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What has changed in Hiberno-English: Constructions and their role in contact-induced change

Three case studies of contact-induced grammatical innovations in Hiberno-English (Irish English) are presented, with a view to determining a realistic and descriptively adequate syntactic analysis of the mechanisms of syntactic replication under language contact. The case studies deal with a range of different tense-aspect constructions and the morpho-syntax of subordinating clause constructions. It is argued that an approach based on the “construction”, a holistically represented complex form-function mapping as a central cognitive unit of storage and mental representation, offers a plausible and intuitive way of modelling the cross-linguistic identification processes that must be at the heart of what happens in the mind of the bilingual speaker in actuating contact-induced change.

1. Introduction

Hiberno-English (or Irish English) is the contact variety of English resulting from the language contact situation with the Celtic language Irish, which began in the middle ages and culminated in the mass language shift of most of the Irish population towards English by the mid-19th century. It has long been recognised as a highly interesting test case of contact linguistics, due to its relatively well attested history, the typological interest inherent in the structural contrasts between the languages concerned, and finally because of all the dialects spoken in the British Isles it shows the highest degree of grammatical divergence from standard English and the most visible, salient marks of structural impact of contact. There is a substantial and still growing body of literature discussing grammatical non-standard features of Hiberno-English under a contact-related perspective (for surveys, see FILPPULA 1999, HARRIS 1991, 1993, HICKEY 2002, 2007).

The present contribution intends to add to this discussion with a focus on theoretical explicitness with respect to some selected grammatical phenomena. With few exceptions of treatments of Irish English conducted from a formal syntactic perspective (most notably HENRY 1995, see also CORRIGAN 2000), most contributions to the field have so far come from an historical or dialectological background and have mostly taken a rather agnostic approach to describing the phenomena involved. Thus, analyses have mostly remained on a surface-oriented, a-theoretic level. While this does not diminish their value as contributions to language history, it arguably constitutes a weakness of the field where the impact of these historical findings to a theory of language contact and its mechanisms is concerned. If one wants to investigate *how* contact-induced grammatical change occurs, it is evidently necessary to be analytically precise about *what* has changed.

In seeking for answers to this question, I will focus on the concept of the *construction*, which I suggest to be the primary cognitive unit involved in contact-induced change. Constructions, in the sense developed in Construction Grammar (GOLDBERG 1995, 2006; CROFT 2001) are assumed to be units of mental storage that represent complex recurrent schemata of syntactic organisation, consisting of a binary mapping between a formal/syntactic and a functional/semantic specification. These cognitive units are assumed to be arranged along a lexicon-grammar continuum, where they can be

described as a hierarchically ordered network of representations, such that the more concrete items are said to instantiate more general ones and may inherit their structural properties or else partially override them.

The concept of constructions as the central element of grammatical organisation has been adopted by several authors as a suitable model for describing the types of language change observed in the field of grammaticalisation studies (DIESEL 2002, ROSTILA 2006, DIEWALD 2006a, 2006b). As such, it also offers a suitable framework for incorporating models of contact-induced grammatical replication or “contact-induced grammaticalisation”, as proposed in recent work by HEINE & KUTEVA (2005, 2006). In my approach to applying this concept to contact studies, I follow BISANG (2001: 188f.), who suggests that constructions are “the basic medium of exchange in language contact which transports processes of grammaticalization from one language into the other and thus heavily contributes to structural convergence”. This concept, in a sense, echoes WEINREICH’S (1953) conception of “interlingual identification” as a fundamental process at the core of contact-induced processes of change (as also suggested by CROFT 2000: 147): constructions are precisely the mental entities that interlingual identification operates on. In the mind of a bilingual speaker, stored representations of construction schemata in both linguistic repertoires can enter into relations of perceived similarity, analogy and common categorisation, and these cognitive links are what ultimately guides speakers in assimilating syntactic structures of the one language to those of the other.

In assuming grammatical organisation to consist of mental storage of essentially holistic representations of complex constructional patterns, the Construction Grammar approach differs sharply from assumptions made in the mainstream of the Chomskyan generative tradition. Here, it is usually thought that grammatical knowledge is stored in an atomistic fashion, such that the outward behaviour of complex constructions is not represented directly but is explained as an epiphenomenon of the workings of more basic component units located on individual lexical and/or functional items. In recent generative approaches, such atomic units (“features”) are also assumed to be responsible for the fundamental “parametric” typological settings that characterise a language system. The features-based approach has interesting repercussions for how contact-induced change can be modelled. Proposals coming from the generative tradition describing effects of grammatical interference in bilingual acquisition or bilingual speech (e.g. MÜLLER & HULK 2001, SÁNCHEZ 2003, 2006) typically describe interference effects as an intrusion of feature settings of the one language into the other in some (possibly very restricted) domain. A similar features-based atomistic approach is also implied in MYERS-SCOTTON’S (2002) approach to interference in the context of her “Matrix Language Framework” (for an application to a case of incipient contact-induced change see, for instance, BOLONYAI 2000). These proposals imply an interesting prediction about what kinds of changes can be expected to occur: since features are copied verbatim from one system to the other, and since they are thought of as taken from a restricted set of possible elements dictated by Universal Grammar, structural replication can only lead to grammatical states that involve precisely identical settings on the level of underlying abstract feature specifications. What would be excluded from such a model is any process by which

languages come to do similar things as a result of contact, but with different formal means. Just such a process, however, will be presented in one of the case studies of Irish English below. The construction-based model of grammatical replication, where relations between grammatical entities in the two languages are relations of similarity, not identity, predicts no such restriction.

I will present three case studies taken from the historical development of the grammar of Hiberno-English. In each of them, I will first present the likely historical scenario of contact, and then sketch out and discuss possible analyses of the grammatical changes in question. Empirical data, in addition to what is readily available in the earlier literature, comes from original corpus material of sub-literary 18th and 19th-century written English texts of Irish provenance. The case studies will be preceded by a short sketch of the overall characteristics of Hiberno-English, and followed by a brief summary of theoretical conclusions drawn from these examples.

2. A sketch of Hiberno-English

Hiberno-English is principally a language shift variety (THOMASON & KAUFMAN 1988), the main factor in the external history of the dialect has undoubtedly been the fact that a large number of native Irish speakers shifted to the use of English. Hence the expectation would be that contact effects should ultimately be traceable to the kinds of interference effects found in L2 learners. However, it is likely that the situation is in fact somewhat more complex than this, involving more of a back-and-forth and mutual influence between the two languages, given the relatively long and complex history of contact. While an older form of contact English had developed in Ireland prior to the 16th century and was spoken in the so-called “English Pale”, the early Anglo-Norman colonized area centred around Dublin, it is commonly believed that the present-day Irish English varieties are primarily based on the language of the new waves of colonisers from Britain who entered Ireland in the course of the Plantation programmes between the late 16th and mid-17th centuries (for a survey of the relevant literature, see FILPPULA 1999: 6–10). According to demographic studies, the British settlement seems at first to have led to a period of prolonged, widespread and relatively stable societal bilingualism, where English became the language of the upper strata of society and some of the more strongly Anglicised population centres in the east and north-east. The position of Irish remained strong enough across most of the country during the 17th century to give incentives for English-speaking settlers to acquire Irish and in some cases even shift completely to Irish (FILPPULA 1999: 7, quoting HINDLEY 1990). After a period of bilingualism during which the societal use of English as a widespread L2 gradually expanded, the 19th century saw an accelerated “collapse” (HINDLEY 1990: 12) of the use of Irish, manifested in mass language shift towards English. This was helped along by the social crises of the 19th century, culminating in catastrophic famine and mass emigration, which most strongly affected the remaining Irish-speaking lower strata of society.

In all, the contact situation between the two languages seems to have proceeded through a fairly long phase characterised by the continued presence of a large number of bilingual speakers, mostly with English as an L2 acquired without any formal training. At the same time there would have been steady incursions of English into ever new areas that had previously still been Irish-speaking. This situation must have provided ample opportunity for all of the processes involved in emergent contact-induced change: L2 acquisition both early and late in life; linguistic accommodation and negotiation by competent bilingual adults; and L1 and L2 acquisition on the basis of input from non-native speakers.

