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Old Irish

Morphosyntactic Structures – Part 4



A Roadmap

- More on the verb
 - negation
 - Tense, Aspect, and Modality
 - verbal avoidance strategies
- Clause structure
 - word order
 - information structure
 - clause combining
- Text sample: *Táin bó Froích*

Predication (continued)



Negation

- The primary split in NEGATION comes via finite vs. non-finite predication.
- Non-finite negation: preposition *cen* ‘without’

accaldam ‘addressing’ vs *cen=accaldaim* ‘not addressing’

ad·rīmet=som *deit=su* *ar=mēlacht* *cen-ar=ñ-dītin=ni* (Ml. 129d22)
PRV·count.3PL=3PL to.2SG=2SG for=reproach.DAT.SG without-1PL=NAS-protecting.ACC.SG=1PL
‘they count it as a reproach to You (sg) not to protect us’

Negation

- The primary split in NEGATION comes via finite vs. non-finite predication.
- Finite negation: various conjunct particles

Main clause negation: *ní* / *nícon* (*ná* with imperatives)

beirid 'he carries'

ní·beir 'he doesn't carry' and *ná·beir* 'don't carry!'

Subordinate negation: *nád* / *nádcon* (*nach* with infixed pronouns)

beres 'who carries'

nád·beir 'who does not carry' and *nachim·beir* 'who does not carry me'

Tense, Aspect, and Modality (TAM)

- There is a three-way system of TENSE: PAST – PRESENT – FUTURE

PRESENT is marked by the present.

PAST is marked by the imperfect, the preterite, the perfect / augmented preterite, and the historical present.

FUTURE is marked by the future.

Tense, **Aspect**, and Modality (TAM)

- ASPECT is coded variously.

Imperfective is marked by the imperfect.

Perfective is marked by the preterite and perfect / augmented preterite.

Progressive is marked via *at·tá* 'is' + *oc* + verbal noun

Habitual exists only with *at·tá* 'is' via a suppletive stem.

Retrospective is marked by the perfect / augmented preterite.

Tense, Aspect, and **Modality** (TAM)

- The moods are indicative, subjunctive, and imperative.
- The subjunctive is more common in subordinate clauses.
- The imperative is barred from subordinate clauses.
- Main clause subjunctives are used for deontic (commands) and epistemic modality (wish, uncertainty).

Verb-avoidance strategies: light-verb constructions

ní·íarfaigid

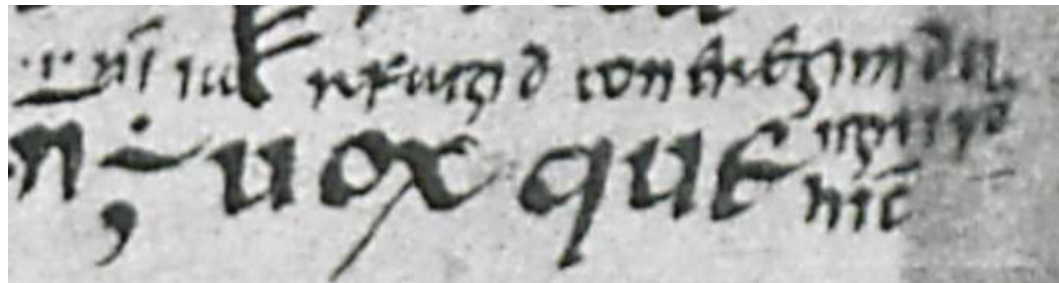
co=n-eregim

du·n-gní=som

NEG·seeking.NOM.SG with=NAS-complaint.ACC.SG PRV·NAS-do.3SG.REL=3SG.M

‘It is not a seeking with complaint which he does’

(Ml. 92b10)



For **ní·íarfaig eregim híc* ‘he does not seek complaint here’

Verb-avoidance strategies: ellipsis of verbs

Carpat dam-sa!

chariot.NOM.SG to.1SG=1SG

‘A chariot to me!’

(Táin Bó Cúailnge Rec. I 648)

For **Not·guidiu ara·tartae-su carpat dam-sa* ‘Please give me a chariot!’

In=fer úait dam=sa nó bás for-t=béolu!

ART.NOM.SG.M=man.NOM.SG from.2SG to.1SG=1SG or death.NOM.SG on-2SG=lip.ACC.PL

‘The man from you to me or death upon your lips!’

(Fingal Rónáin 71-2)

Verb-avoidance strategies: Verbal noun constructions

<i>Imthecht</i>	<i>Boínde</i>	<i>cosaib</i>	<i>tírmaib</i>	<i>₇</i>	
Perambulation.NOM.SG	PN.GEN.SG	foot.DAT.PL	dry.DAT.PL.F	and	
<i>ala-n-aile</i>	<i>n-abann...</i>	<i>Oiss</i>	<i>allti</i>	<i>do=thofunn.</i>	
other-NAS-other.GEN.PL	NAS-river.GEN.PL	deer.NOM.PL	wild.NOM.PL.M	to=hunt.DAT.SG	

‘Perambulation of the Boyne and of other rivers dry-footed... Wild deer to hunt.’
 (Annals of Ulster 818.2)

For **Im·téigthe Boänd cosaib tírmaib ₇ alaili abainn... Do·seinntis oiss alltai.*
 ‘The Boyne and other rivers were walked on dry-footed... Wild deer were hunted.’

