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Language change in early Britain: The convergence account

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1 Introduction

In many recent publications, starting in the 1990's, Theo Vennemann has argued with great conviction, that there was a Semitic and Vasconic influence on the languages of north-west Europe which stem from the Indo-European language family and which spread into this region of Europe sometime in the last centuries BC (Vennemann 1994, 1997, 2001, see also Adams 1975; Gensler 1993; Morris Jones 1965 [1900]). The branch in question is first and foremost Celtic but also Germanic, and to a lesser extent Italic, both of which are related to the first branch at many points. When one considers the movement of the Celts in the British Isles two facts are immediately obvious. The first fact is that the Celts did not arrive in a *terra nulla*, there were people there before them and the archaeologists can trace neolithic settlement in Ireland and Britain with ease (Mallory 1999). The second fact is that, in the words of Hawkes (1973), a 'cumulative Celticity' arose in these islands, i.e. there was no single invasion with an ensuing military conquest (Hawkes 1973, Clark 1966). This assumption, which is the most sensible, given the complete absence of battlefields or of references by historians to a military campaign by the Celts in these islands, has immediate linguistic consequences. If the Celts diffused slowly into Britain and Ireland then they most likely mixed with the peoples already present. There would have been language contact, bilingualism and linguistic coexistence (Thomason and Kaufman 1988, Bammesberger and Alfred Wollmann (eds) 1990, Jackson 1953), resulting in a scenario in which an influence of the pre-Celtic languages on Celtic was more than likely, given the mixture of peoples and the length of time before the previous inhabitants were entirely assimilated.¹

1.1 External and internal arguments: convergence

The fate of external explanations, especially those based on contact, has varied in recent linguistic literature. In the course of the 1980's many linguists reacted negatively to a too ready postulation of contact as a source of unexpected features in languages and varieties, see for instance Harris' treatment of syntactic peculiarities in Irish English (Harris 1984) as a good example of this line of reasoning. Other authors, such as Lass (see Lass and Wright 1986 and Lass 1997), have consistently been sceptical of contact explanations and been quite dismissive of external arguments, in general stressing the coherent internal structure of languages and assuming by default that this is the source of features, unless it can be proven otherwise. This position can be understood against the background of earlier contact accounts, but it has also been theoretically contested (see Filppula 2002a) as it is

unproven that internal factors take automatic precedence over external ones in language change.

There is another point about contact which needs to be highlighted. This is that it at best it accounts for the source of a phenomenon but does not explain why this should have arisen. Contact treatments tend to push the question of origin back a step, but do not explain how a phenomenon arose in the first place. For instance, if one believes that the VSO word order of Insular Celtic is due to contact with a Semitic language (Pokorny 1949), present in the British Isles before the arrival of the Celts, one still has not accounted for the rise of VSO in the source language, assuming that in the early history of Semitic, verb-initial word order represented an innovation. This fact is of considerable importance: what it means is that no matter how long the chain of contact may be, at the end of the line one has language-internal reasons for the rise of phenomena which are assumed to be innovations in the language which is the original source of contact. For this reason, contact cannot be said to *explain* a phenomenon but rather to *account* for how it arose in a language. Account is a more muted term and does not raise the expectations of a high degree of adequacy implied by explanation (Hickey 2002).

For the present paper contact accounts will be considered alongside language-internal factors for a series of phenomena which are contested in the scholarship which deal with them. Despite the likelihood of contact having played a significant role, it would be blind to neglect the internal arguments which can be put forward for various features suspecting of having a contact source. If the internal arguments are considered and then deemed insufficient on their own, then this actually strengthens the contact case, as contact is then seen as a necessary contributory factor to account fully for the appearance of a phenomenon.