Documents providing linguistic data about the development of the contact variety during its formative phase come in principally three forms. During the earliest phase, in the 17th and 18th centuries, most of the sources available are literary representations, often of a satirical character (BLISS 1979). These instances of “Stage Irish” are sometimes of rather dubious authenticity (cf. FILPPULA 1999: 44; HENRY 1981). From the 19th century onwards, there is a body of more sympathetic literary portrayals of dialectal speech, often written by native Irish authors, culminating in the works of such famous Irish authors as JOYCE or SYNGE. Works of this kind have often been taken as authentic documents of actual speech varieties (TANIGUCHI 1972). The third kind of evidence, which has repeatedly been used in historical studies of the dialect, comes from private sub-literary written documents, especially letters of less educated or semi-literate writers (FILPPULA 1999, McCAFFERTY 2004b, MONTGOMERY 1995). Unfortunately, it is only from the mid-19th century onwards that documents of this type become plentiful, with emigration providing the crucial context for both the writing and the preservation of such letters. These documents present yet another problem of interpretation: while undoubtedly authentic, they invariably represent their authors’ attempts at writing standard English, not their own dialect. They can therefore be expected to mirror actual dialectal speech only to a limited extent. However, taken in combination and complementing each other, these three types of documents offer a fairly rich database of information about the development of the dialect. The present study draws on a corpus of letters, the *Hamburg Corpus of Irish English*, as part of its empirical material (see PIETSCH 2007, 2008, in print). They mostly come from contexts of emigration during the 18th and 19th centuries and comprise some 600,000 words of text.

Hiberno-English displays syntactic influence from Irish mostly in the domain of optional syntactic constructions at the clause level, such as verbal periphrases and patterns of clausal complementation. The following (non-exhaustive) list shows some of the most prominent phenomena. Probably the single most notable group consists of periphrases coding temporal and aspectual values (FILPPULA 1999, KALLEN 1989, HARRIS 1993, TRISTRAM 1995). Thus, Hiberno-English displays (or has displayed in some of its older forms):

- non-standard marking of habituality by means of periphrastic *do* and *be* (*they do be drinking*), a form that can be argued to be modelled on the existence of a functionally though not formally corresponding verbal category in Irish);

- two separate non-standard periphrastic types expressing perfects, so-called medial-object perfects (*I have the boat sold*), and *after*-perfects (*I'm after selling the boat*) (GREENE 1979, Ó SÉ 2004);
- several other periphrastic types following the pattern *be* + preposition + gerund, expressing a range of temporal meanings of prospectivity or durativity (PIETSCH, 2008.; see also section 3.1 below).

A second group concerns the syntax of clausal subordination and complementation. Thus, we find:

- preservation of inverted verb-subject order in embedded questions (HENRY 1995: 106–119);
- a pattern of non-finite adverbial adjunct clauses introduced by *and* as a subordinator (HÄCKER 1999, CORRIGAN 2000);
- a pattern, manifested across a range of different gerundial and infinitival constructions, where overtly nominative-marked subjects can appear in non-finite clauses (PIETSCH 2007; see also section 3.3 below);

A third group of phenomena can be assigned to the domain of clause-level constructions expressing focus and scope. These include the following:

- use of cleft constructions with much higher frequency and fewer syntactic/pragmatic restrictions than in standard English, including the clefting of VP constituents (*it's working they are*), adjectival predicates (*it's busy they are*) and others;
- divergent patterns regarding the scope behaviour of negative polarity items, as manifested in sentences like *anybody couldn't do it* (discussed under the heading of “failure of negative attraction” in FILPPULA 1999: 179–183; see also DUFFIELD 1993, HENRY 1995).

While all of the phenomena listed here can be assigned in some way or the other to the level of the organisation of the clause and the verb phrase, other domains of the grammar are less affected. There is little or no apparent contact-related effect on the level of inflectional morphology and the core domain of morphosyntactic functions associated with it, such as subject-verb agreement, number marking or case assignment (other than in the construction-specific cases mentioned above). Even though these domains may contain quite a number of non-standard phenomena – for instance singular nouns after plural numerals; the occurrence of the so-called “Northern Subject Rule” in verbal agreement (PIETSCH 2005; McCAFFERTY 2004b) etc., there is not a strong case for regarding these as contact effects, and most are shared more widely with other dialectal forms of English. Similar observations can be made for the structure of the noun phrase. (FILPPULA 1999: 55). There are, however, likely contact effects in the functional-pragmatic role of certain noun phrase-related elements, especially as regards the functions of the definite article and of the reflexive pronouns. Finally, a domain of grammar that has remained quite unaffected is the general architecture of the clause in terms

of the basic typological parameters of constituent order. While Irish and English contrast sharply in this domain in several ways (Irish being VSO, English SOV; Irish having noun-adjective and noun-genitive word order in the noun phrase, English the reverse), these fundamental parameters have not been affected by contact.

These findings can be related to the proposal of a universal hierarchy of borrowing made by STOLZ & STOLZ (1996) (see also MATRAS 2000 for a functional interpretation of the hierarchy):

- (1) Hierarchy of grammatical borrowing:
discourse > text > paragraph > clause conjoining > clause grammar >
constituent combining > word grammar

Along this cline, Irish English displays numerous features located in the domains of discourse and text organisation, towards the upper part of the hierarchy (BARRON & SCHNEIDER 2005). In the domain of grammar, it reaches towards the middle area, of what STOLZ & STOLZ call clause grammar. The domains located towards the right, lower end of the hierarchy, i.e. constituent order and word-internal grammar, are virtually unaffected.

3. Case studies

3.1. Prepositional Aspect Constructions

The first area of grammar we will take a closer look into concerns a group of periphrastic verbal constructions from the functional domain of tense-aspect marking. They constitute two similar and mutually corresponding “families” of constructions in Irish and in Hiberno-English. The section will be concerned with the question of how a theory of grammar, either from a features-based or a construction-based approach, can adequately describe the effects of categorisation, pattern productivity and type frequency that have apparently been involved in the development of this group. I will argue that the parallels between the two groups of constructions in the two languages, but also their differences, provide some motivation for a construction-based view of grammatical knowledge and of grammatical inter-linguistic influences.

The common schema involved in these families of constructions is that of a non-finite verb phrase with nominal properties (i.e. what is known as a “verbal noun” construction in Irish, and a gerund clause in English), combined with a preposition that denotes a temporal/aspectual relation, and with a copula predication. The schema can be exemplified as follows:

- (2) Hiberno-English and Irish Prepositional Aspect constructions

a. Hiberno-English

I am { *after*
for
about
on } *going*

b. Irish

tá mé { *tar éis*
ag
chun
le } *imeacht*

The best known member of this duplex family is the so-called “*after perfect*”, which exists both in Irish (3a) and, apparently as a structural loan from there, in Hiberno-English (3b). While its range of uses has varied somewhat over time (McCAFFERTY 2004a; 2006), its most characteristic use is to express recent past.

- (3) a. *Tá sí tar éis teacht abhaile*
is she after coming home
b. *She is after coming home*
(‘she has just come home.’)

The Hiberno-English form, having no parallel elsewhere in English, has widely been recognised as transparently modelled on the Irish one. Its historical genesis and its function within the tense/aspect system of either language has given rise to a considerable amount of discussion in the literature, which does not need review at this point (see most recently Ó SÉ 2004, Ó CORRÁIN 2006, McCAFFERTY 2006). What has attracted little attention in the literature so far, but will be the main point of interest for our purposes here, is the fact that within both language systems this construction is embedded in a whole network of similar ones.

In Irish, the tendency to form aspecto-temporal periphrases using prepositions and verbal nouns is well known and has been a conspicuous typological feature of the language for a long time (Ó CORRÁIN 1997). The most prominent instance of this pattern, playing a much more central role in the grammatical system of Irish than the *after perfect*, is the Irish progressive, a construction of the formal type *be at V-ing*. This construction, involving the preposition *ag* ‘at’ (from Old Irish *oc*) has been attested since the earliest medieval written documents of Irish (GAGNEPAIN 1963: 49) and, from that time, has been steadily advancing in its degree of grammaticalisation. Several other prepositions are used in similar roles or were used at older stages of the language, depending on the type of verb or type of situation involved. Among them are *ar/for* (‘on’), *a/do* (‘to’), and *i* (‘in’) (for some historical discussion of the rather complex situation, see GAGNEPAIN 1963: 174, 261, 287; Ó SÉ 2004: 191f.)

