The influence of the Irish language on Irish English

An analysis of lexical items and language contact

B.A. Essay

Julia Gansterer
Kt.: 200987–4039

Supervisor: Þórhallur Eyþórsson
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Abstract

Irish traces can be found in many countries all over the world. Despite heavy emigration, Irish influences, culture and folklore can be seen in contemporary media and language. Although the Irish are proud of their heritage, they lost their traditional Celtic language, also known as Gaelic, in the 18th century. Only 1 to 3% of the Irish population speaks Irish on a daily basis, especially in areas in the west of Ireland, called Gaeltacht. This is a result of English colonization and poverty in Ireland. The English language itself was not widely used historically, but managed its way through imperialism and the industrial revolution into a worldwide lingua franca today. Although fluent Irish speakers are quite rare, all pupils learn it in school and Irish phrases are included in everyday speech. Irish has had an effect on the English language. Words like shamrock, whiskey, hooligan, mac, loch, trousers, clan and slogan are borrowed words from Irish. Borrowing of words is quite common, in situations of contact, like trading. Moreover, Irish and English were heavily influenced by other languages and were shaped by different cultural and political influences. Pidgin and Creole languages are an important way to communicate and are defined by borrowing and blending languages. Some words were borrowed in the early days of contact like giústís ‘justice’ and some are recent loanwords like brabhsáil ‘browse’. Some borrowings are so well adapted phonologically and grammatically to the target language, and as a result borrowings can be less obvious than others. Many loanwords can be found in all languages, and it is an interesting process to define and trace the etymological history of words. Irish words and phrases have influenced the English language in Ireland and there are examples of some which are widely known to English-speakers all over the world.
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1. Introduction

The Republic of Ireland is a part of the British Isles. Ireland has a Celtic heritage and has been under the influence of the English since the 12th century (Leith, 1997, p. 162). In the British Isles Celtic, Romanic and Germanic languages were and are spoken (Thomson, 1984, p. 241). Other Celtic languages are e.g. Manx, Breton, Welsh and Cornish, and not all of them survived to this day (Leith, 1997, p. 149). Ireland was colonized and raided by several clans which left an influence on the Irish language (Thomson, 1984, p. 242). While most of the Irish population is proud of their Irish language, and it is a compulsory subject in school, only 1–3% of the population speaks it on a daily basis (Mac Ardghail, 2014). Especially Irish is used in Gaeltacht areas, which are areas mostly on the west coast of Ireland where the Irish language is more common than in the rest of Ireland (Hickey, 2015). Furthermore, in these areas speaking Irish was and still is connected to poverty and rural lifestyle (Hickey, 2015). During and after the potato famine around two million Irish died or emigrated due to little economic potential (Doyle, 2015, p. 124–125 and Hickey, 2015). English became the language of economic upturn and social advantage (Doyle, 2015, p. 66–68). Earlier, however, English itself was a language of little power, being highly influenced by Norman, French and Anglo-Saxons invasions (Milroy, 1984, p. 11–12). Because of colonial expansion and industrial developments the language spread overseas later on. While Latin, Old-Norse and Anglo-Norman left an influence on Irish, English did as well (Doyle, 2015, p. 34). Compulsory education in English and job opportunities were connected to the English language (Siegel, 2008, p. 5). While many Irish grew up as monolingual Irish speakers, children had to learn English to have a chance to escape poverty (Ó Laoire, 2008, p. 227). The Gaelic League created in 1893 and later the independence movement for the formation of the Republic in 1922 were supporting and trying to maintain the Irish language with little results (Edwards, 1984, p. 482).

Generally, trading and exploring leads to contact with new cultures and languages. Language contact results in development or change in one or more languages, which is a natural process. Religious, social, political, educational or
cultural reasons lead to changes in languages (Wardhaugh, 1987, p. 6). These developments can influence the language in all forms: phonologically, syntactically or its lexicon, which is the focus of this thesis. Borrowing of lexicons is a common factor of language contact (Hickey, 2009, p. 670–673). While English had a big influence on the Irish language, replacing it almost in the whole of Ireland, this thesis will concentrate on lexical influences of Irish to the English language.

2. Ireland and the Irish language

Irish is part of the Gaelic language family. All Celtic languages are part of the Indo-European group of languages (Thomson, 1984, p. 241). The Celtic language family is separated into the branches of Irish and Celtic in the Scottish Highlands and the Isle of Man, as well as Welsh, Cornish and Breton (Leith, 1997, p. 149). Two Celtic languages died out, Manx and Cornish. The former died out officially in 1974, but declined since the 18th century and was spoken in the Isle of Man. The latter died out at the end of the 18th century (Thomson, 1984, p. 257) and was spoken in Cornwall. Both languages survived longest in rural areas spoken by the lower class (Leith, 1997, p. 178). Areas which are defined as Irish-speaking are called Gaeltacht, which have been redefined in 1956 (Hindley, 1990, p. 45).

Based on English expansion to Ireland, English speakers were in contact with Irish speakers from the 12th century onwards. Land was confiscated and merchants took over goods from Irish people (Leith, 1997, p. 162). Still, Irish had a rich tradition in literature and English authority was distinctively settled just around Dublin, at the east coast of Ireland until 1490s (Leith, 1997, p. 169). This area was called Pale and although Irish had contact with English and French, the Irish language thrived (Edwards, 1984, p. 480). The usage of English in Dublin started in the 12th century (Hickey, 2007, p. 31). Moriarty (2015, p. 24) mentions political reasons as the main factor for the decline of the Irish language, especially the killing of Irish noblemen in the year 1601. Ireland was conquered from the 16th century on (Edwards, 1984, p. 481). The fertile land in Ireland was taken over by settlers who spoke English, and
Irish-speakers were pushed westwards (Hickey, 2011, p. 17). By doing so, in the 18th century Irish speakers were living in rural areas, mostly poor and catholic. The English language was associated with township and property. Just two cities remand Irish-speaking, Galway and Drogheda (Leith, 1997, p. 169). Most of the Irish population swapped to English around the years 1750 to 1850, when the Roman Catholic Church used English as well (Wardhaugh, 1987, p. 91). As many others, Edwards (1984, p. 481) suggests that Daniel O’Connell, a catholic clergy lead some role in the decline of Irish. He spoke Irish himself, but since Protestants used Irish he switched to English for the catholic society. Furthermore the Irish speaking Catholics were edged out of political and social life (Hickey, 2010, p. 237). Later the Potato Famine killed many native speakers of Irish in the 1840s (Moriarty, 2015, p. 24–26). While firstly the introduction of potatoes lead to a heavy increase in population in the years 1790–1840 from 4.7 to 8 million inhabitants. Later, the potato blight arrived in Ireland in 1841 and spread in the whole country (Doyle, 2015, p. 124–125). Approximately 1 million people died and 1 million emigrated due to the famine (Hickey, 2015).

