

This paper, which was written for teaching purposes, is a compilation of information on modern Celtic languages and the specific examples of their most prominent morphological and syntactic features. The information and examples were taken from the materials cited underneath each section.

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Modern Celtic Languages

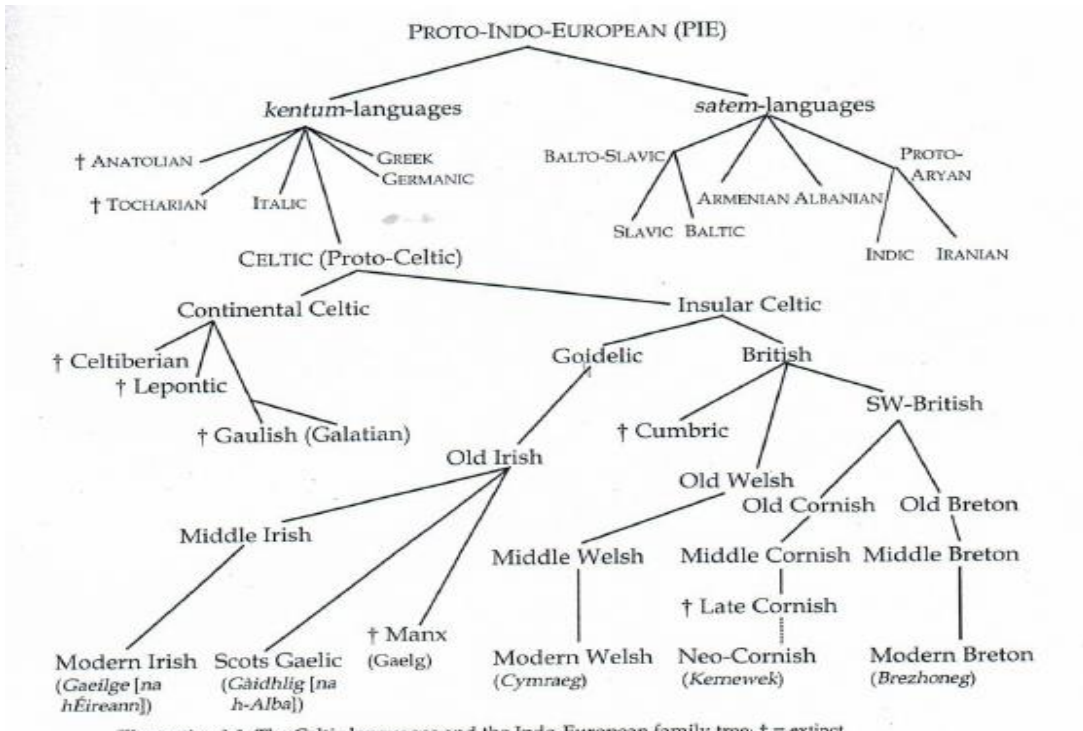
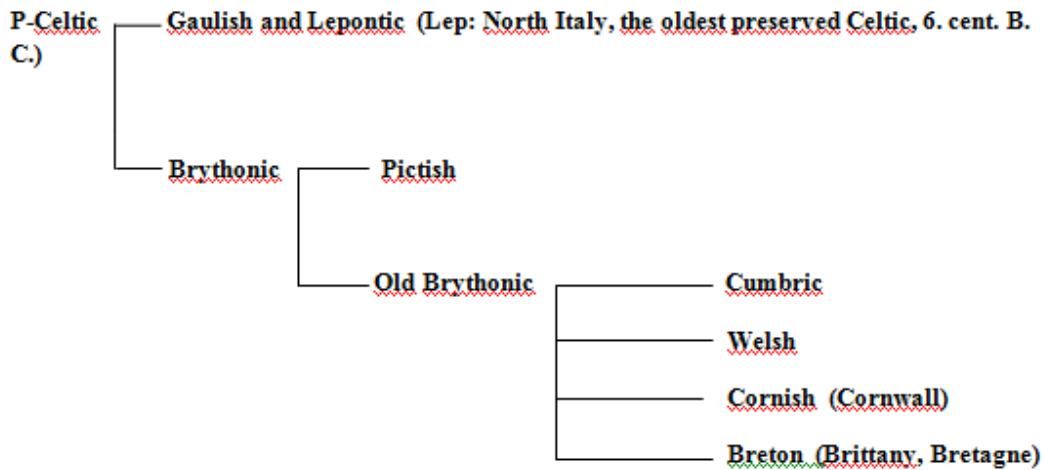
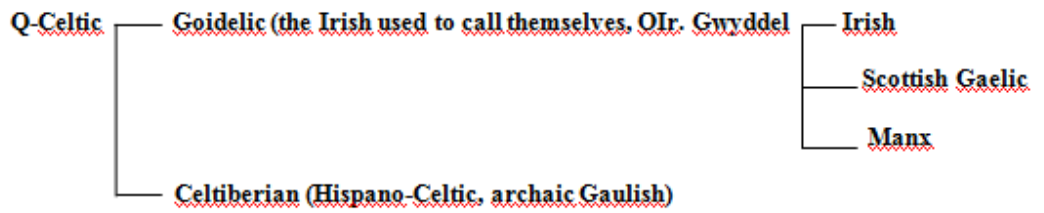
Celtic languages is a group of languages which belongs amongst the Indo-European language family.

Celtic languages belong to a large group of languages known as Centum languages, because the number “hundred” was in old Latin pronounced as[k]- thus the label Centum [kentum], as opposed to Satem languages called after the way “hundred”- *satem* [satəm] was pronounced in the Avestan language.

We are going to divide the Celtic languages into P-Celtic and Q- Celtic. This classification is based on the different development of IE. **k*”, which was kept amongst the **Q-Celtic** languages and changed to p amongst the **P-Celtic** languages. This traditional model of Celtic languages classification is supported by H. Pedersen and K.H. Schmidt.

P- Celtic languages correspond with Brittonic languages and from the modern, still used languages include Welsh, Breton and Cornish.

Q- Celtic languages correspond with Goidelic languages and include Irish, Scottish Gaelic and Manx.



The Brittonic Languages

Breton Language

The peninsula **Armorica** (Gaulish for “*place by the sea*”, started to be called Bretagne after the colonization of the British Celts coming from southeast England in between the **5th and 7th centuries** (thanks to the immigration of Anglo-Saxon tribes to Britain). The name **Brez(h)oneg**. Today E. *Brittany*, F. *Bretagne* clearly signifies the Celtic origin of the name.

(Ad. Václav Blažek, *Keltské Jazyk*)

Old Breton: the language flourished the most in the **9th century**. Most of the texts are religious in nature.

Middle Breton: (12-17 cent.) The area in which Breton was spoken shrank by almost one half. Most of the preserved texts are translations of religious texts from Latin and French. In the 12. cent., Breton was ceased to be used by the gentry, which caused its continuous decline.

Modern Breton: 1659 – the first book of Breton grammar and dictionary was published.

Modern Breton is composed of the most diverse dialects of any modern Celtic language. Nowadays, only the western part of the area is Breton-speaking (**Basse Bretagne**) and even here it is restricted to the countryside. Two-fifths of the ordinary vocabulary is of French origin. Today, it is estimated that 200 000 people use Breton on daily basis.

(Taken from Fortson, *Indo-European Linguistics*, 2010, p. 332)

Standard language and orthography

There are two standard languages as dialectal varieties of Breton- the Léon and Haut-Vannetais. The Léon dialect has a much greater importance and is taken as standard Breton. The situation of a small country as Brittany to have two main dialects (even referred to as two standard languages) is for its great dialectal diversity in general. These two dialects differ from each other more than any other dialects within the Breton speaking spectrum of dialects, and have rather particular traits. While Léon was chosen for its archaic nature, Vannetais for its literary tradition. This represents a problem because the majority of native Breton speakers fail to understand any of the standard language dialect.

Another specific feature of Breton is its multiple orthographies. At the moment, there are used four orthographical systems for standard Breton and two for Vannetais. The orthographies represent not only different ways of dealing with assimilation of the main dialects, but also political ideas that stood behind the decisions. Therefore the questions of orthography can present a very sensitive problem. The most frequently used orthography, and the orthography used in this compilation is so called *orthographe unifiée* (unified orthography) and it is known as *zedachek*.

The Breton alphabet (lizherenneg ar brezhoneg)

A a	B b	Ch ch	C'h c'h	D d	E e	F f	G g	H h
a	be	che	ec'h	de	e	ef	ge	hach
I i	J j	K k	L l	M m	N n	O o	P p	R r
i	je	ke	el	em	en	o	pe	er
S s or Sh	T t	U u	V v	W w	Y y	Z z or Zh		
es	te	u	ve	we	ye	zed		

Pronunciation

Vowels & diphthongs

a	ai	e	ei	eu	i	o	ou	u
[a/a]	[ai]	[ɛ/e]	[ei]	[ø/œ]	[i]	[ɔ/o]	[u]	[y]

Consonants

b	ch	c'h	d	f	g	gn	gw/gou	h
[b/p]	[ʃ]	[x/y]	[d/ð]	[f]	[g]	[ɲ]	[g ^w]	[h]
j	k	kw	l	lh	m	n	p	r
[ʒ]	[k]	[k ^w]	[l]	[ʎ]	[m]	[n]	[p]	[r/r̥/ɾ]
s	t	v	w	y	z	zh		
[s]	[t]	[v]	[w]	[j]	[z]	[z/h/ð]		

Pronunciation notes:

Long e- [œ:] is sometimes written as ê

Nasality is shown by placing ñ after the vowel letter- añ - [ã]

i is usually pronounced as [i], but before a vowel, it is generally [j]- *livioù*[livju] “colour”

o usually corresponds with [o], but before a vowel, it is almost always [w]- *c`hoar*[xwa:r] “sister”.

sh is pronounced [s] and **zh** is pronounced [z]

The grave accent placed on the **u** – **ù** indicates the plural ending and its pronunciation can vary according to the spoken dialect. Geographically ranging from Northwest Leon to Southeast Gwened- [u] [o] [ø] [ow] [aw] [aʏ] or [əʏ]

Mutations of initial consonants

The initial consonant of a word can change in Breton just like in all other modern Celtic languages. The mutations are divided into four groups: hard, spirant, soft and mixed.

Unmutated	Soft	Spirant	Hard	Mixed
<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>f</i>		
<i>t</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>z</i>		
<i>k</i>	<i>g</i>	<i>c'h</i>		
<i>b</i>	<i>v</i>		<i>p</i>	<i>v</i>
<i>d</i>	<i>z</i>		<i>t</i>	<i>t</i>
<i>g</i>	<i>c'h</i>		<i>k</i>	<i>c'h</i>
<i>gw</i>	<i>w</i>		<i>kw</i>	<i>w</i>
<i>m</i>	<i>v</i>			<i>v</i>

The soft mutation is the most common and is applied after many prepositions (eg. *da* “at, to, for”, *en*, *ur* “while, by”, *war* “on”, *aba* “since”), verbal particles (eg. *a*, *ra*, *ez*), negative particles (eg. *na*, *ne*), numbers (*daou* “two” (masc.), *div* “two” (fem.)), possessive pronouns (eg. *da* “yours (thy)”) etc.

Examples might be: *kador* “chair”- *da gador* “your chair”; *penn* “head”- *da benn* “your head”; *gwele* “bed”- *da wele* “your bed”.

The spirant mutation occurs after some numbers (*nav* “nine”, *peder* “four” (fem.), *pevar* “four” (masc.), *teir* “three” (fem.), *tri* “three” (masc.)) and after some possessive pronouns (*he* “her”, *o* “their”, *va* “my”).

Like for instance *kador* “chair”- *va c'hador* “my chair”; *penn* “head”- *va fenn* “my head”.

The hard mutation occurs after following words: *az*, *ez*, *z* “you, thee”, *ez* “in your, in thy”, *da z* “to your, to thy”, *ho* “your”.

Examples can be: *glin* “knee”- *ho klin* “your knee”; *breur* “brother”- *ho preur* “your brother”.

The mixed mutations are applied after the following words: *e*- verbal article, *ma* “if”, *o*- verbal particle.

For example: *gwelout* “to see”- *o welout* “seeing”, *bevañ* “to live”- *o vevañ* “living”.

There are also mutations in compound words in cases when a prefix causes the root consonant to undergo a soft mutation eg.: *morvleiz* “shark” from *mor* “sea” and “*bleiz*” “wolf”.

Morphology

For historical and literal reasons (Breton was for many centuries considered a language of uneducated peasants and it almost completely lacks any classical literature), Breton has the greatest number of loanwords among all the modern Celtic languages. They are especially of Latin and French origin. It is estimated that about two-fifths of everyday Breton consists of French loanwords. These might not be always obvious, like for example *brav* “beautiful” from French *brave* “brave, valiant”; *kas* “to send” from French *chaser* “to hunt”.

The noun

The gender

The distinction animate/inanimate finds a marginal expression in plural forms- some plural suffixes are used predominantly for animate beings- *-ed*, *-ien*, *-on*, *-i*, *-iz*.

Breton has only two genders, which means that every noun is either masculine or feminine. In animate beings grammatical gender usually coincides with the sex. The numerals 2, 3 and 4 have their respective forms of masculine and feminine (ad. numerals). The noun *tra* “thing” cannot be placed into any gender group. However, it combines with the masculine forms of numerals, but undergoes feminine forms of initial mutations. This is the only word considered neuter.

In this respect, masculine nouns refer to male human beings, male animals and most objects. In particular, there is a vast majority of nouns ending with *-adur* and abstract nouns with suffixes *-der* and *-erezh*.

Feminine nouns are assigned to female human beings, female animals, most geographical nouns (countries, towns, rivers) and some objects ending with *-ez*, *-ezh*, *-enn*, *-ell*, *-ded*, and abstract nouns with a suffix *-i*.

In order to create some feminine versions of nouns, a feminine suffix *-ez* can be added to a masculine noun: eg. *ki* “dog”- *kiez* “bitch”.

For certain animals, the sex is specified with the aid of designating words *tad* “father” or *mamm* “mother”. They are placed before the noun. Thus *un tad golvan* “a male sparrow”

In some cases, feminine gender is expressed by a completely different word than the masculine: *tad* “father” - *mamm* “mother”; *eontr* “uncle”- *moereb* “aunt”; *tarv* “bull”- *buoc’h* “cow”.

Number

The Breton distinguishes three numbers: singular, plural and dual.

The plural is generally formed by adding *-où* or *-ioù* to nouns referring to objects: *lenn* “lake”- *lennoù* “lakes”; *taol* “table”- *taolioù* “tables”, or by adding *-ed* while referring to

persons, animals and trees: *merc'h* “girl”- *merc'hed* “girls”; *pesk* “fish”- *pesked* “fish pl.”; *avalenn* “apple tree”- *avalenned* “apple trees”.

The plural nouns can be also marked with other suffixes like: **-i, -ier, -ien, -on, -ez, -en**. The root vowel of the singular form might be changed after adding them, like in following examples: *bran* “crow”- *brini* “crows”; *gad* “hare”- *gedon* “hares”; *ti* “house”- *tiez* “houses”. In some cases, the singular vowel is sufficient for making the plural: *dant* “tooth”- *dent* “teeth”.

Certain nouns in Breton refer to a group of objects or to a class of objects and therefore classify as collective nouns. In these cases, if we want to specify that we mean only one individual from this group, we use the ending **-enn**: *geot* “herb”- *geotenn* “a sprig of herb, a blade of grass”; *kouevr* “copper”- *kouevrenn* “a piece of copper”, *merien* “ants”- *merienenn* “ant”; *blev* “hair col.”- *blevenn* “a hair”.

The dual occurs in nouns that refer to parts of bodies and pieces of clothing which occur in pairs. It is usually formed with a prefix *daou-* in masculine nouns, and with a prefix *div-* or *di-* in the case of nouns assigned to the feminine gender: *lagad* “eye” (masc.)- *daoulagad* “eyes”; *dorn* “hand” (masc.)- *daouarn* “hands”; *bronn* “female breast” (fem.)- *divronn* “female breasts”.

In Breton, like in some other Celtic languages, we can encounter so called double plurals. These double plurals allow the language to describe very subtle differences in meanings. These double plurals are formed with the suffix **-eier**: *parkoù* “fields”- *parkeier* “open country, countryside”; *edoù* “flour”- *edeier* “cereals”. And thus: *bragez* “one leg of trousers”- *bragoù* “a pair of trousers”- *brageier* “trousers”.

The personal pronoun

The personal pronoun in Breton takes upon itself a different form depending whether it is a subject or an object in a sentence.

me	I	va, 'm	me
te	you (sg.- thou)	da, 'z'	you (sg. thee)
eñ	he	e, hen	him
hi	she	he	her
ni	we	hol, hon, hor	us
c'hwi	you (pl.)	ho, hoc'h	you (pl.)
i, int	they	o	them

When the personal pronoun refers to an object in the sentence, for the first two persons singular, **va** and **da** are used before verbal nouns, past participles and imperatives, while **'m** and **'z** are used before all other verbal forms and after the preposition **da** “to, for” and negative **ne**.

Thus:

va gwelet en deus.

my seen he-has: "He has seen me."

ne 'z karan ket- "I don't love you"

da 'm, da 'z- "to me, for you".

In the first person plural: **hol**, **hon** and **hor** have the same pattern of usage as the articles **al**, **an** and **dar**. And so, **hol** is used before **l-**; **hon** before initial consonants **n-**, **d-**, **t-**, **h-** and before vowels, and **hor** in other cases.

In the second person plural, **ho** is used before consonants, while **hoc'h** before vowels.

When a pronoun is used in isolation, it always takes the subject form, even when logically, we would consider it a direct object of the verb: *Piv a welit? Eñ.* "Who do you see? Him."

As in some other European languages, we can use more polite "formal" version when addressing a single person, or a more familiar version. In the case of Breton, the use of **te** corresponds with the usage of French **tu**, while **c'hwir** represents French **vous**. There are, however, some places in central and south coastal Brittany, where **te** has disappeared from usage.

Interrogatives: some of the most common interrogatives include *piv* "who?"; *pet* "how many?", while most other interrogatives are compounds with *pe* "which, what?": *petra* "what?"; *pegoulz* "when?"; *perak* "why?".

The Adjective

The qualifying adjectives are usually unchanging regarding the number or gender. There are however some interesting exceptions: *kaezh* "poor" sometimes appears in its plural version *keizh*: *tud keizh* "poor people". The adjective "drunk" *mez 'v* has a feminine form *mez 'vez*. So the sentence "Peter was drunk, his wife was drunk" would be: *Per a oa mez 'v, e wreg a oa mez 'vez*.

The attributive adjectives usually follow the noun:

un den gwan: "a weak person"

un ti bihan: "a little house"

dour fresk: "fresh water"

There are a few exceptions which may precede the noun. These might be for example adjectives *gwall* "bad", *gwir* "true", *hir* "long", *berr* "short", *kaezh* "poor".

ur c'haezh paotr "a poor boy"

ur wir garantez ‘a true love’

gwall amzer ‘bad weather’

Sometimes, when adjectives precede a noun, it gives the noun a slightly different meaning. It is usually in a pejorative sense:

un ti kozh ‘an old house’

ur c’hozh ti ‘a miserable house’

There might be also certain fixed expressions, when an adjective, normally following a noun stands before it:

un den fall ‘a bad man’

fall wad ‘bad mood’

Any adjective can be made into a diminutive form by adding the suffix *-ik*. In the case the adjective ends in one of the consonants *-p*, *-t*, *-k* or *-s*, which are preceded by a vowel, the consonant softens to *-b-*, *-d-*, *-g-*, or *-z-* respectively: *bihan* ‘small’- *bihanik*; *bras* ‘large’- *brazik*.

Adjectives can make two additional degrees of comparison- comparative and superlative. This is being done by suffixation, which may cause some minor changes in the morphological stem. To create comparative, a suffix *-oc’h* is added, and *-añ* for superlative.

Positive (stem)	Comparative	Superlative
<i>brav</i> ‘nice, pretty’	<i>bravoc’h</i>	<i>bravañ</i>
<i>kriz</i> ‘cruel, rude’	<i>krisoc’h</i>	<i>krisañ</i>
<i>gleb</i> ‘wet’	<i>glepoc’h</i>	<i>glepañ</i>

There are a few irregular comparatives and superlatives:

Positive (stem)	Comparative	Superlative
<i>mat</i> ‘good’	<i>gwelloc’h</i>	<i>gwellañ</i>
<i>fall</i> ‘bad’	<i>gwashoc’h</i>	<i>gwashañ</i>
<i>mui</i> ‘a lot’; <i>kalz</i> ‘much’	<i>muioc’h</i> ‘more’	<i>muiañ</i> ‘most’
<i>kent</i> ‘the first’	<i>kentoc’h</i> ‘before, sooner’	<i>kentañ</i>

The Numerals

The Breton system of numerals combines the decimal system based on the number ten- *dek* with the system based on the number twenty- *ugent* (vigesimal system).

The numbers “two”, “three” and “four” have distinguished masculine and feminine forms, as well as combinations of numbers finishing with these (22-24 etc.), and agree with the gender of the counted noun.

“Two”: masculine *daou*; feminine *div*: *daou baotr*, *div blac'h* “two boys, two girls”; “Three”: masculine *tri*; feminine *teir*: *tri mab*, *teir merc'h* “three sons, three daughters”; “Four”: masculine *pevar*; feminine *peder*: *pevar mevel*, *peder mitezh* “four waiters, four waitresses”.

	Cardinal numbers		Ordinal numbers
1	unan	1st	kentañ, unanvet
2	daou (m), div (f)	2nd	eil, eilvet
3	tri (m), teir (f)	3rd	trede, trivet (m) teirvet (f)
4	pevar (m), peder (f)	4 th	pevare, pevarvet (m) pedervet (f)
5	pemp	5 th	pemp(v)et
6	c'hwec'h	6 th	c'hwec'hvet
7	seizh	7 th	seizhvet
8	eizh	8 th	eizhvet
9	nav	9 th	navet
10	dek	10 th	deket
11	unnek	11 th	unnekvet
12	daouzek	12 th	daouzekvet
13	trizek	13 th	trizekvet
14	pevarzek	14 th	pevarzekvet
15	pemzek	15 th	pemzekvet
16	c'hwezek	16 th	c'hwezekvet
17	seitek	17 th	seitekvet
18	triwec'h	18 th	triwec'hvet
19	naontek	19 th	naontekvet
20	ugent	20 th	ugentvet
21	unan warn-ugent	21 st	unanvet warn-ugent
22	daou warn-ugent	22 nd	eilvet warn-ugent
30	tregont	30 th	tregont
31	unan ha tregont	31 st	unan ha tregont
32	daou ha tregont	32 nd	daou ha tregont
40	daou-ugent	40 th	daou-ugentvet
50	hanter-kant	50 th	hanter-kantvet
60	tri-ugent	60 th	tri-ugentvet
70	dek ha tri-ugent	70 th	deket ha tri-ugent
80	pevar-ugent	80 th	pevar-ugentvet
90	dek ha pevar-ugent	90 th	deket ha pevar-ugent
100	kant	100 th	kantvet

101	unan ha kant	101 st	unanvet ha kant
110	dek ha kant	110 th	dekvvet ha kant
120	c'hwec'h-ugent	120 th	c'hwec'h-ugentvet
140	seizh-ugent	140 th	seizh-ugentvet
150	kant hanter-kant	150 th	kant hanter-kantvet
200	daou c'hant	200 th	daou c'hanvet
1000	mil	1000 th	milvet

The numbers 11-19 are combinations of *dek* “ten” (except of 18). For 21-29 *warn* “on” is the linking element used to combine the tens and units, whereas the tens from 30 on use *ha* “and”. The number “fifty” literary means “half-hundred”: *hanter-kant*.

After a number, the noun keeps its singular form: *ugent aval* “twenty apples”. This changes in the number is followed by the preposition *a* “of”: *ugent a avaloù* “twenty of apples”.

When a compound number contains the linking *war* (for twenties) or *ha* (from thirties on), the noun that is counted takes place before these words: *daou zen warn-ugent* “twenty-two people”; *tri den ha tregont* “thirty-three people”.

Ordinal numbers are formed regularly, by adding the suffix *-vet*. However, the first four numbers have irregular forms. Like in English, the ordinal numbers are usually preceded by the definite article: *an eil* “the second”; *ar pempet* “the fifth”.

The Verbs

The verbal noun (infinitive) is usually formed from the stem by adding a suffix. Sometimes the suffix might have zero value. In Breton, there are many verbal-noun endings, and there are no morphological rules which would help to predict the possible suffix complementing the given verb stem. The most common suffix is *-añ*, but there are others like *-iñ*, *-at*, *-al*, *-out*, *-a*, *-et*, *-el*, *-ek*, *-ezh*, *-er*, *-en*, *-n* and a zero suffix.

Examples:

Stem	Verbal noun	
<i>mal-</i>	<i>malañ</i>	“to grind”
<i>klemm-</i>	<i>klemm</i>	“to complain”
<i>nij-</i>	<i>nijal</i>	“to fly”
<i>marv-</i>	<i>mervel</i>	“to die”
<i>red-</i>	<i>redek</i>	“to run”

Modern Breton language distinguishes six tenses: present, future, preterite, imperfect, conditional and imperative. The characteristic suffix markers are:

Present: zero suffix

Future: *-o*

Preterite: *-j*

Imperfect: *-e*

Conditional: *-fe, -je*

Imperative: zero

In modern Breton, the use of the preterite tense (comparable to English past simple) is limited to the literary language. In the spoken language, this tense was replaced by the perfect.

There are two conditionals that are sometimes referred to as present conditional and past conditional.

Breton has only one verbal conjugation which can be shown on the regular verb *skrivañ* “to write”.

Regular verb: *skrivañ* “to write”

Verbal noun: *skrivañ* “to write”; present participle: *o skrivañ* “writing”; verbal adjective *skrivet* “sown”.

		Present	Imperfect	Preterite
Verbal noun: <i>skrivañ</i> “to write”	1st sg.	skrivan	skriven	skrivis
	2nd sg.	skrivez	skrives	skrivjout
Present participle: <i>o skrivañ</i> “writing”	3rd sg. (fem. in parentheses)	skriv	skrive	skrivas
	1st pl.	skrivomp	skrivemp	skrivjomp
Verbal adjectives <i>skrivet</i> “sown”	2nd pl.	skrivit	skrivec’h	skrivjoc’h
	3rd pl.	skrivont	skrivent	skrivjont
	Impersonal passive form	skriver	skrived	skrivjod
	Imperative	Future	Present Conditional	Past Conditional
1 st sg.	-	skrivin	skrivfen	skrivjen
2 nd sg.	skriv	skrivi	skrivfes	skrivjes
3 rd sg. (fem. in	skrivet	skrivo	skrivfe	skrivje

parentheses)				
1 st pl.	skrivomp	skrivimp	skrivfemp	skrivjemp
2 nd pl.	skrivit	skrivot	skrivfec'h	skrivjec'h
3 rd pl.	skrivent	skrivint	skrivfent	skrivjent
Impersonal passive form	-	skrivor	skrivfed	skrivjed

There are only five verbs in Breton which are considered irregular: *bez'añ* “to be”; *endevout* “to have”; *gouzout* “to know”, *mont* “to go” and *ober* “to do”. Some of them are conjugated below.

