

THE SEMANTIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE IRISH AND WELSH WORDS FOR FIGHTING

Name Hanna Muller
Student-number 4288041
Supervisor Dr. Mícheál Ó'Flaithearta
Eindwerkstuk Bachelor Keltische Talen en Cultuur (KE3V14003)
Verdiepingspakket Taalcontact en Taalverandering van het Keltisch
June 2018

Index

Abbreviations	1
0. Introduction	1
1. Theoretical Framework	4
1.1 Traditional classifications of semantic change.....	4
1.2 General tendencies in semantic change.....	6
1.3 Theory and hypothesis	8
2. Methodology	9
2.1 The choice for Irish and Welsh words	9
2.2 Order and manner of investigation.....	9
3. Analysis of the word-pairs	10
4. Conclusion	16
5. Bibliography	17

The abbreviations used in this investigation are in accordance with the abbreviations used in *A Grammar of Old Irish*. The abbreviations that indicate the source of the attestations are in accordance with those used by the *Dictionary of the Irish Language* and *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru*.

Abstract

This investigation answers the question: What is the direction of the semantic development of the cognate words for fighting in Irish and Welsh? Traugott, building on the work of Meillet, argued that the tendency for words is to develop a more internal and subjective meaning. This underlies the hypothesis that the direction is 'word' > 'discussion' > 'heated discussion' > 'physical confrontation' > 'fight' and the development was not the reverse. The analysis of the word-pairs *bríathar-brwydr*, *focal-gwaethl*, *dál-dadl*, *comrac-cyfranc*, *cath-cad*, *ár-aer* and *gleo-glew* demonstrates that the direction of the semantic development is 'word' > 'discussion' > 'heated discussion' > 'physical confrontation' > 'fight'.

Celtic – Semantic development – Subjectification – Etymology

0. INTRODUCTION

The topic for this dissertation arose during the module Historical Grammar which was part of the 'verdiepingspakket' Language Contact and Language Change of the Celtic Languages. During this module we had to write an essay about a certain Irish or Welsh word and examine its etymology and its changes from earlier to later stages of the language. The Irish word *bríathar* 'word' caught my interest and while writing the essay, the interesting word pair *bríathar/brwydr* came to light. Although both words have the same origin, the Welsh word *brwydr* means 'fight', which is an intriguing difference in meaning. The essay was too short to investigate this thoroughly, which is what I intend to do in this dissertation. In this investigation, the topic has been expanded to the semantic range of Welsh and Irish words connected with speaking and fighting and their semantic development to establish if there is a certain direction in which the semantic development moves. According to this, the research question is as follows: What is the direction of the semantic development of the cognate words for fighting in Irish and Welsh?

Matasović proposes that the semantic development in Welsh might have been 'word' > 'conversation' > 'quarrel' > 'dispute' > 'fight', so the meaning in Old Irish is the original meaning of the word, whereas the Welsh meaning has undergone a development. On the other hand, he states that if it is possible to derive **brētrā* from the Proto-Celtic root **brē-/ *brī-* which means 'to cut', then the meaning in Welsh would be the original meaning and the meaning observed in Old Irish would have undergone the reverse semantic development.¹ The most logical of these two options would be the following direction: 'word' > 'discussion' > 'heated discussion' > 'physical confrontation' > 'fight', which is the expected answer to the research question in this study. To accept this hypothesis after having carried out the investigation, it is also necessary to confirm that the direction of the semantic development is not as follows 'fight' > 'physical confrontation' > 'heated discussion' > 'discussion' > 'word'. The results of the investigation must only indicate that the direction of the semantic development of the words is 'word' > 'discussion' > 'heated discussion' > 'physical confrontation' > 'fight' and must never indicate that the direction could have occurred the other way around, in order to accept the hypothesis.

This investigation is embedded in the theories that argue that there are general regularities or tendencies to be found in semantic development which predict the direction of the change. In the early 20th century the French linguist Antoine Meillet was one of the first linguists to describe these

¹ Matasović 2009: 77.

principles. Decades later, Elizabeth Traugott developed and refined Meillet's work to establish three tendencies in semantic change.² This is thoroughly explained in the first chapter of this dissertation.

The second chapter concentrates on the methods of investigation used in this dissertation. For this investigation an analysis of the word-pairs has been conducted to be able to draw conclusions about the semantic range of the relevant words. Also, in this chapter it is explained which word-pairs are relevant for this study and why.

In the third chapter, the established word-pairs are thoroughly analysed with regards to their etymology and semantic differences. The earliest attestations are also included as are the meanings of the word in modern Irish and Welsh.

This investigation is relevant because it addresses an interesting semantic difference, which hitherto has been assumed to have a certain logical explanation in terms of its semantic development, but this explanation has never been examined and tested. This study intends to submit this explanation to a thorough investigation and establish if this assumption about the direction of the semantic development is indeed correct or not.

² Millar 2015: 39-40.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Change in the meaning of words is called semantic change, and it is just as common as other types of change, such as phonological, morphological or syntactic change. Words have been changing their meanings for centuries, and words are still changing their meanings today. In this chapter, attention is given to both the traditional classification of kinds of semantic changes and the theories about regularities or general tendencies in semantic change, which would reflect overarching principles of semantic change. The second part of this chapter is the most relevant to this investigation, but to give a thorough theoretical background, it is also important to pay attention to the traditional work on semantics. To answer the research question, it is not only important to know about the tendencies in semantic development, but also to understand the types of semantic change that are occurring.

