

Proceedings of the Thurneysen Fanclub: issue 16

Records of the discussions in the conference room on 27-04-2017 (Koningsdag)

In attendance: David Stifter (chair), Nike Stam, Nicole Volmering, Theodorus Fransen, Chantal Kobel, Anne Harrington, Siobhán Barrett, Fangzhe Qiu, Bernhard Bauer, Elliott Lash, Lars Nooij (scribe)

Apologies: Lára Ní Mhaoláin, Elizabeth Boyle

Routine apologies assumed: Romanas Bulatovas, Gearóid Ua Conchubhair

Practicalities

There are remarkably few cookies, considering the size of the crowd.

As over a third of those present are from the Netherlands, it seems only fitting¹ to open the meeting with sincere well-wishes to his Majesty Willem-Alexander van Oranje, king of the Netherlands, on the occasion of his fiftieth birthday.

David did not prepare much for this session, as he has to hand in a report on the ChronHib project tomorrow and it is proving to be quite complicated. Moreover, the proceedings of the last meeting have not been finalized and uploaded yet. As such, we leave comments on the preceding proceedings aside for this meeting and continue reading the grammar.

Stress: verbal compounds (§38, p.29)

“3. (a) On rare occasions a prototonic verb is found introducing a relative clause...”; the type of reduction described here has nothing to do with the placement of stress. We would now call this a ‘contracted form’.² For example, one often finds *ticc* instead of *do-icc* in independent position. In these contexts *ticc* is not prototonic (although it is formally identical), but rather a contracted form of the deuterotonic verbal form. That is to say, this is the result of a separate, phonetic process, which is not related to the deuterotonic/prototonic distinction.

The contracted forms are nonetheless problematic as they are not predicted by the particle theory.³ The particle, as for example described by Peter Schrijver, is taken to have been **eti*,⁴ which should have yielded /h/ in OIr. As such, one would expect *do-icc* to have been pronounced /do·hicc/ and it is generally expected that this *h* would have kept the two syllables apart. Elliott wonders why the latter needs to be the case, noting that in Ancient Greek *kai hauta* becomes *khauta*. Why would an intervening *h* necessarily preclude reduction?⁵

¹ To me, the scribe, at any rate.

² At this stage, David takes a picture. Siobhán: “Do you want one with yourself in it?” David: “No.”

³ Siobhán: “Sounds like physics.”

⁴ There are good arguments in favour of there having been a particle and it being PIE **eti* ‘and’, which was then turned into a general ‘main-clause particle’. The British languages provide some visible evidence for the existence of the particle itself (e.g. Middle Welsh *nyt* vs. *ny*), but it has left no direct trace in Irish. Elliott comments that in the Book of Armagh – in the *Additamenta* – one finds that verbal forms in initial position are geminated and that gemination, rather than devoicing is the expected result of a cluster **hC* in this position. This needs to be looked into further, but offers further support for the particle theory.

⁵ It is further noted that stress itself does not always prevent contraction/elision either, e.g. stressed *ro... V > rV*.

McCone argued that *ticc* is actually the expected form and that *do-icc* arose by means of either analogy, or the presence of the relative particle. But neither McCone's theory that contraction is expected, nor the particle theory's stance that contraction is never expected manages to explain all the attested forms.

Carlos García Castillero ('The type *tánicc* in the Old Irish glosses', *Transactions of the Philological Society* 113 (2015)) offers a third way. García Castillero looked at the distribution of these contracted forms and found that the more frequent a verb is, the more common contracted forms are, whereas contracted forms are relatively uncommon in less frequently attested verbs. He explains the contraction as a secondary phenomenon which arose in OIr. as an 'allegro-form' (i.e. these are rapid, every-day speech forms). It is raised that this does not immediately explain why we find *ticc*, rather than *dicc*. However, there are ways around this issue: e.g. analogy with prototonic forms, or arguing that the contraction occurred before the voicing of pretonic elements around 700 AD. Elliott adds that one could also argue that *d-h-icc* would yield *ticc* by means of devoicing on purely phonetic grounds, which would offer a way of explaining the matter without the need for analogy, or reanalysis.

In the *Poems of Blathmac* one sometimes finds contracted forms in the manuscript which need to be restored to uncontracted forms on metrical grounds. David ('The Language of the Poems of Blathmac') has noticed that contraction seems to be more common with more frequently used verbs, thus giving support to García Castillero's theory, although it is also clear (having emended the forms that require restoration) that this 8th-century poet was free to choose between contracted and uncontracted forms to suit the metre.

