Corpus Perspectives on Some Irish Gaelic (Pseudo-)Partitives

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Abstract   Irish Gaelic is rich in partitive and pseudo-partitive structures, and this essay intends to discuss certain variational aspects of some of these based on corpus and lexicographical data. The structures to be covered are the following: (Type A) Quantifier + glottonym in the genitive; (Type B) Nouns denoting body parts with cuid 'part, portion'; and (Type C) Personal numerals in a partitive structure. A) and B) can be considered pseudo-partitives, while C) is a true partitive. As literature on this topic is scarce, the new data provided here are collected from dictionaries (especially the New English-Irish Dictionary – NEID – at focloir.ie and Ó Dónaill's Foclóir Gaeilge-Béarla [Irish-English Dictionary] – FGB), and the Corpus of Contemporary Irish. The focus of this research is to study the variation that is present or is expected to be present in these structures in contemporary usage, and to give possible reasons for the variation if it was attested.

Keywords   Irish. Partitives. Cuid. Body parts. Personal numerals.

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1   Introduction

Irish Gaelic belongs to the Celtic branch of the Indo-European language family. It is the first official language of the Republic of Ireland (the second being English) and is one of the 24 official languages of the European Union.[1] Despite its nominally high status, it has only a few tens of thousands of native speakers, who speak several different dialects and are scattered in several officially designated *Gaeltacht* (= 'Irish-speaking') areas. The 2022 census did not intend to establish the number of native speakers; instead, it asked questions about the usage of Irish. According to the census data, 71,968 people claimed to speak Irish on a daily basis outside the education system (it is compulsory to learn Irish in schools); but only 20,261 speakers used Irish on a daily basis in the Gaeltacht areas. However, about 195,000 people stated that they could speak Irish very well ("Education and Irish Language" 2023; "Laghdú eile…" 2023).[2]

The geographically and linguistically fragmented nature of native varieties of Irish and the fact that learner speakers by far outnumber native speakers have various consequences for the language. However, it is not the aim of this essay to discuss these. Suffice it here to note that if we compare research done on Irish Gaelic and on English, then it will be obvious that English is a much more extensively studied language than its neighbour. It should not come as a surprise then that Irish (pseudo-)partitives have not yet been explored and discussed in great detail.

Irish is rich in partitive and pseudo-partitive structures,[3] and certain corpus aspects of some of these will be discussed here. The structures to be covered are the following:

a. Quantifier + glottonym in the genitive (as exemplified by the structure describing the degree of knowledge of a language, e.g. *beagán Fraincise* (lit. 'a little of French', as in example (1));

b. Nouns denoting body parts with *cuid* 'part, portion', as exemplified by *a cuid gruaige*, lit. 'her part of hair', as in example (7); and

c. Personal numerals in a partitive structure (as exemplified in *triúr againn* in example (14) and *triúr dínn* in example (15), both meaning 'three of us').

1   The terms 'Irish Gaelic' and 'Irish' will be used to denote the varieties of Gaelic spoken on the island of Ireland. 'Irish' would normally be used in Ireland, while 'Irish Gaelic' outside Ireland.

2   The census was conducted in the Republic of Ireland, so it does not include data for Northern Ireland.

3   Partitives denote a PART of something, whereas pseudo-partitives denote an AMOUNT of something (Bayda 2018, based on Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2001).

As literature on this topic is scarce (but see Bayda 2018; Kane 2015), the data which supplement existing studies have been collected from dictionaries (see below), and the *Corpus of Contemporary Irish*. It is not the aim of this essay to argue for the categorisation of the structures discussed as partitive or pseudo-partitive; for example, Bayda's argument that the *cuid* possessive construction is a pseudo-partitive one (2018, 52) is accepted (his views are presented in the section on *cuid*). Thus, based on the definition given in footnote 3, A) and B) can be considered pseudo-partitives, while C) a true partitive. Rather, the focus of this research is to study the variation that is present or is expected to be present in these structures in contemporary usage, and to give possible reasons for the variation if it was attested.

2 Corpus and Dictionaries Used

In the following paragraphs a description is given of the corpus and the dictionaries used for this study.

