How to *put up* with *cur suas le rud* and the Bidirectionality of Contact[1]

Elvira Veselinović
(Potsdam University)

> "The verb-particle construction in English is one of the most controversial and written about subjects in the syntactic literature of this language." (Aidan Doyle 2001: 98)

1. Preverbal Composition in Old Irish and Old English

When looking at an arbitrary sample of an Old Irish text, among the first things one notices is the high frequency of preverbal compounds.[2] At the older stages of the Irish language, the vast majority of verbs was compound, i.e. combined with a preverbal prefix. This was usually a local preposition in origin, a process well known from other Indo-European languages like Sanskrit, Greek or Latin. Even for verbs which are simple in other languages, Old Irish very often employs compound verbs, so we have e.g. *do-téit* 'comes,' *do-tuit* 'falls,' *as-beir* 'says,' *fo-ceird* 'puts,' *ad-cí* 'sees,' *ro-cluinethar* 'hears' etc.

As far as the frequency of verbal composition is concerned, similar observations can be made in any Old English text. Roughly estimated, at least one third of the verbs in e.g. *Beowulf* are preverbal compounds, which is definitely not the case in Modern English. We find examples with a local preposition which now stands after the verb like *þurhwadan* 'pass through,' *forgyldan* 'pay for' on the one hand and verbs which are replaced by simple verbs nowadays like *forlætan*

[2] Cf. Veselinović (2003: 48 and 2005 passim). I regard the process of adding a preverb to a verb as composition, not derivation, since most Indo-European preverbs are meaningful lexical units and not merely derivational morphemes.

'leave,' *tobrecan* 'shatter' on the other. The neglectful treatment of compound verbs in dictionaries of Old English might have been to some extent influenced by the native speakers of Modern English.[3] A good survey of the research conducted in this field is given by Brinton (1988: ch. 5 "The Development of Phrasal Verbs in English;" see also Bolinger 1971).

The purpose of this paper is to show that Irish and English, two languages that were once typologically rather different, but similar in that they both made extensive use of the device of verbal composition, have undergone a very similar development as far as the abolition of preverbal compounds and the increase of analytic constructions, i.e. multi-word verbs, is concerned.

Preverbal composition and most of the inflexional system in Irish were given up during the Middle Irish period leading to a dramatic change in morphosyntax. From a language with a highly complex verbal morphology, Irish developed into a language with just a few remnants of the once so extensive inflection. Preverbs had become obsolete both as aspectual markers[4] and as lexical complements of the verbal content by the time of Early Modern Irish (approximately the beginning of the 13th century). A strikingly similar development occurred in English, distinguishing it from other modern Germanic languages, where preverbal composition is still highly productive.

A shift from preverbal compounds to constructions with postverbal particles can be noticed in Early Middle English and is firmly established around 1200 (Claridge 2000: 84), which corresponds to the time estimated above for the same process in Irish. The fact that English underwent a rather different development to other Germanic languages in this respect, as well as in its basic word order, leads us towards various speculations about language contact that can be held responsible for these tendencies. I will try to find evidence that supports the assumption that English and Irish cannot be viewed separately as far as the emergence and origin of verbal formations containing more than one word are concerned.

The paper is organised as follows: In chapter 2, a brief attempt towards a typology of the Modern Irish verbal lexeme – particularly the periphrastic constructions and their idiosyncrasies – is given. This is followed in chapter 3 by a synchronic comparison of Irish and English, based on the awareness that we may presuppose language contact, in chapter 4 an attempt towards a diachronic explanation is made and in chapter 5 some preliminary conclusions are drawn. As most examples in this paper serve to illustrate amply attested phenomena from a living language, they are not a product of a corpus analysis or of elicitation, but simply a collection of sentences which were constructed by the author and confirmed by native speakers and, in some instances, the result of internet searches or slightly simplified versions of original oral utterances from the *Caint Chonamara* database (Wigger 2000).

---

3   Kornexl (1994: 447), Dietz (2004 passim).
4   As far as the aspect and aktionsart dichotomy is concerned, I refer to previous terminological discussions, e.g. in Sasse (1990 passim, 2001: 6), Veselinović (2003: 10f.), and recently Wischer and Habermann (2004: 264).

2. The Shape of the Modern Irish Verbal Lexeme

Irish has overtaken English in the extreme analyticisation of the verbal system. Modern Irish possesses a multitude of complex verbal structures to denote verbal actions usually expressed by simple verbs in other languages:

(1)   Stative possessive constructions, where a state is expressed through a construction with a possessive pronoun:

> *Tá mé i mo chodladh* 'I am sleeping' (lit. 'I am in my sleep')
> *Tá mé i mo sheasamh* 'I am standing' (lit. 'I am in my standing')

(2)   Semantically transitive light verb constructions[5]

> *caith tobac* 'smoke' (lit. 'to use tobacco')
> *déan dearmad* 'forget' (lit. 'to make a mistake, an omission')

(3)   Semantically intransitive light verb constructions[6]

> *faigh bás* 'die' (lit. 'to get death')
> *lig sraoith* 'sneeze' (lit. 'to let a sneezing')
> *tarraing anáil* (lit. 'to pull breath')

(4)   Constructions with verbal nouns without a corresponding verb

> *Tá an madra ag tafann.* 'The dog is barking.'
> *Tá siad ag gáire.* 'They are laughing.'

