

Diachronic, lexicographical and corpus perspectives on some Irish Gaelic partitives Dóra Pődör

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STRUCTURE OF THE TALK

- 1. Introduction
- 2. Data sources
- 3. Expressing the degree of language knowledge
- 4. Body parts with *cuid* ('part, portion')
- 5. Personal numeral in a partitive structure
 - 6. Conclusion
 - 7. Possibilites for further research

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. General introductions
- The speaker's background and motivation

- General view of the structures to be discussed:
 - partitive in a broad sense of the word;
 - part-whole relationships;
 - different grammatical structures
- Does not cover all partitives

1.2 Irish (Irish Gaelic)

- A Celtic language; Indo-European language family
- First official language of the Republic of Ireland
- One of the 24 official languages of the European Union
- Relatively small number of native speakers.
- Speakers are scattered in officially designated/recognized Irish-speaking areas (Gaeltacht areas).
- 3 major dialects, several subdialects; disconnected locations; no dialect continuum.
- 2022 census data: 20,261 daily users of Irish in the Gaeltacht areas

1.3 Research Gap and Aim of the Study

- Irish: not as well researched as English or some other European languages
- Lack of detailed exploration of Irish partitives:
 - Bayda, Victor: 'The Possessive Construction with cuid 'part''. (2018)
 - Kane, Frances: The Fine Structure of the Irish NP. PhD Thesis, Ulster
 University, 2015.
- This talk: based on a forthcoming paper which discusses diachronic, lexicographical, and corpus aspects of certain partitive structures in Irish Gaelic. (Here: lexicographical and

1.4 Structures to be Covered

- A) Expressing the degree of language knowledge
- B) Body parts with *cuid* ('part, portion')
- C) Personal numeral in a partitive structure

NOT an aim: to argue for the categorization of the structures discussed as partitive or pseudo-partitive (e.g. Bayda's argument that the *cuid* possessive construction is a pseudo-partitive one (2018: 52) is accepted).

Focus: to study the variation that is present in these structures in contemporary usage.

