The Syntax of Irish Gaelic

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Background

Contemporary Irish survives as three major dialect-groups – northern, western and southern. These dialect areas are not contiguous, mutual intelligibility is not guaranteed, and there are rich patterns of morphosyntactic variation among them. In their broad typological profile, however, the surviving dialects do not differ greatly. All are verb-initial in their finite clauses, for instance, and all show VSO (verb-subject-complement) order in their transitive finite clauses:[1]

(1)   d' fhreagair   sé an garsún.
        TM1 answer.PAST he the boy
        'He answered the boy.'

Irish, therefore, is a member of a significant minority group – languages in which the finite verb precedes its subject. Current estimates (see for instance Dryer (2013)) suggest that such languages represent roughly 13% of the world's languages. The insular Celtic languages aside, verb-initial languages are not attested in Europe or in mainland Asia; they are very common, however, among the Austronesian languages of the Pacific and in two areas of the American continent – in the Pacific northwest and in Central America. They are also found in northern and eastern Africa and it is widely assumed that verb-initial order was more widespread in North Africa and the Middle East in earlier times than it is today.

But within this group, Irish is atypical in insisting on the order of (1). Many languages of the verb-initial type allow fairly free alternation between VSO and orders in which objects or other complements may intervene between verb and subject. Irish, though, insists on a tight bond between the finite verb and the subject to its right, allowing the two to be separated only under very circumscribed conditions. Postposing of the subject is possible in all dialects, but is licit only in a narrow range of contexts (existential and presentational):[2]

(2) a. shiúil   amach rompu   beirt fhear armáilte
        walk.PAST out   before-them two   man armed
        'Two armed men walked out in front of them'   LNT 131
    b. do leath   eadrainn an sgéal go raibh sé ag   dul   chun báis
        TM1 spread.PAST among-us the story C be.PAST he PROG go.VN to   death.GEN
        'The story spread among us that he was going to his death.'   MSF 210

Such perturbations, furthermore, are impossible in transitive clauses and so never yield the VOS order often observed in other verb-initial languages.

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[1] See Appendix A for an explanation of the conventions used in glossing examples.

[2] When examples are cited from published sources, that is indicated by way of a tag consisting of an abbreviation of the title followed by a page number. The abbreviations are explained in Appendix B.

HEAD INITIAL SYNTAX

Irish resembles other verb-initial languages, however, in being strongly head-initial throughout its phrase-structure system: verbs precede their complements, adpositions precede their objects, degree-words precede adjective phrases, adjectives precede their complements and complementizers precede the sentential complements they introduce.

(3) a. go [Doire]
        to Derry
        'to Derry'   PREPOSITION PRECEDES ITS NOMINAL COMPLEMENT
    b. an [cogadh domhanda]
        the war   global
        'the world war'   DETERMINER PRECEDES ITS NOMINAL COMPLEMENT
    c. iontach [déanfasach]
        very   industrious
        'very industrious'   DEGREE-WORD PRECEDES ITS ADJECTIVAL COMPLEMENT
    d. saor [ó   pheaca]
        free   from sin
        'free of sin'   ADJECTIVE PRECEDES ITS PREPOSITIONAL COMPLEMENT
    e. suim   [sa   cheol]
        interest in-the music
        'interest in music'   NOUN PRECEDES ITS PREPOSITIONAL COMPLEMENT
    f. an [nglacfá   liom   ]
        C.Q take.COND.S2 with-me
        'Would you accept me?' COMPLEMENTIZER PRECEDES ITS SENTENTIAL COMPLEMENT

There are, though, certain apparent exceptions to this otherwise regular pattern. For the most part, the nominal subsystem has exactly the properties one would expect. We see in (3b) that determiners precede nominal phrases and in (3e) that nouns precede their complements. Head nouns, in addition, precede attributive modifiers (adjectives and relative clauses).

(4) an fear mór láidir groí   a bhí   i mo chomhluadar
     the man big strong hearty C be.PAST in my company
     'the big strong hearty man who was in my company'

The demonstrative particles, though, and the universal quantifer *uilig*, despite the fact that both seem to be heads of their phrases, appear further to the right and often in phrase-final position:

(5) a. an fear mór láidir groí   seo
        the man big strong hearty DEMON
        'this big strong hearty man'
    b. na   daoine   misniúla   sin
        the.PL people.PL courageous.PL DEMON
        'those courageous people'
    c. na   daoine   saibhre seo   uilig
        the.PL person.PL rich.PL DEMON all
        'all these rich people'

See Doyle (2002: Chap. 5) for detailed discussion and Adger (2013) for analogous observations for Scots Gaelic; Doyle (2002) develops an interesting proposal for how this apparent anomaly might be resolved in Irish. The larger point, however, remains – Irish is, in the main, a thoroughly head-initial language, a fact which will be important in the discussion which follows.

HEAD MARKING

Along another typological dimension – the distinction between head-marking and dependent-marking – varieties of Irish are also strikingly consistent. They are all strongly head-marking.

Many syntactic relationships may be conceived of as dependencies between a head (a lexical item) and a phrase with which that head interacts. Verbs interact with their objects, prepositions interact with their objects, possessive markers within nominal phrases interact with possessors and so on. Such interactions are frequently marked overtly by morphological means – case on a nominal phrase, or agreement morphology on a head. A preposition may assign a particular case to its object or a verb might assign accusative case to its direct object. These are instances of *dependent-marking*. Alternatively, the relationship between the head and the phrase it interacts with can be marked on the head. A preposition may agree with its object; or a verb may agree with its direct object (giving 'object agreement'). A possessive particle may agree with the possessor within a nominal phrase, giving rise to 'possessor agreement'. All of these possibilities are commonly attested and they are instances of *head-marking*.[3]

Since its introduction (see Nichols (1986)), this distinction between two ways of formally marking a dependency has proven its usefulness especially in historical and typological studies (for a recent overview, see Nichols and Bickel (2013a,b,c)). In the case of Irish, the distinction highlights one of the most distinctive (and theoretically interesting) aspects of its syntax – the system of person-number marking.

