

# Early contact and parallels between English and Celtic<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

If one looks at English over the 1500 years of its attested development then certain changes are immediately obvious. From a point of view of typology there is something which obviously needs to be explained in the history of English, namely the rate at which the language has changed from a synthetic language with a complicated system of inflections in the nominal and verbal area to an analytic language in which grammatical relations are largely expressed by word order and by the increased functionalisation of prepositions.

To begin with I should state my stance on the issue of typological change in English: the central hypothesis of this paper is that there may well have been a low-level influence from British Celtic on Old English whereby the phonetic makeup of the former with its lenition of consonants in weak environments and reduction of vowels in unstressed syllables may well have infected the pronunciation of Old English and at least accelerated any tendency to phonetic opacity and attrition in unstressed syllables which may have been present in the existing varieties of the language leading ultimately to changes in morphology which we perceive as a shift in language type when viewed over a long period.

This paper will address general questions concerning types of contact and shift (sections 1 and 2), offer a brief history of Celtic-Germanic contact (sections 3 to 5), consider the linguistic nature of the contact (sections 6 to 8) and its consequences (sections 9 and 10). Those readers primarily interested in the linguistic arguments should concentrate on the part of the paper from section 6 onwards.

*The relative typology of Germanic languages.* The slow but constant movement in more or less one typological direction, the Sapirian drift from synthetic to analytic, is a development which is typical of most Indo-European languages but the rate of change varies considerably. Indeed if one takes the group of Germanic languages on their own, then one sees that the changes are greatest in English and least in German with the remaining languages ranging somewhere inbetween. This can be illustrated this with four variables, grammatical gender, case, plural formation and verbal inflections.

(1)	<i>Gender</i>		
	German	3	(Masc.,Fem.,Neuter)
	Swedish, Dutch	2	(Masc.+Fem.,Neuter)
	English	0	(only natural gender)
	<i>Case</i>		
	German	4	(Nom.,Acc.,Gen.,Dat.)
	Swedish	2	(Nom., Gen.; object case for pronouns only)
	English	0	(Nom., Gen.; object case for pronouns only)
	<i>Plural formation</i>		
	German		Nasals, /r/, Umlaut, /q/, /s/, zero and combinations of these
	Swedish		Nasals, /r/, Umlaut, /q/ /s/, zero and some combinations
	English		/s/ and a small group of irregular nouns
	<i>Max. number of different forms in present tense</i>		
	German	5	( <i>spreche, sprichst, spricht, sprechen, spricht</i> )
	Swedish	1	( <i>talar</i> )
	English	2	( <i>speak, speaks</i> )

This simple taxonomy is just a bare indication of the present-day situation in the languages listed. The status of the different items varies. Thus in German the genitive has all but disappeared as the case of a verbal complement whereas the dative very common. However the overall picture has general validity: English has lost most of its inflections and German has retained most of its endings (cf. the many forms of verbs).

## 1 Contact and typological shift

The question which arises when considering the typology of English is whether one can postulate a reason for the extent of the shift which it has undergone. To begin with one can say that there is a standard wisdom on this point: this assumes that contact with other languages is responsible for the typological change. The basic idea is that in a situation where speakers are confronted with others whose language they do not understand, they simplify their own and of course the members of this other group also simplify when they are speaking the language of those they are in contact with. This scenario when applied to Old English would assume that English was simplified as a result of contact with Old Norse as carried by the Scandinavian invaders and later settlers as of the late 8th century. Support for this can be gleaned from northern dialects of Old English which are more 'progressive', ie they undergo more morphological change than the corresponding dialects in the south.

*Polish* When viewing a matter such as the present one it is good to play the devil's advocate now and again. Let me tackle the adage that strong language contact induces change. There are many

annoying counterexamples which militate against this being regarded as any kind of explanation for English. Take Polish as a case in point.

- (2) a. Old shift of /r<sup>h</sup>/ rʒ F /g/ as in verbal prefix *prze*, Russian *pre*, cf. R. *khodit* 'walk' and *prekhodit* 'arrival' vs P. *chodzie* 'walk' and *przechodzie* 'pass by, cross over'.
- b. Recent vocalisation of velarised /ɹ/ [ɹ̥] easily recognisable in place names like *Lodz* [wutʂ], or *Wroclaw*, [vrɔswaf].

Apart from the old shift of palatal /r/ to fricative (Stieber, 1973: 69f.) and the vocalisation of /ɹ/ virtually nothing has happened to the phonetics of the language and this in a situation where language contact with Germans, Baltic language speakers and various kinds of Slavs has been a perennial feature of the country's history.

Incidentally I don't think one can use 'external' arguments like the fact that the Poles did not necessarily harmonise with their German neighbours so they did not let their language be affected by them. They certainly borrowed enough words from German and have been doing so for a long time as the phonological adaption of old loans such as *rynek* 'square' from *Ring* show, alongside such everyday words as *dach* 'roof' which match the phonotactics of Polish.

*Tuscan Italian* Another example of lack of change is provided by Tuscan Italian which has remained remarkably intact since at least the days of Dante (1265-1321). It may even be the case that characteristic but unwritten features of Tuscan like the *gorgia toscana* (a sandhi phenomenon consisting of intervocalic fricativisation and initial gemination due to absorption of preceding final consonants, Rohlf's, 1949/50: 290ff.; 321ff.) was already a feature of late medieval Tuscan.

- (3) Tuscan Italian *gorgia toscana*  
/porta, a forta, tre pporte/ from Latin *porta, ad portam, tres portae*

This is all the more astounding given the enormous dialectal diversity and change in Italy. I also think that the argument that the literary standard (which Tuscan was and is) retarded language change is weak. There may be some validity to this argument in the case of countries where such a standard arose later (post-Renaissance) but more often than not this question is bound up with the creation of an orthographical and morphological standard after the introduction of printing and, in the case of English, with the increasingly prescriptive attitude of writers from the early modern period onwards.

The upshot of these considerations is that there is certainly no simple equation between the ostensible amount of contact and the degree of change. Furthermore a language can undergo major typological re-alignment without this being induced by external circumstances. Irish is a good example here: the language shed virtually all its inherited inflections and massively reduced the quantity of grammatical categories with only quite temperate contact (with Norse and later Anglo-Norman) in the decisive periods of typological shift (Old and Middle Irish, 600 - 1200).

It is the predictive nature of the 'contact causes change' assumption which is

unacceptable. If one retreats from this strong claim then one can still hold that contact can induce change. Indeed it can do so on a large scale. And as authors like Thomason and Kaufman (1988: 35-64) are at pains to point out, there is no area, eg inflectional morphology or core vocabulary, which is immune from change in an appropriate contact situation. What one must do is to differentiate various types of contact and the external situations in which it occurs and then classify the resulting kinds of change. Allow me to now discuss a number of scenarios for language contact.

## 2 Types of contact

Any discussion of language contact and ensuing transfer must take the various types of contact<sup>2</sup> and the results for the languages involved in this contact into account. For the present discussion one must distinguish two basic types. The first is *direct transfer* where the effect is immediate, frequently with alteration in the structure of the recipient language. Immediate influence on closed classes of a language (morphology and syntax) presumes intensity of contact with fairly widespread bilingualism and a lack of external constraints such as a notion of standard, perpetuated by general education and a literate public. The point about bilingualism is important: given that every language is a self-contained and internally structured system then there is normally no need to accept structure from an external source, unless matters have come to such an impasse that structural re-organisation is imperative. But even here the deadlock does not have to be solved by extraneous means, a language can right itself by re-structuring from within, pidgins being the classic example of this which not just carry out palliative therapy on themselves but create structure so as to put flesh on the skeleton of the arising language. In a situation of bilingualism however speakers use two languages, frequently with one acquired subsequent to the other with the result that the second is acquired less perfectly than the first. In such instances they may well feel the need for an equivalent in the second language to structural options, say aspectual categories, pronominal distinctions or lexical differentiation,<sup>3</sup> which they are acquainted with from their first language. This sets the stage for interference in the classical Weinreichian sense.

