

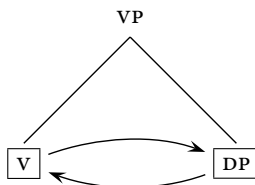
# Objecthood in Irish and the Origin Point of Subjects

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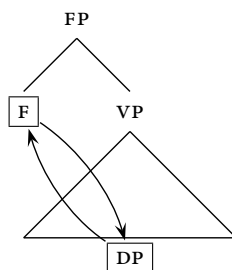
GIST 6: WORKSHOP ON SUBJECTS  
UNIVERSITEIT GENT, OCTOBER 18TH 2012

## 1 TWO THEORIES OF OBJECTHOOD

- (1) A relation between a nominal and a lexical head v:



- (2) A relation between a nominal and a distinguished closed-class head F:



THE CRUCIAL THING: In (2) F is a lexical item—an autonomous atom of the syntactic system and one member of a closed class (functional) category. Johnson (1991), Chomsky (1991), Chomsky (1995, Chap. 4)

The analysis in (2), in its various variants, now represents the conventional wisdom within the framework of the Minimalist Program. But outside that circle, the analysis is widely criticized, if not derided. For Culicover & Jackendoff (2005, 50–56), for example, the kind of analysis illustrated in (2) is a symbol of all that is wrong with what they call MGG ('Mainstream Generative Grammar').

PRESENT PURPOSES:


- Examine the syntax of objecthood and transitivity in nonfinite clauses in Irish,
- Argue that the framework of (2) provides a better way of understanding the phenomena that is better than any previously available.
- Try to tease apart implications for theories of the origin-point of (what become) subjects.

## 2 BACKGROUND

Two types of clauses—nonfinite, as in (3a) and finite, as in (3b):

- (3) a. Níor mhaith liom iad an scéal sin a chluinstean roimh ré.  
I-wouldn't like them the story DEMON hear [-FIN] before time  
'I wouldn't like them to hear that story in advance.'
- b. Níor mhaith liom go gcluinfedh siad an scéal sin roimh ré.  
I-wouldn't like c hear [COND] they the story DEMON before time  
'I wouldn't like them to hear that story in advance.'

And a crude (but basically correct) analysis of the relation between (3a) and (3b) suggests itself:

- (4)  VERB < SUBJECT < OBJECT < OBLIQUE ARGUMENTS < ADVERBIALS

THAT IS: the 'inflected verb' is a morphological gathering up (in a position just below c) of all of the information expressed in the various heads which define the clausal spine.

### 3 NONFINITE CLAUSES—BASICS

Nonfinite clauses emerge then as being a better context in which to observe the basic principles of clausal organization (unobscured by head-movement of the verb to initial position).

Those clauses can be described by way of the informal schema in (5):

(5) NONFINITE CLAUSES

[NEG] [SUBJECT] [DIRECT OBJECT] V [non-DP-complements] [CP-complement]

A CONTRAST:

- The VSO pattern of finite clauses is constant across the dialects and has been established since the earliest period.
- The SOVX pattern of nonfinite clauses is a relatively recent innovation (emerges into view in the 17th century) and shows some quite complex variation across the dialects.

A QUESTION: What is the syntax that yields the informal description in (5)?

- STRATEGY:
- Focus initially on northern dialects but deal with some of the variation in 7
  - Make extensive use of the data-base described in APPENDIX A.

### 4 NONFINITE CLAUSES—THE TRANSITIVITY PARTICLE

Subjectless sentences first:

(6) CONTROL

d'iarr mé [ an lámhscríbhinn a thabhairt chugam ]  
 PAST-ask I the manuscript bring [-FIN] to-me  
 'I asked that the manuscript be brought to me.'

MBF 101

(7) RAISING

dá dtarlódh sé sin mise a mharú  
 if happen [COND] he DEMON me kill [-FIN]  
 'if that guy should happen to kill me'

LA 25

(8) [ [OBJECT] a+VN [OTHER COMPLEMENTS] [ADJUNCTS] ]

Focus on the 'nonfinite verb':

TWO PARTS: ◦ A preverb (*a*, phonemically /ə/) which lenites the following element

- A 'verbal noun' – a form formerly nominal but now verbal

CORE CLAIM: The particle *a* which precedes and lenites 'verbal nouns' is the mark of transitivity in nonfinite clauses. Call it the 'transitivity particle'.

#### DISTRIBUTION OF THE TRANSITIVITY PARTICLE

*Obligatorily present with objects (preverbal nominal arguments)*

- (9) a. Ba mhaith liom an teach seo [a] dhíol le duine inteacht.  
 I-would-like the house DEMON PTC sell.VN to person some  
 'I would like to sell this house to someone.'
- b. cha dtig liom an fear choíche [a] phósadh  
 NEG come with-me the man ever PTC marry.VN  
 'I can't ever marry the man.'
- c. Ba bhreá liom cuairt a thabhairt ar an Róimh.  
 COP[COND] fine to-me visit PTC take-VN on the Rome  
 'I'd love to visit Rome.'

