

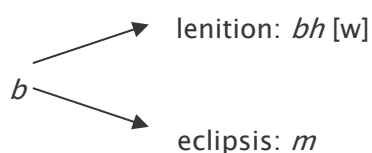
## Reradicalisation – Irishmen lost in segment replacement rules?

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The purpose of the paper is to present reradicalisation of initial consonants in Irish as a morphophonological alternation. Reradicalisation, understood as aberrant application of consonantal mutations consists in segment manipulation of a phonological origin.

Irish initial mutations used to be pure phonology. In the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> century, all initial consonants preceded by a final vowel were lenited. The lenition spirantised the voiced and unvoiced stops, and prefixed *h* to vowels. Another mutation, eclipsis, called also nasalisation, was triggered by the preceding final nasal consonant. As a result, voiced plosives were nasalized, voiceless plosives underwent voicing, and *n* was prefixed to vowels. These mutations lost their phonological conditioning due to the apocope (deletion) of final syllables. This process took place in the 6<sup>th</sup> and early 7<sup>th</sup> century and turned mutations into grammatical markers. The best example of a grammatically loaded mutation is lenition of the initials of preterite verb forms, e.g. *ghlan sé an teach* 'he cleaned the house'.

The examination of Irish data reveals that initials of some words are subject to dialectal variation, e.g. *prae/ frae* (CF)<sup>1</sup> 'prey', *bain-tighearna/main-tighearna* (R) 'mansion house', *boc/poc* (WM) 'buck'. We assume that these are permanent results of the phenomenon called reradicalisation, by which we understand the shift of the radical status from one consonant (R) to another, reanalyzed as (R1). We use the term 'radical'(R) after, *inter allia*, Ball (1992), for the basic, unmutated variant of the initial consonant of a given lexeme. The operation of the reradicalisation results in the replacement of the true radical with a secondary-radical (R1). The system of Irish mutations offers a plausible explanation for the rise of the new radical. Let us consider the Irish consonant *b* which has two potential non-radical variants:

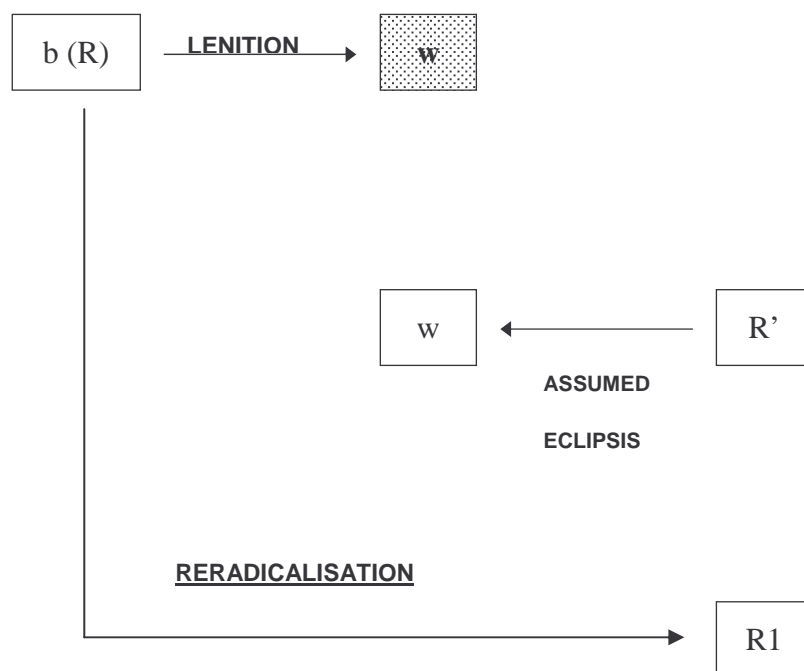


<sup>1</sup> The abbreviations accompanying the glosses stand for the dialect they were recorded in: WM=West Muskerry, R=Ring, T=Tourmakeady, CF=Cois Fhairrge

The ensuing examples demonstrate *p* interchanging with other consonants in the place of a radical:

- (1) *blaosc/plaosc* 'shell' (WM)
- (2) *banrach/manrach* 'paddock' (WM)
- (3) *balla/falla* 'wall'(WM)

In keeping with our analysis, (2) is an example of the shift of the radical status from the true radical *b* to its mutated variant *m*, probably due to non-recognition of the mutation context. (1) and (3) are cases of a more intricate segment replacement operation. The mutated variant of *b* is erroneously interpreted as the derivative of *m* (2) or *f* in (3) and not its true radical *b*. We illustrate the process with the following graph:



In this case of reradicalisation we observe a switch between two morphophonological rules, both replacing a radical consonant with *w* in the context for mutation. The wrong judgment on the part of the speaker results in the transfer of the radical status from R to R'.

We believe that morphophonological rules, understood as segment replacement rules, do have life on their own. The pressure to apply mutation rules, clearly without any phonological

context, may be felt by the speakers so strong as to introduce alternative initials for existent words.

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