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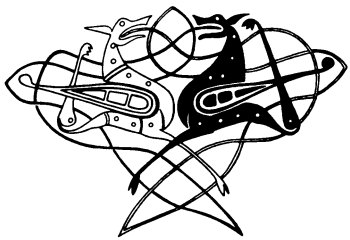

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Make Peace and *Take Victory:* Support Verb Constructions in Old English in Comparison with Old Irish

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CONTENTS

TABLES

ABBREVIATIONS

B	Bede diPaulo Healy et al. (2004)
BB	Bethu Brigte Ó hAodha (1978)
Beo	Bēowulf diPaulo Healy (2004)
CCC	Compert ConCulainn van Hamel (1933)
CG	Críth Gablach Binchy (1949)
Chron	Anglo-Saxon Chronicle diPaulo Healy (2004)
DIL	Dictionary of the Irish Language. Quin (1953-75)
EC	Echtrae Connlai McCone (2000)
Emph	Emphatic
IB	Immram Brain Meyer (1895)
LU	Lebor na hUidre Best and Bergin (1929)
Ml	Milan Glosses Stokes and Strachan (1901)
MUT	Grammatical mutation
N	Noun
OED	Oxford English Dictionary Simpson and Weiner (1989)
Part	Particle
Prtv	Partitive
Sg	St. Gall Glosses Stokes and Strachan (1903)
SMMD	Scéla Mucce Mac Dathó Thurneysen (1935)
SVC	Support verb construction

LL	Táin Bó Cúailgne (from the Book of Leinster) O'Rahilly (1967)
TBF	Táin Bó Fraech Meid (1967)
TDOE	Dictionary of Old English online corpus
Thes II	Thesaurus II Stokes and Strachan (1903)
Tur.	Turin Glosses Stokes and Strachan (1901)
VN	Verbal noun
Wb.	Würzburg Glosses Stokes and Strachan (1901)

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I would like to dedicate this study to the memory of *Anthony and Elisabeth Ronan*. Thank you both.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 AIM OF THE INVESTIGATION

During its linguistic history the English language has largely lost its inflectional endings; its typology has become increasingly analytic: nominal inflections were lost and prepositional constructions took over many of their functions. Similarly, verbal inflection was reduced and this reduction was paralleled by an increase in particle verbs and prepositional verbal constructions, as well as by growing verbal periphrasis, such as increased use of auxiliaries (e.g Hiltunen 1983, Denison 1993). During recent years the function and the emergence of a particular kind of verbal periphrasis has attracted the interest of scholars working from both synchronic and diachronic perspectives, that of support verb constructions. Support verb constructions describe a single action or state in more than one word. These verbal constructions, variously known as *light verb structures, stretched verb constructions* or *support verb constructions* (e.g. Algeo 1995, Brinton 1996, Claridge 2000), consist of a semantically non-specific inflected verb, such as *make, give* or *take* and predicate noun objects, which are typically related to or derived from verbs, such as *walk, talk* or *admit*:

1. He gave a good talk.
2. I took a long walk to clear my head.
3. It is time for someone to make this admission.

Syntactically, the predicate nouns are the direct objects of the inflected verb, but conceptionally the verb-object phrases denote one single event. Thus, *giving a talk* is not about 'giving' and 'talking', but predominantly about 'talking'. This is in contast to ordinary verbs and their objects. *Giving a book* is separable into 'giving' and 'a book' and is not paraphrasable by *booking*. This latter, cognitive separation of all individual members of a phrase is known as semantic compositionality (going back to Frege 1892). In compositional meanings the overall sense can be derived from adding up the individual meanings of all the components. Support verb constructions, by contrast, are not the

sum of the meaning of all their members, hence they are semantically non-compositional.

Recent book-length studies on the subject of support verb constructions in the English language alone have been provided by Brinton and Akimoto (eds) (1999), Claridge (2000), Allerton (2002), and Matsumoto (2008). The bulk of this research has so far been carried out on the linguistic development from Middle English onwards, with the contribution by Akimoto and Brinton (1999) providing a pioneering study of the most frequent types of collocations found in Old English.

