

More about "a" and "go/gur"

Some Special uses

Having gotten relatively comfortable with using these particles *a* and *go/gur* to introduce clauses, you will find that these forms are used in the Mac Mathúna story in ways that may be new to you. In a nutshell, we'll quickly review:

1. Using *go/gur* to mean "until", and
2. Using *a* in indirect relative form to mean things like, "all of that which", "however much".

These uses are generally in the affirmative, meaning that we don't get into *nach*, etc.

Go/Gur and "until"

We have gotten used to using *go/gur* to express "that" after expressions like "They said," "I hope", "It seems," and so on.

There is another common usage, in which the first part of the sentence talks about the action of one verb up to the point of action of another verb -- that is, one thing went on *until* something else happened.

In Mac Mathúna's story, the first part, next to last paragraph, the wind picks up Tadhg and blows him here and there. If we take out all the details, we get:

rug chun siúil é . . . gur thuirling sé . . . it took him about *until* he descended . . .

and in the last paragraph, we find:

Níorbh fhada go dtáinig sé . . . It wasn't long *until/before* he came . . .

This use is straightforward: *go/gur* behave as they always do, the verb is conjugated according to the sense of what you are saying. In practice, many times this usage will be either an imperative followed by the future -- "Do that until it hurts" -- or the first and the latter parts of the sentence are in the past -- "He did that until it hurt." But other tenses are possible, these are just the most common usages.

Here are a few more examples:

Fan go dtiocfaidh sí	Wait until she comes
Rith sé gur thit sé	He ran until he fell
Cuardóigh mé go bhfaighidh mé é	I will search until I find it.
Itheann sé go bpléascann sé	He eats until he bursts
D'ith siad milseáin gur éirigh siad tinn	They ate candy until they got sick

This is, again, pretty straightforward, so you should learn to use it.

a for "all of that . . ."

There is a use of *a* that may seem a little strange -- in form, it is basically an indirect relative (C) clause, except that the *a* doesn't seem to refer to a noun in the first part of the sentence.

It is used to express notions like "all of that which", "however much", "no matter how ___", and the like. The "all" part can be contained in the *a*, rather than in a separate noun or pronoun that the relative particle refers to. The most common examples are things like:

Sin a bhfuil ann/agam! That's all there is/that I have!

In Mac Mathúna's story, Part I, Paragraph 4, he is responding to one of the people he bumped into, and he says:

Is binne liomsa . . . méileach . . . ná a bhfuil de ghártha suilt . . .
Bleating is sweeter to me than *any amount* of joyful shouts . . .

It is frequently the case, in this usage, that, compared to our indirect relative clauses, it looks like something is missing. We don't have a clear noun/pronoun to refer to, many times.

But the form is the same -- *a* + eclipsis + dependent form, if available, with *ar* and the past (lenited) in that tense.

Some more examples:

sin a bhfuil le rá agam leat	that's all I have to say to you
d'ól sé a bhfuair sé	he drank everything (all that) he got
tar éis a ndearna mé ar do shon	after all that I did for you
sin ar chuala mé	that's all I heard
chaill sé a raibh aige d'airgead	he lost all the money that he had
an é sin a bhfuil d'airgead agaibh?	is that all the money you have?

This usage often involves *de*, either to say "all of the (something)", or with a noun to introduce the sentence. Note that we often get *de plus a* (possessive) combined into *dá* (or *dhá*). *De* also combines with the indirect relative particles *a* and *ar* to give us *dá* and *dár* (*dhá dhár*). Examples:

Chaith sé a raibh d'airgead aige	He spent all the money that he had
Ní raibh duine dá raibh ann sásta	Nobody who was there was happy (none of all that were there)
Níor chreid mé focal dár 'úirt sé liom	I didn't believe a word of what he told me
Dá mhéad a itheann sé, bíonn ocras air	However much he eats, he is (still) hungry
dá mhéad airgead dá gcaithfidh tú	however much money you spend
Dá gránnacht an áit, is maith liom í	No matter how ugly the place is, I like it

In the last example, we are expressing something that uses an adjective ("ugly") in English. But in this construction, you will find either the abstract noun that goes with the adjective, or the comparative form, *not* the usual adjective you expect:

dá áilleacht/áille an bhean	No matter how beautiful the woman . . .
dá óige an cailín . . .	No matter how young the girl (is, was) . . .
dá éascaíocht í an Ghaeilge	No matter how easy Irish is . . .
dá leisciúla/ghlice é	No matter how lazy/clever he is

Just Recognize It . . .

Look, I'm no great shakes at this usage myself, and it doesn't get a lot of attention in texts. But, again, the important thing is to be able to recognize this usage and understand its meaning when you bump into it.