Leith (1997, p. 170) suggests that half of the population spoke English, the other half Irish around 1800. The usage of Irish in schools was punished and literacy was achieved in English. Irish has not received any support until the Gaelic League was set up 1893, to promote the language of the minority (Leith, 1997, p. 170). Since around 1890, the Irish speaking areas are geographically departed from each other. Most speakers of Irish are concentrated around the area of Galway, in the west of Ireland (Hindley, 1990, p. 19). Gaeltacht areas are remote and connected with poverty, pictured by the public (Hindley, 1990, p. 164). As a result to this remoteness Irish might be able to have survived (Hindley, 1990, p. 165), thanks to the lack of influence of people coming from other parts of the country. Celtic languages are often based in remote areas, connected with traditional businesses like farming and fishing, including limited opportunities for young people for employment (Leith, 1997, p. 163). The Gaeltacht areas have its own dialect, which is supported by its local speakers. Second language learners, speak contrarily a non-dialectic version of Irish, which might sound artificial (Hindley, 1990, p. 164). Three main dialects in Irish exist
nowadays, South, West and North Irish (Hickey, 2011, p. 21). In 1922 Ireland became a Free State where the Irish language played an important role to form an independent nation (Moriarty, 2015, p. 24–26). This was followed by the declaration that Irish is the first official language in Ireland (Wardhaugh, 1987, p. 92). Statistical data for the usage of Irish is poor, from 1926 to 1981. During this time the ability of fluency or practice of Irish at home was unquestioned. Although the mandatory education of Irish in school, many might claim to have knowledge in Irish, but actually never use it (Hindley, 1990, p. 46). On the opposite, Hickey presents the fact that, despite the lack of statistical data, the usage of Irish is underrepresented since the Irish language was connected with poverty, so it might have been that not all Irish speakers committed to its usage in surveys (Hickey, 2011, p. 18). Hindley as well (1990, p. 15) claims that data used in statistical surveys is unreliable. Irish as a language was rejected, since it was connected to low status and illiteracy. Since 1922 Irish is on the contrary seen as the language of the middle class, despite the fact that Gaeltacht areas are poorer than e.g. suburban regions (Hindley, 1990, p. 175). Since 1893 the Gaelic League (Conradh na Gaeilge) has tried to support and encourage the Irish language which continuously lost importance since the independence of Ireland (Edwards, 1984, p. 482). The Irish language was seen as a way to lead to real independence and to the formation of a nation (Townshend, 1999, p.124). As Moriarty (2015, p. 26) summarizes, the language led a key role in the movement of independence in Ireland and following slogan was used tír gan teanga, tír gan anam ‘A country without a language is a country without a soul’. At the same time, as Irish was not connected to progress, the independence movement marketed the Irish language as a cultivated feeling of togetherness to form an independent nation. This should be done by the schools, when the language of teaching became Irish again. Even in 1928 it was stated that in the Annual Report of the Department of Education that a renaissance of the Irish language is not possible. By changing the language of education, it can be doubted that the spoken language will change to Irish, since many had no contact with the language outside school (Townshend, 1999, p. 125). As a result of little fluency in Irish of the students, the standards were reduced so students could follow easier learning material in all subjects. Although not scientifically researched, many teachers
had the experience that in Irish taught classes, students tend to learn less, than if the instruction would have been led in English. Society and parents did not support the pure Irish education, and the Irish language continued to decline (Townshed, 1999, p. 156–157). Irish is a mandatory subject in all schools, and education conducted in English was forbidden in the 1930s in primary schools (Edwards, 1984, p.484). Moriarty (2015, p. 26–27) discusses that the education of the Irish language of children failed, by cause of the focus on cultural traditions and mostly middle and higher class children were able to profit from this education. Still after 13 years of mandatory education in Irish many fail to speak the language (Moriarty, 2015, p. 36). About 93% of the population has a positive attitude towards the language which does not mirror its daily usage. Observing more micro-level activities in media, tourism and culture could raise the usage of the Irish language, which was successful in Belfast, Northern Ireland (Moriarty, 2015, p. 37). The modern media gives a forum for language exchange and connects the speaking community better (Moriarty, 2015, p. 45–46). Also the economic expansion during the Celtic Tiger increased popularity of the Irish language (Moriarty, 2015, p. 45–46). This successful period is defined by high economic growth rates and happened in the 1990s and from 2004 –2008 (Business Dictionary, 2016).

After 1922, the political leaders planned to shape Ireland into a country with Irish speakers and declined bilingualism with English. While at first the Irish language led to independence, now it was used again to be able to distinguish from the Irish and the English people (Moriarty, 2015, p. 27). At this time just around 17% of the population spoke Irish (Moriarty, 2015, p. 25). While firstly the government wanted to enforce a language shift, in 1970 the bilingualism in Ireland was accepted and the focus was lead to the Gaeltacht area and the remains of the Irish language and its maintenance. Starting around the year 2000 different attempts on a micro and macro level were introduced, like a purely Irish television channel. In 2007 research has shown that also in Gaeltacht areas the usage of English is rising and different approaches have to be tried. Daily usage of Irish inside the Gaeltacht areas was only at 25%. While on the one hand the Gaeltacht areas have to be linguistically revitalized with their mother tongue, also second-language-learners have to be paid attention to
In 2005 Irish became the 21st official language of the European Union (EU). On the one hand this improved the language’s importance seeing that jobs were created for Irish speakers. On the other hand, many claim that translations cost too much, and this money could be used otherwise. Having it as an official language inside the EU does not lift the number of native speakers in Ireland (Moriarty, 2015, p. 31). Also Ó Laoire (2008, p. 193) claims that current language planning is focused too much about protecting the Irish language, than accepting the bilingual status of the country and not the integration of the English language and other languages spoken in Ireland e.g. by immigrants. In the year 2006 only one to three percent of the population used Irish daily (Hickey, 2015).