SRNF 11

*Obligatorily absent with intransitive verbs of all types*

- (10) a. bhí an chúis ró-mhór le Sasain géilleadh go síothchánta  
was the matter too-grave with England yield [-FIN] peacefully  
‘The matter was too grave for England to yield peacefully.’ BSM 048
- b. Is cuimhin liomsa muid cruinniú i New York  
COP[PRES] memorable to-me us gather [-FIN] in  
‘I remember us gathering in New York.’ DM 106
- c. cionnus an bósun tuitim thar an taoibh  
because the bosun fall [-FIN] over the side  
‘because the bosun fell overboard’ BG 239
- d. Seo an darna huair a leithéid tarlú.  
this the second time its like happen [-FIN]  
‘This is the second time such a thing has happened.’ RNG 29-09-2008
- e. Ba mhian leat gan mé creidbheáil ins an rud  
COP[PAST] desire with-you NEG me believe [-FIN] in the thing  
‘You wanted me not to believe in the thing.’ UMI 167

*Optional with verbs which take CP-complements*

- (11) a. agus é a shílsteán gur bh iad a namhaid a bhí aige  
and him think [-FIN] C COP[PRES] them his enemies C was at-him  
‘and him to think it was his enemies he was dealing with’ SC 157
- b. is fearr iad sílstin nach de’n tsaoghal seo sinn  
COP[PRES] better them think [-FIN] NEG C of-the life DEMON US  
‘it’s better that they think that we are not of this world’ CP 39
- (12) a. níorbh fhurast a thabhairt ar m’ athair an lán mara a ligean ar shiúl air  
was-not easy give [-FIN] on my father the tide let [-FIN] away on-him  
‘it wasn’t easy to make my father miss the tide’ NBM 65
- b. ní thiocfadh liom tabhairt air níos mó a innse  
NEG come [COND] with-me give [-FIN] on-him more tell [-FIN]  
‘I couldn’t make him tell any more’ FFF 69
- (13) a. an bhfuil dochar a fhiafruighe díot caidé’n scéal éagsamhail a tá in do chionn  
Q is harm ask [-FIN] of-you what story strange C is in your head  
‘Is there any harm in asking you what strange story you have in your head’ CP 135
- b. Ar mhiste domh fiafraí duit cé an áit a bhfuil an baile agat?  
? harm to-me ask [-FIN] of-you what the place C is the home at-you  
‘Would it be OK if I asked you where your home is?’ SSOTC 266
- (14) a. go dtáinig leis a’ tseandúine a chreidbheáil gur i Rinn na bhFaoileann a bhí sé  
C came with the old-person believe [-FIN] C in C was he  
‘that the old man came to believe that it was in Rinn a bhFaoileann he was’ D 277
- b. dhiúltaigh siad creidbheáil go bhfuil an domhan cruinn  
refused they believe [-FIN] C is the world round  
‘they refused to believe that the world is round’ AM 46

## INTERACTIONS

QUESTION: If we identify the transitivity particle with F of (2), what would our expectations be about its behaviour and properties?

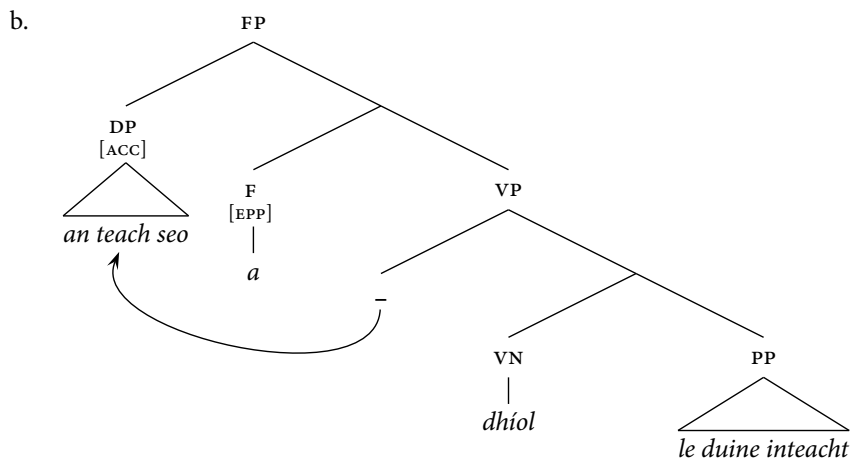
- We might expect it to be implicated in Object Shift.
- We might expect it to be implicated in Case licensing.
- We might expect it to be implicated in Object Agreement.