Old Irish had single-word expressions for most of these concepts, most of which were compound verbs: *con-tuili* 'sleeps,' *at-baill* 'dies' (lit. 'throws it out'), *fo-áitbi* 'laughs,' *do-ruimnethar* 'forgets,' *glommaid* 'barks.'

Using the example of the very frequent and highly polysemous verb *cuir* 'to put,' one can describe to which extent periphrastic constructions are used in Irish, and how the use of particle verbs has replaced a verbal system once dominated by preverbal composition. Ten different types of verbal lexemes can be exemplified in Modern Irish.

(1)   Simple / primary verb: *cuir* 'put'

> **Chuir**   *sé*   *an*   *leabhar*   *ar*   *an*   *mbord.*
> put PAST   he   ART   book   on   ART   table
>
> 'He **put** the book on the table.'

(2)   Verbs with restricted or elliptic object:

> *cuir* 'sow, plant,' 'bury,' 'engage'
>
> *Níor*   **chuir**   *siad*   *aon*   *fhata*   *ariamh.*
> NEG   put PAST   they   any   potato   ever
>
> 'They never **planted** any potato.'

---

[5]   The term *light verb* goes back to Jespersen (1961: 117). It is used to describe the verb in constructions like **make** *a guess*, **take** *a walk*, **give** *a sigh*, which is extremely general in meaning and conveys only the tense/aspect/modality (TAM) features, whereas the lexical content is expressed by the noun in the respective constructions.

[6]   I call them 'semantically intransitive,' since they formally represent transitive constructions.

*Tá   sé **curtha**   anois, go   ndéana Dia   trócaire   air.*
EXIST he bury PPP   now,   PART make   God   mercy   on3SG

'He is **buried** now, may God have mercy on him.'   (cf. Germ. *beisetzen*)

*Bhí   sé ag ullmhú   chun **cogadh** a   **chur**   ar an   Iaráic*
EXIST PAST he at preparing   to   war   PART put   at ART Iraq

'He was **preparing** to wage war against Iraq.'

(3)   Verbs with full selection restriction:

   cur (VN of *cuir*) + PROGR. 'rain'

   *Bhí   sé **ag cur**   go   trom   aréir.*
   EXIST it   at   put VN PART heavy   last night

   'It was **raining** heavily last night.'

(4)   Prepositional verbs:

   cuir le (*le* 'with') 'add to sth.'

   *Níl   sé sin   ach **ag cur**   **le**   deacrachtaí   an   ghnáthduine.*
   EXIST NEG it DEM but   at   put VN with   difficulties   ART common people

   'This is only **adding to** the problems of the common people.'

(5)   Phrasal verbs with reduced valency:

   cuir as 'put out, extinguish'

   Cuir   as   na   coinnle.
   put IMP out ART candles

   '**Put out** the candles.'

(6)   Phrasal verbs:

   cuir amach (*amach* 'out') 'spit out, vomit; report'
   cuir síos (*síos* 'down') 'describe'

   ***Cuir   síos**   ar do   tháirge nó seirbhís.*
   put IMP down   at POSS 2SG product or   service

   '**Describe** your product or service.'

(7)   Phrasal prepositional verbs:

   cuir isteach ar (*isteach* 'in') 1. 'to apply for,' 2. 'disturb sb.'
   cuir suas le (*suas* 'up') 'bear, endure'

   *Níl   a   fhios   agamsa   cén chaoi ar   **chuir**   duine*
   exist neg poss knowledge at 1sg-emph how   part past put past person

   *ar bith **suas leis**   siúd.*
   at all   up   with 3sg dem

   'I don't know how anybody **put up with** him.'

(8) Prepositional support verb constructions:[7]

    cuir ar ceal 'cancel;' *cuir chun cinn* 'complete, bring to an end;'
    cuir i gcás '(pre)suppose' (lit.: 'put in case;' cf. Germ. 'gesetzt den Fall,...')

Bhí	*páidreacha*	*acu*	*le*	*chuile shórt*	***Cuir***	***i***	***gcás***
exist PAST	prayers	at 3PL	with	every kind.	put	in	case

dhá	*ndéanadh*	*duine*	*sraofairt.*
if	make PAST	someone	sneeze

    'They had prayers for everything. **Suppose** someone sneezed.'

(9) Prepositional support verb constructions with object:

    (a)   *cuir ruaig ar* 'put to flight, drive away'

Cuir	*an*	***ruaig***	*i*	*bhfad*	*uait*	***ar***	*an*	*mbrón*
put IMP	ART	chase	in	far	from 2SG	at	ART	sorrow

    '**Drive** resentment **far away** from you'

    (b)   *cuir araoid ar* 'address somebody'

Níor	***chuir***	*siad*	*ceist*	*ná*	***araoid***	*orm*	*agus*
NEG	put PAST	they	question	nor	address	at 1SG	and

níor	***chuir***	*mé*	*ceist*	*ná*	***araoid***	*orthu.*
NEG	put PAST	me	question	nor	address	at 3PL

    'They neither asked nor addressed me, and I neither asked nor addressed them.'