Some complex historical variation is also observed with respect to the items used to form the *after perfect*. The word originally used to fill this constructional slot was *iar* (‘after’), which merged phonologically with *ar* (‘on’) during the 17th

century and became obsolete in most of its uses. It was subsequently replaced in Irish with the composite prepositional items found today, *tar éis* and *i ndiaidh*, whereas in the closely related Scots Gaelic language its cognate (*air*) has continued to function in this role.

In the domain of prospective constructions, present-day Irish uses *le* (synchronically a preposition meaning ‘with’, but etymologically a result of another merger with a different preposition, *fri>lé>le* ‘against, towards’; cf. Gagnepain 1963: 69). It is mostly used with meanings that could be rendered with *be to + V* in English (4):

- (4) *Tá sé le theacht amáireach*
 is he with/towards coming tomorrow
 (‘He is to come tomorrow.’)

A second item used as a prospective is *chun* (‘towards’) (5). In those environments where both forms are possible, they form a contrast in such a way that *le* carries implications of obligation, *chun* of intentionality (Ó SIADHAIL 1989: 296, 293; cf. BRÁITHRE CRÍOSTAÍ 1960: 173).

- (5) *Tá sé chun a thuras a thosnú*
 is he towards his journey PRT beginning
 (‘He is going to begin his journey.’)

Although forms of this type have played a role in Irish grammar for many centuries, not all of them are particularly frequent or tightly integrated in the categorial system of the language. Other Celtic languages have progressed considerable further along a trend of grammaticalisation of this type, and have developed a set of corresponding prepositional constructions into a neat threefold tense/aspect system. This is true both for Welsh and for Scottish Gaelic, the closest relative to Irish (Ó CORRÁIN 1997):

(6) Scottish Gaelic

- a. [Progressive:]
tha an duine a’ falbh
 is the man at going
 ‘the man is going’
- b. [Perfect:]
tha an duine air falbh
 is the man on/after going
 ‘the man has gone’
- c. [Prospective:]
tha an duine gus falbh
 is the man to going
 ‘the man is going to go’

(7) Welsh

- a. [Progressive:]
mae 'r dyn yn mynd
 is the man in going
 'the man is going'
- b. [Perfect:]
mae 'r dyn wedi mynd
 is the man after going
 'the man has gone'
- c. [Prospective:]
mae 'r dyn ar fynd
 is the man on going
 'the man is going to go'

Turning back to Hiberno-English, the following items besides the *after* perfect itself have been attested at one time or other (for a more extensive treatment and historical data, see PIETSCH, 2008):

- (8) a. *I am **for** going*
 b. *I am **about** going*
 c. *I am **on** going*
 d. *I am **upon** going*

In contrast to the *be after* V-ing construction, which expresses a retrospective (perfect) aspecto-temporal value, these others are mostly prospective, expressing meanings of future intended or impending events, or durative, expressing ongoing states. As such, however, they can all be subsumed under a single semantic class, and I will refer to them together as “prepositional tense/aspect constructions”. The *be about* V-ing construction is an exact semantic equivalent of the more common standard English infinitival periphrasis *be about to* V, mainly expressing immediacy of intended future action. *Be for* V-ing is used to express future planned action, without an implicature of temporal immediacy; its standard English semantic equivalents would be *plan to* V or *intend to* V. The construction with *on/upon* is attested only sparsely in historical data, but from what can be gleaned it seems to have been used to express either ongoing states or impending (non-intentional) future events. To these constructions can be added another, independent variant using *after*, which is attested only in earlier (17th and 18th century) forms of the dialect, and seems to have been used with a function distinct from the *after* perfect proper. It mostly occurs in combinations with future-oriented modals, of the type *will be after* V-ing, where the precise semantic contribution of *after* itself is not entirely clear but is certainly not that of a perfect; according to some hypotheses this use may have been related indirectly to one of the competing uses of *ar* ('on/after') on the Irish side (BLISS 1979: 302f.; FILPPULA 1999: 99–107; McCAFFERTY 2003, 2004a; Ó SÉ 2004; Ó CORRÁIN 2006).

There is thus a clear similarity between what I am calling the two “families” of constructions in the two languages, although it is worth pointing out that this similarity is not a one-to-one correspondence. In particular, the contrast between *about* and *for* does not correspond exactly with that between *chun* and *le* in Irish

(or for that matter with any other particular lexical contrast in that language). Moreover, the most important member of the Irish family, the progressive, is lacking a counterpart on the English side (where the standard English progressive, without a preposition, fills the same function.)

Thus, while it would be tempting to hypothesise that the whole family of constructions in English – just like its best known member, the *after* perfect – is a wholesale replication from Irish, this does not seem to be the case. Historically, matters are more complex. In fact, both *be about V-ing* and *be for V-ing* are also attested in other historical forms of English, at various times between the 17th and 19th centuries. We must therefore assume that the Hiberno-English attestations are of quite mixed ancestry.

As reported in PIETSCH (2008), gerundial *be about V-ing* seems to have arisen in emergent standard British English as a structural alternative to the older and more common *be about to V* at some time during the early 18th century. It then spread rapidly, but turned out to be a short-lived innovation, soon to be marginalised again in standard English during the 19th century. In contrast to this, Hiberno-English non-standard writing preserves the gerundial construction at least until the early 20th century, as shown in the following attestations:

(9) a. *a parcel of land on the Bury Estate which was then **about being** sold*
[HCIE: ForreE01, 1906]

b. *Some of the estates you are **about purchasing*** [HCIE: RyanJ_01, 1908]

Something similar seems to be the case with the *be for V-ing* construction. It, too, had a short-lived appearance in emergent standard English in the 17th and 18th century. Its first appearance in that variety, as discussed in PIETSCH (2008), must pre-date the last third of the 17th century. It reaches a relatively high frequency around 1750, but then takes a steep drop, even more rapidly than the *about* construction, to become virtually extinct in the written record by the beginning of the 19th century. Again, in contrast with the data from Britain, the Irish material from the *Hamburg Corpus of Irish English* see the pattern in continued use right through the 19th century (10):

(10) a. *A last request I ask is to write by this ship what you **are for doing*** [HCIE: McLeeJ01, 1828]

b. *They are **for writing** soon* [HCIE: Hammon03, 1845]

c. *I would like to let my mate know what I am **for doing*** [HCIE: Millik01, 1884]

By the early 20th century, it was apparently felt to be a characteristic marker of Irish speech, as can be seen in the following literary portrayal of Hiberno-English, a folk tale purportedly translated from the Irish (“The Piper and the Puca”, O’NEILL 1913), where it is evidently used as a stylistically marked feature to give the narrative an Irish stylistic flair (11):

- (11) “Upon my word, you’re a fine music master,” says the piper then; “but tell me where **you’re for bringing** me.” – “There’s a great feast in the house of the Banshee, on the top of Croagh Patric, tonight,” Says the Puca, “and **I’m for bringing** you there to play music and, take my word, you’ll get the price for your trouble.”¹

A complication added to this story is that there is a seemingly different type of usage of *for* attested in earlier Hiberno-English, in at least one 17th century satirical literary portrayal of Hiberno-English as reported in BLISS (1979: 124f., 303). The instances reported there (12), which stand side by side with similar ones of *upon*, seem to be semantically related to the curious (but better attested) future-oriented uses of *after* mentioned earlier, and may have been meant as a marker of durativity or habituality. The *for* periphrasis here apparently does not have the prospective meaning as attested in the standard British and in the later Irish examples, since the meaning of futurity in these sentences is carried by the modal verbs *will* (*vill*) and *shall* (*shaut*), just as in standard English.

- (12) a. *Y vill be for mauking Child upon dy Body*
 b. *Vee vill shet up Housh-kepin and be for livein aul togadder*
 c. *Dou shaut be for sending Aunswer to vaat Y hauve sent dee* [BLISS (1979: 124)]

We may thus be dealing with a double source of the *be for V-ing* construction in later Hiberno-English. If we are to trust the testimony of BLISS’s material, then we may assume that during an early phase of the development, in the 17th century, some Irish speakers were using a range of different English prepositions to form structural calques of various similar Irish constructions, some short-lived but some stable enough to find consistent reflection in the written sources. Later, these patterns converged with those that were independently available in emergent standard English, which led to mutual reinforcement and stabilisation. The standard-derived constructions were ultimately preserved in Hiberno-English significantly longer than in the standard itself, while of the borrowed forms only the *after* perfect survived.