The *Corpus of Contemporary Irish* contains Irish-language texts published from the beginning of the twenty-first century onwards. It has been freely available to the public since 2016 and contains 36.1 million words. If we compare it with other corpora – e.g. the *British National Corpus* contains 100 million words; the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* and the *Hungarian National Corpus* both have more than 1 billion words – then we can say that the Irish corpus is relatively small (although note that the *Hungarian National Corpus* contains non-contemporary material as well). The Irish texts come from 19 sources, which include newspapers, news portals, magazines, journals and scholarly publications, works of fiction, and the news from the Irish-language radio station (Raidio na Gaeltachta) and the Irish National Radio and Television Broadcaster, RTÉ ('Corpus of Contemporary Irish'). Not all the texts were written by native speakers, although the site does not mention this. This means that unless the biography of the author of the source of each quotation is checked, there is no way of knowing whether the given example is from a native or a non-native speaker. The search tool is fairly simple and offers two types of search modes: 'The phrase as is' and 'Broad search'. In the latter mode, inflected and alternate forms of the term(s) searched can be accessed. Two filters can be used: the first one is 'Collections', where the results are filtered according to source(s), and 'Word forms', which can only be used in the 'Broad search' mode, and certain word forms (e.g. the nom. pl. of a noun) can be excluded from the search. However, if the grammatical forms are homonymous (e.g. in some nouns the gen. sg. form is identical with the nom. pl. or the nom. sg. is identical with the gen. pl.), then the search tool is not able to distinguish between them. Also, some

examples are duplicated in the corpus although they have different identification numbers.[4] Note that it was not possible to filter out duplicated examples in the course of this research. The corpus was compiled by the Gaois research group, which develops various digital resources for the Irish language, and is part of Fiontar & Scoil na Gaeilge [Irish Department] in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Dublin City University ('About Gaois').

When searches were made in the corpus, all the relevant grammatical forms of the given words were checked; however, in the presentation of the data here, only the dictionary form of the Irish words is provided.

Foras na Gaeilge's online *New English-Irish Dictionary* (NEID) was launched in 2013. The site does not give information about the current amount of data contained in the dictionary; however, users can learn that in January 2017 it contained 48,000 entries and 140,000 senses ("About"). The latest update was given in July 2023, according to which "a couple of hundred additional entries and senses were added" ("Latest news"). For the researcher, one of the most helpful features of this dictionary is that it can also be used as a corpus, and various types of searches can be made in it. For example, despite it being an English-Irish dictionary, one can also search for all the examples of Irish words or phrases that appear in it. Many of the examples do not seem to be corpus-based, although there is no information about the source of the examples on the site.

Ó Dónaill's *Irish-English Dictionary* (*Foclóir Gaeilge-Béarla*, FGB) was first published in 1977 and is available online. No information is given about the amount of data and the number of entries it contains; the printed version is of the size of a concise dictionary.

The *Electronic Dictionary of the Irish Language* (eDIL) is a digital historical dictionary of the Irish language, which covers the period from c. 700 to c. 1700.

All of the above resources can be freely accessed by the public.

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4   For example, the sentence *Beidh banna ceoil seachtair páirteach ann chomh maith* 'A music band of seven people will be a part of it as well' can be found under numbers #2064167 and #2064232 in the corpus, coming from the same article on an online news portal. (Note that apart from the translations cited from dictionaries, all other – both word for word and literal – translations are those of the author.)

3 Discussion of the Structures, Presentation and Analysis of the Data

3.1 Quantifier + Glottonym in the Genitive (Describing the Degree of Knowledge of a Language) (Type A)

3.1.1 Discussion of the Structure

Irish Gaelic has many words that express quantity: e.g. *a lán*, *mórán*, *neart*, *go leor* – all meaning 'a lot, much, many'; e.g. *a lán airgid* 'a lot of money', *airgid* being the gen. sg. of *airgead*. See also examples with *beagán* 'a little', as in (1), *roinnt* 'some',[5] as in (2), and *tuilleadh* 'more' as in (3).

(1) *Tá   beagán   Fraincise   agam.*
    be.SUBST.PRS little   French.GEN.SG   at.1SG
    'I have (= I know) a little French.'
    Lit.: 'There is (substantive verb) a little of French at me.'

(2) *Tá   roinnt   leabhar   aige.*
    be.SUBST.PRS some   book.GEN.PL   at.3SG.M
    'He has some books.'
    Lit.: 'There are (substantive verb) some books at him.'

(3) *tuilleadh   eolais*
    more   information.GEN.SG
    'more/additional information'

In (1), *Fraincise* is the gen. sg. of *Fraincis* 'French'. In (2), *leabhar* is the gen. pl. of *leabhar* 'book'. In (3), *eolais* is the gen. sg. of *eolas* 'information'. The general rule is that uncountable nouns will select the gen. sg. form, while countable nouns the gen. pl. As scholars have been documenting for the past few decades that the genitive case-form of the noun is on the decline in all the dialects (e.g., see Ua Súilleabháin 1994, 492; Ó hUiginn 1994, 565; Hughes 1994, 630-1, or Péterváry, Ghiollagáin 2014, 36), it would be worth examining some dictionary and corpus data connected to some pseudo-partitive phrases where the genitive form of the noun would be required. The present investigation was restricted to structures containing nouns that denote languages, as a) the great majority of them form their

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5   Partitive use of *roinnt*, noun, 'division' (FGB s.v. "roinnt").

genitives in a phonologically quite salient manner (by adding an extra syllable),[6] b) many learners of the language would meet the gen. sg. for the first time while learning to talk about the languages that they speak, and finally, c) this limited number of nouns yielded an amount of data that was possible to analyse within a limited period of time.