2. Data Sources

Dictionaries and

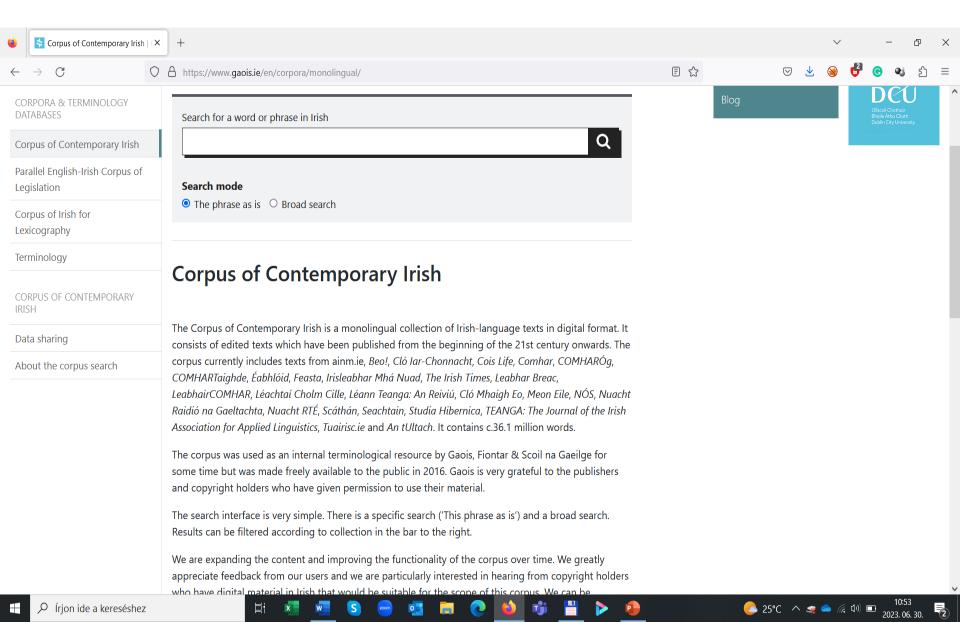
the Corpus of Contemporary Irish

2.1 Corpus of Contemporary Irish

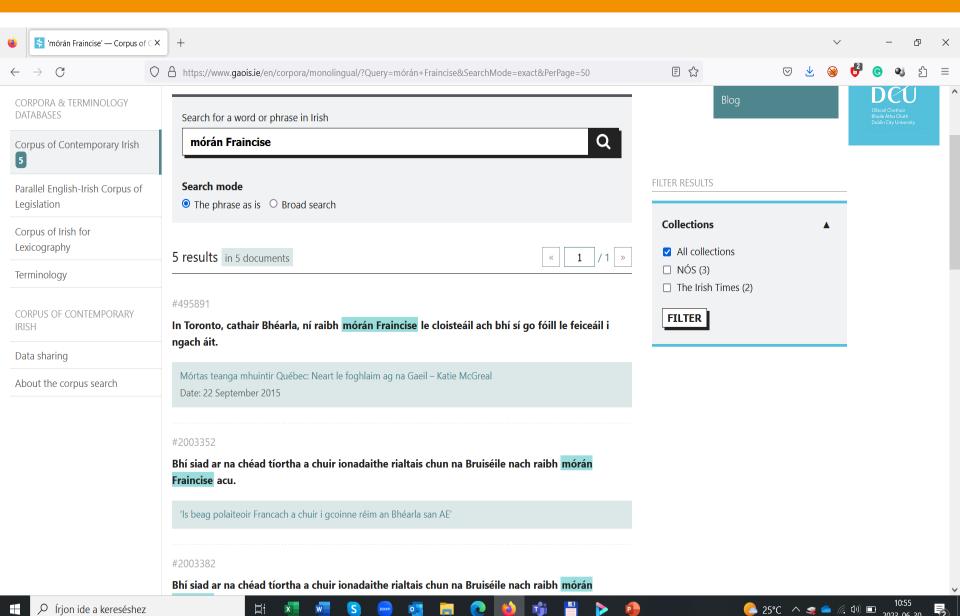
(https://www.gaois.ie/)

- Irish-language texts published in the 21st century onwards.
- Contains 36.1 million words.
- Consists of sources like newspapers, magazines, journals, and more (mostly prose).
- Developed by the Gaois research group, part of Dublin City University.
- Not all the texts were written by native speakers.
- A fairly simple research tool two types of search mode: 'The phrase as
 is' + 'Broad search'.
- Not possible to disambiguate homonyms.

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2.2 Dictionaries

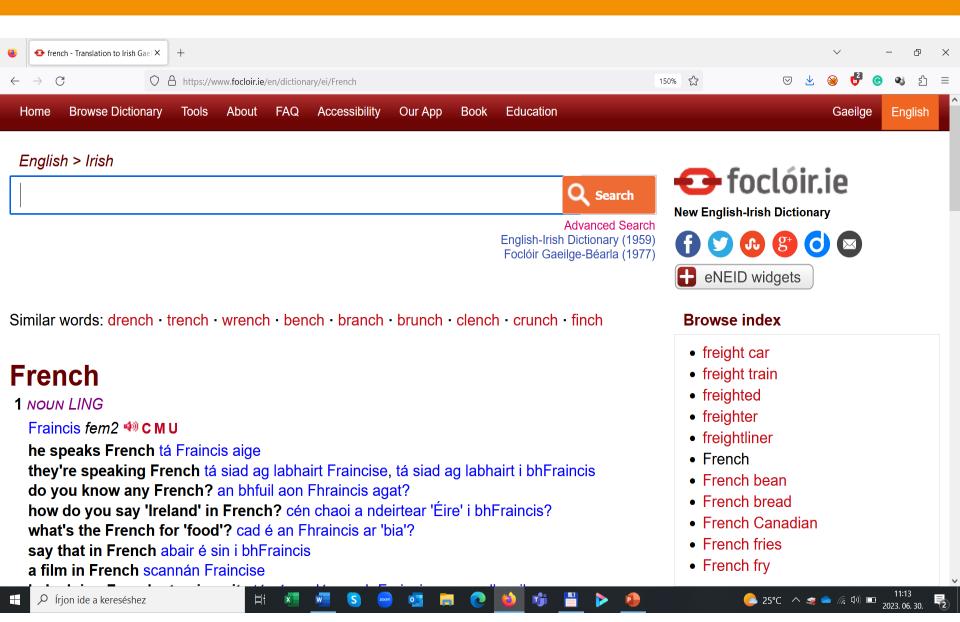
(freely accessible)