Having established this historical scenario, we can now turn to the question of a suitable formal analysis of the patterns and changes in question. It will, first of all, need to account for why and how these forms are not possible in standard English, when standard English seemingly has all the formal components of these constructions readily at its disposal. The grammatical representation of these forms must evidently differ from those incidental syntactic assemblies that are perfectly possible in standard English and superficially identical: *be after* + gerund, in the sense of ‘follow X in temporal sequence’ or ‘pursue X as a goal’; *be for* + gerund, in the sense of ‘be in favour of X’ (or ‘be designed for’), or *be about* + gerund, in the sense of ‘be about the topic of X’. See examples in (13):²

- (13) a. *But all of that, he added, is after taking some much-needed time off.*

¹ “The Piper and the Puca”, Irish folk story, “translated from the Irish by Dr. Douglas Hyde”, in O’Neill (1913: ch.31). Online edition: <http://billhaneman.ie/IMM/IMM-XXXI.html>

² All of these are random authentic tokens from the Internet.

- b. *You really think I'm just **after getting** as much money as I can?*
- c. *If there's a better way to obtain this info, then I'm **for trying** something else.*
- d. This song is ***about going** insane in public.*

Evidently, the tense-aspect constructions differ from these incidental combinations in having become conventionalised as grammaticalised units to some degree, and having begun a concomitant formal change in the direction of clause union (in the sense of HARRIS & CAMPBELL 1995). There are also a number of syntactic indicators of the loss of syntactic independence of the embedded gerundial constituent: for instance, while the gerundial constituents in the incidental examples of (13) could all be replaced with a noun phrase or expanded by a subject, this is not possible in the tense-aspect constructions. Also, in the historical examples, the tense-aspect constructions never display the internal noun-phrase-like syntax characteristic of full gerund constituents in 18th-century English, where objects are often still coded as *of*-possessives (FANEKO 2004). In formal terms, one has to conclude that the embedded constituent is losing its properties of full gerund phrases (either clause-like or NP-like), and is taking on the characteristics of a purely verbal constituent integrated in the matrix clause. To the extent that this development has fully gone through (a conclusive demonstration would admittedly require some additional analysis), this would entail a categorial change also of the governing prepositional element. Within a generative framework, a natural interpretation would be to ascribe to it a status not as a preposition proper, but as an aspect marker, occupying a position heading an aspect phrase AspP. This, incidentally, matches the analysis assumed for the corresponding structures in Irish in work such as DUFFIELD (1993) and CARNIE (1995).

How would an analysis in such terms now relate to the question of what actually changed in English when it came into contact with Irish? Since English, as we saw above, already had a few optional constructions of the relevant type, independently of the contact, the answer from a generative perspective is clear: there was not much of a change at all. The formal mechanism responsible for licensing the pattern as a whole was evidently already in place, and the only change observed was that a couple of additional lexical items picked up the same set of feature settings that allowed them to fill the relevant structural positions.

However, this analysis fails to represent the idea that is at the core of the historical scenario sketched out above. The fact that these constructions share so many structural and semantic properties across the two languages strongly suggests that their parallels, despite their partly independent origins, are not purely coincidental. The fact that Irish has had constructions of this type, the fact that Hiberno-English developed some new ones that are strikingly similar, and the fact that Hiberno-English strengthened and preserved the use of yet others that happened to be already available independently on the basis of standard English, can reasonably be assumed to be causally related. This entails that there must be something in the grammatical system of each language that represents the existence of the group as a whole: if these constructions come in families, and the similarities between the families across the two languages are a factor that can influence their

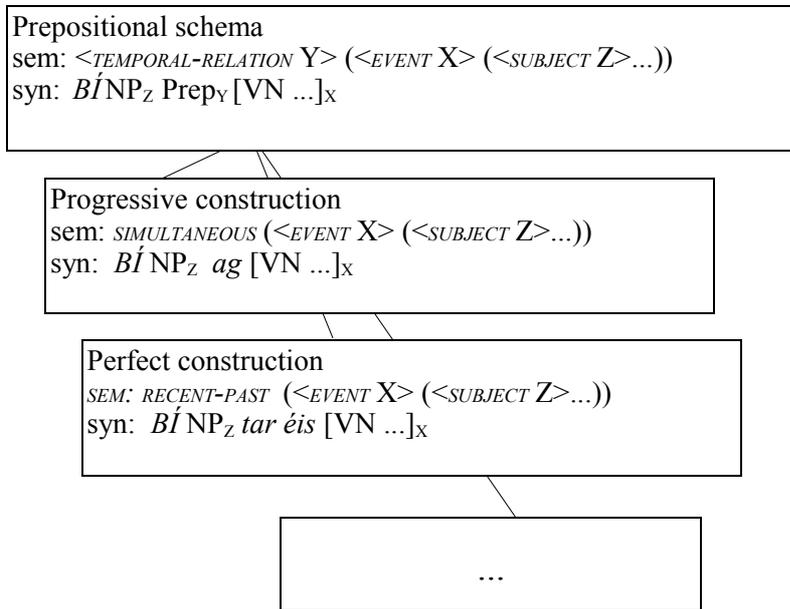
behaviour in the language of bilinguals, then speakers must *know* about these families, and not just about their members individually.

At the same time, this knowledge must be represented in a way flexible enough to account for a high degree of internal heterogeneity. This is because, despite all the similarities, the constructions in question do not form a completely homogeneous uniform category. Particularly within Irish, the various instantiations of the preposition-plus-verbal-noun pattern display a host of idiosyncratic differences of grammatical behaviour. This goes for their applicability to different groups of verbs, different behaviour under processes such as passivisation or wh-extraction, different syntax regarding internal arguments of the verbal noun, and other properties. Thus, while speakers in some sense seem to “know” about the general pattern as a whole, there clearly is also an element of idiosyncratic knowledge specific to each lexically filled combination.

This is just the kind of situation that a Construction Grammar approach is designed to capture with the help of its concept of hierarchically ordered networks of stored mental representations. In this approach, both the more abstract pattern and its more concrete instantiations are represented as units, and specific elements of knowledge associated with only a particular instantiation are allowed to complement and to override specifications associated with the more abstract unit. Moreover, under a usage-based conception of Construction Grammar, it is assumed that speakers build up this network of units bottom-up, by abstracting away from concrete tokens encountered in speech and building up categorisations over them.

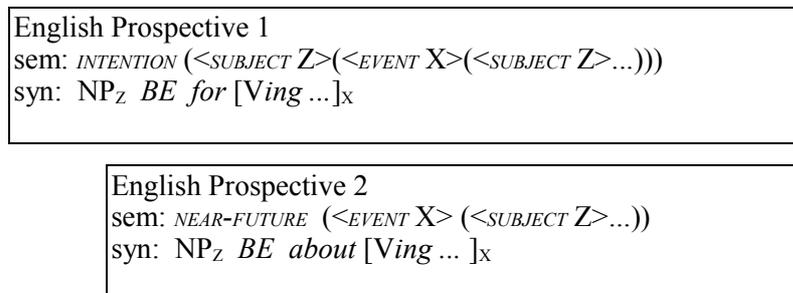
We can thus model the process roughly as follows: Irish, at the time of contact, already had a fully developed family of constructions instantiating a common schema *be* + preposition + verbal noun. Both the knowledge about the individual instantiations and the common schema were represented as stored units in the grammars of Irish speakers, as indicated schematically in the simplified inheritance graph in (14). Of the individual constructions, some would have been strongly entrenched, as major and highly frequent patterns in the grammar, others less so.

(14) Hierarchy of prepositional constructions in Irish



In contrast, English speakers in the 17th and 18th century would have had at most one or two constructions of the relevant type, the *for* and/or the *about* periphrasis, neither of which was particularly frequent or strongly entrenched. Given the low type frequency, a representation of a common more abstract schema uniting these two patterns into a single category would likely have been weak or absent.

(15) Prepositional constructions in Standard English, c.1700



This model lets us describe simply and elegantly what must have happened under contact: Irish-English bilinguals came to perceive of the structural similarity of the English and Irish patterns, and re-categorised the English items as instantiations of a new abstract schema they formed on the model of the Irish one. To this schema, both the already existing English items (with *for* and *about*) and the new ones

replicated from Irish (with *after* in its various different uses, and possibly *on/upon*) were assimilated.