## OBJECT SHIFT

The preverbal position of the object in nonfinite clauses reflects:

- the non-application of verb-movement
- obligatory OBJECT SHIFT: raising of the most prominent DP in the verbal domain into the specifier position of the transitivity particle.

- (15) a. Ba mhaith liom an teach seo a dhíol le duine inteacht.  
I-would-like the house DEMON PTC sell.VN with person some  
'I would like to sell this house to someone.'



QUANTIFIER FLOAT (Ó Baoill & Maki (2008)):

- (16) a. ní hionann sin agus an tAifreann a léamh uilig  
NEG same that and the Mass PTC read.VN all  
'That's not the same as reading the entire Mass.'
- b. Iad a rá uilig, an ea?  
them PTC say.VN all is-it  
'(You want me to) sing them all, is it?'

IDCS 73

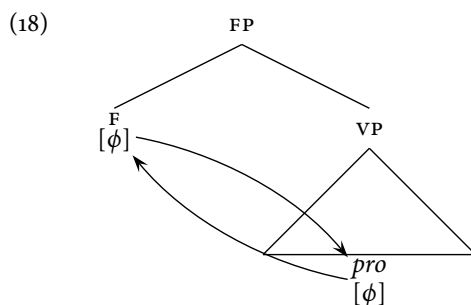
RNG 8-7-95

## CASE MARKING

To the extent that it's possible to tell in this rabidly head-marking language, the case assigned to fronted objects in nonfinite clauses is accusative:

- (17) a. Ba bhreá liom í a fheiceáil.  
COP[COND] fine to-me her PTC see.VN  
'I would love to see her.'
- b. \*Ba bhreá liom sí a fheiceáil.  
COP[COND] fine to-me she PTC see.VN  
'I would like to see she.'

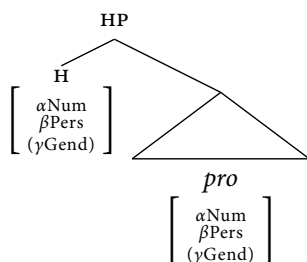
## OBJECT AGREEMENT



- (19) a. Ach má tá sé i ndán damh an torc mo marbhadh  
but if be [PRES] it in store for-me the boar s1 kill.VN  
'but if it is my fate that the boar should kill me' SNAF 127
- b. má chailleann tú agus gan eisean do mharbhadh  
if lose [PRES] you and NEG him s2 kill.VN  
'if you lose and he doesn't kill you' ACO 473
- c. gur cheart leigean don mhaighistir a teagasc do na scoláirí  
C-COP[PRES] right let [-FIN] do-the teacher FS3 teach.VN to the students  
'that it would be right to let the teacher teach it to the students' D 113
- d. tar éis Tadhg ár bhfágaint  
after P1 leave.VN  
'after Tadhg had left us' O 236
- e. ceisteanna nach bhfuil dul ag aonduine a bhfuascailt  
questions NEG C is ability at anyone P3 resolve.VN  
'questions that nobody is able to resolve' SS 164
- f. níor mhaith liom ceachtar acu m' fheiceáil  
NEG-PAST good with-me either of-them s1 see.VN  
'I wouldn't like either of them to see me.' CM 103

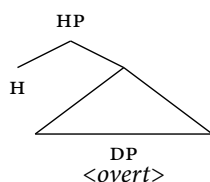
## THE GENERAL COFIGURATION FOR AGREEMENT IN IRISH

(20)



- (i) H = T, D, P, or *v*,  
(ii) PRO is the most prominent DP in the domain of H,  
(iii) His the SYNTHETIC form: specified for number, person, and (sometimes) gender.

(21)



- H is the *analytic* ('bare') form  
(i) in the case of T: a bare tensed verb  
(ii) in the case of P: the citation form of the preposition  
(iii) in the case of D: the null article which licenses genitive,  
(iv) the transitivity particle,  
(v) in the case of the progressive: the progressive particle *ag*.

See McCloskey & Hale (1984a), McCloskey (1986b), McCloskey (2011) etc.

## INTERIM CONCLUSION

The properties of the transitivity particle are those we would expect it to have if it were to be identified with F of (2).

## FURTHER QUESTIONS:

- What is the status of the transitivity particle? Is it an atom of the syntactic system (an autonomous lexical item) or is it a sub-part of a lexical item, a morpheme?
- Does the Irish data help distinguish among the various versions/implementations of (2) currently on the market?

## 5 MORPHOSYNTACTIC AUTONOMY OF THE TRANSITIVITY PARTICLE

A CENTRAL ASSUMPTION: The transitivity preverb, according to (20b), is a syntactically independent element—a functional element like a determiner or a preposition or a complementizer. Is this believable?

