

THE DIFFERENT FACES OF NA

Na is a common word in Cornish. But we are in fact dealing here with *several different words* that should be distinguished, lexically and grammatically.

General negative particle

Meaning 'not'. Followed by Second State. Becomes **nag** before a vowel in forms of **bos** and **mos**. Since it is a particle, it must be immediately followed by a verb (with or without infixed pronoun). In all but the most colloquial Cornish it is replaced by particle **ny** in a main clause or apodosis of a conditional sentence and in the protasis of a real conditional sentence; but this replacement never occurs after **prag** 'why'. When it introduces the nominal clause of an indirect statement we may translate it as 'that ... not'. When it introduces an adverbial clause with subjunctive verb (optionally preceded by clarificatory **rag**) we may translate it as 'in order that ... not'.

Relative negative particle

Meaning 'who / which / that ... not'. This is a fusion of general negative particle **na** with affirmative relative particle **a** 'who / which / that'. Followed by Second State.

Adjectival pronoun

Meaning 'some'. The sense will be 'any' in negative sentences or in isolated phrases when a negative is implied, but it is important to realize that this **na** is not itself the negator. It is followed by *Third State*. It only occurs in a few fixed expressions, where it replaces **neb**, from which it is derived via intermediate pretonic **nam* that is seen in **nampëth** 'something' (a by-form of **neppëth**): the loss of *m* in **nam* leaves a trace as *Third State* mutation – compare loss of *m* in earlier **om** (still in revived Cornish as '**m**') > **ow** 'my'. The simplification of **nampell* to **napell** does not involve mutation (hence we write as one word in this case).

Conditional conjunction

Meaning 'if ... not'. Followed by Second State. This is a fusion of general negative particle **na** with conditional conjunction **a** 'if'. Logically it should be followed by *Fourth State*, since **a** is the second element; but it has been attracted to Second State by analogy with the simple particle. Likewise by analogy **mar na** is very frequently replaced by **mar ny** in the protasis of an unreal conditional sentence; but there can be no replacement when **na** is used alone in such a protasis.

Coordinating conjunction

Meaning 'nor'. It is not followed by any mutation. This is a fusion of general negative particle **na** and coordinating conjunction **ha** 'and'. Just as **ha** optionally (very frequently) becomes **hag** before *any* vowel, so **na** optionally (very frequently) becomes **nag** before *any* vowel.

Interjection

Meaning 'no'. In KS spelling this is written **nâ** with the distinguishing circumflex seen in e.g. **dâ** 'good'.