3.1.2   Presentation and Analysis of the Data

Irish Gaelic expresses someone's knowledge of a language with a possessive structure:

(4) *Tá*   *Fraincis*   *agam.*
    be.SUBST.PRS   French.NOM.SG   at.1SG
    'I have (= I know) French.'
    Lit.: 'There is (substantive verb) French at me.'

In this case, the noun denoting the language is in the nom. sg. However, if one wanted to express the level of language knowledge, then literally, the AMOUNT of the given language possessed by the speaker has to be given. For example, in the following example from the NEID, *Spáinnise* is the gen. sg. of *Spáinnis* 'Spanish':[7]

(5) 'they have a poor grasp of Spanish'
    níl   *mórán* *Spáinnise*   *acu*
    be.SUBST.PRS.NEG   a lot   Spanish.GEN.SG   at.3PL
    Lit.: 'There is not a lot of Spanish at them.'
    (NEID s.v. "poor")

Almost all nouns denoting a language end in the suffix *-(a)is*, are feminine and belong to the second declension; the two most notable exceptions being *Gaeilge*, 'Irish, Gaelic' and *Béarla* 'English'. These latter two have the same form in the nom. sg. and the gen. sg.; however, the language-nouns ending in *-(a)is* have gen. sg. *-(a)ise*, see (5) above.

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6   Adding an extra syllable to form the gen. sg. is present in other nouns as well; however, there are also many nouns where the gen. sg. is created by palatalising the last consonant of the noun: e.g. *ábhar* /ˈaːvər/ 'material', *roinnt ábhair* / ˈaːvər/ 'some material'. For many learners, it is very difficult to distinguish between the palatal and non-palatal versions of some consonants.

7   When the example is cited from the NEID, then the order is English phrase/clause/sentence followed by the Irish equivalent (these two being taken from the dictionary), and then comes my literal translation of the Irish equivalent. Also note that the NEID does not use capitalisation and punctuation in its examples, and that is how material from this dictionary is presented here.

Of the glottonyms ending in -*(a)is*, *Breatnais* 'Welsh' seems to be the earliest attested, already appearing in Early Irish[8] (eDIL s.v. "Bretnas"). A search in eDIL for some of the languages of Europe did not yield too many results: the earlier forms of the nouns for French, Italian and Spanish were found, all dated to the seventeenth century (eDIL s.v. "fraingcis", "Etáil(l)is", "Spáinnis"), but no noun phrases indicating the level of knowledge.

In the *Corpus of Contemporary Irish*, only a few examples of such structures were found. Some of these are: one example of *roinnt Breatnaise/Gearmáinise/Iodáilise/Spáinnise* ('some Welsh/German/ Italian/Spanish') each, one of *mórán Breatnaise/Spáinnise* ('a lot of Welsh/Spanish') each, one of *beagán Gearmáinise/Iodáilise* ('a little German/Italian') each and three of *beagán Breatnaise* ('a little Welsh'; two of which are from the same interview published in different news portals). No examples of phrases where the glottonym is NOT in the gen. sg. could be found.

The following example from the corpus illustrates the use of the nom. sg. and the gen. sg. forms:[9]

(6) *Bhí*   *Fraincis*   *líofa*   *aige*   *agus*   *roinnt*
     be.SUBST.PST   French.NOM.SG   fluent   at.3SG.M   and   some
     Gearmáinise   *agus*   *Breatnaise.* (#1136424)
     German.GEN.SG   and   Welsh.GEN.SG
     'He had fluent French and knew some German and Welsh.'
     Lit.: 'There was French fluent at him and some of German and some of Welsh.'

This example shows that in this pseudo-partitive structure two genitives that are dependent on the same noun can be coordinated.

Thus, it can be stated that at least in publications in Irish Gaelic the use of the gen. sg. of the second noun in this type of construction is still the norm. It could be suggested that as Irish grammars and Irish dictionaries codify the use of the gen. sg. in this structure, educated authors of Irish texts would try to follow this norm. (Note that in types B) and C) variation itself is present in grammars and dictionaries.) However, further research would be needed with other quantifier + noun combinations to see if there is variation between the genitive and the nominative in other phrases, and whether the way the gen. sg. of the noun is formed has any bearing on this.

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8   Early Irish denotes the Gaelic language from the sixth century to the end of the twelfth c. It is also called Early Gaelic (especially in Scotland).

9   The source of the corpus example is ainm.ie s.v. "Dáithí Ó hÓgáin (1949-2022)".

3.2 Nouns Denoting Body Parts with *Cuid* 'Part, Portion' (Type B)

3.2.1 Discussion of the Structure

This type is exemplified in (7).