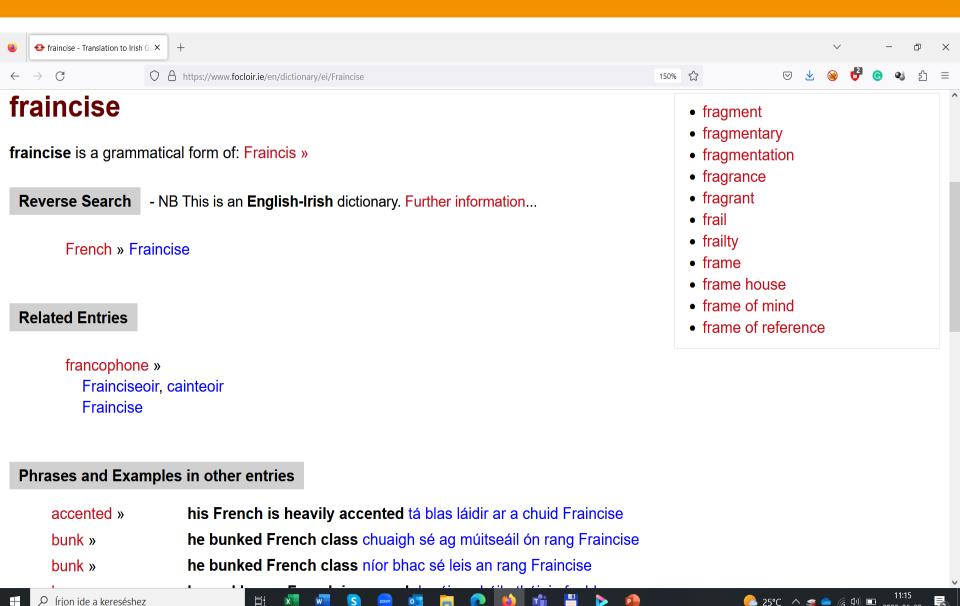
2.2.1 Foras na Gaeilge's online New English-Irish Dictionary

(NEID)

(focloir.ie)

- Since 2013
- More than 48,000 entries and more than 140,000 senses.
- Can be used as a corpus for searches.



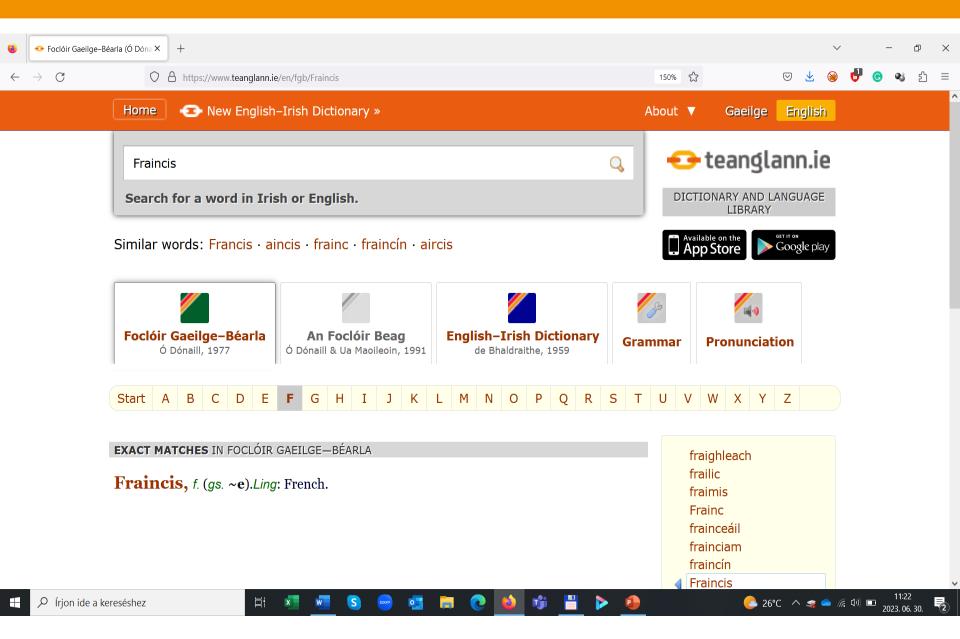


2.2 Dictionaries

2.2.2 Ó Dónaill's *Irish-English Dictionary* (*Foclóir Gaeilge-Béarla, FGB,* 1977).