In the remainder of this paper, the focus is one phonological and grammatical phenomena. While it is true that lexical correspondences between languages are the most powerful indicator of contact as a source, they are simultaneously less interesting theoretically. As an open class, the lexicon is always open to new elements and borrowing makes a frequent appearance on contact. However, lexical borrowing does not entail structural borrowing and it is the latter which is a clearer indicator of sustained contact between speakers of two speech communities. The other difficulty with lexical correspondence is that they may well be due to coincidence. For instance, it is true that in both Irish (Celtic) and Arabic (Semitic) the word for student literally means ‘son of knowledge’, but that in itself is not sufficient to show that the Irish expression was borrowed from Semitic, however likely it may appear to those favourably disposed toward contact accounts. Of course probabilities are always worked out on the basis of inherited material and contact transfer. Take the case of Old Irish *boss* (= ‘palm of hand’, Modern Irish: *bualadh bos* ‘applaud, clap’) as an illustration. Julius Pokorny (1930: 111) notes that this word is non-Indo-European, i.e. not part of the inherited lexical stock of Irish and hence postulates that it could be from Basque *bortz* / *bost* ‘five’. He further links it to Berber *a-fus* ‘hand, five’ and *fus-t* ‘clutch, fistful’, quoting Trombetti and Schuchardt *Revue Internationale des Études Basques* (7: 339) in support, and states unequivocally: ‘Ich bin jedenfalls der Meinung, daß die keltischen Formen auf ein hamitisch-iberisches Substrat zurückgeführt werden können’ (‘I am at any rate of the opinion that the Celtic forms can be traced back to an Hamitic-Iberian substrate’ — translation mine, RH). This brief mention shows one aspect of contact accounts, their relative probability. While many scholars might follow Pokorny in tracing Irish *boss* to Basque, the question of a link to Berber (Basset 1952) is more speculative. At the end of the day, contact accounts depend for their acceptance on whether scholars are convinced going on what they know about contact scenarios in general, specific contact in the case being discussed, possible

alternative accounts and the crucial balance of internal and external factors. If internal arguments are inapplicable, e.g. where a word in Irish is definitely not of Indo-European origin then the contact case is greatly strengthened as opaque lexical stems are rarely independent developments.

The above remarks are in a way on contact *versus* endogeny, but the theme of the present article is the notion of convergence, the scenario where both internal and external factors are seen to have contributed to a specific development. Given that both internal and external sources are available to speakers, no matter what the contact situation is like, it might be legitimate to postulate that no matter what the likelihood of transfer through contact, internal factors can always play a role. And if one looks to other sciences then one finds that multicausal accounts of the phenomena under consideration represent the default case. For instance in botany, the falling of the leaves (due to the retraction of nutritional material from the leaves, triggered by hormones) is interpreted as a function of both the reduction in daylight and the ambient temperature. This can be clearly seen during warm autumns when the leaves stay longer on the trees although the reduction in daylight is constant. This can be seen as parallel to internal and external arguments in language change. While internal factors always play a role, the nature and rate of change can be influenced by contact, an external factor which can vary in intensity. In this vein a number of phenomena will now be investigated to see whether one can identify both internal and external factors which may have been operative

2 Celtic and English

2.1 *The northern subject rule*

Among the various features of non-standard English syntax one which has received considerable attention in recent years is what has been dubbed the *Northern Subject Rule* (Ihalainen 1994: 221). Basically this is an agreement pattern between verbs and preceding subjects whereby a preceding pronoun blocks the use of an inflectional *-s* on a verb, irrespective of the person or number of the verb (although some dialects have relative scales for different points in verbal paradigms). The pattern can be seen in sentences like *We meet and talks together in the morning before doing the dinner*. Inflection is also favoured by preceding nouns as in *The workers gets extra timeoff at Christmas*. This agreement pattern is well-attested in northern Middle English and Middle Scots (Mustanoja 1960: 481f.). In areas of England south of an approximate line from Chester to the Wash (Klemola 2000: 336) the distribution of this type of agreement is uneven. East Anglia favours zero marking on all persons, while other southern dialects show a free use of inflectional *-s* with adjacent pronominal subject, something which is rare in the north.

