

Constructions and polysemy of three Old Irish verbs



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Celtica 32 (2020), 15–26

DOI: 10.58480/SCS-tt92j-swdhp

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Institiúid Ard-Léinn | Dublin Institute for
Bhaile Átha Cliath | Advanced Studies



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CONSTRUCTIONS AND POLYSEMY OF THREE OLD IRISH VERBS

ABSTRACT¹

This brief paper examines three constructions attested in the Old Irish glosses. The relationship between flagging of arguments (case marking and adpositions) and predicate meaning is addressed for two very frequent transitive verbs used in a metalinguistic sense, *beirid fri/do* ‘refer to’ and *do-beir ar* ‘put/say/write for’, and for a third verb, *do-fich*, usually translated with ‘punish’ or ‘avenge’ but whose valency pattern differs from that of English ‘punish’. The data from the glosses suggest variation in the selection of the preposition with *beirid*, consistency in the alignment of case marking with semantic roles for *do-fich*, and a possible semantic distinction between *do-beir ar* + dative ‘put, say for’ and *do-beir ar* + accusative ‘exchange’.

OVERVIEW

In this short paper I will outline the relationship between constructions and verb meaning of three Old Irish verbs: *beirid* ‘bring’, *do-fich* ‘punish’ and *do-beir* ‘give’. The constructions taken into account are grouped as valency patterns, gathered according to the general framework of the Leipzig Valency Patterns Project (Hartmann, Haspelmath and Taylor 2013). The sources are the Würzburg, Milan and St. Gall Glosses, which have been searched through the lists of occurrences in Kavanagh (2001), Griffith (2013) and Bauer (2015) respectively. The patterns of the three transitive verbs discussed here suggest the need to qualify or clarify in some ways what is reported in *DIL*, *eDIL* and in the literature (Williams 1954, Kavanagh 2001, Griffith 2013, Bauer 2015).

Before presenting the data, it is necessary to supply a working definition of the most traditional term used in grouping valency patterns, i.e. ‘transitive’: on a morpho-syntactic basis (flagging and indexing properties in Hartmann et al. 2013),² ‘transitive’ will be used for patterns where the verb in the active

¹The results presented in this paper are part of the research project ‘Transitivity and Argument Structure in Flux’, funded by the Italian Ministry for Education and Research (MIUR) within the 2015 PRIN call, grant no. 20159M7X5P. The author thanks the reviewer for useful comments that greatly helped to emend the submitted version, and the audiences of the conference ‘The shaping of transitivity and argument structure’ (Pavia, 25–7 October 2018) and of the XVI International Congress of Celtic Studies (Bangor, 22–6 July 2019) for their feedback.

²In Hartmann et al.’s (2013) framework, flagging and indexing are coding techniques: flagging includes case and adposition marking, indexing includes agreement and cross-referencing. The third technique is word order (*Database Questionnaire Manual*, 7.1).

form agrees with an argument in the nominative and is accompanied by (at least) an argument in the accusative. The active form may alternate with the passive, and in that case the nominal argument in the accusative with the active switches to nominative with the passive. ‘Transitive verb’ is shorthand for a verb which most frequently occurs in these constructions. The semantic relationship of the argument in the accusative case with the predicate is not preliminarily relevant; for an alternative working definition of the term ‘transitive’ for Old Irish, which relies on the semantic role of the accusative argument, see Griffith and Lash (2018).

1. METALINGUISTIC *BEIRID*

Among the constructions with the verb *beirid* ‘bring’, the pattern in (1) below occurs in a metalinguistic sense meaning ‘refer something to’ in 15 instances in the three corpora of glosses, including 7 instances in the corresponding passive construction.

