The pragmatics of *grand* in Irish English

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Over the past two centuries, the use of the adjective *grand* underwent a specific semantic expansion in Irish English. Apart from the meaning of ‘displaying grandeur’, the adjective came to mean ‘fine’, ‘alright’ and ‘in good form’, both as an expression of the speaker’s situation and as a reference to that of the addressee. This development can be shown to represent a case of subjectification, as described seminally by Elizabeth Traugott in various publications (e.g., Traugott 1995), with the element of intersubjectification arising somewhat later (Traugott 2003). Through the examination of various texts, this paper examines the diachronic development of *grand* in its various uses and the rise of the Irish English extension with a consideration of possible precursors and parallels in other varieties. The subjective and intersubjective uses of *grand* are labelled “approving *grand*” and “reassuring *grand*” respectively and are shown to be in keeping with other features of Irish discourse structure and pragmatics.

Keywords: “approving *grand*”, Irish English discourse, “reassuring *grand*”, semantic extension, (inter)subjectification

1. Introduction

In recent years, the pragmatics of varieties of English have received particular attention. It has been shown that pluricentric languages (Schneider and Barron [eds] 2008), such as English (Leitner 1991) or Spanish (Thompson 1991), vary in their pragmatics\(^1\) because of the different societies using varieties of such languages and, hence, the differing socialisation which speakers are subject to in the formative period of language acquisition. The pragmatics of Irish English has been the subject of a number of investigations including two edited volumes (Barron and Schneider [eds] 2005; Amador-Moreno et al. [eds] 2015) which attest to the

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\(^{1}\) In this paper, the label “pragmatics” refers to (historical) sociopragmatics (Culpeper 2011: 2; Jucker and Taavitsainen 2013: 2–5) as is hopefully evident from the introduction.
considerable differences in the use of English in Ireland compared to that in other anglophone countries.

One of the prominent features of Irish English pragmatics is a unique use of the adjective *grand*. This is here termed “approving *grand*” as its use is very widespread in contemporary Irish English as an adjective expressing general approval, either of a specific aspect of a discourse as in A: “Will you have a cup of tea as you’re here?” B: “Grand so, I will” or as a general assessment of the discourse context (e.g., “Grand, we can take our time with leaving”). There is also a certain awareness among Irish people that their use of *grand* differs from that of other English speakers: consider the following extract from a trade publication (Flynn 2014) about Irish women.

Grand: The meaning
Irish women say they’re “Grand” about a million times a day. But let’s be clear, it doesn’t mean “fancy”: It simply means the bare bones of “fine”. In Ireland, the word “Grand” isn’t confined to ballrooms, candelabras or horsey types: it’s not elaborate, not highfalutin, just fine.

2. The diachrony of *grand*

The central question for this paper is how “approving *grand*” arose diachronically out of other uses of the adjective *grand* to reach its present distribution during the twentieth century, which now continues in the twenty-first century. It would seem that “approving *grand*” arose through extensions of other uses of *grand*, but

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2. In Irish English there are two pronunciations of the word spelled *grand*. One of these has a long, retracted low vowel (i.e., [grɑːnd]), and implies poshness and snobbery (e.g., “W… speaks with a grand accent”, “He’s got a bit grand since going to Trinity” and “She thinks herself far too grand for us” (Waterford English Recordings [WER], see Hickey 2007: 161–168 for details). This can be considered to be lexically different from *grand* ([grænd]) which is being considered here. Note that the pronunciation “[grɑːnd]” does not exist in Received Pronunciation but is used by Irish speakers to refer to the back vowel found in words like *bath, pass* and *grant* in this variety of English.

3. There is no established terminology for dealing with *grand* in its varying senses in Irish English. For this reason, I have taken the liberty of judiciously devising labels for the different uses of *grand*, both in Irish English and in the history of English in general, in the hope of making it easier to refer to the various uses of the adjective.

4. As opposed to so many other features of Irish English, approving *grand* is not connected with any feature of Irish. Nonetheless, equivalents may be found in present-day Irish usage. For example, the phrase *tá tú ceart* [are you right] (< *tá an ceart agat* [is right at-you]) “you’re grand” can be used in situations where “reassuring *grand*” would naturally occur in IrE. Reassuring/
this issue requires examination and, if possible, a chronology must be established. It would seem that the specifically Irish development of grand reflects a usage in which the subjective assessment of a discourse context has come to the fore. An extension of this is the intersubjective use of “approving grand” which reflects the subjectivisation trajectory described in Traugott (2003, 2010): non-subjective > subjective > intersubjective. Following Benveniste (1971 [1958]), Traugott (2003) has closely scrutinised the notion of intersubjectivity (see also Schiffrin 1990). To begin with, she notes that “in principle, any semantically subjective lexeme or grammatical morpheme can be hypothesized to have originated semasiologically in a form with non-subjective meaning” (Traugott 2003: 126). This assumption applies to the development of “impressive grand” to “approving grand” as implied in the discussion in this paper so far. Traugott then goes on to specify that a “…way to construe intersubjectivity is in parallel with subjectivity […]” From this perspective, intersubjectivity is the explicit expression of the speaker’s (S) or writer’s (W) attention to the “self” of addressee/reader in both an epistemic sense (paying attention to their presumed attitudes to the content of what is said), and in a more social sense (paying attention to their “face” or “image needs’ associated with social stance and identity”).