(7) *a   cuid   gruaige*
     her   part   hair.GEN.SG
     'her hair'
     Lit.: 'her part of hair'

In (7), *gruaige* is the gen. sg. of *gruaig* nom. sg. 'hair'.

Modern Irish *cuid* goes back to the Old Irish noun *cuit* /kudʹ/, the primary meaning of which is 'share, part, portion'.[10] It is attested already in the Old Irish glosses from the eighth century AD. When followed by the genitive, its meaning is 'some, a certain amount'. eDIL cites 10 examples with the structure possessive pronoun + *cuit* + genitive of noun, "replacing simple noun" (i.e., possessive pronoun + noun in the nominative) (eDIL s.v. "cuit"). For the modern language, the standard reference work on grammar, *Graiméar Gaeilge na mBráithre Críostaí*, confirms that *cuid* often occurs between a possessive pronoun and a noun dependent on it (both with abstract/uncountable nouns and plural nouns) (Ó hAnluain 1999, 115).

Victor Bayda conducted corpus research into this structure (see Bayda 2018). He used *Nua-Chorpas na hÉireann / The New Corpus for Ireland* (NCÉ), a corpus of about 30 million words, about 20% of which make up a native-speaker corpus, where texts are categorised into one of the three major dialects (Bayda 2018, 43). He examined the use of some mass nouns with (i) the bare pronouns *a* 'his', *a* 'her', *a* 'their' and their use with the same pronouns + *cuid*; (ii) the nouns *caint* 'talk', *gruaig* 'hair' with/without *cuid*; and (iii) pair nouns with the bare pronoun *mo* 'my' and the pronoun *mo* with *cuid* (Bayda 2018, 44-5).[11] He comes to the conclusion that "[t]he use of *cuid* with mass nouns is highly preferred, whereas with plurals less so", and "[t]he 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).

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10   Bayda (2018) glosses *cuid* as 'part', and this is the first meaning given in FGB as well; thus, this equivalent will be used in this article, though 'portion' or 'share' might be a more idiomatic rendering in some contexts.

11   Pair nouns: objects or people that come in pairs (e.g. *feet*, *hands*, *parents*, *shoes*).

Apart from such corpus data, there is also lexicographical data, as the NEID has examples of the structure possessive pronoun + *cuid* + noun with more than 100 different nouns, ranging from concrete to abstract ones and belonging to various lexical fields.

For the purpose of the present study, one semantic group will be discussed based on lexicographical and corpus data: structures with body parts. The reasons for this choice are the following: they seem to form a clearly delineable group from the semantic point of view in that they are connected to inalienable possession; they include mass (uncountable) nouns, countable nouns and pair nouns; Bayda's research also includes some body parts; and learners of Irish come across the use of *cuid* with body parts at a fairly early stage.

3.2.2   Presentation of the Data

The NEID features the following nine different nouns denoting body parts in this structure: *fiacail* 'tooth', *fuil* 'blood', *gruaig* 'hair', *ionga* 'nail', *ladhar* 'toe', *lámh* 'hand, arm', *méar* 'finger', *scamhóg* 'lungs', *súil,* 'eye'. Of these, only two, *fuil* and *gruaig* are uncountable, thus they are used in the gen. sg. when preceded by *cuid*:

(8)   'they transfused his blood'
  rinne siad fuilaistriú   ar a chuid fola
  did.PST 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.PRS her part hair.GEN.SG chestnut
  Lit.: 'There is her part of hair chestnut.'
  (NEID s.v. "chestnut")

The other seven are countable nouns, therefore *cuid* is followed by the noun in gen. pl., e.g.:

(10)   'she clipped her nails'
  bhearr sí a cuid ingne
  clip.PST she her part nail.GEN.PL
  Lit. 'Clipped she her part of nails.'
  (NEID s.v. "clip")

Examples with *gruaig* 'hair' in the NEID far outnumber the total number of examples with the other words, as there are 186 tokens

of such structures in the dictionary, while there are only 33 examples with *fiacail* 'tooth', 18 examples with *ionga* 'nail', 12 examples with *súil* 'eye', 8 examples with *fuil* 'blood', 4 examples with *méar* 'finger', 3 examples with *scamhóg* 'lung', 2 with *lámh* 'hand, arm', and 1 with *ladhar* 'toe'.

The above data was complemented by a search in the *Corpus of Contemporary Irish* for structures containing the above nouns plus six other nouns denoting body parts either with poss. pron. + *cuid* or just the bare possessive pronoun. The six additional nouns are: *cluas* 'ear', *cnámh* 'bone', *cos* 'leg, foot', *croí* 'heart', *gualainn* 'shoulder', and *glúin* 'knee'. As pair nouns were also considered, the data for possessive pronoun + the numeral 'two' + body part is also provided for these. For the other nouns, this category is of course not applicable.

