

Is there ‘homorganic inhibition’ in Classical Manx? A corpus investigation

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0. Introduction

‘Homorganic inhibition’ in the Gaelic languages refers to the situation where expected lenition of a word-initial consonant fails when the final consonant of the preceding ‘trigger’ word has the same place of articulation. The cases usually focused on are those where a word-initial coronal obstruent /t, tʲ, d, dʲ, s, sʲ/ is preceded by a word also ending in a coronal (/t, tʲ, d, dʲ, s, sʲ, r, rʲ, l, lʲ, n, nʲ), though we can legitimately ask whether anything similar might be seen when a word-initial velar is preceded by a velar, or a word-initial labial, by a labial. (There is known to have been homorganic inhibition more generally in earlier periods of the Gaelic languages.) We consider the several grammatical contexts in which expected lenition might be inhibited, looking at evidence from our corpus of Classical Manx texts.²

1. Regular homorganic inhibition

In certain specified cases in Manx, homorganic inhibition is clearly established. Any grammar will tell you that *d-*, *j-*, *t-*, *çh-*, *s-*, *sh-* do not mutate after *un* ‘one’, *chied* ‘first’, *trass* ‘third’, *shenn* ‘old’, *feer* ‘very’. Likewise, *d-*, *j-*, *t-*, *çh-* do not lenite where other consonants do after the singular definite article *y/yn/’n*, while here *s-* and *sh-* become *t-* and *çh-* in a leniting context. We do not explore further here the issue of variation in lenition after the definite article. The rule that coronal consonants do not lenite after *un*, *chied*, *trass*, *shenn*, and *feer* is, indeed, confirmed in our corpus;³ there are a few deviations, listed in the Table 1, which are worth remarking on.

lenition	×	inhibition	×	
<i>un ghorrys</i>	1	<i>un dorrys</i>	3	one door
<i>un yoarree</i>	1	<i>un joarree</i>	0	one stranger
<i>un hreishteil</i>	2	<i>un treishteil</i>	1	one hope
<i>un hooill</i>	2	<i>un sooill</i>	1	one eye
<i>un heeloghe</i>	1	<i>un sheeloghe</i>	4	one generation
<i>un heshaght</i>	1	<i>un sheshaght</i>	2	one company
<i>un heshey</i> ⁴	1	<i>un sheshey</i>	0	one companion
<i>chied ghooinney</i>	1	<i>chied dooinney</i>	5	first man
<i>chied heshey</i>	1	<i>chied sheshey</i>	0	first companion
<i>trass heeloghe</i>	2	<i>trass sheeloghe</i>	0	third generation
<i>shenn ghooinney</i>	18	<i>shenn dooinney</i>	0	old man
<i>shenn gheiney</i>	17	<i>shenn deiney</i>	0	old men

Table 1. Unexpected lenition cases after *un*, *chied*, *trass*, *shenn*.

¹ We are most grateful to Christopher Lewin for his advice on this topic and his very helpful comments on a draft of this paper.

² *Aght Giare...*; *Coyrle Sodjey*; *Book of Common Prayer 1765*; *Metrical Psalms 1777*; *Pargys Caillit 1796*; *Thomas Wilson, Sermons 1-12*; *Bible*; *Apocryphal Books*; *Yn Fer Rauee Creestee*; *Cregeen, Dictionary*, Lewin: *Manx prose texts in 19th-c. newspapers*.

³ NB in Scottish Gaelic, *aon*, *a’ chiad*, and *seann* are among the short list of items after which homorganic inhibition is regularly observed (Bauer, 2011, 198-202).

⁴ *Sheshey* over-lenites: *un heshey*, *chied heshey*, *ben-heshey/ben-heshee* occur exclusively.

