

What's "That" All About?

"That" + Verb in Irish Clauses

HOW TIME FLIES WHEN YOU'RE HAVING FUN!

At the recent *Weekend in Winona*, Nancy Stenson spent some time working with the *ardrang* on "relative clauses." This was a topic we had done some work on a while ago, and since a good portion of my class was at that event, it seems like an ideal time to circle back on that.

Relative Clauses are . . .

. . . generally less-than-complete sentences that explain or amplify or modify something from the main part of a sentence, often connected with a "that." *This is the hat that I bought, There is the boy who kicked me:* "that I bought" specifies which hat we are talking about, and "who kicked me" tells us why we are interested in that boy over there. The clause starts with something like *that, which, who* and is generally followed by a sentence that doesn't make sense on its own, without the thing it refers to.

There's More to "that" than Relative Clauses

Back in the fall of 2006, we took a run at this from the perspective of a student who thinks of a sentence in English that has a "that" (or similar) connector in it, and wants to express it in Irish. Here is the original introduction from the handout *About "That"* (please review that one, or I can give you a new one). -----

We often use the word "that" in English (sometimes "which") to introduce clauses in slightly more complex sentences. If we want to be able to converse in Irish, we have to know how to express the same concepts in Irish as well.

We're talking about "that" when used before verb clauses — not demonstrative "that", as in "that dog". Typical English sentences might be:

1. *He said that he is tired.*
2. *I hope that he isn't sick.*
3. *Did you see the car that I bought last week?*
4. *Did you see the car that hit me?*
5. *Did you see the car that I was in?*

We can't think about just translating the word "that", in these situations, for a couple of reasons:

- ◆ "That" is not always explicitly expressed in both languages. We could say, "She says she is ill," with no "that" in the sentence. Or, "Did you see the car I was in?" In general, the "that" will always be explicitly indicated in Irish, even when it isn't used in English.
- ◆ "That" is translated differently, depending on the grammatical situation. In some situations, we'll use *go/nach*, in others *gur/nár*, in others *a* plus eclipsis, in others, *a* plus lenition, and so on.

"THAT" CONNECTORS IN IRISH

This go around, let's focus on recognizing these situations in their Irish forms, and correctly putting them in one of three "buckets":

- ◆ **Bucket A:** *DIFFERENT* from relative clauses, there is a set of "that" structures that deal mainly with Indirect Speech and Opinions & Wishes. You can easily recognize these in a couple of ways:
 - The main part of the sentence expresses things like "He said that," "She thinks that," "They do not believe that," "We are happy that."
 - The part after the "that" is generally a complete sentence, unlike a relative clause: "this is stupid," "politicians are evil," "your mother wears Army boots."
 - The two parts of the sentence are connected with *go/nach* and eclipsis, or *gur/nár* and lenition in the past tense.
- ◆ **Bucket B:** In a *DIRECT RELATIVE clause*, the key item in the first part of the sentence is the *doer* or the *do-ee* of the clause (the subject or the direct object).
 - "Did you see the car that I bought last week?" "Car" is the object, the thing that was done to.
 - "Did you see the car that hit me?" "Car" is the subject, the thing that did the doing.
 - We use **a plus lenition** for the *affirmative* clauses in all tenses, and *nach* (plus eclipsis, as always) or *nár* plus lenition (past tense) for negative clauses. In the past, that *a* is followed by the *d'* for verbs starting with a vowel or *f*. "Independent" forms are used after *a* (*a bhí*, not *a raibh*).
 - We are always dealing with a relative clause when it is preceded by *nuair*, as well as most of the "cé" questions: *cé a . . .*, *cén uair*, *cén lá*, *cén X a . . .*
- ◆ **Bucket C:** *INDIRECT RELATIVE clauses* are used mainly when the connection is *possession* or a *preposition*.
 - *Did you see the car that I was in?* "Car" is the object of the preposition "in". *She is the girl whose father yelled at me.* "Girl" is connected through a genitive relation to her father. Looking for the prepositional or possessive connection can help you recognize these.
 - We use **a/nach plus eclipsis** in all tenses except the past, which uses *ar/nár* plus lenition. Where available, the dependent form is used, even after *a* (*a raibh*, not *a bhí*).
 - *Cén t-am*, *Sin é an t-am*, are followed by indirects, as are phrases and questions involving a reason (*fáth*, *cúis*, *údar*) or a place (*áit*).

ADDITIONAL NOTES

- ◆ Let's ignore the copula for now, shall we?
- ◆ Note that *nach* always behaves the same. It is always followed by eclipsis, and by the dependent form of the verb, where available. Similarly, the past particle forms, *ar* and *nár*, behave as they generally do, triggering lenition. This means, for one thing, that in the negative, particularly, the verb forms can look similar for all of these types of clauses, so consider:
 - The **A-type** clauses will have more of a complete sentence, verb and subject, than the others.
 - Clues to what you're dealing with will be elsewhere in the sentence -- whether a preposition is involved, or a genitive relation, whether the "antecedent" (what "that" refers to) is clearly the subject of the clause, say, whether some of those "trigger words" are used.
- ◆ Verbs that have dependent forms will use *a*, *nach* instead of *ar*, *nár* in the past.
- ◆ Special forms for **direct** relatives: *atá*, *a dúirt*, *a fuair*.