TERMINOLOGY IN THE GRAMMATICAL TRACTS:
CIALL TEASAIDHEACHTA

GORDON Ó RIAIN
University of Limerick

ABSTRACT

It has been held that the Irish grammatical tracts do not have a term for the relative clause. In this article, previously overlooked terms are identified and the passages in which they occur in the grammatical tracts are discussed.

In his important 1965 study of ‘Linguistic terminology in the mediaeval Irish bardic tracts’, Brian Ó Cuív chose IGT I §90 as an example of ‘how round-about the expression of a rule [in the tracts] can be for lack of precise terminology’. In the passage in question it is explained that the third singular relative form of the copula in the present indicative is followed by lenition.¹ This differs from the non-relative form, which does not mutate a subsequent initial. The earlier distinction in form between non-relative is and relative as had been lost by this date, so the teaching is expressed by reference to the negative, for which distinct non-relative and relative forms of the copula had been maintained, namely ní and nach. The passage in question reads as follows, with Eoin Mac Cárthaigh’s translation of it:

An úair bhíos ní ar a dhiúltadh so, as, lomadh as cóir na dhíaigh mur so: as fearr mé iná thú, fearn lom air. An úair bhíos nach ar a dhiúltadh so, as, séimhioghadh as cóir na dhíaigh mur so: as mór as fhearr mhé iná thú, ó’s nach atá ar a dhiúltadh so as fhearr ann.

‘When ní is its negative counterpart, as should be followed by non-mutation, like this: as fearr mé iná thú, with an unlenited f. When nach is its negative counterpart, as should be followed by lenition, like this: as mór as fhearr mhé iná thú, since it is nach that is the negative counterpart of as fhearr there.’²

¹ I am grateful to the editors of Ériu and to an anonymous reader for their helpful comments. All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.
² According to Giolla Brighde Ó hEódsasa, however, mutation after the relative form is optional, GGBM 2087–91. For discussion, see Mac Cárthaigh (2002, 106 q. 4a n.) and SNG IV §3.2 (g).
³ Mac Cárthaigh (2014, 112–13 (§90)); modified to include Bergin’s useful feature of placing words under discussion in bold. The passage is also translated by Ó Cuív (1965, 148–9). On Bergin’s mis-expansion of the MS reading as neach instead of the correct nach and on placing some additional words in bold-face, see BST p. 126 (199.11 n.) where McKenna corrects Bergin’s reading; cf. also McManus (1992, 15 n. 4).
Ó Cuív’s discussion of this passage suggests that Classical Irish grammarians had no term available to them for a relative clause.Ó Cuív seems to have overlooked the term *céal teasaidheachta*, however. This means a ‘warming sense’ (literally ‘a sense of heat’) and clearly indicates relativity in the examples to hand. It occurs in Giolla Brighde Ó hEóidhasa’s prosody, *Ealadhain an Dána Gaoidhealda* and the copy of IGT III §22 in RIA E iv 1 (751). The relevant passages are presented with discussion below. The first has to do with the use of the article with definite nouns and forms part of a discussion of faults to be avoided.


*Translation*  
‘Do not employ definiteness or an enclitic except in their proper place. Do not employ definiteness without an enclitic or the force of a relative clause after them, unless you may wish that a famous or unique thing be understood, or unless you might say *an bhean* (“the woman”) for all women or the like.’

*Commentary*  
The discussion in this passage is to be connected with the fault termed *iomarcaidh sunnartha* elsewhere in *Rudimenta Grammaticae Hibernicae*. The fault occurs when a definite noun is further defined by the article or possessive adjective. This would apply, for example, to a personal name or to a genitive construction in which the second noun is preceded by the article and another instance of the article is inserted before the first noun (the ‘double definite article’), for instance *an Brian, mo Bhrian* and *an lámh an fhir*. The fault does not occur if the noun is followed by: (a) an enclitic demonstrative or emphasising particle, for example *an Briansa, mo Bhriansa* and *an lámhsa an fhir*; (b) a relative clause, as in *táinig an Brian do bhual mé*.

