

*“The Influences of the Celtic  
Languages on Present-Day  
English”*

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# 1. Introduction

The perceived lack of Celtic loanwords in English has generally been seen as proof that the Anglo-Saxon invaders made short notice of their Celtic predecessors when they took possession of Britain during the fifth century. Thus, the Celts simply would not have had the chance to leave their mark on the English language as they were either killed, driven into the sea or had to take refuge in the mountainous West and North of Britain. The possibility of any Celtic influence on the very *structure* of English has been discounted altogether.

In recent years, this view has met mounting opposition from different fields of study. New archaeological evidence as well as a methodological reassessment have called for an examination of the history of the Anglo-Saxon immigration. Besides, new advances in contact linguistics provide tools with which a more detailed look on the history of the English language has become possible.

These developments have led to a new approach to the question of Celtic influence on the English language. The new argument runs that the dearth of Celtic loanwords in PDE can rather be seen as proof for the rapid shift of the indigenous peoples from Celtic to Anglo-Saxon speech, taking with them hardly any loanwords. Due to their ‘imperfect learning’ of the Anglo-Saxon language the Britons are assumed to have carried over a number of morphosyntactic and phonological features from Brittonic that, found their way into the general spoken language of the people due to the large number of British-influenced speakers of Anglo-Saxon. This linguistic interference is then assumed to have influenced a number of changes in the English language.

Expectably, this view has met (sometimes quite sharp) opposition from scholars who, discount the possibility of any Celtic influences on the English language for a variety of reasons. They attribute the changes of the English language to internal developments or, at most, medieval language contact with speakers of Old Norse in the Danelaw.

The question of whether such influence exists is not without implications, as language and nationality are closely tied together. It may also provide a new point of view on the current debate of national or European identity. So, as has been emphasised by Filppula et al., it is time to reconsider the question of linguistic outcomes of language contact between Celtic and English, particularly during the first centuries after the coming of the Saxons, but also taking into account the possibility of ongoing linguistic contacts with speakers of Celtic languages, e.g. Welsh (Filppula et al. 2002:7).

This paper aims to give an account of the current state of research on the question of language contacts between Celtic and English along with its possible outcomes. The conflicting opinions will be contrasted, taking into account the different disciplines that provide information.

In the first chapter, the historical background of the contact between speakers of English and the Celtic languages will be examined. The question of whether Britons and the British language did survive the coming of the Anglo-Saxons and what their sociocultural situation after the *adventus saxonum* might have been is of special interest.

For the consideration of the process and outcome of language contact, the approach of Thomason and Kaufman (1988) and Thomason (2001) will be taken as the instrumental framework set out. This makes it possible to distinguish between situations of ongoing language contact and situations of rapid language shift. These situations have different linguistic consequences, and it will be illustrated that the Celtic languages are a possible cause of language interference along both ways i.e. by means of substratal influence through the rapid language shift towards Anglo-Saxon by speakers of Brittonic as well as continuing long-term contact with speakers of Celtic languages in the British Isles with the possible result of areal convergence.

In Chapter 3, this methodological framework will be applied to the specific situation of English-Celtic language contact, whereby the different conclusions that have been drawn from the historical evidence have to be considered. As Thomason and Kaufman point out, it is important to consider the whole language,

not separate subsystems alone, when assessing the potential effects of language contact interference in a language (Thomason and Kaufman 1988:60).

Hence, the general development of the English language in its evolution from Old English until today will be depicted, pointing out where Celtic influence can possibly be suspected. Then a number of specific features found in PDE that might be attributed to Celtic language interference will be discussed. This includes features of English morphosyntax as well as of its phonology. In a last step, the lexis of PDE will be examined for words that have been borrowed from Celtic languages, including a (necessarily brief) look on place-names.

## 1.1 Definition of terms

The language spoken by the Britons at the time of the Roman occupation has come to be termed 'British'. This language went through a number of substantial changes around the fifth and sixth century, after which it is called 'Brittonic' (Coates *fc*:1). These languages, along with their descendants, Welsh, Cumbric, Cornish and Breton belong to the Brythonic branch of Insular Celtic languages, as opposed to the Goidelic branch that encompasses Irish, Scottish and Manx Gaelic. All of these languages are part of the Celtic branch of the Indo-European languages and are thus distantly related to the other IE branches, e.g., Germanic or Italic. The term 'Celtic' and 'Celts' will be used in this paper to refer to Celtic languages and their speakers respectively. For a recent discussion of the validity of the term 'Celtic' see, e.g., Sims-Williams (1998).

The definition of a Standard English language is somewhat problematic, giving rise to such description as 'Queen's English' or 'BBC English'. One could ask whether this standard language is spoken at all or if it has any 'native speakers' at all. For the present purpose, Standard English will nevertheless be defined as a general, regionally and socially unmarked language (that arguably is based on the regional dialects of the South East). But, attention is also paid to more regional variants because, as Filppula et al point out, the "traditional regional dialects of English English [...] provide a more realistic point of

reference than standard English for assessing the impact of the Celtic languages on the development of the British Isles Englishes” (Filppula et al. *fc.*:3).

The term ‘Celtic Englishes’ is applied to the regional varieties of English spoken in (formerly) Celtic areas, i.e. Ireland, Scotland, Wales, the Isle of Man and Cornwall. In these areas, a Celtic language was formerly, (or is even today) spoken by a sizeable portion of the population. Celtic influence on these varieties can be shown by linguistic and extra-linguistic evidence to be “beyond reasonable doubt” (Filppula et al. *fc.*:4). Some degree of Celtic influence has also been proposed for a number of regional Englishes where it is linked with more recent immigration from Celtic speaking countries, e.g. Bretons in Canada, Scots in New Zealand, Welsh in Patagonia and Irish in the United States.

The Celtic Englishes have been the focus of a series of Colloquia held at Potsdam University that have generated a renewed interest in the question of possible Celtic influences even outside the ‘classic’ Celtic Englishes. While these Celtic Englishes are themselves not the focus of this paper, they will occasionally be drawn upon for reference as they can serve as examples for processes of language contact interference between English and Celtic languages. As Markku Filppula points out, “the linguistic characteristics of the so-called ‘Celtic-Englishes’ that have emerged in the modern period provide yet another important source of indirect evidence supporting the Celtic Hypothesis with regard to medieval contacts” (Filppula 2006:1). Some of the features that will be discussed below are also part of the structure of Celtic Englishes and where a proposed contact feature in Standard English occurs in even higher frequency in the Celtic Englishes this may be a potential indicator for Celtic influence.



## 2. The Historic Background

In order to assess the linguistic outcome of Celtic-English language contacts, it is necessary to pay attention to the sociocultural environment in which these contacts occurred. A number of different disciplines provide us with sometimes conflicting information on the *adventus saxonum* and the events of the following centuries. These include archaeology, linguistics and genetics.

Since this area is by no means free of discussion, this chapter will outline not only the historical developments themselves, but also, how they were treated in the academic debate.

Of particular interest for this paper is the question of the relations of the Britons with the Anglo-Saxons, including the linguistic situation at the time. Is there any evidence for a survival of a (sizeable) British population or even for a degree of survival of the Brittonic language? Which parts of society, if any, were literate, and if so, in which language(s)? Different scenarios of language contact are known to have radically different outcomes. A variety of factors determine not only the degree of interferences languages can have upon another, but also the fields that influence is exerted upon. So, much of the linguistic argumentation rests on particular interpretations of historical and archaeological evidence relating to the earliest invasions and settlement of Germanic tribes in Britain (Filppula et al. 2002:1).

The last century evidenced a paradigm shift in scientific assessment of the *adventus saxonum*, ‘the coming of the Saxons’. With the scientific consensus moving from the so-termed ‘double-X theory’, with expulsion and extermination effecting a population replacement, to so called ‘elite replacement’ theories. The former approach was largely based on the few textual sources describing the events, but improvements in archaeological methods as well as a critical reassessment of other available data led to the abandonment of the theory of ‘ethnic-cleansing’. Instead, a large degree of continuity of the population of Britain has come to be assumed, with the Anglo-Saxons simply taking over the

Post-Roman society ‘from the top’ in a form of elite take-over (Tristram 2004:100). This so-called ‘new debate’ was “stimulated by theoretical reconsiderations as well as by some new evidence” (Härke 2003:1). In 2002, Markku Filppula summarises these developments:

It seems safe to conclude that the last decade or so has seen us enter a new phase in the history of research on the early Celtic–English contacts: a substantial amount of new research has been undertaken, or is under way, on a wide range of problems covering the general historical and archaeological background to these contacts and the linguistic outcomes in all domains of language (Filppula et al. 2002:22).

Later contacts of speakers of English and Celtic languages are considerably better documented and do not involve as much controversies as the period after the coming of the Saxons to Britain. There continued to be considerable British military opposition to the Saxons, with Wales only coming under English control after the defeat of Llywelyn ap Gruffydd by Edward I in 1282. Indeed, Welsh is still, the most widely used surviving Celtic language. Continuing waves of Viking raiders and settlers that had begun to arrive on English shores in the eighth century led to the establishment of the Danelaw, an area encompassing roughly half of England under the control of the Vikings. It was not until the 10<sup>th</sup> century that these areas were brought back under English rule. The end of the Anglo-Saxon aristocracy came in 1066 with the Norman invasion of England. Still, the Irish language in Ireland and Scottish Gaelic in Scotland survived. These languages came into stronger contact with English when England brought its neighbouring countries under its control, effectively establishing the English language in Ireland, Scotland, Wales and Cornwall. The subsequent Anglicisation had profound effects on these areas, giving rise to distinct varieties of English that have come to be called ‘Celtic Englishes’ as they display obvious influences of the original languages of the areas. Economic, social and confessional pressure led to mass emigrations into all parts of the World, particularly after the Industrial Revolution and the social upheaval it entailed along with an increase of personal mobility.

## 2.1 Written Sources

As no contemporary records of the period of invasion exist, we must rely on later sources for information. The most influential textual sources were Gildas' *De excidio et conquestu Britanniae* (written c. 500 AD) and the accounts given by Bede (Beda Venerabilis) in his *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* as well as the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (Härke 2003:1). The texts imply that the incoming Saxons performed nothing less than 'ethnic-cleansing' in either killing the Britons or driving them over the sea, before they took possession of the vacated island. In his historiographical account, Bede tells of a letter purportedly written by the inhabitants of Britain to the consul of Rome, asking for Roman military support against the invading Saxons.

To Aëtius, thrice consul, the groans of the Britains. ... The barbarians drive us to the sea. The sea drives us back towards the barbarians. Between them we are exposed to two sorts of death: we are either slain or drowned (Tristram 1999 3f).

Until the emergence of the so called "New Archaeology" during the 1980s these descriptions were taken at face value, thus giving rise to the theory of 'extermination and expulsion'. Richard Coates cautions against "the possibility in these sources of rhetorical, politically-motivated exaggeration of the severity of what happened to the Britons, and one must also allow that some of the principal sources were written (in their current form) over 300 years after the events they purport to describe" (Coates *fc.*:18).

Concerning the limitations and obvious inaccuracies exhibited by these texts, Gary German points out that "[...] the exploitation of original written sources, though of critical importance to our understanding of the languages involved, is only one element among others forming an intricate multidimensional mosaic" (German 2001:126). Of course, other areas of research greatly contribute towards our assessment of textual sources.

Although some written sources indicate that substantial numbers of Britons survived the coming of the Saxons, these were, more or less consciously, ignored as they did not fit in with the traditional model of 'expulsion and extermination'.

For example, the Law codes of King Ine of Wessex imply the survival of a distinctly British part of the population in the late seventh century. They list, in some detail, the *weregilds* ‘honour-prices’ for both Saxons and Britons. While these weregilds are considerably lower for Britons than for Saxons, thus putting the native population at a distinct economic and legal disadvantage. They indicate, however, a certain amount of land-ownership by free Britons (Härke 2003:1). Richard Coates points out that, on the whole, Britons appear to have constituted a recognisable ethnic identity until the 10<sup>th</sup> century (Coates *fc.*:19).

## 2.2 Archaeology

Until the reassessments caused by the ‘new debate’, Anglo-Saxon archaeology was mainly concerned with finding proof for the ‘historical facts’ as portrayed by the written sources instead of researching independently. Härke notes that “a *circulus vitiosus* was established in which the disciplines confirmed one another by adopting each other’s results as underlying assumptions for their own work” (Härke 2003:2).

In his 1983 study, Christopher Taylor remarks that, considering the numbers of immigrants in relation to the native population: “The Saxon invasions and settlement appear more as the political takeover of a disintegrating society rather than a mass replacement of population” (cited in Viereck 2000:391).

Heinrich Härke notes that recent estimations for Post-Roman population numbers for Britain (ca. 3.7 million inhabitants at the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century) are roughly the same as those given by the Norman *Domesday* census for the 11<sup>th</sup> century. As he sees no reliable archaeological evidence for a dramatic change in population density in Post-Roman Britain, nor any archaeological evidence for plague, famine or slaughter, he argues for a relative stability of the British population (Härke 2003:3). Gary German, agreeing to this model, stresses the existence of “convincing evidence that the Brittonic peasantry largely outnumbered the incoming Germanic-speaking *foederatii* and their followers who formed a dominant social, economic and military elite” (German 2001:126).

Although in Bede's accounts the year 449 AD is given for the *adventus saxonum*, recent archaeological evidence points to a rather earlier date, probably shortly after AD 400, implying a longer duration of less organised immigrations into Britain (Viereck 2000:390).

In her 1999 paper, Hildegard Tristram highlights that a number of different settlement patterns are visible with each area exhibiting its own pattern. They range from complete kinship settlements and settlements by male war-bands to settlements of individuals and their followers with successive reinforcements. Rural areas appear to have been settled first, and, most importantly, there are distinct variations in settlement density. The South-East of Britain was settled most densely by the Anglo-Saxons, whereas in the North and the West of the island the density of Anglo-Saxon settlement was lowest. Additional evidence for cultural continuity is given by the fact that there appears to have been no change in the pattern of land-ownership after the coming of the Anglo-Saxons. Summarising, Tristram argues that "[t]he archaeological evidence can be interpreted at its simplest as showing a smooth assimilation of the two cultures" (Tristram 1999:12f).

Information on the social structure of early Anglo-Saxon England may be derived from comparison of burials. An indicator of status differences is the amount and value of grave goods, which vary considerably but apparently do so in relation to the ethnicity of the buried [INT 4:5].

Until the seventh century, two groups of male burials can be distinguished. One group, constituting 47% of grown men, are buried with weapons while the remainder are buried without [INT 4:4]. Examinations of the graves and skeletons allow to draw the conclusion that only the immigrants and their descendants were buried with weapons, while native Britons make up a significant portion of the other group. It is only towards the seventh century that this distinction ceases to be visible, pointing at large scale assimilation by that time (Härke 2003:9). As certain large burial sites exhibit a discontinuity in physical appearance, they indicate a replacement of native inhabitants. Other sites point at two separate

populations living alongside each other, but without intermarrying (Härke 2003:6).

The exact numbers for immigrant and native population are still under debate, with evidence coming from all areas of archaeology, such as e.g. analyses for the amount of forest regrowth after the Roman occupation, analyses of graves etc. Heinrich Härke cites recent estimates for the Romano-British population as ranging between 2 and 4 million inhabitants (Härke 2002:147). He points out that there is “less clear, but still persuasive, evidence of substantial survival of a large native population” (Härke 2002:148f).

Newest estimates of the Anglo-Saxon migration vary considerably more, ranging from less than 10,000 up to 200,000 immigrants [INT 4:1]. This, along with the unequal distribution of the incomers, who spread only thinly in the West and North areas of Britain leads to a number of different estimations for the relative proportions of Anglo-Saxons and Britons. Laing et al. give a ratio of 20 Britons on 1 Anglo-Saxon for the south east and as little as 50:1 for the Anglian north. Härke suggests more conservative ratios, 3:1 in the south east and 5:1 in the north (both cited in Tristram 1999:13).

Concerning modern reassessments of archaeological theories he cautions that “it is also worth bearing in mind that we are as influenced by the *zeitgeist* and our own expectations as the Victorians were a century ago” (Härke 2003:9).

### 2.3 Genetic analyses

Recent genetic analyses of Y-chromosome distribution indicate that the Anglo-Saxon contribution to the modern English gene-pool lies between 50% and 100%, also finding significant dissimilarity between the distribution of certain Y-chromosome haplotypes between Central England and North Wales. In order to explain this level of influence solely with mass immigration, Thomas et al. estimate a necessary influx of approx. 500,000 people. Since no movement of this scale is attested by the archaeological data, they set out for alternative models to explain the modern genetic distribution. They argue that “[a]n alternative

explanation would be provided by an apartheid-like situation [...] in which elevated social and economic status grant higher reproductive success to the immigrants when compared to the native population and a degree of post-migration reproductive isolation is maintained among ethnic groups for several generations” [INT 5:1].

Evidence for such division of Anglo-Saxon social structure along ethnic lines is present, e.g., in the significant differences in legal status assigned to Britons and Anglo-Saxons in the Laws of Ine [INT 4:2].

Thomason et al. see the imposition of an apartheid-like social structure as a means of securing political and military control by a small immigrant population that would otherwise risk assimilation with subsequent loss of power. This model also provides an explanation for the long span of skeletal distinctiveness, as in an apartheid-like system a low degree of intermarriage between the incomers and the natives would be expected, precluding an assimilation of physical features [INT 4:4].

This distinction appears to have been upheld at least until the seventh century, when the two groups cease to be distinguishable archaeologically. No ethnic distinctions are made any more in the Laws of Alfred the Great (c. 890 AD), so Thomas et al. assume a maximum of fifteen generations of ethnic division after the coming of the Saxons. [INT 5:2f].

Calculating different rates of population development in different theoretical social environments, they conclude that “the genetic contribution of an immigrant population can rise from less than 10% to more than 50% in as little as five generations, and certainly less than fifteen generations” [INT 5:6].

Correspondingly, Bryan Ward-Perkins sees a continued assertion of alterity, ranging from the earliest sixth century sources until the tenth century where again and again the natural, seemingly innate, differences between Anglo-Saxons and Britons are stressed. He adds that “the broader evidence of failed contacts, in religion and in language, provides strong support for the idea that this perception of difference was no mere literary construct, but was felt (and lived) throughout society” (Ward-Perkins 2000:2).

## 2.4 Conclusion on Sources

On the whole, the historical evidence suggests an ‘elite-transmission’ with subsequent cultural assimilation rather than, a ‘clean sweep’ with large scale population replacement, as previously favoured and still upheld by a number of scholars.

