

Phonology and morphosyntax of early Insular Celtic verbal phrases

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One of the most salient features of the medieval Insular Celtic languages are the so-called initial mutations – morphophonological alternations of the initial consonant of a morph triggered by the grammatical properties of the morph and the morphosyntactic context it appears in (Stifter 2010: 65–66). As seen in (1), they operate inside phrases but not across phrase boundaries.

- (1) [a-^Ntrian ^N aill] [oc-oul ^L chormae]
a'dʲrʲin 'na:lʲ: o'goul 'χorme
ART.ACC.SG-third.ACC.SG other.ACC.Sg at-drinking.DAT.SG beer.GEN.SG
'[he spends] the other third drinking beer' (Early Irish, LU 95a)

Other phonological and morphophonological processes such as stress placement, syllabification, or vowel epenthesis operate on smaller units. Under certain circumstances, this leads to mismatches between phonological domains and morphosyntactic phrases: The noun phrase in (2) is contained in a prepositional phrase, but stress placement and syllabification in *ydaw* operate across the phrase boundary.

- (2) *y-bu* *achaus* [yd-[aw a-hi]]
ə.'bʷ 'a.χos i.ðo a.'hi
REL-be.3SG.PST reason to-3SG.M and-3SG.F
'which was the reason for him and her' (Middle Welsh, Peniarth 5: 4r.27)

Based on recent typological work on phonological and morphosyntactic domains (e. g. Bickel, Hildebrandt, and Schiering 2009; van Gijn and Zúñiga 2014; Bickel and Zúñiga 2016), I will outline the make up of morphosyntactic phrases and establish the relevant phonological domains in Early Irish and the medieval Brythonic languages to then discuss the possible mismatches between them and their diachronical stability.

References

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