The second main type can be termed *delayed effect* contact. The effect is not immediate. There is no structural upheaval in the recipient language but a gradual acceptance of features in the other language due to prolonged exposure within a single geographical area. The speakers of the donor language do not have to enjoy a position of prestige within the social community of the recipient language. Characteristic of such a scenario is low-level influence in a general sense: 'speech habits' migrate from one language to another. These may lead later to structural if not indeed typological change. The development of Gaulish French [y] (from Latin *U* [u]), if it has its origins in contact with Celtic (not undisputed by any means), must have arisen in this manner. This view of gradual change is of course more Neogrammarian than one which presupposes the sudden appearance of a contact phenomenon in a recipient language. If Celtic had /y/ at the time of the initial development of Latin to French in Gaul (which is postulated but not demonstrated) then an abrupt appearance could only have occurred in a scenario which assumes lexical diffusion: the Romance speakers started borrowing words from the Celts and among these words would have been some with /y/ and this pronunciation would have then spread to encompass native

sections of their vocabulary causing a shift of *U* to /y/. However this situation is unlikely to have obtained as there are so few loans from Celtic in Romance; the keyword *bruise* is a good example but it is hardly probable that the pronunciation of this word led to the Romance speakers using the putative /y/ which it contained in Celtic for all their occurrences in Romance of inherited *U*.<sup>4</sup>

*Relationship of languages in contact* When looking at contact situations one is dealing with two or more language groups and the relation between these is never exactly equal. One group will represent a superstrate, a socially superior group, and another will be a substrate, a less prestigious group. The intermediary position, that of adstrate, where two groups are equal is one which does not appear to exist in practice although it is a theoretical option.

Now the assumption of sociolinguistics is that the speakers of the substrate emulate the speech of the superstrate, particularly in a language shift scenario (as opposed to one where borrowing into the substrate is the main manifestation of contact). It is difficult to find real-life situations which illustrate this in any pure form but I suppose the situation with Modern Irish comes close to it. Here you have a moribund Celtic language spoken by not much more than 30,000 people as a first language. These speakers are abandoning their language rapidly, which is hardly surprising seeing as how it is pitted against the world language English. English is furthermore exercising a strong influence on the lexicon and syntax of Modern Irish while in the opposite direction there is little or no influence. Hence one can claim that English is the superstrate and Irish the substrate in the contact areas of the west of Ireland today.

Before turning my attention to the situation in England after the mid-5th century, allow me to sketch briefly first the history of Celtic and the relations between Celtic and Germanic up to their renewed contact in Britain.

### 3 Brief history

Knowledge of the Celts in pre-history is derived from (i) references to them in the works of classical authors (the earliest is Herodotus, 5th century BC, from whom comes the term 'Celt': Greek *Keltoi* 'Celts', later Latin *Celtae*) and (ii) archaeological remains (Schlette, 1979: 13-43; Laing, 1979: 1-14). For the latter one can consult the chapter 'Ethnogenesis: Who were the Celts?' (1987: 211-249) in which Renfrew gives a very broad overview of the supposed distribution and movement of the Celts since their appearance in history. He furthermore touches on the question of the spread of the Celts to Britain which he does not see as consisting of identifiable migrations but successive waves over a very long period starting perhaps as early as 2000 BC with the Beaker People.

There is an identifiable culture known after the location Hallstatt in Austria. This was early Iron Age (*c* 800-450 BC), though other authors (not just Renfrew) see in the preceding Bronze Age Urnfield culture, and perhaps the *tumulus* ('earth mound') culture in central Europe north of the Alps, the first appearance of the Celts in an area roughly from the Rhineland across Bavaria to Bohemia. The late Iron Age is represented by the La Tène (*c* 450-100 BC) stratum of Celtic culture named after a site in Switzerland.

The coming of the Celts to Britain is difficult to date and can be placed in any period from a distant 2000 BC when the Bronze Age Beaker Folk came to Britain to a more recent 600 BC when the Iron Age people arrived in successive waves (Dillon and Chadwick, 1967: 4). The last distinct wave of immigration is of the Belgae in the first century BC (Caesar mentions that they cross from northern Gaul to Britain). This gives the following picture for Britain.<sup>5</sup>

- |     |    |  |           |
|-----|----|--|-----------|
| (4) | 0) | Pre-Iron Age settlers                                | ?         |
|     | 1) | Hallstatt stratum                                    | 600 BC -> |
|     | 2) | La Tène stratum                                      | 300 BC -> |
|     | 3) | Invasions of the Belgae                              | 100 BC    |
|     | 4) | Immigration from Gaul on Roman subjugation, 58-50 BC |           |

The Celtic languages today comprise six languages with greater or lesser degrees of vitality. These fall into two main groups traditionally known as *Brythonic* or *Brittonic* (P-Celtic in type) and *Goidelic* from the *Goídil*, modern *Gaels* (Q-Celtic in type).

- |     |                        |                              |
|-----|------------------------|------------------------------|
| (5) | <i>P-Celtic</i>        | <i>Q-Celtic</i>              |
|     | Welsh, Cornish, Breton | Irish, Scottish Gaelic, Manx |

The distinction between P- and Q-Celtic is based on the realisation of words with inherited IE /k(w)-/. In the Q-Celtic branch this is retained whereas in the P-Celtic branch it is shifted to /p/.<sup>6</sup>

- |     |                 |                      |                              |
|-----|-----------------|----------------------|------------------------------|
| (6) | Irish           | Welsh                |                              |
|     | <i>ceann</i>    | <i>pen</i>           | ‘head’ <sup>7</sup>          |
|     | <i>mac</i>      | <i>mab</i> (E /map/) | ‘son’                        |
|     | <i>ceathair</i> | <i>pedwar</i>        | ‘four’ (IE * <i>qetwar</i> ) |

Note that the distinction between the two main types of Celtic already existed on the continent. Celtiberian like Irish is Q-Celtic whereas Gaulish and Welsh are P-Celtic. One should also be aware of the fact that Breton is *not* a remnant of Gaulish but is due to a wave of immigration from Cornwall to Brittany as a consequence of the pressure brought to bear on the Celts in the south-west of England by the Germanic invaders.

All the languages just mentioned belong to a branch of Indo-European known itself as Celtic. Its relationship to other branches is unclear, formerly scholars thought that there was an earlier unity between Italic and Celtic on certain morphological grounds.<sup>8</sup> On a firmer footing is the location of the Celts. There are two archaeologically defined cultures which are associated with the Celts in the latter half of the first millennium BC, the earlier Hallstatt and the somewhat later La Tène culture (see above).

One can safely say that the La Tène Celts were located in central Europe in a band stretching from eastern France across to approximately present-day south-west Poland. Onomastic evidence helps us in determining this, for instance the names of the river Rhine (E Celtic \**r<sup>h</sup>nos* E IE \**reinos*, Schmidt, 1986: 206) and Isar and names of regions like Bohemia (*Böhmen*, the area of the *Boii*, the wood-dwellers, Chadwick, 1971: 52; Krahe, 1954: 123) are

Celtic in origin. Not all the hitherto accepted Celtic origins for place names can be upheld, however. Vennemann (1994: 275) sees *Isar*, for instance, as Old European (his own, not Krahe's, which he takes to be pre-Indo-European, agglutinative in structure and hence identifiable vis à vis the later subgroups of Indo-European) with *Is-* cognate with Basque stem *iz-* 'water'.

In approximately the 6th century BC the Celts began a period of expansion. They moved in virtually every direction. There are references to them in western and central Turkey, in the historical province of Galatia, (Dressler, 1967), best known because of St. Paul's epistle to the church there, and of course the Celts were in Italy and sacked Rome in 390 BC. Another thrust of the Celts was to the west and north. One section moved into the Iberian peninsula and is responsible for Celtiberian, recorded in a number of inscriptions. The group which moved north, north-west occupied the centre and north of France, historically Gaul and moved on across the English channel.

Linguistic evidence for continental Celtic is scanty but there is enough of it to realise that the language forms spoken on the mainland of Europe still retained much of the morphology which it had inherited from IE.

(7)	Gaulish	Old Irish	Welsh	
	<i>uxellos</i>	<i>uasal</i>	<i>uchel</i>	'high, noble'
	<i>vindos</i>	<i>find</i>	<i>gwynn</i>	'fair, beautiful'
	<i>nertomaros</i>	<i>nertmar</i>	<i>nerthfawr</i>	'strong, powerful'

It is clear from just a few forms that adjectival and nominal endings were present in Gaulish, clusters like /ks/ and /nd/ still existed and internal voiced stops had not yet been fricativized, or at least this was not so systematic a feature of Gaulish for it to be orthographically recognised.

The latter point is important. Allow me to expand on it for a moment. One of the features of all Celtic languages is that the initial consonants of words change their form under clearly defined grammatical conditions. This is known as lenition, a weakening of articulation. In this context it means the shift of stop to fricative or of voiceless to voiced fricatives as part of a morphological process. Here are a few examples from Modern Irish and Modern Welsh.

