

Historical background of the contact between Celtic languages and English

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Diplomski studij engleskog jezika i književnosti – nastavnički smjer i mađarskog
jezika i književnosti – nastavnički smjer

Mario Dominković

**Povijesna pozadina kontakta između keltskih jezika i
engleskog**

Diplomski rad

Mentor: izv. prof. dr. sc. Tanja Gradečak – Erdeljić

Osijek, 2016.

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Teaching English as a Foreign Language, MA Programme and

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SUMMARY

The main aim of this research is to present Celtic languages on the British Isles and their connection to contemporary English. It is evident that the English language has gone through different changes over the time. It has been shaped by many new words, brought with new inhabitants from different areas. The changes enriched the English language. The enrichment of the English language influenced its huge expansion, making it the second most frequently spoken language in the world, with Mandarin in the first place.

The English language could not be created by itself, in isolation. It was influenced by other languages in order to expand its existence. The Celtic influence on the English language can be seen mostly in place names when it comes to vocabulary and in various grammatical features. The Celtic languages of the British Isles are divided in two main groups: Goidelic and Brittonic (Brythonic) and their geographical position and influence of their linguistic features on the Present Day English is observed.

KEY WORDS: *Celtic, English, language contact, Goidelic, Brittonic*

SAŽETAK

Glavni cilj ovog istraživanja je predstaviti keltske jezike na području britanskog otočja i njihovu vezu s današnjim engleskim. Engleski jezik je prošao kroz mnoge promjene tijekom vremena. Oblikovale su ga različite nove riječi, koje su donosili novi doseljenici na različitim područjima. Te promjene značajno su obogatile engleski jezik. Obogaćivanje engleskog jezika je utjecalo na njegovo veliko širenje, čineći ga drugim najčešće govorenim jezikom u svijetu iza mandarinskog.

Engleski jezik nije mogao nastati sam od sebe. Drugi jezici su morali utjecati na njega kako bi se proširio. Utjecaj keltskih jezika na engleski vidljiv je u različitim gramatičkim značajkama, a u sferi vokabulara najbolje je vidljiv u toponimima. Keltski jezici Britanskog otočja su podijeljeni u dvije glavne skupine: goidelski i britonski te se proučava njihova geografska rasprostranjenost i njihovi jezični elementi koji su sačuvani u suvremenom engleskom jeziku.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: *keltski, engleski, jezični kontakt, goidelski, britonski*

1. Introduction

1.1. The role of Celtic in the development of English

The topic of this research is “Historical background of the contact between Celtic languages and English”. The main aim is to explore Celtic influence in the development of English. If it is to judge from the numerous historical sources that provide information on Celts, it becomes evident they had a certain influence on English. The Anglo-Saxon tribes were the ones who conquered the Celtic people and territories. In the process, the Celts had to accept the new language. Even after the conquest, the Celts still spoke their language (Celtic) among themselves. Because of that, Celtic words served as roots from which certain English words were derived. Beside this, being under Celtic influence, English seemed to take certain grammar rules. There are also constructions in the syntax of English that are a result of the contact between languages. Linguistic outcomes of the early contact between languages have been explored, as well as the syntactic influence of Celtic on English. This research will show that syntactic influence is more relevant than lexical, in terms of the contact between Celtic languages and English. The main hypothesis of the research will be based on the claim that vocabulary is not as relevant in the case of the Celtic influence on English as it is its grammar and syntax.

1.2. The English language today

The English language is the second language by the number of its speakers as their first or second language, with Mandarin (Chinese) being in the first place. English is the most important and the most widespread language in the world. It is a Germanic language of the Indo – European family. Most business contracts are made in English, whereas two-thirds of scientific documents are written in this language. There are 300 million native speakers of English, 300 million people to whom this is the second language and 100 million of those who use it as a foreign language.¹ The English language nowadays is used in the majority of life spheres, including aviation, tourism, education, science, diplomacy, etc. It is impossible to imagine today’s life of a young person not knowing the language. Bearing in mind the fact that English is

¹ Available at http://www.thehistoryofenglish.com/history_today.html

spreading its use every day, it is almost obligatory to know the language if one wants to travel or work. Many jobs require the knowledge of English, so it is mandatory to learn at least the basics. Those basics are presented to pupils in primary schools, and later on, with good elementary understanding, it is easy to deepen one's knowledge of the language.

English plays a significant role in the cultural, political and economic spheres of the society in the following countries:

Botswana, Brunei, Fiji, Gambia, Ghana, India, Cameroon, Kenya, Kiribati, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Malta, Mauritius, Namibia, Nauru, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Porto Rico, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Suriname, Swaziland, Tanzania, Tonga, Tuvalu, Uganda, Vanuatu, Western Samoa, Zambia, Zimbabwe

In the following countries English takes the lead role as the first language:

Antigua, Australia, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bermuda, Dominica, Guyana, Grenada, Ireland, Jamaica, Canada, New Zealand, Saint Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Trinidad and Tobago, Great Britain ²

1.3. The historical development

Speaking of the history of the language, it is necessary to look back at the 5th century AD. In those times, three Germanic tribes (Angles, Saxons and Jutes) crossed the North Sea and came to the British Isles. The Angles' land of origin was Engle (present-day Schleswig-Holstein, Germany) ³; they were named after it. The language they spoke was called 'Englisc'. From this word, the word English was derived. ⁴

The indigenous inhabitants at the British Isles spoke the Celtic language. However, Celtic speakers were soon pushed into Wales, Cornwall and Scotland, which caused their language to become modified and almost disappear. One group of those tribes was pushed to the Brittany Coast of France where their descendants nowadays still speak the Celtic language of Breton. During the next few centuries four dialects of English developed:

- Northumbrian in Northumbria, north of the Humber

² Available at http://engleski-jezik.com/tekstovi/o_jeziku.htm

³ Available at <http://www.historyfiles.co.uk/KingListsEurope/ScandinaviaAngeln.htm>

⁴ Available at http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=English&allowed_in_frame=0

- Mercian in the Kingdom of Mercia
- West Saxon in the Kingdom of Wessex
- Kentish in Kent⁵

The Old English was of West Germanic, Anglo – Saxon origin. It was written in an alphabet which was brought over from Ireland by Christian missionaries. This has remained the writing system of English.

Latin and Norse languages influenced certain dialects. The vocabulary of Old English mainly consisted of the Anglo-Saxon base. Latin gave many words to English (*street, cup, kitchen, wine, cheese, angel, bishop, martyr, candle, etc.*). The words of the Latin origin came into the language through Roman invasion, Christianization as well as via French in the Middle English period. The Vikings added many Norse words (*sky, call, die, they, their, them, etc.*). Celtic words remained in names of places and rivers (*the Avon, the Thames, Devon, Dover, Kent, etc.*).⁶

In 1066 Britain was conquered by the Normans. It was the period when the French influence on English appeared. The poor English people worked for the Norman upper classes. They cooked for them, so the words for meats were derived from French, as it can be seen in the Online Etymology Dictionary (*beef, veal, mutton, pork, bacon, venison, etc.*). Other fields influenced by French, in terms of vocabulary, are for example diplomacy (*envoy, embassy, chancery, passport, diplomacy, etc.*) and military (*battalion, soldier, officer, lieutenant, general, admiral, etc.*).⁷

Beside expanding its vocabulary, another important development in English that was influenced by the French language is the making of plural of the nouns by adding the suffix –s instead of the Germanic –n (*places* instead of *placen, names* instead of *namen* etc.).⁸ In this way, the English language got a new way of making plurals which remained as a prototype until today.

French also brought the changes in spelling. Freeborn (1998) provides the 'cw' sound that came to be written as 'qu' as an example of this change (e.g. *cween* became *queen*).

⁵ Available at <http://www.krysstal.com/english>

⁶ Available at <http://www.krysstal.com/english>

⁷ Available at <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php>

⁸ Available at http://www.btb.termiumplus.gc.ca/tpv2guides/guides/favart/index-fra.html?lang=fra&lettr=indx_autr8O1_lvjM70bY&page=9PK3TnrHndLI.html

1.4. Other influences

From the 16th century on, many words have entered the English language, which led to the formation of the Early Modern English in the early 17th century. The English language continued to grow because of its contact with other languages and Modern English is still changing today by deriving new words.

According to surveys conducted by Finkenstaedt, Wolff, Neuhaus, and Herget (1973), Williams (1986), modern English language has derived many words from different languages. The percentage of Latin (including words used only in scientific/medical/legal context), French, Germanic, Greek and others is 29%, 29%, 26%, 6%, and 10% respectively. According to Skeat (1892), the English language consists of 178 Anglo-Saxon root words and 280 others, and the majority of them is borrowed from Latin or Greek. Henry (1993) reported that ‘twelve (12) Latin and two (2) Greek roots, besides 20 other most frequently used prefixes generated about 100,000 words.’⁹

The English language has a very developed vocabulary. Despite all borrowings, the roots of the language are to be found in the language of Anglo-Saxon tribes. However, the Celts were the first people who lived in the British Isles; Anglo-Saxons came there later. So, it was the language of the Celts that influenced the Anglo-Saxons' language, and finally English.

2. Historical background of contact between English and Celtic languages

According to Kuhn (1961), words which do not have a clear Celtic etymology can be found in both groups of Celtic languages (Continental and Insular), which could be an indicator of the presence of loanwords from other languages. Graham R. Isaac (2007), investigates the connection of the Celtic and Afro-Asiatic¹⁰ languages.

