

Assignment Four – Irish Again

TO BE TURNED IN ON TUESDAY FEBRUARY 23RD

1 BACKGROUND

In Syntax Three last quarter, you did an assignment on Irish clause structure (Assignment Four) and afterwards read an associated paper.¹ This assignment picks up where that one left off.

That assignment was concerned with what is probably the single best-known fact about Irish, namely that it is a VSO language. And indeed finite clauses conform, for the most part, to the informal schema shown in (1) and exemplified in (2):

(1) VERB < SUBJECT < OBJECT < OBLIQUE ARGUMENTS < ADVERBIALS

- (2) a. Sciob an cat an t-eireaball den luch.
cut.PAST the cat the tail off-the mouse
'The cat cut the tail off the mouse.'
- b. Má bhriseann tú an fhaocha, tífídh tú na castáí atá ina leath deiridh.
if open.PRES you the periwinkle see.FUT you the twists C-be.PRES in-its half rear.GEN
'If you break open a periwinkle, you will see the twists that are in its hind parts.'

Begin by refreshing your memory about where you got to in understanding these structures last quarter. Give a very brief summary of the analysis you arrived at in those discussions and use it to sketch the syntax of (2a).

NEGATION

There is an additional piece of information that may be useful as you face the tasks of the current assignment. This has to do with the syntax of negation. Negation is always expressed on C in this language. Each complementizer has a 'negative' form which may never co-occur with any other expression of negation. The negative complementizer has the form *ní* or *cha* in root clauses, *nach* or *ná-* in embedded clauses. The facts are illustrated in (3)–(7).

(3) THE ROOT COMPLEMENTIZER

- a. Ní ólann na daoine tae.
NEG-FIN drink.PRES the people tea
'People don't drink tea.'
- b. Cha n-ólann na daoine tae.
NEG-FIN drink.PRES the people tea
'People don't drink tea.'

(4) THE DECLARATIVE COMPLEMENTIZER

- a. Creidim go gcuirfidh sí isteach ar an phost.
I-believe C put .FUT she in on the job
'I believe that she'll apply for the job.'
- b. Creidim nach gcuirfidh sí isteach ar an phost.
I-believe NEG-C put .FUT she in on the job

¹'The Shape of Irish Clauses,' J. McCloskey, in *Formal Approaches to Celtic Linguistics*, ed. Andrew Carnie, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 143–178. The paper is still available on the Syntax Three website and also on McCloskey's website.

- 'I believe that she won't apply for the job.'
- (5) a. Creidim gu-r chuir sí isteach ar an phost.
I-believe C.PAST put she in on the job
'I believe that she applied for the job.'
- b. Creidim ná-r chuir sí isteach ar an phost.
I-believe C-NEG-PAST.PAST put she in on the job
'I believe that she didn't apply for the job.'
- (6) THE POLAR QUESTION COMPLEMENTIZER
- a. An gcuirfidh sí isteach ar an phost?
Q put .FUT she in on the job
'Will she apply for the job?'
- b. Nach gcuirfidh sí isteach ar an phost?
NEGQ put .FUT she in on the job
'Won't she apply for the job?'
- (7) THE WH-COMPLEMENTIZER
- a. an post a-r chuir tú isteach air
the job C.PAST put you in on-it
'the job that you applied for'
- b. an post ná-r chuir tú isteach air
the job NEG-FIN.PAST put you in on-it
'the job that you didn't apply for'

Do not concern yourself with the variation in form seen in these examples. Simply assume that *c* may bear a feature [NEG] and that the rules of morphology take care of getting the details of form right in (3)–(7). Note that the negative complementizer is frequently followed by the marker of past tense *-r*.

2 GOING FARTHER

The facts described in the previous section, however, hold only for finite clauses. Nonfinite clauses seem very different. We illustrate the facts first for subjectless clauses. (8a) is a Control clause and (8b) illustrates Raising.

- (8) a. D'ordaigh sí domh an fhuinneog a ocailt díthe láithreach.
PAST-order she to-me the window open.NON-FIN for-her immediately
'She ordered me to open the window for her right away.'
- b. Thaibhsigh siad díthe a bheith iompaithe dearg
appeared they.NOM to-her be.NON-FIN turned red
'They appeared to her to have turned red'

Nonfinite clauses with overt subjects are also, however, very common (Irish is typologically unusual in that way).

