Proceedings of the Thurneysen Fanclub: issue 14[1]

Records of the discussions in the conference room on 06-04-2017

In attendance: David Stifter (chair), Theodorus Fransen, Siobhán Barrett (part-time scroller), Bernhard Bauer, Fangzhe Qiu, Elliott Lash, Lars Nooij (scribe)

Apologies: Chantal Kobel, Nicole Volmering
Routine apologies assumed: Deborah Hayden, Romanas Bulatovas, Elizabeth Boyle

Practicalities
There have been no comments on the proceedings of last week's meeting so far (including on our comments on the comments made on the preceding proceedings). David notes that, contrary to what he said last week, academia.edu does not actually delete the comments made after the discussions are closed. As such, fortunately, the comments made on the earlier proceedings are still preserved. Michelle Doran, who is building a new website for ChronHib, will add a subsection to the project website for the Thurneysen reading group. This section will include a comment function where comments will be directly linked to the word commented upon).

Phonology (title, p. 27)
There was some initial confusion as to whether we would skip this chapter of *GOI*. We will in fact go through much of it, but will ignore the obsolete section on historical phonology.

As per usual, we first turn to the title itself: 'Phonology'. It is argued that this should be split into various sections: 1) synchronic and historical, and 2) phonetics and phonology.

In linguistics, phonetics (the study of sounds) precedes phonology (the study of the sound systems of specific languages), but given the nature of the sources there is naturally very little which can be inferred about the exact phonetics of the OIr. language with any degree of certainty. We have access only to orthography and morphology both of which are related directly to phonology, not phonetics: orthographical patterns attempt to encode phonological patterns; morphological contrasts have phonological expression. As such, in the new grammar we will include phonetics as a subsection of the chapter on phonology, rather than the other way around.

As mentioned before, the chapter on phonology should precede the chapter on orthography.

Stress (title, p. 27)
David prefers the German term for 'stress' (*Betonung*) over the English one, as it is less ambiguous.[2] We would not open the discussion of phonology with stress, but rather have this follow the phonemes. In general, 'stress' should come under the proposed subsection on phonetics. [EL: It seems to me that since stress can convey differences in meaning and because it is clearly involved in phonological rules (such as the stress placement rules in verbal complexes), that one could just as well say it is part of phonology.]

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1 In contrast to previous instalments, the current proceedings have undergone a considerable amount of ex-post editing by Elliott Lash, Lars Nooij, David Stifter.
2 The scribe is rather taken with the Dutch term (*klemtoon*). [DS: For a speaker of German, this evokes quite weird connotations.]

"Zimmer, Keltische Studien II, 1884; Thurneysen, RC VI 129 ff., 309 ff."; it took decades – back in the early days of the discipline – to figure out the exact placement of the stress in OIr. (esp. the deutero-tonic/prototonic distinction). We assume that these articles refer back to those efforts. As the matter is now well established, we figure we can safely drop these references.

Stress: general rule (§36)

"Words susceptible of full stress take this on the first syllable, e.g. f*a*irsingmenmnaige[3] 'magnanimity'." This is essentially correct, but one should note that there are exceptions to the main rule from the very outset by qualifying this statement.

"The stress is expiratory and very intense…"; this is true. We think that 'expiratory' is still the current term. This is clearly a matter of phonetics, rather than phonology.

"…as may be seen from the reduction of unstressed syllables…"; this is indeed indicative of a very strong stress. We wonder what other evidence might exist for a particularly pronounced stress and come up with a number of suggestions: alliteration in early poetry (alliteration is particularly common in languages with stress on the first syllable), the fact that *rinn-ardrinn* metres operate from the stressed syllable for rhyming purposes (ignoring what precedes the stress), and possibly the scribal practice of writing words that fall under one stress unit as one. For the latter David mentions that Ancient Greek, which had a melodic stress, tended to be written without breaks and one wonders whether stress patterns might have a broader effect on writing practices.

