INITIAL SEGMENTS IN IRISH – VARIATION IN MUTATION PATTERNS

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INITIAL SEGMENTS IN IRISH – VARIATION IN MUTATION PATTERNS

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Wydawnictwo KUL
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List of Abbreviations

A	Arran dialect
adj.	adjective
Ach.	Achill dialect
adv.	adverb
CF	Cois Fharraige dialect
cf.	compare
conj.	conjunction
dem.	demonstrative
dep.v.	dependent verb
DIL	*The Dictionary of the Irish Language*. Available at: http://www.dil.ie
dim.	diminutive
Dinn.	Dinneen, P. S. 1927. *Foclóir Gaedhilge agus Béarla: An Irish–English dictionary, being a thesaurus of the words, phrases and idioms of the modern Irish language*
E	Erris dialect
EMnIr.	Early Modern Irish
f.	feminine
IA	Iorras Aithneach dialect
indef.	indefinite
int.	interjection
interr.	interrogative
LASID	Wagner, H. 1958. *Linguistic Atlas and Survey of Irish Dialects*, vol. 1. Dublin: The Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies
m.	masculine
MIr.	Middle Irish
MnIr.	Modern Irish
n.	noun
num.	numeral

OD	Ó Dónaill, N. 1977. *Foclóir Gaeilge–Béarla*. Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig an tSoláthair
OIL	*Old Irish Lexicon*. University College Cork. Available at: http://research.ucc.ie/lexicon/sample
OIr.	Old Irish
p.aut.	past tense autonomous
pl.	plural
poss.	possessive
pp.	past participle
pref.	prefix
prep.	preposition
pron.	pronoun
refl.	reflexive
s.	substantive
T	Tourmakeady dialect
TI	Tory Island dialect
v.	verb
var.	variant
vn.	verbal noun
vs.	versus vn.
WM	West Muskerry dialect

Introduction

This work investigates the alteration of word-initial segments in Irish. This phenomenon consists of a dialectal variation whereby the phonetic realisation of certain words differs, only or mainly, in the quality of the word-initial segment, e.g. *cabáiste*/*gabáiste* 'cabbage', *beach*/*meach* 'bee', *aiste*/*faiste* 'peculiarity'. The goal of this analysis is to contribute to the description of the process, identify its causes, and propose a formal account of the alteration in the word-based morphology framework.

Lexical Relatedness Morphology (Bochner 1993) and Network Morphology (Bybee 1985) are the two implementations of word-based morphology used in this work. The key tenet of both theories is that all the words a speaker encounters are stored in the lexicon in their full form. The words are organised into sets, called 'word-schemas', according to their morphological (derivational or inflectional) relatedness, e.g. *act/actor*, *describe/description/descriptive*. Furthermore, following Jackendoff's (1975) proposal, the principle of 'full-entry' is promoted, i.e. each lexical entry is fully specified with its phonetic, morphosyntactic, and semantic properties. Morphological patterns, similar to Jackendoff's (1975) redundancy rules, emerge from sets of morphological relations on a different level of abstraction, and are represented as abstract word-schemas. The lexical connections, as well as lexical entries, are characterised by different degrees of lexical strength, which result from the frequency of usage of a given word or morphological pattern. As Bybee (1985) postulates, the more frequent a word or pattern, the higher its lexical strength. The lexical strength, in turn, determines the ease of lexical retrieval, i.e. the more frequent forms are retrieved faster than the rare ones. The most productive morphological patterns, on the other hand, are those with the strong lexical connections.

The central claim made in this work is that the word-initial reanalysis results from the confusion caused by the mutation patterns. Irish initial mutations are sets of consonant replacements triggered by morphosyntactic contexts, e.g. after a feminine definite article or the 1st person plural possessive adjective. There are two types of mutations in Irish, i.e. eclipsis and lenition, and their effects are defined by grammar. For instance, [p] in a leniting context is replaced with [f], and in the eclipsing one with [b]. The problem inherent in the mutation system is that it allows for certain consonants to occur both as effects of mutations and as radical (non-mutated) consonants. For instance, the above mentioned [b] is the initial radical segment in the word *bean* 'woman', but it is an effect of eclipsis in *ár bpeann* 'our pen'.

In the word-based lexicon model, mutations are, on the one hand, embedded directly in the relations between three interrelated forms, i.e. radical, lenited and eclipsed. On the other hand, mutations are patterns which emerge from these sets of forms, referred to as mutation-schemas, and represented as sets of related initial segments specified for the mutation grade (radical, lenited, eclipsed). The representation of mutations as connections between consonants ensures that speakers use them productively with borrowings or neologisms. Furthermore, the speakers' knowledge of mutation patterns as relations, and not as input-output rules, enables them to retrieve a radical form on the basis of the mutated one.