(9) illustrates a nonfinite clause alongside its finite counterpart, which shows the expected vso order:

- (9) a. Níor mhaith liom iad an scéal sin a chluintsean roimh ré.
I-wouldn't like they.ACC the story DEMON hear.NON-FIN before time
'I wouldn't like them to hear that story in advance.'
- b. Níor mhaith liom go gcluinfadh siad an scéal sin roimh ré.
I-wouldn't like C hear.COND they.NOM the story DEMON before time
'I wouldn't like that they should hear that story in advance.'

The four examples of (8) and (9) illustrate a number of kinds of differences between finite and nonfinite clauses. Lay them out as clearly as you can before proceeding.

3 YOUR MISSION

Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to construct an analysis of the relation between finite and nonfinite clauses in Irish, taking the analysis from last quarter as your starting point and using the analytic and theoretical tools we have been gradually assembling this quarter and last. The relevant facts and patterns will be laid out in two stages – one dealing with the bottom (rightmost part) of the clause and one dealing with the top (leftmost part).²

4 THE BOTTOM

THE NONFINITE ‘VERB’

Subjectless sentences first again:

(10) CONTROL

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

MBF 101

(11) RAISING

dá dtarlódh sé sin mise a mharú
 if happen.COND he DEMON me kill.NON-FIN
 ‘if that guy should happen to kill me’

LA 25

What we have so far been glossing as ‘nonfinite verbs’ actually have a complex internal structure. They consist of the ‘preverb’ *a* followed by a ‘verbal noun’. Verbal nouns (which aren’t really nouns at all) are tenseless forms created by adding one of a number of suffixes (*-t* in (10), *-ú* in (11)) to the verbal root. So we can represent the internal make up of the ‘nonfinite verbs’ in (10) and (11) as in (12):

(12) ... *a* [VN V+SUFFIX] ...

We will occasionally use the abbreviation VN for ‘verbal noun’; we will use the traditional term ‘preverb’ or ‘preverbal particle’ for *a*. It is a stress-less proclitic. It has a very particular distribution, which is described in the next subsection.

DISTRIBUTION OF THE PREVERBAL PARTICLE

The preverb *a* is obligatorily present with objects:

- (13) 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.’
 b. cha dtig liom an fear choíche [a] phósadh
 NEG-FIN come with-me the man ever PTC marry.VN
 ‘I can’t ever marry the man.’

SRNF 11

It is obligatorily absent with intransitive verbs of all types:

- (14) a. bhí an chúis ró-mhór le Sasain géilleadh go síothchánta
 was the matter too-grave with England yield.VN peacefully
 ‘The matter was too grave for England to yield peacefully.’

BSM 048

²Jim’s niece, now an accomplished political analyst in London dealing with EU affairs, used to tell a joke when she was three years old – Q: what’s got a bottom at the top? Answer in a subsequent footnote.

- b. Is cuimhin liomsa muid cruinniú i New York
COP-PRES memorable to-me us gather.VN in
 ‘I remember us gathering in New York.’ DM 106
- c. cionnus an bósun tuitim thar an taoibh
because the bosun fall.VN 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.VN
 ‘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-NON-FIN me believe.VN in the thing
 ‘You wanted me not to believe in the thing.’ UMI 167

It is optional with verbs which take CP-complements:

- (15) a. agus é a shílsteán gur bh iad a namhaid a bhí aige
and him think.VN C COP-PRES they.ACC 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.ACC think.VN NEG-C of-the life DEMON US
 ‘it’s better that they think that we are not of this world’ CP 39
- (16) a. níorbh fhurast a thabhairt ar m’ athair an lán mara a ligean ar shiúl air
was-not easy give.VN on my father the tide let.VN 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-FIN come .COND with-me give.VN on-him more tell.VN
 ‘I couldn’t make him tell any more’ FFF 69
- (17) a. an bhfuil dochar a fhiafraí díot caidé’n scéal éagsamhail a tá in do chionn
Q is harm ask.VN 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?
Q harm to-me ask.VN 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
- (18) a. go dtáinig leis a’ tseanduine a chreidbheáil gur i Rinn na bhFaoileann a bhí sé
C came with the old-person believe.VN C in C was he
 ‘that the old man came to believe that it was in Rinn na bhFaoileann he was’ D 277
- b. dhiúltaigh siad creidbheáil go bhfuil an domhan cruinn
refused they believe.VN C is the world round
 ‘they refused to believe that the world is round’ AM 46