2.1. Economic situation in Ireland

In the year 1891, the Gaeltacht areas overlap with the poorest areas of the UK government. Emigration is common in Ireland, also seasonal workers who left for labor activity, had a need to learn English. Emigration was introduced by learning English, considering the economic connection to Great Britain, but also the United States (Hindley, 1990, p. 180).

The Gaeltacht areas were defined by rurality and agriculture. Towns provided possibilities to shop, work, for education and entertainment but are mostly English-speaking. In a report published in 1975 (Hindley, 1990, p. 35), 7% described a negative or neutral connection to the language. Based on numbers of 1984, on the one hand the majority of the population would like Irish to be the language of the nation. On the other hand many are against compulsory teaching and see little use in the knowledge of the language (Hindley, 1990, p. 40).

From the Second World War until the 1980s, the rural areas of Ireland were struggling to improve. These areas lack behind in social an economic well-being. The lack of employment besides farming, leads to that educated leave for better opportunities of employment (Cawley, 1990, p. 146–147). Defined rural problem fields are mostly resident in the north-west, west and south-west of Ireland. While
these are not just overlapping with the Gaeltacht region, it is clearly visible that all Gaeltacht areas are part of these defined problem areas. These regions are marked with employment in the agricultural sector, high unemployment rates, low level of education, overcrowding and poor household amenities (Cawley, 1990, p. 153). This was also stated in a news article written in 1997 (Mac Dubhghailll), showing that development programs by the state had little effect yet in rural areas, and half of the Gaeltacht areas fell into the areas of Ireland with the highest 20% of deprivation. Around 55% percent of the population leaves school at the age of 15 and around 32% are unemployed. Only around the city Galway opposite results can be shown. In a study published by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development OECD (2015), all measured wellbeing-indicators are above average, despite the factor income and wealth. The brain drain continues 2015, mostly highly educated young people leaving Ireland (OECD, 2015).

An economic boost in the 1970s made former emigrants move back to Gaeltacht areas, and using their language skills in their professions (Hindley, 1990, p. 48). This industrial development led to re-immigration and attracted English speakers to the area (Hindley, 1990, p. 182). Transport and road improvements meant that it was easier to migrate, and look for work elsewhere, as well as English speaking tourists might visit more often the Gaeltacht areas. At the same time television brought English-speaking programs to the homes of everyone (Hindley, 1990, p. 183).

Hindley concludes that just around 20.000 people speak Irish as their native language (1990, p. 185). Some emigrated Irish speakers might form a new community in bigger cities, speaking and promoting a minority language for reasons of identification, e.g. in Belfast in North Ireland (Leith, 1997, p. 165). Cities play an important role in teaching Gaelic languages to young, middle-class people who are interested in Gaelic languages and nationality (Leith, 1997, p. 166).
2.2. Latin influence

The Irish language was shaped by Christian influences, by monks, who settled and established monasteries and schools in Ireland. Latin was used to teach literature, law, history and medicine. The monks shaped the Irish alphabet, gave structure to the language and wrote down local poems, history, tales and mythological stories. The Irish language was used to write theological and liturgical texts. Irish was equally practiced to the Latin language by this time (Corkery, 1968, p. 15–20). Lexical items which were included into Irish vocabulary from Latin are for example (Hickey, 2015 and Doyle, 2015, p. 34):

- manach ‘monk’
- cill ‘church’
- cáis ‘cheese’
- corp ‘body’ (Hickey, 2015).
- instruimint from instrumentum ‘instrument’
- oific from officium ‘employment, ritual’
- spongia from spongia ‘sponge’ (Doyle, 2015, p. 34).

Contrary to English, Irish has little loanwords from Latin or Greek. Following words were made in a descriptive matter (Hickey, 2015):

- leathscéal literal translation: half-story ‘excuse’
- cur sios literal translation: putting down ‘description’
- éirí amach literal translation: rising out ‘rebellion’
- fianaise bréige literal translation: witness lie ‘perjury’
- flichshneachta literal translation: wet snow ‘sleet’
- cos ar bolg literal translation: foot on stomach ‘oppression’
- caitheamh aimsire literal translation: spending time ‘hobby’
- urú gréine literal translation: darkening sun ‘eclipse’ (Hickey, 2015).
2.3. *Old Norse influence*

Later influences on the Irish language derive from the Old Norse settlements. Grammatical structures were rarely taken over from Old Norse into Old Irish, but some examples for lexical borrowings are (Hickey, 2011, p. 4–6):

- *ancaire* from Old Norse akkeri ‘anchor’
- *seol* from Old Norse segl ‘sail’
- *fuinneog* from Old Norse vindauga ‘window’
- *margadh* from Old Norse markadr ‘market’
- *bróg* from Old Norse brók ‘shoe’ (Hickey, 2011, p. 4-6).

Doyle (2015, p. 12) claims furthermore that many people were bilingual during the times of the Vikings. Further borrowings are:

- *targa* from Old Norse targa ‘shield’
- *garrda* from Old Norse garðr ‘garden’
- *stiúir* from Old Norse styri ‘rudder’
- *trosce* from Old Norse þorskr ‘codfish’
- *beóir* from Old Norse bjórr ‘beer’ (Doyle, 2015, p. 12).

2.4. *Anglo-Norman influence*

The Anglo-Normans stayed for a long time and had quite an influence on the Irish language and was used for more than two centuries as the language of law. At the same time the native Irish language was allowed to be used in court, which shows its importance. Many loanwords influenced Irish from Anglo-Norman, but not the other way round, although there must have been close contact between the speakers of the different languages. Many words can be found of French origin (Hickey, 2011, p. 9):
Since borrowed words were adapted phonologically to Irish, Hickey (2011, p. 9–10) reveals that Irish had a strong position. Today the status of Irish is lower, since English words are simply taken over, without altering the pronunciation. This is contrary to the contact with Old Norse, since bilingual communication has taken place during the time of Anglo-Normans. Doyle (2015, p. 15) mentions that French was used as a lingua franca for trading purposes with mainland Europe as well as it was practiced inside religious and aristocratic surroundings. Many took over Irish customs and the language. During the 15th and 16th century Irish gained power and Gaelicisation took place until the beginning of the 17th century (Hickey, 2007, p. 346).