(8)	Irish	<i>cat</i> 'cat'	
		<i>a chat</i> /q xat/ 'his cat'	
		<i>a cat</i> /q kat/ 'her cat';	<i>a gcat</i> /q gat/ 'their cat'
	Welsh		
		<i>ei bib</i> /i bib/ 'his pipe'	( E <i>pib</i> )
		<i>ei fara</i> /i varq/ 'his bread'	( E <i>bara</i> )
		<i>ei chorff</i> /i xorf/ 'her body'	( E <i>corff</i> )

Bear in mind that in all the Celtic languages the reaction to the gradual decay of the inherited inflections of Indo-European was to functionalise the phonetic lenition present in each language (probably at around the 5th century AD in Britain and Ireland, i.e. in P- and Q-Celtic, independently; Jackson, 1953: 561 assumes the second half of the fifth century).

What is curious here is that each language group adopted the same solution which, seen typologically, is not a very obvious reaction to inflectional attrition. Given this situation I think one is justified in assuming that the seeds of lenition, the weakening of consonants, was already present in the continental forms of Celtic. Indeed authorities like Jackson (1953: 546) would seem to assume that in Continental Celtic there was a systematic distinction between geminate and simplex consonants and this developed into the opposition non-lenited # lenited later with the demise of distinctive length for consonants. The geminates occurred in absolute initial position (strong syllable onset) and internally where they derived from previous clusters, eg *-mm-* from *-sm-*. Where the cluster was still present, eg *lt* or *Xt*, no lenition is later observable. Evidence is present for the fricativisation of labials on the continent, eg in that of /m/ to /v, w/. Tovar (1961: 79ff.) provides instances and calls this lenition (in the simple sense of a shift from stop to fricative which is accepted usage in Celtic studies). Furthermore, he would seem to subsume under this process the very early loss of *\*p* which is the defining feature of early Celtic (Irish *athair*, Latin *pater* to quote the standard example).

#### 4 The earliest Celtic-Germanic contact

It is accepted that the Celts occupied central Europe in the first millenium BC and that the Germanic peoples came in contact with them when they moved southwards into roughly the same area. Furthermore there is consensus that the embryonic Italic group was initially north of the Alps and hence broadly speaking in the area of the Celts. These facts concerning the undifferentiated Indo-European subgroups led older scholars to postulate clusters of these subgroups the most notable of which are the following.

- 1) Krahe *Old European*  
Celtic, Italic, Germanic, Baltic, Illyrian
- 2) Meillet *West Indo-European*  
Celtic, Italic, Germanic
- 3) Kuhn *Nordwestblock*  
Germanic and Celtic plus non-Germanic, non-Celtic Indo-European languages in northern Europe

Before considering Germanic and Celtic one should mention that periodically some scholars have maintained that there was a developmental stage at which Italic and Celtic formed a unity. This opinion rests on a number of phonological and morphological parallels (see Baldi, 1983: 47ff. for a convenient summary) which tend nowadays not to be regarded as evidence for a period of unity but, inasmuch as they represent innovations, to be at most the result of contact while Italic was in roughly the same part of central Europe as Celtic, ie before it spread south of the Alps.

Turning to Germanic one sees that a major defining feature of it as a branch of Indo-European is the initial stress accent which separates it from other more conservative sub-groups of the family such as Slavic or Baltic. The fixing of stress can be postulated to have occurred by about around 500 BC at a time when both Celtic and Germanic which were spoken



in central Europe (Salmons, 1984: 269ff., 1992: 87ff.). Salmons notes that accent shift, particularly a fixed, stress accent is a common feature in language contact situations and postulates that this held for the Germanic - Celtic interface at this early stage and assumes (1984:274) that the Celtic group was dominant over the Germanic one.<sup>9</sup> However stress is not a good parameter with which to establish the nature of contact between languages and the notion that initial fixed accent is somehow typical for contact is not supported by cross-linguistic evidence. For instance while it is true that extreme southern dialects of Polish have initial stress (rather than the penultimate type which is general) as a contact feature from Czech, other languages show a movement away from initial stress, eg southern Irish which adopted stress later in words on long vowels from Anglo-Norman. The variable stress in the latter can indeed be seen as a simplification of the accentual system as the placement is governed solely by syllable coda weight and does not require an appeal to units like lexical root.

The notion of ascendancy of the Celts over their Germanic neighbours in the first millennium BC is one which has a long pedigree. It goes back to Indo-Europeanists like Alfred Holder and Hermann Osthoff at the end of the last century. The basis for their assumption is lexical. Here is a brief resumé of the facts.

There are two important loans from Celtic in Germanic at this early stage (Elston, 1934: 160ff. is the most comprehensive treatment, others worth consulting are Lane, 1933 and Dillon, 1943). The first is the stem which is seen in German names like *Friedrich; Heinrich* (the latter element is related to *Reich* 'domain; empire') and which is cognate with Latin *rex* 'king'. This word had the original meaning of 'prince' or 'ruler' (Goth. *reiks*) and was first recognised by Hermann Osthoff in 1884 to be a loan from Celtic. The reasoning is as follows. Latin *rex* : *r<sup>e</sup>gis*, Gallic *rix*, Old Irish *rí*, Sanskrit *raj* show that the IE word must have contained a long e:. In Gothic this e: more or less remains, spelt *ei*: *qeins*, *qe:ns* 'wife, woman' (in some instances *i*). In West and North Germanic the vowel is lowered to *é*: Goth. *m<sup>e</sup>na*, OHG *mÉno*, Old Norse *máni* 'moon'. The high vowel in Germanic *\*re:ks* (Holder, 1896: 1198) is taken as proof that it is not a continuation of an IE root *reg*'- but a loan from Celtic which has regular raising of IE *e*: to ».

The second keyword (Elston, 1934: 166ff.) is *ambactus* (see also Holder, 1896: 114). This Gallo-Latin form corresponds to Goth. *andbahts* and still has a reflex in German *Amt* 'office', *Beamter* 'civil servant'. The etymology is Celtic *\*ambi-* 'around' and *\*actos*, the past participle of IE *\*ag*'- 'drive', and the meaning in Gothic is 'vassal' or 'servant'. Note that there is some doubt as to whether the word came from Celtic directly: it could have been a loan from Latin; the *ht* /*xt*/ sequence might have been an adaptation of /*kt*/ to the phonology of Gothic, a very common type of alteration, and not necessarily proof that it was borrowed into Germanic before the First Consonant Shift. It is beyond doubt that the word was well established in Gothic at the time of Wulfila's Bible as it has the noun and the verb *andbahtjan* 'to serve' along with the derivative noun *andbahti* 'office, service'. The first Latin attestation is from c.170 BC in the writings of a poet Ennius who uses it in the sense of 'Gallic slave' (Elston, 1934:168).

Another shared lexical item in Celtic and Germanic is that for 'iron' which is Germanic *\*isarna* and Celtic *\*isarno* (Holder, 1896: 75). This root is only attested in these two sub-groups<sup>10</sup> of IE (Kluge-Mitzka, 1975: 160f.) as is the word for 'lead', cf. German *Lot*, Irish *luaidhe*. As the proto-IE population is taken to have been in the transition between stone and

metals in the period immediately before dispersion, the knowledge of metallurgy is ascribed in particular to the Celtic and Germanic subgroups. Much has also been made of the fact that Latin *gladius* ‘sword’ (Old Irish *claideb*, Thurneysen, 1946: 103) would appear to have been a Celtic loan (Holder, 1896: 2023). However there is archaeological evidence that the Celts in the Hallstatt period (middle of the first millennium BC) gained their ability to forge iron from a previous Illyrian culture in the Middle Danube region (Elston, 1934: 179f.; this idea was supported by Pokorny as well, see also Krahe, 1954: 122f.).

In the opposite direction there are Germanic loans in Celtic, eg the words for *breeches*, (Gaulish *brac(c)a*, OHG *bruoh*) *shirt* (Old Irish *caimis*, OHG *hemidi*). A balanced summary of the arguments concerning the nature of the mutual influence is to be found in Elston (1934: 185ff.). He sees the relation of the two groups as one defined first and foremost by trade rather than by any considerable bilingualism. He also sees no firm ground for assuming that the Celts dominated the Germanic tribes in the parts of Germany where there was extensive contact (along the Rhine valley).

