THE DISTRIBUTION OF NOMINATIVE CASE IN MODERN IRISH

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1. Introduction

In Modern Irish (Irish, hereafter), the statement in (1) in English is expressed by the structures in (2a, b).

(1) They are hungry.

(2) a. Tá ocras orthu.

   be hunger on-them

   ‘They are hungry.’
b. Tá siad ocras orthu.
   be they hunger on-them
   ‘They are hungry.’

In (2a), ocras ‘hunger’ seems to be the subject of the sentence, and (2b) contains another subject siad ‘they.’ Constructions such as (2b), therefore, are called the Double Subject Construction (DSC) by McCloskey and Sells (1988). The purpose of this paper is to present DSC data that have not yet been discussed in the literature, and investigate the distribution of Nominative Case in Irish. Based on the data, we argue (3a, b).

(3) a. A certain class of adverbs can introduce a small clause.
   b. A small clause as a whole can check Nominative Case.

We then discuss an implication of the analysis that contrary to Carnie (1995), among others, Nominative pronouns are not clitics to the adjacent verbs, and Nominative and Accusative pronouns are base-generated as such.

The organization of this paper is as follows. Section 2 provides basic facts about the distribution of Nominative Case in Irish. Section 3 proposes an analysis. Section 4 discusses an implication of the analysis. Finally, Section 5 provides concluding remarks.

2. The Data

The relevant data are shown in (4) and (5). (5a–d) are intended to have

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3 The first reviewer asked (A) how the data in this paper were collected, and (B) if there was any variation in grammaticality judgments for the collected data. As for Question A, we created minimal pairs, and showed or read (as appropriate) each pair to the informants. This has been a standard method to have judgments on data in theoretical linguistics, including generative grammar. We did not use magnitude estimation, so that we did not make a formal questionnaire with test sentences and fillers. We directly asked our informants if there would be a difference in grammaticality between the sentences constituting a minimal pair. Therefore, we only had judgments such as (i).

(i) a. Yes, there is a difference in grammaticality between the two sentences.
   b. No, there is no difference in grammaticality between the two sentences.

(Therefore, if yes, one of the sentences is grammatical, and the other is ungrammatical, and if no, both sentences are grammatical or ungrammatical.)

As the first reviewer points out, if we had administered a magnitude estimation-based survey, we might have been able to get more precise grammaticality judgments. We hope to conduct a statistics-based analysis of the distribution of Nominative Case in Irish on the next occasion.

As for Question B, all the informants were native speakers of Ulster Irish, and there was no variation (or inconsistency) in grammaticality judgments for any of the minimal pairs in this paper among the informants.
the same interpretation.

(4) *Tá iad ocras orthu.
   be them hunger on-them
   ‘They are hungry.’

(5) a. Tá siad leoga ocras orthu.
    be they indeed hunger on-them
    ‘They are indeed hungry.’
 b. Tá leoga siad ocras orthu.
    be indeed they hunger on-them
 c. *Tá iad leoga ocras orthu.
    be them indeed hunger on-them
 d. Tá leoga iad ocras orthu.
    be indeed them hunger on-them

Example (4) is ungrammatical, where the first subject is marked Accusative, in contrast to example (2b), where it is marked Nominative. The examples in (5) contain the adverb leoga ‘indeed.’ The grammatical status of (5a–c) is not surprising, if we assume that the Case feature on the first subject is checked off by the relevant feature on INFL (Tá in (5)), which we tentatively assume is a Case feature, or alternatively, the Case feature on INFL is checked off by Nominative Case, not Accusative Case. However, the fact that (5d) is perfectly grammatical does not follow from this assumption. In (5d), there is no NP marked Nominative, yet the sentence is perfect, in sharp contrast to the ungrammatical example in (5c). The crucial difference between (5c) and (5d) is the position of the adverb leoga ‘indeed.’ Therefore, it seems correct to assume that the adverb does play an important role in making (5d) grammatical.

Note that in speech there is a slight break between the adverb and the following pronoun in (5d). However, this does not affect the contrast between (5c) and (5d). This is because sentences such as (5d) are even more perfect if the stressed/emphatic particles are added (as opposed to speech emphasis), as shown in (6).