When trying to establish whether “approving grand” arose out of earlier uses it is necessary to trace and classify these uses in the late-modern period of English (since approximately 1800), both in Ireland and England. To begin with, some comments on its source are called for.

In English, the adjective grand is a borrowing from French, cf. Old French graund/grant; Modern French grand, a Common Romance word meaning ‘great’. It would appear that the adjective experienced a metaphorical extension from a more basic meaning of ‘great, big’ to one implying exalted position, a development from a more literal to a more figurative meaning.

The adjective graunt is first attested according to the Oxford English Dictionary (second edition 1989, enhanced digital edition, 2009) in the early fifteenth century as part of an epithet of the type well-known from later English (e.g., Peter the Great). Here the form is graunt; for example, Troye the graunte (Caxton, Aesop’s Fables). The word initially showed the diphthong characteristic of French loans with original <au> before <n>, cf. a(d)vaun(t)age (‘advantage’), daunce/dauns(e) (‘dance’), implying that it was a borrowing from Anglo-Norman which would have entered the language well before the earliest attestations in the first half of the fifteenth century.

approving grand is, of course, also available in Irish through code-switching (on the latter, see Ó Curnáin 2012).
The use of *graund/graunt* indicating an exalted, elevated position was continued with the form *great* (e.g., *Alfred the Great*). However, the form *grand* is still used attributively (e.g., *The Grand Inquisitor* and *The Grand Master*). This usage implies something which is pre-eminent, chief, principal and in high position, and came to be applied to objects and often became part of a name (e.g., *The Grand Hotel* and *The Grand National* (a horse-race), *The Grand Canal, The Grand Opera, The Grand Parade* and *The Grand Tour*).\(^5\)

All of the uses just listed can be regarded as cases of proper nouns where the adjective *grand* is an integral part of a name. But this usage spread to all nouns and was extended semantically to denote something which was impressive and magnificent (e.g., “They put on a grand banquet for the guests”) or the best and/or most distinguished exemplar of a set (e.g., *grand piano, grand auction, grand dinner, grand ball* and *grand slam*), even if this is itself negative (e.g., “the criminal offence of *grand larceny*”). There is already an element of subjective assessment in this early usage, as compared with the use in the sentence just quoted. This point is important as it is not being claimed that the use of *grand* for subjective assessments is a development which only took place in Irish English (see discussion, below).

To capture the various early usages of *grand*, I devised the label “impressive *grand*”. Admittedly this is *ad hoc*, but it offers the advantage of providing a shorthand to refer to usages of a similar nature. To this day, some of the occurrences of “impressive *grand*” form typical collocations, if not indeed fixed phrases – for example, *a grand plan, on a grand scale, the grand old man* (of English letters, for instance) and *the grand style* (of the old masters, for instance).

A further application of “impressive *grand*” occurs where *grand* indicates the sum or totality of something. This could be labelled “comprehensive *grand*” – “a comprehensive unity in relation to its constituent portions” (*Oxford English Dictionary*) and can be seen in phrases such as *the grand sum* and *the grand total* (‘the complete amount after adding all parts together’).\(^6\) Again like “impressive *grand*”, “comprehensive *grand*” would appear to have developed through metaphorical usage stemming from the basic mean of *grand* as ‘big’. Included here are instances which imply that something is all-embracing, overarching (e.g., *some kind of grand design to the universe, a Grand Unified Theory in physics, the grand themes of life and death, the grand narrative of English history, a grand strategy for the inevitable war*).

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\(^5\) The phrase *Grand Prix*, typically used in car racing, is a French phrase retained in English. The pronunciation of the adjective varies accordingly from French [grã] to native English [grænd].

\(^6\) The sense of *grand* as a thousand units of money (dollars, pounds, etc.) may well have developed from the comprehensive sense discussed here.
3. The transition from “impressive grand” to “approving grand”

Before 1800 there would appear to be no instances of “approving grand” in Irish literature, at least on the basis of the texts in A Corpus of Irish English (Hickey 2003) – the largest collection of diachronic texts for Irish English. For example, an electronic search through Laurence Sterne’s Tristram Shandy (1759–67) revealed that there are sixteen instances of the word, all of which refer to ‘displaying grandeur’ (i.e., these are instances of “impressive grand”). To substantiate the view that “approving grand” derives historically from “impressive grand”, transitional cases would need to be robustly documented, forming a bridge between the two meanings. And there would, indeed, seem to be such instances. Consider the following extracts from Irish authors writing before 1800 (emphasis added).