The results are summarised in Table 1; the data are presented in decreasing order in terms of the percentage of examples with *cuid* **[tab 1]**.

Note that there are some limitations as to the extensiveness and the accuracy of the data for the following reasons:

1. In Irish Gaelic, many prepositions combine with the possessive pronouns which begin with a vowel. As much extra time would have been needed to search for all of these options in the corpus, these data were not taken into consideration (e.g., phrases such as *lena shúile* or *lena chuid súl* 'with his eyes', where *lena* is a combination of the preposition *le* 'with' and the possessive pronoun *a* 'his').

2. As for plural forms, Irish nouns fall into two categories: nouns with the so-called weak plural have the same form in the nom. sg. and the gen. pl.; and those with the so-called strong plural have the same form in the nom. pl. and the gen. pl. In this research, the first type of homonymy, namely when the nom. sg. is identical with the gen. pl. may cause problems. For example, *mo chluas* can either mean 'my ear' or 'of my ears', and only by looking at the context could these phrases be disambiguated. However, as some test analyses have confirmed that the great majority of these forms is nom. sg., such examples were not included in the count.

3. Another type of homonymy that exists is when the gen. sg. is identical with the nom. pl. (this generally occurs in nouns with weak plurals and some irregular nouns). This is the case, for example, with *súil* 'eye'. Thus, *mo shúile* can either mean 'my eyes' or 'of my eye'. Again, a test analysis was applied here, and according to the results, the nom. pl. forms by far outnumber the gen. sg. forms. The other word where such ambiguity arose was *glúin* 'knee'. Thus, such forms were all counted among the nom. pl. forms.

Table 1 Nouns denoting body parts with a possessive pronoun and with or without *cuid*

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
ionga '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

* The forms with the pl. 3 poss. pron. were not taken into consideration at all, as *a bhfuil* 'their blood' is homonymous with *a bhfuil*, relative particle + dependent form of the present indicative of the substantive verb. A search for *a bhfuil* in the corpus gives more than 10,000 results, and each would have had to be checked to disambiguate this syntagm.

** Of these, 2333 are ambiguous, as they could be either nom. pl. or gen. sg. – see, however, point (3).

*** Of these, 315 are ambiguous, as they could be either nom. pl. or gen. sg. – see, however, point (3).

4. There exists dialectal variation in the nom. pl. + gen. pl. of nouns. So, although the gen. pl. form, *cluas* 'of ears', would be expected after *cuid*, structures with *cuid* + the officially recognised nom. pl. form *cluasa* 'ears' were also searched for.[12] As such forms were indeed found, they were included in the count, as this research was not focussed on variation in the gen. pl. form of individual nouns, but on variation between structures with and without *cuid*.

3.2.3   Analysis of the Data

The following conclusions can be drawn from the data presented above:

a. The nine nouns denoting body parts that appear in the NEID in the *cuid*-type of construction are not the only ones which can take *cuid*, as in the corpus the other six nouns can also appear with it.

b. The nouns in the dictionary appearing with *cuid* are not necessarily those that most frequently appear in the corpus in this type of structure. E.g. *cnámh* 'bone' appears with *cuid* in nine cases in the corpus, making up 9% of the examples, but the NEID has no examples of *cnámh* with *cuid*. The corpus provides comparable data for *scamhóg* 'lung', but here the NEID does give examples with *cuid*.

c. The ratio between structures with possessive pronoun + *cuid* + body part and structures between pronoun + body part (i.e. without *cuid*) varies greatly from noun to noun. There are three nouns which appear with *cuid* more often than without it: *gruaig*, *fuil* and *fiacail*. The first two are uncountable nouns, as humans do not know how much hair and blood they actually have, and so here the quantity in question is uncertain. The third noun, *fiacail* 'tooth', is a countable one, but of all the countable body parts, teeth are the most numerous, moreover, their number is not stable during one's lifetime, and two human beings will not necessarily have the same number of teeth. Generally, a person knows how many teeth they have; but they will not normally know how many another person has. Thus, the reason for the frequent use of *cuid* with this noun seems to be again the uncertain quantity. *Ionga* 'nail' and *ladhar* 'toe' also have a relatively high percentage of occurrences with *cuid* (37% and 22% respectively). In an ideal case, a person has 20 nails and 10 toes, which are fairly high

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12   The standard for written Irish has existed since 1958 (*An Caighdeán Oifigiúil*).

numbers as far as body parts go, and normally, it is not easy to see at first sight whether a person possesses all of these, so the element of uncertainty is also present here. It may then come as a surprise that *méar* 'finger' has a very low percentage of the *cuid*-type construction (5%): however, if we think along the lines of visibility, fingers are more conspicuous than toes, which means more certainty. At this point, it is interesting to compare these findings with those of Bayda (2018, 44). In the native-speaker corpus that he investigated, he found no examples of *fuil* 'blood' without *cuid*; and he had almost the same number of examples of *gruaig* 'hair' with and without *cuid*. However, it should also be noted that his total number of tokens was lower than in the present research (52 for *fuil* and 215 for *gruaig*). An important finding is that he was able to show dialectal differences in the use of *cuid* with *gruaig*.