Phonological parallels between Celtic and Germanic are accidental if they occur at all. Specifically there is no connection between the first consonant shift and lenition as is later developed in Celtic. The consonant shift is an unconditional change whereas lenition is an external sandhi phenomena which arose between a grammatical and a lexical word. Salmons (1992: 118) quotes Schrodt (1986: 105) approvingly in his rejection of a possible parallelism between Celtic lenition and the Germanic sound shift.

#### 4.1 Accent and lenition in Celtic

Two matters need to be broached when viewing Celtic - Germanic contact and possible influence of the former on the latter. These are interconnected but will be considered separately to begin with. The first is the nature of accent and the second the phonetic weakening (lenition) which is a characteristic of Celtic and which has led to radical typological changes in all these languages.

An examination of accent must consider two aspects, its place in the word and its nature. The standard assumption is that the accent in early Celtic was a pitch accent, that is accented syllables were spoken with a noted increase in frequency, the other two possible parameters length and loudness (amplitude) not varying significantly. This pitch accent also has the labels ‘tonic accent’ or ‘musical accent’. Its opposite is stress accent; German authors use the pair of terms ‘*musikalischer Akzent*’ und ‘*Druckakzent*’ (‘accent of pressure’ by which is meant loudness). Note that pitch accent is tacitly taken to mean an increase in frequency for acoustic prominence. A drop in frequency is also a possibility but this is usually associated with the stress accent type so that lowering the frequency of vowels is accompanied by an increase in amplitude (as in Modern German).

It is not necessary in this paper to go into the individual arguments for and against pitch type accent for early stages of IE languages.<sup>11</sup> The main view is that ablaut can supposedly be better explained if one assumes variations in pitch, these then accounting for alternations in vowel quality.

**Accent in Continental Celtic** The scholars who have concerned themselves with continental Celtic assume that the accent in common Celtic was of the pitch type. Dottin (1920: 103f.) refers to ‘un accent tonique’/‘un accent de hauteur’ and states that by the time of Gaulish this must have been ‘un accent d’intensité’. But the position of the accent shows a certain freedom.<sup>12</sup> The antepenult is the most common position, but there are stressed penults and some cases of initial stress.

More recently there has been extended consideration of the question of accent placement in early Celtic. Salmons (1992: 146ff.) sees Celtic along with Germanic and Italic as having initial stress from a very early stage (first half of the first millennium BC) and the source of this being a substrate, in his opinion western Finno-Ugric languages in the region of the Baltic. Vennemann (1994: 272) rightly rejects this as the location for the contact is too far in the east of Europe. He pleads for a language of the Old European language group which he identifies as the forerunner of present-day Basque on the basis of his major re-evaluation of Krahe’s Old European hydronymy. There is evidence that Basque had an initial accent previously although the situation today is dialectally quite diverse (Vennemann, 1994: 257f.).

Disregarding the question of origin for a moment both authors see western forms of Celtic (Irish and Celtiberian) as more archaic, inkeeping with their geographical peripherality, and as preserving an original initial accent which arose at a very early stage, possible through contact. One should perhaps point out here that Old Basque, like Celtic, did not have *p*. Scholars such as Michelena (1977) believe that Old Basque did not have either /p/ or /m/ but that these arose through later phonetic developments such as assimilations and Hualde (1991: 10f.) does not list /p/ in his ‘common consonant inventory’ for Basque.

It remains a matter of opinion whether one accepts Vennemann’s standpoint (1994: 246) that the language of Old European hydronymy led to Italic, Celtic and Germanic developing initial stress (with temporal staggering). What is indisputable is that unambiguous signs of initial stress are present in each language group from the very beginning: (i) Syncope in the second syllable with variable word length (there would no way of determining accent position by working backwards from the end of a word which would always produce this syncope); (ii) Syllables have greatest complexity in initial position which points to this being accented; (iii) At least in Germanic and Celtic, alliteration is found in the earliest verse, something which is indicative of initial stress.

Within the continental Celtic conglomerate Gaulish must be given separate consideration. The standard work on comparative Celtic, Lewis/Pedersen (1937: 68f.), maintains that the accent in Gaulish was on the antepenult or the penult and that this ‘may represent a trace of the free IE accent’, cf. *Balódurum* : Fr. *Balleure*; *Cambóritum* : Fr. *Chambort*; *Eburóuices* : Fr. *Evreux*. They point out that those syllables which immediately precede or follow the stressed syllable are most likely to reduction and/or syncope. As with Jackson, Lewis/Pedersen are reticent about the accent in earlier forms of Celtic.

Later authors do not share this earlier view. Again Salmons in his treatment (1992: 152ff.) of Gaulish and Brittonic accent assumes that Gaulish had initial accent. Dottin (1920: 103ff.) notes expiratory accent but not place. Altheim (1951) notes that those names with evidence for initial accent in Gaulish (with syncope of second syllables) are found in regions which were Romanized last. Olmsted (1989) remarks on the high incidence of alliteration in the Gaulish inscription of Larzac (pointing to initial accent).

**Accent in British** This is an unsettled matter ultimately deriving from the uncertainty about Gaulish. Here are the standard views: Jackson (1953: 265f.) assumes that before the separation of Welsh and Cornish/ Breton the accent fell on the then penultimate syllable which became the ultimate shortly afterwards with the loss of final unstressed syllables.<sup>13</sup> Jackson assumes that this was a stress accent given the reduction of weak syllables and contradicts assumptions about a tonic accent made by other authors such as Loth (1934: 3). He avoids any commitment on an older different accentual type and says that nothing is known about a Common Celtic accent (Pedersen, 1913, I: 256; Lewis/ Pedersen, 1938: 68f.) and mentions that the Irish accent need not have any relevance for British, ie that the accent system of the former probably represents an older state of affairs with the Gaulish/British accent an innovation.

Thurneysen (1883-5: 311)<sup>14</sup> apparently believed earlier that the British accent was initial and that there was a secondary stress on the penult. As Jackson points out this worked well for quadrisyllables but not for trisyllables such as *trinitas* (Irish *tríonóid* showing a long vowel in the originally penultimate syllable which points to stress on this syllable). Thurneysen apparently changed his mind and later claimed that from the second to the fifth century the accent ‘tended to be on the penultimate’. (Jackson, 1953: 266).

On the nature of accent one can say that for Q-Celtic there is one clear indication of strong stress accent: Irish developed a system of palatal and non-palatal consonants on a systematic level just as Slavic did or Arabic did with respect to pharyngealisation (the so-called ‘emphatic’ consonants). This type of development is characteristic of languages which have a strong stress accent on a certain syllable. Those languages which have fewer differences in stress do not tend to polarise consonant articulations. If these do, for instance in the case of palatalisation, then the result is typically not an affricate or if so this is then simplified to fricative (Finnish [t] - [s] or Latin [k] to French [ʃ] via [tʃ]).

**Lenition in Continental Celtic** When talking of lenition in Celtic one must distinguish between its existence as a phonetic phenomenon and its establishment and orthographical recognition as a morphological device. In this latter function lenition appears in British quite late (opinions differ but there is general consensus that it is to be posited at around the fifth century AD, Jackson, 1953: 695).

Phonetic lenition is a much older phenomenon and evidence for its occurrence in Continental Celtic is not overwhelming given the scanty nature of the attestations but nonetheless it is enough to be certain about its existence (see examples in section 3 above). Some instances of lenition are recognizable due to ‘misspellings’. Dottin (1920: 67) mentions the lenition of /b/ to /v/ which is seen occasionally in these misspellings and thus assumes that it was definitely a Continental Celtic phenomenon.<sup>15</sup>

The lenition of labials links up with the morphologized lenition in Modern Irish and Welsh where these segments are subject to fricativization. Earlier it was assumed that the initial segment which resulted from lenition was also nasalized, i.e. [à]. The lack of stop lenition in Continental Celtic is not positive evidence of its non-existence as it may well have been present but not indicated orthographically. Indeed this situation obtained even for Old Irish where lenition of voiced stops was not usually indicated (Quin, 1975: 8).

Phonetic weakening of this sort is the pre-condition for the apocope which set in during the first few centuries AD and which led to the loss of final unstressed syllables by the advent of the Germanic period proper by the mid-5th century.