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3 Compare also McManus (1992, 15).
4 For *céal* used of grammatical forms in the sense ‘force, function, meaning’, see *DIL* s.v. *céal* (d).
5 Given that the plural possessive adjective is used in this sentence, it may be preferable to expand *sunnradh* as a plural form, namely *sunnraidh*, or to read the variant plural form *sunnartha* (for which, see *DIL* s.v. *sainred* and IGT II §49). This could be justified on the basis that the teaching encompasses different types of definition, such as definition by the article or by a possessive adjective (for the types of definition which were recognised, see IGT I §15). Alternatively, we could read *dhiadadh*.
6 *GGBM* 1908–9 and discussed in *GGBM* 1905–32. The term *iomarcaidh sunnartha* also occurs in IGT I §§2, 15 (with discussion); see further BST 67a.8–26 and 66a.12–66b.9. The teaching summarised above is based solely on *GGBM*; the relationship between its doctrine and that of the other sources is not discussed here as this has no bearing on the interpretation of the term *céal teasaidheachta*. 
The second exception, (b), is of relevance in the present context and is found in *Rudimenta Grammaticae Hibernicae* where it is phrased as follows:


This is expressed in almost identical terms by Aodh Buidhe Mac Cruitín in the 1728 grammar entitled *The elements of the Irish language, grammatically explained in English in 14. chapters*:

Except, ... [s]econdly when a Pronoun Relative is understood in the speech, as tānīgh [sic] an Domhnall do bhual me, for the question may be well put, cia an Domhnall, ‘what Daniēl?’

This exception corresponds to the idea expressed by the term *cīall teasaídh­eachta* in the passage cited above and, taken in conjunction with (2) below, clearly establishes its meaning as referring to a relative clause.

The second passage is a note on the past passive form of *do-gheibh*. The context is diagnostic and supports the interpretation of the term *cīall teasaídh­eachta* as indicating a relative clause.

(2)

*frioth friotha* .c. *rīth* .l. an *fer frīth agus rīth* as .c. ann gach ionadh a bhfacaísin as .c. ar .r. *agus ar .f.* e (E iv 1, 20r; cf. IGT III p. 193 n. 12–12).

[Alterations have been made to the underlined words in a different hand, that of a later scribe who was designated E\(^2\) by Bergin, as follows: frioth; fhríoith; fhrioith; fh.]

Translation (of unrevised text)

‘frioth friotha correct, rīth incorrect, an fear frīth and rīth (“the man who was found”) correct, everywhere the force of a relative clause is found attached to (lit. up to) that word it is correct that it begin with r and f.’

Commentary

The past passive forms of *do-gheibh* are *frioth* and *friotha* (plural).\(^9\)

A non-relative form *rīth* (= *frioth*) is faulted in this passage and, in addition,

\(^7\) Mac Curtin (1728, 78). The same teaching is found in an unpublished grammar of 1713 by Francis Walsh (Proinsias Bhailis), for which see Mac Aogáin (1968, xv–xvi), who also discusses the influence of the *Rudimenta* on this work; it has *Brian* in the above examples as in the *Rudimenta*, see King’s Inns MS 24, 95. Mac Cruitín’s grammar is ‘apparently but an edited version’ of Walsh’s according to de Brún (1972, 63), cf. also Morley (1995, 95–9).

\(^8\) For E\(^2\), see IGT III p. 167 and *RIA Cat.* Fasc. 18, 2314–15. The alteration of *rīth* to *rioth* (fourth word) and the addition of a spiritus asper above *f* (penultimate word) were not noted by Bergin in his edition.

\(^9\) Compare also BST 238.21–2/15a.19–20.
the construction ní ríoth is labelled as incorrect in IGT III 255. The only situation in which a form ríoth is acceptable is in a relative clause, as exemplified in the citation in the tract: Is easbach lim an Rí ríoth (v.l. easbhuidh, leam E iv 1) ‘Distressing to me is the King who was found’.