One of the Celtic languages (Gaulish, spoken in Gaul, modern France) was in close relationship with Latin, since it was replaced by it in the 1st century BC. Although, having been replaced, many Gaulish words were retained in Latin, which was the language of the new masters and enjoyed a higher prestige. “Given the political and social circumstances, it is to be expected that the impact of Latin onto Gaulish was more significant” (Tristram 2007:81). Gaulish continued to

⁹ Available at http://www.academia.edu/2345377/Etymological_Analysis_of_the_English_Language

¹⁰ Afroasiatic (Afro-Asiatic), also known as Afrasian and traditionally as Hamito-Semitic (Chamito-Semitic), is a large language family of several hundred related languages and dialects. It comprises about 300 or so living languages and dialects, according to the 2009 Ethnologue estimate. It includes languages spoken predominantly in the Middle East, North Africa, the Horn of Africa, and parts of the Sahel.

be written for about three centuries and was probably used in speech long after, especially in the rural areas.

As it is evident from what was said before, Celtic languages were in contact with other languages. For the purpose of this research, we shall concentrate on the most important contact that Celtic languages did have, the one with English.

The first contact between the Celtic languages and English happened in the mid 5th century AD. The last Roman legion left Britain in the early 5th century, leaving it without strong administrative center. Before the Roman occupation the island was inhabited by a diverse number of tribes that are generally believed to be of Celtic origin collectively known as *Briton*. The Romans knew the island as *Britannia*¹¹. Then, the Anglo-Saxon forces came to Britain. At first, they were hosted by the Britons (as allies, but later on, they embarked on a series of rebellions against Britons which resulted in almost wholesale conquest of Britain within the next couple of centuries (Filppula et al. 2002). Our main source of information from this period, according to Jackson (1953) was the historical account by the British monk Gildas who wrote his *De excidio et conquestu Britanniae*, in the first half of the 6th century.

According to Filppula et al. (2004), the first Anglo-Saxon settlements did not lead to their permanent place of living. Still, the Britons were able to fight back the invading Anglo-Saxon armies and secure peace for the next few decades. After a short period of peace, the situation changed rapidly after the new invasions by the Saxons along the Thames valley at the beginning of the 6th century. Jackson (1953) writes that the second half of the 6th century witnessed a great expansion of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Wessex. This meant Wessex reached to the west (the river Severn), and further south to the forest of Selwood on the borders of Wiltshire and Somerset. This happened around 600, causing the Britons of Wales to be cut off from the Britons of south-west Britain, leading eventually to the separation and division of British dialects into Welsh and Cornish.

The kingdom of Wessex continued its expansion to the west, first conquering the remaining parts of Somerset, Devon and parts of Dorset. Cornwall, according to Jackson (1953) retained some form of independence, probably sharing the power with the Anglo-Saxons. This is evident from Cornish names which remained in those parts at the time.

¹¹ According to the <http://www.ancient.eu/britain/>

In the north of Britain, the Anglo-Saxon expanded their predominance similarly as in the other parts. They first started with major waterways: the Trent and the Humber. When settled in the north, they established the Anglian kingdoms of Lindsey and Mercia. As Filppula et al. (2008:9) claim in the book *English and Celtic in Contact*:

“In any case, the Anglo-Saxon advances to the north proved to have significant consequences for the later development of the Celtic languages, as it meant an areal separation of the Welsh and Cumbric dialects of Late British.”

In the far north there was the kingdom of Deira, which united with the kingdom of Bernicia and formed the powerful kingdom of Northumbria. By the middle of the 7th century the south-eastern parts of Scotland were also brought under the Anglian rule.

Summing up the advance of the Anglo-Saxon occupations, Jackson (1953) shows on the basis of river names and other evidence how the Anglo-Saxon invasions proceeded in a wave-like process from the south and east towards the west and north.

The majority of the Celtic population of Britain remained in place and continued to live as part of the crossbred Celtic-Anglo-Saxon community, which adopted the Anglo-Saxon language, religion and culture (Higham 1992).

If compared with Wales and Scotland, it took much longer for the English to enter Ireland. The first known evidence of the English entering Ireland dates from 1169.¹² The arrival of the Anglo-Normans marked the beginning of the history of English and Norman French as main languages spoken in Ireland, alongside Irish.

3. The Celtic Languages

According to Donald MacAulay (2008), the original homeland of the Celts is unestablished. The first Celts (according to Greek and Latin sources) were associated with two cultures of the Central European Iron Ages; the Hallstatt, from the 7th century BC, and La Tene (5th century BC). During this period, the Celts migrated across whole Europe: to the east and south through the Balkans to Asia Minor, and Italy; to the west into the Iberian Peninsula, to the north to the Atlantic Coast, and across into Britain and Ireland.

¹² Available at <http://www.ancient.eu/britain/>

The term ‘Celts’ was used by Greek and Roman ethnographers to describe the tribes who spoke a distinctive kind of languages.

The communities who spoke Celtic languages were located at the peripheries of states with other major language. They were pushed in loose networks or as family groups throughout other majority populations around the world.

The Celtic languages were divided as follows:

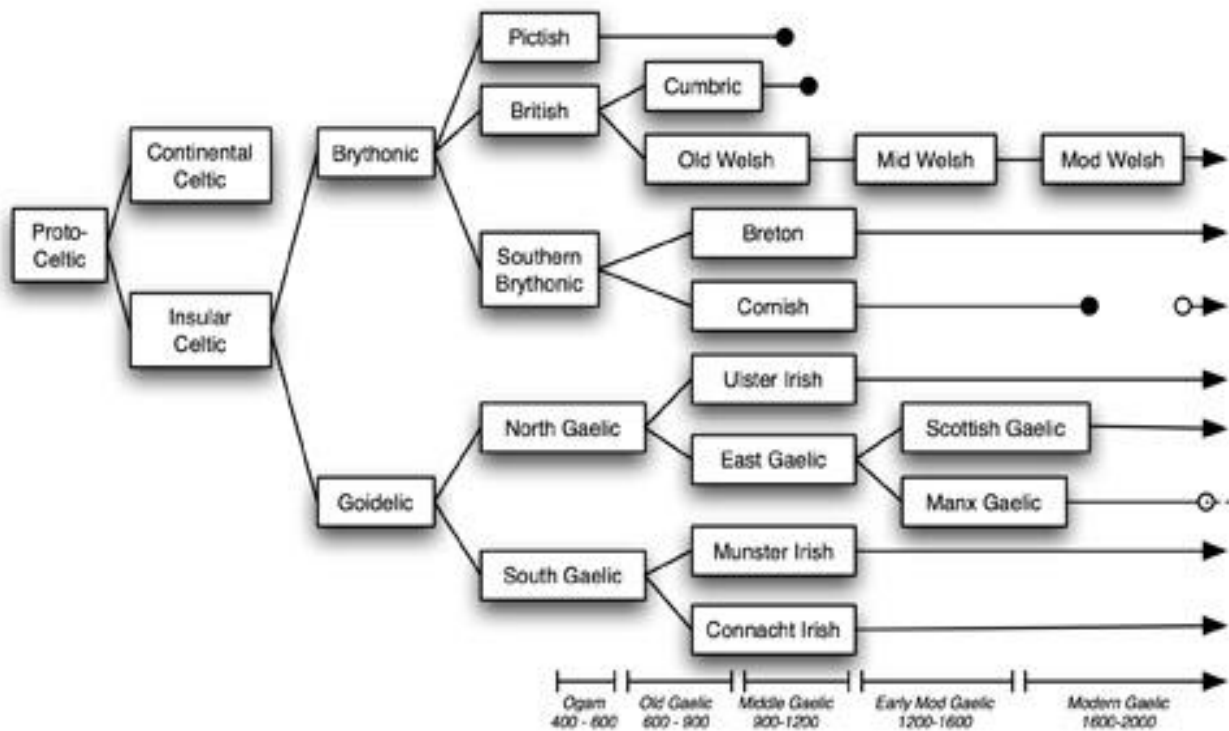


Figure 1. Division of Celtic languages¹³

The Celtic languages are divided, according to McCone (1996) as seen in Carpenter’s thesis (2011:15), into:

- 1) Celtiberian
- 2) Gaulish
- 3) The Insular Celtic (divided into Goidelic and British languages)

According to this division, Celtiberian separated itself first, from ancient Celtic, and then the rest of the Celtic languages were derived. According to the older theories that rely primarily on the

¹³ Diagram of Celtic languages of British Isles by Michael Newton, (2008) available at http://sites.stfx.ca/celtic_studies/hist_gaelic_scotland

phonological system, i.e. according to the reflection of e.g. ' *kw* ', Celtic languages are divided into the P-Celtic languages and the Q-Celtic languages. In the P-Celtic languages i.e. ' *kw* ' reflects as ' *p* ', while in Q-Celtic languages it remains ' *kw* ' (which can be changed into ' *k* '). Q-Celtic languages are thus: Goidelic (Irish, Scottish, and Manx) and Celtiberian, and P-Celtic are: Gaulish, Lepontic, and Brittonic (Welsh Cornish, Breton). The reason for such division can be found in an internet source which says:

“The Goidelic languages are often referred to as “Q-Celtic” because they use a “Q” sound, usually represented by a C or K, where the Brittonic or “P-Celtic” languages use P. For instance, Irish and Scottish Gaelic for “head” is *ceann*, or sometimes *kin*. Brittonic languages, P-Celtic Welsh and Cornish, use *pen*. There’s a place on the coast of Cornwall called Pentire, and one on the coast of Scotland called Kintyre. Both mean “head of the land.” There are hundreds of similar P and C initial words that indicate the relationship between P-Celtic and Q-Celtic languages.”¹⁴

Celtiberian

According to Cólera (2007) Celtiberian is a language that belongs to the family of Celtic languages. Inscriptions in this language have been found in the territory of the Iberian Peninsula that the Romans called Celtiberia.

