

# SCOTTISH GAELIC

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## INTRODUCTION

Gaelic was brought into north-western Scotland by settlers from Ireland – around the year 500 AD according to the traditional dating. In the centuries that followed, Gaelic ousted Pictish in the north-east and subsequently became established in the south-west and south-east of what is now Scotland, as the Gaelic kings of the Scots annexed the British kingdom of Strathclyde and the northern part of the Anglian kingdom of Northumbria. This expansionist phase lasted until the twelfth century. Thereafter Gaelic gave way gradually to Scots in the Lowlands (though it continued to be spoken in Galloway until the seventeenth century) and around the north-east coast until, by c. 1400, there emerged a consciously bi-cultural nation in which the Gàidhealtachd ('Gàeldom') coincided with the physical Highlands and Islands, as opposed to the Scots-speaking remainder of Scotland – the 'Lowlands' or Galldachd.

As those early Scottish Gaels lost touch with Ireland and met new linguistic neighbours (including, from the ninth century, Norse speakers in the Hebrides and far north), independent Scottish linguistic developments doubtless began to take place, and Kenneth Jackson's vision (1953) of an undifferentiated pan-Goidelic dialect surviving until the thirteenth century is no longer tenable (Gillies 1994, Ó Buachalla 2003). Direct testimony from the 'Old' and 'Middle' periods (seventh to eleventh century) is almost wholly lacking, though progress has been made on some fronts by linguistic reconstruction. In the better attested Early Modern period (twelfth to seventeenth century) the extant manuscript literature uses the pan-Gaelic educated dialect 'Classical Irish', in which vernacularisms are, in general, rare. However, the early sixteenth-century *Book of the Dean of Lismore* offers a glimpse of the extent to which one (Perthshire) dialect had developed by then. Modern Scottish Gaelic texts occur in bulk only from the seventeenth century on, though the earliest genres attested show signs of relative antiquity. These texts consist mainly of poetry. While their language is by no means colloquial in the sense that some of the Scottish Gaelic forms in the Dean's Book are colloquial, they are indubitably vernacular when compared with the latest productions in the Classical literary language, with which they were roughly contemporary.

The Linguistic Survey of Scotland, which began collecting Scottish Gaelic dialect material in the early 1950s, found indigenous Gaelic speakers in almost all the areas forming 'the Highlands' as defined above: from Sutherland and parts of Caithness in the north,

to Braemar and East Perthshire in the east, to Kintyre and Arran in the south. While the geographical limits of the Gàidhealtachd had thus remained pretty stable for several centuries, its consistency had altered considerably: depopulation and linguistic attrition in the southern, eastern and central Highlands have caused the Gaelic centre of gravity to move steadily north-westwards over the past 150 years. Today Gaelic is a community language only in the Islands and on parts of the western seaboard. (There are, however, Gaelic émigré communities in the Lowland cities and overseas, most notably in Nova Scotia, the diaspora of the nineteenth-century Highland Clearances.)

Scottish Gaelic speakers are keenly aware of dialectal distinctions at both local and wider levels. Some of these have demonstrably been in existence for centuries. Studies of several individual dialects exist (e.g., Borgstrøm 1937, Oftedal 1956, Dorian 1978, Ó Murchú 1989, Ternes 2006). Although the dialectology of Scottish Gaelic is yet to be written, it is possible to discern some of the axes of dialectal differentiation. These include a central: peripheral opposition, whereby the West Central Highlands from North Argyll to Wester Ross and the Western Isles are united against the most northerly, easterly and southerly dialects (cf., Jackson 1968, Dilworth 1995/6). The central group combines many of the best-known Scottish Gaelic phonological innovations with a conservative inflectional system, and provides the great majority of Gaelic speakers nowadays.

The variety of Scottish Gaelic described below represents an attempt to take advantage of this correlation between West Coast-Hebridean Gaelic and the literary norm which emerged in the nineteenth century and is enshrined in most dictionaries and grammars. It is, in the last resort, a synthetic variety – in effect ‘standard’ Scottish Gaelic – based on the practices of the majority of active Gaelic speakers who come from the ‘central’ area.<sup>1</sup>

As regards linguistic description, our approach to phonology recognizes that the Scottish Gaelic dialects as a whole present a welter of surface variety concealing a high degree of regular development from a Common Gaelic base. To describe at a moderately abstract level enables us to make statements which can mediate between the traditional grammars and the more rigorously descriptive treatments in the dialect monographs. Given our overall aim of capturing the practical homogeneity of the ‘central’ dialects, a comparable approach has been adopted for morphology and syntax, and for similar reasons. Since the description of Scottish Gaelic is in a fairly primitive state in many important ways, we shall describe the language in a fairly traditional way, so as to provide a link with what is available in the grammars, while at the same time trying to ensure that points of significance to comparative or general linguistic discussion are duly highlighted.

### **Scottish Gaelic orthography and pronunciation<sup>2</sup>**

Modern Scottish Gaelic orthography is founded on that of Classical Irish as established and practised by the Gaelic literati in the Early Modern period. It was consistent and phonemically transparent. Some Scottish Gaelic features were incorporated as the modern standard evolved in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, but others went unrecognized (Black 1994). As a consequence, Scottish Gaelic orthography bears a complex, though still basically regular relationship to the vernacular language. Minor orthographical revisions have been introduced since the 1980s. These are reflected in recent dictionaries and grammars (see note 1), and in what follows. The most obvious innovation is the dropping of *é* and *ó*, leaving *è* to do duty for both [e:] and [ɛ:] and *ò* for both [o:] and [ɔ:].

The most obvious divergences between Scottish Gaelic sounds and spellings are as follows.

1 Scottish Gaelic uses purely graphic vowels to signal consonant quality. Where  $C'$  = a palatalized consonant and  $C^{\text{v}}$  = a velarized consonant,  $/aC'/$ ,  $/oC'/$ ,  $/uC'/$  and  $/eC'/$  are written *ai*, *oi*, *ui*, *ei*;  $/eC^{\text{v}}/$  and  $/iC^{\text{v}}/$  are written *ea*, *io*;  $/C'o/$  and  $/C'u/$  are written *eo*, *iu*; and similarly with long vowels. Note that vowel affection, both allophonic and phonemic, can be associated with consonant quality: for example *each* 'horse' is [ɛx], *eich* 'horses' is [eç]. Additionally, some  $C^{\text{v}}$  :  $C'$  oppositions have undergone secondary developments; e.g.,  $/s^{\text{v}}/$  :  $/s'/$  has become  $/s/$  :  $/s'/$  in all dialects. It is still expedient to regard this as a  $C^{\text{v}}$  :  $C'$  opposition in view of its morphophonemic vitality; e.g., *bàs* represents [b̥a:s], i.e., 'death' (nom.), *bàis* represents [b̥a:s̥], 'death' (gen.).

2 Scottish Gaelic uses a set of consonant digraphs to represent fricatives: for example, *bh* for  $/v/$ , *gh* for  $/ɣ/$ . (This practice originates in the fact that pairs of stop and homorganic fricative stand in morphophonemic opposition in initial position; e.g., {b ~ v} has generated *b* ~ *bh*.) Voiced fricatives are liable to reduction or loss in intervocal, pre-consonantal or final position in the modern language (see below), but this is not reflected in the orthography.

3 The digraphs which represent such reduced or lost intervocal fricatives are also used, somewhat capriciously, to represent acoustically similar 'vowel (+ light or partial constriction) + vowel' sequences of a different origin, i.e., where there is historical hiatus. Thus disyllabic [fi(h)əx] 'raven' (OIr. *fiach*) is written *fitheach* just as disyllabic [ʃi(h)əɣ] 'thrust' (OIr. *sithad*) is written *sitheadh*. Contrast monosyllabic [fiəx] 'debt' (OIr. *fiach*), written *fiach*.

4 The central Scottish Gaelic dialects have developed a series of long vowels or diphthongs in syllables where historically short vowels preceded certain consonants or consonant groups. These lengthenings are to a considerable extent ignored by Scottish Gaelic orthography; e.g., *ard* beside *àrd* 'high' with [a:] before the *rd*-group. In other  $\check{V}CC$  syllables epenthetic vowels have developed: again, these are mostly ignored by the orthography; e.g. *arm* 'army' with [aram].

5 The inherited opposition of voiced : voiceless stops has in most Scottish Gaelic dialects become effectively an opposition of voiceless unaspirated : voiceless aspirated. Orthography does not recognize this. Thus *gad* /gad/ 'wither' approximates to [kat], while *cat* /kat/ 'cat' approximates to [k<sup>h</sup>a<sup>t</sup>] or similar.

The values assigned in the following tables are crude phonetic ones. For fuller details see especially Borgstrøm 1937 and 1940, Oftedal 1956 and Ternes 2006.

#### *Vowel spellings and vocalic sounds*

Table 7.1. refers to stressed (i.e., initial) syllables. In most unstressed syllables the vowel is  $/ə/$ , but  $/a/$  is common as the outcome of historic long vowels and diphthongs. Variation in vowels is associated mainly with contiguous consonants or consonant groups, especially the following:  $/R/$  and *r*-groups;  $/m L N \eta/$ ;  $/ɣ/$  (i.e., *gh/dh*) and  $\gamma$ -groups;  $/v/$  (i.e., *bh/mh*) and *v*-groups. For exemplification of these points, and of the development of epenthetic vowels within some clusters, see below, 'Phonology'.

Table 7.1 Orthography and pronunciation: stressed vowels

Spelling	Specimen values		Alternative values	
a	[a]/[a]	<i>balla, cat</i>	[a:] [au] [ə] [ə:]	<i>barr</i> (or <i>bàrr</i> ) <i>mall; samhradh</i> <i>lagh</i> <i>adhbhar</i>
ai	[a]	<i>baile</i>	[a:] [ai] [e]/[ɛ] [ə] [əi]	<i>cairdean</i> (or <i>càirdean</i> ) <i>sail; aibhne</i> <i>air, cait</i> <i>taigh</i> <i>faighneachd</i>
à (eà)	[a:]/[a:]	<i>làmh (feàrr)</i>		
ài	[a:]	<i>sgàin</i>		
ao	[u:]	<i>gaol</i>		
aoi	[u:]	<i>sgaoil</i>	[əi]	<i>laoigh</i>
e	[ɛ]/[e]	<i>dheth</i>		
è	[e:]	<i>dè</i>		
ea	[ɛ]/[e]	<i>bean, beag</i>	[(ɛ)a:] [eu] [ə] [ə:]	<i>fearr</i> (or <i>feàrr</i> ) <i>ceann; geamhradh</i> <i>feadh</i> <i>teaghlach</i>
èa	(see eu, ia)			
eà	(see à)			
ei	[e]	<i>eich</i>	[e:]	<i>seinn</i>
èi	[e:]	<i>tèid</i>	[ɛ:]	<i>sèimh</i>
eo	(see o)			
eò	(see ò)			
eòì	(see òi)			
eu	[e:] [e:/ia]	<i>feum</i> <i>beul</i> (or <i>bial</i> )	[ɛ:]/[ia]	<i>meud</i> (or <i>miad</i> )
i	[i]	<i>lite</i>	[i:]	<i>till</i>
ì	[i:]	<i>tìde</i>		
ia	[iə] [ia/e:]	<i>iasad</i> <i>bial</i> (or <i>beul</i> )	[ia] [ia]/[ɛ:]	<i>sian</i> <i>miad</i> (or <i>meud</i> )
io	[i]	<i>smior</i>	[(i)u:] [(i)u] [iə] [iə]	<i>lionn</i> <i>sionnach</i> <i>tìodhlaic</i> <i>crioch</i>
ìo	[i:]	<i>pìos</i>		
o (eo)	[ɔ] [o]	<i>loch</i> ( <i>deoch</i> ) <i>bog</i>	[ɔ:] [ou] [o:]	<i>torr</i> (or <i>tòrr</i> ) <i>toll</i> <i>sobhrach</i> (or <i>sòbhrach</i> )
oi	[ɔ]	<i>oir</i>	[ɔ:] [ə] [ɔ:]	<i>comhradh</i> (or <i>còmhradh</i> ) <i>goid</i> <i>oirnn</i>

ò (eò)	[ɔ:] [o:]	òl ( <i>ceò</i> ) <i>mòr</i>	[əi]	<i>toill; oighre</i>
òì (eòì)	[ɔ:] [o:]	<i>dòigh (eòin)</i> <i>còig</i>		
u (iu)	[u]	<i>luch (fliuch)</i>	[u:]	<i>null; ughdar (or ùghdar)</i>
ua	[uə] [ua]	<i>uasal</i> <i>uan</i>		
uai	[ua]	<i>uainn</i>		
ui	[u] [ɰ]	<i>tuit</i> <i>tuig</i>	[ui]	<i>druim; cuibhle</i>
ù (iù)	[u:]	<i>ùr (diùlt)</i>		
ùì (iùì)	[u:]	<i>ùir (ciùil)</i>		

### *Consonant spellings and consonantal sounds*

Scottish Gaelic consonant phonemes mostly contain a palatalized and a non-palatalized or velarized member. Orthographically the former is always flanked by *e* or *i*, the latter by *a*, *o* or *u*. In intervocal positions the doubled spellings *ll*, *nn*, *rr* represent the fortis sounds, while *l*, *n*, *r* represent the lenis sounds of Common Gaelic; contemporary pronunciation transforms these oppositions in various ways.

A narrow transcription would have to indicate that [t d] are dentals; [p t k] are post-aspirated [p<sup>h</sup> t<sup>h</sup> k<sup>h</sup>] in initial position, pre-aspirated [p<sup>h</sup> t<sup>h</sup> k] or [hp ht xk] at the close of stressed syllables. The devoicing of historical /b d g/ is positionally determined; generally it is partial in initial position and complete in internal and final positions. (Voiced allophones occur in contact with nasals: see below, ‘Sandhi and related phenomena’.)

The devoicing of stops at the close of stressed syllables is to some extent paralleled in the continuants. Thus the /v/ of *damh* ‘ox, stag’ may be realized as [f], and the /l/, /n/ and /r/ of *mol*, *bun* and *cor* may be devoiced (or progressively devoiced) in final position. Of the nasals, those denoted [ɲ] and [ɲ] below are typically tongue-spread inter-dental sounds, respectively velarized and palatalized, while [n] is typically a light tongue-tip dental or post-dental sound, lacking the hollow quality of [ɲ]. Of the laterals [ɬ] is dental, strongly velarized, while [ʎ] is dental, strongly palatalized; [l] is a light, tongue-tip alveolar sound. Of the *r*-sounds [ʀ] is an alveolar trill with a dark, hollow quality, and [r] an alveolar flap. The symbol [Z] denotes an historical *r*-sound which nowadays shows wide dialectal variation, from a lightly trilled and perceptibly palatalized true *r*-sound to [z], [j], a dental spirant, or even a [l].

See ‘Phonology’ for discussion of the more important combinatory modifications, including retroflex allophones of sounds clustered with *r*-sounds; the treatment of initial *cn*- as *cr*-, etc.; combinations of /h/ with resonants; and clusters closing with historical /t/.

Note that in Table 7.2 an asterisk (\*) preceding a word-internal graphic spirant denotes an original hiatus word in which the graphic spirant is a dummy one in historical terms. For [G], [I], [J] and [W], see note 2.

Table 7.2 Orthography and pronunciation: consonants

Spelling	Word-initial value		Non-initial value	
b	[b̥]	<i>bog</i>	[p]	<i>cab</i>
	[b̥] ([b̥I])	<i>binn (beò)</i>	[p] ([Ip])	<i>glib (lùib)</i>
bh	[v]	<i>bhog</i>	[v]	<i>sàbh</i>
	[v] ([vI])	<i>binn (bheò)</i>	[W]	<i>dubh, abhainn, so*bhadh</i>
			[v] ([Iv])	<i>sibh (dhuibh 'to you')</i>
			[J]	<i>dhuibh 'black', luibhean</i>
c	[k <sup>h</sup> ]	<i>cat</i>	[ <sup>h</sup> k]	<i>bac, faca</i>
	[c <sup>h</sup> ]	<i>cinn, ceann</i>	[ <sup>h</sup> c]	<i>faic, faicinn</i>
ch	[x]	<i>chat</i>	[x]	<i>loch</i>
	[ç]	<i>chinn</i>	[ç]	<i>bruich</i>
d	[d̥]	<i>dath</i>	[t]	<i>ad</i>
	[d̥ <sup>3</sup> ]	<i>deoch</i>	[t <sup>3</sup> ]	<i>maide, caraid</i>
dh	[ɣ]	<i>dhath</i>	[G]	<i>feadh, modhail, ca*dha</i>
	[j]	<i>dhia</i>	[J]	<i>ùidh, uidheam, I*dhe</i>
f	[f]	<i>fàg</i>	[f]	<i>lof, cofaidh</i>
	[f] ([fI])	<i>fill (feall)</i>		
fh	- ([I])	<i>fhàg (fheall)</i>		
g	[g̥]	<i>gabh</i>	[k]	<i>fàg, fàgail</i>
	[ġ]	<i>gin, geall</i>	[c]	<i>tuig, thuige</i>
gh	[ɣ]	<i>ghabh</i>	[G]	<i>leagh, leaghadh, o*gha</i>
	[j]	<i>gheall</i>	[J]	<i>laigh, slighe, ai*ghear</i>
h	[h]	<i>h-uain</i>		
	[h] ([hI])	<i>h-éisg (h-eòin)</i>		
l	[t̪]	<i>loch</i>	[t̪]	<i>mol, eala</i>
	[ɬ]	<i>leabaidh</i>		
	[l]	<i>(mo) leabaidh</i>	[l]	<i>buil, baile</i>
ll			[t̪]	<i>ball, balla</i>
			[ɬ]	<i>buill, buille</i>
m	[m]	<i>mac</i>	[m]	<i>am</i>
	[m] ([mI])	<i>mìnn (mionn)</i>	[m] ([Im])	<i>im (caim)</i>
mh	[v]	<i>mhac</i>	[v]	<i>tàmh</i>
			[W]	<i>sàmhach, reamhar,</i> <i>leo*mhann</i>
	[v] ([vI])	<i>mhinn (mhionn)</i>	[v] ([Iv])	<i>nìmh (làimh)</i>
			[J]	<i>cnuimh, uimhir, aimhleas</i>
n	[n̥]	<i>nuadh</i>	[n]	<i>bun, òran, fine</i>
	[ɲ]	<i>nighean, neach</i>	[ɲ]	<i>duine</i>
	[n]	<i>(dà) neach</i>		
nn			[n̥]	<i>ann, Anna, fearann</i>
			[ɲ]	<i>loinn, innear, fearainn</i>
p	[p <sup>h</sup> ]	<i>poca</i>	[ <sup>h</sup> p]	<i>map, lapach</i>
	[p <sup>h</sup> ] ([p <sup>h</sup> I])	<i>pinn (peann)</i>	[ <sup>h</sup> p] ([I <sup>h</sup> p])	<i>cipean (suipeir)</i>
ph	[f]	<i>phoca</i>		
	[f] ([fI])	<i>phinn (pheann)</i>		
r	[r̥]	<i>rud, rionnag</i>	[r]	<i>car, caran, adhbhar</i>

			[Z]	<i>air, aire</i>
rr			[ʀ]	<i>barr, barrachd, oirre</i>
s	[s]	<i>sad</i>	[s]	<i>as, agus, asam</i>
	[ʃ]	<i>siod</i>	[ʃ]	<i>ais, taigeis, uisge</i>
sh	[h]	<i>shad</i>		
	[h] ([hj])	<i>shiod</i> ( <i>shiu bhail</i> )		
t	[tʰ]	<i>taigh</i>	[ʰt]	<i>at, bratach</i>
	[tʰ]	<i>teine, tiugh</i>	[ʰtʰ] / [ʰtʰ]	<i>ait, bruichte</i>
th	[h]	<i>thaigh</i>	[h] ([G/W])	<i>math (giu*thas)</i>
	[h] ([hj])	<i>thig (thiugh)</i>	[h] ([J])	<i>bith (fi*theach)</i>

## PHONOLOGY<sup>3</sup>

### Vowel system<sup>4</sup>

*Vowels in stressed syllables* Long and short varieties of the Gaelic vowels occur: *ubh* /u(h)/ ‘egg’ beside *ùth* /u:(h)/ ‘udder’. In stressed syllables long or short vowels may occur: *bata* /ˈbatə/ ‘stick’ beside *bàta* /ˈbatə/ ‘boat’; in unstressed syllables only short vowels normally occur.

Stressed vowels (long or short) can occur in oral and nasal varieties: *bàs* /ba:s/ ‘death’ beside *tàmh* /tā:v/ ‘rest’. Nasality developed in contact with historical /m/, /n/, /N/, /ŋ/ and /ṽ/, but the synchronic rules for its occurrence have also been determined by both psychological pressures and physiological constraints, whose effects differ dialectally in their details (cf., Ó Maolalaigh 2003a; Ternes 2006: 103–18). The opposition is neutralized in unstressed vowels.

Vowel sequences of two types are found, diphthongal and hiatus: for example, *fiach* /fiəx/ ‘debt’ with [fiəx] beside *fi theach* /fiəx/ ‘raven’ with [fi(h)əx] or [fi<sup>2</sup>əx]. Under suitably contrastive conditions hiatus sequences are disyllabic, diphthongal sequences are monosyllabic. The syllabic distinction is sometimes minimal, but the contrast may be maintained at the level of intonation. (See, for example, Oftedal 1956: 25; Ternes 2006: 129–45.)

### Scottish Gaelic vowel system (stressed syllables)

i:	u:(:)	u:(:)
e:(:)	ə:(:)	o:(:)
ɛ:(:)	a:(:)	ɔ:(:)

Examples:

i	<i>thig</i>	/higˈ/ ‘come’	u	<i>ruig</i>	/Rugˈ/ ‘reach’	u	<i>luch</i>	/Lux/ ‘mouse’
e	<i>deich</i>	/dˈexˈ/ ‘ten’	ə	<i>tagh</i>	/təɣ/ ‘choose’	o	<i>gob</i>	/gob/ ‘beak’
ɛ	<i>each</i>	/ɛx/ ‘horse’	a	<i>lach</i>	/Lax/ ‘wild-duck’	ɔ	<i>loch</i>	/Lox/ ‘loch’
i:	<i>cìr</i>	/kˈi:rˈ/ ‘comb’	uu:	<i>daor</i>	/dɔ:ɾ/ ‘dear’	u:	<i>ùr</i>	/u:r/ ‘fresh’
e:	<i>feum</i>	/fe:m/ ‘need’	ə:	<i>adhradh</i>	/ə:ɾəɣ/ ‘praying’	o:	<i>mòr</i>	/mɔ:r/ ‘big’
ɛ:	<i>sèimh</i>	/ʃɛ:v/ ‘mild’	a:	<i>làr</i>	/Lɔ:r/ ‘floor’	ɔ:	<i>òr</i>	/ɔ:r/ ‘gold’

## Notes on the vowel system

At the phonemic level the language is relatively homogeneous, the main divergence from the above pattern being the non-differentiation of /u:/ from /ə:/ in the southern dialects. Some phonemes are of relatively restricted occurrence, notably /o:/, /ɛ:/, /u/. Certain contrasts may be hard to pin down in individual dialects, e.g., /e : ɛ/, /ɔ : o/. For the shortening of long vowels before hiatus and for the lengthening or diphthongization of short vowels before certain consonants and consonant groups see below, 'The syllable and syllable length'.

There is a considerable amount of sub-phonemic variation among vowel sounds, both inter- and intradialectal. (For variation in the reporting practices of scholars see Hamp 1988.) It owes much to the heavy semantic burden assigned to consonant quality at the onset or closure of stressed syllables. Its effects are most marked in the case of short vowels, but are by no means confined to them.

The Gaelic dialects may differ also as to the location of phoneme boundaries, and of the principal allophones of the phonemes. Globally speaking, the phoneme /a/ can yield a wide variety of realizations in the [æ-a-a] sector. Conversely, [æ] may require to be assigned to /ɛ/ or to /a/.

Some dialectal variation is well enough established to be enshrined in the written language, for example, *mios* and *meas* 'esteem' (with /i/ and /e/ respectively); but often it is not, for example, *coileach* 'cock' (with /ə/ or /a/). Doublets within the same dialect arising from earlier differentiations of this sort are not infrequent, for example, *soitheach* 'vessel' gives rise to /sɛ(h)əx/ 'dish' and /sə(h)əx/ 'boat' in some dialects (Borgstrøm 1940: 141). Morphological incentives are sometimes discernible, for example, *cat* 'cat', pl. *cait*, usually yields /kat : kət/, whereas the unrelated pair *at* 'swell' and *ait* 'funny' usually appear as /at/ and /at'/.

*Diphthongs* Two main sorts of diphthong occur: diphthongs closing with /i/ or /u/, and diphthongs closing with /ə/ or /a/. The first sorts arise from earlier sequences of  $\check{V}\check{C}$  or  $\check{V}CC$  and are firmly established in the central Gaelic dialects, but less developed in some southern, eastern and northern dialects. The incidence and structural setting of the *i*- and *u*-diphthongs are discussed below, 'The syllable and syllable length'. The second sorts arise from the breaking of earlier long vowels: Early Gaelic /uə/ and /iə/ from inherited /o:/ and /e:/; and /ia/ from a still ongoing development affecting certain occurrences of Early Modern Gaelic /e:/. Where /ia/ alternates with /e:/ the central dialects have a higher proportion of breakings than the southern, eastern and far northern ones (Jackson 1968).

Examples:

ei	<i>seinn</i>	/ʃeiN/	'sing'	ɛu	<i>ceann</i>	/k'ɛuN/	'head'
əi	<i>roinn</i>	/RəiN/	'divide'	ɔu	<i>tonn</i>	/tɔuN/	'wave'
ai	<i>caill</i>	/kaiL/	'lose'	au	<i>rann</i>	/RauN/	'verse'
ui	<i>suim</i>	/suim/	'interest'				
iə	<i>liath</i>	/L'iə(h)/	'grey'	ia	<i>eun/ian</i>	/e:n/, /ian/	'bird'
uə	<i>tuath</i>	/tuə(h)/	'north'				

Other, more localized occurrences of diphthongs include /iə/ for standard /i:/, for example, /L'iən/ is quite widespread beside /L'i:n/ 'net'; and Lewis /əi/, /ɔu/ developing from /i:/, u:/ before 'heavy' consonants or consonant groups, e.g., *tinn* /t'əiN/ 'sick', *sunnd* /sɔuNd/ 'happiness' for standard /t'i:N/, /su:Nd/. For diphthongs involving vocalic elements



generated by the depalatalization of previously palatalized labials and /h/ see below, ‘Notes on the obstruent system’.

*Vowels in unstressed syllables* In unstressed syllables the range of vocalism is much reduced. Basically, inherited short vowels appear as /ə/ and inherited long vowels (including /iə/ and /uə/ and reductions of certain syllabic complexes involving lost spirants) appear as /a/. Thus *atharrachadh* ‘changing’ is /ʰahəRəxəy/, *amadan* ‘fool’ (earlier *amadán*) is /ʰamədan/, *fearail* ‘manly’ (earlier *fearamhail*) is /ʰfəral/. Some quite widely occurring examples of unstressed /a/ are harder to explain historically; e.g. *galar* ‘illness’ (earlier *galar*).

The repertoire is strengthened by /i/ and /u/ in unstressed open syllables. These result mainly from earlier combinations of /ə/ + spirant, e.g., *cuiridh* /kurʰi/ ‘will put’, *air beulaibh* /biaLu/ ‘in front of’. Compare also *slánaighear* /sLaniə/ (with /i/ < /əyʰ/) ‘saviour’, *brìtheamhan* /brʰihuən/ (with /u/ < /əv/) ‘judges’. Various originally non-native words, for example: *Màiri* ‘Mary’ and *Glaschu* ‘Glasgow’, swell this group. (See Ó Maolalaigh 2003b.)

Syncope of post-tonic vowels is found fairly regularly in paradigms and word derivation, and new consonant clusters thus created undergo standard modifications; for example, *càirdean*, plural of *caraid* ‘friend’, has /a/ before the *rd*-group.

Examples:

<i>fosgail</i>	‘open’	<i>fosglaidh</i>	‘will open’
<i>doras</i>	‘door’	<i>dorsan</i>	‘doors’
<i>lughad</i>	‘smallness’	<i>lùghdaich</i>	‘diminish’

Sometimes etymological consciousness acts as a counter; for example, *craobh-sgaoileadh* ‘broadcasting’ had developed a by-form *craosgladh* by the eighteenth century, but the longer form has prevailed in the age of radio ‘broadcasting’.

Apocope of final /ə/ is widespread dialectally, for example, *mise* ‘I, me’ becomes /miʃ/ in many areas. Less frequently met with is the addition of unhistorical /ə/, as in *caraide* for *caraid* ‘friend’. While this last phenomenon is usually to be explained on analogical grounds, a prosodic motivation may underlie the addition of /ə/ to many loanwords from English; for example, *drama* /dramə/ beside *dram* /draum/ ‘dram (of liquor)’.

### Consonant system<sup>5</sup>

The Common Gaelic consonantal system inherited by Scottish Gaelic was as follows.

	<b>Explosive</b>	<b>Fricative</b>	<b>Continuant</b>
Labial	p b	f v ɸ	m
Dental	t d	(θ) (ð) s	N n L R r
Post-dental	k g	x ɣ h	ŋ

In this system each consonant had two members, C<sup>◌</sup> and C<sup>◌</sup>. Among the continuants /N/, /L/ and /R/ mostly represent the outcome of old assimilations, e.g. \**-sn-* > *-nn-*, \**-ln-* > *-ll-*, etc. A gap opened up in the dental fricative area as a result of the merger of Middle Irish /ð/ with /ɣ/ and of Middle Irish /θ/ with /h/. At the morphophonemic level the Common Gaelic consonants ordered themselves in pairs, e.g., {p : f}, {N : n}. This system is basically intact in Scottish Gaelic, though surface changes tends to obscure the regularity.