Digitized at https://www.teanglann.ie/en

Concise dictionary; no information about the number of headwords, senses, etc.



2.2 Dictionaries

2.2.3 Electronic Dictionary of the Irish Language (eDIL)

A digital historical dictionary of the Irish language; covers the period from c. 700 to c. 1700 (https://dil.ie/); without dating.

Originally: printed





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n f. the French language: focail Fraingcise, Keat. ii 944 . i bhFraingcis, 945 . as Frainncis do chualaidh sé ... dá innsin é he heard it told in French (of a romance) Flower Cat. 353 (<24 P 9, A.D. 1651).



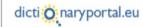
















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Discussion of the Structures

3. Structure A – The structure describing the degree of knowledge of a language

- Irish Gaelic has several words expressing quantity or amount: a lán, mórán, neart, go leor ('a lot, much, many'), beagán ('a little), roinnt ('some'), tuilleadh ('more').
- Rule: These are nouns or behave like nouns; are followed by the gen. sg. (uncountable nouns) or the gen. Pl. (countable nouns).

(1) Tá roinnt leabhar aige

be.SUBST some book.GEN.PL at.him

'He has some books.'

Literally 'Is/Are (substantive verb) some books at him.'

(2) tuilleadh eolais more information.GEN.SG.

'more/additional information'

(3) Tá beagán Fraincise agam

be.SUBST little French.GEN at.me

'I have (= I know) a little French.'

Literally: 'Is/Are (substantive verb) a little of French at me.'

Example 4 (compare with 3)

(4) Tá Fraincis agam.

be.SUBST French.NOM.SG at.me

'I have (= I know) French.'

Literally: 'Is (substantive verb) a little of French at me.'

Research question

• Genitive case-form is on the decline in all dialects (Ua Súilleabháin, 1995: 492, Ó hUiginn, 1995: 565, Hughes, 1995: 630-631, or Péterváry et al., 2014: 36).

• Lexicographical and corpus data for the use of the gen. sg. of the noun denoting a language when expressing a degree of knowledge?

(NEID s.v. "poor")

(5) 'they have a poor grasp of Spanish' níl mórán Spáinnise acu

be.SUBST.NEG. a lot Spanish.GEN.SG. at.them

Literally: 'There is not a lot of Spanish at them.'

Few examples in the *Corpus of Contemporary Irish*

Examples:

- roinnt Breatnaise/Gearmáinise/Iodáilise/Spáinnise
 (some Welsh/German/Italian/Spanish) (1 ex. each)
- roinnt Fraincise (some French) (2 exx.)
- mórán Breatnaise/Spáinnise (a lot of Welsh/Spanish) (1 ex. each)
- mórán Fraincise (a lot of French) (3 exx.)
- beagán Gearmáinise/Iodáilise (a little German/Italian) (1 ex. each)
- beagán Breatnaise (a little Welsh) (3 exx.)

(6) Bhí Fraincis líofa aige agus roinnt Gearmáinise agus Breatnaise. (#1136424)8

Bhí Fraincis líofa aige agus roinnt Gearmáinise

.be.SUBST.Past French.NOM.SG. fluent at.him and some German.GEN.SG.

agus Breatnaise

and Welsh.GEN.SG.

'He had fluent French and knew some German and Welsh.'

Literally: 'Was French fluent at him and some of German and some of Welsh.'

Observations

- Most language-denoting nouns end in -is/ais and belong to the second declension genitive singular -ise/aise.
- Example: Spáinnise (Spanish) becomes Spáinnise (genitive singular).
- Exceptions: Gaeilge (Irish/Gaelic) and Béarla (English).
- Coordinated genitives are possible (ex. 6).
- No exx. with the nom. form; use of genitive singular of the second noun is still the norm in this type of construction (written 28 language).