(6) a. *Beidh iadsan leoga ocras orthu.
    be(Future) them(Emph) indeed hunger on-them
    ‘They will indeed be hungry.’
 b. Beidh leoga iadsan ocras orthu.
    be(Future) indeed them(Emph) hunger on-them

In (6), the first subject is an emphatic pronoun iadsan ‘them(Emph)’ rather than an unmarked pronoun iad ‘them,’ and there is still a sharp contrast between (6a) and (6b).
There are other adverbs that behave like *leoga* ‘indeed,’ such as *b’fhéidir* ‘perhaps’ and *cinnte* ‘certainly,’ as shown in the examples in (7) and (8).

(7)  
   a. Tá siad *b’fhéidir* ocras orthu.  
       are they perhaps hunger on-them  
       ‘They are perhaps hungry.’
   b. Tá *b’fhéidir* siad ocras orthu.  
       are perhaps they hunger on-them
   c. *Tá iad b’fhéidir* ocras orthu.  
       are them perhaps hunger on-them
   d. Tá *b’fhéidir* iad ocras orthu.  
       are perhaps them hunger on-them

(8)  
   a. Tá siad cinnte ocras orthu.  
       be they certainly hunger on-them  
       ‘They are certainly hungry.’
   b. Tá cinnte siad ocras orthu.  
       be certainly they hunger on-them
   c. *Tá iad cinnte* ocras orthu.  
       be them certainly hunger on-them
   d. Tá cinnte iad ocras orthu.  
       be certainly them hunger on-them

Therefore, a certain class of adverbs in Irish plays an important role in making sentences that do not contain a Nominative subject grammatical.

3. Analysis

We have seen DSC examples with the verb *tá* ‘be’ so far, and found that without an adverb, DSC examples with *tá* ‘be’ must have a Nominative subject, as shown in (2b) and (4), and when an adverb is placed right after the verb *tá* ‘be,’ the first subject may not be Nominative, as shown in the paradigm in (5). The same holds true to non-DSC examples with *tá* ‘be,’ as shown in (9) and (10).

(9)  
   Tá sé/*é* aineolach faoin tsaoil.  
   be he/him ignorant about the-world  
   ‘He is ignorant of the world.’

(10)  
   a. Tá sé cinnte/*leoga* aineolach faoin tsaoil.  
       be he certainly/indeed ignorant about the-world  
       ‘He is certainly/indeed ignorant of the world.’
   b. Tá cinnte/*leoga* sé aineolach faoin tsaoil.  
       be certainly/indeed he ignorant about the-world
be him certainly/indeed ignorant about the-world

d. Tá cinnte/leoga é aineolach faoin tsaol.
be certainly/indeed him ignorant about the-world

The adjective *aineolach `ignorant' is not a DSC adjective, because it does not have two subjects. Therefore, the examples in (2b), (4), and (9) indicate that the verb tá `be' needs a Nominative subject in principle. However, while they do not have a Nominative subject, the examples in (5d) and (10d) are perfectly grammatical.

To reconcile this conflict, we propose that a certain class of adverbs, such as leoga `indeed,' can introduce a small clause, and a small clause as a whole can check Nominative Case. If this is correct, in (5d), the

4 See Section 4 for relevant discussion on this phenomenon.

5 There are other non-DSC adjectives that show the same pattern as *aineolach `ignorant' in (10). As shown in (i), the adjective bródúil `proud' is one of them.

(i) a. Tá sé cinnte/leoga bródúil as a thir féin.
be he certainly/indeed proud from his country self
‘He is certainly/indeed proud of his own country.’

b. Tá cinnte/leoga sé bródúil as a thir féin.
be certainly/indeed he proud from his country self

(c. *Tá é cinnte/leoga bródúil as a thir féin.
be him certainly/indeed proud from his country self

d. Tá cinnte/leoga é bródúil as a thir féin.
be certainly/indeed him proud from his country self

However, there are adjectives that do not show the same pattern as *aineolach `ignorant' and bródúil `proud,' as shown in (ii). We owe the second reviewer for bringing this to our attention.

