

Proceedings of the Thurneysen Fanclub: issue 17

Records of the discussions in the conference room on 04-05-2017

In attendance: David Stifter (chair), Theodorus Fransen, Chantal Kobel, Deborah Hayden, Daniel Watson, Siobhán Barrett, Fangzhe Qiu, Elliott Lash, Lars Nooij (scribe)

Apologies: Anne Harrington

Routine apologies assumed: Romanas Bulatovas, Gearóid Ua Conchubhair, Bernhard Bauer, Elizabeth Boyle, Lára Ní Mhaoláin

Practicalities

The proceedings are lagging behind a bit; both in terms of being finalized and uploaded (David's task) and in being drafted (Lars' task). There will be no meeting next week [Lars: nor, as it turned out to be, the week after that]. Comments on previous proceedings will be discussed during the next meeting.

Unstressed words (§41)

"Words which are not themselves fully stressed are attached either (a) to the following word as proclitics, or (b) to the preceding word as enclitics." Should we then not write e.g. articles together with nouns in our editions? This is, of course, often (albeit inconsistently) also the attested manuscript practice.¹ We would prefer a wording such as 'which fall under the same stress' and to add a note on the fact that the definite article is sometimes written together and sometimes written apart from the following noun in the manuscripts. That is to say, the article was recognized by speakers of OIr. as a separate word, but was spoken together with the noun.

"...prepositions... and infixed personal pronouns before verbs..."; as noted before, one should now call these 'prepositions' 'preverbs'. We should also make mention of the negatives and perhaps also of some of the mutations.

"...the forms of the copula..."; is the copula most often written separately? Deborah: it is included under one stress group in the *Auraicept* (along with prepositions and such). See Ahlqvist in *Ériu* (probably Anders Ahlqvist, 'Notes on 'case' and word-boundaries', *Ériu* 25 (1974), 181–189 is meant) and Erich Poppe, 'Thinking about words in medieval Ireland', in: *Grammatica, Gramadach and Gramadeg. Vernacular Grammars and Grammarians in Medieval Ireland and Wales*, eds. Deborah Hayden & Paul Russell, Benjamins 2016, 65–83.

"...often also conjunctions before verbs." Should we also add the conjunct particles?

The question of why some conjunctions never are conjunct particles rears its head again. A syntactic solution is offered:

<i>cía do-beir</i>	interrogative clause + relative clause; <i>cía</i> is on a higher level than <i>do-beir</i>
<i>ce-tabair</i>	one clause
<i>cía</i>	"although, even, if" < old locative * <i>kēi</i> is also on a higher level.

¹ At this stage David's phone made a sound. David: "Prince Philip died, apparently." David: "Oh, no, sorry! He retires from public functions. That's what the Guardian considers 'important news'."

At the time when the distinction between dependent and independent verbs arose there must have been an awareness of a distinction between conjunctions which were on a different, or on the same level as the verb. This was then fossilized into a distinction between stressed, independent conjunctions and unstressed, conjunct particles. In synchronic OIr. this distinction became blurred, e.g. *cía* ‘although’ and *ma* ‘if’ are often unstressed although they should be stressed.

All this warrants a reference to the section on the verbal complex. One wonders whether this would be at all comprehensible to a newcomer to OIr. grammar. Most probably not. As such, we want to have references to all the matters discussed here, so that the reader can look up explanations and examples of everything that has a bearing on this topic.

“(b) includes certain demonstrative particles...”; ‘particles’ are always unstressed. As such, we should distinguish between ‘demonstrative particles’ (unstressed) on the one hand and demonstrative pronouns (stressed) on the other. In the *Handbuch* they are called *Verstärkungspartikeln*.

“...the emphasizing particles...”; we would now say ‘*notae augentes*’, the term used by Zeuss and reintroduced by Aaron Griffith. It used to be thought that these particles were used to emphasize the object or the subject of the verb, but the distribution has turned out to imply something very different. For example, if both a 1st and a 2nd person are involved, the *nota augens* can only ever refer to the 1st person – i.e. one cannot choose which of the two to ‘emphasize’ (a term which thus loses its significance). Also, in copula phrases it often occurs in the position of the subject. Etymologically the *notae* sometimes go back to real pronouns. Altogether, they seem to have a function as discourse markers, something to do with distance.