At any rate, this part of §38 – which is absent from the *Handbuch* – should not be in a chapter on stress, as it has no bearing on that issue. It is not entirely clear whether it is purely a matter of syntax, or morphology, as the explanation by means of allegro forms would make it part of phonology all the same. For those with an interest in the topic, the main arguments are set out in: Peter Schrijver, *Studies in the History of Celtic Pronouns and Particles* (Maynooth 1997), 113–129; Kim McCone, *The Origins and Development of the Insular Celtic Verbal Complex* (Maynooth 2006), 78–90; and García Castillero in *TPhS* 113, 76–104.

"This may also account for the appearance of a prototonic verb in replies, for that such replies can be in relative construction is indicated by the use of the neg. **nǎd** and the verbal form **fil**"; this is actually completely unrelated to the preceding. We now call such forms 'responsives', and they do indeed take the negation *nad* and *fil* instead of *at-tá*, but they are not relative. Chantal adds that Liam Breatnach calls them 'performatives' to explain forms such as *qicdiu* 'I invoke', which are not responses as such.

David Greene ('The responsive in Irish and Welsh', in *Indo-Celtica: Gedächtnisschrit für Alf Sommerfelt* 1972, 59–72) – who discusses responsives in all branches of Celtic, both modern and old – goes against Thurneysen, arguing that it has nothing to do with relatives. Rather, Greene argues that it is an echo-statement, or even an 'indignant reply'. That is to say, one wishes to answer rather quickly and therefore replies with a prototonic form. Elliott is not very fond of this particular explanation.

Bob Morris-Jones has published a book on the syntax of responsives in Welsh (*The Welsh answering system*, 1999).

Elliott adds that responsives are in some way connected to previous discourse and that this triggers the use of subordinate forms (not relative, but subordinate all the same). David comments that you would

then expect to find other places in which subordination is marked solely by means of the use of a prototonic form. To which Elliott replies that there are other examples, such as contractions, which arise out of different processes, but still have to do with subordination (e.g. they are governed by a null-particle). Fangzhe: might the imperative, injunctives and responsives all be fundamentally related? David: are they pausa-forms? Why don't they use *ní* as a negation? Elliott: because they are subordinate and *ní* is only used in independent constructions.

The particle theory explains these forms by similar means: they do not take the particle for the simple reason that they are not main-clause expressions.

Why do we find *nad·fil*, which includes a subordinate particle (**ne-de-*) rather than just *na·fil* (**ne-*)? Why is the negative clause specifically marked as subordinate, whereas this is not necessary in positive clauses of this type (the use of prototonic forms/the lack of **eti* suffices)? One might want to look at other languages, to see how they deal with this. It may also be a case of synchronic reanalysis; *nád* being imported into this construction on the basis of some kind of analogy? Clearly, responsives need more research. Some further literature on the matter: Andrew Carnie's dissertation on *Non-verbal predication and head-movement*, which also treats Modern Irish; Anders Ahlqvist in *The Early Irish Linguist*, 29; Stefan Schumacher in *Die keltischen Primärverben*; and Graham Isaac in his article in *Ériu* 57.

The distinction between responsives⁶ and performatives seems useful. One wonders whether they are formally identical; they look the same in affirmative phrases, but what about negative clauses? And could they be united with the imperative in some way? Might 'responsives' in the 1sg. actually be 1sg. imperatives "let me..."?

Elliott raises the question: how often do responsives occur with further elements, e.g. *cumcaim écin* 'I can indeed'? Greene states that responsives get combined with the 'particle'/'adverb' *écin* in later OIr. and in Middle Irish, eventually (in Modern Irish) replacing the use of protonic forms to mark this distinction altogether. Elliott wonders whether this might have been a way to mark the subordination, but David counters that as the use of *écin* in such phrases does not occur in the earliest Irish, it cannot be used to explain the use of prototonic forms.

"(b) The archaic..."; this is again something entirely different, which we shall not discuss at present.

We note that the following paragraph in the *Handbuch* (§37) is found in small-print towards the end of §39 in *GOI*.

As noted above, the section of *GOI* §38 on p. 29 is missing in the *Handbuch*. As is apparent from the preceding discussion, it should not have been discussed here at all.