1.1 Traditional classifications of semantic change

Work on semantic change has been almost exclusively concerned with lexical semantics, that is, change in the meaning of individual words. Several linguists have made attempts to classify the different kinds of semantic changes according to the associations underlying them. Stephen Ullmann differentiates between two categories in which semantic changes naturally fall if one classifies the semantic changes according to the underlying associations. On the one hand, those which are based on an association between the senses and those involving an association between the names.³ If the customary distinction between two kinds of association is accepted, each of these categories can be further subdivided into similarity and contiguity. Contiguity should here be taken in a broad sense, because it includes any associative relations other than those based on similarity.⁴ The following table shows this classification of semantic changes.⁵

Table 1.1. *Classification of semantic changes according to Ullmann*

Change based on:	Association between the senses	Association between the names
Similarity	Metaphor	Popular etymology
Contiguity	Metonymy	Ellipsis

One of the most frequent types of semantic change is **metaphor**: applying a word to something it does not literally denote in order to draw attention to a resemblance.⁶ The structure of a metaphor consists of two terms: the thing we are talking about and that to which we are comparing it.⁷ Ullmann distinguishes four types of metaphors.

The first group consists of anthropomorphic metaphors, which means that names of the human body and its parts are transferred to inanimate objects.⁸ For example, the word *head* originally just meant the part of the body on top of the shoulders, but since this is both the highest part of the body and the part that is perceived as being in charge of the whole body, *head* also started to be used

³ Ullmann 1977: 211.

⁴ Ullmann 1977: 212.

⁵ Table is based on Ullmann 1977: 212-227.

⁶ Millar (ed.) 2015: 37.

⁷ Ullmann 1977: 213.

⁸ Ullmann 1977: 214.

as a metaphor for all kinds of things and people that are high, in front, in charge or just rather round.⁹ We speak of the *head* of a corporation, the *head* of a flower, the *head* of a river and a *head* of garlic or cabbage and so on. Other body-part names are also frequently used in a metaphorical sense, for example, the *foot* of a mountain, the *eye* of a needle, the *mouth* of a river, the *hands* of a clock, the *heart* of the matter, and so on.¹⁰

The second group consists of animal metaphors. These metaphors move in two main directions. Some of them are applied to plants or insentient objects. Plants often owe their name to some vague resemblance to an animal, for example, *dandelion* comes from the French *dent de lion*, which means 'lion's tooth'. A lot of inanimate objects, including instruments, machines and parts of machines, are also called after an animal, for example, a *cat-o'-nine-tails* or a *crane*. Animal metaphors are also used in the human sphere where they often acquire humorous, ironical, pejorative or even grotesque connotations. A human being can be likened to a *dog*, a *pig*, a *mouse* and many other animals.¹¹

The third group consists of abstract experiences that are translated into concrete terms. Examples are the countless metaphors connected with *light*: to throw *light* on, to *enlighten*, *brilliant*, *illuminating*, *high-lights*, and so on.¹²

The fourth group consists of synesthetic metaphors, which means that one sense is transposed to another, for example, from sound to sight, from touch to sound, etc. We can speak of a *warm* or *cold* voice, because we perceive a certain similarity between the senses. We can also talk about *piercing* sounds, *loud* colours, *sweet* voices and odours, and many more.¹³

Another common kind of semantic change is **metonymy**, which is the use of an attribute to denote the thing that is meant.¹⁴ Metonymies can also be classified and this can best be done according to the associations underlying them. Some metonymic transfers are based on spatial relations, for example, the Latin word *coxa* 'hip' shifted its meaning to French *cuisse* 'thigh', because they are two contiguous parts of the body¹⁵, or English *chin*, Old Norse *kinn* 'cheek' and Old Irish *gin* 'mouth', which all derive from the same source. Other metonymies are based on temporal relations, for example, English *mass*, French *messe* and related terms denoting the Roman Catholic service go back to Ecclesiastical Latin *missa*, feminine past participle of *mittere* 'to send, to dismiss'. The service ended with the formula: 'Ite, *missa* est' 'Go now, the meeting is *dismissed*', and the word *missa* eventually came to stand for the service itself.¹⁶ Another type of metonymic change is synecdoche, the use of the whole to denote a part, or of a part to denote the whole.¹⁷ Examples are *redbreast* for 'robin', saying 'Ireland is playing Italy' and speaking of the *crown* instead of the king or queen.

A third type of semantic change is **popular etymology**, which can change both the form and the meaning of a word by wrongly connecting it with another term to which it is similar in sound.¹⁸ The reason behind popular etymology is the desire to explain or motivate what has become opaque in the language. In some cases, the new motivation will affect the meaning of a word, but will leave its form intact. In other cases, the form will change, but the meaning will remain intact, for example, the English

⁹ Millar (ed.) 2015: 38.

¹⁰ Ullmann 1977: 214.

¹¹ Ullmann 1977: 215.

¹² Ullmann 1977: 215-216.

¹³ Ullmann 1977: 216.

¹⁴ Millar (ed.) 2015: 38.

¹⁵ Ullmann 1977: 218.

¹⁶ Ullmann 1977: 219.

¹⁷ Millar (ed.) 2015: 38.