### ONE: A SLIGHTLY SALACIOUS ARGUMENT

#### INTERVENTION

- (22) tá sé ceaptha thú a *feckin* ghortú  
is it intended you PTC HURT.VN  
'It's intended to feckin' hurt you.' GDDR 271
- (23) a. chaithfidís  
must [COND] [P3]  
'they have to'  
b. \*chaithfi-feckin-dís  
c. uilig go léir  
all all  
'all'  
d. \*uilig go feckin léir
- (24) Feicfidh mé arú amáireach thú le dhul ar *feckin* siúlóid mar sin.  
see [FUT] I day-after-tomorrow you with go [-FIN] on walk as that  
'I'll see you the day after tomorrow to go on a feckin' walk then.'
- (25) a. níl mé ag iarraidh ortsa mo *feckin* cháil a scriosadh  
NEG-be pres I ask [PROG] on-you my reputation destroy [-FIN]  
'I'm not asking you to destroy my feckin' reputation.' GDDR 304  
b. Dún do *friggin* chlab, a Mhamái.  
close your gob VOC-Mammy  
'Shut your friggin mouth, Mammy' RNG 13-06-2012
- (26) a. an *focain* deartháir úd.  
the brother DEMON  
'that fuckin brother' J 95  
b. thar thairseach an *focain* tí seo.  
over threshold the house [GEN] DEMON  
'into this fucking house' J 95
- (27) Ná *focain* fliuch an bosca!  
NEG-IMP wet the box  
'Don't fucking wet the box.' J 117
- (28)
- PP

```

      / \
     P  DP
     |
    ar

```

DP

```

      / \
     D  NP
     |
    mo

```

DP

```

      / \
     D  NP
     |
    an

```

CP

```

      / \
     C  TP
     |
    ná

```

VP

```

      / \
     v  VP
     |
    a

```

APPARENT GENERALIZATION: Swear words borrowed from English never appear within a morphological word. However, they may appear between a prosodically dependent functional head and the complement of that head. All of the well-formed examples in (22)–(27) meet this condition.

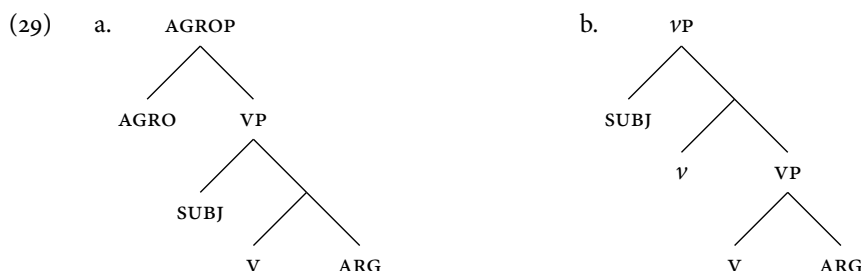
If this is accurate, we have evidence that the relation between the transitivity particle and the projection of the verbal stem is analogous to the relation between P and DP, D and NP, C and TP and so on. That is, the transitivity particle is a closed-class lexical item which f-selects a complement (the projection of the verbal stem). This is exactly one of the core commitments of the analysis sketched here.

## TWO: INDEPENDENT SELECTION?

## AN EXPECTATION:

- If F of (2) is an independent atom of the syntax, then its complement should also be syntactically independent.
- If that complement is independent, it should be available for selection by elements other than F.
- What would the syntactic outcome of such selection look like?
- Severely defective complementation, since the characteristic case-licenser for objects would be, by definition, absent.

A COMPLICATION: Our exact expectations about what the outcome will be here will depend on which variant of (2) we are dealing with. Consider the two possibilities in (29):



CRUCIAL DIFFERENCE: in (29b), the complement of F is entirely subject-less (syntactically and semantically). In (29a), the complement of F includes the subject.

FINAL CLAIM: There is a construction-type in Irish (an extremely common and productive one) whose properties fall readily within the range of understanding if (29b) is the correct understanding of the verbal domain.

## INFINITIVAL MODALITY IN IRISH

Bhatt (1999), Kayne (2012):

- (30) a. We were to take the train to Ghent.  
 b. We were unsure what to do.  
 c. The book for us to read is the *The Speckled People*.  
 d. There's a bill (for us) to pay in today's post.

## THE PREPOSITION 'LE':

## (31) SELECTING A FINITE CP

- a. Bheir sé ar an mhuc dhubh le go gcuirfeadh sé marc eile inti,  
 caught he on the pig black with c put [COND] he mark other in-her  
 'He caught hold of the black pig to put another mark on it.'
- b. Theastaigh uaidh eagla a chur ar Mhatt le go dteithfeadh sé.  
 wanted from-him fear put [-FIN] on with c run-away [COND] he  
 'He wanted to frighten Matt so that he would run away.'