The ‘New Debate’ in archaeology concerns itself with the ethnogenesis of Anglo-Saxon England. The works of Lloyd Laing, Nicholas Higham and Heinrich Härke showed “that the nineteenth century ‘Anglo-Saxonist’ ideology of the Germanic racial ‘purity’ of the Anglo-Saxon society cannot be maintained in the light of recent archaeological research” (Tristram 2004:100). Härke notes that the question of racial purity had a tangible political background that prohibited the notion of a Celtic element in the English population. With Ireland demanding Home Rule, the question was: “were the Celts able to govern themselves, or did they need English masters to look after them?” (Härke 2003:2). This also reflected on British attitudes towards the Celtic languages that were seen as impeding economic progress in the Celtic areas. While they were sometimes admitted to possess a certain ‘aesthetic value’, the overall attitude towards them remained negative. So, the prevailing mood of Anglo-Saxonism continued to have not only influence on the interpretation of data and sources, but also on the direction of research, with the possibility of any Celtic influence on the English language only emerging in discussion rather recently.

Objections to this new approach have been voiced, e.g., by Richard Coates, who argues for cultural annihilation by means of enslavement rather than large scale survival of free Britons or extermination at the hands of the Saxons. While he concedes, e.g., the possibility of ‘slave-coloured’ variety of English emerging in Brittonic communities, illiteracy on part of the slaves prevented its documentation and it could not have had great influence on the standard language as it was a severely stigmatised variant (Coates *fc.*:19).



### 3. Language Contact

Before proceeding to the contact(s) between English and the Celtic languages, a theoretical background for establishing the mechanisms of language contact is necessary. In this paper, the approach of Thomason and Kaufman (1988) and Thomason (2001) will be followed, so their main theories concerning the differentiation between situations of borrowing and language shift, as well as their systematics for determining contact interference for a given feature will be presented.

As the basis for a systematic approach, the discipline of contact-linguistics provides us with a theoretical framework which not only helps in the analysis of a given contact situation or phenomenon, but comparison with similar situations may also grant us insight which is otherwise unavailable. Light will be thrown on the sociocultural background of a language-contact situation from what we know about its outcome. Conversely, the observation of language contact phenomena, as Pieter Muysen points out, contributes to our general understanding of syntactic structures and their roles in the behaviour of a language (Muysen 1996:117).

Most importantly, Thomason and Kaufman distinguish between language contact situations involving borrowing and those involving language shift. When two languages come into contact with each other, the typical result is borrowing of some material from one language into another, usually starting with lexical items in form of loanwords. If the contact between these languages is strong enough and cultural pressure is made on the speakers of the receiving language, eventually anything may be borrowed, including morphosyntactic features (Thomason and Kaufman 1988:37ff).

This matches closely with the traditional approach towards language contact, which postulates that contact influence first and foremost takes the form of lexical influence. While the transfer of lexical items may be easiest to prove, this form of contact is by no means the only one (Thomason 2001:64). In a situation where a

large number of speakers abandon their native language, thereby ‘shifting’ towards an other language, the outcome is almost the exact opposite: contact interference then starts with features of phonology and syntax and only a small numbers of lexical items are transmitted, if any at all (Thomason 2001:75). This, of course, makes it far easier to spot historical language contact that has taken the form of borrowing, especially when information on the overall social and linguistical situation at the proposed time of contact is scarce.

### 3.1 Rapid Shift with Imperfect Learning

Concerning their approach towards what has traditionally been termed ‘substratum interference’, Thomason and Kaufman state that:

Substratum interference is a subtype of interference that results from imperfect group learning during a process of language shift. That is, in this kind of interference a group of speakers shifting to a target language fails to learn the target language (TL) perfectly. The errors made by members of the shifting group in speaking the TL then spread to the TL as a whole when they are imitated by original speakers of that language (Thomason and Kaufman 1988:38f).

These learners now carry features from their original language into their version of the TL (then called TL<sub>2</sub>). If this group of speakers is then integrated into a shared speech community consisting of both speakers of TL<sub>1</sub> and TL<sub>2</sub>, this will lead to a shared variety, TL<sub>3</sub>, emerging because the original speakers of TL<sub>1</sub> will take over some of the distinct features of TL<sub>2</sub> into their language. Thomason here speaks of ‘negotiation of a shared version’ (Thomason 2001:75).

She stresses the importance of markedness in shifting situations, as marked features of a TL are not only less likely to be learned, and thus less likely to appear in the TL<sub>2</sub> of the shifting speakers, but are also less likely to be taken over from this TL<sub>2</sub> into the shared TL<sub>3</sub> by the original speakers of a language. (Thomason 2001:76).

In addition, crucial importance is attributed to the relative sizes of speaker communities. If the shifting population is numerically larger than the amount of original speakers, this improves the chance of at least some of the shift interference being taken over into the ‘new’ community language. An example

given by Thomason is the presence of Irish Gaelic features in the English of Ireland due to large numbers of shifters compared to the incoming ‘native’ speakers of English (Thomason 2001:78f).

Thomason and Kaufman point out that “[i]n changes resulting from imperfect learning of a second language, the TL is not so much accepting the changes as giving in to them, since it is the shifting speaker, not the original TL speakers, who initiate the changes” (Thomason and Kaufman 1988:43). They also note the ineffectiveness of strong attitudes towards this influence if the shifting speakers are numerous enough to ‘impose’ their variety upon the community as a whole.

Thomason criticises the common tendency to judge the probability of language contact by the amount of loanwords from a language, and assumes that the absence of lexical interference precludes any influence in any other area of the language, or even indicates *lack* of language contact (Thomason 2001: 80).

A scarcity of loanwords is to be expected, since the shifting speakers may see no reason to preserve their original language due to the strength of economical, political or other pressures that led them to abandon their language in the first place, quickly acquiring the new lexicon (Thomason and Kaufman 1988:117).

### 3.2 How to Define Contact Features

Thomason, gives the definition for contact-induced language change as follows: “any 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). These changes may take the form of direct transfer from one language to another, but also more indirect influences (Thomason 2001:62). Concerning the search for the source of a certain change in a language, Thomason and Kaufman maintain that:

[A] successful criterion for establishing external causation is possible only when we consider a language as a complex whole—a system of systems, of interrelated lexical, phonological, morphosyntactic, and semantic structures. Instead of looking at each subsystem separately, we need to look at the whole language (Thomason and Kaufman 1988:60).

Firstly, in order to establish language contact as a cause for a given feature a source language with which the language evidently has been in contact must be identified. This is naturally more problematic in shift situations (which may well lead to the eventual death of the shifting speakers' original language) than in those of borrowing situations. Secondly, 'shared structural features' have to be identified in both languages. One must be aware, that in order to establish a shared feature, a one to one identity is not necessary, even unlikely. One also has to prove that the proposed features were *not* part of the system of the receiving language, and that they *were* present in the donating language before the contact occurred. Finally, plausible internal motivations for any change have to be considered as well. Here, Thomason points out the possibility of 'universal structural tendencies' for language evolution as well as the possibility of multiple causation (Thomason 2001:93f).

She also draws attention to the unlikeliness of solitary contact features occurring, noting that "an argument for a contact origin will only be convincing if it is supported by evidence of interference elsewhere in the language's structure as well" (Thomason 2001:93).

Concerning the identification of a source for a given change in a language, Thomason stresses the difficulty of distinguishing between contact-induced and internally motivated changes. In either case, features may be lost from a language, a language may gain certain features or native features may be replaced by new ones. (Thomason 2001:86f). Furthermore, a clear reason for a given feature may not always be obtainable for a given feature and "the possibility of multiple causation should always be considered and [...] it often happens that internal motivation combines with an external motivation to produce a change" (Thomason 2001:91). Thus, the possibility of multiple causation should be borne in mind when establishing the cause of a given feature.

Filppula et al. note that the complete identity of features is not a necessary "especially [as] syntactic parallels between the substrate and the emerging contact variety are often only partial in nature" (Filppula et al. fc.:2). In addition, speakers may overgeneralise on features that resemble those found in their native language,

or develop uses for them that were not previously part of either language. Thomason and Kaufman stress that “many interference features will in fact **not** be exactly the same as the source-language features that motivated the innovations. Lack of ‘point-by-point-identity’ must therefore not be taken to mean that an innovation is not due to foreign influence” (Thomason and Kaufman 1988:62). Also, they point out, the fact that an internal motivation can be determined for a change in one language, does not have to be a valid explanation for the same change occurring in an other language (Thomason and Kaufman 1988:59).

A further complicating aspect of interference through shift is that it most often results in grammatical simplification, thus making it hard to distinguish from any internal simplifications in a language (Thomason and Kaufman 1988:114).

Markku Filppula explicitly discounts the ‘principle of parsimony’ that has been voiced by Roger Lass when regarding the problematic issue of distinguishing between internal and external causation for a feature. While this principle states that in cases where both an external and an internal explanation are available, endogeny is always preferable, Filppula argues for possible external influence even in features where an internal explanation is possible as well (Filppula 2003<sup>a</sup>:161). He admits that the burden of proof lies with those wanting to establish contact influence rather than with those arguing for internal causation, but stresses that “the quest must always be for the *best* explanations whether more or less parsimonious” (Filppula 2003<sup>a</sup>:170).

Additionally, the idea that substratum and superstratum form identifiable, discrete layers in a language has come under criticism, e.g. by Markku Filppula who instead argues for “intricate patterns of variation which exist in contact vernaculars both at the inter- and intraindividual level” (Filppula 2000: 322), further complicating the issue of identifying the source of a given feature. Still, he warns against accepting multicausation as a default solution, stressing instead the need for careful search for evidence pointing out a feature’s most likely source (Filppula 2001:23).

Another problem in establishing historical language contact as a source for a certain development may be the long latency before any innovation becomes attested in written language. Spoken and written language may differ considerably from one another, the written form usually being more conservative by far, while any contact influenced changes are likely to take place in the spoken variety of a language. This effect becomes especially important in Hildegard Tristram's approach of assuming a form of diglossia after the shift of large numbers of speakers of British towards Anglo-Saxon (Tristram 1999: 27). This approach will be discussed in detail below.

It should be noted, however, that the debate on the theoretical background of contact linguistics is far from being settled. In particular, the question of what features may be indicative of language contact remains. While Tristram assumes contact influence in the transfer of features from one language to another, she also considers not only shared innovations between adjacent languages but also shared retention of features as indicative of contact influence (Tristram 2002<sup>a</sup>:260). This is debated by Graham Isaac, who sees only shared innovations as indicative of contact, while shared retention of archaisms may be due to pure coincidence (Isaac 2003:53). Likewise, Muysheer sees language convergence as a distinct form of contact influence as well, with the distinction that it is a bi-directional process affecting not only one language in a contact situation (Muysheer 1996:121). Clearly, an expanded theoretical background is necessary for this matter.

All in all, Filppula et al. summarise that "ascertaining contact influences is more a matter of greater or smaller likelihoods than of achieving definite proof" (Filppula et al. *ibid.*:3).

## 4. English and Celtic in Contact

In the following chapter, different theories and approaches towards the contact of English with the Celtic languages will be presented. As mentioned above, the traditional view that the Britons were annihilated by the incoming Anglo-Saxons, thus leaving no trace of their original language has come under debate. Analogous with the historical and archaeological reconsideration of the issue, more and more research is undertaken suggesting the survival of distinctly Brittonic features in the English language of today.

In contrast to past approaches that dismissed the possibility of Celtic influences on English on the grounds that no significant lexical loans could be found, advances in contact-linguistics have led to the theory that in situations of language shift such scarcity is to be expected. The proposed process of rapid language shift with imperfect learning would see these substantial numbers of surviving Britons abandoning their native language, rapidly shifting to Anglo-Saxon and thereby introducing a tangible amount of influence features into their new language. Some of those features would survive to become part of the standard language, making this Celtic influence felt even today. Expectably, the validity of such theories has been debated, with the occasional rise of tempers hinting at the ideological implications such claims entail. Before any proposed features are discussed in detail, the process of how they may have found their way into the English language of today will be examined.

A wide variety of languages were spoken in Britain over the course of its history. When the first speakers of a Celtic language arrived on the British Isles, they encountered a native population, presumably speaking a non-Indo European language. With the Romans came Latin that, besides being the language of the Roman occupation, continued to have a profound influence as a prestige language well through the middle ages, e.g., in the domains of religion as well as science. Continental mercenaries and auxiliaries within the Roman army in Britain spoke a wide variety of languages, among them Germanic dialects. Raiders and settlers

from neighbouring Ireland brought with them their Gaelic language, which would later develop into Scottish Gaelic in the area settled by the Irish *scotii*. After the Roman retreat and the *adventus saxonum* we encounter a variety of Germanic dialects, eventually becoming Old English. The Brittonic language previously spoken all over England was pushed back into distinct areas, where it developed to Welsh in the West, Cornish in the South West and Cumbric, spoken in what remained of the British area north of the Anglo-Saxon territory. The Cumbric area was Anglicised in the Old English period, Cornish as well as Manx, spoken in the Isle of Man only died out in the Modern Period. Welsh as well as Irish and Scottish Gaelic survive to the present day, thus being possible contact candidates with their neighbour English for one and a half millennia. Over this time, the different languages went through a number of developments that brought them to their present form. This involved different kinds of contact situations under different socio-cultural influences.

Although Old English can be seen as a thoroughly Germanic language of a distinctly synthetic character and mainly exhibiting the grammatical categories it inherited from Indo-European, it underwent a number of changes over time. In the course of its development over Middle English, Early Modern English to Present Day English it developed a distinct character of its own, setting it aside from its Germanic cousins. Of these, only the later changes are well documented in written form. Changes that took place before the appearance of any number of written documents in the 8<sup>th</sup> century are largely undocumented. This is problematic insofar as it is some of these changes that play a great role in alienating English from its Germanic source, although later changes would further increase this distance (Meid 1990:112).

#### 4.1 Application of Framework on Historical Situation

In her 1999 paper, Hildegard Tristram set out the theoretical background to her approach that proposes a rapid shift of speakers of Late Brittonic towards Anglo-Saxon with subsequent language death of their original language. This shift is



assumed to have been complete within the span of at most six generations after the *adventus saxonum*. The majority of speakers in the east and the south shifted to Anglo-Saxon, whereas Brittonic survived in some more isolated or peripheral areas (Tristram 1999:16). She emphasises that recent advancements as well as reassessments of old preconceptions, in the disciplines of contact linguistics, archaeology and historical research do not allow for any other possibility other than large scale British survival (Tristram 2002<sup>b</sup>:118).

As early as in 1955 a similar notion has been expressed by Gerard Visser who proposed the existence of a dialect, analogous to Anglo-Irish, called Anglo-Welsh, “which we may define as English spoken by people who think in Welsh” (Visser 1955:276). He assumed this dialect to exhibit at least some degree of mutual influence. He suggested that “oral influence *among the lower orders* will have been considerable and that this influence was not so much a matter of vocabulary as of syntax and phraseology” (Visser 1955:276).

Arguing for a slow shift to English, Gary German assumes that “the anglicisation of England occurred, not as the result of ethnic cleansing [...]” (German 2001:126), but as the result of a gradual process that may have taken hundreds of years, its speed being modified by geographical as well as social environmental influences.

Bryan Ward-Perkins argues for only a short duration of the transitional period, as he assumes that the native British population swiftly shed their Britishness, rapidly Anglo-Saxonising themselves (Ward-Perkins 2000:5). He attributes this swiftness of shift to strong socio-cultural pressures forcing the Britons to adopt the religion, culture and speech of the Saxons in order to overcome the severe legal, economic and social disadvantages of belonging to the stigmatised class (Ward-Perkins 2000:2). Heinrich Härke, stressing the pressure caused by the social dimension of the situation points out that “any status improvement of the Britons in social and legal terms could only have come from emulation of the Anglo-Saxons” (Härke 2003:8).

Noting parallels in other language shift scenarios, Manfred Görlach assumes a span of only three generations for the shift towards English, with only the first

generation ‘imperfectly learning’ it (Görlach 1990:68). Raymond Hickey identifies another possible locus of language contact in the early ages of the speakers. He sees a possibility in the interaction of British and Anglo-Saxon children who thereby came into contact with the ‘native speech’ of the other (Hickey 1995:104f). Filppula summarises this situation, asserting that “the sociohistorical circumstances surrounding the English-Celtic interface were such that linguistic influences from Celtic upon English were not just possible, but a natural consequence of the language shift situation” (Filppula 2006:1).

Concerning the outcome of this situation of language-shift, Tristram expects to find, in agreement with the theoretical framework, “significant typological changes in morphosyntax” (Tristram 1999:18). She does this, asserting that “[t]he linguistic contact between the Britons and the Anglo-Saxons has indeed produced significant typological disruption” (Tristram 1999:18).

Based on the theoretical background by Thomason, Gary German proposes a number of contact interference features that would be expectable in the ‘basilectal forms of Anglo-Brittonic’: Firstly, a certain degree of morphological simplification as well as the presence of morphosyntactic calques on Brittonic. He assumes lexical borrowing only during the initial stages of the shift while Brittonic was still a living language with a large degree of transferred native vocabulary disappearing again after the completion of the shift. Secondly, some phonological interference is likely to occur as well (German 2001:129).

This view towards Brittonic interference is shared by Cyril Molyneux who suggests that “a number of constructions in Standard English seem to reflect the influence of Celtic syntax” (Molyneux 1987:83-84). Markku Filppula agrees to this theory, asserting that “many features of English grammar have characteristics that cannot be satisfactorily explained as independent developments or as results of contacts with any other than the Celtic languages” (Filppula 2006:1).

Tristram takes this situation as a ‘shift with slight interference’. Later contacts of Welsh and English then representing a case of mutual (not necessarily symmetric) borrowing that sees them both developing new but related features (Tristram 2002<sup>b</sup>:113). She attributes the considerable typological changes

affecting both English and Welsh to this initial shift, as well as to continuous mutual influences (Tristram 1999:19). Indeed, she even suggests that “in some important aspects, modern standard written English may perhaps best be regarded as a Late Britonised West Germanic language” (Tristram 2002:271).

Raymond Hickey discounts the notion of a permanent Celtic substrate in Anglo-Saxon England (Hickey 1995:106), whereas Filppula et al. 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 substratal features in all of the putative Celtic Englishes” (Filppula et al. *ibid.*:2).

Indeed, considerable differences in the realisation of these proposed interference features are visible in different regions of Britain. Peter Schrijver argues that these differences are based in the distribution of languages at the time of the *adventus*. While most of lowland Britain had experienced (at least a certain degree) of Latinisation, Brittonic survived in the Highland Zones in the North and the West. Thus, he does not find it unnatural for Brittonic features to occur less frequently in the South east and east regions (Schrijver 2002:103).

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 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> century; the second took the form of long-term areal convergence with Welsh due to continuous contact with a certain degree of bilingual speakers and speaker mobility, resulting in eventual ‘linguistic homogenisation’ (Tristram 2002<sup>b</sup>:112).

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 1999:29f).

Despite the general agreement on the possibility of this sort of language contact influence from Celtic on English among a growing number of scholars in this field, the traditional view is not without supporters. While some voice their

opposition to proposed explanations of certain features, others dispute the general possibility of language shift interference on English.