¹⁸ Ullmann 1977: 220.

bridegroom which comes from Old English *brȳdguma*, a compound of *brȳd* 'bride' and *guma* 'man'. The latter term became opaque and was identified with the word *groom* 'lad', and so the form of the word changed, but its meaning remained intact. In many other cases, both the form and the meaning of the word change because of popular etymology.¹⁹

The last type of semantic change explained by Ullmann, is **ellipsis**, which occurs when in a set phrase of two words, one of these is omitted and its meaning is transferred to the remaining word. Examples are *the main* for *the main sea*, *a daily* for *a daily paper*, and *piano*, which is a shortened form of *pianoforte*.²⁰

Besides these four types of semantic change, a word may also change in range, which means that the meaning of a word undergoes a process of **extension** or **restriction**. An example of extension is the word *dog* which once denoted only a particular kind of canine, but now it is the generic term for all canines. An example of restriction is the word *deer* which once meant 'animal (in general)', but it now denotes a cervine animal.²¹

A word may also change in evaluation, which includes **melioration** and **pejoration**. Melioration is an 'improvement' in meaning, for example, the words *queen* and *knight* formerly just meant 'woman' and 'boy', but today these words are only applied to people occupying certain exalted positions. Pejoration is the opposite, for example, the words *villain*, *churl* and *boor* once meant merely 'farm-worker', but all three have become purely insults.²²

1.2 General tendencies in semantic change

Such general classifications of semantic change are useful for classifying the kind of change that occurred, but do not explain how and why a certain word changed its meaning. Certainly, there are some interesting observations to be made, for example, the metaphorical use of body-part names and the tendency for words denoting parts of the body to 'move around, as was illustrated above with English *chin*, Old Norse *kinn* 'cheek' and Old Irish *gin* 'mouth', words that all derive from the same source, but now denote different parts of the face.²³ There have been several attempts at identifying general principles of semantic change. One of those attempts was made by the French linguist Meillet, who proposed three principles of semantic change.

The first principle is the change of the linguistic conditions, which results in the transformation of words into simple grammatical tools. For example, under the influence of *ne*, the French words *pas*, *rien* and *personne* in negation sentences, adopted a negative value, and this has as a result that the negation word *ne* has become redundant and that *pas*, *rien* and *personne* have become negations themselves in colloquial speech. The grammatical category of a word sometimes can change the meaning of a word as well, for example, Latin *homo* is a masculine word, which caused the meaning of the word to change from 'human being', without a gender-specific quality, to 'male human being'.²⁴

Meillet's second principle is that the things expressed by the words are changing, that is, there is change in the world, which causes things that have developed over time to be expressed by the same

¹⁹ Ullmann 1977: 102.

²⁰ Ullmann 1977: 222-223.

²¹ Millar (ed.) 2015: 36-37.

²² Millar (ed.) 2015: 37.

²³ Millar (ed.) 2015: 39.

²⁴ Meillet 1958: 239-240.

words. A lot of words fall into this category, including cases of taboo, which prohibits the use of plain language and forces speakers to use euphemisms instead.²⁵

The third principle is change resulting from borrowing, in those cases in which a loan word induces a shift in the meaning of an earlier word.²⁶ Social stratification is important for this principle, because the tendency of individual groups is to differentiate and innovate their language, whereas the tendency of society as a whole is to standardize. Men and women do not use the same vocabulary and give different meanings to the same words, and persons who occupy the same profession have words to denote things for which the common language does not have names, because those things do not concern most of the people. The result of different groups having different words for certain things is that the rest of society borrows these words or new meanings and incorporates them into the common language. Borrowing not only occurs within a society, but a society also borrows words from foreign languages.²⁷

Meillet's views have been developed and refined in the work of Traugott, who suggests three closely related tendencies in semantic change.²⁸ The first tendency is that meanings based in the external described situation become meanings based in the internal (evaluative/perceptual/cognitive) described situation.²⁹ This is illustrated by most of the familiar meaning changes known as pejoration and amelioration, for example, words like *boor* becoming insults. This also subsumes a wide range of metaphorical extensions, because most of them are shifts from concrete to abstract, and the observation that Old English *felan* meant only 'touch' (an external description), and later acquired the meaning 'feel', which denotes the perceptions of the person doing the touching.³⁰

The second tendency is that meanings based in the external or internal described situation become meanings based in the textual and metalinguistic situation.³¹ An example of a meaning based in the external described situation becoming a meaning based in the textual situation is English *while*. Formerly it meant only 'period of time', as it still does in cases like *Wait for a while*, but it acquired the textual meaning of 'the period of time (during which something happens)', and later still it acquired the more abstract discourse function of 'although'.³² Examples of a meaning based in the internal described situation becoming a meaning based in the metalinguistic situation include the shift from a mental-state to a speech-act verb meaning, for instance, in the early 1500's *observe* had the meaning 'perceive (that)', which is coding an internal described situation, but by 1605 it had acquired the meaning 'state that', which codes the metalinguistic situation.³³

The third tendency is that meanings tend to become increasingly based in the speaker's subjective belief state/attitude toward the proposition.³⁴ This includes a lot of changes, for example, the word *apparently*, which originally meant 'openly, in appearance', but then it obtained a weak sense of evaluation: 'to all appearances'. Later, in the 1800's it acquired a stronger sense of evaluation, which it still has, for example: *She is apparently determined to pursue this*. Another example is the word

²⁵ Meillet 1958: 241-244.

²⁶ Millar (ed.) 2015: 40.

²⁷ Meillet 1958: 244-252.

²⁸ Millar (ed.) 2015: 40.

²⁹ Traugott 1989: 34.

³⁰ Traugott 1989: 34 & Millar (ed.) 2015:40.

³¹ Traugott 1989: 35.

³² Traugott 1989: 35 & Millar (ed.) 2015: 40.

³³ Traugott 1989: 35.