What I am suggesting here, then, is that a classificatory network of construction schemata can span the two languages of a bilingual speaker. As speakers are able to perceive of similarity relations both between individual schemata in the two languages, and between the systemic constellations of which they are part, the existence of a well-entrenched family of constructions in one language will facilitate the formation of corresponding categorisations in the other. This is a plausible mechanism behind the process by which speakers of Hiberno-English were able to assimilate the various instantiations of the *be* + preposition + *V-ing* pattern, both the borrowed and the native ones, to integrate them into a single pattern whose existence then served to strengthen and preserve each construction for longer than they might otherwise have persisted.

It may also provide an explanation for why the borrowed patterns (especially the *after* perfect) were borrowed in the first place. One of the questions that has always been an open issue but has maybe found less attention than warranted in the discussion of the borrowing of the *after* construction in Hiberno-English is why this construction was borrowed even though its structural model in Irish was never a particularly frequent one within Irish (GREENE 1979, Ó SÉ 2004). The suggestion that emerges from the present discussion is that one relevant factor that made the *after* perfect attractive for borrowing despite its own relatively marginal position in Irish was its status as a member of a larger family of constructions. It was the cognitive saliency of this family-prototype as a whole, caused by the relatively high type frequency of its instantiations, rather than the prominence of any one of its instantiations alone, that made it accessible to bilingual speakers in a way that would influence their discourse choices and their mental categorisation in dealing with English, and which gave them an incentive to realign the morphosyntactic material found in English in such a way as to form a new class of constructions replicating the Irish structures.

3.2. Medial-Object Perfects

We will next take a closer look at another of the characteristic tense/aspect constructions that Hiberno-English is known for: the so-called medial-object perfects. With regard to this case, we will specifically test the hypothesis that cross-linguistic replication effects can be explained by a structural takeover of identical formal features on the level of underlying formal structures, as discussed above in section 1. It will be shown that such a model is not borne out in this case, as the processes of contact-induced identification operated purely on the semantic-functional level while the formal development proceeded on the basis of formal elements native to the receiving language alone.

As mentioned above, the Hiberno-English “medial-object perfects” are periphrastic constructions of the type in (16), typically expressing a resultative, often stative, perfect meaning:

(16)a. *I have the work finished*

- b. *I have the money lost*
- c. *I have my dinner eaten*

The discussion about this construction (for a survey, see FILPPULA 1999: 107–116; see also GREENE 1979, Ó SÉ 2004, PIETSCH in print) has mostly revolved around the parallel with an Irish construction that is functionally but not formally a close match to this one, and around the question of continuity with superficially similar forms in older forms of English. To a lesser degree there has been some discussion about the directionality of the contact, as it has been suggested that in this case the Irish construction could also have been partly modelled on the English one rather than the other way round.

To recapitulate the most basic facts, the Irish construction in question (17) displays a structure formally quite different from the English one. Nevertheless, there is a consensus in the literature that the two are closely comparable *mutatis mutandis*, as both languages are essentially doing the same thing while employing the typologically different formal means that each has at its disposal. Typologically speaking, both constructions are instances of what HEINE (1997) terms a “possessive perfect”, one that is grammaticalised on the basis of a statal passive construction combined with an expression of possession. Since Irish lacks a verb for ‘have’ and instead employs a locative schema construction to express possession (‘X is at Y’ = ‘Y has X’, see 17a), this same construction also features in the Irish perfect in lieu of the English *have* construction. Since the possessed entity in the locative possession construction is coded as the grammatical subject, the same also holds in the perfect construction; it therefore displays the argument mapping properties of a passive clause. In fact, the perfect construction can also be understood as an extension of a statal passive (17b) with an optional prepositional agent phrase (17c):

(17) a. Locative possessive construction:

tá bád agam
 is boat at.me
 ‘I have a boat’

b. Statal passive construction:

tá an bád díolta
 is the boat sold
 (‘The boat is sold’)

c. Passival Perfect construction

tá an bád díolta agam
 is the boat sold at.me
 (‘I have sold the boat’)

PIETSCH (in print), building on historical corpus evidence and previous discussion found in FILPPULA (1999) and elsewhere, demonstrates that the innovation in Hiberno-English can best be characterised as a case of “contact-induced grammaticalisation” in the sense of HEINE & KUTEVA (2005). It is the product of a functional extension on the basis of a formally identical construction, which already existed (and continues to exist) as a minor, less grammaticalised use type in

standard English, as a kind of syntactic doublet of the standard perfect: the so-called “conclusive perfect” (KIRCHNER (1952), BRINTON 1994) of the type in (18).

(18)a. *I must have the paper written by tomorrow.*

b. *He had him cornered.*

c. *She had him almost convinced.*

d. *I have it all figured out.*

As predicted by the model of contact-induced grammaticalisation developed by HEINE and KUTEVA, this extension follows all the same internal functional dynamics observed in normal grammaticalisation (semantic bleaching, conventionalisation of conversational implicatures, etc.). However, the parallelism with the Irish construction – together with the fact that the same functional extension did not happen in other varieties – makes the assumption of some, possibly indirect, contact-induced mechanism an obvious one to follow. PIETSCH (in print) argues that the decisive factor was in fact one of interlingual identification in the sense of WEINREICH (1953). Both the English source (the conclusive perfect) and the Irish equivalent (the passival perfect) were constructions at a similarly early, not yet strongly grammaticalised stage of the universal grammaticalisation path characteristic of possessive perfects. As such, they were both characterised by a strong element of functional motivation linking them to an original possessive and statal function, and a high degree of iconicity (form-function matching) with respect to that source function. These factors of iconicity and functional correspondence made the medial-object structure more cognitively salient to Irish bilingual speakers and hence more “attractive” to acquire and use than the less iconic and less transparently motivated standard perfect, even though it was much less frequent than the latter. This was a factor favouring its over-use, which in turn gave the construction a boost in the direction of further grammaticalisation. Functional identification in the sense of Weinreich, operating mostly on the correspondence in semantics, must be assumed as a logical prerequisite of such a scenario, and has in fact been implicitly assumed by most commentators in the literature as a matter of course. See e.g. HENRY (1957: 177), or BLISS (1972: 73), who explicitly notes that speakers must have operated on the basis of their intuitive knowledge of the translation equivalence between the Irish *tá X ag Y* and the English *Y has X* possessives.

While this scenario provides a plausible contact-related explanation of what happened with the English construction, this does not necessarily mean that the contact-induced changes in English were manifested through “code copying” in a literal sense, on the level of directly replicating formally identical parts of the grammar. A scenario whereby formal feature settings of the one language directly infiltrated the structure of the other, be it through interference in acquisition or in code mixing behaviour, seems not to be applicable here, at least not if syntactic structure is modelled in the way typically done in the generative tradition. As a brief sketch of the formal make-up of the different constructions will show, the Irish and the English structures are just too different in their basic components.

Let us first have a closer look at the Irish construction, exemplified here again by (19):

- (19) *tá an bád díolta agam*
 is the boat sold at.me
 ('I have sold the boat.')

Modern formal analyses of this pattern (McCLOSKEY 1996, HARLEY 2000 and others) see it as a straightforward mono-clausal passive, very much structurally analogous – *mutatis mutandis* – to an English clause like *the boat is sold by me*. In this analysis, *tá* is a pure auxiliary. The nominal argument expressing the object is assumed to originate in the object position within the VP (to the right of the lexical verb *díolta*), in the way typical of passives, and raises to pick up nominative case, presumably first through a VP-internal subject position, and then further up towards a functional specifier position in the IP domain. There, it takes its position to the immediate right of the finite auxiliary *tá*, in the normal way subjects do within the framework of the VSO syntax of Irish. Finally, the agent phrase (*agam* 'at me') must be assumed to be generated in an adjunct position under VP, quite analogous to a passive *by*-phrase in English.

While the construction is thus formally quite identical to a (statal) *be*-passive in English, its functional equivalence – and indeed translation equivalence – to an English active perfect is due to a divergence in pragmatic conventions between the two languages: Irish employs characteristically different strategies in mapping passive and active structures to given/new (topic/comment) constellations than English does, and therefore tends to use this formally passive construction with the pragmatic force of an English active clause (NOONAN 1994).