**The position with Latin** Any consideration of developments in Celtic must take Latin as spoken in Britain in the first centuries after the turning of time into account. The general consensus is that British Latin was peripheral and conservative. Loanword evidence can be advanced to attest this. Starting probably in the first century and completed definitely by the third, Latin *v* and *b* collapsed as [β] (Gratwick, 1982: 17ff.). However this is not reflected in the loanwords from British Latin into British as these show unshifted /b/ which is then subject to lenition after the 5th century (Jackson, 1953: 413+ 548). Gratwick (1982: 62f.) thinks that some Latin loans must have entered even before the turning of time and that once they had entered British remained unchanged as fossilized traits of the phonology of the original language. There is also much dissent among scholars on the number of bilinguals in Roman Britain (Gratwick, 1982: 70 seems to think that the over-correct loanwords do not point in this direction).

## 5 The fate of the Celts

It is known that the Germanic tribes had harassed the southern shores of England<sup>16</sup> before they invaded the country in a concerted effort. Furthermore we know that there was an ostensible reason for their invading the country, a Celtic lord (Vortigern according to Bede and less reliably the Welsh accounts of Gildas and Nennius) sought help abroad much as happened in the late 12th century in Ireland with the Celts and Anglo-Normans (including marriage to a daughter of one of the new partners). Now the standard view is that the Germanic invaders conquered the Celts<sup>17</sup> and pushed them back to the western and northern edge of the country, to present-day Wales, Cornwall in the west and south-west and towards the Scottish border in the north.

The central issue here is to what extent the Germanic tribes actually displaced the Celts. The simplest view, if you like, is that the Germanic tribes conquered the Celts expelling them from the easily accessible areas in the south and east of the country, hence their distribution on the fringe of Britain today. However this is quite improbable. What conceivable motivation would the Germanic tribes have had for banishing the Celts? After all it would have been far more to their advantage to have put the Celts to work for them, to retain them as servants.<sup>18</sup> There is a clear piece of internal linguistic evidence that this did in fact take place. The word *wealh*<sup>19</sup> not only had the meaning 'foreigner' in general but 'Celt' or 'Welshman' in particular and came to be used in the sense of 'servant, slave' (cf. *wielen* 'female slave' which contains the same root, Holthausen, 1974: 393) which would appear to be an indication of the status of the Celts vis à vis the Germanic settlers.

Note that later invasions of England do not support the notion of banishing the local population, neither the Scandinavian nor the Anglo-Norman invasion of England. In fact we know quite clearly from the latter that the policy pursued was one of replacing the leading figures in society, the nobility and the higher clergy, but not of expelling the indigenous population from their native areas.

Recall also that the Germanic settlers retained Celtic town-names like *London* (E *Londinium* ‘place of someone called Londinos’?), *Leeds* (E *Ladenses* ‘people living by the strongly flowing river’, *pace* Förster and Ekwall), names of regions like *Kent* (E *Cantium*, uncertain perhaps ‘coastal district’ or ‘land of the host or armies’, Mills, 1991: 193) and river names like *Avon*, (‘river’, cf. Modern Irish *abhainn*) *Ouse*, (‘water’, Ekwall, 1928: 317; cf. Irish *uisce*), *Trent* (‘trepasser’, ie river which overflows its banks). These would seem to imply that they felt no obvious desire to replace these by purely Germanic terms. This situation is different from, say, that after the Second World War where there was a system of active expulsion of Germans from their former eastern provinces in the geographically realigned Poland with a consistent policy of Polonisation.

So assume for a moment that the Germanic tribes lived in areas also populated by Celts<sup>20</sup> after they had subjugated them. What kind of contact would there have been between the two groups? One obvious contact would have been that of service, the Celts having worked for their Germanic superiors in which case the Germanic speakers would have had to communicate with their Celtic servants.

Important for our considerations here is the possibility that the Celts may well have mixed with the Germanic tribes on a par, at least early on in the life of speakers, i.e. Celtic and Germanic children may well have intermingled, this providing an important locus for language contact. This type of contact would have been among the children of following generations of Germanic settlers. At an early age they would have come into contact with the Celts, as playmates or at least with Celtic carepersons who would have retained their Celtic speech-habits.

## 5.1 Other parallels

**How plausible is this scenario?** The question is best answered by considering other attestations of this type of contact later in history. A well-known example is that of the southern United States. It has been repeatedly noted by authors that the language of the whites in the southern states is not that dissimilar to that of the blacks of the region<sup>21</sup>. Now it is known that the whites had black nurses for their children so that the speech of the blacks may well have had an influence on the whites in a formative period of development of each successive generation until of course the practice of keeping of black nurses was abandoned.

The point here is that the influence among the Germanic settlers took place at a crucial period in the lives of children (during first language acquisition) and during a time when possible prestige group thinking and its negative consequences for attitudes towards the Celts had not yet developed.

The type of contact scenario where concubinage and/or mixed marriage took place is somewhat less likely. After all if the Celts were conquered by the Germanic tribes and put to work by them then considerations of prestige would make co-habitation with (adult) Celts unlikely. One should not confuse this contact situation with that of the Scandinavians later. The latter were first cousins of the Old English and spoke a language or set of varieties of a language which were not too far removed from the different forms Old English. Nor does the situation with the Romans in the first few centuries AD afford a viable parallel. Their policy was one of winning

over the local population into an alliance, a necessity given the enormous geographical extension of the Roman sphere of influence and the their relatively restricted numbers. This was then carried further with the Romanisation of a sizeable portion of the Celtic population. But the Germanic invaders were concerned with subjugating the Celtic population, not necessarily banishing them but forcing them into a position of social inferiority so as to curtail their role as competitors.

Let me at this point substantiate the argument that the Germanic invaders subjugated but did not banish the Celts by describing a similar situation which arose later. The parallel is provided by the Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland in the late 12th century. Here one had a situation in which a fairly small number of militarily powerful foreigners managed to conquer large parts of the south and east of the country. They established bases in the countryside among the subdued Irish, getting the latter to work for them.<sup>22</sup> When not immediately threatened they must have had contact with the Irish of the surrounding countryside. It is known from contemporary references that they also carried on trade with the Irish and many French loanwords from this area provide ample evidence of this (words like ‘carpenter’, ‘tailor’, ‘service’; military terms like ‘archer’ and titles like ‘squire’, ‘duke’, ‘baron’ are all Anglo-Norman loans in Irish).

**Historical evidence** It should be mentioned at this point that the view represented here is not obvious from historical accounts of the situation in Britain in the Dark Ages. What historical records we have such as the *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae* ‘Concerning the ruin and conquest of Britain’ (Winterbottom, 1978) by the 6th century British monk Gildas (c 516-573) paint picture of continuous warfare between Celts and Germanic tribes Berresford- Ellis, 1993), but again what would one expect of historical writings? It would be most improbable to find accounts of day-to-day contact between the two groups. History in the Dark Ages was in effect military history. Furthermore the existence of such fortifications as Hadrian’s Wall from 122 AD in the north (between Northumbria and southern Scotland) or much later of Offa’s Dyke (an early 8th century rampart dividing Wales and England) does not imply that there was an impenetrable divide between Celt and Roman or Celt and Saxon/Angle in the entire island of Britain as these defences only demarcated the more inaccessible mountainous parts in the west and extreme north.

## 5.2 Was Celtic really a substrate?

It would be hasty to assume that Celtic was a permanent substrate in Anglo-Saxon England, a more differentiated view of the matter would seem to be called for. Bear in mind that the Irish St.Columba<sup>23</sup> brought Christianity to the North and that this was a major cultural influence (Richter, 1982) until in 664 at the Synod of Whitby the matter was decided in favour of Rome by King Oswy of Northumbria. Columba (c 521-597) established his centre on the island of Iona in the west of Scotland in the middle of the 6th century (c 563).

Another important fact connected with religious contacts is that the English took over a system of writing from Ireland which was an insular adaption of the Latin alphabet used for both Latin and Old Irish (Scragg, 1974: 3). The rise of vernacular literature in England is accompanied by an influence from Old Irish poetry which pre-dates the earliest English writings (Wright, 1993;

Reichl, 1982: 168 assumes that the Anglo-Saxon writers were acquainted with Irish literature and accepted impulses from it, particularly in the Old English elegies). These points would suggest that in the literary and ecclesiastical spheres the Celts, or at least the Irish, enjoyed a relatively high status.

## 6 Manifestations of contact

Before proceeding any further one should note that the result of contact can be seen on various levels of language and that different types of contact affect different levels. One can start from the obvious observation that with superstrate influence the field which shows most influence from the more prestigious language is that of lexis. The standard example from the history of English is that of French, particularly Central French, with its heavy lexical influence on English. Again scholars always remark that the type of contact between Scandinavians and English differed from that between English and French in that the former was a day-to-day contact and this facilitated the borrowing of every-day items, witness words like *take*, *call*, *skirt*, *sky*, and of course the morphology of English was affected by the borrowing of the forms of the third person plural in /2/ (*they*, *their*), though this was motivated by internal factors in the grammar of northern English dialects of the time.