Irregular verb: *bez'añ* “to be”

		Present	Imperfect	Preterite
Verbal noun: <i>bez'añ</i> “to be”	1st sg.	on	oan	boen
	2nd sg.	out	oas	boes
Present participle: <i>o vez'añ</i> “being”	3rd sg. (fem. in parentheses)	zo, eo, eus	oa	boe
	1st pl.	omp	oamp	boemp
Verbal adjective <i>bet</i> “been”	2nd pl.	oc'h	oac'h	boec'h
	3rd pl.	int	oant	boent
	Impersonal passive form	oar, eur	oad	boed
	Imperative	Future	Present Conditional	Past Conditional
1 st sg.	-	bin, bez'in	befen	bijen
2 nd sg.	bez	bi, bez'i	befes	bijes
3 rd sg. (fem. in parentheses)	bezet	bo, bez'o	befe	bije
1 st pl.	bezomp	bimt, bez'imp	befemp	bijemp
2 nd pl.	bezit	biot, bez'ot	befec'h	bijec'h
3 rd pl.	bezent	bint, bez'int	befent	bijent
Impersonal passive form	-	bior, bez'or	befed	bijed

In the third person singular of a present, there are three forms of *bez'añ*: *zo*, *eo* *eus*. *Zo* is used in the affirmative, when the subject comes before the verb: *me a zo* “I am”. *Eo* is used in other cases, eg.: *brav eo* “It’s nice.” *Eus* is used as “there is, there are”: *eno ez' eus tud* “there are people there.”

bez'añ “to be”: habitual and locative forms

Habitual forms		Locative forms	
Present	Imperfect	Present	Imperfect
beza'n	bezen	emaon	edon
beze'z	bezes	emaout	edos
bez'	beze	emañ	edo
bez'omp	bezemp	emaomp	edomp
bez'it	bezec'h	emaoc'h	edoc'h
bez'ont	bezent	emaint	edont
bez'er	bezed	emeur	edod

The habitual forms, in present and imperfect tenses, express habitualness, long duration or the frequent repetition of the action. Except of the verb *bez'añ* “to be”, also the verb *endevout* “to have” possess these forms: *klañv e vez' bep sizhun* “he is sick every week”.

The verb *bez'añ* “to be” also has special locative present and imperfect forms to express location or a momentary situation: *emañ e Brest* “he is in Brest”; *edo o vervel* “he was dying”.

Thus for example: habitual- *beza'n* “I am usually”, *bezen* “I used to be” and situational- *emaon* “I am located”, *edon* “I was located”.

Irregular verb: *endevout* or *kaout* “to have”

		Present	Imperfect	Preterite
Verbal noun: <i>endevout</i> or <i>kaout</i> “to have”	1st sg.	am eus	am boa	am boe
	2nd sg.	ac'h eus	az poa	az poe
Present participle: <i>o kaout</i> “having”	3rd sg. (fem. in parentheses)	en dues (he eus)	en doa (he doa)	en doe (he doe)
	1st pl.	hon eus	hor boa	hor boe
	2nd pl.	hoc'h eus	ho poa	ho poe
	3rd pl.	o deus	o doa	o doe
	Impersonal passive form	ez eus	e oa	e voe
	Imperative	Future	Present Conditional	Past Conditional
1 st sg.	am bez'et	am bo	am befe	am bije
2 nd sg.	az' pez'	az' po	az' pefe	az' pije
3 rd sg. (fem. in parentheses)	en devez'et (he devezet)	en devo (he devo)	en defe (he defe)	en dije (he dije)
1 st pl.	hor bez'et	hor bo	Hor befe	hor bije
2 nd pl.	ho pez'et	ho po	ho pefe	ho pije
3 rd pl.	o devez'et	o devo	o defe	o dije
Impersonal passive form	-	e vo	e vefe	e vije

Habitual forms	
Present	Imperfect
am be'z	am beze
az' pez'	az' peze
en devez' (he devez')	an deveze (he deveze)
hor bez'	hor beze
ho pez'	ho peze
o devez'	o deveze
e vez	e veze

Irregular verb: *mont* “to go”

		Present	Imperfect	Preterite
Verbal noun: <i>mont</i> “to go”	1st sg.	an	aen	is
	2nd sg.	ez	aes	ejout
Present participle: <i>o vont</i> “going”	3rd sg. (fem. in parentheses)	a, ya	ae, yae	eas, yas
	1st pl.	eomp	aemp	ejomp
Verbal adjective <i>aet</i> “gone”	2nd pl.	it	aec'h	ejoc'h
	3rd pl.	eont	aent	ejont
	Impersonal passive form	eer	aed	ejod
	Imperative	Future	Present Conditional	Past Conditional
1 st sg.	-	in	afen	ajen
2 nd sg.	a, kae	i	afes	ajes
3 rd sg. (fem. in parentheses)	aet	ay, aio, yelo	afe, yafe	aje, yaje
1 st pl.	eomp, deomp	aimp	afemp	ajemp
2 nd pl.	it, kit	eot	afec'h	ajec'h
3 rd pl.	aent	aint	afent	ajent
Impersonal passive form	-	eor	afed	ajed

Irregular verb: *ober* “to do”

		Present	Imperfect	Preterite
Verbal noun: <i>ober</i> “to do”	1st sg.	gran	graen	gris
	2nd sg.	grez	graes	grejout
Present participle:	3rd sg. (fem.)	gra	grae	greas, geure

<i>o' ober</i> “doing”	in parentheses)			
	1st pl.	greomp	graemp	grejomp
Verbal adjective <i>graet</i> “done”	2nd pl.	grit	graec'h	grejoc'h
	3rd pl.	greont	graent	grejont
	Impersonal passive form	greer	graed	grejod
	Imperative	Future	Present Conditional	Past Conditional
1 st sg.	-	grin	grafen	grajen
2 nd sg.	gra	gri	grafes	grajes
3 rd sg. (fem. in parentheses)	graet	gray, graio	grafe	graje
1 st pl.	greomp	graimp	grafemp	grajemp
2 nd pl.	grit	greot	grafec'h	grajec'h
3 rd pl.	graent	graint	grafent	grajent
Impersonal passive form	-	greor	grafed	grajed

In Breton, there are verbal particles. The verb is generally preceded by such article, except of in the case of a verbal noun and the imperative. This particle is *a* if the verb is preceded by its subject or a direct object: *me a han* “I am sowing”, *tud a welan* “I see people”, or by *e* (*e'z* or *ec'h* if followed by a vowel) if the verb is preceded by an indirect object or by an adverb: *eviti e labour* “he was working for her”, *neuze ez' eas kuit* “then he left”.

Negation: is formed by adding words *ne...ket* (just like in French *ne...pas*). The negated verb is placed in between them: *ne skrivan ket* “I do not write”. In compound tenses, the *ne...ket* surrounds the auxiliary: *ne voe ket lazhet* “he was not killed”.

The compound tenses and auxiliaries

Breton is the only modern language with compound tenses which correlate with perfect, pluperfect, future perfect, and present and past conditional. The compound tenses are formed with the present, imperfect and future auxiliary verbs *kaout* or *endevout* “to have” or *bez'añ* “to be” followed by past participle of the main verb. Most verbs pair with *kaout/endevout* “to have”, the verbs that take *bez'añ* “to be” usually correspond to those in French with for example verbs of motion like *mont* “to go” or *dont* “to come” and intransitive verbs.

Here are some examples with the verb *kavout* “to find” and the auxiliary *endeavour* “to have”:

Perfect	<i>kavet en deus</i>	“he has found”
Pluperfect	<i>kavet en doa</i>	“he had found”
Past Perfect	<i>kavet en doe</i>	“he had found”
Future Perfect	<i>kavet en devo</i>	“he will have found”
Pres. Conditional	<i>kavet en defe</i>	“he would have found”
Past Conditional	<i>kavet en dije</i>	“he would have found”

Here is a verb of motion *kouezhañ* “to fall” with its auxiliary *bez 'añ* “to be”:

Perfect	<i>kouezhet eo</i>	“he has fallen”
Pluperfect	<i>kouezhet e oa</i>	“he had fallen”
Past Perfect	<i>kouezhet e voe</i>	“he had fallen”
Future Perfect	<i>kouezhet e vo</i>	“he will have fallen”
Pres. Conditional	<i>kouezhet e vefe</i>	“he would have fallen”
Past Conditional	<i>kouezhet e vije</i>	“he would have fallen”

In a sentence, the inflected auxiliary may precede or follow the past participle:

me am eus debret or *debret em eus* “I have eaten”

te az peus debret or *debret ez peus* “you (sg.) have eaten”

eñen deus debret or *debret en deus* “he has eaten”

hi he deaus debret or *debret he deus* “she has eaten”

me am boa debret or *debret em boa* “I had eaten”

The Adverbs

Strictly speaking, adverbs in Breton don't form a separate morphological class not differing from adjectives:

un det mat “a good man”

labourat a ra mat “he/she works well”

Anyway, we can divide adverbs into temporal, locative, quantitative like: *atav* “always”, *eno* “there”, *kalz* “much” etc.

An adverb connected to an adjective or a past participle is usually connected to it with a hyphen: *klañv-fall* “gravely ill”.

The Prepositions

The most common prepositions combine with the personal pronouns like for example: *evit* “for”- *evito* “for her”. In a consequence, prepositions are conjugated:

<i>dindan</i> “under”; stem+ending	<i>davet</i> “towards to”; stem –t > d in 1,2 endings
<i>dindanon</i>	<i>davedon</i>
<i>dindanout</i>	<i>davedot</i>
<i>dindanañ</i>	<i>davedañ</i>
<i>dindani</i>	<i>daveti</i>
<i>dindanomp</i>	<i>davedomp</i>
<i>dindanoc`h</i>	<i>davedoc`h</i>
<i>dindano/dindane</i>	<i>daveto/davede</i>
others: <i>dreist</i> “over” <i>hervez</i> “according to”	Others: <i>eget</i> “than” <i>evit</i> “for”, in order to” <i>nemet</i> “but, except”

The Conjunctions

The principal conjunctions are: *ha* “and” which changes to *hag* before a vowel, *pe* “or”, *na* “nor” (which becomes *nag* before a vowel), *hogen*, *met* “but”, *rak* “because, for”, *peogwir* “because”, *ma* “that, if”, *mar* “if”, *pa* “when, if, because”.

A conjunction is usually connected to the verb which follows by the verbal article *e*: *hag e kouezhas* “and he fell”, *peogwir e varvas* “because he died”.

Syntax

The Breton syntax is very free, and in case that all the rules observing verbal particles and conjugations are observed, words can be usually placed in the sentence in any order.

Interrogation phrases

Interrogative phrases don't differ from positive statements, except of adding (in some) an interrogative word. In the spoken language, a question is distinguished by intonation:

dont a rit “you come”; *dont a rit?* “are you coming?”

In the written, especially literary language, an interrogative particle *ha* or *daoust ha* can be placed in front of the affirmative sentence. There are no further changes.

(daoust) ha chom ganeomp a reot? “Will you (pl) stay with us?”

INTER. stay with-us VPT you will do?

If the question has an interrogative word, this is placed at the beginning:

piv a zo aze?

who VPT is there?

pet eur eo?

how-many hours is?

“What’s the time?”

Articles

Breton has a definite and indefinite article, which makes it the only surviving Celtic language with an indefinite article. Both articles always precede the noun and don’t change in respect to gender or number. The variations depend on the initial phoneme of the following word:

Definite article: *al, an, ar*

Indefinite article: *ul, un, ur*.

The *l-forms* are used before *l*, the *n-forms* before *t, d, n, h* or a vowel and the *r-forms* in all other cases:

al loar “the moon”

ar pri “the mud”

an tad “the father”

ur vro “a country”

un den “a man”

ar broioù “the countries”

When a noun is qualified by another following noun, the definite article is not applied: *ti an tad* “the house of the father”; *paotr e varc’h du* “the boy on the black horse”, as well as certain nouns like for example *kêr* “town” and the names of meals (very similar situation we can see in English): *tostaat ouzh kêr* “come into town”; *goude koan* “after supper”. The definite article is also omitted before a comparative or superlative preceding a noun: *brasoc’h tie o c’hoazh* “it is still a larger house”; *kentañ ti a welis* “the first house which I saw”. Proper names, apart from names of some rivers, mountains and towns don’t take the definite article neither: *Breizh* “Brittany”, *Europa* “Europe”. However, as mentioned above, some place names are exceptions: *an Elorn* “The Elorn”, *an Alpoù* “the Alps”.

Demonstratives

There are three degrees of demonstratives in Breton according the distance of the object they refer to from the closest to the furthest away (this, that and that over there). They are formed by the definite article and another particle placed after the noun: *an den-mañ* “this person”, *an den-se* “that person”, *an den-hont* “that person over there”. If the noun is followed by an adjective, the particle is linked to the adjective: *an den fall-se* “that evil person”.

“This”- *an dra-mañ*: literary “this thing”

“That”- *an dra-se*

“That over there”- *an dra-hont*

The possessive

The possessive adjectives have the same forms as the direct object personal pronouns. Here we can see them with the respective mutations they cause to the followed noun:

<i>va zi</i> “my house” (spirant mutation)
<i>da di</i> “your house” (lenition)
<i>e di</i> “his house” (lenition)
<i>he zi</i> “her house” (spirant mutation, <i>hec’h</i> before vowel)
<i>hon ti</i> “our house” (<i>k</i> changes to <i>c’h</i>)
<i>ho ti</i> “your house” (provection, <i>hoc’h</i> before vowel)
<i>o zi</i> “their house” (spirant mutation)

Breton possessive adjectives don’t depend on the number or the gender of the following noun. Just as in English, the third person singular agrees with the gender of the possessor.

The genitive

A noun can stand in a genitive relation to another noun. In many cases, possession is expressed in this way. If the genitive is definite, the noun it precedes is used without an article: *tog Anna* “Anna’s hat, the hat of Anna”; *marc’h ar milliner* “the horse of the miller”; *bro va zad* “the country of my father”; *dor an ti* “the door of the house”. If the genitive object is indefinite, it simply follows the noun before it and the noun keeps its article: *an ti kenwerzh* “the house of commerce”, *un tamm kig* “a piece of meat”.

Materials:

Hemon Roparz: *Breton Grammar*, tenth edition, translated, adapted and revised by Michael Everson. Dublin. 1995

MacAulay Donald: *The Celtic Languages, The Breton Language* written by Elmar Ternes, Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Welsh Language

The Welsh call themselves as *Cymro*, which reflects Bret. **kom-brogos, -is* “from the same land”, comp. W. *bro*, OIr. *mruig* “land”.

(Ad. Václav Blažek, *Keltské Jazyky*)

The English term *Welsh* comes from the Anglo-Saxon name for the Celtic tribes *wealas* which means „foreigners“ (4. – 5. cent.). In that time, the British Celtic population was hardly linguistically differentiated. In the 6. and 7. cent., the areas inhabited by the Celts significantly shrank thanks to the Anglo-Saxon colonization.

Old Welsh: (8-12. cent.) followed the period of so called „primitive Welsh”. No literature from this period is preserved (the pieces of two important poets- Taliesin and Aneirin from the 6. cent. survived in later 12. – 13. cent. versions, of course modernized). From this period we only have short Welsh and Latin texts concerning a lawsuit.

Middle Welsh: (12-14. cent.) – during this time, the Welsh language flourished. This period offers copious literature of medieval romances and legends. The most famous masterpiece is *Mabinogi* – a collection of romances.

Modern Welsh: the beginning of this era is marked by the translation of the **Bible** in the year **1588** (by the bishop of Llandaff, **William Morgan**). This translation became the literary standard of the Welsh language for many next generations and it is very likely that without it, the Welsh language would have been long extinct. Since the beginning of the 15. cent., the higher strata of society were becoming Anglicized, and Welsh was completely banned from the use as an official administrative language in the mid. 15. cent. This didn't change until the year 1967).

In the year **1993** by so called. **Welsh Language Act**, the Welsh language was made equal with English in all spheres of public life (law, education, administration, health care).

Despite the continuous efforts to spread the knowledge and usage of the language, the number of Welsh speakers continue to decrease (according to the **UK Census 2011**, the percentage of Welsh speakers decreased from 20.8% (in 2001) to 19% (in 2011). However, the number of today's speakers (about 582 000 people) is greater than in 1991 (about 508 000 people). There is also a small community of people speaking Welsh in Chubut Province in Argentina.

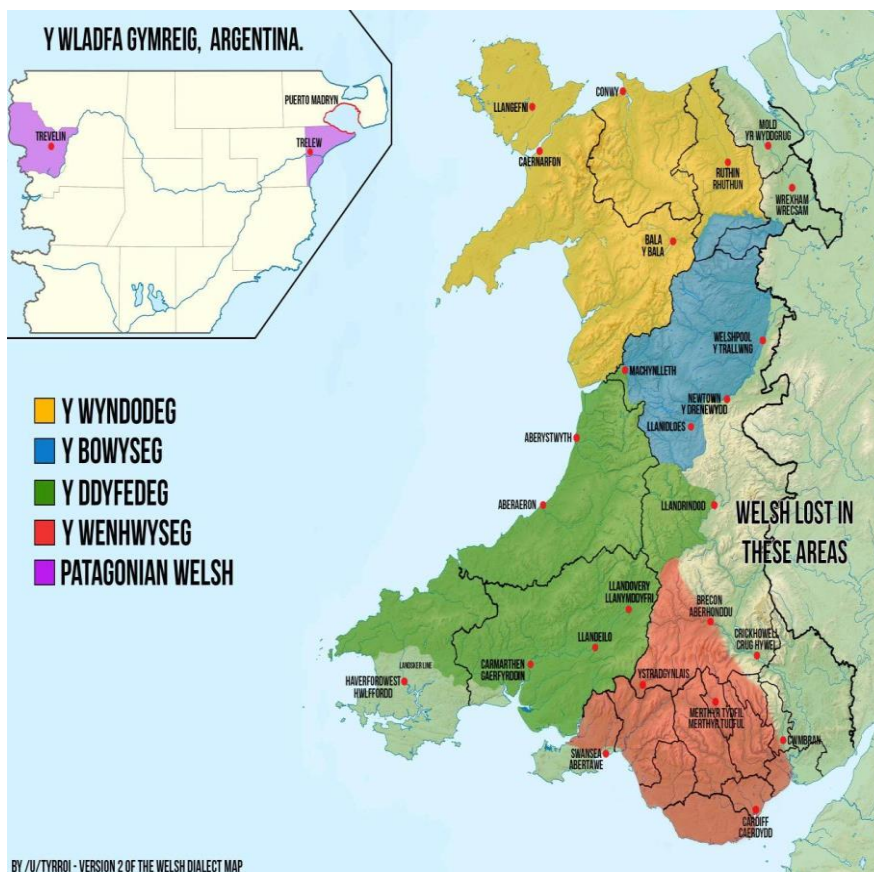
The Welsh is spoken mostly in counties **Gwynedd** and **Ynys Môn**. It is estimated that about 500 000 people use the Welsh language on daily basis. There is also a small community of people speaking Welsh in Chubut Province in Argentina.

(Partly taken from Fortson, *Indo-European linguistics*, 2010, p. 329-331)

Types of Welsh

First of all, we have to distinguish between the literary and colloquial Welsh. Whereas colloquial, or vernacular Welsh is a native language of some percentage of the Welsh people and can be further divided into dialects, the literary Welsh is nobody's native language and was artificially designed to standardize the written language at the time of the Bible translation in the sixteenth century. In a way, the reason of creating a version of "more sophisticated" or "proper" Welsh was a deliberate move to leave the Welsh of the rural population out of the literary usage. This tendency can be seen in the native population in a form of low confidence in Welsh speaking until these days.

Welsh language can be geographically divided into two main dialects- south and north, but they do divide further into their respective east and west varieties. There is also a specific dialect used on the Island of Anglesey.



Dialectal variation remained a reality of modern spoken Welsh. The dialectal differences are most obvious in respect to the lexis of the language. There are also phonological variants which tend to coincide with the lexical division of the areas and some rare syntactic differences which don't represent any problems to native speakers (in the respect of understanding each other), but which can be confusing for the learners.

Vocabulary: there are north and south variants of certain words, even though they usually concern a small number of very common words. For simplification, the difference is marked here as S for the south dialect and N for the north.

North:

South:

taid “grandfather”

tadcu

nain “grandmother”

mamgu

rwan “now”

nawr

allan “outside”

mās

Pronunciation: the differences in pronunciation are predictable and reflect the division of the north and south dialects. Here I'm giving just a few examples: In the north Welsh areas, the “high mixed” vowel [ɨ] is used, while this vowel sound has merged with [i] in all the south and midland dialects. So *dyn* “man” would be pronounced [dɨ:n] in the north, while [di:n] in southern Wales including the midlands. While long diphthongs in monosyllabic words have been retained in the northern dialects, the southern variants tend to monophthongise them: northern *maen* [ma:i:n] “stone” corresponds to southern [ma:m]. There are also differences in the incidence of phonemes which involve the lax fricatives in final position. They tend to be lost in all dialects, but in northern dialect [v] and [ð] are regularly lost in cases where they are preserved in the southern ones:

North

South

[go:]

gof “blacksmith”

[go:v]

[ko:]

cof “memory”

[ko:]

[bar]

barf “beard”

[barv]

-au which marks plurals sounds like [a] in the north and like [e] in the south: *pethau* “things”- N. [peəa], S [peəe].

Syntactic differences: Even though there are not that many syntactic differences, they occur in some very basic patterns (like for example the expression of possession). The standard literary syntax further differs from the both main dialects:

ex. standard negative sentence: *nid yw ef yn mynd*

NEG is he in go “he is not going”

can have very different forms in the northern and southern dialect:

Northern: *dydy o ddim yn mynd.*

NEG-is he not in go

Southern: *nag yw e`n mynd*

NEG is he-in go

To express possession of something- English “to have” differs in the southern and northern dialect. First, there is no corresponding word as such in Welsh and the possession is expressed by using the existential verb (*mae, oes*) with the preposition “with” *gan* (North Wales) or (*gy*)*da*(South Wales). The order of words in the sentence also differs:

ex. (N) *Mae gan John gar.*

(S) *Mae car`da John.*

As a result of trying to bridge the historical gap between the literal and colloquial Welsh and to minimize the dialectal varieties, a new type of a “standardized colloquial” Welsh was created. This construct is called “Cymraeg byw” “Living Welsh” and even though often criticized, offers a stable “base” for adult learners of Welsh.

Sounds and spelling

The Welsh alphabet (*Yr Wyddor Gymraeg*)

A a	B b	C c	Ch ch	D d	Dd dd	E e	F f	Ff ff	G g
a	bi	èc	èch	di	èdd	e	èf	èff	eg
Ng ng	H h	I i	L l	Ll ll	M m	N n	O o	P p	Ph ph
èng	aitsh	i-dot	èl	èll	èm	èn	o	pi	ffi
R r	Rh rh	S s	T t	Th th	U u	W w	Y y		
èr	rhi	ès	ti	èth	i-bedol	w	y		

Source:

http://canolbarth.ybont.org/pluginfile.php/71/mod_resource/content/3/yr_wyddor_gymraeg.pdf

Pronunciation (*Ynganiad*)

Short vowels (*Llafariaid fyr*)

a	e	i	o	u	w	y	â	ê	î	ô	û	ŵ	ÿ
[a]	[e]	[i]	[ɔ]	[ʏ]	[ɨ]	[ʏ/ɨ]	[ɑ:]	[e:]	[i:]	[o:]	[i:/i:]	[u:]	[i:/i:]

Long vowels (*Llafariaid hir*)

Diphthongs (*Deuseiniau*)

ae	ai	au	aw	ei	eu/ey	ew	iw	oe	oi	ou	uw	wy	yw
[a:i/ai]	[ai]	[ai/ai]	[au]	[ai]	[eɨ/ei]	[eu]	[iu]	[oi/oi]	[oi]	[oi/oi]	[u:/u]	[ɨi/ɨi]	[i:/i]

Consonants (*Cytseiniaid*)

b	c	ch	d	dd	f	ff	g	ng	h	l
[b]	[k]	[x]	[d]	[ð]	[v]	[f]	[g]	[ŋ]	[h]	[l]
ll	m	n	p	ph	r	rh	s	t	th	
[ʎ]	[m]	[n]	[p]	[f]	[r]	[r]	[s]	[t]	[θ]	

Pronunciation notes

1. There is no **k**, **q**, **v** or **z** in the Welsh alphabet.
2. The **ll** and **ch** are separate entities. **Ng** comes after **g**.
3. **a**, **e**, **i**, **o**, **u**, **w**, **y** are all vowels, the rest are consonants. In some cases **i** and **w** can be consonants too.
4. Vowels can have their long varieties by adding a tilde: *tan* “until”- *tân* “fire”, however, many long vowels stay unmarked: *nos* [no:s] “night”, *ceg* [ke:g] “mouth” etc.
5. **u** is pronounced as [i] in the southern dialects, while its northern counterpart resembles more a French **u**, [ɥ].
6. **w** is like English [u] or [u:] pronounced a bit further back in the throat.
7. **y** has two possible sounds- in the final or the only syllable in the word it sounds like **u** above, otherwise, it resembles a schwa sound [ə]. So for example the word *ynys* has both sounds: [ənɪs]
8. Diphthongs or combinations of vowels are mostly a simple running of the sounds together as they are written: **au** [aɪ], **oe** [oɨ], **wy** [uɪ].
9. Consonants don't have double forms except for **nn** and **rr** and there is no change in pronunciation. **Dd**, **ff** and **ll** are separate letters.
10. Here are some pronunciation values when they vary from English: **ch** [x], **dd** [ð] voiced, **f** [v], **ff** [f], **h** always sounded, **ll** aspirated *l*, **ph** [f] not common in Welsh, **r** a rolled *r*, **rh** aspirated rolled *r*, **th** [θ] unvoiced *th*, **i** + vowel is like English [j]: *iard* [jard] “yard, garden”, **w** + vowel is like English [w]: *Gwent* [gwent] “Gwent”.

Mutations

Initial	Soft (<i>meddal</i>)	Nasal (<i>trwynol</i>)	Aspirate (<i>llaes</i>)
c [k]	g [g]	ngh [ŋ̊]	ch [χ]
p [p]	b [b]	mh [m̥]	ph [f]
t [t]	d [d]	nh [n̥]	th [θ]
g [g]	(disappears)	ng [ŋ]	
b [b]	f [v]	m [m]	
d [d]	dd [ð]	n [n]	
ll [l̥]	l [l]		
m [m]	f [v]		
rh [r̥]	r [r]		

(Taken from:

https://www.google.cz/search?q=mutations+table+in+welsh&source=lnms&tbn=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiDsqCxnZ_eAhXB66QKHXOrCC4Q_AUIDigB&biw=1366&bih=626#imgrc=DzoGVbS30BxsxM:)

There are three types of the initial sound mutations: soft (which is by far the most frequent), nasal and aspirate. All instances of the mutations in Welsh can be classified either as contact mutation (where a mutation of a word is caused by the preceding word, usually a preposition or a possessive pronoun) or grammatical mutation where the mutation (almost invariably soft) fulfils some grammatical function.

Soft mutation (which is in textbooks and dictionaries marked as ° in front of the word) occurs in the following cases:

Grammatical:

- a) after the subject of the sentence: *naethon nhw° fynd* “they went”
- b) with adverbs of time (occasionally of manner): *°ddwy °flynedd yn ôl* “two years ago”
- c) when a noun is used to address or call somebody: *dewch fan hyn, °blant!* “come here, children!”
- d) generally with all inflected verbs: *°Golles i`r tocyn* “I lost the ticket.”
- e) after an “additional” word which is not part of the basic VSO pattern. As we can see in the following example in the case of *hefyd* “also”:
Fe °alla i °weld darn o °bapur. “I can see a piece of paper.”
*Fe °alla i °weld **hefyd** °ddarn o °bapur.* “I can also see a piece of paper.”

Contact:

- a) There are many prepositions using soft mutations: *am, ar, at, dan, dros, gan, heb, hyd, i, o, tan, trwy, wrth.*
- b) Amongst other important words that cause contact mutations, we can mention: *pan* “when”; *rhy* “too”; *pa* “which?”; *dyma* “here is”; *dyna* “there is”; *neu* “or” etc.
- c) Some sentence particles: *fe, mi*
- d) **The definite article y with feminine nouns** (except of those starting with *ll-* and *rh-*).
- e) After a complement marker *yn* (nouns and adjectives only, except of those starting with *ll-* and *rh-*).
- f) After numerals 2: *dau* (f.) and *dwy* (m.) and 1 *un* (f.) (except of those starting with *ll-* and *rh-*).
- g) Some possessive pronouns: *ei* “his”, *dy* “your (sg)”
- h) Several common prefixes used in word formation also trigger the soft mutation:
 ex. *af-* “un-“ *rhesymol* “reasonable”- *afresymol* “unreasonable”
di- “un-, -less, without” *gwaith* “work”- *diwaith* “unemployed”

Aspirate mutation

The aspirate mutation is marked by *a^h* in front of the mutated letter. The aspirate mutation is caused by the following preceding words:

a “and”, *â* “with”, *chew* “six”, *ei* “her”, *gyda* “with”, *tri* (m.) “three”, *tua* “towards, about”.