    (c)   *cuir fios ar* 'send for somebody'

Cuireadh fios		***ar***	*an*	*dochtúr*
put IMPERS	knowledge	at	ART	doctor

    'The doctor was **sent for**.'

    (d)   *cuir geall le* 'bet'

Chuir	*mé*	*féin*	***geall***	*leis*
put PAST	me	myself	bet	with-3SG

    'I **bet** with him'

    (e)   *cuir tús le* 'start'

Is	*tú*	*a*	***chuir***	***tús***	*leis*	*an*	*troid*
COP	you	REL	put PAST	start	with	ART	fight

    'It was you who **started** the fight.'

---

7   *Support verb construction* is the most suitable English translation of the German term
   'Funktionsverbgefüge,' such as "zu Ende führen," "in Frage stellen."

(10)   Support verb constructions with object (as "replacement" for intransitive verbs):

>   *cuir fuil* 'bleed' (lit. 'to put blood')
>   *cuir scread* 'scream' (lit. 'to put a scream')
>
>   **Chuir**   *sí*   **scread**   *beag aisti.*
>   put PAST   she   scream   little   out 3SG
>
>   'She **let out** a little scream'

In the last case (10) we can observe a transitivisation strategy: whereas 'bleed' and 'scream' are clearly intransitive verbs, 'to put a scream' or 'to put blood' are formally transitive. For the vast majority of intransitive constructions Modern Irish resorts to such light verb constructions. Among these are verbs of bodily processes, nonverbal expressions, sounds made by animals, sound emission, smell emission etc.

The question that arises from the classification outlined above could be formulated as follows: What do we identify as a verb in Irish and in English? From a practical point of view, we have to bear in mind the possibility of finding the verb in a dictionary and the transparency of the idiom, since the meaning of a multi word lexeme is not always to be computed from its constituents. In the case of verbs consisting of more than one lexical element, we are dealing with what is commonly known as a paraphrase or *periphrastic construction* (Gr. periphrasis 'circumlocution'). All these periphrases are lexicalised, which means that a specific lexical meaning is attributed to every single such entity. They are therefore to be distinguished from periphrases that serve as expressions for morphosyntactic categories, e.g. the *have*-perfect or the *going to*-future. They are also not to be treated under the label of grammaticalisation, since the multi-word verbs still consist of clearly defined phonological and grammatical words, even though the verbal element is partly depleted of its full lexical meaning or the particles of their spatial reference, i.e., they are lexical units in Cruse's sense of the word[8] – pairing of one sense and grammatical form. The increasing occurrence of these structures is usually ascribed to the general tendency of analyticisation in English by historical linguists.

Since in lexical semantics every (conventionalised) mapping of sense and form is defined as a lexical unit, regardless of the number of words it consists of, we already face the first difficulty in placing the complex entities we are describing in a suitable context between lexicon and grammar. We are dealing with a lexical unit that behaves like a word on the one hand and like a syntactic construction on the other. The approach I favour in this context is a lexical one, i.e. I assume that multi-word verbs are to be viewed as parts of the lexicon (cf. Stiebels and Wunderlich 1994 for German particle verbs).[9]

---

[8]   Cruse (1986: 49) defines a *lexical unit* as participating in semantic contextual relations, whereas a *lexeme* is just the orthographic representation of a word.

[9]   Jackendoff (in: Dehé, et al., 2002: 67) suggests to draw a distinction between *lexical item* and *grammatical word*, according to their storing in the mental lexicon.

3. Particle Verbs in Irish and English

3.1. Definitions: Phrasal Verb or Prepositional Verb?

In English the difference between a phrasal verb and a prepositional verb is usually clear, depending on the function of the particle in the construction. Nevertheless, the treatment in grammar books varies considerably. Most commonly a verb is called phrasal verb if the particle is functioning as an adverb and the construction does not include a prepositional object, like *to fall apart*, *to settle down*; and a prepositional verb if the verb governs a preposition which in turn governs an object, like *to opt for sth.*, *to look into sth*. In prepositional verbs, the primary stress is on the verb, whereas in phrasal verbs it lies on the particle.[10]

In Irish, the line is not as easily drawn. The first difference lies in the word order. Irish, as is well known, is a verb-initial (VSO) language. Since in a VSO-language the subject stands between the verb and the particle, these two cannot form a close stress unit as in English, and the particle is always stressed. Consequently, the tests with adverbs and pronouns which can be inserted into phrasal or prepositional verbs respectively are of no use for Irish, and neither is the movability of the particle in transitive constructions.

Another criterion that does not seem applicable for a classification of Irish particle verbs is transitivity. Here we need to distinguish between formal and semantic transitivity, where formal transitivity means that a direct object is expressed, whereas semantic transitivity means that there are at least two participants involved in the situation. As mentioned above, Modern Irish has virtually no simple semantically intransitive verbs but employs various complex constructions to express intransitive verbal actions. Consequently, most phrasal verbs are formally transitive, since nearly all the verbs that are at the speaker's disposal to be involved in the constructions are transitive.