The point about the day-to-day nature of Scandinavian contact is not disputed. Its probability can be shown by reverse cases, so to speak, such as the borrowings from English in present-day German where the lack of contact between speakers precludes any morphological influence of the former language on the latter. Trying to determine the influence of Celtic languages on English is more difficult because there has been varying contact at different periods and the nature of the evidence is inconclusive.

*Lexicon* The effect of Celtic languages on the lexicon of English for the entire period of its attestation is slight to say the least.<sup>24</sup> Old English shows a couple of loans such as *bannoc* 'flat loaf of unleavened bread', *brocc* 'badger', *drā* 'magician' (from Old Irish *druí* 'druid'). Modern English has only a couple of undisputed terms like *galore* (E *go leor*) exist and some uncertain ones besides, such as *dig/twig* 'understand, grasp' which is taken (Hamp, 1981; Ahlqvist, 1988) to derive from Irish *tuig* 'understand' (the /w/ in English is a rendering of the back off-glide from the non-palatal /t/ at the beginning of the word).

*Syntax* Syntactic borrowings in the history of English are indeed scarce or at the very least difficult to prove. A case in point is the zero object relative as in *The man I met is my cousin* which according to some scholars, like Jespersen, himself a Dane, may have arisen due to Scandinavian influence.<sup>25</sup> Influence from the syntax of Celtic languages has been postulated by Poussa (1990) who takes issue with the view propagated by Ellegård (1953) that periphrastic *do* arose from causative *do* by semantic bleaching and believes that it goes back to the Old English period and to contact in Wessex with Celtic speakers. She postulates a creolisation situation where *do* was used in affirmative sentences followed by a later linking with *be* to render the habitual present which was present as a category in Insular Celtic and uses Irish English evidence



to support this view. In an other article, Poussa (1991) argues for a Celtic source of the relativisers *what* and *as* because there are no suitable models within the Germanic languages and maintains that the contact situation between the Celtic tribes and the initial Germanic invaders would have been favourable for such transfer.

*Phonetics/phonology* This is a broad area and needs to be further differentiated for the present discussion. At the top end of the spectrum of sound- related phenomena one has phonological items and processes. These may be borrowed into a language but usually they are concomitant with lexical borrowings as the diphthong /oi/ or initial voiced fricatives (with support from southern varieties) in Middle English would seem to indicate (*point; veal, zeal, etc.*).

At the lower end of the phonetics/phonology cline one has non-distinctive sound phenomena including allophonic realisations, phonetic reductions and mergers, what one could bundle under the heading ‘allegro phenomena’. It is these which are of particular interest. The stance I am adopting is that these low-level phenomena may well have been part of Celtic influence on Germanic in the (early) Old English period.

Allow me to demonstrate the likelihood of this by a modern example. Finland has a small percentage of Swedish-speakers, above all in the south, chiefly in Helsinki and in the south-west, embracing such towns as Turku/Åbo. These speakers now represent only a few percent; true, their numbers were greater in previous centuries but they never represented a sizeable proportion of the entire population of Finland. However the Finlanders, the Swedish Finns, did form the economically and socially dominant class in Finland. From a sociolinguistic point of view one has a superstrate group (the Swedish- speakers) and a much larger substrate group (the Finns).

Now one of the prominent characteristics of Finnish Swedish is that it has a low, flat intonation. It does not have the fall-rise intonational pattern which is such a salient feature of mainland Swedish as in *tala* ‘speak’, *göra* ‘do’ (Selenius, 1974). I am deliberately ignoring the question of whether Finnish Swedish had and lost the central Swedish contrastive intonational pattern or never developed it in the first place. In either case, however, the low-tone, relatively level intonation (in non-initial syllables) can be traced to Finnish where it is a regular feature.

## 7 Low-level influence

Let me state that for the period immediately after the coming of the Germanic tribes to Britain I am assuming low-level influence on the speech of the latter. This stance can be put in categorical terms as follows. The phonetic makeup of British Celtic which included the weakening of consonants in voiced and inter-vocalic environments and vowel reduction in unstressed syllables came to influence the allophony of Old English and quickened any tendency to phonetic blurring and loss in unstressed syllables which may have existed already in varieties of Old English.

Now as mentioned above the phonetic makeup of a language encompasses in a broad sense speech habits, the way one pronounces words, the leeway one has in the realisation of systematic sound units. Here is another example of what is meant here, this time from modern German.

It is a characteristic of German dialects in a broad arc-shaped band from Saxony through

Franconia across to Swabia and down to the Alemannic region in the south-west that voiceless consonants are lenited, ie spoken ‘softly’, in a manner which for other speakers of German, say North Germans or Bavarians would appear to be voiced: *backen* ‘bake’, *leiten* ‘lead, conduct’, *zerreißen* ‘tear up’, *Waffel* ‘waffle’ sound as if they contain /-g-, -d-, -z-, -v-/ respectively. It is part of the manner of speaking in these dialects that voiceless consonants are almost voiced intervocally. Of course voiced consonants are more very clearly voiced in the same position so that there is no confusion between the two classes of consonants, voiceless and voiced. The phonemic distinction in voice is retained in these as in other German dialects.

This intervocalic voicing is a low-level phenomenon in that it has no systematic status. Such phenomena tend furthermore to occur in certain areas and examples abound. Typical cases are the mid high realisation of /u/ [+] in Ulster/Scottish English and Irish/Scots Gaelic, the occurrence of vowel epenthesis in heavy coda clusters in Irish and Irish English, the voicing of initial fricatives in the Low Countries (and southern England perhaps), the distribution of tone in the Baltic area as proposed by Jakobson, the development of a low front vowel /e/ in Balkan languages, the lenition of intervocalic stops in Iberian Romance, the presence of retroflex consonants in both Indo-European and Dravidian languages in India, etc. There has been much speculation about such areal phenomena in the past and in general scholars tend to look for their origins in contact.<sup>26</sup>

One should, however, also consider this phenomenon from a sociolinguistic point of view for a moment. The usual assumption is that there is a certain locus for language change and that in any given situation certain groups in society will be more prestigious than others. It is assumed that the more prestigious group influences the less prestigious one. This certainly holds for the lexical level of language. However there is clear evidence for influence on more prestigious groups by less prestigious ones in low-level areas which encompass phenomena like the ones alluded to above in the German dialects considered.

The reason for quoting the case of Finnish Swedish above was to show that a group which is very clearly a superstrate can borrow low-level characteristics from another group which surrounds it, irrespective of how much the latter is a substrate. Switching to the situation in post-invasion Britain after of the mid-fifth century, there would seem to be no a priori objection to postulating an influence of the speech habits of the British Celts on the Germanic invaders cum settlers.

Now it is one thing to say that there is no a priori objection to influence and quite another to say that this actually occurred. To substantiate the arguments consider the development of the Celtic languages during approximately the same period for which English is also attested. Let me start however with a brief consideration of Romance.

## 8 Areal features

With reference to the matter at hand, some authors have claimed that there were areal features of Celtic which had an influence on neighbouring languages.<sup>27</sup> The most notable representative of this view is André Martinet who suggested in 1952 that the lenition which is characteristic of Western Romance had its origin in that which is typical of Celtic. The type of phenomenon

Martinet was thinking of was the loss of intervocalic consonants (with later apocope) or the loss of the first element of clusters in the transition of Latin to French and the synchronic alternation of stops and fricatives in Modern Spanish.

(9)	Latin	<i>OCTO</i>	F	French <i>huit</i>	‘eight’
		<i>CATTUS</i>	F	<i>chat</i>	‘cat’
	Spanish	<i>pagar</i> [paJaɾ]			‘pay’
		<i>nada</i> [na3a]			‘nothing’
		<i>escribir</i> [eskɾiβiɾ]			‘to write’
	Latin	<i>FARINA</i>	F	Spanish <i>harina</i>	‘flour’ <sup>28</sup>

Martinet was suggesting here a scenario for continental Celtic which I am putting forward for the early Old English period with regard to insular Celtic: a low-level feature of Celtic was the weakening of consonants, particularly in intervocalic position, and the reduction of unstressed syllables. This then spread as a speech habit to the Germanic settlers who were in contact with the Celts.