On the English side, the construction evidently has a quite different structure. The original "conclusive perfect" construction, as it exists in standard English and existed in the English input varieties during the initial contact with Irish, can best be analysed as a bi-clausal structure with a passival secondary predicate clause, represented in traditional formal terms very roughly like (20a) or (b):

- (20) a. *Peter had John_i [PRO_i cornered t_i]*
 b. *Peter had [SmallClause John_i cornered t_i]*

The choice between the two analyses – with or without a separate argument position for the object ('John') in the matrix construction – is debatable. Arguably, according to standard assumptions in the generative tradition, the first version corresponds better to a semantic reading where the matrix verb *have* retains full possessive force and continues to assign a separate thematic role to the following noun phrase as the object of possession, whereas the second is better fit for a reading – somewhat more advanced on the grammaticalisation path – where *have* denotes not a relation with the object as such but rather the achievement of the result state denoted by the embedded clausal unit as a whole. Structures analysed along these lines have repeatedly been posited in analyses of incipient *have* perfect constructions at relatively early stages of their grammaticalisation, e.g. the predecessors of the standard English perfect in Old English (CAREY 1994: 110), its equivalents in late Vulgar Latin and early Romance (SALVI 1987: 228), or certain modern Slavic languages (MIGDALSKI 2006); cf also HOEKSTRA 1984: 267f.).

This leads us finally back to the Hiberno-English construction type and the question of what actual change it represents compared to the earlier standard English one. While both types are quite close, they are not identical: there is something in the Hiberno-English grammar that renders examples like (21a–b) acceptable, whereas they are arguably impossible in standard English:

(21) a. *He turned out very disagreeable to me by reason of him drinking. He **has** my heart **broke**.* [HCIE: LynchH01, 1847]

b. *they **hadn't** each other **seen** for four or five years* [FILPPULA 1999: 108]

To the best of my knowledge, there are currently no published analyses of the Hiberno-English construction under an explicit syntactic perspective. It seems safest to say that the overall structure in Hiberno-English is still close to the standard English one, being still a bi-clausal structure with an instance of full lexical *have* in the matrix clause, and what is essentially a passive construction in the embedded syntagm. There are no signs that the construction has progressed along its renewed grammaticalisation path to a point where *have* would be reduced to purely auxiliary status. If it had done so, this would lead to quite serious analytical questions about how to reconcile the preservation of the surface-medial object position with general properties of English clausal architecture. General assumptions within the generative tradition would in that case force us to conclude that the medial NP must now be generated as a plain object of the lower (lexical) verb in an active constellation, raising the question of what mechanism could be responsible for its raising beyond that verb towards the left.

The changes that do seem to be occurring on the way from the original possessive-plus-secondary-predicate construction to the Hiberno-English medial-object perfect all seem to be on the semantic-pragmatic level. They concern mainly the semantic contribution of *have* to the construction as a whole, and the construction's implications regarding agency and intentionality of the matrix subject. Broadly speaking, there is an ongoing grammaticalisation process, with its usual pragmatics-driven mechanisms of pragmatic enrichment on the one hand and semantic bleaching on the other. The earliest reading is the one where *have* purely denotes possession or control of the object by the subject, and the secondary predication phrase denotes no more than an attendant state that the object is in. In a second step, characteristic of many of the uses of the conclusive perfect in standard English, the meaning of possession gives way to a more specific meaning of successful attainment of a desired goal, as in (22). What is also strengthened at this stage is the conventionalised implicature that the matrix subject is also the agent who has brought about the action denoted by the embedded participle, although, in the standard English uses, this implicature is still cancellable (23):

(22) *I **have** it all **figured** out.*

(23) *just when we **had** them **judged** and **convicted** as child abusers, the other side of the story gets in the way.*

In a third step, reached only in Hiberno-English but not generally in standard English, the meaning component of successful planned attainment is lost again, through semantic bleaching, while at the same time the meaning component of

coreference between the matrix subject and the implied agent of the embedded verb is strengthened into an obligatory entailment. This is the stage exemplified by the Hiberno-English examples in (21) above. It should be noted that the meaning component of intentionality is not lost completely and suddenly. Indeed, according to an observation by HICKEY (2007: 208), the most prototypical use of the construction in Hiberno-English continues to involve “planned action”, and it seems to be the case that the construction is generally not compatible with inanimate subjects. However, as the examples show, planned intention is not a necessary component in all cases, bringing the construction closer to a true resultative perfect, with a purely aspecto-temporal meaning lacking such modal implications.

It is not immediately apparent where and how these semantic changes would be mirrored in the formal grammatical structure, in the framework of a traditional generative analysis. Under the premises of such an approach, we would ideally expect to be able to derive the semantic value of the construction, at each stage of its development, from the compositional working of semantic features located in its morphosyntactic components. Such differences would then have to be sought in the feature specifications of either the verb *have* or the morphological category of the embedded participle. Crucially, for our purposes, it is difficult to see how any of these formal changes could constitute a precise takeover from the corresponding Irish structure. The verb *have* is just that part of the English construction that has no formal counterpart in the Irish at all. As for the participle, one possible line of analysis is to treat the changes as an increase of verbal properties at the expense of adjectival properties of the participle and its functional projection (cf. SALVI 1987 for an account of the early Romance perfect involving a similar step from an assumed AP to a VP constituent). However, this too may not be easy to reconcile with the Irish model structure on the level of literal take-over of feature settings, since at least on the morphological level the Irish “participial” category (traditionally called a “verbal adjective”) displays, if anything, rather less of a verbal and more of an adjectival status than the English one.

Thus, to the extent that Hiberno-English displays a change in the underlying formal structure of the medial-object construction at all, it seems to be easier to describe in terms of separate formal developments in the two languages, each within its existing, separate formal system, and triggered through interlingual identification that operated essentially on the level of functional equivalence and superficial formal similarity rather than through channels of underlying structural identity. Such interlingual identification is easier to model formally if one assumes a Construction Grammar approach. A Construction Grammar representation of the same structures differs from a generative one mainly in treating the syntactic structure as much “flatter” and less rich in non-overt elements. Since CG assumes that construction schemata are arbitrary binary mappings between a formal and a semantic representation, much of the semantic information that a Principles-and-Parameters approach will assume to be directly reflected in the syntactic structure is relegated instead to the mapping conditions between the semantic and syntactic side in a CG representation.

(24) Conclusive Perfect construction

sem: *ACHIEVE* (<AGENT X>, *RESULT* (<ACTION Y>(<PATIENT Z>))
syn: NP_X *have* NP_Z [_{VP} *Ved*]_Y
*John*_X *has the work*_Z [_{VP} *done*]_Y

Described in this framework, a comparison of the above construction schema and that for a Hiberno-English medial-object perfects shows no change whatsoever on the formal, syntactic side. All change that takes place between the earlier and the more grammaticalised version of the construction can be stated on the semantic level alone.

(25) Hiberno-English Medial-Object Perfect construction

sem: *RESULT* (<ACTION Y>(<AGENT X>, <PATIENT Z>)
syn: NP_X *have* NP_Z [_{VP} *Ved*]_Y
*John*_X *has the work*_Z [_{VP} *done*]_Y

(26) Irish Passival Perfect construction

sem: *RESULT* (<ACTION Y>(<AGENT X>, <PATIENT Z>)
syn: *bí* NP_Z VN_Y *ag* NP_X
*tá an obair*_Z *déanta*_Y *ag Seán*_X

Crucially, this framework also provides us with a straightforward representation of how the English and the Irish structures are similar, and thus of how and why they could be perceived as equivalent. In fact, the CG representation directly reflects the fact that the Irish construction has a meaning that is precisely identical to that of the Hiberno-English one, and partially identical to that of the earlier English pattern. Identification of the patterns happened on this semantic level, and a process of grammaticalisation was then triggered that proceeded along the normal lines of internally caused paths of change, and made the semantic representations – though not the syntactic ones – even more similar to each other than they were originally.

3.3. Subject pronouns in non-finite constructions

In this third and final case study we will be discussing a structural peculiarity of Hiberno-English whose manifestations span a number of different constructional environments: the use of overtly subject-case (nominative) marked pronouns in certain non-finite clauses. These use types constitute something of an oddity in English, given the fact that in standard English the nominative case is typically restricted to the subject position of finite verbs. Their existence in Hiberno-English as well as the precise definition of how they relate to possibly similar structures in Irish raise interesting questions about the delimitation of the core “parametric” organisation of the clause as opposed to what is sometimes called a “marked periphery” of special construction types, and the question of what items and

properties can be the carriers of interlingual identification and thus become active in structural replication.