- (1) argument 1-nominative [bringer/sayer] > argument 2-accusative
[brought thing/referring expression] > preposition + argument
3-accusative/dative [referred entity]

This meaning is not reported in *DIL* and *eDIL* s.v. *beirid*, where only the abstract sense of ‘adduces, infers’ is given (sense I(b)). Nevertheless, the entry for the verbal noun *breth* records the meaning ‘act of referring to’ with *do*, *fri* (*DIL* D, col. 181, l. 44; *eDIL* sense (e)), and Griffith (2013) and Bauer (2015) clearly acknowledge a submeaning or meaning ‘applies, refers’ for *beirid*. The collection of verb-frames reveals variation in the selection of the preposition. While in *Wb.* (and *Sg.*, which however only offers one example) only *fri* occurs in this construction, *MI.* mostly features *do*, although *fri* occurs twice, once with an active form and once with a passive form. The relevant loci are listed in (2)–(16) below.³

- (2) *MI.* 16a17 indí nodberat **duduaid** ‘those who refer it to David’.

- (3) *MI.* 16a18 indí no berat [leg. nod berat] **dosorbabel** ‘those who refer it to Zorobabel’.

- (4) *MI.* 37a9 cia beraid **doib** aremepthe [leg. remeperthe] ‘although he may refer the aforementioned to them’.

- (5) *MI.* 42b7 is **dososcelu beridi**[nt]apstal insalmso ‘the apostle refers this psalm to the Gospel’.

³All examples henceforth are cited from *Thes.* (for *Wb.*), Griffith (2013, for *MI.*) and Bauer (2015, for *Sg.*). Manuscript abbreviations are silently expanded.

- (6) *ML*. 42b7 an ·eorum is **do** apstalaib beirthi ‘the *eorum*: it is to the apostles that he refers it’.
- (7) *ML*. 43a2 mad**frif**recur cheill de nosbera ‘if it be to the worship of God that he should apply them’.
- (8) *ML*. 45a1 **dodia** ráuc ‘[it is] to God that he applied it’.
- (9) *ML*. 86d16 archuit nimmaircidetad· number **duchesad** ‘in respect of appropriateness, apply it to the Passion!’
- (10) *Wb*. 23c11 (passive) is **fripol** berir amal sodin ‘it is to Paul that it is referred in that case’.
- (11) *Wb*. 29a28 (passive) berir dano **frilaa** brátha ‘it is then referred to Doomsday’.
- (12) *ML*. 35b10 (passive) ruucthar **fricachrét** ‘it can be applied to every thing’.
- (13) *ML*. 37a8 (passive) air**doib** danau ⟨airdoib⟩ berthair ⟨thir⟩ anisui sís ‘for it is to them, then, that this below would be referred’.
- (14) *ML*. 37a8 (passive) **badoib** berthir sanctis .i. iudeis ‘or [it is] to them that *sanctis*, i.e. *Iudeis*, would be referred’.⁴
- (15) *ML*. 37a10 (passive) nad fetammar ni im **du** iudaib fagentib berthair a sanctis fil sunt ‘that we do not know whether it is to Jews or to Gentiles that the *sanctis* here is referred’.
- (16) *Sg*. 28b8 (passive) benair [leg. berair] **fri** cach nae a ndédese ‘these two are referred to each of them’.

This variation is confirmed by the occurrences of the two prepositions with the verbal noun *breth*, reported in (17)–(24) below (6 instances with *do* in *ML*, 2 with *fri* in *Wb*).

⁴This is the translation in Griffith’s database, where it is assumed that *ba* (= *fa*) introduces the second of two alternatives; *Thes.* emends *badoib* to *bad doib* and translates ‘let it be to them that is referred *sanctis*, i.e. *Iudeis*’, where *bad* is a copular form in a cleft sentence. I would suggest that here *ba* is a modal form of the copula and *doib* is cataphoric to *iudeis*, which is the focus of a pseudo-cleft sentence (see Mac Coisdealbha 1998: 18–19) and represents one of the frequent instances of a Latin dative corresponding to an Irish prepositional phrase with *do*. Therefore, an appropriate translation would be ‘it would be to them, *Iudeis* (to Jews), that *sanctis* is referred’, or ‘to whom *sanctis* is referred would be *Iudeis* (to Jews)’.