³⁴ Traugott 1989: 35.

probably, which once meant only ‘plausibly, believably’, but today it also expresses the speaker’s subjective beliefs: *She is probably going to be promoted*.³⁵

These tendencies have in common a movement away from the external and the objective toward the discourse-internal and the subjective. The later meanings presuppose a world of values and of linguistic relations and not only of objects and states of affairs.³⁶

Ideally, these tendencies would reflect overarching principles of semantic change, which would be an extremely helpful advance, but it could also be stated that they are epiphenomenal and do not represent any general principles in semantic change, which is the argument of Benjamin Fortson. He argues that the probable reason that Traugott’s and others’ directional tendencies seem true is not because they are overarching principles governing semantic change, but rather because the contexts in which the opposite semantic direction could be taken are rare to non-existent.³⁷ For example, English *since* once had a purely temporal meaning ‘after’, but acquired a secondary, subjective, causal meaning ‘because’, which coincides with the supposed tendency that a meaning becomes more subjective. The opposite direction would be a reanalysis from a subjective expression of causality to an objective expression of temporal succession, which might well be possible by narrowing, but this would require a type of restriction that is very rare or non-existent.³⁸ The tendencies themselves are perfectly valid and very useful in diachronic analysis of semantic development, which is done in this investigation, but it is important to be careful about the interpretation of these tendencies as general principles governing semantic change.³⁹

1.3 Theory and hypothesis

Now that the tendencies occurring in semantic development are explained, it is necessary to examine how the hypothesis fits into this framework. The hypothesis is as follows: the semantic development of the Irish and Welsh words for speaking and fighting is ‘word’ > ‘discussion’ > ‘heated discussion’ > ‘physical confrontation’ > ‘fight’. Firstly, ‘word’ extends its meaning to ‘discussion’. Secondly, it undergoes a process of restriction and, arguably, pejoration from a discussion in general to a ‘heated discussion’. Thirdly, the ‘heated’ element of the discussion is emphasized and the earlier connection with words and conversation is lost as the meaning changes to ‘physical confrontation’. Lastly, the meaning extends to ‘fight’.

During this development, the tendency for word-meanings to become more internal and subjective can be seen. Originally, the meaning was objective, namely ‘word’, which then became more internal, because it came to mean ‘discussion’, that is, between people. It then acquired an even more subjective meaning, because the meaning became restricted to a ‘heated discussion’, which is a subjective view of a discussion. The subjective view is intensified as the meaning changed to ‘physical confrontation’, which moves further away from an objective meaning. From ‘physical confrontation’ to ‘fight’ is an easy movement that indicates further subjectification, as the confrontation develops into a fight.

For this development to occur in the opposite direction, the word would have to lose its physical connection, which means that the meaning would have to become more objective and

³⁵ Millar (ed.) 2015: 40.

³⁶ Millar (ed.) 2015: 40 & Traugott 1989: 35.

³⁷ Fortson 2003: 656.

³⁸ Fortson 2003: 657.

³⁹ Fortson 2003: 658.

external, which goes against the tendency for meanings to internalise. Furthermore, the meaning would have to lose the element of quarrelling and disputing, which would mean that the meaning turns more objective, again going against the tendency for meaning to turn more subjective. This makes it unlikely that the semantic development happened in this way. The direction of the semantic development in accordance with the theories about general tendencies or principles should be 'word' > 'discussion' > 'heated discussion' > 'physical confrontation' > 'fight'.

2. METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the choices made in this investigation are explained as are the manner and order of this investigation. Firstly, the criteria for choosing the Irish and Welsh words are discussed. Secondly, the way this investigation is conducted is described.

2.1 The choice for Irish and Welsh word

There are two criteria underlying the choice for the Irish and Welsh words that are analysed in this investigation. The first criterium is that the words must have a meaning connected with speaking and/or fighting. This investigation is concerned with the semantic range of words in the realm of speaking and fighting, so it is only logical that the analysed words fall into this realm. The words that are mentioned in Buck's *Dictionary of Selected Synonyms in the Principal Indo-European Languages: A Contribution to the History of Ideas* are leading. The second criterium is that the words have a cognate in the other language, either Irish or Welsh. Knowing that the words have the same origin and the same original meaning is important because only then valid conclusions about change of meaning in either Irish or Welsh can be drawn.

According to these two criteria the following word-pairs have been chosen: *briathar* 'word' and *brwydr* 'battle', *focal* 'word' and *gwaethl* 'battle', *dál* '(hostile) meeting' and *dadl* 'argument', *comrac* 'meeting' and *cyfranc* 'meeting', *ár* 'slaughter' and *aer* 'battle', *cath* 'battle' and *cad* 'battle', and *gleo* 'fight' and *glew* 'brave'.

This definite list of the word-pairs can be divided into three groups. The first group contains the words that show the difference in meaning in Irish and Welsh very clearly (*briathar-brwydr* and *focal-gwaethl*). The second group contains the words that also show this difference in meaning, but within the language and not compared with the other language (*dál-dadl* and *comrac-cyfranc*). The third group contains the neutral words for fighting in Welsh and Irish (*cath-cad*, *ár-aer* and *gleo-glew*). This last group is important because it acts as a control group, so that it is possible to establish whether the semantic use of the neutral word-pairs versus the ambivalent word-pairs is different.

2.2 Order and manner of investigation

This investigation consists of a thorough analysis of the word-pairs mentioned above. Their etymologies, semantic differences and development, and attestations are examined to form a complete picture of the (semantic) history of the word-pairs. This analysis is necessary to be able to draw conclusions about the direction of the semantic development of the words for fighting in Irish and Welsh and confirm or reject the hypothesis. Conducting the investigation this way ensures that all the relevant aspects of the word-pairs are closely researched.

3. ANALYSIS OF THE WORD-PAIRS

In this chapter, the word-pairs are analysed to be able to answer the research question. It is important to examine all the information available to draw the correct conclusions about the semantic range of the words-pairs. Information about the etymology, the semantics and attestations is included to form a complete picture of the words and their history. The following word-pairs are arranged as Irish-Welsh.