The best known use type where the phenomenon in question is observed in Hiberno-English is found in sentences of the so-called “subordinating *and*” type (27):

- (27) *James came over and borrowed 3 pounds of me **and he going** to the diggings*
(‘... while he was going ...’) [Hogan_04, 1857]

This peculiar use of the coordinating conjunction *and* in what is functionally and formally a subordinating construction with a non-finite adverbial clause has been fairly thoroughly discussed in the literature on Hiberno-English (Ó SIADHAIL 1984; FILPPULA 1991, HÄCKER 1999; CORRIGAN 2000). Hiberno-English has extended the use of such structures from an original “exclamative” use shared with other varieties – expressing regret, reproach, surprise or some other form of emotional involvement, as in (28), to expressions of pure temporal and causal relations.

- (28) *How could you not trust him, and he/him your best friend!*

However, the structural peculiarity of the nominative case choice has found much less attention and has usually not been discussed in connection with the other clause types to be presented next, which have typically been only mentioned in passing, if at all. Nominative subjects can be found in virtually all types of non-finite constructions. HENRY (1957: 190) reports them for infinitive constructions in a 20th-century Connacht dialect (29):

- (29) *It’s a point o’law **for she to put** him out*
(‘it’s a legal question whether she can evict him’)

FILPPULA (1999: 197) has a few examples in verbless temporal clauses (30):

- (30) *Indeed I walked it myself **when I** young.*

Finally, PIETSCH (2007) provides documentation of nominative forms in gerund clauses in a range of different functions, in historical written Irish English:

- (31) a. *What is the cause of **we** not Getting the possession of this farom* [HCIE: MarshM04, 1907]
b. *When I heard **she** being in this place I went to see her directly* [HCIE: Normil04, 1863]
c. *My sister Bridget stoped with her old Misses **after I** leaving* [HCIE: Normil04, 1863]

In standard English, the closest to the structure in question here is the so-called nominative absolute construction, of the type in (32).

- (32) ***He being** your best friend, you should trust him.*

This construction has been a part of formal registers of standard English since at least the Middle English period. There is a certain similarity between it and the subordinating-*and* constructions, and in fact some instances that have been cited in the literature as supposed early attestations of subordinating *and* in emergent

standard English are in fact nothing but instances of coordination of two parallel nominative absolutes, as in the following example (33) from 1635, cited by FILPPULA (1991: 624):

- (33) *all phisitions having given him over and he lying drawing his last breath there came an old woman unto him*

Given the superficial similarity of the patterns, it may well be the case that there is a diachronic genetic relationship between them, especially since early attested instances of subordinating-*and* constructions in British English also show nominative marking (HÄCKER 1999). This may be the case despite the fact that today they belong to quite different registers – the nominative absolutes being part of a formal register, while the subordinating *and* forms of the “exclamative” type are much more colloquial. There are, however, also certain formal differences. Most notably, if the subordinate clause consists of a non-verbal predication, a subordinating-*and* construction will most typically employ a verbless small clause to express it, while a nominative absolute construction will invariably employ a verbal participle construction with *being*:

- (34) a. *How could you not trust him, and he/him ([?]being) your best friend!*
b. *He *(being) your best friend, you should trust him.*

Whatever the ultimate relation between the two constructions in British English, it seems safe to assume that they both were available as part of the varieties of English that were transplanted to Ireland in the 17th century and served as input to the language contact situation that led to the emergence of present-day Hiberno-English. We may also assume that at that time the case form used would still have been mostly the nominative in both. In contrast to this, the nominative forms in the other types of non-finite constructions as shown in (29–31) above, are to the best of my knowledge without a precedent or parallel in other varieties of English outside Ireland. This goes especially for those types where the non-finite subclause is outwardly governed by a case-assigning element in the matrix clause, such as a verb or preposition. In these positions, standard English regularly employs accusative forms motivated by just this government relation, according to the mechanism described in formal grammar as “Exceptional Case Marking (ECM)”. We are thus again, like in the case of the prepositional aspect constructions, dealing with a development that may have multiple different sources.

Parallels that may have motivated the developments both in the subordinating-*and* constructions and in these other nominative non-finite constructions can be found in Irish. As has been well documented in the relevant literature (e.g. Ó SIADHAIL 1984; FILPPULA 1991, CORRIGAN 2000, RONAN 2002), a construction formally similar to the subordinating-*and* construction, using *is* or *agus* (‘and’), is a central and very frequent element of Irish grammar. Its functions, often involving simple temporal relations of simultaneity or attendant circumstance, correspond closely to those of the Hiberno-English subordinating *and* constructions that fall outside of the “exclamative” prototype shared with the other English varieties. The Irish construction consists of the conjunction *is/agus* followed by a non-finite constituent, normally consisting of a subject NP and a predicate that may be an AP,

PP, or an aspectual phrase consisting of a prepositional aspect marker and a verbal noun phrase.

The degree to which the conjunction *agus* has emancipated itself from its originally coordinating function and has taken on clearly subordinating functions in Irish is shown by the fact that the *agus* construction can also stand sentence-initially, without any antecedent to join it with (35). In such cases it may functionally correspond to an absolute construction in English.

- (35) *Agus é ina cheann Rialtais, déanann an Taoiseach comhordú*
 And he in.his head of government does the P.M. coordination
ar obair na Ranna Rialtais uile
 on work of all government departments
 ('He being the Head of Government, the Taoiseach co-ordinates the work of all Government Departments')

As for the gerund constructions in governed complement positions, an Irish parallel can be found in a certain class of verbal-noun subclauses, as argued in PIETSCH (2007). In this Irish pattern, the notional subject of a non-finite clause is expressed by a bare NP or pronoun in a special position – sometimes described as “promoted” (ARMSTRONG 1977) or “displaced” (GENEE 1998) – at the left edge of the clause, before the verbal noun and usually separated from it by the particle *a* (36).

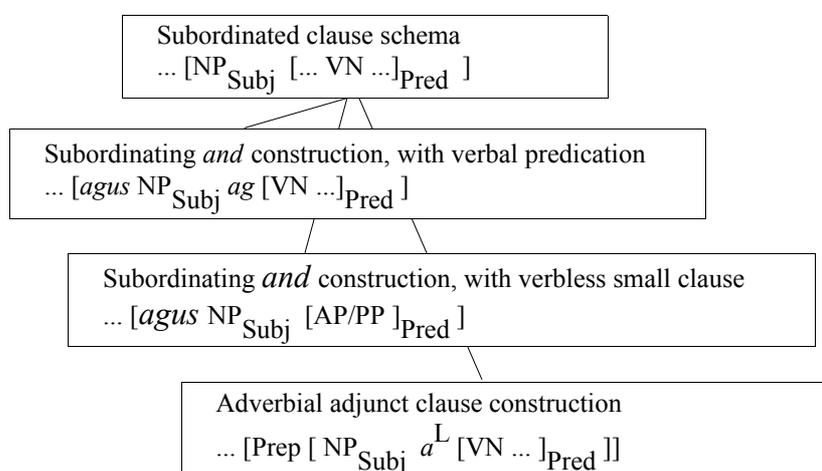
- (36) a. *tar éis iad féin a shábháil na gcéata*
 after they themselves PRT saving hundreds
 ('...after they themselves saved hundreds')
- b. *an bun a bhí le mé féin a thógaint geite*
 the reason REL was with I myself PRT taking fright
 ('...the reason of myself becoming frightened') [Ó Siadhail 1989: 256]

It must be noted that if we are to seek here for a parallel to account for the nominatives in Hiberno-English, there is a twist to this explanation: the morphosyntactic categories instantiated by the pronoun forms do not match in a straightforward way. In fact, the Irish pronoun forms in question, the so-called disjunct forms *é* 'he', *í* 'she', *iad* 'they' etc., have sometimes even been described as accusative forms, and on the basis of this analysis the syntactic pattern in question has been described as “raising” (NOONAN 1995, DISTERHEFT 1982), just as if they resembled the exact opposite pattern in English, the one using accusative forms. More precisely, however, the Irish forms in question are better analysed as case-neutral, default forms (cf. WIGGER 1970: 36; CARNIE 1995: 160f.) They contrast with another set of pronouns, the so-called conjunct forms *sé/sí/siad*, which are used in most – but not all – subject positions: more precisely, they are used only when immediately adjacent to a finite verb. The distinction between the two sets can thus best be captured as one of mere surface morphological manifestation conditioned by rules of direct linear adjacency with a clitic host; it is not a distinction of case properly speaking. HARLEY (2000: 13f) proposes that the disjunct pronouns in these non-finite positions are in fact instantiations of structural nominative case in the sense of generative case theory. Following her, and *pace* CORRIGAN (2000: 92–94) and DUFFIELD (1993: 228), we can therefore conclude that

the structural parallel between Irish and Hiberno-English on the morphological level is in fact fairly close. Syntactically, the parallel can be stated descriptively by saying that both Hiberno-English and Irish allow for a subject position in non-finite clauses whose licensing conditions are defined solely in terms of clause-internal linear constituent order, and which are independent of external government configurations like those involved in the standard English ECM schema.