Clause Structure



Linearization

- WORD ORDER: basic order is Verb_{finite} – Subject – Object

Is=dáe *ro·gab* *duaid* *in=salm=sa* (Ml. 87d8)
is.3SG=from.3SG.NT PRFT·sing.3SG.PRET PN.NOM.SG ART.ACC.SG.M=psalm.ACC.SG=this
'It is about that that David sang this psalm'

Linearization

- WORD ORDER: basic order is Verb_{non-finite} – Object – Subject

hi=tosuch *gabalae* *toisigechtae* *du=moysi* (Ml. 83a3)
in=beginning.DAT.SG taking.GEN.SG leadership.GEN.SG to.PN.DAT.SG
'in the beginning of Moses' taking leadership'

Linearization and Information Structure

- WORD ORDER is nonetheless flexible, apart from the verb placement. Allows for movement of constituents for clarity, emphasis, etc.

cen=tabairt *dait=siu* *du=fortachtae* *dún=ni* (Ml. 87d8)
without=giving.ACC.SG to.2SG=2SG 2SG=help.GEN.SG to.1PL=1PL
'without You giving Your help to us'

Information Structure

- CLEFT SENTENCES allow the fronted word or phrase to be emphasized (less often topicalized).

ar-is=do=thabirt *díglae* *berid* *in=claideb=sin* (Wb. 6a13)
for-is.3SG=to=bringing.DAT.SG vengeance.GEN.SG carry.3SG ART.ACC.SG.M=sword.ACC.SG=that
'For it is to inflict vengeance that he carries that sword'

is=dreecht *díib* *nad·ro-chreit* (Wb. 5c2)
is.3SG=portion.NOM.SG from.3PL NEG.REL·PFCT-believe.3SG.PRET
'it is a portion of them who had not believed'

Information Structure

- LEFT DISLOCATION (NOMINATIVUS PENDENS) fronts a noun or pronoun, establishing it as the topic of the sentence. It must be resumed by some element in the sentence.

inna=hí *batar=buthi* *ar=thus*
ART.NOM.PL.NT=that is.3PL.PRET=should.be on=beginning.DAT.SG
du-s-ra-le *fo=diad* (MI. 23c16)
PRV-3PL.OBJ·PFCT-put.3SG.PRET under=end.ACC.SG
'the things that should have been first, he put them last'

Clause combining: Clausal coordination

- Conjunctive: *ocus* ‘and’
- Disjunctive: *nó^L* ‘or’; *rodbo...nó...* ‘either...or...’
- Adversative: *acht* ‘but, except’
- All these forms can also join smaller units (i.e. nouns or adjectives)

Clause combining: relative clauses

- Morphologically relative forms:

beirid 'he carries'

beires 'who carries / whom he carries'

- Morphosyntactic indication: lenition or nasalization after first preverb / conjunct particle:

ad·cí 'he sees'

ad·chí 'who sees / whom he sees'

ad·cí [að'gʲi:] 'whom he sees'

Clause combining: relative clauses

- These basic mechanisms can be used for most syntactic roles: subject, object, and dative / prepositional.
- Subject: morphologically relative form, leniting relative
- Object: above plus nasalizing relative
- Prepositional: above plus special prepositional relative $-(S)a^N-$
- Genitive: only appears possible with copular sentences in which the subject or predicate is possessed

Clause combining: relative clauses

- Examples of the prepositional relative:

<i>nech</i>	<i>suidigther</i>	<i>loc</i>	<i>daingen</i>	<i>dō</i>
anyone.NOM.SG	establish.3SG.PASS.REL	place.NOM.SG	strong.NOM.SG.M	to.3SG.M

<i>i-nna·āgathar</i>	<i>ní</i>	(Ml. 87d15)
in-REL.NEG·fear.3SG	nothing.ACC.SG	

‘anyone for whom a strong place is established in which he fears nothing’
Lit. ‘anyone that a strong place is established for him...’

Clause combining: relative clauses

‘TRUE’ RELATIVES VS. ‘FAKE’ RELATIVES

- ‘true’ relatives have an antecedent in a previous clause (can only be third person)

is=mé / tú / cach

ad·chí

Con Culainn

is.3SG=1SG / 2SG / each.NOM.SG PRV·see.3SG.REL PN.ACC.SG

‘it’s me / you / everyones who sees Cú Chulainn.’

Clause combining: relative clauses

‘TRUE’ RELATIVES VS. ‘FAKE’ RELATIVES

- ‘fake’ relatives are relative only because of rules of Old Irish and they generally indicate subordination (can be any person).

as·biur ‘I say’

as·beir ‘he says’

vs.

a n-as·m-biur ‘when I say’

vs.

a n-as·m-beir ‘when he says’

Clause combining: subordinating particles

- They have a varied syntax: conjunct particle or not? nasalizing relative or not?
- Temporal: *a^N*, *in tan*, *dia^N*. ‘when’; *íarsindí*, *resiú* ‘after’; *céin(e)* ‘as long’; *co^N*. ‘until’
- Cause: *arindí*, *úare*, *fo bíth*, *dég* ‘because’
- Purpose: *co^N*. ‘in order to’
- Condition: *má*, *día^N*. ‘if’ *acht* + past subj. ‘if only’
- Explicative: *co^N*. ‘that’
- Concessive: *cía^L* / *ce^L* ‘although’ (also location ‘where’)

Ad·tlochur indithim dúib!