3. English language in the British Isles

The English language is part of the Germanic languages (Milroy, 1984, p. 6). English was highly influenced by language contact with other nationalities. On the one hand by Scandinavians who settled and on the other hand by the Normans. The language contact situation led to simplification of the English. Pidgin-type languages must have been spoken then (Milroy, 1984, p. 11–12). English was firstly spoken in Ireland in
the 12th century (Ó Laoire, 2008, p. 198). As Doyle (2015, p. 34) claims, English had a moderate influence on Irish from 1200 to 1500. English altered for the sake of translations and borrowings. The Tudors, in 1485 wanted to introduce the English language to oppress religious and political views, while Irish were not fond of learning English (Doyle, 2015, p. 40–44). Regarding written records not much change happened to the Irish language from 1500 to 1600, but pronunciation changed (Doyle, 2015, p. 51). A book published in 1547 covered sentences to learn Irish phrases for English people (Doyle, 2015, p. 52). Diglossia was common in the Tudor area, English was used as an upper class language and Irish as the lower class one (Doyle, 2015, p. 57). There are few accounts of English people trying to learn Irish. Code-switching, means using words from a different language must have been used in such a bilingual context. More and more Irish was suppressed (Doyle, 2015, p. 59–60). The Stuarts continued this progress, planting English settlers into Ireland. To keep land it was crucial to know the English language, which was the language of law, also education was available in English. In 1660 about 30% were native English speakers or bilingual Irish/English, who were mostly the ones in power. Especially in bilingual situations where one language is connected to prestige, the other one is often defeated (Doyle, 2015, p. 66–68).

The change to English started on the east coast and in urban areas, and moved westwards. Bilingual contact between the Irish and English planters is likely, giving Irish English today some of its features (Hickey, 2007, p.121–122). It must be noted that the English of the planters was highly dialectical, just by the 17th century some form of Standard English was known to the public (Smith, 2008, p. 118). Between 1600 and 1900 about 65% percent switched their mother tongue, which could happen in four generations (Ó Laoire, 2008, p. 227):

- An Irish speaking adult is learning some English from immigrants and colonists but cannot speak it properly.
- This person’s children learn English at school and speak it as their second language, being more proficient in Irish, their mother tongue.
The grandchildren speak Irish and English equally well, but use English more in their daily life. The Irish language won’t get transmitted to the next generation.

The great-grandchildren speak English as their mother tongue, with passive knowledge of Irish, learned from their grandparents (Ó Laoire, 2008, p. 227).

As Hickey (2007, p. 123–125) mentions, little education was available to the inhabitants in the form of schools. As a result learning the English language must have happened in an informal context. The change took roughly around 250 years, while Irish had influence on the English being spoken in Ireland today.

Since Latin was used in theology, science and philosophy, English had a pretty low status. Standardizing the English language started rather late, in 1755. Before this time period just Latin and Norman French were used in official documents (Milroy, 1984, p. 12–13). English, French and Latin were used in England until the mid-eighteenth century. Afterwards English was the only language to be used in legal transcripts. All other languages, like French and Latin but also Gaelic languages were not allowed (Wardhaugh, 1987, p. 71). A pure version of the English language was looked for, which became Received Pronunciation (RP) in the later part of the 19th century (Wardhaugh, 1987, p. 72). Although the written language was standardized, spoken English differs in syntax and phonology (Milroy, 1984, p. 13).

In the 18th century, the upper class spoke English, whereas the catholic middle class was bilingual. They used English to talk in towns and to the upper class. Irish was more and more used for speaking purposes and English for reading and writing (Doyle, 2015, p. 97). Other languages were forbidden, or English was preferred and connected to the right to own land (Wardhaugh, 1987, p. 74). Moriarty (2015, p. 24–25) reveals that English had a stronger position in the bilingual environment around 1900. English was used in cities and became the language of upward mobility and progress.

Today’s English contains many synonyms. This is based in heavy borrowings from other languages like for example from French which is shown in the latter words in following list: house/mansion, depth/profundity, child/infant, and stink/scent.
During the Norman invasion words were borrowed from French, the higher class. English was shaped on the one hand by settlers, mostly Scandinavians and Norman French and borrowings from other languages, because of colonization and trading (Milroy, 1984, p. 26–28). English spoken in Ireland is called Hiberno-English, which is divided into northern Hiberno-English, spoken in Northern Ireland and southern Hiberno-English in Ireland (Harris, 1984, p. 115).

4. Language contact

Moreover Edwards (1984, p. 491) divides the English languages in Ireland into Hiberno-English and Anglo-English. Anglo-Irish developed in rural area as a mixture of Irish and English and on the opposite Hiberno-English which derives from the English of the first settlers from England, a more standard version of English in Ireland so to say. The contact between Irish and English language for example in Galway led to the inclusion of Irish phrases into English, which are pointed out in following two examples (Edwards, 1984, p. 491):

- Anglo-Irish: “There no word o’ a lie in it”
  - (relates to Irish: “Nil aon fhocal bréige ann”)
  - Hiberno-English corresponding: “That (this) is quite true”
- Anglo-Irish: “There’s misfortune shook down on ‘im”
  - (relates to Irish: “Tá ,n mí-ádh craítí anuas air”)

As Doyle (2015, p. 5) mentions, English and Irish have influenced each other and language contact lead to communication between them. Aitchison (1991, p. 112–115) divides the intrusive contact of languages into substratum and borrowing. Substratum means imperfect learners who are more likely to take over sound and syntax change. Borrowing on the other hand is mostly about vocabulary and less about sound patterns.
of syntax. Words, which are unlikely to be borrowed is basic vocabulary like numbers. Items which are borrowed are mostly easily isolated and can be adapted into the target language. All changes to borrowed items are made slowly and is fitting the words more and more into the target language. Miller states that only a few words were acquired from Celtic to Old English. This number is increasing a little since Celtic had slightly more influence on Middle English and dialects of Modern English (Laker, 2013, p. 73). Hickey (2007, p. 131) argues that, given the fact Irish was serving as the substrate language in contact with English, not much lexical exchange happened, since in a shift situation, borrowing is unlikely because people focus on the new prestigious language, which was English.