Aspirate mutation is not consistently applied except off after *ei* “her”.

Nasal mutation

The nasal mutation is also not applied consistently. It is marked with ⁿ in front of the mutated letter. It is usually used after following words:

fy “my” and *yn* “in: *fyⁿnhad i* “my dad” - *tad* “dad”

ynⁿMangor “in Bangor”

Also, some time words- *blynedd* “year” and *diwrnod* “day” undergo nasal mutation after numerals 5-10: *chweⁿmlynedd* “six years”; *saithⁿniwrnod* “seven days”.

One word formation prefix also causes nasal mutation: *an-* “un-, in-”

an- +*posib* “possible” – *amhosib* “impossible”

cofio “remember” – *anghofio* “forget”

Nouns

Gender

All common nouns in Welsh are either masculine or feminine. In animate nouns the gender corresponds with the gender of the person or animal it represents: ex. *dyn* “man”, *merch* “girl”; *buwch* “cow”, *tarw* “bull”. However, in other nouns, the gender is evident from its form in relatively few cases- when can tell by its distinctive suffixes. Therefore, for a learner, it is in the end easier to memorize each noun with its respective gender. Here I’ll present some typical suffixes for each gender, even though exceptions are rife.

Typical suffixes for masculine (by form) nouns are **-wr**, **-ydd** and **-yn**:

hogyn “boy”, *mochyn* “pig”, *actiwr* “actor”

and nouns (usually but not always abstract) derived from adjectives and verbs with following endings: **-ad**, **-iad**, **-did**, **-dod**, **-dra**, **-eb**, **-edd**, **-had**, **-i**, **-iant**, **-ni**, **-rwydd**, **-wch**.

Amongst some typical feminine suffixes belong **-en** and **-es**:

rhaglen “programme”, *teisen* “cake”

also derived mostly abstract nouns ending in **-aeth** and some in **-as**:

cenhedlaeth “generation”, *priodas* “wedding”

nouns ending with **-fa** referring to places where some actions or events happen (derived mostly from verbs, but sometimes from nouns):

arhosfa “waiting room” (*aros* “to wait”), *swyddfa* “office” (*swydd* “job”)

and two-syllable words with **-e-** in the second syllable (excluding masculine suffixes above), especially if there is **-a-** in the first syllable:

siwmpwr “jumper”, *tabled* “tablet”

Even though the indicators of gender in Welsh are unreliable, certain logical grouping of words and concept might help to remember to which gender a certain noun belongs to:

1. names of the days, months, seasons and points of the compass are always masculine
2. names of countries, rivers and languages are generally feminine

Note that there might be also gender differences of certain nouns across dialects.

There are some special important features of feminine nouns:

1. Soft mutation is applied to their initial letter after the definite article.
2. They cause soft mutation to the following adjective.
3. Special forms of some numbers or adjectives might be required with them.

Number

In Welsh, nouns can be either singular/plural or collective/unit. As it is in the case of indicating gender, there are many possible ways how to create a plural form and it is easier for the potential learner to memorize each plural form separately. The principal means of forming plurals from singulars is by means of a suffix or by a vowel change.

Plural endings:

There are a dozen different plural endings in use in modern spoken Welsh. The most common are **-au/-iau**, followed by **-on/-ion** and **-i**. Others include **-edd**, **-oedd**, **-ydd**, **-ed**, **-iaid**, **-od**, **-aint**.

<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>	
siop	siopau	shop/shops
geiriadur	geiriaduron	dictionary/dictionaries
allwedd	allweddi	key/keys
merch	merched	daughter/daughters

Changing vowels and mixed forms:

Changing one or two vowels of the original noun is also a very common way to form plurals. In addition, some common words use a combination of changing a vowel and adding a suffix:

<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>	<i>Vowel change</i>
castell	cestyll	caste/castles
car	ceir	car/cars
corff	cyrff	body/bodies
brân	brain	crow/crows
		<i>Vowel change and a suffix</i>
mab	meibion	son/sons
gardd	gerddi	garden/gardens
cyfaill	cyfeillion	friend/friends
iaith	ieithoedd	language/languages

Next to the *singular/plural* system, there is a *collective/unit* system in use. The latter comprises mostly living things- animals, trees and plants that are associated with being in a group. The base of the form is the collective meaning, whereas the unit is formed by adding a suffix:

Compare:

<i>sing/pl.</i>	cath	cat	cathod	cats
<i>c/u</i>	moch	(a group of pigs)	mochyn	a pig
<i>sing/pl.</i>	llyfr	book	llyfrau	books
<i>c/u</i>	coed	wood (a group of trees)	coeden	a tree

There are more *collective/unit* nouns amongst the feminine gender. The feminine unit nouns are formed by adding **-en**. There are usually names of animals, plants and trees. Some of them undergo a vowel change in addition:

afan	raspberries	afanen	a raspberry
mefus	strawberries	mefunen	a strawberry
mellt	lightning	mellten	a bolt of lightning
piod	magpies	pioden	a magpie
dail	leaves (foliage)	deilen	a leaf
derw	oak trees (grove)	derwen	an oak
cyll	hazel trees (grove)	collen	a hazel tree
bedw	birch trees (grove)	berwen	a birch tree

Masculine *collective/unit* nouns are not quite as numerous and the unit nouns are formed with suffix **-yd**.

adar	birds	aderyn	a bird
dillad	clothes	dilledyn	an item of clothing
pysgod	a school of fish	pysgodyn	a single fish
morgrug	a colony of ants	morgrugyd	an ant
plant	children	plentyn	a child

Duals

There is a small number of nouns that have a special dual form. They all contain the element **deu-** or **dwy-** “two”:

dydd “day” - *deuddydd* “two days”

mis “month” – *deufis* “two months”

llaw “hand” – *dwyllo* “hands”

Nouns with no singular

There are some nouns that have no singular forms or that are never used as singular:

creision “crisps”

gwatheg “cattle”

nefoedd “heavens”

Double plurals with different meaning

In some cases, nouns can form two different plurals, each with distinguished meaning:

<i>bron</i>	<i>bronnau</i> “breasts”	<i>bronnydd</i> “hills”
<i>pryd</i>	<i>prydau</i> “meals”	<i>prydiau</i> “times”
<i>ysbryd</i>	<i>ysbrydion</i> “ghosts”	<i>ysbrydoedd</i> “spirits”

Adjectives

Apart from a few exceptions, the usual position of an adjective in Welsh is after the noun:

car newydd “new car”

yr ysgol fawr “the big school”

The sequence of adjectives generally appears to be in the exact reverse order to English:

1	2	3	3	2	1
<i>bws</i>	<i>coch</i>	<i>mawr</i>	a big	red	bus

The most common adjective modifiers are: *iawn* “very”, *eitha* “quite”, *go*^o “pretty”, *rhy*^o “too”, *mor*^o “so” etc. The ones that cause a soft mutation of the following adjective are marked with an ^o.

ysgol fawr iawn “a very big school”

mae`r gadair`ma rhy isel i mi “the chair is too low for me”

However, there is a small number of adjectives that come before the noun. These are for example: *hen* “old”, *pob* “each, every”, *ambell* “occasional”, *prif* “main”, *holl* “all”. Also, the interrogative adjective *pa*^o “which...?” is always positioned before the noun. *Pa* causes a soft mutation as well as all the adjectives that come before the noun except of *pob* “every”:
pa^o *lyfr*^o *bryni di?* “which book did you buy?”, *pa ieithoedd dach chi`n siarad yn rhugl?* “What languages do you speak fluently?”

hen^o *ddyn* “an old man”

yr holl^o *waith* “all the work”

There are also some adjectives that can be placed before or after the noun and the position directly changes the meaning:

unig^o *blentyn* “an only child” vs. *plentyn unig* “a lonely child”

Feminine forms of adjectives:

In vast majority of cases, the gender of a noun doesn't influence the form of the adjective in any way. However, especially in older Welsh, many, especially one-syllable adjectives actually had different forms for masculine and feminine. In modern Welsh, only a few adjective still preserve this distinction:

<i>gwyn</i> (m.)	<i>gwen</i> (f.) “white”
<i>byr</i> (m.)	<i>ber</i> (f.) “short”
<i>cryf</i> (m)	<i>cref</i> (f.) “strong”
<i>tlws</i> (m.)	<i>tlos</i> (f.) “pretty”
<i>bychan</i> (m.)	<i>bechan</i> (f.) “small”

Plural forms of adjectives

Some adjectives possess special plural forms. Once again, this occurred more frequently in the older versions of Welsh. Many of these adjectives form their plurals by adding suffixes – *ion* or *-on*, by changing a vowel, or by a combination of both: *doeth* “wise”- *doethion*, *gwyrdd* (green) – *gwyrddion* etc. These plural adjectives are in the modern language usually used on their own (without the noun like “people” for instance) to denote certain groups (of people):

tlawd “poor”: *y tlodion* “the poor”

cyfoethog “rich”: *y cyfoethogion* “the rich”

ifanc “young”: *y ifainc* “the young”

meddw “drunk”: *y meddwon* “the drunks”

dall “blind”: *cŵn y deillion* “guide dogs- dogs for the blind”

Mutations in adjectives

Adjectives following a feminine singular noun require a soft mutation. Neither masculine nor feminine plural nouns cause would cause the same:

bwrdd (m.) “table”: *bwrdd mawr* “a big table”- *byrddau mawr* “big tables”

torth(f.) “loaf”: *torth °fawr* “a big loaf” – *torthau mawr* “big loaves”

a definite article cause an additional soft mutation to the feminine singular noun:

y °dorth °fawr “the big loaf”

Comparatives and superlatives

The way of forming comparatives and superlatives depends on the number of the syllables that the adjective consists of, very much like in English. Short words of one or two syllables are made comparatives by adding a suffix **-ach** and superlatives with a suffix **-a**, while for the longer ones **mwy** “more” and **mwy**a “most” must be used. There is a group of two-syllable adjectives that can form comparatives and superlatives either way.

adjective	comparative	superlative
<i>coch</i> “red”	<i>cochach</i>	<i>cocha</i>
<i>ysgafn</i> “light”	<i>ysgafnach</i>	<i>ysgafna</i>
<i>hardd</i> “beautiful”	<i>harddach</i>	<i>hardda</i>
<i>cyfforddus</i> “comfortable”	<i>mwy cyfforddus</i>	<i>mwy</i> a <i>cyfforddus</i>
<i>siaradus</i> “talkative”	<i>mwy siaradus</i>	<i>mwy</i> a <i>siaradus</i>
<i>hapus</i> “happy”	<i>hapusach</i> <i>mwy hapus</i>	<i>hapusa</i> <i>mwy</i> a <i>hapus</i>
<i>doniol</i> “funny”	<i>doniolach</i> <i>mwy doniolach</i>	<i>doniola</i> <i>mwy</i> a <i>doniol</i>

Than is *na*(*nag* before vowels):

Mae aur yn fwy gwerthfawr nagarian. “Gold is more valuable than silver”.

Roedd y ffermwyr yn dlotach na'r dinasyddion. “The farmers were poorer than the city-dwellers.”

radical	equative	comparative	superlative
<i>oer</i>	<i>cyn oared a</i>	<i>oerach na</i>	<i>oeraf</i>
“cold”	“as cold as”	“colder than”	“the coldest”

Irregular comparative and superlative forms

In the chart below, there are the most commonly used ones:

<i>da</i> “good”	<i>gwell</i> “better”	<i>gorau</i> “the best”	<i>cystal</i> “as good”
<i>drug</i> “bad”	<i>gwaeth</i> “worse”	<i>gwaetha</i> “the worst”	<i>cynddrwg</i> “as bad”
<i>mawr</i> “big”	<i>mwy</i> “bigger”	<i>mwy</i> a “the biggest”	<i>cymaint</i> “as big”
<i>bach</i> “small”	<i>llai</i> “smaller”	<i>lleia</i> “the smallest”	<i>cynlleied</i> “as small”
<i>uchel</i> “high”	<i>uwch</i> “higher”	<i>ucha</i> “the highest”	
<i>isel</i> “low”	<i>is</i> “lower”	<i>isa</i> “the lowest”	
<i>hen</i> “old”	<i>hŷn</i> “older”	<i>hyna</i> “the oldest”	
<i>ifanc</i> “young”	<i>iau</i> “younger”	<i>fenga</i> “the youngest”	
<i>hawdd</i> “easy”	<i>haws</i> “easier”	<i>hawsa</i> “the easiest”	
<i>agos</i> “near”	<i>nes</i> “nearer”	<i>nesa</i> “the nearest”	

Possessive adjectives

The possessive adjectives consist of two elements- one that comes before the noun and an optional one which is placed after. The second, so called “echoing” element is optional, but sometimes it is exactly this element that clarifies the possessor, since in vernacular Welsh, *ei* “his” or “her” and *eu* “their” sound the same. Below is the table of the possessive adjective forms and the mutation they cause (mentioned in brackets).

<i>fy</i> `(y) <i>n</i> (nm)... (<i>i</i>)	my	<i>ein</i> ... (<i>ni</i>)	our
<i>dy</i> •... (<i>di</i>)	your	<i>iech</i> ... (<i>chi</i>)	your
<i>ei</i> •... (<i>e/fe</i>)	his	<i>eu</i> ... (<i>nhw</i>)	their
<i>ei(am)</i> ... (<i>hi</i>)	her		

Examples:

<i>fy mhlant i</i> “my children”	<i>ein plant ni</i> “our children”
<i>dy blant di</i> “your children”	<i>eich plant chi</i> “your children”
<i>ei blant e</i> “his children”	<i>eu plant nhw</i> “their children”
<i>ei phlant hi</i> “her children”	

Demonstrative adjectives

In contemporary spoken Welsh, *this* and *that* are formed of two elements: the definite article *y* (*yr*) before the noun and a word *ma* “here” or *na* “there”:

y llyfr ma “this book” and *y llyfr na* “that book”.

There is no need distinguishing between singulars and plurals: *y llyfr ma* “this book” - *y llyfrau ma* “these books”.

Pronouns

Personal pronouns:

	Singular	Plural
1 st	<i>i, fi, mi</i> “i, me”	<i>ni</i> “we, us”
2 nd	<i>ti, di</i> “you”	<i>chi</i> “you”
3 rd	<i>e/o, fe/fo</i> “he, him” <i>hi</i> “she, her”	<i>nhw</i> “they, them”

Notes:

a) Welsh doesn't distinguish between subject and object forms of personal pronouns:

Mae hi wedi chwarae'r rôl ma o'r blaen. “She has already played this part before.”

Weles i hi yn y rôl ma llyned. “I saw her in this part before.”

- b) There is no such pronoun that would correspond to English *it* in the 3rd sg. To some extent, English *it*, especially while talking about the weather or telling the time is replaced with Welsh *hi* “she”:

Mae hi`n bwrw glaw. “It is raining” literally “she is raining”.

Mae hi`n tri o`r gloch. “It is three o`clock” literally “she is three o`clock”.

- c) Welsh language distinguishes between a singular *you- ti* and a plural *you-chi*. They are used while making difference between singular and plural *you*, but also for formal and informal addressing, just like in French or Spanish.
- d) In the 1st singular: *i* is used after verbs: *dw i* “I am”, *weles i* “I said” etc. *fi* after conjunctions and other miscellaneous words, after prepositions and as the object of an inflected verbs: *pam fi?* “why me?”, *gyda fi* “with me”, *stopiodd yr heddlu fi* “the police stopped me”.
- e) *di* is used as a subject in future in conditional sentences: *os gweli di fe* “if you see him...” or in the reinforced singular command form: *aros di fan hyn am eiliad* “Wait here a moment!” In many parts of North Wales, an alternative *chdi* is common in spoken language: *wela i chdi!* “see you”.
- f) In the third singular, *e/fe* is used in the South Wales, while *o/fo* in the north. For choosing which variant to use, look at the rule mentioned as point d) dealing with *i/fi*.

Demonstrative pronouns:

For concrete and non-abstract ideas, the demonstrative pronouns have different forms for number and (only in singular) for gender:

	masculine	Feminine
this	<i>hwn</i>	<i>hon</i>
that	<i>hwennw</i>	<i>honno</i>
these	<i>y rhain</i>	<i>y rhain</i>
those	<i>y rheiny</i>	<i>y rheiny</i>

Examples:

Beth dych chi`n galw hwn yn Gymraeg? “What do you call this in Welsh?”

Mae`r rhain i chi. “These are for you.”

There is also a separate pair of singular demonstratives which are used to refer to general, non-tangible ideas:

“this”- *hyn*

“that” – *hynny*

Mae hyn oll yn wastraff llwyr o amser “All this is a complete waste of time”

There are a few idiomatic expressions which involve *hyn* or *hynny*:

Examples:

serch hynny “despite that”

fan hyn “here”

ar hyn o bryd “at the moment”

erbyn hyn “by now”

Interrogative pronouns

Amongst the most common interrogative pronouns belong the following: *pwyl* “who”, *beth* “what”, *pa un* “which one”, *pa rai* “which ones”.

Pwy dych chi? “who are you?”

Beth yw`r lliw`na? “what is that colour?”

Numerals and quantifiers

Cardinal		Ordinal	
0	sero/dim		
1	un (causes SM)	1af	cynta(f)
2	dau (m) (causes SM) dwy (f) (causes SM)	2ail	ail
3	tri (m) tair (f)	3ydd	trydydd (m) trydedd (f)
4	pedwar (m) pedair (f)	4ydd	pedwerydd (m) pedwaredd (f)
5	pum(p)	5ed	pumed
6	chwe(ch) (causes AM)	6ed	chweched
7	saith	7fed	seithfed
8	wyth	8fed	wythfed

9	naw	9fed	nawfed
10	deg	10fed	degfed
11	un ar ddeg un deg un	11eg	unfed ar ddeg
12	deuddeg un deg dau	12fed	deuddegfed
13	tri ar ddeg un deg tri	13eg	trydydd ar ddeg
14	pedwar ar ddeg un deg pedwar	14eg	pedwerydd ar ddeg
15	pymtheg un deg pump	15fed	pymthegfed
20	ugain dau ddeg	20fed	ugeinfed
21	un ar hugain dau ddeg un	21ain	unfed ar hugain
22	dau ar hugain dau ddeg dau	22ain	ail ar hugain
23	tri ar hugain dau ddeg tri	23ain	trydydd ar hugain
30	deg ar hugain tri deg	30ain	degfed ar hugain
40	deugain pedwar deg	40fed	(rhif) pedwar deg deugainfed
50	hanner cant pum deg	50fed	(rhif) pum deg hanner canfed
60	trigain chwe deg	60fed	(rhif) chwe deg trigainfed

70	deg a thrigain saith deg	70fed	(rhif) saith deg degfed a thrigain
80	pedwar ugain wyth deg	80fed	(rhif) wyth deg pedwar ugainfed
90	deg a phedwar ugain naw deg	90fed	(rhif) naw deg degfed a phedwar ugain
100	cant	100fed	canfed
101	cant ac un		(rhif) cant ac un
102	cant a dau		(rhif) cant a dau
120	cant ac ugain cant dau ddeg		(rhif) cant dau ddeg
200	dau gant	200fed	dau ganfed
300	tri chant	300fed	tri chanfed
500	pum cant	500fed	pum canfed
1,000	mil	1000fed	milfed
10,000	deng mil		deng milfed
100,000	mwnt can mil		can milfed
1 million	miliwn		miliyenfed

In Welsh, from number eleven on, there are two valid counting systems- the original vigesimal system (based on number 20) and the newer decimal. Some of the vigesimal system based numbers are short and are commonly in use (perhaps more than their easier modern decimal counterparts). This is the case especially with the following: 12: “*deuddeg*“ (vigesimal), „*un deg dau*“ (decimal); 15 “*pymtheg*“ (vigesimal) “*un deg pump*“ (decimal); 18 “*deunaw*” (vigesimal), ”*un deg with*” (decimal) and 20 “*ugain*” (vigesimal), “*dauddeg*” (decimal). The original, vigesimal system is especially used while telling time, years and counting money.

In the chart presented below, when there are variants, the vigesimal system is mentioned in the first place and the decimal underneath. In the chart is also marked which numbers cause which mutations to the following noun.

Notes for the Welsh numerals:

- a) Numbers 2-4 have different forms for masculine and feminine nouns, as mentioned in the chart in brackets after the numerals.
- b) Generally, with low numbers, a singular noun follows the numeral: *dwy gath* “two cats”, *pedwar drws* “four doors”. However, with higher numbers (exceptions might be while counting money, weights or measures), a plural noun follows preceded by a preposition **o** (which causes SM): *deg o gathod* “ten cats” (literary “ten of cats”), *cant o ddrysiau* “a hundred doors”.
- c) **Un-** even though **un** “one” has the same form for both, masculine and feminine, it mutates with a soft mutation only the feminine nouns: *un ceffyl* (m.) “one horse” but *un °gath* (f.) “one cat”.
- d) **Dau, dwy** both cause soft mutation to all following nouns and they are also mutated while used with the article **y** then the meaning shifts to “the two, both”: *dau °geffyl* “two horses”, *dwy °gath* “two cats”; *y °ddwy °gath* “both cats”.
- e) **Pump** “five” is used only when there is no immediate noun following. If there is, the used form is **pum**: *pum dyn* “five men” but *pump o ddynion* “five men”. The same applies for **chwech** “six” and **chwe**.
- f) **Deg** has got an alternative **deng** before units of time beginning with **m-**: *deng munud* “ten minutes”, *deng mis* “ten months”. The same rule applies for numerals: *deng mil* “ten thousand”.
- g) **Hanner cant** literary “half of a hundred” is a commonly used alternative for *pumdeg* “fifty”.
- h) In the vigesimal system, numbers 21-39 are all added onto 20: 33- *tri ar °ddeg ar hugain* “thirteen on twenty”, 39 is *pedwar ar °bymtheg ar hugain* “nineteen on twenty”.
- i) **Ugain** “twenty” adds an **h-** after **ar** in composite numerals: *deuddeg ar hugain* “thirty two”.

The two right hand-side columns of the above chart deal with the ordinal numbers. In daily language, the ordinal numbers above the 10th are rarely needed, except of telling dates.

- a) **Cynta** “the first” behaves like a common adjective and comes after the noun: *y mis cynta* “the first month”.
- b) All other ordinals precede the noun. **Ail** “the second” mutates both, masculine and feminine nouns: *yr ail °lyfr* (m.) “the second book”, *yr ail °gath* (f.) “the second cat”. All the other ordinals, with a masculine noun, don’t cause any mutations (not even to themselves). However, the ordinals preceding a feminine noun mutate both, themselves and the noun:
y pumed dosbarth (m.) “the fifth class” - *y °drydedd °goeden* (f.) “the third tree”

Telling time

For telling the time, generally, the native speakers prefer to use the vigesimal counting system. There is no equivalent to 24 hour clock in Welsh.

Faint o`r gloch ydy/yw hi? “What`s the time?” - the *sin* in English is in this case substituted by Welsh *hi* “she”.

Below, some most important examples are mentioned:

3:00	<i>tri o`r gloch</i>
3:05	<i>pum munud wedi tri</i>
3:15	<i>chwarter wedi tri</i>
3:20	<i>ugain wedi tri</i>
3:30	<i>hanner wedi tri</i>
3:40	<i>ugain munud i`bedwar</i>
3:45	<i>chwarter i`bedwar</i>
3:50	<i>deny munud i`bedwar</i>
4:00	<i>pedwar o`r gloch</i>

To the question “what the time is”, we usually use the phrase: *Mae hi`n`... :Mae hi`n`ddeng munud wedi wyth* “it`s ten minutes past eight”.

Numbers with years

The word for *year* is in Welsh *blwyddyn* (f.), pl. *blynyddoedd*, however there are also variants *blynedd* and *blwydd* used in certain circumstances. *Blynedd* is the form used after numbers. *Blwydd* is used specifically in the sense of *how many years old*. All of these variants are feminine, and as such use the appropriate feminine forms of numbers 2-4.

<i>Dwy`flynedd</i>	Two years
<i>Tair blynedd</i>	Three years
<i>Pedair blynedd</i>	Four years
<i>Pum`mlynedd</i>	Five years
<i>Chwe`mlynedd</i>	Six years
<i>Saith`mlynedd</i>	Seven years
<i>Wyth`mlydedd</i>	Eight years
<i>Naw`mlynedd</i>	Nine years
<i>Deng`mlynedd</i>	Ten years

Blwydd usually appears with **oed** in phrases telling somebody`s age: *Mae`r`ferch yn`dair blwydd oed* “The girl is three years old”.

Telling dates

With dates, the ordinal vigesimal numbers are used. The preferred way used with telling dates is with the preposition **o** “of”. There are two usual variants for saying *the fifth of November*: *y pumed o °Dachwedd* or *y pumed o °fis Tachwedd*.

Some common expressions of quantity

<i>faint?</i>	how much/many?
<i>sawl?</i>	how much/many?
<i>sawl un?</i>	how many?
<i>digon</i>	enough
<i>gormod</i>	too much/many
<i>rhagor</i>	more
<i>llawer</i>	a lot
<i>tipyn</i>	a bit

Faint o °fara sy angen dros y Sul? “How much bread do we need over the weekend?”

Gormod o °fraster yn °beryg i`r iechyd. “Too much fat is bad for your health.”

The verb

Verbal noun

The verb stem is either suffixed to mark its function as a verb-noun (VN), or to express tense, mood or a person.

It is the verbal noun that is the basic dictionary form and the closest equivalent in English are verbs ending with **-ing**(gerunds). However, the VN is grammatically a noun in every aspect and must stand in a sentence with other auxiliary-verb components (which themselves will be conjugated according to the person and tense). For this reason, VN can be preceded by an article: *canu da* “good singing” – *y canu gorau* “the best singing”. Another example of using a VN in a sentence might be: *Mae`ch gyrru wedi gwella`n °ddiweddar*. “your driving has improved lately.”

All VN are masculine in gender, except of *gafael* “to hold”.

We can also use certain prepositions with VN, like for example: **am**°, **ar**°, **dan**°, **gan**°, **heb**°, **trwy**°, **wrth**°: *Eson nhw o amgylch y pentre dan °ganu*. “They went around the village singing”.

The ending **-io** is very often an indicator of a VN. This is particularly used while making VN from nouns, especially of nouns of English origin: *teithio* “to travel” from *taith* “journey”.

Example of forming VNs from English loan-forms: *stopio* “to stop”, *parcio* “to park”, *starvio* “to starve”.

There are other common endings of VN, like for example: **-u, -o, -io, -i, -a, -au**: *rhifo* “to count”, *crafu* “to scratch”, *berwi* “to boil”.

If the VN expresses an action, it must stand in a sentence together with an auxiliary verb, which is either *bod* “to be” or *gwneud* “to do”. When the auxiliary verb is *bod*, a linking element **yn** is used:

Mae (AUX) *Elwyn yn canu* (VN) *heno*. “Elwyn is singing tonight.”