The verbal particles *ro/ru* and *no/nu* (§39)

"III. The **verbal particles** *ro ru* ... and *no nu* ... at the beginning of a word are unstressed just like prepositions..."; this is a problematic section. We should probably take one of the forms (*ro*, *no* vs. *ru*, *nu*) as basic, as the distribution is probably regular. The phrasing "at the beginning of a word" is problematic in that it presupposes something about the placement of these particles; this holds true for *no*, but not for *ro*, which can really occur anywhere but at the end of the word.

⁶ Elliott: "I don't like 'responsive'; 'indignant reply' sounds cool."

At any rate, this discussion belongs to verbal morphology and should not be treated here. We skip it for now, but should take it up again when we get to §526–529 where the placement of *ro* is discussed.

The small-print is relevant to the discussion of stress placement though, as it relates to our proposed rule of stress-placement. Here we find an example from Milan where two preverbs occur without any shift of the stress. However, in *ad-con-rótaig* (ML 35^b13) we are dealing with a direct calque on Latin, i.e. this is artificial, rather than natural language.

In general, it must also be noted that the position of stress cannot always be determined when dealing with the particle *ro*. McCone’s discussion of *ro*-placement is too schematic and too far removed from the philological reality. García Castillero has also published a promising article with a different scheme to deal with this issue (*TPhS* 111 (2012), 108–140: ‘Morphological externalisation and the Old Irish verbal particle *ro*’).⁷

We now leave this discussion for a few years.

Other words (non-verbs) with post-initial stress (§40)

“**Words** other than verbs which are **not stressed on the first syllable** would all seem to have originated in the fusion of two or more words.” This paragraph is essentially correct. We would want to give the etymologies here as well, so as to be explicit. It would also be nice to have a longer, more comprehensive list of this forms. This should for example include:

Words in which the article is the first element (*indíu*, *inuraid*).

Words related to compound verbs and words (‘pseudo-prepositions’?) such as *corrici* (if it is stressed) and perhaps *co-tí* > *go dtí*.

We might also include words such as *mad-génair* (its reduction in Blathmac to *mo-génair* implies that it was regarded as one word; we could add a reference to the proposed adverb-as-preverb-list here) and *monúar*. *Amin*, *amein*, etc. are less certain – it depends on what etymology one accepts.

We should also mention foreign names. *Iscarioth* rhymes only on *-oth* in Blathmac (it has a cadence of one). *Israel* has a cadence of three in Blathmac, so it must have had hiatus *aě*, but Irish otherwise has no hiatus in unstressed syllables. Is there a secondary stress on the final syllable in *Israel*? Or perhaps it has an unstressed long *é*, but the stress remains on the first syllable?

Fergnaue could also be mentioned, although it is not entirely clear if it is not a compound with stress on the second element, similar to the *Máel*- names.

Are words like *immallé* one or two words in synchronic OIr.? Probably one word. If so, some adverbs must have had lexical stress placement, rather than following the general rule.

Dadaig “at night” < *ind adaig* (dat. sg.) has aphaeresis of *in-* before *-nd-* was assimilated, but *indíu* retains the *in-*, perhaps because the latter was monosyllabic?

⁷ Elliott had an article written up on this on the basis of research which he did during his MA, proposing a similar scheme, but García Castillero managed to get his paper published before Elliott could finalize his own.

Directional elements such as *anall* should also be mentioned.⁸

The session ends with a discussion of the etymology of *immurgu*. Heiner Eichner (Vienna, 1994) derived it from *imm-fairge*. *Fairge* ‘sea’ itself is an abstract derived from *fairsinge* < **for-ess-angu-* ‘very-ex-narrow’ (for *angu-*, cf. German and Dutch *eng* ‘narrow’), cf. Welsh *ehang* ‘broad’. *Fairsinge* *‘very broad’ > ‘extent’. *Immurgu* would then originally have meant something like ‘around a wider extent’. But there are some issues with this solution. *Imm* should take the accusative and *fairsinge* is an *iā*-stem, not an *io*-stem. It is suggested that it might be derived from the adjective *fairsinge*, rather than the noun, but *immurgu* has a lenited *g*. Could it be an allegro form?⁹

⁸ At this stage the wonderful phrase ‘petrified craziness’ is heard. [DS: But why?]

⁹ David: “I have no sleepless nights over this.” Elliott: “I do.”