Authors like Koch (2006) and Cólera (2007) prefer to use the term Hispano-Celtic as a collective name for the varieties of Celtic languages spoken in the Iberian Peninsula. Celtiberian is the only variety for which there are concrete evidence about its relations to Celtic languages.

Gaulish

Gaulish belongs to the group of Continental Celtic languages. According to Stifter (2012:107) “Gaulish in the strict sense is the Old Celtic language that was spoken in the area of modern France, ancient Gaul. [...] In a wider sense all those Old Celtic parts of the European Continent may be said to belong to the Gaulish language area which do not belong to the Celtiberian or Lepontic language areas.”

“Prior to the Roman conquest of Transalpine Gaul, the Massiliote Greek script was employed to write in Gaulish” (Eska, 2008:168). Evidence for this claim can be found in the Gallo-Greek inscription on stone from Vaison-la-Romaine and Nîmes. After Caesar's conquest of Gaul (Bellum Gallicum), the Gaulish aristocracy adapted to the Latin alphabet in order to maintain

¹⁴ Available at <http://www.digitalmedievalist.com/opinionated-celtic-faqs/celtic-languages/>

prestige and power. Among the most important Gaulish monuments written in the Latin alphabet, according to Mallory and Adams (1997), are the calendar from Coligny and the Larzac tablet.

4. The Goidelic Languages

The term ‘Goidelic’ comes from the Old Irish word ‘*goidel*’.¹⁵ Goidelic languages belong to the Insular Celtic “languages that are historically rooted in the British Isles” (Borsley 2005:2).

According to the online Oxford Dictionary Goidelic relates to the northern group of Celtic languages.¹⁶ There are three Goidelic languages: the Irish language in all its phases (the Old Irish, Middle and New Irish), Scottish (Gaelic) and Manx (the Isle of Man). It spread to Scotland and the Isle of Man around the 5th century AD.¹⁷ The Goidelic languages belong to the Q-Celtic group, as opposed to Brittonic, which is part of the P-Celtic group. “The principal distinguishing feature of the two groups is the reflex of Indo-European *kw, which in Brythonic gives p and in Goidelic gives k: for example, Welsh pump (‘five’) corresponds to Irish coic (cf. Latin quinque)”. (Borsley 2005:2)

4.1. The Irish language

Cathair o Dochartaigh (2008) in the book “*The Celtic Languages*” states that the Irish language (*Gaeilge*) is, together with Scottish Gaelic and Manx, a member of the Q-Celtic grouping of Insular Celtic. The language has existed in Ireland from the early centuries of the Christian era, still its exact date of entrance is unknown. He also states that the earliest evidence we have for the presence of Q-Celtic in Ireland dates from the period of the Ogham inscriptions (an alphabetic system of inscribed notches for vowels and lines for consonants used to write Old Irish, chiefly on the edges of memorial stones, from the fifth to the early seventh century)¹⁸. An important thing for the development of the language was the introduction of Christianity which brought the Latin alphabet that was adopted by the native speakers into literacy.

Between the 17th and the 20th century the Irish language was replaced by English in most parts of Ireland. When the English people conquered Ireland in the 16th century (Cromwellian war in

¹⁵ Available at http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=goidel

¹⁶ Available at <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/goidelic>

¹⁷ Available at <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/goidelic>

¹⁸ Available at <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/ogham>

Ireland 1649 – 53)¹⁹, they decided to inhabit Protestants from Scotland and England in Ireland. According to O Siochrú (2008) the plan was to overpower the Irish inhabitants. Catholics in Ireland were deprived of all rights and the Irish language was treated in the same way. The Irish language was replaced by English because the English language was portrayed as prestigious and it was connected to success. Children in schools were punished if they spoke Irish. When Ireland became the Republic in 1922, the Irish language was adopted as an official language, along with English. Some Irish terms were used for titles of public figures and institutions such as: *garda* (police), *Taoiseach* (Prime Minister), *Dail* (Parliament), etc.

According to the 1996 census, 1.43 million people in Ireland claim to have some knowledge of Irish, 353,000 speak it regularly.²⁰

Recently, the Irish language has experienced changes in terms of its use. It is now used on radio stations, television and in the educational system.

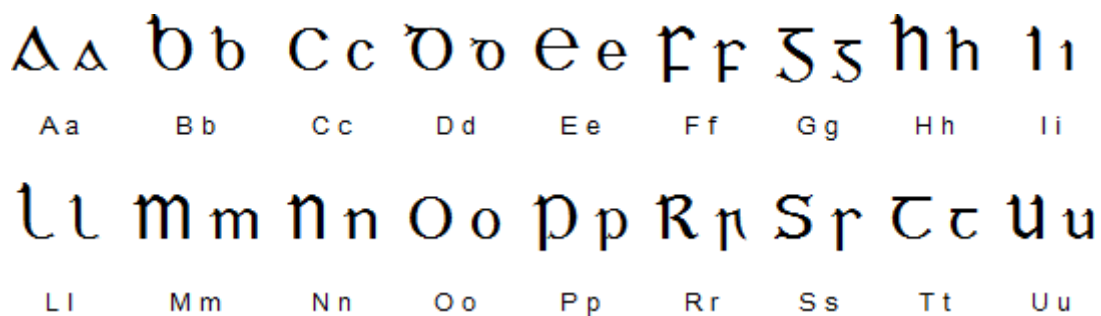


Figure 2. The Irish alphabet²¹

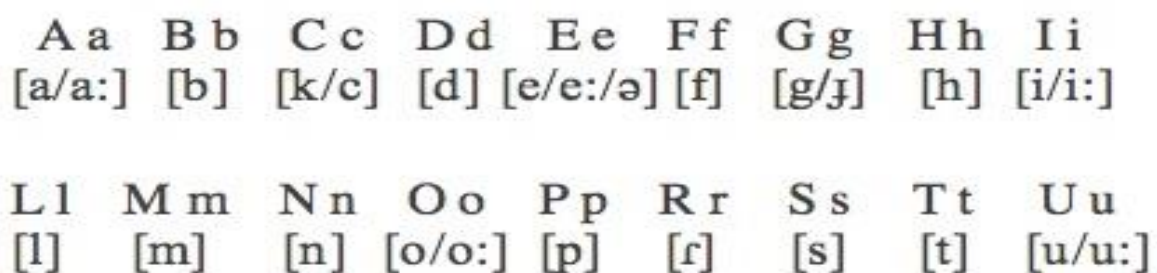


Figure 3. The Modern Irish alphabet²²

¹⁹ Available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cromwellian_conquest_of_Ireland

²⁰ Available at <https://www.pinterest.com/sarahyetts92/gaelic-alphabet/>

²¹ Available at <http://www.omniglot.com/writing/irish.htm>

As it is visible from the figures of the Irish alphabet presented above, the number of letters in the alphabet remained the same in the modern period as it was at the language's beginning.

4.2. The Manx language

Manx is the Celtic language of the Isle of Man (Ellan Vannin) which lies in the middle of the north Irish Sea (Old Irish Muir Manann). Manx was introduced in the 5th century by expansion of the Irish speakers which brought Gaelic to Scotland. The language is related to the Irish of Ulster and Scottish Gaelic of Galloway. "Between 1858 and 1907 the Manx Society published a number of works in and about Manx, including John Kelly's dictionary and Bishop John Phillips' Manx translation of the Book of Common Prayer" (Ager, 2009:23). These were the first writings in Manx.

The Manx language was spoken by the entire population of the Isle of Man until 1765 when Duke of Atholl sold the island to the British Crown. After this, the number of people who spoke Manx went into decline. It was followed by immigration from North West England during the later 18th and early 19th centuries. At those times, many English-speaking tourists started to visit the island from 1830's onwards which caused a reduced number of Manx speakers.²³

Wilf Gunther (1990:59) states that "in 1874 the Celticist Henry Jenner conducted his own private census on the state of Manx and estimated that out of a population of 41,084 (excluding the town of Douglas) 12,340, i.e. 30% would habitually speak it, with 48.5% in the northern parishes and 17.5% in the south. [...] The final phase of decline is documented by official census figures:

1901 9.1% claim to be Manx speakers, but by
1921 the number had dropped disastrously to 1.1%.
1931 529 claim to speak Manx,
1951 355 and
1961 165."

Manx became lexically impoverished as a result of isolation and a lack of keeping and extending the language's vocabulary.

In the wake of Manx national awakening during the 1980's the Island's Parliament sponsored Manx Heritage Foundation and the Manx Gaelic Advisory Council to regulate and standardize

²² ibid

²³ <http://www.omniglot.com/writing/manx.htm>

the official use of Manx. Since then Manx has been introduced in both primary and secondary schools.²⁴

| | | | | | | | |
|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| A a | B b | C c | D d | E e | F f | G g | H h |
| aittyn | beih | couyll | darragh | eboin | faarney | guilckagh | hibbin |
| I i | J j | K k | L l | M m | N n | O o | P p |
| iuar | juys | keirn | lhouan | malpys | neaynin | onnane | pobbyl |
| Q q | R r | S s | T t | U u | V v | W w | Y y |
| quinsh | rennaigh | shellagh | tramman | unjin | vervine | wooshlagh | yiarn |

Figure 4. The Manx alphabet²⁵

Compared to the Irish alphabet, it can be noted that the Manx alphabet has more letters; while the Irish alphabet consists of only 18 letters, the Manx alphabet has 24 letters.