So how do we classify Irish particle verbs? One cannot neglect the Latin influence behind the traditional grammatical categories applied to Old Irish, so a pragmatic solution that suggests itself is to make use of the categories of particle verbs gained from the English language when classifying the Irish ones. I shall therefore speak of phrasal verbs when there is no indication that the object is governed by the particle appearing with the verb, and of prepositional verbs when the government relationship between the preposition and the object is obvious. In Irish, particular attention has to be paid to numerous prepositional verbs that occur in certain set phrases (prepositional support verb constructions, cf. example (9) in §2. above), like **bain** *meabhair* **as** *rud* 'to find a meaning in something,' **tabhair** *cuntas* **ar** *rud* 'to give account of something,' **lig** *rún* **chuig** *duine* 'to reveal a secret to somebody.'

---

[10] For a precise definition, cf. Quirk, et al. (1972: 811).

3.2. Examples

Unfortunately, there is as yet no such thing as a phrasal verb dictionary for the Irish language. According to a careful scrutiny of the two most common dictionaries (Ó Dónaill 1977; de Bhaldraithe 1959), the following verbal lexemes occur in phrasal or prepositional constructions in Irish: *bain* 'extract, release,' *beir* 'bear, take, catch,' *bris* 'break,' *buail* 'hit, beat, strike,' *cuir* 'put,' *déan* 'do, make,' *éirigh* 'rise,' *fág* 'leave,' *faigh* 'get,' *gabh* 'take,' *imigh* 'leave, depart,' *leag* 'lay, set,' *lean* 'follow,' *lig* 'let,' *rith* 'run,' *scaoil* 'loosen, release,' *tabhair* 'give,' *tar* 'come,' *tarraing* 'pull,' *téigh* 'go,' *tit* 'fall,' *tóg* 'take, lift.'

We can notice that they all have rather basic meanings and that most of them are monosyllables. As will become obvious, most of the Irish particle verbs have English counterparts. A simple example to start with would be Ir. *bris* 'break.' Most phrasal verbs with Ir. *bris* look very similar to their English equivalents, e.g.: *bris amach* 'break out,' *bris síos* 'break down,' *bris isteach* 'break in.' These occur frequently and are listed in most dictionaries. Especially for 'break out' and 'break down,' the metaphorical dimension of their connotation is obvious, but the meaning is roughly identical in both languages.

Even though it is neither listed in a dictionary nor does it appear in recorded texts from the '60s,[11] the construction *bris suas* 'break up' is rather common in contemporary Irish texts, especially in texts on the internet for which it is more probable that they were generated by semi-speakers or non-native learners of Irish. Therefore one has to be more aware of the probability that this particular phrasal verb is a loan-construction modelled on the basis of English 'break up' or 'split up.'

A clear counterexample as far as the comparison with English is concerned would be *bain* (lit. 'extract, release'). It occurs in eleven phrasal verb constructions (that means with nearly every available preposition) and in one phrasal prepositional construction (*bain siar as* 'to surprise, cause sb. to be taken aback'). There is no English verb that fully corresponds to *bain* in these constructions; in some of them it translates roughly as 'take' (*bain aníos* 'take up,' *bain ó* 'take from'), in others the whole phrase is translated as 'touch, interfere' (*bain do*, *bain le*). This shows that the individual status of phrasal verbs in the respective languages is well established and that there are seldom any 1:1 correspondences between them.

3.3. Obvious Similarities

As already indicated, Modern Irish has a great deal of multi-word verbs that exactly match their English counterparts: *cur suas le* = 'put up with,' *coinnigh suas le* = 'to keep up with,' *tabhair suas* = 'to give up,' *lig síos* = 'let down,' to name only a few.

---

[11] The database Wigger (2000) was meticulously searched previous to this study.

It is not easy to tell in which direction the idioms were borrowed (if they were borrowed at all), but the respective expressions are too similar in this respect to neglect the possibility of contact as a cause for these correspondences.

In a comprehensive study of the construction *cur suas le* 'to put up with' in Modern Irish (Veselinović 2004), I have tried to show that, even though it looks very much like an English loan formation, the phrase is neither colloquial nor a product of language contact. This is probably valid for most such constructions – the fact that they occur both in Irish and English reinforces the impression, since English is perceived as the dominant language, that they are necessarily borrowed, but this must by no means be true. Another very similar construction *cuirid suas de* 'give up, renounce, repudiate,' is well attested in older stages of the language (cf. *DIL* s.v.). This phrase does not have an English counterpart and therefore strengthens the assumption that such constructions might be old.

The overall impression is that English does not necessarily always has to be the source of such phrases, but the possibility of borrowing in both directions has to be considered. The striking similarities between certain idioms probably have to be traced back to contact, but others can be products of an independent but typologically parallel development.

3.3.1. The Lexical Stock of Comparable Constructions

The following is a list of Irish multi-word verbs that have a direct English equivalent and are therefore easily suspected of having been borrowed:

(1)   *bris amach* 'break out'

   Bhris   *an*   *cogadh*   **amach**.
   break PAST   ART   war   out

   'The war **broke out**.'

