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Old Irish

Phonology – Part 1



ERC Consolidator Grant 2015
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Roadmap

- Phonemes
 - Consonants
 - Vowels and diphthongs

The Proto-Celtic consonant system

	labial	dental	alveolar	palatal	velar	labiovelar
nasal	m	n			(ŋ)	
stop	b	t d			k g	k ^w g ^w
fricative			s			
approx				j		w
trill			r			
lateral		l				

The Early Primitive Irish consonant system

	labial	dental	alveolar	palatal	velar	labiovelar
nasal	m	n			(ŋ)	
stop	b	t d			k g	k ^w g ^w
fricative			s			
approx						w
trill			r			
lateral		l				

The Late Primitive Irish consonant system

	labial	dental	alveolar	palatal	velar	labiovelar
nasal	m	n			(ŋ)	
stop	b	t d			k g	
fricative			s			
approx						
trill			r			
lateral		l				

The Late Primitive Irish consonant system

	labial	dental	alveolar	palatal	velar	labiovelar
nasal	m	n			(ŋ)	
stop	p b	t d			k g	
fricative			s			
approx						
trill			r			
lateral		l				

Lenition and the Old Irish consonant system

	labial	dental	alveolar	velar	glottal
nasal	m	n		ŋ	
stop	p b	t d		k g	
fricative			s		
trill			r		
lateral		l			

Lenition and the Old Irish consonant system

	labial	dental	alveolar	velar	glottal
nasal	m	n		ŋ	
stop	p b	t d		k g	
fricative		θ	s	x	
trill			r		
lateral		l			

Lenition and the Old Irish consonant system

	labial	dental	alveolar	velar	glottal
nasal	m	n		ŋ	
stop	p b	t d		k g	
fricative	β	θ ð	s	x γ	
trill			r		
lateral		l			

Lenition and the Old Irish consonant system

	labial	dental	alveolar	velar	glottal
nasal	m ß	n		ŋ	
stop	p b	t d		k g	
fricative	β	θ ð	s	x γ	h
trill			r		
lateral		l			

Lenition and the Old Irish consonant system

	labial	dental	alveolar	velar	glottal
nasal	m ß	n		ŋ	
stop	p b	t d		k g	
fricative	f β	θ ð	s	x γ	h
trill			r		
lateral		l			

Lenition and the Old Irish consonant system

	labial	dental	alveolar	velar	glottal
nasal	m β	n: n		ŋ	
stop	p b	t d		k g	
fricative	f β	θ ð	s	x γ	h
trill			r: r		
lateral		l: l			

Pairs of unlenited and lenited consonants

unlenited	lenited
k	x
t	θ
p	f
g	ɣ
d	ð
b	β

unlenited	lenited
m	β̃
nː	n
rː	r
lː	l
ŋ	–
s	h
f	∅

Palatalisation and the Old Irish consonant system

	labial	dental	alveolar	velar	glottal
nasal	m m ^j β β ^j	n: n ^j : n n ^j		ŋ ŋ ^j	
stop	p p ^j b b ^j	t t ^j d d ^j		k k ^j g g ^j	
fricative	f f ^j β β ^j	θ θ ^j ð ð ^j	s s ^j	x ç γ γ ^j	h
trill			r: r ^j : r r ^j		
lateral		l: l ^j : l l ^j			

And a velarised series?

	labial	dental	alveolar	velar	glottal
nasal	m m ^j m ^ʲ β̃ β̃ ^j β̃ ^ʲ	n: n ^j : n: ^ʲ n n ^j n ^ʲ		ŋ ŋ ^j ŋ ^ʲ	
stop	p p ^j p ^ʲ b b ^j b ^ʲ	t t ^j t ^ʲ d d ^j d ^ʲ		k k ^j k ^ʲ g g ^j g ^ʲ	
fricative	f f ^j f ^ʲ β̃ β̃ ^j β̃ ^ʲ	θ θ ^j θ ^ʲ ð ð ^j ð ^ʲ	s s ^j s ^ʲ	x ç x ^ʲ ɣ ɣ ^j ɣ ^ʲ	h
trill			r: r ^j : r: ^ʲ r r ^j r ^ʲ		
lateral		l: l ^j : l: ^ʲ l l ^j l ^ʲ			

Vowels – phonemic theory...

	front	central	back
high	i i:		u u:
mid	e e: (œ)	ə	o o:
low		a a:	

Vowels – ...and positional practice

Stressed internal syllable

	front	central	back
high	i i:		u u:
mid	e e: (œ)		o o:
low		a a:	

Posttonic short internal syll.

	front	central	back
high			u
mid		ə (ə)	
low			

Posttonic long internal syll.

	front	central	back
high	i:		
mid	e:		o:
low		a:	

Stressed final syllable

	front	central	back
high	i:		u:
mid	e:		o:
low		a:	

Unstressed final syllable

	front	central	back
high	i		u
mid	e		(ɔ)
low		a	

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Pretonic syllable (simplified)

	front	central	back
high	i		o/u
mid	(e)	(ə)	
low		a	

Diphthongs

	i-diph.s	'short' u-diph.s	'long' u-diph.s	falling diph.s
a	aj	a ^w	aw	
e		e ^w	e:w	
i		i ^w	i:w	ia
o	oj	o ^w		
u	(uj)			ua

Early Old Irish

	i-diph.s	'short' u-diph.s	'long' u-diph.s	falling diph.s
a	^w e: / ^w ɪ:	u	o:	
e		^j o(:)	e: / ^j o:	
i		i / ^j o	^j u	ia
o	^w e: / ^w ɪ:	o		
u	^w e: / ^w ɪ:			ua

Middle Irish

Hiatus

- Early Old Irish tolerates hiatuses, i.e. two vowels next to each other which do not belong to the same syllable, e.g.
 - *grían* [gʲrʲian] ‘sun’ vs. *griän* [gʲrʲi.ən] ‘gravel’
 - *cúach* [kuax] ‘fastener, hook’ vs. *cuäch* [ku.əx] ‘cup; gen. of cuckoo’
 - *ruüd* [ru.uð] ‘forest’

- Already during Old Irish hiatuses merge into diphthongs or long vowels, e.g.
 - *biäd* [bʲi.əð] > *bíad* [bʲiað] ‘food’
 - *biüd* [bʲi.əðʲ] > *bíd*, *bíth* [bʲi:θʲ] ‘is usually’
 - *oöl* [o.ol] > *ól* [o:l] ‘drink’

Ad·tlochur indithim dúib!



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