4.1. Pidgin/Creeole

Pidgins and Creoles are developed by a contact situation of people who do not share a common language (Siegel, 2008, p. 1–3). The lexifier or superstrate is the language which is the more powerful one. Lexical items, phonology and grammar might differ, and pidgins and creoles can be influenced by several other languages as well. Firstly just phrases are taken over, and people try to use familiar concepts for communication and create a pre-pidgin. After some time in contact the new pidgin develops as lingua franca and a new language has been created. Furthermore this language can gain vocabulary and grammatical rules, and expand in area. When children learn the pidgin of their parents, the children use this language as their vernacular, and at this stage a pidgin turns into a creole. A creole has like any other language grammatical rules, a full lexicon and is used in all situations, not just for trading (Siegel, 2008, p. 1–3). Pidgin languages are not native to any speakers, so are never used as mother tongue, develop often through trade based on simplifying and reducing. A creole is used as a mother tongue and has a normal level of complexity (Holm, 2004, p. 68).

As mentioned before, a language shift appeared in Ireland where many inhabitants changed to another language, as a result of colonial pressure of England; this can be considered a case of so-called substratum interference (Siegel, 2008, p. 5).
Substratum influence resulted in adaptations to English from Irish mother tongue speakers, making certain phrases also common in Irish English. This “after phrase” is quite common in Irish English, rooting in Irish (Siegel, 2008, p. 125–126).

- Irish English: She is after selling the boat. “She has (just) sold the boat.”

A source of the 16th century is mentioning the “mingle mangle ... of both the languages... as commonly the inhabitants of the meaner sort speake neyther good English nor good Irishe” (Kirk, Kallen, 2006, p. 89), noticing and describing the language contact in the British Isles between English and Irish.

4.2. **Borrowings and code-switching**

Borrowing is defined as taking linguistic items and including them into a new language. Code-switching includes phrases and can be used in both languages (Mac Mathúna, 2006, p. 123). In 1991 code-switching in Ireland is mostly being practiced with the base language of Irish and English words are added to the Irish with phonological assimilation. The two languages English and Irish share a long past with similar influences, which might have led to borrowings in the past (Stenson, 1991, p. 562).

Hickey (2009, p. 670–673) points out that code-switching of Irish speakers shows the pressure of the English language on Irish speakers. The English influence on Irish is visible; hence almost all Irish speakers are bilingual. Irish children, with the mother tongue of Irish are a minority in schools and research in Ireland and Wales show that the majority of children, with the mother tongue of English make mistakes in the usage of Irish. The children with Irish as a mother-tongue take over errors of the children and do not correct the non-mother tongue speakers. A difference is made between loanwords who are established, used by monolingual and bilingual speakers.
and have been adapted to the recipient language and borrowings. Borrowings might have partial phonological or syntactical adaption and are used by bilinguals. Furthermore there are code-switches which do not change into the recipient language and are not widely spread in the speaking community. In the article it is mentioned that older loanwords or borrowings are assimilated into Irish, today's words based on Irish English are not being adapted. Some authors conclude that today the difference between borrowing and code-switching is not distinct, since recent loans both route in Irish English and widespread bilingualism.

A research conducted in 2001 shows that Irish speakers (L1, Irish as their mother tongue) are code-switching in 60% of the cases discourse markers like: ‘well/bhuel, like, you know, d’ya know, I know, you see, just, so, because, but, right, alright, whatever, really, kinda, I’d say’. Another study, conducted in different Irish speaking schools shows that most code-switching was used by teachers who call themselves bilingual (19% compared to 2.5%) or have a mixed setting in the classroom, meaning little mother-tongue pupils of Irish in the classroom. Mostly words are switched like: ‘now, c’mon, okay, sure’ or ‘no’ and ‘yeah’. This is shown in following four examples (Hickey 2009, p. 670–673):

- **No, níl tú ag iarraidh sin.**
  - “No, you don’t want that.”
- **Gheobhaidh mé duit é láithread, alright?**
  - “I’ll get it for you immediately, alright?”
- **Now, tá páipéar ag gach duine.**
  - “Now, everyone has a paper.”
- **Just fág mar sin é.**

Moreover religious words were borrowed from either English or Latin (Doyle, 2015, p. 52 and p. 147):

- **aldarman ‘alderman’**
Some loan words in the Irish language, that have their roots in English, have been phonologically integrated into the Irish language. They appear native to Irish speakers, and might date back to the first contacts (Stenson, 1991, p. 563):

- *seríbhís* ‘service’
- *balla* ‘wall’
- *buntáiste* ‘advantage’
- *giústís* ‘justice’
- *siosúin* ‘sessions’ (Doyle, 2015, p. 78).

These are all cases of total integration. Other lexical items were code-switched, without adaption like: greenway, writ, provost and surrender (Doyle, 2015, p. 78).

Sometimes single lexical items are switched, like in this example ‘families’ which is morphologically and phonologically integrated in the sentence (Stenson, 1991, p. 563):

- *Tá cupla* families *thart anseo...*
  - “There are a couple of families around here...” (Stenson, 1991, p. 563).

Furthermore phrases or clauses with English phonology, morphology and syntax are included into an Irish sentence (Stenson, 1991, p. 562):
Who cares céard atá aici?
  ○ “Who cares what she has?”

You bet go bhfuil sé te.
  ○ “You bet it’s hot.”

Bhí sé imithe by the time a tháinig mé amach.
  ○ “He was gone by the time I came out.” (Stenson, 1991, p. 562).