(2)   *coinnigh siar* 'keep back'

   Ní   *raibh*   *an*   *samhradh*   *go*   *maith*   *againn,*   *agus*   *tharla*   *sé*
   NEG   be PAST   ART   summer   part   good   at 1PL,   and   happen PAST   it

   gur   **choinnigh**   *sé*   **siar**   *go*   *mór*   *muid.*
   that   keep PAST   it   back   part   big   us

   'We didn't have a good summer, and it happened that it **kept** us **back** a lot.'

(3)   *déan suas* 'to make up' in all senses of the idiom:

   Rinne   *mé*   **suas**   *na*   *huaireanta.*
   make PAST   me   up   ART   hours

   'I **made up** the hours (i.e. compensated for).'

   Rinne   *sí*   **suas**   *an*   *scéal.*
   make PAST   she   up   ART   story

   'She **made up** the story (i.e. invented it).'

*Caithfidh sé   a   intinn a   **dhéanamh suas**.*
must FUT he POSS mind PART make   up

'He has to **make up** his mind.'

(4) *déan amach* 'to make out'

*Níl   mé   in   ann   a   **dhéanamh amach***
NEG be me   in   ability PART make   out

céard is   brí   leis.
what   COP meaning with 3SG

'I can't **make out** what it means.'

(5) *leag síos* 'to lay down'

Leag   síos   na gunnaí
lay IMP down ART guns

'**lay down** the guns'

(6) *teacht anuas ar* 'come down on sb. (i.e. blame sb. for sth., be severe)'

Tháinig   sé anuas orm   *go   crua.*
come PAST he down on 1SG PART hard

'He **came down** hard **on** me.'

(7) *lig síos* 'let down'

Lig   siad síos   muid go   minic.
let PAST they down us   PART often

'They **let** us **down** often.'

alternative constructions:

Loic/chlis sé   orm
fail PAST   he on 1SG

'He failed me / It failed me'

(8) *teacht suas* 'to come up'

Tháinig   sé suas sa   scrúdú.
come PAST it up   in ART exam

'It **came up** in the exam.'

***Tháinig   sé suas le**is an   airgead.*
come PAST he up   with ART money

'He **came up with** the money.'

(9) *rith as* 'to run out of sth.'

Rith   muid as   airgead.
run PAST we   out money

'We **ran out of** money.'

In his comprehensive study of the syntax and formal semantics of such constructions, Doyle (2001: 91) lists a few more idiomatic correspondences: *cuir amach* 'put out, i.e. vomit,' *leag suas* 'lay up, i.e. make pregnant' and *tabhair suas* 'bring up, i.e. rear, educate,' Apart from the fact that the lexical content is nearly identical (i.e. both the verb and the particle mean roughly the same in both languages) a few more parameters can be compared: both in Irish and English the stress is on the particle, not on the verb, most verbs used in phrasal verb constructions are commonly monosyllables in both languages.

One has to be particularly careful with verbs that are borrowed: the fact that Ir. *pioc* means 'pick,' for example, does not justify the invention of a phrasal verb *pioc suas 'pick up.' A native verb *tóg* exists for this purpose. Nevertheless, the trend among semi-speakers to resort to such constructions is evident, as any arbitrary search for such calques would be bound to prove. It is, in any case, interesting to observe the (in)tolerance of genuine native speakers to such constructions and the degree to which a loan-translation is conjectured by them, as I have argued elsewhere (Veselinović 2004: 98).

3.3.2. An Example of a Parallel Grammaticalisation Path

For the particle *up* in English, a development towards a marker of completive/telic aspectual nuances with no spatial/directional connotation can be noticed in many phrasal verbs like *eat up*, *finish up*, *clean up*. The shift from literal to resultative use of adverbial *up* can be traced back as far as Early Middle English (cf. Hiltunen 1983: 208ff.) and probably even to Old English (Brinton 1988: 225).

This partly seems to be the case in Irish, where we would probably arrive at a chronology of grammaticalisation comparable to the English example referred to above, as illustrated in the following:

> **Ghléas**   *sí*   **suas**   *í*   *féin.*
> dress PAST   she   up   she ACC   herself
>
> 'She **dressed up**.'

> *Caithfidh muid   an   teach   a   **ghlanadh suas**.*
> must FUT   we   ART   house   PART   clean VN   up
>
> 'We have to **clean up** the house'

There is a case where the adverb is both directional and perfective: *fág aníos* / *fág suas* 'to grow up.' The preposition *siar* 'back' has a similar effect on verbs of consuming drink:

> **Caith**   **siar**   *é agus   ná   lig   aniar   é*
> consume IMP   back   it   and   NEG   let IMP   forward   it
>
> '**Drink it up** and don't let it come back' (proverb)

Caithigí		*siar*	*iad!*
consume	IMP PL	back	them

'**Drink** them **up**!' (used in pubs at closing-time)[12]

3.4. Irish English Peculiarities

There are some phrasal verbs that are peculiar to the English spoken in Ireland, some of them with clear correspondences in Irish.