Across five apparently disparate contexts in Irish we see a system in which features of person, number (and sometimes gender) are marked on a head and reflect properties of a pronominal argument to its right. These contexts are illustrated in (6a-e).

(6) SUBJECTS OF FINITE CLAUSES

  a. **Labhradar** leis na comhairleoirí.
      spoke.PAST.P3 with the councilors
      'They spoke with the councilors.'
      OBJECTS OF PREPOSITIONS

  b. D' fhéach mo mháthair **orm**.
      TM1 look.PAST my mother on.S1
      'My mother looked at me.'
      POSSESSORS IN NOMINAL PHRASES

  c. **Ár** n-arán laethúil.
      P1 bread daily
      'Our daily bread.'
      OBJECTS IN NONFINITE CLAUSES

  d. I ndiaidh na péas **m'** fheiceáil.
      after   the police S1 see.VN
      'after the police saw me'
      OBJECTS IN PROGRESSIVE ASPECT STRUCTURES

  e. Bhí siad (dho-) **mo** mholadh.
      were they   S1 praise.VN
      'They were praising me.'

Such synthetic forms exist alongside analytic forms which express no person or number features:

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[3]Head-marking and dependent-marking need not be mutually exclusive – the syntactic relationship between a head and its dependent phrase might be signalled simultaneously on both elements, or on neither.
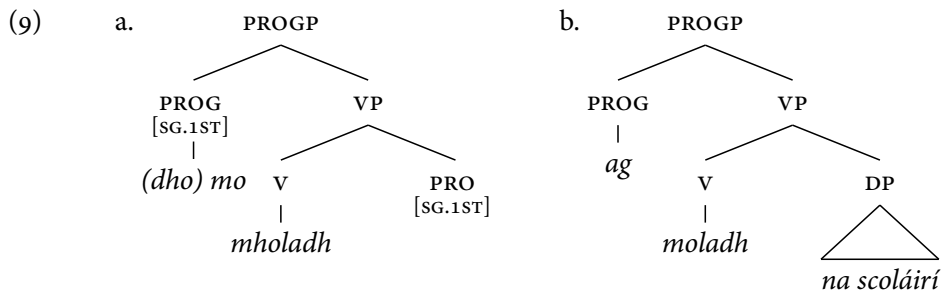
(7) a. **Labhair** sé leis na comhairleoirí.
         spoke.PAST he with the councilors
         'He spoke with the councilors.'

     b. D' fhéach   mo mháthair **ar** an leabhar.
         TM1 look.PAST my mother   on the book
         'My mother looked at the book.'

     c. ∅ arán laethúil na   ndaoine.
           bread daily   the.GEN people.GEN
         'The daily bread of the people.'

     d. I ndiaidh na péas iad **a** fheiceáil.
         after   the police them VCE see.VN
         'after the police saw me'

     e. Bhí siad **ag** moladh na   scoláirí.
         were they PROG praise.VN the.PL student.PL
         'They were praising the students.'

These patterns have attracted a great deal of productive attention from theoreticians (McCloskey and Hale (1984), McCloskey (1986), Hale (1987, 1990), Guilfoyle (1990), Andrews (1990), Legate (1999), Acquaviva (2000, 2001), Doyle (2002), Ackema and Neeleman (2003), Brennan (2008), Diertani (2011)). For our limited purposes here it will be enough to highlight them as instances of head-marking. The pattern that unifies them is that in (8):

(8) $\begin{matrix} \text{H} \\ [\phi] \end{matrix}$ $\cdots$ $\begin{matrix} \text{PRO} \\ [\phi] \end{matrix}$

The formula in (8) uses the conventional abbreviation ϕ to indicate any combination of person, number and gender features. H represents any of the heads which has a synthetic form and so may bear those ϕ-features – a preposition ((6b)), a possessive determiner ((6c)), a marker of transitive voice in nonfinite clauses ((6d)) or a marker of progressive aspect ((6e)). We will return to the question of what the relevant head is in the case of subjects of finite clauses. PRO is a silent pronoun which appears (potentially at some distance) to the right of the synthetic head and it is the dependent element in the interaction (subject, object or possessor phrase). The synthetic head and the dependent pronoun agree – they share values for ϕ and those features have semantic effect only for the silent pronoun. The synthetic forms of the progressive head ((6e)) and the voice head in nonfinite clauses ((6d)) are syncretic with those of the possessive determiner – a survival reflecting the older nominal syntax of verbal noun constructions.

Within this framework we can represent the structure of the progressive examples in (6e) and (7e) as in (9a) and (9b) respectively (the other cases involve more complex internal syntax and are best set aside for now). The syntax is head-initial throughout.

(9)   a.   b.

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            PROGP                                    PROGP
           /     \                                  /     \
       PROG       VP                            PROG       VP
      [SG.1ST]   /  \                            |        /  \
         |      V    PRO                         ag      V    DP
     (dho) mo   |   [SG.1ST]                          moladh   /\
              mholadh                                        na scoláirí
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The presence of the pronoun in such structures, though null, is signalled unambiguously by the appearance of elements which otherwise attach only to pronouns – among others, the contrastive

suffixes which 'augment' simple pronouns. The general form of such cases is as in (10).