From VN, we can derive the verb-stems in order to be able to conjugate the verbs in various tenses. Some verb-stems have quite a predictable form, while others are irregular:

- a) VNs ending in a vowel usually drop the vowel to make the verb-stem:
tal “to pay”: *tal-*; *torri* “to cut”: *torr-*
- b) VNs ending with **-io** follow the same rule with the exception of leaving the **-i-**:
teithio “to travel”: *teithi-*
- c) VNs ending in **-au** change this to **-eu**:
dechrau “to begin”: *dechreu-*
mwynhau “to enjoy”: *mwynheu*
- d) The majority of the VNs ending with a consonant don't require any change:
cadw “to keep”: *cadw-*
eistedd “to sit”: *eistedd-*
- e) There are, however, a lot of common verbs with unpredictable stem, for example:
cymryd “to take”: *cymer-*
gadael “to leave”: *gadaw-*
gwrandaw “to listen”: *gwranda-*
meddwl “to think”: *meddyl*

The tense system

Generally, there are two ways of expressing a tense: periphrastic, which involves using another auxiliary verb together with the VN, and inflected, when the VN is converted into a verb-stem and an appropriate ending is added:

Periphrastic:

(present) *Mae`r hen`ddyn ynll~~o~~sgi sbwriel yn yr`ardd*. “The old man is burning rubbish in the garden.”

Inflected:

(preterite) *Llogodd yr hen`ddyn y sbwriel yn y`ardd*. “The old man burnt the rubbish in the garden.”

Welsh tense system as compared to English

Present	<i>mae e`n prynu</i>	he buys/he is buying
Imperfect	<i>oedd e`n prynu</i>	he was buying
Perfect	<i>mae e wedi prynu</i>	he has bought
Pluperfect	<i>oedd e wedi prynu</i>	he had bought
Preterite	<i>naeth e •brynu</i> <i>ddaru o •brynu</i> <i>•brynnod e</i>	he bought
Future	<i>•brynnith e</i> <i>bydd e`n prynu</i> <i>neith e •brynu</i>	he will buy
Future perfect	<i>bydd e wedi prynu</i>	he will have bought
Conditional	<i>basai fe`n prynu</i> <i>prynai fe</i>	he would buy
Conditional perfect	<i>basai fe wedi prynu</i>	he would have bought

As we can see from the chart above, there are different ways of expression preterite, future and conditional. One way is to use a periphrastic form and the other is to inflect the verb itself, as I have previously mentioned. Some examples of the inflected form in preterite tense: *gweld* “to see” – *gweles i* “I saw”, *talw* “to pay” - *•dallod e •ddim* “he didn’t pay”. These forms are made by adding personal suffixes to a verb-stem.

Suffixes for the inflected forms:

	singular	plural	
1 st	<i>-es (i)</i>	1 st	<i>-on (ni)</i>
2 nd	<i>-est (ti)</i>	2 nd	<i>-och (chi)</i>
3 rd	<i>-odd (e/hi)</i>	3 rd	<i>on (nhw)</i>

In spoken Welsh, affirmative markers **mi**^o or **fe**^o are very common. Their function is to indicate that a statement follows, rather than a question or a negative sentence. It is in all cases optional:

(Fe) glywes i`r newyddion ar y radio bore`ma. “I heard the news on the radio this morning”.
(Mi) agora i`r drws i ti. “I’ll open the door for you.”

BOD: “to be”

The verb *to be* is absolutely pivotal in the Welsh language. This is because the verb **bod** stands not only as a verb on itself, but also as an auxiliary verb in most periphrastic phrases. **Bod** can be taken as any regular verb except of some special characteristics. Some of the most important are:

- a) is has inflected forms also for present and imperfect (as well as for future and conditional like other verbs)
- b) there are different forms for affirmative statements, questions and negatives in present and to some extent in imperfect tenses
- c) the third person singular appears in distinctive forms to mark three different meanings
- d) it has two verb stems: **bydd-** and **bu-**

There are three basic meanings of the verb **bod**: identification, existence and description.

Identification sentences

Express who or what a subject is:

Pwy ydy hwnna? “Who is that?”

Beth sy'n cropian ar dy goes? “What is crawling up your leg?”

Existential sentences

These correspond with English *there is/are*.

Mae gormod o bobol fan hyn. “there are too many people here.”

Descriptive sentences

Include all uses of **bod** not mentioned further. This includes all uses of **bod** as an auxiliary and all the cases where the element following **bod** is an adjective or adverb.

Distinctions in 3rd person singular present

The verb **bod** takes different forms for different fields of meaning in the 3rd pers. sing. depending whether the sentence is an affirmative statement (AFF), question (INT) or negatives (NEG):

	AFF	INT	NEG
identification	<i>...ydy...</i>	<i>...ydy...?</i>	<i>Dim...ydy...</i>
existential	<i>Mae...</i>	<i>Oes...?</i>	<i>Does dim...</i>
descriptive	<i>Mae... (...sy...)</i>	<i>Ydy...?</i>	<i>Dydy... •ddim</i>

Example sentences:

AFF ident: *Ci Sioned ydy hwnna.* “That’s Sioned’s shirt.”

INT ident: *Ci sioned ydy hwnna?* “Is that Sioned’s dog?”

NEG ident: *Dim ci Sioned ydy hwnna.* “That isn’t Sioned’s dog.”

AFF exist: *Mae llaeth yn yr oergell.* “There is milk in the fridge.”

INT exist: *Oes llaeth yn yr oergell?* “Is there milk in the fridge?”

NEG exist: *Does dim llaeth yn yr oergell.* “There is no milk in the fridge.”

AFF descr: *Mae`r cwrw`ma`n` °gryf.* “This beer is strong.”
 INT descr: *Ydy`r cwrw`ma`n` °gryf?* “Is this beer strong?”
 NEG descr: *Dydy`r cwrw`ma` ddim yn` °gryf.* “This beer is not strong.”

Simplified overview of inflected forms of *bod*:

		present	imperfect	preterite
Sing.	1 st	<i>dw i</i>	<i>roeddwn i</i>	<i>bues i</i>
	2 nd	<i>(r)wyt ti</i>	<i>roeddet ti</i>	<i>buest ti</i>
	3 rd	<i>mae e/hi</i>	<i>roedd e/hi</i>	<i>buodd e/hi</i>
Pl.	1 st	<i>dyn ni</i>	<i>roedden ni</i>	<i>buon ni</i>
	2 nd	<i>dych chi</i>	<i>roeddech chi</i>	<i>buoch chi</i>
	3 rd	<i>maen nhw</i>	<i>roedden nhw</i>	<i>buon nhw</i>
		future	conditional	
Sing.	1 st	<i>bydda(f) i</i>	<i>byddwn/baswn i</i>	
	2 nd	<i>byddi di</i>	<i>byddwn/baswn ti</i>	
	3 rd	<i>bydd e/hi</i>	<i>byddwn/baswn e/hi</i>	
Pl.	1 st	<i>byddwn ni</i>	<i>byddwn/baswn ni</i>	
	2 nd	<i>byddwch chi</i>	<i>byddwn/baswn chi</i>	
	3 rd	<i>byddan nhw</i>	<i>byddwn/baswn nhw</i>	

Present tense of *bod*

Here all the forms are presented depending on whether the speaker is making a statement, question or a negative sentence. There are also quite significant differences between the North dialects and the South dialects:

NORTH:

		AFF	INT	NEG
Sing.	1 st	<i>dw i</i>	<i>ydw i?</i>	<i>(dy)dw i ddim</i>
	2 nd	<i>ti</i>	<i>wyt ti?</i>	<i>dwyt ti ddim</i>
	3 rd	<i>mae o/hi</i>	<i>ydy o/hi?</i>	<i>dydy o/hi ddim</i>
Pl.	1 st	<i>dan ni</i>	<i>ydan ni?</i>	<i>(dy)dan ni ddim</i>
	2 nd	<i>dach chi</i>	<i>(y)dach chi?</i>	<i>(dy)dach chi ddim</i>
	3 rd	<i>maen nhw</i>	<i>ydyn nhw?</i>	<i>dydyn nhw ddim</i>

SOUTH:

		AFF	INT	NEG
Sing.	1 st	<i>rw i, w i</i>	<i>ydw i?</i>	<i>(d)w i ddim</i>
	2 nd	<i>ti</i>	<i>wyt ti?</i>	<i>ti ddim</i>
	3 rd	<i>mae e/hi (mae fe)</i>	<i>ydy/yw e/hi?</i>	<i>dyw e/hi ddim</i>
Pl.	1 st	<i>(ŷn) ni</i>	<i>ŷn ni?</i>	<i>ŷn ni ddim</i>
	2 nd	<i>ych chi</i>	<i>ych chi?</i>	<i>(ych) chi ddim</i>
	3 rd	<i>maen nhw</i>	<i>ŷn nhw?</i>	<i>ŷn nhw ddim</i>

Welsh doesn't really have an equivalent to *yes* and *no* while answering a question. The tense and the person must be always kept the same as was in the questions on which we give an answer. The forms are also different according to the dialect:

		North	South
Sing.	1 st	<i>(y) (n)dw</i>	<i>ydw/odw</i>
	2 nd	<i>wyt</i>	<i>wyt</i>
	3 rd	<i>(y) (n) dy</i>	<i>ydy/ody</i>
Pl.	1 st	<i>(y) (n) dan</i>	<i>ydyn/odyn</i>
	2 nd	<i>(y) (n) dach</i>	<i>ydych/odych</i>
	3 rd	<i>(y) (n) dyn</i>	<i>ydyn/odyn</i>

Example sentences:

Ti`n dwad i`r cyfarfod heno?Ndw. (N) “Are you coming to the meeting tonight? Yes.”

Wyt ti`n dwad o Sbain?Ydw. (S) “Are you from Spain? Yes.”

To answer **no- nag** (usually written as **nac**), we add the negation before the “yes” answer. Sometimes **nais** is used instead of **nag**: **nag ydw** “no, I’m not”, **nag wyt** “no, you are not” and so on.

It is also important to mention, that the “normalized” AFF conjugations of the verb **bod** come with prefixed **ry**. Even though they appear in most textbooks, they are never used by native speakers. Examples would be: **dw i – rydw i** “I am”, **ydyn ni – rydyn ni** “we are” and so on.

Other tenses of **bod**

The other tenses of **bod** will be mentioned in a shorter version:

Imperfect

		AFF	INT	NEG
Sing.	1 st	<i>o`n i</i>	<i>o`n i?</i>	<i>o`n i ddim</i>
	2 nd	<i>o`t ti</i>	<i>o`t ti?</i>	<i>o`t ti ddim</i>
	3 rd	<i>oedd e/hi</i>	<i>oedd e/hi?</i>	<i>oedd e/hi ddim</i>

Pl.	1 st	<i>o`n ni</i>	<i>o'n ni?</i>	<i>o`n ni ddim</i>
	2 nd	<i>o`ch chi</i>	<i>o'ch chi?</i>	<i>o`ch chi ddim</i>
	3 rd	<i>o`n nhw</i>	<i>o'n nhw?</i>	<i>o`n nhw ddim</i>

Future

		AFF	NEG	INT
Sing.	1 st	<i>Bydda i</i>	<i>Fyddda(f) i ddim</i>	<i>Fyddda(f) i?</i>
	2 nd	<i>Byddi di</i>	<i>Fyddi di ddim</i>	<i>Fyddi di?</i>
	3 rd	<i>Bydd o/hi</i>	<i>Fydd o/hi ddim</i>	<i>Fydd o/hi?</i>
Pl.	1 st	<i>Byddwn ni</i>	<i>Fyddwn ni ddim</i>	<i>Fyddwn ni?</i>
	2 nd	<i>Byddwch chi</i>	<i>Fyddwch chi ddim</i>	<i>Fyddwch chi?</i>
	3 rd	<i>Byddan nhw</i>	<i>Fyddan nhw ddim</i>	<i>Fyddan nhw?</i>

Conditional

		AFF	NEG	INT
Sing.	1 st	<i>byddwn i</i>	<i>fyddwn i ddim</i>	<i>fyddwn i?</i>
	2 nd	<i>bydet ti</i>	<i>fydet ti ddim</i>	<i>fydet ti?</i>
	3 rd	<i>byddai fe/hi</i>	<i>fyddai fe/hi ddim</i>	<i>fyddai fe/hi?</i>
Pl.	1 st	<i>bydden ni</i>	<i>fydden ni ddim</i>	<i>fydden ni?</i>
	2 nd	<i>byddech chi</i>	<i>fyddech chi ddim</i>	<i>fyddech chi?</i>
	3 rd	<i>bydden nhw</i>	<i>fydden nhw ddim</i>	<i>fydden nhw?</i>

Periphrastic tenses

The vast majority of auxiliary based sentences in formed with the aid of the verb *bod*. Sometimes *gwneud* “to do” is used, especially for preterite and future, with *darru* as an alternative in North Welsh dialects.

Present tense:

For expressing a periphrastic present tense, the present tense of *bod* is used together with *yn* and VN:

Dach chi`n darllen y papur newydd`na? “Are you reading that paper?”

Dw I`ddim yn siarad Cymraeg yn rhugl. “I don`t speak Welsh fluently.”

Note that this form of tense can express English present simple and continuous, and as such can also have a future meaning:

Maen nhw`n mynd I Tenerife am °ddefis. “They are going to Tenerife in two months.”

Perfect tense:

The perfect tense is created exactly like the present tense, only **wedi** is placed before the main verb of the sentence:

Compare:

Mae`n cymydog yn gwerthu ei °dŷ. “Our neighbour is selling his house.”

Mae`n cymydog wedi gwerthu ei °dŷ. “Our neighbour has sold his house.”

Imperfect tense

Imperfect tense is formed in the same way as the present tense; only the verb **bod** is used in its imperfect form. Again, the linking word **yn** is used.

O`n i`n cerdded heibio oi`r swyddfa °bost pan °weles i fe. “I was walking past the post office when I saw him.”

Doedd y planhigion °ddim yn edrych yn rhy iach. “The plants were not looking too healthy.”

Pluperfect tense

Formed as imperfect, but just as in the perfect tense, the **yn** is replaced with **wedi**.

Compare:

O`n i`n siarad ag y diwrnod o`r blaen. “I was speaking to him the day before.”

O`n i wedi siarad ag y diwrnod o`r blaen. “I had spoken to him the day before.”

Future

Future is formed with the future of **bod, yn** and the VN, as we saw in previous examples:

Bydd y gweddill yn cysgu yn y pebyll. “The rest will sleep in tents.”

This tense can have a meaning of a habitual present:

Bydda i`n mynd yno °bob wythnos. “I go there every week.”

Future perfect

As in all the other instances, **wedi** replaces **yn**.

Bydda I wedi gadael erbyn I ti °gyrraedd, mae`n °debyg. “I’ll probably have left by the time you arrive.”

Preterite

In everyday standard language, preterite corresponds to English past simple. The preferred way to express the preterite is to add corresponding endings to the verb-stems:

Suffixes for the inflected forms:

	singular	plural	
1 st	-es (i)	1 st	-on (ni)
2 nd	-est (ti)	2 nd	-och (chi)
3 rd	-odd (e/hi)	3 rd	on (nhw)

Verb stem: *gweld- gweles i* “I saw”; *°Weles i?* “Did you see?”

Increasingly, the SM applies to all inflected preterite verbs, so *gweles i* “I saw” changes in everyday speech to *°Weles i* even in affirmative sentences.

Irregular preterite

There are four frequently used verbs with irregular preterite forms. There are regional differences between them and their inflection pattern is similar. These verbs are *mynd* “to go”, *dod* “to come”, *gwneud* “to make, to do” and *cael* “to get, to have”.

		mynd	gwneud	dod	cael
Sing	1 st	es i (I went)	nes i (I did)	des i(I came)	ces i (I got)
	2 nd	est ti	nest ti	dest ti	cest ti
	3 rd	aeth e/hi	naeth e/hi	death e/hi	caeth e/hi
Pl.	1 st	aethon ni	naethon ni	daethon ni	caethon ni
	2 nd	aethoch chi	naethoch chi	daethoch chi	caethoch chi
	3 rd	aethon nhw	naethon nhw	daethon nhw	caethon nhw

Examples:

Pryd °gaeth e`r neges? “When did you get the message?”

Be`°gest ti i Nadolig eleni? “What did you get for Christmas this year?”

The future tense

The future tense applies the same general principles as preterite. The individual suffixes which are added to the verb-stem are written below:

	singular	plural	
1 st	-a (i)	1 st	-wn (ni)
2 nd	-i (di)	2 nd	-wch (chi)
3 rd	-ith (o/hi)	3 rd	an (nhw)

Optionally, affirmative particles **fe**• and **mi**• are used with inflected future:

(Mi) °wela i chi. “I’ll see you.”

(Fe) ffonniwn ni ti. “We’ll phone you.”

Irregular future

The same four verbs which form irregular preterite form irregular future as well. Below is the chart with their conjugated forms:

		mynd	gwneud	dod	cael
Sing	1 st	a i (I will go)	na i (I will do)	doi (I will come)	ca i (I will get)
	2 nd	ei di	nei di	doi di	cei di
	3 rd	eith e/hi	neith e/hi	daw e/hi	ceith e/hi
Pl.	1 st	awn ni	nawn ni	down ni	cawn ni
	2 nd	ewch chi	newch chi	dewch chi	cewch chi
	3 rd	ân nhw	nân nhw	dôn nhw	cân nhw

Examples: *Mi °ddo i hefo chdi rŵan.* “I’ll come along with you now.”

Eith hi °ddim hebdat ti. “She won’t go without you.”

Adverbs

There are adverbs derived from other words or primary adverbs in the Welsh language. The derived adverbs is a very large group of words and are formed from adjectives by placing a particle **yn**° before them.

<i>cyflym</i>	quick	<i>yn °gyflym</i>	quickly
<i>gofalus</i>	careful	<i>yn °ofalus</i>	carefully
<i>cyhoeddus</i>	public	<i>yn °gyhoeddus</i>	publically
<i>araf</i>	slow	<i>yn araf</i>	slowly

Siaradwch yn araf os gwelwch yn °dda. “Speak slowly please.”

Darllenwch y llyfr yn °ofalus. “Read the book slowly.”

Then there are a lot of adverbs that have a form of a single word, a short phrase or a prepositional phrase. These might be adverbs of time, place, direction or degree and others. There are a few examples below.

Adverbs of time	Adverbs of place	Adverbs of direction	Adverbs of degree
<i>ar hyn o °bryd</i> “at the moment”	<i>gartre</i> “at home”	<i>i`r dde</i> “to the right”	<i>iawn</i> “very”
<i>bob amser</i> “always”	<i>yno</i> “there”	<i>i`r chwith</i> “to the left”	<i>rhy°</i> “too”
<i>nawr</i> “now”	<i>yma</i> “here”	<i>adre</i> “home”	<i>arbennig o °dda</i> “especially good”
<i>o`r blaen</i> “before”	<i>lan y grisiau</i> “upstairs”	<i>ffordd`na</i> “that way”	<i>ofnadwy o °ddrud</i> “awfully expensive”

Prepositions

Even though some prepositions might have a consistent translation into English- for example *heb*° “without”, most of them can change their English equivalents according to the context and their idiomatic usage. There are currently about twenty-five commonly used prepositions. Most of them cause mutations to the following words and undergo specific rules of inflection with names, nouns and pronouns.

The commonly used prepositions are: *â* (AM), *am°*, *ar°*, *at°*, *cyn*, (o) *dan°*, *dros°*, *efo*, *gan°*, *ger*, *gyda* (AM), *heb°*, *hyd°*, *i°*, *mewn*, *o°*, *oddiar°*, *rhag*, *rhwng*, *tan°*, *trwy°*, *tua* (AM), *wrth°*, *yn* (NM).

As it is seen from the list above, most prepositions cause a soft mutation to the following word:

am°ddim “for nothing”, *dan°ofal* “under care”, *i° Fangor* “to Bangor”, *ar°fwrdd* “on the table”...

When used with pronouns, a linking syllable is inserted in between the preposition and the pronoun. The syllable is specific to each preposition, and a pattern similar to the conjugation of verbs appear. However, there are prepositions which are non-inflecting. Compare the non-inflecting prepositions *gyda* “with” with the inflecting *ar* “on”.

with name: *gyda Sian* *ar Sian*

with noun: *gyda`r ferch* *ar y °ferch*

with pronoun: *gyda hi* *arni hi*

Example of an inflected preposition *ar* “on”:

	singular	plural
1 st	<i>arna i</i>	<i>arnon ni</i>
2 nd	<i>arna ti</i>	<i>arnoch chi</i>
3 rd	<i>arno fo/fe</i> <i>arni hi</i>	<i>arnyn nhw</i>

Naturally, prepositions are very much used in idiomatic language. Examples with the preposition *ar* “on”:

Faint dy arna i i chi? “How much do I owe you?”

Rhowch •gynnig arni! “Give it a try!”

Conjunctions:

There are four coordinating conjunctions that can be used to connect clauses or single words: *a(c)* “and”, *ond* “but”, *neu* “or” and *na(c)* “nor”. There are of course many more conjunctions conveying a whole variety of meanings and determining different status between the clauses. Examples might be: *achos* “because”, *ar ôl* “after”, *cyn* “before”, *ers* “since”, *wedi* “after”, *wrth* “while” and others.

Materials:

MacAulay Donald: *The Celtic Languages, The Welsh Language* written by Alan R. Thomas, Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Gareth King: *Modern Welsh: A Comprehensive Grammar*. London, 2003

Late Cornish

Cornish language is most closely related to Breton. It was spoken by the Celtic inhabitants of southwest England who remained after their neighbours migrated to Brittany in the sixth and seventh centuries, when the Anglo-Saxons spread over south England and cut the Cornish people from their Welsh neighbours (who both spoke dialects of British). The Anglo-Saxon migration also caused some of the Cornish communities to move to Armorica, which was then by the Celtic new inhabitants, named as Bretagne.

(Transl. ad. Václav Blažek, *Keltské Jazyky* and taken from Fortson, *Indo-European Linguistics*, 2010, p. 334)

Conventionally, there are three historical periods ascribed to the Cornish language@

Old Cornish period includes the first texts written in Cornish, which were almost without exception religious glosses (annotations) from the 9th cent. In the year 1100, the longest Cornish text of this period was written - *Vocabularium Cornicum* „Cornish Vocabulary“. In the earlier medieval era, Cornish was also spoken in Devon and western part of Somerset. However, already in the 10th century, it was completely confined to the present area of Cornwall.

Middle Cornish describes the Cornish language between the 14th and 16th century. In the earlier medieval era, Cornish was also spoken in Devon and western part of Somerset. However, already in the 10th century, it was completely confined to the present area of Cornwall. From this period, there are about 10 000 preserved lines, mostly translated from English, from so-called miracle plays - religious theatre pieces. Towards the end of this period, at the beginning of the 17th century, the estimated number of Cornish speakers was not higher than 20 000. The numbers continued to drop, until, about a century later, only about 5000 speakers still used Cornish as their native tongue.

Late Cornish is the last century of Cornish existence as the first language and is dated from the end of the 17th century until the death of the last native speaker Dolly Pentraeth of Mousehole in 1777.

Today, revival of the Cornish languages is supported - and the product of these efforts is called **Neo-Cornish** (Kernewek) or also **modern Cornish**. In the last few decades, Cornish has been once again actively used by a few communities in the region as their second language.

In this assignment, a **late Cornish** version will be dealt with, for it is the real “modern” form of this Brythonic language, even though it is no longer spoken. Late Cornish speakers called their language *Curnoack* [kərnuək]: *Curnow* [kərno] Cornwall or Cornish person linked with a suffix (adjectival marker) – [ək] usually used to denote languages.

As all modern Celtic languages, the Cornish was, especially in its late period heavily influenced by English. Amongst the most significant features belong: the overuse of the definite article (the definite article is used more times in one clause), the use of the English plural marker (-s): *poscaders* “fishermen”, the usage of uninflected preposition at the end of clauses, the preferred use of [gwe:r] “green” at the expense of [gla:z] “grue- blue and green”

which has been traditionally used in Celtic languages to describe plants, some words of English origin used side by side with their more traditional equivalents.

There are no clearly discernable dialectal variations, since the area where late Cornish was spoken was quite limited and most surviving information comes from West Penwith peninsula. There is a dialectal alternation, however, between medial **-dʒ-** in western Cornwall as opposed to medial **-z-** in mid-Cornwall. It is also possible, that the pre-occlusion of **-n** and **-m** to **-dn** and **-dm** represents a dialectal variation rather than a diachronic difference.

Cornish alphabet and pronunciation

Cornish alphabet

A a	B b	Ch ch	D d	E e	F f	G g	H h
a	be	cha	de	e	ev	ge	ha
I i	J j	K k	L l	M m	N n	O o	P p
i	je	ka	el	em	en	o	pe
R r	S s	T t	U u	V v	W w	Y y	
er	es	te	u	ve	we	ye	

Pronunciation (Common Cornish/Kernewek Kemmyn)

Vowels

a	e	eu	i	o	oe	ou	u	y
[a~a:]	[ɛ~ɛ:]	[œ:]	[i:]	[ɔ~ɔ:]	[y~o:]	[u:]	[y:]	[ɪ~ɪ:]

Consonants

b	ch	d	dh	f	g	gh	h	hw
[b]	[tʃ]	[d]	[ð]	[f]	[g]	[x]	[h]	[ʍ]
j	k	l	m	n	ng	p	r	s
[dʒ]	[k]	[l]	[m]	[n]	[ŋ]	[p]	[r]	[s]
t	th	v	w	y				
[t]	[θ]	[v]	[w]	[j]				

Taken from: <https://www.omniglot.com/writing/cornish.htm>

The Common Cornish orthography version (Kernewek Kemmyn) was devised by Dr Ken George and was adopted by the Cornish Language Board in the 1980`s. Even though this system found a lot of opposition, it is currently the most popular version in use.

The greatest inconsistency throughout the orthographies is the different way the vowel [ə] is represented. Across all possibilities, it might be “e”, “eu”, “u”, “uy”, “o”, or “ey”, so for example the word [mər] “big” can appear as “meur”, “mur”, “mer” or “meyr”. As for consonants, the symbol ʒ may in some cases refer to [ð].

All vowels in late Cornish, except of [ə], could be long or short.

There are a few diphthongs, four with **w**: **iw**, **ew**, **aw**, **ow** and possibly free with **j**: **əj**, **oj** and **uj**.

Mutations

As it is the case in all other Celtic languages, Cornish is characterised by mutations of initial consonants in various word classes. There are complex rules taking into account many grammatical considerations. In late Cornish, there are three separate groups of mutations: lenition, spirantisation and provection. Lenition or soft mutation, as it is preferred to be sometimes called (especially in Welsh) involves voicing plosives and frictionalisation of the voiced stops. Spirantisation is manifested by frictionalisation of voiceless plosives and provection devoices the voiced plosives. Below, see a chart of initial consonant mutations:

lenition	spirantisation	provection
<i>k - g</i>	<i>k - h</i>	<i>g - k</i>
<i>t - d</i>	<i>t - θ</i>	<i>d - t</i>
<i>p - b</i>	<i>p - f</i>	<i>b - p</i>
<i>g - ø</i>		
<i>d - ð</i>		
<i>b - v</i>		
<i>m - v</i>		
<i>gw - w</i>		

Lenition is the most common of all applied mutations and there are several triggers putting its rules into practise. The lenition is especially linked to the usage of feminine nouns- it is for example applied to the first letter in the feminine noun if it is preceded by a definite article **an** or after some possessive determiners- **his**, **your**:

an drea [an dre] “the town” <*tre* [tre] (f.)

an wethan [an weðən] “the tree” <*gwethan* [an gweðən] (f.)

y gi [i gəj] “his dog” <*kyy* [kəj]

the vara [ðə varə] “your bread” <*bara* [barə]

Spirantisation is applied after possessive determiners **ə** “my”, **i** “her” and **(a'gə)** “their”. In the middle Cornish, this mutation class was also triggered by the numeral “three” **trəj**, but this was not shown in any of the late Cornish examples.

oh thees [ə θi:z] “my men” <*teez* [ti:z]

i hodna [i hodnə] “her neck” <*codna* [kodnə]

ago phidn [agə fedn] “their head” <*pedn* [pedn]

Provection is caused by **mar**[mar] “if” and the pre-verbal particle **a** [ə] which precedes verb-nouns.

mar peth traveeth gwrez [mar pe:ð tra've:θ gre:z] “if nothing is done” (LIT if is nothing done)
<*bith* [be:ð]

a toaz [ə to:z] “coming” <*doaz* [do:z]

In the Middle Cornish, there was also the mixed mutation; however, this was in most cases replaced by lenition in Late Cornish. The only case this mutation was used in Late Cornish was with the adjective *da* [da:] “good” with the adverbial particle *en* and *maga* [magə] “as”:

maga ta [magə ta:] “as well” <*da* [da:] “good”

There are also a number of traces of nasal mutation following the definite article:

an nore [an no:r] “the earth” <*daor* [do:r] “earth”

Nouns

In Cornish, nouns have no cases. Only number and gender can be marked.