The explanation of the alteration of word-initial segments hinges on the two modes of the lexical representation of mutations as pinpointed above, i.e. word-level sets of related word-forms, and as abstract sets of related initial segments. On the word-level, as the word-forms vary in their token frequency, a very frequent mutated form may be retrieved more readily than a rarely used radical, and reanalysed as a radical word. For instance, the loan-word *pailm* 'palm' is a feminine noun, thus it is always lenited after the definite article giving *an phailm* [an fal'm']. If this form is prevalent, in some dialects the initial [f] is reinterpreted as a radical segment and the 'new' radical word *failm* is reassigned to a different mutation schema. On the other hand, a very rare radical word may be misinterpreted as an effect of mutation. For instance, the opposite alteration to that previously described is possible where *fréamh* 'root' is reanalysed as a lenited variant of a previously non-existent *préamh.* Both cases of reanalysis are possible because of the overlaps in the abstract mutation patterns. In the first example, speakers' reference to the abstract mutation schemas lead to the confusion of the initial mutated [f] (related to the radical [p]) with the radical [f]. In

the second case, the mutation schemas serve to 'restore' the radical *préamh* from *fréamh* 'root'.

This work is structured as follows. Chapter 1 is a brief review of the Irish sound system, with a focus on the phonotactic constraints concerning the beginning of the word in Irish. Next, a synchronic and diachronic account of consonant mutations is provided, in terms of mutation effects and contexts of occurrence, in order to set the scene for the analysis of other types of word-initial segment replacements. The core of this chapter is the introduction of the theoretical model in which the analysis is couched, i.e. word-based morphology. The fundamental aspects of the lexical representation of mutations are presented, as well as their relevance in the context of word-initial alteration.

Chapter 2 is divided into two parts. The first clarifies the terminology involved in the description of the reanalysis of initial segments. The term 'alteration' is contrasted with the term traditionally used in this context, i.e. 'interchange'. It is shown that alteration is a replacement process, whereby one radical segment is substituted by another initial segment, e.g. *miodóg→biodóg* 'dagger'. As a consequence, the word is reassigned to a different mutation pattern and mutated accordingly. The term 'interchange', on the other hand, does not capture the derivational aspect of the word-initial change. Rather, it is an observation about a synchronic variation in the realisation of a given word across dialects, e.g. *méaróg*/*béaróg* 'neat little girl'. The second part of this chapter is dedicated to the methodology of data collection, organisation and analysis. The sources of the dialectal variation in initial segments are enumerated and briefly discussed.

Chapter 3 seeks to present a unified account of these alteration patterns which are based on consonant mutations. The analysis is couched in the word-based morphology framework. A typology of word-initial changes is offered, the basis of classification being the type of reanalysis process involved in postulating the secondary radical. Three types of mutation-based alterations are distinguished, i.e. radicalisation (when a mutated segment is assumed to be radical, e.g. [p]→[b]), deradicalisation (when the radical consonant is interpreted as a mutated reflex of another radical, e.g. [d]→[t]), and misradicalisation (when the mutated reflex is associated with a radical different from its original one, e.g. [m]→[b]). For each type of alteration a general mechanism is provided, as well as a discussion of the relevant dialectal instances. Additionally, two in-depth case studies are included, i.e. the alteration in the noun *beach→meach* 'bee' and in the dependent form of the verb *téigh* 'to go', i.e. *deachaigh/teachaigh* 'going'.

Chapter 4 concerns the reanalysis phenomena which are not rooted in mutation patterns, but have the same effect, i.e. alteration of the word-initial segment. Three such processes are discussed. The first is the confusion of the initial palatalised coronals [t′], and [d′] with the palatalised velars, i.e. [k′] and [g′] respectively. It is argued that the alteration results from the phonetic affinity of these two classes of sounds in some Irish dialects. Another reanalysis process is the semantically motivated prefixation of the consonants *s-* and *p-*. They are shown to have the phonaesthemic function of increasing the expressiveness of derogatory terms, e.g. *leib*/*pleib* 'fool', *truán*/*struán* 'wretch'. The last group of alterations are those resulting from the wrong division of the definite article, i.e. *an* and *an t-*, before vowel-initial nouns. This development, called metanalysis, is found in the following by-forms: *aos*/*taos* 'people, folk' and *uchtóg*/*nuchtóg* 'small heap'.

Following the conclusions, a list of all the by-forms obtained from the literature is appended.