(10) $\overset{\text{H}}{[\phi]}$ … $\overset{\text{PRO}}{[\phi]} + \overset{\text{AUG}}{[\phi]}$

Typical examples from the three major dialects are presented in (11).

(11) a.   do phaidir bheag, bhochta -sa
          S2 prayer little   poor   CONTR .S2
          'Your poor little prayer'   EMPP 112

     b.   do chrága móra místuama   gránna -sa
          S2 claw.PL big.PL awkward.PL ugly.PL CONTR .S2
          'your big ugly awkward hands'   EBS 48

     c.   ag   caitheamh dabht ar ár luacha beatha -na
          PROG cast.VN   doubt on P1 value.PL life.GEN CONTR .P1
          'casting doubt on our life values'   LG 383

The presence of the null pronoun in the predicted position is signalled more dramatically still by the fact that it may coordinate freely with overt nominal phrases. Such examples have the form in (12) and they involve agreement with the first conjunct only.

(12) $\overset{\text{H}}{[\phi]}$ …   [$\overset{\text{PRO}}{[\phi]}$ *agus*   NOMINAL PHRASE]

(13) a.   eatarthu   agus an reilig
          between.P3 and the graveyard
          'between them and the graveyard'   GB 34

     b.   im   shúile -se   agus na   bhflaitheas
          in-my eye.PL CONTR .S1 and the.GEN heavens.GEN
          'in my eyes and those of the heavens'   NBN 44

     c.   sa   leoraí a bhí   dhá thabhairt fhéin, Klaus is   na   pictiúir go Gaillimh
          in-the lorry C be.PAST MS3 bring.VN REFL.LOG   and the.PL picture.PL to Galway
          'in the lorry that was bringing him, Klaus and the pictures to Galway'   NGTTS 94

DEPENDENT MARKING

If Irish is rich in head-marking, it is strikingly sparing in its use of dependent marking. Modern varieties in particular make do with a very spartan array of case distinctions. Most descriptions distinguish only common and genitive cases. And in many contexts in which genitive might be expected, it fails to appear – even in conservative idiolects and especially in nominal phrases whose internal structure is complex. In (14), genitive marking might be expected following the compound prepositions *i ndiaidh* and *in aghaidh*; it does not appear. In (15), normative grammars would demand genitive case on the direct object in a progressive structure; it does not appear.

(14) a.   i ndiaidh an gealltanas a thug   an sagart do mo mháthair
          after   the promise   C give.PAST the priest to my mother
          'in spite of the promise that the priest gave to my mother'   NBMO 39

     b.   in aghaidh do   thoil
          against   your will
          'against your will'   SMC 207

(15) a.   ag   baint an fhuil as   an eallach
          PROG take.VN the blood out-of the cattle
          'taking the blood out of the cattle'   GOG 37

b. ag   seinnt an fonn mall 'Leaving Lerwick Harbour'
PROG play.VN the air   slow
'playing the slow air *Leaving Lerwick Harbour*'   IB 190

Care is needed in assessing the syntactic implications of such facts however. Genitive case can be detected not just in nominal inflection but also in patterns of initial mutation. And as Diarmuid Ó Sé and Chonchúr Ó Giollagáin (1999: 312-314) have pointed out, the signature initial mutations associated with genitive case often appear even when genitive inflection is absent:

(16) a. ag   líonadh na bpoill   bheaga
PROG fill.VN   the hole.PL little.PL
'filling the little holes'   MABAT 136
b. go dtí aimsir an chogadh
until time the war
'until the time of the war'   SMC 173
c. Sheas   sé os cionn an tseanfhear.
stand.PAST he over   the old-man
'He stood over the old man.'   (Ó Curnáin, 2007: Volume One, p. 508)

In (16a), although the object is in common case, it undergoes eclipsis (nasalization) as appropriate for the genitive plural; in (16b) the possessor is uninflected but is lenited as appropriate for a genitive singular noun. It seems then that genitive must be recognized as a *syntactic* case even for some idiolects and registers in which it is rarely realized by nominal inflection.

Similar caution is needed in assessing whether or not a 'dative' or 'prepositional' case should be recognized. As an inflectional form, prepositional case survives only for a handful of second declension nouns and in the most conservative idiolects (see Ó Curnáin (2007: Volume One, p. 512) or Ó Buachalla (2016: 7-8)). A distinctive pattern of initial mutation, however, (lenition or nasalization following certain preposition-determiner sequences) is probably best analyzed as a reflection of prepositional case. The relevant patterns are exemplified in (17), in which adjectives following masculine nouns are lenited if they are objects of a preposition.

(17) a. sa   teach mhór fholamh
in-the house big   empty
'in the big empty house'   MCL 386
b. leis   an tsaol bheag shuarach seo
with the life   little petty   DEMON
'with this petty little life'   SUSS 30

Jason Ostrove (2020) argues that this pattern is best understood as a morphological reflection of prepositional case (see also Carnie (2008) for general discussion).[4]

At least three *syntactic* cases (common, genitive and prepositional) should be recognized for contemporary varieties of Irish then. Much work in theoretical syntax (my own included), though, also assumes a distinct nominative case. The evidence for this claim, however, remains weak. Only third person pronouns show distinct 'nominative' forms – they have an initial *s* which other forms lack:

(18) a. Chonaic siad é.
see.PAST they him
'They saw him.'

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[4]Ostrove's paper deals with Scots Gaelic but the analysis extend straightforwardly to Irish.

b. Chonaic sé iad.
see.PAST he them
'He saw them.'

A widely adopted alternative view is that the *s*-initial forms are allomorphic variants of common case forms, which appear only when the pronoun is adjacent to the finite verb (see, for instance, Ó Siadhail (1989: 339) or the more nuanced discussion in Ó Sé (2000: 155-156)).

