

Irish English resumptive pronouns and Celtic contact: Implications on agreement and movement in relative clauses

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While Standard English prohibits the use of resumptive pronouns (RPs) in relative clauses, they can be used in everyday English (EvE) due to processing reasons (the RP is more likely to be inserted if the distance is longer between the filler and the gap and/or the higher the syntactic complexity is). This is shown in (1) below (Erteshik-Shir 1992). This distribution is confirmed by corpora (see Radford (2019) and by various experiments (e.g. Hofmeister and Norcliffe 2013). In (1), the relative clause is introduced by the complementiser *that*; the relative operator is covert and it undergoes successive cyclic movement to the highest (relative) clause:

- (1) a. This is the girl [that John likes ***her**].
 b. This is the girl [that Peter said [that John likes ?**her**]].
 c. This is the girl [that Peter said [that John thinks [that Paul likes ?**her**]]].

Agreement between the movement-triggering relative C head and the operator takes place via specifier-head agreement. That is, the filler-gap dependency arises via movement and independently of the RP: the RP has no interpretive function (Asudeh 2004). As such, it is not in complementary distribution with relative pronouns, as shown in (2) below (Ross 1967):

- (2) King Kong is a movie [which you'll laugh yourself sick] if you see **it**].

In IrE, see (3), the restrictions for EvE do not apply (examples from Filppula 2008):

- (3) a. They jumped banks that time on the race-course [that they wouldn't hunt over **them** today].
 b. But the course was there in the sandhills of Lahinch, now, across from the golf-course, [where the Sluagh hall is **there**], a grand flat, a grand, grand course.

Such patterns are well-established (Joyce 1988, Henry 1957, Harris 1993, Filppula 2008) and are assumed to be due to Celtic contact (Corrigan 2010, Filppula 2008).

Regarding Irish, RPs are assumed to be base-generated and not to pattern with gaps (McCloskey 2002, 2006, Asudeh 2012), see (4):

- (4) a. an scríbhneoir [a mholann na mic léinn]
 the writer aL praise the students
 'the writer whom the students praise' (McCloskey 1979)
 b. an scríbhneoir [a molann na mic léinn é]
 the writer aN praise the students him
 'the writer whom the students praise' (McCloskey 1979)

The complementiser (*aL* vs. *aN*) is sensitive to whether there is a filler-gap dependency involving operator movement (and hence specifier-head agreement in the CP), (4a), or whether there is a binder-resumptive dependency involving a RP but no operator movement, (4b): *aL* triggers lenition mutation on the following word, *aN* triggers a nasalisation mutation (McCloskey 1979, Asudeh 2012).

With *aN*, no movement operation takes place: while gaps in Irish are sensitive to Weak Crossover effects, (5a), RPs are not, (5b):

- (5) a. *fear [a d'fhág a bhean]
 man aL left his wife
 'a man that his wife left' (McCloskey 1990)
 b. fear [a d'fhág a bhean é]
 man aN left his wife
 'a man that his wife left' (McCloskey 1990)

In (5a), the construction is ungrammatical as the (covert) relative operator moves across the possessive pronoun *a* ‘his’; in (5b), there is no operator movement, and the structure converges.

IrE RPs pattern with (5b), see (6) below (Filppula 2008, citing Joyce 1988):

(6) there’s a man [that his wife leaves **him** whenever she pleases]

At the same time, relative pronouns can co-occur with RPs, see (3b), as in EvE. Given this, I argue that IrE has a mixed system: RPs can be inserted merely due to processing reasons but they also have an Irish-like grammatical status. Contrary to Filppula (2008), who claims that RPs are prevalent in other Celtic Englishes as well, I argue that IrE is special among Celtic Englishes as RPs are practically unattested in Welsh English and in Scottish English (Kortmann et al. 2020). I attribute this asymmetry to two factors: (i) RPs are less attested in Welsh and in Scottish Gaelic and (ii) Scottish English is not a high-contact variety, unlike IrE. That is, the mixed IrE system has a different underlying grammar from EvE due to the intense contact; at the same time, resumption per se was not unattested in the English system either, so that the analogical base for the extended (contact-induced) resumption pattern was already given.

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