(17) *Wb.* 13d4 *niréid ambrith fricorpu peccatorum sed iustorum* ‘it is not easy to refer them to the bodies *peccatorum* rather than *iustorum*’.

(18) *Wb.* 23c11 *abrith frisandliged remeperthe* ‘its reference to the aforementioned principle’.

(19) *MI.* 36c20 *abrith doisraheldaib* ‘its reference to the Israelites’.

(20) *MI.* 36c21 *abreth doisraheldaib* ‘its reference to the Israelites’.

(21) *MI.* 37a10 *acht is dogentib is coir a breth* ‘but it is to Gentiles that it is right to refer it’.

(22) *MI.* 16b05 *friabrith doduaid 7 sorbabel* ‘against referring it to David and Zorobabel’.

(23) *MI.* 37a10 *abrith doiudaib* ‘its reference to Jews’.

(24) *MI.* 37a06b *á birithe doiudaib* ‘of its reference to Jews’.

To sum up, the use of *fri* is possibly semantically restricted in *MI.* (‘apply’), and looks like a relic as opposed to *beirid do* ‘refer to’. Anyhow, although the alternation of the two prepositions in the construction points to variation, it would be hard to conclude that this alternation reflects a diachronic development without being circular. In this connection, it might be worth noting that a similar hypothesis has been put forward for variation concerning an unrelated feature, nasalisation after inflected nominals, in *Wb.* and *MI.* (Roma 2018 and forthcoming).

2. THE TWO TRANSITIVE PATTERNS OF *DO-FICH*

The collection of argument frames may uncover some restrictions which do not surface immediately. The patterns attested with the verb *do-fich* (occurring only in *Wb.* and *MI.*; 23 instances) show that the accusative argument with active forms and the nominative argument with passive forms can either be the punished deed (inanimate direct object, 7 instances),⁵ as in (25), or the beneficiary, the person on behalf of whom the punishment is inflicted (animate direct object, 6 instances), as in (26).⁶

(25) *Wb.* 6a16 *hore dofeich cach nolc et mórid cachmaith* ‘because he punishes every evil and magnifies every good’.

⁵*Wb.* 6a16, 15a16; *MI.* 24b17, 24b19, 38d8, 115b13, 129b4.

⁶*MI.* 29c7, 38c21, 43d11, 43d19, 98d9, 101c16.

(26) *MI.* 38c21 *nimdichimse formnaimtea* ‘I do not avenge myself upon my enemies’.

In the first case the verb can be translated with both ‘punish’ and ‘avenge’, in the second only with ‘avenge’, if a transitive construction with the same direct object is preserved in translation. The beneficiary can also be flagged by *tar cenn* + genitive (*MI.* 27c4, 72d11), while the punished deed can be flagged by *tar ési* + genitive (*MI.* 123d8). The punished person is always flagged by the preposition *for* + accusative (*Wb.* 15a16, *MI.* 38d8, 38c21, 115b13, 129b4).

The two meanings ‘punish’ and ‘avenge’ are simply listed in *DIL* and *eDIL*, without any reference to particular constructions. Nevertheless, in no case is the animate direct object of *do-fich* the punished person. In *MI.* 24b17 *nísndíg focetoir* ‘he does not punish them at once’ the plural infixed pronoun refers to *peccata* ‘sins’ in the Latin text, in *MI.* 24b19 *ardufesatar asennad* ‘for they will be punished at last’ the subject of the plural passive form *dufesatar* is (*impunita*) *uitia* ‘unpunished vices’ in the Latin text.⁷ This pattern excludes a correlation between the English translations and the argument frame, as is suggested for example by Griffith (2013):

The meanings ‘punishes’ and ‘avenges’ are distinguished by the nature of the object (when present). The object of ‘punishes’ is personal and represents the person receiving the punishment, while in ‘avenges’, the object is either personal or impersonal and represents rather the person or thing on behalf of which or because of which the vengeance is being carried out.