I will not try to resolve this issue here, but I will observe that the *s*-initial forms have a broader distribution than is often recognized. They appear in certain coordination structures:

(19) D' fhág   sise   cúig chéad   déag punta ina diaidh agus seisean   dhá
      TM1 leave.PAST she.CONTR five hundred ten   pounds after-her   and he.CONTR two
      mhíle   is   corradh.
      thousand and addition
      'She left fifteen hundred pounds and he more than two thousand.'   CCC 170

Ó Sé is also careful to note that in the variety he describes certain parenthetical elements may intervene between the finite verb and the *s*-form pronoun in subject position (see his (20a)); this is also true for the other major dialect-groups, as shown in (20b) and (20c):

(20) a. Thóg   ambaist sé tamall fada.
         take.PAST really   it time   long
         'It really took a long time.'   Ó Sé (2000: p. 156)
     b. Dúirt, a mh'anam, sí é!
         say.PAST my-soul   she it
         'She certainly did say it.'   AN 337
     c. Beidh, cinnte,   sé ag rialú.
         be.FUT certainly he PROG rule.VN
         'He certainly will be ruling.'   UMI 24

There are also dialects in which the *s*-initial forms (when augmented by a contrastive suffix) may appear in possessor position, if they are governed by a third person possessive determiner (de Bhaldraithe (1953: 236), McCloskey and Hale (1984), Legate (1999), Doyle (2002: 192–200)):

(21) a. ar a son siadsan
         on P3 sake they.CONTR
         'for their sake'   RNAG 2-11-05
     b. a lámha seisean
         MS3 hand.PL he.CONTR
         'his hands'   MABAT 238
     c. ar a   teanga sise
         on FS3 tongue she.CONTR
         'on her tongue'   CGC 64

Whatever mechanism accounts for the distribution of *s*-initial forms, then, must be more complex than a requirement that they appear 'when they follow directly a finite verbal form' (Ó Siadhail's (1989: 339) formulation).

My own assessment is that the question of the status of nominative case in Irish remains open. But if the final conclusion is that the *s*-initial third person forms reflect syntactic mechanisms like those responsible for nominative case in other languages, the theory of case must allow a significant distance between the syntactic property of being 'nominative' and its morphological

reflection. Julie Legate (2008) argues, on entirely independent grounds, for such a view. Ostrove (2020) makes a similar argument on the basis of prepositional case in Scots Gaelic. Our earlier discussion of genitive case in Irish implies a similar conclusion.

Returning now to more central themes, however, we are brought to a view of Irish syntax in which it is shaped by certain core properties (shared, of course, with many other languages) – it is strongly head-initial; it consistently favours head-marking over dependent-marking; and its morphological system makes very few case distinctions.[5]

Finite Clauses

How might we understand the verb-initial character of Irish (an historical and areal anomaly), given this typological background and the mechanisms of current syntactic theory?[6]

Since the advent of the 'Minimalist Program' for syntax (Chomsky (2000, 2001)), research on the composition of clauses has centered on the idea of an *extended projection* – a sequence of (closed-class) lexical items whose relative order and combinatorial properties play a crucial role in guiding the unfolding of full clausal structures. A sequence along the lines of (22) can be discerned in languages of very different types:

(22)   Complementizer (C)⌒Tense-Modality (TM)⌒Polarity (POL)⌒Aspect (ASP)⌒Verb (V).

Beginning at the top, the class C includes various elements which encode subordination and force – declarative, interrogative or imperative. Such elements close off the extended projection. They also have other functions, which we will discuss presently. At the bottom is the single open-class category in the sequence. Verbs (V) define the predicative core of a clause by projecting a verb phrase (VP) containing its main predicate and the arguments – subject and complements – that it selects. In semantic terms it defines the kind of eventuality (event, or state, or process) with which the clause is concerned. Above V, we find aspect markers (ASP), which define the internal temporal structure of the eventuality denoted by the VP – whether it is point-like, for instance, or smeared across an interval as in the case of an imperfective aspect like progressive. Tense-modality elements (TM) anchor the described eventuality to a particular time and possible world. Then polarity particles (negative and positive) form propositions – expressions which can be true or false and which can therefore be used to make assertions. The subordinate declarative clause of the English example in (23), for example:

(23)   It's clear [that Sinéad will not be writing a novel].

expresses the proposition that there is in the future of the actual world no extended writing event in which Sinéad is the agent (the writer) and in which the thing being written is a novel.

That clause can be viewed as being elaborated from a skeleton like (24), in which various specific choices have been made from the lexical classes laid out in (22):

(24)   [[$_C$ that] …] [$_{TM}$ will] … [$_{POL}$ not] … [$_{ASP}$ be] … [$_V$ writing]]

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[5]The inventory of structural cases in Irish would be considerably larger if we were to take certain apparent prepositional phrases to be nominal phrases preceded by case-marking prefixes – Grimshaw's (1991) KP's. Arguing for this point of view, Borgstrøm (1968) identifies thirteen distinct cases for Irish; Ahlqvist (1974) shows that this view was well established in the Irish grammatical tradition from the earliest period.

[6]By 'syntactic theory' here, I mean the intellectual tradition of generative grammar, as it has developed from Chomsky's seminal work. There are of course alternative theoretical frameworks (for work on Irish in those alternative frameworks see, for instance, Andrews (1990), Carnie (2005), Nolan (2006, 2012), Asudeh (2012)). It is undeniable, though, that the majority of work done on Irish syntax over the last several decades has been done in the framework of 'mainstream generative grammar'. That body of work will therefore be my focus in what follows.