We wonder what the suffixed pronouns / reference markers are called in Welsh grammar [Lars: GMW §62: ‘affixed pronouns’]. We also wonder whether there is any reference to this in the *Auraicept*; probably not, but it might be worth checking the booklet on grammatical terms by Ahlqvist.

“Certain conjunctions used in principal clauses, such as **dano, didiu, trá**... are not fully stressed either.” This is problematic. *Danó* has final stress, *trá* looks stressed and *didiu* might well be stressed as well. Perhaps we should add a ‘lightly-/semi-stressed’ category for these words? They are fundamentally stressed, but it seems that the phrasal stress reduces the word stress in these instances.

A parallel to this may be found in the known stress reduction in groups consisting of a monosyllabic noun followed by a noun in the genitive, in which the first noun becomes unstressed (e.g. the name *Mullaly* < *Maelalagh* < *Máel* + gen.). This is, of course, a different process, but it does demonstrate that stressed words can lose their stress under the influence of higher-level stress patterns.

“The absence of stress is most complete in (1) the article or a possessive pronoun standing between a preposition and the word it governs, (2) infixed pronouns and (sometimes) **ro** between preverbs and verbs, and (3) the copula between conjunctions and the predicate.” We should take *ro* out of this discussion as its stress or lack of stress has nothing to do with its inherent quality.

The copula may well be even less stressed in this particular position, e.g. *ara mbitis* > **aramb̥tis* (extra) > **ar̥mb̥tis* (ordinary) > *airmtis* has an extra round of syncope. [Elliott calls this ‘pretonic squish-ing’.] One wonders whether one should call this a matter of stress though. As the copula is already fully unstressed under normal circumstances, how can it become even less stressed than unstressed?

All in all, it seems we can distinguish at least three levels of stress:

- 1) words that are fundamentally stressed
- 2) words that are either stressed or unstressed (depending on the syntactic context)
- 3) words that are fundamentally unstressed

Vowels

Thurneysen now turns to vowels, but this seems a rather abrupt shift from a relatively abstract to a much more concrete topic. It is suggested that we might want to add a section on syllable structure (possible sequences, epenthesis, etc.) in between.

On a higher level, we wonder whether we should follow the order “stress/abstract concepts > sounds”, or start with the sounds and progress to more abstract things. We would prefer to first briefly discuss the phonemes and graphemes of OIr., then deal with stress issues, before turning to a description of the synchronic phonological rules.

Vowel quantity (§42)

This paragraph, as is often the case, contains a mixture of orthography and phonology.

“According to later bardic teaching there was also an intermediate quantity (**síneadh meadhónach**...). This may have already existed in Old Irish in cases where the mark of length appears only sporadically... But no definite conclusion can be reached for our period.” We would like to know more about this, as we are not particularly familiar with this intermediate length. We are not at all certain that the inconsistency of length marking in the manuscripts can be used to argue for the presence or absence of this quality, however, as vowel length is in general only marked haphazardly in the manuscripts from the period; even in the case of words which definitely had a long vowel.

This paragraph is missing in the *Handbuch*.

Vowel quantity and stress (§43)

Pretonic position should be mentioned here as well. Are there long vowels in pretonic position? There are of course prepositions such as *ó*, *ós* (unstressed), which alternate with *ua*, *uas*, and *ré*, *ria* (<**prej*, i.e. it was originally long). But we are not certain how this should be interpreted.

“Long vowels appearing in such [post-tonic] syllables are either secondary... or have arisen from assimilation to the vocalism of stressed syllables; or they occur in compounds formed after the rule as to shortening had fallen into disuse...”; this is not a case of ‘assimilation’, but rather analogy to the occurrence of the long vowel in stressed position. There is an additional example in the *Handbuch*, which should be added: *erégem*, *airégem* vs. *erígem* ‘complaint’, cf. *ar-égi* ‘he complains’.