One good example is the phrasal verb *to give out* (in the sense of 'to criticize, to scold'), which exists only in Irish English and has a well established parallel in Irish *tabhairt amach* (Dolan 1998 s.v.).

Bhí	*Deirdre*	*i gcónaí*	***ag***	***tabhairt***	***amach***	*faoi*	*Pheadar.*
be PAST	Deirdre	always	at	give VN	out	about	Peadar

'Deirdre was always **giving out** about Peter.'

*I remember her **giving out** about the people who'd bought the place, as if they hadn't payed for it.* (Roddy Doyle: *Rory and Ita*)

A further specifically Irish English prepositional verb is *to cop on* 'understand,' 'become alert' (also nominalised, meaning 'common sense' as in "anyone with a bit of cop on would have understood what I mean"). There is no indicator whatsoever that this could have been borrowed from Irish.

This, of course, is just a first random finding, as the present author is by no means an expert in dialectology. A detailed study of multi-word expressions in the Celtic varieties of English would certainly unearth many more such phrases.

Another Irish English idiom is also worth mentioning, as it contains a sequence of three prepositions: *go away out of that / go on out of that* meaning something like 'I don't believe you.' The possibility of being borrowed from Irish can easily be excluded for this construction, since there is no simple preposition meaning 'away' in the Irish language, and also since no similar constructions (i.e. accumulation of prepositions) can be observed in Irish.

4. The Abolition of Verbal Composition in Irish and English – Parallels and Differences in Historical Syntax

By now I have shown various possible interferences between the English and Irish verbal system. This chapter will be dedicated to the parallel grammatical developments which could have led to the fact that preverbal composition was abolished and particle verbs were established as an end product of a pragmatically similar but structurally different process of syntactic reorganisation both in English and Irish.

---

[12] *caith*, lit. 'throw.'

Both English and Irish gave up preverbal composition within the period that is well known to us through attestation, probably leading to the most radical changes we can observe in the development of both languages, and significantly influencing their present day structure.

In English this tendency started some time after the Norman Conquest and reached its peak in late Middle English. In the Irish language preverbs became obsolete between Middle Irish and Early Modern Irish.

Once preverbal compounds were given up and case morphology was largely abandoned, the functional load of prepositions both as markers of aspectual properties and semantic roles increased substantially, so that the overall syntactic structure was reorganised at the expense of complex morphology.

Another crucial factor which gave rise to the large amount of verb-particle combinations in English was the change-over from SOV to SVO word order which took place between Old and Middle English (cf. Hiltunen 1983: 125f.). An argument which supports this hypothesis is that in Germanic languages which preserved the SOV basic word order, like Dutch and German, preverbal compounds are still very productive. Another equally important factor that has to be taken into account is the language contact situation with Old Norse. Old Norse was the only Germanic language which had hardly any preverbs; from its earliest stages on it had postverbal particles, often in fully lexicalised constructions (e.g. *koma at* 'to arrive,' *sœkja at* 'to attack').[13] This was not always the case: we have to presume that the preverbs were lost shortly before attestation began. The same is assumed also for Old Frisian. It is probably safer to view the Scandinavian influence as a kind of catalyst for the corresponding development in English (Hiltunen 1983: 43). Baugh and Cable (2002: 181f.) hold the Norman Conquest responsible for the decrease in the use of compounding. Most authors seem to neglect the possibility of Celtic influence, even though the Celtic languages experienced precisely the same change within the same time span.

The transition from SOV to SVO on a larger scale implies a general transition from a premodificational to a postmodificational syntax in the sense of Vennemann (1974), meaning that the predominant order determinans-determinatum was gradually replaced by the order determinatum-determinans. On the level of verbal lexemes, the original order of elements preverb (determinans) – verb (determinatum) was thus changed into the order verb (determinatum) – particle (determinans).

Along with the change from SOV to SVO goes the tendency that all basic/new information has to be expressed in the postverbal syntactic slot. This leads to the following changes:

a) Preverbs move from the beginning of the verb towards the end of the verb phrase. Presumably the first verbs treated like that were motion verbs and position verbs in loose composition, whereas the process was later extended to include all telic and ultimately all formerly compound verbs.

---

[13] Cf. Roberts (1936: 475), Samuels (1972: 163f.).

b) Loosely incorporated objects follow the verb.
c) The focus, i.e. the relevant information in the sentence follows the verb:
  I read the BOOK (not the newspaper).
  Tell them to read it THROUGH first.