Klemola (2000) and Vennemann (2001) have both considered the distinct possibility of influence by northern forms of Welsh (in Cumbria, Westmoreland and other parts of the far north of England) on English dialects there, leading to the grammatical rule which states (approximately) that verb agreement is only found when the preceding subject is a personal pronoun. The first point to note in this connection is that such agreement rules are rare cross-linguistically Klemola (2000: 337). However, in P-Celtic languages, notably in Welsh (and not in Irish) there is an agreement rule whereby plural forms of the present are only used with verbs when the pronoun *nhw* 'they' follows the verb immediately. In all other cases the singular of the verb is found (Klemola *loc. cit.*; King 1993, Williams 1980: 94f.). In essence this is the Northern Subject Rule: the plural forms of Welsh (*maen* 'is'-PL in the following) correspond to the *s*-less forms of English, the Welsh verbal singular (*mae* 'is'-SG in the following) is the equivalent to the *s*-inflected verbal forms of English: *Maen*

nhw'n dysgu Cymraeg 'They are learning Welsh', *Mae Trevor a Sian yn dysgu Cymraeg* 'Trevor and Sian are learning Welsh'. In his examination of this subject Klemola stresses that the occurrence of the Northern Subject Rule is greatest in regions of northern Britain which were bilingual regions with Brythonic Celtic in the Old English period.

Notwithstanding the remarkable parallel to P-Celtic, one can also find internal arguments for the rise of the Northern Subject Rule. One reason for the occurrence of something like this lies in the nature of verbal morphology in the late Old English period. The decline in inflectional morphology which progressed steadily during the Old English period (not evident to any great extent in the West Saxon koiné) meant that language learners towards the end of the period were faced with a difficulty in analysing the remaining inflections in some systemic way. By a process of abduction (Andersen 1973) language learners are likely to have hit on a number of alternative interpretations of these moribund inflections. In the northern areas which were either close to Welsh-speaking districts, or indeed bilingual regions, there would probably have been an embryonic Northern Subject Rule which would then have spread to monolingual English speakers and hence become firmly established.

The scenario of decaying inflections in Old English actually strengthens the contact view because it offers a further reason for the establishment of the Northern Subject Rule and hence bolsters the contact case as part of this convergence context.

2.2 *Internal possessor construction*

The development in Celtic and English of a constructional type in which possessive pronouns are used in cases of inalienable possession is, as Theo Vennemann has repeatedly pointed out (Vennemann 2000: 404, *fc.*) a remarkable structural parallel between the languages. This is the type which is to be seen in sentences like *He injured his finger*, compare German *Er verletzte sich den Finger*, Irish *Rinne sé dochar ar a mhéar* [did he damage on his finger]. What is striking in the European context is that the internal possessor construction is only found in two areas, both of which are on the edge of the continent, i.e. in the British Isles (in English and Celtic) and in the south-east of Europe (in Turkish and Lezgian, a South Caucasian language).

In Irish the exclusive nature of the internal possessor construction is not that obvious. It is equally common for a locative preposition to be used to denote possession, as in *An baile seo againne* [the town this at-us] 'our town'. This type of structure has an internal motivation: In Irish a locative expression with *ag* 'at' is used to express possession, i.e. the verb 'to have'. The central structural function of prepositional pronouns combined with nouns to express verbal notions is very common in Irish as in the following sentence: *Rinne sé dearmad faoi* [did he forget-NOUN under-him] 'He forgot him'. This type of structure is, however, an unusual feature in the Indo-European context so that the question of its origin can also be placed.

In the context of the current paper, the question must be asked: is there an internal motivation in English for the development of the internal possessor construction in English? The answer is clearly 'yes', seeing as how the case marking of Old English quickly went into decline at the end of this period and shortly afterwards. The inherited Old English type involves a dative of relevance as seen still in modern German, e.g. *Er legte ihm die Krone aufs Haupt* [he laid him-DATIVE the crown on the head] 'He laid the crown on his head'. The demise of overt dative marking (contrasting with the accusative) can be said to have provided an impetus for alternative marking of possession. In this situation the likelihood of the adoption of a strategy from Celtic with which Old English was in contact (Hickey 1995) was much increased.

