

## PHONETIC ANALOGY

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The principle of analogy in linguistics is a familiar fact of morphology, in the spread of pronominal endings to the nouns, the spread of thematic inflexion to non-thematic verbs, the establishment of four regular conjugations in Latin, and so on.

Two examples of the working of analogy in the phonology of Modern Irish are of interest to phoneticians, as they are based upon facts of mere phonetics.

### I

The Irish of Cois Fhairrge, Co. Galway, has been described by Professor Tomás de Bhaldraithe.<sup>1</sup> In this dialect intervocalic *h* (< original *th*) disappears with contraction of two vowels into one long vowel.

	Southern Irish	Cois Fhairrge
bóthar "road"	[bo:hər]	[bo:r]
máthair "mother"	[ma:hir']	[ma:r']
fichead "twenty"	[f'ihəd]	[fi:d]
tighthe "houses"	[t'ihɪ]	[ti:]

Professor de Bhaldraithe, however, reports some fluctuation in a few words:

faitheamhail "generous"	[fLahu:l']	beside	[fLa:u:l']
dathamhail "petty"	[dahu:l']	„	[da:u:l']
taihiughadh "to frequent"	[tahu:]	„	[ta:u:]

l u:

And he notes that an intrusive *h* sometimes occurs in slow speech, where there is an original long vowel:<sup>2</sup> an t-ád[h] "the luck" [ə tahə] beside [ə tu:]; dráir (gsg.) "drawers" [drahir'] beside [dra:r']. In Carrowroe, eight miles to the west, intervocalic *h* usually remains, but a preceding long vowel is shortened, so that the opposition long/short is lost before *h*:

[bohər], [məhir'], [f'ihəd], [t'ihə].

<sup>1</sup> *The Irish of Cois Fhairrge, County Galway* (Dublin, 1945).

<sup>2</sup> For details and exceptions see pp. 104-105.

But in some words *h* is lost, as in Cois Fhairrge:

bláthach	"buttermilk"	[blan]
sáthach	"sufficiently"	[san]

Now in Carrowroe, where *h* usually remains, there are several words which are historically monosyllables with a long vowel, and so appear in other dialects, but here are pronounced with two short vowels separated by an intrusive *h*: ádh "luck" [ɔhə]; gaoth "wind" [gihə]; luath "early" [luəhə]; láir "mare" [lohə]; snáth "thread" [snəhə]. Here again some words keep the long vowel, and there is no *h*: breaghda "fine" [b'ra:]; crádh "misery" [kra:]; fáth "cause" [fa:]; lá "day" [la:].

No "sound-law" emerges clearly, and this is what linguistic geography has taught us to expect. Each word has its own history. But an interesting principle emerges, namely that where a phonetic change, such as the disappearance of *h* between vowels, gives rise to alternative forms in one group of words, alternative forms may arise by analogy in another group, and the original forms may then be lost. In the Carrowroe forms [ɔhə], [gihə], [snəhə], etc. we have an intrusive *h* and two short vowels, quite inexplicable except in the light of the sound-change proper to Cois Fhairrge and sporadic in Carrowroe.

One must suppose for each word a transition period when both forms are current, but my notes show consistent pronunciation of each of the words recorded.

## II

There is in Old Irish a compound verb, deuterotonic *con-icc*, prototonic *-cumaing* "he is able, he can", and the verbal noun has alternative forms *cumacc*, *cumang*. Thurneysen has explained the forms with *-n-* as modelled on *-fulaing* (vn. *fulang*) "he supports", where the *n* is normal (deuterotonic *fo-loing*), but is lost where *-lng-* come together by syncope. Thus *fo-loingem* "we support", but *ní fulggam* "we do not support" without *-n-*. By analogy with such syncopated forms, a prototonic *-cumcam* "we can", has given rise to 3rd sg. *-cumaing* vn. *cumang*.<sup>3</sup> The objection to this is that the analogy stops there. One might expect occurrences of deuterotonic *\*con-ing*, etc., and they do not appear to be quotable. An alternative explanation, perhaps less satisfactory, is to suppose a suppletive root *\*ang* for the *n*-forms of *con-icc*.<sup>4</sup> It seems to me not impossible that the alternation *con-icc*, *-cumaing* is a phenomenon similar to the instances of Verner's Law, *\*ink* becoming *icc* when stressed, as is to be expected in Irish, but *ing* when unstressed, as in the prototonic forms. But there are other compounds of *icc* that do not show the alternation:

<sup>3</sup> *Grammar of Old Irish*, p. 354  
<sup>4</sup> Pedersen, *VKG*, II, p. 554.

<i>ar-icc</i>	"finds";	prototonic <i>-airicc</i> ;	verbal noun <i>airecc</i>
<i>imm-airicc</i>	"suits";	" "	" "
<i>con-ricc</i>	"meets";	" -comraic;	" "

Only those compounds with *com* next before the root have the *n*-forms:

<i>ad-cumaing</i>	"happens";	verbal noun <i>ecmong</i>
<i>do-ecmaing</i>	"happens";	" "

It looks as though the *m* of *com* had something to do with the change, and one is reminded of Firth's prosodies.

However that may be, we are faced with this alternation, which gives rise to alternative forms of the verbal noun *cumacc*, *cumang*, and it is due to a phonetic change, whether of *-lng-* to *-lgg-* as in *-fulggam*, or of *ink* to *ing* in unstressed position, or to a spreading of nasal articulation from *com* into the unstressed root syllable (unless, indeed, we resort to a suppletive root *ang* as above mentioned).

In West Muskerry today, a group of words which have no connection, etymological or semantic, with *con-icc*, *-cumaing*, show the influence of its forms:

Northern Irish	West Muskerry
<i>fairsing</i> "wide"	<i>fairseag</i> [farʃæg]
<i>fulang</i> "to endure"	<i>fulag</i> [fuləg]
<i>tarrang</i> "to draw"	<i>tarrac</i> <sup>1</sup> [tarək] <sup>5</sup>
<i>tuirling</i> "to descend"	<i>túrlie</i> [tu:rl'ik] <sup>5</sup>

In all these examples original *-ng* has become *-g* (*-c*), and this pronunciation is apparently constant.<sup>6</sup> The origin of the change is to be found in the existence in Old Irish of *cumang* beside *cumacc*, which may have resulted from analogy with *fulang*. *Fulang* was itself exposed to analogy and, in turn, developed a by-form [fuləg]; the final *-g* spread to other words ending in *-ng*, and the *g*-forms became established in West Muskerry.

But there is one word, the name of the Irish language itself, which is indeed a borrowing from Welsh *Gwyddelig*, that shows the opposite change:

Northern Irish	West Muskerry
Gaethlig (Gaethilge)	[ge:liŋ']

Here original final *-g* has become *-ng*. The ambivalence was there as a potential, but the resulting form is in strange conflict with the trend of the dialect. The only explanation I can propose is that, by association of meaning, the name of Ireland, dat. sg. *Éirinn* [e:r'iq'], has here interfered to influence the name of the Irish language. *Chaque mot a sa propre histoire.*

Dublin

<sup>5</sup> For the final [-k] compare the pronunciation, in northern dialects, of the name *Pádraig* [pa:rik'] and *Nollaig* "Christmas" [NoLík'].  
<sup>6</sup> Ó Cuiv, *The Irish of West Muskerry, Co. Cork*, p. 120. The change also occurs in South Uist, see MacDonald, *Gaelic Words from South Uist*, p. 92, s.v. *cullaig*.