The development of the Celtic languages since their earliest attestations lends support to this view. Above I quoted examples from Gaulish and Old Irish. The later history of the latter shows if anything ever severer phonetic attrition. Here are some examples to illustrate this (Lewis/Pedersen, 1937: 70ff.; the situation with Welsh in analogous).

(10) General lenition

Old Irish		Modern Irish	
<i>adhbhar</i>	/a3vqr/	<i>ábhar</i> /<:bqr/	‘matter’
<i>ardughadh</i>	/arduJq3/	<i>ardú</i> /ardu:/	‘raising’
<i>cuidhbhe</i>	/ki3"v"q/	<i>cuí</i> /ki:/	‘appropriate’
<i>biadh</i>	/biq3/	<i>bia</i> /biq/	‘food’

Case syncretism

Old Irish		Middle Irish	
Nom. <i>céle</i>		<i>céle</i>	‘companion’
Gen. <i>céli</i>		<i>céle</i>	
Dat. <i>céliu</i>		<i>céle</i>	

Verbal simplification

Middle Irish		Early Modern Irish	
<i>do-bheir</i>		<i>do-bheir</i>	‘gives’
<i>ad-chí</i>		<i>do-chí</i>	‘sees’
<i>ro-ghabh</i>		<i>do-ghabh</i>	‘took’

A clear sequence of events can be recognized here. Between Old Irish and Middle Irish (600-900 and 900-1200 respectively) one has the loss of consonants and vowel reduction. This

takes place on such a massive scale that the language thrusts forward towards morphological analyticity. After this in the development of Early Modern Irish (1200-1600) the verbal prefixes simplify to *do-* /dɔ/, although some of them, such as *ro-* /rɔ/ (from /ro/) did not show consonantal lenition. A complex system of verb prefixes is something which is characteristic of a synthetic language (compare the prefixes still vital in Modern German, *auf*, *ab*, *zu*, *entgegen*; *be*, *er*, *ent*, *ver*, *zer*, etc.). With the shift to analytic in the nominal area, Irish adapted the verb system to comply to the new overall typological shape by reducing the number of these prefixes to a couple.

As the main issue in this paper is the possible effect of Celtic on English I will have to skip over many aspects of the developments in Celtic. Nonetheless one should point out that certainly Old Irish and probably Middle Welsh (the oldest form of the language) had adopted the word order VSO and that there is a Greenbergian implicational universal which states that languages of this type tend to be lacking in morphological case. This is seen as due to the fact that the verb (head) always comes first and the subject after this so that sentence constituents can always be easily identified by their position. Contrariwise SOV language tend to be agglutinative with many cases (see the not uncontroversial treatment of this tentative connection in Gil, 1986).

## 9 Later effects on language type

Low-level transfer in contact can have far-reaching consequences for the language effected. Like meteorological erosion or biological decomposition it is slow but inexorable. Consider just a few words from modern English and modern German to begin with.

(11)	English:	<i>sofa</i> [sqʊftɔ]	<i>canal</i> [kɑ/n<:l]	<i>Canada</i> [/kænɑdɑ]
	German:	<i>Sofa</i> [zo:fa]	<i>Kanal</i> [ka/na:l]	<i>Kanada</i> [ˈkanada]

What is obvious here is that the unstressed /æ/ in the English words is reduced to a central vowel, a schwa, while German keeps the pronunciation as /a/ which is normal for stressed syllables. Put in general terms: German retains unstressed short vowels at their full value whereas English does not; English also demonstrates a strong tendency to diphthongize long vowels whereas (standard) German does not (rising diphthongs, as in [bout] *Boot*, and off-glides from long vowels, as in [guot] *gut*, are characteristic of many types of northern and southern German respectively, Keller, 1979: 210-212, 347f.).

It would seem sufficient to point out such realisational differences in both languages. I am not sure to what extent attempts at formulating a systematic, ie basically non-phonetic, difference between *dominating* and *non-dominating* languages, as van Coetsem et al. (1981) have done, is of any relevance here. Particularly as these authors lump German and English together (as dominating types) and see both as opposing the non-dominating type of language, such as Finnish, which has a more or less pitch-oriented accent system. Furthermore in view of the maintainance of vowel contrasts in unstressed syllables it seems quite unrealistic to make statements such as ‘German exhibits widespread vowel reduction in nonprominent syllables’ (van Coetsem et al., 1981: 298). The distinction made by these authors reminds me of that between stress- and

syllable-timing. It is a convenient label at an initial stage of examination but needs very quickly to be refined and further differentiated in order to do justice to the phonetics of a particular language.

*What are the consequences of vowel reduction?* Bear in mind that Old English had stress on the lexical base of a word. This in effect meant on the first syllable of all words which did not have a prefix. Such prefixes occurred with a subset of verbs and with certain nominal compounds and of course in the past participle. Here one can see a clear lenition scale from a very early *ge* /gǣ/ to *e-* /jǣ/ to /i,ɪ/ in Middle English with eventual loss.

*Phonetic blurring.* Now if affixes lack stress and their vowels are centralised they lose their distinctiveness. The most obvious consequence of this is that the internal structure of words becomes less and less transparent with each generation of speakers. At some stage a morphologically complex word form is no longer analysable and henceforth regarded as an indivisible entity. A clear example of this in Modern English is formed by words which originally contained the preposition *on* before a noun.

(12)	a	<i>asleep</i>	E	OE <i>on slæpe</i>	lit. 'on sleep'
	b	<i>alive</i>	E	OE <i>on life</i>	lit. 'on life'
	c	<i>away</i>	E	OE <i>onweg</i>	lit. 'on way'

*Phonetic loss.* The extreme case of phonetic reduction is loss. Reduction of unstressed syllables consisted not only of the centralization of vowels but of the loss of consonants and the later loss of syllable-bearing vowels. In the instance of *asleep*, etc. the nasal was lost entirely, the syllable-bearing vowel centralizing from /o/ to /ɔ/.

Note that the loss here is initiated by phonetic tendencies in the language. Higher levels of structure may play a role in the demise or survival of unstressed elements, however. The standard examples here are the Germanic prefix *with* and *under* (as in Modern English *withstand* and *understand*) which would seem to have gained support for their retention from the separate existence of the prepositions *with* and *under* (Lutz, 1991). Such structural considerations can be seen to operate in other areas as well. Take the survival of a phoneme pair /2, 3/ in Modern English. Here the functional load of the two sounds is very slight (*thigh, thy; teeth, teethe* are some of the very few examples of minimal contrast) but the general distinction between voiceless and voiced elements in English is central, just think of the role it plays in pairs like *cease, seize; rice, rise*, etc.

*Semantic considerations* The semantics of affixes would also appear to have played a role. Take a simple case like the negative prefix *un-*. This exists in Modern English as a productive suffix with an unambiguous role of negating a base. The phonetically similar verbal prefix *on-* has not survived, nor has the very general prefix *Ē-*. In Old English neither had a single identifiable meaning, compare the following selection of verbs.

(13)	a	<i>onslæpan</i>	'fall asleep'	d	<i>Ēlecgan</i>	'lay down'
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b	<i>onstellan</i>	‘establish’	e	<i>ƒhebban</i>	‘lift up, raise’
c	<i>onwendan</i>	‘change’	f	<i>ƒdræfan</i>	‘drive away’

In a stage of the language in which the system of verb prefixes was crumbling such polyfunctional elements were especially vulnerable. One can for Old English more or less identify a function of movement for *ƒ* (see examples under e and f above) but the existence of so many verbs in which the directional element was no longer recognisable probably led to a lexicalization of verbs with this prefix with later generations and ultimately to its loss as it was not felt necessary to impart an identifiable semantic component to a base.

(14)	a	<i>ƒbreccan</i>	‘storm, ransack’
	b	<i>ƒcennan</i>	‘give birth to, bring forth’
	c	<i>ƒhliehhan</i>	‘deride, laugh at’
	d	<i>ƒstreccan</i>	‘extend, stretch out’

As can be seen from the modern English glosses they were replaced by a verb plus adverb, by later Romance loans or again later by prepositions which were clearly delimited semantically (phrasal verbs).

## 10 Conclusion

The above observations have hopefully shown that while the adoption of phonetic speech habits does not affect the system of a language at the period at which they enter they can lead to far-reaching changes in the morphology of the language effected in the fullness of time. As they are non-systematic there is little awareness of them and so they are accommodated easily without disturbing the system.