(ii) a. Tá sé cinnte/leoga cliste (go leor).
be he certainly/indeed smart enough
‘He is certainly/indeed smart (enough).’

b. Tá cinnte/leoga sé cliste (go leor).
be certainly/indeed he smart enough

c. *Tá é cinnte/leoga cliste (go leor).
be him certainly/indeed smart enough

d. *Tá cinnte/leoga é cliste (go leor).
be certainly indeed him smart enough

In (ii), the d-example is ungrammatical, in contrast to the d-examples in (10) and (i). The crucial difference between the adjective in (ii) and those in (10) and (i) is that the latter take a complement NP (PP). At this point, we have no adequate explanation for the contrast between (iid) on one hand, and (10d) and (id) on the other. Note here that as shown in Section 4, Carnie’s (1995) hypothesis also incorrectly predicts that (iid) would be grammatical. Therefore, in this paper, we will leave this problem for future research rather than providing an ad hoc solution to it.
adverb *leoga* ‘indeed’ makes the following constituents a small clause, which in turn checks off the Nominative Case feature on the INFL+VERB complex. Therefore, in (5d), even though it does not contain a Nominative phrase, the sentence is predicted to be grammatical due to the fact that the adverb *leoga* ‘indeed’ makes the following constituents a small clause. Note that within a small clause, for reasons still unknown, an NP may bear Accusative Case as a default Case, as shown in (11).

(11) Bhuail mé leis agus [é ar an bhealach ‘na bhaile].
struck I with-him and him on the way home
‘I met him as he was on the way home.’

(Chung and McCloskey (1987: 175, 2a), with the parentheses added)

In (11), the small clause is positioned after *agus* ‘and,’ which does not check any Case. Therefore, *iad* ‘them’ after the adverb in (5d) is allowed and does not cause any problem.

On the other hand, in (5c), reproduced as (12), the adverb *leoga* ‘indeed’ is placed after the Accusative subject *iad* ‘them.’

(12) *Tá iad leoga ocras orthu.
be them indeed hunger on-them
‘They are indeed hungry.’

If, as we claim, the adverb *leoga* ‘indeed’ makes the following constituents a small clause, (12) should contain a small clause, as shown in (13).

(13) *Tá iad leoga [ocras orthu].
be them indeed hunger on-them

In (13), the small clause SC, which contains the NP *ocras* ‘hunger,’ may have a Nominative Case feature, which should be able to check off the Nominative Case feature on the INFL+VERB complex, which in turn would predict that (12) is grammatical, contrary to fact. Note, however, that in (12), the Accusative Case on the subject *iad* ‘they’ is not licensed by anything, which leads to the ungrammaticality of (12).

There is another derivation that would save (12). The subject *iad* ‘them’ is base-generated within the small clause, and is moved to the surface A-position. As noted above, within a small clause, for reasons still unknown, an NP may bear Accusative Case as a default Case. Therefore, *iad* ‘them,’ which has been moved to the position right after the verb, should not cause any problem. Note, however, that in order to check off the Case feature on the INFL+VERB Complex, the small clause must have Nominative Case. In the derivation at issue, the subject marked Accusative undergoes A-movement out of a phrase/clause marked Nominative. If we assume that a Case-marked phrase/clause has a nominal (or D) feature, what should
be moved/attracted is not the subject marked Accusative within the small clause, but the small clause itself, given Chomsky's (1995) theory of movement, and the derivation at issue is ruled out. Therefore, in any event, (12) is predicted to be ungrammatical.

Furthermore, the fact that (5b) is grammatical indicates that small clause creation by a certain class of adverbs is optional. In (5b), the Nominative subject siad 'they' is within the small clause introduced by leoga 'indeed,' and the question arises as to how the Nominative Case feature on the NP is licensed. We claim that this fact suggests that small clause creation by a certain class of adverbs is optional, so that in (5b), the Nominative Case feature on the subject NP is checked off by the INFL+VERB Complex, when the small clause creation does not take place.