4.3. The Scottish Gaelic language

According to the online Oxford Dictionary Scottish Gaelic is “a Celtic language spoken mainly in the highlands and islands of western Scotland. It was brought from Ireland in the 5th and 6th century AD and is now spoken by about 58,000 people.”²⁶ Since it belongs to the same group of Celtic languages, the Scottish language is closely related to Manx and Irish.

The downfall of Scottish Gaelic began according to Jones (1997) during the reign of King Malcolm Canmore (Malcolm III) and his English speaking queen, Margaret of Wessex. The queen anglicized the court by bringing clerics and nobles from England and giving her children Anglo-Saxon names, rather than Gaelic names.

Scottish Gaelic is rich in oral and written tradition, but it is not an official language of Scotland or the United Kingdom. It is only recognized as a minority language in the United Kingdom. In 2005 the Scottish Parliament passed the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 in order to secure

²⁴ Available at <http://www.poileasaidh.celtscot.ed.ac.uk/gawneseminar.html>

²⁵ Available at <http://www.omniglot.com/writing/manx.htm>

²⁶ Available at <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/gaelic>

“the status of the Gaelic language as an official language of Scotland commanding equal respect to the English language”.²⁷ According to Scotland’s 2011 census report:

“In 2011, 87,100 people aged 3 and over in Scotland (1.7 per cent of the population) had some Gaelic language skills. Of these 87,100 people: 32,400 (37.2 per cent) had full skills in Gaelic, that is could understand, speak, read and write Gaelic; 57,600 (66.2 per cent) could speak Gaelic; 6,100 (7.0 per cent) were able to read and/or write but not speak Gaelic; and 23,400 (26.8 per cent) were able to understand Gaelic but could not speak, read or write it.”²⁸

| | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| A a | B b | C c | D d | E e | F f | G g | H h | I i |
| Ailm (Elm) | Beith (Birch) | Coll (Hazel) | Dair (Oak) | Eadha (Aspen) | Fearn (Alder) | Gort (Ivy) | Uath (Hawthorn) | Iogh (Yew) |
| L l | M m | N n | O o | P p | R r | S s | T t | U u |
| Luis (Rowan) | Muin (Vine) | Nuin (Ash) | Oir/Onn (Gorse) | Peithe (Guelder Rose) | Ruis (Elder) | Suil (Willow) | Teine (Furze) | Ur (Heather) |

Figure 5. The Scottish alphabet²⁹

In the figures above it can be noted that the Scottish and Irish alphabets consist of the same letters.

5. The Brittonic languages

According to the online Oxford Dictionary Brittonic is the collective name for “the southern group of Celtic languages, consisting of Welsh, Cornish, and Breton.”³⁰ The Brittonic group of languages has been referred also to P-Celtic because of the case where ‘kw’ is replaced with ‘p’, as opposed to Goidelic where ‘kw’ is replaced with ‘c’.

²⁷ Available at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2005/7/introduction>

²⁸ Available at http://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/documents/analytical_reports/Report_%20part_1.pdf

²⁹ Available at <http://www.omniglot.com/writing/gaelic.htm>

³⁰ Available at <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/brythonic>

The online Oxford Dictionary further states that Brittonic languages “were spoken in Britain before and during the Roman occupation, surviving as Welsh and Cornish after the Anglo-Saxon invasions, and being taken to Brittany by emigrants.”.³¹

Tristram (2007) claims that during the Roman rule over Britain (43-410 AD) Latin exerted its influence on the lexicon of Brittonic in the domains of social contact by providing this as an example to Theo Vennemann’s (1995) *Superstrate rule or Lexical rule*. The superior Latin language did not influence Brittonic in the same degree in the areas of morphosyntax and phonology.

Tristram (2007:199) further points out the possibility that with the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons “the speakers of Late British shifted to the language of their conquerors and selected for transfer those features of their native language which were the most salient ones” in order to improve their communication needs. Thus, the language of the indigenous people evolved over time from Late British/ British Latin into Old English. The following chapters will deal more in detail about the descendants of Old British or Brittonic (Welsh, Breton and Cornish).

5.1. The Welsh language

The Welsh language (Cymraeg) belongs, as mentioned in the previous chapter, to the Brittonic group of Celtic languages. Welsh is today the official language of Wales, along with English. The Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning (2014:7) states that the Welsh language “as spoken today is descended directly from Early Welsh, which emerged as a distinct tongue as early as the 6th century AD”. Welsh was the only means of communication for the majority of the population in Wales up until the 19th century. Alan R. Thomas claims that the Welsh language has its survival to thank to Christianity.

“It is possible that the language would not have survived but for the translation of the Bible into Welsh in 1588, providing both a symbol of prestige and a model for standard written and public oratorical usage which persisted until the second half of the present century, latterly alongside the conservative literary standard established by the publication of Morris-Jones (1913).” (Thomas, 2008:253)

This translation of the Bible is perhaps the biggest reason why Welsh is now the only living Celtic language from the perspective of survival in the next few hundred years. According to Jones’ (2012) census overview the number of Welsh speakers rose from 18.7% in 1991 to 20.8%

³¹ ibid

in 2001. In the period between 2001 and 2011 the number of Welsh speakers remained relatively stable. The percentage of Welsh speakers according to the 2011 census is 19%.³²

The literary tradition of the Welsh language dates back to around the 6th century AD. William Forbes Skene (1868) describes four manuscripts that contain transcriptions of the earliest works of Welsh literature - the *Black Book of Caermarhen*; *the Book of Aneurin*; *the Book of Taliessin*; *the Red Book of Hergest*. Skene (1868:3) refers to these four manuscripts as *The Four Ancient Books of Wales*, as it is undoubtedly that in “these four MSS. that the most ancient texts of the poems are to be found; and, in most cases, those in the other MSS. are not independent texts, but have obviously with more or less variation, been transcribed from these”.

According to Skeat (1888), some English words have their origin in Welsh. The etymology of these words was claimed in his book *A Concise Dictionary of Middle English*:

Clutter – cludair, “heap, pile”

Crumpet – creampog, “wool”

Maggot – maceoid, “worms, grubs”

Flannel – gwlanen, “wool”

Penguin – pen, “head” + gwyn, “white”

Tor – twr, “a rocky hill”

Trousers – trews, “pants, trousers”

Truant – truan, “wretched, miserable”

The majority of those words have their origins in Welsh. However, by searching their etymology in the Online Etymology Dictionary of English it is established that all of the words listed above have their roots, to some extent, in Celtic languages, though their etymologies were not confirmed to be strictly of Celtic origin.

³² Available at <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Welsh-Language/WelshSpeakers-by-LocalAuthority-Gender-DetailedAgeGroups-2011Census>

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------|---------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|-----|-------|-----|
| Alphabet: | A a | B b | C c | Ch ch | D d | Dd dd | E e | F f | Ff ff | G g |
| Pronounced: | a | bi | ec | èch | di | èdd | e | èf | èff | èg |
| Alphabet | Ng ng | H h | I i | L l | Ll ll | M m | N n | O o | P p | |
| Pronounced: | èng | aets | i | èl | èll | em | èn | o | pi | |
| Alphabet: | Ph ph | R r | Rh rh | S s | T t | Th th | U u | W w | Y y | |
| Pronounced: | ffi/yff | èr | rhi | ès | ti | èth | u | w | y | |

Figure 6. The Welsh alphabet³³

5.2. The Cornish language

The online Oxford Dictionary describes the Cornish language as “the ancient Celtic language of Cornwall, belonging to the Brythonic branch of the Celtic language group”.³⁴ As mentioned in previous chapters, Cornish is related to Welsh and Breton. The development of the Cornish language is divided into four phases:

- 1) “Primitive Cornish (PrimC) is the name given to the earliest phase of the language, approximately AD 600 to 800, which has no written records.
- 2) Old Cornish (OldC) refers to the phase from 800 to 1200, the later date being chosen to be sure of including the *Vocabularium Cornicum* (see the section on sources below).
- 3) Middle Cornish (MidC) lasted from 1200 to c. 1575. The second half of this phase contains 75 per cent of the extant traditional corpus.
- 4) Late Cornish (LateC) lasted from c. 1575 to 1800.” (George, 2009:488)

Some authors, like Ferdinand (2013), include the revival of Cornish as the fifth phase.

Late Cornish is sometimes referred to as Modern Cornish, but George (2009) considers the term inappropriate because the Cornish language today has a status of a revived language.