Bríathar-brwydr

In GOI the word *bríathar* ‘word’ is mentioned twice, both regarding the variation in the quality of the interior vowels. *Bríathar* is a feminine long a-stem. It has either a broad or a slender consonant or consonant-cluster throughout the paradigm. For example, the accusative and the dative singular is *bréithir* with a palatal consonant, the genitive singular has the form *bré(i)thre* with a palatal consonant-cluster as well, whereas the nominative singular *bríathar* and the nominative and accusative plural *bríathra* have a broad consonant and consonant-cluster.⁴⁰

The Welsh cognate of *bríathar* is, despite semantic differences, clearly *brwydr* ‘battle, conflict, dispute, army’. Matasović proposes that the semantic development in Welsh might have been ‘words’ → ‘conversation’ → ‘quarrel’ → ‘dispute’ → ‘fight’. On the other hand, he states that it is possible to derive **brētrā* from the PC root **brē-/brī-* which means ‘to cut’ (PIE verb **b^hrey-* ‘cut’), which indicates a semantic development from ‘fight’ into ‘word’.⁴¹

In Irish, the compound *bríatharchath* ‘war of words’ is found in the story of *Fled Bricrend* where it refers to the word-battle between the wives of three Ulster champions. This compound connects the two meanings in an interesting way.

The earliest attestations of *bríathar* are found in the glosses and it is well attested in later sources also:

Wb. 4c18: *be sóir mo brethre* ‘I shall be free as regards my word’.

Wb. 31b30: *imfresnat a ngníme fria mbriathra* ‘their deeds conflict with their words’.

TBC Rec. I 2831: *‘Dar ar m-bréithir ém,’ for in gilla.* ‘“On my word,” said the charioteer’.

Welsh *brwydr* is attested as early as the thirteenth century:

HGC 116: *A brwyder a vu ... y lle a elwir ... y tir gwaetlyt, o achau y vrwyder a vu ena* ‘a battle took place ..., a place which is called “the bloody land”, by reason of the battle which took place there’.

WML 126: *yn dyd kat a brwydyr* ‘in the day of battle and fighting’.

WM 166: *a bellach brwydreu ac ymladeu* ‘but now there is conflict and combat’⁴².

Bríathar in modern Irish has the meaning ‘word, verb’ and modern Welsh *brwydr* means ‘battle, conflict’.⁴³

Focal-gwaethl

Old Irish *focull* ‘word, vocable’, later written as *focal*, and its Welsh cognate *gwaethl* ‘debate, dispute, contention, battle’ show the same semantic difference as the word-pair *bríathar-brwydr*. *Focal* was originally a neuter word, but in Middle-Irish, it regularly developed into a masculine word.⁴⁴ Matasović

⁴⁰ GOI §161 and §290.

⁴¹ Matasović 2009: 77.

⁴² Translation Davies 2007: 94.

⁴³ The translations of the modern Irish and Welsh words are taken from *Foclóir Póca* and *Y Geiriadur Mawr*.

⁴⁴ Bergin 1938: 135.

proposes that *focal* is presumably borrowed from Latin *uocābulum*, because inherited *woxtlo- would have given **fochtul.⁴⁵ However, this etymology is not without problems. Bergin noted that it is unexpected that such a learned Latin word is found in the early laws in the sense of ‘test’. He also noted that the phonetic development would be surprising, because it leaves the modern -c unexplained, even if one assumes an arbitrary contraction or influence of *vōcula* or *vōcalis*. He suggested that *focal* is rather a native word and postulated a form *woktlon.⁴⁶

Thurneysen showed that the consonant-cluster *-chtl-* has become *-kkl-* in *anacul* ‘protection’ < *anechtlo-* (cf. Gaulish *anextlo-marvs*),⁴⁷ which also applies to the phonetic development of *focal*. The form *wok-tlo- ‘word’ with o-grade can be regularly traced back to the PIE verb *wek^{w-} ‘speak, say’.

Welsh *gwaethl* developed regularly from *wok-tlo-, but it acquired a different meaning in the process. If *focal* indeed stems from a native Celtic word, this word-pair is cognate and then it complies to the criteria mentioned above.

Focal occurs in the earliest Irish glossaries and in later sources as well:

O’Mulc 552: *focul i.e. a uocala.*

Mon. Tall. §61: *na digebad cid a oenfocul dia briathraib* ‘a single word that she said’.

Laws I 32.3: *a inde in focail is sencus* ‘meaning of the word “sencus”’.

Welsh *gwaethl* is first attested at the beginning of the fourteenth century:

H 59a: *Gweathyl edlid om bron pan brouer kynrein (Cynddelw)*

R 1391: *etlit hil gwythlit gwaethlon*

Focal has the modern Irish meaning ‘word, phrase, remark, message’, but *gwaethl* is no longer used.

These two word-pairs share the same semantic difference, that is, the Irish words mean ‘word’, but their Welsh cognates mean ‘battle’. It has already been said that word-meanings tend to become more internal and subjective and the semantic development from ‘word’ to ‘fight’ has been explained. The word-pair *focal-gwaethl* most likely is derived from the PIE root *wek^{w-} ‘speak, say’, which definitely makes ‘word’ the original meaning and ‘battle’ the secondary meaning. *Bríathar-brwydr* probably are derived from a verbal root as well, but the exact PIE root is not clear. However, the compound *bríatharchath* shows how the meanings ‘word’ and ‘battle’ can be connected. This strengthens the hypothesis that the semantic development was ‘word’ > ‘discussion’ > ‘heated discussion’ > ‘physical confrontation’ > ‘fight’.