The analysis proposed here applies to the examples in (7), (8), and (10) as well. Furthermore, the proposed analysis predicts that the patterns shown in the examples in (5), (7), and (8), which are characterized as DSC examples, should be seen in non-DSC examples as well (along with non-DSC examples with adjectives shown in (10)), as long as the examples contain special class adverbs such as leoga 'indeed.' This prediction is borne out, as shown in (14) and (15). The examples in (14) contain the transitive verb léigh 'read' and those in (15) contain the intransitive verb chuaigh chuig 'went to.'

(14) a. Léigh siad leoga an leabhar.
    read they indeed the book
    'They indeed read the book.'
b. Léigh leoga siad an leabhar.
    read indeed they the book
c. *Léigh iad leoga an leabhar.
    read them indeed the book
d. Léigh leoga iad an leabhar.
    read indeed them the book

(15) a. Chuaigh siad leoga chuig an amharclann.
    went they indeed to the theatre
    'They indeed went to the theatre.'
b. Chuaigh leoga siad chuig an amharclann.
    went indeed they to the theatre
c. *Chuaigh iad leoga chuig an amharclann.
    went them indeed to the theatre
d. Chuaigh leoga iad chuig an amharclann.
    went indeed them to the theatre
Just as in the cases of (5), (7), (8), and (10), the d-examples in (14) and (15) are perfectly grammatical, and the c-examples in (14) and (15) are ungrammatical. Therefore, the examples in (14) and (15) provide further support for the claims made in this paper.

4. An Implication

The analysis provided above, if correct, has an interesting implication for the theory of Irish syntax that contrary to Carnie (1995), among others, Nominative pronouns are not clitics to the adjacent verbs, and Nominative and Accusative pronouns are base-generated as such.

In his investigation into the nature of the Copular construction, Carnie (1995) claims that the subject NP, which superficially bears Accusative case, actually bears Nominative Case. Consider the example in (16).

(16) Is dochúir é/*sé.
COP doctor him/*he
‘He is a doctor.’

(Carnie (1995: 160, 19))

Carnie (1995: 160) states that overt phonological case marking in Irish is only seen on third person pronouns, and for all other NPs, there is no morphological case difference between Nominative and Accusative Case. Therefore, Nominative case pronouns are the Accusative forms preceded by an <s>, as shown in (17).

(17) 3rd Person Pronouns in Irish

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nominative</th>
<th>Accusative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3rd person singular male</td>
<td>sé ‘he’</td>
<td>é ‘him’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person singular female</td>
<td>sí ‘she’</td>
<td>i ‘her’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person plural male and female</td>
<td>siad ‘they’</td>
<td>iad ‘them’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Carnie (1995: 161) attributes to Ken Hale (p.c.) the claim that this marking is not necessarily a reflex of syntactic Case, since the <s> forms are never found anywhere except to the immediate right of a tensed verb (a fact also noted in Christian Brothers (1960) and McCloskey and Hale (1984)), so that the <s> forms are only a feature of the basic ‘é/i/iad’ set being cliticized to the right of a tense verb. Carnie (1995) concludes then that Nominative pronouns are not a real morphological realization of Nominative Case, but they simply show a phonological marking of their clitic status to the verb. In other words, the s in these pronouns is the result of cliticizing the pronoun to the adjacent verb, and when it is not adjacent to the verb, the
pronoun marked Accusative case can bear either Nominative or Accusative Case. In (16), the pronoun is not adjacent to the copular verb. Therefore, it can bear Nominative Case, in spite of the fact that the surface form is Accusative. In this way, Carnie (1995) maintains the claim that the Copular construction has a subject with Nominative Case.

Chung and McCloskey (1987) provide data which support the claim that Nominative pronouns are clitics. Consider the examples in (18) and (19).

(18)  
a. *Tá, ar ndóigh, siad ar an bhealach.
    "They are, of course, on the road.'
    b. *Bhi, cinnte, siad aige.
    "He certainly had them.'