The last known native speaker of Cornish died, according to Sayers (2012), in 1777. Dalby (2006) claims that the last speaker of the Cornish language who knew no English died in 1777, but the very last native speaker of Cornish died, according to him, in 1891. Revival efforts have been made since the nineteenth century, but it was not until 2002 that “the UK Government

³³ Available at <https://www.worldtranslationcenter.com/languages/welsh/welsh-translation?sw=1366>

³⁴ Available at <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/cornish>

recognized Cornish as a British minority language under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages”. (Ferdinand, 2013:215)

Because of several supporting groups using different orthographies and speaking varieties the Standard Written Form (SWF) for Cornish was created in 2008 to represent “a common ground for users of all existing orthographies and for speakers of all varieties of Revived Cornish. The SWF is not meant to replace other spelling systems, but rather to provide public bodies and the educational system with a universally acceptable, inclusive, and neutral orthography”. (Bock and Bruch, 2008:1) Today, Cornish is not on the extinct list of UNESCO’s *Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger*, but it still has the status of a “critically endangered” language.³⁵

What follows is the picture of Cornish alphabet:

| | | | | | | | |
|------------|------------|--------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| A a | B b | Ch ch | D d | E e | F f | G g | H h |
| a | be | cha | de | e | ev | ge | ha |
| I i | J j | K k | L l | M m | N n | O o | P p |
| i | je | ka | el | em | en | o | pe |
| R r | S s | T t | U u | V v | W w | Y y | |
| er | es | te | u | ve | we | ye | |

Figure 7. The Cornish alphabet³⁶

In the figures above it can be seen that the Cornish and Welsh alphabet, although somewhat similar, also have some differences. The Welsh alphabet has more letters than the Cornish alphabet and both alphabets feature some additional letters that the other one does not have.

5.3. The Breton language

Breton is spoken mainly in Brittany (Breizh), located on the peninsula in the northwest of France, by about 200,000 people.³⁷ Brittany was known to the Romans as Armorica, which was later renamed “Brittany” (little Britain). It got the name after the people who migrated there from Britain in the 6th century AD. Breton first appeared in writing in 790 AD in a manuscript “le manuscript de leyde”, a botanical treatise in Breton and Latin. The first written text in Breton

³⁵ Taken from <http://www.unesco.org/languages-atlas/index.php>

³⁶ Taken from <http://www.omniglot.com/writing/cornish.htm>

³⁷ Taken from <http://www.fr.brezhoneg.bzh/5-chiffres-cles.htm>

appeared in 1530. From 1880 to the middle of the 20th century Breton was banned from schools. The Deixonne law from 1951 allowed Breton to be taught in schools for one to three hours a week.³⁸

There are four dialects in Breton: *Leoneg* in the county of Leon, *Tregerieg* in the county of Tregor, *Kerneveg* in Cornouaille, and *Gwenedeg* in Vannes. In 1908 the orthography of three dialects (Kerneveg, Leoneg and Tregerieg) was unified (Wmffre, 2007). The Gwenedeg dialect was added in 1941 (Koch and Minard, 2012).

Today, Breton can be heard at some radio stations for a few hours a week and there is one hour program on TV every week in Breton.

The Breton alphabet (lizherenneg ar brezhoneg)

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------|------------|--------------|----------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| A a | B b | Ch ch | C'h c'h | D d | E e | F f | G g | H h | I i | J j | K k | L l |
| a | be | che | ec'h | de | e | ef | ge | hach | i | je | ke | el |
| M m | N n | O o | P p | R r | S s | T t | U u | V v | W w | Y y | Z z | |
| em | en | o | pe | er | es | te | u | ve | we | ye | zed | |

Figure 8. The Breton alphabet³⁹

In the figures above it can be seen that the Breton and Cornish alphabets are more similar to each other than either of them is to Welsh. The Breton alphabet has 25 letters, while Cornish consists of 23 letters. Due to political reasons around the 1500s Breton and Cornish started to evolve separately under the influence of French and English respectively, while Welsh started evolving separately much earlier. Thus, it can be concluded that the Goidelic languages are more closely related than the Brittonic languages.

6. Examples for words from the Celtic family compared across Celtic languages

Table 1. Corpus of Celtic words for family members⁴⁰

| English | THE CELTIC FAMILY | | | | | |
|---------|-------------------|------|--------|-------|---------|--------|
| | Irish | Manx | Gaelic | Welsh | Cornish | Breton |
| | | | | | | |

³⁸ Available at <http://www.omniglot.com/writing/breton.htm>

³⁹ *ibid*

⁴⁰ Available at <http://www.omniglot.com/language/kinship/celtic.htm>

| | | | | | | |
|-------------|------------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|--------------|---------------|
| Family | Teaghlach | Mooinjer | Teaghlach | Teulu | Teylu | Famih |
| Father | Athair | Ayr | Athair | Tad | Tas | Tad |
| Mother | Mathair | Moir | Mathair | Mam | Mamm | Mamm |
| Parents | Tuisti | Ayr as Moir | Parantan | Rhieni | Kerens | Kerent |
| Son | Mac | Mac | Mac | Mab | Mab | Mab |
| Daughter | Inion | Inneen | Nighean | Merch | Myrgh | Merch |
| Children | Paisti | Cloan | Clann | Plant | Flehes | Bugale |
| Brother | Dearthair | Braar | Brathair | Brawd | Broder | Breur |
| Sister | Deirfiur | Shuyr | Piuthair | Chwaer | Hwor | C'hoar |
| Husband | Fear ceile | Dooinney | Feas Posda | Gwr | Gour | Pried |
| Wife | Bean (cheile) | Ben | Bean Phosda | Gwraig | Gwreg | Gwreg |
| Grandfather | Seanathair | Shaner | Seanair | Taid/Tad-cu | Tas Gwynn | Tad- kozh |
| Grandmother | Seanmathair | Sherin Voir | seanmhair | Nain/Mam-gu | Mamm Wynn | Mamm- gozh |

The reason for choosing words for family members above to be analyzed in the Celtic languages is the fact that those words are a part of the basic vocabulary acquired at the early stages of language acquisition. Because every child first learns the words ‘mum’, ‘dad’, etc. it is necessary to present those words along with their first appearances in Celtic languages. Their possible influence on Modern English words for family members will also be discussed.

As it is evident, even among the Celtic languages themselves, there are many differences. It looks like the first letters for words are the same in one group (Goidelic or Brittonic) of languages, while other parts of words are changed.

6.1. Corpus Analysis

1. E (English), I (Irish), M (Manx), G (Gaelic), W (Welsh), C (Cornish), B (Breton)

Family (E) - Teaghlach (I) - Mooinjer (M) - Teaghlach (G) - Teulu (W) - Teylu (C) - Famih (B)

The English word ‘family’ is the most similar to Breton – *Famih*. Speaking of other Celtic languages, the word is the same in Irish and Gaelic. Similarity of the words is visible in Welsh

and Cornish, while Manx word is different from all other Celtic words for ‘family’. According to Online Etymology Dictionary of English, the word ‘family’ comes from:

Family, (n.): early 15c. “servants of a household”, from Latin *familia* “family servants, domestics collectively, the servants in a household”, thus also “members of a household, the estate, property; the household, including relatives and servants”, abstract noun formed from *famulus* “servant, slave”, which is of unknown origin.

2. *Father (E) – Athair (I) – Ayr (M) – Athair (G) – Tad (W) – Tas (C) – Tad (B)*

Celtic words for ‘father’ are the same in Irish and Gaelic (*athair*), and in Welsh and Breton (*tad*). According to the Online Etymological Dictionary the English variant *dad* and the Welsh/Breton *tad* most likely have the same origin from child’s speech.⁴¹ Manx and Cornish are different but they have common PIE root. English word ‘father’, according to Online Etymology Dictionary, came from:

father (n.): Old English *fæder* "he who begets a child, nearest male ancestor;" also "any lineal male ancestor; the Supreme Being," and by late Old English, "one who exercises parental care over another," from Proto-Germanic **fader* (cognates: Old Saxon *fadar*, Old Frisian *feder*, Dutch *vader*, Old Norse *faðir*, Old High German *fatar*, German *vater*; in Gothic usually expressed by *atta*), from PIE **pāter-* "father" (cognates: Sanskrit *pitar-*, Greek *pater*, Latin *pater*, Old Persian *pita*, Old Irish *athir* "father"), presumably from baby-speak sound "pa." The ending formerly was regarded as an agent-noun affix.⁴²

According to the presented information, it can be seen that the English word ‘father’ is most similar with Irish ‘athair’.

3. *Mother (E) – Mathair (I) – Moir (M) – Mathair (G) – Mam (W) – Mamm (C) – Mamm (B)*

This word is similar in all Celtic languages, and it may have had some influence on the English word ‘mother’.

mother (n.1): Old English *modor* "female parent," from Proto-Germanic **mothær* (cognates: Old Saxon *modar*, Old Frisian *moder*, Old Norse *moðir*, Danish *moder*, Dutch *moeder*, Old High German *muoter*, German *Mutter*), from PIE **mater-* "mother" (cognates: Latin *mater*, Old Irish *mathir*, Lithuanian *mote*, Sanskrit *matar-*, Greek *meter*, Old Church Slavonic *mati*),

⁴¹ Available at http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=dad

⁴² http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=father

"[b]ased ultimately on the baby-talk form *mā- (2); with the kinship term suffix *-ter-"
[Watkins].⁴³

The most visible similarity is between Old Irish (*mathir*) and Modern English (*mother*), but all have a common PIE root.

4. *Parents (E) – Tuisti (I) – Ayr as Moir (M) – Parantan (G) – Rhieni (W) – Kerens (C) – Kerent (B)*

parent (n.): early 15c. (late 12c. as a surname), from Old French *parent* "father, parent, relative, kin" (11c.), from Latin *parentem* (nominative *parens*) "father or mother, ancestor," noun use of present participle of *parere* "bring forth, give birth to, produce," from PIE root **pere-* (1) "to bring forth" (see *pare*). Began to replace native *elder* after c. 1500.⁴⁴

The English word 'parents' has most similarity with Gaelic *Parantan*.