Richard Coates, vehemently opposes the notion of any large scale survival of Britons and states that “whatever may come from archaeology, the linguistic evidence favours the traditional view, at least for the south and east” (Coates *fc.*:1). He maintains that no convincing argument has been made for Brittonic to have had any influence on English at all, yet. He states that the Anglo-Saxon language can not be proved to exhibit Celtic interference in the form of any feature of morphology or syntax (Coates *fc.*:2f). Specifically, he argues that:

there is no reason to believe that large-scale survival of an indigenous population could so radically fail to leave linguistic traces,

[but]

[o]n the other hand, absence of Britons is a sufficient condition for the absence of Brittonic coloured English (Coates *fc.*:2ff).

A similar notion is expressed by Manfred Görlach who asserts that:

With the single exception of the 16<sup>th</sup>- to 19<sup>th</sup>-century Hiberno English, the Celtic languages failed to have any significant influence on English, apparently because most speakers of Germanic dialects did not care to learn Celtic languages, and the higher prestige of English throughout history must have made language shifters careful not to carry over and retain conspicuous features of their mother tongues (Görlach 1990:72).

Graham Isaac disputes that this contact has had “any significant effect on the development of Standard English” although he admits obvious Celtic influences on the regional varieties of English, caused by language contact interferences (Isaac 2003:63).

As other possible sources for external causation of changes in the development of English, two languages are most frequently invoked; i.e. Old Norse due to the intensive contact situation in the Danelaw and French as the prestige language brought to England by the Normans.

Thomason and Kaufman discount the traditional notion that language contact with Norse was the cause for the simplifications from OE to ME. To them, English and Norse were too similar for contact between them to influence the basic typology of English. They see the simplifications from OE to ME as results

of a process that was already underway before English and Norse came into contact (Thomason and Kaufman 1988:302f). German suggests that language contacts with the Scandinavian languages did not trigger these changes, but reinforced a development that was already in motion (German 2001:131). Arguing for a certain amount of mutual intelligibility, Wolfgang Meid sees it as the cause for the relatively strong lexical influence from Old Norse (Meid 1990:97).

Concerning the assumption of French influence as the cause for the change to analytic structure, German points out that even at the height of French influence a maximum of 5% of English population spoke French at all. He summarises that “[t]he move toward analytic structure thus had to have been well under way” (German 2001:129). Although Görlach notes the strong lexical influence of even this small number of speakers of French, he points out that, since a large scale language shift did not occur, Norman French did not cause significant structural changes (Görlach 1990:74). As German summarises, “[t]he arrival of French speaking Normans simply completed, and perhaps masked, developments that had begun centuries before” (German 2001:132).

## 4.2 How Long Did ‘British’ Languages Survive in Britain.

As to whether the British language survived (and if so, how long) the coming of the Anglo-Saxons in regions other than Wales and Cornwall, different opinions have been voiced. This is important insofar as the linguistic outcome of a language contact situation may be markedly different in situations of language shift and those of prolonged bilingualism.

The traditional theory is that if any Britons survived under the Anglo-Saxons at all, they would have assumed the language of their masters rapidly, Gary German, however, proposes the existence of pockets of Brittonic, lingering on as long as the 10<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> century, especially in isolated or peripheral regions. Indeed the military power of the British region of Cumbria was not broken until 1092 (German 2001:128). Wolfgang Viereck points out that, e.g., in the region around

Hereford, English did not establish itself until the end of the sixteenth century (Viereck 2000:393).

Tristram also argues for a long period of bilingualism among Brittonic speaking slaves, retaining their native language for as long as six or seven generations. Tristram refers to Gelling (1993) as proposing ‘more than four hundred years’ for the duration of shift, completing around 900 AD’ (Tristram 2004:94).

German notes that the Anglicisation of aristocracy and elites does not have to mean that the mass of the population would immediately follow. He refers to the example of Breton peasants still speaking Breton in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century although the Breton aristocracy had shifted to French about 700 years earlier (German 2001:128).

### 4.3 Old English diglossia

The problem remains that clear indicators for language contact induced change are not visible in Old English texts. To explain why Old English – despite suffering manifest influence from Late British, remains relatively stable and unchanging until its eventual demise after the Norman Conquest, the theory of Old English diglossia has been voiced.

The theory runs that not only was Anglo-Saxon remarkably stable over the four centuries of its attested written development, but that it was *too stable* to be the actual vernacular of the people. Its orthographical appearance was kept more or less unchanged over that time, also showing only remarkably few indicators of dialectal variation. Indeed, the typological structure of the language changed only very little, suggesting the deliberate effort to keep it unchanged (Tristram 2004:89).

Hildegard Tristram suggests that the “theocratic elite of late Anglo-Saxon England deliberately enforced the standardisation of old English as a means of political control”, this standard being upheld until the early twelfth century

(Tristram 2004:89). Accordingly, she concludes that a wide spread diglossia must have been present as the small literate elite did not allow the actual vernacular English surface in their texts (Tristram 1999:28). Although it was a purely literary standard, it probably did in some way reflect the speech of the ruling class from which the clergy was recruited (German 2001:129).

Tristram assumes three contemporaneous variants of the Old English language, first, OE<sub>w</sub>, the written language of the elite then OE<sub>H</sub>, the spoken language of this elite, and finally OE<sub>L</sub>, the daily language of the majority, consisting to a large extent of assimilated Britons and in the Danelaw the descendants of Scandinavian immigrants as well. She assumes only 4-5 thousand speakers of OE<sub>H</sub>, compared to 1-1.25 million speakers of ‘learner Old English’ in the form of OE<sub>L</sub> (Tristram 2004:103ff).

Instead of stressing the difference between written Old English and Middle English, Tristram proposes that the apparently sudden shift in the 12<sup>th</sup> century that saw English drifting away from a synthetic towards an analytic type is to be seen as the emergence in writing of the actual spoken language, in the form of a ‘middle class written language’, exhibiting strong regional variation (Tristram 2004:103f). She concludes that “Middle English started to be spoken as a low variety of English not after the Norman Conquest, but not long after the Anglo-Saxon Conquest” (Tristram 2004:87).

If we are looking for Celtic influence in the Old English language, we would have to look at the Low variety. But, since no record of the language of the majority of the population survives, this complicates the search for possible substratum interference from Brittonic. As Gary German notes, “[c]onsidering the stigmatised nature of Brittonic, such influence would not have been immediately apparent in the literary language for centuries to come” (German 2001:131). Indeed, the Old English *literatii* can be assumed to almost exclusively be of Anglo-Saxon ethnicity (Tristram 2004:103). Gary German, expressing a similar notion, terms the corresponding Low variants of Old English ‘Anglo-Brittonic dialects’ (German 2001:128).

Thus, instead of arguing for a sudden outbreak of dialectal variation in Middle English, the dialectal zones of ME can be shown to correspond to the historical contact areas of Anglo-Saxon with Norse in the Danelaw, with Brittonic in the North and the South West, and with British Latin in the Romanised lowlands. Thus, as Tristram points out, “the assumption of a substantial diglossia in Anglo-Saxon England helps to explain why, after the removal of the Anglo-Saxon elite, Middle English dialect writing appears to feature such ‘sudden’ innovations emanating or radiating from the two focal centres in the North and in the South West” (Tristram 2004:104) .

#### 4.4 Approach Towards Proposed Features

In order to identify a special feature of PDS as a result of contact between English and a Celtic language, a number of questions have to be answered. Firstly, we have to determine that it is not (also) a common feature of the Germanic languages or even a language universal. Then, this feature must be shown to have been present in the Celtic language before the proposed point of contact and finally a plausible causation for its being taken over into English must be presented. Also, this explanation must be ‘better’ than any alternative external or language internal explanations. As to what constitutes a ‘better’ explanation, fierce debates are led between the proponents of the most economic or parsimonious explanations and those arguing for the most complete solutions. Proponents of the ‘parsimony-approach’ usually favour language internal explanations for developments in the English language, whereas the most complete solution may involve the assumption of multicausation (see e.g. Filppula 2003<sup>a</sup>).

Apart from the fact that any development may well be multicausal, the scarcity of written attestation of the earliest forms both of English, as well as the Celtic languages makes the search for early documentation and possible parallels of features rather difficult (Tristram 1999:19).



To compensate for the unavailability of Late Brittonic material both Welsh and Breton are frequently used as alternatives. While most often Welsh is being employed in comparisons, Gary German suggests the use of Breton and cautions against Welsh, assuming that “significant Irish adstratal influence on Welsh cannot be ruled out” (German 2001:127). To him, Breton is typologically closer to English. Furthermore, it serves best as a successor for Celtic languages spoken in south west Britain before the advent of English since Breton was never in direct contact with English and “typological similarities between Breton, Cornish and Welsh probably reflect the Brittonic vernaculars [...] before Brittonic went to Brittany” (German 2001:127).

Concerning the use of Welsh data as evidence for language contact, Tristram cautions that the dialects of Late British that were spoken by the shifters to Anglo-Saxon were most likely not the direct ancestor of what later became Welsh (Tristram 2002<sup>b</sup>:118).

## 5. Syntax (in contact)

In the following, the possibility of Celtic influence on the shift of English from a synthetic towards an analytic type is examined. Different features related to this shift and the theory of Celtic influence are discussed, pointing out the conflicting opinions.

### 5.1 The Analyticisation of English

In the evolution from Old English to Modern English, a number of changes are evident. The English language has not only changed in its phonology, lexis and a number of morphosyntactic features, but has even changed its type from the synthetic language it started out as, becoming largely analytical. While the language appears to have been relatively stable over the old English period, attritions in its formerly rich inflectional system are clearly visible in early Middle English (Tristram 2002<sup>b</sup>:124)

The traditional explanation for this drastic change is a combination of internally motivated developments with an additional influence coming of the Norse languages spoken in the Danelaw. A new approach suggests that the reason for the high degree in analyticity in Modern English is its contact with the Celtic languages. This theory is mainly based on the consideration that English and Welsh share a common development from synthetic to analytic, setting them both apart from the other members of their languages families (Tristram 2002<sup>b</sup>:120). Indeed, as Tristram points out, “Welsh and English are the most conspicuously analytic languages of Western Europe’s Indo-European [...] languages” (Tristram 2002<sup>b</sup>:262). She notes that while the Late Brittonic noun phrase was already almost as analytic as in Modern Welsh, old English still had the full inflectional paradigm for its noun phrases and verb phrases. In its shift away from syntheticity to analyticity, the English language shed most of the grammatical categories inherited from IE. English is preceded in this development by Brythonic by about

300-400 years (Tristram 1999:19). This ‘analytical gap’ makes a restructuring through the shifting population rather expectable (Tristram 2002<sup>b</sup>:118).

She rejects the traditional explanation that the strong stress on the first syllables in OE led to the reduction of unstressed syllables and draws attention to the fact that German and Icelandic who also have the same stress accent did not suffer inflectional attrition.

She also dismisses the notion that the inflectional endings were lost because they had become ornamental through increasing redundancy because, e.g., German kept its endings despite the fact that they may be partially ornamental as well (Tristram 2004:91f). David White argues that, instead of considering any sound changes responsible for the eventual loss of a number of grammatical categories, by way of merging and attrition of endings, it is rather the other way round with categories becoming obsolete and subsequently changing their sounds (White 2002:166). Gerhard Meiser concludes that “syncretism caused by phonetic development alone is in theory imaginable, but is in practice not demonstrable in IE languages” (Meiser 1992:208).

Gary German sees two different paths of Brittonic influence on the English language. On the one hand he suggests that shifting speakers of Brittonic introduced their stress system that had already “led to the weakening and loss of final atonic syllables in Brittonic” (German 2001:130). On the other hand, he assumes that speakers of Brittonic would have had problems in learning the complex inflectional system of Old English, since Brittonic had by then very strongly simplified its own inflectional system. He draws supporting evidence for this from Latin texts written by Britons in which it is obvious that the scribes had problems with the Latin system of nominal inflections (German 2001:130). Tristram notes that this attrition of nominal inflections was compensated by the rise of a rigid word order and “grammaticalized use of prepositions which lent the NP a very obvious analytical character” (Tristram 2004:96).

The Old English nominal system that included three genders, three numbers (including the dual) and four cases, has become greatly simplified. While PDE distinguishes for gender only in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular of personal pronouns as

well as in some nouns, Welsh still has distinction between masculine and feminine in the NP and certain frequently used adjectives (Tristram 1999:21). Late Brittonic had already dropped noun inflections, thus “the speakers of Late British are likely to have imperfectly acquired the inflections of the Old English noun phrase” (Tristram 2002<sup>b</sup>:135).

Late Brittonic had only two grammatical genders, having already lost the neutral. White suggests that British learners of Old English overgeneralised on the neutral gender, the resulting simplification along with further influence from Norse leading to eventual loss of the gender system altogether (White 2002:156f). Tristram considers the invariability of nouns to be a clear Brittonicism originating in the Northern areas (Tristram *fc.*:8).

While Old English adjectives were not only distinguished between strong and weak forms, but also had number and gender inflections, Modern English retains none of these. Their loss is completed by the 14<sup>th</sup> century, starting with the Northumbrian dialect. Here, English is more advanced than Welsh which still retains distinctive plural forms. However, the concord patterns between nouns and adjectives are deteriorating in Modern Welsh as well (Tristram 1999:12). Tristram attributes this invariability of the adjective to Brittonic influence, originating in the Northern dialects, due to the higher percentage of Britons to Anglo-Saxons in the North (Tristram 2004:104).

Manfred Görlach considers the simplification of the English inflectional system to have come from the spoken language. He points out that OE was already more regular than Old High German and considers this to have two reasons. On the one hand he assumes that a certain degree of ‘levelling’ must have taken place among the Germanic invaders that spoke a variety of continental dialects upon their arrival in Britain. On the other hand he suggests influences to come from the speech of a substantial number of Celtic second language learners of English during the shifting process (Görlach 1990:72).

A traditional contact based explanation is that language contact took place between speakers of Old English and Old Norse in the areas under Viking control, the Danelaw. Here, it is argued, a pidgin language emerged for trade purposes,

leading to a degree of creolisation in the area. Tristram counters that “with a little effort, Northumbrians, Mercians and Scandinavians were very well able to communicate in their everyday dealings” (Tristram 2004:94), thus limiting the necessity of a pidgin language.

She further argues that later contact with speakers of Norse not only caused new transfer features by means of intense language contact, but also “led to reinforcing the already existing analytizing tendencies of Brittonic English” (Tristram 2004:97). She stresses, however, that since Old Norse was at that time still fully inflected, it cannot alone have caused this process. Language contact between speakers of synthetic Old Norse and ‘analyticised OE’ would therefore have acted upon the tendencies set in motion by the British shift to OE (Tristram 2002<sup>b</sup>:136). She also points to the fact that the first signs of attrition were visible in the loss of final nasals <n> and <m> that had already started by the time the Vikings arrived. Tristram argues that “[t]he Vikings provided the necessary, but not the sufficient condition for the seemingly sudden Middle English innovations and their spread southward across England over the centuries” (Tristram 2004:94). As Filppula et al. stress, strong support for the theory of Celtic influence on the analyticisation of English is given by the earlier attestation of the same development in the Brythonic languages (Filppula et al. *ibid.*:13).

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).

## 5.2 Clefting

Despite its general preference of end-focus, the English language allows almost all elements to be fronted, typically for added emphasis. The element to be focussed upon is moved to the front, preceded by a conjugated form of ‘to be’. The earliest examples for this construction come from Old English:

- (1) *Hit wæs se Hælend þe hyne hælende.*  
 (2) *It was the saviour who healed him.* (Tristram 2002<sup>a</sup>:265)

This cleft construction is still quite rare in Old English though, becoming somewhat more frequent in Middle English. Towards the beginning of the modern period it developed into an established feature, thereby also acquiring a broader functional range. This, as Filppula et al. point out, matches roughly the development of the present English word order patterns in general (Filppula et al. fc.:24f). Clefting is a common feature of Modern English, allowing for the topicalisation of almost all elements, with the notable exception of verbs, although Northern and Irish dialects of English do allow for verb fronting (Tristram 2002<sup>a</sup>:265).

The ‘traditional’ explanation sees the rise of clefting in English as a reflex on the increasing rigidity of word order, stating that it is a particularly robust feature of languages with fixed word order systems (Filppula et al. fc.:22f). Filppula et al. specifically discount any proposed French influence on the English emergence of this feature since its earliest attestations in English clearly predate the French ones (Filppula et al. fc.:24).

However, clefting is already a common feature of the earliest Old Irish texts, dating from the 8<sup>th</sup> century (Tristram 2002<sup>a</sup>: 266), e.g.:

- (3) *is combat maithi coiscitir* (Thurneysen 1980:492)  
 ‘it is so that they may be good (that) they are corrected’

Although the number of surviving texts in Old Welsh is rather small, it is clear that clefting is a property of the Brittonic languages from early on (Filppula et al. fc.:24). Tristram defines clefting in Welsh as the fronting of an element to become a nominal complement of the copula clause. The rest of the proposition then follows as a relative clause (Tristram 2002<sup>a</sup>:256). This construction is already seen in Middle Welsh:

- (4) *(ys) mi a’e eirch* (Evans 1964:140f)  
 ‘(it is) I who ask for her’

Because of the similarity of these constructions to their English counterparts and their earlier occurrence in the Celtic languages, Tristram suggests Brittonic influence on the development of the English forms, connected with the establishment of a fixed word order after the attrition of inflections (Tristram 2004:104). She points out that in both languages any constituent may be topicalised, excepting the verb in Standard English. Thus, English is considered to be still less advanced than Welsh in its analyticisation (Tristram 1999:22).

Filppula et al. examined the geographical distribution of clefting and drew attention to the fact that it occurs with higher frequency in the West Midland dialects, but is not as common in the North. They note that this makes it difficult to argue for general Brittonic substratum interference on this feature since this would be expected to be most visible in the North. Instead, they suggest rather recent language contact influence on the development of the English form, sometimes occurring as late as the (comparatively) recent Anglicisation of the West Midlands (Filppula et al. *fc.*:19). They also note that clefting is not as frequent in non-Celtic regional English dialects and educated spoken English, concluding that “it is clear that clefting is ‘better developed’ both functionally and in terms of frequencies of use in those dialects of English which have had the closest contacts with Celtic languages” (Filppula et al. *fc.*:26).

A look at the wider European context reveals that cleft constructions are not only found in English and the Celtic languages, but also in French, Portuguese, Danish and Swedish. Interestingly, it is rare and usually considered to be unidiomatic in German (Filppula et al. *fc.*: 21). Tristram suggests clefting to be an areal feature, found in languages along the Atlantic coast from Portugal to Scandinavia (Tristram 2002<sup>a</sup>:256). Filppula et al. agree that some sort of ‘geolinguistic connection’ is hard to rule out (Filppula et al. *fc.*:26). Concerning this distribution of the cleft construction, Tristram remarks that “it is well worth noting that it is not a feature limited to English and probably not original to English” (Tristram 2002<sup>a</sup>:267).

Filppula et al. conclude that the existing variations in the distribution of cleft constructions in English dialects are indicative of at least a certain degree of

influences from the Celtic languages. However, they do not see them as the single cause, stressing that any Celtic influences on clefting in English have only reinforced an already existing pattern (Filppula et al. fc.:19f).