## Obstruent system

The Scottish Gaelic obstruent system is set out in Table 7.3. Broad phonetic equivalents have been added to facilitate comparison with Table 7.2, 'Orthography and pronunciation: consonants'. Note that the nasalized labial fricative /ṽ/ of the Common Gaelic system does not figure in this array; for phonemic description it has seemed more effective to associate inherited nasality with the adjacent stressed vowels to which it has spread or transferred itself.<sup>6</sup> For the glottal stop [ʔ] see below.

Table 7.3 Scottish Gaelic obstruent system (cf. Table 7.2, Orthography and pronunciation: consonants)

//p̃	p´	b̀	b´	f	f´	v̀	v´//			
/p	p(j)	b	b(j)	f	f(j)	v	v(j)/			
[p	p	b̥	b̥	f	f	v/W	v/W/J			
//t̃	t´	d̀	d´					s̀	s´//	
/t	t´	d	d´					s	ʃ/	
[t	tʰ	d̥	d̥ <sup>s</sup>					s	ʃ]	
//k̃	k´	g̀	g´	x̀	x´	ɣ̀	ɣ´	h̀	h´//	
/k	k´	g	g´	x	x´	ɣ	ɣ´	j	h	h(j)/
[k	c	g̥	g̥	x	ç	ɣ/G	j/J	j	h	h/J]

### Examples:

<i>pòg</i>	/pɔ:g/	'kiss'	<i>fòd</i>	/fɔ:d/	'sod'
<i>piuthar</i>	/pju(h)ər/	'sister'	<i>fiodh</i>	/fiʏ/ or /fjəʏ/	'wood'
<i>bochd</i>	/bɔxk/	'poor'	<i>bhuam</i>	/vuəm/	'from me'
<i>binn</i>	/bi:N/	'melodious'	<i>(mò) bhean</i>	/vɛn/	'(my) wife'
			<i>mheall</i>	/vjauL/	'deceived'
<i>taigh</i>	/təj/	'house'	<i>soc</i>	/sɔ(x)k/	'snout'
<i>tiugh</i>	/t´u(ɣ)/	'thick'	<i>sean</i>	/ʃɛn/	'old'
<i>dachaidh</i>	/daxi/	'home'			
<i>deoch</i>	/d´ɔx/	'drink'			
<i>caob</i>	/kur:b/	'dollop'	<i>(a) chaoidh</i>	/xəi/	'forever'
<i>ceò</i>	/k´ɔ:/	'mist'	<i>(a') cheò</i>	/x´ɔ:/	'(of the) mist'
<i>gasda</i>	/gasta/	'excellent'	<i>ghabh</i>	/ɣav/	'took'
			<i>(a) dhùnadh</i>	/ɣu:nəʏ/	'(to) shut'
<i>geansaidh</i>	/g´ɛnsi/	'jersey'	<i>gheall</i>	/j̥auL/	'promised'
			<i>dhiùlt</i>	/j̥u:LT/	'refused'
			<i>ionnsaich</i>	/j̥ū:səx´/	'learn'
			<i>thog</i>	/hog/	'lifted'
			<i>shuidh</i>	/huj/	'sat'
			<i>thionndaidh</i>	/hju:Ndaj/	'turned'
			<i>shuibhail</i>	/hju əɪ/	'travelled'

### Notes on the obstruent system

Status of /j/. /j/ attains phonemic status through bi-segmental treatment of *i* before certain non-palatalized consonants and groups (e.g., *ionnsaich* /iN̄səx'// as /juN̄səx'// or /jü:səx'//) and through weakening of /ɣ'// (e.g., *taigh* /tʰaɣ'// giving /təj/).

Status of /p' b' f' v'//. For present purposes the Common Gaelic palatalized labials may be said to have developed as follows: where P = a labial consonant, initially /P'// gives /P/ before remaining front vowels, e.g., *beud* 'harm' = /b'e:d// = /be:d/, but otherwise /Pj/ (sometimes realized as /P/ + a semi-vocalic glide or vowel), e.g., *beàrn* 'gap' /b'eRN// yields /bjɑ:RN/ (sometimes [bʰɑ:RN] or [bʰeARN]). Closing stressed syllables /P'// has given /jP/ > /iP/, or /P/ with compensatory vowel change, e.g., *lùib* '(of a) bend' /Luib/, *dhàibh* 'to them' /ɣaiv/, *cnàimh* 'bone' /krāiv/ or /krēiv/, *cnaip* '(of a) lump' /krē(h)p/. Internally and closing unstressed syllables /P'// gave /P/, often with compensatory vowel affection, but occasionally /jP/ > /iP/, e.g., *caibe* 'spade' /kɛbəl/, *Raibeart* (earlier *Roibeart*) 'Robert' /RɛbəRt/; exceptionally *suipèir* 'supper' /suipar'// (realized with [uɕp], i.e., with devoicing of /j/ before /p/). For articulatory distinction (specified in terms of lip tension) of the labials in contact with front vowels in stressed syllables see Borgstrøm 1940: 18–19 and MacAulay 1966. For discussion of the phonemic status and realization of the glides see Ternes 2006: 27–43.

Status of /h'//. A development comparable to that of the labials has taken place, resulting in either loss of palatalization or bi-segmental realization as /hj/ or /h/ + vocalic glide or vowel; for example, *na h-eòin* /nə'hjɔ:N'// 'the birds' appears as [nə'hjɔ:N'], [nə'hʰɔ:N'] or [nə'hɛɔN'].

Status of pre-aspiration. The Scottish Gaelic dialects show two sorts of realization of the sequences //Vp Vt Vk// in stressed syllables, one being symmetrical (i.e., [p t k], [ʰp ʰt ʰk] or [xp xt xk]) and the other asymmetrical (i.e. [p t xk] or [hp, ht, xk]). Of these the 'standard' treatment for our purposes is the last, including as it does the Hebrides other than Lewis (which has [ʰp, ʰt, ʰk]). These sequences are here assigned the phonemic values /hp, ht, xk/, though it is clear that a monophonemic interpretation could be sustained, for example, in the case of Lewis. For discussion see Ternes 2006: 44–54.

Status of glottalization. The glottal stop [ʔ] is generally regarded as a southerly feature in Scottish Gaelic, but in fact extends well into the central area. It occurs in two principal environments: (a) intervocally in hiatus words, e.g., *ogha* [oʔə] 'grandson', *tughadh* [tuʔəɣ] 'thatch'; (b) pre-consonantly where a member of the lenis series of consonants follows a short vowel, e.g., *uile* [uʔlə] 'all'. (The latter type occurs only in a restricted way outside the southerly 'homeland' of glottalization.) Perhaps [ʔ] should be regarded as an allophone of a hiatus phoneme or prosodeme; it certainly needs refinement in terms of the type of glottal feature involved. See Shuken 1984, Dilworth 1995–6, Watson 1996, Ternes 2006: 129–45, Jones 2006.

The articulation of the voiced fricatives /ɣ/, /v/, etc., is noticeably more lax in non-initial positions, leading in some dialects/positions to vocalization or loss: hence their specification as [W], [G] and [J] above. Compare the examples *slànaighear* (with /əɣ'ə/ > /əjə/ > /iə/) and *britheamhan* (with /əvəl/ > /əwəl/ > /uəl/) cited above, and see further below, 'Consonant clusters'.

For details of consonantal realization beyond the skeleton account given above, 'Scottish Gaelic orthography and pronunciation', see the dialect monographs of Borgstrøm, Oftedal and Ternes cited in the References.

## Resonant system

The development of the Common Gaelic resonant system in Scottish Gaelic is set out in Table 7.4, in which the arrows (↔ ↗ ↘) indicate the ways in which some of the inherited oppositions have continued, while other distinctions have collapsed.

Table 7.4 Scottish Gaelic resonant system (cf. Table 7.2, Orthography and pronunciation: consonants)

//m`	m´	N`	N´	n´	n`	ŋ`	ŋ´//
↘	↘	↘	↗	↗	↗	↘	↘
/m	m(j)	N	N´	n		ŋ(g)	ŋ(g´/)
[m	m	ɲ	ɲ	n		ŋ(g)/ɣ	ŋ(ʃ)/j]
//L`	l´	L´	l´	R`	R´	r`	r´//
↗	↗	↘	↘	↗	↗	↘	↘
/	L	L´	l	R		r	r´/
[	ɫ	ɫ	ɫ	ʀ		r	Z]

### Examples:

- m *muir* /mur´/ 'sea'; *meall* /mɛuL/ or /mjauL/ 'lump'
- N *nàbaidh* /Na:bi/ 'neighbour'; *Annag* /aNag/ 'Annie'
- N´ *neach* /N´ɛx/ or /N´ax/ 'person'; *bainne* /baN´ə/ 'milk'; *duine* /duN´ə/ (but also /dunə/) 'man'
- n (*mo*) *nàbaidh* /na:bi/ '(my) neighbour'; (*dà*) *neach* /nɛx/ or /nax/ '(two) people'; *canach* /kanəx/ 'bog-cotton grass'; *fine* /finə/ (but also /fiN´ə/) 'clan'
- ŋ *long* /Lɔŋ(ɡ)/ 'ship'; *teanga* /t´ɛŋ(ɡ)ə/ or /t´ɛɣə/ 'tongue'
- ŋ´ *cuing* /kuiŋ´(ɡ´)/ or /kūj/ 'yoke, asthma'; *aingéal* /aŋ´əL/ or /ājəL/ 'angel'
- L *loch* /Lɔx/ 'loch'; *balla* /baLə/ 'wall'; *cala* /kaLə/ 'harbour'
- L´ *leannan* /L´ɛNan/ or /L´aNan/ 'lover'; *gille* /g´iL´ə/ 'lad'
- l (*mo*) *leannan* /lɛNan/ or /laNan/ '(my) lover'; *sileadh* /ʃiləɣ/ 'rain(ing)'
- R *ràmh* /Ra:v/ 'oar'; *Barraigh* /baRaɲ/ 'Barra'; *rionnag* /RuNag/ 'star'
- r *car* /kar/ 'turn'; *caraid* /karəd´/ 'friend'
- r´ *cuir* /kur´/ 'put'; *aire* /ar´ə/ 'attention'

## Notes on the resonant system

The old system of fortis : lenis oppositions has been transformed in most dialects. Though a few dialects have retained the four-way split in laterals and/or nasals, none have four *r*-phonemes. Where morphological motivation exists the contrast which was once carried by the fortis : lenis opposition may be reinforced or replaced by the use of different vowel allophones; for example, Oftedal reported (*dà*) *ràmh* [d̪a: r̪ä:v] '(two) oars' beside *ràmh* [r̪ä:v] 'oar' (1956: 26). A general tendency for the more southerly dialects to have

a less rich inventory than, for example, the Hebridean dialects is cut across, in parts of Argyll, by the consistent use of the glottal stop /ʔ/ in association with the historically non-fortis sounds, for example, *duine* [dʊʔnə] 'man' beside *duinne* [dʊnə] 'for us'. See below, 'Morphophonemics'.

In the system set out above //mʔ// has undergone the same process of development as the labial obstruents, for example, *meud* //mʔe:d// 'size' yields /mɛ:d/ or /miad/; *leum* (earlier *léim*) 'leap' appears as /Lʔe:m/; *caim* 'bent' (gen. sg. m.) is /kaim/; *caime* 'id.' (gen. sg. f.) is /kɛmə/; *Uilleim* 'William!' (voc.) is /uLʔam/.

Of the nasals //nʔ// has been redistributed between /Nʔ/ and /n/ in the central dialects, for example, *duine* 'man' usually has /Nʔ/; but *fine* 'clan' tends to have /n/ in the northerly varieties (though /Nʔ/ is commoner in southern varieties). The velar nasal //ŋ// yields /ŋ(g)/ or /ɣ/, as in *teanga* 'tongue' /tʔɛŋ(g)ə/ or /tʔɛɣə/. Among the laterals //l// and //lʔ// have merged; to write /L/ rather than /l/ accords with the commonest practice of Scottish Gaelic scholars. Of the *r*-phonemes initial /Rʔ/ is not found in any dialect, and apparently merged with /R/ at a fairly early date.

### The syllable and syllable length

Stressed syllables may contain long or short vowels, for example, *mi* /mi/ 'me', *cat* /kat/ 'cat', *trosg* /trɔsk/ 'cod' have short vowels; *clì* /kli/ 'left', *òr* /ɔ:r/ 'gold', *fàisg* /fa:ʃk/ 'squeeze' have long vowels. Under certain circumstances historically short vowels may be lengthened or diphthongized, and this process is an important source of long syllables in the central dialect area. The following patterns are found.

#### Type 1

Historic  $\check{V}C \rightarrow \check{V}C$  where C = a member of the old fortis series of resonants other than /R/, i.e., /L/, /N/, /m/, /ŋ/. The standard outcomes are given in Table 7.5.

Table 7.5 Vowel lengthening before nasals and laterals

Historic vowel	Before /Cʔ/	Before /Cʔ/
i	u	(j)u: u: i: uì
e	o	ɛu ɔu ei òi
a		au ai

#### Examples:

<i>lionn</i>	/Lʔu:N/	'beer'	<i>till</i>	/tʔi:Lʔ/	'return'
<i>ceann</i>	/kʔɛuN/	'head'	<i>seinn</i>	/ʃeiNʔ/	'sing'
<i>am</i>	/aum/	'time'	<i>(An) Fhraing</i>	/Raiŋʔgʔ/	'France'
<i>tom</i>	/tɔum/	'knoll'	<i>Goill</i>	/gɔiLʔ/	'foreigners'
<i>(a-)null</i>	/Nu:L/	'over, away'	<i>suim</i>	/suim/	'esteem'

This development is not universal in Scottish Gaelic. It is only partially effective in some southern dialects, and in others it does not take place. Nor does it occur uniformly; for example, the more northerly Hebridean dialects diphthongize the product of /iCʔ/ and /uCʔ/ as /ɔi/, /ɔu/, e.g., *till* becomes /tʔɔiLʔ/, *null* becomes /NɔuL/.

The process is conditioned by syllabic environment: it operates under VC# and VC<sub>1</sub>C<sub>2</sub>

(unless this falls under Type 3 below), but not under VCV; e.g., *Gall* /gauL/ ‘foreigner’, *Gallda* /gauLdə/ ‘anglified’, *Gallach* /gaLəx/ ‘from Caithness’; cf. also *cum* /ku:m/ ‘keep!’, *cumte* /ku:mt’ə/ ‘would be kept’, *cumaidh* /kumi/ ‘will keep’.

### Type 2

Historic  $\check{V}C(C) \rightarrow \bar{V}C(C)$  where  $C(C)$  = either fortis /R/ or /R/ followed by a homorganic consonant, i.e., *rn*, *rl*, *rd*, *rs*. (For the combination /rt/, which usually has a different sort of outcome, see below ‘Voice’, under ‘Sandhi and related phenomena’.) The standard outcomes are given in Table 7.6.

Table 7.6 Vowel lengthening before r-sounds

Historic vowel		Before /R/		Before /R < R’/	
i	u	(j)u:	u:	(j)u:	u:
e	o	(ε)a:	ɔ:	(ε)a:	ɔ:
	a		a:		a:

### Examples:

<i>tiùrr</i>	/t’u:R/	‘high tide mark’	<i>siùrsach</i>	/ʃu:Rsəx/	‘whore’
<i>ceàrr</i>	/k’a:R/	‘wrong’	<i>méirleach</i>	/mja:Rləx/	‘thief’
<i>càrn</i>	/ka:RN/	‘cairn’	<i>càirdeas</i>	/ka:Rd’əs/	‘friendship’
<i>còrd</i>	/kɔ:Rd/	‘please’	<i>òirleach</i>	/ɔ:Rləx/	‘inch’
<i>Mùrdag</i>	/mu:Rdag/	‘Murcina’	<i>ùird</i>	/u:Rd’/	‘hammers’

The treatment is not wholly uniform: certain dialects tend to diphthongize (e.g., *òrd* /auRd/ ‘hammer’) or to insert an epenthetic vowel (e.g., *dòrn* /dɔRəN/ ‘fist’).

Lengthening before /R/ alone is environmentally conditioned, as with the nasals and laterals: e.g., *geàrr* /g’a:R/ ‘cut’, *geàrrte* /g’a:Rt’ə/ ‘would be cut’, *Geàrrloch* /g’a:Rləx/ ‘Gairloch’, but *gearraidh* /g’aRi/ ‘will cut’, *gearradh* /g’aRəy/ ‘cutting’. Lengthening before /RC/ takes place regardless of syllabic environment, e.g., *beàrn* /bja:RN/ ‘gap’, *teàrnadh* /t’a:RNəy/ ‘descending’.

The allophones of /R/ found before homorganic consonants are noteworthy: they tend to be retroflex and to include retroflexion in the homorganic consonant; indeed, in some dialects /Rd/, /RN/, /Rl/, /Rs/ are simplified to [d], [ŋ], [l], [s] with no perceptible *r*-colouring, while /Rd/ may also appear as [ʰ]ʃt/ or similarly.

### Type 3

Historic  $\check{V}C_1C_2 \rightarrow \check{V}C_1\check{V}C_2$  where  $C_1$  = a resonant and  $C_2$  = a non-homorganic continuant or historical voiced stop. See Table 7.7 (overleaf) for the main combinations found.

Table 7.7 Consonant clusters which provoke epenthetic vowels

	+ b	+ g	+ bh/mh	+ gh	+ ch	+ s	+ r	+ l	+ n	+ m
r +	rb	rg	rbh/rmh	rg	rch					rm
l +	lb	lg	lbh/lmh	lg	lch					lm
n +	nb		nbh/nmh	ngh	nch					nm
m +					mch	ms	mr	ml	mn	

## Examples:

r +	<i>borb, dearg, marbh, dorgh, dorcha, arm</i>
l +	<i>Alba, tilg, dealbh, duilghe, salchar, calma</i>
n +	<i>cainb, meinbh, conghlas, eanchainn, ainm</i>
m +	<i>timcheall, aimsir, imrich, imleag, immidh</i>

Examples of Type 3 can be found where  $C_2$  = a lost spirant or similar; e.g., *anfainn* /*anaəN*/ 'feeble' < *an-* (intensive) + *fann* 'weak'. Here the syllabic shape of the word must have been set before the loss of  $C_2$ : cf., *gainmheach* /*gɛnɛ(v)əx*/ 'sand'. See note 4 and below for the phonological representation of epenthetic vowels.

The epenthetic (also termed 'intrusive' or 'svarabhakti') vowel tends to echo the root vowel, except where the colouring imparted by its flanking consonants is too powerful to permit this. The commonest outcomes are given in Table 7.8.

Table 7.8 Main patterns of vowel epenthesis

Historic vowel		Before C`C`	Before C`C`
i	u	i/ə__ə	u__u
e	o	ɛ__a	ə__ə
	a	a__a	ɛ__ə/i

Note that Type 3 does not occur after historical long vowels, e.g., *àrmann* 'warrior' has /*a:Rmən*/.

## Examples:

<i>iomchaidh</i>	/i:məxi/	'fitting'	<i>tilg</i>	/t'ilig/	'throw'
<i>dearg</i>	/d'ɛrag/, /d'arag/	'red'	<i>meirg</i>	/mer'ig/	'rust'
<i>calma</i>	/kaLamə/	'brave'	<i>tairbh</i>	/tər'iv/	'bulls'
<i>borb</i>	/bɔrɔb/	'fierce'	<i>doirbh</i>	/dər'iv/	'difficult'
<i>Murchadh</i>	/muruxə/	'Murdo'	<i>builg</i>	/bulig'/	'bags'

Although this type of syllable is clearly disyllabic in phonetic terms, it is associated with the same held or rising tone as is found in monosyllables with long vowels. This, together with the perception of native speakers that svarabhakti words are monosyllabic, has led to its interpretation as phonemically monosyllabic: see Borgstrøm 1940: 153; Oftedal 1956:

29. That is, *arm* ‘army’ /ara,m/ has been linked with *am* /aum/, and *àrd* /a:Rd/ rather than with *Calum* /kaLəm/ or *aran* (older *aràn*) /aran/. Note, however, that this treatment is not universal in Scottish Gaelic: epenthesis of a fixed /ə/ with normal tone is found in some of the southerly dialects. (See further ‘Intonation’.)

#### Type 4

$\check{V}C_1C_2 \rightarrow \check{V}C_2$ , where  $C_1$  is a spirant (/v/ or /ɣ/, written *bh/mh* or *dh/gh*) which is lost with lengthening or diphthongization of the short vowel. The standard outcomes are given in Table 7.9.

Table 7.9 Vocalization of historic spirants

iv	(j)u:	<i>siùbhlach</i> ‘nimble’	iv´	i:	<i>lìbhrig</i> ‘deliver’
ev	ēũ	<i>geamhradh</i> ‘winter’	ev´	ēĩ	<i>geimhlean</i> ‘chains’
av	āũ	<i>samhradh</i> ‘summer’	av´	ai	<i>aibhne</i> ‘(of a) river’
ov	ō:	<i>còmhradh</i> ‘conversation’	ov´	ōĩ	<i>doimhne</i> ‘depth’
	o:	<i>sòbhrach</i> ‘primrose’			
uv	u:	<i>ùbhlan</i> ‘apples’	uv´	ũĩ	<i>cuimhne</i> ‘memory’
iɣ	i:	<i>ìo(dh)bairt</i> ‘sacrifice’	iɣ´	i:	( <i>nas</i> ) <i>rìghne</i> ‘tougher’
eɣ	ə:	<i>teaghlach</i> ‘family’	eɣ´	e:	<i>feum</i> ( <i>feidhm</i> ) ‘need’
aɣ	ə:	<i>adhbhar</i> ‘reason’	aɣ´	ai	<i>saidhbhir</i> ‘rich’
oɣ	o:	<i>bodhradh</i> ‘deafening’	oɣ´	əi	<i>oidhche</i> ‘night’
uɣ	u:	<i>ùghdar</i> ‘author’	uɣ´	ui	<i>buidhnean</i> ‘groups’

Variant treatments are sometimes found, for example, Islay /sɛvərəɣ/ for *samhradh* ‘summer’; but for the most part the vocalization of preconsonantal spirants is standard and clearly long established in vernacular Scottish Gaelic.

Note the parallel tendency for /N/ and /L/ to be vocalized in the same way as the spirants: /N/ before /s/, /L/ and /r/, and /L/ before /s/; e.g., *dannsa* /dāūsə/ ‘dance’, *Fionnlagh* /fjū:Ləɣ/ ‘Finlay’, *bannrainn* (for historic *ban-rioghain*) /bāūrəN/ ‘queen’, (*Loch*) *Aillse* /aiʃə/ ‘(Loch) Alsh’.

#### Shortening of historically long vowels

A category of short syllables from historic long vowels occurs where these preceded hiatus, for example, *chì* /x´i:/ ‘sees’ beside *chitheadh* /x´i|əɣ/ ‘would see’; *cnò* /krō:/ ‘nut’ beside *cnothan* /krō|ən/ ‘nuts’. This can include hiatus brought about by the weakening of spirants, e.g., *làmh* /Lə:v/ ‘hand’, pl. *lamhan* /Lā|ən/ beside *làmhnan* /Lə:(v)ən/ and /Lā:ən/. This phenomenon awaits comprehensive investigation.

#### Syllabification

In monosyllables, syllabic boundaries and word boundaries coincide. For polysyllables it is reckoned that syllabification is based on the prime unit VC rather than CV, that is, that *diochuidhneachadh* ‘forgetting’ is to be analysed as /d´i:x ən əx əɣ/ (e.g., Oftedal 1956: 30). Compare, however, *cagnadh* /kagnəɣ/ ‘chewing’, where CVCC|VC seems forced and CV|CCVC might have been expected to show the word-initial change /gn → gr/; we



would appear to be dealing with CVC|CVC in these and similar combinations (e.g., *fasg-nadh* /fasknəy/ ‘winnowing’).

### Consonant clusters

*Word-initial groups* The following groups occur:

- |     |    |     |      |      |      |      |  |
|-----|----|-----|------|------|------|------|--|
| (1) | bl | br  | (mn) | pl   | pr   |      |  |
|     | dl | dr  |      | tl   | tr   | (tn) |  |
|     | gl | gr  | (gn) | kl   | kr   | (kn) |  |
| (2) | vl | vr  | (vn) | fl   | fr   |      |  |
|     |    |     |      | (hl) | (hr) | (hn) |  |
|     | ɣl | ɣr  | (ɣn) | xl   | xr   | (xn) |  |
| (3) | sp | spl | spr  |      |      |      |  |
|     | st |     | str  |      |      |      |  |
|     | sk | skl | skr  |      |      |      |  |
| (4) |    |     | sl   | sr   | sn   | sm   |  |

Note that groups consisting of initial /Cn/, except for /sn/, are usually realized as /Cr/ with the following vowel nasalized; for example, *mnathan* ‘women’ is usually /mrã|ən/, *gnè* ‘species’ /gr̃ɛ:/. The groups listed under (2) are the lenited equivalents (see Morphophonemics) of those in (1), except that /fl/ and /fr/ can also function as radical clusters, for example, *fraoch* /frux:|/ ‘heather’ as well as (*mo*) *phrionnsa* /fr̃ũ:sə/ ‘(my) prince’. The groups /hl/, /hn/ and /hr/ (which relate morphophonemically (a) to /tl/, (/tn/), /tr/, and (b) to /sl/, /sn/, /sr/) are commonly realized as [l, n, r], that is, with loss of the initial /h/. The groups *sl-* and *sn-* have /sL(̃)/ and /sN(̃)/; the group *sr-* is realized as [str] in northern central dialects.

*Word-internal groups* The following groups occur:

1 The clusters listed as occurring word-initially under (1) and (3) above; plus /xl, xr, xn/ as in (2) above; plus /xk/ (written *chd*). Note that groups with /-Cn-/ preserve the /n/ in medial position, and that internal /sr/ does not become /str/. The other clusters occurring initially under (2) do not normally appear medially, since syllables of the shape //Vvl// or //Vɣl// normally vocalize the fricative.

2 Groups of resonant + stop or resonant + resonant:

lp	lt	lk		ld		(ln)	(lr)
rp	rt	rk		rd	rl	rn	
mp	nt	nk	mb	nd	ng	(nl)	(nr)

Note that the gaps in this array are caused by epenthesis having developed in /lb/, etc. The bracketed combinations occur in a limited way, for example, where non-acclimatization of loanwords, etymological consciousness or paradigm pressure may have balked the normal processes of simplification or epenthesis.

3 Complex groups combining sequences from groups (1) and (2) occur; e.g., /-mpr-/, /-ntr-/, /-ndr-/, /-ltr-/, /-rsp-/, as in *imprig* ‘flit’, *inntrig* ‘enter’, *Anndra* ‘Andrew’, *altrap* ‘accident’, *farspag* ‘black-backed gull’. Note, however, that vocalization or epenthesis can simplify such clusters, e.g., *connspaid* /kɔ̃ʊspad/ ‘dissension’, *garbhloch* /g̊araɲLɔx/ ‘rough ground’.

*Word-final groups* The following groups are commonly attested:

sp	lp	rp	mp			
st	lt	rt	nt	rd	rn	
sk	lk	rk	nk			xk

See below for the realization of, e.g., the /lk/ in *olc* ‘evil’ as [lɣk] or similar.

### Sandhi and related phenomena

*Harmonization within consonant clusters* In tolerated clusters (that is, where neither simplification nor epenthesis is provoked), the following main adjustments and assimilations take place.

#### Palatalization

In general, historical clusters are either non-palatalized or palatalized throughout, e.g., *cosgas* /kɔskəs/ ‘expense’, *uisge* /uʃkʷə/ ‘water’. When secondary clusters are created by morpheme addition or syncope in derivational or paradigmatic contexts assimilation is normal. Such assimilations are usually anticipatory or ‘leftwards’; e.g., *abhainn* ‘river’, gen. *aibhne*; *miosa* ‘worse’, *miste* ‘the worse for’.

An exception is provided by the *-te* morpheme which expresses the conditional impersonal-passive: *cumte* ‘would be kept’, *dèante* ‘would be done’. Compare also the past participle passive suffix *-te* (where, however, an alternate form in *-ta* is found, e.g., *dèanta*, *dèante*, ‘done’); *feàrrde* /fja:Rdʷə/ ‘the better for’, where /R/ resists palatalization; and the contrastive pronominal suffixes *-sa* (1 sg.), *-se* (3 sg. f.), etc., which maintain their form irrespective of the quality of what comes before them, e.g., *mo mhàthair-sa* ‘my mother’, *dhèanainn-sa* ‘I would do’; *a làmh-se* ‘her hand’.

In initial clusters note that palatalization does not always extend to the first element in the cluster; e.g., *grian* ‘sun’ with /grʷ/.

#### Voice

The pre-aspiration of historic voiceless stops closing stressed syllables is to some extent paralleled in words concluding with resonant + voiceless stop. That is, the treatment of final /VC/, as [V(ʷ)C], [V<sup>h</sup>C] or [Vx̣C], is mirrored in the treatment of, for example, *olc* /ɔLk/ ‘evil’, which can appear as [ɔt̪k], [ɔ<sup>h</sup>k] or [ɔt̪x̣k]. On the other hand, where the resonant is a member of the old fortis series /L N R m ŋ/, the opposite tendency is in evidence, and the stop can become at least partially voiced. Thus *calltainn* /kauLtəN/ ‘hazel’ has [t̪d] whereas *sult* /sult/ ‘fat’ has [t̪t]. Gaelic orthography mirrors this feature inconsistently. It is reflected correctly in, for example, *Galldachd* ‘Lowlands’ (with [t̪d], cf. the *-ll* of *Gall*) as opposed to *Gàidhealtachd* ‘Highlands’ (with [t̪t] cf. the *-l* of *Gàidheal*), where both have the same abstract noun suffix *-tachd*; but the /N’d/ of *cinnteach* ‘sure’ (with [ɲd̪]) is not reflected in the spelling.

The realization of /rt/ is varied and idiosyncratic (though compare /rd/), for

example, [tʃt], [ʃt] or [t] (in the last case with the loss of the palatalized/non-palatalized distinction).

The inherited cluster /xt/, spelled *chd*, shows a different sort of assimilation, appearing in Modern Scottish Gaelic as /xk/. (Evidence for the earlier treatment may be seen in place names in *Auchter*-, from *uachdar* ‘top, upper part’.)

