

AARON GRIFFITH

Old Irish

Morpho-syntactic Structures – Part 1



A Roadmap

Typological profile

Head-marking: how to use pronouns

Text examples: *Táin bó Froích*

Typological overview and distinctive features

- Basically right-branching (head-initial)
 - Basic word order is V(erb) – S(ubject) – O(bject)

- Dependent-marking with nouns; head-marking with pronouns
 - Pronouns marked on verbs, prepositions, possessives

- Significant degree of non-finite predication
 - Frequent verbal nouns (though no infinitives, few participles)

Head-Marking vs. Dependent Marking

▪ Heads

- Verb
- Possessum
- Adposition

Dependents

- Subject, Objects (direct, indirect)
- Possessor
- Adpositional Object

Head-Marking vs. Dependent Marking

- Dependent marking

do·beir *in=macc* *in=lebor* *dond=ingin*
PRV·give.3SG.PR.IND ART.NOM.SG=boy.NOM.SG ART.ACC.SG=book.ACC.SG to.ART.DAT.SG=girl.DAT.SG
‘The boy gives the girl the book’

- Head marking

d-a·m-beir(=som) *dí(=si)*
PRV·3SG.MASC.OBJ-give.3SG.PR.IND(=3SG.MASC) to.3SG.FEM(=3SG.FEM)
‘he gives it to her’

Head-Marking: possessors

Possessor marking: possessive pronouns

mo=charae

1SG=friend.NOM.SG

'my friend'

a=n-ochtmad cú

3PL=NAS.eighth dog.NOM.SG

'their eighth dog'

	Singular	Plural
1st	m(o) ^L	ar ^N
2nd	t ^L /do ^L	for ^N
3rd M./N.	a ^L	a ^N
3rd F.	a ^H	

Head-Marking: prepositions

		Singular	Plural
1st		-m	-nn
2nd		-t	-ib
3rd M./N.	ACC.	Irregular	-u
3rd F.			
3rd M./N.	DAT.		-ib
3rd F.			

Head-Marking: prepositions

Prepositional object marking: conjugated prepositions

do=Choin Culainn

to=PN.DAT.SG

'to Cú Chulainn'

dó

to.3SG

'to him'

dúnn

to.1PL

'to us'

i-sin=tig

in-ART.DAT.SG.NT=house.DAT.SG

'in the house'

and

in.3SG.DAT.NT

'in it'

ind

in.3SG.ACC.NT

'into it'

la=Meidb

with=PN.ACC.SG

'with Medb'

lee

with.3SG.FEM

'with her'

lib

with.2PL

'with you'

leu

with.3PL

'with them'

Head-Marking: verbal objects

Verbal object marking: infixed and suffixed pronouns.

extremely complex morphophonology
also syntactically conditioned

Linearization: place the pronoun after the first preverb / conjunct particle.

	Class A			Class B			Class C	
	Sg.	Pl.		Sg.	Pl.		Sg.	Pl.
1st	m ^L	n		tam ^L	tan		dam ^L	dan
2nd	t ^L	b		tat ^L	tab		dat ^L	dab
3rd M.	a ^N	s ^(N)		t ^N	ta ^H		(d)id ^N , (d) ^N	
3rd F.	s ^(N)			ta ^H			da ^H	
3rd N.	a ^L			t ^L			(d)id ^L , (d) ^L	

Head-Marking: verbal objects

Class A vs Class B is (morpho)phonologically conditioned

If a preverb ends in a vowel prehistorically (i.e. if it lenites): use class A.
Otherwise: use class B.

	Class A			Class B	
	Sg.	Pl.		Sg.	Pl.
1st	m ^L	n		tam ^L	tan
2nd	t ^L	b		tat ^L	tab
3rd M.	a ^N	s ^(N)		t ^N	ta ^H
3rd F.	s ^(N)			ta ^H	
3rd N.	a ^L			t ^L	

Head-Marking: verbal objects

Class A vs Class B is (morpho)phonologically conditioned

do·biur

PRV.give.1SG

'I give'

da·m-biur

PRV.3SG.M·NAS-give.1SG

'I give it'

dos·(m-)biur

PRV.3PL·(NAS-)give.1SG

'I give them'

do·beir

PRV.give.3SG

'he gives'

da·m-beir

PRV.3SG.M·NAS-give.3SG

'he gives it'

dos·(m-)beir

PRV.3PL·(NAS-)gives.3SG

'he gives them'

ad·ciam

PRV·see.1PL

'we see'

atat·chiam

PRV.2SG·see.1PL

'we see you'

atab·ciam

PRV.2PL·see.1PL

'we see you (pl)'

Head-Marking: verbal objects

Class C is syntactically conditioned:

Use Class C pronouns if the verb is relative!

They are only mandatory in 3rd person when replacing Class A.

	Class C	
	Sg.	Pl.
1st	dam ^L	dan
2nd	dat ^L	dab
3rd M.	(d)id ^N , (d) ^N	da ^H
3rd F.	da ^H	
3rd N.	(d)id ^L , (d) ^L	

Head-Marking: verbal objects

Class C is syntactically conditioned:

do·beir

PRV.give.3SG

'he gives'

da·m-beir

PRV.3SG.M·NAS-give.3SG

'he gives it'

dod·m-beir

PRV.3SG·NAS-gives.3SG

'who gives it'

ad·ciam

PRV·see.1PL

'we see'

at·chiam

PRV.3SG.NT·see.1PL

'we see it'

amal adind·chiam

as PRV.3SG.NT·see.1PL

'as we see it'

–or–

amal at·chiam

PRV.3SG.NT·see.1PL

'as we see it'

Head-Marking: verbal objects

Problem: infixing only works if there is a preverb or conjunct particle.