(1) During this anxious interval I had full time to look round me. Every thing was grand, and of happy contrivance: the paintings, the furniture, the gildings, petrified me with awe, and raised my idea of the owner.  
   (Oliver Goldsmith. 1766. The Vicar of Wakefield)

(2a) There’s to be famous doings upon the Downs, the first of September; that is grand, fine. In short, what does it signify talking any longer, Patty, about the matter? Give me my bow, for I must go out upon the Downs and practise.  
   (Maria Edgeworth. 1796. The Parent’s Assistant)

(2b) […] and there was open house kept night and day at Castle Rackrent, and I thought I never saw my lady look so well in her life as she did at that time; there were grand dinners, and all the gentlemen drinking success to Sir Condy till they were carried off;  
   (Maria Edgeworth. 1800. Castle Rackrent)

What is significant in these instances is that each represents a subjective assessment of what is being described (by the omniscient narrator in these works of literature). It would thus appear that the increase in subjectivity forms the bridge, in terms of semantic development, between “impressive grand” and “approving grand”. Indeed it could be argued that an element of assessment was always present with grand as all uses of evaluative adjectives imply a degree of assessment by the speakers or writers who employ them. But for uses before 1800 this assessment is not made at the moment of speaking/writing by the speaker/writer. Rather, the evaluation has been arrived at previously, whether by consensus in a community or not (e.g., the grand style of the old masters), and this evaluation is not open to re-assessment by the speaker/writer at the moment of speaking/writing. In fact, the less a use of grand is open to individual assessment the more it is a fixed expression (e.g., grand auction and grand opera) and can even lose the connotation
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of assessment entirely and simply be a designation of a particular exemplar of a set, for example, *grand piano*, which primarily refers to the size of the instrument.

The transitional uses, shown above, continue in the textual record of Irish English throughout the nineteenth century. However, by the middle of the nineteenth century, instances of *grand* begin to appear in which the meaning of ‘displaying grandeur’ would not seem to be applicable. Granted, this view rests on the judgement of the author as there is no means of testing the linguistic intuitions of writers from previous centuries. However, the usages which appear from the mid-nineteenth century onwards correspond increasingly with those found in present-day Irish English and conform to the intuitions of native speakers of this variety, such as the present author.

Here are two extracts from a play and a novel by Dion Boucicault (1820–1890), the second a collaboration, which testify to uses implying “impressive *grand*” in the first case and “approving *grand*” in the second. The second quotation from Synge, below, shows a predicative use of “approving *grand*”.

(3a) It’s a *grand* weddin’ ye’ll have, my lady; but it is in Wicklow Gaol ye’ll pass this night!  (Dion Boucicault. 1864. *Arrah na Pogue*)

(3b) Hazel cut and chiseled it out at a *grand* rate, and, throwing it to the sides, raised by degrees two mud banks […].

(Charles Reade and Dion Boucicault. 1868. *Foul Play*)

By the turn of the century, in the plays of the author John Millington Synge, instances can be found which only allow of a single interpretation: “approving *grand*”.

(4a) TRAMP [going over to NORA] We’ll be going now, lady of the house—
the rain is falling but the air is kind, and maybe it’ll be a *grand* morning by the grace of God.
You’ll be saying one time, “It’s a *grand* evening by the grace of God,” and another time, “It’s a wild night, God help us, but it’ll pass surely.”
MARY That’s right now, your reverence, and the blessing of God be on you. Isn’t it a *grand* thing to see you sitting down, with no pride in you, and drinking a sup with the like of us, and we the poorest, wretched, starving creatures you’d see any place on the earth?

(John Millington Synge. 1903. *In the Shadow of the Glen*)

(4b) MARTIN DOUL The blessing of God on this day, and them that brought me the saint, for it’s *grand* hair you have [she lowers her head, a little confused], and soft skin […].

(John Millington Synge. 1905. *The Well of the Saints*)

Assuming that the textual record was lagging behind developments in vernacular speech, the rise of “approving *grand*” can be located to around the middle of the
nineteenth century, perhaps earlier, if the Edgeworth cases shown in Example 2 are classified as approving. Allowing for a slow beginning, before the usage spread rapidly, would explain the relatively sudden increase of attestations in the late nineteenth-century textual record, especially vernacular documents (see the emigrant letters discussed below). This would furthermore account for the spread of “approving grand” to predicative and highly focussed, clause/sentence-final positions. A dating about a decade earlier than Synge is found in a novel by the now little-known Irish author, Jane Barlow (1860–1917). Both the instances here show grand in predicative position.