That this signifies a form with initial r, rather than a lenited form of fríoth, appears to be confirmed by the following example in which ríoth occurs in an indirect relative clause and a nasalised form bhfríoth would not provide alliteration:

\[
\text{Dá n-innisear ní hiul cam / dá gach fhios dá ríoth (fríoth MS) romham / láimh re cion na ríogh roimhe / ciodh fa mbíodh an bhóroimhe 'It will not be amiss if I give a full account of the old story as to how the Cattle-tribute came to be added to the other prerogatives of our ancient kings.'}
\]

The first couplet, which is relevant for present purposes, may be rendered more literally as ‘If I relate—it is [= will be] no false knowledge—all of the lore of that which was found before me.’ The term ciall teasaidheachta occurs in this passage only in the copy in E iv 1; in the other copies which are discussed at (3) a related term is found.

The adjectives té ‘hot’ and fuar ‘cold’ are also used in the sense of ‘relative’ and ‘non-relative’ respectively.

Examples occur in IGT III and in a tract

\[\text{\textsuperscript{10} IGT III 256 (= IGT III 216cd, as noted by Bergin, and DDé no. 26 q. 32c as identified by McManus (1997, 94); cf. also DDé no. 26 q. 26ab: Siol nEabha ag toibhéim tré thnúth / is fior ceana is rosreádh ríoth 'Eve's race in malice reviling (Him), He was found lovable and gentle' (McKenna's translation). For easbach in the sense translated above, see Mag. p. 406 (l. 546 n.) and Butlers pp 110–11 (l. 278 n.). IGT III 216 reads: Dia Domnaigh a-dréacht gu luath / an t-écht ón chomraid gu cách / as easbach lim an Rí ríoth / arna díth a cinn tri tráth (The slain one rose from the tomb into the world early on Sunday, distressing to me is the King who was found to be missing (?) after three days'. dlioth is tentatively interpreted by the present writer in DIL's sense (b) 'privation, want, absence' in the context). The Book of Úi Mhiane, on which the edition in DDé is based, reads 'ní heasbhaigh' (f. 61r) in place of is easbach. In his edition, McKenna emended 'intect' and 'dith' (both faded) in lines b and d to ar dheacht and shíoth respectively, resulting in the following text and translation: Dia Domhnaigh a-dréacht go luath / ar dheacht a comhrair go cách / ni heasbhaidh liom an Rí [ríoth] / ar n-a [shíoth] / gceimn tri dráth 'On Sunday early He arose from His tomb into the world; I rejoice for the Lord who was found reconciled (with us) after the Three Days'. His emendations are hardly justified, however, as dheacht does not rhyme with a-dréacht and the idea is, presumably, either that the poet is distressed at the prospect of Christ exacting vengeance for his death (reading is easbach) or joyful at the chance for salvation offered by Christ's death (reading ni heasbhaidh). Both sentiments are encountered in religious poetry, see Ó Riaín (2015, 157–8) and AithdD. no. 65 q. 1.}
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\[\text{\textsuperscript{11} Retaining the form in the manuscript with initial f and reading fios and bhfríoth would also provide alliteration. Lack of lenition after gach (dative) is, however, non-classical according to Mac Carthaigh (2002, 108 7c n.; 'is docha gur fheidir glacadh leis go bhtail an easpas shéimithe seo seanmhríaisceach'), and this supports McKenna's emendation.}
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\[\text{\textsuperscript{12} Text and translation: AithdD. no. 18 q. 2 (edited from Yellow Book of Lecan, TCD H 2. 16 (1318), col. 204.24–5). See McKenna's remarks on ríoth in vol. II pp 234 (2b n.) and 289 s.v. do-ghabhaim. This poem, beginning loc sa mbóraimhe ag cloinn Chiuinn, is on the marriage of Aodh Buide Ó Néill (d. 1444) to Fionnghuala, daughter of An Calbhach Ó Conchobhair Falghie.}
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\[\text{\textsuperscript{13} For the long vowel in té, see Breathnach (2003, 137). Hoyne (2016, 191) has recently suggested 'a form of the adj. té with a short vowel was familiar to bardic poets'. He gives one example of uncompounded té from a poem in ogláchas. The edition of the example in question (DG no. 8 q. 3bd) reads atá mo ghuth ar mo bhreith ... fá mo dhruim, do bheith sé te. The Book of the O'Conor Don, f. 25v, however, reads 'ata mo ghuth ar mo breith féin' in line b. Thus its}
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on the subjunctive preserved in TCD H 2. 17 (1319) and H 2. 12 (no. 12) (1311). \(^{14}\) These passages are discussed here.