*Sandhi in compounds, set phrases and unbound speech* To a greater or lesser extent the word-internal contact rules also operate in compounds and within the phrase.

#### *Close compounds*

Here word-stress is initial and the word-internal sandhi rules are in general operative. Thus *seanmhair* /ʃjənaˌvar/ ‘grandmother’ (etymologically *sean* ‘old’ + *màthair* ‘mother’) generates an epenthetic vowel just like *seanachas* /ʃjənaˌxəs/ ‘lore’. A useful contrast can be drawn between close or proper compounds and what may be termed loose compounds, using some further combinations involving *sean*. Thus *seannduine* /ʃjəNˌd̪ən̪ə/ ‘old man’, *seanntaigh* /ʃjəNˌt̪aj/ ‘old house’ and *sean(a)charaid* /ʃjənaˌxarəd/ ‘old friend’ may occur with initial stress and internal sandhi rules operative, but also with double stress as *seann duine*, *seann taigh* and *seann charaid*.<sup>7</sup> The ‘double stressed’ category involve the special set of phrase-sandhi rules known as the initial mutations (for which see below ‘Morphophonemics’).

#### *Set phrases*

Examples of assimilation and accommodation matching word-internal treatment may be found wherever set formulas with fixed stress are used, for example, *aon uair deug* /ənarˈd̪ˌiak/ ‘eleven o’clock’ may have [ɾd̪<sup>3</sup>] or [(<sup>4</sup>)z̪d̪<sup>3</sup>] or [d̪], that is, with the same treatment of //rd// as in *feàrrde* etc.; compare *Ceann Loch Gilb* [kˈɛũtɔxˌg̪/iliˌb] ‘Lochgilphead’, with the same treatment of //nl// as in *Fionnlagh* [fjũːt̪ay], etc.<sup>5</sup>

To a certain extent, too, these effects may appear in uncontextualized, ‘normal’ speech as a species of *liaison*, that is, any special features about the treatment of the junction of the set phrase *bràthair-céile* ‘brother-in-law’ are likely to be heard also in *abair cèilidh!* ‘what a party!’ See further below ‘Morphophonemics’, which provides further context for this strong tendency in the language.

### **Stress**

Gaelic is a stress-timed language in which word-stress plays an important part in defining phrase and sentence structure.

A distinction may be drawn between words capable of bearing stress (though they need not bear full, or indeed any stress) and words not capable of bearing stress. The latter category includes simple prepositions and conjunctions, the definite article, possessive adjectives and similar; they are treated as proclitic to stress-bearing words (which include nouns, adjectives, pronouns, verbs, etc.). Thus the distinction between unmarked ‘my hand’ and contrast-marked ‘my hand’ cannot, in Gaelic, involve stressing the possessive adjective *mo* ‘my’. Scottish Gaelic has *mo làmh* /məˈLaːv/ ‘my hand’ and *mo làmh-sa* /məˈLaː(v)sə/ ‘my hand’. Again, Scottish Gaelic *is tù am fear* /(ə)sˈtuː (ə)mˈfer/ does duty for ‘You are the one’ and ‘You are the one’. Here one could clarify meaning in various ways if context did not make things sufficiently clear, but stressing the copula *is* is not an option.

Vowels in pre-tonic syllables follow basically the same rules as for post-tonic positions. However, some prepositions whose historic vowel is preserved by the presence of

stressed forms in the pronominal paradigms have helped to preserve a slightly greater diversity, for example, *fo* 'under' with /fɔ/, /fa/ (cf., earlier *fō*, *fá*, etc.); compare also the negatives *cha* /xal/, *nach* /max/.

In stressable words one stress occurs, falling on the initial syllable: for example, *deisealachadh* /d'ɛʃalaxəy/ 'preparing', *atharrachaidhean* /'ahəRəxiən/ 'changes'.

In the case of compounds there is an element of variability, where prosodic and/or psychological factors such as etymological consciousness may be involved (cf., note 7). Thus *comh* + *dìnadh* 'con-clusion' currently yields *co(mh)-dhìnadh* /kɔ'yu:nəy/ and *codhùnadh* /'kɔyənəy/; *comh* + *lìonadh* 'com-pletion' yields *co(mh)-lìonadh* /kɔ'l'i:nəy/ and *coilìonadh* /'kɔl'ənəy/ 'completing, completion'; cf. *co(mh)-lìonta* /kɔ'l'i:ntə/ and *coil-eanta* /'kɔl'əntə/ 'complete, fulfilled', plus, with specialization of meaning, *coimhleanta* /'kɔil'əntə/ 'perfect (mentally or physically)'. Normally, however, a single treatment predominates, giving *either* initial stress with post-tonic reductions, as in *bantrach* (*ban-* + *treabhthach*) /'bauNtrax/ 'widow', *clann-mhac* /'kləNəvax/ 'sons, male children', or a stressless or de-stressed proclitic followed by the stress-bearing word, as in *bana-mhoraire* /bana'rar'ə/ 'Countess', *clann-nighean* /klaN'ìən/ 'female children, girls'.

The availability of the latter treatment enables Gaelic to deal with imported words with non-initial stress, as in *buntàta* /bəN'ta:tə/ 'potato(es)', *sineubhar* /ʃə'nɛ:vər/ 'gin', *mailisidh* /ma'liʃi/ 'militia', *Caitrìona* /ka'tr'ì:ənə/ (or similar) 'Catherine', etc.

Noun, verb or adverb phrases contain at least one fully stressed word, as in *mo mhàthair* /mə'va:hər/ 'my mother'; *cha do dh'fhalbh i* /xə də 'y:əLəv i/ 'she did not go'; *am-màireach* /ə'ma:r'əx/ 'tomorrow'.

When two or more stress-bearing words occur in such a phrase subordination usually takes place, with lower-ranked stresses bearing secondary or reduced stress, for example, *an taigh beag* 'the bathroom' (lit., 'the little house') becomes /ən,təi 'bɛg/ or even /(ə)N tə 'bɛg/.

Subordination is not essential: double or even treble stressing can occur, as in (*A*) *mhic an Diabhail!* /('ə) 'vik əN 'd'ìəl/ 'Son of the Devil!'; *Call Mòr Ghathaig* /'kauL 'mɔr 'y:əɔg/ 'the great Gaick disaster'. However, the standard pattern is represented by the following examples:

<i>am balach 'beag</i>	the little boy
<i>,ceann an 'rathaid</i>	(the) end of the road (i.e., the road-end)
<i>am balach beag 'bìodach</i>	the tiny wee boy
<i>fear an taigh 'mhòir</i>	(the) man of the big house (i.e., the laird)

There is a strong tendency for the phrase-final stress to predominate. In a more refined analysis it would be plausible to distinguish secondary and tertiary stress in examples like the third: cf., Ó Murchú (1989: 67–71).

Sentence stress involves an extension of the phrase-stress principles. A sentence must contain at least one full or primary stress. Stressed syllables may become partially or wholly de-stressed through proximity to higher ranking stresses, especially the nuclear stress (marked " in the following examples).

<i>'Bhris mi i</i>	I 'broke it.
( <i>ˈ</i> ) <i>Bhris 'mis' i</i>	'I broke it.
<i>'Bhris mi mo "chas</i>	I 'broke my "leg.
( <i>ˈ</i> ) <i>Bhris 'mise mo "chas</i>	'I broke my "leg.

## Intonation

Tonality has not figured prominently in Scottish Gaelic scholarship hitherto. However, tonal contrasts demonstrably occur in at least some environments in some dialects, and their extent and status clearly deserve further investigation. In the central dialects, historically monosyllabic words which have developed epenthetic vowels give phonetically disyllabic words whose tonal shape resembles that of monosyllables with a long vowel. For example, *arm* /ara,m/ 'army' has a rising pitch continuing over both vowels, and contrasts with *Calum* /kaLəm/ 'Malcolm' and *aran* /aran/ 'bread', which have the falling tone associated with 'normal' stressed initial syllable and unstressed second syllable. Similar contrasts occur in dialects which do not mark hiatus with /h/ or /ʔ/, e.g. between long-vowel monosyllables like *bò* 'cow' and historical disyllables like *bodha* 'submerged reef'. See further Oftedal 1956: 27–29 (where words like *arm* are taken as phonemically monosyllabic), and especially Ternes 2006: 129–45.

Intonation patterns are of undoubted importance in the construction of phrases and sentences. They involve both affective usage and systematic syntactic effects. They, like tonality, have yet to be properly studied for the language as a whole. See, however, Oftedal 1956: 36; Ó Murchú 1989: 72; and especially MacAulay 1979, whose findings permit some preliminary generalizations. It is expedient to distinguish three significant pitch levels (high, mid and low) associated with stressed syllables, and three final contours (rising, falling and sustained). Different configurations may be employed to express attitudinal nuances (e.g., surprise, acceptance or rejection, sarcasm). Differences in the steepness of pitch fluctuation play a part in this system, which may thus overlap descriptively with the free 'dramatic' exploitation of pitch height and tone duration in affective usage. Different configurations may also result from flexibility of tone placement designed to emphasize a selected element in a sentence, though limitations on stress placement mean that Gaelic is less versatile than British English in this respect. Final contours have a special (though not an exclusive) association with the indication of sentence type. Thus a falling contour may indicate affirmation with finality ('topic closed') where a rising contour would indicate uncertainty and invite a response, and a sustained contour would indicate non-finality ('I'm not finished yet').

## MORPHOPHONEMICS<sup>8</sup>

Scottish Gaelic, like the other Celtic languages, shows grammaticized reflexes of the prehistoric phrase-sandhi rules which gave rise to initial mutations. Essentially, where a certain degree of word-binding existed, the initial sound of a following word was affected by the final sound of an immediately preceding word, with results analogous to the treatment of the same sequences in word-internal positions. More particularly, the three significant word-juncture environments of the prehistoric system (i.e., -V C-, -N C- and -C C-) are reflected in the Scottish Gaelic options of lenition, nasalization and non-mutation respectively.

### Lenition

Lenition (often called 'aspiration' in Scottish Gaelic grammars) gave rise to the morphophonemic correspondences given in Table 7.10.

Table 7.10 Scottish Gaelic initial lenition

Phonemes		Spellings	
Radical	Lenited	Radical	Lenited
p	f	p	ph
t	h	t	th
k	x	c	ch
b	v	b	bh
d	γ	d	dh
g	ʝ	g	gh
m	ṽ	m	mh
f	∅	f	fh
s	h	s	sh
L	l	l	l
N	n	n	n
R	r	r	r

*Notes on lenition* The initial groups /sk/, /sm/, /spl/, /st/ are not subject to lenition. For the lenition of *s-* by the definite article see below, ‘Mutation by the definite article’.

The Common Gaelic oppositions /L ~ l/, /R ~ r/, /N ~ n/ are preserved to varying degrees in the Scottish Gaelic dialects. At the morphophonemic level the central dialects show the following alternations: /N ~ n/ and /N' ~ n'; L' ~ l/, /R ~ r/; phonetically [ɲ] ~ [n] and [ɲ] ~ [n]; [ʎ] ~ [l]; [ʃ] ~ [r].

The opposition /f/ : ∅ extends to /fl/ : /l/ etc. The groups /hl, hn, hr/, the lenited equivalents of /sl/, /tl/ etc., are simplified to /l/, /n/, /r/ in some dialects.

*Blocking of lenition* Lenition reflects the circumstances of prehistoric phonology, for example, the lenition in *nighean mhath* ‘good girl’ originated when *nighean* was \**inigenā*, and its final vowel made the *m-* of \**matīs* intervocal, and hence subject to lenition, like the *-g-* of \**inigenā* or the *-t-* of \**matīs* within the word. Where, however, the loss of old final syllables brought together consonants which were homorganic, the result was a blocking of the lenition rules, just as, e.g., word-internal *-tt-* or *-nd-* resisted lenition. The rule of non-lenition in such circumstances survives in many set phrases and locutions in Modern Scottish Gaelic; though it in its turn is now being superseded by a renewed generalization of the lenition rules. Thus lenition is blocked in *nighean donn* ‘brown(-haired) maiden’ (in a song; contrast *nighean dhona* ‘bad girl’ in ordinary speech); *Clann Dòmhnail* ‘Clan Donald’ (in a set phrase; contrast *clann Dhòmhnail* ‘Donald’s children’ in ordinary speech); *MacCoinnich* (but now also *MacChoimnich*) ‘Mackenzie’. Compare also non-lenition of *thu* ‘you (sg.)’ after verb-forms ending in *-s* or dentals: e.g., *bidh tu* (but *gum bi thu*), *ma bhios tu*, *is tù* etc.

### Nasalization

Nasalization (or ‘eclipsis’) in Modern Scottish Gaelic is not directly comparable to that of Modern Irish. This has usually been explained as the result of secondary developments on the Scottish side; see, however, Ó Maolalaigh 1995–6 for an alternative account. The ‘Irish’ type of nasalization involves the voicing of /p t k/ to /b d g/ and of /f/ to /v/, and

the replacement of radical /b d g/ by the homorganic nasals /m N ŋ/, in positions where a closely related preceding word had terminated in a nasal in prehistoric times, for example, \**sechtan kattī* ‘seven cats’ gave rise to *seacht gcait* /ʃext gatʹ/, rather than word-internal *-nk-*lies behind the /g/ in *cogadh* ‘war’ (< *con* ‘with’ + *cath* ‘battalion’).

For Scottish Gaelic we must recognize a different treatment in which the fusion of closing nasal and initial obstruent either did not take place or ceased to take place. This was the intuitive perception of the eighteenth-century founders of vernacular Scottish Gaelic orthography who broke with tradition to write *nan eilean* ‘of the islands’ (Ir. *na n-oileán*), *nam beann* ‘of the bens’ (Ir. *na mbeann* with /m/) and *nan cat* (Ir. *na gcat* with /g/). This Scottish system (‘ScG1’) is set out in Table 7.11.

Table 7.11 Scottish Gaelic initial nasalization (ScG1)

Radical	Nasal	Written	Radical	Nasal	Written
p	mp	-m p-	b	mb	-m b-
t	nt	-n t-	d	nd	-n d-
k	ŋk	-n c-	g	ŋg	-n g-
f	mf	-m f-			

The Gaelic dialects show two types of further development from the starting point of ScG1, which itself survives wholly or partially in some dialects. In ScG2 the distinction between voiced and voiceless remains distinctive, as in Lewis, where *-m p-*, *-n t-*, *-n c-* are realized as /mh nh ŋh/; and *-m b-*, *-n d-*, *-n g-* as /m n ŋ/, e.g., *am balach* /(\ə) maLəx/ ‘the boy’, *nan cat* /nə ŋhat/ ‘of the cats’, *seann taigh* /ʃeuN həj/ ‘old house’, etc. In ScG3 the voiced/voiceless distinction can be overridden by a tendency for nasals to voice following consonants, giving /mb nd ŋg/ for both sets of stops. Here the aspirated: non-aspirated distinction can prevent *an caol* (with [ŋg<sup>h</sup>]) and *an gaol* (with [ŋg]) from becoming homophonous (see Borgstrøm 1940: 78–9 and 173–4).

*Notes on nasalization* The non-coalescence of nasal and obstruent in ScG1 meant that situations where nasalization ‘proper’ occurs in Irish were open to the same treatment as any other final nasals preceding initial obstruents; that is, the same treatment could apply to *an cat* (Ir. *an cat*) as to *nan cat* ‘of the cats’ (Ir. *na gcat*).

The relationship between the Irish system and the Scottish Gaelic systems is not wholly clear. That the Irish type was once present in Scotland in some contexts can be inferred from fossil forms with /v/ for nasalized /f/, e.g., *a-bhàn* ‘down’, *a-bhos* ‘over here’, *a bheil* ‘is . . .?’, *Beinn-a-bhaoghla* (or similar) ‘Benbecula’, which all conceal nasalized *f-*: \**a bhfán*, \**a bhfus*, \**a(n) bhfeil*, \* . . . *na bhfadhla*. These examples are challenging because in general initial *f-* drops out of the nasalization system in Modern Scottish Gaelic, except in certain Perthshire dialects which realize *-m f-* as /v/ and *-n s-* as /z/. On the other hand, scattered examples of these /v/ and /z/ forms are already present in the *Book of the Dean of Lismore*.

### Other mutations

*Non-mutation* Non-mutation may be viewed as an outcome with the same status as lenition or nasalization when it occurs within the phrase, i.e., in a situation where one

of the latter mutations could have been a possible outcome; for example, *a caraid* ‘her friend’ beside *a charaid* ‘his friend’, where *a* ‘his’ is followed by lenition, *a* ‘her’ by non-mutation. Note that non-mutation of consonants corresponds to the prefixing of *h-* to vowels, e.g., (*a*) *athair* ‘his father’ beside *a h-athair* ‘her father’; *na h-èdin* ‘the birds’ corresponding to the non-mutation in *na coin* ‘the dogs’.

*Mutation by the definite article* The definite article *an* can be followed by non-mutation (*a(n) saor*), lenition (*a(n) mhàthair*) or nasalization (*nam beann*), depending on case, number and gender. In dialects which show the ScG2 and ScG3 varieties of nasalization, grammatical non-mutation after the article is replaced by nasalization of those sounds which show it, according to the rules given above (e.g., *an taigh* ‘the house’ becomes /əN hāj/ under ScG2 or /əN dāj/ under ScG3).

The treatment of words with initial *s-* is peculiar. The article having had the prehistoric shape *\*sind-*, cases of *\*sind-* ending in a vowel, when they were followed by an initial *s-*, gave rise to the juncture *-nd + h-*, which gave /nt/. This is represented orthographically by *an t-s-* in Scottish Gaelic and phonologically by /ənt/, e.g., *mac an t-saoir* ‘son of the joiner, Macintyre’. Dialects with ScG2 and ScG3 treat this *t-* like any other *t-*, i.e., ScG2 as /nh/, ScG3 as /nd/.

*Rules for the mutations* Mutations do not occur at every word junction within the sentence, but only within the following phrasal environments:

- 1 the verb complex, including pre-verbal particles but *not* the immediately following subject;
- 2 the noun phrase (which may be the subject or object of a sentence or, if preceded by a preposition, in an adverbial role), including qualifiers preceding or succeeding the noun or preceding an adjective;
- 3 certain adverbial phrases (frequently disguised cases of the last).

The principal occurrences of lenition are as follows.

#### *Nouns*

the definite article (nom. sg. f.; dat. sg. m. and f.; gen. sg. m.)

possessives *mo, do, a* ‘his’

prepositions *do, fo, bho, mar, tro(imh), ro(imh), de, mu;* and *gun* before non-homorganic sounds

vocative particle *a*

numerals *aon, dà, a’ chiad*

preceding nouns, in certain cases when the following noun is a genitive qualifying the first

certain proposed adjectives, principally *deagh, droch, sean(n)*

#### *Adjectives*

preceding nouns (nom. sg. f.; dat. sg. m. (when def. art. precedes) and f. (always); gen. sg. m., any plural forms ending with a palatalized consonant)

intensive particles *glé, ro, sàr, fìor*

negative and intensive prefixes *neo-, mì-, an-*, etc.

*bu* (past tense of copula)



*Verbs*past tense marker *do*negative particle *cha(n)*relative pronoun *a* ‘who, which, that’, including conjunctions involving *a* (e.g., *nuair a* ‘when’); relative pronoun *na* ‘that which, all that’; the conjunction *ma* ‘if’

The principal occurrences of nasalization are as follows.

*Nouns*the definite article *an/am* (nom. sg. m.; gen. pl. m. and f.)the prepositions (*ann*) *an/am*; and *gun* before homorganic soundsthe possessives *ar* ‘our’, (*bh*)*ur* ‘your (pl.)’, *an/am* ‘their’*Verbs*

Verbs are nasalized by:

the interrogative particle *an/am*the conjunctions *mun/mum*, *gun/gum*the relative pronoun *an/am* ‘whom, which’ after prepositions

Note that, in addition to the above cases, when a leniting word ending in a nasal has lenition blocked by a homorganic initial consonant, nasalization takes place; e.g., *acon taigh*, *seann duine*. (The treatment of nouns after the article, referred to above, is a special case of this.)

*Notes on the mutations* While some of the above rules reflect the original, phonologically conditioned rules for the occurrence of mutation, others are plainly the result of analogical and restructuring processes over a long period, for example, *le balach beag* ‘with a little boy’ but *leis a’ bhalach bheag* ‘with the little boy’, where there is no phonological reason for the adjective *beag* to be affected by the presence or absence of a preceding definite article.

Certain adverbials, prepositions and particles undergo ‘spontaneous’ lenition, e.g., *d(h)omh* ‘to me’, *t(h)roimh* ‘through’, *cheana* ‘already’. But the apparently spontaneous lenition of the genitive plural of all nouns in the absence of the definite article, e.g., *dhaoinne* ‘of men’ shows the generalization of lenition from those cases where lenition of a dependent noun was demanded by the case and number of the headnoun, a requirement nowadays applicable only to adjectives.

Certain other morphophonemic alternations take place within limited fields; mention may be made of a tendency within the irregular verbs for an opposition /h/ ~ /d/ to emerge, where /h/ characterizes absolute/independent forms and /d/ characterizes conjunct/dependent forms, e.g., *thubhairt*: *dubhairt* (usually written *tubhairt*) ‘said’, *fhuair* (with initial /h/): *duair* (written *d’fhuair*) ‘got’.

**MORPHOLOGY<sup>9</sup>****The nominal system**

Scottish Gaelic uses inflectional distinctions to mark number, gender and case in nouns, adjectives and the definite article. These may involve the addition of a suffix (e.g., *bròg*

'shoe', pl. *brògan*), qualitative change in a final consonant (e.g., *balach* 'boy' with /-əx/, pl. *balaich* with /əx'/), vowel affection (e.g., *duine* 'man', pl. *daoine*), or a combination of these strategies (e.g., *meur* 'finger', pl. *meòirean*). On the basis of these distinctions, Scottish Gaelic nouns are here divided into five classes: see below.

*Number* Scottish Gaelic distinguishes *singular* and *plural* number. In addition, distinct *dual* forms are a marginal survival in conservative Gaelic in Class 1B nouns and feminine adjectives:

<i>an aon bhròg bheag</i>	the one little shoe
<i>an dà bhròg bhig</i>	the two little shoes
<i>na trì brògan beaga</i>	the three little shoes

Some grammatically singular nouns denote groups of beings or things. They may either lack a plural form or assign a specialized meaning to it if they have one, for example, *aodach* 'clothes' is grammatically singular, but a specialized plural *aodaichean* 'sets or suits of clothes' occurs. Note that *clann* 'children' and *feadhainn* 'ones, people' may in current speech be followed by plural adjectives, as in *an fheadhainn bheaga* (or even *na feadhainn* with plural article) 'the little ones'.

*Case* While it is clear that Scottish Gaelic is gradually eliminating its case distinctions, the nominative : genitive opposition is still an important one in most noun classes. More marginal is the status of the vocative (confined to 1A nouns) and of the dative (practically confined to 1B nouns) as inflectional categories; while the historic accusative survives only at the morphophonemic level in the occurrence of so-called 'prepositions governing the nominative' (as in *mar an ceudna* 'likewise, in the same way', *eadar am bàrd agus . . .* 'between the bard and . . .').

*Gender* Scottish Gaelic distinguishes the grammatical genders *masculine* and *feminine*, by means of morphophonemic effects (for example, *balach beag* : *nighean bheag*, where *balach* is masculine and *nighean* is feminine), and to a certain extent by noun class (e.g., class 1A nouns like *fear*, gen. sg. *fir*, nom. pl. *fir* are masculine) and word-shape (e.g., *caileag*, like other nouns with the suffix *-ag*, is feminine).

There are many examples of dialectal gender variation (e.g., *bùth* (m. or f.) 'shop', *muileann* (m. or f.) 'mill'), some of which reflect divergent treatment of old *neuter* gender nouns. While there is a general correspondence between male/female and masculine/feminine gender (e.g., *coileach* (m.) 'cock', *cearc* (f.) 'hen'; *gobhar* (m. or f.) 'goat' or 'nanny-goat', this is not invariable, for example, *boireannach* 'woman' (lit. 'female person') is masculine because the class of nominal derivatives in *-ach* to which it belongs is masculine.

#### *Noun classes: preliminary notes*

Scottish Gaelic nouns are traditionally specified (and will be specified here) on the basis of nominative singular, genitive singular and nominative plural, the minimum information needed to predict all the forms of a noun. The reason why nominative plural has to be cited is that large-scale reorganization of plural classes has taken place in recent centuries.

The inflectional strategies employed in nominal morphology are: (a) alternation between non-palatalized and palatalized quality in final consonants; (b) addition of case- or number-marking suffixes; and (c) combinations of these strategies. (The strategies originate in the inflections of Common Gaelic, ultimately Indo-European declensions.)

Changes in final consonant quality may affect the preceding vowel (e.g., *fiadh* /fiəɣ/ ‘stag’, pl. *fèidh* /fe:j/; *mil* /mil/ ‘honey’, gen. *meala* /mɛLə/). Addition of a syllabic suffix may be accompanied by syncope of an internal syllable (e.g., *bràthair* ‘brother’, pl. *bràithrean*). The phonological rules for vowel-lengthening or diphthongization may also be brought into play by inflectional suffixation, e.g., /a: ~ a/ in *bàrr* ‘top’, pl. *barran*; /a ~ a:/ in *caraid* ‘friend’, pl. *càirdean*.

The following classification attempts to capture the current facts in a dynamic situation in which an inflected declensional system is moving towards a caseless one in which only number is marked. The ‘spontaneous’ lenition of the genitive plural (above, ‘Notes on the mutations’) in, e.g., *ainmean dhaoine* ‘men’s names’ beside *ainmean nan daoine* ‘the men’s names’ is not indicated in the paradigms that follow.

### *The Scottish Gaelic noun classes*<sup>10</sup>

The following noun classes have been abstracted from the practice of the more conservative dialects of the modern spoken language. Classes 1–4 terminate in a consonant, Class 5 in a vowel. In Class 1 the nominative singular : genitive singular relation is C : C’; in Class 2, C’ : C; in Class 3, C : C; in Class 4, C’ : C’. Note that nominative plural forms are *typical of*, rather than *obligatory for* the class concerned.

#### **Class 1 nouns (C : C’ ± ending, as in each (m.) ‘horse’, bròg (f.) ‘shoe’, ugh (m.) ‘egg’)**

	<b>1A</b>		<b>1B</b>		<b>1C</b>	
	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>
Nominative	<i>each</i>	<i>eich</i>	<i>bròg</i>	<i>brògan</i>	<i>ugh</i>	<i>uighean</i>
Genitive	<i>eich</i>	<i>each</i>	<i>bròige</i>	<i>bròg(an)</i>	<i>uighe</i>	<i>u(i)gh(ean)</i>

#### *Notes on Class 1*

- 1A Numerous, including many common and basic nouns and some of the most productive suffixes. All *masculine*. 1A nouns alone have distinct vocative forms: e.g., *balach* ‘boy’, *a bhalaich!* ‘boy!’; *balaich* ‘boys’, *a bhalacha(ibh)!* ‘boys!’.
- 1B Numerous, including many common and basic nouns and some very productive suffixes. All *feminine*. Polysyllabic 1B nouns usually make their genitive singular by palatalization alone: e.g., *caileag* ‘girl’, gen. sg. *caileig*. 1B nouns alone have distinct dative singular forms, e.g., *le bròig* ‘with a shoe’, *le caileig* ‘with a girl’. The 1B genitive singular ending *-e* appears as *-eadh* in some dialects, e.g., *bròigeadh* ‘of a shoe’.
- 1C Not numerous, though including some basic vocabulary items. All *masculine*.

#### **Class 2 nouns (C’ : C ± ending, as in bràthair (m.) ‘brother’, sùil (f.) ‘eye’, iuchair f. ‘key’)**

	<b>2A</b>		<b>2B</b>		<b>2C</b>	
	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>
Nominative	<i>bràthair</i>	<i>bràithrean</i>	<i>sùil</i>	<i>sùilean</i>	<i>iuchair</i>	<i>iuchraichean</i>
Genitive	<i>bràthar</i>	<i>bràithrean</i>	<i>sùla</i>	<i>sù(i)l(ean)</i>	<i>iuchrach</i>	<i>iuchraichean</i>

*Notes on Class 2*

- 2A A small group, largely confined to the kinship terms for ‘mother’, ‘father’, etc. Both genders.
- 2B A relatively small and non-productive group. Mostly *feminine*.
- 2C A relatively small group, though capable of expansion in some dialects, e.g., *suipeir* (f.) ‘supper’, gen. *suipeir* or *suipearach*. All *feminine*.

**Class 3 nouns (C : C ± ending, as in rud (m.) ‘thing’, guth (m.) ‘voice’, luch (f.) ‘mouse’)**

	<b>3A</b>		<b>3B</b>		<b>3C</b>	
	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>
Nominative	<i>rud</i>	<i>rudan</i>	<i>guth</i>	<i>guthan</i>	<i>luch</i>	<i>luchainn</i>
Genitive	<i>rud</i>	<i>rud(an)</i>	<i>guth(a)</i>	<i>guth(an)</i>	<i>luchainn</i>	<i>luch(ainn)</i>

*Notes on Class 3*

- 3A Two main classes fall under this heading: (a) mostly *masculine* monosyllabic nouns, including many very common ones, many loanwords, and numerous refugees from Class 1 and Classes 3B and 3C; (b) numerous *feminine* polysyllabic abstract nouns in *-achd*, e.g., *rìoghachd* ‘kingdom’.
- 3B Largely monosyllabic, largely *masculine*; a declining category tending to lose inflection and join Class 3A.
- 3C A small group of survivors of what was once a larger element in the noun repertoire, tending to join Class 3A.