Number

Most commonly, singular is the unmarked form. However, as in other Celtic languages, in some cases, the singular noun may be the marked form:

goan [gu:n] “moor” → pl. *gunneau* [gunjo] “moors” (Pl. suffix –**o**)

hazan [hazən] “a seed” ← pl. *haze* [ha:z] “seed” (a group) (Sg. suffix – **ən**)

There is a great number of plural suffixes. The most commonly used, however, is –**o** (and its variant –**jo**):

jowloo [dʒowlo] “devils” <*jowle*

gerriau [gerjo] “eords” <*geer*

Other frequently used plural suffixes are –**jan**, –**i**, –**əð**, – **əs**, –**s**.

The plural ending –**jan** is usually used to denote a group of people:

prounterian [**pronterjan**] <*pronter* [**prontər**] “priest”

Below are some other examples of frequently used plural suffixes:

esily [əzili] “limbs” <*esel* [ezəl] “limb”

gwregath [gregəð] “wives” <*gwreag* [gre:g] “wife”

tereath [tɪrəð] “lands” <*tîr* [ti:r] “land”

poskas [pəskəs] “fish” <*pesk* [pe:sk] “a fish”

horroz [horəs] “rams” <*horr* [hor] “ram”

The plural suffix **–s** is an English influence and was mainly used with English loan-words, like for example *clappiers* [klapjərs] “speakers”, however, it was also applied to nouns of Celtic origin with an **–ər** ending: *poscadars* [pəskadərs] “fishermen” <*pÿsgadar* [pəskadər] “fisherman”.

There are also plurals formed by means of internal affection:

denz [denz] “teeth” <*danz* [danz] “tooth”

devaz [devəs] “sheep” <*davaz* [davəs] “a sheep”

ean [e:n] “lambs” <*oan* [o:n] “lamb”

A **dual** form with *dew* (f. *diw*) is used for the pair body parts:

brodn [brodn] >*devran* [divran] “breasts”

pednglin [pedn'gli:n] >*pedndowlin* [pedndowlin] “knees”

However, many duals were lost as compared to Middle Cornish, since the dual forms were replaced with suffixed plurals:

lagaz [lagəs] “eye” >*lagagow* [lagadʒo] “eyes”

gar [gar] “leg” >*garro* [garo] “legs”

The Article

Like most Celtic languages, Cornish lacks indefinite article. The definite article *an* [ən]/[an] is softened reduced before consonants to *a* [ə]: *a venen* [a venən] “the woman”; *an deez* [an di:z] “the men”

Gender

There are two grammatical genders for nouns: masculine and feminine. The fact whether the noun is masculine or feminine decides upon its possible mutation. Generally, in masculine nouns, there are no mutations (there are exceptions, however, like for example plurals referring to condition or occupation of men that triggers lenition after the definite article: [klevjən] “sick people” >*an glevyan* [an glevjən] “the sick” (pl.)). A noun of a feminine gender may cause a mutation to a following adjective or may undergo a lenition while preceded by the definite article. However, it is important to note, that the plural form of feminine nouns are not lenited, nor do they cause a lenition to the following adjective.

chy [tʃəj] “house” (m.) > [an tʃəj biən] “the small house” (no mutation)

benen [benən] “woman” (f.) > [an venən viən] “the small woman” (mutation of the noun as well as of the adjective)

[an benenəs biən] “the small women” (f. pl.) (no mutation)

Adjectives

The Adjectives in Cornish almost always follow the noun they describe and remain invariable, except for their comparative and superlative forms. They undergo a lenition while following a singular feminine noun.

bennen younk [benən joŋk] “a young woman”

bennen vaaz [benən va:z] “a good woman”

dên kôth [de:n ko:θ] “an old man”

Amongst the few exceptions of adjectives that come before nouns belong the adjective “ugly” *hagar* [hagər] and a small number of English origin adjectives:

hagar musi [hagər vozi] “ugly girls” (mutation of the noun after adjective)

hagar auall [hagər awəl] “storm” LIT “ugly wind”

hujeth tra [hiwdzə tra] “a huge thing”

hugez meneth euhall [hiwdzə menəð iwəl] “an exceedingly high mountain”

Comparatives and superlatives

Comparative and superlative forms are both made by adding a suffix *-a[-ə]* and can be from each another distinguished only by the definite article, which comes with the superlative:

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative
[bro:z] “big”	[bro:sə] “bigger”	[an bro:sə] “the biggest”

The suffix *-a[-ə]* unvoices the final consonant or the consonant clusters it is attached to:

hagar [hagər] “ugly” > (an) *hackra* [(an) hakrə] “uglier/the ugliest”

teag [te:g] “beautiful” > (an) *tecka* [(an) tekə] “more beautiful/the most beautiful”.

Changing adjectives to their comparative and superlative forms may also cause lengthening of sonants and doubling *-n-* to *-nn-* which led to a further, regular change to *-dn-*, *-tn-*:

kear [ke:r] “dear” > *kerra* [kerə] “more precious”

bean [biən] “small” > (*an*) *behathna* [(an) bihatnə] “smaller/the smallest”

There are a few irregular comparative and superlative forms from which, there are a few most commonly used chosen in the table below:

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative
[liəs] “many”	<i>mouy</i> [mu:j] “more”	<i>an moya</i> [an mu:jə] “the most”
[da:] “good”	<i>gwel</i> [gwel] “better”	<i>an gwella</i> [an gwelə] “the best”
[dro:g] “bad”	<i>gwaeth</i> [gwe:θ] / <i>lacka</i> [lakə] “worse”	<i>an gwela</i> [an gweθə]/[an lakə] “the worst”
[nebəs] “few, little”	<i>le</i> [le:] less	<i>an leha</i> [an leə] “the least”
[ogəs] “near”	<i>nêz</i> [ne:z] “nearer”	<i>an nessa</i> [an nesə] “the nearest”

Superlatives forms are usually placed before the noun they describe, even though, there are some exceptions to this rule. Compare:

an brossa mine [an brosə məjn] “the biggest stones”

an gwella ternuan [an gwelə ternuən] “the best side”

with

an cor gwella [an kor gwelə] “the best beer”

an Dew euhella [an diw iwelə] “the highest God”

When using comparisons in sentences, *vel* [vel] “than” is used:

kerra vel au'r [kerə vel owr] “more precious than gold”

To express equativity in sentences, a phrase (*ma*)*gə... vel* “as ... as” is applied:

kÿ güêr vel güelz [gə gwe:r vel an gwelz] “as green as grass”

However, while followed by a verbal form, the phrase changes to (*ma*)*gə... tər* “as ... as”:

magga pel ter el eve heathes [magə pel tər el e:v heðəs] “as far as he can reach”

Demonstrative particles

There are two demonstrative particles: *ma* “this” and *na* “that”. Just like in Welsh, these are placed immediately after a noun with a definite article:

a tacklow ma [**a taklo ma**] “these things”

an powna [**an pow na**] “that district”

However, when the noun is followed by one or more adjectives, the demonstrative particle comes after the last adjective:

an gwas bras sigirma [**an gwa:z bro:z zigər na**] “that big lazy fellow”

Colours

Colours represent a fascinating topic in linguistics. The basic colours of Celtic origin that were used in Late Cornish were: *due* [diw] “black”, *gwidden* [gwidn] “white”, *loos* [lu:z] “grey”, *galze* [gla:z] “all hues of blue and green together with some hues of grey”, *reeth* [ri:ð] “red” and *mellon* [melən] “yellow”. *Güêr* [gwe:r] “green” was a loan word from Latin.

Traditionally, in Cornish, as well as Welsh, the *galze* [gla:z] was used to refer to the verdancy of plants, and this word was used to describe all hues of blues and greens together with some hues of grey. However, in Late Cornish, it seems that *güêr* [gwe:r] “green” replaced *galze* [gla:z] in order to describe the greenery of plants and grass and even *bloü* “blue” was introduced into the equation, meaning that the original *galze* [gla:z] most probably would not be any longer used for “blue”. There were also other colours mentioned in Late Cornish, but they were compound words, like for example *kigliü* [kigliw] “pink” LIT “meat colour” and *ruthvelyn* [riðvelən] “orange” LIT “red yellow”.

Personal pronouns

In Cornish personal pronouns, gender is marked only in the 3rd person singular. The 2nd person plural has also become, probably in Late Cornish, a formal way of addressing “you” in a singular meaning- very much like in Welsh (*ti/chi* “you” informal/ “you” formal).

Independent personal pronouns:

	singular	plural
1 st	[mi] “I, me”	[nəj] “we, us”
2 nd	[tʃi] “you”	[wəj] “you”
3 rd	(m.) [e:(v)] “he, him” (f.) [həj] “she, her”	[(ən')dʒəj ~ əj] “they, them”

The only suffixed personal pronoun which takes upon itself a different form is *vi* “I, me” in Late Cornish. All the others have the identical forms.

Possessive determiners

	singular	plural
1 st	[ə]/[mə]+ spirantization “my”	[(a)gən] “our”
2 nd	[ðə] + lenition “your”	[(a)gəs] “your”
3 rd	(m.) [i] + lenition “his” (f.) [i] + spirantization “her”	[(a)gə] + spirantization “their”

Usually, possessive determiners are found as object pronouns preceding verbs:

e rat ha rowlia [e ra ðə rowljə] “he will rule you” (sg.) LIT “... your ruling”.

me vedn e thone [mi vedn i ðo:n] “I will carry it” LIT “...its carrying”

Just like in Welsh, the possessive determiners preceding the nouns they refer to, were with time reinforced by a corresponding post=positioned personal pronouns (in case of the 1st sg, the form of independent personal pronoun *vi* is used rather than *mi*):

a bredyr vi [ə bredər vi] “my brothers”

gun tavaz ny [gən tavəs nəj] “our language”

This dual marking of possessive adjectives made the gradual replacement of the possessive determiner by the personal pronoun possible. Very similar phenomenon happened in spoken Welsh in the 20th century:

wreag vee [gre:g vi] “my wife”

kar ve [ka:r vi] “my friend”

dreav nye [tre:v nəj] “our village”

lagagow an gie [lagadʒo ən'dʒəj] “their eyes”

Numerals

Late Cornish counting system shows both, vigesimal and decimal based characteristics. There are numbers 10-20 repeated 30-39, 50-59, 70-79 and 90-99.

Below is the chart of Late Cornish numerals, cardinal and ordinal:

	Cardinal	Ordinal
0	<i>mann, zero</i>	
1	<i>onen</i> [ənən]; <i>idden/ydn</i> [idn] (before noun)	<i>kensa</i> [kenzə]
2	<i>deaw</i> [dew] (m.); <i>dew</i> [diw] (f.)	<i>nessa</i> [nesə]
3	<i>try</i> [trəj] (m.); <i>tayr</i> [təjr] (f.)	<i>tridga</i> [tridzə]
4	<i>pager</i> [padzər] (m.); <i>pider</i> [pedər] (f.)	<i>padgurra</i> [padzorə]
5	<i>pemp</i> [pemp]	<i>pempas</i> [pempəs]
6	<i>hwea</i> [we:]	<i>wheffas</i> [wefəs]
7	<i>zith</i> [zəjθ]	<i>sithas</i> [zəjθəs]
8	<i>eath</i> [e:θ]	<i>eathas</i> [eθəs]
9	<i>naw</i> [naw]	<i>nawas</i> [nawəs]
10	<i>deag</i> [de:g]	<i>deagvas</i> [degvəs]
11	<i>ednack</i> [ednək]	<i>ydn'hakvas</i> [ednegvəs]
12	<i>dowthack</i> [dowðək]	<i>dowthegvas</i> [dowðegvəs]
13	<i>tarthack</i> [tarðək]	
14	<i>puzwarthack</i> [pədzwarðək]	
15	<i>punthack</i> [pənθək]	
16	<i>whettak</i> [wetək]	

17	<i>zitack</i> [zəjtək]	
18	<i>itack</i> [əjtək]	
19	<i>nownjack</i> [nowndzək]	
20	<i>iggans</i> [igəns]	<i>iganzvath</i> [igənzvəs]
21	<i>onen warn iggans</i> [ənən war n igəns]	
22	<i>deaw warn iggans</i> [dew war n igəns]	
30	<i>deg warn iggans</i> [de:g war n igəns]	
40	<i>duganz</i> [dugəns]	
50	<i>hanter kanz</i> [hantər kanz] <i>deg ha duganz</i> [de:g ha dugəns]	
60	<i>tri uganz</i> [tri igəns]	
70	<i>deg ha tri uganz</i> [de:g ha tri igəns]	
80	<i>pager egance</i> [padzər igəns]	
90	<i>padzhar hanz ha dêg</i> [padzər igəns ha de:g]	
100	<i>kanz</i> [kanz]	
1000	<i>meel</i> [mi:l]	

There more examples of the order the individual numbers are ordered within compound numerals (similar tendencies are found in spoken Welsh):

deg ha duganz [de:g ha dugəns] “50”

douthak ha dogans [dowðək ha dugəns] “52”

try egence a pemp [trəj igəns ha pemp] “65”

Noun follows the number. When the numeral is compound, the noun follows the first element:

whe sithon warn egans [we: zəjθən war n igəns] “26 weeks”

Generally, when units are added to decimals, conjunction *ha* “and” is used. However, numbers 21-39 use the preposition *warn* [war] “on” instead:

dewghans ha try [dugəns ha trəj] “43”

onen warn iggans [ənən war n igəns] “21”

deaw warn iggans [dew war n igəns] “22”

Number “one” has two forms. The form *onen* [ənən] is independent, whereas the form *idden/ydn*[idn] is used before noun and causes lenition to feminine nouns:

ow onyn perfect [ə ənən pɛrfəkt] “my perfect one”

ydn marh [idn mar] “one horse”

ydn dra [idn dra] “one thing”

In Late Cornish, numerals don't tend to cause mutations as it is usual in Welsh, for example. The exception is the number “2”, whose both- masculine and feminine forms cause lenition and are themselves lenited by the definite article.

an dhêaü [an ðew] “the two”

Ordinal numbers usually precede nouns:

an kensa journa [an kenzə dʒurnə] “the first day”

an nisau blethan [an nesə bleðən] “the next year”

Verbs and verbal structures

The regular verbs of Late Cornish period have kept a reduced conjugation system, and only a small number of auxiliary verbs have been preserved in all their conjugations. These few auxiliary verbs are: *bo:z* “being”, *gwi:l* “doing, making”, *godas* “knowing”, *mednə* “willing” and *galləs* “being able”. The scarcity of the conjugated forms may be connected with the common use of the SVO construction pattern of sentences in Late Cornish which meant that the commonest conjugated form was the 3sg.

There are six tenses and moods in Late Cornish: present, present subjunctive, past, preterite, future and conditional. The punctual present and past originally existed only in the case of the verb *bo:z* “being”, while all other verbs only had the habitual present form (which also served for future) and habitual past (which also served as conditional). The original punctual present and past conjugations of *bo:z* “being” have developed to express the habitual present and past in Late Cornish. So for example:

therama suppoga “I suppose” LIT “I am supposing”

therama pederee “I think” LIT “I am thinking”

thera ni güelez “We see” LIT “we are seeing”

In some other verbs, we can also see the lack of distinction between the punctual and habitual past and present tenses.

theram cara whye e`n colan “I love you (pl.) in the heart” LIT “I am loving you...”

Although in Late Cornish, the conjugation of verbs was broadly analytic, forms we may call synthetic also existed. There were syntetic variants for all singular masculine persons and also for the 3 Pl. The 3 Pl syntetic variants seem to be older in usage. The syntetic form of the 2pl. only survived into the 17th century in the case of the present tense and the imperative.

	analytic	syntetic	
1sg. (locat.)	[erə vi]	[erəmə]	“I am”
3sg. (locat.)	[ma e]	[mavə]	“he is”
1sg. (desc.)	[o vi]	[omə]	“I am”
2sg. (desc.)	[o tʃi]	[ostə]	“you (sg.) are”
3sgm. (desc.)	[ew e]	[ewə]	“he is”
3sg. (desc.)	[o:ə]	[ovə]	“he was”
1sg. (cond.)	[mendʒə vi]	[mendʒəmə]	“I would”
3sg. (cond.)	[galdʒə e]	[galdʒəvə]	“he could”
3pl. pres. (locat.)	[man'dʒəj]	[monz]	“they are”
3pl. pres. (desc.)	[en'dʒəj]	[enz]	“they are”
3pl. pres. (subj.)	[bon'dʒəj]	[bonz]	“they are”
3pl. fut. and pres.	[gran'dʒəj]	[granz]	“they do”
3pl. pret.	[grigən'dʒəj]	[grigən(s)]	“they did”

Verb *bos*[**bo:z**] “being”

The present and past forms of the irregular verb *bos*[**bo:z**] differ in positive and negative statements, as well as in questions:

Initial positive statement: [**θ erə vi/ θ o vi**]“I am”

Dependent positive statement: [... **erə vi/... o vi**] “...I am”

Positive question: [**erə vi? / o vi?**]“am I?”

Negative statement: [**nag erə vi / nag o vi**] “I am not”

Negative question: [**nag er bos[bo:z]**] “being”

vi? / nag o vi? “am I not?”

As we can see from the sentences above, positive statements are preceded by the particle *eth* [θ]. Dependent positive statements follow a phrase and negative statements and questions are preceded by the negative particle *nag* [**nag**]. In positive questions, there used to be an interrogative particle *a* at the beginning of the sentence, but it ceased to be used in the Late Cornish period.

There are descriptive and locative forms in the past and present tenses. The locative forms are used while giving a location of the subject:

thera vi ybma [θ erə vi: əbmə] “I am here”

Future of bos[bo:z] “being”

	singular	plural
1 st	[bedə vi ~ beðəmə]	[beðə nəj]
2 nd	[beðə tʃi ~ bestə]	[beðə wəj]
3 rd masculine	[be:ð e ~ beðə]	[beðən dʒəj ~ beðəns]
3 rd feminine	[be:ð həj]	

Preterite of bos[bo:z] “being”

	singular	plural
1 st	[bi vi ~ bimə]	[bi nəj]
2 nd	[bi tʃi ~ bistə]	[bi wəj]
3 rd masculine	[bi e ~ bivə]	[bindʒəj ~ bonz]
3 rd feminine	[bi həj]	

The construction of **possession** based on the 3rd sg. of [**bo:z**] should be translated as “having” rather than “being”:

mee a vee owne [**mi a vi: own**] “I was frightened” LIT “I had fright”

termen arall why veth moye [**termən arəl wəj we:ð muj**] “another time you will have more”

Verb [gwi:l] “doing, making”

The conjugated forms of the verb [gwi:l] are used only as auxiliary verbs linked to other verb-nouns:

t e ra guile whele [tʃi ra gwi:l wel] “you will do work”

	future and present	
	singular	plural
1 st	[gra vi ~ gramə]	[gra nəj]
2 nd	[gra tʃi ~ grastə]	[gra wəj ~ greo]
3 rd masculine	[gra e ~ gravə]	[gran'dʒəj ~ granz]
3 rd feminine	[gra həj]	
	preterite	
	singular	plural
1 st	[grigə vi ~ grigəmə]	[grigə nəj]
2 nd	[grigə tʃi ~ gristə]	[grigə wəj]
3 rd masculine	[grig e ~ grigəvə / gra:z]	[grigən'dʒəj ~ grigən(s)]
3 rd feminine	[grig həj]	
	conditional and past habitual	
	singular	plural
1 st	[gresə vi ~ gresəmə]	[gresə nəj]
2 nd	[gresə tʃi ~ grestə]	[gresə wəj]
3 rd masculine	[gresə e ~ gresəvə]	[gresən'dʒəj ~ gresən(s)]
3 rd feminine	[gresə həj]	

Verb *gallus* [galəs] “being able to”

The verb *gallus* “being able to” also fulfils the role of an auxiliary verb.

present (with possible additional future meaning)		
	singular	plural
1 st	[gelə vi ~ geləmə]	[gelə nəj]
2 nd	[gelə tʃi ~ geləstə]	[gelə wəj]
3 rd masculine	[gel e ~ geləvə]	[gelən'dʒəj ~ geləns]
3 rd feminine	[gel həj]	
conditional and past habitual		
	singular	plural
1 st	[galdʒə vi ~ galdʒəmə]	[gorə nəj]
2 nd	[galdʒə tʃi ~ galdʒəstə]	[gorə wəj]
3 rd masculine	[galdʒə e ~ galdʒəvə]	[gorən'dʒəj]
3 rd feminine	[galdʒə həj]	

Example sentences:

gy el e glowas [ən'dʒəj el i glowəs] “they can hear him” (LIT “... his hearing”)

elo why clavier Kernuack? [elə wəj kləpjə kərnuək] “Can you speak Cornish?”

Negation

Na/nag is a negative particle in Late Cornish negative sentences and causes a lenition of the first letter in the following verb. The form *nag* is used before a vowel except for the case when because of the lenition *g* is dropped.

na ges travith [na e:z tra ve:θ] “there is nothing”

nag ô an vartshants [nag o: an vartʃənts] “the merchants were not”

na vedn an Arleth [na vedn an arləð] “the Lord will not”

na olguma e clappia [na aldʒəmə i glapyə] “I could not speak it”

Questioning

Originally, an interrogative particle in positive questions was *a*, however, this elided before the Late Cornish period, leaving behind it, as a trace, the lenition of the following verb:

yü an vëz na gÿz hôr? [ew an vo:z na gəz ho:r] “is that girl your sister?”

ez kêz? [e:z ke:z] “is there cheese?”

elo why clapier kernuack? [elə wəj klapjə kərnua:k?] “Can you speak Cornish?”

To indicate a negative questions, the negative particle *Na/nag* is used:

nag ez? [na:g e:z] “Is there not?”

The difference between a negative questions and statement is therefore just in the tone.

Answering

Just like in other modern Celtic languages, there is not a single word expressing *yes/no*. The verb or the auxiliary verb is used instead to indicate positive or negative respond. However, the Late Cornish variants *eea* [iə] “yes” and *na* [na] “no” were used in specific cases and don't seem to be loanwords from English.

Past participle

Past participle is marked by adding *-əs* to the verb base. Below, there are a few examples of past participles together with the matching verb-nouns.

verb-noun	verb base	past participle
<i>kelly</i> [keli]	[kol-]	<i>kelles</i> [keləs] “lost”
<i>ladha</i>	[laðə]	<i>lethez</i> [leðəs] “killed”
	[gan-]	<i>gennez</i> [genəs] “born”

There are some commonly used irregular past participles:

verb-noun	past participle
[do:z] “coming”	<i>devethez</i> [døvedəs] “came, has come”
[mo:z] “going”	<i>gellez</i> [geləs] “went, has gone”
[gwi:l] “doing”	<i>gwreaze</i> [gre:z] “did, has done”

Past participle was in Late Cornish used principally to convey the perfect tense, passives together with the 3rd of the preterite tense of the verb *to be*:

me a hunnen ve gennez... en Collan [me ə hənən vi: genəs ... en kolən] “I myself was born in Collan”

Order of the elements in a sentence

In Neo-Celtic languages, the VSO (verb – subject – object) order of the elements within a sentence is often stressed as one of the most notable characteristics. In Late Cornish, the above mentioned order of elements is found only in the present and past conjugations of the verb **bo:z** “being”, and the most natural component order within a sentence is SVO (subject – verb – object). In positive statements, the present and past conjugations of **bo:z** “being” mostly prefer a verb-fronted order. In all other cases, a subject-fronted construction is used:

me ra bose [**mi ra bo:z**] “I will be”

Deew a ore [**diw a o:r**] “God knows”

ni venja pea [**nəj vendʒə peə**] “we would pay”

However, if the sentence is a question or a negative, it keeps its VSO structure.

Some auxiliaries

To express “can, be able to”, the verb [**galəs**] “can” is used:

gy el e glowas [**ən'dʒəj el i glowəs**] “they can hear him”

mî ôr môs [**mi o:r mo:z**] “I can go”

To express “should, ought to”, the 3rd sg. of the verb [**koðə**] “falling” was used:

me a goth... gorthya Dew [**mi a go:ð gorjə diw**] “I should worship God”

Prepositions

As in other Celtic languages, in Cornish language, prepositions are inflected. Some prepositions are regularly inflected (like for example *urt* “at, by”; *thurt* “from” or *en* “in”), while others are less regular (like for example *genz* “with”; *war* “on” or *a* “of”).

For example:

[**genəmə**] “with me” < [**genz**] “with”

[**ðəðə**] “to him” < [**ðə**] “to”

[**ragə wəj**] “for you” < [**rag**] “for”

Below is an example of the inflected form of the preposition [ðə] “to”

	singular	plural
1 st	[ðə vi ~ ðemə]	[ðə nəj ~ ðən]
2 nd	[ðə tʃi ~ ðiz]	[ðə wəj ~ ðəo]
3 rd masculine	[ðə e ~ ðəðə]	[ðə n'dʒəj ~ ðəðə(ns)]
3 rd feminine	[ðə həj ~ ðəði]	

Materials:

Iwan Wmffre: *Late Cornish*. München. 1998

MacAulay Donald: *The Celtic Languages, The Cornish Language* written by Alan R. Thomas, Cambridge University Press, 1992.

The Gaelic languages

Irish Language

History of Irish

The proper name of Ireland is *Ériu* (W. *Iwerydd*).

The oldest documented words of goidelic origin are found in **Ptolemy`s** *Geography* (around 150 AD), where in the description of Ireland, he mentioned more than 30 place and tribal names.

Proto-Goidelic

This language is considered a prehistoric ancestor of Irish, and was spoken in Ireland at least at the beginning of the Christian era, if not earlier.

Primitive Irish (Ogam Irish)

The earliest preserved Irish is found in about 300 stone inscriptions written in **Ogam** (**Ogham**) script. The origin of the Ogam script is unknown and most of the inscriptions originate in southern Ireland and date back between the fourth and seventh centuries AD. Usually, they represent short burial inscriptions.

Tradition names for Ogam letters have come down to us in medieval manuscripts. Often tree names are used for the names of the individual letters, but many of the identifications are dubious. Also not all original phonological values of the Ogam letters are absolutely clear.

In the **fifth century**, Ireland converted to Christianity and this resulted in the introduction of the **Roman alphabet**. In the following two centuries, the Irish language changed radically and started resembling the Irish we know from the most popular medieval Irish literature.

Old Irish

Approximately from the **seventh to the mid-900s**.

Religious manuscripts brought to the Continent (Milan, Turin, Würzburg) by Irish missionaries in the **eighth and ninth** centuries represent our only contemporary documentation of the Old Irish classical period (commentaries on the psalms). They survived on the Continent, for nobody understood them and they were not worn out from continuous use and recopied with modernized spellings.

Many texts that have survived were copied into much later manuscripts.

Old Irish possesses an extremely high number of phonemes in comparison to other European languages (esp. consonants). 18 letters are thus used to express 66 sounds, which means that on average, every letter has more than 3 sound meanings.

In modern Irish, the number of phonemes was reduced to 52. This is dealt with by introducing **broad** and **slender** consonants (**palatalization**)- further dealt with in the text below.

Middle Irish

10-13th century

There were a lot of far-reaching changes in the morphological system of the language- simplification of verb conjugations and reduction of phonemes. In the old Irish, for example, the article, noun and adjective, all inflected for nominative, vocative, accusative, genitive and dative cases in singular, plural and dual in masculine, feminine and neuter gender. With time, during the middle Irish period, the flectional system of the spoken language was gradually declining.