Summarize what these observations suggest so far. The observations in (19) may be of additional interest:

- (19) QUANTIFIER FLOAT
- a. ní hionann sin agus an tAifreann a léamh uilig
NEG-FIN same that and the Mass PTC read.VN all
 ‘That’s not the same as reading the entire Mass.’ IDCS 73
- b. agus an scéal a inseacht uilig dhó
and the story PTC tell.VN to-him
 ‘and to tell him the whole story’ DGD 200

- c. Iad a rá uilig, an ea?
 them PTC say.VN all is-it
 '(You want me to) sing them all, is that it?'

RNG 8-7-95

FURTHER OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING THE PREVERB

The preverbal particle is a stressless proclitic which is phonologically dependent on the following verbal noun. However certain elements may nonetheless intervene between it and the verbal noun – swear-words borrowed from English (Irish is impoverished in the lexicon of abuse).

(20) INTERVENTION

- a. tá sé ceaptha thú a *feckin* ghortú
 be.PRES it intended you PRV hurt.VN
 'It's intended to feckin' hurt you.'
- b. Ag iarraidh iad a *focain* mharú a tá sí.
 PROG try.VN they.ACC VN kill.VN C be.PRES she
 'It's trying to fucking kill them she is.'

GDDR 271

These borrowings have a very limited and interesting distribution, which is illustrated in what follows.

ONE

- (21) a. Feicfidh mé arú amáireach thú le dhul ar *feckin*' siúlóid mar sin.
 see.FUT I day-after-tomorrow you to go.NON-FIN on walk as that
 'I'll see you the day after tomorrow to go on a feckin' walk then.'
- b. faoi *feicin* Dheaide
 about Daddy
 'about feckin' Daddy'

TWO

- (22) 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
 'over the threshold of this fucking house' J 95
- c. Ré an *feicin* t-ainm a tá orm.
 Ray the name C be.PRES ON-me
 'Ray is my feckin' name.'
- d. craobh an *feicin* domhain
 championship the.GEN world.GEN
 'the championship of the feckin' world'
- e. Tabhair dhom na *feicin* hurchair anois.
 give.IMPERV to-me the bullets now
 'Give me the feckin' bullets now.'

- (23) dhá *feicin* dhúnmharfóir
two murderer
'two feckin murderers'
- (24) a. chuile *feicin* rud sa teach seo
every thing in-the house DEMON
'every feckin' thing in this house'
b. chuile rud sa *feicin* teach seo
every thing in-the house DEMON
'every thing in this feckin' house'
- (25) cén *feicin* t-ainm a tá ort?
what name c be.PRES on-you
'What's your feckin' name?'

THREE

- (26) a. sách *feicin* dona
pretty bad
'pretty feckin' bad'
b. ag imeacht chomh *feicin* craiceáilte agus a bhíonn sibh
going around as crazy as c be.PRES you
'going around as crazy as you do'

FOUR

- (27) a. sin an rud a *feicin* fuair sí
that the thing c get.PAST she
'that's the thing she feckin' got'
b. Ná *focain* fliuch an bosca!
NEG-IMP wet the box
'Don't fucking wet the box.'
c. Faraoir nach *feicin* bhfuil ...
alas NEG-C be.PRES
'Too bad he feckin' isn't ...'

J 117

No ungrammatical examples are given here, but you can assume that the possibilities laid out in these subsections give a complete picture of the distribution of these important elements. You are not, of course, asked to construct a full analysis of the distribution of these borrowings. However, there is a fairly clear pattern to their occurrences which may help you make sense of the relationship between the preverb *a* and the material that follows it.

Sorry about the salaciousness, but science is science.

PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER

At this point, and on the basis of the evidence that you have so far been presented with, construct an analysis of the lower domain of the nonfinite clause in Irish, paying special attention to:

- o constituent order
- o case assignment
- o category membership
- o any movements that may be called for

In constructing your analysis, make full use of the theoretical and analytical tools we've been developing so far.

5 THE HIGHER REGIONS

With this much as a foundation, construct an analysis of the higher reaches of the clause – the top. The central pieces of the puzzle are laid out in the subsections which follow.