"It is this reduction that enables us to infer the position of the stress in Old Irish…"; again, correct. OIr. is in fact an illustrative example of a language in which the position of stress has a strong, synchronic effect on the shape of words. Other examples are Tocharian B and some of the Turkic languages (Uighur is mentioned in particular); in these latter cases one might, perhaps, be dealing with a Central Asian areal feature. English has a good deal of such alternations as well, but they belong mainly to word formation (e.g. conversion of nouns into verbs or vice versa) and are acquired as lexical properties.

"…further evidence is supplied by the pronunciation of the modern dialects, although in a few of these the stress has shifted in certain cases." In Scottish Gaelic the stress is strongly fixed on the first syllable (including the resulting reduction of long vowels in unstressed syllables). In Donegal Irish the stress is similarly strongly fixed on the first syllable. In Connemara there are some exceptions to this rule. In Munster, and more generally in the Southern half of Ireland, there are strong shifts of the accent to later syllables (explicable by particularly strong Norman/French influence on the language? However, the shifts include native words, such as *caill<u>ea</u>ch*, too). We do not know the position of the stress in Manx, but we would not be surprised if it was in accord with Scottish Gaelic (as it often is). According to Wikipedia the stress in Manx is usually on the first syllable, but actually tends to be attracted by long vowels in other syllables.

"The above rule holds for all simple words and for nominal compounds, including participles." 'Simply words' seems to mean 'uncompounded', be it a noun, or a verb. 'Including participles', why single these out in particular? The *Handbuch* is only slightly clearer on the matter. We prefer to leave this sentence out as such and instead simply state that there are systematic exceptions to the main rule.

[3] Wonderful efforts were made by various participants to pronounce this word correctly.

Stress: verbal compounds (§37)

"Deuterotonic and prototonic verbal compounds"; we would rather say 'verbal compounds', as the terms 'deuterotonic' and 'prototonic' have not yet been introduced at this stage.[4]

"When one or more prepositions are compounded with a finite verb the stress normally falls on the second element…"; the entire paragraph should be rewritten from scratch, as there are many problematic issues. First, we would say 'preverbs' rather than 'prepositions' (with due reference ahead to the paragraphs in which the diachronic relationship between preverbs and prepositions is set out). We also prefer to replace 'finite verb' with 'finite, simple verb'. Ahead of that we would emphasise the fundamental distinction between 'simple' and 'compound' verbs, with reference to the section on verbs.

At this stage the following statement was recorded: 'in simple verbs the stress is on the first syllable, in compounds the stress is on the second element.' A first indication of the intense discussion that was soon to follow on how exactly to formulate the placement of the stress in compound verbs is to be seen in the brief note appended to this statement: '(but what about infixes, etc.?)'.

"…in simple compounds on the verb itself (on the first syllable), in multiple compounds on the second preposition." As the entire compound can be called 'the verb' we would much rather say 'on (the first syllable of) the root'.

"The first preposition, in fact, does not form a close compound with the second element, and may be separated from it by a personal pronoun…"; the terms 'close' and 'loose' compounds are decidedly vague and therefore not commendable. We would rather say that the 'first preverb may be separated from the rest by various infixes (i.e. augments, infixed pronouns, relative or clause-type markers)'.

"…in verse even by other words." In rhetorical style this can occur as well (e.g. in *Audacht Morainn*).

The useful term 'verbal complex' (coined by Calvert Watkins) should be introduced into the grammar at this point, but its details are not only complex, but also somewhat messy. Take, for example, *co·n-epir* "so that he says" and *co as·beir*. The elements *co* can both function both as prepositions and as conjunctions, have the same shape and similar meanings, and neither take the stress, but the first *co*^{N} can be a conjunct particle (triggering dependent forms of the verb), whereas the second *co*^{H} cannot (the verb remains in its independent, in this case deuterotonic form). As such, *co*^{N} (as a conjunct particle) is said to form part of the verbal complex, whereas *co*^{H} never is. The two elements were kept separate in OIr., as is indicated by the differing mutations which they trigger. This clearly demonstrates that stress as such (specifically the gathering of various elements around a single stressed element) does not define the verbal complex. If stress did define the verbal complex, both elements should have been able to function as conjunct particles.