5. *Son (E) – Mac (I) – Mac (M) – Mac (G) – Mab (W) – Mab (C) – Mab (B)*

The word is characteristic in Celtic languages since it has the same form in Goidelic languages (*Mac*), and the same form in Brittonic languages (*Mab*). The difference between the words in Goidelic and Brittonic languages is only in one letter (c-b).

Son (n.): Old English *sunu* "son, descendant", from Proto-Germanic *sunuz* (cognates: Old Saxon and Old Frisian *sunu*, Old Norse *sonr*, Danish *søn*, Swedish *son*, Middle Dutch *sone*, Dutch *zoone*, Old High German *sunu*, German *Sohn*, Gothic *sunus* "son")... a derived noun from root *seue* – "to give birth" (cognates: Sanskrit *sauti* "gives birth", Old Irish *suth* "birth, offspring").⁴⁵

The English word 'son', according to Online Etymology Dictionary was derived from Proto Germanic and its cognate Old Irish, not noun but verb 'suth' (birth).

6. *Daughter (E) – Inion (I) – Inneen (M) – Nighean (G) – Merch (W) – Myrgh (C) – Merch (B)*

Celtic word for 'daughter' is same in Welsh and Breton (*Merch*), and similar in Irish and Manx (*Inion*, *Inneen*). In Gaelic (*Nighean*) and Cornish (*Myrgh*), the word is completely different from other Celtic languages.

⁴³ http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=mother

⁴⁴ http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=parent

⁴⁵ http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=son

Daughter (n.): Old English *dohtor*, from Proto – Germanic *dokhter*, earlier *dhukter* (cognates: Old Saxon *dohtar*, Old Norse *dottir*, Old Frisian and Dutch *dochter*, German *Tochter*, Gothic *dauhtar*). Latin does not have a separate word for “daughter”, but uses the female form of the Latin word for “son” (Latin *filia* “daughter” is fem. of *filius* “son”).⁴⁶

7. *Children (E) – Paisti (I) – Cloan (M) – Clann (G) – Plant (W) – Flehes (C) – Bugale (B)*

This word is completely different in all Celtic languages, except for similarity between words in Manx and Gaelic. Also, it does not have any connection to English ‘*children*’.

child (n.): Old English *cild* “fetus, infant, unborn or newly born person,” from Proto-Germanic **kiltham* (cognates: Gothic *kilþei* “womb,” *inkilþo* “pregnant;” Danish *kuld* “children of the same marriage;” Old Swedish *kulder* “litter;” Old English *cildhama* “womb,” lit. “child-home”); no certain cognates outside Germanic. “App[arently] originally always used in relation to the mother as the ‘fruit of the womb’” [Buck]. Also in late Old English, “a youth of gentle birth” (archaic, usually written *childe*). In 16c.-17c. especially “girl child.”⁴⁷

8. *Brother (E) – Dearthair (I) – Braar (M) – Brathair (G) – Brawd (W) – Broder (C) – Breur (B)*

The word is similar in all Celtic languages (except Irish) to the English ‘*brother*’. Brother (n.): Old English *broþor*, from Proto-Germanic **brothar* (cognates: Old Norse *broðir*, Danish *broder*, Old Frisian *brother*, Dutch *broeder*, German *Bruder*, Gothic *bróþar*), from PIE root **bhrater* (cognates: Sanskrit *bhrátár-*, Old Persian *brata*, Greek *phratér*, Latin *frater*, Old Irish *brathir*, Welsh *brawd*, Lithuanian *broterelis*, Old Prussian *brati*, Old Church Slavonic *bratru*, Czech *bratr* “brother”).⁴⁸

According to Online Etymology Dictionary, the word is related (besides other languages) to Irish (*brathair*) and Welsh (*brawd*).

9. *Sister (E) – Deirfiur (I) – Shuyr (M) – Piuthair (G) – Chwaer (W) – Hwor (C) – C’hoar (B)*

If we exempt the similarity between Welsh (*Chwaer*) and Breton (*C’hoar*), the word is different in all Celtic languages, and seems not to have any relationship with the English word “sister”.

⁴⁶ http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=daughter

⁴⁷ http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=children

⁴⁸ http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=brother

sister (n.) mid-13c., from Old English *sweostor*, *swuster* "sister," or a Scandinavian cognate (Old Norse *systir*, Swedish *syster*, Danish *søster*), in either case from Proto-Germanic **swestr-* (cognates: Old Saxon *swestar*, Old Frisian *swester*, Middle Dutch *suster*, Dutch *zuster*, Old High German *swester*, German *Schwester*, Gothic *swistar*).⁴⁹

10. Husband (E) – Fear ceile (I) – Dooinne (M) – Feas Posda (G) – Gwr (W) – Gour (C) – Pried (B)

The word is completely different in all Celtic languages. No similarity can be found.

husband (n.) Old English *husbonða* "male head of a household, master of a house, householder," probably from Old Norse *husbondi* "master of the house," literally "house-dweller," from *hus* "house" + *bondi* "householder, dweller, freeholder, peasant," from *buandi*, present participle of *bua* "to dwell". Beginning late 13c. it replaced Old English *wer* as "married man (in relation to his wife)" and became the companion word of wife, a sad loss for English poetry. Slang shortening hubby first attested 1680s.⁵⁰

11. Wife (E) – Bean (cheile) (I) – Ben (M) – Bean (phosda) (G) – Gwraig (W) – Gwreg (C) – Gwreg (B)

There are similarities in each branch of Celtic languages. According to Online Etymology Dictionary, there cannot be found similarities between Celtic and English words for "wife".

wife (n.) Old English *wif* (neuter) "woman, female, lady," also, but not especially, "wife," from Proto-Germanic **wiban* (source also of Old Saxon, Old Frisian *wif*, Old Norse *vif*, Danish and Swedish *viv*, Middle Dutch, Dutch *wijf*, Old High German *wib*, German *Weib*), of uncertain origin, not found in Gothic.⁵¹

12. Grandfather (E) – Seanathair (I) – Shaner (M) – Seanair (G) – Taid/Tad-cu (W) – Tas Gwynn (C) – Tad-kozh (B)

Similarities are visible within each group of Celtic languages.

grandfather (n.) early 15c., from *grand-* + *father* (n.), probably on analogy of French *grand-père*.⁵²

⁴⁹ http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=sister

⁵⁰ http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=husband

⁵¹ http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=wife

⁵² http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=grandfather

13. *Grandmother (E) – seanmathair (I) – Sherin Voir (M) – Seanmhair (G) – Nain/Mam-gu (W) – Mamm (Wynn) (C) – Mamm-gozh (B)*

Like “grandfather”, this word also does not have any relationship with English “grandmother”.

grandmother (n.) early 15c., from grand- + mother (n.1), probably on analogy of French grand-mère⁵³

Our hypothesis that grammatical and semantic features that have been taken over from the Celts are more important than vocabulary has been proven in this chapter (in terms of vocabulary). From the examples presented above, it can be seen that the Celts did not have influence, they only share common roots, i.e. PIE roots. In most cases family terms in English are inherited from Proto Germanic. More significant influences are to be found in terms of grammar, which is to be presented in the next chapters.

7. Celtic and English – contact and shift

In order to borrow grammatical features from one language, some vocabulary borrowing is a prerequisite. The roots of Modern English rely, to some extent, on Celtic languages. The reason for this is that all Celtic languages, no matter where they were spoken, were replaced with the English language. The English retained Celtic names for places: London, Thames, Devon, Litchfield, Malvern, Berkshire, Penge, Ross, etc. There is also evidence for continuation of farming practices and religious customs. The English did not take over whole words; in terms of vocabulary – they took over practically no vocabulary, but what they did keep are roots for some words.

The best explanation that defines the contact features between two languages is to be found in Thomason (2001) who states:

“Only linguistic change that would have been less likely to occur outside a particular contact situation is due at least in part to language contact.” (Thomason, 2001:62)

Those changes that happen may have had direct influence, but mostly they appeared from indirect influences such as habits, culture, religion etc. According to Niehues (2006), in order to establish language contact, first we must identify the features of a source language. Secondly, the

⁵³ http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=grandmother

structural features that were shared have to be established in both languages. In order to establish a feature of structural share it is first necessary to identify it in both languages in order to be able to conclude that the borrowed feature did not exist in the second language, as well as that they were presented in the donating language before the contact occurred.

Another difficulty in establishing the exact point of contact may be the long latency before any innovation becomes attested in written language. Any contact that influenced changes in a language due to shifting, is more likely to take place in the spoken than in the written form. However, there is a lack of theoretical background of contact. The question of which features may be indicative of language contact remains until today.

Different theories and approaches towards the contact of English and Celtic languages are still present. The traditional opinion is that the Britons were annihilated by the incoming Anglo-Saxons thus leaving no trace of their original language.

However, it is impossible that no features were taken over from the Celtic languages because of the process of rapid language shift, where imperfections in learning existed, and people were not able to completely adopt the new language. That means that some native Celtic language features must have survived.

Some of those features would survive to become a part of Modern English, thus making the Celtic influence still present today. What follows is the explanation how those features may have found their way in contemporary English.