## (32) SELECTING A NONFINITE CP

- a. Lig muid leis le gan a bheith dian air.  
 let we with-him with NEG be [-FIN] hard on-him  
 'We let him go so as not to be hard on him.'
- b. Chuaigh sé 'na bhaile le gan an dinnéar a chailliúint.  
 went he home with NEG the dinner lose [-FIN]  
 'He went home so as not to miss dinner.'

## (33) BUT ALSO:

- a. Tá leabhar le scríobh i mbliana.  
 be-PRES book with write.VN this-year  
 'A book is to be written this year.'
- b. Tá rudaí le rá.  
 be-PRES things with say.VN  
 'There are things to be said.'

- c. go raibh beirt shagart le teacht ar lóistín chucu.  
 c be-PAST two priest with come.VN on lodging with-them  
 'that two priests were to come to stay with them'
- d. Tá bia le déanamh reidh agus fion le cur i ngloiní.  
 be-PRES food with make.VN ready and wine with put.VN in glasses  
 'There's food to be got ready and wine to be poured into glasses.'

CAT 55

## CHARACTERISTICS OF (33):

- absence of the particle *a*
- absence of an external argument
- the internal argument, in the absence of the transitivity particle, dependent on the matrix environment for case-licensing. Therefore it raises (compare Wurmbrand (2003) on German).

## PROPOSAL:

These properties fall into place if the element *le*, in the use seen in (33), selects VP (crucially subjectless).

PREDICTION: Only internal arguments (objects of transitives and internal arguments of unaccusatives) should appear in subject position in the construction illustrated in (33).

## UNACCUSATIVE VERBS

- (34) a. Is dócha nach raibh Seán le bá an lá sin.  
 COP probable NEG C was John with drown.VN the day DEMON  
 'John was not meant to die that day.' (Christian Brothers, 1960, 260)
- b. Bhí le titim ar leibhéal na dífhostaíochta.  
 was with fall-VN on level the unemployment.GEN  
 'The level of unemployment was meant/supposed to fall.'

IMPLICATION: There are two (semantically close or equivalent) instances of *le*: one which selects CP (the examples in (31) and (32)) and one which selects VP (the examples in (33)).

Munster dialects formally distinguish the two. The element which selects CP is *chun* ('to'); the element which selects VP is *le*, as in the other dialects:

- (35) a. chun go mbeadh sé againne  
 to c be-COND he at-us  
 'so that we would have him' CAT 174
- b. chun an méid seo a chruthú  
 to the amount DEMON prove [-FIN]  
 'to prove this much' CAT 136
- (36) a. bhí tarrac ar mhil le n-ól.  
 be-PAST plenty-of honey with drink.VN  
 'There was plenty of honey to drink.' CAT 129
- b. go raibh beirt shagart le teacht ar lóistín chucu.  
 c be-PAST two priest with come.VN on lodging with-them  
 'that two priests were to come to stay with them' CAT 55



## 6 OTHER PREVERBS

Preverb (*v*) is a (closed-class) category; therefore it should be possible to identify other members of the class, with properties similar to those just identified.

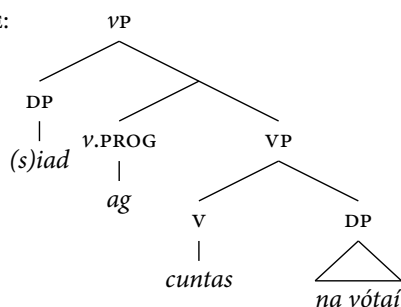
### THE PROGRESSIVE PREVERB

#### (37) PROGRESSIVE ASPECT

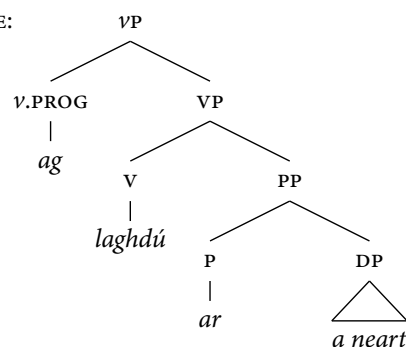
- a. Bhí siad ag cuntas na vótaí.  
were they [PROG] count.VN the votes  
'They were counting the votes.'
- b. Bhí ag laghdú ar a neart.  
was [PROG] lessen.VN on his strength  
'His strength was waning.'