2.3 *The development of the progressive*

The case just discussed shows the necessity of distinguishing in this context between internal motivation for a category and the presence of an internal pattern similar to that in a contact language. In Old English the decline in inflectional marking offers internal motivation on two fronts for speakers in the late Old English period: (i) the reinterpretation of moribund verbal suffixes as with the Northern Subject Rule and (ii) the search for an alternative for a category, inalienable possession, which was losing its overt marking. With the categories to be discussed now, one is dealing with the expansion of a pattern which was already embryonically present in Old English.

The concern of the present section is with the development of the progressive form in English. There are basically three views on this (Filppula 2002b): (i) it was an independent development in English (Curme 1912, Nickel 1966, Visser 1963-73, Mitchell 1985), (ii) it arose under the influence of Latin, perhaps via French (Mossé 1938), and (iii) it results from contact with Celtic (Keller 1925, Dal 1952, Preußler 1956, Wagner 1959, Braaten 1967, Ó Corráin 1997).

As has been pointed out by many authors previously (see Mittendorf and Poppe 2000: 119) a type of progressive structure in which a gerund was governed by a preposition existed in Old English: *ic wæs on huntunge* ‘I was hunting’ (Braten 1967: 173). This type of structure is also found in vernacular German, with an infinitive, as in *Ich bin am Schreiben* [I am at write-INFINITIVE] ‘I am writing’.

In this context a further consideration is necessary which Mittendorf and Poppe deal with in their examination of the progressive (2000: 120-2). This is the typological perspective. As noted by other scholars such as Comrie (1976: 98) and Bybee and Dahl (1989: 77) progressive aspect is frequently expressed — in many unrelated languages (Mittendorf and Poppe, *loc. cit.*) — by means of a locative structure meaning to be ‘at’ and ‘in’ an activity. Furthermore the step from structures like *ic wæs on huntunge* to *I was hunting* is small, involving only the deletion of the preposition. The fully developed progressive form appears in Middle English, but the apparent time delay between the contact with Celtic in the Old English period and the surfacing of the progressive later can be accounted for by the strong tradition of the written standard in Old English and should not be given as an argument against Celtic influence as some authors are inclined to do, see Nickel (1966: 300) for instance and Dal (1952: 113) who rightly explains the time gap.

The progressive is found in all the Celtic languages² and is clearly represented by the Irish structure *ag* + verbal noun as in *Tá mé ag caint léi* [is me at talking with-her] ‘I am talking to her’. This in itself is a good example of a locative expression for the progressive aspect and is typologically parallel to the Old English *ic wæs on huntunge*.

In summary one can say here that in both Old English and Celtic one had a progressive aspect, realised by means of a locative expression and with a similar functional range (Mittendorf and Poppe 2000: 139). Both languages maintained this aspect and English lost the locative preposition and increased the syntactic flexibility and range of the structure, perhaps under the supportive influence of contact with Celtic.

3 Celtic and Atlantic

For the second half of this contribution the parallels between Celtic and Atlantic are to be considered. The latter is taken by Vennemann to be a branch of Semitic (part of the Afro-Asiatic language family, Fischer 1982) which spread from the Maghreb in north-west

Africa along the western coast of Europe up into the north-west, specifically to the British Isles. This branch is of course long since defunct, but for the purposes of comparison one can consider Arabic which is the best attested and investigated Semitic language, not directly related to Atlantic but enjoying at least sibling status. For the Celtic languages the one chosen for data comparison is Irish. Its speakers were and are located further out on the coast of Europe and there are more parallels between it and Arabic than there are between the latter and representatives of P-Celtic such as Welsh.