There is evidence from other languages that particles, incorporated objects and focus tend to occupy the same position syntactically (e.g. in Hungarian they stand directly before the verb, see below).[14]

A crucial difference between the development in Irish and English is that in English composition was simply given up, leaving behind simple verbs (apart from some exceptions like *withdraw*, *underlie*, *overtake*, *outnumber*, where the metaphorical meaning probably reinforced the preservation), whereas in Irish many compounds survive in petrified (i.e. synchronically not analysable) forms. E.g. *abair* < *as-beir* or *fágann* < *fo-ácaib*. The disappearance of compound verbs in Irish has to do with the general process of giving up the deuterotonic form of a verb and keeping just the prototonic form, i.e. the one with the stress on the preverb.[15]

A very interesting development worth mentioning here is that of the support verb construction *tabhairt faoi deara* 'to notice.' It developed from the Old Irish compound verb *fo-fera* 'prepares, provides; causes' via a relative form *fodera* with petrified infixed pronoun *-d-*, which already occurs in the Glosses (Wb 3c33, 14c42). Today *deara* neither means anything, nor is there a justification

---

[14] See Hungarian

(1) preverb:

János	***fel****olvasta*		*a*	*verseit.*
János	UP read PAST 3SG.DEF	DEF	poem POSS PL ACC

'János read up his poems' (Kiss 2002: 56)

(2) incorporated objects (i.e. bare/articleless objects):

János	***újságot***	*olvas.*
János	newspaper ACC	read 3SG.INDEF

'János is newspaper-reading' or 'is involved in reading newspapers' (Kiss 2002: 57)

(3) focus:

János	***TEGNAP***	*olvasta*		*fel*	*a*	*verseit.*
János	yesterday	read PAST 3SG.DEF	UP	DEF	poem POSS PL ACC

'It was yesterday that János read up his poems.' (Kiss 2002: 57)

Note that the identity of the preverbal position occupied by preverbs, incorporated objects and focus is proved by the fact that preverbs and incorporated objects have to stand behind the verb if the sentence contains a focus.

[15] In Old Irish compound verbs, the stress falls on the second syllable, which is the verbal stem or the second preverb if there is more than one. These are the 'regular' or *deutero-tonic* forms. After most particles, due to the phonological reduction of unstressed syllables, a corresponding *prototonic* form with the stress on the first syllable is employed. See Thurneysen (1975: 27-29, 351).

for the spelling *faoi*, but apparently it was easier to treat the construction as a light verb construction reinterpreting *faoi* as a preposition and adding a light verb *tabhairt* 'to give' to it after the original verbal meaning was lost, than to add a verbal ending to the phrase.

It is remarkable that in Indo-Iranian, a language family rather remote from Germanic or Celtic, we can observe precisely the same development as far as preverbs are concerned. Sanskrit had a huge variety of preverbal compounds. In Vedic the preverbs are still separable with independent syntactic status and accent. In Classical Sanskrit univerbation is obligatory, i.e. the preverb necessarily precedes the verb. The modern Indo-Aryan languages (Urdu, Hindi, Bengali etc.) do not have preverbs but have developed an increase in light verb constructions since the Middle Ages (cf. Butt 2003 passim). It is plausible that the analyticisation tendency is similar to that in English, where we can notice a high increase of multi-word verb constructions as preverbal compounds fall into oblivion.

5. Conclusions

The crucial changes that have taken place in the English and Irish languages in the course of their development concerning the rise of complex verbal constructions are obviously too similar to be analysed separately. Only a comparative analysis of the two languages can give us insight into the possible causes for the morphosyntactic restructuring that took place. One important syntactic isogloss between Goidelic, English and Norwegian – which e.g. German does not share – is preposition stranding and especially the final position of the preposition in infinitive constructions – like *níl leabhar agam le caint faoi* 'I have no book to talk about' (cf. de la Cruz 1972 a: 175). As possible factors that could have influenced the increasing affinity to build complex verbal expressions, changes in the basic word order have to be equally considered as the possibility of mutual contact between English and Irish.

What should be taken into account is not only the fact that many multi-word verbs seem to exist in both languages, but the fact that many idioms with virtually unlimited metaphoric extensions seem to have crossed the linguistic border between English and Irish without giving us a chance to decide which language borrowed from which one, if at all. Thus, in this context we cannot really speak about contact features in the standard meaning of the term, as in the case of loanwords, but simply about comparable typological structures which lead to a similar linguistic outcome. Once the foundation for a typological similarity is laid, in this case a structural similarity which consists in the ability to form lexical units consisting of a verb and a particle following it, constructions can be transferred more easily from one language to the other. The process of language contact, at least as far as this phenomenon is concerned, has to be viewed as some kind of cogwheel, where there is a permanent taking and giving in both directions.

Nevertheless, there are differences between Irish and English as far as multi-word verbs are concerned. One point worth mentioning here is that there are differences between the two languages as far as synonyms (i.e. register differences) are concerned. For English, it is claimed that multi-word verbs in most cases have a more formal equivalent, which is usually a polysyllabic word of Romance origin. Hiltunen (1999: 161) notices that multi-word verbs in Early Modern English were extensively used in dramatic texts, where the language is more informal. However, there are clear counterexamples of phrasal verbs that are very literary/bookish, e.g. those with the adverb *asunder* (*put asunder*, *break asunder*). In Irish no observations of different registers according to the frequency of particle verbs can be made, and it seems as if the particle verbs entered the formal language earlier (cf. Veselinović 2004).

References

Baugh, A.C. & T. Cable, 2002, *A History of the English Language*, London: Routledge (5th ed.).

Bolinger, D., 1971, *The Phrasal Verb in English*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.

