

## OBJECTHOOD IN IRISH AND THE ORIGIN POINT OF SUBJECTS

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The theory of objecthood in generative grammar underwent a radical shift in the late 1980's and early 1990's, from a view which took it to be a relation between a nominal and a lexical head (V) to a view on which the crucial mediating element is a distinguished functional head (AgrO, little *v*, or Aspect, in different implementations of the core idea). This paper first examines a pre-verbal particle which occurs in nonfinite clauses in Irish, one which is clearly linked with the expression of transitivity in the nonfinite context: it is implicated in (i) obligatory Object Shift (ii) object agreement and (iii) case-licensing of direct objects. It argues in the first place, on the basis of the behaviour of a particular class of modifiers, that the particle is syntactically independent (it heads its own projection and is not morphologically part of the nonfinite verb). In the second place it argues that its complement (a verbal projection of some size) is independently selectable (in a modal construction very similar to that identified in Rajesh Bhatt's 1999 dissertation for nonfinite clauses in English). Crucially, this complement is subjectless and if it contains a direct object, that object is case-dependent. All of this makes possible and investigation of how and where subjects originate in syntactic structure, and suggests an analysis along lines developed by Wurmbrandt 2003 for certain cases of re-structuring in German (the phrase selected by the restructuring trigger is VP rather than vP or CP). This analysis in turn provides evidence for Kratzer's (1996) view of how external arguments are introduced. The paper ends by exploring the plausibility of these views by examining evidence from Quantifier Float, agent-oriented adverbials, scope phenomena and other subject-sensitive phenomena.