One can think of delayed effect contact as setting a ball rolling which gains more and more momentum and may eventually lead to a restructuring of the grammar as was clearly the case in Celtic. In the case of English this is the switch from synthetic to analytic which was rendered necessary with the progressive weakening of inflectional endings and verb prefixes something which did not occur in German to anything like a similar extent.

## Notes

- 1 The present article is a revised version of a guest lecture held at the English Department, University of Vienna on 1 December 1994 and it would seem fitting to offer the thoughts contained in it for consideration by colleagues via the Viennese forum VIEWS created for just this purpose. My thanks go to Herbert Schendl and Niki Ritt who encouraged me to re-bake the original version for presentation in print, though their names are not necessarily to be associated with the more extreme ideas contained in this linguistic biscuit.

- 2 See Appel and Muysken (1986: 153ff.) for a taxonomy of contact.
- 3 And of course a language may borrow a structural principle or property from another without borrowing an instantiation of this (Moravcsik, 1978: 102f.) as with Munda languages borrowing the sequence Modifier - Modified from Dravidian languages or Kwa languages (Nupe, Yoruba, Ewe, Igbo) borrowing Possession - Possessor sequences from Bantu languages.
- 4 See Wartburg (1951: 36-51) for a detailed discussion of arguments for and against a Celtic source for French /y/.
- 5 For a good archaeological history of Celtic Britain, see Laing (1979), chapters two and three, on the stages up to the end of the Roman period.
- 6 In early stages of Celtic /p/ and /k(w)/ are mutually exclusive in the respective branches which is why one has a shift to the velar with early loans in Irish such as Latin *planta* F *cland* ‘children’; *Patricius* F *Cothrige* (later borrowed as *Pátraic*). In the P-Celtic branch many instances of /p/ are in fact retentions as with the number ‘five’ for instance cf. IE \**pempe* ‘five’, Welsh *pump* but Old Irish *cóic*.
- 7 Possibly related to Latin *caput* ‘head’, Skr. *kapElam* ‘skull’.
- 8 See Baldi (1983: 47ff.) for a precise overview of the relevant facts. Krahe (1954: 83-98) offers a comprehensive overview and concludes that the shared features of both subgroups do not speak for a Celtic-Italic unity but are relics of their common ancestry.
- 9 Salmons (1984: 118) is inconclusive on the direction of influence (Celtic to Germanic or vice versa) and just points to Celtic domination. On the latter notion see the comprehensive discussion in Elston (1934: 57ff.).
- 10 There are other words like that for ‘hostage’ which may be of cultural significance, cf. German *Geisel*, Irish *giall* (Kluge-Mitzka, 1975: 242).
- 11 The ‘standard’ view is that Indo-European had some kind of pitch accent, see Lehmann (1974) and Rix (1976) on Greek with general remarks. Some authors have argued that the original language had tonal features, notably Jucquois (1970), see Kortlandt (1986) for the view that this arose much later due to the loss of laryngeals, on the latter see the contributions in Vennemann (ed.) (1989).
- 12 Note that variable position of stress in a word does not imply a pitch type accent. Russian has morphologically determined accent placement and is very definitely a stress type language; Finnish has initial accent and tends more to a pitch type (though I grant that this division is not strictly binary).
- 13 A look at Modern Welsh and Modern Breton (except the dialect of Vannes which has ultimate stress, Jackson, 1967: 67) reveals a penultimate accent much as in Polish or Italian. The conclusion here is that there was an accent shift back one syllable to retain penultimate

stress after apocope. Holmer (1938: 82) is of the opinion that this shift set in more or less simultaneously with the apocope thus maintaining the stress pattern of British despite loss of final unstressed syllables, see also Jackson (1953: 682ff.). The Vannes dialect of Breton can be interpreted as retaining the original stress pattern (penultimate) which after the loss of endings was thereafter on the final syllable.

- 14 To be precise Thurneysen states ‘Vielmehr scheint mir die irische Betonung (which was initial - RH) *alt- und gemeinkeltisch*’ (emphasis Thurneysen’s) ‘rather the Irish stress pattern seems to me to have been a feature of Old and Common Celtic’.
- 15 For Old Irish Thurneysen (1946: 27) maintains that ‘stress is expiratory and very intense, as may be seen from the reduction of unstressed syllables’. He does not speculate, however, on what stress was like in other forms of Insular Celtic or in Continental Celtic nor does he seem to have an opinion as to how the initial stress of Irish arose.
- 16 There was a Roman office of Count of the Saxon Shore *Comes litoris Saxonici* who was responsible for defending this southern flank, Partridge (1982: 11).
- 17 For the present discussion it is irrelevant what the exact ethnic status of the Celts was, ie whether ordinary Celts or Romanised Celts were involved, though there may have been some social distinction between the two at the time the Germanic invaders arrived in England.
- 18 This the Romans had done before them. In fact they won the Celts over as allies who after a period became naturalised Romans (Partridge, 1982: 16ff.).
- 19 This word is found in a variety of compounds such as *Cornwall, walnut* (E OE *wealh-hnutu*) ‘foreigner’s nut’, OE *wealh-hafoc* ‘foreign hawk, falcon’; its adjectival form gives us the present-day form *Welsh* (an ethnic designation and surname) and other names such as *Wallace* (from the Anglo-Norman *waleis*). It also exists in German. where it came to mean ‘Romance’ probably at first as a designation for those people who came to occupy areas formerly settled by Celts (Kluge-Mitzka, 1975: 851), these being the *Volcae* referred to by Latin authors. In this meaning the word is found in many contexts, e.g. *Kauderwelsch* ‘incomprehensible mixture of languages’ (originally from *Kauer*, i.e. Chur in Switzerland), *Rotwelsch* ‘thieves’ language’. The term for French-speaking Belgians, *Walloons*, and the Swiss usage meaning ‘French-speaking area’ as in *Wallis* both derive from the same root. Other German words representing the same etymon are *Wallach* ‘gelding’ from *Walachei* ‘Wal(l)achia’ which takes its name from Bulgarian *vlach* which in its turn is a loan from German, cf. Old High German *wal(a)hisc*. The German surname *Walch* also shows the root. In Old Norse forms with the same root offer an indication of the status of the Celts in early Germanic Britain: *valsk-r* ‘foreign, captive’; the (plural) noun *valir* ‘French’ is a reflection of the German usage as are modern Scandinavian forms like Swedish *välisk* ‘Gaulish’.
- 20 Onomastic evidence can also be used to determine the extent of Celtic settlement in Britain. For example, the name *Cumberland* ‘land of the Cymry, ie the British Celts’ attests to the presence of Celts in the north-west of England.



- 21 Dillard (1992: 93ff.) ‘The development of Southern’ gives an account of the various views on southern speech in the United States.
- 22 This is very obvious from architectural evidence. The Normans in Ireland built castles and fortresses in the countryside known as ‘keeps’ in which they were able to barricade themselves and survive a siege.
- 23 Recall that Ireland was itself Christianised in the early 5th century. The official and by no means incontrovertible version of the event sees St. Patrick (a Welshman) as the person who brought the new religion to the country early in the fifth century.
- 24 See Lockwood (1965-8) and Breeze (1994) for discussions of recent forms and Förster (1921) on older loans.
- 25 There is much counter-evidence here. For instance the zero subject relative as in *A man is outside wants to speak to you* is a feature of popular London in the south quite far from the central area of Scandinavian influence in the north.
- 26 If one wanted to push it one could point to the fact that lenition in German dialects is typical of the south-west and parts of Switzerland where Celtic contact was considerable but this is going back to something like 500 BC and would be a little far-fetched. Here I share the scepticism expressed long ago by Bloomfield (1933: 386) and sympathetically echoed by Thomason and Kaufman (1988: 112), namely that such influence could have arisen long after the contact had ceased.
- 27 One phenomenon, which is somewhat discredited nowadays, is the development of the front rounded vowel /y/ in French under Celtic influence. The arguments for and against will not be dealt with here.
- 28 This is perhaps a special case as Spanish /h/ from Latin *F* is often traced back to a Basque substratum in Ibero-Romance (see Tovar, 1957: 49 who is rather noncommittal on this point). It is true that Basque originally did not have /f/ (only latterly in loanwords) but the /h/ from *F* might just as well have been an internal development in Spanish. Of course the articulatory motivation for this may well stem ultimately from lenition as a make-up feature of Spanish which in its turn may be a contact feature. This puts the contact source at one remove but in fact increases its plausibility.

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