#### (38) ASSUMED PHRASE STRUCTURE

##### a. TRANSITIVE:



##### b. UNACCUSATIVE:



The sequence *ag*+VN is a prosodic word, but the preverb is syntactically independent:

- (39) nach bhfuil uait ach a dhul ag bloody nurseáil  
NEG C is from-you but go [-FIN] PROG nurse.VN  
'that all you want is to go to do bloody nursing'

J 32

### EXTRACTION AND PHASEHOOD

When the direct object of a progressive verb undergoes  $\bar{A}$ -movement, the progressive preverb may appear in the form *a/ə/* followed by lenition:

- (40) a. Céard a cheapann tú atá mé a dhéanamh \_ istigh anseo?  
what  $C_t$  think [PRES] you  $C_t$ -be.PRES I v.WH do.VN in here  
'What do you think I'm doing in here?' AFAP 85
- b. an rud deas a chonaic mise m'athair a chur \_ faoin tuí inné  
the thing nice  $C_t$  saw I my-father v.WH put.VN under-the straw yesterday  
'the pretty thing that I saw my father hide under the straw yesterday' SSOTC 224
- c. Déistean a bhíodh scéalta uafáis na meán a chur \_ air  
disgust  $C_t$  be [PAST-HABIT] stories horror [GEN] the media v.WH put.VN on-him  
'It was disgust that the media's horror-stories were causing him.' SG 44
- d. ag dúil le mise a oiread oibre a dhéanamh agus a bhí m'athair a dhéanamh \_  
[PROG] expect.VN with me as-much work [GEN] do [-FIN] as  $C_t$  was my-father v.WH do.VN  
'expecting me to do as much work as my father was doing' UAN 31
- e. diabhal cianóg a bhí sé a fháil \_  
devil farthing  $C_t$  was he v.WH get.VN  
'Not a damn farthing was he getting.' DGD 192

A WH-form of the progressive particle. (Clements et al., 1983)

And the effect is sometimes successive-cyclic (that is: the WH-progressive marker may head each progressive phrase out of which the moved object raises):

- (41) a. céard a tá tusa a cheapadh a tá mé a cheapadh \_ ?  
 what  $c_t$  be [PRES] you  $v.WH$  think.VN  $c_t$  be [PRES] I  $v.WH$  think.VN  
 ‘What are you thinking that I’m thinking?’  
 b. Sé d’anam a tá mé a iarraidh a shábháilt \_ .  
 it-is your-soul  $c_t$  be [PRES] I  $v.WH$  try.VN save [-FIN]  
 ‘It’s your soul that I’m trying to save.’

ISBNB 59

AFAP 81

So the structure of (41)a is presumably:

- (42)  $[_{CP} WH\ c_t\ [_{vP} \_ v.WH\ [_{CP} \_ c_t\ [_{vP} \_ v.WH\ \_ ]]]]$

#### OPTIONALITY OF MARKING

- (43) a. Caidé a tá sé a dhéanamh?  
 what  $c_t$  is he  $v.WH$  do.VN  
 ‘What is he doing?’  
 b. Caidé a tá sé ag déanamh?  
 what  $c_t$  is he  $v.PROG$  do.VN  
 ‘What is he doing?’

Recall that only extraction of direct objects trigger this special marking:

- (44) a. I nDoire a bhí siad ag taisteal.  
 in Derry  $c_t$  be.[PAST] they  $v.PROG$  travel.VN  
 ‘It was in Derry that they were travelling.’  
 b. \*I nDoire a bhí siad a thaisteal.  
 in Derry  $c_t$  be.[PAST] they  $v.WH$  travel.VN  
 ‘It was in Derry that they were travelling.’

Therefore the  $WH$ -form of the progressive preverb must have something like the form in (45):

- (45) 
$$\begin{bmatrix} v \\ \text{PROG} \\ \begin{bmatrix} \text{CASE} \\ \text{AGR} \\ \text{WH} \\ \text{EPP} \end{bmatrix} \end{bmatrix}$$

Given (45), we can, and presumably should, capture the similarity between the  $WH$ -version of the progressive preverb and the transitivity particle discussed in section 4 by assuming the realization rule in (46):

- (46) A PREVERB REALIZATION RULE:  
 Nonfinite  $v$  bearing EPP is realized as /ə/ + LENITION.

The more usual progressive preverb will be realized by way of (47):

- (47) A PREVERB REALIZATION RULE:  
 Nonfinite  $v$  bearing PROG is realized as /əgʲ/

This lets us understand the optionality of the marking: since neither (47) nor (46) is in a subset-superset relation, Panini’s Principle does not apply and both are available to realize (45).

#### CONCLUSIONS

More important for our present concerns: these observations suggest that the identification of the progressive preverb with  $v$  is correct, since it suggests that a crucial property of  $v$  (that it is phase-defining) is also a property of the progressive preverb.