This distinction rather applies to English, but not to Old Irish, since the direct object of *do-fich* is never the person receiving the punishment.

The permitted frames are confirmed by the patterns attested with the verbal noun *dígal*: out of 138 instances, 77 are followed by a prepositional argument with *for* (always expressing the punished person), while 21 are accompanied by a genitive referring to either the punished deed (11 instances),⁸

⁷In *Tur.* 79 *is forrae fadisin doroacht* ‘it is on itself that vengeance has been taken’, glossing Latin *mentita est iniquitas sibi, ut regina aduersus Ioseph, et sacerdotes aduersus Susannam* (‘iniquity has lied to itself, as the queen against Joseph, and the priests against Susanna’), the feminine noun *iniquitas*, resumed in *forrae*, metonymically refers to persons, and a non-promotional passive, with no nominative subject, occurs, translating a Latin deponent form. I cannot dwell on this issue here, but I use ‘non-promotional passive’ for what is usually termed ‘impersonal passive’ or ‘arbitrary-subject passive’ (‘active subject impersonal’ in Graver 2011) because I think there are reasons to believe that some Old Irish passive constructions with no nominative argument may represent strategies to promote adpositional arguments pragmatically, without promoting them syntactically, while downplaying the nominative argument by suppressing it. This example is a case in point.

⁸A single occurrence also in *Sg.*, where the finite form does not occur: *Wb.* 9c21, 17a10; *MI.* 23b5, 27c1, 51c21, 55d4, 74b5, 74b7, 77c6, 138b6; *Sg.* 181a6.

the beneficiary (3 instances),⁹ or else the punisher (7 instances),¹⁰ but never to the punished person.

The two possible exceptions are *MI*. 32c20, with a finite form, reported in (27), and *Wb*. 26b21, with the verbal noun, reported in (28).

(27) *MI*. 32c20 *codufessar* ‘that he be punished’ (translation as in *Thes.*)

(28) *Wb*. 26b21 *conammadarsa andígail forru .i. bot[h] cen biad man[id]irgn[at]*¹¹ ‘I have adjudged their punishment on them, to remain without food if they do not supply it’.

MI. 32c20 is a single word gloss on Latin *rogat ut sine furore [...] in se [...] seueritas uindicetur* ‘he asks that severity might avenge upon him without rage’. Single-word glosses are not good sources to establish valency patterns and, notwithstanding the translation in *Thes.*, there is no need to interpret *codufessar* as a promotional passive with a (zero anaphora) nominative subject (see fn. 7); it could rather be translated as ‘that punishment be inflicted’.

In *Wb*. 26b21 *andígail forru* the argument expressing the punished person is clearly in the inflected preposition *forru*, so that, if one claims that the plural possessive refers to the punished person, that would be coreferential with, and cataphoric to, the object of the preposition, ruling this out as a neat counter-example. Alternatively, the possessive refers to the punisher (reflexive, ‘their punishment on themselves’), an alignment which, as stated above, occurs in 7 instances in the glosses and of course would not testify to an accusative argument expressing the punished person. This gloss on the right margin of the page starts over the Latin *si quis non uult operari, nec manducet* (‘if someone does not want to work, neither should he eat’), and is in fact followed by the preceding gloss in *Thes.*, *Wb*. 26b20 *issí apennit dé* ‘that is their penance for it’, which is written over *nec manducet*.

In conclusion, the Old Irish verb’s polysemy relies on the hierarchy and animacy of participants: if the accusative direct object is inanimate it represents a punished/avenged deed, if it is animate, it is a beneficiary, not the punished person. This does not align with the English opposition between ‘punish’ and ‘avenge’, because, as noted above, both can have either animate or inanimate direct objects. Rather, the relationship between argument structure and semantic roles of *do-fich* is similar to that of English ‘avenge’.