Each head in the sequence of (24) in turn imposes its own selectional requirements (the set of phrases it requires or allows in its local domain) and it is in virtue of those requirements that the other core elements (subjects, objects, complements) appear in various positions.

It is a very welcome entailment of this conception that informal terms like 'sentence' and 'clause' lose their special status. 'Sentences' are phrases whose head is a marker of tense-modality – a TMP. The term 'clause' is a nickname for CP – a phrase whose head is a complementizer. There is more at stake in this conceptual shift than naming conventions; phrases of the type TMP or CP ('sentences' and 'clauses'), rather then being privileged or exceptional, are composed by structure-building mechanims that are general and regular.

There is spirited debate about what the range of permitted variation is across languages with respect to (22). But the distinction between head-initial and head-final languages is clearly crucial in shaping that variation. The sequence (22) and its specific English realization in (24) is defined in terms of relative prominence, not linear order. That is, the intended claim is that each element of the sequence is a head which takes as its complement a phrase whose head is, in turn, the next element in the sequence. All of the elements in C, for instance, will take complements whose head is a TM-element. Since the central concept in defining (22) is the head-complement relation, its actual realization in a given language will be sensitive to how heads are ordered with respect to their complements in that language. The left to right order presented in (24) is found in head-initial languages like English or Chamorro. In a consistently head-final language, such as Turkish or Japanese, we expect the mirror-image order:

(25)   [SUBJ ... OBJ ... V ... ASP ... POL ... TM ... C]

This is indeed the pattern that is largely observed, allowance made for other kinds of permitted variation.

Among those 'other kinds of permitted variation' are mechanisms which determine how the elements of (22) are given form. The components of an extended projection like (22) are atoms of the syntactic system. But those atoms will not always be realized as free-standing words, as they are in (24). Depending on the morphological and phonological resources of the language in question, those atoms might be realized as free-standing words (as auxiliary verbs perhaps) or as invariant particles (like English *not*) or as affixes within morphologically complex words. Many languages deploy a process by which the disparate atoms of the clausal skeleton are folded up into 'inflected verbs'. In the framework we are describing, inflected verbs arise when V first raises to the ASP-position, the V-ASP complex then moves on to the T-position and so on. The end-result is a complex morphological word which has, say, the internal form in (26):

(26)   V-ASP-T

in which the internal order of its constituent morphemes is the mirror-image of their position in the extended projection. The mechanism responsible for creations like (26) is *head-movement*. We will have more to say about these matters when we focus on the internal structure of finite clauses in Irish.[7]

Other aspects of variation have their source in combinatorial properties of the elements which make up the clausal skeleton. A core commitment is the idea that at the heart of every clause is a phrase which includes (as its head) the main predicate, along with the subject and complements of that predicate. The idea that subjects begin their syntactic careers in this innermost domain is known as the *Internal Subject Hypothesis* and few theorical innovations have been so productive. Consider the English alternation in (27).

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[7]For an overview of the status of head-movement and for some important proposals about its typology, see Gribanova and Harizanov (2018).

(27) a.   There were [_{VP} many people waiting for me].
      b.   Many people were [_{VP} _ waiting for me].

In (27a) the subject *many people* is in its original low position within the verb phrase, to the left of the main verb *waiting* (technically – in its specifier position). In the higher subject position (to the immediate left of the expression of past tense) is the place-holder *there*. In (27b), the subject has been raised to the position filled by *there* in (27a). In the unfolding of the clause in (27b), then, the indefinite nominal *many people* occurs twice – in a lower position in the immediate domain of the main predicate (*waiting*), of which it is an argument; and in a higher position – the specifier position of the TM-element expressing past. The subject nominal thereby satisfies two distinct combinatorial requirements, one having to do with lexical requirements of the main verb *wait* (it demands a first argument) and one having to do with requirements of the TM-element expressing past tense. The syntax of subjecthood in English, in other words, involves an interplay between requirements of two of the elements making up its clausal skeleton – the main predicate (in English always a verb) and the higher TM element. We can say that the TM-element of an English clause 'attracts' the subject to itself from its original position within the predicative core. It does this in virtue of a combinatorial requirement of its own – that there be a phrase (usually a nominal phrase) in its specifier position. (27b), then, can be represented as in (28):

(28)   [_{TMP} Many people [_{TM} were] [_{VP} _ waiting for me]]

which shows *many people* in the specifer position of TM, its first position indicated again by way of the symbol: _ .

There is an important link between our discussion of head-marking and dependent-marking (from the typological literature) and the discussion here (drawing on the literature in theoretical syntax) of the role of closed-class lexical items in shaping crosslinguistic variation. The technical literature in syntactic theory uses the terms *probe* and *goal* to describe the interaction we just discussed for English – by which the high TM-element agrees with *many people* and attracts it into its specifier position. The TM-element in that interaction (the 'probe') is the 'head' of the dependency; the subject which it attracts from a lower position (the 'goal') is what is called in the typological literature the 'dependent'. So when we say that Irish is predominantly head-marking, what we mean is that in probe-goal interactions, it is principally the probe, rather than the goal, which bears a distinctive morphological signature (the system of person-number marking which we examined in the previous section). We return to these issues presently.