Brinton, L., 1988, *The Development of English Aspectual Systems*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Butt, M., 2003, "The Light Verb Jungle," handout of a conference paper, *Workshop on Multi-Verb Constructions*, Trondheim, June 2003, <http://edvarda.hf.ntnu.no/ling/tross/TROSS03-toc.html>

Claridge, C., 2000, *Multi-word Verbs in Early Modern English. A Corpus-based Study*, Amsterdam & Atlanta: Rodopi.

Cruse, D.A., 1986, *Lexical Semantics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

de Bhaldraithe, T., 1959, *English-Irish Dictionary*, Dublin: Government Publications.

de la Cruz, J.M., 1972 a, "A Syntactical Complex of Isoglosses in the North-Western End of Europe (English, North Germanic and Celtic)," *Indogermanische Forschungen* 77: 171-180.

de la Cruz, J.M., 1972 b, "The Origins of the Germanic Phrasal Verb," *Indogermanische Forschungen* 77: 73-96.

Dietz, K., 2004, "Die altenglischen Präfixbildungen und ihre Charakteristik," *Anglia* 122: 561-613.

DIL: Dictionary of the Irish Language, Quin, E.G., et al., eds., 1990 (1953-1975), Dublin: Royal Irish Academy.

Dolan, T.P., 1997, *A Dictionary of Hiberno-English*, Dublin: Gill & Macmillan (2nd ed. 2004).

Doyle, A., 2001, "Verb-particle Combinations in Irish and English," in: Kirk, J.M. & D. Ó Baoill, eds., *Language Links. The Languages of Scotland and Ireland*, Belfast: Belfast University Press.

Hiltunen, R., 1983, *The Decline of the Prefixes and the Beginnings of the English Phrasal Verb*, Turku: Turun Yliopisto.

Hiltunen, R., 1999, "Verbal Phrases and Phrasal Verbs in Early Modern English," in: Brinton, L. & M. Akimoto, eds., *Collocational and Idiomatic Aspects of Composite Predicates in the History of English*, Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 133-165.

Jackendoff, R., 2002, "English Particle Constructions, the Lexicon and the Autonomy of Syntax," in: Dehé, N., et al., eds., *Verb-Particle Explorations*, Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 67-94.

Jespersen, O., 1961 (1942), *A Modern English Grammar on Historical Principles*, part VI: *Morphology*, London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd. (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard).

Kiss, **K.É.**, 2002, *The Syntax of Hungarian*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kornexl, L., 1994, "Progress in Historical Lexicography: The *Dictionary of Old English*," *Anglia* 112: 421-453.

Ó Dónaill, N., 1977, *Foclóir Gaeilge-Béarla*, Baile Átha Cliath: An Gúm.

Quirk, R., et al., 1972, *A Grammar of Contemporary English*, London: Longman.

Roberts, M.H., 1936, "The Antiquity of the Germanic Verb-Adverb Locution," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 35: 466-481.

Samuels, M.L., 1972, *Linguistic Evolution. With Special Reference to English*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sasse, H.-J., 1990, "Aspect and Aktionsart. A Reconciliation," in: Vetters, V. & W. Vandeweghe, eds., *Perspectives on Aspect and Aktionsart*, Brussels: University of Brussels.

Sasse, H.-J., 2001, *Recent Activity in the Theory of Aspect: Accomplishment, Achievements, or Just Non-progressive State?*, Cologne: University of Cologne, Institut für Sprachwissenschaft (working paper).

Stiebels, B. & D. Wunderlich, 1994, "Morphology Feeds Syntax: The Case of Particle Verbs," *Linguistics* 32: 913-968.

Thurneysen, R., 1975 (1946), *A Grammar of Old Irish*, Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies (Rev. and enlarged edn., transl. by Binchy, D.A. & O. Bergin).

Vennemann, T., 1974, "Topics, Subjects, and Word Order: From SXV to SVX via TVX," in: Anderson, J. & C. Jones, eds., *Historical Linguistics: Proceedings of the First International Congress of Historical Linguistics, Edinburgh, September 1973*, vol. II, Amsterdam: North-Holland, 339-376.

Veselinović, E., 2003, *Suppletion im irischen Verb*, Hamburg: Dr. Kovač.

Veselinović, E., 2004, "Der Übergang von der Verbalkomposition zum *Phrasal Verb* im Irischen," in: Poppe, E., ed., *Keltologie Heute. Themen und Fragestellungen*, Münster: Nodus Publikationen, 95-110.

Veselinović, E., 2005, "Verbalkomposition und Entlehnung in den Altirischen Glossen," in: Hackstein, O. & G. Meiser, eds., *Sprachkontakt und Sprachwandel. Akten der XI. Fachtagung der Indogermanischen Gesellschaft*), Wiesbaden: Reichert, 735-754.

Wigger, A., 2000, *Caint Chonamara*, CD-ROM, Königswinter: Studienhaus für Keltische Sprachen und Kulturen (SKSK).

Wischer, I. & M. Habermann, 2004, "Der Gebrauch von Präfixverben zum Ausdruck von Aspekt/Aktionsart im Altenglischen und Althochdeutschen," *Zeitschrift für Germanistische Linguistik* 32: 262-285.