The proposal about the treatment of the optionality of marking in cases like (43) depends crucially on the assumption that the transitivity preverb and the progressive preverb belong to the same category (otherwise they would not compete with respect to the realization rules).

## 7 AN APPARENT ANOMALY IN THE SOUTH

### DIALECTS

- (County Clare) – extinct since the middle 1960's
- The Dingle Peninsula, County Kerry – vibrant
- Uíbh Ráthach, County Kerry – currently a single family
- County Cork – moribund except possibly for Cúl Ao
- Na Déise, County Waterford – reasonably vibrant

### DIFFERENCES WITH NORTHERN DIALECTS

#### INTRANSITIVE VERBS WITH OVERT SUBJECTS

In these dialects, a pattern unknown in the North turns up:

- (48) a. nárbh aon ionadh an réabhlóid a tharlú sa chathair seo  
 NEG-COP[PAST] any wonder the revolution PREV happen.VN in-the city DEMON  
 'that it was no wonder the revolution happened in this city' SR 126
- b. scéal ... mar gheall ar chailín óg a thitim i ngrá  
 story about girl young PREV fall.VN in love  
 'a story about a young girl falling in love' MB 126
- c. blianta fada tar éis mise a theacht don Oileán  
 years long after me PREV come.VN to-the Island  
 'many years after I came to the Island' MS 122

In this pattern, an overt subject (accusative in form when you can tell) appears with the preverb *a* and an intransitive verb.

This at odds with the pattern seen earlier, according to which the transitivity particle *a* appears iff there is a direct object to be realized.

### SIMILARITIES WITH NORTHERN DIALECTS

#### SUBJECTLESS CLAUSES

Exactly the same as everywhere else:

- (49) CONTROL  
 d'iarr mé [ an lámhscríbhinn a thabhairt chugam ]  
 PAST-ask I the manuscript bring [-FIN] to-me  
 'I asked that the manuscript be brought to me.' MBF 101
- (50) RAISING  
 dá dtarlódh sé sin mise a mharú  
 if happen [COND] he DEMON me kill [-FIN]  
 'if that guy should happen to kill me' LA 25
- (51) [ [Object] *a*.VN [Other complements] [Adjuncts] ]

#### CLAUSES WITH DATIVE SUBJECTS

The pattern with 'dative' subjects in (52) (see McCloskey (2001), Doyle (2012) for detailed discussion) exactly the same:

- (52) a. Tar éis dó an pota deireanach a shíneadh go dtí Bill  
 after to-him the pot last PREV stretch.VN to  
 'after he had handed the last pot to Bill' SOM 8
- b. tar éis di titim i bhfanntais  
 after to-her fall.VN in swoon  
 'after she fainted' LS 146
- c. tar éis don mbeirt scarúint óna chéile  
 after to-the two separate.VN from each-other  
 'after the two parted from one another' NBN 151

(53) **PUZZLE**

All the data we have seen so far (in other dialects and within Munster) suggests that the nonfinite preverb *a* is associated with the licensing of objects and only appears when an object needs to be licensed. But in the pattern exemplified in (52) it appears with an intransitive verb with an overt subject.

And the preverb may appear only when the subject is overt (never in a subjectless raising or control structure: see (54)).

(54) **BARE VERBAL NOUNS IN RAISING AND CONTROL CONTEXTS**

- a. Caithfidh sé sin tarlú.  
must it [NOM] DEMON happen.VN  
'That must happen.'
- b. Níor mhaith liom titim den díon.  
I-wouldn't-like fall.VN of-the roof  
'I wouldn't like to fall from the roof'

**A CLOSER LOOK**

The pattern in (48) is restricted in the following ways:

- lexical restrictions (only some intransitives support the pattern in (48))
- idiolectally: not all speakers control it to the same degree
- in terms of register: extensive use of the pattern in (48) is characteristic of formal and archaic registers.

These restrictions are related.

**SOME NUMBERS**

Setting aside the verb to be, 83% of the examples gathered involve one of five verbs:

<i>teacht</i> , come	136
<i>dul</i> , go	53
<i>fanúint</i> , stay	26
<i>titim</i> , fall	27
<i>imeacht</i> , leave	20

Total: 262 (83%)

The remaining 17% of examples involve the following verbs:

críochnú ( <i>finish</i> )	léim ( <i>leap</i> )	scarúint ( <i>separate</i> )	dúiseacht ( <i>wake up</i> )
tosnú ( <i>begin</i> )	dúnadh ( <i>close</i> )	neartú ( <i>strengthen</i> )	tarlú ( <i>happen</i> )
bualadh le ( <i>meet</i> )	aistriú ( <i>move</i> )	bá ( <i>drown</i> )	maireachtaint ( <i>live, survive</i> )
iompáil amach ( <i>turn out</i> )	éirí ( <i>rise</i> )	stad ( <i>stop</i> )	cailliúint ( <i>die</i> )
fuairadh ( <i>become cold</i> )	bogadh ( <i>move</i> )	gluaiseacht ( <i>move</i> )	