[4] David, citing Neoplatonic imagery, would prefer to go from the general concept to its various realizations (general > concrete). The scribe wholeheartedly approves.

The following elements can form part of the verbal complex, roughly in this order:

– conjunct particles
– (a cluster of up to four) preverbs
– clausetype markers
– augments
– infixes
– the verbal root
– the inflectional endings
– the notae augentes

Despite the aforementioned inconsistencies, the verbal complex is a functional, practical concept.

It follows that there are two types of conjunctions: those that can function as conjunct particles within the verbal complex and those that cannot. A further illustration of this distinction may be found in the conjunction *má* "if", which is not a conjunct particle, and the conjunct particle *mani* "if (it is) not", which consists of the aforementioned *má* and the negation *ní*.

The question is raised whether this was ever a stable system, to which the answer is basically yes. It seems to be a pretty much fixed system in OIr., but there is some fluctuation in Middle Irish, e.g. *cía* 'although', which in OIr. entails an independent sentence, being treated as a conjunct particle.[5]

It is, nonetheless, not always understood why the verbal complex functioned quite as it did. Diachronically all kinds of elements could be included in the verbal complex as clausetype markers, e.g. **de*, **$k^{\mu}e$*, **eti*, **i̯o*, **so(si)m*, **i̯om*. However, as we have seen, by the OIr. period there are many elements which could not be included in it as conjunct particles, in spite of their clear similarity to existing conjunct particles. There is also some ambiguity, or variation in its function, as shown by *cía*^{H} "who is it?", which constitutes a full phrase in and of itself,[6] but also has a counterpart conjunct particle, *ci·/ce·*. As such, we find both *cía as·beir* and (more rarely) *ci·epir*, both meaning "who says/speaks?". Why was this distinction maintained? It is suggested that this may have something to do with topicalization.

[EL: David Adger (2005), 'Post-syntactic movement and the Old Irish Verb', talks about this alternation in an interesting way. For the conjunct particle *ci·/ce·* he says that this is a *wh*-head (X), while for the full phrase *cía*, this is a *wh*-phrase (XP). They are thus subject to different morphological/phonological pressures, being different types of items. He does not go into the pragmatics, but I don't think 'topicalization' works since typically topicalization is associated with old information, but *wh*-interrogatives are normally asking for new information, i.e focus. A better term might be 'discourse-linked' versus 'non-discourse-linked' – if the question can be linked back in some way to something previously mentioned in the discourse or not. These terms are typically used to describe *wh*-interrogative syntax in many languages.]

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[5] Rosemarie Lühr, FS Meid 1999, p. 222 (see also LIPP 409), has explained *cía* as an originally locatival adverb **k̂ei̯* 'here' which in certain contexts took on an adversative function, cf. Germ. *dabei*. This adverbial origin of the conjunction explains straightforwardly the non-subordinate construction of *cía* in OIr. Approaching the question of the diverse behaviour of OIr. conjunctions from this angle may prove fruitful.

[6] The aspiration ^{H} is the dying gasp of the copula.

At this stage Elliott, who was absent during the first hour of the meeting, is sorely missed.[7] Fortunately, as fate would have it, Elliott promptly entered the room[8] and joined the discussions.[9]

It is noted that this chapter would form the first grammatical chapter (right after the sources and resources) in our proposed new grammar of OIr. And one wonders whether it is a good practice to be introducing such complex matters as the verbal complex straight up, as this requires a very extensive amount of references to future chapters right at the start of the grammar proper. We conclude that it is essentially unavoidable. One cannot leave the discussion of deuterotonic and prototonic out of the discussion of stress, as it is such a key grammatical function of stress in the grammar of OIr. And one should not discuss this distinction without at least touching upon the verbal complex. Moreover, as the grammar is intended to be a reference, rather than a learner's grammar we assume that our intended audience will be able to deal with this.