These structures are of course not unique to English and they have been discussed in other Indo-European languages such as German (van Pottelberge 1996, 2001), French (Danlos 1992, Langer 2009) or Modern Irish (Bloch-Trojnar 2009a, 2009b), and also Sanskrit (Jacobi 1903). Discussions of support verb constructions in non-Indo-European languages include Estonian (Kaalep and Muischnek 2006) or Basque (Oyharçabal 2004). Older varieties of the Celtic languages have not yet received any significant attention.

One point that has been mooted as a possible contributor to linguistic change in general, and also to increased analyticity in the history of English in particular, is the question of the influence of language contact. Thus studies on linguistic typology (van der Auwera 1998, Haspelmath 2001) and grammaticalisation (such as Heine and Kuteva 2005, 2006) have stressed the increasing similarities in European language structure, and language contact has been mentioned as a factor influencing the development of English after the expansionist period from the sixteenth century onwards (e.g. Bauer 2002, Mesthrie and Bhatt 2008). Language contact is furthermore thought to have played a role in the development of Early English, and the presence of features which are not found in other Germanic languages has been attributed to contact induced change (e.g. Wagner 1959, Hickey 1995, Filppula, Klemola and Pitkänen (eds.) 2002, Tristram 2009). Thinking particularly of the contacts with Celtic languages, Tristram (1999) suggests that developments which could have been influenced by contacts are, amongst others, word order in the sentence, increasing analyticisation in the nominal and verbal paradigms, rise of prepositional verbs, the verbal aspect system, and reflexive systems.

The current study investigates whether support verb constructions are a feature of even earlier stages of the languages on the British Isles

than discussed in the majority of recent studies, and this is done by looking at the two earliest attested languages in Britain and Ireland, namely Old English and Old Irish. These languages are investigated to find out in how far the analytic verbal phrases introduced above, support verb constructions, can already be found in the early languages, even though these linguistic stages are typically not yet considered to display signs of the increasing analyticisation mentioned. Old Irish has been chosen as a particularly good comparandum to Old English from a typological perspective. Old Irish was the Insular Celtic language with the highest degree of morphological synthesis.[1] Thus, it was considerably more synthetic than Old Welsh, and had a higher average morphemic count per word than Old English, whose morpheme counts are between Old Welsh and Old Irish (Tristram 2009). From this point of view, one might be inclined to expect that stronger morphological synthetic tendencies of a language are likely to coincide with lower syntactic analyticity, and this assumption will be tested in the following. Indeed, two tentative suggestions will be made in answer to this hypothesis, namely that the constructions already appear fairly well established in the two languages under investigation here, and that their structural and functional characteristics may be partly caused by language contact influence on their genesis, and partly by inherited word-formation patterns.

To approach this issue, the first research question addressed in this study is to what extent these collocations were already to be found in Old English, and with what distribution. To this end previous documentation and investigations of verb-noun collocations were consulted and their approaches unified, then a new investigation on the basis of a specifically compiled corpus data was added. In the second step the results of this first investigation are compared to Old Irish data. Unlike for English, no previous investigations of verbal collocations existed and a sample corpus has been collected from Early Irish texts. Detailed descriptions of the method used in the respective investigations are found in chapter 2 and 3 respectively. Finally, the status and distribution of the constructions in the two languages are compared and evaluated, and conclusions are drawn from this evaluation. In the remainder of

1. A short description of the Old Irish characteristics most relevant to this study is given in the introduction to chapter 3.

chapter 1, more background information will be given on support verb constructions, and other types of multi-word verbs, in order to specify our topic of investigation, and we will describe multi-word verbs which we are not subsumed under the term support verb construction, and distinguish those from support verbs. The results of this study are the outcome of an investigation that has been carried out in collaboration with the Project *Analyticisation of the Indigenous Languages of the British Isles and of Ireland*, carried out at the University in Freiburg i. Brsg. under the direction of Hildegard L. C. Tristram.

1.2 TYPES OF MULTI-WORD VERBS

In many cases the semantic concept of a single action ('verbal concept') can be expressed by a single verb, such as *to walk, to discuss* or *to complain*. Additionally, there are multi-word expressions which denote semantic concepts similar to simple verbs, such as *to take a walk*, *to speak about* or *to make a complaint*. This study is largely concerned with what motivates the use of one type of multi-verb word, support verb constructions, at the early recorded linguistic stages of the English and the Irish languages. In order to deliminate the object of study, a survey of different multi-word verbs will given in the following to clarify the distinction between support verb constructions and other multi-verb categories.