### 5.3 The Northern Subject Rule

The Northern Subject Rule (NSR) governs the number accord of nouns and verbs in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular. As the name implies, it occurs in Northern English regional dialects, where it is first attested from the Middle English period. Its modern distribution is indicated by data from the *Survey of English Dialects*, summarised by Klemola as being frequent, but not completely obligatory in the Northern dialects (roughly north of the Lincoln-Liverpool line) (Klemola 2000:33f).

No general agreement as to its origin has been reached yet. While the traditional explanation sees the NSR as language internal development to resolve ambiguity, it has recently been pointed out as a possible case of syntactic transfer from Brittonic (Klemola 2000:330f).

The Northern Subject Rule dictates that all verbs in the present tense take the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular form unless they are directly adjacent to a pronominal subject, e.g.:

(5) *They peel them and boils them.*

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

A parallel for this can be seen in Modern Welsh:

(7) *Cyrhaeddodd y car.*                    ‘The car arrived.’  
arrived.SG    the car

(8) *Cyrhaeddodd y ceir.*                    ‘The cars arrived.’  
arrived.SG    the cars

(9) *Cyrhaeddodd e.*                    ‘It arrived.’  
arrived.SG    he



- (10) *Cyrhaeddon nhw.*                    ‘They arrived.’ (Isaac 2003:54)  
       arrived.PL     they

As can be seen from the examples (5) - (6), the plural verb form is used only in conjunction with the plural pronoun *nhw*. In all other cases, even with plural subjects, the singular verb must be used (Klemola 2000:37).

As Tristram points out, this form was already an option in Old Welsh, though not yet obligatory:

- (11) *Gwyr a aeth Gatraeth yg cat yg gawr.*  
       S.pl    V.sing  
       ‘Men went to Catraeth in a battalion, with the war-cry.’

- (12) *Gwyr a gyrass-ant bu-ant gytvaeth.*  
       S.pl    V.pl        V.pl  
       ‘Men hastened forth, they feasted together.’ (Tristram 1999:20)

This shows again, as she notes, a shared development of English and Welsh towards a greater degree of analyticity (Tristram 1999:20). Juhani Klemola points out that this type of construction is typologically rare, thus the occurrence of a close parallel of this lack of subject-verb concord is remarkable. He suggests substratum interference from the Brythonic languages that used to be spoken in the areas where the NSR is presently attested (Klemola 2003:30f).

Graham Isaac, however, proposes a language internal explanation. According to him “the parallel, while typologically defensible, is historically illusory” (Isaac 2003:55). His approach considers the NSR to be a disambiguation strategy to compensate for the loss of inflectional diversity of the indicative present tense verbal paradigm (Isaac 2003:55). He gives the paradigm of the Old English present-indicative:

		strong/weak I	weak II	
sg.	1	-e	-ie	
	2	-(e)st	-ast	
	3	-(e)þ	-aþ	
pl.		-(a)þ	-iaþ	(Isaac 2003:55)

which in North Middle English is reduced to:

sg.	1	-(e)	
	2	-(e)s	
	3	-(e)s	
pl.		-(e)s	(Isaac 2003:56)

The loss of distinction between the singular and the plural is not problematic with noun subjects because most nouns are marked for number. Reductions in the pronoun system however give rise to ambiguity. In OE the subject pronouns ‘he, she, it, they’ were *hē, hēo, hit, hīe*. This distinctiveness was kept up in the Middle English stressed forms, whereas all the unstressed form eventually merged into *ha*. Thus, the OE distinction of *hē bindes* vs. *hīe bindas* was no longer present in the ME: *ha bindes* vs. *ha bindes*.

Isaac argues that this ambiguity was then resolved by using the subjunctive and preterite plural ending with present indicative verbs, producing *ha bindes* vs. *ha binde*, thus restoring distinctiveness (Isaac 2003:56).

He emphatically opposes language external explanations for this feature, stating that it was a natural development that gave rise to this ambiguity and a natural development as well for this ambiguity to be resolved, using structures already present in the language. He concludes:

The prehistory and history of the NSR can be formulated entirely in terms of the phonological, morphosyntactic and lexical development of English itself, without reference to Celtic languages of any variety. And since it can be so formulated, it must be so formulated. The NSR is no symptom of Celtic-English contact. Where did the NSR ‘come from’? It came from the history of English. (Isaac 2003:57).

An other contact-based explanation is offered by Theo Vennemann. He notes that English shares the NSR not only with Welsh, but also with the Semitic languages. This he includes in his general theory of the existence of a distinct Semitic substratum influence on the Insular Celtic languages (e.g. Vennemann 2000:404). Isaac acknowledges “typological parallels for this pattern in Afro-Asiatic languages” but continues that “this has absolutely no bearing on the present argument” (Isaac 2003:55).

David L. White agrees that a transfer from Brittonic into English would be unlikely for this feature and argues for a language contact explanation including Norse English instead. As with other Northern proposed Brittonicisms he sees the combination of Brittonic and Norse influence as crucial for a feature to become part of the Northern English language. This necessary combination, he argues, is the reason why almost all proposed Brittonicisms occur in the North (White 2002:158f).

White suggests a direct transfer of the Brittonic structure into Norse English, thus assuming a rather long survival of Brittonic in the North of England. This combination of Brittonic and Norse then led to the emergence of the NSR in the Northern dialects (White 2002:159).

To him, Norse influence is crucial in the retention of the distinctiveness of the verb endings of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural and singular. Indeed, they became the same for most verbs in the south, thereby making the Northern solution useless for the southern dialects (White 2002:159). He specifically dismisses Isaac's assumption that pronoun ambiguity should have played a role in the emergence of the NSR. White points out that vowel reduction in pronouns was a general process of Middle English, thus there was a general ambiguity of /h-/ pronouns for the 3<sup>rd</sup> singular and plural. To resolve this ambiguity, the Norse pronoun *they* was used for the 3<sup>rd</sup> plural. As in the North, the past tense verbal paradigms were reduced to only one form for all persons and numbers, *they* was used for disambiguation in the past tense. If a disambiguation would have become necessary in the present tense, this strategy from the past tense would have been available (White 2002:159).

So, he concludes, instead of assuming that the NSR arose as a disambiguation strategy, “[i]t seems better to posit simply this: the usual Brittonic rule was applied to Norse English. This would explain both why the NSR occurs in English at all, and why it occurs in the North” (White 2002:160).

Again, the issue is unlikely to be resolved very soon. As with other possible features of Celtic-English language contact interference, external influences may have reinforced trends already present in the language, or may have been the

crucial factor when it came to ‘deciding’ between conflicting language-internal trends.

#### 5.4 External vs. Internal Possessors

One feature in which the English language differs markedly from the other West Germanic languages is its possessor construction. Modern English uses noun phrase internal genitival possessors, as in (13), unlike, e.g., German, where an external possessor with the effected possessor expressed with a sympathetic dative is used as in (15). While the internal construction is uncommon in German, it is not strictly ungrammatical (16). English, on the other hand does not allow for external possessors at all, thereby making construction like (14) not possible (Vennemann 2002:3).

(13) *then someone gouged out his eyes* (Vennemann 2002:2)

(14) *\*then someone gouged him the eyes out* (Vennemann 2002:2)

(15) *Die Königin schlug ihm den Kopf ab.* (Tristram 1999:25)

lit. ‘the queen cut him the head off’

‘The queen cut his head off.’

(16) *Die Königin schlug des Königs Kopf ab.* (Vennemann 2002:3)

‘The queen cut off the king’s head.’

Here, Modern English has changed from its Old English source where both constructions were possible. The external construction however was still used more frequently (Vennemann 2002:5).

(17) *he cearf of heora handa ⁊ heora nosa* - 11<sup>th</sup> cent. (Vennemann 2002:6)

‘he cut off their hands and noses’

(18) *þa sticode him mon þa eagan ut* - 9<sup>th</sup> cent. (Vennemann 2002:5)

‘then someone gouged his eyes out’

In the progression from Middle English to Early Modern English the internal possessor became increasingly common, but constructions with the external dative possessor are still attested in Middle English (Vennemann 2002:6).

(19) *Hys legges hy corven of anon* - 14<sup>th</sup> cent. (Vennemann 2002:6)

‘They cut his legs off immediately’

(20) *And whan she saugh hir fader in the strete,*

*She lighte down, and falleth **him** to feete.* - 14<sup>th</sup> cent. (Vennemann 2002:6)

The demise of the external possessor with the sympathetic dative is generally attributed to the attrition of the English case system. Yet Theo Vennemann dismisses this explanation, noting that even in PDE, case distinctions are observed in some constructions.

(21) *Mary gave him the book.*

(22) \**Mary broke him the arm.* (Vennemann 2002:7)

(23) *Mary gave the book to him.*

(24) \**Mary broke the arm to him.* (Vennemann 2002:8)

A similar development would have been possible for the sympathetic dative as well, Vennemann asserts, concluding that “there was no need to give up the external possessor construction merely because morphological case distinctions eroded” (Vennemann 2002:9).

He also discounts the notion that the loss of the external possessor could be a naturally occurring phenomenon by pointing out that none of the other European languages underwent this change, and even worldwide, external possessors are extremely common (Vennemann 2002:17). Concerning the rare occurrences of internal possessors with the genitive in Old English, Vennemann considers Biblical Latin with its preference for internal possessors to be a possible influence. He does not, however, see it as the source for the eventual abolition of the external construction in English. Furthermore, he notes that numerous other European languages had contact with Biblical Latin without losing it (Vennemann 2002:17).

Hildegard Tristram draws attention to the results of König and Haspelmath’s research; in their work on Standard Average European they found the external possessor in the dative to be the standard construction in European languages

(Tristram 1999:25). Indeed, it is only Lezgian, Turkish, English, Welsh and Breton that do not use an external construction at all (Vennemann 2002:9).

As early as 1927 Julius Pokorny suggested that this feature was an areal development; Vennemann supports this view and speaks in favour of a twofold Celtic influence leading to the establishment of the internal construction in English. He points out that any substratum interference was reinforced further reinforcement due to contact of English with the Celtic languages which still continues until today (Vennemann 2002:9f). Indeed, the Celtic languages exhibit close parallels to the English construction:

Middle Welsh:

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

lit. 'cut.off the queen his head'

'The queen cut off his head.'

Modern Welsh:

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

lit. 'is he after breaking his arm'

'He has broken his arm.'

Old Irish:

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

lit. 'he.cut.off his head'

'He cut off his head.'

Vennemann agrees with Tristram by determining contact influences from the Insular Celtic languages as the most plausible explanation for the loss of the external possessor construction in English (Vennemann 2002:17). It should be noted however, that even if a plausible explanation for a feature can be identified, developments need not be monocausal. Contact influence from Celtic languages and internally motivated developments caused by case attrition may well have reinforced each other.

## 5.5 Periphrastic *do*

One of the features of English that is commonly mentioned as a possible candidate for contact interference with Celtic languages is the periphrastic construction with *do*.

It can be seen as a relatively late development but it is now fully integrated into the English language. Johan Van der Auwera and Inge Genee give a description of the use of constructions with periphrastic *do* in modern English, distinguishing three subtypes. The earliest attestations for this type of constructions are quoted by Juhani Klemola in his 2002 paper.

Negation:

(28) *Roland did not sound his horn.* (Van der Auwera and Genee 2002:286)

(28a) *that were grete vnryzte,* |

*To aventour oppon a man þat with hym did nat fi3te.* (Klemola 2002:199)

‘that would-be great wrong |

to venture against a man that with one did not fight.’ c.1460

Interrogation:

(29) *Did Roland sound his horn?* (Van der Auwera and Genee 2002:286)

(29a) *How dost þow, harlot, þyn erand bede?* (Klemola 2002:199)

‘How do you rascal your message deliver?’ c.1380

Emphasis:

(30) *Roland did sound his horn.* (Van der Auwera and Genee 2002:286)

(30a) *His sclauyn he dude dun legge.* (Klemola 2002:199)

‘He laid down his pilgrim’s cloak.’ c.1300

Although in none of these cases, a clear meaning can be assigned to *do*, it is obvious that it is an obligatory particle nonetheless (Van der Auwera and Genee 2002:285).

Parallels to the English constructions have been noted in all of the surviving Celtic languages. Van der Auwera and Genee state that *do* periphrasis is indeed

very common in the Celtic languages, where it combines with the verbal noun instead of the infinitive (Van der Auwera and Genee 2002:288).

In his 2001 paper, Erich Poppe draws attention to what is probably the earliest suspicion of the possibility of Celtic influence on Present Day English. W. F. Edwards mentions in his 1844 “Recherches sur les Langues Celtiques » a similarity of a number of constructions in the Celtic languages and English (Poppe 2001:313).

Edwards sees the English use of ‘to do’ as an auxiliary for active verbs as a singular anomaly amongst the languages of Europe but states that this is closely paralleled by the Breton construction (Poppe 2001:313).

Breton:

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

Old Irish:

(32) *dogéantar 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:

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

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

‘I’ll read’ (Tristram 1997:406)

Gary German, arguing for a Brittonic origin of the English construction gives examples from Middle Welsh, e.g.:

(34) *ymdidian a wnaethont*

‘converse (is) what they did’ (German 2001:132)

He presumes that this is based on an (unattested<sup>1</sup>) form like

(35) *\*ys ymdidan a wnaethont* ‘

it is speak that they did’ (German 2001:132)

<sup>1</sup> He concedes that *ys* (IS) is unattested before verbal nouns (German 2001:132).



eventually leading to forms like

- (36) *\*ys ef a wnaeth mynd*  
 ‘it is he who did go’

which he supposes to be the hypothetical ancestor to such Modern Welsh constructions as:

- (37) *fe naeth ef mynd*  
 ‘he did go’ (lit. he did-he go)

He sees traces of a construction like (36) in the Middle Welsh contraction of the copula and the pronoun of the third person masculine: YS + EF → SEF which is frequently employed in Middle Welsh texts.

- (38) *Sef a wnaeth Arthur kyudi a mynet kymryt kynghor.*  
 lit. ‘It.is.he who did Arthur arise and go to.take counsel’  
 ‘What Arthur did was to arise and take counsel.’

By the Middle Welsh period the semantic content of *sef* was no longer analysed, thus the subject, *Arthur*, is placed behind the verb. German then draws a connection between sentences of this type and periphrastic *do* in PDE, seeing in it a “word-for-word calque on Brittonic (ex. NP + DO + INF)” (German 2001:132-133).

Van der Auwera and Genee draw attention to the fact that periphrastic *do* does have parallels in a number of dialects of Germanic languages. They quote an example from Hessian German:

- (39) *Isch deed’s ned mache.*  
 ‘I wouldn’t do it.’ (Van der Auwera and Genee 2002:286)

Other possible examples come from dialects of Dutch and Frisian. They point out that similar constructions may arise independently of contact with Celtic languages (Van der Auwera and Genee 2002:287)<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> It has, however been suggested, that Celtic substratum influence may indeed be the cause of similar constructions in Coastal Dutch as well as Southern German (Klemola 2002:208).

The general approach towards an explanation of the origins of periphrastic *do* in English is that it evolved from a construction consisting of causative *do* and an infinitive. This construction is attested as early as AD 1255:

(40) *Dis hali mihte ðe dieð ilieuen ðat ...*

‘this holy virtue that causes believe that ...’ (Klemola 2002:205).

The traditional approach then assumes a reinterpretation of this structure that left *do* essentially as a dummy auxiliary, without semantic content. An example from c.1400 shows how such a reinterpretation could occur:

(41) *Henry ...| þe walles did down felle, þe tours bette he down.*

‘Henry ...| the walls he ‘did’ down fell, the towers beat he down.’ (Klemola 2002:205)

It is argued that in (41) the reinterpretation occurred due to the ambiguity of *did* as either a verb meaning ‘to cause’, or as an auxiliary conveying past tense. This then is seen as the starting point for the general use of periphrastic *do* (Klemola 2002:206).

Van der Auwera and Genee agree to the possibility of this causative origin, but add that it may not be the solitary cause. They then set out to discuss a number of hypotheses involving contact with the Celtic languages (Van der Auwera and Genee 2002:293). They distinguish between the idea that language contacts in general cause a rise of periphrastic constructions and the idea that specific Celtic features may have been transferred to English (Van der Auwera and Genee 2002:295).

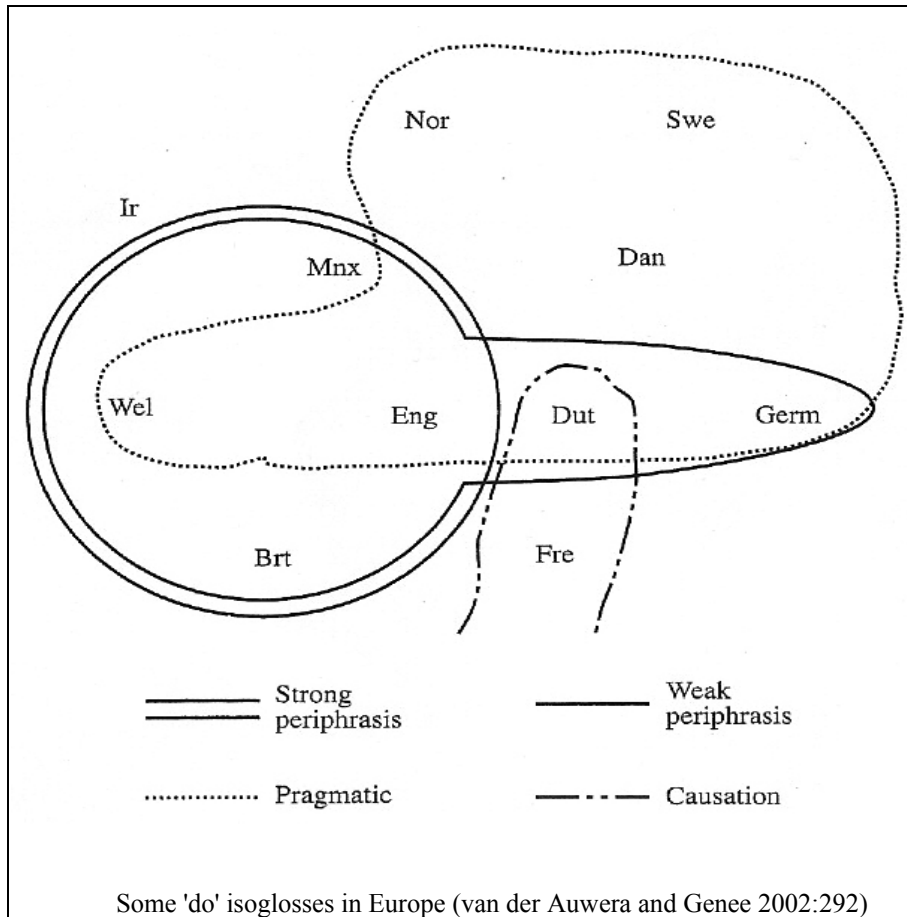
On the basis of its present geographical distribution, Juhani Klemola suggests that periphrastic *do* originated in the South West, roughly West Wiltshire and East Somerset, then gradually spreading out from there (Klemola 2002:200f). This he sees confirmed by written attestations in late Middle English and early Modern English that indicate a South Western origin of periphrastic *do* as well. From there, it spread out into other English dialects “as a consequence of the growing influence of the Southern standard from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards” (Klemola 2002:204f).