Among these examples in Table 1, apart from 13 occasional deviations, the frequent and invariable expressions *shenn ghooiney* and *shenn gheiney* stand out. It may be noted that quite widely in Classical Manx *ghooiney* and *gheiney* are found in various contexts where *dooiney* and *deiney* might be expected.⁵ In the corpus, there are no exceptions to the rule that coronals do not lenite after *feer* ‘very’.

2. Is there ‘homorganic inhibition’ of lenition after feminine singular nouns in Classical Manx?

In the corpus, there is a considerable number of examples where a feminine singular noun ending in a coronal consonant is followed by either an adjective or a dependent noun whose radical form begins with a coronal obstruent (*d-*, *j-*, *t-*, *çh-*, *s-*, *sh-*). Table 2 sets out the statistics of observed lenition in this context. There does not seem to be a significant difference between dependent adjectives and dependent nouns. There is a difference in the way different initial consonants are treated, with *j-* and *sh-* being lenited in 63 per cent or more cases, while *d-*, *t-*, and *s-* are lenited in 38 per cent or fewer cases. That is, there is rather more ‘inhibition’ with *d-*, *t-*, and *s-* than with *j-* and *sh-*. To set this in context, Table 3 shows comparable statistics where feminine singular nouns ending in a velar consonant are followed by a homorganic velar-initial dependent. Here lenition occurs in 69 per cent of the cases, which is comparable to the proportions where homorganic initial *j-* and *sh-* are involved.⁶

7	Nf+A				Nf+N				Total after f.			
	Hom +len.	Hom -len	Hom total	Hom % len.	Hom +len.	Hom -len	Hom total	Hom % len.	Hom +len.	Hom -len	Hom total	Hom % len.
<i>d-</i>	33	35	68	49	14 ⁸	59	73	19	47	94	141	33
<i>j-</i>	61	22	83	73	1	4	5		62	26	88	70
<i>t-</i>	31	64	95	33	12 ⁹	7	19	63	43	71	114	38
<i>s-</i>	19	74	93	20	1	15	16	6	20	89	109	18
<i>sh-</i>	0	4	4		17	6	23	74	17	10	27	63
Totals	144	199	343	42	45	91	136	33	189	290	479	39

Table 2. Lenition of adjective and noun dependents with homorganic coronal-initial consonants after feminine noun heads

⁵ For example, in the genitive after masculine, or plural, head nouns, *baas ghooiney erbee* ‘any man’s death’ (CS), *goan ghooiney* ‘words of man’ (TW), *yymyd ghooiney* ‘the use of man’ (Ap), *dow ghooiney erbee* ‘any man’s ox’ (B), *garey feeyney ghooiney elley* ‘another man’s vineyard’ (B); *goo gheiney* ‘the word of men’ (TW), *ayns shillee gheiney* ‘in the sight of men’ (Ap, B), *inneenyn gheiney* ‘daughters of men’ (B), *obbyr laueyn gheiney* ‘the work of men’s hands’ (B), *folliaghtyn gheiney* ‘the secrets of men’ (B), *sharvaantyn gheiney* ‘the servants of men’ (B), *feanish gheiney* ‘the witness of men’ (B).

⁶ Much of the data on which these tables are based can be seen in the appendix of Max Wheeler’s paper ‘Survey of grammatical gender in Classical Manx’ (May 2017).

⁷ There are too few cases of *çh-* words in homorganic leniting contexts to count here.

⁸ Leaving aside *cloan gheiney* ‘children of men’, which occurs 48 times in the corpus, with 1 × *cloan deiney*. Once again *gheiney* occurs rather more often than might be expected. However, cases of *ben ghooiney*, *cooid ghooiney*, *cooinsheanse ghooiney*, *craid gheiney*, *feill gheiney*, *obbyr gheiney*, *slatt gheiney*, are included; alongside these *ben dooiney*, *cooid dooiney*, *cooinsheanse dooiney*, *feill deiney* are also attested.