1.2.1 PREPOSITIONAL VERBS

The category of prepositional verbs largely consists of simple, uncompounded verbs that are employed together with a particle. These combinations can be intransitive (4.) or transitive (5.).

4. The economy went down from there on.
5. They looked at the pictures.

Quirk et al. (1985:1155) observe that particles are added on to the verb and that these two constituents then form a syntactic and/or semantic unit and can therefore be argued to behave like a single word. This is visible in *to look at*, paraphrasable by *to observe*, or *to come across*, paraphrasable by *to find*. As the particle forms part of the meaning

component of the verb, rather than belonging the noun phrase following it, preposition may not be as appropriate a term in this case as particle verb might be. However, as this category is typically referred to as 'prepositional verb' in the relevant literature (e.g. Quirk et al., ibid.) the term prepositional verb will be used here.

In contrast to simple verbs followed by prepositional phrases, prepositional verbs form a semantic unit, and a means for testing whether this unity exists is to ask questions for the object. The constituent following a phrasal verb can typically be asked for by means of *what* or *who*, but not by question words indicating spatial or temporal relations such as *where* or *when* (cf. Quirk et al. 1985:1165, Claridge 2000:59).

6. Just recently, he came across a nice old book.
7. Would they like to come and look at our new arrival?

Thus *he came across what?* or *they should look at who?* are correct paraphrases of the above, and the answers are *a nice old book* and *our new arrival* respectively. With prepositional phrases, a similar question would make the use of the preposition in the answer, but not in the question, necessary:

8. He walked across the bridge.
9. We'll meet at the restaurant.

In these examples, the questions for the prepositional phrases are *he walked where?* and *we'll meet where?* respectively. The answers *across the bridge* and *at the restaurant* enable us to identify the prepositions as forming a unit, and thus a constituent, with the noun phrases.

A further test of separate constituency of the object is passivisation of the noun phrase, which leaves the particle stranded behind its verb (cf. Quirk et al. loc.cit.: 1164):

10. An old book was come across.
11. Our new arrival was looked at.

In the case of non-prepositional verbs, the preposition remains before the object. This passivisation test also indicates that the noun phrase following the phrasal verb can in fact be understood as a true patient

of the verb phrase as passivisation is only possible for direct objects. Furthermore, it is an important and distinguishing feature of all of these collocations that the preposition in these structures is unstressed:

12. Just recently, I **came** across a nice old **book**.
13. Would you like to come and **look** at our new **arriv**al?

Both the descriptions and the examples illustrate that prepositional verbs and their objects do not form a semantically unified group and must therefore be viewed as distinct from support verb constructions.

1.2.2 PHRASAL VERBS

In addition to prepositional verbs, there are collocations of a verb and a particle element that combine into a semantic unit with an adverbial particle (cf. Quirk et al. 1985:1151), and this particle typically indicates spatial or causative/resultative relations (cf. Claridge 2000: 50). These collocations are generally referred to as phrasal verbs. As in prepositional verbs, both a transitive and an intransitive type can be observed as illustrated by *a problem cropped up* and *he turned the offer down* (cf. Quirk et al., 1985:1152-4). Here again the verbs are typically uncompounded and Claridge (2000:54) endorses the view that these are often mono- or disyllabic and derived from Germanic stock. Earlier studies have shown that frequent verbs in English are *take, put, go, get, turn, lay, set, run, make, fall* (Fraser 1976:9). These verbal phrases may be followed by noun phrases, but in contrast to prepositional verbs, they may also appear without being followed by a noun phrase:

14. The machine broke down.
15. House prices went up sharply.

Even if the phrasal verb is followed by a noun phrase, the particle and the following noun phrase do not form a constituent. In contrast to the particle following the prepositional verb, the adverbial particle of the phrasal verb carries stress (Quirk et al. 1985:1167, Brinton 1996: 196). A further feature that distinguishes prepositional and phrasal verbs is the position of objects. While an object can only follow the

prepositional verb, this is not the case for phrasal verbs. Phrasal verbs are syntactically separable and the object can be found both after the particle and between the verb and the particle (cf. Quirk et al., loc. cit.:, Claridge 2000:52):