If these ideas are on the right track, we should detect unifying patterns like that seen in (22) in languages of very different types and genetic affiliations. We also expect to be able to attribute variation in clause structure to three principal factors:

- Whether the language is head-initial or head-final,
- Whether or not the language has head-movement and, if it does, how it operates.
- Selectional (that is combinatorial) properties of the elements that make up the extended clausal projection.
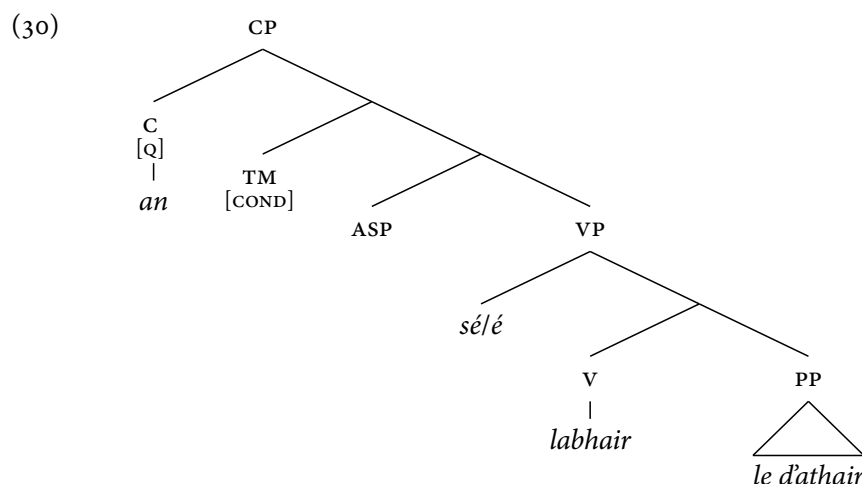
The research programme that explores these expectations is rich, lively and ongoing. In what follows, we explore its implications for clause-structure in Irish.

FINITE CLAUSES IN IRISH

We will use the simple example in (29) as we ask what insights the framework described so far might yield about Irish clauses.

(29)   An labharfadh sé le   d'   athair?
       c.q speak.cond he with your father
       'Would he speak to your father?'

Since, as we have seen, Irish is consistently head-initial, we will expect the sequence in (22) to be realized in Irish as in (30):[8]

(30)

```
                    CP
                   /   \
                  /     \
                 C       \
                [Q]       \
                 |      TM  \
                an     [COND] \
                       /  \    \
                     ASP   VP
                          /  \
                         /    \
                       sé/é    \
                              /  \
                             V    PP
                             |    /\
                          labhair/  \
                                le d'athair
```

The order of elements shown in the verbal phrase (VP) of (30) (in which the verb is medial, its first argument to its left in specifier position and its second to its right in complement position) is not of course that seen in finite clauses. It is, however, the observed order when we examine nonfinite clauses. For those dialects which routinely allow (accusative) subjects in nonfinite clauses, what we see is verb-medial order, as in (31).

(31)   B'   áil   leis na máithreacha na cailíní fanacht   sa   bhaile.
       cop.past desire with the mother.pl   the girl.pl remain.vn in-the home
       'The mothers wanted the girls to remain at home.'   SSGD 63

All dialects allow the the 'small clauses' discussed by Chung and McCloskey (1987) and here too we see not verb-initial but rather verb-medial order.

(32)   Is   fada mé ag   fanacht leis.
       cop.pres long me prog wait.vn with-him
       'I've been waiting for him for a long time.'   ST 61

This pattern is systematic across clause-types and across dialects – verbs appear in initial position in finite clauses, but in medial position (as in (30)) in all other clause-types. Verbs in finite clauses differ from those in nonfinite and 'small' clauses in being inflected for tense and mood – facets of the clause that are encoded in the TM-position of (30). Nonfinite verbs (almost by definition) show no such inflection. Whatever analysis of the positioning of verbs we adopt, then, must make this link.

We conclude that finite verbs must raise to a position outside the verbal domain. Given that the crucial factor in this placement is whether or not the verb is inflected for tense and mood, it is natural to assume that the target position for this head movement is TM of (30). In a head-

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[8](30) takes no account of polarity. Negation seems to be expressed, in finite clauses, on c, by way of a set of dedicated negative complementizers (ní, nach, cha, ná …). The situation is more complicated, though, in ways that we cannot go into here. See Duffield (1995), Acquaviva (1996), McCloskey (1996a), McCloskey (2017).

initial language that high position will always be further to the left and closer to initial position. And although we have spoken loosely here of the verb being in 'initial' position, it is always in fact preceded by the finite complementizer, and there is extensive evidence that the inflected verb does not move as far as the c-position (Carnie (1995), Duffield (1995), McCloskey (1996a), Ostrove (2018) among others). The conclusion is more or less forced, then, that 'verb-initial' order in Irish finite clauses reflects raising of v from within vp to the TM-position, resulting in verbal forms which include a suffixal expression of tense and modality. This analysis might be thought of as an incorporation of Watkins' (1963) celebrated 'univerbation' – a diachronic process – into a synchronic grammar.

What of the subject though? How is its position determined? The result that needs to be secured is that it always follows the inflected verb and usually follows it immediately. An obvious possibility is that the subject remains in its base position within the predicative core of the clause (the vp of (30)). However, evidence has steadily accumulated that the subject in fact often raises out of that domain and that we must recognize distinct 'subject positions' in Irish finite clauses (McCloskey (1996b, 2001a, 2011, 2014)). In the examples of (33), the indefinite subject appears to the right of a class of adverbs which demarcate the edge of the predicative domain, although subjects must in general appear to the left of such adverbs:

(33) a. ní   raibh riamh díospóireacht fá   na   nithe   seo
          c.neg be.past ever   debate   about the.pl thing.pl demon
          'there was never any debate about these things'   png 187

     b. Bhí   chomh maith mórchuid daoine ann ná   faca   riamh cheana.
          be.past as   well   many   people in-it c.neg see.past.s1 ever before
          'There were also many people there that I had never seen before.'   fi 236

We must therefore recognize two distinct postverbal subject-positions in Irish finite clauses – a conclusion very much in harmony with our earlier conclusions about English (see (27) above) and similar findings regarding other languages (see Diesing (1992), Jäger (2001), among many others, for comparable effects in German). Specifically, we must distinguish for Irish a lower position (within vp, reserved for indefinites and characteristic of existential constructions), and a higher position. That higher position in turn shows interpretive properties which closely parallel those of the relatively high English subject position (see McCloskey (2001a)).