⁹ 10 of these 12 are of the genitive of *thalloo*: *hallooin*, which predominantly occurs in this form, even when lenition would not be expected, such as after a masculine noun head, as in *kione hallooin* ‘promontory’, *mess hallooin* ‘fruit of the land’, *room hallooin* ‘space’. *Diunid thalloonin*, and *obbyr thalloonin* occur once each.

	Nf+A				Nf+N				Total after f.			
	Hom +len.	Hom -len.	Hom total	Hom %len.	Hom +len.	Hom -len.	Hom total	Hom % len.	Hom +len.	Hom -len.	Hom total	Hom % len.
<i>k-/g-</i>	26	6	32	81	8	9	17	47	34	15	49	69

Table 3. Lenition of adjective and noun dependents with homorganic velar-initial consonants after feminine noun heads

However, in order to decide whether homorganicity is contributing significantly to deviation from the lenition rule, we need to compare, firstly, what happens when the same feminine nouns as provide the data in Table 2 are followed by lenitable consonants which are not homorganic. The results are in Table 4, row a. Here we see that lenition occurs in only 68 per cent of possible examples, a similar proportion to the incidence of lenition of homorganic velars, or of homorganic coronals where initial *j-* or *sh-* are involved. Secondly, we need to consider the proportion of lenition of initial coronals in dependents after feminine singular nouns which do not end in a homorganic coronal consonant. These results are given in Table 4b, excluding the item *jesh* ‘right’ where the expression *laue yesh* ‘right hand’ is extremely frequent (and *laue jesh* is never found).¹⁰ The proportion of lenition of coronal initials after non-homorganic trigger words (43%) proves to be very similar to as the proportion of lenition of coronal initials after homorganic trigger words (39%). That is to say, for lenition of coronal-initial dependents after feminine nouns, the homorganicity or otherwise of a preceding word-final element is not relevant.

	+len.	-len.	total	% len.
a. Non-homorganic dependents of the f. noun triggers whose homorganic dependents are recorded in table 2	625	299	924	68
b. Coronal-initial targets after non-homorganic f. noun triggers (excluding <i>jesh</i> : 197 examples of <i>laue yesh</i>)	59	78	137	43

Table 4. Lenition of non-homorganic-initial dependents after feminine noun heads

In Table 2, we have seen considerable differences between the lenition behaviour of different coronal consonants, with *j-* and *sh-* strongly favouring lenition, and *d-*, *t-* and *s-* disfavouring lenition. Though the proportion of lenition of coronal consonants overall is similar in the homorganic (Table 2) and the non-homorganic (Table 4b) contexts, we may investigate further whether the differences between the different consonants observed in the former context are mirrored in the latter. This we do in Table 5, where the data of Table 4b are similarly separated into the different coronal initials.

¹⁰ In fact, the form *jesh* ‘right’ never occurs as an attributive adjective, but only *yesh*. We find it with masculine sg. nouns —*lheyast yesh*, *pillar yesh*—, and with plural nouns —*nyn laueyn yesh*, *nyn gassyn yesh*. *Jesh* ‘convenient’ does occur attributively.

	+len.	-len.	total	% len.
<i>d-</i>	10	32	42	24
<i>j-</i>	10	23	33	30
<i>t-/çh-</i>	34	8	42	81
<i>s-</i>	0	5	5	0
<i>sh-</i>	5	10	15	33
Total	59	78	137	43

Table 5. Lenition of initial coronals in dependents after f. heads not ending in a homorganic consonant, cf. Table 4b.

The results are rather different, however. Initial *d-* and *s-* resist lenition in both contexts, but whereas in the homorganic context *j-* and *sh-* favour lenition and *t-* resists it, in the non-homorganic context, the outcome for these consonants is the opposite. It is not clear to us what kind of explanation might be sought for this difference. Insofar as *t-* resists lenition in homorganic contexts more than elsewhere, we could say there is some confirmation of (residual) homorganic inhibition in dependents of feminine nouns in Classical Manx. But insofar as *j-* and *sh-* lenite in greater proportion in the homorganic context than elsewhere, we should have to count that as a tendency towards homorganic *disinhibition*.