16. He looked at his friend.
17. *He looked his friend at.
18. He put up the shelf.
19. He put the shelf up.

This position is typically determined by the degree of new information conveyed by the object (cf. Claridge, loc.cit.: 53). Claridge here follows Bolinger (1971:113) in arguing that objects which convey new information are typically found after the adverb, whereas those that contain known information can be found between the verb and the adverb. The difference in object position is even more pronounced for pronominal objects, which in phrasal verbs always is between the verb and the adverb. View the two following examples of prepositional verb and phrasal verb respectively:

20. I looked at him quizzically.
21. I looked him up in the directory.

As a further difference between phrasal and prepositional verbs, Quirk et al. (loc.cit.: 1154, 1167) mention the fact that an adverb can be inserted into a prepositional verb, but not into a phrasal verb. This is illustrated by the examples *they called angrily on the dean* versus **they called angrily up the dean*.

All these examples mentioned show clearly that, in spite of formal similarities between prepositional and phrasal verbs, there are significant syntactic, semantic and prosodical differences between the two types. Like prepositional verbs, phrasal verbs clearly do not form a semantic unit with their object noun phrase and are therefore clearly distinct from support verb constructions.

1.2.3 PHRASAL-PREPOSITIONAL VERBS

In addition to phrasal and prepositional verbs, a further category is found which is largely a combination of the two previous groups,

containing both a phrasal verb and a prepositional particle. Like the two previously discussed categories, these exist in a transitive and an intransitive variant, as illustrated by

22. He came up with a solution. (cf. Quirk et al. 1985:116)
23. They put him up for the next election. (ibid.)

Syntactic behaviour of this structure further underlines the assessment that a phrasal verb is further complemented by a preposition. This is illustrated by the following examples:

24. The doctor broke in on her thoughts. (Claridge 2000:64)
25. I ... put that down to the ageing process (ibid.).

This category shows combined features of both phrasal and prepositional verbs. On the one hand, application of passivisation or focusing may leave the preposition stranded at the end of the verbal phrase as in prepositional verbs. This then leads to possible, albeit not very natural, sentences like *her thoughts were what her doctor broke in on* or *her thoughts were broken in on by her doctor.* Example 25 by contrast, offers the possibility of inserting an object pronoun after the verb and in front of the adverbial particle and could have an alternative shape like *I put down to the aging process that terrible back-pain I always have*. Claridge (2000:65) observes that, with the exception of the object, there are few intervening elements in phrasal-prepositional verbs other than adverbs appearing between adverbial particle and preposition. Like for prepositional and phrasal verbs, the main criteria for constituency of this multi-word verb are semantic unity and substitutability by simplexes. Thus *broke in on* is paraphrasable by *interrupted*, whereas for *put something down to* the only available paraphrase appears to be the prepositional verb *to attribute to*.

1.2.4 SUMMARY

The three above constructions each consist of a verb and a particle, in the case of phrasal-prepositional verbs two particles. They resemble each other in forming a unit semantically, as proven by the fact that they are typically replaceable by a simple verb. All three types superficially resemble prepositional phrases and some tests to distin-

guish them have been illustrated. While it has been suggested that phrasal-prepositional verbs behave like a combination of the two former categories, phrasal and prepositional verbs display clear functional differences. Most prominently those two differ in the possible positions of the object (pronoun), and in their stress patterns. In addition to these multi-word verbs consisting of a verb and a particle, further multi-word structures exist. They are discussed in the following.

