Doyle, Aidan and Edmund Gussmann (1996) *A Reverse Dictionary of Modern Irish.* Lublin, Poland: Wydawnictwo Folium. 355pp.

One of the most fundamental goals of descriptive work on endangered language is the creation of effective research tools such as grammars and dictionaries for use by scholars who don't or won't have access to native speakers consultants. In this regard, Irish is a fairly well served language, having a number of dictionaries, grammars, and phonologies written about it. However, Doyle and Gussmann's *A Reverse Dictionary of Modern Irish* (henceforth DG) fills an important gap in this collection of tools.

A reverse dictionary is alphabetized, not from the beginning of the word, but from the final letter moving backwards to the front of the word. This kind of dictionary was originally of most use to poets (as rhyming dictionaries). They are also of special importance, however, for linguists working on languages with extensive suffixation . They allow one to clearly see the number and type of words taking various suffixes, and the various forms of those suffixes. Similarly, from the phonologist's perspective, they allow one to examine the structure of syllabic codae and word final phenomena in a systematic manner.

Doyle and Gussmann have put forth an extensive and remarkably complete reverse dictionary of Irish. With over 60,000 entries, it is without a doubt an impressive achievement in lexicography, and will certainly be of an important tool for phonologists and morphologists working on Irish. Based primarily upon Ó Dónaill's (1977) dictionary of Irish, they have supplemented this work with numerous dialectal variants. A somewhat frustrating feature of this supplementation is that the entries which are dialectal variants are not distinguished in the main body of the dictionary from the more standard Ó Dónaill forms. Anyone interested in comparing dialectal differences in suffixal morphology simply

has no indication of which forms are standard and which forms are associated with a particular dialect.

I have two quite general issues to raise about the way the dictionary is compiled, however, neither should be taken to detract from the overall importance of this book. First, it is more of a word list than a dictionary proper. No definitions are given for the words. This means that the non-Irish speaking linguist has to look up each word in a normal non-reverse dictionary to find out what the meanings of the words are. This is particularly annoying when one is trying to determine the function or meaning of a particular suffix. Take for example the ending *-úil*. In scanning DG, one immediately notices that this is a productive and frequent suffix in the language (it is a deverbal, adjectival ending roughly corresponding to English *-al*). In order to figure out its meaning, however, the non-Irish speaker has to cross reference each word (approximately 700 words) to insure that there is no accidental isomorphism between the deverbal adjective suffix and some other suffix. Such isomorphism is not uncommon in language — consider the two suffixes *-ing* in English: one is a nominalizer; the other forms gerunds/participles. Similarly, in English we have the suffix *-s*, which could represent either the plural morpheme on nouns or the third person present tense agreement suffix. The task of sorting out such cases would be greatly reduced if Doyle and Gussmann had provided at least a one word gloss for each of their words.

A related problem arises from a phonological perspective. DG is organized by orthographic spelling rather than by phonetic form. While Irish spelling is both more regular and phonetic than English, it is by no means transparent. The non-speaker then is forced once again to refer to another dictionary to get a phonetic form of each word. This is both frustrating and occasionally misleading. Take for example the graphemic sequence <gh>. In final position, this is pronounced a number of ways. Taking the standard

pronunciation found in *An Foclóir Póca*[1], in some words like *dligh* 'to merit' <gh> is pronounced /ɣ/; in a word like *diailigh* 'to deny', by contrast, it indicates vowel lengthening of the preceding vowel. On the other hand, the spelling does represent morphological distinctions that aren't indicated phonologically. The plural suffix <-í> (/-i:/) is distinguished in the dictionary from the non-finite verbal ending <-igh> (/-i:/) or the future tense ending <-fidh> (/-i:/).

The dictionary is one of a series of books that have come out of work done by linguists in the Celtic Department at the University of Lublin in Poland. The Polish location of the publisher makes this book somewhat hard to get hold of. In fact, this reviewer got his copy by sending email directly to one the authors, who was kind enough to send the book via an American colleague.

These very small issues aside, this dictionary is an impressive achievement. It fills an important gap in the reference material for Irish and will undoubtedly serve as a frequently used tool on my desk.

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[1](A small Irish dictionary with phonetic transcriptions. (1986) Baile Atha Cliath: An Gúm.