NEGATION

Negation in nonfinite clauses is marked at the left edge of the clause, realized by the element *gan* (homophonous with, but distinct from, the preposition meaning ‘without’)

- (28) B'fharr liom gan iad mé a fheiceáil ag caoineadh.
 I-would-prefer NEG.NON-FIN them me PREV see.VN PROG cry.VN
 ‘I’d prefer that they not see me crying.’

SUBJECTHOOD AND ACCUSATIVE CASE

Accusative subjects are freely licensed in nonfinite clauses, giving the schema in (29), represented by examples such as (30):

- (29) [NEG] [Subject] [Direct Object] PREV.VN [PP-complement] [CP-complement]

- (30) a. i ndiaidh an doineann a cuid craobhacha a bhriseadh
 after the storm its share branches PREV break.VN
 ‘after the storm broke its branches’ ERON 31
- b. Is é an gnás ... gan tú port fidile a éisteacht go ceann bliana
 COP-PRES it the custom NEG-NON-FIN you tune fiddle.GEN PREV listen.VN till-the-end-of year
 ‘The custom is for you not to listen to a fiddle-tune for a year.’ DM 10
- c. ach iad a n-intinn a chur le chéile
 but them their mind PREV put.VN together
 ‘as long as they put their minds together’ BSM 103
- d. Ní bheadh ormsa ach luchtáir é í a fháil le pósadh
 NEG-FIN be.COND ON-me but joy him her PREV get.VN to marry.VN
 ‘I’d be only delighted for him to get her as a bride.’ LA 73

OPTIONALITY OF RAISING

Raising (to subject) seems to be optional. For example, there is raising in (31a), but no raising in (31b). (Note that these two examples are from the same text by the same author, within pages of one another.)

- (31) a. thaibhsigh súile na deilbhe di a bheith iompaithe dearg
 appeared eyes the.GEN statue.GEN to-her be.NON-FIN turned red
 ‘the eyes of the statue seemed to her to have turned red’ LG 160
- b. Thaibhsigh dó na soilse a bheith níos boige
 appeared to-him the lights be.NON-FIN MORE soft.COMPR
 ‘The lights seemed to him to be softer.’ LG 179

COMPLEMENTATION PATTERNS

Nonfinite clauses with overt (accusative) subjects appear freely as complements to unaccusative verbs:

- (32) Ó tharla gan iad a gcuid saibhris a chur i gcontúirt ariamh
 since happened NEG-NON-FIN they.ACC their portion wealth.GEN PREV put.VN in risk ever
 ‘since they happened not ever to have put their wealth at risk’

as complements to adjectives:

- (33) Ní dóiche iad an baile a fhágáil a choíche arís.
 NEG probable they.ACC the home PREV leave.VN ever again
 ‘They are unlikely to ever leave home again.’

and as complements to nouns:

- (34) Chuir sé iontas orm iad a leithéid a rá.
 put.PAST it wonderment on-me they.ACC its like PREV say.VN
 ‘It caused me surprise that they would say such a thing.’

WHEN OVERT SUBJECTS ARE IMPOSSIBLE

The complex preposition *i ndiaidh* takes a nonfinite clause to express a very recent perfective:

- (35) Tá siad i ndiaidh na gloiní a fholmú.
 be.PRES they after the glasses PREV empty.VN
 ‘They’re after emptying their glasses.’ ≡ ‘They’ve (only) just emptied their glasses.’

In this use negation is impossible within the complement clause:

- (36) *Tá siad i ndiaidh gan na gloiní a fholmú.
 be.PRES they after NEG-NON-FIN the glasses PREV empty.VN
 ‘They’re after not emptying their glasses.’

(Note that the translation of (36) is well-formed in versions of Irish English which have been influenced by the Irish substrate.)

In this same context, overt subjects are absolutely disallowed:

- (37) *Tá i ndiaidh iad na gloiní a fholmú.
 be.PRES after them the glasses PREV empty.VN
 ‘They’re after emptying their glasses.’

THE FINAL CHALLENGE

On the basis of these observations, propose an analysis for the higher regions³ of the nonfinite clause in Irish, focusing on the following kinds of issues:

- phrase structure (the number and sequence of functional heads)
- case assignment
- the position of the subject and related matters
- the distribution of nonfinite clauses with overt subjects

Again, go as far as you can with the tools you currently have. Not all problems may be solvable. If you encounter a severe dilemma or difficulty lay out with all the clarity you can muster what the difficulty is and what the issues around its resolution are.

³A: Your leg.