**Class 4 nouns (C' : C' ± ending, as in cìobair (m.) ‘shepherd’, prìs (f.) ‘price’)**

	<b>4A</b>		<b>4B</b>	
	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>
Nominative	<i>cìobair</i>	<i>cìobairean</i>	<i>prìs</i>	<i>prìsean</i>
Genitive	<i>cìobair</i>	<i>cìobairean</i>	<i>prìse</i>	<i>prìs(ean)</i>

*Notes on Class 4*

- 4A Both genders; *masculine* examples include agent-nouns in *-air*, *-eir*, *-ir*, while *feminine* examples include many polysyllables in *-idhl-igh* and verb-nouns in *-ich*. There is some uncertainty as to the line between 4A and 4B nouns, e.g., *Gàidhlig*, gen. *Gàidhlig* (4A) but also occasionally *Gàidhlighe* (4B). Hypercorrection may be at work here.
- 4B Almost all *feminine*, except for a few old neuters which have become masculine, e.g., *taigh*, gen. *taighe* ‘house’. As in Class 1B, the genitive singular feminine ending *-e* appears as *-eadh* in some dialects.

**Class 5 nouns (nouns ending in a vowel, as in còta (m.) ‘coat’, cnò (m.) ‘nut’, gobha (m.) ‘blacksmith’)**

	5A		5B		5C	
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Nominative	còta	còtaichean	cnò	cnothan	gobha	goibhnean
Genitive	còta	còtaichean	cnò/cnotha	cnothan	gobhainn	goibhnean

*Notes on Class 5*

- 5A Polysyllables ending in /ə/, written *-a* or *-e*. Extremely numerous; receptive to loan-words and to defections from other Classes. *Both genders* common; masculines include the agent suffixes *-(a)iche* and *-(a)ire*. Disyllabic feminines in /-ə/ may form genitives in *-eadh* as in Class 1B. In such cases they may also form dative singular in *-idh*, e.g., *lèine* (f.) ‘shirt’, gen. *lèine(adh)*, dat. *lèine/lèinidh*. (The *-idh* ending recurs sporadically in feminines of Class 1B and 3B, e.g., *bùth* ‘shop’, dat. *bùthaidh*; cf., note 11)
- 5B Monosyllables in an open long vowel. Limited in number, *both genders*. (The *-th-* in the declensional form of these nouns is orthographic, as these words have hiatus – whence the vowel shortening.)
- 5C Uncommon survivors (mostly *feminine*) of a once more numerous class.

*Irregular nouns* A small number of very basic nouns cannot be fitted into the above scheme. See Scottish Gaelic grammars or dictionaries for *bean* (f.) ‘woman’, gen. *mnà mnatha(dh)*; *bò* (f.) ‘cow’, gen. *bà*; *cù* (m.) ‘dog’, gen. *coin*.

*Main sources of the Scottish Gaelic noun classes* The Modern Scottish Gaelic noun classes derive in historical terms from the vocalic and consonantal declensions of Early Irish, as given in the chart:

1A m. <i>o</i> -stems	3A m. <i>o</i> -, <i>u</i> -stems etc. f. <i>ā</i> -stems etc.	5A m. <i>io</i> -stems f. <i>iā</i> -stems
1B f. <i>ā</i> -stems	3B m./f. <i>u</i> -stems	5B various
1C n. <i>o</i> -, <i>u</i> -stems	3C m./f. consonantal stems	5C m./f. <i>n</i> -stems
2A m./f. <i>r</i> -stems	4A m./f. <i>i</i> -stems f. <i>ī</i> -stems	
2B m./f. <i>i</i> -stems	4B f. <i>i</i> -, <i>ī</i> -stems n. <i>s</i> -stems	
2C m./f. <i>k</i> -stems		

Note that many nouns with old consonantal stems have joined new classes by generalizing an oblique case-form, for example *darach* (m.) ‘oak tree’ (earlier *dair*, genitive *darach*)

joins Class 1A; *caraid* (m.) ‘friend’ (earlier *cara*, accusative-dative *caraid*) and *rìgh* (m.) ‘king’ (earlier *rì*, accusative-dative *rìgh*) join Class 4A.

*The plural forms of the noun* Plurals are formed by palatalization of final consonant(s), by addition of a distinctive ending, or by a combination of changed final consonant quality and added ending.

Plurals formed by palatalization are usually identical with genitive singular forms, and can involve the same vowel affections, e.g., *bòrd* (m.) ‘table’, gen. sg. and nom. pl. *bùird*. Polysyllables are liable to syncope where a syllabic ending is added and a viable cluster results, e.g., *leabhar* (m.) ‘book’, pl. *leabhraichean*, but *seanair* (m.) ‘grandfather’, pl. *seanairean*.

The following are the most common plural formations:

+ <i>-an/-ean</i>	<i>cas: casan</i>	$C > C'$	<i>cat: cait</i>	$C > C' +$	<i>-ean</i>	<i>ugh: uighean</i>
	<i>taigh: taighean</i>			$C' > C +$	<i>-an</i>	<i>cnàmh: cnàmhan</i>
+ <i>-(a)ichean</i>	<i>bàta: bàtaichean</i>					
+ <i>-(e)achan</i>	<i>balla: ballachan</i>					
+ <i>-(e)annan</i>	<i>am: amannan</i>					
+ <i>-tan/-tean</i>	<i>cuan: cuantan</i>					
	<i>baile: bailtean</i>					

Many nouns admit more than one plural form, especially when the dialects are taken into account, e.g., *ràmh* ‘oar’, pl. *ràimh/ràmhan*; *uair* ‘hour, time’, pl. *uairean/uaireannan* ‘hours, times’ (with specialization of meaning); *bùth* ‘shop’, pl. *bùthan/bùithean*.

The more morphologically complex plural endings tend to be associated with elimination of case inflection, e.g., *beathach* ‘beast’, nom. pl. and gen. pl. *beathaichean*, beside *sionnach* ‘fox’, nom. pl. *sionnaich*, gen. pl. *sionnach*. For the powerful Class 1A group one can normally say that if genitive singular = nominative plural then genitive plural = nominative singular.

*Incidence of the plural formations* Although plural forms are, strictly speaking, non-predictable, there are nevertheless correlations between noun classes and particular plural formations:

<i>-(e)an</i>	Commonest of all plural endings. Regular in 1B, 2B, 3A, 3B, 4A, 4B and 5B; found also in 1A ( <i>eilean</i> , pl. <i>eileanan</i> ); 2A ( <i>seanair</i> , pl. <i>seanairean</i> ); 5A ( <i>gille</i> , pl. <i>gillean</i> ).
<i>-(a)ichean</i>	Regular in 2C, extremely frequent in 5A (both native and loanwords); also found in 2A ( <i>màthair</i> , pl. <i>màthraichean</i> ).
<i>-(e)achan</i>	Frequent in 5A, both native and loanwords.
<i>-(e)annan</i>	Fairly frequent in 3A ( <i>modh</i> , pl. <i>modhan/annan</i> ), 3B ( <i>am</i> , pl. <i>amannan</i> ), 4B ( <i>pàirc</i> , pl. <i>pàirceannan</i> ) and 5A ( <i>oidhche</i> , pl. <i>oidhcheannan</i> ).
<i>-(t)e(an)</i>	Limited mainly to monosyllables in <i>-l</i> , <i>-n</i> , and disyllables in <i>-le</i> , <i>-ne</i> , as in <i>cuan</i> , pl. <i>cuantan</i> (1A); <i>gleann</i> , pl. <i>gleanntan</i> (1C); <i>sgoil</i> , pl. <i>sgoiltean</i> (4B); <i>baile</i> , pl. <i>bailtean</i> (5A); <i>lèine</i> , pl. <i>lèintean</i> (5A).

Palatalization	Regular in, and distinctive of 1A.
Palatalization + <i>-ean</i>	Regular with 1A nouns in <i>-adh</i> ( <i>cogadh</i> , pl. <i>cogaidhean</i> ) and 1B nouns in <i>-ach</i> ( <i>mòinteach</i> , pl. <i>mòintichean</i> ); found also in 1C ( <i>ugh</i> , pl. <i>uighean</i> ).
Palatalization + <i>-ichean</i>	Occasional, as in <i>abhainn</i> , pl. <i>aibhnichean</i> (4B).
De-palatalization + <i>-an</i>	Occasional, as in <i>cnàimh</i> , pl. <i>cnàmhan</i> (2B).
De-palatalization + <i>-annan</i>	Occasional, as in <i>druim</i> , pl. <i>dromannan</i> (2B).

### The definite article

The definite article is always proclitic to a following noun, with the result that (a) it itself is liable to reduction, and (b) there are morphophonemic consequences, both lenition and nasalization being involved. The article is also inflected for case and number. It is hence somewhat protean, especially at the surface level. The forms of the definite article are given in Table 7.12.

Table 7.12 The definite article in Scottish Gaelic

	Before vowels			Before consonants		
	Masculine singular	Feminine singular	Plural	Masculine singular	Feminine singular	Plural
<i>Nominative</i>	<i>an t-</i>	<i>an</i>	<i>na h-</i>	<i>an<sup>n</sup></i>	<i>an*</i>	<i>na</i>
<i>Genitive</i>	<i>an</i>	<i>na h-</i>	<i>nan</i>	<i>an*</i>	<i>na</i>	<i>nan<sup>n</sup></i>
<i>Dative</i>	<i>an</i>	<i>an</i>	<i>na h-</i>	<i>an*</i>	<i>an*</i>	<i>na</i>

The form *an\** causes lenition of velar and labial consonants, but not of the dental series *d-*, *t-*, *l-*, *n-*, *r-*, where homorganic blocking of lenition takes place. The treatment of *s-* after *an\** is complex: in cases of *s* + vowel and *sl-*, *sn-*, *sr-* the special mutation /*s* → *t*/ takes place, e.g., *sùil* (f.) ‘eye’, *an t-sùil* /əN tuil/ ‘the eye’. (The initial groups *sp-*, *st-*, *sg-*, *sk-*, *sm-* resist any change, as always, e.g., *an sgeir* (f.) ‘the rock’.)

The form *an\** is normally pronounced /ə/ and written *a’* before lenited consonants, e.g., *a’ chailleach* (f.) ‘the old woman’. The treatment of lenited *f-* reflects the fact that *fh-* is Ø. Words in *f* + vowel are treated as though they began with a vowel, and words beginning with *fl-*, *fr-* as though they began with *l-*, *r-* respectively.

The forms *an<sup>n</sup>* and *nan<sup>n</sup>* interact with following consonants as follows:

- 1 The final nasal becomes /ŋ/ before velars and /m/ before labials, the latter assimilation being recognized by standard Scottish Gaelic orthography, e.g., *am balach* (m.) ‘the boy’, *nam balach* ‘of the boys’.
- 2 In the speech of many dialects the ‘new’ nasal mutations (i.e., ‘ScG2’ and ‘ScG3’ as described above, ‘Morphophonemics’) affect following stops, while elision (or assimilation followed by simplification) of the final nasal is normal before *l-*, *n-*, *r-*, *m-*, *f-*, *s-*; e.g., *an taigh* /ən ‘təj/ (normally with [Nd] or [Nh]) ‘the house’; *an sgoil* /ə ‘skəl/ ‘the school’; *am fraoch* /ə ‘fru:x/ ‘the heather’.

- 3 In the case of the dental series *d-*, *t-*, *l-*, *n-*, *r-*, *s-*, the nasalizing treatment is extended to cases where the article is *an*\* with homorganic blocking of lenition, for example, *an tìde* (f.) ‘the weather’ may show /nt/ → /nd/ or /nh/. Similarly, masculine nouns with *an t-* /ənt/ before a vowel are treated in the same way as nouns with initial dental, for example, *an t-am* (m.) ‘the time’ can show /nt/ → /nd/ or /nh/ by nasalization just like *an tom* ‘the hillock’. The same is true where *an*\* precedes /t/ mutated from radical *s-*, e.g., *an t-sròn* (f.) ‘the nose’.

For detailed examples of definite article plus noun combinations see the handbooks, e.g., Borgstrøm 1937: 168–70 and 1940: 94–5, 182–3; Oftedal 1956: 205–8.

### The adjective

The predicative adjective is indeclinable. The attributive adjective may be inflected for case, number and gender, though it is subject to the same pressures towards morphological simplification as the noun. Three Types may be distinguished.

In their singular inflection, adjectives resemble *either* Class 1A (m.) and Class 1B (f.), *or* Class 4A (m.) and 4B (f.), *or* Class 5A (both genders). The plural declension of adjectives is idiosyncratic from this point of view, the practical distinction being rather between monosyllabic and polysyllabic adjectives.

In some positions (e.g., nominative singular feminine) the adjective is lenited by a preceding noun wherever lenition is possible; in the following paradigms examples are used which show this lenition orthographically. In certain other positions (e.g., dative singular masculine) lenition occurs in a more restricted way: here, examples with orthographically visible lenition are used, but the *-h-* of lenition is enclosed in brackets. The operative rules appear in Table 7.13.

Table 7.13 The adjective in Scottish Gaelic

	Type I		Type II		Type III
<i>Masculine singular</i>					
nom.	<i>dubh</i>	<i>salach</i>	<i>glic</i>	<i>soilleir</i>	<i>fada</i>
gen.	<i>dhuibh</i>	<i>shalaich</i>	<i>ghlic</i>	<i>shoilleir</i>	<i>fhada</i>
dat.	<i>d(h)ubh</i>	<i>s(h)alach</i>	<i>g(h)lic</i>	<i>s(h)oilleir</i>	<i>f(h)ada</i>
voc.	<i>dhuibh</i>	<i>shalaich</i>	<i>ghlic</i>	<i>shoilleir</i>	<i>fhada</i>
<i>Feminine singular</i>					
nom.	<i>dhubh</i>	<i>shalach</i>	<i>ghlic</i>	<i>shoilleir</i>	<i>fhada</i>
gen.	<i>duibhe</i>	<i>salaich(e)</i>	<i>glice</i>	<i>soilleir(e)</i>	<i>fada</i>
dat.	<i>dhuibh</i>	<i>shalaich</i>	<i>ghlic</i>	<i>shoilleir</i>	<i>fhada</i>
voc.	<i>dhubh</i>	<i>shalach</i>	<i>ghlic</i>	<i>shoilleir</i>	<i>fhada</i>
<i>Plural (both genders)</i>					
nom.	<i>d(h)ubha</i>	<i>s(h)alach</i>	<i>g(h)lice</i>	<i>s(h)oilleir</i>	<i>f(h)ada</i>
gen.	<i>dubha</i>	<i>salach</i>	<i>glice</i>	<i>soilleir</i>	<i>fada</i>
dat.	<i>d(h)ubha</i>	<i>s(h)alach</i>	<i>g(h)lice</i>	<i>s(h)oilleir</i>	<i>f(h)ada</i>
voc.	<i>dubha</i>	<i>salach</i>	<i>glice</i>	<i>soilleir</i>	<i>fada</i>



*Declension of adjectives* The paradigms in Table 7.12 show maximal inflection; see Syntax (Noun phrase) for certain reductions in the range of inflectional variation. Type I consists of adjectives terminating in a non-palatalized consonant (cf., noun classes 1A/1B), e.g., monosyllabic *dubh* ‘black’, polysyllabic *salach* ‘dirty’. Type II adjectives close in a palatalized consonant (cf., noun classes 4A/4B), e.g., monosyllabic *glic* ‘wise’, polysyllabic *soilleir* ‘clear’. Type III adjectives close in /ə/, written *-a* or *-e* (cf., noun class 5A), e.g., *fada* ‘long’.

In the dative singular masculine lenition is conditioned by the presence or absence of the definite article, e.g., *le balach beag* ‘with a little boy’, *leis a’ bhalach bheag* ‘with the little boy’.

In the nominative and dative plural lenition is conditioned by the form of the preceding plural noun: lenition follows plurals with palatalization of final consonant (mostly 1A masculine nouns), but not plurals formed by addition of *-an* etc., e.g., *balaich bheaga* ‘little boys’ (to *balach*), *gilean beaga* ‘little lads’ (to *gille*).

The genitive singular feminine ending *-e* in monosyllabic adjectives may also appear as *-eadh* (cf., feminine 1B nouns) in phrase-final position (see note 11). By contrast, the genitive singular feminine in polysyllabic nouns usually loses its termination, especially in phrase-final position.

The dual form of the adjective is unstable, showing vacillation between ‘singular’ and ‘plural’ forms, e.g., (*an*) *dà chat m(h)òr/m(h)òra* (m.) ‘(the) two big cats’, (*an*) *dà chois bhig/bheaga* (f.) ‘(the) two little feet’.

The palatalized : non-palatalized alternations in adjective declension may lead to vowel affection. The sorts that occur are the same as occur with 1A/1B nouns, e.g., *liath* : *lèith(e)* ‘grey’, and are limited to Type I.

*Comparison of adjectives* Each adjective has a comparative form used to express the comparative and also the superlative degree, the difference being a matter of syntax. The form of the comparative, which is indeclinable, is usually identical with the genitive singular feminine of the positive degree, e.g., *dubh* : *duibhe*, *glic* : *glice*, *salach* : *salaich(e)*. For the constructions involved in *tha Iain nas duibhe* and *is duibhe Iain* ‘John is darker’, as opposed to *is e Iain as duibhe* ‘John is darkest’, see below, ‘Noun-phrase syntax: Adjectives’. Several of the commonest comparative forms are irregular: see Scottish Gaelic grammars for *math* : *feàrr* ‘good : better’, *dona* : *miosa* ‘bad : worse’, *mòr* : *motha/mò* ‘big : bigger’, *beag* : *lugh*a ‘small : smaller’, etc.

Gaelic also possesses a set of forms based on the comparative + *de* ‘of it’, used to express ‘the better for . . .’ etc. Most of these are now uncommon, but *feàirrde* ‘the better for’ and *misde* ‘the worse for’ are common enough. Older Scottish Gaelic grammars sometimes call these forms the ‘second comparative’.

The same grammars further allege ‘third comparatives’, citing forms like *daoiread* (< *daor* ‘dear’). These are abstract nouns whose connection with the comparative seems to be simply that they can (or could once) be used in idioms to express ‘getting dearer’ (*a’ dol an daoiread*), etc.

## The numerals

The Scottish Gaelic numerals 1–10 appear in four series, as follows: Series A, cardinals as used to qualify a noun; Series B, cardinals as used when no noun is specified (e.g., when counting); Series C, ordinals; Series D, personal numerals (‘one person’, ‘two people’, etc.), confined to the numerals 1–10.

**The Gaelic numerals: 1–10**

	<b>Series A</b>	<b>Series B</b>	<b>Series C</b>	<b>Series D</b>
1	<i>aon ghille</i>	<i>a h-aon</i>	<i>a' cheud ghille</i>	<i>aonar</i>
2	<i>dà ghille</i>	<i>a dhà</i>	<i>an dar(n)a ghille</i>	<i>dithis</i>
3	<i>tri gillean</i>	<i>a trì</i>	<i>an treas ghille</i>	<i>triùir</i>
4	<i>ceithir gillean</i>	<i>a ceithir</i>	<i>an ceathramh ghille</i>	<i>ceathrar</i>
5	<i>còig gillean</i>	<i>a còig</i>	<i>an còigeamh ghille</i>	<i>còig(n)ear</i>
6	<i>sia gillean</i>	<i>a sia</i>	<i>an siathamh ghille</i>	<i>sianar</i>
7	<i>seachd gillean</i>	<i>a seachd</i>	<i>an seachdamh ghille</i>	<i>seachd(n)ar</i>
8	<i>ochd gillean</i>	<i>a h-ochd</i>	<i>an t-ochdamh ghille</i>	<i>ochd(n)ar</i>
9	<i>naoi gillean</i>	<i>a naoi</i>	<i>an naoidheamh ghille</i>	<i>naoinear</i>
10	<i>deich gillean</i>	<i>a deich</i>	<i>an deicheamh ghille</i>	<i>deichnear</i>

The numerals 11–19 employ an indeclinable adjectival *deug* ‘teen’:

**The Gaelic numerals: 11–19**

	<b>Series A</b>	<b>Series B</b>	<b>Series C</b>
11	<i>aon ghille deug</i>	<i>a h-aon deug</i>	<i>an t-aona ghille deug</i>
12	<i>dà ghille dheug</i>	<i>a dhà dheug</i>	<i>an dar(n)a ghille deug</i>
13	<i>tri gillean deug</i>	<i>a trì deug</i>	<i>an treas ghille deug</i>
↓	↓	↓	↓
19	<i>naoi gillean deug</i>	<i>a naoi deug</i>	<i>an naoidheamh ghille deug</i>

The numerals 20–99 employ the noun *fichead* ‘twenty, a score’:

**The Gaelic numerals: 20–99**

	<b>Series A</b>	<b>Series B</b>	<b>Series C</b>
20	<i>fichead gille</i>	<i>fichead</i>	<i>am fheadamh ghille</i>
21	<i>gille air fichead</i>	<i>aon air fichead</i>	<i>an t-aona ghille fichead</i>
22	<i>dà ghille air fichead</i>	<i>dhà air fichead</i>	<i>an dar(n)a ghille fichead</i>
↓	↓	↓	↓
39	<i>naoi gillean deug air fichead</i>	<i>naoi deug air fichead</i>	<i>an naoidheamh ghille deug air fichead</i>
40	<i>dà fhichead gille</i>	<i>dà fhichead</i>	<i>an dà fhicheadamh ghille</i>
41	<i>dà fhichead gille 's a h-aon</i>	<i>dà fhichead 's a h-aon</i>	<i>an dà fhicheadamh ghille 's a h-aon</i>
↓	↓	↓	↓
60	<i>trì fhichead gille</i>	<i>trì fhichead</i>	<i>an trì fhicheadamh ghille</i>

The numerals 100–999 employ the noun *ceud* ‘(a) hundred’, e.g., *ceud (gille) ’s a h-aon* ‘a hundred and one (lads)’; *an ceudamh gille ’s a h-aon* ‘the hundred and first lad’, etc. The numerals from 1,000 employ the noun *mìle* ‘(a) thousand’, and the numerals from 1,000,000 employ the noun *muillean* ‘(a) million’, both employed in the same way as *ceud*. Note that 100–199 can also be expressed in scores using *fichead* ‘twenty’.

The dual form, which is only found after *dà* ‘two’, is identical to the singular except in the case of feminine 1B nouns, where (in conservative speech) it is identical to the dative singular form, e.g., *aon chas* ‘one foot’, *dà chois* ‘two feet’.

Besides *treas*, the forms *tritheamh* and *treasamh* are also found for ‘third’.

The numerals *ceud*, *mìle* and *muillean* are followed by the singular. Historically they were followed by the genitive plural, since *fichead* etc. are nouns (‘a score’, etc.); the coincidence of nominative singular and genitive plural in the powerful Class 1 noun category has generated the synchronic rule.

Several variant constructions are employed with the larger numbers. Note in particular the tendency for Series B to take over from Series A, e.g., *ceithir mìle deug*, *dà fhichead ’s a trì deug de ghillean* ‘fourteen thousand and fifty-three (of) lads’.

There is a tendency in some dialects for Series D to be used for all animate beings, and not just human beings.

## Pronouns and pronominals

*Personal pronouns as subject or object of verb* These may occur with or without the contrastive force imparted by the deictic suffixes *-sal/-sel/-san*. The contrastive forms usually receive at least secondary stress. The non-contrastive forms may occur stressed or unstressed. The forms most commonly found are given in Table 7.14.

Table 7.14 The Gaelic personal pronouns

Person	Non-contrastive		Contrastive	
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
1	<i>mì, mi</i>	<i>sinn</i>	<i>mise</i>	<i>sinne</i>
2	<i>t(h)ù, t(h)u</i>	<i>sibh</i>	<i>t(h)usa</i>	<i>sibhse</i>
3 (m.)	<i>è, e</i> } <i>ì, i</i> }	<i>iad</i>	<i>esan/eisean</i> } <i>ise</i> }	<i>iadsan</i>
3 (f.)				

Fully stressed non-contrastive forms occur most frequently with the copula, e.g., *is mì / (ə)s ’mì:* ‘I am, it is me’, and in the ‘assertive’ usage, e.g., *cha dèan thù* ‘oh no, you won’t (do that)’. (See Questions and Answers.)

The pronunciation of unstressed *e*, *iad* is frequently /a/, /ad/, i.e., with the regular Scottish Gaelic treatment of historical unstressed long vowels/diphthongs.

The old neuter pronoun *eadh* ‘it’ survives in petrified form with the copula, *’s eadh* or *seadh* ‘well, yes, indeed’ (lit. ‘it is it’), negative *chan eadh*.

*Personal pronouns governed by prepositions* There are no independent dative forms of the pronouns. Instead we find sets of conjugated prepositions in which preposition and pronominal have coalesced permanently, e.g., *aig* ‘at’, *agam* ‘at me’. The most widely used ‘prepositional pronouns’ are given in Table 7.15.

Table 7.15 The Gaelic prepositional pronouns

	Singular				Plural		
	1	2	3 (m.)	3 (f.)	1	2	3
<i>aig</i> 'at'	<i>agam</i>	<i>agad</i>	<i>aige</i>	<i>aice</i>	<i>againn</i>	<i>agaibh</i>	<i>aca</i>
<i>gu</i> 'to, towards'	<i>thugam</i>	<i>thugad</i>	<i>thuige</i>	<i>thuice</i>	<i>thugainn</i>	<i>thugaibh</i>	<i>thuca</i>
<i>as</i> 'out of'	<i>asam</i>	<i>asad</i>	<i>as</i>	<i>aiste</i>	<i>asainn</i>	<i>asaibh</i>	<i>asta</i>
<i>(ann) an</i> 'in, into'	<i>annam</i>	<i>annad</i>	<i>ann</i>	<i>innte</i>	<i>annainn</i>	<i>annaibh</i>	<i>annta</i>
<i>le</i> 'with'	<i>leam</i>	<i>leat</i>	<i>leis</i>	<i>leatha</i>	<i>leinn</i>	<i>leibh</i>	<i>leotha</i>
<i>ri</i> 'to, against'	<i>rium</i>	<i>riut</i>	<i>ris</i>	<i>rithe</i>	<i>rinn</i>	<i>ribh</i>	<i>riutha</i>
<i>air</i> 'on'	<i>orm</i>	<i>ort</i>	<i>air</i>	<i>oirre</i>	<i>oirnn</i>	<i>oirbh</i>	<i>orra</i>
<i>eadar</i> 'between'	–	–	–	–	<i>eadarainn</i>	<i>eadaraibh</i>	<i>eatarra</i>
<i>(bh)jo</i> 'from'	<i>(bh)uam</i>	<i>(bh)uat</i>	<i>(bh)uaidh</i>	<i>(bh)uaipe</i>	<i>(bh)uainn</i>	<i>(bh)uaibh</i>	<i>(bh)uapa</i>
<i>fo</i> 'under'	<i>fodham</i>	<i>fodhad</i>	<i>fodha</i>	<i>foidhpe</i>	<i>fodhainn</i>	<i>fodhaibh</i>	<i>fodhpa</i>
<i>mu</i> 'about'	<i>umam</i>	<i>umad</i>	<i>uime</i>	<i>uimpe</i>	<i>umainn</i>	<i>umaibh</i>	<i>umpa</i>
<i>ro(imh)</i> 'before'	<i>romham</i>	<i>romhad</i>	<i>roimhe</i>	<i>roimhpe</i>	<i>romhainn</i>	<i>romhaibh</i>	<i>romhpa</i>
<i>tro(imh)</i> 'through'	<i>tromham</i>	<i>tromhad</i>	<i>troimhe</i>	<i>troimhpe</i>	<i>tromhainn</i>	<i>tromhaibh</i>	<i>tromhpa</i>
<i>d(h)e</i> 'of, off'	<i>dhiom</i>	<i>dhiot</i>	<i>dheth</i>	<i>dhith</i>	<i>dhinn</i>	<i>dhibh</i>	<i>dhiùbh</i>
<i>do/dha</i> 'to, for'	<i>dhomh</i>	<i>dhut</i>	<i>dha</i>	<i>dhi</i>	<i>dhuinn</i>	<i>dhuibh</i>	<i>dhàibh</i>

Exceptions are rare, e.g., *eadar mi fhìn is tu fhèin* 'between myself and yourself'; *seach mi fhìn* 'by comparison with me', *mar mise* 'like me'.

Strong analogical forces have operated, and continue to operate, within the system of prepositional pronouns, and also within the orthographical system which attempts to reflect the spoken forms and paradigmatic tensions. The forms and spellings given here are merely the most widely current in the central group of dialects. For example, the forms *annam*, etc., corresponding to *(ann) an*, are often pronounced with initial /u/ and sometimes written *unnam*, etc. (reflecting earlier *ionnam*, etc.).

*Genitival relation and personal pronouns* There are no independent genitive (or 'possessive') pronouns in Scottish Gaelic, expressions involving 'mine', etc., being rendered by means of prepositions, e.g., *is leam-sa sin* or *tha sin leam-sa* 'that is mine' (lit. 'that is with-me'). There are, however, possessive adjectives, e.g., *mo (chat)* 'my (cat)'. Their forms are given in Table 7.16.

Table 7.16 The Gaelic possessives

Person	Before consonants		Before vowels	
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
1	<i>mo</i> *	<i>ar</i>	<i>m'</i>	<i>ar n-</i>
2	<i>do</i> *	<i>ur</i>	<i>t'</i>	<i>(bh)ur n-</i>
3 (m.)	<i>a</i> *	} <i>an</i> <sup>n</sup>	<i>(a)</i>	} <i>an</i>
3 (f.)	<i>a</i>		<i>a h-</i>	

These forms are always unstressed. To express the equivalent of English 'my cat' Gaelic makes use of the deictic particles (see below, 'Demonstratives and deixis'), e.g., *mo chat-sa* /mə 'xatsə/. Alternatively, Gaelic uses the formula 'definite article + noun + *aig*', e.g., *an cat agam-sa* (lit. 'the cat at-me'), where *agam-sa* can be fully stressed. The two locutions have a considerable overlap, but are not identical in their application: the contrast is one of intimacy vs. distance, for example, *mi fhìn 's mo bhean* 'my wife and I', but *a' bhean agam* 'that wife of mine'. (There would be something odd about *an ceann agam* for 'my head' in normal circumstances.) Where there is semantic unconcern, syntactic manageability and prosody may enter into the choice of locution.

Nouns with initial *f*- + vowel preceded by leniting possessives are treated as though they begin with a vowel, e.g., *m'fhalt* /maLt/ 'my hair'; cf., *mo fhradharc* /mə 'rərk/ 'my (eye)sight'.