    (Chung and McCloskey (1987: 227, 134a, b))

(19)  
a. Tá, ar ndóigh, saighdiúirí ar an bhealach.
    "There are, of course, soldiers on the road.'
    b. Bhi, cinnte, nuaiocht aige.
    "He had, certainly, news.'

    (Chung and McCloskey (1987: 226, 133a, b))

The examples in (18), in which the Nominative pronouns are not adjacent to the verbs due to an intervening adverb, are ungrammatical, while those in (19), in which the pronouns are replaced by common nouns, are perfectly grammatical.

However, we have already seen that the example in (5b), reproduced as (20), is perfectly grammatical, in which the Nominative pronoun is not adjacent to the verb.

(20)  
Tá leoga siad ocras orthu.
    "They are indeed hungry.'

Our informants also find that the examples in (18) are perfectly grammatical. With our present understanding, we cannot provide any explanation for the variation in grammaticality of the sentences with Nominative pronouns. However, as long as our informants, including a linguist in Irish syntax, are correct, the facts provided in this paper suggest that Nominative pronouns are not clitics to the adjacent verbs, and that Nominative and Ac-
cusative pronouns are base-generated as such.⁶

There is another piece of evidence for the claim that Nominative pronouns are not clitics to the adjacent verbs on the basis of phonological segmentation. The example in (10b), reproduced as (21), for example, allows more than one pattern of phonological segmentation: it has three possible patterns of phonological units shown in (22).

(21) Tá cinnte/leoga sé aineolach faoin tsaol.
   'He is certainly/indeed ignorant of the world.'

(22) a. [Tá cinnte/leoga sé] aineolach faoin tsaol
   b. [Tá] cinnte/leoga [sé] aineolach faoin tsaol
   c. [Tá cinnte/leoga] sé aineolach faoin tsaol

(22a) is an unmarked case. (22b) is possible, if cinnte/leoga are stressed. Finally, (22c) is possible, if tá and cinnte/leoga are stressed. The fact that (22b) and (22c) are possible strongly suggests that a Nominative pronoun can appear without attaching to a verb or a verb+adverb complex, supporting the claim that Nominative pronouns are not clitics to the adjacent verbs.

5. Concluding Remarks

In this paper, we presented DSC data in Irish that have not yet been discussed in the literature, and investigated the distribution of Nominative Case

⁶ If it is correct that Nominative pronouns are not clitics to the adjacent verbs, this will lead to another implication in Irish syntax. That is, the Copular construction in Irish does not require a Nominative phrase. In (16), reproduced as (i), and (ii), only the Accusative pronoun is allowed.

(i) Is dochtúir é/ *sé.
   COP doctor him/*he
   ‘He is a doctor.’ (Carnie (1995: 160, 19))

(ii) Ba dochtúir é/ *sé.
    COP(Past) doctor him/*he
    ‘He was a doctor.’

Provided that dochtúir ‘doctor’ is (part of) the predicate of the sentence, the examples in (i) and (ii) indicate that the Copular construction in Irish does not have a Nominative phrase, which in turn suggests that there are two types of Tense/INFL in Irish, one of which is not connected to Nominative Case at all.
in the language. Based on the data, we have claimed (i) that a certain class of adverbs can introduce a small clause, and (ii) that a small clause as a whole can check Nominative Case. We then discussed the implication of the analysis that Nominative pronouns are not clitics to the adjacent verbs, and Nominative and Accusative pronouns are base-generated as such.

There remain, however, a number of important issues with respect to the DSC with an adverb. We will point out three below. First, the syntactic position of appositive/parenthetical adverbs such as leoga ‘indeed’ is not clear. The issue is that while they seem to select for small clause complements, these adverbs are clearly adjuncts, which in principle cannot select for clauses. Second, feature checking is a property of heads. The question arises as to how a small clause, which does not seem to be headed by a particular head, can contribute to feature checking. Third, and finally, why is an adverb necessary for (the head of) a small clause to be able to do feature checking? Note that if small clause formation is free, (4), reproduced as (23), would be incorrectly predicted to be grammatical.

(23) *Tá [iad ocras orthu].
    be them hunger on-them
    ‘They are hungry.’

We will leave these important issues for future research.

REFERENCES


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