If the verb is a non-relative absolute form:

- use an empty preverb (*no·*) with class A infixed pronouns
- use a suffixed pronoun (mostly with 3rd person verbs)

	Singular	Plural
1st	-um	-unn
2nd	-ut	-uib
3rd M/N.	-i	-us
3rd F	-us	

Head-Marking: verbal objects

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- use a suffixed pronoun (mostly w/ 3rd person verbs)

biru
carry.1SG
'I carry'

nos·(m-)biur
PRV.3SG.F·(NAS-)carry.1SG
'I carry her'

nís·(m-)biur
NEG.3SG.F·(NAS-)carry.1SG
'I don't carry her'

beirid
carry.3SG
'he carries'

beirthiunn
carry.3sg.1pl.obj
'he carries us'

nín·beir
NEG.1PL·carry.3SG
'he doesn't carry us'

Pronouns: the leftovers

Leftover clitics: *notae augentes* (emphatic / contrastive and topic marking):

- only attached to phrases w/ pronominal marking

	Singular	Plural
1st	-sa / -se	-nai / -ni
2nd	-so, -su / -siu	-si
3rd M./N.	-som, -sum/ -seom, -sium	-som, -sum
3rd F.	-si	

Pronouns: the leftovers

Accented pronouns used:

- as predicates in cleft sentences
- in fronted topic position

	Singular	Plural
1st	mé	sní
2nd	tú	sí
3rd M.	é	é
3rd F.	sí	
3rd N.	ed	

air-is=he=som

du·beir

in=nn-inducbáil

(MI. 90b13)

for-is.3SG=3SG.M=3SG.M PRV·give.3SG.REL

ART.ACC.SG.FEM=NAS-glory.ACC.SG

‘For it is He who gives the glory’

TEXT SAMPLE (TÁIN BÓ FROÍCH LL. 7–12)

Background: Fróech is a famous, good-looking, and unmarried warrior in Ireland.

<i>Carth-ai</i>	<i>Findabair,</i>	<i>ingen</i>	<i>Ailella</i>	<i>ocus</i>	<i>Medbae,</i>
love.3SG-3SG.M.OBJ	PN.NOM.SG	daughter.NOM.SG	PN.GEN.SG	and	PN.GEN.SG
<i>ar-a=irscélaib.</i>		<i>Ad·fiadar</i>	<i>dó=som</i>		<i>oc-a=thig.</i>
for-3SG.M=famous.tale.DAT.PL		PRV·tell.pass.sg	to.3SG.M=3SG.M		at-3SG.M=house.DAT.SG
<i>Ro-pu=lán</i>		<i>Ériu</i>	<i>ocus</i>		<i>Alban</i>
PRV-is.3SG.PRET=full.NOM.SG		Ireland.NOM.SG	and		Scotland.NOM.SG
<i>di-a=allud</i>		<i>ocus</i>		<i>di-a=scélaib.</i>	
from-3SG.M=fame.DAT.SG		and		from-3SG.M=tale.DAT.PL	

‘Findabair, daughter of Ailill and Medb, loves him for his famous tales. This is told to him at his house. Ireland and Scotland were full of his fame and his stories.’

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<i>Íar=suidiu</i> after=3SG.DAT	<i>do·corastar</i> PRV·throw.3SG.PRET	<i>fair</i> on.3SG.M	<i>dul</i> going.NOM.SG	<i>do=accallaim</i> to=address.DAT.SG
<i>inna=ingine.</i> ART.GEN.SG.F=daughter.GEN.SG	<i>Imm-a·ro-raid</i> PRV-3SG.NT.OBJ·PERF.discuss.3SG.PRET		<i>fri-a=muntir</i> against.3SG.M=people.ACC.SG	
<i>a=n-í=sin.</i> ART.ACC.SG.NT=NAS-that=DEM	<i>“Tíagar</i> go.IMPV.PASS.SG	<i>úait=didiu</i> from.2SG=then	<i>co=siair</i> to=sister.ACC.SG	
<i>do=máthar,...”</i> 2SG=mother.GEN.SG				

‘After that it was incumbent on him to go to talk to the girl. He discussed that with his people. “Let someone be sent from you to the sister of your mother...”’

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<i>co·tucthar</i>		<i>ní</i>	<i>do=étuch</i>	<i>ingantach</i>
so.that·bring.PFCT.SUBJ.PASS.SG		something.NOM.SG.NT	from=clothing.DAT.SG	special.DAT.SG.NT
<i>ocus</i>	<i>de=ascedaib</i>	<i>síde</i>	<i>duit</i>	<i>úadi''</i>
and	from=gift.DAT.PL	fairy.mound.GEN.SG	to.2SG	from.3SG.F

'...so that something of the wonderful clothing and gifts of the fairy mound might be brought to you from her.'

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and	from=gift.DAT.PL	fairy.mound.GEN.SG	to.2SG	from.3SG.F

‘...so that something of the wonderful clothing and gifts of the fairy mound might be brought to you from her.’

Ad·tlochur indithim dúib!