The database for Table 5 is quite sparse; there are relatively few nouns securely identifiable as feminine that do not end in a coronal consonant, and for which there is evidence from lenitable dependent adjectives or nouns. Within it there are several frequent collocations, such as *cragh trome* ‘great slaughter’ (×7), *laue hoshtal* ‘left hand’ (×21), *laue dooinney* ‘a man’s hand’ (×11), *çhengey yoarree* ‘an unknown tongue’ (×9); these account for 48 of the total of 137 examples. As mentioned above, the overall proportion, 43%, in Table 5 of lenition of coronals after non-coronal-final heads, is broadly in line with the 39% lenition of coronals in the homorganic contexts shown in Table 2.

Conclusion: coronal-initial dependent words lenite in not more than 43% of cases on average after a feminine noun head, independently of whether the head ends in a homorganic coronal consonant or not.

3. Is there homorganic inhibition in the case of proper names in the genitive case, where lenition is the norm?

Of proper names beginning with a coronal obstruent in the Bible + Apocrypha (i.e. names beginning in *D-*, *J-*, *T-*, *S-*, *Sh-*), those in *T-*, *S-*, *Sh-* never lenite in the genitive.¹¹ NB, if they did, their lenited forms, in *H-*, would be hard to distinguish from the very many Biblical names that begin in radical *H-*.

- *David*, *Damascus*, *Daniel*, *Dibon*, and *Diblaim* (*Ghibleam*) lenite in the genitive in 90% of cases after a homorganic consonant.
- There is a large number of Bible names in *J-* (including *Jee*, *Jerusalem*) that lenite, and they do so in the genitive in 96% of cases after a homorganic consonant. NB radical-initial *Y-* names are rare —only *Yeeseey* ‘Jesus’ and *Yuaase* ‘Judas’.

¹¹ We detect one exception: *Jos.* 17.8 *cheer Happuah* ‘the land of Tappuah’. *Thomase* ‘Thomas’ lenites once in the vocative: *Homase* (John 20.29).

4. Is there coronal homorganic inhibition of lenition after a plural noun not ending in *-yn*?

After a non-*yn* plural, lenition of a following dependent is possible. However, in this context, the occurrence or non-occurrence of lenition of a dependent is to a very large degree determined lexically, rather than phonologically. So, lenition (including of homorganic coronals where this is relevant) appears to be the rule after *buid*, *cluig*, *croink*, *eayin*, *goair*, *moddee*, and *smeir*;¹² whereas non-lenition is the rule after *cabbil*, *deiney*, *eeanlee*, *feeaihee*, *foawir*, *goan*,¹³ *kirp*, *mraane*,¹⁴ *spuitt*, and nouns in *-tee* (*cummaltee*, *reiltee*, *scammyltee*, *scapailtee*, *troailtee*). There is variation after *buill*,¹⁵ *kirree*¹⁶ and *mec*.¹⁷ If we only looked at *fir*, we could believe the homorganic inhibition rule: 147 cases of lenition of a non-homorganic dependent;¹⁸ 5 cases of non-lenition of a homorganic dependent; just one case of lenition of a homorganic dependent: *fir-hie*.¹⁹

5. Is there coronal homorganic inhibition after coronal-final prefixes?

First, we need to establish whether, in fact, lenition is found in the case of labial- or velar-initial roots after a prefix ending in a coronal consonant. The corpus evidence shows that this is generally the case, though initial *f-* is only rarely lenited.²⁰ In Table 6, the exceptions to lenition after coronal-final prefixes are indicated in **bold**. Where the same lexical stem is treated variably, we put the variants together, after the first in alphabetical order, and mark both variants in *italic*. We include in this list preposed modifiers that may be written with a hyphen, without taking a position on whether some of them, e.g. *ard*, might equally well be counted as preposed adjectives, as we have treated *shenn* above.