1.2.5 SUPPORT VERB CONSTRUCTIONS

1.2.5.1 STRUCTURE

'Support verb constructions' is a term used for a specific type of multi-word verbs, which can be found in a number of Indo-European and non-Indo-European languages. Further terminology includes *eventive object* (Quirk et al. 1985), *verbo-nominal construction* (Stein 1991), *expanded predicate* (Algeo 1995), *complex verb* (Brinton 1996), *stretched verb constructions* (Allerton 2002), or *light verb constructions* (e.g. Family 2011, going back to Jespersen 1909-49, IV:117). The term *support verb constructions*, which is employed in the present study, is current particularly in French language tradition (e.g. Danlos 1992, Gross and de Pontonx 2005). There is no consensus among the authors about what structures are admissible, and different studies investigate non-identical structures. In English linguistics, the common ground is that the structures should be non-compositional and consist of a semantically low-content, inflected verb and a predicate noun. Nickel (1968), who investigates collocations involving *give, have, make* and *take*, and Wierzbicka (1982), who restricts her material to *have* and *take* collocations, confine their studies to those constructions that contain zero-derived verbal nominalisations and could be paraphrased by a simple verb. Thus we may find alternative constructions *to lecture,* Germ. *lesen* or *to decide*, Germ. *entscheiden:*

26. to give a lecture, *eine Vorlesung halten*
27. to take a decision, *eine Entscheidung treffen*

Typically the nominal element is preceded by an indefinite article such as *to have a laugh* or *to have a think*. This article is argued to have a singularising and delimiting effect on the noun (Wierzbicka

1982:758). Stein (1991) adds the observation that not all theoretically possible structures can in fact occur: she maintains that we can only find verbal nominalisations that also exist outside this support verb frame, and that, where no zero-derived nominalisations exist independently, there is no corresponding support verb construction. According to Stein (1991:8), this would account for the absence of structures like **to have an observe*, which is blocked by the absence of the zero-derivation of the verb *observe*, or **to have a urinate*, which likewise lacks zero-derivation. In this context, Stein (ibid.) asserts that disyllabic and trisyllabic Romance loanwords tend to form their derived nouns by suffixation rather than zero-derivation. She holds this to be responsible for the absence of the corresponding support verb constructions in English (ibid.). Although this assessment leaves no room for possible linguistic innovation, the observation seems to be valid overall. Not tenable, however, is her assertion that occurrences of a structure are blocked by the existence of a noun with a similar sense, such as **to have an eat*, which is supposed to be blocked by the presence of *to have a meal/snack* (loc.cit.: 14). Counterexamples can easily be found in the word-field of verbs of thinking: to *have a think* is possible in spite of the presence of a *thought* or even *to have a thought* or *to give a thought*.

Some authors (e.g. Quirk et al. 1985:750-52, Algeo 1995:206) do not restrict their treatment to zero-derived nouns, but also admit those that are 'semantically an extension of the verb' (Quirk et al., loc.cit.: 750). For these Quirk et al. (ibid.) highlight the use of the following verbs: *do, get, give, have, make offer, pay, put* and *take*, Algeo adds *be* (loc.cit.: 207). Other authors (Allerton 2002:18-19, Claridge 2000:73) further admit combinations that contain non-deverbal nouns, such as *take place* or *make way*. This broader definition is accepted on the grounds that the resulting combination is used as a verb, and that its syntax and semantics resemble their counterparts with de-verbal predicate nouns.

In a bid to systematise the differences between support verb constructions and other manners of expression, Allerton (2002:16-17) raises a number of issues: 1. What are the precise grammatical structures of the constructions? 2. How regular are the semantic differences between support verb and non-support verb constructions? 3. How regular is the formation pattern? 4. And finally, should their structure be ac-

counted for: by grammatical rule, lexical listing[2] or differently? To these he offers the following answers: firstly, each relation needs to be given an independent grammatical description that clarifies how the structural elements are related to the corresponding structures. This necessitates surface and deep level structures. Secondly, the semantic relationship may contain gaps and idiosyncrasies in the relationship between syntax and lexical morphology. Thirdly, some relationships involve multiple modifications, such as the typical morphological changes of the participants as well as e.g. passive transformations or causative expressions. Fourthly, the structures have to be dealt with with reference to both lexicon and syntax.

The approach taken here adds different issues to those raised by Allerton. In contrast to support verb constructions with a deverbal noun, the combinations of verb and abstract or concrete noun may create new verbal structures for which no alternative, simple expressions exist. Rather than supplementing and modifying existing expressions of a concept, such a combination would therefore fill a gap that exists in the language and offer the possibility to verbalize a concept that cannot otherwise be expressed verbally, such as *to take place* and *to make way*. The two types of structures may have functional differences and different distributions. The approach in the present study is to differentiate between these two types. The type containing a deverbal predicate is treated as support verb constructions proper. Those structures involving a non-deverbal predicate is also investigated and referred to as support verb constructions in a wider sense.