d. Pair nouns, that is nouns that denote things or persons of which there are only two, constitute a separate subcategory in many languages of the world. The same applies to Irish Gaelic, which, like all Indo-European languages, used to have a fully-fledged dual number.[13] As stated earlier, of the category of body parts that come in pairs, Bayda examined five (*cluas* 'ear', *cos* 'leg, foot', *glúin* 'knee', *lámh* 'hand, arm' and *súil* 'eye') using a different corpus from the one used here, and presented only those results which contain the poss. pron. *mo* 'my'. He only found 2 examples of *súil* 'eye' with *cuid*, and no *cuid*-type examples with the other nouns. (He had altogether 647 examples.) However, he also calls attention to the fact that "*[l]ámha*, for example, has different numbers if we consider not *mo*, but *a* 'his', *a* 'her', *a* 'their': 306 "- *cuid*" against 15 "+ *cuid*"". He notes that "plural nouns denoting objects coming in pairs (usually inalienable possessions like body parts) are hardly ever used with *cuid*" (2018, 45) and that "[t]he construction is not used with singular nouns or those denoting possessions coming in pairs as in these cases there is no AMOUNT in question, the number of persons or items is given by definition" (Bayda 2018, 52). It is all the more noteworthy then that the NEID does give example sentences with poss. pron. + *cuid* with two pair nouns: *lámh* 'hand, arm' and *súil* 'eye'. They are the pair nouns that have the highest percentage of occurrences with *cuid* in the *Corpus for Contemporary Irish*: 6% in both cases (for *lámh*, this is not that much higher than Bayda's data for the three poss. prons. in 3rd person

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13 It is not within the scope of this essay to discuss the residue of the dual number in Modern Irish.

mentioned above), although this would probably be somewhat higher in the case of *súil* if the gen. sg. forms from the ambiguous examples with *mo shúile*, *do shúile*, etc. could be filtered out, see point 3 above. A search was also done for examples for a sixth pair noun denoting a body part, *gualainn* 'shoulder'. With the exception of *cluas* 'ear', where 5% of the examples contain *cuid*, in the examples of the other three pair nouns (*cos* 'leg, foot', *glúin* 'knee' and *gualainn* 'shoulder') *cuid* only appears in about 2% of the cases.

    e. Nouns denoting two internal organs, *scamhóg* 'lung' and *croí* 'heart' have not been discussed yet. It is notable that 9% of the corpus examples with poss. pron. + *scamhóg* contain *cuid*, as opposed to only 2% of the examples with *croí*. Moreover, one of the examples is from a text written by a non-native speaker (see the discussion in Section 2; the source of this particular example was fairly easy to find, but note that further meticulous research would be needed to separate examples coming from native speakers from those coming from non-native speakers). The *Corpus of Contemporary Irish* seems to show that *scamhóg* is a lot more often used in the plural than in the singular, even when referring to one person (compare the frequently used English plural form, *lungs*). This may partly explain the relatively high number of examples of poss. pron. + *cuid* + gen. pl. (7 examples making up 9% of all cases) compared to the case of *croí* 'heart'.

Finally, the following example from the corpus illustrates the various uses of nouns denoting body parts:[14][15]

(11) *Scrúdaíodh   a   cuid súl,   a   cuid fiacla,*
       examine.PST.PASS her part eye.GEN.PL   her part tooth.GEN.PL
       a   cuid ingne,   a   cluasa, a   dhá láimh. (#393709)
       her part nail.GEN.PL her ear.NOM.PL her two hand.NOM.SG
       '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.'

Here we have the following structures: i.e. (i) possessive pronoun + *cuid* + gen. pl. of the body part; (ii) possessive pronoun + body part in the nom. pl.; (iii) numeral + body part in the nom. sg. It is interesting

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14   The source of the corpus example is Mac Donncha (2010, 37).

15   The official standard recommends the form *lámh* /la:v/; however, in the Gaeltacht areas, *láimh* /la:v'/ with palatal final consonant is frequently used after the numeral *dhá* (Ó Baoill, Ó Tuathail 1992, 113).

to note that there are three body parts mentioned of which humans have two: eyes, ears and hands, and each is used in a different type of phrase. As the data presented in Table 1 also show, all of these three constructions can be used with pair nouns, although their frequency varies: the possessive pronoun followed by the nom. pl. of the noun being the most frequent type.

3.3 Personal Numerals in a Partitive Structure (Type C)

3.3.1 Discussion of the Structure

The last structure to be discussed is a true partitive equivalent to English 'two of us', 'three of you', etc., containing personal numerals**.**

Personal numerals behave like nouns and are used for counting people, as in (12) and (13), with *gasúr* in (13) being the gen. pl. of *gasúr* 'child'.