Where coronal homorganic inhibition is in question, both lenition and non-lenition are found. But the choice between these outcomes is largely lexical. Thus, Wilson uses lenited *an-yeegh* ‘atheist’, and *an-yeey*s ‘atheism’ in his sermons; Cregeen gives *anjee* ‘atheist’, *anjeegh* ‘atheistical’, but these are not otherwise found in the corpus. *Con-*, *far-*, *giare-*, *liass-*, and *moal-* are found with lenition in homorganic initials. *Mooar-* is found with homorganic inhibition of lenition, but there are only two examples in the corpus, both with *s-* (and also one non-homorganic *c-*). With *ard-*, lenition largely depends on the root to which it is prefixed: note *ard hreatoor* (PC) ‘arch-traitor’ and *ard-hranlaasagh/ard-hranlaasee* ‘arch-tyrant’, *ard yymmoose* ‘great wrath’. We observe almost always *ard-ghooinney* and *ard-gheiney*, variation with *ard sharvvant* ~ *ard harvaant*, *ard drogh-gheiney* ~ *ard ghrogh-gheiney*, but otherwise *ard* induces homorganic inhibition: *ard-saggyrt*, *ard traa*, *ard trostey*, etc.

¹² *buid chooney*, *buid chloaie* ×4, *cluig veggey* ×2, *croink gheinnee*, *croink veggey* ×3, *croink chasherick*, *eayin woirryn* ×3, *goair woirryn* ×2, *moddee valloo*, *moddee voghtey*, *moddee yiooghey*, *moddee yooh* (Pargys Caillit, i.e. *yoogh*), *moddee yollyssagh*; *smeiy*r *hroam*, *smeir ghreshagh*.

¹³ Except *goan ghooinney* ×1, *goan gheiney* ×2, *goan vrynnerragh* ×1.

¹⁴ Except *mraane ghoaley*, *mraane vourey* (Cregeen). There are single cases with non-lenition in *dew beiyht*, *merriu deyr*it, *builg sheidee*.

¹⁵ *buill hrome*, but *buill dorragey*.

¹⁶ *kirree chailjey*, *kirree vaney*, *kirree vooarey*, *kirree woirryn*; but *kirree cailjey* ×4, *kirree trome lesh eayin*.

¹⁷ *mec gheiney* ×3; but *mec deiney* ×1, *mec joarreeyn*, *mec mee-chrauee*, *mec tribeyn elley*.

¹⁸ Including very frequent *fir-chiaullee*, *fir-choonee*, *fir vaghee*, *fir vooinjerey*.

¹⁹ *fir-cheerey* ‘countrymen’ ×1, *fir tashtee* ‘treasurers’ ×2, *fir traashtee* ‘treaders’ ×1, *fir thammag* ‘bastards’ ×1; *fir hie* ‘householders’ ×1.

²⁰ *ard-eallagh* ‘chief people’, *ard-endeilys* ‘mighty protection’ *ard-er* ‘chief’ ×28.