Although periphrastic *do* is attested in writing only in Middle English, Klemola does not rule out the possibility of earlier Celtic influence, allowing for a delay of several centuries between the contact influence and attestation in writing. He argues that contact influence with Celtic may be “a factor in explaining the origin of periphrastic *do* in English” (Klemola 2002:207f).

Molyneux agrees that a Celtic origin for *do* periphrasis is probable because it does not only have parallels in Welsh, Breton and Cornish, but also because it is more common in the Celtic Englishes than in Standard English (Molyneux 1987:86).

Patricia Poussa, notes that language-contact situations frequently cause the rise of auxiliaries. Contact between English and Celtic is supposed to have been strongest in the West of England, where, indeed, the first occurrences of *do* periphrasis are attested, the East lagging behind by roughly a century (Poussa 1990:411ff). She goes on to claim that this language contact caused the rise of *do* with habitual meaning which then, losing its habitual connotation, was established in English (Poussa 1990:424).

This hypothesis is rejected by Van der Auwera and Genee for reasons of textual attestation as well as the general development of this form (Van der Auwera and Genee 2002:297).



These isoglosses show English siding with Welsh rather than with the other Germanic languages in its implementation of *do*. Van der Auwera and Genee agree with the theory of mutual reinforcement expressed by Tristram. They emphasize that the assumption of mutual reinforcement is not rendered implausible by differences in the realisation of periphrastic *do* in the Celtic languages and English (Van der Auwera and Genee 2002:298). This view is in accord with the framework offered by Thomason that notes that complete identity of features is not necessary to allow the conclusion of contact interference (Thomason 1988:63).

Tristram argues for a parallel rise of the *do* periphrasis in English and the insular Celtic languages, here the focus lying on Welsh (Tristram 1997: 413). She states that, instead of claiming “that periphrastic *DO* in the South West of England and in Irish English are immediately related through the influence from Celtic sources, I would, indeed see a connection between the rise of the whole pattern of the *DO* periphrasis as such in the later Middle Ages, both in English and in the P-Celtic languages. [...] Each language then developed this pattern according to its own structural constraints and communicational needs” (Tristram 1997:414f).

She also links the rise of periphrastic *do* to the general rise of periphrastic aspect that she argues to be due to contact interference from Late British (Tristram *fc.*:8). Tristram points out that, the construction of (VN + *a* + *gwneuthur*) as in (34) and (37) was extremely common in Middle Welsh (Tristram *fc.*:12).

Van der Auwera and Genee summarise that “a direct Celtic, more specifically Brythonic, influence of periphrastic ‘do’ on English periphrastic *do* is at least possible. The hypothesis is certainly not absurd, but there is no direct evidence to prove or disprove it. [...] We think that the present state of the available evidence and methods of analysis, including areal–typological analysis, warrants the conclusion that influence of Brythonic periphrastic ‘do’ on English periphrastic *do* is likely. We do not, however, commit ourselves to the view that Celtic influence is the only factor” (Van der Auwera and Genee 2002:299,302).

## 5.6 The Expanded Form

One feature of the English language that has been frequently remarked as untypical for a Germanic language is the so called progressive, formed with the *-ing* form of a verb. In his 2002 paper Poppe suggests the usage of the term ‘expanded form’ as a functionally neutral label rather than ‘progressive’ because the latter “already implies a rather specific functional range for the construction in question” (Poppe 2002:237). This terminology will be applied here as well.

Different approaches have been considered to explain the modern English expanded form (EF), usually assuming either an independent internal

development of English or external influence from Latin, Greek or French. Some scholars have noted constructions in the Insular Celtic languages that exhibit remarkable similarities both in form as well as in their functional range (Filppula 2003<sup>b</sup>:151).

The modern English EF is constructed with an inflected form of *to be* and the *-ing* form of a verb. It is thus a non-finite analytic construction, differing from the finite uses of a verb. Thus:

(42) *I was crossing the street when I noticed her.*

(43) *I crossed the street when I noticed her.* (Elsness 1994:5)

Here, obviously, the two forms are semantically different. In his description of the functional range of the modern English, Johan Elsness summarises the current view on the functional ranges of the English EF. While its main focus lies on the image of imperfectivity it conveys, it fulfills three basic functions. The EF expresses duration, it indicates that a duration is limited and it indicates that an action not necessarily completed (Elsness 1994:6). Its importance in framing constructions is mentioned by Poppe who defines these as constructions “in which the clause with the expanded form provides the temporal frame for the activity or event of another clause which is thus temporally contained within the framing clause. The activity or event of the framing clause is viewed as being of unspecified duration” (Poppe 2002:239).

The origins of the Modern English EF are not as unproblematic to establish as its present form. Two different forms have been suggested as the formal ancestor, but current consensus appears to be that the modern EF is not so much a continuation of one of these forms but rather a merger of both. The Old English constructions are: firstly a combination of ‘*wesan/beon*’ with the present participle in *-ende* as in (44) and a form combining ‘*be*’ with a preposition and a nominal form in *-ing/-ung*, e.g. (45) (Poppe 2003:12).

(44) *hie simle feahtende wæran* (Molyneux 1987:85)

‘they were fighting’

(45) *ic wæs on huntunze* (Elsness 1994:7)

‘I was hunting’

Over the Middle English period, the ending of the present participle changed from *-ende* to *-ing*, and the preposition *on* was reduced first to *a* and then disappeared completely (Poppe 2003:13). This then led to a merger of both forms over such Middle English constructions as:

(46) *He was a-hunting.* (Elsness 1994:8)

So, the modern EF does not continue a single construction but has a formally and functionally mixed background as the OE constructions each appear to have had a different functional focus. With this construction, English is the only Germanic language where the EF comes from a merger of a verbal noun and a participial construction with preposition (Filppula 2003<sup>b</sup>:151). The development of the EF can be seen as a part of the general trend from synthetic towards analytic construction in the English language. This trend has frequently been linked to contact with Celtic languages, so it is worthwhile to take a look at the other Germanic languages to establish whether forms similar to the English construction occur. The existence of close formal and functional parallels in other Germanic languages would point to an internal rather than an externally influenced development.

As it turns out, there are indeed forms that are somewhat parallel to the English construction in other Germanic languages. In Old Norse e.g., a form similar to the OE constructions exists, although it is, as Poppe points out, rather rare:

(47) *hon er her nu komande at ræða við yðr* (Poppe 2003:3)  
 ‘she is now coming here to talk to you’

Looking at the modern Germanic languages, a parallel construction is found in Icelandic (48), Dutch (49), and the Rhineland dialect of German (50):

(48) *ég er að lesa* (Poppe 2003:3)  
 ‘I am reading’

(49) *Ze is aan het koken.* (Poppe 2003:10)

‘She is cooking.’

(50) *Ich bin die Zeitung am lesen.* (Poppe 2003:10)

‘I am reading the paper.’

As Markku Filppula points out, these constructions were already discounted by Wolfgang Keller in 1925 as not being really parallel to the English form because they use the infinitive rather than a verbal noun or participle (Filppula 2003<sup>b</sup>:151). Poppe notes that the Icelandic form is most similar to Middle Welsh and Middle English as it has a duality of processivity and expressivity, expressing duration and adding emphasis respectively. He summarises that most Germanic languages or dialects seem to have, at some point in their development, ‘experimented’ with periphrastic progressives (Poppe 2003:3f). Although constructions with ‘to be’ and the present participle were theoretically available, those languages that have similar expanded forms realise them by means of a prepositional construction. Poppe draws attention to a possible parallel for the historical rise and expansion of the English EF in the current spread of the Rhineland progressive into general German colloquial language, suggesting a similar development for English (Poppe 2003:12).

The possibility of external influence from Latin and Medieval French on the development of the English EF has been discounted by a number of authors for practical as well as systematic reasons. Cyril Molyneux draws attention to the small numbers of actual speakers of Latin or Medieval French in England that severely limits the possibility of structural interference (as opposed to lexical influence) (Molyneux 1987:88f). Furthermore, as Filppula points out, the French influence is assumed to have come from the gerundial participle with the suffix *-ant*, as in *en chantant*. Thus, it should have reinforced the OE participial forms in *-ende/-ande*, but instead the *-ing* form came to be the dominant model (Filppula 2003<sup>b</sup>:154). He also refers to Gerhard Nickel who discounts the suggestion of Latin influence, showing that in Old English the EF does not primarily occur in formal style but rather in untranslated texts, there assuming the role of ‘vivid descriptions’. This speaks against a transmission from formal Latin into English, suggesting a colloquial source instead (Filppula 2003<sup>b</sup>:151).



Poppe draws attention to what is probably the earliest suspicion of Celtic influence on the English construction. In 1844 W. F. Edwards noted a similarity in the function of the infinitive between Celtic and English, namely its triple use as substantive, adjective and verb. He concluded that the source for these similarities cannot lie in the Germanic languages but that the English must have acquired them from the language of the Britons, their ancestors (Poppe 2001:313).

A number of scholars have commented on the fact that what has been termed the ‘progressive’ in English is indeed an unusual feature for a Germanic language. Also, the Celtic languages appear to employ constructions that closely parallel the English EF, thus reinforcing the suspicion that some form of linguistic contact between English and the Celtic languages might be the cause for the occurrence of this feature (e.g. Tristram 1999:22f). 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 give a number of samples from the modern Insular Celtic languages:

(51) Welsh: *Mae Mair yn canu.*

‘Mary sings/is singing.’

(52) Breton: *Emaint o c’hoari kartoù.*

‘They are playing cards.’

(53) Cornish: *Yma hi ow prena hy losow.*

‘She is buying her vegetables.’

(54) Irish: *Tá Máire ag scríobh na litreach.*

‘Mary is writing the letter.’

(55) Scot. Gael. *Tha Iain a’ leughadh.*

‘Iain is reading.’

(56) Manx: *Ta mee g-ee.* (Mittendorf and Poppe 2000:118)

‘I am eating/ eat.’

as well as from Old Irish:

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

‘the druid was watching the stars’

Gary German notes that “the existence of the expanded form (IN/AT/ON > atonic preverbal particle A- + BE + VN) in both the Brittonic languages and in English is [...] striking” (German 2001:137). He also draws attention to a similar construction in Breton French that he presumes to have developed under Breton influence :

(58) *Elle est à laver le linge.* (Filppula 2003<sup>b</sup>:165).

‘She is washing clothes.’

Apart from their formal similarities, the Celtic and English constructions also share a similar functional range. As Cyril Molyneux points out, they share the aspect distinction between progressives and simple forms (Molyneux 1987:85). Gary German confirms the semantic similarities in between the Breton and Middle English forms (German 2001:137). Discussing the Middle Welsh forms, Mittendorf and Poppe point out the similarity of their functional range to the English EF. On the one hand, Middle Welsh periphrastic progressives can be used in frame constructions, on the other hand, they also convey an image of processivity “that is, a dynamic state which is presented as a series of identical intervals without a defined beginning or end” (Mittendorf and Poppe 2000:138f). These processes can be seen as either continuing up to the present, as having present relevance or as carrying future reference (Mittendorf and Poppe 2000:139). Also, the expanded form can be used for the pragmatic or stylistic effect of emphasis or highlighting. Mittendorf and Poppe summarise the findings of Ó Corráin on the Early Irish progressive forms, stating that it has three typical functions: the framing of an action, description of a situation beginning in the past and continuing to present and the expression of habituality (Mittendorf and Poppe 2000:137). Poppe stresses that all these constructions convey an imperfective meaning (Poppe 2002:251).

Concerning the question of where these forms first appeared, Filppula refers to the findings of Patricia Ronan and Poppe summarises that a clear chronological precedence in the Celtic languages can be established against their English

counterparts. But, as he points out, this does not exclude the possibility of two-way adstrata influences between English and Celtic (Filppula et al. 2002:17).

The areal distribution of these periphrastic progressive constructions is interesting insofar as, according to Filppula, its distribution is suggestive of “an adstratal development in English and the Celtic languages, which is particularly prominent in the various ‘contact Englishes’ and their neighbouring dialects” (Filppula 2004:181). Already in 1959, Heinrich Wagner drew attention to similarities in the linguistic area of the British isles. He suggested the term ‘North European linguistic area’, pointing out parallels in the periphrastic constructions and suggesting an areal rather than genetic origin of these features (Filppula 2003<sup>b</sup>:158).

From what is known about the historical background of the language contact situation on the British Isles, Celtic influence on the development of the English EF cannot be ruled out *a priori*, since, as Molyneux emphasizes, “English speakers came into contact with large numbers of Celtic speakers from the earliest period of English history” (Molyneux 1987:88f). Filppula notes that language shift situations in general are supportive of syntactical influences of this form (Filppula 2003<sup>b</sup>:168).

Summarising their examination of the constructions in the Celtic languages, Mittendorf and Poppe point out that “in addition to the striking formal similarities between the Insular Celtic and English periphrastic constructions, striking similarities also exist between their functional ranges in the medieval languages” (Mittendorf and Poppe 2000:139). Graham Isaac, however stresses that the English and the Celtic progressives differ in their actual constructions. While the Celtic progressives are of the form: BE (+ SUBJECT) + PREP + VERBAL NOUN, the English construction is SUBJECT + BE + PARTICIPLE. Thus, he sees them, while functionally similar, as “two entirely different, entirely distinct constructions” (Isaac 2003:59).

Isaac also does not see the functional similarities of the progressives as indicative of contact. As he puts it: “they may turn out to be identical, but I would assume that that is simply because that is what the category ‘progressive’ is and

does, wherever it occurs” (Isaac 2003:58). Only if the progressives would exhibit shared and unusual properties, not present in other languages the suggestion of language contact interference would be justified. But, as he points out, “progressives formed from locative constructions are found in languages world-wide, and that is exactly what the Celtic constructions, with their verbal nouns dependent on various locative prepositions, are” (Isaac 2003:58f).

Poppe points out that all the Germanic languages seem to have the potential for periphrastic progressives and most languages or dialects have at least ‘experimented’ with them, but it has become fully grammaticalised only in English, Icelandic and the Rhineland dialect of German. Furthermore, it is only in English that the construction is based on a merger of a participial and prepositional progressive with verbal noun (Filppula 2003<sup>b</sup>:158). Filppula states that the functional and formal parallels between English and Welsh are much closer than those with Latin or any suggested Dutch and German construction. Thus, the Celtic languages provide the most plausible external source of possible influence on the English EF (Filppula 2003<sup>b</sup>:158ff).

An other indicator speaking for influence from the Celtic languages is the chronological precedence of the Celtic constructions that is considered by Filppula to be “beyond any reasonable doubt” (Filppula 2003<sup>b</sup>:168). This is in line with the findings that the medieval Celtic languages are generally more advanced in their development towards analyticity than English. The EF is an excellent example of an analytic construction, so its later occurrence in English is not surprising (Filppula 2003<sup>b</sup>:160).

The main feature of the medieval Celtic constructions was imperfectivity, which was not yet as strongly established in the OE construction so, “any semantic influence on English expanded forms from Insular Celtic would probably be along the lines of imperfectivity” (Poppe 2002:260).

Poppe considers a contact explanation to be possible because of the length of Celtic English linguistic contact, but does not necessarily see it as the only cause, stating that “external influences may have reinforced existing linguistic options” (Poppe 2003:20). While Filppula et al. assert that “some degree of Celtic

influence is prerequisite to an explanation of the Modern English continuous tense system” (Filppula et al. 2002:12), either through direct or indirect contact influence, Poppe concedes that it is indeed difficult to exclude the possibility of two-way influences between English and Celtic reinforcing a trend towards analyticity in both languages (Filppula 2003<sup>b</sup>:168).

All in all, no definite conclusion is likely to be reached anytime soon, but again the evidence appears to be pointing towards a multicausal origin with influence from the Celtic languages as at least a definite possibility.

## 5.7 Varia

Here, a number of ‘smaller’ features will be examined.

### 5.7.1 The definite article

Late British used the indeclinable definite article *ir* to express definiteness of noun phrases, late Old English used *ðe/the*, thus, according to Tristram “the indeclinable form very much looks like a calque from Late British usurped from native material” (Tristram 2002<sup>b</sup>:136).

Filppula sees a possible case in the use of the definite article in situations where the indefinite or zero article would be expected. Examples he gives include the names of ‘domestic institutions’: *be in/go to the school/church/hospital*, as well as names for diseases and languages, e.g. *the measles* or *to learn the English*. He assumes a mixed heritage for these cases, with some of them being due to Celtic influences, with others originating from English, either in dialects or earlier forms of the language (Filppula 2004:181). Concluding, he indicates two different adstratal relations as origins for this feature namely, “between English and the Celtic languages, on the one hand, and between the various dialects of English spoken in the British Isles on the other” (Filppula 2004:183). Presuming an Irish

influence for the origin of this development, Mencken points out its employment in the English language in America (Mencken 1936:161).

### 5.7.2 Genitival groups

An other feature where the modern English language differs markedly from its Germanic cousins is in construction of group genitives, where the genitive marker is placed at the end of a noun phrase instead of the actual possessor noun as in:

(59) *He married the king of England's daughter.* (Allen 1997:112)

This appears to be a rather recent development, so with the Middle English construction:

(60) *The Wiu-es Tale of Bath* (Tristram 1999:26)

leading to Modern English:

(61) *The Wife of Bath's Tale* (Tristram 1999:26)

Allen suggests that this is due to gradual changes setting in around the Middle English period, suspecting that “the increase in syncretism led to the reanalysis of *-es* as a clitic” (Allen 1997). Tristram draws attention to the similarity of Welsh constructions where likewise the definite article governs the whole genitival group, not the individual constituents (Tristram 1999:26).

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

Again, language contact influence from Welsh on the development of the English form cannot be ruled out completely. It could either be speculated to be a direct transmission of a feature, or it could have been triggered through the increase in analyticity that again is possibly influenced by linguistic contacts.

### 5.7.3 ‘To go’ as copula

Gerard Visser points out that English and Welsh share a parallel in the possibility to use a verb with the meaning of ‘to go’ to assume the function of the copula. In Welsh, this construction uses the verb *mynet* ‘to go’:

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

‘and because of this Kyledyr went mad’

He notes that a similar construction Irish, using the verb *téigh* ‘to go’:

- (64) *Téighim ar buile.* (Visser 1955:293)  
 ‘I go mad.’

Concerning the origin of the English construction he concludes that, because of its relative frequency in Welsh, “the assumption of Welsh influence will not seem rash” (Visser 1955:293).

#### 5.7.4 Preposition stranding

While English prepositions usually precede their complements, there are cases where the preposition is left ‘stranded’ at the end of the sentence.