Although Old English inherited many grammatical categories from Indo-European languages, it underwent a number of changes over time. Its development from the Middle English, Early Modern English to Present Day English created a character of its own, setting it aside from its Germanic cousins. There is a lack of written documents for all changes that happened before the 8th century.

Tristram (2002:28) suggests that “...in some important aspects, modern standard written English may perhaps best be regarded as a Late Britonised West German language.”

Filppula et al. (2004:98) point out that, due to the mechanisms of language shift, a Celtic influence on English “...does not involve the requirement for a ‘pan-Celtic substratum’ nor occurrence of the same sets of subtracted features in all of the putative Celtic Englishes.”

Tristram argues for two distinct influences of the British language on English. The first was the initial shift of speakers of late British to Anglo-Saxon from 5th to 7th century; the second took

the form of a long-term areal convergence with Welsh due to the continuous contact with a certain degree of bilingual speakers and speaker mobility, resulting in eventual ‘linguistic homogenization’. She stresses the importance of subsequent reinforcement of any developments by language contact via ‘loose-knit network ties’, pointing out sociological considerations of the personal dimension, any language change being effected by speakers in social interactions, noting that “*the result of continued interaction invariably is convergence*” (Tristram, 1999:29).

7.1. Linguistic outcomes of the early contacts

Based on the historical evidence discussed above, it may be claimed that bilingualism existed in many parts of Britain for a certain period of time after the first arrival of the Anglo-Saxons. Britons were forced to learn Anglo-Saxon, beside their knowledge of Brittonic (languages grouped as Insular Celtic, and Brittonic Celtic forms of Celtic were spoken by the occupants of the British Isles)⁵⁴, while on the other side, Anglo-Saxons had no need to learn the language of the people whom they conquered. Weinreich (1953) states that, in the process of acquiring a new language, speakers seek both categorical and structural equivalence relations and dissimilarities between the native and the target language. In conditions of rapid language shift and due to a lack of adequate language instructions, this kind of process leads to the transfer of many features (on the phonological and syntactic level). However, the influences of the two languages mixed. In the British context, it is more likely that the language of Anglo-Saxons (English) exercised a strong influence on Brittonic but, at the same time, it should be taken into consideration the Celtic features have also taken place in English. This influence has grown rapidly in the speech of the increasing numbers of Brittonic speakers shifting to the language of their rulers.

Regarding the Celtic influence on English, Filppula et al. (2008) claim that it is difficult to identify transfer effects in the early English text in Old English. Due to the lack of information, it is difficult to claim that the Celtic languages have had hardly any influence on English. Whatever impact the Celts had on the English language, it was restricted to a handful of loanwords (*bard, crag, glen, whiskey*) to which can be added a number of place names and river names.

⁵⁴ Available at <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/utk/ireland/conquest.htm>

“We should not expect to find many [Celtic loanwords in English], for the British Celts were a subject people, and a conquering people are unlikely to adopt many words from those whom they have supplanted.” (Pyles and Algeo 1993: 292)

Furthermore, Strang (1970:391) states that “the extensive influence of Celtic can only be traced in place-names”.

About the lack of evidence of the presence of Celtic words in English, Jespersen (1905) said:

“We now see why so few Celtic words were taken over into English. There was nothing to induce the ruling classes to learn the language of the inferior natives; it could never be fashionable for them to show an acquaintance with that despised tongue by using now and then a Celtic word. On the other hand the Celt would have to learn the language of his masters, and learn it well; he could not think of addressing his superiors in his own unintelligible gibberish, and if the first generation did not learn good English, the second or third would, while the influence they themselves exercised on English would be infinitesimal.”

(Jespersen 1905: 39)

Forster (1921) points to only several relatively certain common noun-loans from Welsh, Cornish or Breton and even fewer from the Old Irish. Those are mostly words used in everyday household, such as terms used for animals. From Irish the majority of loanwords are taken for terms of nature.

A completely different perspective is presented by a growing number of scholars who claim that the influence of conquered people would have been more manifested in the syntax of the language. The reason for such thinking is the fact that conquered people had to learn the language of the conquerors, but in the process they would probably have retained some of the syntactic characteristics of their native language. Keller (1925) is maybe one of the most important authors to highlight the role of syntax rather than lexicon as the main area where Celtic contact effects can be expected.

7.2. Borrowings from Celtic into English in terms of vocabulary

In the following examples of words it is evident that English words have their origins in Celtic languages (Irish):

Banshee – bean síth, “woman of the fairy mound”

Brogue - bróg, “shoe”

Drumlin – druim, “the ridge of a hill”

Galore – go leór, “plenty, enough”

Keen – caoin, “weep”

Pet – peata, “a tame lamb”

Phony – fainne, “ring” (from the gilt brass ring used by swindlers)

Shamrock - seamróg, “shamrock”

Shanty – sean tigh, “old house”

Slew – sluag, “army”

Slug – slug, “swallow”

Smithereens – smidirin, diminutive of suiodar, “small fragments”, i.e. “super small fragment”

Whiskey – visage beatha, “water of life”

Here are some examples for words from culture (in English) that seem to have roots in Scottish:

Cairn – carn, “heap, pile”

Clan – clann, “family, lineage”

Claymore – claidheamh mór, “great sword”

Crag – creagh, “rocky outcrop”

Glen – gleann, “valley”

Glom – glam, “grab, snatch”

Hubbub – ubub, a Scottish exclamation of contempt

Plaid – plaide, “blanket”

Slogan – sluagh, “army” + ghairm, “call, shout”

For example, in Modern English there are also words similar to Welsh:

Brock – badger (Welsh: broch)

Coomb – small valley (cwm)

Tor – rocky peak (twrr ‘heap’)

Crag – craig, cliff

Bogey (man) – bwg

Gull – gwylan

According to Harper etymology dictionary, the following words have their origins in Brittonic:

basket (apparently from Brittonic *basc(i)-etto-n, meaning "little wicker thing")

beak (possibly from Brittonic *becco-s, meaning "beak"; equally possibly from Gaulish via Latin (beccus) via French (bec))

brock (from Brittonic *brocco-s, meaning "badger")

dad, daddy (from Brittonic *tatV-, meaning "dad". Equally possibly an independent innovation, although well-attested in Celtic and other Indo-European languages, including German)

dam (possibly from Brittonic *damā-, meaning "female sheep or deer"; alternatively from French dame, "lady, woman")⁵⁵

The table listed below presents the English and Celtic words with the common root.

Table 2. Words in English and Celtic with the common root⁵⁶

| English word | Celtic word |
|-----------------------|--|
| Beak | <i>Bacc-</i> *indicates it is a reconstructed word |
| Puck – an evil spirit | <i>Puca</i> (the game poker and the name Puck in Shakespeare's <i>Mid Summer Night's Dream</i> ⁵⁷) |

⁵⁵ Available at <http://www.etymonline.com/>

⁵⁶ Available at <https://babblelingua.com/celtic-words-in-english-language/>

⁵⁷ Available at https://books.google.ba/books?id=ndiYMpZNdMIC&pg=PA92&lpg=PA92&dq=english+and+celtic+words+from+a+common+root&source=bl&ots=yi5uFmTo6c&sig=oZR6786bYncC2JDY_aslrp5F964&hl=hr&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjTxu3

| | |
|---------|--|
| Car | Norman French <i>carre</i> , from Latin <i>carrum</i> , <i>carrus</i> meaning a “two-wheeled Celtic war chariot,” from Gaulish <i>karros</i> |
| Crumpet | Welsh <i>crempog</i> Cornish or Breton <i>Krampoez</i> ; ‘little hearth cakes’ |
| Gob | Might be from Brittonic <i>gobbo</i> -s, meaning “mouth, lump, mouthful”. |
| Hog | Cornish <i>Hogh</i> |

This research has shown that the most important influence that the Celts had on English was mirrored in syntax and grammar.

7.3. Syntax in contact

In the evolution from Old to Modern English there occurred many changes. The English language did not change only in its phonology, morphology or lexis but in terms of a synthetic language becoming more analytical. New theories suggest that the reason for a high degree in analytical elements in Modern English lies in its contact with the Celtic languages. This theory relies on the fact that English and Welsh share a common development from synthetic to analytic. Tristram (2002:262) points out:

“Welsh and English are the most conspicuously analytic languages of Western Europe’s Indo-European [...] languages.”

Gary German (2001) wrote about the Brittonic influence on the Modern English. He suggests that shifting speakers of Brittonic brought their stress system that had “led to the weakening and loss of final atonic syllables in Brittonic” (German, 2001:130).

Tristram concludes that “the very vital contribution of the speakers of the Brythonic languages to the creation of the English language lay in triggering the (initial) typological change from a predominantly analytical language. Therefore this contact determined that all subsequent changes would tend towards analyticity” (Tristram, 1999:30).

Based on information above, the main influence that the Celts had on English was in syntax and grammar, rather than in terms of vocabulary, what the hypothesis of this research advocates. The possible Celtic influences on English in terms of syntax and grammar will be explained below.

7.3.1. *Clefting*

‘Clefting’ is another feature that seems to come from the Celts. Some effects may also been taken in terms of English phonology and morphology, although such evidence is thinner than in syntax.

Although there is a small number of surviving texts in Old Welsh, it is clear that ‘clefting’ is probably a property of the Brittonic languages. Tristram (2002) defines ‘clefting’ in Welsh as the fronting of an element to become a nominal complement. This could be seen in Middle Welsh:

(1) *Hit was se Halend te hyne halende.*

(2) *It was the saviour who healed him.* (Tristram, 2002:265)

Tristram (2002) suggests Brittonic had influence on the English word order, because of similarities of those constructions that occurred earlier in the Celtic language.

