

## The Origins of Celtic Lenition in the Coda Mirror

Krzysztof Jaskuła (Catholic University of Lublin)

Word-initial lenition is present in all Celtic languages, both past and present. As regards the reasons why lenition originated about twenty centuries ago, the traditional explanation is that voiced/lenis stops (C) were weakened intervocalically, for example, [d] → [ð], [b] → [v], [g] → [ɣ]. First, the weakening occurred word-medially (...VCV...) and then initially (...V#CV...) provided that in close syntactic groups, e.g. article/preposition+noun, the segment ending the function word was a vowel (V). Otherwise no lenition happened.

More interestingly, lenition also took place in the left-hand member of a consonantal cluster, e.g. [gn] → [ɣn], [dr] → [ðr], [bl] → [vl]. Here, again, the order of changes was the same: first word-medially (...VCRV...) and then initially (...V#CRV...). From the viewpoint of phonology, the presence of a resonant (R) after the lenited stop should be a hindrance, or, at least, an interesting detail which is worth considering.

The next phase of lenition affected voiceless/fortis stops, which were weakened to fricatives in Goidelic languages (e.g. [t] → [θ]), but turned into their voiced congeners in Brittonic tongues (e.g. [t] → [d]), in all the aforementioned contexts plus the final position.

Following the tradition of Celtic studies, it is assumed in the paper that the voiced series of stops are viewed as non-aspirated and lenis, while their voiceless counterparts are perceived as fully aspirated and fortis.

Within the framework of standard Government Phonology (Kaye, Lowenstamm and Vergnaud 1990; Charette 1991; Harris 1994, 1997), the lenition of stops in clusters is difficult to explain since these are viewed as branching onsets, where the stops have to be strong enough to 'govern' the resonants and should not undergo weakening as governors. A modified, non-branching version of GP (Cyran 2003, Jaskuła 2006) offers an explanation to the origins of lenition because there such clusters are not branching onsets but sequences of independent onsets which are separated by empty nuclei. The theory predicts that before an empty nucleus a segment is very weakly 'licensed' and hence prone to weakening. Moreover, the model can foresee that the voiced/lenis stops ('weak') will undergo lenition earlier than their fortis/voiceless ('strong') counterparts. A weakness of the analysis in Jaskuła (2006) is that word-initial lenition is treated as analogous to word-medial weakening.

Another theory stemming from Government Phonology, that is the Coda Mirror (Scheer 2004/2006), an introduction to which is offered in the paper, can also explain why Celtic lenition took place. An analysis conducted in the spirit of CM, however, can shed different light on the origins of lenition because the account is focused on the context but not on the order of changes.