⁹*Wb*. 5d35, 5d37; *MI*. 57c6.

¹⁰*Wb*. 27c11; *MI*. 31d1, 32d27, 40a6, 77d16, 105d7, 128d3. These instances are not crucial to the point here, but I have discussed them in two conference presentations (Roma 2018b and 2019) and will deal with them in a forthcoming paper.

¹¹This is the restoration of the missing letters I suggest. *Thes.*, followed by Kavanagh (2001), reads *bot[h] doib] cen biad ma[ni]... irgn...*

3. TRANSITIVE *DO-BEIR* WITH *AR*

The verb *do-beir* is one of the most frequent in the glosses (403 occurrences in finite form). It occurs in a variety of transitive constructions, in particular also as a light (aka support) verb governing nouns or verbal nouns such as *fortacht* ‘help’, *digal* ‘punishment’, *frithorcun* ‘offence’, usually accompanied by a prepositional argument whose phrasal head (mainly *do* or *for*) appears to be selected by the verbal noun. I will not report all the argument frames here, but focus on those transitive constructions with a third argument flagged by the preposition *ar*, in order to try to match the meaning of the predicate, or rather of the whole construction, with the case governed by *ar*. This preposition can in fact govern either the dative or the accusative, without a clear semantic distinction between the two. *DIL* (A, col. 365, ll. 35–60) and *eDIL*, s.v. 1 *ar*, are at pains to draw a distinction and, referring to Zeuss (1853: 622) and *VGK* (74),¹² state:

The presumed distinction between *ar* with *accus.* when motion is implied and with *dat.* when no motion is implied [...] appears most clearly in the stereotyped phrases *ar chenn towards*, *ar chiunn ahead of, before* [...]. The *dat.* is usual in *ar cach láu daily* [...] and in *ar thosuch* [...]. Usage is less clear outside fixed phrases, and that of the various collections of O. Ir. glosses differs (the available material is also much reduced by the frequent identity of form of *as.* and *ds.* of nouns). The *accus.* is regular in *Wb.* in senses of taking away *from* and counting *as*, and also in glosses on Lat. *ob*, the *dat.* where the meaning is *with regard to, instead of* and in glosses on Lat. *super*. Both cases are found where the meaning is *for the sake of, because of*. In *Ml.* *accus.* is constant only in set phrases. The *dat.* is usual in meaning counts *as*, *do-beir ar (for?) calls* and in glosses on Lat. *dat.* without preposition (*ar gentib gl. gentibus*, 78a12, 89c2) and where a Lat. compd. noun is treated as two words (*arintinmlegun gl. promulgatione*, 71c18). In general use the meanings *saving from, instead of, in meaning of, in return for, on account of, because of, for the sake of, for the purpose of* are all found both with *accus.* and *dat.* In *Sg.* the meanings *instead of* and *on account of* are found with both cases.

Besides the use of *do-beir ar* ‘calls’ found in the excerpt above (presumably corresponding to the metalinguistic meaning outlined in (i) below,

¹²‘Die Grenze zwischen den dativischen und den akkusativischen Verwendungen ist nicht immer leicht zu ziehen; namentlich ist die Unterscheidung zwischen Grund, vorhandenen Umständen, die etwas bewirken, und [zu erreichendem] Zweck nicht immer selbstverständlich.’ (‘The boundary between dative and accusative usages is not always easy to draw; the distinction between cause, existing circumstances that cause something, and goal (to be reached) is in particular not always self-evident.’)

examples 29–32), the frequent occurrence in the glosses of *ar* with the verbs *do-beir* and *as-beir* in the meaning ‘instead of, in place of, as substitute for, in meaning of’ is also clearly recorded in *DIL* (A, col. 367, l. 42) and *eDIL* (s.v. 1 *ar* sense II(d)); in that sense, again, the dative is given as the usual case, and it is stated that the accusative is used occasionally. No case is specified for *do-beir* (*ní ar* ‘gives in exchange for, pays for’ (*eDIL* s.v. *do-beir*, sense I(c)). Williams (1954: 311), also referred to by *DIL*, notes that *ar* meaning ‘in place of, instead of, representing, as representative of’ may govern either the dative or the accusative.