(5) “Ah! sure now, that’ll be grand”, said Mrs. Doherty, unwarily complaisant; “we’ll all be proud to behold him that way. “Ay, sure that ’ud be grand,” said Mrs. Doherty, much more elated than if she had heard of a large fortune; “you couldn’t find an iliganter place for it in the width of this world.”

(Jane Barlow. 1896. A Lost Recruit)

By the beginning of the twentieth century “approving grand” is firmly entrenched in fictional texts. Some of the instances are ambiguous, pointing to a combination of “impressive grand” and “approving grand”. In fact this has remained to the present-day as a minor, but frequently chosen, usage by speakers to incorporate both meanings of the adjective.

(6) (ambiguous)
… and sure we thought we were grand fellows because we had pipes stuck in the corners of our mouths.
(approving)
And I’ll buy you a nice little penny handkerchief to keep your nose dry. Won’t that be grand fun?
(approving)
Temple was standing in the midst of a little group of students. One of them cried:
– Dixon, come over till you hear. Temple is in grand form.

(James Joyce. 1916. A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man)

The development of “approving grand” would seem to be a specifically Irish occurrence as is the extension of syntactic contexts in which it can occur (see Section 4). Consulting the Corpus of Nineteenth Century English (CONCE, see Kytö et al. 2006) some sixty-three hits for grand were identified but only one which, in my opinion, could be interpreted as “approving grand” in the Irish – English sense.

(7) The outer isle of Juan Fernandez is little known. – The investigation of these little spots by a band of naturalists would be grand.

(Letter by Charles Darwin to Charles Lyell, February 1857)
On the other hand, searches through specifically Irish corpora show that the Irish English usage was established at least by the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The *Corpus of Irish English Correspondence* (McCafferty and Amador Moreno 2012) contains many attestations of *grand* among the letters by emigrants to the New World. These are written in a non-prescriptive vernacular style and can be taken to represent the informal colloquial usage of the letter writers – be these the stated senders or not.

(8a) It was a *grand* sight to see every thing [everything?] and from evey [every?] place it is nice to see so many people together  
I suppose it was a *grand* sight for you to Lake-side I would have liked to gone but Will was busy […]  

(James Alexander Smyth, Ontario, Canada; July 1892)

(8b) I see that you had a good gathering there, I am sure it was a *grand* sight to see so many in one place.  

(Bella M. Smyth, Plumbridge, Co. Tyrone, Ireland; August 1897)

(8c) […] to have a fill of watter [water?] mellon [melon?] the [they?] are *grand* to eate [eat?] well I cannot tell you how good the [they?] are.  

(William Smyth, Ontario, Canada; September 1891)

(8d) Its going to be *grand* I wish you and Miss Harrison could go Maggie is crazy to go to dance with O.Brien  

(Mary ?, Detroit, Ohio, USA; October 1891)

Some of the common collocations in which *grand* occurs today – for instance, *a grand time, grand times* and *a grand day* – are already attested several times in the emigrant letters of the CORIECOR corpus.7

(9a) […] we had a annual Social last Friday night and had *a grand time* […]  

(Anne Weir, Pontiac, Michigan, USA; February 1891)

(9b) […] he says we will have *a grand time* going.  

(Mary ?, Detroit, Ohio, USA; March 1892)

(9c) …drive on Saturday to entertain the old veterans *a grand time* is anticipated  

(Linda Weir, Lack, Co. Fermanagh, Ireland; March 1892)

(9d) You must have had *grand times*…  

(J. Banks Reford, Bloomfield, New Jersey, USA; August 1897)

7. My thanks go to Kevin McCafferty of the University of Bergen for putting a section of this corpus at my disposal in advance of publication. See McCafferty and Amador Mardor (2013) for an outline of the design and aims of this corpus.
(9e) So we expect to have a grand day – we hope you will have a good day somewhere? (James Alexander Smyth, Ontario, Canada; July 1893)

Transitional instances between “impressive grand” and “approving grand”, similar to those shown in Examples 1 to 3, can also be found in the letter corpus.

(10) …it was a grand harvest, we have 17 cocks of hay this year…

(J. J. Smyth, Plumbridge, Co. Tyrone, Ireland; September 1898)

3.1 The role of collocations in the development of grand

The text searches conducted for this study, both those in diachronically oriented corpora like A Corpus of Irish English and the Corpus of Irish Correspondence as well as the sub-components of the International Corpus of English (see Section 5.2), reveal that in both earlier Irish English and present-day forms of English outside Ireland, grand is found in fixed collocations rather than in the syntactically and pragmatically more flexible form of present-day Irish English. Collocations like grand sight, grand day, and above all grand time(s), are particularly common, perhaps suggesting that the bridge from “impressive grand” to “approving grand” in nineteenth-century Irish English was through a small set of fixed collocations with “approving grand” – the grand times(s) type – which subsequently led to a lifting of the collocational restrictions surrounding grand, thus resulting in the modern use of the adjective in twentieth and twenty-first century Irish English.