To complete the analysis, then, we need a theory of the movement of the subject from its lower to its higher position. That means, in this framework, identifying the head in (30) which acts as a probe for the subject and attracts it into its specifier position. We can identify that head by returning to a question left open in our earlier discussion of null pronouns and the synthetic heads which license them (see (8) above and the discussion surrounding it). We saw there that null pronouns in Irish are licensed in a range of positions in virtue of their relation with a licensing head (a 'probe') bearing features of person and number. Such null pronouns also of course appear in the post-verbal subject position, where their presence can be detected in the usual ways – by their being part of a coordinate structure (as in (34a)), by being augmented by a contrastive particle (as in (34b)), or by both simultaneously (as in (34c)).

(34) a. Bhíos   agus Frainc le   blianta san   oifig chéanna.
          be.past.s1 and   with years.pl in-the office same
          'Frank and I were in the same office for years.'   bm 97

     b. Dheineamar -na   éinní   a bhí   le déanamh
          do.past.p1   contr .p1 anything c be.past to do.non-fin
          'We did anything that needed to be done.'   annf 73

   c.   D' fhéadfainn -se   nó ise cúig nó sé de ghníomhra a   lua
         TM1 can.COND.S1 CONTR .S1 or her five or six of action.PL   VCE mention.VN
         'She or I could mention five or six actions.'   OCF 362

The identifying head in these cases is clearly the TM-head of (30). The morphological reflexes of various members of the TM-class are the elements on which the various person-number features are distinguished – /əs/ in (34a) is the TM-element which expresses the simple past and bears first person singular features. Those features in turn agree with those of the null pronoun whose presence is signalled by the intriguing patterns of (34).[9]

We have not yet solved the problem of deriving VSO order, then. If the finite verb raises to TM of (30) and the subject is attracted to the specifier position of the same head, we expect SVO order.

But that is because we have not yet taken into account one of the more striking features of Irish morphosyntax – the double-marking of tense and mood. Certain tenses and moods (among them past and conditional) have a double exponence – a preverbal 'particle' along with a verbal suffix. The past tense preverb takes the form -r in (35).

(35) a.   gu–r ól+adar   an deoch
          C–PAST drink.PAST.P3 the drink
          'that they drank the drink'
    b.   a–r   ól+adar   an deoch?
          C.Q–PAST drink.PAST.P3 the drink
          'Did they drink the drink?'

It takes the form *do-* in (36).

(36) a.   má d' ól+adar   an t-uisce
          if   PAST drink.PAST.P3 the water
          'if they drank the water'
    b.   an t-uisce a   d' ól+adar
          the water   C.DIR PAST drink.PAST.P3
          'the water that they drank'
    c.   D' ól+adar   an t-uisce.
          PAST drink.PAST.P3 the water
          'They drank the water.'

The preverbal particle *do* is proclitic on the finite verb which follows it;[10] the particle *-r* is enclitic on the complementizer to its left. Which 'past tense particle' is used depends on the selecting complementizer.[11]

If we take seriously the syntactic implications of this double exponence of tense in VSO clauses, we will be brought to assume that there are in fact two independent TM-heads in the extended clausal projection for Irish. Instead of (22), then, we will have (37):

(37)   C⌢TM1⌢TM2⌢ASP⌢V

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[9]If we recognize a distinct nominative case, the TM-element will also be the relevant probe – a rare instance of dependent-marking. In varieties which allow nominative pronouns in possessor position (see (21) above) the relevant probe is the possessive determiner *a*.

[10]In most contemporary varieties, *do* appears only before vowel-initial verbs and its vowel is elided. However in many Munster dialects, especially in conservative idiolects and registers, it appears more generally (see Ó Buachalla (1962, 1964, 2003) and the editors' introduction to Ó Buachalla (2016).

[11]Most members of the class C demand the preverbal past tense marker *-r*, but a smaller group forces appearance of *do-*. In the (apparent) absence of a complementizer (in root clauses), *do-* appears (see (36c)).

TM1 is the position in which the preverbal particles appear; TM2 is the locus of the suffixes and is also therefore the locus of ϕ-agreement with the subject. TM2, that is, acting as a probe, drives the syntactic interactions which jointly define subjecthood in verbal clauses (position, case, and agreement). Subjects are therefore in the specifier of TM2. Verb-raising, however, in its final step targets the higher TM1-position, giving rise to complex morphological 'words' such as *d'óladar* in (37). The higher TM1-element never interacts with the subject and has no agreeing forms. We might then represent a finite clause by the formula in (38):

(38)   [$_{CP}$ C { TM1+V+ASP+TM2 } SUBJ   … OBJ   …   ]

The innovation in (37) and (38) is the postulation of a high syntactic projection TM1. It is this element, acting as a target for verb-raising, which provides the syntactic basis for the formation of the 'verbal complex' at the left edge of the clause and thereby provides a way of modeling the synchronic genesis of VSO order. Diarmuid Ó Sé (1987,1990) has provided important evidence that the preverbal particles belong to the same syntactic category as the copula – the TM-element which introduces verbless (so-called 'copular') clauses. If that is right (see McCloskey (2017:134–139) for supporting evidence and some implications) then a new vista opens in the study of finite clauses in Irish (both verbal and verbless) and many new questions arise about the nature of extended projections.[12]

For now, though, I want to stand back from these particulars and uncertainties and ask if the general framework in any way deepens our understanding of Irish clauses. I argue in the next section that it does.