- (55) a. Is mór an tabhartas a leithéid a bhualadh trasna ar dhuine  
COP[PRES] great the gift such-a-person strike [-FIN] across on person  
'It's a great gift to happen on such a person.' ACS 164
- b. agus mé a thosnú san am ceart  
and me begin [-FIN] in-the time right  
'and for me to begin at the right time' AL 91
- c. Ní thaitneodh sé leo an ghaoth a neartú le héirí na ré  
NEG please [COND] it with-them the wind strengthen [-FIN] with rise the moon  
'It wouldn't please them for the wind to strengthen at moon-rise.' AO 81
- d. Nach olc an bhail ar an bhfear bocht san an t-asal breá san a chailliúint air  
NEG INTERR C bad the condition on the man poor DEMON the donkey fine DEMON die [-FIN] on-him  
'Isn't it a terrible thing for that poor man that his fine donkey should die on him.' AII 98

## IDIOLECTS

Narrow the focus further ...

Sean Ó Conaill: only the five commonest verbs

Padraig Ó Cíobháin: only the five commonest verbs

Maidhc Dáinín Ó Sé: the four commonest, with *scarúint* (separate), and *bogadh* (move)

## HYPOTHESIS

It is possible to identify the following populations among contemporary Munster speakers:

POPULATION A: speakers who have only the verb to be *a bheith* in this pattern

POPULATION B: speakers who have only the five commonest verbs (or a subset of them) in this pattern

POPULATION C: speakers who have the five commonest verbs and one or two of the others in this pattern

## PROPOSAL: VARIATION, CHANGE, AND MARKEDNESS

- The element *a* is still what it appears to be—an object licenser (a closed class item, a member of the preverb class which assigns accusative Case to the most prominent DP in its local domain and attracts it into its specifier).
- But the verbs which support this pattern are all unaccusative
- Therefore the pattern must be exceptional, in that it necessarily involves a violation of *Burzio's Generalization*
- *Burzio's Generalization* is not an absolute principle; it is rather a default, a bias in acquisition which links presence of an external argument with the potential to assign accusative case.
- Therefore the various instances of the pattern of (48) must be learned one by one as positive evidence presents itself
- Hence its variability across idiolects and the restriction (for most contemporary speakers) to a handful of commonly-occurring verbs
- Specifically, what must be acquired is a preverb which has the following (normally un-paired) properties:
  - (i) it licenses no second (external) argument
  - (ii) but it does assign accusative case
 and the verbal stems which it selects.
- Of course EPP must be optional for Irish. This is fine.

In addition: speakers who grew up in the second half of the 19th century or in the early decades of the 20th century have a richer array of verbs in this construction than any contemporary speakers.

## 8 CONCLUSIONS

- By this language-internal deductive path, we arrive at the theory of objecthood and subjecthood which Chomsky (1995, 2000, 2001) arrives at by way of general theoretical deduction and which Kratzer (1996) arrives at by deduction from semantic considerations. The central element of this theory is that the properties crucial for objecthood inhere not in verbs but in syntactically independent functional heads which select phrases headed by verbal stems. VP's are multi-layered, in the sense abhorred by Culicover & Jackendoff (2005). In addition, the syntactically autonomous element implicated in the licensing of objects is the same element which is the thematic licenser for deep subjects (external arguments).
- *Burzio's Generalization*, which links the licensing of an external argument with the capacity to license accusative case, must not be an absolute principle, but a default which can be overridden in the presence of sufficient positive evidence in the acquisitional input.
- The EPP must be optional throughout Irish varieties—this is the natural situation given recent conceptions of what this property is and what it does.
- It is very striking (to me at any rate) that the closer we come to following minimalist strictures, the broader, deeper, and more accurate our descriptions become.

## APPENDIX A: THE DATA-BASE

A data-base of naturally occurring examples drawn from published sources but also from radio broadcasts, podcasts, and spoken word CD's.

- Contains some 10,000 examples, coded for 250 syntactic properties. Most 'examples' are sentences; some are (very) short texts.
- Searchable by syntactic feature and by dialect.
- Extracted from some 280 published texts plus audio sources, suggesting an overall 'corpus-size' of 14 to 15 million words.
- Represents all of the major dialects, including many now extinct, the oldest from late in the 19th century, the newest contemporary (i.e. a span of 120 years or so),
- About 150 idiolects are represented.
- The total context for each example is easily recoverable.

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