

Poster Title: Nasal Mutation Variation in Patagonian Welsh

Authors: Morgan Sleeper

As a relatively cross-linguistically rare phenomenon inhabiting the interface between morphology, syntax, and phonology, consonant mutation has long attracted the attention of linguists (Ball & Müller 1992, Gnanadesikan 1997, Hannahs 2013, Lieber 1987, McLaughlin 2000). Initial consonant mutation – a (morpho-)phonological process that affects certain word-initial consonants – is a characteristic feature of the Celtic languages. In Welsh – spoken in Wales and in the Chubút province of Argentine Patagonia – there are three distinct types of initial consonant mutations: Soft Mutation, Nasal Mutation, and Aspirate Mutation. Each of these three mutations apply in different morphological, phonological, and syntactic contexts. Nasal Mutation, for instance, affects words following the locative particle *yn* 'in', the first-person singular possessive pronoun *fy* 'my', and the negative prefix *an-* 'un-'. When preceded by a triggering morpheme, word-initial /p/, /t/, /k/, /b/, /d/, or, /g/ will mutate into the nasal of like place and voicing, as in the following example:

Bangor ['baŋgɔr]		ym	Mangor ['maŋgɔr]
Bangor	→	in	Bangor
'Bangor'		'in Bangor'	(Hannahs 2013:127)

While accounts of the alternations themselves are widespread, comparatively less is known about the specifics of how Welsh mutations vary in use. The paradigm for Nasal Mutation described above, for example, is presented as standardized in grammars of Welsh (King 2003:17-18; Hannahs 2013:126-127; Thomas 1984:220; Willis 1986:7), yet observations of dialectal and socially-conditioned variation, as well as individual differences, have been reported in speakers' use of the Nasal Mutation in Wales. King (2003:17) states that Nasal Mutation is “not consistently applied after [*yn* or *fy*] in many parts of Wales”, while Thomas (1984:214) notes that in South Glamorgan Welsh, both voiced and voiceless stops are replaced by homorganic voiced nasals, and different groups of speakers realize the mutation more or less frequently in expected environments. Further, Hannahs (2013:125) points out that lexical restrictions can block mutations entirely in certain words, and Ball & Müller (1992:205) indicate that non-Welsh place names may be less likely to participate in mutation than Welsh place names.

Taking these observations as a starting point, this paper uses corpus data of conversational Welsh speech from both Wales and Patagonia (Deuchar et al. 2014) to examine variation in the realization of Nasal Mutation in Patagonian Welsh. Results indicate that while speakers in Wales generally do not use Nasal Mutation – often applying Soft Mutation instead when they do mutate – Patagonian speakers retain a Nasal Mutation paradigm in certain cases, making the use of this mutation a significant distinguishing dialectal feature of Patagonian Welsh. Further, this study confirms the observation (c.f. Ball & Müller 1992:205) that the geographical position of named places relative to Wales affects their participation in Nasal Mutation, and shows that – for certain Patagonian speakers – place names of the *Wladfa* (Welsh Patagonia) pattern in the same way as place names within Wales. This work therefore adds to our understanding not only of the dialectal features of an understudied variety of Welsh, but also of how the complex interaction of physical and social geography influences linguistic variation.

References:

- Ball, Martin J. & Nicole Müller. 1992. *Mutation in Welsh*. New York: Routledge.
- Deuchar, Margaret, P. Peredur Davies, Jon Russell Herring, M. Carmen Parafita Couto & D. Carter. 2014. Building bilingual corpora. In Enlli Môn Thomas & Ineke Mennen (eds.), *Advances in the Study of Bilingualism*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- ESRC Centre for Research on Bilingualism in Theory & Practice. *Bangor Patagonia Corpus*. <http://bangortalk.org.uk/>. Bangor: University of Wales.
- ESRC Centre for Research on Bilingualism in Theory & Practice. *Bangor Siarad Corpus*. <http://bangortalk.org.uk/>. Bangor: University of Wales.
- Gnanadesikan, Amalia E. 1997. Phonology with ternary scales. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Massachusetts.
- Hannahs, S.J. 2013. *The Phonology of Welsh*. London: Oxford University Press.
- King, Gareth. 2003. *Modern Welsh: A Comprehensive Grammar*. New York: Routledge.
- Lieber, Rochelle. 1987. *An Integrated Theory of Autosegmental Processes*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- McLaughlin, Fiona. 2000. Consonant mutation and reduplication in Seereer-Siin. *Phonology* 17. 333-363.
- Morris-Jones, John. 1913. *A Welsh Grammar, Historical and Comparative*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Thomas, Peter Wynn. 1984. Variation in South Glamorgan Consonant Variation. In Martin J. Ball & Glyn E. Jones (eds.), *Welsh Phonology*. Cardiff: Cardiff University Press. 208-236.
- Watkins, T. Arwyn. 1993. Welsh. In Martin J. Ball & James Fife (eds.), *The Celtic Languages*. London: Routledge. 298-348.
- Willis, Penny. 1986. *The Initial Consonant Mutations in Welsh and Breton*. Bloomington: Indiana University Linguistics Club.