- (65) Main clause: *We sat down on the rock.*  
 (66) Relative clause: *the rock we sat down on* (Isaac 2003:47)

Tristram notes that this construction has a parallel in Welsh, thus making it a potential candidate for language contact interference (Tristram 1999:23f):

- (67) Main clause: *Eisteddon ni ar y garreg.* (Isaac 2003:48)  
 sat.1<sup>st</sup>Pl we on the rock  
 (68) Relative clause: *y garreg eisteddon ni arni* (Isaac 2003:48)  
 the rock sat.1<sup>st</sup>Pl we on-her

According to Graham Isaac, preposition stranding is not a feature of Celtic contact in English because it does not even exist in the Celtic languages. He stresses that “[t]he English construction with isolated prepositions could not be more foreign to Celtic syntax” (Isaac 2003:47). To be an exact formal parallel, he argues that an English construction should be of the form:

- (69) \*the rock<sub>i</sub> we sat down on it<sub>i</sub> (Isaac 2003:48).

The dissimilarity of these sentences shows, according to Isaac, that they “are therefore no evidence of linguistic contact between English and Celtic” (Isaac

2003:48). He concedes that this type of construction does indeed occur in the Celtic Englishes, as would be expected from varieties whose Celtic influence is proven beyond reasonable doubt.

#### 5.7.5 Pronouns

In their 2002 paper, Filppula et al. draw attention to a possible Celtic influence on the pronoun system of English that was first pointed out by Wagner in 1958 (Filppula et al. 2002:16). They note the phonetic similarity of the Old Irish and Manx forms of the personal pronoun in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular feminine, *sí* /ʃi:/ to the Modern English *she*. They assume that this feature was then spread via the Norse settlers in the North, hence its first attestations in Northern texts (Filppula et al. 2002:16f).



## 6. Phonology

Following the approach of Thomason, we would expect visible substratum influence if a substantial number of speakers shifts from their native language towards a new one. This substratum influence should be especially visible in the phonology of their L2. Thus, if we assume that a substantial number of Britons survived and shifted into English, evidence for this shift should ideally be visible in the phonology of English (Thomason 2001:75).

As Jackson puts it, however, the prevailing theory is that “the natives learned Anglo-Saxon thoroughly and accurately, so accurately that they had to mangle their own names to suit the new language, rather than the new language to suit their own sound-system” (cited in Coates *fc.*:16). Indeed, he insists that “[i]t is impossible to point to any feature about Anglo-Saxon phonology which can be shown conclusively to be a modification due to the alien linguistic habits of the Britons [...] they must have learned the new phonology very completely” (cited in Coates *fc.*:16).

Richard Coates agrees to this, stressing that those features of pronunciation that set English apart from the continental Germanic languages can not be explained as originating from Celtic. He concedes, however, that certain features of regional variants of English may indeed suggest Brittonic influence (Coates *fc.*:19).

A counterargument to this is given by Peter Schrijver who argues that the consonantal systems of Brittonic and early West Germanic offered ‘close counterparts’ for each other’s consonantal phonemes, “including the fricatives *f*, *θ*, *χ*, *v*, *ð*, *ɣ*, no sound substitutions are to be expected in the speech of Brittonic speakers who shifted to West Germanic. Hence, if we are searching for a Brittonic substratum in Old English, the best result we can hope to find is pretty close to what we actually have found” (Schrijver 2002:105).

He argues for strong substratum influence of ‘Northwestern Romance’ (as he terms the successor of British Latin) on the Brittonic language spoken in the

British Highland Zones, but considers the Anglo-Saxon dialects to be less influenced by either Brittonic or Northwestern Romance, because they retained their distinctive vowel quantities as well as the Germanic stress system (Schrijver 2002:109).

Raymond Hickey notes that the adoption of phonetic speech habits does not have to have immediate influence on a language, but may trigger deeper, far-reaching changes, e.g. in the morphology of a language (Hickey 1995:115).

He suggests that the British language may have exerted substratum influence on Old English. He argues that British lenition of unstressed consonants and reduction of vowels in unstressed syllables was carried over into the phonology of Old English, thereby accelerating “any tendency to phonetic opacity and attrition in unstressed syllables which may have been present in the existing varieties of the language leading ultimately to changes in morphology” (Hickey 1995:87).

Hickey sees this influence primarily in the area of low-level, non-distinctive phenomena, such as in e.g. allophonic realisations, phonetic reductions and mergers that paved the way to phonetic blurring and ultimately the loss of unstressed syllables (Hickey 1995:108f). Features of English which he attributes to Celtic influence include e.g. the loss of unstressed short vowels in English (in contrast to, e.g., German in which they are still present) or the English tendency to diphthongise long vowels which is absent in German. In the area of unstressed prefixes, he attributes the attrition of the Old English unstressed prefix *ge-* /gə/, that was first blurred towards /ɪ/ and subsequently lost to vowel reduction, as triggered or reinforced by Celtic influence (Hickey 1995:113). The unstressed nasal in e.g. OE *on slæpe*, lit. ‘on sleep’, were lost, while the phonetically similar prefix *un-* survived. He sees reasons that this is due to a degree of phonetic overlap between these two prefixes, triggered by British Celtic influence and resolved by eventual loss of the prefix *on-* (Hickey 1995:114).

In his 2002 paper, Stephen Laker proposes a Brittonic substratum influence for the change of *kw-* and *hw-* towards  $\chi w-$  in northern English dialects of OE. He argues that since Old Welsh had neither *kw-*, nor *hw-*, Brittonic shifters to English

substituted both of them with the closest approximation present in their original language, namely  $\chi w$ .

Laker dismisses the traditional explanation of Norse contact influence in the Danelaw, since at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century this sound change was attested in southern dialects as well (Laker 2002:191). Although this has not become a feature of Standard English, it is nonetheless important as the theory of Brittonic substratal influence on PDE is frequently dismissed due to the absence of any phonological interference from Brittonic that such substratum interference would entail.

In contrast, to the debate on phonological visibility of Celtic influence in Standard English, Celtic influences on the phonology of the Celtic Englishes are rather unproblematic to establish. An example for these is what Raymond Hickey calls the word-final ‘clear’ /l/ instead of the usual realisation as the velarised lateral alveolar approximant /ɫ/.

This feature is common to Hiberno English, Highland English, Island English as well as the southern dialects of Welsh English, that mirror closely the phonetic realisation of the relevant Celtic substratum languages (Filppula et al. fc.:4f).

One possible aspect of Celtic influence in English phonology was already pointed out by Tolkien in his 1963 lecture “English and Welsh” where he noted that of all Germanic languages, English was the only one not only to have preserved /θ/, which, as he noted also occurs in Icelandic, but also /w/. While remaining cautious in determining a cause for this phenomenon, he remarked that “[i]t may at least be noted that Welsh also makes abundant use of these two sounds” (Tolkien 1983:178). While Tristram does not discuss this feature any further, she notes this to be a possible candidate as well (Tristram 2002<sup>a</sup>:272).

Among other features, David L. White suggests that Brittonic influence was responsible for the absence of /æ/ in Middle English, which came about through a temporary rise in status and influence of Brittonic-influenced south western dialects of English, where, even today /æ/ and /a/ are not contrastive (White:fc.:42). He also states that Modern English shares the use of central

vowels instead of front round vowels with medieval Brittonic, suggesting that this is an areal feature (White:fc.:43f).

## 6.1 Interdental Fricatives

In her influential 1999 paper, Hildegard Tristram draws attention to the retention of both the voiced and the voiceless interdental fricatives (/θ/ and /ð/) in English as well as in Welsh. She notes that both the voiced and voiceless realisations were present in common Germanic as well as the insular Celtic languages but only English and Welsh were to keep both variants. This distinction is exemplified in English e.g. by the minimal pair *thigh* vs. *thy* and Welsh *oeth* ‘easy’ vs. *oedd* ‘was’. Tristram attributes this shared feature of English and Welsh to mutual language contact influence (Tristram 2002<sup>a</sup>:260).

Tristram also addresses the warning voiced by Graham Isaac against interpreting this as a contact feature by pointing out that the prevalent wave hypothesis of spreading innovations being diagnostic does not account for the shared retention of old features which she considers to be equally diagnostic.

In response, Graham Isaac reinforces his rejection of this hypothesis as it “ignores [...] the principle of differentiating strictly between archaisms and innovations” (Isaac 2003:50), admitting only shared innovations as diagnostic evidence for language contact (Isaac 2003:53).

Surveying the European languages, he shows that a number of these languages, acquired these sounds at one point in their development, while others did not. In the long run, most central European languages that did acquire them lost the dental spirants again, leaving only Welsh, English, Icelandic, Faroese, Iberian Romance, Sardinian, southern Italian, Greek, Albanian and, until its eventual death, Cornish.

He contrasts a central, innovating block of continental Germanic, losing its dental spirants due to language contact with, e.g., Romance and Slavic, with a marginal, non-innovative area on its fringes. The notion of areal convergence

between English and Welsh on this feature is discounted, to him “[i]t is not a symptom of Celtic-English contact” (Isaac 2003:52f).

## 6.2 Retroflex /r/

Another feature noted by Tristram as a possible case of British Celtic influence in Present Day English is the realisation of /r/ as the retroflex approximant /ɻ/. While this feature is absent in the area of the historical Danelaw, it is present in Ireland, south western Scotland, the south western variants of English and in the Treguier dialect of northern Brittany. The Treguier Breton retroflex /r/ does not appear to be a recent development, rather standard Breton has changed from retroflex approximant to uvular trill under French influence. Tristram attributes the appearance of this feature in SW English to Brittonic substratum influence (Breton being a descendant of Brittonic), with the discontinuity of its spread in north western England being due to Norse suppressive influence in the Danelaw (Tristram 1999:36). It is this pronunciation of /r/ that, as David White notes, is the prevalent one in the North American variants of English (White *fc.*:46f).

## 6.3 Influence in American English

Writing in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, H.L. Mencken notes that while the amount of loans in American English taken over from Irish-Gaelic is relatively small despite the numbers of Irish immigrants in America, there are “certain speech habits that the Irish brought with them – habits of pronunciation, of syntax, and even of grammar.” He ascribes these to “efforts to translate the idioms of Gaelic into English” (Mencken 1936:160) as well as archaisms in the variant of English used by the Irish newcomers reinforcing the American tendency for conservatism in speech. Indeed, he describes the speech of the Irish newcomers as stemming from Jacobean times. Examples for such forms include “*h’ist* for *hoist*, *bile* for *boil*, *chaw* for *chew*, *jine* for *join* [and] *sass* for *sauce*” (Mencken 1936:161).

## 7. Celtic Words and Names in English

Words from Celtic languages can be found in almost all spheres of the English language. This phenomenon ranges from first names and surnames to names of places, to common nouns and even a number of verbs. There is, however, no general consensus on how large the Celtic contribution to the English lexicon actually is, and whether it is smaller than one would expect or merely not yet fully recognised.

This chapter summarises the main theories concerning the acquisition of Celtic words into the English language. Although the most important lexical loans are listed, these lists are by no means comprehensive. Multiple etymologies are proposed for a large number of items, and even the origins of some ‘clear cases’ are now debated. The matter is complicated further by the question of which items to include, as numerous loan words once existed in the English language but have by now become extinct or at least archaic. Some are now only to be found in regional varieties, while other regional terms never entered ‘Standard English’.

Terms that show Celtic influence only so far as that they denote concepts relating to Celts or Celtic Studies, e.g. *Brythonic*, *Celticist*, *Celtomania* and so forth are excluded as well. The focus of this chapter will lie on lexical items that are used in the standard variety of Present Day English.

As with most areas of possible Celtic influence, a fierce debate has been led as to whether such an influence was possible at all. The concept of Celtic words surviving in English was linked to the survival of Celts after the Anglo-Saxon conquest. The received view of the *adventus saxonum* states that no Britons survived in what was later to become England. Thus, they could not have left a lexical impression. This theory found apparent proof in the lack of borrowings from the British language with the result that – to complete the circular argument – possible Celtic etymologies were dismissed in favour of rather dubious English based explanations or the labels ‘obscure’ and ‘unknown’.

## 7.1 Loanwords

While Celtic influence in toponymics is today largely undisputed, the Celtic contribution to English lexis is still discussed. The traditional view that virtually no Celtic loanwords were taken into English has come to be challenged by recent publications. In his 1921 study on Celtic Words in English Max Förster identified a small number of Old English loans from Brythonic and some possible loans from Old Irish, less than two dozen in all, dismissing all other words previously discussed. This work, along with Jackson's *Language and History in Early Britain*, came to dominate the standard opinion for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as the lists were being cited frequently. Among the loans identified were *assa* 'ass', *bin*, *crag*, *coombe* and *hog* (Tristram 1999:6f).

Recent work has shown that a variety of Celtic loanwords were, at least for some time, part of the English vocabulary. Especially the numerous publications of Andrew Breeze<sup>3</sup> are hailed as having "called into question the prevailing view about the dearth of Celtic loans in English" (Filppula et al. 2002:21).

However, there has been some agreement that the number of Celtic loans in English is smaller than what one would expect. In their most recent paper Filppula et al. concede that the "Celtic languages have – perhaps surprisingly – not really left their mark on the vocabulary of the English language at all" (Filppula et al. fc.:27).

Richard Coates identifies lexical borrowing as prerequisite for any kind of borrowing. Thus, in his view, no structural borrowing is to be expected if no lexical borrowing has taken place (Coates fc.:2). Tristram sees the reason for the apparent dearth of Celtic lexical influence in the linguistic scenario in Britain after the Anglo-Saxon conquest, namely in a situation of language shift that saw large numbers of surviving Britons gradually but imperfectly shifting from Brittonic to English. According to the system set forth by Thomason and Kaufman, such a scenario would not lead to strong lexical influence but instead entail heavy

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<sup>3</sup> A partial summary of his work, along with extensive references is available in his 2002 article "Seven types of Celtic loanword" (Breeze 2002).

syntactical and phonological influence from the learner language (Tristram 1999:17f).

Despite the model of Thomason and Kaufman stressing the probability of syntactic over lexical influence in situations of language shift, some scholars maintain that the Celtic contribution to the English lexicon is in fact so meagre that not even this approach can account for it. They conclude that the existence of *any* Celtic interference is to be doubted (Filppula et al. *fc.*:28).

One of the aspects that Richard Coates sees as contributing to a 'linguistic invisibility' of Britons is the similarity between the Saxon homelands and their new British surroundings. The Anglo-Saxons had, he argues, simply no need for any new words to describe the topographical concepts, flora or fauna they encountered in Britain. Also, their contacts with British culture were, if the written sources are to be believed, limited to expulsion, annihilation and enslavement of the local population and thus restricting the need for terms to cover peculiarities of the British social system or culture (Coates *fc.*:17f).

Wolfgang Meid suggests that a possible reason for the dearth of lexical loans into English could be the large degree of Latinisation of the British in south-east England. When dealing with the newcomers they spoke Latin as the more prestigious language with the intention of 'impressing' the Anglo-Saxons who were perceived to be less cultured. This would in turn have reduced the frequency of contact with the British language (Meid 1990:114).

Concerning the systematics of lexical borrowing, Coates stresses that some sort of necessity has to exist for borrowing to take place. Thus, borrowing of non-basic vocabulary will take place first. Usually this concerns terms for which no equivalent exists in the borrowing language e.g. place-names and topographical terms, but also terms for unique social concepts (Coates *fc.*:2). Generally, content words as e.g. nouns, verbs or adjectives are more frequently borrowed than function words like pronouns or articles, this again being due to the fact that words that are embedded in the system of a language are relatively resistant to replacement by loanwords. On the other hand, peripheral words like interjections



or discourse markers may be borrowed and incorporated fairly easily (Muysken 1996:119).

Stalmaszyk concedes that most loanwords “remain firmly associated with the land of their origin, its terrain and the life of its people” (Stalmaszyk 1997:80). This includes words that are seen as peculiar for Celtic culture, e.g. *druid*, *bard*, *kilt*, *menhir*, *whiskey*. But other lexical items have long lost their Celtic ‘flavour’ and have come to be used universally, e.g. *gull*, *slogan*, *flannel*, *merry*, *bother*, *Tory*. Serjeantson notes already in 1935 that the Celtic languages contributed not learned or literary words but rather vocabulary for day-to-day purpose (Serjeantson 1935:55).

Several different phases of loanwords can be identified, starting with the contact between Germanic and Celtic languages on the continent and continuing up to the present day. During the Bronze and Iron Ages there was linguistic contact between continental Celtic and Germanic peoples that resulted in at least a small degree of lexical borrowing. It was at this stage that the term *\*isarn*, ‘iron’, entered the Germanic languages as a loan from Celtic (Viereck 2000:373). Another continental loan is the Germanic *\*rīki-* (cf. Ger. *Reich*, Gaulish *\*rix*), which only survives today as an element in *bishopric*. This Germanic element was also borrowed into French and thence to English thus giving *rich* (Serjeantson 1935:55).

Some words however do not reflect lexical loans or borrowings but instead reveal the common Indo-European ancestry of both the Germanic and Celtic languages. These include *beaver* (cf. G. *Biber*, Lat. *fiber*, Celt. *\*bebro*s or *\*bibros*) (Maier 2003:34) [INT 3] and *oath* (cf. OIr. *óeth*, Ger. *Eid*) [INT 4].

The next phase shows a number of British words taken over into Old English, e.g. *syrc*e ‘coat of mail’, *mil* in *milpæp* ‘army road’, perhaps *prass* ‘pomp, array’, *wassenas* ‘retainers’, *trem* ‘pace’, *trum* ‘strong’, *truma* ‘host’, *wered* ‘sweet drink’, *lorh* ‘pole, distaff’, *clædur* ‘clapper’, *hreol* ‘reel’, *deor* ‘brave’, *wann* ‘dark, pallid’, perhaps *stor* ‘incense’. While the number of British loans in the semantic field of military and warfare is curiously strong, perhaps suggesting British superior military tactics, none of these words survive in Present

Day English (Breeze 2002:175-176). It is only *ass*, *bin*, *crag*, *coombe* and *hog* that were taken over from British at this stage and are still used today (Tristram 1999:7).

From Irish were to come: *dry* ‘magician’ (cf. Irish *druí* ‘druid, magician’), *sacerd* ‘priest’, *cursung* ‘curse’, *deorc* ‘bloody’, perhaps *gop* ‘servant’, *truð* ‘buffoon’, *cumeman* ‘serf’ (from Irish *coloman* ‘farmer’). In addition, the following words came from Irish via Norse: *gafeluc* ‘javelin’, the first part of *Beltancu* ‘Beltaine cow, May Day cow’, the name *Cwiran* (from Irish *cúarán* ‘little hunchback’) (Breeze 2002:176) as well as *clucge* ‘bell’, hence *clock* (Serjeantson 1935:55).