I shall try here to draw a distinction between (i) a metalinguistic meaning ‘put/say/write a word for x’ and (ii) a physical or abstract meaning not implying any metalinguistic sense, ‘give something (in exchange) for x’, ‘exchange’. The valency patterns in the glosses for (i) and (ii) are reported below:

(i) *do-beir* argument 2-acc [said, put word] > *ar*+argument 3-dat
[substituted, referred thing/person]

(ii) *do-beir* argument 2-acc [given thing] > *ar*+argument 3-acc
[exchanged thing].

The construction in (ii) is synonymous with a similar one where the third argument is flagged by *tar ési* + genitive (e.g. *Wb.* 6a11, 14b15, 22b7, *ML.* 106c1). Moreover, the metalinguistic meaning of *do-beir* ‘say/write/put down a word, an expression’ can also be found without *ar* (e.g. *ML.* 118b6 *airmad panem namma duberadsom ⁊ ní taibred meum* ‘for if it were only *panem* which he had put, and had he not put *meum*’). Nevertheless, while the meaning of the preposition *ar* is similar in the two constructions, so that it could be semantically classified independently from the predicate, the meaning of the predicate differs (‘say/write in replacement of’ vs. ‘give in replacement of’), so that it seems better to look at construction meaning. The two valency patterns in fact imply two different further semantic roles: a locative in (i)¹³ and a recipient in (ii) (explicitly expressed by *do* + dative in *Wb.* 3c1 quoted in (33) below).

The clear cases are listed in (29)–(32) for (i) and (33)–(35) for (ii):

(i) Metalinguistic meaning with *ar* + dative:

(29) *Wb.* 21a13 *dobeir inso arnab uilib cumactib* *dichoissin inim et talam* ‘he puts this for all the powers which exist in heaven and earth’.

¹³Cp. *ML.* 35c26a *mani taibred domine ant* ‘if he had not put *Domine* there’, *ML.* 51d5 *nitaib* [leg. *nitaibir*] *ebraide dobrethir hisuidib* ‘the Hebrew does not put an adverb in them.’

(30) *ML*. 18c5 douic nadegnimu **arnaib foraiccib** [leg. fochraic-cib] 7 inna dualchi **arnaib pianaib** ‘he has put the good deeds for the rewards and the vices for the punishments’.

(31) *ML*. 109a1 is **ar neurt** dubeir som dugræs am brachium amal as ar gnim dubeir am manum ‘it is for strength that he always puts *brachium*, as it is for deed that he puts *manum*’.

(32) *ML*. 51c2 **aircech ceneliu** ciuil honid techtae molad dá do ber som ani as chithara as beir ‘for every kind of musical instrument with which the praise of God is fitting he puts the *cithara* which he mentions’.

The same construction is calqued in *Wb*. 21d1 *tuicsom inda nainmso tantum pro omnibus gradibus caelestibus* ‘he puts these two names only for all heaven’s grades’, and *ML*. 50b8 7 *pro sustinui da* [leg. *dano*] *dauic dauid an dixi* ‘and so for *sustinui* David has put *dixi*’, with Latin *pro* (+ ablative) corresponding to *ar* + dative.

(ii) Exchange meaning with *ar* + accusative:

(33) *Wb*. 3c1 stipendium didiu ainm indlóge doherr domíledaib **armílte** ‘*stipendium* then is the name of the pay which is given to soldiers for military service’.

(34) *ML*. 90c14 intan dobera dia fochraicci **ar degnimu** ‘when God will give rewards for good works’.