First- and second-person plural *ar* and (*bh*)*ur* appear before vowels as *ar h-* and (*bh*)*ur h-* in some dialects. Third-person plural *an<sup>n</sup>* is /əŋ/, /əN/, /əm/ before velar, dental and labial stops respectively. In most dialects it is reduced by elision (or assimilation) to /ə/ before *l-, n-, r-, s-, f-*. (It is conventionally written *am* before *p-, b-, m-, f-*.)

The sequence 'preposition + possessive + noun', which juxtaposes two unstressed words in pre-tonic position, gives rise to various elisions, syncopes and similar accommodations. Thus the sequence *gu + a + bhràthair* becomes /gə 'vra:hər/, traditionally written *gu 'bhràthair* or *g'a bhràthair*, and in the current revised orthography *gu bhràthair* or *ga bhràthair*. The combination of '(*ann*) *an* + possessive' regularly gives 'nam /nam/ or 'na mo /namə/, 'nad /nad/ or 'na do /nadə/, etc. for 'in my', 'in your', etc. Similar forms occur when a contamination product of *do* 'to, for' and *aig* 'at' + possessive is used with verbal nouns, e.g., 'gam (or *dham*) *bhualadh* 'striking me' (lit. 'for/at my striking'). The forms 'nam, 'gam, etc., are written *nam, gam*, etc., in the revised orthography.

### Relative pronouns

#### 'Direct' (subject/object) relation

Scottish Gaelic uses *a\** 'who, whom, which' irrespective of gender or number, as in *am fear a chunnaic mi* 'the man who saw me/whom I saw'; or *na\** 'those who/whom/which', as in *mharbh e na chunnaic e* 'he killed all that he saw/that saw him'.

#### 'Indirect' (dative) relation

Scottish Gaelic uses (*s*)*an<sup>n</sup>* irrespective of gender or number, as in *an t-àite anns an cuir mi e* 'the place in which I shall put it', *an duine aig am bi e* 'the person with whom it will be'. (The *s*-element appears only after the prepositions *gu, ri, le* and (*ann*) *an*.) As a common alternative, Scottish Gaelic uses the direct relative pronoun *a\** syntactically: *am fear a bha mi a' bruidhinn ris* 'the man to whom I was talking' (lit. 'the man who I was talking to him'). See 'Relative clauses' below.

#### Genitival relation

Scottish Gaelic has no word corresponding to English 'whose', but uses a variety of idioms to express this relationship, e.g., *am fear a bha mi a' bruidhinn ri 'athair* 'the man whose father I was speaking to' (lit. 'the man who I was speaking to his father'). See 'Relative clauses' below.

*Interrogative pronouns* Scottish Gaelic has two interrogative pronouns: *cia/cò* ‘who?, whom?, which?’ (any person and number) and (*gu*) *dè* ‘what?’. Of *cia* and *cò*, the latter is the prevailing spoken form.

Datival and genitival relations are expressed by *cò* + prepositional pronoun 3rd singular masculine, e.g., *cò bhuidh* ‘from whom?’, *cò leis* ‘with whom? whose?’, e.g., *Cò bhuidh a fhuair thu e?* ‘From whom did you get it?’ (lit. ‘Who (is it) from him that you got it?’).

When the interrogative pronoun is co-ordinated with a noun, *cò* is used: *Cò am fear a ghabhas mi?* ‘Which one shall I take?’ (lit. ‘Which (is) the one (which) . . .?’).

Some common combinations have formed permanent compounds, e.g., *ciamar* ‘how?’ (lit. ‘what like?’), *cuime* ‘why?’ (lit. ‘in aid of what?’, cf., *uime* ‘about him/it’); with nouns: *càite* ‘where?’ (lit. ‘what place?’, cf. *àite* ‘place’). See ‘Questions and answers’ below.

### *Demonstratives and deixis*

Scottish Gaelic has three fully stressable demonstrative pronouns: *seo* ‘this’ (with primary connotations of ‘here’, ‘now’, ‘about to be mentioned’); *sin* or *sean* ‘that’ (with primary connotations of ‘there’, ‘just there’, ‘just mentioned’); and *siod* ‘that’ (with primary connotations of ‘over there’, ‘previously mentioned’). They involve a person-correlated gradation from nearness to remoteness, as do the adverbials *an seo* ‘here’ etc. (see ‘Adverbs of place’ below). However, there is also pressure towards a binary ‘this/that’ opposition, which enables *sin* and *siod* to be contrasted on another plane, in setting or revising the intimacy/formality level of discourse.

Demonstrative adjectives corresponding to *seo*, *sin*, *siod* are formed in conjunction with the definite article:

<i>an gille seo</i>	this lad
<i>an cù sin</i>	that dog
<i>an taigh ud</i>	that (‘yon’) house

The demonstrative elements may be treated as enclitics, cf., *-sa*, a fully cliticized alternative to *seo*, as in *am fear-sa* *l̪ə* ‘fɛrsəl’ ‘this man’. Equally, *seo* and *sin* can bear the phrase stress when the deictic element is strong, e.g., *am fear seo* *l̪ə* fɛr ‘ʃɔ/. Note also the frequently occurring periphrasis *am fear (a) tha (an) seo*, lit. ‘the man who-is-here’, e.g., *Bhruidhinn mi ris a’ bhodach a bha (an) seo* ‘I spoke to this old fellow’, lit. ‘old man who-was-here’.

Forms ultimately related to the demonstratives are used to create emphatic-contrastive suffixes for pronouns or their equivalents, e.g., *mise* ‘I, me’, *agam-sa* ‘at me’, *mo chat-sa* ‘my cat’, *chanainn-sa* ‘I would say’, where in each case the ‘I, me’ is underlined, or someone else’s claims are implicitly rejected, or the existence of other parties who could be interested is loaded into the conversation. The relevant forms are as follows:

*The Gaelic emphatic-contrastive suffixes*

Person	Personal pronoun	Prepositional pronoun	Possessive	Synthetic verb
1 sg.	<i>mise</i>	<i>agam-sa</i>	<i>mo mhac-sa</i>	<i>chanainn-sa</i>
2 sg.	<i>t(h)usa</i>	<i>agad-sa</i>	<i>do mhac-sa</i>	
3 sg. (m.)	<i>esan</i>	<i>aige-san</i>	<i>a mhac-san</i>	
3 sg. (f.)	<i>ise</i>	<i>aice-se</i>	<i>a mac-se</i>	
1 pl.	<i>sinne</i>	<i>againne</i>	<i>ar mac-ne</i>	<i>chanamaid-ne</i>
2 pl.	<i>sibhse</i>	<i>agaibh-se</i>	<i>(bh)ur mac-se</i>	<i>canaibh-se</i>
3 pl.	<i>iadsan</i>	<i>aca-san</i>	<i>am mac-san</i>	

Here *sinne* and *againne* are simplifications of *sinn-ne* and *againn-ne* respectively. Note the absence of adjustment to consonant quality on either side of the morpheme boundary in *chanainn-sa*.

**The verbal system**

*Person, number and voice* Scottish Gaelic recognizes first, second and third person and singular and plural number in the pronominal paradigm. This enables the Scottish Gaelic verb to be basically analytic, the distinctions of number and person being carried mainly by the subject; e.g., *buailidh mi* : *buailidh tu* 'I will strike : you will strike', *buailidh e* : *buailidh iad* 'he will strike : they will strike'. At the same time Scottish Gaelic contains a few synthetic forms, and these were once more numerous. The commonest are:

First-person singular conditional:	<i>-(a)inn</i> , e.g., <i>dhèanainn</i> 'I would do'
First-person plural imperative:	<i>-(e)amaid</i> , e.g., <i>dèanamaid</i> 'let us do'
First-person plural conditional:	<i>-(e)amaid</i> , e.g., <i>dhèanamaid</i> 'we would do'
Second-person plural imperative:	<i>-(a)ibh</i> , e.g., <i>dèanaibh</i> 'do!'

Scottish Gaelic distinguishes active and passive voice, the latter being expressed either by special impersonal-passive forms or by periphrasis, e.g., *dhùin iad* 'they closed', *dhùin-eadh iad* 'they were closed'; *bha iad air an dùnadh* or *chaidh iad a dhùnadh* 'they were closed' (lit. 'they were on/after their closing' or 'they went its closing'). The synthetic impersonal-passive forms are:

Future <i>-ar</i> : <i>dèanar</i>	'will be done, one will do'
Conditional <i>-te</i> : <i>dhèante</i>	'would be done, one would do'
Past <i>-adh</i> : <i>rinneadh</i>	'was done, one did'

Note the absence of adjustment to consonant quality on either side of the morpheme boundary in *dhèante*. However, in some dialects the conditional impersonal-passive ending has become *-ist(e)*, e.g., *dhèanaiste* 'would be done, one would do'. This form has developed from the *-ich-te* of denominative verbs in *-ich*.

The Scottish Gaelic impersonals parallel the semantics of French *on* and German *man*, and are vital in spoken Gaelic, despite some pressure from the English second-person singular impersonal ('this is how you do it') and third-person plural without specific reference

(‘this is how they do it’). The impersonal-passive forms express the passive voice unambiguously only when an agent is explicitly mentioned, e.g., *rinneadh e* ‘one did it/it was done’, *rinneadh an t-òran le Iain* ‘the song was made by John’. Scottish Gaelic grammars tend to call these forms passives, but their occurrence with intransitive verbs forbids us to take this as their primary definition, e.g., *thigear* ‘one comes’, *thathar* ‘one is’.

A small group of Scottish Gaelic verbs are (or can be) used without an expressed subject, for example:

<i>dh’fhairtlich orm</i>	‘I failed’	(lit. ‘(it) failed on me’)
<i>thàinig orm</i>	‘I was obliged to’	(lit. ‘(it) came on me’)
<i>shoirbhich leam</i>	‘I succeeded’	(lit. ‘(it) prospered with me’)

*Tense, mood and aspect* The Scottish Gaelic verb distinguishes *indicative* and *imperative* mood, e.g., *tha (e)* ‘(he) is’: *biodh (e)* ‘let (him) be’. Subjunctive forms occur marginally: see ‘Subjunctives’ below. The verb has three non-periphrastic tense/aspect forms. For *gabh!* ‘take!’ we have (*do*) *ghabh* ‘took’, *gabhaidh* ‘will take/takes’ and *ghabhadh* ‘would take/used to take’. Of these, *ghabh* is a simple preterite, but also corresponds to the English perfect tense, e.g., *ghabh mi mo bhiadh* ‘I have taken (= eaten) my food (and now I am going out to play)’. (This is to be distinguished from the perfective *tha mi air mo bhiadh a ghabhail*, with the connotation ‘I have finished my meal’ or ‘I have had my meal’.) *Gabhaidh* has two distinct meanings: a simple future, and a habitual present. *Ghabhadh* mirrors this in secondary sequence, yielding a secondary future or ‘future in the past’, and a habitual past which Scottish Gaelic grammars sometimes misleadingly call ‘the imperfect’ or even ‘the subjunctive’. Certain verbs, including verbs expressing perceptions, use the future-tense forms to express a non-habitual present, e.g. *chì mi* ‘I see/can see’ as well as ‘I shall see/habitually see’; *saoilidh mi* ‘I think, suppose’.

The substantive verb *tha* ‘is’ has an additional contrast between *tha* ‘is at the present time’ and *bidh* ‘is as a rule’. Periphrastic use of *tha* + verbal noun (on which see further below and ‘Verb-phrase syntax’) enables the other verbs to express ‘is doing at the present time’, and the central role of this verb has helped to establish the single action : repeated action opposition as a general feature. (Formal mergers, between the earlier present and future, and between the earlier imperfect and secondary future tenses, constitute the second main source of the Modern Scottish Gaelic situation.) The basic tense/aspect relationships expressed by the Scottish Gaelic verb may hence be set out as in Figure 7.1, using *bi* ‘be’ and *gabh* ‘take’.

Two contrasts are involved. These may be generalized as in Figure 7.2, in which the *vertical* plane ABDC contrasts actualized (AB) and not yet actualized (CD) actions in present (AC) and past (BD) contexts; while the *horizontal* plane ABFE contrasts single (AB) and repeated (EF) actions in present (AE) and past (BF) contexts.

The historical mergers of the present and future, and of the imperfect and secondary future, are reflected in those irregular verbs in which different dialects have generalized one or the other to represent the double-duty Scottish Gaelic category, for example, Scottish Gaelic *dhèanadh* or *nitheadh* ‘would do/used to do’, where Early Modern Gaelic had *do-ghèanadh* ‘would do’ and *do-(gh)nièadh* ‘used to do’. The Early Modern past subjunctive had come to be formally indistinguishable from the imperfect indicative, which may help to explain why Scottish Gaelic grammars sometimes call the Scottish Gaelic secondary future/habitual past ‘the subjunctive’.

Tense/aspectual differentiation also takes place on a different plane, provided by combinations with the shape: ‘verb “to be” + preposition + verbal noun’. Three main types of



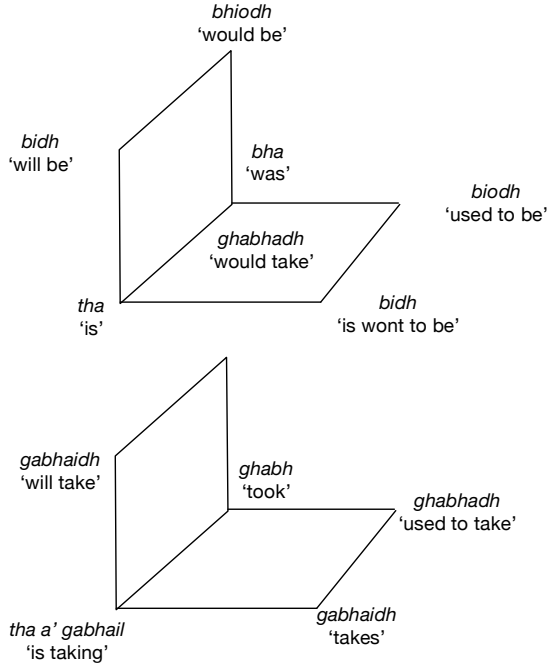


Figure 7.1 Forms and meaning of the Gaelic verb

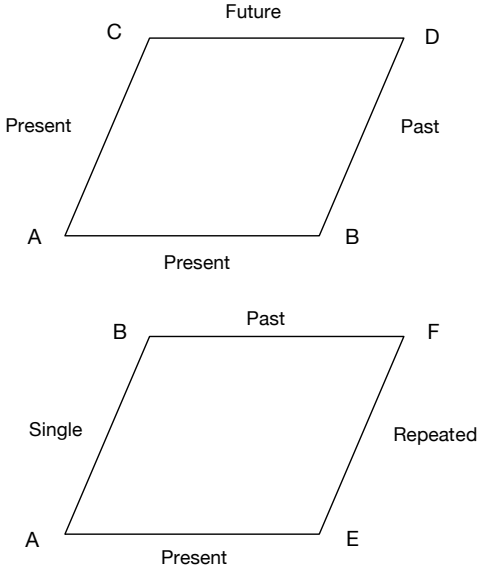


Figure 7.2 Tense/aspect relation of the Gaelic verb

activity are contrasted: *progressive* ('engaged in doing something'); *prospective* ('about to do something'); and *perfective* ('having completed doing something'). Thus with *a(i)g* 'at', *tha i ag òl* 'she is (engaged in) drinking' (lit. 'at drinking'); with *gu* 'towards', *tha mi gu fannachadh* 'I am on the point of fainting' (lit. 'towards fainting'); with *air* 'on, after', *tha mi air tilleadh* 'I have returned' (lit. 'on/after returning'). The use of these forms, especially the progressive ones, is important in Modern Scottish Gaelic; for the syntactic implications when the verb has an 'object' see 'Verbal Noun Phrases' below.

Other prepositions or equivalent locutions are quite commonly used in the contexts just described, for example:

*progressive*: *ri* 'to, against', with stronger iterative/durative connotations than *a(i)g* in most dialects; *a(g) sìor-* 'continually';  
*prospective*: *an impis* 'on the point of'; *a(g) dol a\** 'going to'; *ri* 'needing to' (gerundive, e.g., *tha sin ri* ('*dhèanamh fhathast* 'that still requires to be done'));  
*perfective*: *an dèidh* 'after', *air ùr-* '(having) just/newly'.

Combining these aspectual markers with periphrastic use of the verb *tha* enables Scottish Gaelic to capture many nuances achieved within the English 'tense' system, e.g., *bha mi air dùsgadh* expresses the pluperfect 'I had awoken'.

*Flexion* Scottish Gaelic is not usually reckoned to possess conjugations as such, though the phonological rules generate some definable subgroups, for example, where disyllabic roots augmented by a syllabic ending undergo syncope of the second syllable, as in *fos-gail* 'open!', *fosglaidh* 'will open'; or where root syllables closed by a heavy consonant or consonant group show vowel-length alternations correlating with the presence or absence of a syllabic suffix, as in *cum* /ku:m/ 'keep', *cumaidh* /kumi/ 'will keep'. Compare also the occurrence, in some dialects, of future and secondary future forms in *-(e)achaidh* and *-(e)achadh* (elsewhere *-(a)ichidh*, *-(a)icheadh*) among the common class of denominative verbs in *-(a)ich*. The irregularity of the so-called irregular verbs (see below) consists largely of suppletion, e.g., *bheir* 'gives, will give', *thug* 'gave'.

On the other hand, it is necessary to distinguish three sorts of flexion shared by all verbs, termed *independent* (or 'absolute'), *dependent* (or 'conjunct') and *relative*, e.g., *gabhadh am fear* 'the man will take', *an gabh am fear?* 'will the man take?', *am fear a ghabhas* 'the man who will take'. While preverb alternation differentiates the flexion classes throughout the paradigm, alternating verbal endings occur only in the future/habitual present *-(a)idh*:  $-\emptyset$ : *-(e)as*. The relative ending *-(e)as* alternates specifically with the independent ending *-idh*, and those irregular verbs which do not have *-idh* do not have *-as* either, e.g., *chì am fear* 'the man will see', *am fear a chì* 'the man who will see'. The irregular verbs contain a small number of instances in which a different stem is used for dependent flexion; e.g., *chì*: (*am*) *faic*. In these cases the relative goes with the independent against the dependent stem form.

*Paradigm of the independent verb forms*

	<b><i>gabh</i></b> ‘take’	<b><i>cuir</i></b> ‘put’	<b><i>caidil</i></b> ‘sleep’	<b><i>tòisich</i></b> ‘begin’
<i>Indicative</i>				
Future/habitual present	<i>gabhaidh</i>	<i>cuiridh</i>	<i>caidlidh</i>	<i>tòisichidh</i>
2 future/habitual past	<i>ghabhadh</i>	<i>chuireadh</i>	<i>chaidleadh</i>	<i>thòisicheadh</i>
(Simple) past	<i>ghabh</i>	<i>chuir</i>	<i>chaidil</i>	<i>thòisich</i>
<i>Imperative</i>				
(2 singular)	<i>gabh</i>	<i>cuir</i>	<i>caidil</i>	<i>tòisich</i>

The imperative second-person singular provides the citation forms for Scottish Gaelic dictionaries, and the ‘root’ or ‘base’ form for Scottish Gaelic grammars.

The synthetic verb-forms noted above in certain positions are under some pressure, with analytic alternatives well established in many dialects.

The apparently spontaneous lenition of the independent simple past and secondary future/habitual past forms commemorates an earlier leniting pre-verbal particle *do*\*, reduced in pre-tonic position to *a* before consonants and then lost. (This particle is still visible when the verb begins with a vowel or *f*- + vowel; e.g., *òl* ‘drink’, *dh’òl* ‘drank’, *dh’òladh* ‘would/used to drink’; *fàg* ‘leave’, *dh’fhàg* ‘left’, etc.)

*Paradigm of the independent, dependent and relative forms*

	<b>Independent</b>	<b>Dependent</b>	<b>Relative</b>
Future/habitual present	<i>gabhaidh</i>	( <i>nach</i> ) <i>gabh</i>	<i>a ghabhas</i>
2 future/habitual past	<i>ghabhadh</i>	( <i>nach</i> ) <i>ghabhadh</i>	<i>a ghabhadh</i>
(Simple) past	<i>ghabh</i>	( <i>nach</i> ) <i>do ghabh</i>	<i>a ghabh</i>

Dependent imperative forms only occur after the direct negative *na*. The verb-form is unchanged from the positive, e.g., *gabh* ‘take!’ *’na gabh!* ‘don’t take!’. Relative forms do not occur. See also ‘Commands’.

Initial mutations may occur after pre-verbal particles taking the dependent forms, e.g., *cha ghabh* ‘will not take’. Lenition follows the *a* which characterizes relative flexion.

As a synchronic rule for the Scottish Gaelic verb, the lenition of consonants is paralleled by the prefixing of *dh’* to vowels and lenited *f*- + vowels, e.g. *nach do dh’òl*, *a dh’òlas*, *a dh’òladh*, *a dh’òl*, beside *nach do ghabh*, *a ghabhas*, *a ghabhadh*, *a ghabh*.

The alternation seen in independent *gabhaidh* : dependent (. . .) *gabh* reflects the absolute : conjunct opposition of Early Irish.

**Irregular verbs**

*bi* ‘be’: pres. *tha* (dep. *(f)eil*), fut. *bidh* (dep. *bi*, rel. *a bhios*), 2 fut. *bhiodh* (dep. *biodh*), past *bha* (dep. *robh*)

copula *is* ‘is’: pres. *is* (dep. coalesces with pre-verbal particle and becomes invisible; rel. *as*), other tenses *bu* (dep. *bu*)

*dèan* ‘do’: fut. *nì* (dep. *dèan*), 2 fut. *dheanadh* or *nitheadh* (dep. *deanadh*), past *rinn* (dep. *do rinn*)

*faic* ‘see’: fut. *chì* (dep. *faic*), 2 fut. *chitheadh* (dep. *faiceadh*), past *chunnaic* (dep. *faca*)

*thoir* ‘give’: fut. *bheir* (dep. *toir*), 2 fut. *bheireadh* (dep. *toireadh*), past *thug* (dep. *tug*)  
*abair* ‘say’: fut. *their* (dep. *abair*), 2 fut. *theireadh* (dep. *abradh*), past *thuirt* (dep. *tuirt*)  
*thig* ‘come’: fut. *thig* (dep. *tig*), 2 fut. *thigeadh* (dep. *tigeadh*), past *thàinig* (dep. *tàinig*)  
*rach* ‘go’: fut. *thèid* (dep. *tèid*), 2 fut. *r(e)achadh* (dep. *r(e)achadh*) or *thèigheadh* (dep. *téigheadh*), past *chaidh* (dep. *deachaidh* or *deach*)  
*faigh* ‘get’: fut. *gheibh* or *gheobh* (dep. *faigh*), 2 fut. *gheibheadh* or *gheobhadh* (dep. *faigheadh*), past *fhuair* (dep. *d’fhuair*)  
*cluinn* ‘hear’: fut. *cluinnidh* (regular), 2 fut. *chluinneadh* (regular), past *chuala* (dep. *cuala*)  
*beir* ‘bear’: fut. *beiridh* (regular), 2 fut. *bheireadh* (regular), past *rug* (dep. *do rug*)  
*ruig* ‘reach’: fut. *ruigidh* (regular), 2 fut. *ruigeadh* (regular), past *ràinig* (dep. *do ràinig*)

*Responsives* In certain commonly occurring verbs special *pausa* forms are found in so-called responsive usage (cf., ‘Questions and answers’). These differ from the unmarked sentence-initial forms in cases where the unmarked form incorporates a reduction (for example, of an old hiatus) or is liable to de-stressing (for example, where the verb is used as a quasi-auxiliary and the primary stress of the phrase is permanently associated with some other element). The commonest occurrences are with the verb *tha* ‘is’, and are given in Table 7.17.

Table 7.17 Stressed and unstressed forms of the verb *tha* ‘is’

	Normal		Responsive	
	Independent	Dependent	Independent	Dependent
(Simple) present	<i>tha</i>	<i>chan eil</i>	<i>thà</i>	<i>chan eil</i>
Future/habitual present	<i>bidh</i>	<i>cha bhi</i>	<i>bithidh</i>	<i>cha bhì</i>
(Simple) past	<i>bha</i>	<i>cha robh</i>	<i>bhà</i>	<i>cha robh</i>
2 future/habitual past	<i>bhiodh</i>	<i>cha bhiodh</i>	<i>bhitheadh</i>	<i>cha bhitheadh</i>

With other verbs, note unmarked *chaidh*, (*cha*) *deach* ‘went’, responsive *chathaidh* (i.e., with hiatus) or *chàidh*, (*cha*) *deachaidh*; unmarked *thuirt*, (*cha*) *tuirt* ‘said’, responsive *thubhairt*, (*cha*) *tubhairt*; unmarked *dheanadh*, (*cha*) *deanadh* ‘would do’, responsive *dhèanadh*, (*cha*) *dèanadh*.

These forms may also be found in other classes of marked utterance, including the ‘assertive’ usage (see ‘Personal pronouns’ above); e.g., *ach thà mi mar sin* ‘but I (really) am like that’ (where ‘that’ is known). Many Gaelic writers, and some Scottish Gaelic grammars, use the longer and shorter spellings indiscriminately.

*Defective verbs* Scottish Gaelic has a small number of verbs which show only a single form or a limited range of forms, e.g., *arsa/orsa* ‘said, says’; *tharla* ‘happened’; *theab* ‘almost did (X)’, as in *theab mi tuiteam* ‘I almost fell’, with *tuiteam*, verbal noun of *tuit* ‘fall’.

*Non-finite verb forms and derivatives* A verbal noun (perhaps better a ‘verb-noun’) is attached to each verb. It signifies ‘the act or fact of breaking/being broken (or whatever)’ and can, subject to certain restrictions, be used as a noun. That is, it has case, number and gender and can be qualified by adjectives, etc. Thus *seas* ‘stand’, *seasamh* ‘(act of)

standing'; *till* 'return', *tilleadh* '(act of) returning'. The verbal noun is neutral as to voice, for example, *briseadh na cloiche* can mean, according to context, 'the breaking (e.g., John's breaking) of the stone' or '(the fact of) the stone's being broken (by John)'. The form of the verbal noun is not predictable, though some rules of thumb apply (see 'Derivational morphology' below). It is most frequently used in conjunction with other verbs, especially the verb *tha* 'is', to express progressive action and other aspectual nuances.

The preposition *a*\* (a reduced form of *do* 'to, for') can be used with the verbal noun in a construction resembling the English infinitive in cases like *tha mi a' dol a choimhead* 'I am going to watch'. Frequently, however, the English infinitive corresponds to the Scottish Gaelic verbal noun itself, for example, 'I want to watch' is *tha mi ag iarraidh coimhead*; 'I would prefer to stand' is *b'fheàrr leam seasamh*. The verbal noun of the verb *tha* 'is', i.e., *bith* 'being' is used only as a noun ('being, existence') in Modern Scottish Gaelic and *a bhith* does duty for verbal constructions requiring either verbal noun or 'infinitive', e.g., *is toigh leam a bhith an seo* 'I like being/to be here'.

A *verbal adjective* is formed from many (but by no means all) Scottish Gaelic verbs. It corresponds to the English past-participle passive, and is formed by the addition of *-ta/-te* to the base form of the verb, e.g., *pòs* 'marry', *pòsta* 'married'; *bris* 'break', *briste* 'broken'. In some cases a non-palatalized root-final consonant is permitted to co-exist with the palatalized form of the ending, e.g., *dèante* (beside *dèanta*) 'done, completed'.

## Other parts of speech

*Prepositions* Scottish Gaelic makes constant use of a set of simple prepositions, backed up by a set of prepositional phrases, to introduce adverbial extensions of all sorts. A substantial proportion of the most common verbal ideas is expressed by a relatively small number of verbs used with different prepositions.

Most prepositions are invariable in form. (Compare, however, *ri* : *ris an*, *ann* : *anns an*, etc., where the preposition once ended in a consonant which fused with the now lost *s-* of an early form of the definite article.) Their pre-tonic position renders them liable to reduction, for example, *do* 'to' and *de* 'from' become /ɣə/ or simply /ə/. On the other hand, several protective strategies have been evolved: a preposition may be reduplicated (for example, *do dh'* or *a dh'* from *do/de*, *ann an* from *an*), or the third-person singular masculine prepositional pronoun form may be used as the preposition (e.g., *troimh, air, dha*), or a more distinctive 'compound preposition' (see below) may be used in preference to the simplex (e.g., *mu dhèidhinn* for *mu* 'about'), or the last two processes may be combined (e.g., *seachad air* for *seach* 'past', *thairis air* for *thar* 'over').

'Compound prepositions' or prepositional phrases are of two sorts: (a) (preposition + noun + preposition (e.g., *timcheall air* 'around', *a bharrachd air* 'in addition to'), and (b) (preposition +) noun (e.g., *timcheall* 'around', *air cùlaibh* 'behind'). The second sort is naturally followed by the genitive. Some apparent examples of simple prepositions governing the genitive are disguised examples of this category (e.g., *far* 'off', earlier *a (= de) bhàrr*; *chun* 'towards', earlier *dochum*).

Prepositions combine variously with pronouns and possessives: for details see 'Pronouns and pronominals' above.

*Adverbs* Adjectives may be converted to adverbial use by prefixing *gu* (*gu h-* before vowels), e.g., *rinn thu gu math* 'you did well', *leum e gu h-obann* 'he leapt suddenly', *tha mi gu math* 'I am well'. The prefix is usually omitted if another prefix, such as an intensive, is present, e.g., *rinn thu glé mhath* 'you did very well', *tha mi glé mhath* 'I am very

well' (as well as 'I am very good'). Note that some *gu*-adverbials have a different origin, e.g., *gu bràth* 'forever' (lit. 'until Judgement', i.e., a preposition + noun combination).

The demonstratives *seo*, *sin* and *siod* are paralleled by *an seo*, *an sin* and *an siod* 'here', 'there' and 'yonder'. Many other adverbials are formed by prefixing *an*, e.g., *an-diugh* 'today' (involving the obsolete \**di*- 'day'), *an còmhnaidh* 'always' (involving the extant but now disassociated noun *còmhnaidh* 'staying'). The origins of adverbial *an* are various.