Some words that are originally Latin found their way into Old English through the transmission of Irish: *fann* ‘fan’, OE *ancor* ‘anchorite’ (from Oir. *anchara* which is based on Lat. *anachoreta*) and probably the most important: OE *cros* ‘cross’ (from Oir. *cross*, based on Lat. *crux*) (Stalmaszyk 1997:78), and from Latin over British came *funta* ‘fount’, (Lat. *fontana*) (Coates fc.:10).

In her 1935 work *A History of Foreign Words in English*, Serjeantson identifies quite a number of loans from Irish:

<i>kern</i>	<i>spalpeen</i>	<i>bog</i>	<i>caird</i>
<i>lough</i>	<i>planxty</i>	<i>ingle</i>	<i>quaich</i>
<i>tanist</i>	<i>florin</i> ‘coarse grass’	<i>plaid</i>	<i>gillie</i>
<i>shamrock</i>	<i>keen</i> ‘lament’	<i>caber</i> ‘pole’	<i>dulse</i>
<i>rath</i>	<i>blarney</i>	<i>slogan</i> (orig.: ‘war cry’)	<i>whisky</i>
<i>brogue</i> ‘shoe’	<i>colleen</i>		<i>pibroch</i>
<i>leprechaun</i>	<i>carrageen</i>	<i>sonsy</i>	<i>filibeg</i>
<i>ogham</i>	<i>crannog</i>	<i>cairn</i>	<i>claymore</i>
<i>Tory</i>	<i>loch</i>	<i>capercaillie</i>	<i>cairngorm</i>
<i>galore</i>	<i>mull</i>	<i>garron</i>	<i>sporran</i>
<i>rapparee</i>	<i>beltane</i>	<i>strath</i>	<i>glengarry</i>
<i>pollan</i> ,	<i>clachan</i>	<i>kyle</i>	<i>gralloch</i>
<i>banshee</i>	<i>inch</i>	<i>duniwassal</i>	(Serjeantson
<i>shillelagh</i>	<i>coronach</i>	<i>strathspey</i>	1935:203f)

Other loanwords from Irish are *banshee*, *bawn*, *galore*, *shamrock*, *Tory* (Stalmaszyk 1997:79), *brehon* ‘native Irish judge’, *coshery* ‘entertainment enforced by Irish chiefs’, *tanist* ‘chieftain’s heir’, *bentule* ‘woman beggar’, *smulkin* ‘small coin’ (Breeze 2002:178), *bog* (from Ir. *bogach* ‘a bog, soft’), *brogue*, *Samhain*, *leprechaun*, *phoney* ‘fake, counterfeit’ (from Ir. *fáinne*), *keen* ‘wail, lament’ (Ir. *caoine*, /ki:n/), as well as, perhaps surprisingly, *trousers* (from Irish *triubhas* which led to the term *trouse* that was later given the plural suffix *-ers*) [INT 3]. From Manx, the now extinct Gaelic language spoken on the Isle of Man, only *carvel* and *lochan* were taken over (Stalmaszyk 1997:79).

While *basare* ‘executioner’ (from ScotGael. *básaire*) is now extinct, *brisk*, *brat* and *pet* are loans from Scottish Gaelic that are common in PDE (Breeze 2002:178). Despite its Greek appearance, *ptarmigan* is in fact Scottish Gaelic, (ScotGael. *tàrmachan*), the *pt-* orthography being due to its supposedly Greek origin (Serjeantson 1935:205). Other words from Scottish Gaelic are: *capercailzie* ‘wood grouse’ from the Scottish Gaelic *capull coille* (lit. ‘horse of the woods’), *claymore*, *ghillie*, *sporrán*, *pibroch*, *Beltane* [INT 4], *bard*, *ben*, *bog*, *dulse*, *glen*, *loch*, *slogan*, and *whisky* (Stalmaszyk 1997:79).

Perhaps surprisingly, only a few words with Welsh origin have been identified so far: *corgi* (W. *cor* + *gi* ‘dwarf dog’), *cromlech* (W. *crwm* + *llech* ‘crooked stone’), *cwm* ‘a combe or hollow’, *gwyniad*, *flannel* (Stalmaszyk 1997:79), as well as *crag*, *pendragon*, *coracle*, *cromlech*, *gwyniad*, *pennill*, *eisteddfodd*, possibly *penguin* (Serjeantson 1935:205f) and *flummery* (W. *llymru*) [INT 3]. Perhaps the most important loan from Welsh is Middle English *baban* that is today found both as *babe* and *baby*, with the latter having now spread into many languages around the world (Breeze 2002:177).

The number of Cornish words in PDE is even smaller – Serjeantson only finds *gull*, *brill*, and *wrasse* (Serjeantson 1935:206), to which Coates is able to add *coble* ‘(ferry)-boat’ (Coates fc.:10).

Some Celtic words found their way into Present Day English by way of some other language. From French, for example, come *dolmen* and *menhir*, both

originally Breton words (Stalmaszyk 1997:80). A few Gaulish words which survived in French were taken over into English as well: *gravel*, *lawn*, *league*, *lees*, *marl*, *ouch*, *quay*, *skein*, *truant*, *vassal*, *valet*, *varlet*, *toque*, and possibly *tan* (Serjeantson 1935:203).

The modern *ambassador* arrived via the French *ambassadeur* from Latin *ambactus* which in turn comes from Celt. *\*ambaktos* ‘follower, servant’ (Maier 2003:23f). The word *budget* comes from Fr. *bougette* ‘small sack’ of which Gaulish *\*bulgā* (cf. OIr. *bolg* ‘sack’) is the source [INT 4]. The word *clan* that is firmly associated with Scottish highland traditions to the modern speaker is, despite its coming from Gaelic *clan*, originally Latin (Lat. *planta* ‘sprout, shoot’) (Stalmaszyk 1997:79). Also from Latin comes *bitumen* (Lat. *bitūmen*) which in turn comes from Celt. *\*betu-* ‘birch’ from which bitumen ‘birch tar’ was won (Maier 2003:33f).

In his 1956 study, Ernst Lewy identifies a number of words he found in the works of the Irish playwright J.M. Synge as being loans from Irish:

*to jilt* from Ir. *diúltaim* - ‘I deny, oppose, renounce, abandon; I jilt’

*fond* from Ir. *fonn* - ‘longing, desire, fancy, liking, pleasure, delight’

*merry* from Ir. *medhrach*, *meidhreach* - ‘merry, glad, joyful’

*bother* from Ir. *bodhram*, as in *ná bodhair mé* - ‘don’t annoy me’

He sees these as certain, if rather recent loans into English and also notes a possible connection between English *dear* and Irish *daor* (Lewy 1956:317f). Agreeing with Lewy, Anders Ahlqvist adds *to twig* ‘to understand, comprehend’ (from Irish *tuig* ‘to understand’ or, less probably, from the Scottish Gaelic *tuig* with the same meaning) to the list of recent loans from Irish Gaelic. He draws attention to the fact that, while these etymologies have been known to Celtic studies for quite some time, Anglicists have so far failed to take note of them (Ahlqvist 1988:71f). In one of his recent works, Klemola points out that the second edition of the OED alone contains the staggering number of 549 entries with Celtic etymology, though he does not give further examples (Klemola 2003:4).

Recently, the theory has been voiced that a large number of loanwords is still not recognised due to a certain bias and prejudice on the side of researchers as well as the prevailing historical theory on the *adventus saxonum*. This was stated explicitly at the 1994 colloquium on medieval dialectology:

A further parallel exists in the form of under-reporting Celtic loanwords in the English lexicographical tradition. [...] Nevertheless, it is clear to me that, for a mixture of reasons (primarily ignorance and ideological bias) there are words and phrases which could be added to the list of recognized Celtic loans in English, but which currently appear as ‘of uncertain origin’ or similar (Filppula et al. fc.:28).

Andrew Breeze observes that only a small part of these has been found, while large numbers of Celtic loanwords are still awaiting discovery (Breeze 2002:179). Concerning the editors of the OED and their dismissal of possible Celtic etymologies, Filppula suggests that “in many cases their judgement appears to have been based on some preconceived notion about the impossibility of such borrowing, instead of being based on comparative and historical research” (Filppula 2003a:165). It will remain to be seen in how far the revision of the OED which is currently under way will reflect these new approaches towards Celtic influences in the lexis of English. A welcome feature of the digital OED3 is at least the possibility to revise entries for which new evidence or scholarship becomes available, thus surpassing the old edition whose definitions stood enshrined over the last century.

### 7.1.1 Dialects of English

While there are some scholars who see the lexical influence of the Celtic languages on the regional dialects of English as minimal, arguing for the sole existence of heavy syntactical influence instead (e.g. Molyneux 1987:83) the general opinion is that Celtic lexical influence in the ‘Celtic Englishes’ is rather strong. Most of these dialectal words are not included in the OED as their use outside their relative dialectal community is limited. They are however listed in the English Dialect Dictionary (EDD)(Filppula et al. fc.:29f).

Viereck cites Davies (1882) who, after having found more than twelve hundred Celtic words in the dialects of Lancashire, proposed a further study of

English regional dialects, as he expected to find that “a large portion of the Celtic languages has been retained in them; and if these words are often archaic in form and meaning, they are not less interesting on this account” (in Viereck 2000:297). Filppula et al. assume that “potentially such a study could have a profound influence on our conceptions about the role of Celtic loans in English (dialect) lexicon” (Filppula et al. fc.:33).

A number of terms and expressions are supposed to have entered the American language from a Celtic source, and from there to have been taken over by British English. Examples for this include *so long*, *slab*, *slug*, *shanty* and *quid* (Montgomery 2000:239). In his 1936 study of the American Language, Mencken also attributes the use of intensifiers such as *no-siree*, *yes-indeedy*, or *teetotal* as well as the use of *dead* as an intensifier (as in *dead serious*) to Irish influence (Mencken 1936:162).

## 7.2 Place-Names

Although there have been early proponents of Celtic influence in British toponymy, they were only few and were usually met with fierce criticism. For example, S.O. Addy states in 1887 that “[...] enough has been said to show that tribal influences and tribal names are clearly apparent in English local names. A conclusion of this kind is admittedly of the greatest historical interest” (Addy 1887:251). The foundation for the study of Celtic influence in the place-names of Britain was laid by the monumental studies of Förster in 1921 and 1942 and Jackson (1953). While their works still remain influential, current research has come to challenge a number of their theories. Two of the most influential scholars in this area currently are Andrew Breeze and Richard Coates (e.g. Coates and Breeze 2000).

Among the first spheres of influence to be acknowledged is the obvious Celtic influence shown in the English terms for Celtic areas, such as *Cumbria* (from W. *\*kombrogī* ‘fellow countrymen’), *Scotland* ‘Land of the *Scotii*’, *Devon* (from the name of the local Celtic tribe, the *Dumnonii*). On the other hand, *Wales*

‘Land of the *Wealas*’ and Cornwall ‘Land of the *Corn-wealas*’ are English-derived terms for Celtic areas, as e.g. the Welsh name for Wales *Cymry* is also based on Welsh *\*kombrogi* [INT 3].

Place-names are generally recognised as suffering only relatively few changes over time. They are especially interesting in that they not only give information on previous inhabitants of an area, but also allow conclusions to be drawn as to the dating of their entrance in a language. English as well as the British language underwent a number of sound changes and developments that can be dated with relative certainty. Thus, the appearance of certain forms can give a fair indication as to when the name in question was possibly heard and recorded into English (Meid 1990:99; Coates *fc.*:7f).

Place-name items can generally be taken over and assimilated into a new language so completely that their original form is no longer recognisable. Thus, some names that appear to be Celtic in form are based on pre-Celtic elements and some that look English are actually taken over from British and restructured to suit the new language. An example for this kind of assimilation is the English *Leatherhead* (Surrey) which was originally based on the Brittonic form *\*Lēdrid* ‘grey ford’ (Coates 2000:6).

Other clues to the origin of a place-name are offered by its structure and the appearance of recognisable lexical elements. For example, in *Minety* (Wiltshire) the Brittonic *\*tīy* ‘house’ may be recognised, or in *Idover*, a name frequently associated with water (streams, places containing a spring) the Brittonic *\*diβr* ‘water’ is visible (Coates *fc.*:8).

Structural evidence for the origin of a place-name is available in the form of compounds. In typical Late Brittonic compounds the specifier follows its head as in e.g. *Pensax* (Worcestershire) meaning ‘head of (the) Englishman’ and *Chittoe* (Wiltshire) which is probably *\*Cēd teyw* ‘thick wood’. Interestingly, this lies close to *Thickwood*, a manor and village mentioned in the Domesday Book (Coates *fc.*:8f).

Meid argues that the existence of place-names combining British with Anglo-Saxon features is an indicator of (at least some amount of) bilingualism of Britons

and Anglo-Saxons as a necessity for transmitting them (Meid 1990:113). Richard Coates points out that in a number of OE adaptations of British toponyms, the relevant items were evidently not incorporated into the lexicon, but used rather as proper names without semantic content. Examples include \**cēd* ‘wood’, surviving in wood names like *ceet*, *chet*, *chad* (as e.g. in *Chetwode*, west Buckinghamshire) thus limiting the need for bilingual speakers for their transmission and giving the impression that “Brittonic was not much understood by the incomers” (Coates *fc.*:11).

From place-names, some clues to the social and political situation after the *adventus* may be gained as well. The stability of names for regional and administrative units, but also for entire kingdoms (as e.g. *Elmed*, *Deira*) especially in the more western and northern areas points to a greater degree of political continuity than the Anglo-Saxonist view propagates. Archaeological findings support this in so far as the farm boundaries appear to have remained stable (in some cases even to the present day) (Härke 2003:4).

As with place-names in general, English river names show a variety of origins<sup>4</sup>. A fair number of them has been shown to be pre-Celtic, e.g. *Humber*, *Tweed*, *The Solent*, *Ouse*, *Witham* (Coates 2000:1; Coates 2005:305) Their names were transmitted by the Britons until the *adventus* and were then taken over into English. Some river names are distinctly Celtic, as e.g. *Glen* ‘clean, pure’, *Ivel* ‘forked’, *Chater* (probably from Neo-Brittonic *cadr* ‘handsome, fine; powerful’) (Coates 2005:305f). In 1953 Jackson claimed that the distribution of Celtic (and pre-Celtic) river-names in England corresponds with the political and military advancement of the Anglo-Saxons by approx. 600AD (Jackson 1953:208f, 220).

While Kenneth Jackson warned of proposing a Celtic origin for ambiguous or unclear cases, Coates speaks out against a tendency of place-name scholars to assign the label ‘pre-Celtic’, ‘Old European’ or even ‘obscure’ to river names because they cannot prove an English etymology. Instead he claims that a viable Celtic etymology is possible for a large number of previously ‘obscure’ items (Coates 2005:304). He insists that “where an obscure and difficult name is to be

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed discussion of European river names see Kitson 1996.



analysed, there is no solid reason to assume a priori that it must be Germanic; a Celtic origin should be considered equally” (Coates *fc.*:5). An example for a Celtic etymology for what appears to be an obviously Saxon place-name is *Mancetter* (Warwickshire). Its typical medieval spelling was *Man(e)cestre* which appears Saxon enough, but it is in fact derived from Lat. *Mandussedum* from the British term for ‘pony-chariot’ (Coates 2002:48).

Coates proposes a Celtic origin for a number of items even in the East of England, e.g. *Penge* (Surrex), *Reculver* (Kent) *Crayke* (Yorkshire) *Lynn* (Norfolk), *Roos* (Yorkshire), that were previously believed to show no traces of Celtic survival at all (Coates *fc.*:5).

He assumes that although the number of Celtic place-names must be higher than presently recognised, the general picture is not likely to change. Instead, he sees “a problematic relation between English progress and Brittonic survival” (Coates *fc.*:6f). Tristram suggests that the reason for the relative scarcity of Celtic place-names in the Lowland Zone may lie in the different settlement patterns of the Romano-British and the Anglo-Saxons. Thus, “[t]he Romano-British towns and country estates (*villae*) cum dispersed farmsteads were successively replaced by Germanic types of village settlement” (Tristram 2004:101).

Richard Coates draws attention to the fact that Celtic place-names in Britain are not limited to toponymics but also denote “human artefacts including dwellings and other buildings” (Coates *fc.*:5). He lists examples including a hall at *Liss* (Hampshire), a small hall at *Beccles* (Suffolk), and a number of names with *-tref* ‘farm, village’. He also points to a number of Irish place-names in coastal zones of England, that are the result of Irish conquests and settlement, as well as missionary activity (Coates *fc.*:5).

An interesting point are place-names containing the element *wealh*, ‘Briton, slave’, such as *Walden*, *Saffon Walden* or *Walton*. Their number is fairly substantial, even when allowing for problems of distinguishing *-wealh* from *-wald* ‘forest’ and *-wall* ‘wall’. Some instances are even more explicit as e.g. in *Bretby* ‘the *by* of the Britons’. As there is no indication of slave villages established by Anglo Saxons, Faull proposes to see them as settlements of free Romano-Britons.

She concedes that “the fact that villages were picked out as ‘British’ implies that they were a rarity in the local landscape” (Faull 1976:33). Obviously, villages of free Britons were not seen as the usual type of settlement, thus limiting the amount of British survival they possibly indicate (Faull 1976:33). Today, the element *walh* survives in the form of the *walnut*, from OE *walhhnutu* ‘Welsh / foreign nut’ [INT 3].

### 7.2.1 Names for Britain

Although the 19<sup>th</sup> century inhabitants of *Albion* prided themselves on being *British*, they largely ignored the fact that both these terms were Celtic rather than Anglo-Saxon. Despite the fact that the etymology for *Albion* is not undisputed, Wolfgang Meid presents a convincing case in its being based on *\*albho-* ‘white’ (df. Lat. *albus*). He rejects the traditional association with the White Cliffs of Dover and rather argues for a cosmological connection, contrasting light and brightness with a dark underworld. (Meid 1990:107) The derivation of Britain is virtually unquestioned, coming from the name of the Roman province *Britannia*. This in turn is based on the Greek term for the British Isles, *αἱ πρεττανικαὶ νῆσοι*, from *Πρεττανοί* ‘Britons’ based on the original Brittonic *\*Pritenī*, *\*Pritanī*. The Latin form with initial /b/ was then taken over by the inhabitants of the Roman province (Meid 1990:109).

## 7.3 Personal Names

A field where Celtic influences are obvious and more or less undisputed are personal names in the form of first as well as family names. From the earliest written sources there is evidence of Celtic names being used in an English context. While Richard Coates states that it is difficult to judge the ethnicity of a person by his or her name (Coates fc.:3), the fact remains that a number of Celtic names appear even in the royal genealogies of Wessex. They begin with an apparently Celtic name, *Cerdic* also containing e.g. *Cadda/Ceadda* and *Ceadwalla*. Tolkien draws attention to the fact that these names appear

in a markedly anglicised form that must be due to their being borrowed as names, and to their accommodation like ordinary loan-words to English speech habits. One deduction at least can be safely made: the users of these names had changed their language and spoke English, not any kind of British (Tolkien 1983:169).

