

Wh-extraction in Irish

Irish has three complementizers: *aL*, *aN*, *go*

(L = triggers 'lenition' on following word; N = triggers 'nasalization' on following word)

- (1) Deir siad [_{CP} gur [_{TP} ghoid na síogaí í]].
say they go-PAST stole the fairies her
 'They say that the fairies stole her away.'
- (2) an ghirseach [_{CP} a [_{TP} ghoid na síogaí ____]]
the girl aL stole the fairies
 'the girl that the fairies stole away'
- (3) an ghirseach [_{CP} ar [_{TP} ghoid na síogaí í]]
the girl aN stole the fairies her
 'the girl that the fairies stole away'
- (4) an lá a bhí muid i nDoire
the day aL be[PAST] we in Derry
 'the day that we were in Derry'
- (5) an lá a raibh muid i nDoire
the day aN be[PAST] we in Derry
 'the day that we were in Derry'

Basic properties of *aL*:

1. It appears at the left edge of the clause.
2. It appears only in finite clauses.
3. It forms a prosodic unit with the verb.
4. It occurs in all structures in which wh-movement has occurred.

Relative clauses: [see (2) and (4) above]

Questions:

- (6) Cá fhad a bhí siad fá Bhaile Átha Cliath *t*?
WH length aL be[PAST] they around Dublin
 'How long were they in Dublin?'

In clefts:

- (7) Ba i nDoire a dúradh a fuarthas é *t*.
COP[PAST] in Derry aL was-said aL was-found it
 'It was in Derry that it was said it was found.'

In 'reduced clefts':

- (8) Sean-aimseartha a deir muintir an bhaile a tá sí.
old-fashioned aL say people the townland aL is she
 'It's old-fashioned that the people of the townland say she is.'

In certain manner adverbial clauses:

- (9) mar a chloisimid a dh'imthigh ar Níobé *t*.
as aL we-hear aL went on Niobe
 'as we hear happened to Niobe'

In certain temporal adverbial clauses:

- (10) nuair a tháinig siad 'na bhaile nuair < n uair 'at/in time' uair < Lat. ora
when aL came they home
'when they came home'

In emphatic negative constructions

(Also in other cleft-like constructions)

5. Triggers the so-called 'relative' forms of the verb: In the present and future, the finite verb may optionally add a final –s

- (11) Cá h-uair a thiocfas tú 'na bhaile?
what time aL come[FUT-WH] you home
'When will you come home?'

6. It is incompatible with the independent expression of negation

7. It does not co-occur with any other complementizer

8. In general, it occurs all along the path of extraction:

- (12) Cé a mheas tú a chonaic tú?
who aL thought you aL saw you
'Who did you think that you saw?'

- (13) Cén t-úrscéal a mheas mé a dúirt sé a thuig sé.
which novel aL thought I aL said he aL understood he
'Which novel did I think he said he understood?'

- (14) Ba i nDoire a dúradh a fuarthas é t.
COP[PAST] in Derry aL was-said aL was-found it
'It was in Derry that it was said it was found.'

- (15) Sean-aimseartha a deir muintir an bhaile a tá sí.
old-fashioned aL say people the townland aL is she
'It's old-fashioned that the people of the townland say she is.'

- (16) an rud a shíl mé a dúirt tú a dhéanfá [M90:207]
the thing aL thought I aL said you aL do[COND.2sg]
'the thing that I thought you said you would do'

All examples from:

James McCloskey. 1979. *Transformational syntax and model-theoretic semantics: A case study in Modern Irish*. Reidel: Dordrecht.

James McCloskey. 1990. Resumptive pronouns, A'-binding, and levels of representation in Irish. In R. Hendrick (ed.), *The syntax of the modern Celtic languages*, 199-248, Academic Press: San Diego.

James McCloskey. 2002. The morphosyntax of wh-extraction in Irish. To appear in *Journal of Linguistics*.