(3) frith frítha .c. o neminndscne rith .l. an fer rith .c. agus gach uair dogebthur te mar sin he as .c. he (H 2. 17, 211; cf. IGT III §22)

**Translation**

‘frith frítha correct in the sense of the passive, rith incorrect, an fear rith correct, and whenever it is found in relative position (lit. hot) like that it is correct.’

**Commentary**

This corresponds to item (2) above. \(^{15}\) The same idea is conveyed, if expressed in slightly different terms and with the omission of the unlenited form fríoth. The comment beginning ‘agus gach uair etc.’ does not occur in the copies in RIA C i 3 (750) and TCD H 2. 12 (no. 4) (1305). \(^{16}\)

(4) Tigim ni dhuit ni thugas amhain a .d. [an uair tigim ní dait .l. ni fuilngenn sin red te do chur roimhi E\(^2\)] (E iv 1, 16r; cf. IGT III §14). \(^{17}\)

[The passage enclosed in square brackets is found only in the copy of IGT III in RIA E iv 1 in the later hand which was designated E\(^2\) by Bergin.] \(^{18}\)

**Translation**

‘Tigim ni dhuit (“I give you something”): only ní thugas (“I did not give”) is its negative [an uair tigim ní dait (“when I give you something”) incorrect;

[The passage enclosed in square brackets is found only in the copy of IGT III in RIA E iv 1 in the later hand which was designated E\(^2\) by Bergin.] \(^{18}\)

**Commentary**

This corresponds to item (2) above. \(^{15}\) The same idea is conveyed, if expressed in slightly different terms and with the omission of the unlenited form fríoth. The comment beginning ‘agus gach uair etc.’ does not occur in the copies in RIA C i 3 (750) and TCD H 2. 12 (no. 4) (1305). \(^{16}\)

\(^{14}\) For an account of the tract on the subjunctive, see McManus (1996, 174–5). Text of the tract has been made available online by Damian McManus at: [www.tcd.ie/Irish/assets/doc/TractOnSubjunctive.doc](http://www.tcd.ie/Irish/assets/doc/TractOnSubjunctive.doc).

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\(^{16}\) The words na fir are added in the margin after frítha in the copy of the tract found in RIA C i 3 (750) as noted by Bergin (IGT III p. 193 n. 10). He does not, however, indicate that the words ó neminndscne are found here only in the copy in TCD H 2. 17 (1319).

\(^{17}\) The copy in H 2. 12 was not used by Bergin in his edition; for notice of this copy, see Breatnach (2004, 49 n. 2).

\(^{18}\) See n. 8 above.
that (sc. form) does not tolerate an antecedent to a relative clause (lit. something hot) to be placed before it].