3.2 Negative uses of grand

“Approving grand” implies a positive assessment of a situation. There are occasions when a negative interpretation of grand is clear from the context in which it occurs; for example, “Look at the grand mess you’ve got us into. With all his grand talk he didn’t manage to realise the project after all” (Waterford English Recordings [WER], see Hickey 2007: 161–168). Such instances would appear to be derivatives from “impressive grand” (i.e., the adjective suggests a large scale and implies criticism of the individual responsible for the situation being referred to). This usage furthermore involves grand in an attributive position which matches its function here to highlight the following noun negatively.

3.3 Use of qualifiers with grand

The development of “approving grand” appears to have led to a restriction in terms of the adverbs that can qualify it. The set of possible qualifiers is highly restricted in present-day Irish English. Those which would diminish the force of grand
would appear not to occur; for example, slightly as in *“The weather was slightly grand for the party”. Conversely, augmentatives are permissible with grand but not all. For instance, really co-occurs with grand quite readily; for example, “The weather was really grand for the party” and “We had a really grand meal in the new hotel”. However, the semantically similar very would seem to imply “impressive grand” and so not be allowed with “approving grand”: *“The weather was very grand for the party” (“approving grand”), but “She spoke with a very grand accent” (“impressive grand”).

4. Extension of syntactic contexts

The extension in meaning for grand to a new sense of approval brought with it an extension of the syntactic contexts in which this sense could be found. A characterisation of this extension is offered in Table 1.

Table 1. Syntactic/prosodic extension of “approving grand”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Attributive use:</th>
<th>A grand cup of tea.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Predicative use:</td>
<td>a. Sentence-internal use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes, the kids are grand, I’m pleased to say.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Sentence-final use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A: How’s the wife doing?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B: She’s grand.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Use as minimal response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A: How are you keeping these days?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B: Grand.*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* As Susan Fitzmaurice rightly points out, such instances show how responses to an expression can serve as reception and, in consequence, as validation of a particular communicative meaning.

Nearly all the early cases of “approving grand” show attributive uses of the adjective, with the exception of the quotations from Barlow and one from Synge. So the question arises as to why and when the predicative uses shown in Table 2, especially the bare, focussed use in Example 2c, became widespread. It has been posited that semantic extensions, and instances of language change in general, begin in positions of low salience in a sentence, not least prosodically, and hence perceptually for the hearer (Cheshire 1996). Hence the attributive position for grand would represent a typical low-salience site for initial or at least early change. As to when this extension occurred, the textual record would suggest the early twentieth century because by the 1920s type (2c) uses of “approving grand” appear – for instance, in the plays of Sean O’Casey (1884–1964) in which the characters use vernacular Dublin English.
(11a) MRS MADIGAN *Grand, grand*; you should folly that up, you should folly that up. 

(Sean O’Casey. 1924. *Juno and the Paycock*)

(11b) MOLLSEIR *Grand*, Fluther, *grand*, thanks. Yis, milk. 

BESSION They’ll go *grand* with th’ dhresses we’re afther liftin’;

(Sean O’Casey. 1926. *The Plough and the Stars*)

James Joyce (1882–1941) shows in his later novel *Ulysses*, non-prenominal uses of “approving *grand*”. It is uncertain, however, whether this represents a change during Joyce’s lifetime: indeed, he spent his adult life in various continental European countries and was not necessarily in contact with developments in the Irish English of his day. If not, then the non-prenominal usage found below could be indicative of extended syntactic contexts which were already typical of Irish English when Joyce was growing up in Dublin in the 1880s and 1890s.

(12) Milly has a position down in Mullingar, you know. 
– Go away! Isn’t that *grand* for her? 
– Yis. In a photographer’s there. Getting on like a house on fire. 
I’m sure it’ll be *grand* if I can only get in with a handsome young poet at my age. (Molly Bloom’s soliloquy) 

(James Joyce. 1922. *Ulysses*)

In present-day Irish English such uses are very common and unmarked. More recent attestations can be provided at will as in the following quotation from a play by a well-known contemporary author.

(13) LILY What time is it, young fella? 
MICHAEL Just after five. 
LILY That’s *grand*. 
S.B. The baby’s strong and healthy? 
MADGE *Grand – grand*. 
S.B. That’s all that matters. (Brien Friel. 1973. *Freedom of the City*)

Indeed, “approving *grand*” often combines with another specifically Irish pragmatic usage, that of highlighting *now* (Vaughan and Clancy 2011; Clancy and Vaughan 2012); for example, “Them shoes are grand now” (i.e., they fit and are comfortable).
5. Uses of *grand* today

5.1 Distribution within Ireland

The discussion so far has been of various uses of *grand* in Ireland without differentiating between different parts of the island. But it is worth considering whether the major political division of the island of Ireland into the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland (a constituent part of the United Kingdom) is reflected in the use of “approving *grand*”. To answer this question the Ireland component of the *International Corpus of English*, known as ICE-Ireland (Kirk and Kallen 2008; Schneider 2013), was examined as the texts which it contains are divided into two groups, a northern and a southern one, which correspond to the political division of the island of Ireland.

