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

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Carton House, Maynooth, Co. Kildare

Day 1, October 13, 2017

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
Silva Nurmio (School of Celtic Studies, D.I.A.S)
Singulatives in Brittonic and Goidelic: change going two separate ways

Singulatives are a cross-linguistically attested category where a noun denoting a single unit is morphologically derived from a non-unit-denoting base, e.g. Welsh *adar* 'birds', singulative *ader-yn* 'a bird', where the base is a morphological collective. I argue that the singulative category is productive in the Brittonic languages and remains so in Modern Welsh and Breton, where singulatives are often formed on loanword bases. In Goidelic, on the other hand, there are only traces of this category, e.g. OIr *fo(i)ltne* 'a hair', from *folt* 'hair', and it is not productive in any period. In this paper I trace the history of singulative formations in Brittonic and Goidelic, and discuss how this category interacts with grammatical number, the mass/count distinction, and evaluative semantics (diminutive and pejorative connotations).

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
Elena Parina (Institute for Classical Languages and Literatures, Philipps University of Marburg)
Variation in Middle Welsh: data from religious texts

The data for my paper will be drawn from the texts analyzed for the project „Translations as language contact phenomena: studies in lexical, grammatical and stylistic interference in Middle Welsh religious texts" (University of Marburg, funded by Fritz Thyssen Stiftung). These texts allow us to study variation in Middle Welsh from several angles. The paper will focus on two perspectives. First, collation of text (mostly translated from Latin sources) contained in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Jesus College MS. 119 (the so-called Book of the Anchorite of Llanddewi Brefi) with versions of these texts found in other manuscripts yield insights into variation both within scribal transmission and within a single genre. Secondly, a comparison of aspects of morphology and syntax in the translated texts in Jesus 119 and in native texts highlights the impact of genre on variation.

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 *intí 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 rage 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 carrys 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. *ymgrogi 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 - 15:45
Coffee Break

15:45 - 16:30
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.

16:30 - 17:15
Joseph Eska (Department of English, Virginia Tech)
Observations upon the architecture of the left periphery in Celtic and Diachrony

This paper explores the evolution of the architecture of the left periphery from Old through medieval Celtic. 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. It expanded with the development of V2 in medieval Brittonic, but with microvariations across the languages. Comparison will be drawn with a diverse array of other languages.

Day 2 - October 14, 2017

9:00 - 9:45
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.

9:45 - 10:30
Paul Widmer & Stefan Dedio (Institute for Comparative Linguistics, University of Zurich)
The Pervasiveness of agreement in the history of Welsh and Breton

Abstract: To be Added

10:30 - 11:00
Coffee Break

11:00 - 11:45
Ruairí Ó hUiginn (School of Celtic Studies, D.I.A.S)
Pronouns, particles and protonic verbs

Abstract: To be Added

11:45 - 12:30
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).