

## Variation and Change in the Syntax and Morphology of Medieval Celtic Languages

Host: Chronologicon Hibernicum Project, Department of Early Irish, Maynooth University  
Organizers: David Stifter, Elliott Lash, Fangzhe Qiu

October 13-14, 2017  
Carton House, Maynooth, Co. Kildare

Day 1, October 13, 2017

8:45  
Bus from South Campus, Stoyte House to Carton House

9:00 - 9:30  
Registration and Breakfast

9:30 - 10:15  
Liam Breatnach (School of Celtic Studies, D.I.A.S)  
**Some developments in the use of the demonstrative pronouns**

In this paper I intend to examine aspect of the use of the stressed demonstrative pronouns *só*, *sé* and *sin* in Old Irish, especially with reference to animates, and subsequent developments in Middle Irish.

10:15 - 11:00  
Ruairi Ó hUiginn (School of Celtic Studies, D.I.A.S)  
**Pronouns, particles and protonic verbs**

Despite some significant divergence, the Insular Celtic languages, as evidenced by Irish and Welsh in their earliest stages, show many shared features in the structure of the verbal complex. Prominent among these is the distinction between simple and compound verbs. With the former, pronouns or relative particles can be suffixed to the simple absolute verb or infixed by means of a preverbal particle or conjunction. In the latter, such pronouns and particles must be positioned after the first preverb or after a conjunction if such be present. In their subsequent histories, the inherited system of compound verbs is lost, and is replaced in most cases by new simple verbs based on the prototonic stem of the old compounds. This development had serious repercussions for the pronominal and relative systems in both languages.

In this paper we will look at aspects of how both languages reacted to this fundamental change, comparing the syntactic strategies employed in each case.

11:00 - 11:30  
Coffee Break

11:30 - 12:15  
Elisa Roma (Department of Humanistic Studies, University of Pavia)  
**Nasalization after inflected nominals in the Old Irish Glosses: diachronic or diatopic variation?**

The paper reports the results of a survey of nasalization or lack thereof after inflected nominals in the major corpora of Old Irish Glosses, classifying the occurrences according to phonetic and syntactic environments. The data point to high variation, so that the different behaviour in the various corpora may be supposed to be linked to later variation in the distribution of nasalization in Gaelic dialects.

12:15 - 13:00  
David Willis (Department of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics, Cambridge University)  
**Computational methods for tracking historical Welsh dialects**

It was traditionally thought to be impossible to identify dialect variation in Middle Welsh, but in the past twenty years significant progress has been made, and several convincing dialect diagnostics have been identified. The problem of securely localizing and dating texts and manuscripts has hampered progress in the past, as have difficulties raised by scribal practice (different approaches to copying manuscripts by scribes of the period). Existing work is based on the idea of extending present-day variation into the past: where two variants still exist today, it is assumed that the current distribution must be based in past patterns. On this basis, geospatial variation of morphophonological variables has been successfully identified (presence or absence of /j/ in suffixes; prepositional inflections in /t/, /d/ or /θ ð/; 3sg. past tense in /Vs/ or in /auð/) (Thomas 1993, Willis 2005). Where variation has no present-day correlate, little progress has been made in assigning it geospatial significance. I will investigate the prospects offered by the development of large-scale electronically searchable databases and statistical techniques for this area, using multidimensional scaling to create a space of variation that can be interpreted in part as representing dialect variation. A specific case for analysis will be variation in marking of realis conditional clauses, where this approach suggests that the marker *o(d)* 'if' should be considered northern and *or* 'if' southern. Further ahead, the existence of such databases may allow us to locate the source of the innovation that leads to the present-day system, namely the generalization of the focus conditional marker *os* to all realis conditional clauses. Finally, I will compare where we are with Welsh to progress made for medieval English in the LAEME and LALME atlases (Laing & Lass 2009) or for medieval German (e.g. Middle Low German negation, Breitbarth 2014).

13:00 - 14:00  
Lunch

14:00 - 14:45  
Carlos García-Castillero (Classical Studies, University of the Basque Country)  
**Synonymy (aN 'that (what)' and aní 'that (what)') and homonymy (aN 'that (what)' and aN 'when') in the Old Irish glosses**

In this presentation, the Old Irish elements *aN* 'that (what)' and *aní* are interpreted in terms of the notion of 'light head' recently proposed in the linguistic literature; in particular, I pay attention to the differences which can be observed between the unstressed and paradigmatically isolated *aN* 'that (what)' and the stressed *aní*, both nom./acc.sg. neuter

forms. After that, I discuss the diachrony of the temporal conjunction *aN* ‘when’ as derived from the light head *aN* and discuss the differences between the former and *inta(i)n* ‘when’, the other general temporal conjunction in Old Irish.