Elliott is not particularly fond of our use of the term 'compound verb', as this is liable to misunderstanding by linguists from outside the field of OIr. studies. In general linguistics, the term 'compound verb' can be (and perhaps usually is) used rather for compounds between two verbs, of which one has a specifically auxiliary function [LN, having chatted with EL: usually denoting the direction of the act], or a verb and a noun.[10] This triggers a discussion on our traditional vs. the current, general linguistic use of the term 'compound verb'. It is felt that in the study of Indo-European languages the traditional use of the term (referring to a verbal root compounded with a preverb, in contrast to a simple verb, consisting of the uncompounded verbal root) is not ambiguous. Nonetheless, it warrants further thought. [EL: We might make a distinction between *Phrasal Verbs* (Compound Verbs as traditionally thought of, i.e. P+V compounds], *Complex Verbs* or idiomatic verb phrases (N+V, V+V compounds), and Adjunct+V (*caín-*, *slán-*, *mí-*, *mos-*, +V).] All of this is going beyond the phonetics of the language, but ought to be considered in the definition of 'compound verb' in the section on verbs.

Unfortunately, there is no simple way of defining the placement of the stress on the basis of the verbal complex. Take for example the verb *asnacha·tucad*, where the stress is on the sixth element (*a-s-na-ch-a-t**u**c-ad*).

The discussion now turns to figuring out a reliable formulation to predict stress placement in compound verbs (in the traditional sense). One might define the verbal complex as the 'verb proper' plus 'various grammatical elements'. The formulation 'as soon as anything precedes the verbal root (unless it is an imperative, or a participle) the stress falls on the second syllable of the verb' does not work.

Looking at the matter of the position of the stress in verbs from a more abstract perspective, Elliott suggests that "in phrases, heads are stressed". It is objected that it seems counterintuitive that in, say, *·tucad* and *do·ucad* the preverb *do* can be part of the head in the former, whereas it is not part of the head in the latter. To which Elliott replies that this is simply because the language had verb movement; the stress is where the head is, irrespective of what's there. [EL wants to clarify his suggestion further: The head of the verb phrase (i.e. the verbal root) is always stressed, but the deuterotonic/prototonic

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[7] The minutes record: "we want Elliott!" [DS: However, David saw the cup rather as half full, when he remarked that the absence of Elliott allowed him to say whatever he wanted about syntactical matters, without anybody objecting or contradicting.]

[8] The minutes record: "→ Elliott enters, lo!"

[9] Elliott: "Where are you at?", David: "Stress.", Elliott: "You guys need to relax."

[10] Example by Elliott after the meeting: in OIr. e.g. *gaibid port*, i.e. 'to come to port' – *Is and gabuis o[port] s[curuch Coluim Cildi]* "It is then that Coluim Cille's curragh reached harbour." (Monastery of Tallaght 466).

distinction depends on whether or not the preverb has been incorporated into the root or not. This incorporation could be seen as a type of head movement. DS: From a diachronic perspective, the concept of the incorporation of preverbs into the root blurs the differences between them. Doing so would multiply the number of synchronic roots. While there is nothing that prohibits us from doing so a priori, and while such a step is necessary at some stage to account for the verbal system of Modern Irish, it would be bought for the price of creating complications in other areas of verbal morphology, e.g. stem formation (reduplication) and augmentation. Terminology that we could use could be verbal root vs. verbal stem vs. verbal complex (to be explained at a later date).]

Tying this into the preceding discussion on the term 'compound verbs', it is felt that both that term and phrases such as 'heads are stressed' are liable to be unhelpful to at least part of the intended audience (formal linguists vs. historical linguists and traditional Celtologists). As such, additional definitions and clarifications are required, whichever option – in either case – is eventually adopted.

The attempt to come up with a formulation to predict the position of the stress in verbs continues. It is proposed that 'the stress comes after the clausetype-marker', but that does not work either.