**Commentary**

The use of _tig_ in the sense of the verb _do-bheir_ is permitted.\(^{19}\) According to this passage, it may be employed only under certain circumstances, namely (a) as a historic present, as indicated by the negative form cited, and (b) in non-relative position. The phrase _réd té_, which is employed here to denote an antecedent to a relative clause, may be compared to the use of _réd_ in a passage in _BST_ 67a.8 concerned with the teaching discussed under (1) above: O hUiginn, _l. sunnr(adh) air acht le barr no le red eigin nach ba he fein_. This was translated and explained by McKenna as follows: "Ó hUiginn is not to be defined by any word (e.g. _an_, _mo_, _do_, &c.) unless it has an enclitic or something else besides itself"; i.e. an art. or other defining word will not be used to define a family-name unless the name bear an enclitic, or is followed by a rel. clause.\(^{20}\)

(5)

Mar _budh tu agus_ <o> _budh tu ticfa_. _l. iad ar an bhús as_ .c. _ann sin_ _<mar agus>_ o da _iairmberla_ tee (H 2. 17, 240; faded items are enclosed in angular brackets):

mar _budh tú ticfa agus_ o _budh tu ticfa_. _l. mar bus agus o bus_ as .c. and _mar agus_ o _da _iairmberla_ téé iad (H 2. 12, 3v).

*Translation of H 2. 12*

‘Mar _budh tú ticfa_ and _o budh tu ticfa_ are incorrect; _mar bus_ and _o bus_ are correct in that case. _Mar_ and _o_ are two unstressed words which cause a subsequent verb to be in the relative form (lit. are two hot unstressed words).’

**Commentary**

The conjunctions _mar_ and _ó_ are correctly followed by a relative form of a verb. Accordingly, the non-relative future form of the copula, _budh_, is faulted in the above examples. This is expressed in the text by the phrase ‘da _iairmberla_ tee/da _iairmberla_ téé’, literally ‘two hot unstressed words’.

(6)

_Coir ór ré gach ni _iairmberla_. _s. agus_. _g. ar_ _bith as_e _dober sin_ nach _foil ann acht iarmberla_ fuar _Oir_. _l. or_. _c._ (H 2. 17, 239):

_c. ór_ [length-mark faint] _re hucht gac ni _iairmberla_. _sh. agus_. _g. as_e _dobir sin_ _nac fuil ann acht focal_ _faire oir_. _l. or_. _c._ (H 2. 12, 3r).

\(^{19}\) _DIL_ s.v. _do-icc_ III and Murphy (1953), 331–2 s.v. _2 tigim_.

\(^{20}\) _BST_ p. 222. See also _BST_ p. 278 for relative clauses in which the antecedent denotes time.
Translation of H 2. 17

‘Ór is correct before every unstressed word in the subjunctive and indicative; what causes that is that it is merely an unstressed word which is not followed by a relative clause (lit. a cold unstressed word). Óir is incorrect; or is correct.’

Commentary

This remark arises in the text partly from a concern with conjunctions which should be followed by a relative clause, as in (5) above, and partly from a concern with issues of agreement in mood and tense in cleft sentences which involve relative clauses such as madh mé tí ‘if it be I who may come’ and ó bhus tú tiogfa ‘since it will be you who will come.’ The variant ‘focal fuar’ occurs in H 2. 12 as against ‘iarmberla fuar’ in H 2. 17; the latter is to be preferred as the conjunction ór ‘for, since’ is an unstressed word. The term ‘iarmberla fuar’ is applied to this conjunction and, in light of (5) above, is to be interpreted as meaning an unstressed word which is not followed by a relative form of the verb; the verb in question here is the copula since it is described as an unstressed word (iarmberla saidhighthe agus gaídhilge). The teaching that the correct form of the conjunction is óir rather than óir is also found in BST 238.8.

The final example presented here is found in a fragment of grammatical material found in UCD–OFM A 10. The relevant passage consists of a citation followed by brief comment.

(7)
Gidh e an f e r tall ti ticfa. ben an<...> ni bi buidelta .l. gid e i n f e r ti tall tigfa .c. do cell fuair is .c. he (UCD–OFM A 10, f. 4v20–1)

Translation

‘Even if that man yonder who will come may come, there is neither a woman [nor (?)] a flock of tawny birds there (i.e. the area is deserted (?)), incorrect, as for that man who may come, he will come, correct, it is correct in a non-relative sense (lit. a cold sense).’