Dál-dadl

Both *dál* and *dadl* have a meaning connected with meeting and assembling, but they also have a secondary meaning that has an association with hostility and fighting. Welsh *dadl* has a lot of meanings, including ‘argument, debate, doubt, action in law, meeting, account, battle’. *Dál* also has a wide semantic range; its meanings include ‘(hostile) meeting, court, law-case, dispute, judgment, agreement, matter’. Both words come from PC *datlā ‘assembly, meeting’, which possibly contains the PIE verbal root *d^heh₁- ‘make, do’, and the suffix *-tlo-.⁴⁸ De Bernardo Stempel suggests the PIE form *d^hə-d^hlā and makes the connection with the PIE root *d^heh₁- as well.⁴⁹

Both the Irish and Welsh words are well-attested throughout the centuries:

⁴⁵ Matasović 2009: 429.

⁴⁶ Bergin 1938: 136.

⁴⁷ GOI §180.

⁴⁸ Matasović 2009: 92.

⁴⁹ De Bernardo Stempel 1999: 384.

TBC Rec. I 570-1: *Nírbo chuman laiss dál a daltai inna díaid* ‘He did not remember the arrangement with his fosterling to come after him’.

TBC Rec. I 2835-6: *Tíagam isin dáil-sea do chosnom ind fír-sea* ‘let us go to this encounter, to contend with this man’.

Fianaig 10.3: *dochta do neoch dál as dáil facbas dáil néco fri láim* ‘it is blindness for anyone making a tryst to set aside the tryst with death’.

WM 32: *a menegi y dadyll oll* ‘and he told her the whole story’⁵⁰.

WM 49: *yn dadleu idaw dydgweith* ‘at a council of his one day’⁵¹.

MWL 16: *kaffel pedeir keinhawc kyfreith o pop dadyll* ‘to receive four legal pence from every cause’.

Both modern Irish and modern Welsh retain the wide semantic range: Irish *dáil* means ‘meeting, tryst, (legislative) assembly, distribution, circumstance’ and Welsh *dadl* ‘debate, doubt, meeting, conversation, battle, course, account, cause’.

Comrac-cyfranc

Just like the word-pair *dál-dadl*, this word-pair also has a primary meaning connected with meeting, but a secondary meaning connected with fighting. *Comrac* is the verbal noun of the verb *con-ricc* ‘meets, encounters’ and is often used in military contexts, which changes the meaning from ‘meeting’ into ‘battle’. *Cyfranc* ‘meeting, encounter, battle, story, conversation’ shows the same semantic range. Matasović suggests the PC verb *kom-fro-ank-o ‘meet, fight’,⁵² which would indicate that the words already had a twofold meaning, i.e. ‘meet, fight’, before they developed separately in respectively Irish and Welsh. This PC verb consists of the preposition *kom ‘with’ and the verb *ank-o ‘reach’, which is traced back to PIE *h₂nek- ‘reach, attain’⁵³.

Comrac is attested as early as the Milan glosses and in later stages of the Irish language as well:

MI. 75a1: *a chomraicsom frisaul* ‘of his encounter with Saul’.

Mon. Tall. § 38: *iar comruc ind crontsale frisind laim* ‘after the spittle touches the hand’.

TBC Rec. I 1293: *Scíth lim namá comrac dúib & Cú Chulaind* ‘I dislike the thought of a fight between you and Cú Chulainn’.

Welsh *cyfranc* is also well-attested:

HGC 120: *ar gyvranc honno er henne hyt hediw a elwir* ‘thenceforward to this day this contest is called’.

WM 35: *menegi y holl gyfranc* ‘telling the whole story’⁵⁴.

WM 87: *ac yno y bu y gyfranc* ‘and that is where the battle took place’⁵⁵.

Modern Irish *comhrac* means ‘encounter, fight, meeting’, but Welsh *cyfranc* is now obsolete.

In both these word-pairs, the semantic development seems to have been ‘meeting’ > ‘unfriendly meeting’ > ‘fight’, which is in accordance with the tendency for words to develop a more subjective meaning. These word-pairs demonstrate that it is possible for words to develop from ‘word, meeting’ to ‘fight’, which supports the direction of the semantics in the word-pairs *briathar-brwydr* and *focal-*

⁵⁰ Translation Davies 2007: 18.

⁵¹ Translation Davies 2007: 28.

⁵² Matasović 2009: 215.

⁵³ Matasović 2009: 36-37.

⁵⁴ Translation Davies 2007: 20.

⁵⁵ Translation Davies 2007: 51.

gwaethl. The fact that the semantic development is not the reverse only strengthens the hypothesis. If this semantic direction is correct, the double meaning, ‘meet, fight’, that Matasović suggests for the PC verb *kom-fro-ank-o is questionable. Rather, the secondary meaning ‘fight’ developed separately in Irish and Welsh after the meaning ‘meet’ gained a more negative association.

Ár-aer

Ár ‘slaughter, carnage, defeat, destruction’ and *aer* ‘battle, fight, war, slaughter, army’ come from PC *agro- ‘carnage, battle’. *Veragri*, the name for a Gaulish people, undoubtedly contains the same word.⁵⁶ These words are presumably derived from the PIE root *h₂eǵro- ‘hunt’.⁵⁷ Pokorny gives the PIE substantive root *aǵ-rā ‘hunt’.⁵⁸ An interesting compound that is found in both Irish and Welsh is *ármag* and *aerfa* ‘field of slaughter, battlefield’.