1.2.5.2 SYNTAX

Formally, the predicate noun in the support verb construction fulfils the function of the object of the support verb. Erbach and Krenn (1993: 17) argue that the argument structure of a support verb construction typically resembles that of the verb underlying the predicate noun. They note, however, that in other cases the argument structure results from a combination of the patterns of the support verb and the verb underlying the predicate noun. As an example they give the German phrase *jemandem vertrauen* 'to trust someone'. This differs from the

2. 'Lexical listing' is the storage of a whole expression in the mental lexicon.

corresponding support verb construction *Vertrauen haben zu jemandem* 'to trust (in) someone', which uses a prepositional indirect object. This is illustrated in the following examples:

28. *Vertraust du Peter*? 'Do you trust Peter?'
29. *Hast du Vertrauen zu Peter*? 'Do you trust in Peter?'

It has furthermore been observed that in some languages the predicate noun can show behaviour that distinguishes it from normal syntactic objects. For this Balles (2004:46) adduces the example of the language of Vedic prose. She points to the example of periphrastic perfects construction that could consist of the auxiliary verbs *as* 'be', *bhū* 'become' and *kar* 'make' plus a verbal nominal ending in *–ām*, which cannot be connected to any nominal ending synchronically, but might be a petrified accusative singular diachronically.

Oyharçabal (2004) illustrates a similar phenomenon for Basque support verb constructions. He points out that the predicate noun differs from ordinary nouns in being outside the normal case system in that it can only appear in the absolutive singular (loc.cit.: 8), as illustrated by the example of *lo egin* [sleep do] 'to sleep' as opposed to *etxe-a egin* [house-Art do] 'do housework':[3]

30. Ez d-u-t etxe-rik
    Neg Obj-*have*-Subj.1Sg *house*-Prtv
    egin
    do-Ptcp
    'I have not done any house(-work).'
31. *Ez d-u-t lo egin*
    Neg Obj-*have*-Subj.1Sg *sleep*-Abs *do*-Ptcp
    'I have not slept.'

While the object of a verb normally needs to be in the partitive case in negative clauses, the predicate of a support verb will appear in the absolutive only. Furthermore, the predicate noun shows special be-

3. The glosses follow the Leipzig glossing rules with the addition of *Prtv* for *partitive*. In the interest of space, singular and third person are taken as default values, and the abbreviations are not wholly capitalised.

haviour in word order. While a predicate noun can remain before the verb in a question, that is not possible for ordinary objects (loc.cit.: 13):

32. *Nor-k* *egin* *d-u-Ø*
Who-Erg *do*-Ptcp Obj-*have*-Sbj.3Sg
etxe-a */ lo?*
house-Art.Abs */ sleep*-Abs
'Who has done the house-work/ has slept?'

33. *Nor-k* *lo* *egin*
Who-Erg *sleep*-Abs *do*-Ptcp
d-u-Ø?
Obj-*have*-3.Sg
'Who has slept?'

34. **Nor-k* *etxe-a* *egin*
Who-Erg *house*-Art.Abs *do*-Ptcp
d-u- Ø?
Obj-*have*-Subj.3Sg
'Who has done the house?'

Oyharçabal (2004:16) concludes from his investigation that, while predicate nouns in support verb constructions in Basque have many features in which they resemble ordinary, non-verbal object nouns, the special features named above, and some further ones, point to formal incorporation of the verbal predicate into the verb. Special object marking in support verb constructions has further been observed for another highly inflectional language, namely Estonian (Kaalep and Muischnek 2006, see 1.2.5.3 below). These observations show that restrictions or special object marking may be a feature of support verb constructions. Given the grammatical patterns of the languages under investigation here, it is questionable whether equally clear formal signs of special grammatical marking of support verb constructions can be found, but this point will nevertheless be kept in mind in the investigation.

1.2.5.3 FUNCTION

Kaalep and Muischnek (2006:61) show that predicate nouns in Estonian use special predicate case in both idioms and support verb constructions. The use of case is frozen in opaque idioms and some special