Wagner, in his treatment of the verb in the languages of the British Isles, is quite explicit at many points in his claim that the specific verbal structures in these languages, notably their analytic character and the presence of a progressive form in all of them is something which was developed in the British Isles (1959: 119). He further links up these developments with parallels in other languages of the Atlantic coast and north Africa, specifically with Basque and with Berber (1959: 182-98). Wagner's methodology consists of repeatedly pointing out typological parallels between the languages of the British Isles and those in north Africa (Wagner 1982) which together form his 'Euroafrican' type which contrasts with a 'Ural-Altaiic' type which he sees as having influenced proto-Germanic (1959: 148). There are strengths and weaknesses in Wagner's approach. His forte lies in the broad typological perspective which he brings to his subject matter, the inherent weakness of his investigation is that it is almost ideologically in favour of typologically similarity through contact. There is no consideration of language-internal arguments so that the other side is never given a hearing.

3.1 *Verb-initial word order*

One of the striking parallels between Insular Celtic and Semitic is obviously the verb-initial word order and in general the post-modifying character of both language groups (with the genitive following the nominative and adjectives after nouns). Internal arguments have been put forward for the development of VSO in Insular Celtic, notably by Calvert Watkins (1963). In essence Watkins maintains that in early Celtic the inherited SOV word order of Indo-European was upset by the operation of *tnesis*, lit. 'cutting', whereby preverbs were separated from verbs to carry unstressed enclitics to the beginning of the sentence because these tended towards second position (Wackernagel's Law, Wackernagel 1892). But because enclitics had to be embedded in a complex verbal form, univerbation later set in (Russell 1995: 303), reversing *tnesis*. This process can be visualised something like the following:

... PEV -> PE ... V -> PEV ... (P = preverb, E = enclitic, V = lexical verb)

Much later the pre-verbs and the enclitics become opaque and are largely deleted leaving VSO as the canonical word-order in all Celtic languages today.

The essential criticism of Watkins' account is that it is just a description and not an explanation. Why should *tnesis* have become effective at a particular time in the development of Celtic, shifting preverbs to initial position? Why did Wackernagel's Law operate in the way it did to drag enclitics into second position? And why was it necessary for verbs to univerbate with preverbs and enclitics and lead them shifting to initial position? There are other accounts of the rise of VSO (see Hickey 2002 for a detailed discussion) one of which is the contact case. The reasoning here is as follows. A form of Semitic was spoken along the west coast of Europe and in the British Isles, what Vennemann calls Atlantic. This was a substrate to the Celtic languages which encroached on their territory and in time the speakers of the latter languages adopted the VSO word

order of the Atlantic speakers. There are a number of arguments in favour of this scenario, the strongest of which are (i) the fact that substrate languages typically have an influence on superstrate languages in closed classes of language, above all syntax and (ii) VSO word-order show a clear areal distribution in the world, the four most prominent of which are 1) the Celtic realms, 2) the Semitic language area (with Nilotic), 3) north-west United States and western Canada, 4) Polynesia (Austronesian).

3.2 *Status constructus*

In the discussion of the Northern Subject Rule above it was stressed that parallels between languages gain credence where the phenomena in question are cross-linguistically rare. This would seem to hold for the present feature. It is termed the *status constructus* in Arabic studies (Holes 1995: 166f.) and refers to the situation where, of two nouns, only the second noun of a pair (the one in the genitive) is marked for definiteness although the first is definite: *sayya:ratu al-mudi:r* [car-NOM the-director-GENITIVE] ‘the director’s car’. There is an exact formal parallel to this in Irish, seen in a phrase like *gluaisteán an mhúiteoir* [car-NOM the teacher-GENITIVE] ‘the teacher’s car’. The parallels are not exact as the post-posing of an adjective modifying the head is peculiar to Arabic, and referred to traditionally as *idáfat* lit. ‘occupation’ (the bond between head and genitival modifier), which specifies that no modifier (adjective) intervenes between head and genitive e.g. *kitáb er-râgil el-kebîr* [book the-man the-large] ‘the man’s large book’, compare the Irish equivalent *leabhar mór an fhir* [book big the man-gen]