4. Structure B: Body parts with *cuid* ('part, portion')

Example 7

(7) a cuid gruaige

her part hair.GEN.SG

'her hair'

Lit. 'her part of hair'

Corpus research by Victor Bayda (2016/2018)

- Used Nua-Chorpas na hÉireann / The New Corpus for Ireland (NCÉ)
 - Subcorpus of data from native speakers
- Examined the use of some mass nouns with the bare pronouns a 'his', a
 'her', a 'their' and their use with the same pronouns + cuid

E.g.

a gruaig – 'her hair' as opposed to

a cuid gruaige – 'her part/portion of hair'

Bayda's conclusions:

• "The use of *cuid* with mass nouns is highly preferred, whereas with plurals less so." (Bayda, 2018: 44-45).

(Research: not restricted to nouns denoting body parts)

- "plural nouns denoting objects coming in pairs (usually inalienable possessions like body parts) are hardly ever used with cuid" (2018: 45)
- "The pseudo-partitive nature of the construction means that *cuid* expresses the idea of the AMOUNT of the possessum which is non-specific, quantifying over a type of objects, unlike partitive constructions which quantify over a set." (2018: 52).

Research questions

- 1. Occurrence of **possessive pronoun +** *cuid* **+ body part** AND of **possessive pronoun + body part** in the *Corpus of Contemporary Irish?* (E.g. with pair nouns like 'eye', 'ear', 'hand', etc.?)
- 2. Frequency of occurrence of the two structures?
- 3. What influences variation?

Differences from Bayda's research: different corpus; <u>all</u> the possessive pronouns were considered.

Lexicographical data in NEID

- Examples of possessive pronoun + cuid + noun:
- With more than 100 different nouns; ranging from concrete to abstract; various lexical fields

 Nine different body part nouns in NEID:: fiacail (tooth), fuil (blood), gruaig (hair), ionga (nail), ladhar (toe), lámh (hand, arm), méar (finger), scamhóg (lungs), súil (eye)

(8) 'they transfused his blood'

```
rinne siad fuilaistriú ar a chuid<sup>10</sup> fola
```

did.PAST they blood transfusion on his part blood.GEN.SG.

Lit. 'Did they blood transfusion on his part of blood.'

(NEID s.v. "transfuse")

(9) 'she has chestnut hair'

tá a cuid gruaige donnrua

be.SUBST.PRES. her part hair.GEN.SG. chestnut

Lit. 'Is her part of hair chestnut.'

(NEID s.v. "chestnut")

(10) 'she clipped her nails'

bhearr sí a cuid ingne

clip.PAST she her part nail.GEN.PL.

Lit. 'Clipped she her part of nails.'

(NEID s.v. "clip")

Comparison of the examples in NEID

Possessive pronoun + *cuid* **+ body part** in *NEID* (C = countable, U = uncountable, P = pair nouns)

```
hair (186) (U)
tooth (33) (C)
nail (18) (C)
eye (12) (P)
blood (8) (U)
finger (4) (C)
lung (3) (C)
hand/arm (2) (P)
toe (1) (C)
```

Corpus data

6 more body parts were added:

```
cluas 'ear' (P)
cnámh 'bone' (C)
cos 'leg, foot' (P)
croí 'heart' (C)
gualainn 'shoulder' (P)
glúin 'knee' (P)
```

Structures with <u>all</u> the possessive pronouns were searched for.

