

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

Julia Bacskai-Atkari

University of Amsterdam / University of Potsdam

j.bacskaiatkari@uva.nl / julia.bacskai-atkari.1@uni-potsdam.de

The Linguistics Association of Great Britain and Northern Ireland Annual Conference 2023
(LAGB 2023)

Cambridge, 29 August – 1 September 2023

1 Introduction

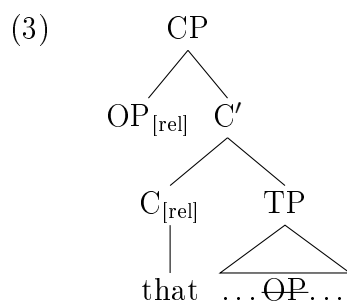
relative clauses contain a gap:

- (1) a. This is the table [that I bought _____ yesterday].
b. *I bought yesterday.

filler of the gap: the head noun in relative clauses

- (2) This is **the table**_i [OP_i that I bought ______i yesterday].

movement of an empty operator in *that*-relatives (see Chomsky 1977) triggered by the C head → specifier-head agreement with the operator



gap not filled by a resumptive pronoun in Standard English:

- (4) *This is the table [that I bought **it** yesterday].

→ question: whether the filler-gap dependency differs in Irish English, a variety allowing resumption

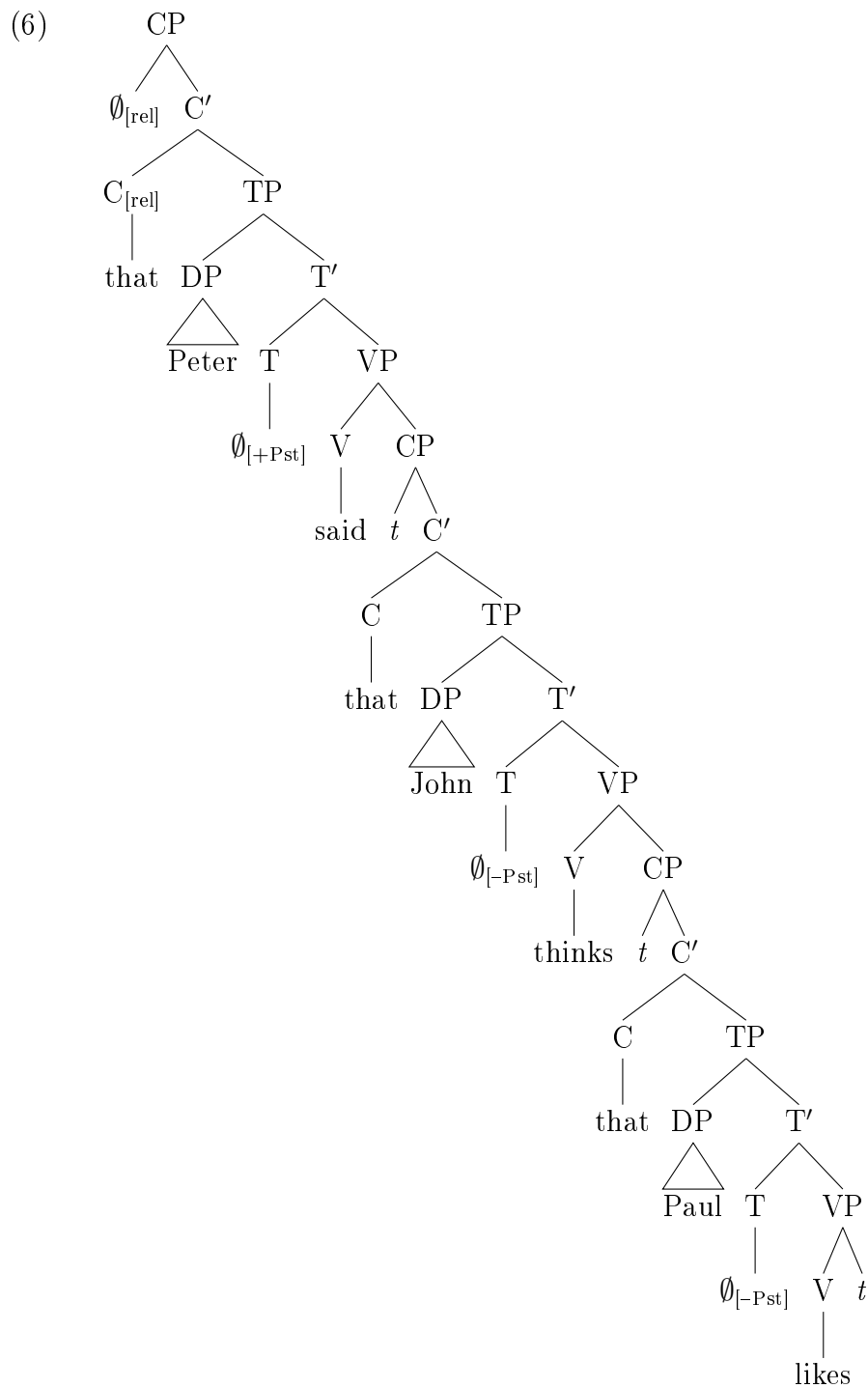
proposal: Irish English has a mixed system using both filler-gap and binder-resumptive dependencies