This gives rise to the theory of intermarriage between the Saxon and Celtic royal dynasties in Wessex, their offspring being given Celtic names (Coates *fc.*:3). It may also provide us with hints to the social structure, as it would appear unlikely for the offspring of a royal house to be given a name associated with a people that were stigmatised or against whom open hostility was present.

In his 1921 study Förster identifies more than 130 common English names (personal names, as well as family names) as having a Brittonic or Welsh origin (Tristram 1999:7) e.g. *Gough, Dewey, Yarnal, Merrick, Onions* and *Vowles*. Today, their occurrence is by no means limited to Wales but has instead spread all over the English speaking areas (Tolkien 1983:176). At present, there is a continued international popularity of Celtic personal names such as Arthur, Alan, Brian, Bruce, Conan, Kevin, Nora or Oscar, although most people do not realise the Celtic origin of these names.

## 8. Conclusion

In the course of this paper, a number of different features of the English language that have been proposed as potential candidates for Celtic contact interference were examined. An overview of the current state of research on this topic has been given. By contrasting the different opinions on these features it has become visible that there is some disagreement on almost all points of the debate.

This is evident from the conflicting opinions concerning the possibility of this influence as well as on the individual proposed contact features. Some scholars favour language internal explanations, dismissing the possibility of Celtic influences. Others, arguing for the necessity of external influences point as the obvious dissimilarity of English and the other Germanic languages that appears to speak against regular internally motivated changes.

So, while Tristram suggests “that the history books and encyclopaedias of the English language should be rewritten in line with these findings and that they should pay tribute to the very important contribution of Brythonic/Welsh to the creation of Present Day English” (Tristram 1999:31), Manfred Görlach, however, asserts that “[w]ith the single exception of 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup>-century Hiberno-English, the Celtic languages failed to have any significant influence on English” (Görlach 1990:72).

The problem remains, that although the *possibility* of language contact influence from the Celtic languages can be established, it can rarely be proven to be the sole cause of any given feature. It may turn out that a possible compromise lies in the middle ground of multicausation, with Celtic influences acting upon and reinforcing trends already present in the English language. On the other hand, settling for multicausation may in cases be the ‘easy’ answer, obstructing the search for the real origin of a feature.

In assessing this question, it remains important not to fall for the extremes. Indeed, Graham Isaac warns of abandoning basic linguistic methodology out of an enthusiasm for language contact (Isaac 2003:63f). Hildegard Tristram, on the

other hand cautions against remnants of Anglo-Saxonist attitudes that provide an ideological barrier against the consideration of possible contact influences from Celtic languages (Tristram 1999:31). Filppula et al. point out that, “despite an obvious need for further research in many areas, the time is ripe for a critical reassessment of the ‘textbook’ views on the nature and outcome of the Celtic–English contacts” (Filppula et al. 2002:22).

## 8.1 Outlook

For reason of space, a number of interesting features could not be considered in this paper. Among these is the growing number of Old English loanwords from the Celtic languages that are being pointed out by Andrew Breeze. The majority of these loanwords however did not find their way into the Modern English language; for a recent summary see Breeze (2002). An other feature relating more closely to Old English than to the modern language is the possibility of Celtic influence on Anglo-Saxon poetic style and rhetoric that has been suggested to be visible in the use of motifs and certain stylistic devices (see e.g. Filppula et al. 2002:19).

The question of Celtic linguistic influences on the English language in America has received little attention so far. As Michael Montgomery points out, a lot of work still has to be done in this field, including even a systematic collection of data (Mongomery 2000:264).

An interesting point that had to be left out as well is the presence of so called ‘sheep-counting numerals’ in the English North counties that bears close resemblance to the Modern Welsh numbers. They have been speculated to be either an archaic remnant of the Cumbric language once spoken in the North, or a more recent importation from Wales. It is interesting to note that they appear to have spread into some dialects of North Eastern American where they have been attested in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Klemola 2000:34f or Isaac 2003: 54).

Tristram stresses out the necessity for closer cooperation between scholars of English and Celtic. She sees the present academic departmentalisation as a distinct

hindrance to comprehensive research into the field of contact between the two (Tristram 1999:18).

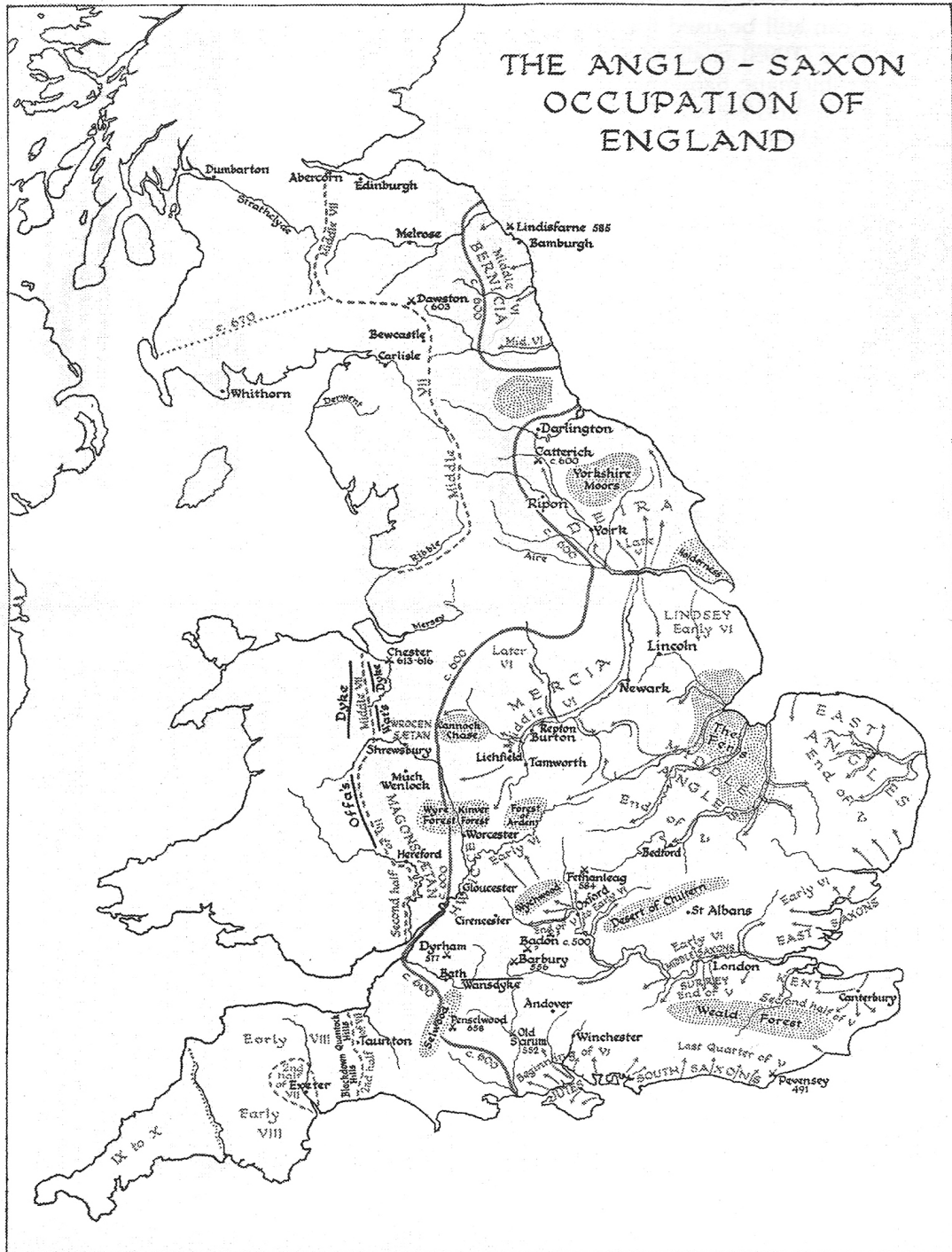
Also, as Graham Isaac points out, “the idea of convergence of nationalities and linguistically defined ethnicities is a powerful one, politically highly charged” (Isaac 2003:64). And indeed, Van der Auwera and Genee draw attention to the fact that most scholars who advocate Celtic influences have a non-British background. They remark that: “[t]here should be no relation between the nationality, native language, institutional environment or scholarly background of a linguist and the hypotheses (s)he defends, but in fact there may well be such a relation” (Van der Auwera and Genee 2002:302).

## 9. Appendices

### 9.1 Abbreviations used

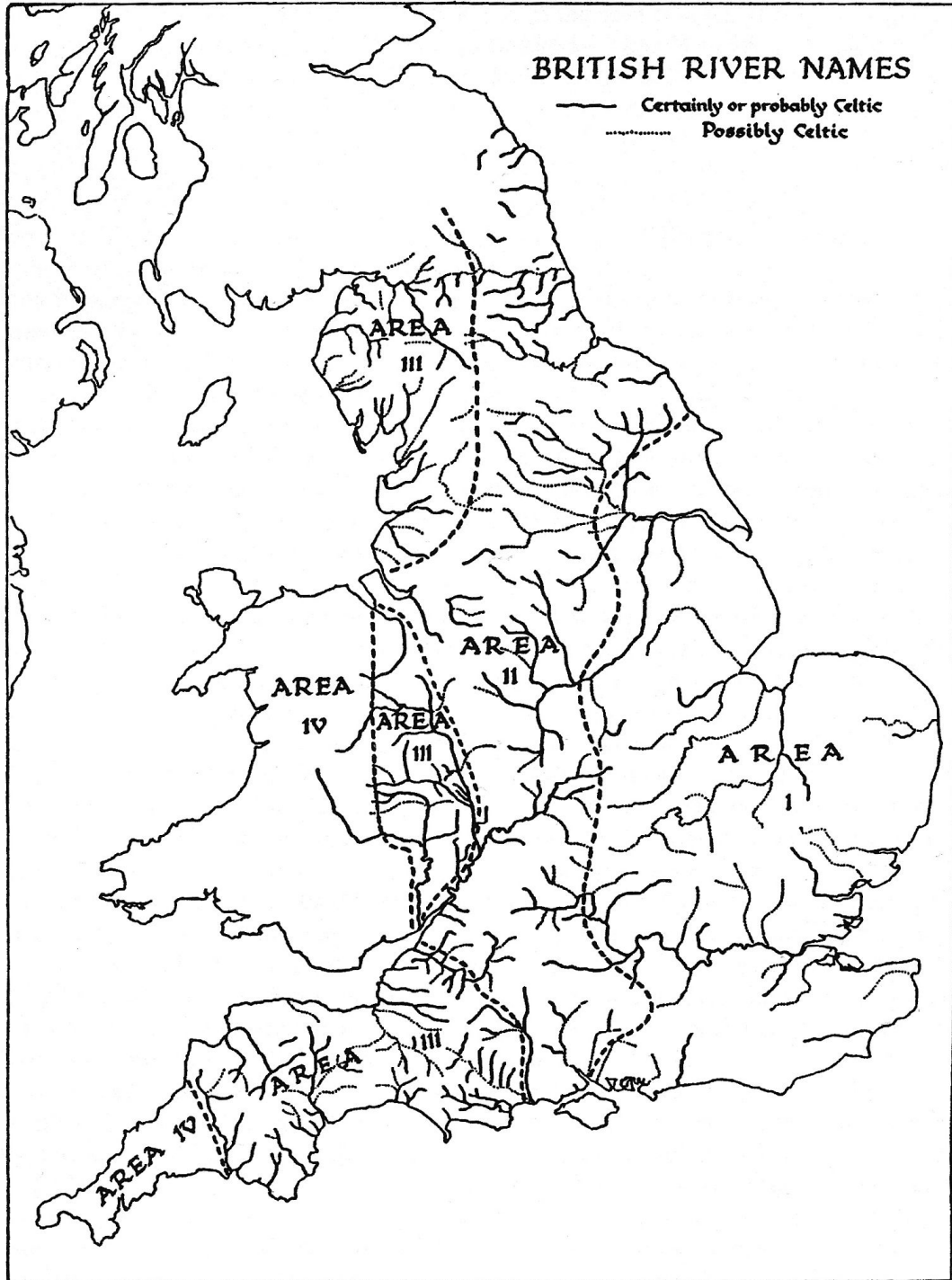
OE	Old English
EME	Early Middle English
ME	Middle English
EMnE	Early Modern English
PDE	Present Day English
OHG	Old High German
We	Welsh
Ir	Irish
OIr	Old Irish
Bret	Breton
BrE	British English
AmE	American English
IrE	Irish English
WeE	Welsh English
IE	Indo-European
NP	Noun Phrase
VP	Verb Phrase
Adj	Adjective
Adv	Adverb
NSR	Northern Subject Rule
VN	Verbal noun
EF	Expanded form

9.2 Maps

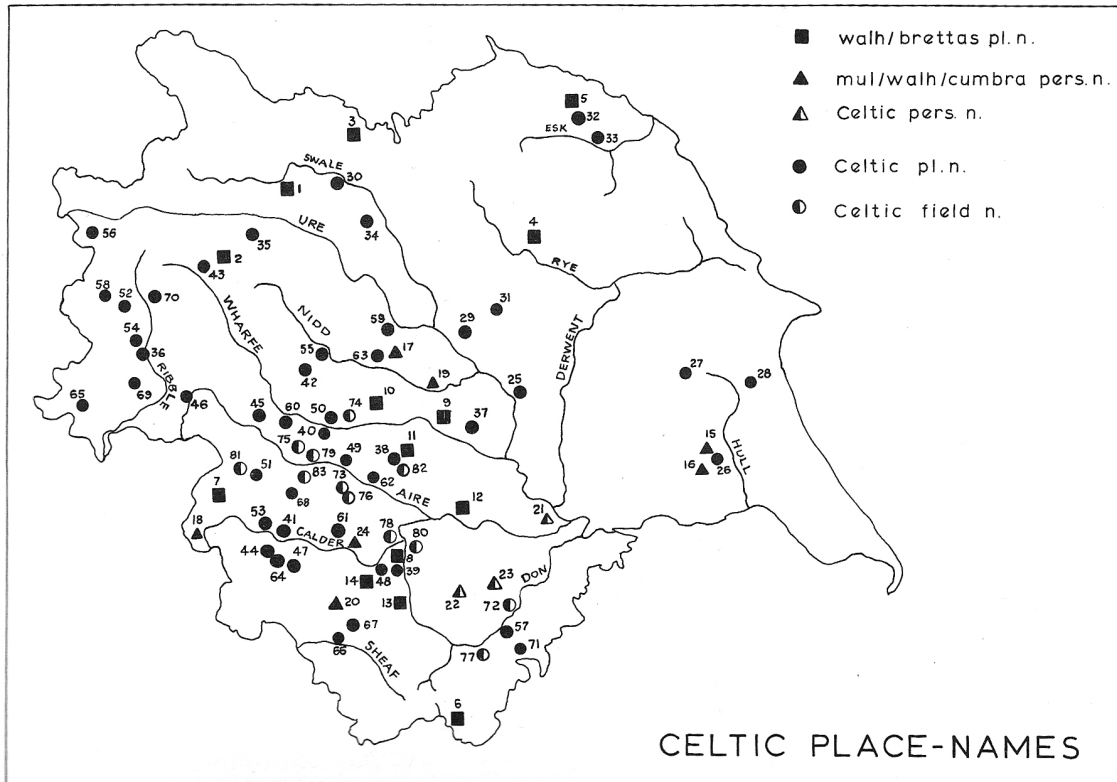
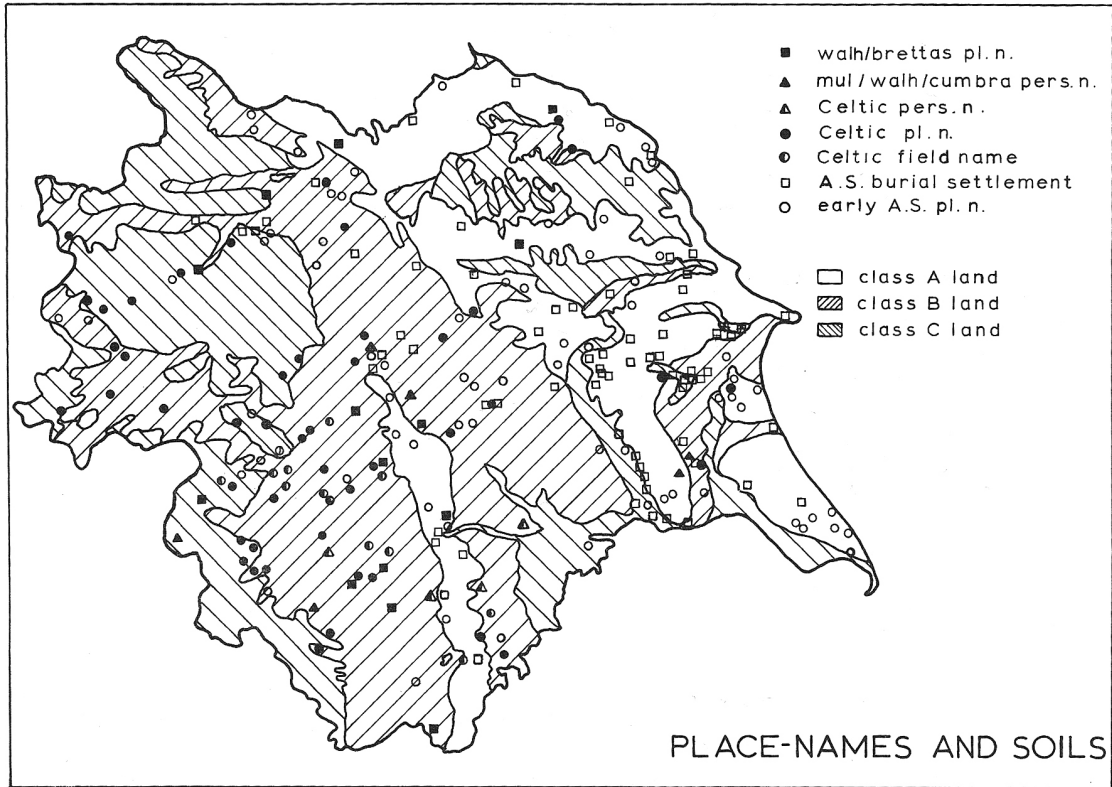


The Anglo-Saxon Occupation of England (Coates 2002:55)





British River Names (Coates 2002:50)



Celtic Place-Names in Relation to Soil Quality (Faull 1977:44)

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## Erklärung

*Hiermit erkläre ich, daß ich meine Hausarbeit zur Erlangung des Magister-Grades (M.A.): "The Influences of the Celtic Languages on Present-Day English" selbständig verfaßt, ganz oder in Teilen noch nicht als Prüfungsleistung vorgelegt und keine anderen als die angegebenen Hilfsmittel benutzt habe. Die Stellen der Arbeit, die anderen Quellen im Wortlaut oder dem Sinn nach entnommen wurden, sind durch Angaben der Herkunft kenntlich gemacht. Dies gilt auch für Texte, Zeichnungen, Skizzen, bildliche Darstellungen und dergleichen aus dem Internet.*

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