Corpus data for body part nouns

BODY PART	POSS. PRON. + CUID/CHUID/GCUID + BODY PART	POSS. PRON. + BODY PART (NOM. PL. IF COUNTABLE)	POSS. PRON. + 'TWO' + BODY PART	EXAMPLE IN NEID with cuid
Gruaig 'hair'	508 (= 69%)	232 (= 31%)	not applicable	YES
Fuil 'blood'	99 (= 61%)	64 (= 39%)	not applicable	YES
Fiacail 'tooth'	130 (= 61%)	84 (= 39%)	not applicable	YES
longa 'nail'	27 (= 37%)	46 (= 63%)	not applicable	YES
Ladhar 'toe'	4 (= 22%)	14 (= 78%)	not applicable	YES
Cnámh 'bone'	9 (= 9%)	92 (= 91%)	not applicable	NO
Scamhóg 'lung'	7 (= 9%)	74 (= 91%)	not applicable	YES
Lámh 'hand, arm'	89 (= 6%)	1104 (= 73%)	312 (= 21%)	YES
Súil 'eye'	194 (= 6%)	2769 (= 86%)	275 (= 8%)	YES
Cluas 'ear'	20 (= 5%)	324 (= 85%)	38 (= 10%)	NO
Méar 'finger'	17 (= 5%)	301 (= 95%)	not applicable	YES
Cos 'leg, foot'	31 (= 2%)	1191 (= 87%)	147 (= 11%)	NO
Glúin 'knee'	9 (= 2%)	= 415 (= 86%)	57 (= 12%)	NO
Gualainn 'shoulder'	7 (= 2%)	385 (= 96%)	8 (= 2%)	NO
Croí 'heart'	2 (= 2%)	98 (= 98%)	not applicable	NO

Limitations

- Prepositions combined possessive pronouns not considered (extra time)
- Homonymy issues with plural forms
- Dialectal variation in noun forms

Analysis of the Results

- 1. More body parts can appear in the construction with *cuid* than the nine given in NEID.
- 2. The frequency of structures with **possessive pronoun +** *cuid* **+ body part** and **pronoun + body** part varies; *NEID* does not fully correspond to the corpus data
- 3. Three nouns appear more frequently with *cuid* than without it: *gruaig* 'hair', *fuil* 'blood', and *fiacail* 'tooth' (at least 60%) > ncountable nouns (*gruaig, fuil*) involve uncertain quantity, while *fiacail* (countable) represents variable numbers.

Analysis of the Results (continued)

- 4. *ionga* ('nail') and *ladhar* ('toe') also have relatively high occurrence percentages with *cuid* (37% + 22%) (more certainty than for *fiacail*)
- 5. Méar ('finger') has a low percentage (5%) (greater visibility and certainty)
- 6. Bayda's research shows similar findings for *gruaig* and *fuil*, but with lower token numbers.
- 7. Pair nouns (*cluas, cos, glúin, lámh, súil*) DO occur with *cuid*, although their frequency is low (bw 2 and 6%).

Analysis of the Results (continued)

The frequency of the use of *cuid* with body parts seems to depend on the certainty in the speakers' mind about the quantity/amount of the body part (countability, visibility).

Example 11

(11) Scrúdaíodh a cuid súl, a cuid fiacla, a cuid ingne, a cluasa, a dhá láimh. (#393709)16 Scrúdaíodh cuid súl, cuid а а examine.PAST.PASS. eye.GEN.PL. her her part part fiacla, cuid cluasa, dhá ingne, aа а toothGEN.PL. nail.GEN.PL. her ear.N.PL. her part her two

hand.N.SG.17

láimh.

'Her eyes, her teeth, her nails, her ears, her two hands were examined.'

Lit. 'Were examined her part of eyes, her part of teeth, her part of nails, her ears, her two hands.'

5. Structure C - Personal numeral in a partitive structure

personal numerals: for counting people

cardinals: for counting things or animals

Set of personal numerals

duine 'one person' beirt 'two people' triúr 'three people' ceathrar 'four people' cúigear 'five people' seisear 'six people' seachtar 'seven people' ochtar 'eight people' naonúr 'nine people' deichniúr 'ten people'

dháréag 'twelve people'

Grammatical features of personal numerals

- 1 + 2 are or had originally been simple nouns; 3-10 are derived from cardinals + the noun "fer" (man) (Thurneysen 1980: 243)
- Behave as nouns morphologically and syntactically
- Have grammatical gender and are declined based on noun class (nom. sing., gen. sing., nom. pl., gen. pl.) (but: 12 dháréag only nom. sing. and gen. sing.; < contracted form of dhá fhear dhéag (twelve men))
- Can stand alone or be followed by a noun in gen. pl.
- Whole part relationship expressed in some phrases with personal numerals
- Sometimes the personal numerals can also refer to objects (!)