3.3 *Lack of verb ‘to have’*

In both Irish and Arabic (as representatives of Celtic and Semitic respectively) there is no verb for ‘have’. Arabic uses a locative construction for ‘have’ with a preposition ‘to/for’ or ‘with’, e.g. *ma ‘andi kúrsi* [not with-me chair] ‘I don’t have a chair’, ‘*andek sayyaára?* [with-you car] ‘Do you have a car?’.

The verb *have* in Indo-European, inasmuch as one is dealing with a lexical verb in later languages, is generally derived from something meaning ‘hold, seize, take’. Older methods of expressing possession is with a form of the verb *be* and a locative or directional preposition indicating the possessor. This is the case in Greek and Latin with *moi esti* and *mihi est* respectively and is continued into the Celtic languages with phrases meaning ‘is sth. at someone’, e.g. *Tá leabhar nua agam* [is book new at-me] ‘I have a new book’. This is also the case in Modern Russian for instance: *u menja novoe pal’to* [with me-DATIVE new coat] ‘I have a new coat’.

The upshot of these considerations is that there can be no question of the Celtic situation being an innovation. Again if pre-Celtic languages supported the retention of a locative structure to express the notion of ‘have’ then one is dealing with convergence once more. What one should stress here is that both Irish and Arabic make ample use of spatial relations to render figurative meanings and in this respect the ‘look-and-feel’ of both languages is similar, consider the means for expressing ‘owe’, Arabic ‘*ilii 9índhum thalaáth danaaniír* [to-me with-them three dinars] ‘They owe me three dinars’ and Irish *Tá trí punt agam orthu* ‘They owe me three pounds’ [is three pounds at-me on-them].

3.4 *The functionalisation of secondary articulation*

The phonology of Irish is remarkable when compared to the P-Celtic languages in that all

consonants, except /h/, exist in pairs of which one member is palatal and the other non-palatal. In this respect Irish is like Russian, though palatalisation is more regular because the palatalised velars did not further develop into affricates or sibilants. As in Russian, present-day Irish shows velarisation of non-palatal segments to increase the phonetic distinction between them and their palatal counterparts. The traditional view about how palatalisation arose is that it was triggered by high vowels following consonants, typically in grammatical endings, which led to these sounds adopting a degree of palatalisation as secondary articulation. With the later loss of inherited inflections containing these high vowels, the secondary articulation was functionalised and the phonetic distance between palatal and non-palatal sounds grew.

Remarkably, Semitic languages, like the various forms of Arabic, also show a functionalisation of secondary articulation. In this case it is pharyngealisation which is involved and this has been functionalised with Arabic now having a systemic distinction between emphatic (pharyngealised) and non-emphatic (non-pharyngealised consonants) which is used, as in Irish, on both the lexical and the morphological levels.

Given the fact that there is an adequate language-internal reason for the rise of systemic palatalisation in Irish and given the fact that this is a common phenomenon cross-linguistically there is little need to appeal to contact as a source.³ At best one could maintain that the presence of functionalised secondary articulations — assuming that these also existed in the variety of Atlantic spoken in Ireland when the Celts arrived — had a positive influence on a parallel functionalisation in Irish.

3.5 *Spurious parallels*

3.5.1 *The expression of existence*

Certain formal parallels can be ascertained between Arabic and Irish but these are likely to be spurious or at the very least the matter is undecided as to whether these could be the results of transfer or not. For instance, in Arabic the form *fīh* ‘in it’ (Bergsträsser 1963: 166) is used to express existence just as Irish *ann* ‘in-it’, compare Arabic *fīh khubz* [in-it bread] ‘Is there any bread?’, *ma fīh mōya* ‘There is no water’, cf. Irish *Níl aon uisce ann* [not-is any water in-it]. Two points should be remembered here. The first is that locative expressions for existence are not in the least unusual typologically, quite the opposite. The second point is that Irish *ann* ‘in-it’ is part of a larger set of paradigms which contain productive combinations of prepositions and pronouns for all persons and both numbers. The conclusion from this is that Irish *ann* ‘in-it’ is a point of similarity with Arabic but this stems from a morphological pattern in Irish which does not have a precise equivalent in the Semitic language.