(35) *ML*. 130d15 amal bid log mór dubertha **erru** ‘as though it were a great price that you had given for them’.

However, in the case of the two constructions in (i) and (ii), it should be noted that the situation is more skewed, in comparison with the previous two cases discussed in this paper. The counterexamples are reported in (36) and (37):

(36) *ML*. 81c4–6 is **ar forngartaidi** dubertar ‘it is for imperatives that they are put’.

(37) *Sg*. 140a4 ní-comsuidigther acht is **ar in mbrethir ndiuit** doherr ‘it is not compounded, but it is put for the simple verb’.

Example (36) seems to attest to a metalinguistic meaning with the accusative (note that Griffith 2013 tentatively suggests ‘check this: forngartaid?’, i.e. a singular form which can be a dative). Example (37) again shows an accusative case in a construction with metalinguistic meaning; case is unambiguous.

It could be argued that the instances (29–33) listed under (i) above are slightly different from the two counterexamples (36) and (37), since rather than a *designans* (accusative) for a *designatum* (*ar* + dative) we have here reference to a morphological form used instead of another (a perfect instead of an imperative, an analytic verb form for a synthetic one). However, I am inclined to group the instances together.

Ambiguous cases, i.e. where there is no morphological distinction between dative and accusative (singular), are reported in (38–40). In *MI*. 109a1 (31 above), although *gním* in *ar gním* could either be a dative or an accusative form, the parallelism with (*ar*) *neurt* suggests that it is a dative form (metalinguistic meaning).

(38) *Wb*. 10d20 *honorum dobertar ar precept soscéli* ‘of the honours which are given for teaching the Gospel’ – exchange meaning.

(39) *MI*. 73d12 *cia duberat argat dait siu arasoirad* ‘though they give you silver for their deliverance’ (Griffith 2013 ‘probably acc.’) – exchange meaning.

(40) *MI*. 118b6 *huare immurgu dunuic meum isarcechsasad dauc som amal sodin* ‘because, however, he has put *meum*, it is for every food that he has put it then’ – metalinguistic meaning.

The following two examples from *Sg*. should probably be classified differently (Williams 1954: 314, n. 8, ‘To denote purpose: “with a view to, with the object or purpose of, as preparatory to, in order to”’), although *do-beir* shows here the same metalinguistic meaning ‘put a word, an expression’, which, as noted above, can occur without any prepositional argument (explicit locative *híc* in (41), implicit locative in (42)).

(41) *Sg*. 76b2 *ardesimrecht dobeirseim indaarticul híc* ‘for an example he puts here the two demonstratives’.

(42) *Sg*. 213a7 *isaremsuidigud dobertar indadesmerecht ⁊ itaremsuidigthib indí greic amal sódain*¹⁴ ‘it is for prepositive use that the two examples are given and for prepositions are the two Greek words then’.

It is hard to tell whether dative and accusative case really match with these two meanings, in particular because occurrences of the first construction outside

¹⁴I wonder whether the ms. text really needs to be emended here supplying the preposition *ar* in *itaremsuidigthib*, as suggested by *Thes.* and Bauer (2015): it could be read as *a* plural possessive + dative (see *GOI* § 251.2 for the construction). The translation given above could accordingly dispense with the second ‘for’.

the glosses are hard to find.¹⁵ However, the account of occurrences given here can be a starting point for further investigation.

4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This paper has shown that the transitive construction *beirid fri* ‘refer to’ in *Wb.* is scarcely attested with the same preposition in *ML.*, where *do* is mostly used; that the transitive Old Irish verb *do-fich* in the Old Irish glosses can only govern a direct object expressing the punished deed or the beneficiary (the person on behalf of whom punishment is inflicted), not the punished person; that the two constructions attested in the glosses *do-beir ar* + dative and *do-beir ar* + accusative may belong to two different semantic fields.

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¹⁵ No instances of both constructions can be found in the glosses reckoned in the *Minor Glosses Database* (Lash 2018).

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