Both analogy and time depth are indeed possible explanations for the occurrence of long vowels in post-tonic syllables.

“...certain loan-words like **achtáil** ‘actuālis’, **enáir** ‘ianuārius (ienuārius)’, which preserve their Latin quantity.” Did the Irish take their pronunciation of Latin from learned/classical Latin, or from spoken British Latin? It is hard to know. It is suggested that the loss of the *u* in *enáir* might, perhaps be regarded as an Irish development, cf. **Conuall* > *Conall*.

Vowel lengthening (§44)

§44.a. deals with a matter of historical phonology, so we follow our established practice and skip it.

“(b) Final vowels in stressed monosyllables are lengthened...”; this is fundamentally correct. We would add the etymologies of the examples here, to illustrate the matter.

The discussion now turns to whether this is a synchronic or a diachronic rule of OIr. It turns out to be difficult to decide. Are there any new formations which follow this rule? As the effect of the rule was maintained in the OIr. period, it is certainly synchronically significant and functional; some examples:

<i>mé</i>	<i>me/sse</i>	
<i>·gé</i>	<i>ge/s-</i>	
<i>·má</i>	<i>má/s-</i>	(with underlying long vowel)

It is suggested that if we can find an originally long vowel being shortened in unstressed position this proves that the rule is still functional: e.g. *fo·loing*, subjunctive root *fo·lós-* < **fo-leus-*. This verb has deuterotonic 3sg. *fo·ló*, but prototonic *·ful*, rather than expected *·fulo* (an original long vowel is preserved in a closed final syllable). You could argue that attested *·ful* arose due to analogy with cases where the root vowel was long in deuterotonic position due to the operation of this rule, but short in prototonic position (and would therefore have been lost in the apocope). To illustrate the contrasts between a verb with underlying short vowel (*do·guid*) and a verb with underlying long vowel (*fo·loing*) in the subjunctive stem:

	<i>do·guid</i>		
subj.	<i>*di-ges-</i>		
3sg.deut.	<i>do·gé</i>	3sg.prot.	<i>ní·dig</i> (< <i>ní·di-ges</i>)
3pl.deut.	<i>do·gessat</i>		
	<i>fo·loing</i>		
subj.	<i>*fo-lós-</i>		
3sg.deut.	<i>fo·ló</i>	3sg.prot.	<i>ní·fola</i> (< <i>ní·fo-lós</i>) / <i>ní·ful</i>
3pl.deut.	<i>fo·lóssat</i>		

However, it is argued that although this is clearly a synchronic alternation, alternative explanations for *ní·ful* can be suggested (other models of analogy). As such, though suggestive, this does not clinch the matter.

The non-verbal alternations (*mé/messe*) might offer stronger arguments for the synchronicity of the rule, but the obvious material is also problematic:

<i>sí</i>	< <i>*sih₂</i> (long), but emph. <i>sisse</i> (short). Is this a case of secondary shortening?
<i>é</i>	< <i>*em</i> (short), but emph. <i>é·som</i> (long), Modern Irish <i>seisean</i> . This is problematic.
<i>sní</i>	< <i>*snēs</i> (long), but emph. <i>snisni/sníni</i> , it is short in the later language. Unclear.

A clear loanword from Norse, British, or English would also work, if a short vowel is lengthened by means of this rule. Unfortunately, a quick search in eDIL for relevant Norse loanwords offered no examples with V#.

“Certain words which generally occur in unstressed position are not lengthened even when they take the stress...”; Liam Breatnach (in *Ériu* 53, 2003) argues that these are all actually long, so this statement is incorrect. Breatnach argued his case conclusively by means of both spellings with length marks and rhyme. Mícheál Hoyne takes the matter further into the Classical Modern Irish period in an article in the latest *Celtica* (vol. 28, 2016). In Classical Modern Irish you seem to find both long and short variants of these words, but the shortening appears to be analogical rather than based on a phonological rule, which means that the Classical Modern Irish material has no bearing on the OIr. period in this case.

We should really start writing the vowels of these words as long in normalised OIr. texts.