The use of personal numerals 1: Examples 12 and 13

(12) triúr

'three people/persons'

(13) triúr cailíní three girl.GEN.PL 'three girls'

Lit. 'three people/persons of girls'

Expressing 'one of us', 'two of us', 'one of you', 'two of you', etc.

NEID: two equivalents for phrases such as 'X of us':

- a) with the 1st person plural prepositional pronoun form of the preposition *ag* 'at';
- b) with the 1^{st} person plural prepositional pronoun form of the preposition de 'from'.
- Ó Dónaill's *Irish-English Dictionary (FGB)* does name this type of usage as a partitive one under sense (4) in the entry for *ag (FGB* s.v. "ag"), and under sense (2 f) in the entry for *de (FGB* s.v. "de"),

The use of personal numerals 2: Example 14 and 15

```
(14) triúr againn
three at.us
'three of us'
or
(15) triúr dínn
three from.us
```

'three of us'

Research question:

Frequency of the occurrence of the two structures in the *Corpus of Contemporary Irish?*

Frequency of usage

Personal numeral	againn	dínn	agaibh	díbh	acu	díobh
duine 'one person'	478 (94%)	29 (6%)	71 (93%)	5 (7%)	2116 (83%)	437 (17%)
beirt, dís 'two people'	447 (99.8%)	1 (0.2%)	109 (100%)	0 (0%)	2049 (98%)	44 (2%)
triúr 'three people'	143 (100%)	0 (0%)	10 (100%)	0 (0%)	416 (96%)	18 (4%)
ceathrar 'four people'	53 (100%)	0 (0%)	6 (86%)	1 (14%)	120 (92%)	10 (8%)
cúigear 'five people'	36 (97%)	1 (3%)	0	0	92 (84%)	18 (16%)
seisear 'six people'	29 (100%)	0 (0%)	3 (100%)	0 (0%)	32 (71%)	13 (29%)
mórsheisear 'seven people'	2 (100%)	0	0	0	0	0
seachtar 'seven people'	15 (100%)	0 (0%)	0	0	45 (86.5%)	7 (13.5%)
ochtar 'eight people'	10 (100%)	0	0	0	44 (88%)	6 (12%)
naonúr 'nine people'	1 (100%)	0	0	0	20 (80%)	5 (20%)
deichniúr 'ten people'	5 (83%)	1 (17%)	0	0	44 (88%)	6 (12%)
dháréag 'twelve people'	2 (67%)	1 (33%)	0	0	12 (92%)	1 (8%)
Total:	1221 (97%)	33 (3%)	199 (97%)	6 (3%)	4990 (90%)	565 (10%)

Analysis of the data

- Prevalence of the construction with the preposition ag 'at'.
- Variation seems to depend on the grammatical category of person: the use of the prepositional pronominal forms of ag are more overwhelming in the case of the 1st and 2nd pl. (97%) than in the 3rd pl. (90%).
- Further research needed to determine factors influencing variation (the 'of them' construction can also refer to objects!).

6. Conclusion

Findings:

- The gen. sg. of nouns denoting a language in a structure indicating the degree of knowledge does not show variation in the Corpus of Contemporary Irish, in spite of the general scholarly consensus that the use of the gen. sg. of nouns in general is in decline
- Detailed data for the variation between the structures possessive pronoun +
 cuid + body part AND possessive pronoun + body part were presented, and it
 was argued that The frequency of the use of cuid with body parts seems to
 depend on the certainty in the speakers' mind about the quantity/amount of
 the body part (countability, visibility).
- Detailed data for the variation between the structures corresponding to English 'one of us', 'two of us', 'one of you', 'two of you' were presented from the Corpus of Contemporary Irish, which showed the overwhelming use of the construction with ag.

7. Possibilites for further research

- a) Exploration of further structures expressing quantity (expansion on type A) (also in the *New Corpus for Ireland*)
- b) Further exploration into the use of *cuid* with nouns other than the ones denoting body parts
- c) Further exploration into the use of *cuid* with body parts (use of the *New Corpus for Ireland*, examination of text types, native vs. non-native speakers, dialects)
- d) Further exploration into the use of personal numerals with nouns and with the prepositional pronominal forms of *ag* and *de* (use of the *New Corpus for Ireland*, examination of text types, native vs. non-native speakers, dialects)

Thank you for your attention!

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