A Gaelic Athletic Association sends out a newsletter *An Nuachtán* and collects weekly news on its homepage. The homepage is in English, but like the author suggests (Cunningham, 2011, p. 212–214), the organization wants to use as much Irish as possible without scaring non-Irish speakers. Following examples are listed:

- The committee, players and members of *Droim Ratha na Sarséil GAC* extend deepest sympathies to the McG. Family on the sad death of P. P. was a founding member of the club in January 1972, the proud father of committee member J., former players P., T. and J. and grandfather of a number of playing members. *Ar dheis De go raibh a anam.* (“May his soul be on the right side of God”).
- *Nollaig shona agus Athbliain faoi Mhaise Dhaoibh* (“Happy Christmas and a flourishing coming year to you all”). *Droim ratha na sarséil*, wish all our members and players a Happy Christmas and peaceful and successful 2009.
- *Comhghairdeas* to our *Scor na nOg Bailead Ghrupa* (“Congratulations to our ballad group of the Scor youth competitions”) on making it through to represent *Droim Ratha* in the Ulster final in Silverbridge on January 10th.
- *Droim Ratha na Sarséil* (Drumragh GAA Club) has a long and proud history of participation in the GAA’s showcase for our native culture through the annual *Scór na Óg* and *Scór Sinsear* competitions. The *Scór* competition itself is celebrating its 40th Birthday this year and its popularity, especially within Tyrone, continues to grow.
- Any club member that would like to attend *Cursai Gaelige* (Courses in Gaelic) in Downings on July 20 to 25 should contact B. McK. on 123456. This course
is sponsored by Comhairle Uladh CLCG and is well worth attending (Cunningham, 2011, p. 212–214).

As shown above, macaronic texts are texts where two languages are mixed willingly. In macaronic texts vernaculars are often blended with Latin and written accounts of macaron Irish/English texts date back to the 16th and 17th century (Doyle, 2015, p. 86).

Due to housing developments, new words were not shaped, but simply taken over from English during 1800–1870 e.g. foundation, drains, shutters, front, repairs, who were inserted in the Irish text. Further borrowings are bird eye, brush, diaper, informer, job, rice, profit, ticking. Many words were adapted e.g. (Doyle, 2015, p. 148–149):

- **aicsean** ‘action’
- **búistéara** ‘butcher’
- **damáiste** ‘damage’
- **pinsean** ‘pension’
- **seaicéad** ‘jacket’
- **truic** ‘trick’ (Doyle, 2015, p. 149).

Borrowings happened during different periods in history, some like **dochtúir** ‘doctor’ being borrowed in the Middle Ages and many others much later (Doyle, 2015, p. 152). Furthermore word-formation was used to form new words by combining for example lion and the suffix –ess to lioness. Word-formation lead to enrichment of vocabulary e.g. the Irish prefix **ban**- equal to –ess in English was highly used in the 17th century. These formations often route in translations, where translators were missing words, being forced to create new ones (Doyle, 2015, p. 238–239).

- **Cliamhuin** ‘son-in-law’ becomes **ban-chliamhuin** ‘daughter-in-law’ (Doyle, 2015, p. 238–239).
Later the prefix ban- was not used anymore and was replaced by the adjective *mná* ‘of woman’ (Doyle, 2015, p. 239).

- *Fíodóir* ‘weaver’ becomes *fíodóir mná* ‘female weaver’ (Doyle, 2015, p. 239).

Doyle (2015, p. 239–240) reveals that word-formation created many words, but still Irish lacked words describing the modern life in the cities, by reason of a traditional agricultural lifestyle. While vocabulary for new inventions was often word-formations from Greek or Latin, Irish mostly did not borrow words like telephone or microscope. New words borrowed from English who were added with the ending –*each* for adjectives is e.g. (Doyle, 2015, p. 240):

- *eleictreach* ‘electrical’ (Doyle, 2015, p. 240).

Many verbs have been transferred into Irish from English. They get a special marker, the ending –*eáil* to show that they are borrowed, but have been integrated (Doyle, 2015, p. 148):

- *péinteáil* ‘paint’ (Doyle, 2015, p. 148).

Members of the Gaelic League did not support these kind of borrowings at all. A new way of borrowings was established named calquing, where the structure of a word was split up and translated piece by piece. This can be shown by the word *cúigeachas* ‘provincialism’. The suffixes were split from the word province –al, –ism. Province gets translated into the word *cúige* and then two Irish suffixes –*ach*, –*as* are added (Doyle, 2015, p. 240–241).

Recent loanwords have affected the Irish language, rooting in the usage of English promotion (Hickey, 2015):

- *brabhsáil* ‘browse’ (with the Irish verbal ending –*áil*)
- *idirghabhalaí* literally translates to: between-goer ‘mediator’
- *íoslódáil* literally translates to: download ‘download’
- *mórchuid* literally translates to: big party ‘the majority’
- *sruthlíneach* ‘streamlined’
Hickey (2002, p. 1257) states that adding Irish words in the middle of a conversation in English is quite common in Ireland despite its little usage in the population of less than 1%. This is called cúpla focal, meaning ‘couple of words’. Loan words which are used are for example:

- *ciúineas* ‘silence’
- *piseog* ‘superstition’ (anglicised as pishogue)
- *sláinte* ‘health’ or *plámás* ‘flattery’ (Hickey, 2002, p. 1257).

Furthermore Hickey (2002, p. 1258) uses the examples which are Irish words, having no synonym in English and are generally known to people from Ireland:

- *currach* ‘a wooden-framed boat covered with tarred canvas’
- *crannog* ‘lake dwelling’

Code-switching in the Irish language is for example used in Irish radio comedy shows. Atkinson and Kelly-Holmes (2011, p. 258) see the reasoning in the usage of the Irish language in creating a new Irish ethnicity. Irish is not shown as Gaelic speaking or English speaking, the Irish identity is shaped through a sketch by blending Irish into English, disconnecting the association of a certain language to a certain ethnicity. The variation of the two languages aims on mixing traditional groups together, to a new Irish way of speaking and in fact a new Irish culture. The authors claim furthermore that the popularity of the Irish language in media is rising.