Prefix	_labial	_velar	_coronal
an-	anvennick anmagh anvea anveagh anvio anvroie	an-Chreestee ×14 <i>an-chreesteenyn</i> ×8 an-creesteenyn ×2 an-chooie ×3 an-chredjuagh ×2 an-chredjuee ×4 an-chasherick- ×28 an-ghoo ×18 an-ghooagh an-ghiarey-chymmylt ×15 an-ghiarey-chymyltee	<i>an-yeegh</i> ×3 anjeegh (Cr.) an-yeeyys ×5 anjee (Cr.) anjeeragh (Cr.)
ard	ard-eallagh ard-endeilys ard-er ×28 ard fer-oik ard-fer-reill ×4 ard-fer-ynsee ard farrane ard-feailley ×3 ard-feaillaghyn ×6 ard-feeuit ard fir-oik ard-firrinys(yn) ard-foayr ×6 ard foayryn ard-foays(yn) ard-marragh ard-pheccah ard-phleayder ard-phooar ard-phrinice ard-phryssoon ard-vainshtyr ard-valjyn ard-valley ard-vanglaneyn ard-vannaght ard-vasoonagh ard-vee-viallee ard-veyiht ard-verchee ard-verchys ard-vochilley ard-voggey ard-vollaght ard-volteyryn ard-vooaralagh ard-voylley ard-voyrnagh ard-vriw ard-vunlaa ard-vutler ard-vyghin	ard casherick ×4 <i>ard-chasherick</i> ×2 ard-casherickys ard-chaptan ard-chenjallys ard-cherraghey ard-chiannoortys ard-chiarail ard-chiarailys <i>ard-chiaulleyder</i> ard-kiaulleyderyn ard-chione ard-chlagh ard-chleragh ard-choraa ard-chreeagh ard-chreenaght <i>ard-churmyn</i> ard currimyn ard-churrim ard creaghyt ard-gharraghtee ard-ghennallys ard-gherjaghey ard-ghloyr ard-ghloyroil ard-ghoo ard-ghooagh ard-ghrayse ard-yiat ard-yioot ~ ard-ghioot	ard-danjere ard dooinney ×2 <i>ard-ghoooinney</i> ×15 ard-dorrys ×2 ard-gheiney ×107 ard drogh-spyrryd <i>ard ghrogh-spyrryd</i> <i>ard harvant</i> (PC) ard-sharvaantyn ard-hranlaasagh ard-hranlaasee ×2 ard hreatoo(y)r ×4 (PC) ard-jaghin (Cr.) ard Jee ×2 ard-saaseyn ard-saggyrt(yn) (passim) ard-saggyrtys ard-shamyr ard-shamyrder ard shirveish ard-soiagh ard-soiaghey ard soilshean ard-sollys ard-sym ard traa ard tribe ard thie ard trostey ard-tushtey ard yymmoose

Prefix	_labial	_velar	_coronal
	ard-wannalagh ard-whuaiyl ard-wooinjer		
con			con-ghorraghey con-ghorraghys con-ghorrid
far	farvane far-ven far-vlaa far-voalley far-folt	far-charkyl far-chass far-chooish far-chloie far-chlashtyn	far-ghuillag
giare		giare-chooat giare-cheeyllagh ×7 giare-cheaut	giare-heillagh ×2 giare-heihltagh ×4 giare-hooillagh
kiare	kiare-filley	<i>kiare-chassagh</i> ×5 <i>kiare-cassagh</i> ×2 <i>kiare-chorneilagh</i> ×3 <i>kiare corneilagh</i> ×3	
liass	liass-vraar liass-vac liass-voir		liass-yishig liass-huyr
moal		moal-chreeagh moal-chredjuagh	moal-hushtagh
mooar	mooar-volgagh	mooar-creeagh	mooar-soiaghey mooar-seaghnit
myn		myn-chyrl	

Table 6. Lenition after coronal-final prefixes

6. Conclusions

There is coronal homorganic inhibition in Classical Manx after *un*, *chied*, *trass*, *shenn* and *feer*, as is well known. The only non-*yn* plural noun inducing lenition generally but homorganic inhibition in a dependent is *fir* ‘men’. We find also that there is coronal homorganic inhibition generally after the prefix *ard-*, with the exception of certain stems. In the other contexts investigated here, there is variation in lenition, in different proportions depending on the consonant and the context, but not consistently related to the ‘homorganicity’ of lenitable initial consonants. Note, in particular, that *s-* is especially resistant to lenition in these contexts.

Reference

Bauer, Michael, 2011. *Blas na Gàidhlig. The practical guide to Gaelic pronunciation*, Glasgow: Akerbeltz.