Within the verbal complex, the stress is always on the 'lexical verb', or the 'verb proper', which may be defined as the 'semantic part' of the verb (ignoring the ending). We now come up with the rather cumbersome rule: **'the stress is always on the first element of the verb proper, unless other positions [within the verbal complex] on the left edge of the verb proper are left unfilled; in that case, the stress is moved one position to the right within the verb proper**'. An example to illustrate the matter:

1a	X-|es-ber|-ø	vs.	1b	ni-|es-ber|-ø
2a	X-|ber|-id	vs.	2b	ni-|ber|-ø

The area between the vertical lines forms the verb proper. Following the rule, the stress is placed on the first syllable of the verb proper, unless positions to the left of it are unfilled, but the stress cannot move outside of the verb proper. As nothing precedes the preverb in 1a (i.e. the positions to the left of it are left unfilled), the stress is moved rightward to the verb root in the first example (*as·beir*). If a conjunct particle is added as in 1b the stress moves to the preverb (*ní·epir*). In 2a the position to the left of the verb proper is left unfilled as well, but the stress cannot move outside of the verb proper to the ending and therefore remains on the verbal root (*beirid*). If a conjunct particle is added the same holds (*ní·beir*).

We take a brief detour into the nature of the verbal complex before turning to an obvious weakness in the proposed stress rule. It is noted that the verbal complex is made up of a semantic part, consisting of a verbal root and inflectional endings (which are both obligatory), up to four preverbs and the optional slots: infixes, conjunctions, clause type markers and augments. The flaw in our rule is that it only works for compound verbs (and simple verbs with a root consisting of just one syllable). Taking the word *suidigidir*, the stress would be placed on *-di-* by our rule. An *ad hoc* solution would be to add that simple verbs do not have this rule (we leave imperatives and the issue of *-ro-* aside for the moment).

We decide to accept this imperfect solution for the moment. It is not ideal to have simple and compound verbs behaving differently in this matter, but the rule, with the addition of the exception, does work.[11]

[11] Addition by DS: The general definition also makes incorrect predictions in cases where the verb proper has more than one syllable because of reduplication, e.g., a form like †*me**maid*** could be expected. In order to avoid having to treat simple and compound verbs differently in regard to stress placement, maybe it would help to add

Stress: prototonic (§38)
"On the other hand the stress falls on the **first** preposition in the following cases…"; as our rule explains the movement of the stress and regards the accent on the first syllable as the default position anyway, we do not need to go into as much detail, nor list as many examples, as Thurneysen did in this paragraph. In a new grammar it would suffice to give a few examples of deuterotonic and prototonic verbs to illustrate the matter.

It is notable that Thurneysen does not actually define 'deuterotonic', while he gives a definition for 'prototonic'.

The imperative follows a different pattern, as it has prototonic forms, but no surface element precedes the verb proper. The reason for this may, perhaps, be found in the null-clause-typing hypothesis,[12] or by taking it as a pausa-form.[13] The formal question arises whether or not the stress in the imperative was always prototonic, or moved back from the deuterotonic position.

X-|to-ber| (*do·beir*)	pres.indic.
X-|to-ber| (*tabair*)	imperative

An argument in favour of the stress not to have moved (at a relatively late stage) is that the change of *to-* to *do-* and the vowel change in the prototonic forms are related to an early, prototonic stress.

[EL exemplifies this:

	tóbeir > *tobéir* > *dobéir* > ***dóbeir*	(movement forward and back with voicing)
vs.	*tóbeir* > *tábair*	(no movement with vowel alternation)]

It would seem possible to argue for the unusual treatment of imperatives on the aforementioned basis of either null-clause-typing, or a pausa-form, making it less of an exception to the proposed rule.

this further restriction to the general rule: **'…but not further than the first syllable of the slot occupied by the representation of the root'**.

[12] That is to say, having an empty, unexpressed element in front of the verb proper which serves as a virtual conjunct particle.

[13] The pausa-form is "the form of a word uttered on its own, with nothing surrounding it." An example is the vocative in many languages, e.g. in Greek: nominative *Sōkrátēs* (stress on the second syllable), but taking the pausa-form in the vocative *Sṓkratēs* (stress on the first syllable).