While Crystal (2000, p. 22) mentions code-switching as a threat to a non-dominant language which is followed by losing vocabulary and grammatical features,
but borrowing words is a normal subject since languages are developing. On the contrary, Wigger points out that he defines the borrowing or code-switching of words in Ireland as a coexistence of both. Moreover he states that Irish influence on English and English effect on the Irish language has existed since long time, so he defines these words, if borrowing or code-switching lexemes, showing adaption on both sides of the language. Ní Eochaidh mentions the interwovenness of English and Irish in 1922 as that many might not know if they speak English or Irish. Etymologically some words cannot be traced to a distinct language, either enrooted in English or Irish but were adapted or borrowed back and forth (Kirk, Kallen, 2006, p. 90). Code-switching clearly has an impact on the English language spoken in Ireland compared to elsewhere, rooting in the knowledge of Irish (Kirk, Kallen, 2006, p. 94).

4.3. Irish influence on English

4.3.1. Lexical items

Hickey (2002, p. 1259) observes that not many lexical items have been transferred into other countries. He sees the reason in the Irish reluctance with their past, and the connection to poverty.

Following a list of English words will be presented, embedded in the Irish language. The former bullet point is the definition of the Oxford Dictionary (Oxford University Press, 2016), the later one defines the roots of the word from Etymology Online (Harper, 2016):

- **banshee** (noun)
  - A female spirit in Irish legends who wails warning of a death in the house.
  - Deriving from Irish *bean* *sidhe* ‘female of the Elves’ from *bean* ‘woman’ + *sidhe* from *sith*, ‘fairy’, since 1771.

- **biddy** (noun)
  - An elderly woman, who is interfering.
• Used first in 1785 as ‘Irish maid/servant’ in American English but also ‘old woman’.

• **bog** (noun)
  - Land which is muddy.
  - Dates back to the 1500s to Gaelic and Irish *bogach* ‘bog’, meaning ‘soft, moist’.

• **bother** (verb)
  - To disturb someone.
  - Likely deriving from Anglo-Irish *pother*, and Irish *bodhairim* ‘I deafen’, since 1718 and used firstly by Irish authors with the meaning ‘to confuse’.

• **boycott** (noun and verb)
  - To protest, punish or withdraw from commercial or social relations.
  - Created 1880 by Irish Capt. Charles C. Boycott, who refused in the County of Mayo to lower rents for his farmers. The word spread quickly and marks a place name in England.

• **brogue** (noun)
  - A shoe of leather formerly worn in Ireland and the Scottish Highlands, nowadays a shoe with ornamental perforated patterns.
  - Deriving from Old Irish *broce* ‘shoe’ or *barrog* ‘a hold’ (on the tongue), meaning a stout shoe.

• **clan** (noun)
  - A large family or a group of people with a common interest.
  - From the early 15th century, used in Gaelic *clann* ‘family, stock, offspring’ and Old Irish *cland* ‘offspring, tribe’.

• **claymore** (noun)
  - Is a double-edged broadsword, formerly used by Scottish Highlanders.
  - Derived 1749 from Gaelic *claidheamh mor* ‘great sword’.

• **drumlin** (noun)
  - A small hill.
  - Used first in 1833, from Gaelic and Irish *druim* ‘back, ridge’.

• **galore** (adverb)
• In abundance, a lot of.
• Used first in the 1670s, from Irish go leór ‘sufficiently, enough’.

• **glen** (noun)
  • A narrow valley.
  • From Scottish and Gaelic gleann ‘mountain valley’, commonly used in place names from the late 15th century on.

• **gob** (noun)
  • An informal word for mouth.
  • The word is deriving from Irish gob ‘mouth’ firstly used in the 1540s.

• **hooligan** (noun)
  • A violent troublemaker, typically in a gang.
  • The word derives from an Irish surname Houlihan of the year 1898 used in songs, newspapers. It originates from a comic newspaper.

• **hubbub** (noun)
  • A chaotic sound, caused by a crowd.
  • It is believed to be of the Gaelic word ub! being an expression of aversion or Old Irish battle cry abu, from buide ‘victory’.

• **kibosh** (noun)
  • Used to express an end.
  • A possible explanation is Irish caip bháis ‘cap of death’, being a black cap of a judge who pronounced a death sentence.

• **loch** (noun)
  • A lake.
  • From Gaelic loch ‘lake or narrow arm of sea’ in the late 14th century.

• **mac** (prefix)
  • A patronymic prefix of Scottish and Irish surnames.
  • From Irish and Gaelic mac meaning ‘son of’, a generic term for a man and an element in surnames.

• **puss** (noun)
  • A person’s mouth or face.
- Used firstly in 1890 from Irish *pus* ‘lip, mouth’.

**puck** (noun)
- A black disc, used in ice hockey.
- The word is used since 1891 which might trace back to Irish *poc* ‘bag’.

**shamrock** (noun)
- A clover-like plant with three-lobed leaves, used as the national symbol or Ireland.
- Since the 1570s, deriving from Irish *seamrog* and *seamar* ‘clover’.

**shebeen** (noun)
- A house or place where alcohol is sold illegally.
- Used since 1781 mostly in Ireland and Scotland from Irish *seibin* ‘small mug’ and also ‘bad ale’.

**slew** (noun)
- A large number.
- Used first in 1839, meaning large number from Irish *sluagh* ‘a host, crowd or multitude’

**slob** (noun)
- Muddy land.
- 1780. From Irish *slab* ‘mud, mire dirt’.

**slogan** (noun)
- A short memorable phrase.
- 1670s. From Gaelic *sluagh-gharim* ‘battle cry used by Scottish Highland or Irish clans’ and *sluagh* ‘army, host, slew’ and *gairm* ‘a cry’.

**smithereens** (noun)
- Small pieces.
- Deriving in 1810 from Irish *smidirin/smioder* ‘fragment’.

**tory** (noun)
- A member of a political conservative party.
- Used from 1566, ‘an outlaw’, used for Irish robbers known for cruelty, later used for Irish who were dispossessed of their land, from Irish *toruighe* ‘plunderer’ but also ‘pursuer, searcher’.
• **trousers** (noun)
  - A garment covering the body from the waist to the ankles, separately for each leg.
  - Used from the 1580s on, from Gaelic or Middle Irish *tribhas* ‘close-fitting shorts’.

• **whiskey** (noun)
  - A spirit distilled from barley or rye
    (First bullet points sourced from: Oxford University Press, 2016).
  - 1715. From Gaelic *uisge beath* ‘whisky’ and ‘water of life’, from Irish *uisce* ‘water’ and *bethu* ‘life’
    (Second bullet points sourced from: Harper, 2016).