(12) *triúr*
       three people/persons'

(13) *triúr*   *gasúr*
       three people   child.GEN.PL
       'three children' Lit.: 'three people/persons of children'

The term 'personal numeral' for such words is used in Thurneysen's A *Grammar of Old Irish* ([1946] 1980, 243). In Ó Dónaill (2010, 190) they are also referred to as 'personal numerals' (note that Acquaviva uses the term 'collective' numerals – 2008, 30; 165). They are different from cardinals; for example, when simply counting or when counting things or animals, the word *trí* 'three' would be used for 'three'. In both eDIL and the FGB these personal numerals are categorised as nouns. The Modern Irish forms are the following:

duine '(one) person'
beirt 'two people' (earlier and now rarely used form: *dís*)
triúr 'three people'
ceathrar 'four people'
cúigear 'five people'
seisear 'six people'
seachtar 'seven people' (earlier and now rarely used form: *mórsheisear*)
ochtar 'eight people'
naonúr 'nine people'
deichniúr 'ten people'
dháréag 'twelve people'

Since in Irish Gaelic each noun has grammatical gender, the above-mentioned nouns/personal numerals also have grammatical gender and are (and were) declined according to the noun class they belong (or belonged) to. This means that in Modern Irish, all of them have a nom. sg., a gen. sg., a nom. pl. and a gen. pl. form, with the exception of *dháréag*, which only has nom. sg. and gen. sg.[16] The FGB still has an entry for *dís*, '(Of persons) Two; pair, couple' (FGB s.v. "dís"); and the NEID also gives this as one of the equivalents of ''two', when referring to people (NEID s.v. "two").

In order to understand why the above words function as numerals from the semantic point of view but behave as nouns from the morphological and syntactic point of view, one would need to have a look at their etymology.[17]

The origin of the Old Irish (OIr.) personal numerals is discussed in Thurneysen ([1946] 1980, 243), where he suggests that with the exception of 'two' (which was *días* in OIr.),[18] these are made up of the cardinals + the noun *fer* (Mod. Ir. *fear*, 'man'), thus OIr. *tríar* (Mod. Ir. *triúr*) in itself means 'three men' (= OIr. *trí* 'three' + *fer* 'man'), *cethrar* (Mod. Ir. *ceathrar*) 'four men' (= OIr. *cethair* 'four' + *fer* 'man'), etc. This explains why these personal numerals behave as nouns both from the morphological and syntactic point of view:

a. as already mentioned above, they are declined like any other noun;
b. they can be used on their own, e.g. *triúr* on its own means 'three people', *ceathrar* on its own means 'four people', etc.;
c. if they are followed by another noun, then that noun has to be in the gen. pl., see ex. (13) above. According to Breatnach, nouns start to appear after the personal numerals only during the Middle Irish period (c. 900-c. 1200) (i.e. before that, these numerals could only be used on their own), and the noun had to be in the gen. pl. (Breatnach 1994, 262).

Kane (2015, 124) analyses these personal numerals as noun phrases, and convincingly argues that the fact that they can stand alone and are followed by the gen. pl. of the noun means that their second element, i.e. the reduced form of *fear*, is still considered to be the syntactic head of the noun phrase. (So, *cúigear* 'five people' consists of

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16   This is probably because *dháréag* /ˈɣaːrˈeːɡ/ stands out from the above lexical items as it is actually the contracted form of *dhá fhear dhéag* /ˈɣaːarjˈeːɡ/, 'twelve men'; lit. 'two man teen', where it is the cardinal, and not the personal numeral that is used for 'two' (eDIL s.v. "deec").

17   Acquaviva classifies their usage as pronouns or determiners (2008, 165).

18   There were four differences in the personal numerals between Old Irish and Modern Irish, but these are not discussed here as they are not relevant for the research.

cúig 'five' and the reduced form of *fear* 'man', *fear* being the syntactic head of the noun phrase *cúigear*.)

It is also worth noting that these personal numerals are not exclusively used for referring to people; they can also denote things (see Thurneysen 1980, 244 and eDIL s.v. "tríar"): however, in this case they cannot be followed by a noun (FGB s.v. "triúr"). Furthermore, the cardinals can also be used for counting people (see the entries for the numerals between 2 and 10 in the NEID), although language coursebooks and grammars generally teach the personal numerals to learners for this context.