Various other combinations, some transparent and some not, have attained the status of adverbs in the language, e.g., *mu seach* 'alternately', (*a*-)*riamh* 'ever', *mu thràth* (properly *mar thà*) 'already'.

Certain locative adverbial oppositions have combined with a rest/motion opposition to give adverb-families as follows. (Note that 'here' and 'there' mean 'over here' and 'over there', that is, with relational nuance, in this context.)

	'up'	'down'	'in'	'out'	'here'	'there'
motion towards	( <i>a</i> -) <i>suas</i>	( <i>a</i> -) <i>sìos</i>	<i>a-steach</i>	<i>a-mach</i>	( <i>an seo</i> )	( <i>an sin/siod</i> )
motion from	<i>a-nuas</i>	<i>a-nìos</i>			<i>a-null</i>	<i>a-nall</i>
rest	<i>shuas</i>	<i>shìos</i>	<i>a-staigh</i>	<i>a-muigh</i>	<i>a-bhos</i>	<i>thall</i>

Usage is as follows: *thig a-nuas* 'come down', *théid mi suas* 'I will go up', *tha e shuas* 'he is up (aloft)'. Note, however, that for most speakers of contemporary Scottish Gaelic *a-nìos* 'up (from below)' has been replaced by *a-nuas*, which hence means 'towards the speaker, in an up/down context'. Similarly, *a-staigh* is encroaching on the domain of *a-steach* with many contemporary speakers.

A comparable system was built around the compass points *thiar*, *thear*, *tuath*, *deas*, etc., e.g., *gaoth an iar* 'west wind' (lit. 'wind from the west'). However, usage has adapted this system in various directions in the modern dialects. It seems likely that *a-staigh* and *a-steach* have also provided the model for several further adverbial developments in the language, e.g., *as tìr* 'in the country', *as t-earrach* 'in the spring', *as t-samhradh* 'in the summer'.

*Preverbals* Since the Scottish Gaelic verb heads its clause, conjunctions may come into contact with it, and hence fall to be described as preverbals along with such verb modifiers as negatives and interrogatives; see 'Verb-phrase syntax' below.

Interrogative *an*, neg. *cha(n)* and interrogative negative *nach* may head principal clauses, e.g., *An/Nach till thu? Tillidh/Cha till*. 'Will you/Won't you return? Yes, I will/No, I won't.' They are followed by *dependent* flexion: see 'Questions and answers' and 'Negation' below. *Cha* lenites lenitable consonants other than *d*, *t* (most dialects) and *s* (some dialects), and appears as *chan* before lenited vowels and pre-vocalic *f*. *An* is a nasalizing particle and appears as *am* before labials. *An* + *do* (past-tense marker) yields /Nə/ (sometimes written *na*) in speech. *Nach* causes lenition of initial *f*. See 'Notes on the mutations' above for irregular verb-forms in /h/, mostly written *th-*, which mutate to /d/ after *cha*, *an* and *nach*.

Interrogative *an*, interrogative negative *nach* and various conjunctions may head subordinate clauses, e.g., *Saoil an tig e?* 'I wonder whether he will come' (lit. 'Suppose, will he come?'), (*ag ràdh*) *gun tig e* '(saying) that he will come', (*Falbh*) *mun tig e* '(Go) before he comes'. This category also includes the relative pronoun *an*, that is, the form used after prepositions, e.g., (*an seòmar*) *anns am bi e* '(the room) in which he will be'; and the interrogative *càite*, e.g., *Chan eil fhios càit' an tèid e* 'There's no knowing where

he will go'. All these are followed by dependent flexion.

The relative pronouns *a* and *na*, together with the interrogative pronouns other than *càite*, demand *relative* flexion in the following verb. They are joined by several conjunctions based on *a* (e.g., *nuair a* 'when', lit. 'the hour that') or modelled on this group (e.g., *ged a* 'although', *ma* 'if'), e.g., *am fear a sheinneas* 'the man who sings', *innis dhomh cò (a) sheinneas* 'tell me who will sing', *innis dhomh nuair a sheinneas e* 'tell me when he sings', *chan éisd mi ma sheinneas e* 'I shan't listen if he sings'. See further 'Subordination' below.

### Derivational morphology

**Nouns** The generic/descriptive *-ach* of adjectives (see below) is frequently used substantivally, e.g., *seirbhiseach* 'servant' (*seirbhis* 'service'), *Leòdhasach* 'Lewisman' (*Leòdhas* 'Lewis'). Such nouns are mostly masculine 1A, but note feminine 1B *cailleach* 'old woman' (cf., early *caille* 'veil') and *gainmheach* 'sand(s), sandy place' (*gaineamh* 'sand').

Diminutive suffixes include *-anlean* (m. 1A) alternating with *-ein* (m. 4A), and *-ag* (f. 1B), e.g., *balachan* 'wee laddie' (*balach* 'boy'), *uircein* 'piglet' (early *orc* 'pig'), *Annag* 'Annie' (*Anna* 'Anne'). These suffixes also occur with generic/descriptive force, e.g., *aonaran* 'loner' (*aonar* 'one person'), *bròinean* 'pathetic male', *brònag* 'pathetic female' (*bròn* 'sorrow').

Agent-suffixes include *-airl-eir* (m. 4A), *-aire* (m. 5A), *-adair* (m. 4A), *-aiche* (m. 5A), e.g., *clachair* 'mason' (*clach* 'stone'), *fidhleir* 'fiddler' (*fidheall* 'fiddle'), *piobaire* 'piper' (*piòb* 'bagpipes'), *seinneadair* 'singer' (*seinn* 'sing'), *sgeulaiche* 'story-teller' (*sgeul* 'story').

Abstract suffixes: *-e* (with palatalization of preceding consonant; f. 5A), e.g., *gile* 'whiteness' (*geal* 'white'), *gainne* 'scarcity' (*gann* 'scarce'); *-achd* (f. 3A), e.g., *bàrdachd* 'poetry' (*bàrd* 'poet'), *rioghachd* 'kingdom' (*rìgh* 'king'); *-ad* (f. 3A or m. 1A), e.g., *gluasad* 'moving, movement' (*gluais* 'move'), *tighead* 'viscosity' (*tiugh* 'thick'); *-as* (m. 1A), e.g., *donas* 'evil' (*dona* 'bad'), *gliocas* 'wisdom' (*glic* 'wise'); *-(a)ich* (f. 4B), e.g., *casadaich* 'coughing' (*casad* 'cough'), cf. *-adaich* in *gliogadaich* 'clinking' (*gliog* 'clink'). The modification of final *-th* in adjectives to *-s* in abstract nouns may also be mentioned, e.g., *blàth* 'warm', *blàs* 'warmth'. Doubled suffixation is not uncommon, e.g., *dorchadas* 'darkness' (*dorch(a)* 'dark').

**Verbal nouns** Suffix *-(e)adh*, e.g., *mol: moladh* 'praise', *bris: briseadh* 'break'; with depalatalization of preceding consonant, e.g., *buail: bualadh* 'strike', *tòisich: tòiseachadh* 'begin'. This is by far the commonest verbal-noun suffix.

Suffix *-aill-eil*, e.g., *fàg: fàgail* 'leave', *tilg: tilgeil* 'throw'; with *-tail*, e.g. *fan: fantail* 'wait'. This is a favoured suffix in certain dialects.

Suffix *-inn*, e.g., *faic: faicinn* 'see'; with *-sinn*, e.g., *creid: creidsinn* 'believe'; with *-tinn*, e.g., *cluinn: cluinntinn* 'hear'; with *-tainn*, e.g., *fan: fantainn* 'wait'; with *-eachdainn*, e.g., *tòisich: tòiseachdainn* 'begin'. The last mentioned is a favoured suffix in some dialects.

Suffix *-amh*, e.g., *dèan: dèanamh* 'do'.

Zero suffix, e.g., *òl: òl* 'drink', *leum: leum* 'jump'; with depalatalization of final consonants, e.g., *fuirich: fuireach* 'stay', *ceannaich: ceannach* 'buy'.

Dialectal variation is not uncommon, e.g. *dèanadh* beside *dèanamh*.

*Adjectives* Suffix *-(e)ach*, e.g., *creagach* ‘rocky’ (*creag* ‘rock’), *muldach* ‘depressed’ (*mulad* ‘depression’), etc.; *Albannach* ‘Scottish’ (*Alba* ‘Scotland’, gen. *Albann*), etc. This is by far the commonest and most productive adjectival suffix.

Suffix *-ail-eil*, e.g., *fearail* ‘manly’ (*fear* ‘man’), *ainmeil* ‘famous, namely’ (*ainm* ‘name’), *sàrachail* ‘wearisome’ (cf., *sàraich* ‘weary, wear down’).

Suffix *-mhor*, e.g., *lionmhor* ‘numerous’ (*lion* ‘number’). This is common in literature, but not now productive.

Suffix *-dal-ta*, e.g., *grànda* ‘ugly’ (*gràin* ‘loathing’), *seunta* ‘bewitched, shy’ (*seun* ‘charm’).

Suffixes *-arra*, *-anta*, *-alta*, *-asta* and similar, e.g., *fosgarr* ‘frank’ (cf., *fosgail* ‘open’), *lasanta* ‘passionate’ (*las* ‘kindle’, *lasan* ‘flame, anger’), *sìobhalta* ‘civilized’, *drabasta* ‘obscene’.

*Verbs* Zero-suffix, from adjectives, e.g., *fliuch* ‘moisten, wet’ (id., ‘wet’), *glan* ‘(make) clean’ (id., ‘clean’); from nouns, e.g., *toll* ‘pierce’ (id., ‘hole’), *lùb* ‘(make to) bend’ (id., ‘bend’).

Suffix *-ich*, from adjectives, e.g., *tiormaich* ‘(make) dry’ (*tioram* ‘dry’), *àrdaich* ‘raise’ (*àrd* ‘high’); from nouns, e.g., *grunn(d)aich* ‘wade’ (*grunn(d)* ‘(sea-)bottom’), *riaraich* ‘satisfy’ (*riar* ‘desire’). Note also *-sich*, e.g., *làimhsich* ‘handle’ (*làmh* ‘hand’), *-n(a)ich*, e.g., *crìochnaich* ‘finish’ (*crìoch* ‘end’).

Suffix *-ig* (common in English loanwords), e.g., *buinnig* ‘win’. This suffix is highly productive in technological and bilingual contexts.

*Compounding rules* Compounding is relatively restricted in Scottish Gaelic. Nominal or adjectival elements may be found prefixed to nouns, including verbal nouns. Examples: *meanbh-chuileag* ‘midge’ (*meanbh* ‘mini’ + *cuileag* ‘fly’); *blàth-chridheach* ‘warm-hearted’ (*blàth* ‘warm’ + *cridhe* ‘heart’ + *-ach* adj. suffix); *féin-riaghladh* ‘self-government’ (*féin* ‘self’ + *riaghladh* ‘ruling’, verbal noun of *riaghail* ‘rule’); *deann-ruith* ‘headlong rush’ (*deann* earlier ‘smoke, fire’ + *ruith* ‘running’, verbal noun of *ruith* ‘run’), *dealbh-chluich* ‘(theatrical) play’ (*dealbh* ‘shape’ + *cluich* ‘play(ing)’). Compounding is freer in poetry, and in modern bureaucratic and similarly restricted contexts.

A few compounding elements are productive, e.g., *ban-* ‘female’, as in *Bain-tighearna* ‘Lady’, *ban-Fhrangach* ‘Frenchwoman’. Note also the prefixes *so-* ‘good, easy’, *do-* ‘bad, difficult’, *mì-* ‘mis-’, the negatives *neo-* and *an-*, and the intensive *an-*; e.g., *so-chreidsinn* ‘(easily) believable’, *do-thuigsinn* ‘unintelligible’, *mì-chleachdadh* ‘misuse’, *neo-àbhaisteach* ‘unusual’, *ana-ceartas* ‘injustice’, *anfhainn* ‘feeble’ (*fann* ‘weak’).

## SYNTAX

### Noun-phrase syntax

*Simple noun-phrase structure* The fixed order of elements in a basic noun phrase is as follows:

(Article)	+ (Numeral)	+ Noun	+ (Adjective)
<i>na</i>	<i>trì</i>	<i>taighean</i>	<i>ùra</i>
the	three	houses	new



The elements are built up as follows:

<i>taighean</i>	houses	<i>trì taighean</i>	three houses
<i>taighean ùra</i>	new houses	<i>trì taighean ùra</i>	three new houses
<i>na taighean ùra</i>	the new houses	<i>na trì taighean ùra</i>	the three new houses

The position '(Adjective)' may be taken by a noun in the genitive case used adjectivally, e.g., *taighean samhraidh* 'summer houses', *taighean soluis* 'lighthouses'. Where a comparative or superlative adjective is involved the position '(Adjective)' is filled by a copula phrase, e.g., *na taighean as àirde* 'the tallest houses' (see below, 'Adjectives').

Possessives and demonstratives involve the following modifications:

With possessive adjectives:

*mo thaighean ùra* 'my new houses'  
*mo thrì taighean ùra* 'my three new houses'

With definite article + *aig*:

*na (trì) taighean ùra agam*  
 'my (three) new houses' (lit. 'the (three) new houses at-me')

With demonstratives:

*na (trì) taighean (ùra) seo/sin/ud*  
 'these/those/yon (three) (new) houses'

In 'possessive + demonstrative' noun phrases the following order is adopted: *an taigh (ùr) sin aige* 'that (new) house of his'. The pronominal/adjectival *fhéin* 'self, own' is used as follows:

*an taigh fhéin* the house itself  
*mo thaigh fhéin* my own house  
*an taigh sin fhéin* that house itself  
*an taigh seo agam fhéin* this house of my own

*Complex noun phrases* 'Noun dominating Noun' noun phrases are strongly favoured by Scottish Gaelic, e.g., 'the house on the brae' or 'the man with the telescope' are most naturally rendered '(the) house of the brae', '(the) man of the telescope'. The fixed order of elements is:

<b>Headnoun</b>	<b>+ (Article)</b>	<b>+ Dependent noun</b>
<i>ceann</i>	<i>an</i>	<i>duine</i>
(the) head	(of) the	man

Note also: *ceann Iain* 'John's head', *ceann an duine bhig sin* 'that little man's head', *taigh mòr an dà Shasannaich ud* 'yon two Englishmen's big house', etc.

The article is deleted before a definite head noun qualified by a definite dependent noun. Compare *ceud mhìos an Earraich* '(the) first month of the Spring', where the noun-phrase rule overrides the rule that ordinal numerals be accompanied by the definite article. This type of noun phrase is to be distinguished from examples like *taigh samhraidh* 'summer house' above, where genitive *samhraidh* has become purely adjectival in a fixed

phrase, with the result that *an taigh soluis* and *an taigh samhraidh* are perfectly acceptable. The article deletion rule holds good for more complex noun phrases of this type, e.g., *mullach taigh a' mhinisteir* 'the roof of the minister's house', lit. '(the) roof (of the) house (of) the minister'.

Where English uses 'a son of John' to include the possibility of contrast with other sons of John, Gaelic uses a prepositional phrase: *mac aig Iain* (lit. 'a son of Iain') or similar. The same type of strategy is used to deal with 'that son of John': *am mac sin aig Iain* or similar.

Complex 'Noun dominating Noun' phrases also involve a genitive suppression rule whereby only the last noun in the chain is permitted to go into the genitive. Thus:

<i>làmh an doruis</i>	the handle of the door ( <i>dorus</i> , 1A)
<i>làmh dorus an taighe</i>	the handle of the door of the house ( <i>taigh</i> , 4B)
<i>làmh dorus taigh na mnatha</i>	the handle of the door of the house of the woman ( <i>bean</i> , irreg.)
<i>làmh dorus taigh bean Sheumais</i>	the handle of the door of the house of the wife of James ( <i>Seumas</i> , cf. 1A)

At the same time there is in Scottish Gaelic a tendency (as in English) to break such sequences as the last, where expedient, by internal bracketing of, for example, *dorus taighe* 'house-door' or *làmh doruis* 'door-handle'.

*Simplification of the case system in spoken Scottish Gaelic* Contemporary Scottish Gaelic tends to eliminate genitives, that is, to rely on syntax alone (in effect, word order) to specify noun-phrase relations. Thus, for example, masculine 1A nouns, with their chiasmic paradigm of 'nominative singular = genitive plural, genitive singular = nominative plural' are now under pressure (especially in the absence of the definite article) to conform to the simple 'all singular vs. all plural' paradigms of Class 5A etc. Thus, *ceann fir* 'a man's head' tends to become *ceann fear*, and *cinn fhear* 'men's heads' becomes *cinn fir*. Features like the genitive suppression rule just described are instrumental in this process (e.g., *ceann fear na feusaig*, lit. 'the head of the man of the beard', is regular in 'correct' Scottish Gaelic); indeed the genitive suppression rule may be seen as an early manifestation of the tendency. Note also a comparable tendency to balk genitives when a relative clause follows, for example, *a' lorg fear* ('correct' ScG *fir*) *a chuidicheas* 'searching for a man who will help', or even *a' lorg am fear* ('correct' ScG *an fhir*) *a chunnaic mi* 'searching for the man whom I saw'. The ambivalence in this respect of countless 5A nouns (e.g., *an duine*, gen. sg. *an duine*), together with the various consonantal and vocalic declensions which have joined noun Classes 3A and 4A, assists these developments to gather momentum.

While the genitive singular feminine ending *-e* of noun Classes 1B and 3B and adjectives has generally been eliminated in polysyllables (see above, 'Declension of adjectives'), a new set of phrase-based rules operates, at least temporarily, in some of the Hebridean dialects. In monosyllables *-e* is retained, and, in phrase-final position, is strengthened to *-eadh*, e.g., *grian* 'sun', gen. *grèine(adh)*.<sup>11</sup> The genitive forms of *a' bhanntrach* 'the widow' and *a' chlann* 'the children' with the adjectives *beag* 'small' and *gaolach* 'loving' are given in Table 7.18.

Table 7.18 Forms of the genitive singular feminine

Literary Gaelic	Conservative spoken Gaelic	Progressive spoken Gaelic
<i>na bantraiche</i>	<i>na bantraich</i>	<i>a' bhantrach</i>
<i>na cloinne</i>	<i>na cloinne(adh)</i>	<i>a' chlann</i>
<i>na bantraiche bige</i>	<i>na bantraich bhig</i>	<i>a' bhantrach bheag</i>
<i>na cloinne bige</i>	<i>na cloinne bigeadh</i>	<i>a' chlann bheag</i>
<i>na bantraiche Barraiche</i>	<i>na bantraich Bharraich</i>	<i>a' bhantrach Bharrach</i>
<i>na cloinne gaolaiche</i>	<i>na cloinne gaolaich or na cloinn ghaolaich</i>	<i>a' chlann ghaolach</i>

Note here (a) the influence of surface concord (e.g., *na bantraich bhig*); (b) the association of phrase-final position (and phrasal stress) with the appearance of the *-eadh* ending; and (c) the fact that the 'conservative spoken' column does not represent *the* intermediate position in a simple progression from 'literary' to 'progressive', but merely *one* intermediate position which happens to be well attested and comparatively coherent. See note 10 and, for further discussion and exemplification, MacAulay 1978.

Given that *fh-*, the lenited correlative of *f-*, has the value Ø, the language has long supported doublets of the type *eagal*: *feagal* 'fear', *aithnich*: *faithnich* 'recognize', based on the ambiguity of genitive *an (fh)eagail*, negative *chan (fh)aithnich*, etc. One can view the extension of this process, for example, in the paradigm of *feumaidh* 'must', where *an (fh)eum?* is common beside *am feum?* in contemporary Gaelic. The process can also be seen at work in definite article + noun combinations, e.g., progressive Gaelic *an fhear* beside *am fear* 'the man'. The same may be said of words in *s-*, where old doublets like *side*: *tide* 'weather' are now joined by the likes of *an t-saor* beside *an saor* 'the joiner'; and so with the masculine: feminine opposition of *an t-*: *an* in nouns with initial vowel, where there is a tendency to generalize one or the other. It would seem that these developments betoken a threat to the mutation system which underpins the gender category in Scottish Gaelic (cf. MacAulay 1986).

#### *Further syntactic points relating to noun-phrase constituents*

##### *The definite article*

The definite article may be used with abstract nouns or nouns used abstractly, especially if they lack a distinctive abstract suffix (e.g., *An Gaol* 'Love', beside *Cràbhachd* 'Piety'); with seasons and periods of the year (e.g., *An Céitean* 'May-time', *An Geamhradh* 'Winter'); with certain place names (e.g., *An Fhraing* 'France', *A' Chuimrigh* 'Wales'); and similar.

##### *The noun*

Scottish Gaelic employs a special syntax for proper names. In the genitive case, masculine personal names are 'spontaneously' lenited and treated, where possible, as 1A nouns, e.g., *Seumas* ('James'): *taigh Sheumais*, *Donnchadh* ('Duncan'): *mac Dhonnchaidh*; feminine personal names in most dialects are not lenited, but treated as 1B nouns where possible, e.g., *Peigi* ('Peggy'): *taigh Peigi*, *Annag* ('Annie'): *croit Annaig*; place names of both genders are lenited, e.g., *Barraidh* ('Barra', f. 4A): *muinntir Bharraidh*, *Baile a' Chaolais* ('Ballahulish', *baile* m. 5A): *drochaid Bhaile a' Chaolais*. Where the definite article is the first element in a place name its requirements take precedence over the above, e.g., *Am*

*Bràigh* ('Braes' in Skye, m. 4A): *muinntir a' Bhràighe, An t-Òban* ('Oban', m. 1A): *Baile an Òbain, Na Lochan* ('Lochs' in Lewis, *loch* m. 3A): *Sgìre nan Loch*.

### Pronouns and pronominals

'One', 'ones' are expressed by means of *fear* (m.), *té* (f.), depending on the grammatical gender of the Gaelic word referred to, for example, *té bheag* 'a little one', e.g., 'a small whisky', where the referent is *gloinne* (f.) 'glass'; *seo am fear agam-sa* 'this is my one' (e.g., *leabhar* (m.) 'book'). The plural (both genders) is *feadhainn*, a feminine noun originally meaning 'company, group'. It is sometimes treated as though it were a plural noun, e.g., *na feadhainn bheaga* 'the little ones (= children, fishes, or whatever)'.

Scottish Gaelic possesses a number of pronominals whose syntax cannot be treated here. See Scottish Gaelic grammars s.v. *càch, gach, uile* ('all, each, every', etc.); *eile, càch, a chèile, còrr* ('other, others, each other', etc.); *cuid, feadhainn* ('some'); *cuid* ('both, either'); *sam bith, gin/duine* ('any').

### Adjectives

Adjectives may be used attributively or predicatively. In the latter case (on which see below, 'The simple sentence') they are always indeclinable, for example *tha a' chuileag gorm* 'the fly (*cuileag*, f.) is blue', beside *tha cuileag ghorm an sin* 'there is a blue fly there'.

Attributive adjectives follow their nouns, with the exception of a small number of common adjectives which precede and form quasi-compounds with their nouns, e.g., *seann chù* 'an old dog', *droch thìde* 'bad weather', *deagh dhuine* 'an excellent fellow'.

Adjectives may be concatenated directly or with the help of *is* or *agus* 'and', *is* being used especially where two closely co-ordinated epithets are linked, e.g., *dubh is geal* 'black and white'.

Adjectives may be preceded by modifiers/intensifiers, which are syntactically of two sorts: (i) compounding, as *ro* 'too', *glè* 'very', *fìor* 'truly', e.g., *duine ro(-)ghlic* 'an excessively wise man'; and (ii) non-compounding, as *caran* 'somewhat', *uamhasach* 'terribly', e.g., *duine caran bodhar* 'a slightly deaf man'. The latter sort do not lenite, nor do they undergo lenition, even when they appear in lenition positions, e.g., *oidhche fuathasach dorcha* 'a dreadfully dark night' (contrast *oidhche dhoineannach dhorcha* 'a tempestuous dark night').

Comparative and superlative are expressed by using the comparative/superlative form of the adjective as follows. (For morphology see above, 'Comparison of adjectives'; for the sentence patterns involved see below, 'The simple sentence'.)

<i>tha X nas (duibhe) na Y</i>	X is (blacker) than Y
<i>is (duibhe) X na Y</i>	X is (blacker) than Y
<i>is e X as (duibhe)</i>	X is (blackest)
<i>am fear/té as (duibhe)</i>	the (blacker/blackest) one

The presence of *nas* always signals the comparative, whether a comparand is expressed or not. Where *as* is concerned, context disambiguates. Any ambiguity in *gach fear as duibhe na 'chèile* (lit. 'each one that is blacker than the next one', but really equivalent to 'all the blackest ones') enters at the stage of translation to English.

Note that the forms *nas, as* contain the copula (see above, 'Irregular verbs' and below, 'The copula: constructions'). In past or habitual past/conditional context *na bu* and *a bu* are used: *bha i na b'fheàrr an dé* 'she was better yesterday'; but *nas* and *as* often occur irrespective of tense.

The forms *misde*, *feàirrde* ('the better for', 'the worse for') are used as follows:

*is fheàirrde duine gàire*      a man is the better for a laugh  
*cha bu mhisde mi sin*      I wasn't (any) the worse for that

Equative expressions appear as follows: *cho X ri Y*, e.g., *cho dubh ri gual/ris a' ghual* 'as black as (the) coal'.

### Numerals

The definite article is always used with ordinals, and may be used with the 'counting series' (see above, 'Numerals', Series B), e.g., *an t-aon*, *na dhà*, *na trì*, etc. (Contrast *an dà ghille*, where the dual article, like the noun, is similar to the singular rather than the plural form.)

Noun phrases involving *deug* 'teen' accommodate it as follows: *na trì gillean beaga deug sin*, though escape strategies by periphrasis are common in more complex cases.

The noun *fichead* 'score' is followed by the singular (historically the genitive plural of 1A, 1B and similar nouns), for example, *fichead gille* 'twenty lads', earlier 'a score of lads'. The constructions employed with *fichead* vary widely in the dialects and literature: well-established alternatives to the forms given under 'Numerals' above include *trì is fichead* and *fichead 's a trì* beside *trì air fhichead*, and *trì gillean fichead* beside *trì gillean air fhichead*.

### Verb-phrase syntax

*The verb-complex* The verb-complex contains the following constituents in the following fixed order:

(Conjunct/relative particle) + (Tense marker) + Verb + (Emphatic/contrastive suffix or subject pronoun)

Examples:

<i>cuir!</i>	put!	<i>an cuir</i>	will (she) put?	<i>an do chuir</i>	did (I) put?
		<i>(i)?</i>		<i>(mi)?</i>	
<i>chuir (sinn)</i>	(we) (did) put	<i>na cuir!</i>	do not put!	<i>anns an do chuir i</i>	in which she (did) put
<i>chuirinn-sa</i>	I would put	<i>gun cuir</i>	that (they) will put	<i>(am fear) a chuireas</i>	(the one) who will put
		<i>(iad)</i>			

Scottish Gaelic exploits the verbal noun in conjunction with the verb *tha* 'is' and various other verbs as auxiliaries to express many aspectual and situational nuances. In these cases the auxiliary undergoes the syntactic modifications proper to the verb, although the verbal noun carries the bulk of the semantic load. Thus, beside *thàinig mi* 'I came', *shuidh mi* 'I sat (down)', *bhuail mi* 'I struck', we find *bha mi* 'I was' + various prepositions + verbal noun, for example:

<i>bha mi a' tighinn</i>	I was coming ('at coming')
<i>bha mi air tighinn</i>	I had arrived ('on/after coming')
<i>bha mi airson tighinn</i>	I wanted to come ('for coming')
<i>bha mi gu(s) tighinn</i>	I was on the point of coming ('towards coming')
<i>bha mi nam shuidhe</i>	I was sitting/seated ('in my sitting')
<i>bha mi gam bhualadh</i>	I was being/getting hit ('for/at my hitting')
<i>bha mi air mo bhualadh</i>	I had been hit ('on/after my hitting')

With other verbs as auxiliary:

<i>rinn mi suidhe</i>	I sat down ('made a sitting'): <i>dèan</i> 'do'
<i>thàinig orm gèilleadh</i>	I had to give in ('it came on me to submit'): <i>thig</i> 'come'
<i>gabhadh e dèanamh</i>	it is feasible/can be done ('will take doing'): <i>gabh</i> 'take'
<i>chaidh agam air tilleadh</i>	I managed to get back ('went with me on a returning'): <i>rach</i> 'go'
<i>chaidh Iain a bhualadh</i>	John was hit ('went his/its striking'): <i>rach</i> 'go'
<i>fhuair mi air tilleadh</i>	I managed/was able to get back ('got on returning'): <i>faigh</i> 'get'

In constructions involving *tha* + preposition + possessive + verbal noun, an instructive ambiguity may occur where (a) the verb is transitive and (b) the possessive refers to the subject of *tha*. Whereas *bha mi ga bhualadh* is unambiguously 'I was hitting him', *bha mi gam bhualadh* can mean either 'I was hitting myself' or 'I was being hit', depending on context.

There are some signs of encroachment by the periphrastic construction at the expense of the 'simple' tense of the verb. Thus certain verbs tend, irrespective of semantic considerations, to occur only in the periphrastic construction, e.g., (*ag*) *amharc* 'looking'. Again, some common expressions are found with the periphrastic construction where this would not be expected, e.g., *tha mi a' smaoineachadh (gun)* 'I think (that)' (lit. 'I am thinking'), where the progressive should convey a meaning like 'I am pondering', while 'I think that . . .' might be expected to attract the simple tense, as in fact happens with the alternative verb 'to think': *saoilidh mi* 'I think, I suppose'. But in general the distinctions between, e.g., *fairichidh mi* 'I feel (he's not as friendly as he used to be)', *tha mi a' faireachdainn* 'I feel (better today)' and *bidh mi a' faireachdainn* 'I (sometimes) feel (he's concealing something)'/I feel (better in the earlier part of the day)', are well understood, if not always exploited, by Gaelic speakers.

A further group of auxiliary verbs and copula phrases expressing modality is dealt with below, 'The modal auxiliary verbs'.