3.5.2 *Autonomous verb form*

In Classical Arabic (Fischer 1997: 209f.; Stempel 1999: 119-23) there existed a strictly agentless passive⁴ e.g. *inkásar al-baab* [broke the door] ‘the door was broken’. This is similar to the autonomous verb form of Irish (Christian Brothers 1977: 94) as can be seen in a sentence like *Briseadh an doras* [broke the door] ‘The door was broken’.

The typological perspective helps in assessing the possible contact source of this structure. Forms of the verbs which do not carry overt marking for person and/or number are common cross-linguistically, as is the case in Finnish (Karlsson 1979), and it is quite natural that such forms should be used in the function of a passive as they fulfill one of the

main purposes of the passive, viz. to mention and action but not the subject who carried it out.

4 Conclusion

The use of contact accounts of unexpected features of a language is an understandable activity. In the case of Indo-European languages this is a very necessary enterprise if our knowledge of the languages which preceded them in the areas where they are now found is to advance to any significant extent. Nonetheless, the notion that contact is the sole explanation for any attested phenomenon is more an article of faith than an established fact. Convergence scenarios in which both internal and external factors play a role provide credible models for language change in that they offer the possibility of multicausal accounts which, given our knowledge of situations in later attested languages, are definitely known to exist. Two obvious examples here would be the survival of a distinction among personal pronouns in the second person and the occurrence of an habitual aspect in forms of Irish English, these phenomena having models both in archaic/regional English and in Irish, the language from which the speakers shifted historically (Hickey *fc.*).

Paradoxically, the consideration of internal factors strengthens the case for contact accounts with many phenomena in language history as the operation of two factors in principle provides more support for the genesis of specific features. So while contact alone may in many instances, such as the Northern Subject Rule, be viewed by scholars as too weak a source for the change it embodies vis á vis Old English, the additional consideration of abductive reanalysis by language learners who reassigned a function to the moribund present-tense verbal inflections of late Old English, offers in tandem with transfer from Brythonic through contact, a more plausible scenario for the development of this phenomenon which is admittedly cross-linguistically unusual. The attention devoted to contact sources in recent work on Celtic and English represents a much-needed redress of the imbalance, hitherto solely in favour of internal developments, and can hopefully, combined with an impartial consideration of internal factors, point the way to avenues of research which engender cogent accounts of the significant parallels between the Celtic languages and English.

Notes

- 1 Vennemann rightly remarks on the reticence of scholars to accept contact explanations in the Indo-European context who otherwise have no such reservations when dealing with language outside this group. He furthermore postulates that the reasons may lie in the vested institutional interest of scholars to preserve the largely contact-free status of Indo-European in order not to undermine the subject.
- 2 The Middle Welsh structure involves an inflected form of *bot* 'be' plus *yn* 'in' plus verbal noun (Mittendorf and Poppe 2000: 136).
- 3 In the past, various scholars have indeed posited a contact source for phonetic phenomena which then become phonologised, see Martinet's account of West Romance lenition (Martinet 1952). A prosodic matter which is frequently discussed in literature considering contact is the source of initial word accent in Celtic. Vennemann (1994:272) sees this as resulting from substrate languages present in North-West Europe and rejects Salmons notion of Finno-Ugric influence on languages in this region as such a source would be too far to the east.

- 4 Holes (1995: 159f.) notes the modern tendency to include agent-marking on passive which was formerly not usual in Arabic.

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