By the end of the 13th century, the language was effectively as we know it today.

Modern Irish

The modern Irish period begins with the codification of a normative form of the language by bards and other literary elite in the **13th century**. In the early 1600s, however, different regional varieties appeared (Munster, Connacht and Ulster)- they exist until these days.

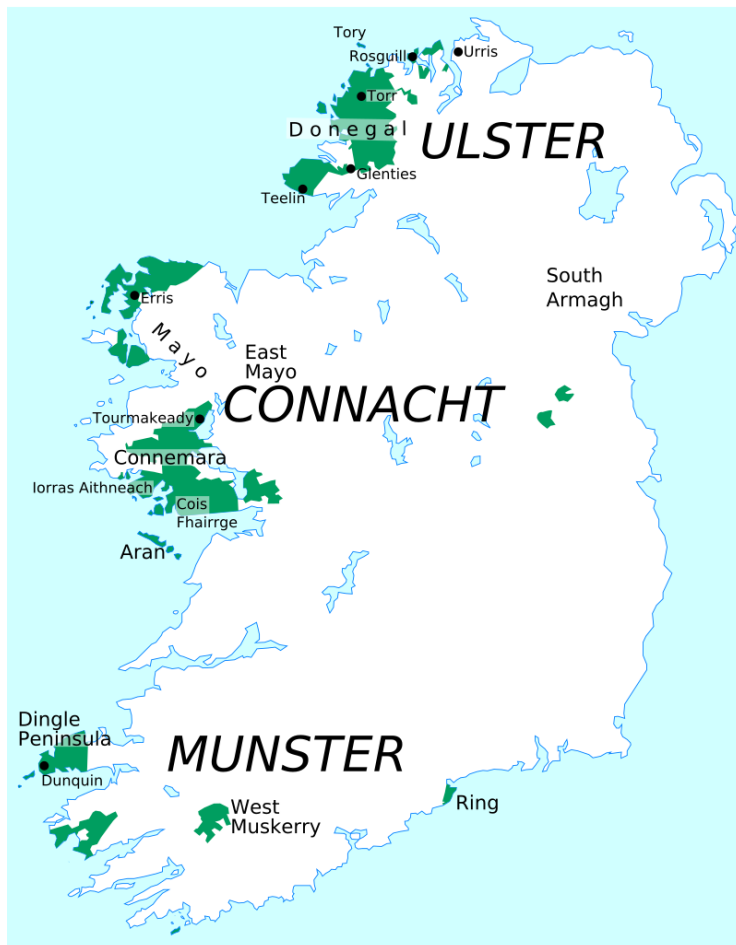
During the **17th century**, Ireland received an English speaking ruling class and the status of the Irish language quickly deteriorated and became a language of the rural poor. During the **potato famine** (1845-1849) much of the Irish speaking population died and about a million and a half migrated into America.

During the twentieth century, the historically rich case-inflection of nouns has been largely abandoned and Irish grammar became simplified.

Today, more people learn Irish as L2, but the future of the Irish speaking community, *Gaeltacht*, remains uncertain.

Pronunciation

Modern Irish has threedialectal variants: Ulster, Connacht and Munster. At the present moment, there is no standard spoken pronunciation. The notes below give approximate sound values as compared to English. Irish is a language very rich in sounds- especially consonants. This fact makes the Irish phonetical system and its reading quite complicating.



The map depicting the main Irish accents. Taken from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaeltacht#/media/File:Gaeltachtaí_Le_hainmneacha2.sv

Vowels

There are five basic vowels in Irish represented by letters *a*, *e*, *i*, *o* and *u*, each of them can be pronounced as either short or long. The difference between the short and long vowels can indicate the meaning.

a [a]	cat “cat”
á [a:]	lá “day”
e [e]	te “hot”
é [é]	mé “i, me”
i [i]	sin “that”
í [i:]	mín “smooth”
o [o]	donn “brown”
ó [o:]	mór “big”
u [u]	bus “bus”
ú [u:]	cúl “back”

The vowels can combine in a large variety of ways in Modern Irish. In many cases, the pronunciation of vowel combination vary in different accents (amongst the main variants, we count the Ulster, the Connacht and the Munster accents).

ai [a:]	caile “chalk”
ao [i:]/[ei]	saol “life”
ea [a:]	fear “man”
eá [a:]/ [io]	meán “middle”
eái [a:]/ [io]	coinn eáil “keeping”
ái [a:]/ [oi]	páirc “field”
ei [e]	peil “football”
ae [e:]	tae “tea”
éa [e:]/[ie]	béal “mouth”
éi [ei]	féin “self”
aei [ei]	traein train”
ia [i:a]	bia “food”
io [ə]/ [iu]	fíonn “fair”
aí [i:]	scéalaí “storyteller”
oí [i:]	oíche “night”
uí [i:]	suí “sitting”
uío [ui:]	buíochas “thanks”
íó [i:]	s íol “seed”
oi [a]	coill “wood”
eo [o:]	ceol “music”
eoi [io:]	beoir “beer”
eó [o:]	seó “show”
óí [o:]	óí r “because”
úi [u:]	cúis “cause”
ua [u:a]	fuair “cold”
iúi [ui]	ciúin “quiet”
iai [iə]	fiaile “weeds”
uai [uə]	duais “prize”

In the middle of words, combinations *a(i)dh*, *a(i)gh*, *o(i)dh*, *o(i)gh*, *eidh*, *eigh* are pronounced as [ai]: *radharc* [raik] “view”, *oighear* [aiəɾ] “ice”. In a similar position, *(e)amh* is pronounced as [au]: *samhradh* [sauru] “summer”. In some dialects, similar pronunciation applies for *(e)abh*, *obh*, *omh*, *odh*, *ogh*: *leabhar* [jaur] “book”.

Consonants

The feature that makes Irish most distinct amongst other languages spoken in the western European area is its consonantal system. Irish has for example nearly twice as many consonants as English. The reason for this is the fact that each consonant has two sound variants depending on the letters that precede or follow the consonant in question. These varieties are called *slender* and *broad*. In written Irish, slender consonants are preceded or followed by the vowels *e* or *i*, whereas the broad ones are preceded or followed by the vowels

a, o or *u*. Thus *p* can be broad in a word *pór* “seed” and slender in a word *peaca* “sin”. Broad consonants are velar or velarized (they have a noticeable velar offglide before the front vowel which sounds like English *w* made without rounding the lips). On the other hand, the slender consonants are palatal or palatalized with a palatal offglide (not unlike English *y*) before the back vowels:

broad: *buí* [b^wwi:] “yellow” / slender: *tiubha* [tju:] “thick”

Initial mutations

Under certain conditions (which are in modern Irish listed in a complex set of rules), the initial letters of some words undergo a change of form. There are two kinds of initial mutations in Irish (not as many as in other Celtic languages) and both are caused by a preceding word. Some words cause **lenition** (*séimhiú* in Irish) (may be considered as a form called *soft mutation* in Welsh), while others (a considerably smaller number) cause **eclipsis** (*urú* in Irish) - which means that unvoiced plosives become voiced, while voiced plosives are changed to nasals. Other possible change to an initial consonant involves *h-provection* to an initial vowel.

In the tables below, we can see the mutated consonants with their approximate pronunciation values with the notes on the most frequent occurrences:

Lenition

consonant	lenited	pronunciation	
		broad	slender
p	ph	[f]	[f]
b	bh	[v] or [w]	[v]
m	mh	[v] or [w]	[v]
n	no change	[n]	[n]
t	th	[h]	[h]
d	dh	[ô]	[j]
c	ch	[x]	[ç]
g	gh	[ô]	[j]
l	no change	[l]	[l]
f	fh	not pronounced	not pronounced
s	sh	[h]	[h] or as [ç] before diphthongs eó, iú and in some case before eá

- a) The definite article *an* lenites singular feminine nouns in cases other than genitives: *cearc* “hen” - *an chearc* “the hen”.
- b) Singular masculine is lenited in genitive: *gairm an choiligh* “cock-crow” (*coileach* – nom. “cock”)
- c) The vocative particle *a* lenites the following noun: *a Phádraig*.

- d) The possessive pronouns **mo** “my”, **do** “your” and **a** “his” cause lenition: *carr* “car”- *mo charr* “my car”.
- e) The numerals 1-2 and 3-6 cause lenition while followed by a singular noun: *mí* “month”- *ceithre mhí* “four months”; *carr* “car”- *trí charr* “three cars”.
- f) Many common prepositions mutate the initial letter with lenition, most regular are **do**, **de**, **faoi**, **ó**: *do Sheán* “to John” (*Seán*); *ó mhaidin* “since morning” (*maidin*).
- g) Frequently the second of two consecutive nouns in cases where the second qualifies the first: *bó bhainne* “milch cow” (*báine*), *muintir Chiarraí* “the people of Kerry”, *tine mhóna* “peat fire” (*móna* “peat”).
- h) Feminine singular nouns in all cases except of the genitive and masculine nouns in the genitive singular cause a lenition to a following adjective: *bean mhaith* “good woman” (*maith* “good, kind”), *an fhir mhaith* “of the good man”.
- i) The first letters of the verb forms in imperfect, conditional and past tenses and the first letters of the verbs in relative clauses with nominative or accusative relationship: (*mol* “to praise”): *mholainn* “I used to praise”, *mholfainn* “I would praise”, *mholas* “I praised”, *an fear a mholfadh* “the man who would praise”, etc.
- j) The particle **ní** which forms negatives and other verbal particles and conjugations ending in **-r**, as well as **má** “if” mutate the following verbs: *ní mholaim* “I don’t praise”, *níor mholas* “I didn’t praise”, *má mholaim* “if I praise”.

Eclipsis

consonant	lenited	pronunciation	
		broad	slender
p	bp	[b]	[b]
b	mb	[m]	[m]
m	not eclipsed	-	-
n	not eclipsed	-	-
t	dt	[d]	[d̪]
d	nd	[n]	[n̪]
c	gc	[g]	[g̪]
g	ng	[ŋ]	[ŋ̪]
l	not eclipsed	-	-
f	bhf	[v] or [w]	[v]
s	not eclipsed	-	-

Eclipses occur in fewer cases than lenition. Below, the most important occurrences are noted:

- a) The most common and simple prepositions followed by the article **an** cause eclipsis to the following initial letter: *ar an mbord* “on the table” (*bord* “table”).
- b) The article **na** eclipses the initial of nouns in genitive plural: *na mbád* “of the boats”.
- c) The preposition **i** “in” causes eclipsis to the initial: *i bPáras* “in Paris”.
- d) The plural forms of possessive adjectives **ár** “our”, **bhur** “your” and **a** “their” cause eclipsis to the following nouns: *bhur dtír* “your country” (*tír* “country”).

- e) The numerals 7-10 cause eclipsis: *seacht mbua* “seven victories” (*bua* “victory, triumph”).
- f) Certain conjunctions and verbal particles like *go* “that”, *dá* “if”, *muna* “unless”, the interrogative *an?* and the indirect relative particle *a* “who” also cause eclipsis: *am mbeidh?* “will there be?”, *dá dtéitheá* “if you were to go”.

Articles

As in most Celtic languages, there is no indefinite article in Irish. The definiteness is expressed with the aid of the definite article, possessive adjective or within a noun phrase connected to the noun. The definite article and the possessive adjective are mutually exclusive. In its origin, the definite article is a demonstrative adjective and always precedes its noun. In modern Irish, only two forms of the definite article survived: *an* for all cases of the singular except the genitive feminine and *na* for the genitive singular feminine and all cases of the plural. Indefinite nouns stay unmarked.

Indefinite noun:

<i> lámh </i>	<i> lámh fhir </i>
hand	hand man-GEN
“a hand”	“a man`s hand”

Definite noun:

<i> an lámh </i>	<i> mo lámh </i>
ART hand	POSS ADJ 1SG hand
“the hand”	“my hand”

<i> lámh Sheáin </i>	<i> lámh an fhir </i>
hand John-GEN	hand ART man-GEN
“John`s hand”	the man`s hand

The articles play a very important role in the formation of demonstrative adjectives by combining with suffixes marking the proximate meaning “this” *-so/-seo* or *-sin* for non-proximate “that” attached to the pronouns. The meaning of remoteness “yon, yonder” is formed by *úd*:

<i> an lámh seo </i>	<i> an fear sin </i>	<i> an leabhar úd </i>
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“this hand”

“that man”

“that (yonder) book”

In Irish language, we also encounter so called **emphasizing particles**, which can be attached to any form containing a pronoun like personal pronouns, conjugated prepositions, possessive pronouns and verbal nouns. The emphasizing particles change their forms according to the person and are used to emphasize the particular form to which they are attached.

1 sg.	-sa/-se	1 pl.	-ne
2 sg.	-sa/-se	2 pl.	-sa/-se
3 sg. m.	-san/-sean	3 pl.	-san/-sean
3 sg. f.	-se		

m`athair-se “my father”

Nouns

In modern Irish, in nouns we recognize gender (masculine or feminine), number and case, and in a small number of occurrences (in vocative case) even person.

Even though the historically rich system of noun inflection was gradually abandoned during the twentieth century, all dialects have preserved a great number of idiomatic and fossilized phrases from which the forms of most of the cases can be recovered into the modern language.

The standard grammar recognizes five **declensions** which include all remnants of the Old Irish stem-classes. Although some declensions possess inflected forms for both nominative and genitive in singular and plural, others have no differentiation of the cases in plural. The dative, however, is marked only occasionally (mainly in fossilized phrases) in the singular number.

From simple stems, which represent the minimum form of a noun, like for example *iasc* “fish”, nouns with new meanings, or diminutives, can be created by the means of suffication and prefixation. Moreover, distinct suffixes mark plurals and some cases.

iasc “fish”: *iascaire* “fisherman”; *iaschemheall* “fish-ball”; *iascán* “small fish”- diminutive

Gender

There are two distinct genders- masculine and feminine. In animate nouns they usually correspond to the natural gender. The distinction of the genders is reflected in the initial mutations found in nouns after the article and in some case forms, and directly cause the initial mutation of the following adjective.

Number

There are two number distinction in Irish- singular and plural, and the nominative singular form represents the unmarked, basic form of the word. There are two types of plural formation in the Irish language. In the modern language, the tendency is to mark plurals

clearly by the use of long plural endings- so called “strong plurals”. There were originally derived from the consonantal stems are *-acha*, *-an(n)a*, *-t(h)a*, *-t(h)e*, *-(a)í*, and some dialects seem to prefer some particular ending over other. The other type of plurals is a so called “weak plural formation”. In the weak form, the plural marker consists of a mutation of the final consonant or consonant cluster of the singular form (usually the mutation involves changing from a neutral to a palatalized segment), sometimes combined with a stem vowel alternation, or also a simple addition of *-a* to the singular. Naturally, the whole system of creating plurals is completed by a number of irregular plural formations.

Below, some examples of plurals and their formation:

Strong plural with vowel suffix and stem mutation:

scian “knife”: *sceana* “knives”

Strong plural with suffixes:

pian “pain”: *pianta* “pains”

tír “land”: *tíortha* “lands”

ubh “egg”: *uibheacha* “eggs”

Weak plural with palatalisation:

cat [kat] “cat”: *cait* [katʲ] “cats”

bád [ba:d] “boad”: *báid* [ba:dʲ] “boards”

tarbh [tarv] “bull”: *tairbh* [tirʲvʲ] “bulls”

Weak plural by vowel suffix:

cos “foot”: *casa* “feet”

clan “family”: *clanna* “families”

Irregular plurals:

bean “woman”: *mná* “women”

mí “month”: *míosa/míonna* “months”

lá “day”: *lae/laethanta/laethe* “days”

leaba “bed”: *leapacha* “beds”

Case

All together, there are four cases in modern Irish, even though not all of them are always marked. The inflections are usually more obvious being reflected on the mutations of the initial phonemes after the article or the following adjective. The cases are: **nominative** (base form), **genitive**, **dative** (prepositional case) and **vocative** (used after the vocative particle *a*). The singular forms are more obviously marked, with genitive and vocative showing the clear distinct forms. In case of plurals, it is only the weak plurals which show any case differentiation, and even then it is only in the case of genitives. On top of this, all genitive plurals undergo an initial mutation after the article. Distinct case forms are usually created within the noun itself by means of mutation of the final consonant or a consonantal cluster, with variation between neutral and palatalized consonants.

Masculine noun:

SG.:

<i>an mac</i>	<i>ah mhic</i>	<i>don mhac</i>	<i>a mhic</i>
“the son”	“of the son”	“to the son”	“son!”
NOM.	GEN.	DAT.	VOC.

PL.:

<i>na cait</i>	<i>na gcat</i>	<i>do na cait</i>
“the cats”	“of the cats”	“to the cats”
NOM.	GEN.	DAT.

Feminine noun:

SG.:

<i>an phóig naphóige</i>	<i>leis on phóig/phóg</i>
“the kiss”	“of the kiss” “with the kiss”
NOM.	GEN. DAT.

PL.:

na craobhacha na gcrabhacha ins na craobhacha

“the branches” “of the branches” “in the branches”

NOM.

GEN.

DAT.

Declensional classes

There are altogether five declensional classes in modern Irish and they all correspond to the Old Irish stem classes. However, except of some regional variations, the nominative and dative have fallen together in the second declension, and even the genitive has started to disappear among the younger generation throughout some dialects. The declensional classes differ in the distinct case marking and whether they include masculine, feminine or both. There is, of course, a number of irregular verbs. In the chart below, the declensions are sketched out:

Declension	Nominative sg.	Nominative pl.	Genitive sg.	Gender classes
First Example:	Neutral final consonant <i>fear</i> [f ar] “man”	May be identical with gen. sg. or have a strong pl. ending: -í, -t(h)a, -ann.	Palatalised final consonant <i>fir</i> [f ir`]	Masculine (and old Irish neuters)
Second Example:	Usually neutral final consonant <i>bróg</i> [bro:g] “shoe”	Usually ends in -a , strong plurals are also common	Palatalise final consonant and add -e [ə] <i>bróige</i> [bro:g`ə]	Feminine mostly
Third Example:	Neutral or palatalized consonant <i>stiúrthóir</i> “director”	Add -a or strong ending.	Neutral consonant and add -a [ə] <i>stiúrthóira</i>	Masculines, feminines (OIrish neuters)
Four Example:	Vowel or ín <i>cóta</i> “coat”	Plural endings all strong	No distinction	Masculines, feminines (OIrish neuters)
Five Example:	Vowel or a palatalized final consonant <i>caora</i> “sheep”	Usually adds -a to the genitive sg.	Neutral consonant, adds a syllable corresponding to the consonantal stems (-ach, -an(n), -ad <i>caorach</i>	Masculines, feminines (OIrish neuters)

Adjectives

As well as nouns, the flexes of adjectives have undergone a dramatic process of simplification throughout the history. In Old Irish, adjectives were fully inflected with a declensional system similar to the nouns, with which they appear (in predicative use) in a sentence in full agreement. In attributive use, however, the flexion of the adjective continued to be used as a standard of the literary language until very recently, even though the number of forms in use considerably dwindled. In modern spoken Irish, declension of the adjectives in singular have been mostly abandoned. The plurals are formed by adding *-a* or *-e* [ə]: *óg* “young”- pl. *óga*; *maith* “good”- pl. *maithe*.

There are compound forms of adjectives consisting of two simple stems, like for example *úrnuá* “brand new”- *úr* “new” and *nua* “new”. Some derived adjectives might be formed by adding a prefix to a stem: privative *dí-* and *buíoch* “thankful”- *díomaíoch* “ungrateful”. Quite a large number of adjectives is formed from nouns with a help of various prefixes: *eolas* “knowledge”- *eolach* “knowledgeable”; *grá* “love”- *grámhar* “loving”.

Comparative and superlative forms

In old Irish, the comparative form was formed with a suffix *-u* and superlative with a suffix *-em/am*. However, the special ending of the superlative form was relatively early in the Irish language evolution (the early Middle Irish period), and the comparative form took over. This situation has been preserved until today, and thus only the degree of comparison can be morphologically expressed.

Old Irish:

gel “bright”- comp. *giliu* “brighter”- superl. *gilem* “the brightest”

Modern Irish:

geal “bright” – comp./superl. “brighter/the brightest”

To express the equative “*as...as*” the base adjective is used together with *comh* “as”...*le* “with”: *comh mór le teach* “as big as a house”. Comparative phrases are formed similarly with a particle *níos*... and *ná* “than”.

Adjectives in their comparative, superlative and equative degrees have been throughout the whole history of the Irish language used in their uninflected form and only predicatively, so the phrase like the “*biggest house*” would be literally expressed like “*the house which is the biggest*”.

bán “white”

comh bán le “as white as”

níos báine ná “whiter than”

is báine “the whitest”

There is of course a number of commonly used, irregular adjectives:

		comparative/ superlative
<i>beag</i>	“small”	<i>lú</i>
<i>maith</i>	“good”	<i>fearr</i>
<i>fada</i>	“long”	<i>faide</i>
<i>olc</i>	“bad”	<i>measa</i>
<i>te</i>	“hot”	<i>teo</i>
<i>mór</i>	“big”	<i>mó</i>

Pronouns

Pronouns change their form according to the person, number, case and gender (even though the case and gender only have a limited number of distinct forms). In the table below, the personal pronouns are introduced (the distinction between *muid* and *sinn* is a question of a dialect):

	Singular		Plural	
	Subject	Object	Subject	Object
1	<i>mé</i>	<i>mé</i>	<i>sinn/muid</i>	<i>sinn/muid</i>
2	<i>tú</i>	<i>thú</i>	<i>sibh</i>	<i>sibh</i>
3	<i>sé</i> (masc.) <i>sí</i> (fem.)	<i>é</i> (masc.) <i>í</i> (fem.)	<i>siad</i>	<i>siad</i>

In modern Irish, when the independent pronouns are used as subject or object, they are only lightly stressed. This however changes in the case of a pronoun being accompanied by an emphatic article. Under that condition, the pronoun receives the same stress as a noun would in its position. The difference is apparent from an example sentence: *feicim thú* “I see you” (with a light stress on *thú* “you”) and *feicim thusa* “I see you” with a noun or a proper name equivalent of a stress on the pronoun *thusa*. Below, see the table with the emphatic forms as they correspond with the table of pronouns above:

	Singular		Plural	
	Subject	Object	Subject	Object
1	<i>mise</i>	<i>mise</i>	<i>sinne/muidinne</i>	<i>sinne/muidinne</i>
2	<i>tusa</i>	<i>thusa</i>	<i>sibhse</i>	<i>Sibhse</i>
3	<i>seisean</i> (masc.) <i>sise</i> (fem.)	<i>eisean</i> (masc.) <i>ise</i> (fem.)	<i>siadsan</i>	<i>iadsan</i>

Possessive adjectives

In the table below, the possessive adjective forms are introduced together with the specific forms used before vowels:

	Singular	Plural
1	$m(o)^L$	$\acute{a}r^N$
2	$d(o)^L$	$bhur^N$
3	a^L (masc.) a^H (fem.)	a^N

Note: the letters indicate mutations: ^L: lenition, ^H: provection, ^N: nasalization

Where a possessive adjective is wished to be emphasized, the emphasisinf particle is attached to the noun in the possessive construction, or if the noun is qualified by an adjective, it gets attached to the adjective. Examples:

mo chatsa “my (EMPH) cat”

do mhadadh bochtsa “your (EMPH) poor dog”

a bróg bheagsa “her (EMPH) small shoe”

Numerals

The Irish numeral system is mainly based on the decimal patterns with some exceptions following the principles of vigesimal counting.

	Cardinal	Ordinal	Personal
0	náid		
1	aon	an chéad, an aonú	duine (amháin) “a single person”
2	dhá	an dara, an tarna	beirt
3	trí	an treas, an tríú	tríur
4	ceithre	an ceathrú	seachtar
5	cúig	an cúigiú	cúigear

6	sé	an seú	seisear
7	seacht	an seachtú	seachtar
8	ocht	an t-ochtú	ochtar
9	naoi	an naoú	naonúr
10	deich	an deichiú	deichniúr
11	aon N déag	an t-aonú N déag	aon duine dhéag
12	dhá N déag	an dóú N déag	dáréag
20	fiche	an fichiú	fiche dhuine
21	N is fiche/ N ar fichead	an t-aonú N is fiche	duine is fiche
22	dhá N is fiche/ dhá N ar fhichead	an dóú N is fiche	bheirt/dhá dhuine is fiche
30	tríocha/ deich N is fiche	an tríochadú	tríocha duine
32	dhá N is tríocha	an dóú N is tríocha	beirt/dhá dhuine is tríocha
40	ceathracha daichead	ceathrachadú daicheadú	ceathracha daichead duine
50	caoga/ leathchéad	caogadú	caoga duine
60	seasca/ trí fichead	seascadú	seasca duine
70	seachtó/ deich N is trí fichead	seachtódú	seachtó duine
80	ochtó/ ceithre fichead	ochtódú	ochtó duine
90	nócha/ deich N is ceithre fichead	nóchadú	nócha duine
100	céad	an chéadú	céad duine
1000	míle	an míliú	míle duine

Notes to numerals:

- a) When the numerals are used without the counted noun which would follow, the cardinal numbers 1-10 are used with an article *a*, which takes upon a prefix *h*-before a vowel. In this case, some numerals change their forms altogether, like for example numeral “two” which without a following noun becomes *dó* instead of *dhá* and “four” which becomes *ceathair* in place of the usual *ceithre*.
- b) In cases when the numerals are followed by nouns, the numerals 1-10 are adjectives and have all their usual characteristics. Even though the numerals 2,3 and 4 had their respective inflected forms in Old Irish, they are now indeclinable. The only difference in respect to the numerals being adjectives is that they precede the noun they “count”/qualify. In modern Irish, singular or plural version of the noun can be used after the numerals 3-6. The important attribute of the Irish numerals and the way they are used is that when we count in “teens”, the component *déag* “teen” comes after the counted noun: *a trí déag* “thirteen”: *trí theach déag* “thirteen houses”.
- c) Even despite the promotion of the decimal system usage in schools, vigesimal system is still popular in everyday speech. The modern Irish uses an English borrowing *scór* “score” for *twenty*: *trí scór is ceithre leabhar* “64 books”. Another popular and much used English borrowing in the modern Irish numeral system is *péire* “a pair, a couple” for “two”.
- d) The ordinal numerals in modern Irish are marked with *-ú* suffix: *ceathrú* “fourth”. However, the first four ordinal numerals exist in more varieties (the varieties ad. chart above).
- e) The personal numerals are used for counting people exclusively. Since the Old Irish, for the 3-10 numerals, the personal numerals have been formed as a compound words putting together the cardinal number and *fear* “man”: *ochtar* “eight people” (<*ocht* “eight” + *fear* “man”- “a group of eight people”). There are a few exceptions, for example in the numeral “one person”, which was in Old Irish *oenar* (<*oen* “one” + *fer* “man”), but this word in modern Irish became to have a meaning of “alone” inclusively, and it has been replaced by the word *beirt* “a bundle”.

Verbs and verb system

The verb system in Irish has gone through much modification since the Old Irish era. Despite the trend of gradual simplification which also affected the noun declensions, Irish verbal system boasts to be the most complicated of the Celtic languages. The Irish verb forms mark **tense** (present, past and future), **aspect** (perfect and imperfect), **mood** (indicative, conditional, imperative and some forms of subjunctive), **person** and **number**, even though it is important to note that not all of these classes would necessarily have a marked form in every instance. This verbal system is not unlike classical Latin or Greek with their conjugations and derives from much more complicated Old Irish.

Present: most verbs in modern Irish denotes only habitual present, while the punctual present is expressed by means of a periphrastic formation using the punctual present form of the

substantive verb. The verbs that describe senses are an exception- in their case, the punctual and habitual present is expressed with the same form as it used to be the rule in the Old Irish.

Imperfect: expresses habitual as well as repeated action in the past.