From the semantic point of view, there seems to be a whole – part relationship expressed in some phrases in which the personal numerals are used, thus they can be considered true partitives. An example for one of these types can be seen in (13); and I would like to discuss another type below. This is the equivalent of English phrases such as 'one of us', 'two of us', 'three of us', i.e. 'X persons of us'. The NEID provides two equivalents for such phrases: one with the 1st person plural prepositional pronoun form of the preposition *ag* 'at', and one with the same grammatical form of the preposition *de* 'from'. FGB does name this type of usage as a partitive one under sense no. (4) in the entry for *ag* (FGB s.v. "ag"), and under sense no. (2 f) in the entry for *de* (FGB s.v. "de").

(14) *triúr*   *againn*
      three people   at.1PL
      'three of us'

or

(15) *triúr*   *dínn*
      three people   from.1PL
      'three of us'

The same two structures can be used for 'X of you' and 'X of them' as well (the latter could also refer to things).

3.3.2 Presentation and Analysis of the Data

The NEID does not give information on the frequency of usage, so a search for these constructions was conducted in the *Corpus of Contemporary Irish*; the results are presented in **[table 2]**.

Table 2 Corpus data for expressing 'X of us', 'X of you', 'X of them'

Personal numeral	*againn* 'at us'	*dínn* 'from us'	*agaibh* 'at you' (pl.)	*díbh* 'from you' (pl.)	*acu* 'at them'	*díobh* 'from them'
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%)

* The percentages were calculated by comparing the data for the following different pairs: *againn – dínn, agaibh díbh, acu – díobh.*

** These two examples come from the same passage from two different sources.

a. The personal numeral *mórsheisear* (the earlier form for 'seven people') appears altogether 26 times in the corpus (but there are only two examples in the examined construction), although note that it is not listed in the NEID in the entry for 'seven'. Also, only 16 examples were found in the corpus with the earlier form for 'two people', *dís*, as opposed to 2634 examples with *beirt* in the structure examined. The variation in these two numerals was not examined.

b. There is an almost total domination of the construction with the preposition *ag*. Although there is some variation depending on the first and second elements, sometimes the number of examples is so low (e.g. in the case of 'ten of us', 'twelve of us' or 'four of you'), that no meaningful conclusion can be drawn in such cases. However, when the data are totalled for each prepositional pronoun, then the dominance of the forms with *ag* can clearly be seen. It is also noteworthy that this prevalence is greater in the case of the structures 'X of us' and 'X of you' than in the case of 'X of them'. More research would be needed to establish whether the variation depends on native speaker or non-native speaker usage, or dialect, or context, or a combination of these.

4   Conclusion

The aim of this study was to provide some insight into certain aspects of a much under-researched grammatical feature of Irish Gaelic: partitive and pseudo-partitive structures. The focus of this research was to study the variation that is present or is expected to be present in three such structures – A) and B) being pseudo-partitives, C) being a true partitive – in contemporary usage, and to give possible reasons for the variation if it was attested. Data from the *Corpus of Contemporary Irish* was retrieved and analysed and was checked against dictionary data.

The findings can be summarised as follows:

a. Type A): The gen. sg. of nouns denoting a language after a quantifier (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. It has been suggested that as Irish grammars and dictionaries codify the use of the genitive here, this is probably why variation was not found in (educated) written Irish. Another possible explanation may have to do with the salience of the gen. sg. form of these nouns.

b. Type B): 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 (which in turn depends on countability and visibility). It was also found that pair nouns can also appear with *cuid*.

c. Type C): Detailed data for the variation between the structures with two different prepositions corresponding to English 'one of us', 'two of us', 'one of you', 'two of you', etc., were presented from the *Corpus of Contemporary Irish*, which showed the overwhelming use of the construction with the preposition *ag* 'at' rather than with the preposition *de* 'from'. More research would be needed to establish the reasons behind this variation.

There are several possibilities for further research connected to all the three types discussed here. Based on these findings, the most obvious possibilities would be:

a. Expansion on type A: Exploration of further structures expressing quantity and using other corpora as well (e.g. the *New Corpus for Ireland*) in order to compare the data from the different corpora;

b. Expansion on type B: Further exploration of the use of *cuid* with nouns other than the ones denoting body parts; further exploration of the use of *cuid* with body parts using other corpora as well (e.g. the *New Corpus for Ireland*); examining the data in different text types;

c. Expansion on type C: Further exploration of the use of personal numerals with nouns and with the prepositional pronominal forms of *ag* and *de,* using other corpora as well (e.g. the *New Corpus for Ireland*); examining the data in different text types.

This essay has shown that the rich variety of (pseudo-)partitive structures and meanings in Irish, and the existence of variation clearly deserve to be explored in more detail in the future.

Abbreviations

GEN	genitive
gen. pl.	genitive plural
gen. sg.	genitive singular
M	masculine
Mod. Ir.	Modern Irish
NEG	negative
NOM	nominative
nom. pl.	nominative plural
nom. sg.	nominative singular
OIr.	Old Irish
PASS	passive
PL	plural
poss. pron.	possessive pronoun
PRS	present
PST	past
SG	singular
SUBST	substantive verb

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