*Status of the verbal noun* The verbal noun is in the first instance a noun. Thus *tha mi ag òl drama* 'I am drinking a dram' is literally 'I am at (the) drinking of a dram', and 'dram' is formally in the genitive case. Similarly, *tha mi a' dol a bhriseadh na cloiche* 'I am going to break the stone' has 'to/for (the) breaking of the stone' and *cloiche* (nom. *clach*) is in the genitive. The previously noted tendency in contemporary Gaelic for genitives to be replaced by nominatives in such positions is operative here as part of the simplification of the nominal system.

The verbal noun may appear as the subject or object of a verb, or as a nominal predicate in copula sentences, for example, *rinn mi suidhe* 'I sat', *feumaidh mi suidhe* 'I must sit', *is fheàrr dhomh suidhe* 'I had better sit' (lit. 'is-best for me (a) sitting'). This has important syntactic consequences when the verbal noun has an 'object': for sentences of the type *feumaidh mi sin a dhèanamh* 'I must do that' see below, 'Verbal-noun phrases'.

*Participials, infinitives, gerundives, etc.* Scottish Gaelic does not possess participles (other than the semi-productive past participle passive in *-te*), but uses various constructions, mostly involving the verbal noun, where English uses participles. Thus 'I saw John sitting' and 'I saw John hitting Mary' are dealt with as follows:

*chunnaic mi Iain (is e) na shuidhe* I saw John (and he) in his sitting  
*chunnaic mi Màiri (is i) a' bualadh Iain* I saw Mary (and she) at (the) striking (of) John

Scottish Gaelic, like English, has a fixed formula for expressions of intention/futurity using 'going to', e.g., *tha mi a' dol a dhùnadh an dorais* 'I am going to close the door' (lit. 'to/for (the) closing of the door'). This construction may be used with *thig* 'come', for example, *thàinig mi a chàradh an dorais* 'I've come to fix the door', and with semantically similar verbs and phrases.

Necessity and possibility/capacity may be expressed by *ri* + verbal noun (e.g., *tha sin ri dhèanamh fhathast* 'that still remains to be done'), or by idioms involving auxiliary verbs (e.g., *gabhadh sin dèanamh* 'that can be done'), or by the modal verbs *feumaidh/faoaidh* 'must/may'. Note also the prefixes *so-*, *do-*, *ion-* used with the verbal noun or past-participle passive of certain verbs, e.g., *so-chreidsinn* 'intelligible, easy to understand', *do-chreidsinn* 'unintelligible, hard to understand', *ionmholta* 'praiseworthy'. (These prefixes are of strictly limited application in ordinary speech.)

*The modal auxiliary verbs* 'May/might' and 'must' are expressed standardly by the verbs *faoaidh* and *feumaidh* respectively, for example:

<i>faoaidh tu falbh</i>	you may go	<i>feumaidh sinn</i>	we must stay
		<i>fuireach</i>	
<i>dh'fhaodadh e</i>	he might/might have	<i>dh'fheumadh e sin</i>	he needed/would
<i>tighinn</i>	come	<i>a dhèanamh</i>	need/would have
			needed to do that

*Feumaidh* and *faoaidh* only occur in the future/habitual present and the conditional/habitual past tenses, cf., perhaps Scottish English 'you'll need to', 'you'd need to'.

Sentences of the type 'you must be cold' are expressed by a subjectless use of *feumaidh* + *gu(n)* 'that', e.g., *feumaidh gu bheil thu fuar* 'you must be cold', *feumaidh gun tàinig i* 'she must have come'. Literally, this idiom states '(it) must (be) that . . .', cf., *dh'fhaodte gu(n)* 'it might be/might have been that', used where English uses 'maybe'. Scottish Gaelic also uses an extended construction with *a bhith* 'to be', *feumaidh/faoaidh e (a) bhith gu(n)* 'it must/may be that . . .'.

Scottish Gaelic possesses a wide range of alternative idioms to cope with the situational complexities of modality. Thus within the field of capacity/capability for action we may contrast:

<i>bha mi air chothrom a dhol ann</i>	I was able to go (I had the opportunity to go)
<i>bha mi air chomas a dhol ann</i>	I was able to go (I had all that was necessary to enable me to go)
<i>bha e air mo chomas a dhol ann</i>	it was within my capacity to go
<i>bha e comasach dhomh a dhol ann</i>	it was possible for me to go
<i>b'urrainn dhomh a dhol ann</i>	I could go/could have gone

*Syntax of the verbs 'to be'* The verb *tha* is an 'irregular verb' (i.e., its tenses, etc., involve suppletion: see above, 'Irregular verbs'). It also differs from other verbs in possessing an 'extra' tense, the instantaneous or non-habitual present, and in the fact that its possession of this extra tense is exploited to create a progressive for other verbs, with *tha* as auxiliary.

The verb *is* is 'irregular' in the same sense, but also syntactically, inasmuch as it is always stressless and proclitic to a following nominal or pronominal element, or to a stress-bearing topicalized element in a cleft sentence, for example:

<i>is math sin</i>	/(\ə)s 'ma 'ʃin/	'that is good' (lit. 'is-good that')
<i>is mi</i>	/(\ə)s 'mi:/	'it is me' (lit. 'is-me')
<i>is i seo do phiuthar</i>	/(\ə)s i 'ʃə də 'fju ət/	'this is your sister' (lit. 'is-she-here your sister')

Note that the dependent present form of the verb *is* is 'invisible' in that it has become absorbed by the preceding conjunct particles. Thus, beside *is e* 'he/it is' we find *an e?* 'is he/it?', *nach e?* 'isn't he/it?', *chan e* 'he/it isn't'. For further details see Scottish Gaelic grammars. The independent form of the copula is itself often omitted in speech, e.g., *math thu!* 'you're good!' (lit. 'good you'); *mi fhìn a tha ann* 'it is (I) myself' (lit. 'myself who is here'); *saighdear a bha ann* 'he was a soldier' (lit. 'a soldier which he was'). Where it does remain, the form *is*, being always proclitic, tends to lose its vowel, e.g., *is mi* becomes /smi:/. With the third person singular masculine pronoun *è/e* the pronunciation /ʃɛ(:)/ is usual, and the pronunciation with /ʃ/ is extended to the commonly occurring (*i*)s *iomadh* 'it is many'. The vowel of the past-tense form *bu* is elided before vowels, as in *b'e*, *b'i*, etc.

### Adverbial-group syntax

In a sentence of standard type VS(O)Adv (see below) the adverbial group Adv is very often a transparent prepositional phrase, e.g., *bhuail mi Iain air an t-sròin* 'I struck John on the nose'. Many adverbs of place, time, etc., are derived from old prepositional phrases, e.g., *a-staigh* 'inside, indoors', relates to *taigh* 'house'; *am bliadhna* 'this year' to *bliadhna* 'year', *a-riamh* 'ever' to (obsolete) *riamh* 'before him/it'. For adverbs formed from adjectives by preposing *gu* (another preposition in origin), and for the development of 'systems' of related adverbs, see above, 'Adverbs'.

There is a degree of freedom with regard to the positioning of Adv, for example, *am bitheantas* 'in general, generally' is preposed for stylistic reasons in the sentence *Am bitheantas cha nochd iad gu madainn* 'Generally they don't show up until morning'.

Where adverbials have to be co-ordinated with nominal elements a 'bridging' element is often found, for example, 'the children of today' or 'today's children' is *clann an là andiugh* (lit. '(the) children of the day today'); 'last night's storm' is *stoirm na h-oidhche an raoir* (lit. '(the) storm of the night last night'). Cf., also *Uibhist a' chinn a-tuath* 'North Uist' (lit. 'Uist of the end to the north') beside *Uibhist a-tuath*, which is commoner nowadays; *an taobh a-deas* 'the south (side)', *an àird an ear* 'the East'.

The element *ann* 'in it, there' is needed to complete some expressions involving certain verbs, most notably the verb *tha* 'is'; and to complete certain sorts of statement, most notably in conjunction with the copula *is*. Note the following usages:



- 1 *Dh'fhàg mi an càr ann* 'I left the car there' (where 'there' is an already specified or known location), as opposed to *Dh'fhàg mi an càr an sin* 'I left the car *there* (and not somewhere else).'  
*Tha Iain ann* 'John is there (in a location already specified).'  
*Thèid mi ann am màireach* 'I'll go (on a journey or to a place already specified) tomorrow.'
- 2 *Tha an t-uisge ann* 'It is raining' (lit. 'the rain is in it').  
*Tha Dia ann* 'There is a God', 'God exists', lit. 'God is in it'.  
 . . . *a h-uile fear a tha ann* 'absolutely everybody' (lit. 'every one who is in it').
- 3 *Dè (a) tha ann?* 'What is it?' (lit. 'What-is-it (that) is in it?')  
*Is e nighean bheag a tha ann* 'It is a little girl' (lit. 'it is a little girl that is in it').  
*Chan eil ann ach a' ghaoth* 'It is only the wind' (lit. 'there is not in it but the wind').

For more about sentences of type (3) see below, 'The cleft constructions'.

### The simple sentence

*Word order* The standard order of elements in the Scottish Gaelic sentence is VSOAdv, for example:

<i>chunnaic</i>	<i>mi</i>	<i>Iain</i>	<i>an-dè</i>
saw	I	John	yesterday
V	S	O	Adv

The Adv element may appear as Adv1 + Adv2 + . . . , for example, where adverbials are used to specify both time and place:

<i>chunnaic</i>	<i>mi</i>	<i>làraidh</i>	<i>aig a' chidhe</i>	<i>an-dè</i>
saw	I	(a) lorry	at the quay	yesterday

Adv very frequently consists of preposition + verbal noun, as in *chunnaic mi Iain a' tighinn* 'I saw John coming'.

Certain verbs are or can be used without an expressed subject, e.g., *dh' fhairtlich orm* 'I failed' (lit. 'failed on me'); *shoirbhich leam* 'I prospered' (lit. 'prospered with me'); *ciamar a chaidh dhut?* 'how did you get on?' (lit. 'how went for you?'). Sentences of the 'voici/voilà' type may interpose the deictic element between V and S, e.g., *Tha (an) seo Iain a' tighinn* 'Here's John coming'. (But *Seo Iain a' tighinn* is also regular in this context.) Where O is a personal pronoun it tends to be put in final position, i.e., after Adv, e.g., *Chunnaic mi air an tràigh e* 'I saw him on the shore'. (But *Chunnaic mi e air an tràigh* is also acceptable and common.) Sentences of the type *Tha iad seòlta na Frangaich* 'The French are smart' (lit. 'They are smart the French') are not uncommon in speech. These may be explained in terms of the attrition of the copula, the elimination of synthetic verb-forms, or similarly.

*The copula: constructions* The copula provides, at least superficially, a series of exceptions to the Simple Sentence word-order rules. The following constructions are recognized:<sup>12</sup>

1 Copula + subject + predicate: *is tù am balach* ‘you are the boy’. Here the predicate is always grammatically definite and the subject is identified with it: cf., *cha mhì thù is cha tù mì* ‘I am not you and you are not me’. Where the subject is a noun or demonstrative it is anticipated by the appropriate pronoun, e.g., *is e Iain am fear* ‘John is the man’ (lit. ‘it-is-he John the man’); *is i do phiuthar an té dhonn* ‘your sister is the brown(-haired) girl’ (lit. ‘it-is-she your sister etc.’); *is e seo mo mhac* ‘this is my son’ (lit. ‘it-is-he-here my son’). The form *is e* tends nowadays to be generalized at the expense of *is i* and *is iad*, e.g., *is e na gillean* for the more ‘correct’ *is iad na gillean* ‘the lads are’. This use of *is e* is sometimes extended to cases of copula + pronoun, e.g., *is e mise* (usually with *se*, as above) beside *is mise* ‘it is I’; *is e sinne* ‘it is we/us’.

2 Copula + predicate + subject: *is math thu* ‘you are good’ (lit. ‘is-good you’). Here the predicate is always grammatically indefinite. The subject is classified as a member of the class denoted by the predicate, which is thus adjectival in character, and normally consists of an adjective nowadays, though sentences of the types *is iasgair thu* ‘you are a fisherman’ and *is iasg sgadan* ‘herring (*sgadan*) is a (type of) fish’ also occur. But at the present time these sorts of sentence are standardly dealt with by cleft constructions, e.g., *is e iasgair a tha annad*, lit. ‘it is a fisherman that is in you’; and even adjective predicates have largely been reassigned to the substantive verb *tha*, e.g., *tha thu glic* ‘you are wise’.

3 Copula + predicate + subject 1 + subject 2: *is math am balach thu* ‘what a good boy you are’ (lit. ‘is-good-the-boy you’). This ‘double focus’ type is of relatively limited occurrence.

In these *cleft sentences* (on which see further below, ‘The cleft constructions’) the augmented form *is e* (‘it is it’) is used when nominal elements (noun, pronoun or demonstrative) follow the copula and *is ann* (‘it is in it’) in all other cases. Thus:

<i>Is e Iain a thàinig</i>	It is John who has come
<i>Is (e) mise a thàinig</i>	It is I who have come
<i>Is e seo an rud a chaill mi</i>	This is the thing that I lost
<i>Is ann an seo a bha i</i>	It is here that she was (i.e., this is where she was)
<i>Is ann an raoir a bha i an seo</i>	It was (lit. ‘is’) last night that she was here
<i>Is ann beag a tha iad</i>	It is small that they are (i.e., they really are small)

In sentences of these sorts tense concord is ‘correct’, though decreasing in use, for example, *B’e Iain a thàinig* ‘It was John who came’ tends to become *Is e Iain a thàinig*. Note also that the copula itself can be deleted, e.g., *Mise a thàinig*, *Seo an rud a chaill mi*, etc.

*Repartition between substantive and copula constructions* The substantive verb *tha* is always used in sentences of the VSAdv type, for example:

<i>Tha mi an seo</i>	I am here
<i>Tha mi gu math</i>	I am well
<i>Tha mi a’ falbh</i>	I am going away
<i>Tha mi ann</i>	I am here (or ‘I am’ = ‘I exist’)
<i>Tha an t-uisge ann</i>	It is raining (lit. ‘the rain is in it’)
<i>Tha taigh agam</i>	I have a house (lit. ‘(a) house is at me’)

The copula *is* is always used in sentences of the following sorts (typically sentences of identification and definition):

<i>Is mise an duine</i>	I am the man
<i>Is mise Iain</i>	I am John
<i>Is mise do bhràthair</i>	I am your brother
<i>Is mise mac a' mhinisteir</i>	I am the minister's son
<i>Is mise am fear a chunnaic thu</i>	I am the one whom you saw
<i>Is mise (am fear) as fheàrr</i>	I am the best (one)
<i>Is e seo an duine</i> , etc.	This is the man, etc.
<i>Is e Iain an duine</i> , etc.	John is the man, etc.

In sentences of this type, where two specified entities are equated, both *Is e am fear a chunnaic thu am fear as fheàrr* and *Is e am fear as fheàrr am fear a chunnaic thu* are competent. (They differ in focus: in the former 'the best one' is identified as 'the one you saw'; in the latter, 'the one you saw' is identified as 'the best one'.) Note, however, that in this construction Scottish Gaelic always places demonstratives and pronouns in the 'highlighted' position, that is, *is e seo an duine* 'this is the man' is the only competent formulation; and similarly *is ise do phiuthar* 'she is your sister'. (Demonstratives and pronouns can become the non-highlighted element in the equation in cleft constructions, on which see below.)

In some other sentence types both *tha* and *is* are found, for example:

<i>Tha sin math</i>	That is good
<i>Tha sin leam</i>	That is mine (lit. 'is with-me')
<i>Tha sin nas fheàrr</i>	That is better
<i>Tha mi nam oileanach</i>	I am a student (lit. 'in my student')
<i>Is math sin</i>	That is good
<i>Is leam sin</i>	That is mine (lit. 'is with-me')
<i>Chan fheàrr seo na sin</i>	This is no(t) better than that
<i>Se oileanach a tha annam</i>	I am a student (lit. 'student that is in-me')

The normal descriptive/classificatory construction nowadays is *tha* + S + adjective; poetry is less constrained, and shows many examples of the construction *is* + adjective + S. (The earlier repartition associated *tha* with transient, superficial characteristics, *is* with permanent, inherent attributes.) The copula construction survives in a good number of set phrases like *is math sin*, where 'that' is assigned to the known class of 'good things', as opposed to *tha sin math*, where 'that' is evaluated as being 'good' in a present context.

*Tha* cannot be followed by a noun or noun equivalent as predicate. (There are marginal exceptions to this rule, e.g., '*Tha thu trang.*' '*Tha mi sin.*' 'You are busy.' 'I am that.') Hence Scottish Gaelic has recourse to *tha mi nam . . .* 'I am in my . . .', etc. Note also, for 'I am one of the students', *tha mi air fear de na h-oileanaich* (lit. 'I am on one of . . .'), where the sort of statement to be made suggests the use of *tha*, but *tha* cannot be followed directly by a noun predicate.

Where alternative constructions involving *tha* and *is* occur, nuances of meaning are in principle to be expected. The following contrast would appear to be valid: *Tha e na oileanach ach chan e oileanach a tha ann* 'He is (registered as) a student but he is not a student

(by disposition)'. Cf., also *Tha mi nam Ghàidheal* 'I am a Gael', which suggests 'I am being a Highlander', 'I am putting on my Highland act' rather than 'I am a Gael (by birth, heredity, etc.)', which would require *Is e Gàidheal a tha annam*.

*The cleft constructions* A sentence of the type *Tha Màiri a' dol dhachaidh air an tràana an nochd* 'Mary is going home on the train tonight' can be clefted with the augmented copula forms *is e* or *is ann* to emphasize specific elements in the sentence:

<i>Is i</i> (or <i>is e</i> ) <i>Màiri a tha a' dol . . .</i>	It is Mary who . . .
<i>Is ann a' dol dhachaidh a tha Màiri . . .</i>	It is going home . . .
<i>Is ann dhachaidh a tha Màiri a' dol . . .</i>	It is home that . . .
<i>Is ann air an tràana a tha Màiri a' dol . . .</i>	It is on the train . . .
<i>Is ann an nochd a tha Màiri a' dol dhachaidh . . .</i>	It is tonight . . .

Similarly with *Tha i bochd* 'She is poor':

<i>Is i a tha bochd</i>	It is she who is poor
<i>Is ann bochd a tha i</i>	It is poor she is

And so also with *Chunnaic mi thu* 'I saw you':

<i>Is mì a chunnaic thu</i>	It is I who saw you
<i>Is tù a chunnaic mi</i>	It is you whom I saw

The main verb of a simple sentence can also take part in a special variation on the cleft construction, which lends weight or emphasis to the whole of the utterance to follow, for example:

*Is ann a tha Màiri a' dol dhachaidh air an tràana an nochd*  
'(We hoped that the girls would stay for the party but) *as it turns out* Mary is going home . . .'

The sentence type *Is e oileanach a tha annam* 'I am a student' (lit. 'it is a student that is in me') has the form of a cleft sentence, but is nowadays unmarked. (*Tha oileanach annam* is not competent, though *Chan eil annam ach oileanach* 'I am only a student' (lit. 'There is not in me but a student'), is acceptable and regular.) Many dialects revitalize the topicalization by using the construction *Se th'ann X* 'Isn't he an X!', 'What an X he is!' (lit. 'What he is is an X'). In some dialects the construction is *Se th'ann ach X*, with *ach* 'but', i.e., '(What) is he but an X'.

## Questions and answers

A statement like *tha thu a' falbh* 'you are going' may be turned into a question in two ways: (a) by intonation (see above, 'Intonation') with a rising final contour; or (b) by preposing one of the interrogative particles *an* or *nach* (see above, 'Preverbals'), with consequent change from independent to dependent flexion. Thus:

<i>Tha thu a' falbh?</i>	You're going, then?
<i>Am bheil thu a' falbh?</i>	Are you going?
<i>Chan eil thu a' falbh?</i>	You're not going, then?
<i>Nach eil thu a' falbh?</i>	Aren't you going?

Questions may also be posed using the interrogative pronouns. These are followed by relative flexion except for *càit?* 'where?', which is followed by dependent flexion:

<i>Cò (a) bhios an seo?</i>	Who will be here?
<i>Dè (a) rinn thu?</i>	What did you do?
<i>Carson a thàinig thu?</i>	Why did you come?
<i>Cuin a thilleas sinn?</i>	When shall we return?
<i>Ciamar a nì thu sin?</i>	How will you do that?
<i>Càit am bi sinn?</i>	Where will we be?

Here *Càit an* is historically 'What place (is it) *in which* . . .', whereas the others are modelled on the locution 'Who/What/Which (is it) *that* . . .'. The dependent flexion which follows *càit* is thus in reality that proper to dative relative clauses, for which see below, 'Relative clauses'.

For negative questions *nach* is used, with dependent flexion:

<i>Cò nach creideadh i?</i>	Who would not believe her?
<i>Carson nach tàinig thu?</i>	Why did you not come?

Where the interrogative is co-ordinated with a noun the construction is as follows:

*Cò am fear a bhios an seo?* Which (is the) one (who) will be here?

To ask 'With whom?', 'To whom?', etc., one can say either *Cò ris an robh thu a' bruidhinn?* 'Who (is it) to whom you were speaking?' or *Cò ris a bha thu a' bruidhinn?* 'To whom (is it) that you were speaking?'. Here the third singular masculine prepositional pronoun form *ris* 'to him/it' coincides with the form of the preposition *ri* used before the indirect relative pronoun *an*. Where these forms are dissimilar the second construction is preferred, e.g., *Cò ann a bha thu?* 'What (regiment) were you in?', *Cò bhuaidh a fhuair thu e?* 'Who did you get it from?'.  
 Scottish Gaelic does not have simple 'Yes' and 'No'. Direct answers to questions employing the interrogative particles are formed by repeating the verb and tense of the question (with or without a negative particle, as appropriate), for example:

Scottish Gaelic does not have simple 'Yes' and 'No'. Direct answers to questions employing the interrogative particles are formed by repeating the verb and tense of the question (with or without a negative particle, as appropriate), for example:

<i>Am bheil thu sgith?</i>	Are you tired?
<i>Thà/Chan eil.</i>	Yes/No (lit. 'am/amn't).
<i>An dèan thu sin?</i>	Will you do that?
<i>Nì/Cha dèan.</i>	Yes/No (lit. 'will do/won't do).'
<i>Nach tigeadh e?</i>	Wouldn't he come?
<i>Thigeadh/Cha tigeadh.</i>	Yes/No (lit. 'would come/wouldn't come').
<i>An do dh'fhalbh i?</i>	Did she go?
<i>Dh'fhalbh/Cha do dh'fhalbh.</i>	Yes/No (lit. 'did go/didn't go').

A direct answer of this sort is, of course, only one of the possible responses to such a question. *Am bheil thu sgìth?* 'Are you tired?' could be answered *Chan eil mi sgìth a-nis* 'I am not tired now' (or 'I don't know', or whatever). But when direct responses are used they employ the distinctive subjectless pause-forms as shown above; see above, 'Responsives', for formal differences between these and normal verb-flexion.

Answers involving the cleft constructions can be deployed in responsive mode, e.g. *Am bheil thu sgìth?* can be answered by *Is mì (a) thà* 'I certainly am', *Is mì nach eil* 'I certainly am not'. An exception to the above rules occurs when the assertive forms of the personal pronoun are used (see above, 'Pronouns and pronominals'), e.g., *Nì mise sin dhut. Cha dèan thu!* 'I'll do that for you. Oh no, you won't!'

Although these forms are termed responsives, that is not a wholly adequate term, since they are also used when one reinforces one's own statement, or questions it, or restates it in a new tense:

<i>Rinn sinn glé mhath, rinn.</i>	We did very well, (so we) did.
<i>Chan eil sin idir dona, chan eil.</i>	That is not bad at all, (no, it) isn't.
<i>Bha mi math, nach robh?</i>	I was good, wasn't (I)?
<i>Cha robh mi toilichte, is cha bhi.</i>	I wasn't pleased, and (I) won't be.

In copula sentences the response forms to *an e* and *an ann* are *is e* and *is ann*. Similarly, with idioms like *an aithne dhut?* 'do you know?' (lit. 'is it knowledge to you?'), the responsive is *is aithne*. With personal pronouns, *an tù?* 'are you?' demands *is mì* 'I am'. The copula is always stressless and needs to be supported by a word capable of bearing stress.

The form *seadh* 'yes, well, uh-huh' is also employed in responses where the form of the question does not supply a suitable starting point for a direct response, and also for purposes of general corroboration. Its negative is *chan eadh*. It is historically a combination of the copula plus the obsolete neuter pronoun *eadh* 'it'.

Responses to questions involving the interrogative pronouns are not constrained to the same degree, but the responsive mode is employed frequently enough, for example, *Cò (a) bha a-staigh? Bhà Iain agus Seumas.* 'Who was at home? John and James (were).' A generalized *Thà* is also common, e.g. *Càit an do dh'fhàg mi e? Thà air a' bhord.* 'Where did I leave it? On the table.'

## Commands

The imperative forms of the verb are used to express direct commands:

<i>bì glic!</i>	be wise!
<i>na bì gòrach!</i>	don't be stupid!
<i>falbhadh e!</i>	let him go!
<i>dèanamaid e!</i>	let's do it!

The construction of *tha + a(g) + verbal noun* can be used in the imperative as in the indicative, e.g., *bì (a') falbh* 'be going' (i.e., 'get on your way'), *na bì (a') dèanamh sin* 'don't be doing that' (i.e., 'stop doing that') as opposed to *falbh!* 'go!', *na dèan sin!* 'don't do that!'.

The third-person imperatives are not very common; the first-person plural is common, but the synthetic form often gives way to an analytic one, for example, *dèanadh sinn!* 'let us do!'. The emphatic-contrastive suffix *-se* occurs frequently with the second person plural imperative, e.g. *dèanaibh-se e!* 'you (people) do it!'; but in the singular *dèan-sa!* has mostly given way to *dèan thusa e!* 'you do it!'.  
 Gaelic has a number of special command forms of various origins, e.g., *trobhad* and *tugainn* 'come (here)'; *thalla* 'go (away)'; *siuthad* 'on you go'; *ist* 'hush', etc.

## Negation

Scottish Gaelic uses the conjunct particle *cha(n)* before finite verbs in principal clauses:

<i>cuiridh mi</i>	I shall put	<i>cha chuir mi</i>	I shall not put
<i>chuir mi</i>	I (did) put	<i>cha do chuir mi</i>	I did not put

For negative commands the form *na* is used:

<i>dèan sin</i>	do that	<i>na dèan sin</i>	don't do that
<i>abair sin</i>	say that	<i>na h-abair sin</i>	don't say that

The non-mutation which follows *na* extends to de-lenition in the case of those irregular verbs with imperative in *th-*, that is, *thoir* and *thig*: *na toir*, *na tig*, if these do not participate in the special /h ~ d/ mutation mentioned above, 'Notes on the mutations'.

In negative questions the conjunct particle *nach* is used:

<i>nach cuir thu?</i>	will you not put?	<i>nach do chuir thu?</i>	did you not put?
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In all subordinate clauses *nach* is used:

<i>ag ràdh gun/nach cuir e</i>	saying that he will/will not put
<i>a' faighneachd an/nach robh mi fuar</i>	asking whether I was/was not cold
<i>a chionn 's gun/nach robh mi trang</i>	because I was/was not busy

This rule includes relative clauses, where *nach* functions as negative + relative pronoun, for example, *am fear a bhios deiseil* 'the one who will be ready', beside *am fear nach bi deiseil* 'the one who will not be ready'. This in its turn includes the disguised relative clauses involved when interrogative pronouns are used, for example, *cò (a) chuireas* 'who (is it that) will put?' but *cò nach cuir* 'who will not put?'.

Preverbal particles may not be used with verbal nouns. In order to express negation with verbal noun phrases (see below) the preposition *gun* 'without' is used, as follows:

<i>dh'iarr e orm a bhith sàmhach</i>	he asked me to be silent
<i>dh'iarr e orm gun a bhith fadalach</i>	he asked me not to be late

With phrases like *gun tilleadh dhachaidh* 'not to return home', *gun sin a dhèanamh* 'not to do that', *gun an cù a leigeil a-mach* 'not to let the dog out', *a bhith* (i.e., the verbal noun of *tha*) is often added to such phrases, e.g., *gun a bhith (a') tilleadh dhachaidh*, *gun a bhith (a') dhèanamh sin*, *gun a bhith (a') leigeil a-mach a' choin*.

All the negatives can be used with *ach* 'but' to express 'only, merely':

<i>chan eil ann ach gille</i>	he is only a lad
<i>thubhairt mi nach fhaca mi ach an cù</i>	I said that I had only seen the dog
<i>na gabh ach na feadhainn bheaga</i>	take only the little ones
<i>dh'iarra i orm gun ach Seumas a thoirt leam</i>	she asked me to bring only James

Similarly all the negatives can be used with words like *duine* 'man', *gin* '(living) creature', *dad* '(minimal) thing' to express 'anybody', 'anything':

<i>chan eil duine ann</i>	there is nobody there
<i>cha robh gin dhiubh air fhàgail</i>	none of them was left
<i>na toir sin do dhuine</i>	don't give that to anybody
<i>gun dad air ach a bhrògan</i>	without anything on (him) but his shoes

### Co-ordination

Scottish Gaelic possesses a small group of non-subordinating conjunctions. They precede the verb which heads a following clause, but do not provoke dependent flexion, for example, *cuiridh mi agus buainidh mi* 'I shall sow and I shall reap'.

'and': Scottish Gaelic uses *agus* or *is*, the latter especially when two formally or conceptually similar clauses are conjoined, e.g., *dh'fhalbh mi sa' mhadainn agus ràinig mi Glaschu mu mheadhon latha* 'I departed in the morning and I reached Glasgow about mid-day'; *dh'fhalbh mi is thill mi san aon latha* 'I departed and returned on the same day'.

'or': Scottish Gaelic uses *no/na* or *air neo*, the former where formally or conceptually similar alternatives are juxtaposed, e.g., *falbhaidh mi no fuirichidh mi* 'I shall (either) go or stay'; *falbhaidh tusa no falbhaidh mise* '(either) you will go or I will go'; *bheir mi leam thu air neo bidh tu fadalach* 'I shall take you with me, or (else) you will be late'. A hybrid *neo* is often heard for *no* nowadays; the variant *na* has a longer history in the language.