Preterite: a narrative tense which marks a single action in the past.

Perfect: a completed action or an action that is in the state of achievement at the time of utterance.

Future: single or repeated action in the future. Future perfect is expressed with a periphrastic construction using the future of the substantive verb and past participle passive.

Conditional: denotes an action which happens under certain conditions, used in indirect speech.

Subjunctive mood: distinguishes present and past and indicates uncertainty or unreality of the action.

The most convenient way the verb system might be analysed is by showing a verbal stem which is followed by one or two suffixes. The distinct verb forms can be expressed with appropriate suffixes, an initial mutation or with the combination of both. The basic stem form is the verbal root which is identical with the second person singular in imperative mood. The usual order of verb elements is- root + tense marker + person (and number) marker: eg. *mol + f + aidh mé* “I will praise”.

The verbal noun and past participle usually consists of a verb stem and a suffix (which may be zero in the case of verbal nouns). There is a wide range of possible formations, and there are no morphological rules to predict which changes will the stem undergo and which suffixes will be used. The most common suffix for verbal nouns is *-(e)adh*, which is a suffix used almost entirely with verbs of the first conjugation. The other commonly used are *-(e)áil*, which is very often used in order to gaelicise the large number of English loan-words), *-(i)ú*, which is principally used with the second conjugation, *-t, -e, -(e)amh* and *-í*. However, some verbal nouns may undergo a mutation of the final consonant in the stem or have a form without suffixation. There is also a number of irregular conjugations which don't follow the set rules. Below there are a few examples of the verbal nouns:

Stem	Verbal noun	
<i>mol</i>	<i>moladh</i>	“praise”
<i>fág</i>	<i>fágáil</i>	“leave”
<i>ceil</i>	<i>ceilt</i>	“conceal”
<i>suigh</i>	<i>suí</i>	“sit”
<i>déan</i>	<i>déanamh</i>	“do”

Conjugation

There are two distinct conjugations in modern Irish and about twelve most commonly used irregular verbs. However, in spoken everyday Irish, the forms which derives from the pattern of regular verbs tend to be abandoned.

The first conjugation developed from the conjunct flecion od the Old Irish weak (regular) verbs and is distinguishable by an *f*-suffix in the future form and a short vowel in the suffix in the majority of its forms.

The second conjugation derives from the Old Irish *-ig-* deponents. The syllable *-igh-* has become *-í-* in Modern Irish, except when it appears at the end of the word, in which case it stays *-igh*.

The table below shows the conjugated forms of the regular verb in Modern Irish across its tenses and moods, including some historic synthetic forms which are still kept in usage.

	First conjugation “praise”	Second conjugation “demand”
Present Indicative		
1 sg.	<i>molaim</i>	<i>éilím</i>
2 sg.	<i>molair/molann tú</i>	<i>éilir/ éilíon tú</i>
3 sg.	<i>molann sé</i>	<i>éilíonn sé</i>
1 pl.	<i>molaimid/molann muid</i>	<i>éilímid/ éilíonn muid</i>
2 pl.	<i>molann sibh</i>	<i>éilíonn sibh</i>
3 pl.	<i>molaid/molann siad</i>	<i>éilíd/ éilíonn said</i>
Aut.	<i>moltar</i>	<i>éilítear</i>
Imperfect Indicative		
1 sg.	<i>mholainn</i>	<i>d`éilín</i>
2 sg.	<i>mholtá</i>	<i>d`éilíteá</i>
3 sg.	<i>mholadh sé (sí)</i>	<i>d`éilíodh sé (sí)</i>
1 pl.	<i>mholaimis/mholadh muid</i>	<i>d`éilímis/ d`éilíodh muid</i>
2 pl.	<i>mholadh sibh</i>	<i>d`éilíodh sibh</i>
3 pl.	<i>mholaidís/mholadh siad</i>	<i>d`éilídís/ d`éilíodh said</i>
Aut.	<i>mholtaí</i>	<i>d`éilítí</i>
Imperative		
1 sg.	<i>molaim</i>	<i>éilím</i>
2 sg.	<i>mol</i>	<i>éiligh</i>
3 sg.	<i>moladh</i>	<i>éilíodh</i>
1 pl.	<i>molaimis/moladh muid</i>	<i>éilímis/ éilíodh muid</i>
2 pl.	<i>molaigí</i>	<i>éilígí</i>
3 pl.	<i>molaidís</i>	<i>éilídís</i>
Aut.	<i>moltar</i>	<i>éilítear</i>
Future		
1 sg.	<i>molfad/molfaidh mé</i>	<i>éileod/éileoidh mé</i>
2 sg.	<i>molfair/molfaidh tú</i>	<i>éileoir/éileoidh tú</i>
3 sg.	<i>molfaidh sé (sí)</i>	<i>éileoidh sé (sí)</i>
1 pl.	<i>molfaimid/molfaidh muid</i>	<i>éileimid/éileoidh muid</i>

2 pl.	<i>molfaidh sibh</i>	<i>éileoidh sibh</i>
3 pl.	<i>molfaid/molfaidh said</i>	<i>éileoid/éileoidh siad</i>
Aut.	<i>molfar</i>	<i>éileofar</i>
Conditional		
1 sg.	<i>mholfainn</i>	<i>d`éileoinn</i>
2 sg.	<i>mholfá</i>	<i>d`éileofá</i>
3 sg.	<i>mholfadh sé(sí)</i>	<i>d`éileodh sé(sí)</i>
1 pl.	<i>mholfaimis/mholfadh muid</i>	<i>d`éileoimis/d`éileodh muid</i>
2 pl.	<i>mholfadh sibh</i>	<i>d`éileodh sibh</i>
3 pl.	<i>mholfaidis/mholfadh siad</i>	<i>d`éileoidís/d`éileodh said</i>
Aut.	<i>mholfaí</i>	<i>d`éileofaí</i>
Preterite		
1 sg.	<i>mholas/mhol mé</i>	<i>d`éilíos/ d`éiligh mé</i>
2 sg.	<i>mholais/mhol tú</i>	<i>d`éilís/d`éiligh tú</i>
3 sg.	<i>mhol sé (sí)</i>	<i>d`éiligh sé (sí)</i>
1 pl.	<i>mholamar/mhol muid</i>	<i>d`éilíomar/ d`éiligh muid</i>
2 pl.	<i>mhol sibh</i>	<i>d`éiligh sibh</i>
3 pl.	<i>mholadar/mhol siad</i>	<i>d`éilíodar/d`éiligh siad</i>
Aut.	<i>mholadh</i>	<i>éilíodh</i>
Present subjunctive		
1 sg.	<i>molaim/mola mé</i>	<i>éilím/éilí mé</i>
2 sg.	<i>molair/mola tú</i>	<i>éilír/éilí tú</i>
3 sg.	<i>mola sé (sí)</i>	<i>éilí sé (sí)</i>
1 pl.	<i>molaimid/mola muid</i>	<i>éilímid/ éilí muid</i>
2 pl.	<i>mola sibh</i>	<i>éilí sibh</i>
3 pl.	<i>mola siad</i>	<i>éilí siad</i>
Aut.	<i>moltar</i>	<i>éilítear</i>
Past subjunctive		
1 sg.	<i>molain</i>	<i>éilínn</i>
2 sg.	<i>moltá</i>	<i>éilíteá</i>
3 sg.	<i>moladh sé (sí)</i>	<i>éilíodh sé (sí)</i>
1 pl.	<i>molaimis/moladh muid</i>	<i>éilímis/éilíodh muid</i>
2 pl.	<i>moladh sibh</i>	<i>éilíodh sibh</i>
3 pl.	<i>molaidís/moladh siad</i>	<i>éilídís/ éilíodh siad</i>
Aut.	<i>moltaí</i>	<i>éilítí</i>

Most irregular verbs are characterized by suppletion (different verb stems are used for different tenses and moods). Some verbs have different **independent** and **dependent** forms in certain tenses; the independent forms are used when no particle precedes the verb, and also after *má* "if" (open conditional) and the direct relative particle *a*, while the dependent forms are used after all other particles.

Below, there are a few irregular verbs with their forms:

abair “to say”

Present	<i>deir +, deirim, deirimid, deirtear</i>
Imperfect	<i>deireadh + etc.</i>
Preterite	<i>dúirt (an ndúirt/ní dúirt) +, dúramar, dúradh</i>
Future	<i>déarfaidh + etc.</i>
Conditional	<i>déarfadh + etc.</i>
Imperative	<i>abair, abraigí</i>
Verbal noun	<i>rá</i>

beir “to catch”

Present	<i>beireann + etc. (regular)</i>
Imperfect	<i>bheireadh + etc. (regular)</i>
Preterite	<i>rug +, rugamar, rugadh. (ar/níor rug + etc.)</i>
Future	<i>béarfaidh + etc.</i>
Conditional	<i>bhéarfadh + etc.</i>
Imperative	<i>beir, beirigí</i>
Verbal noun	<i>beirthe</i>

clois/cluin “to hear”

clois is used in southern and western Irish dialects, while *cluín* is used in northern and north-western dialects.

Present	<i>cloiseann + etc. (regular)/cluineann + etc. (regular)</i>
Imperfect	<i>chloiseadh + etc. (regular)/chluineadh etc. (regular)</i>
Preterite	<i>chuala +, chualamar, chualathas. (ar/níor chuala + etc.)</i>
Future	<i>cloisfidh + etc. (regular)/cluinfidh + etc. (regular)</i>
Conditional	<i>chloisfeadh + etc. (regular)/chluinfeadh + etc. (regular)</i>
Imperative	<i>clois, cloisigí/cluin, cluinigí</i>
Verbal noun	<i>cloisteáil/cluinstin</i>

déan “to do, to make”

Present		<i>déanann + etc. (regular)</i>
Imperfect		<i>dhéanadh + etc. (regular)</i>
Preterite	Independent	<i>rinne +, rinneamar, rinneadh</i>
	Dependent	<i>dearna +, dearnamar, dearnadh (an ndearna/ní dhearna + etc.)</i>
Future		<i>déanfaidh + etc. (regular)</i>
Conditional		<i>dhéanfadh + etc. (regular)</i>
Imperative		<i>déan, déanaigí</i>
Verbal noun		<i>déanamh</i>

bí “to be”

Present	independent	<i>tá +, táim (also tá mé), táimid, táthar</i>
	dependent	<i>fuil +, fuilim (also fuil mé), fuilimid</i>
Habitual present		<i>bíonn +, bím, bímid, bítear</i>
Imperfect		<i>bhíodh +, bhínn, bhíteá, bhímis, bhídís, bhítí</i>
Preterite	independent	<i>bhí +, bhíomar, bhíothas</i>
	dependent	<i>(an/ní) raibh +, rabhamar, rabhthas</i>
Future		<i>beidh +, beimid, beifear</i>
Conditional		<i>bheadh +, bheinn, bheifeá, bheimis, bheidís, bheifí</i>
Imperative		<i>bí, bígí</i>
Verbal noun		<i>bheith</i>

téigh “to go”

Present		<i>téann +, téim, téimid, téitear</i>
Imperfect		<i>théadh +, théinn, théiteá, théimis, théidís, théití</i>
Preterite	independent	<i>chuaigh +, chuamar, chuathas</i>
	dependent	<i>deachaigh +, deachamar, deachthas (an ndeachaigh +/ní dheachaigh + etc.)</i>
Future		<i>rachaidh +, rachaimid, rachfar</i>
Conditional		<i>rachadh +, rachainn, rachfá, rachaimis, rachaidís, rachfaí</i>
Imperative		<i>téigh, téigí</i>
Verbal noun		<i>dul</i>

The irregular verbs taken from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish_conjugation

Negative and interrogative particles

The negative particle is *ní* which lenites and links with the dependent form of the verb (when such form is available). The negative particle used with the imperatives and in subordinate clauses is *ná*, which prefixes *h-* to following vowels or causes no initial mutation in the case of the subordinate clauses (alternative to a negative particle in subordinate clauses is *nach* which eclipses). In the past tense, the form for negative particle is *níor*. The interrogative particle is *an* or *ar* in the past tense:

Present Preterite

ní bhuailim “I don’t strike”

níor bhuaileas “I didn’t strike”

an mbuailim “do I strike?” *ar bhuaileas* “did I strike?”

Here we can see it even more clearly on examples across selected tenses:

chonaic mé

an bhfaca mé

see-PAST IINTER see-past-DEP I

“I saw”

“Did I see?”

rinne siad

nach ndearna said

DO-PAST they

INTER-NEGdo-PAST-DEP they

“they did”

“didn’t they do?”

gheobhaidh tú

go bhfaighidh tú

get-FUT you

SUBORD get-FUT-DEP you

“you will get”

“that you will get”

The verb “to have” and the perfect tense

Like in other Celtic languages, there is no proper verb “to have” in Irish and the meaning is expressed by the verb “to be” and the preposition *ag* “at”. So if we want to say “John has it”, we will literally say “it is at John”: *tá sé ag Seán*. In connection with the past participle form of a verb, this idiom creates tenses with perfect tense meaning, which is like in English distinct from the preterite:

tá sé déanta ag Seán “John has done it”

tá an leabhar caillte ag an ngarsún “the boy has lost the book”

The past participle is formed from the verb stem by adding the ending *-te* or *-ta*, depending whether the verbal stem is slender or broad.

bris- “breat” *briste*

caill- “lose” *caillte*

dún- “shut” *dúnta*

ól- “drink” *ólta*

Adverbs and adverb classes

Even though adverbs don't categorise as a separate morphological class in Irish (for they are generally identical to their corresponding adjectives- the only formal adverbial marking being the occasional presence of the particle *go*), there is a very detailed and intricate system of adverbs connected to special orientation and direction of movement which depends on the location of the speaker and the direction the object to which is referred is moving.

The point of reference is marked with the particle *den*: *lastuas den straighre* “above the stairs”, *lastuaid den tír* “north of the country”.

In the table below, we can see the adverbs of direction corresponding to cardinal points as seen from the perspective of the speaker:

Adverbs of directions:

northwest (of) laistiar lastuaidh				north (of) lastua idh				northeast (of) lastoir lastuaid h
	in the Northwe st thiar thuaidh			in the North thuai dh				in the Northea st thoir thuaidh
		northwe sterly aniar aduid h		northe rly aduai dh		northea sterly anoir aduid h		

			to the Northwe st siar ó thuaidh	to the North ó thuaidh	to the Northea st soir ó thuaidh			
west (of) laistiar	in the West thiar	westerl y aniar	to the West siar	+	to the East soir	easterly anoir	in the East thoir	east (of) lastoir
			to the Southwe st siar ó dheas	to the South ó dheas	to the Southea st soir ó dheas			
		southwe sterly aniar aneas		southe rly aneas		southea sterly anoir aneas		
	in the Southwe st thiar theas			in the South theas			in the Southea st thoir theas	
southwest (of) laistiar laisteas				south (of) laiste as				southeast (of) lastoir laisteas

Adverbs of direction that refer to the cardinal points are used far more often in Irish than in other languages. Even if a person just goes “down the road”, they always mention the actual direction:

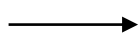
Tá mé ag dul siar an bóthar “I’m going down the road (to the West)”

Taken from: <http://nualeargais.ie/gnag/adverb.htm>

Horizontal adverbs:

Location here

anon/sall “over” (movement away)

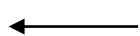


anseo/ i bhfus

“here”

anal “from beyond”

i leith/i bhfus “in this direction”

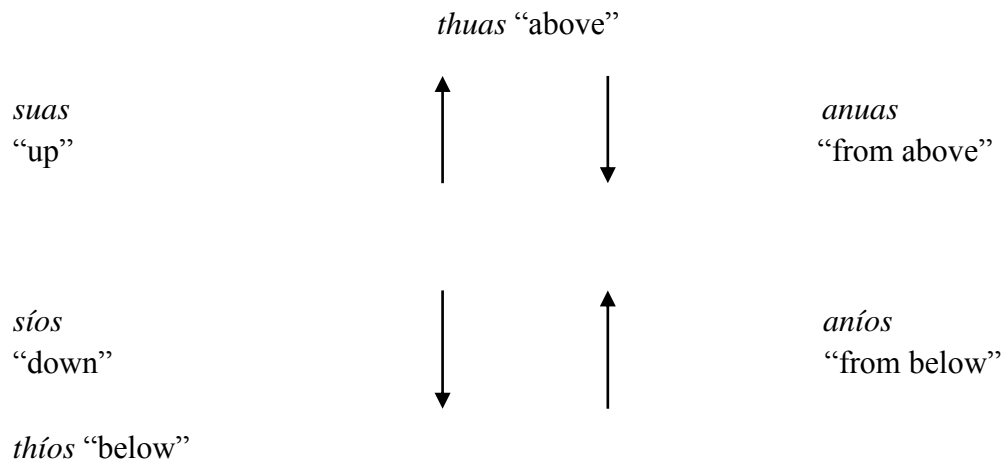


Location there

thall

“beyond”

Vertical adverbs:



Materials:

MacAulay Donald: *The Celtic Languages, The Irish Language* written by Cathair Ò Dochartaigh, Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Martin J. Ball and James Fife: *The Celtic Languages*, Irish, London, 1993.

Myles Dillon, Donncha Ò Crinóin: *Teach yourself Irish*, Liverpool, 1971.

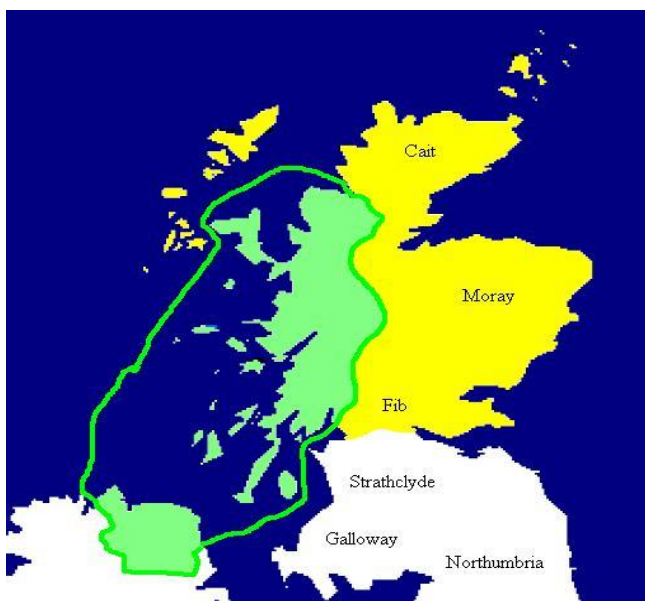
Scottish Gaelic

Scottish Gaelic is by its speakers referred to as *Gàidhlig* [ga:lik] and belongs to the Goidelic branch of the Celtic languages together with Irish and Manx.

Beginning around the late fourth century, immigrants from Ireland colonized what is now Scotland, establishing a colony called Dál Ríata, named after a town in northeast Ireland. The Scottish Dál Ríata became the centre of a kingdom and in the 7th century, the connection was severed.

The Gaelic inhabitants expanded inland and the Scottish territory grew. At the end of the 11th century, Gaelic was the main language of nearly all parts of the Scottish mainland. However, English language gradually began to replace Scottish Gaelic (in the 14th century, English became the official language of Scotland and in the 18th century there were strong tendencies to enforce English in education). The full translation of the Bible into Gaelic at the beginning of the 19th century became the standard for the written language. Today, Scottish Gaelic is confined to the Highlands, Outer Hebrides, the Island of Skye, Tiree and Islay. The Gaelic-speaking region is called by the Gaelic speakers *Gàidhealtachd*.

In the 2011 census, 57 000 people, about 1.1% of Scottish population reported as able to speak Gaelic. Moreover, the Scottish speaking abilities (especially while the native speakers are considered) are closely linked to the farming and fishing communities. Scottish Gaelic is not an official language of the UK. Apart from Scotland, Scottish Gaelic is spoken by about 7000 people in Canada (especially in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island).



Dialects

There is not enough sufficient material to specify the surviving dialects of the Gaelic. It is customary to call the Scottish Gaelic of the Hebridean region “central” while the that of the mainland and the more outlying areas “peripheral”. This division is based on sound criteria-like for example pre-aspiration occurring before the stops consonants or the diphthongisation of some stressed vowels before the sonorants in the central groups. There are also features according to which we can divide the Scottish Gaelic dialects into the east vs. west and north vs. south groups.

The modern Gaelic alphabet and phonology

The modern Gaelic is typed with the standard Latin alphabet letters.

Vowels and diphthongs

Pronunciation

Fuaimreagan (Vowels)

short vowels

a	[a] [ə]
e/ea/ei	[e/ɛ] [ə]
ea	[ɛ]
i/io	[i] [ɪ]
o/oi/eo	[o/ɔ]
u/ui/iu	[u]
ui	[ʊ]
agh/adh/oi	[ʏ]
aidh	[ɪ]
ai	[a/ɛ] [ɪ]

long vowels

à/ài/eà	[a:]
è/eu/éi	[ɛ:]
é	[e:]
ì/io	[i:]
ò/òì/eò	[ɔ:]
ó/óì	[o:]
ù/ùì/ùì/io	[u:]
ao/aoi	[ʊ:]
agh/adh	[ʏ:]

Diphthongs

(Dà-fhoghair)

ia	[iə]
ua	[uə]
eu	[ia]
ai	[ai]
ei	[ei]
oi/ei/ai	[ɔi]
ui/aoi	[ʊi]
a/ea	[au]
o	[ou/ɔi]

Vowels are marked for length: *car* [kar] “a movement” vs. *càr* [ka:r] “car”. Vowels also undergo nasalisation when in contact with nasal consonants like *m*, *mh*, *n* or *ng*- however, as far as the meaning confusion might go, true pairs are very rare, like for example: *tàmh* [tã:v] “rest” vs. *tàbh* [ta:v] “fishing net”.

The Gaelic vowels are also grouped into so called **broad** (back vowels: *a*, *o*, *u*) and **slender** (*e*, *i*). In orthography, this distinction is taken upon by the consonants (or consonant clusters) which then become **broad** (non-palatal) or **slender** (palatal) in their phonetic realization.

Consonants

Connragan leathann (broad consonants)		Connragan caola (slender consonants)		Suathaich (Fricatives)	
b	[b̪]	b	[b̪ʲ/b̪ʲ]	bh	[v/vʲ]
c	[k ^h /k]	c	[kʲ/kʲ]	ch	[x/ç]
d	[d̪]	d	[d̪ʲ]	dh	[ɣ/ɣʲ]
f	[f]	f	[fʲ/fʲ]	fh	[h/Ø]
g	[g̪]	g	[g̪ʲ]	gh	[ɣ/ɣʲ]
h	[h]	h	[Ø]	mh	[v/vʲ]
l, ll	[lʲ]	l, ll	[lʲ/lʲ]	ph	[fʲ/fʲ]
m	[m]	m	[m/mʲ]	sh	[h]
n, nn	[n/nʲ]	n, nn	[n/nʲ]	th	[h]
p	[p]	p	[pʲ]		
r, rr	[rʲ/r]	r, rr	[rʲ/rʲ]		
s	[s]	s	[s]		
t	[t̪/t̪]	t	[t̪ʲ/t̪ʲ]		
rd, tr	[r̪ʲ/t̪ʲ]				

Taken from: <https://www.omniglot.com/writing/gaelic.htm>

The **broad** (non-palatal) consonants are those which are preceded or followed by the broad vowels *a*, *o* or *u*. The **slender** (palatal) consonants are those preceded or followed by the vowels *i* or *e*. Most consonants have different phonological value depending whether they appear at the beginning of the word or elsewhere. The phonological register also varies across the dialects.

Mutations

Lenition

In the Scottish Gaelic, lenition (aspiration, initial mutation) which “weakens” the sound of the initial consonant is the most common of all the consonantal changes. It is deeply embedded in the language’s morphology and marks various aspects of the verbal and nominal system like tense, possession or case agreement. For most letters, lenition is indicated simply by putting an *h* after the first consonant in the mutated word. Example: *caora* “sheep” > *a’ chaora* “the sheep”. Consonants *l*, *n* and *r*, however, show no orthographic change. In the chart below, the lenition is demonstrated with each consonant.

radical	lenited	example (radical)	example (lenited)
p [p ^h]	ph [f]	<i>paileat</i> [p ^h aiλə ^h t̪] 'a pilot'	<i>aig a' phaileat</i> [ɛg̊i ə faiλə ^h t̪] 'at the pilot'
b [b̥]	bh [v]	<i>bodach</i> [b̥oɖax] 'an old man'	<i>a bhodaich</i> [ə vɔɖiç] 'old man (voc.)'
t [t ^h] (broad)	th [h]	<i>tuathanach</i> [t ^h uəhənax] 'a farmer'	<i>a thuathanaich</i> [ə huəhəniç] 'farmer (voc.)'
t [tʃ] (slender)	th [h]	<i>teachdaire</i> [tʃɛxg̊iɾə] 'a messenger'	<i>a theachdaire</i> [ə hɛxg̊iɾə] 'messenger (voc.)'
d [d̥] (broad)	dh [ɣ]	<i>duine</i> [d̥uɲə] 'a man'	<i>a dhuine</i> [ə ɣuɲə] 'man (voc.)'
d [dʒ] (slender)	dh [j]	<i>diùrach</i> [dʒu:ɾax] 'a jura-man'	<i>a dhiùraich</i> [ə ju:ɾiç] 'jura-man (voc.)'
c [k ^h] (broad)	ch [x]	<i>cailleach</i> [k ^h aλax] 'an old woman'	<i>aig a' chailleach</i> [ɛg̊i ə xalax] 'at the old woman'
c [c] (slender)	ch [ç]	<i>ceannaiche</i> [k ^h aɲviçə] 'a salesman'	<i>a cheannaiche</i> [ə çaɲviçə] 'salesman (voc.)'
g [g̥] (broad)	gh [ɣ]	<i>gobha</i> [g̥o.ə] 'a smith'	<i>a ghobha</i> [ə ɣo.ə] 'smith (voc.)'
g [g̊] (slender)	gh [j]	<i>gille</i> [g̊jiλə] 'boy'	<i>a ghille</i> [ə jjiλə] 'boy (voc.)'
f [f]	fh null	<i>frangach</i> [franɣax] 'a frenchman'	<i>a fhrangaich</i> [ə ranɣiç] 'frenchman (voc.)'
s [s̥] (broad)	sh [h]	<i>suipear</i> [s̥u ^h pəɾ] 'supper'	<i>do shuipear</i> [d̥ə hu ^h pəɾ] 'your (sg.) supper'
s [ʃ] (slender)	sh [h]	<i>seòladair</i> [ʃo:λɔɖiɾi] 'a sailor'	<i>a sheòladair</i> [ə ho:λɔɖiɾi] 'sailor (voc.)'
m [m]	mh [v̥]	<i>math</i> [ma] 'good (masc.)'	<i>mhath</i> [v̥a] 'good (fem.)'
n [n̥ ^v] (broad)	n [n]	<i>nasg</i>	<i>a nasg</i>

		[n̪ˠvas̪ˠ] 'a link'	[ə nas̪ˠ] 'his link'
n [n] (slender)	n [n]	<i>nighean</i> [niː.ən] 'a daughter'	<i>a nighean</i> [ə niː.ən] 'his daughter'
l [l̪] (broad)	l [l]	<i>latha</i> [l̪a.a] 'a day'	<i>a latha</i> [ə la.a] 'day (voc.)'
l [l̪] (slender)	l [l]	<i>leabhar</i> [l̪oːr] 'a book'	<i>a leabhair</i> [ə l̪oːrʲ] 'book (voc.)'
r [r̪ˠ]	r [r]	<i>ruith</i> [r̪ˠuɟ] 'run (imperative)'	<i>ruith</i> [ruɟ] 'ran'

Partly taken from <https://gaelicgrammar.org/~gaelic/mediawiki/index.php/Lenition>

Lenition can be a marker of:

a) tense:

Ex:

snàmh thusa

>

shnàmh thusa

swim-imp. 2 sg. emph

swim-past 2 sg. emph

“swim you!”