14:45 - 15:30

Britta Irslinger (English Department, University of Freiburg)

#### **Variation and Change in the expression of detransitive categories in Middle and Early Modern Welsh**

In Middle Welsh, two different markers appear within the domain of detransitive constructions. The verbal prefix *ym-* covers whole range of middle situation types. The inflected marker *X hun* (*my hun*, *dy hun*, *e hun* etc.), on the other hand, is predominantly used as an intensifier from Old Welsh onwards. In addition, it marks so-called "full reflexives", i.e. actions, the agent usually carries out on a patient, but exceptionally carries out on himself. *X hun* thus occurs as a reflexive marker in highly marked contexts with verbs which may or may not be prefixed by *ym-*, e.g. *ymgrogí e hun* 'to hang himself', *lladd e hun* 'to kill himself'.

By the end of the Middle Welsh period, *X hun* gradually extends its scope, developing into the Modern Welsh system, in which reflexive and intensive markers are identical like in English.

This development has previously been discussed as an areal feature, distinguishing the Insular languages English, Welsh and Irish from Continental ones such as German, Latin, French or Breton.

The present paper examines the use of *ym-* and *X hun* within a sample of Middle and Early Modern Welsh texts translated from Latin, Anglo-Norman and English sources and discusses them as possible contact phenomena.

15:30 - 16:00

Coffee Break

16:00 - 16:45

Aaron Griffith (Department of Languages, Literature and Communication, University of Utrecht)

#### **Prepositional cleft sentences in the Old Irish Glosses**

The standard rules for relative verbs in Old Irish cleft sentences are well-known: if the subject or object is brought forward, the main verb is relative. If a prepositional phrase is fronted, the verb is non-relative. Beside these important main categories, there are numerous sub-cases which are succinctly described in Thurneysen's Grammar of Old Irish. Based on an exhaustive collection of cleft sentences from the major Old Irish gloss collections, this paper re-examines the prepositional clefts in particular. While the standard rules are generally upheld, there are a small number of "irregular" relative verbs which form the basis of this talk.

16:45 - 17:30

Joseph Eska (Department of English, Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University) and Benjamin Bruch (Pacific Buddhist Academy)

#### **Observations upon the architecture of the left periphery in Celtic; and Cornish**

This paper explores the evolution of the architecture of the left periphery from Old through medieval Celtic with a particular focus upon Cornish. Old Celtic possessed a TopP and FocP

above both TP and vP, but the transition to V1 Insular Celtic resulted in a much less articulated left periphery. The medieval Brittonic languages evolved to V2. Previous scholarship has focussed upon Middle Welsh and Breton, with little attention to Cornish. This paper examines clausal configuration over the history of Cornish and finds that it varies across text type, sometimes allowing multiple frontings of arguments ahead of the verb. Towards the end of the attested record, there is evidence that it was becoming SVO, surely under the influence of English.

17:45

Bus from Carton House to South Campus, Stoyte House

Day 2 - October 14, 2017

8:45

Bus from South Campus, Stoyte House to Carton House

9:00 - 9:30

Breakfast

9:30 - 10:15

Jürgen Uhlich (Department of Irish and Celtic Studies, Trinity College Dublin)

#### **On the obligatory use of a nasalising relative clause after an adjectival antecedent in the Old Irish glosses**

According to *GOI* §§383 and 498, a nasalising relative clause is obligatory when ‘a neuter adjective used in periphrasis with the copula defines the modality of the following clause; e.g. *arndip maith n-airlethar a muntir* “so that he may well order his household”, lit. “that it may be good how he orders”’. This paper will first define this construction as against other, superficially similar ones, and then seek to demonstrate that this rule is indeed valid, and exceptions that do not feature a nasalising relative clause are rare and almost invariably triggered by additional considerations in their respective syntactical contexts.

10:15 - 10:45

Coffee Break

10:45 - 11:30

Paul Widmer & Stefan Dedio (Institute for Comparative Linguistics, University of Zurich)

#### **The Pervasiveness of agreement in the history of Welsh and Breton**

Abstract:

11:30 - 11:45

Final Remarks

12:00

Bus from Carton House to South Campus, Stoyte House