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*A series of short articles on Manx Gaelic grammar, idiom, vocabulary and pronunciation.*

This month, some notes on stress and emphasis.

### Emphatic suffixes and pronouns

These are 's, 's, -syn, (i)sh, -yn, -syn, according to person and number:

my hie's - MY house

e vacsyn - HIS son

y thie aym's - MY house

y thie echeysyn - HIS house

Beem's - I will be

dooinyn - to US

In late Manx, *y thie aym's* etc. would be more common than *my hie's*, but the point is that the use of the emphatic suffixes, wherever they occur, is very common. They are not in any way an optional extra; to sound natural they should be used copiously (though not totally indiscriminately, as we shall see). In English however, most of their function is taken by **intonation**, and you will hear learners applying this incorrectly to Manx.

For example:

T'eh cummal ayns y thie AYM (as cha nee thie elley) - He lives in MY house (and not another one)

where emphasis is put on *aym*, but without the suffix 's that would be expected. *Ayns y thie AYM* just sounds odd, but

T'eh cummal ayns MY hie (cha nee e thie / y thie eck)

with stress on *my* is just plain wrong. It is absolutely impossible and un-Gaelic to stress possessives like *my*, *dty*, and *e*, because they are clitics, or words which cannot be stressed and must be connected to a stressed word. Other such unstressable clitics include the definite article *yn*, and preverbal particles such as *cha*, *nagh* and *dy*.

The use of suffixes instead of intonation is one of the most alien things about Gaelic to English speakers, because it simply doesn't occur to us to do it that way. It took me a while to get my head round it. Even if you do use 's and say *my hie's*, there is still an urge from an English-speaking perspective to emphasize *my* with the voice, whereas *my hie* and *my hie's* are both stressed on the second word and have about the same intonation—the emphasis is shown by the suffix.

The personal pronouns *mee, oo, eh, ee, shin, shiu, ad*, and the prepositional forms *aym, dou, rhyt...* etc. are not actually unstressed forms, but it is odd to stress them emphatically, the forms *mish, uss* etc. should be used liberally.

When there is contrast, emphatic forms are effectively obligatory:

Shoh yn thie **aym's**, as shen y thie **ecksh**<sup>1</sup> - This is MY house, and that is HER house

**mish** as **eshyn** - me and him (I and he)

Though forms with *hene* can also be used:

**mee-hene** as **eh-hene**

However, there are certain circumstances where learners are wont to overuse the emphatic forms where they are not usual, or not obligatory:

### 1. relative clauses with pronouns:

yn dooinney **rish** va mee loayrt - the man I was talking to

is more common than

yn dooinney **rishyn** va mee loayrt<sup>2</sup>

Examples:

Cre vel screeuyn-scarree nyn moir, **r'ee** ta mee er scarrey - Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? (Isaiah 50:1)

ny greeshyn **oroo** hie eh seose gys thie'n Chiarn - his ascent [the stairs] by which he went up into the house of the Lord (2 Chronicles 9:4)

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<sup>1</sup> Note in passing that it is normal in Manx to repeat the noun, i.e. to say 'my house and her house', which is avoided in English, rather than 'my house and her one / hers'. E.g. FRC p. 66 *Ta e ailleil hene ec dy chooilley ghooiney, as she shoh my ailleil's* 'Every Man has his Failing, and this is mine'.

<sup>2</sup> the like of which nevertheless does occur in the Bible and elsewhere, see Daniel 11:39, Amos 6:1

## 2. coordinate clauses with *as*

honnick mee eh **eh** çheet magh ass y cheeill - I saw him **as** / when he was coming out of church

would be odd as ...*as eshyn çheet magh*... because the emphatic could imply we were talking about to separate masculine individuals.

Examples:

Ny tra ta'n spyrryd dy eadaghey dy ghoail eh, **as eh** geadaghey mysh e ven... Or when the spirit of jealousy cometh upon him, and he be jealous over his wife... (Numbers 5:30)

As shen myr ve, **as ee** markiagh er yn assyl, myr haink ee sheese er lhiattee'n clieau... And it was so, as she rode on the ass, that she came down by the covert on the hill (1 Samuel 25:20)

quoi ren rieu cherraghtyn, **as eh** gyn-loght? - who ever perished, being innocent? (Job 4:7)

## 3. subject of the copula

Usually in the non-emphatic form:

**She Manninagh mee** - I am a Manxman

rather than

? **She Manninagh mish**

Examples:

**She voalley mee**, as ta my cheeaghyn myr tooryn - I am a wall, and my breasts like towers (Song of Solomon 8:10)

Agh my she phadeyryn **ad**, as my ta goo yn Chiarn mâroo - But if they be prophets, and if the word of the Lord be with them (Jeremiah 27:18)

Much of the use of emphatic suffixes depends on training your mind to think in Manx, rather than English. But with familiarity and awareness, you will soon get the hang of it and before long \**Nee shoh yn thie ayd?* ('Is this YOUR house?', where the enquiry is whether it is your house rather than someone else's) will grate on you, and *Nee shoh yn thie ayd's?* will sound natural.

### The clitic preverbal particles

These particles are always unstressed and must be followed by a verb, which is why you cannot say \**cha* on its own to mean 'not' or 'no'. The same applies to *nagh*. Which is why \* *Cre'n fa nagh?* ('Why not?') is ungrammatical and should be

avoided. It is **impossible** to say \**Cre'n fa nagh?* in Manx in just the same way as it is impossible to say \**the* on its own without a following noun in English (whereas this is permissible in some languages, such as German, where it means 'the one').

*Nagh* needs a verb, so:

A: Vel oo goll magh noight? - Are you going out tonight?

B: Cha nel. - No. [=Am not.]

A. Cre'n fa nagh vel? - Why not? [=Why are not?]

A: Cha dug mee feeyn da. - I didn't give him wine.

B: Cre'n fa nagh dug? - Why not? [=Why not gave?]

This is a different way of thinking from what English-speakers are used to, but with a little practice you come to feel *nagh* to be naked, as it were, or incomplete without a following verb. The same applies in other circumstances:

A: Cha daink mee thie riyer. - I didn't come home last night.

B: Ta fys aym nagh daink. - I know that you didn't [=that did not come].

### **Other points**

It is impressed on learners that words like *thalloo* have stress on the first syllable, not the last, as might be expected from the spelling. Indeed, most words in Manx stressed on the first syllable, unless a later syllable has a long vowel ending in a consonant (more or less). So the genitive *thallooin* is stressed on the second syllable, but nominative *thalloo* on the first.

*Chamoo* 'neither', on the other hand, is stressed on the second syllable, because it is really *cha moo* 'no more' with the unstressed particle *cha* followed by the comparative of *mooar*. The subordinate / relative form *nagh moo*, which occurs in Wilson's sermons (pp. 61, 89), makes this clear. Perhaps it would be better if *cha moo* were so written as two words.

*Scadoo* 'shadow' is also stressed on the second syllable (see stress marking in Cregeen and HLSM II p. 386 [skə'døu] TC) because it is originally *scaa doo* 'black shadow'.

*Whilleen*, according to Cregeen, is pronounced *WHILLin*, with stress on the first syllable resulting in shortening of the long vowel in the second syllable.

### **Proverb of the Month:**

Ta mee er y vaarney veayl.

I am on the bare gap, i.e., I am at the end of my tether. (*Manx Proverbs and Sayings*)