There are 500 hundred short texts in ICE-Ireland, divided almost equally between the north and the south. Forty-two of the southern texts contain *grand* and twenty-four of the northern texts do. Of these instances, 71 percent in the southern texts were of “approving *grand*” but only 42 percent of those in the northern texts were of this type.

![Bar chart showing instances of "grand" and "approving grand" in ICE-Ireland](image)

**Figure 1. Grand in ICE-Ireland**

It is a moot point whether this distribution reflects cultural differences between the north and the south (Kirk and Kallen 2008) and whether a vernacular style of discourse is more widespread in the Republic of Ireland than in Northern Ireland. But a partial answer can be achieved by considering the distribution of “approving *grand*” across the spoken texts of the 150 southern and 150 northern texts of *ICE-Ireland* (see figure below). Thirty-one of the southern texts contain *grand* and nineteen of the northern texts do (i.e., 20.77 percent for the south versus 12.73
percent for the north), showing a clear preponderance of “approving grand” in spoken texts from the Republic of Ireland. The high occurrence of “approving grand” compared with other types in the texts from both parts of Ireland – 91.29 percent for the south and 85.68 percent for the north – points clearly to the vernacular nature of “approving grand” in all forms of Irish English.

Figure 2. Grand in the spoken texts of ICE-Ireland

5.2 Possible occurrences of “approving grand” beyond Ireland

To determine whether instances of grand close to the specifically Irish English usage occurred in other Englishes the various components of the International Corpus of English along with the British National Corpus were examined.

With the components for Englishes in Asia there were no instances which were anywhere near the Irish English usage. For instance, ICE-Hong Kong contains fifty-seven instances of grand, all of which are “impressive grand” or “comprehensive grand”. ICE-Singapore contains twenty-four instances of grand one of which – “… giving me a grand send off” (ICE-SIN:W1B-014#63:2) – might be given an interpretation combining ‘approving’ and ‘impressive’.

The fifty-six instances in ICE-India did not reveal any instance of “approving grand” though some archaic uses were to be found, such as “I wish the function grand success” and “[…] will no doubt bring you grand success”, alongside the more present-day usage with the verb be and an indefinite article: “the new venture which was a grand success”.

Among the twenty-seven instances in ICE-Philippines there is one which has the sense of “approving grand”, but in a collocation which is common in many varieties of English: “I hope that you continue to have a grand time there”
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The absence of any collocation-free, context-independent instances of “approving grand” documents the distance between usage in ICE-Philippines and that found in present-day Irish English.

The Canadian component of the International Corpus of English presents a similar but not identical picture. Two of the thirty-two instances of grand in ICE-Canada could be classified as “approving grand”.

(14) […] was not my idea of a grand time. (ICE-CAN:S2A-041#181:1:A)

It would be grand to have such a monopoly (ICE-CAN:W2F-005#22:1)

For English in the United States, two of the corpora produced by Mark Davies of Brigham Young University, Utah, the Corpus of Historical American English (COHA) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) were consulted. The first 100 tokens of 32,174 tokens of grand in COHA reveal a mixed picture.

(15a) […] one of the grand songs of the Revolution […]

(Carl Engel. 1931. Discords Mingled)

(15b) But no-one minded that, because the place was grand, and there was so much to do.

(Upton Sinclair. 1908. The Metropolis)

(15c) […] and we had a grand time, all our Majors was [sic!] there.

(The Select Letters of Major Jack Downing, 1834)

(15d) “Ain’t that grand”, Charlie said admiringly. Well, well, well.

(Edwin O’Connor. 1961. Edge of Sadness)

Examples 15a and 15b are ambiguous in that an interpretation as “impressive grand” is possible. With Examples 15c and 15d an Irish influence cannot be excluded. The collection of letters are seemingly by someone of Irish origin as is the short novel extract in Example 15d.

The Corpus of Contemporary American English provides a similar picture. Here, as with COHA, care must be taken not to use instances stemming from authors with an Irish background or who are, indeed, Irish themselves. The instance of bare grand in the first hundred returns from the 31,040 tokens in COCA is in fact from a short story by the Irish author William Trevor published in the New Yorker magazine in 2004.

5.2.1 Occurrences of grand in British English

Given that Irish English is close to forms of English in Britain, I investigated the British National Corpus (BNC) to see what uses of grand are attested there. The 4,054 texts of the BNC were examined and 5,695 finds for grand were returned. For instance, “impressive grand”, in the almost lexicalised fixed expression a grand
gesture, is attested twenty-four times in phrases like “[…] it was a grand gesture by the owner”, “[…] a grand gesture of affirmation” and “[…] it was indeed a grand gesture”. Other similar collocations are to be found in the BNC; for example, “[…] a grand array of finery”, “Her brothers had a grand idea”, “We had started off in grand style” and “[…] and live in grand style in a fine house”. The phrases on a grand scale and the grand manner occur forty-one and twenty-two times, respectively.