“you swam!”

b) definiteness:

craobh “tree” > *a' chraobh* “the tree”

c) possession:

a cas “her foot” > *a chas* “his foot”

d) case agreement:

taob ceàrr “wrong side” > *air an taobh chearr* “on the wrong side”

Palatalisation

Palatalisation is also quite a commonly occurring form of the mutations. It is realized by palatalisation of normally unpalatal consonants or even clusters. It may mark case or number, but also appears in adjectival declensions. In the orthography, palatalisation is featured by vowel changes- most commonly by the addition of *i* at the end of the broad vowel.

Ex:

<i>mo</i>	<i>chas</i>	<i>dheas</i>	
1sg poss	foot-fem	left	“my right foot”
<i>air mo</i>	<i>chois</i>	<i>dheis</i>	
on 1sg poss	foot-fem-D	left-D	“on my right foot”

Preaspiration

Preaspiration is found apart from some Scandinavian languages in Scottish Gaelic. It is realized by a short breath-like sound occurring before the post-vocalic voiceless stops, like for example *p*, *k* and *t*. Some dialects (Arran, parts of Kintyre) don't share this feature.

Nouns

Nouns in Scottish Gaelic are formed into a complex inflectional system. They manifest inherent and contextual features such as countability, animacy, gender, case and person. The nominal grammatical types are: common nouns, proper nouns, pronouns, anaphoric nouns, mass and count nouns (collective nouns), alienable and inalienable nouns, verbal nouns.

Noun stems are principally simple or compound. The compound noun stems are formed by noun-noun combination, adjective-noun combination or they are formed by adding prefixes and suffixes.

Ex:

bùth-obrach “workshop” < *bùth* “shop” + *obrach* “work”

bodachan diminutive “old man” < *bodach* “old man” + *-an* diminutive suffix

mòrchuid “majority” < *mòr* “large” + *cuid* “portion”

Number

Even though the vigesimal system with its dual number marking is still used in some instances (like for example in the case of pair organs), the only obligatory contrast exists between the singular and plural. Plural number is most often marked by palatalisation and suffixation and interacts with case and gender. The most common plural suffix is *-(e)an*. Amongst other common suffixes, there are *-ichean/-achan*, *-(an)nan* or *-tean*. Below, there are a few examples:

cuileag “fly”: *cuileagan*

cuilean “puppy”: *cuileanan*

alternative plural formed with a stem-consonant mutation: *cuilein*

balla “wall”: *ballachan*

ainm “name”: *ainmnean*

sgoil “school”: *sgoiltean*

Gender

Nouns in Scottish Gaelic can be either masculine or feminine. For the majority of nouns, the gender can be told by their suffix morphology and the case marking. However, the telling of the gender is not always straightforward, since there are a lot of possible exceptions and there is little correlation between the grammatical gender and the physical one: ex. *boireannach* **m.** “**woman**”. There is also a number of nouns to which either gender can be assigned depending on case or dialect. A good example of a noun which takes upon itself different gender across the case system is *muir* “sea” which is often masculine when nominative and feminine when genitive (*mara* G). Some of these words developed from an older neuter gender which doesn't apply any more.

There are a few stereotypical endings and meaning values by which we can guess the gender of the given noun:

Masculine are typically nouns ending with *-a*, *adh* (verbal nouns), *-an/-ean* (diminutive), *-as*, *-ach*, *-aiche*, *-air*. Also words referring to the names of elements, seasons of the year, days of the week, metals, colours, grains, vegetables, liquors and timber. Masculine nouns very often end with a broad consonant.

Examples:

boireannach “woman”

balach “boy”

sagart “priest”

loch “lake”

cor “condition”

Feminine nouns usually end with *-a*, *-ag* (diminutive), *-aech/-eachd* (abstract), *-ad/-ead* (abstract), *-e* (abstract), or *-ir*. Feminine nouns are usually associated with the names of nations, celestial objects, musical instruments, afflictions and corpses. Feminine nouns tend to end with a slender consonant.

Examples:

caileag “girl”

dùthaich “country”

litir “letter”

a' choir “the right”

Definiteness

Scottish Gaelic lacks, like most modern Celtic languages the indefinite articles. Thus it marks only definiteness while the indefiniteness stays unmarked. The form of the definite article depends on the gender, case and number and its pattern is rather complex. The article always directly precedes the noun and may cause lenition or nasalization (which is not reflected in orthography). The form of the article varies according to the first phoneme of the noun and can undertake forms as for example *an*, *am*, *nan*, *nam* or even *an -t*.

Case

In the modern Scottish Gaelic, there are four remaining cases: nominative-acusative, dative, genitive and vocative. These cases are not realized with all nouns and the dative can be more referred to as “prepositional dative”. The Scottish Gaelic is still in the process of the case simplification and some genitive forms are not used any more. Nouns can be divided into eight surviving declensional types.

In non-definite phrases, the prepositional case doesn't tend to be marked (except in the feminine “correct” style or in fossilized phrases). In definite phrases, however, the prepositional dative gets marked.

Non-definite:

	Masculine	Feminine
NOM	<i>balach</i> “boy”	<i>caileag</i> “a girl”
GEN	<i>ainm balaich</i> “a boy's name”	<i>ainm caileige</i> “a girl's name”
DAT	<i>air balach</i> “on a boy”	<i>air caileag/ air caileig</i> “on a girl”

Definite:

	Masculine	Feminine
NOM	<i>am balach</i> “the boy”	<i>a' chaileag</i> “the girl”
GEN	<i>ainm a' bhalaich</i> “the boy's name”	<i>ainm caileige</i> “the girl's name”
DAT	<i>air a' bhalach</i> “on the boy”	<i>air a' chaileig</i> “on the girl”

In the plural, both- the masculine and feminine, definite and indefinite don't differ in the prepositional dative from the nominative form:

	Masculine	Feminine
NOM	<i>balaich</i> “boys”	<i>caileagan</i> “girls”
GEN	<i>ainm bhalach</i> “boys' name”	<i>ainm chaileag(an)</i> “girls' name”
DAT	<i>air balaich</i> “on boys”	<i>air caileagan</i> “on girls”

	Masculine	Feminine
NOM	<i>na balaich</i> “the boys”	<i>na caileagan</i> “the girls”
GEN	<i>ainm nam balach</i> “the boys’ name”	<i>ainm nan caileag(an)</i> “the girls’ name”
DAT	<i>air na balaich</i> “on the boys”	<i>air na caileagan</i> “on the girls”

Pronouns

In Scottish Gaelic, pronouns have combined with other elements creating propositional pronouns and prepositional possessive pronouns. These language elements are very often a part of some idiomatic expressions. There is also a formal and informal form for the 2nd sg. (just like in French or Welsh), when the 2nd sg. *thu* is used for familiars and the well known people of similar status and *sibh* (2nd pl.) is used with unfamiliar persons and elders.

In the chart below, there is a set of free pronouns:

	singular	plural
1	<i>mi</i>	<i>sinn</i>
2	<i>thu/tu</i>	<i>sibh</i>
3	masc. <i>e</i> fem. <i>i</i>	<i>iad</i>

Pronouns can be given emphasis by using a number of suffixes. The emphasized forms are often used for highlighting the meaning or creating contrast.

Below, find a chart with the free pronouns and their emphatic suffixes in parenthesis:

	singular	plural
1	<i>mi(se)</i>	<i>sinn(e)</i>
2	<i>thu/tu(sa)</i>	<i>sibh(se)</i>
3	masc. <i>e(san)</i> fem. <i>i(se)</i>	<i>iad(san)</i>

feimaidh tu a cheannsachadh

must-INDEF 1 2S 3M-POSS taming-VN

“You must control him”

In the **demonstrative** three degrees of proximity and specificity are distinguished. Demonstrative pronouns, in Scottish Gaelic, have a similar character to common nouns. For

example, they never combine with prepositions as the personal pronouns do. Below, see the chart with demonstrative pronouns:

degree	English	PN/ADJ	ADV movement	ADV location
1	<i>this/here</i>	<i>seo</i>	<i>an-seo</i>	<i>an-sheo</i>
2	<i>that/there</i>	<i>sin</i>	<i>an-sin</i>	<i>an-shin</i>
3	<i>yon/yonder</i>	<i>siud/ud</i>	<i>an-siud</i>	<i>an-shiud</i>

Demonstrative adjectives follow the the noun they modify, just as any other adjectives does: *an duine ud* “yon man”. In the first two degrees of proximity, the demonstrative pronoun is identical to its adjectival counterpart. However, in the third degree, it takes upon itself a different form:

chì mi an duine ud “I see yon man” vs. *chì mi siud* “I see that”

In some dialects, demonstrative adverbs can differ in forms whether they describe a location, or a movement. The location forms get lenited:

chaidh sinn an-sin *bha sinn an-shin*

Went 2PL there Was 2PL there

“We went there” “We were there”

Very often, the second and third degree of proximity are used interchangeably. What very often decides which one would be used is visibility and accessibility. Thus *an cnoc ud* “yon hill” would indicate a hill that is either invisible or nearly invisible, while *an cnoc sin* “that hill” a hill which is far away, but discernable and possible to be pointed out.

Interrogative pronouns stand directly before the verb. *Càite* “where” takes the dependent form of the verb, while the others take the independent form. Those taking the independent forms are linked with the relative pronoun *a*, which may be elided in speech before the verb if there is vowel contact.

Question word	Gloss	Relative form
<i>càite</i>	<i>where (cia “what” + àite “place”)</i>	<i>far</i>
<i>cò</i>	<i>who</i>	<i>cò</i>
<i>dè, gu dè</i>	<i>(ciod “what” + è “it”)</i>	<i>na</i>
<i>carson</i>	<i>what (cia “what” + a(i)r son “for”)</i>	<i>airson</i>
<i>cuine</i>	<i>when (cia “what” + ùine “time”)</i>	<i>nuair</i>
<i>ciamar</i>	<i>how (cia “what” + mar “as”)</i>	<i>mar</i>

Below are some examples of question and relative forms used in short sentences:

Question form	Relative form
<i>càite an d`rinn thu sin?</i> “where did you do that?”	<i>chuinnaic mi far an d`rinn thu sin</i> “i saw where you did that”
<i>cò (a) rinn sin?</i> “who did that”	<i>chunnaic mi cò (a) rinn sinn</i> “i saw you did that”
<i>dè (a) rinn thu?</i> “what did you do?”	<i>is toil leam na (a) rinn thu</i> “i like what you did”
<i>carson a rinn thu sin?</i> “why did you do that?”	<i>rinn thu sinn airson `s gum faiceamaid e</i> “you did that so that we would see it”

Possessives

Possessive meaning can be expressed in three ways: by a juxtaposition of nouns or a noun phrase, with the help of personal pronouns and with the means of prepositional phrases.

The possessive noun comes after the object in possession. The possessive noun is in its genitive form:

taigh Chalum

house Calum-GEN

taigh a` bhalaich bhig

house (the boy little-GEN)

“the little boy`s house”

There are two types of the prepositional possessive phrase. Definite phrases the locational preposition *aig*, while the non-definite the preposition *le*:

Definite:

an cù aig a` bhalach

the dog at the boy

“the boy`s dog”

Non-definite:

cù leis a` bhalach

dog with the boy

“a dog of the boy”

Pronominal possessives come before the possessed object and are the set of linked pronouns. Notice the possessive pronouns which cause the lenition:

mo chù (L) “my dog”

do chù (L) “your dog” (sg.)

a chù (L) “his dog”

a cù “her dog”

ar cù “our dog”

ur cù “your dog” (pl.)

an cù “their dog”

Numerals

Scottish Gaelic countic system is vigesimal- based on the number 20. Except of the number for 1000 *mìle* (old Irish *mìle*), which is most probably an early borrowing from Latin, the numerals are all originally native.

The basic numbers from which all the others are combined are: 1, 10, 20, 100 and 1000. If the number is not followed by an accompanying noun (in the case of reciting counting or telling telephone numbers), a particle *a h-* is used. In this rare case, the number two is lenited taking upon itself a form *a dhà*. The chart below gives cardinal numbers while accompanied by a noun (in this case *cù* “dog”). In the compound numerals, note that the counted noun goes in between the units and tens. Where the numeral causes lenition, it is marked as “L”. When constructing numbers between 20 and 40, there are a few possible versions: using a preposition *air* “on” or *thar* “past” or adding *agus* or `s “and” and then the secondary number. Above the number 40, the latter option is the rule.

1	<i>aon(a)^l chù</i> “one dog”	11	<i>aon chù deug</i>
2	<i>dà^l chù</i> “two dogs”	12	<i>dà chù dheug</i>
3	<i>trì^l coin</i> “three dogs”	13	<i>trì coin deug</i>
4	<i>ceithir^l coin</i>	14	<i>ceithir coin deug</i>
5	<i>còig^l coin</i>	15	<i>còig coin deug</i>
6	<i>sia^l coin</i>	16	<i>sia coin deug</i>
7	<i>seachd coin</i>	17	<i>seachd coin deug</i>
8	<i>ochd coin</i>	18	<i>ochd coin deug</i>
9	<i>naoi coin</i>	19	<i>naoi coin deug</i>
10	<i>deich coin</i>	20	<i>fichead cù</i>

In the chart below, the two possible ways of putting the compound numerals are shown. As it is mentioned above, after the number 40, there is only one option (adding *agus* or `s “and” and then the secondary number).

21	<i>aon(a) chù air/thar fhichead</i>	<i>fichead cù agus a h-oan</i>
22	<i>dà chù air/thar fhichead</i>	<i>fichead cù agus a dhà</i>
23	<i>trì coin air/thar fhichead</i>	<i>fichead cù agus a trì</i>
39	<i>naoi coin deug air/thar fhichead</i>	<i>fichead cù agus a naoi deug</i>
40	<i>dà fhichead cù</i>	
50	<i>leth-cheud cù</i>	
51	<i>leth-cheud cù a h-aon</i>	
99	<i>ceithir ficheadn cù `s naoi deug</i>	
100	<i>ceud cù</i>	
200	<i>dà cheud cù</i>	
1000	<i>mìle cù</i>	

6693: *sia mìle sia ceud ceithir fichead `s a trì deug* “six thousand six hundred four score and thirteen”

It is very common, that in everyday speech, speakers switch to English while expressing larger or more precise numbers. This is due to the fact that the compound numerals in Gaelic are longer than their English equivalents, but also due to the fact that most Scottish Gaelic speakers received their mathematic education through English.

Ordinal numerals:

1 st	<i>a` chiad (chù)</i>
2 nd	<i>an dàrna (cù)</i>
3 rd	<i>an treas(amh)/tritheimh (cù)</i>
4 th	<i>an ceathramh (cù)</i>
5 th	<i>an còigeamh (cù)</i>
6 th	<i>an siathamh (cù)</i>
7 th	<i>an seachdamh (cù)</i>
8 th	<i>an t-ochdamh (cù)</i>
9 th	<i>an naoidheimh (cù)</i>
10 th	<i>an deicheamh (cù)</i>
20 th	<i>am ficheamh (cù)</i>
21 st	<i>an t-aona (chù) fichead</i>

Adjectives

Adjectives in Scottish Gaelic can be both- attributive or predicative. The postnominal attributive adjectives (but not the predicative ones) agree with the nouns they describe in number, case and gender. Although most adjectives come after the noun they describe, there is a set of adjectives that usually or always appear before the noun, as well as some exceptions (colours) occurring for poetical reasons.

Prenominal attributive adjectives always lenite the noun that they precede. Below, a few examples of the most common pronominal attributive adjectives are given:

<i>ath</i>	next	<i>an ath dhuine</i>	the next man
<i>deagh</i>	good	<i>deagh latha</i>	a good day
<i>droch</i>	bad	<i>droch naidheachd</i>	nad news
<i>fìor</i>	true	<i>fìor charaid</i>	a good friend
<i>sàr</i>	excellent	<i>sàr obair</i>	excellent work
<i>seann</i>	old	<i>seann taigh</i>	old house

If there is a definite article preceding the adjectives, it causes it to lenite and to undergo affixation:

deireadh na h-ath mhìos “the end of the next month” (*mìos* “day”)

Postnominal attributive and predicative adjectives occur directly after the head of the noun phrase. In case there are more adjectives, their order is: size, quality, colour:

bàta beag snog geal

boat-MASC small nice white

“a small nice white boat”

All attributive adjectives agree with the noun they describe in gender, number and case. Thus if the noun is in plural, the adjective changes its form too:

bàtaichean beaga snoga geala

boats-PL small-PL nice-PL white-PL

“nice small white boats”

Predicative adjectives don't agree with their nouns:

tha na bàtaichean beag snog agus geal

be-PRES ART boats small nice and white

“the boats are small, nice and white”

Comparatives and superlatives

Most adjectives have comparative forms which are either identical to their base form or (most commonly) derived from their base forms by stem modification and lenition- most commonly palatalisation of the final stem consonant and the suffix *-e*: *glas* “grey” > *glaise* “greyer, the greyest”.

For marking a comparative sentence construction *nas* is used:

example a)

base: *tha an t-eun glas*

is ART bird grey

“the bird is grey”

comparative: *tha an t-eun nas glaise*

is ART bird MRK greyer

“the bird is greyer”

example b)

irregular adjective *mòr* “big” > *motha* “bigger”

tha an cù nas motha na an cat

are ART dog MRK bigger than ART cat

“the dog is bigger than the cat” (meaning “dogs are bigger than cats”)

The difference between comparative and superlative is in different sentence structure. In the comparative, there is *tha* (pres. ind.) and in superlative *is* (copular verb), which both are forms of the verb “to be”.

is e t-eun as glaise

COP is it bird MRK greyer

“the bird is the greyest”

is mise as fheàrr

COP is 1sg-EMPH MRK better

“I am the best”

Adverbs

Adverbs are simple or compound. Most commonly, they are either non-inflecting words and fixed phrases or an adjective modified by the article *gu*, which causes an *h-* preceding potential vowel at the beginning of the adverb.

Examples:

math “good” > *gu math* “well”

cinnteach “sure” > *gu cinnteach* “surely”

trom “heavy” > *gu trom* “heavily”

aineolach “ignorant” > *gu haineolach* “ignorantly”

thuir *i* *ris* *gu* *coibhneil*

said she to him ADV kind

“she said to him kindly”

All adverbs of this type we can modify by using quantifiers like for example: *glè* “very” or *ro* “extremely”. Some of these (including the two mentioned above cause a lenition): *gu glè choibhneil* “very kindly”.

There are many time, location and direction adverbs in Scottish Gaelic. Most of them are compound or fixed phrases. Below, see a few as examples:

Time: *an-diugh* “today”, *a-nochd* “tonight”, *am bliadhna* “this year”, *an-dè* “yesterday”, *mar-thà* “already”, *gu sìorraidh* “for eternity”, *an còmhnaidh* “always”...

Direction: *tuath* “north”, *deas* “south”, *ear* “east”, *iar* “west”

There is often a contrast made in Scottish Gaelic between the location and movement towards:

English	Movement	Location
up	<i>suas</i>	<i>shuas</i>
down	<i>sìos</i>	<i>shìos</i>
over here	<i>a-nall</i>	<i>a-bhos</i>
over there	<i>a-null</i>	<i>thall</i>

Verbs and verbal system

Even though Scottish Gaelic belongs into VSO languages, the initial verbs don't always need to be the element carrying the main sentence meaning, for it is sometimes the verbal noun which establishes the lexical meaning, while the initial verb might serve only as an auxiliary or a pro-verb which marks tense, mood and the absence or presence of negation. This can be demonstrated on the two following examples:

Simple past:

chaidh mi dhan bhùth(aidh)

go-past 1sg to-ART shop-DAT

“I went to the shop”

Progressive past:

bha mi a` dol dhan bhùth(aidh)

BE-past 1sg PROG go-VN to-ART shop-DAT

“I was going to the shop”

The synthetic verb forms are marked for person, tense, mood and voice. There are not many irregular verbs and the conjugational patterns are very consistent (with the two copular or “to be” verbs being the most irregular). Verbal nouns play a very important role in the Gaelic verb system, for they are used in periphrastic verbal constructions and link with prepositions acting as the verb carrying the main sentence meaning.

Whereas in English, the grammatical subject (usually human/animate) plays the most important syntactic role, in Scottish Gaelic, as well as in other older stages of Indo-European languages, greater emphasis is placed on the fact whether a participant is an agent or non-agent. This may be the most clearly seen in emotional expressions, where the one who experiences an emotion is said to literally have it “on” or “at” him/her:

tha fearg orm

is anger on me

“I am angry”

chuir i fearg orm

she put anger on me

“she angered me”

In a similar way, bodily functions are dealt with, the function being basically expressed by the suitable noun and the verb activating it being of a general sort like “doing”, “letting”, “putting”, “being” etc.:

tha mi a` sileadh fala(dh)

is 1sg at dripping-VN blood-G

“I’m bleeding”

rinn e sreothart

made 3sg-M a sneeze

“he sneezed”

rinn iad gaire

made they laugh

“they laughed”

Tense

According to Macaulay (1992), there are only two tenses in Scottish Gaelic: **present** (non-past) and **past**, both of which are definite in modality. The untensed, indefinite mode is then divided into “first indefinite” (future) and “second indefinite” (conditional). This reflects the tendency of the language to rely on context and periphrastic devices as opposed to inflection.

Verb “be”, root *bi*

present independent	<i>tha</i> “is”
present relative	<i>a tha</i> “is”
present dependent	<i>bheil, eil</i> “is”
present imperfective, future independent	<i>bidh</i> “is, will be”
present imperfective, future dependent	<i>b(h)i</i> “is, will be”
past perfective independent	<i>bha</i> “was”
past perfective dependent	<i>robh</i> “was”
past imperfective	<i>bhiodh</i> “would be”, “used to be”

Examples with other verbs

No other verb apart from “to be” in Scottish Gaelic has a present tense form in the strict sense. If something needs to be referred to as happening now, this is expressed periphrastically with the help of the verb *tha* and the lexical verb as its complement:

Tha Iain a` leughadh

is Iain at read-VN

“Iain is reading”

chì “see”: an example of a strong verb

definite	present	independent dependent	~ ~	
	past	independent dependent	<i>chunnaic</i> <i>faca</i>	“saw” “saw”
indefinite	first	independent dependent	<i>chì</i> <i>faic</i>	“sees”, “will see” “can see”
	second	independent dependent	<i>chitheadh</i> <i>faiceadh</i>	“would see” “used to see”

seall “look”: an example of a weak verb

definite	present	independent dependent	~ ~	
	past	independent dependent	<i>sheall</i> <i>sheall</i>	“looked” “looked”
indefinite	first	independent dependent	<i>seallaidh</i> <i>seallaidh</i>	“looks” “will look”
	second	independent dependent	<i>shealladh</i> <i>shealladh</i>	“would look” “used to look”

Verbs beginning with a vowel, as well as the verbs beginning with *f-* receive the *dh`* affix. In certain forms, initial consonant of the verb undergoes lenition. Examples illustrating the paradigm for a consonant-initial verb and a vowel-initial verb:

coisich “walk”

definite	present	independent dependent	~ ~	
	past	independent dependent	<i>choisich</i> <i>do choisich</i>	“walked” “walked”
indefinite	first	independent dependent	<i>coisichidh</i> <i>coisich</i>	“will walk” “will walk”
	second	independent dependent	<i>choisicheadh</i> <i>coisicheadh</i>	“would walk” “used to walk”

òl “drink”

definite	present	independent dependent	~ ~	
	past	independent dependent	<i>dh'òl</i> <i>do dhòl</i>	“drank” “drank”
indefinite	first	independent dependent	<i>òlaidh</i> <i>òl</i>	“will drink” “will drink”
	second	independent dependent	<i>dh'òladh</i> <i>òladh</i>	“would drink” “used to drink”

Aspect

As far as the aspect is concerned, there are three categories: progressive (continuing, dynamic process), perfect (a state in the present resulting from an earlier situation) and prospective (expressing that something is going to occur). These aspects are formed by aspectual particles linked to an auxiliary verb (all forms of *bi* “be” are possible).

Progressive aspect:

is constructed by combining the particle *ag* or *a* “at”:

tha iad a' togail na cloiche(adh)

be-PRES 3pl. PROG building-VN ART rock-G

“they are lifting the rock” (LIT: “they are at the lifting of the rock”)

Perfect aspect:

is marked by the particle *air* “after”:

tha iad air a' chlach a thogail

be-PRES 3pl. PERF ART rock lifting-VN

“they have lifted the rock” (LIT: “they are after lifting the rock”)

Prospective aspect:

has a construction pattern very similar to the perfect aspect, using *gu(s)*:

tha iad gus a' chlach a thogail

be-PRES 3pl. PROS ART rock lifting-VN

“they are about to lift the rock”

Negation

In Scottish Gaelic, different parts in the sentence can be negated. As clausal negatives, particles *cha(n)* and *nach* are used:

chan eil iad gu math

NEG be-PRES-DEP 3pl. well

“they are not well”

Question is indicated by intonation only:

nach eil iad gu math?

“are they not well”

There are common double negative constructions, each pair of negatives cancelling each other:

cha chreid mi nach eil iad gu math

NEG believe-INDEF1 1sg. NEG-COMP be-PRES 3pl. well

“I believe they are well” (LIT: “I don’t believe they are not well”)

By placing the particle *na* before the verb, a negative imperative is formed:

na ithibh sin

“don’t eat that” (in a polite pl. form)

Interrogatives

In the case of a yes/no question, there is the interrogative particle *an* coming in the initial position:

an robh am balach anns an sgoil?

“Was the boy at school?”

an ceannaich Iain an leabhar?

“Will Iain buy the book?”

The commonest form of a question has the question element in the first position in the sentence:

cò a bha anns an sgoil?

who REL was in the school?

dè a cheannaich Iain?

what REL bought Iain

“what did Iain buy?”

càite an robh Iain?

where PART was-DEP Iain?

“Where was Iain?”

Prepositions

There are three categories of prepositions:

Simple prepositions which can assimilate with pronominal elements. They are mostly monosyllabic and take the dative case (although there are a few examples which govern nominative/accusative or genitive cases). Many of those cause lenition to the following noun. Most of the simple prepositions are inflected for person, gender and number:

Example:

preposition	mutation it causes	translation	case it traditionally links with
<i>a</i>	L	“to”	DAT
<i>aig</i>	~	“at”	DAT
<i>far</i>	~	“off”	GEN
<i>gun</i>	L	“without”	NOM

	singular				plural		
Prep.	1Sg	2Sg	3Sg-M	3Sg-F	1Pl	2Pl	3Pl
<i>aig</i> “at”	<i>agam</i>	<i>agad</i>	<i>aige</i>	<i>aice</i>	<i>againn</i>	<i>agaibh</i>	<i>aca</i>

<i>air</i> “on”	<i>orm</i>	<i>ort</i>	<i>air</i>	<i>oirre</i>	<i>oirnn</i>	<i>oirbh</i>	<i>orra</i>
<i>gu</i> “to”	<i>thugam</i>	<i>thugad</i>	<i>thuige</i>	<i>thuice</i>	<i>thugainn</i>	<i>thugiabh</i>	<i>thuca</i>
<i>thar</i> “over”	<i>tharam</i>	<i>tharad</i>	<i>thairis</i>	<i>thairte</i>	<i>tharainn</i>	<i>tharaibh</i>	<i>tharta</i>

Compound prepositions consist of an adjective, adverb or a noun combined with a simple prepositions. They always take dative case.

Examples:

barrachd air “in addition to”

an coimeas ri “compared to”

coltach ri “similar to”

seachad air “past”

Complex prepositions consist of a simple preposition and a noun. Because the noun is the terminal element in the phrase, they come with the genitive:

a rèir “according to”

air feadh “through”

air son “for the sake of”

mu thicheall “about”

Materials:

MacAulay Donald: *The Celtic Languages, The Scottish Gaelic Language* written by MacAulay Donald, Cambridge University Press, 1992.

William Lamb: *Scottish Gaelic, Languages of the world/materials 401*, 2003.