4.3.2. **Irish origin of naming organizations**

Irish terms are willingly used in naming government offices and institutions, to show that Irish is the first language of Ireland. The prime minister is called *taoiseach* and *tánaiste* (male/female) deriving from the term chief, and the agency for employment is called *fás* meaning ‘growth’. It has to be stated that these terms are often pronounced with English pronunciation and not the original Irish one (Hickey, 2002, p. 1258). Furthermore for example *Aer Lingus* (Irish airline) and Radio *Telfis Éireann* (Irish public broadcasting organization) have Irish names.

4.4. **Language change and decay**

As Wardhaugh (1987, p. 6) mentions, different factors have influence on expanding on languages, which are changing constantly. “Factors including religious extension, migration, economic policies, geographical isolation, urbanization, administrative convenience, and so on...”.
On the one hand, seen on the personal view, to learn a new language usually brings advantages with it, which drives the learning progress. If disadvantages are connected to a language it will decline. These can be for example religious, social, political, educational or cultural reasons. On the other hand, states decide on language policies (Wardhaugh, 1987, p. 17). The decline of a language is often connected to rural areas, emigration, older and uneducated speakers (Wardhaugh, 1987, p. 19). Irish is a minority language in Ireland (Wardhaugh, 1987, p. 30).

Mac Ardghail (2014) points out that the mixed languages of teenagers, is often a combination of Irish lexical items inside English grammar rules. These teenagers learn Irish in school, until a certain level of communicative skills are reached. The motivation to continue learning stops for the most part, because daily phrases can be expressed and understood. He sees the future of teaching Irish in a better understanding about how English and Irish as interwoven languages work in Ireland and how teenagers learn them. By doing so, better strategies can be applied to teach Irish at a more professional level and lead to more native-Irish speakers in the future. Many pupils learn Irish in school, but do not have enough knowledge of the language to be able to use it outside this environment in effective communication.

4.5. **Shelta, the secret mixed language**

Shelta or Sheldru/Cant is a language spoken by around 6,000 people in Ireland and 80,000 people in the United Kingdom (UK), the United States, Canada, South Africa and Australia. The Shelta language is a mixed form of Irish and English, shaping a new language out of it with English structures and syntax but origins of the Irish lexicon. The speakers of Shelta are called Travellers, who descend from craftsmen, traders, musicians and so forth sharing a common culture of nomadism. They are a minority group inside the UK, but Ireland does not recognize them as an ethnic group, which leads to discrimination. The language was discovered in 1876, functioning as secret language to be able to identify the group and communicate only inside Travellers. The language splits up into regional varieties like Irish Gaelic Shelta,
Scottish Gaelic Shelta, Manx Gaelic Shelta and English Shelta (Velupillai, 2015, p. 381–381).

Hancock (2009, p. 47) defines Shelta as pidgin language with a small lexicon. As many other pidgin languages, words are used to create new lexical items e.g.:

- summer = *getch grimsher* literally meaning ‘hot time’
- sugar = *innoch libis* literally meaning ‘sweet stuff’ (Hancock, 2009, p. 47).

Words in Shelta are formed from Irish for example by reversing, prefixing, substituting and transporting. Following examples list reversed words (Binchy, 1985, p. 128):

- Shelta *kam* = Irish *mac* = English ‘son’
- Shelta *gre* = Irish *eirigh* = English ‘to rise’ (Binchy, 1985, p. 128).

Here it is shown how prefixing one or more phonemes was done:

- Shelta *gather* = Irish *athair* = English ‘father’
- Shelta *grimsher* = Irish *aimsir* = English ‘weather’ (Binchy, 1985, p. 128).

Furthermore substitution of letters was used:

- Shelta *slunya* = Irish *gloinne* = English ‘glass’
- Shelta *shala wa* = Irish *balbh* = English ‘dumb’ (Binchy, 1985, p. 128).

As well transpositioning of letters was used to create Shelta:

- Shelta *axaram* = Irish *amarach* = English ‘tomorrow’ (Binchy, 1985, p. 128).

These adaptations to lexicons are made deliberately to disguise speaking from other groups or outsiders. Mixed languages like Shelta are usually developed by cause of pressure on a certain group or culture. This minority wants to remain its identity
(Velupillai, 2015, p. 79–80). Mixed languages are a kind of contact language like pidgin and creole languages. Compared to pidgins and creole languages mixed languages evolve due to the need of a special language for ethnic identification, and not because of a need of communication (Velupillai, 2015, p. 70).
5. Conclusion

While Irish is a not a widely spoken language, it left a small lexical influence on English. Furthermore Irish words or phrases are commonly used as code-switches called *cúpla focal* and provide a source to name organizations. Irish people are proud of their Celtic past, but political and economic reasons pushed the Irish language out of the people’s mind for more than 200 years. Irish and English itself were influenced from different invaders, making language contact situations and language changes part of both languages. Lexical items such as *banshee, loch, mac, shamrock* and *whiskey* seem quite known in their Celtic heritage words whereas *to bother, boycott, clan, hooligan, slogan* and *trousers* are not. All young people living in Ireland learn Irish in school, but few have to use it on a daily basis or see any advantage in speaking it. Organizations to maintain or rescue the language by the use of school education came too late to change the vernacular of the whole population. Today the main focus to maintain the language lies on a micro level, by television and new media over the internet.

Language change is a natural process, which should not be connected in a negative way, happening as a result of contact of different cultures. Although language changes were determined through political leadership, in Ireland poverty and the lack of economic development made the Irish community conscious about a necessary change for developing the future generations. English gave the only possibility for work and social progress. Borrowing of English words happened at different times, some being properly integrated into the Irish language with Irish spelling and pronunciation and some simply taken over in their English spelling. The languages were so highly mixed at some point that it was unclear if people spoke English or Irish as their mother tongue. As mentioned in the thesis, bilingualism in Ireland should be accepted and might even be creating a new Irish identity, as its use in comedy and radio shows.

The English and the Irish language were in contact for a long period, ever since England set up a colony in Ireland in the 12th century. Although English and Irish are
rooted in different language groups, this thesis showed lexical similarities by giving examples of borrowing and code-switches from the past to the present.
6. Works cited