Speaking of geographical distribution of ‘clefting’, Filppula et al. (2008) noticed that it occurs with higher frequency in the West Midland dialects.

‘Cleft’ form exist not only in English but in Swedish, French, Danish, etc.

7.3.2. *The Northern Subject Rule (NSR)*

NSR represents the number accord of nouns and verbs in the 3rd person singular. It occurs in Northern English, as the dialect’s name itself shows. It was attested to appear in the Middle English period. There is no general agreement on this yet, as it has recently been pointed out as a possible case of syntactic transfer from Brittonic.

3) “*They peel them and boils them.*

4) *Birds sings.* (Klemola 2000:330).

A parallel for this can be seen in Modern Welsh:

5) *Cyrhaeddodd y car.* ‘The car arrived.’

arrived. SG the car

6) *Cyrhaeddodd y ceir.* ‘The cars arrived.’

arrived. SG the cars

7) *Cyrhaeddodd e.* ‘It arrived.’

Arrived. SG he”

(Niehues: 2006: 53)

7.3.3. *External vs. Internal*

The possessor construction is one of the features in which the Middle English differs from the Old English. According to Vennemann (2002):

8) “*he cearf of heora handa & heora nosa* - 11th cent. (Vennemann, 2002:6) – internal possession

‘he cut off their hands and noses’

9) *ta sticode him mon ta eagan ut* - 9th cent. (Vennemann, 2002:5) – external possession

‘then someone gouged his eyes out’”

(Niehues, 2006:40)

In Old English both constructions were possible, while Middle English does not allow the use of both, allowing only the internal one. Vennemann (2002) supports the Celtic influence to the establishment of the internal construction in the Modern English. According to him, the Celtic languages exhibit close parallels to the English construction:

Middle Welsh:

10) “*Torodd y frenhines ei ben.* (Tristram, 1999:25)

lit. ‘cut.off the queen his head’

‘The queen cut off his head.’

Modern Welsh:

11) *Mae e wedi torri ei fraich.* (Vennemann, 2002:10)

lit. ‘is he after breaking his arm’

‘He has broken his arm.’

Old Irish:

12) *Benaid-sium a chend.* (Vennemann, 2002:10)

lit. ‘he.cut.off his head’

‘He cut off his head.’”

(Niehues, 2006:42)

7.3.4. *Periphrastic 'do'*

It is a stylistic device that can be defined as the use of excessive and longer words to convey a meaning which could have been conveyed with a shorter expression or in a few words. It is an

indirect or roundabout way of writing about things. For example, using “I am going to” instead of “I will” is periphrasis.⁵⁸ Periphrastic forms are analytic, while their absence is a characteristic of synthesis. While periphrasis concerns all categories of syntax, it is most visible with verb ‘*catenae*’.⁵⁹

“In linguistics the catena (Latin for 'chain', plural *catenae*) is a unit of syntax and morphology, closely associated with dependency grammars. It is a more flexible and inclusive unit than the constituent and may therefore be better suited than the constituent to serve as the fundamental unit of syntactic and morphosyntactic analysis.”⁶⁰

Although being discovered relatively late, the development is now fully integrated in English. Parallels for this phenomenon can be found in all surviving Celtic languages:

“Breton:

13) *Karoud a rann*. ‘I do love.’ (cited in: Poppe, 2001:313)

Old Irish:

14) *dogentar aidchumtach tempuil less*

lit. will.be.done rebuilding of.the.temple by.him

‘the temple will be rebuilt by him’

(Van der Auwera and Genee, 2002:288)

Welsh:

15) *(mi) (w)na i ddarllen*

I (optional) do.1Sg.Pres. I read-VN

‘I’ll read’ (Tristram, 1997:406)”

(Niehues, 2006:58)

On the basis of its prevalence today, Juhani Klemola (2002) suggests that the phenomenon originated in the South West then gradually spreading out from there.

7.2.5. *The expanded form (EF) – progressive form*

⁵⁸ Available at <http://literarydevices.net/periphrasis/>

⁵⁹ Available at <http://www.it1me.com/learn?s=Periphrastic>

⁶⁰ Available at <http://www.theinfolist.com/php/HTMLGet.php?FindGo=Catena>

Another feature that is atypical for a Germanic language, suggesting it may have been borrowed from another language (Celtic, in this case), is the expanded form – progressive.

“One common feature of the Celtic constructions is that they all use an inflected form of ‘to be’, a preposition or aspect marker and a verbal noun, i.e. a non-finite, nominal form of the verb (Mittendorf and Poppe, 2000:115). Mittendorf and Poppe (2000) give a number of samples from the modern Insular Celtic languages:

Welsh:

16) *Mae Mair yn canu.*

‘Mary sings/is singing.’

Breton:

17) *Emaint o c’hoari kartou.*

‘They are playing cards.’

Cornish:

18) *Yma hi ow prena hy losow.*

‘She is buying her vegetables.’

Irish:

19) *Ta Maire ag scriobh na litreach.*

‘Mary is writing the letter.’

Scottish Gaelic:

20) *Tha Iain a’ leughadh.*

‘Iain is reading.’

Manx:

21) *Ta mee g-ee.* (Mittendorf and Poppe, 2000:118)

‘I am eating/ eat.’

as well as from Old Irish:

22) *boi in drui occ airi na rind* (Mittendorf and Poppe, 2000:137)

‘The druid was watching the stars’”

(Niehues, 2006:53f)

7.3.6. *Genitival groups*

This is another feature where Modern English differs from its Germanic language relatives, where the genitive marker is placed at the end of a noun phrase instead of the actual possessor noun.

23) “*The man in the hall’s taste in wallpaper is appalling.*”

24) *That brother-in-law of mine that I was telling you about’s taste in wallpaper is appalling.”*

(Anderson, 2009:1)

Tristram (1999), as Niehues (2006) states, points out the similarity with the Welsh constructions where the genitival group as a whole is governed by the definite article.

25) “*y dwr bedyd ‘the water (of) baptism’* (Evans 1964:25)”

(Niehues, 2006:58)

7.3.7. ‘To go’ as copula

Another feature, speculating to be taken over from Welsh, is the use of a verb with the meaning ‘to go’ to assume the function of the copula.

“In Welsh this construction was made of the verb *mynet* meaning ‘to go’:

25) *ac am hynny yd aeth Kyledyr yg gwyllt* (Visser, 1955:292)

‘and because of this Kyledyr went mad’”

(Niehues, 2006:58)

7.3.8. Preposition stranding

According to Tristram (1999) preposition stranding is maybe a candidate for language contact interference, because it has a parallel in Welsh.

“(26) Main clause: *Eisteddon ni ar y garreg.* (Isaac, 2003:48)

sat.1stPl we on the rock

(27) Relative clause: *y garreg eisteddon ni arni* (Isaac, 2003:48)

the rock sat.1stPl we on-her”

(Niehues, 2006:59)

However, on the other side, Isaac (2003) claims that this phenomenon is not of Celtic origin since it did not exist in Celtic languages in the earliest records. Isaac argues that the English sentence should be formed as in (26) in order to be an exact formal parallel of the Celtic construction.

“(26) *the rock we sat down on it (Isaac, 2003:48).”

(Niehues, 2006:59)

7.3.9. Pronouns

Filppula et al. (2002) speculate about the possibility of Celtic influence on the English pronoun system. They note the similarity of the Old Irish and Manx form ‘*si*’ (3rd person singular) to the English ‘*she*’.

8. Conclusion

In the paper, the relationship between the Celtic languages and English has been portrayed. At the very first pages, the origins of the English language are presented. As it could be evident, the Celtic languages played a significant role in the development of English since English was the language which used to replace Celtic languages in the territories where Anglo-Saxons came and established their predominance. Anglo-Saxons were the ones who came and conquered the Celtic territories, expelled the inhabitants to the rural areas, forcing upon them their language and customs. The native peoples were forced to accept the language of Anglo-Saxons. However, in the process of shifting from one language to the other, due to the rapid shifting and the lack of proper information of the other language, many linguistic features remained. Thus, in the English language there are many features that have their origins in Celtic languages.

The Celtic languages were spoken by the Celts. They were divided into the two main groups: The Goidelic languages (Irish, Manx and Scottish Gaelic) and the Brittonic languages (Welsh, Cornish and Breton).

Each language was described, followed by a few examples from it. After the description of languages and provided examples, the influence that the Celts left on Modern English has been described. The main things that remained from Celts are the names for places and rivers. Thus in Modern English, those names were certainly taken over from the Celts. Speaking of language changes, there are certain things in syntax that were taken over from the Celts. Those changes include: clefting, the Northern Subject Rule, external and internal construction, periphrastic ‘do’, the expanded form, the definite article, genitival groups, ‘to go’ as copula, proposition standing and many other changes.

By examining different features supposed to be taken over from the Celts it is evident that there is some conflict of different opinions concerning those borrowed features. While a group of authors think certain features in Modern English have Celtic origins, on the other side there is another group of authors who deny it. However, there is a necessity for a detailed interpretation of the misunderstanding because of the lack of reliable information from Celtic period. Some

scholars favor language internal explanations, ignoring the possibility of Celtic influences, while others rely on the possible borrowing from Celtic. The problem is, however, that, although the possibility of language contact influence from the Celtic language can be established, it can rarely be proven.

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