'but': Scottish Gaelic uses *ach*, as in *thuit mi ach dh'éirich mi* 'I fell but I got up'.

'for': Scottish Gaelic uses *oir* as in *thill mi, oir bha mi a' fàs fuar* 'I returned, for I was getting cold'. The conjunction *a chionn* 'because' can also be used in this way.

'so': Scottish Gaelic traditionally uses expressions like *mar sin*, *a-réisd* 'thus, hence, accordingly', e.g., *chan eil duine eile ann; mar sin tha mi fhìn a' fuireach a-staigh* 'there is nobody else around; accordingly, I myself am staying in'. However, one may hear English *so* infiltrating the Gaelic of younger speakers nowadays, for example, *chan eil duine eile ann, so tha mi fhìn a' fuireach a-staigh*.

### Subordination

Scottish Gaelic is a relatively paratactic language, but several important modes of subordination exist. The most common is by means of *subordinating conjunctions* which modify the flexion of the immediately following subordinate verb from independent to dependent or relative. Word order within the clause is not affected by subordination. (See, however, 'Verbal-noun phrases' below for an exception to this general rule.)

Subordinate clauses may precede or follow the principal clause:



*a chionn 's gun tàinig thu faodaidh tu fuireach* because you have come you may stay  
*faodaidh tu fuireach seach gun tàinig thu* you may stay since you have come

'Sequence of tenses' is observed, e.g., the 'secondary' correlate to 'primary' *tha e ag ràdh gun tig e* 'he is saying that he will come' is *bha e ag ràdh gun tigeadh e* 'he was saying that he would come'.

The use of dependent or relative flexion after conjunctions is fixed. The repartition may appear somewhat arbitrary, for example, in temporal clauses we have *mun cuir e* 'before he puts' (dependent) but *nuair a chuireas e* 'when he puts' (relative); in conditional clauses *mur sguir e* 'if he does not stop' (dependent) but *ma sguireas e* 'if he stops' (relative). Historical re-structurings lie behind some of these synchronic inconsistencies.

The conjunction *gun* 'that' (neg. *nach* 'that . . . not') plays a strategic role insofar as numerous 'complex conjunctions' are based on it, e.g., *a chionn 's gun* 'because, because of the fact that', *a dh'aindeoin 's gun* 'despite the fact that'.

*Object clauses ('noun clauses')* These are introduced by *gun* (neg. *nach*):

*thubhairt mi gun robh mi fuar* I said that I was cold  
*thubhairt mi nach robh mi fuar* I said that I was not cold

These clauses can function as subject or predicate to the copula:

*is truagh nach eil thu glic* it is a pity that you are not wise  
*is e gun robh mi cho fuar a thug orm tilleadh* it was (lit. 'is') the fact that I was so cold that forced me to go back

*Indirect questions* In Scottish Gaelic these simply prepose the 'questioning' verb to the direct question, altering the tense from primary to secondary sequence if appropriate:

*dh'fhaighnich e dhomh an robh mi deiseil* he asked me whether I was ready (lit. 'was I ready?')  
*dh'fhaighnich mi cò (a) bha a-staigh agus cò nach robh* I asked who was in and who was not

The sequence 'whether . . . or . . .' is realized variously. For 'whether', *cò aca* or *eadar an* may be used, for example, *cò aca dh'fhuirichinn no dh'fhalbhainn* or *eadar am fuirichinn no am falbhainn* 'whether I would stay or go'. To express 'or not' Gaelic uses *no nach* or *gu/gus/agus nach*, e.g., *cha robh mi cinnteach an robh iad a-staigh no/gus nach robh* 'I wasn't sure whether they were in or not'.

*Adverbial clauses* Various types are found, and the list in Table 7.19 is by no means exhaustive. Note that in this and the following sections [B] = 'followed by dependent flexion'; [C] = 'followed by relative flexion'.

Table 7.19 Gaelic conjunctions

Type of clause	Conjunction	Example
time	<i>(a)n uair a</i> [C] 'when'	<i>thàinig mi nuair a chuala mi an naidheachd</i> 'I came when I heard the news'
	<i>(bh)o</i> [B or C] 'since'	<i>tha treis bho thàinig/bhon tàinig e</i> 'it is a while since he came' <i>is fhada bho nach fhaca mi thu</i> 'it is (a) long (time) since I saw you' (lit. 'haven't seen you')
	<i>mun, mus, mas</i> [B] 'before'	<i>dh'fhalbh sinn mun do dh'èirich a' ghrian</i> 'we departed before the sun rose'
	<i>gun, gus an</i> [B] 'until'	<i>fuirich gus an till mi</i> 'wait until I return'
place	<i>far an</i> [B] 'where'	<i>fàg e far an do chuir mi e</i> 'leave it where I have put it'
manner	<i>mar a</i> [C] 'as, like'	<i>dèan mar a thogras tu</i> 'do as you wish'
	<i>mar gun</i> [B] 'as though'	<i>dèan mar gun robh thu as do rian</i> 'act as though you were out of your mind'
cause	<i>a chionn 's gun</i> 'because' [B]	<i>thàinig mi a chionn 's gun cuala mi an naidheachd</i> 'I came because I heard the news' [cf. also <i>air sgàth 's gun, air sàilibh 's gun, ri linn 's gun</i> , etc., with similar meanings]
purpose	<i>airson gun</i> [B] so that, in order that'	<i>rinn mi sin airson gum biodh cothrom agam bruidhinn riut</i> 'I did that in order to have a chance of speaking to you' [cf. also <i>a chum 's gun, gus gun</i> , etc., with similar meanings]
	<i>mun, mus, mas</i> [B] 'before, to prevent'	<i>rinn mi sin mus cuireadh i stad orm</i> 'I did that before she could stop me'
	<i>gun fhios nach</i> [B] 'for fear, in case'	<i>rinn mi sin gun fhios nach cuireadh i stad orm</i> 'I did that in case she should stop me'
result	<i>air chor 's gun</i> [B] 'so that, in such a way that'	<i>thàinig barrachd dhaoine a-steach, air chor 's gun robh cuideachd mhath an làthair</i> 'additional people came in, so that there was a good company present' [cf. also <i>gus an</i> [B] with similar meaning]
condition	<i>ma</i> [C] 'if'	<i>thig mi ma bhios sin freagarrach</i> 'I shall come if that is (lit. 'will be') appropriate'
	<i>nan</i> [B] 'if, supposing'	<i>thigeadh e nam biodh feum air</i> 'he would come if he were needed'
	<i>mur(a)</i> [B] 'if not, unless'	<i>mur bi mise ann cha bhi Màiri ann</i> 'if I am not there Mary will not be there' <i>mur òl thu sin cha bhi thu slàn</i> 'unless you drink that you will not be healthy'
concession	<i>ged a</i> [C] 'although'	<i>thàinig mi ged a bha mi trang</i> 'I came although I was busy' [cf. also <i>fiù 's ged a</i> 'even though', <i>a dh'aindeoin 's gun</i> 'in spite of the fact that', etc.].
	<i>ged nach</i> [B] 'although . . . not'	<i>thàinig mi ged nach robh mi deiseil</i> 'I came although I was not ready'

*Miscellaneous adverbial clauses* Indefiniteness ('whoever', etc.) is marked by a somewhat protean element placed before the relevant conjunction. The most common representations are *air bith*, *as bith*, *ga brith* or *gum bith*, *ge b'e* or *ge bè*; e.g., *gheibh sinn e ga brith càit am bi e* 'we shall get him wherever he is (lit. "will be")'.

Correlatives ('as . . . as', etc.) are expressed by *cho . . . is a* [C]. Whereas simple equatives have the shape *cho (dubh) ri X* 'as (black) as X', correlative sentences have the shape *tha X cho (dubh) is a tha Y* 'X is as (black) as Y is'. Note also *air cho math 's a bha iad*, *a dh'aindeoin cho math 's a bha iad* 'however good they were' (lit. 'against/despite so good as they were'). Where, however, an adverbial relationship is also present, *is gun* [B] is used, for example, *bha an tìde cho dona 's gun robh agam ri tilleadh* 'the weather was so bad that I had to turn back'; compare also *beag 's gun robh iad, ghlèidh sinn iad* '(as) small as they were, we kept them' (i.e. 'however small they were', 'despite their small size', etc.).

### Relative clauses

#### Subject/object relation

<i>a</i> [C]	<i>an taigh a thog Iain na taighean a bha fuar am bràthair a bu shine</i>	the house that John built the houses which were cold the brother who was oldest (i.e., the oldest brother)
<i>nach</i> [B]	<i>an taigh nach do thog e na taighean nach robh fuar</i>	the house which he did not build the houses which were not cold
<i>na</i> [C]	<i>dh'ith i na chunnaic i theich na bha a-staigh</i>	she ate what she saw (i.e., all that she saw) (all) those who were inside fled

#### Dative relation

Preposition + <i>an</i> [B]	<i>am fear ris an robh mi a' bruidhinn an té don tug mi luaidh</i>	the man to whom I was speaking the girl to whom I gave love
Preposition + <i>nach</i> [B]	<i>daoine aig nach eil tiocaidean</i>	people who do have tickets
Preposition + <i>na</i> [C]	<i>bhruidhinn mi ris na bha a-staigh</i>	I spoke to everybody who was in

Note that dative relation can also be expressed by means of the subject/object construction: either *am fear a bha mi a' bruidhinn ris*, *an té a thug mi luaidh dhi*, *daoine nach eil tiocaidean aca*; or, with invariable third singular masculine prepositional pronoun, *na cuspairean a bhios sinn a' beachdachadh air* 'the subjects we shall be thinking about'. The subject/object construction is especially common with unusual or complex prepositions, for example, *na fir a bha sinn a' bruidhinn man déidhinn* 'the men whom we were talking about/about whom we were talking'.

*Genitive relation* This is expressed by means of various subject/object or dative constructions, there being no direct Scottish Gaelic equivalent to English 'whose'. Thus *am fear a thàinig 'athair* 'the man whose father came' (lit. 'the man who his father came'); *am fear*

*a bu leis an taigh* ‘the man whose house it was’ (lit. ‘the man who the house was his’: cf., *bu leis an taigh* ‘the house was his’); *am fear leis an robh an taigh* ‘the man whose house it was’ (lit. ‘the man with whom the house was’: cf., *bha an taigh leis* ‘the house was his’); note also *am fear leis am bu leis an taigh*, with the same meaning, a hybrid construction based on the last two examples.

*Verbal-noun phrases* The verbal noun may be employed as argument to a wide variety of verbs and verbal expressions, such as:

<i>feumaidh mi falbh</i>	I must go
<i>is urrainn dhomh snàmh</i>	I can swim
<i>tha mi airson smocadh</i>	I want to smoke
<i>tha agam ri tilleadh</i>	I have to return
<i>smaointich mi air tilleadh</i>	I thought of returning

An important qualification must be made if the verbal action specified by the verbal noun itself has an ‘object’. While one can say *smaointich mi air briseadh na cloiche* ‘I thought about the breaking of the stone’ (i.e., the fact), if ‘breaking the stone’ is the object of the ‘thinking’ process a different construction is used:

*smaointich mi air a’ chlach a bhriseadh*      I thought about breaking the stone

Note that *cloich*, the dative of *clach*, is not used, as it might be in the prepositional phrase ‘on the stone’; here *a’ chlach a bhriseadh* is bracketed. This construction has sometimes been called the ‘accusative and infinitive’ construction in supposed imitation of Latin grammarians. Further examples:

<i>feumaidh mi sin a dhèanamh</i>	I must do that
<i>is urrainn dhomh Iain fhaicinn</i>	I can see Iain
<i>tha agam ris an taigh fhàgail</i>	I have to leave the house
<i>smaointich mi air sin innse dha</i>	I thought of telling him that

When a pronoun is the ‘object’ of the verbal action specified by the verbal noun the construction is unchanged if the pronoun is emphasized, for example, *am bheil thu airson mise fhaicinn?* ‘do you want to see me?’. If, however, the pronoun is not so reinforced, Scottish Gaelic uses the possessive, for example, *am bheil thu airson ar fhaicinn?* ‘do you want to see us?’ (lit. ‘our seeing’); and this variety of the construction can also be used with emphasized possessives, for example, *am bheil thu airson m’fhaicinn-sa?* ‘do you want to see me?’.

While historically this construction is explained as containing ‘(I must) that for doing’, ‘(I can) John for seeing’, etc., its realization in Scottish Gaelic suggests a reinterpretation as ‘(I must) that-its-doing’, ‘(I can) John-its-seeing’, etc., i.e., with the third-person singular masculine possessive ‘his/its’ generalized.

## Subjunctives

The subjunctive is no longer productive in Scottish Gaelic, though examples are common enough in literature and in some colloquially surviving set phrases. Its form is identical with that of the conditional/habitual past tense, except in the substantive verb *tha*, whose

subjunctive is *robh*. It is always preceded by *gun*, which may here be taken to stand for '(would) that' or similar, for example:

<i>'gun tigeadh Do Rìoghachd'</i>	'Thy kingdom come'
<i>gu(n) sealladh Sealbh oirmn</i>	may Providence look (kindly) upon us
<i>guma fada beò thu</i>	long may you live (where <i>guma</i> = <i>gum</i> + <i>bu</i> 'may be')
<i>gu(n) robh math agad</i>	thank you (lit. 'may you have good')

An optative 'if only X would happen' may be formed by means of *nan* 'if' or *nach* (negative interrogative), for example, *nan tigeadh e dhachaidh* 'if (only) he would come home', *nach tigeadh e dhachaidh* 'would he not (please) come home'.

### Variation: parameters and trends

The differing social, economic and religious history of Gaelic speakers in different parts of the Gàidhealtachd is reflected in a considerable degree of inter-dialectal variation. Some of this derives from earlier linguistic factors such as the Norse presence in the Isles and on the western seaboard. Other divergences reflect differing linguistic choices made by separate groups of speakers in a context of grammatical simplification and, more recently, lexical impoverishment.

The main agents of change at work in the contemporary Scottish Gaelic context are (a) dialect death in peripheral areas, leading to change in the centre of gravity of Gaelic speaking and its consistency; (b) the decline of an old literary and high-register language founded on traditional religious and literary norms, and its replacement with a new model owing more to education, commerce/technology and the media; and (c) increased penetration of English into the fabric of Gaelic speaking. For these and similar reasons, the Gaelic side of the Linguistic Survey of Scotland, mounted by the University of Edinburgh in the 1950s, found it necessary to reject lexical in favour of phonetic isoglosses for the purposes of distinguishing the Gaelic dialects in general (cf., Gillies 1992); see Grand 1995–6 for some features showing Hebridean lexical differentiation.

The main result of the contraction of the Gàidhealtachd in the present century has been to give greater prominence to the dialects of the Hebrides, whose speakers nowadays supply the great majority of teachers, broadcasters, writers and administrators. The Hebridean dialects are on the whole pretty homogeneous, apart from some rather obvious differences between Lewis and the rest in phonology and intonation patterns. The elimination of some of the more radically different dialects dotted around the periphery of the Gàidhealtachd has effectively decreased the amount of variation in the language as a whole. The Hebridean dialects are also relatively conservative, and this would appear to have had a stabilizing effect on the norms of public and written Gaelic at least.

The decline of the old high registers has led to impoverishment of the language which is only partially redressed by increased interdialectal exposure arising out of increased social mobility and media penetration. It manifests itself in uncertainty as to 'correct' forms – mutations, genders, plurals, pronunciations and so forth – together with a good deal of simplification and a modicum of hypercorrection. Some major changes in the status of the mutations, in the noun phrase and in verbal-noun syntax would appear to be under way among younger speakers; they may be part of the price to be paid if Gaelic is to be spoken by future generations.

In those areas where Gaelic is strong, official encouragement and sponsorship have resulted in a favourable re-drawing of some linguistic boundaries, and as a result the

language may now be heard more freely in public situations, both formal and informal, than for a long time previously. Conversely, in those areas where Gaelic is weak it has tended to become increasingly restricted in use, although the details of this decline vary considerably from community to community. The prevalence of television in all corners of the Gàidhealtachd has ended the older pattern whereby Gaelic-speaking children were virtually monoglot until they went to school. Nowadays, virtually all children are bilingual, and most are more fluent in English than Gaelic, when they go to school. Current Gaelic educational thinking has to take this as its starting point.

### Lexical structure, etc.

Scottish Gaelic would appear to have retained, or reasserted, its inherited Goidelic characteristics pretty well over the long period since it first began to develop within a Scottish context and in contact with non-Goidelic neighbours. British (including Pictish) and Norse loanwords in the language are relatively few, as are early lexical borrowings from English (that is, from the period of Northern Old English down to that of Middle Scots). The question of Norse influence on the phonology of Lewis Gaelic or more widely has been raised, but alternative perspectives are possible. Again, possible Scottish Gaelic/Welsh parallels in, for example, verbal categories and structure and in verb-phrase syntax, have been pointed out over the years, and further investigation may add to the tally; but the significance of these parallels has yet to be determined.

In more recent centuries (and especially from the seventeenth century to the present) the exposure of Gaelic to external forces has become increasingly marked. The subject matter of poetry enables us to chronicle the importation of terms relating to (for example) military matters and luxury goods, and it is to be inferred that borrowing also took place at more popular levels, both along the Highland Line and within the Gàidhealtachd proper. This process has continued down to the present day.

While loanwords of long standing have been assimilated to Gaelic norms, and are sometimes difficult to recognize, more recent importations appear in unassimilated form. 'Naturalized' loanwords include:

- 1 *seacaid* (f. 4A) 'jacket' [ʃɛxkatʃ] or [ʃaxketʃ] or similar, i.e., with [ʃ] by sound substitution as the nearest radical initial to the [dʃ] or [ʒ] of the original; [ʃa]/[ʃɛ] taken to imply //s'ell/ for morphophonemic purposes; pre-aspiration of [k] closing a stressed syllable; and assimilation of the final [ɛt] of the original to the groups of feminine nouns in /ətʃ/ (as in *drochaid* 'bridge') and /atʃ/ (as in *òraid* 'speech').
- 2 *balla* (m. 5A) 'wall' [bʌtə], where /b/ was the nearest radical initial to /w/; the /b/ and the /l/ are devoiced and velarized respectively in accordance with Gaelic norms, and final /ə/ is added in order to create a syllabic structure in which the -al- sequence heard in the original could best be accommodated.

It is noticeable that the tolerance for 'alien' sounds and shapes has increased over the years: for example, we now have semi-naturalized words like *jotair* 'jotter' with [dʃ], *wèire* 'wire' with [w]. This tolerance extends to morphology, for example, in the use of English -(e)s plurals: *na Tories* beside *na Tòraidhean* 'the Tories', whereas at an earlier period '(the) Whigs' had been borrowed as a feminine (singular) abstract noun with full assimilation: *a' Chuigse* 'the Whiggery'. Compare also the freedom with which English verbs are borrowed with the addition of the termination -ig, for example, *hoover-ig* 'hoover', *react-ig* 'react'. (But not all of these are recent; *libhrig* /L'ir'ig/ and *liubhair*

*/L'ul'ər/*, both 'deliver', and *buinnig* /buN'ig'/ 'win' show full naturalization features.) The 'default' verbal-noun ending in *-(e)adh* and the distinctive plural noun endings *-(a)ichean* and *-(e)achan* have likewise become receptive to neologisms involving English loans.

English also makes its presence felt in other ways, for example, precipitating calquing, diglossia and other symptoms of instability in Gaelic idiom and expression. This 'second front' will be increasingly important in the future, and the question of internal erosion of the language is, or should be, a matter of the utmost concern to language planners and teachers. (See Gillies 1980, MacAulay 1986, MacDonald 1986, Quick 1986, Lamb 1999.)

## Conclusion

In historical, Celtic, philological terms Scottish Gaelic has been seen as innovative (or debased!) in the field of morphological simplification (for example, in verbal tense system, in the loss of old synthetic endings and in the decline of various declensional types), but conservative in several aspects of phonology – most obviously in the preservation of internal and final spirants in various positions.

In synchronic, general linguistic terms Scottish Gaelic is noteworthy for its complex phonetics and for the extent to which the phonological niceties can have grammatical significance – perhaps especially in the complexity of noun-phrase inflection, where the placing of a preposition before a combination of definite article, noun and adjective can trigger inflectional shifts at a surprising number of points. Of equal interest are the tense/aspect system, the special status and roles of the verbs *tha* and *is*, and the balance between ergative and non-ergative constructions.

As things stand, Scottish Gaelic is a language in the organic sense: for example, in its possession of dialects and registers (including a literary tradition and a developed faculty for abstract reasoning) and in its capacity (so far, at least) to take on board the mass of technical and technological vocabulary associated with modern life. Scottish Gaelic is also a language in the differential sense of the word: while one can point to linguistic features which link the Southern Highlands and Northern Ireland they cannot compare with the bulk and embeddedness (i.e., at the more fundamental structural levels of morphology and syntax) of the features which distinguish Scottish Gaelic from Irish. While Scottish Gaelic and Irish are, of course, Goidelic dialects in genetic terms, there has grown up over the past few centuries a practical and psychological intelligibility barrier between Irish and Scottish Gaelic speakers, beyond what they experience when dealing with the most divergent varieties of their own language.

For centuries Scottish Gaelic has been said to be dying, and has received not a few nudges to help it on its way to that end. While the general level of understanding as to the predicament and worth of minority languages is now higher than before, it still remains to be seen whether, despite loaded prognostications about language death, Gaelic can retain the attractiveness and uniqueness in the minds of Gaelic speakers which alone will guarantee it a future in the twenty-first century.<sup>13</sup>

## NOTES

- 1 Both grammars and dictionaries of Scottish Gaelic present difficulties for the modern scholar, owing to the long shadow cast by early works whose aim was to teach ‘grammar’ to, and improve the English understanding of users who were native speakers of Scottish Gaelic. Our practice is to use ‘(ScG) Grammars/Dictionaries’ to signify the collective teaching of these works. Among such ‘traditional’ grammars reference may be made to Duncan Reid, *Elementary Course of Gaelic* (Glasgow, 1913: Maclaren; repr. Stirling, 1971: An Comunn Gàidhealach) and George Calder, *A Gaelic Grammar* (Glasgow: Maclaren, 1923; repr. Gairm, 1972). More recent and ‘modern’ treatments are those of M. Byrne, *Gràmar na Gàidhlig* (Stornoway 2002: Acair) and W. Lamb, *Scottish Gaelic* (2nd edn, Munich, 2003: LINCOM). Among ‘traditional’ Scottish Gaelic dictionaries reference may be made to Edward Dwelly, *The Illustrated Gaelic–English Dictionary*, 2nd edn (Glasgow: Maclaren, 1920; repr. Gairm, 1973) and Malcolm MacLennan, *A Pronouncing and Etymological Dictionary of the Gaelic Language* (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1925; repr. Stornoway: Acair/Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1979). More recent publications include C. Mark, *The Gaelic–English Dictionary* (London 2004: Routledge) and A. Watson, *The essential Gaelic–English dictionary* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2001).
- 2 Our phonetic usage follows IPA practice as far as possible. (For phonological usage see notes 3–5.) Transcriptions are broad. The following transcriptional points should be noted:
- i [̥] indicates a degree of devoicing in historical voiced stops.
  - ii [̃] and [ɞ] parallel [ɣ] in being dark, hollow, velarized sounds.
  - iii Scottish Gaelic needs to distinguish between palatal fricative and frictionless continuant. [j] is used here for the former, [j̥] for the latter, e.g., *ghìulain* ‘carried’ [ju:ɬap], *iùl* ‘guidance’ [ju:ɬ]. (See Oftedal 1956: 113–14, Hamp 1988: 14 and Ternes 2006: 33–4 for the issues involved.)
  - iv Glottalization: the symbol [ʔ] is used without differentiation as to articulatory characteristics; when it appears in consonant articulation it is treated segmentally and placed before the consonant. Both these practices beg questions raised by Shuken 1984; cf. Jones 2006.
  - v Our supra-dialectal approach breaks down at certain points, given the limitations of space, where there is too much environmentally conditioned variation or too much interdialectal disagreement (or both) for a ‘specimen’ value to be assigned. In such cases an upper-case letter is used idiosyncratically, as follows:
    - [G] = a spectrum of values from voiced velar fricative [ɣ], as found in initial position, through [ɣ̃] (sometimes strengthened to [g̃] in final position) to [h] or [ʔ] or Ø;
    - [J] = a spectrum of values from voiced palatal fricative [j], as found in initial position, through [j] or vocalization (as [i]) to [h] or [ʔ] or Ø;
    - [W] = a spectrum of values from voiced labial fricative [v], as found in initial position, through [w] or vocalization (as [u]) to [h] or [ʔ] or Ø;
    - [I] in post-consonantal position = [j] or an off-glide or vowel showing allophonic variation according to the height of the following vowel (e.g., *beò* [b̥ẽo:] representing [b̥j̥o:] or [b̥ẽo:] or [b̥ẽo]); in pre-consonantal position [I] = [i] forming a diphthong with the preceding vowel (e.g., *lùib* [l̥uip], representing [l̥uip] or similar);
    - [Z] = the scatter of dialectal realizations for historical-phonological /r/, on which see below.
- (Note that upper-case ‘V’ and ‘C’ are used in their conventional sense at all levels of description to denote ‘any vowel’ and ‘any consonant’ respectively.)
- 3 In phonological description our general intention is to be as informative as possible; i.e., to be as respectful towards phonetic reality as is consistent with phonological coherence. The basic level of description is a surface phonological one; where a more abstract representation is needed (for example, where the surface phenomena are unhelpfully divergent) double slashes ‘//’ are employed. Informativeness has at the same time been taken to imply clarity. Accordingly, our transcriptions omit phonological features which are both inferrable from



rules already given and irrelevant to the feature currently under discussion. Thus, for example, vowel nasality ('~') is shown when being discussed in its own right and where relevant to other developments, but not for general citation purposes in other sections; see note 6.

- 4 Note the following special transcriptional points relating to the Scottish Gaelic vowel system:
  - i The symbol ']' is used to differentiate vowel sequences which contain hiatus from those which do not.
  - ii Sequences of root vowel + consonant + svarabhakti vowel are marked 'VCV', e.g. /m,ara,v/ for *marbh* 'dead'.  
These usages give token recognition to suprasegmental features of Scottish Gaelic which cannot be treated properly here.
- 5 Note the following special transcriptional points relating to the ScG consonant system:
  - i The symbol '˘' is used, in accordance with established Goidelic practice, to denote palatalized consonants: e.g., [x : ç] becomes /x : x'/. (Note, however, that /j/ is used in preference to /s'/ for the palatalized equivalent of /s/ for general citation purposes, although //s'// is of course needed at the abstract level.) The symbol '˘' is used similarly, though only at the abstract level, to denote velarized consonants. While the surface opposition is taken as being /C/ : /C'/, i.e., neutral (unmarked) : palatalized (/'/), at the abstract level //C'// (= 'palatalized') is opposed to //C˘// (= 'velarized').
  - ii Traditional Celticists' practice has been followed in regard to the historical voiced and voiceless stops, which are here transcribed /b d g/ and /p t k/, although their principal allophones are all voiceless in Modern Scottish Gaelic.
  - iii L, N and R, the abstract symbols used by Celtic scholars to denote the historical fortis series of resonants, are used here to denote certain resonant phonemes in Modern Scottish Gaelic. Although this is in keeping with Goidelic practice, and practically expedient, an element of arbitrariness is involved in their assignation, on account of structural remodeling in this area.
- 6 In the Phonology section vowel nasality is marked in those cases where it is (i) historically predictable (e.g. where a nasal consonant has been vocalized before another consonant, as in *ionnsaich* /iũ:səx'/ 'learn', or rhotacized following another consonant, as in *cnoc* /krɔ̃xk/ 'hill'); and (ii) standardly present in contemporary Gaelic.
- 7 Although it is hard to capture a clear-cut polarization between the two treatments there are distinctions of meaning, for example, *bha an 'seanntaigh glé fhuar* 'the old house (= the house we used to live in) was very cold', *bha an 'seann taigh glé fhuar* 'the old house was very cold' (= 'the house was very cold, as one would expect an old house to be'). The appearance of the form *seann* before vowels (e.g., *seann èòlaich* 'old cronies') and before non-homorganic consonants (e.g., *seann chàirdean* 'old friends') shows generalization of the form expected when historic *sean* is followed by homorganic voiced consonants (e.g., *seann daoine* 'old people'), where the juncture //n + d// would have been interpreted as /Nd/.
- 8 The following account should be compared with the more elegant and economic formulation in Hamp 1951.
- 9 Note the following special transcriptional points relating to Scottish Gaelic morphology and syntax:
  - i An asterisk (\*) following a cited form indicates that that form is followed by lenition of a succeeding initial consonant.
  - ii A raised n (<sup>n</sup>) following a cited form indicates that that form is followed by 'nasalization' of a succeeding initial consonant.
- 10 The following account, and the treatment of noun phrase syntax below, draws on the perceptive analysis in K. C. Craig's 'South Uist Gaelic' (unpublished BLitt. thesis, Glasgow University, 1955) in several respects. See also Whyte 1988.
- 11 The dental endings had clearly expanded from their base in nouns with original dental declensions (e.g., *beatha* 'life', gen. *beathadh*) at a time before pressure on the case system started to be felt. This spread is also reflected in the Mod ScG plurals in *-tan* and *-tean*, and those in *-achan* and *-ichean*, earlier *-adha(n)*, *-idhe(an)*.
- 12 In this section the forms *Is e* and *Is ann* are used in preference to '*S e* and '*S ann* or *Se* and *Sann*.

It is to be understood, however, that where *e* and *ann* function as arguments to the copula (Ahlqvist 1978) the pronunciations /ʃɛ:/ and /sauN/ are standard.

- 13 In revising this chapter I have taken advantage of a number of valuable corrections and suggestions from Professor Roibeard Ó Maolaláigh and Ms Morag Brown, whose help I acknowledge with warm thanks. Remaining imperfections are my own.

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