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21 I have not lenited forms of the verb tig/do­ig (IGT III §5) in examples such as those above since verbs with initial t that also have compound forms in Classical Irish ‘show hesitation with regard to the lenition of t- in simple relative clauses’; as noted by O’Rahilly (1941, 254 §17). See also TD I p. ci, BST p. 271 and Bretnach (1983, 418 n. 5).

22 See, for example, DDána no. 99 q. 37b and AithdD. no. 4 v. 14f.

23 An edition and study of this text and another fragment in A 10 is in preparation by the present writer.

24 The translation of the second line of the citation is not certain. It is tentatively taken by the present writer as containing an instance of asyndeton (for ben an[n] ni bhi [ná] buidhealta) and a compound of buidhe and ealta. The order t i tall tigfa of the commentary is very tentatively taken here as an error for tall tigfa tí for two reasons: (i) we might not expect the locational adverb in connection with the verb of motion tig and (ii) the order tigfa tí in the corrected version would be in accordance with the tract on the subjunctive as discussed below.
Commentary

Constructions comparable to that presented in the citation are also discussed in BST and the tract on the subjunctive referred to above. According to the tract on the subjunctive, an example almost identical to that in the citation above, *Gidh é an fear tí tiogfa*, is to be understood as ‘if the man who may come be one of those who will come’ (*an fer gidh é tī dā [d]ticfa*), although some doubt is expressed as to its correctness (*másta .c. hé ‘if it is correct’*). The clause does not mean ‘if the man who will come may come’ as this would be expressed by the order *gidh é an fear tiogfa tí*, according to the tract. The present passage may be presumed to be faulted on the same basis, and the citation has been translated above to reflect the fault. The construction is, however, deemed permissible in the above citation under conditions explained by means of the term *ciall fhuar* (*dat. céill fhuair*). It can be established that this term refers to a non-relative clause, as it is comparable with the use of *fuar* as applied to unstressed words not followed by the relative in (6) above, and represents an antonym of *ciall teasaidheachta* encountered in passages (1) and (2) above. The permissible non-relative sense must refer to the verb in the future, as the subjunctive *tí* will not occur here outside of a subordinate clause. I have interpreted *gidh* in the sense ‘as for, regarding’, in an attempt to present a meaningful non-relative sentence.

In summary, the passages discussed above show that terms for relativity were available to some grammarians at least. These terms are:

(i) the adjective *té* (applied to the antecedent of a relative clause in the phrase *réd té*, as in (4), to a conjunction followed by such a clause, as in (5), or to the verb affected, as in (3));

(ii) its antonym *fuar* (used to indicate a conjunction which was not followed by a relative clause, as in (6));

(iii) the abstract noun *teasaidheacht* in the phrase *ciall teasaidheachta* (applied to a relative clause, as in (1) and (2)); and

(iv) the phrase *ciall fhuar* (applied to a non-relative clause, as in (7)).

A relative clause could also be denoted by the phrase *réd éigin nach ba hé féin* ‘something other than itself’ mentioned under (4). The purpose of the present article has been to establish the meaning of the terms in question and discuss the passages in which they occur. I intend to discuss possible origins of the terminology presented here in a separate publication.

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25 BST 66aff.; TCD H 2. 17, 244 and H 2. 12, [1]v col. a.
26 The use of an adjective in *ciall fhuar* as opposed to an abstract in *ciall teasaidheachta* is to be noted.
27 For *gidh* in this sense, see DIL s.v. 2 cía III.
28 For a discussion of differences in terminology used by the grammarians and an assessment of reasons for such differences, see Ó Riain (2017, 155–6).
ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations


BST L. McKenna, *Bardic Syntactical Tracts* (Dublin, 1944; repr. 1979).


DDána L. Mac Cionnaith, *Dioghluim dána* (Baile Átha Cliath, 1938).

DDé L. McKenna, *Dán Dé* (Dublin, 1922).


RIA Cat. O’Rahilly et al., *Catalogue of Irish manuscripts in the Royal Irish Academy* (Dublin, 1926–70).

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