(16a) […] and brick was adopted on a grand scale.
 […] there was music-making on a grand scale by young people.
 […] everything was happening on a grand scale.

(16b) Lagerfeld is a designer in the grand manner.

Groups of two adjectives, grand + X, are also documented in this sense (e.g., grand and imposing, grand and elegant and grand and beautiful). There are some such collocations in which the adjectives appear in attributive position (2.1 percent of all instances of grand), without and (e.g., “When you reach the grand old age of 50”).

A negative use of grand is found in certain collocations – for example, with talk, which is well-attested in the BNC (see Section 3.1).

(17) What has all this grand talk about moral universals to do with […] Amid much grand talk about the dawn of a new era
 […] with his good looks and grand talk of clean government.

If not explicitly negative, there is at least a critical stance implied in certain other collocations; for example, grand words as in “These are grand words, we must make sure […]” and “But despite the grand words from Barclays […]”.

In the sense of ‘including all possible candidates, sections, units’ (“comprehensive grand”) there are also many attestations; for example, grand alliance, grand amalgam, grand coalition, Grand Army and Grand Fleet.

In general, those cases in British English, where “impressive grand” shows usages close to the specifically Irish one of “approving grand”, nearly always involve an attributive position for the adjective and a fixed collocation; for example, “We had a grand time at the races”, “There’s a grand walk that begins and ends at Bainbridge” and “The swimmers are in grand form today”. Cases like “Yeah, that would be grand”, “That’ll be grand, she exclaimed” and “Who’s feeling grand this morning?” – a typically Irish English usage in which grand is a verbal complement – are very much the exception in the BNC.
5.2.2 Definitions of grand in dictionaries
The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (2009) has for its fourth meaning of grand, ‘wonderful, very pleasing’ but only gives one attestation – the fixed expression, a grand time. The Merriam Webster 11th Collegiate Dictionary (2003) gives its seventh meaning of grand as ‘very good, wonderful’ and uses the same illustration as the American Heritage Dictionary (i.e., a grand time). The Cambridge Advanced Learner Dictionary (2013) gives ‘excellent’ as its third meaning of grand and offers the following illustrations.

(18) We had grand weather on our holiday.
    My grandson is a grand little chap.
    You’ve done a grand job.

Despite these occurrences, none of these dictionaries comes close to the Irish English usage in terms of semantic range and syntactic flexibility. However, the English examples do cover a somewhat broader spectrum than the American ones which would make a closer look at grand in British English advisable. To begin with, there is a revealing section in the long text for grand in the Oxford English Dictionary (second edition 1989, enhanced digital edition, 2009). Definition eleven has the heading “Used as a general term to express strong admiration: ‘Magnificent’ ‘splendid’ colloq.”. The examples which follow are from the nineteenth century, both from the United States and England (there are no quotations provided from the twentieth or twenty-first centuries).

(19) 1816 Pickering Voc. U.S., Grand. Much used in conversation for very good, excellent, fine, &c. Ex. This is grand news; he is a grand fellow; this is a grand day. New England.
1876 Whitby Gloss. s.v., ‘Here’s a grand day’, very fine weather.
1894 Crockett Raiders 156 ‘They’ll bide..at at the Herd’s Hoose, or Cassencary belike, that’s a graund hauf o’ smugglers and gypsies.
1898 Ranjitsinhji With Stoddart’s Team iii, The Melbourne ground was in grand condition as regards the turf.

All these uses are compatible with Irish English “approving grand” in its modern attributive usage. This means it could conceivably be that an approving sense for grand was present embryonically during the nineteenth century and that this sense developed out of a small number of fixed expressions like a grand time. The specifically Irish English development would then have been the expansion of “approving grand” to become a semantically unrestricted adjective which could be combined with practically any noun chosen by the speaker, in either attributive or
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predicative position. Possible support for this view comes from some nineteenth-century authors. Two very different writers are Charles Dickens (1812–1870) and Lewis Carroll (Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, 1832–1898) both of whom provide instances which at least point in the direction of “approving grand”.

(20a) ‘...and found he had grown up such a fine young man, he perceived what a

\textit{grand} thing it would be to have him married without delay, [...]’

(Charles Dickens. \textit{The Pickwick Papers})

(20b) ‘To say that all is \textit{grand}, and all appalling and horrible in the last degree, is

nothing.'

(Charles Dickens. \textit{American Notes})

(20c) ‘That would be \textit{grand}, certainly,’ said Alice thoughtfully: ‘but then—I

shouldn’t be hungry for it, you know.’