The earliest occurrences of *ár* are found in the Milan glosses, later attestations are found in various sources:

MI 34a19: *donaib araib gl. ad strages*.

Met. Dinds. iv 252.3: *diar' fúabairthe isna háraib* ‘when they were cut down in the carnage’.

LU 9606: *ár cend* ‘a slaughter of chiefs’.

TBC Rec. I 492: *fóbair a n-ármach* ‘he made for the battle-field’.

The earliest attestation of Welsh *aer* dates from the tenth century and is well-attested in the following centuries:

(Ox 2) ESC 9: *cladis .i. hair*.

GMB 153: *lliaws cletyf clear a gleif rutreit aer/a gawr daer drac lwys*

C 48: *aer o season*

WM 61: *y buassei yr aeruaeu* ‘where the battles had taken place’⁵⁹.

Modern Irish *ár* means ‘slaughter, havoc’, but Welsh *aer* is no longer used in the modern language.

Cath-cad

Both *cath* and *cad* mean ‘battle, fight’ and have a second meaning ‘troop, army’. They stem from PC *katu- ‘battle’ and eventually from the PIE substantive root *kátu- ‘fight’.⁶⁰ Both the Irish and Welsh words are used in numerous compounds and personal names, for example, *cathbarr* ‘helmet’, *Cathchern* (ogham CATOTIGIRNI), *Cathbad*, *cadfa* ‘battlefield’, *cadfridog* ‘general’, etc. In Continental Celtic, there are also numerous personal names to be found, for example, *Catumarus*, *Catumandus*, *Vellocatus*, etc.⁶¹

Cath is used widely in Irish, and therefore well-attested:

MI. 34a20: *in chatho gl. proelii*.

TBC Rec. I 481: *cath Eógain meic Derthacht fri Conchobar* ‘the fight between E mac D and C’.

MR 166.14: *cid cia ar ar cuirestar ceist in catha* ‘whoever was worried about the outcome of the battle’.

Welsh *cad* is attested from the thirteenth century onwards:

C 95: *oet guaget bragat vrth. kei ig kad*

⁵⁶ LEIA A-82.

⁵⁷ Matasović 2009: 28.

⁵⁸ IEW 6.

⁵⁹ Translation Davies 2007: 34.

⁶⁰ Matasović 2009: 195.

⁶¹ LEIA C-47-48.

C 96: *kei guin a llachev. digon int we kadev*

WM 466: *cat gamlan* ‘the battle of Camlan’⁶².

Both words have not changed their meaning in the modern languages: Irish *cath* means ‘battle, conflict, trial, battalion’ and Welsh *cad* ‘battle, army’.

Gleo-glew

The Irish noun *gleo* ‘fight, combat’ and the Welsh adjective *glew* ‘courageous, fierce, sharp’ perhaps stem from PC *gliwā-. However, Lewis and Pedersen reconstruct the form *ghliwot-s.⁶³ De Bernardo Stempel states that the Celtic meanings of the word are easily derived from “*anstürmen*”, but she does not give the original root.⁶⁴ GPC gives the PIE verbal root *g̑lei- ‘rush, hasten, attack’, which contains the same meaning as De Bernardo Stempel notes, but according to Pokorny, this root is only used in Indo-Iranian.⁶⁵ Buck, who gives the etymology of *gleo* as *gliwā-, tentatively connects it with Sanskrit *jri-* ‘spread out to, overpower’.⁶⁶ Another possibility is that it contains the verbal root *ghel- ‘call, cry’.⁶⁷ Since the Modern Irish meaning of *gleo* is more usual ‘noise’, this could be the original meaning of the word, which then developed into ‘fight’, as follows: ‘call, cry’ > ‘loud cry’ > ‘noise’ > ‘fight’.

Irish *gleo* is well-attested in various sources:

TBC 3444: *ní ba bán in gléo* ‘not bloodless will be the fight’.

TBC 4053: *da mac samla galaib gliad* ‘in feats of battle’.

The earliest attestations of Welsh *glew* date from the thirteenth century:

C 79: *agliv deur. a glev teeirn*

T 63: *gwen glew ryhawt glewhaf vn yw vryen*

WM 158: *ymilgwn goreu a weleist eiroet a glewhaf ar hydot*

Another interesting attestation of *glew* is found in the personal compound name *Glewlwyt Gauaeluawr* ‘Bold Grey Mighty Grasp’⁶⁸, the name of the gatekeeper in the poem *Pa gur yv y porthaur* and of Arthur’s gatekeeper in *Culhwch ac Olwen*.

Modern Irish *gleo* usually means ‘noise’, but can also mean ‘fight, battle’ and Modern Welsh *glew* means ‘brave, daring, stout, valiant’.

These three word-pairs share the fact that they are derived from a root that originally had a meaning ‘fight, battle, slaughter’ and that they retain this meaning. The fact that they do not develop to ‘word’ confirms the hypothesis that the direction of the semantic development is ‘word’ > ‘discussion’ > ‘heated discussion’ > ‘physical confrontation’ > ‘fight’ and not the reverse. The possible semantic development for *gleo* from ‘call, cry’ to ‘fight’ further supports the hypothesis, because it shows the same sort of subjectification, namely that a neutral word gets a negative association which then develops further into ‘fight’.

⁶² Translation Davies 2007: 187.

⁶³ Lewis & Pedersen 1974: 176.

⁶⁴ De Bernardo Stempel 1999: 220.

⁶⁵ IEW 401.

⁶⁶ Buck 1971: 1372.

⁶⁷ IEW 428.

⁶⁸ Translation Bromwich and Evans 1992: 58.