2 Resumption in Everyday English

resumption possible in Everyday English (term following Radford 2019) due to processing reasons (Erteshik-Shir 1992):

- (5) 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**]]].

structure:



distribution confirmed empirically:

- corpora (see Radford 2019)
- experiments (e.g. Hofmeister & Norcliffe 2013)

covert relative operator undergoing successive cyclic movement to the highest (relative) clause – movement regularly triggered by a [rel] C head

→ regular specifier-head agreement takes place

→ filler-gap dependency arises via movement and independently of the resumptive pronoun – the resumptive pronoun has no interpretive function (Asudeh 2004)

further evidence: resumptive pronoun not in complementary distribution with relative pronouns

- (7) King Kong is a movie [which you'll laugh yourself sick [if you see **it**]].
(Ross 1967)

→ resumptive pronouns in Everyday English do not affect the properties of the gap

3 Resumption in Irish English

restrictions in Everyday English do not apply in Irish English:

- (8) a. They jumped banks that time on the race-course [that they wouldn't hunt over **them** today].
(Wicklow: D.M.; Filppula 2008: 341)
- 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.
(Clare: F.K.; Filppula 2008: 341)

such patterns well-established in Irish English (Joyce 1988, Henry 1957, Harris 1993, Filppula 2008)

assumption: pattern due to Celtic contact (Corrigan 2010, Filppula 2008)

→ questions:

- what the Irish system is like
- what the Celtic systems are like
- how other Celtic Englishes behave
- contact effect: surface similarity versus core grammatical properties affected

the differences from Everyday English suggest potential grammatical differences (lack of distance effect)

4 Resumption in Irish

relative clauses in Irish may contain a resumptive pronoun:

- (9) 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)

differences in the complementiser reflected on the following element (McCloskey 1979, Asudeh 2012):

- *aL*: triggers a lenition mutation; shows specifier-head agreement
- *aN*: triggers a nasalisation mutation

differences in dependencies (McCloskey 2002; 2006, Asudeh 2012):

- *aL*: filler-gap dependency (with operator movement)
- *aN*: binder-resumptive dependency (no operator movement)

→ resumptive pronouns in Irish do not pattern with gaps

test for movement: Weak Crossover effects

- (10) a. Who_i t_i likes his_i mother?
b. ??Who_i does his_i mother like t_i?

configuration in (10a): coreference possible:

- *who* c-commands *his* in the lower [Spec,TP] position
- A-binding possible: [Spec,TP] is an A-position

configuration in (10b): coreference not possible (or unlikely):

- *who* cannot c-command *his* in its base position
- A-binding from [Spec,CP] not possible: [Spec,CP] not an A-position
- note: *his* does not c-command the trace of *who* either (no Principle C violation)

problem arises due to movement, i.e. *who* crossing over *his*:

- (11) **His** wife left **him** and Bonvin underwent a crisis and had difficulties concentrating on his work.
(<https://www.art-directory.info/fine-art/francois-bonvin-1817/index.shtml>)

gaps in Irish are sensitive to Weak Crossover effects, unlike resumptive pronouns:

- (12) 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 him
'a man that his wife left' (McCloskey 1990)

→ Irish resumptive pronouns have a different grammatical status – not merely inserted for processing reasons

5 Contact and the mixed system of Irish English

resumptive pronouns pattern with Irish regarding Weak Crossover effects:

- (13) there's a man [that his wife leaves **him** whenever she pleases]
(Filppula 2008, citing Joyce 1988)

→ Irish English resumptive pronouns show a binder-resumptive dependency (just like Irish)

at the same time: operator movement attested:

- (14) 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.
(Clare: F.K.; Filppula 2008: 341)

→ Irish English resumptive pronouns show a filler-gap dependency (just like Everyday English, but without distance effect)

→ mixed system with two kinds of dependencies

role of language contact:

- making a further grammatical option available (binder-resumptive dependency)
- extended use of resumptive pronouns also in filler-gap dependencies (i.e. without distance effect) – potential effect from binder-resumptive dependencies

→ analogical base for the extended (contact-induced) resumption pattern already given

question: whether the same effects can be observed in other Celtic Englishes

Filppula (2008): resumptive pronouns prevalent in other Celtic Englishes as well

↔ eWAVE: resumptive pronouns practically unattested in Welsh English and in Scottish English (Kortmann et al. 2020)

case of Scottish English:

- Scottish English not a high-contact L1 variety (categorised as “traditional L1” by Kortmann et al. 2020)
- resumptive pronouns not common in Scottish Gaelic: not attested with direct objects either (Adger & Ramchand 2005: 179) – possible with prepositions (Adger & Ramchand 2001; see also Rouveret 2011 for discussion)

ungrammatical resumption in Scottish Gaelic:

- (15) *an duine a chunnaic mi e
the man REL saw I him
‘the man that I saw’ (Adger & Ramchand 2005: 179)

case of Welsh English:

- Welsh English is a high-contact L1 variety (Kortmann et al. 2020)
- resumptive pronouns not as common in Welsh as in Irish: not attested with direct objects either (Willis 2000: 543–546) – in Irish, only subjects are excluded

ungrammatical resumption in Welsh:

- (16) *y dyn y mae Wyn wedi ei weld ef
the man REL is Wyn PERF 3SM.GEN see.VN him
‘the man that Wyn has seen’
(Willis 2000: 544, citing De Freitas & Noonan 1993: 55)

→ resumption pattern in Irish English is not a “Celtic contact effect”

6 Conclusion

status of resumptive pronouns in Irish English

- mixed system – properties of Everyday English and of Irish
- compatible with relative pronouns – filler-gap dependency
- otherwise: wider distribution, patterning with Irish
- same setup not attested in other Celtic Englishes

→ role of language contact: contributing to a wider distribution of a pattern for which the analogical base was already given

References

- Adger, David & Gillian Ramchand. 2001. Phases and interpretability. In *Proceedings of WCCFL 20*, 1–14. Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Press.
- Adger, David & Gillian Ramchand. 2005. Merge and move: Wh-dependencies revisited. *Linguistic Inquiry* 36(2). 161–193.
- Asudeh, Ash. 2004. *Resumption as resource management*: Stanford University dissertation.
- Asudeh, Ash. 2012. *The logic of pronominal resumption*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chomsky, Noam. 1977. On *wh*-movement. In Peter W. Culicover, Thomas Wasow & Adrian Akmajian (eds.), *Formal syntax*, 71–132. New York, NY: Academic Press.
- Corrigan, Karen P. 2010. *Irish English 1: Northern Ireland*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- De Freitas, Leslie & Máire Noonan. 1993. Head movement, agreement, and negation in Welsh relatives. In Lise M. Dobrin, Lynn Nichols & Rosa M. Rodriguez (eds.), *Papers from the 27th Regional Meeting of the Chicago Linguistics Society, Part II: The Parasession on Negation*, 49–64. Chicago: Chicago Linguistic Society.
- Erteshik-Shir, Nomi. 1992. Resumptive pronouns in islands. In Helen Goodluck & Michael Rochemont (eds.), *Island constraints: Theory, acquisition and processing*, 89–108. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Filppula, Markku. 2008. Irish English: Morphology and syntax. In Bernd Kortmann & Clive Upton (eds.), *Varieties of English 1: The British Isles*, 328–359. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Harris, John. 1993. The grammar of Irish English. In James Milroy & Lesley Milroy (eds.), *Real English*, 139–186. London: Longman.
- Henry, Patrick L. 1957. *An Anglo-Irish dialect of North Roscommon*: University of Zurich dissertation.
- Hofmeister, Philip & Elisabeth Norcliffe. 2013. Does resumption facilitate sentence comprehension? In Philip Hofmeister & Elisabeth Norcliffe (eds.), *The core and the periphery: Data-driven perspectives on syntax inspired by Ivan A. Sag*, 225–246. Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications.
- Joyce, Patrick Weston. 1988. *English as we speak it in Ireland*. London: Longman.
- Kortmann, Bernd, Kerstin Lunkenheimer & Katharina Ehret. 2020. eWAVE: The Electronic World Atlas of Varieties of English. <https://ewave-atlas.org/>.
- McCloskey, James. 1979. *Transformational Syntax and Model Theoretic Semantics: A case-study in Modern Irish*. Dordrecht: D. Reidel.
- McCloskey, James. 1990. Resumptive pronouns, \bar{A} -binding and levels of representation in Irish. In Randall Hendrick (ed.), *The syntax of the Modern Celtic languages*, 199–248. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- McCloskey, James. 2002. Resumption, successive cyclicity, and the locality of operations. In Samuel David Epstein & T. Daniel Seeley (eds.), *Derivation and explanation in the Minimalist Program*, 184–226. Oxford: Blackwell.
- McCloskey, James. 2006. Resumption. In Martin Everaert & Henk van Riemsdijk (eds.), *The Blackwell companion to syntax, Vol. I*, 94–117. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Radford, Andrew. 2019. *Relative clauses: Structure and variation in Everyday English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ross, John Robert. 1967. *Constraints on variables in syntax*: MIT dissertation.
- Rouveret, Alain. 2011. Some issues in the theory of resumption: A perspective on early

and recent research. In Alain Rouveret (ed.), *Resumptive pronouns at the interfaces*, 1–62. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Willis, David. 2000. On the distribution of resumptive pronouns and *wh*-trace in Welsh. *Journal of Linguistics* 36. 531–573.