(Lewis Carroll. \textit{Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland})

(20d) ‘I tell her it’s a \textit{grand} opportunity for practising patience.’

(Lewis Carroll. \textit{Sylvie and Bruno})

5.3 Intersubjectification: From “approving \textit{grand}” to “reassuring \textit{grand}”

“Approving \textit{grand}” has moved along the following trajectory as posited by Traugott for the cases which she analysed in her 2003 study (see Section 2 for a general discussion).

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{c}
non-subjective > subjective > intersubjective
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The intersubjective use of \textit{grand} can be seen in cases where the speaker seeks to put the addressee at his or her ease. There are a few instances from early twentieth-century texts, such as the following (spoken Irish English can be assumed to have developed this usage some time before its appearance in the textual record):

(21a) MARY DOUL You’ll be \textit{grand} then, and it’s no lie.

(John Millington Synge. 1905. \textit{The Well of the Saints})

In present-day Irish English, this use of \textit{grand} is very widespread and amply attested in data collections of the present author. In addition, it should be noted, as Elizabeth Traugott (p.c.) has pointed out, that these instances involve direct address, with \textit{you}, of another member in a discourse which acts as an enabling factor in intersubjectification.

(21b) Don’t worry about getting dressed up. You’ll be \textit{grand} the way you are.

(21c) Listen, you’re \textit{grand} now, forget about the veg.

\begin{footnote}{8. From a collection of vernacular Irish English data, the Waterford English Recordings, see Hickey (2007: 166) for details.}\end{footnote}
This usage of *grand* has the goal of allaying any doubts the addressee might have about the current situation (Example 21c) or a situation which is about to come about (Example 21b). Because of this, the label “reassuring *grand*” is used here to characterise this usage. It is no coincidence that this use of *grand* should have arisen. Given that Irish English discourse is heavily focussed on exchanges showing consensus and agreement between participants (Hickey 2007: Section 5.7; see also various contributions in Barron and Schneider 2005) – a pragmatic orientation which has its roots in non-industrialised, rural Ireland – it is no surprise that the “face and image needs” of the addressee should be highly valued.9

6. Conclusion

The title of this paper is intended to highlight the manner in which language use, here of the word *grand*, has led to an extension of the meaning of this word, expressing increasingly the speaker perspective in a discourse. Thus the rise of “approving *grand*” would confirm the well-established trajectory for semantic–pragmatic development in which meaning increasingly demonstrates a tendency to reflect the subjective position of the speaker (Traugott 1989). What both the older, pre-1800 usage of “impressive *grand*” and the newer usage of “approving *grand*” have in common is the notion of assessment on the part of the speaker. But the difference is that “impressive *grand*” is characterised by recognition of an assessment which speakers can assume to have been previously established or at least to be currently shared by others – and this is the essence of the non-subjective use of *grand*. However, “approving *grand*” is more centred on the personal opinion of the speaker at the time of an utterance and is, hence, subjective.

Furthermore, the extension of “approving *grand*” to a usage expressing reassurance is in keeping with trajectories of semantic change showing increasing subjectivity and the subsequent encompassing of the addressee in a discourse.10 This trajectory shows an order of its elements, reflected in the development of Irish English *grand*, for which the following approximate chronology can be posited.

9. Note further that the rise of approving *grand* is independent of the Irish language and cannot be traced to the language shift from Irish to English which took place for the greatest number of speakers in the nineteenth century, unlike the use of hedging *now* (Vaughan and Clancy 2011; Clancy and Vaughan 2012) which is connected to the Irish language (see also Hickey 2015).

10. In this respect it is similar to the present-day use of *awesome* as an adjective expressing a subjective assessment in a discourse (my thanks to Shane Walshe, University of Zurich, who reminded me of this). Of course, many other words in English underwent similar semantic-pragmatic developments (e.g., *well*; Defour 2010).
Table 2. Assumed chronology of non-subjective, subjective and intersubjective uses of *grand*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>21st century</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>non-subjective</td>
<td>subjective (early to mid nineteenth century)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intersubjective (twentieth century)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The above chronology also implies that the development is unidirectional. While it is true that there is no way of predicting that this trajectory will not be reversed in future, Traugott (2003: 128, 2010) confirms that her language database shows no instance of the reversal of the trajectory non-subjective > subjective > intersubjective. In addition, the continuing existence of “comprehensive *grand*” and “impressive *grand*” also confirms the claim by Hopper (1991) that, despite the addition of the component subjectivity to an item or phrase, non-subjective and less subjective uses can continue to exist. The comparison of “approving *grand*”, in both corpora from Ireland and from other parts of the anglophone world, has shown that there is a far greater incidence of this extended meaning in Irish English confirming that it is a specifically Irish feature. Hence “approving grand” and “reassuring *grand*” help to distinguish Irish English, in terms of pragmatics, from other varieties of English.

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