4. CONCLUSION

This investigation aims to establish the direction of the semantic development of the Irish and Welsh words for fighting, which is assumed to be ‘word’ > ‘discussion’ > ‘heated discussion’ > ‘physical confrontation’ > ‘fight’.

Firstly, this study explained the theories supporting the hypothesis that the semantics indeed developed from ‘word’ into ‘fight’, namely that the tendency for words is to develop a more internal and subjective meaning. Secondly, an analysis of the word-pairs was conducted, so that it is possible to draw conclusions about the semantic development of these word-pairs.

It is already clear that the different groups of word-pairs are each important for answering the research question while considering all the different aspects of the hypothesis. The word-pairs *briathar-brwydr* and *focal-gwaethl* indicate that the most likely direction of the semantic development must have been ‘word’ > ‘discussion’ > ‘heated discussion’ > ‘physical confrontation’ > ‘fight’, since the original root of *focal-gwaethl* means ‘speak, say’ and the compound *briatharchath* shows how the meanings fighting and speaking can be connected. The word-pairs *dál-dadl* and *comrac-cyfranc* further strengthen the hypothesis, because of the direction of their semantic development they demonstrate how words develop from ‘word, meeting’ to ‘fight’. The fact that these words show this development, makes it questionable that, already in PC, *kom-fro-ank-o had two meanings ‘fight’ and ‘meet’, as Matasović states. The word-pairs *ár-aer*, *cath-cad* and *gleo-glew* are very important as well, because they show that the reverse semantic development did not occur, but that words that already had a meaning connected with fighting, retained that meaning. All this allows us to accept the hypothesis that the direction of the semantic development of the Irish and Welsh words for fighting was as follows: ‘word’ > ‘discussion’ > ‘heated discussion’ > ‘physical confrontation’ > ‘fight’.

It is worth noticing that there is a difference between the words derived from a verbal root and the words derived from a substantive root. The word-pairs that originate in a verbal root are *briathar-brwydr*, *focal-gwaethl*, *dál-dadl*, *comrac-cyfranc* and *gleo-glew* and those that have an original substantive root are *ár-aer* and *cath-cad*. Interestingly, it is the word-pairs that are derived from a verbal root that undergo a semantic development, whether the word-pairs originating in a substantive root do not develop a different meaning. It is well possible that the original root of the words influences the extent to which a word can develop a different meaning. Here, this would indicate that the words originating in a verbal root have a wider semantic range than those derived from a substantive root.

This investigation has confirmed the assumption about the direction of the semantic development, an explanation that was accepted without being examined. It is now possible to state with certainty that this assumption is indeed correct.

The observations made in this study only reach as far as the seven word-pairs that were analysed. For an even more thorough investigation it is necessary to include other relevant word-pairs as well and to pay further attention the words in their contexts. In order to place this study in a wider context, it is also necessary to observe the semantic range of words for fighting and speaking in the other Indo-European languages. Because of this being part of the bachelor dissertation, it is not possible to conduct such a broad and thorough investigation, which leaves it open for further research.

5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bernardo Stempel, Patrizia de, *Nominale Wortbildung des Älteren Irischen: Stammbildung und Derivation* (Berlin 1999).
- Bergin, Osborn, 'O.Ir. foc(c)ul(1)', *Ériu* 12 (1938) 135-136.
- Bromwich, Rachel and D. Simon Evans (eds.), *Culhwch and Olwen: an edition and study of the oldest Arthurian tale* (Cardiff 1992).
- Buck, Carl Darling, *A Dictionary of Selected Synonyms in the Principal Indo-European Languages: A Contribution to the History of Ideas* (Chicago 1971).
- Davies, Sioned, *The Mabinogion* (Oxford 2007).
- Fortson, Benjamin W. IV, 'An Approach to Semantic Change', in *The Handbook of Historical Linguistics*, ed. Joseph, Brian D. & Richard D. Janda (Malden 2003) 648-666.
- Lewis, Henry and Holger Pedersen, *A Concise Comparative Celtic Grammar* (Göttingen 1974).
- Matasović, Ranko, *Etymological Dictionary of Proto-Celtic* (Leiden 2009).
- Meillet, Antoine, *Linguistique Historique et Linguistique Générale* (Paris 1958).
- Meurig Evans, H. et al (eds.), *Y Geiriadur Mawr: The Complete Welsh-English/English-Welsh Dictionary* (Llandysul 2014).
- Millar, Robert McColl (ed.), *Trask's Historical Linguistics*, revised third edition (London and New York 2015).
- Ó Dónaill, N. et al (eds.), *Foclóir Póca: English-Irish/Irish English Dictionary* (Baile Átha Cliath 2014).
- O'Rahilly, Cecile, *Táin Bó Cúailnge: Recension I* (Dublin 1976).
- Pokorny, Julius, *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, vol. I (Bern and Munich 1959).
- Thurneysen, Rudolf, *A Grammar of Old Irish*, revised and enlarged ed., vert. D. A. Binchy and Osborn Bergin (Dublin 1946).
- Traugott, Elizabeth Closs, 'On the Rise of Epistemic Meanings in English: An Example of Subjectification in Semantic Change', *Language* 65/1 (March 1989) 31-55.
- Ullmann, Stephen, *Semantics: An Introduction to the Science of Meaning* (Oxford 1977).
- Vendryes, J., *Lexique Étymologique de l'Irlandais Ancien* (Dublin 1959-1987).

Online sources

- Bibliography of Irish Linguistics and Literature 1972- (BILL) <https://bill.celt.dias.ie/vol4/index2.html>
- Electronic Dictionary of the Irish Language <http://dil.ie/>
- Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru <http://welsh-dictionary.ac.uk/gpc/gpc.html>