In terms of the construction-based model of interlingual identification proposed in the present work, we thus find a process rather similar to that described in the case of the prepositional aspect constructions. Irish, at the time of contact, already had a fairly large number of constructions connected together (though with individual differences) by common schema of a subordinated constituent consisting of a non-case-governed subject and a following predicate, juxtaposed without any overt morphological marking of government or case assignment. The group is shown in the partial inheritance graph in (37):

(37) Subordinating clause constructions in Irish



English, in turn, already happened to have a small number of (fairly marginal) constructions that could functionally and formally be identified as instantiations of the same type. Based on this identification bilingual speakers formed a representation of a corresponding schema (38) for English, to which other construction types were then formally assimilated.

(38) Subordinated non-finite clause schema:
... [NP_{Nom} VP_{nonfin}]

How, finally, would this situation be modelled in a generative approach? The morphosyntactic property implicated in these constructions is of the kind that formal grammar tends to treat as among the most central domains of parametric organisation in core grammar: case licensing on clausal subjects, that is, part of what is commonly known as the IP domain of clausal syntax. This is exactly the domain that is typically thought of as governed by UG parameters, as described by

KEMENADE & VINCENT (1997: 3): “that part of sentential structure where morphological information such as tense, agreement, main/subordinate are expressed”. In fact, at least one analysis (HARLEY 2000) has explicitly linked the contrast between Irish and standard English to one of the most central mechanisms conceivable in the Minimalist framework: a parametric difference in the working of the Extended Projection Principle (EPP). Based on a proposal in McCLOSKEY (1996), HARLEY (2000: 22) argues that the EPP (in the form of “EPP features” located on TP) is parametrised and that it is completely inactive in Irish. In the absence of the structural dictate of the EPP, according to her analysis, the free distribution of either nominative overt nominals or non-overt (PRO) subjects in non-finite positions follows from the case-assigning properties of Agr_SP. In standard English, on the other hand, non-finite clauses have a “[+null] EPP feature.” (HARLEY 2000: 22), which dictates that only the non-overt subject PRO or an outwardly governed (“Exceptional Case Marking”, ECM) accusative subject can appear in these clauses.

This proposal raises the interesting question of whether the corresponding structures in the non-finite Hiberno-English clauses can be ascribed to the same mechanism. As discussed above in section 1, according to the features-driven account of syntactic interference as proposed by authors such as SANCHEZ or BOLONYAI, we would expect that syntactic replication happens through the copying of identical structural configurations on the level of the most basic atomic underlying elements, i.e. structural features. On the other hand, if syntactic replication is driven by perceived similarity relations between surface constellations, then increased surface similarity but not necessarily underlying structural identity should be the expected structural outcome.

Unfortunately, neither HARLEY nor CARNIE discuss the Hiberno-English parallel of the nominative subjects. I am not aware of any formal discussion of the relationship between these and their Irish counterparts except for CORRIGAN (2000), who however identifies the Irish case forms as accusatives and thus recognises no structural parallel to account for. The empirical problem here is that any generative account of how subject case gets assigned in such a wide range of non-finite clauses is likely to imply far-reaching structural repercussions in other areas of the grammar. As the structural properties in question reach so far into what is typically regarded as the core realm of syntactic parameters, certainly involving feature configurations characterising the Infl domain, any change must be a profound one and we would expect to find bundles of phenomena parametrically linked with it. Thus, for instance, carrying over HARLEY’s proposal about the parametrised EPP to account for Hiberno-English is probably out of the question. In Irish, according to Harley, the phenomenon is parametrically linked to several others such as the absence of overt expletive subjects and the existence of subjectless impersonal constructions with unaccusative verbs. In English, absence of the EPP would be expected to have comparably far-reaching consequences, but none such can be observed – Hiberno-English is just as solidly a non-null-subject language as standard English is.

Apart from the case properties in non-finite clauses, Hiberno-English apparently does not display many phenomena of non-standard syntax of subjects. Probably the only candidates of phenomena that might conceivably be parametrically linked to

the nonfinite subjects issue are some of those discussed in HENRY (1995): phenomena relating to scope properties of negative-polarity subjects, subject-verb position in embedded questions, overt subjects of imperatives, and subject-verb agreement behaviour. However, independently of whether any link to these could be motivated by the theory, through whatever formal mechanism, none of them seems to correlate exactly with the nonfinite subjects issue empirically (most notably, HENRY does not find any indication of the nonfinite subjects phenomena in her present-day Belfast variety, and some of the other phenomena exist independently in other varieties too.) Incidentally, HENRY'S analysis would rule out one solution that one might otherwise consider for the nonfinite subjects: treating them as simply a divergent morphological realisation of a default-case assignment mechanism. HENRY'S analysis of verbal concord in Belfast English – a group of phenomena that Belfast English does share with many other forms of Irish English, including forms that have the nominative nonfinite subjects in question – relies crucially on the assumption that pronouns like *he*, *she*, *I*, *we* are in fact true structural nominatives, in contrast with other subject NPs which she analyses as default case.

4. Conclusions

Three case studies of nonstandard and apparently contact-related syntactic phenomena in Hiberno-English were presented. In all of them, the historical scenario reconstructed for their development has shown a complex interaction of language-internal and language-external factors, where processes of syntactic replication were intricately linked with structural developments that happened on the basis of existing morphosyntactic material in the receiving language. In all three of them, I have suggested that a relatively surface-oriented theoretical approach treating grammatical knowledge as construction-specific is descriptively better suited to capture the parallels between the languages and the resulting changes than a compositional/feature-based approach in the generative tradition.

In one case study, that of the prepositional aspect constructions, I argued that the construction-centred approach offered the most adequate way of modelling the factors that were most likely involved in making a certain type of construction a good candidate for structural borrowing and/or reinforcement: the perception of categorial relatedness across a loosely structured, not completely uniform, family of periphrastic constructions. Its semi-productive status in Irish to have been the factor behind the strengthening and increase in both frequency and productivity that its counterparts experienced in English.

In the second case study, that of the medial-object perfects, the focus was on the indirectness involved in the formal mechanisms of contact-induced change. Since contact-induced mechanisms may trigger functional processes of language-internal change, such as grammaticalisation, which operate on the basis of the existing material of the receiving language, the ultimate results of contact will include structures that need not necessarily closely match any of the donor language in precise formal terms. Languages, in other words, can come to do similar things

with entirely different means. While this entails a large role played by language-internal mechanisms of change, it nevertheless suggests that the whole dynamics of the process is triggered and controlled by cognitive links forged between elements of the two languages in question, as suggested by HEINE & KUTEVA (2005) in their model of “contact-induced grammaticalisation”. In keeping with assumptions current in grammaticalisation studies, I suggested that stored representations of construction-specific syntactic knowledge are the carriers of these cognitive links.

The third case study, of case usage in non-finite clauses, combines elements of both the previous ones. Like the first, it involves a situation where an existing but minor and marginal use pattern becomes strengthened and extended in frequency and productivity under the influence of a pattern in the model language, Irish. Like the second, it poses a complex question as to what extent the resulting Hiberno-English structure is formally and not just functionally identical to the model in Irish, and whether it can be modelled by means of a literal takeover of identical abstract formal elements from the one language to the other. In this case, it was argued that even though the formal match between the two languages is descriptively a close one – even closer than some of the relevant literature has assumed –, it is far from obvious how this correspondence could be modelled with identical formal means within a generative approach. This is because the high amount of abstractness and indirectness of explanations typically invoked in generative analyses makes it difficult to model identical surface effects when these are displayed only in a restricted domain of the grammar in two languages that are otherwise typologically dissimilar. However, as I would like to suggest, such changes that are construction-specific and apply to only isolated domains of the grammar without overtly affecting the totality of the system, may in fact be quite common in language contact scenarios.

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