IMPLICATIONS

One of the striking properties of the structure in (30) is that it is finely articulated. Each level is binary branching and the finite clause then consists of a series of ever smaller constituents, each binary and each contained within a larger. This view of VSO syntax is very much at odds with the presuppositions of earlier work, in which it was taken for granted that verb-initial languages must be 'flat' in their phrase structure (see, for example, Anderson and Chung (1977), McCloskey (1979), or Stenson (1981)). Rather than the binary articulations of (30), then, we would have the flat three-way branching of (39):

(39)   S
                         _____|_____
                        / | \
                       V   NP$_{SUBJ}$ XP$_{COMPLEMENT}$
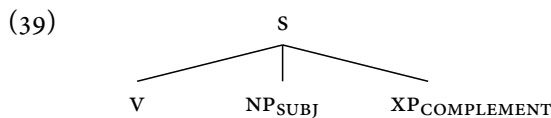
The move away from (39) towards the conception in (30) was driven by a search for symmetry and to highlight commonalities with other (often unrelated) languages. But the view in (30) implies a very different view of the warp and weft of Irish clauses than does (39).

One crucial difference between the two has to do with constituency. We have argued here that the verb in an Irish finite clause raises as far as the TM-position of (30). That head in turn has a single complement and the fact that the verb raises out of that complement has no effect on its syntactic integrity. It follows that all of the material following the inflected verb in a finite clause must form a syntactic constituent, corresponding to the boxed sequence in (40):

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[12]For these and closely related concerns, see Cottell (1995), Oda (2012), Acquaviva (2014), Ostrove (2018), and especially Bennett et al. (2019). The analysis presented here is a simplified version of that developed in McCloskey (2017), in which the expression of polarity plays a central role. For reasons of space and expositional clarity I set those complexities aside here.

(40)   [Verb | Subject   Complement$_1$ Complement$_2$ |]

The view in (39), on the other hand, entails that the sequence of elements following the finite verb in a VSO clause does not form a constituent. These two views have clearly distinct empirical implications. As it turns out, numerous tests demonstrate that the theory illustrated in (30) is correct in entailing the existence of a large post-verbal constituent like that in (40) (along with many smaller predicted constituents as well). Examples like (41) (with (19) above), for instance, show that the postulated constituent can be coordinated:

(41)   Thug   Peats dhá leathchoróin dom   agus Geraldeen leathchoróin dom.
          give.PAST   two half-crown   to-me and   half-crown   to-me
          'Pats gave me two half-crowns and Geraldeen gave me a half-crown.'   ABFS 23

(42) shows that the post-verbal constituent can be disjoined in the scope of negation:

(42)   ní   thearn sé a dhath   ar aon duine   ariamh ná aon duine   ariamh a dhath
          NEG do.PAST he anything on any person ever   or any person ever   anything
          air
          on-him
          'He never did anything to anyone and nobody ever did anything to him.'   SRNF 51

The detailed arguments can be found in McCloskey (2014). Here, I will focus on one aspect of that evidence, because it has been of particular theoretical interest and because it centers on another distinctive aspect of the syntax of Irish. Consider the question-answer pair in (43):

(43) a.   A-r   sciob   an cat an t-eireaball den   luch?
          C.Q.PAST cut.PAST the cat the   tail   off-the mouse
          'Did the cat cut the tail off the mouse?'
     b.   Creidim   gu-r sciob.
          believe.PRESS1 C.PAST cut.PAST
          'I believe it did.'

The apparently isolated verb in (43b) is known as a 'responsive' form in traditional descriptions. That term is, however, not entirely accurate, since such fragments have many uses which do not involve answering questions – in coordinate structures (as in (44a)), in tag questions (as in (44b)), in adverbial clauses of various kinds and in relative clauses (as in (44c)):

(44) a.   Dúirt   siad go dtiocfadh siad, ach ní   tháinig.
          say.PAST they C come.COND they but C.NEG.FIN come.PAST
          'They said that they would come but they didn't.'
     b.   Beidh muid connáilte, nach   mbeidh?
          be.FUT we   frozen   C.NEG.Q be.FUT
          'We'll be frozen, won't we?'
     c.   tráth a raibh   an Contae sin   daonmhar ar chaoi nach bhfuil inniu
          time C be.PAST the county DEMON populous   on way C.NEG be.PRES today
          'at a time when that County was populous, in a way that it is not today'   CE 183

The properties of such truncated clauses in Irish are very close to those of 'polarity ellipsis' in other languages.[13] Polarity ellipsis is characteristic of contexts in which there is contrastive focus

[13]For parallels in Finnish, Hungarian, Russian and Portuguese respectively, see Holmberg (2001), Liptak (2013), Gribanova (2013a,b, 2017), Martins (1994, 2007, 2013), Cyrino and Lopes (2016). For discussion of the Irish type, see McCloskey (1991, 2011, 2017), Bennett et al. (2019).

on the truth or falsity of the expressed proposition and the sentence radical is therefore *given* – in the technical sense which routinely favours elision (Schwarzschild (1999), Rooth (1992)). I will use the informal term 'v-stranding ellipsis' here for this (Irish) instantiation of polarity ellipsis.

Ellipsis of this general type is well known to be subject to the condition that it applies only to constituents, not to sequences of constituents (Ha (2008), Hankamer (2018)). But this is exactly the prime difference between the conception of VSO order in the 'flat' perspective of (39) and the more articulated view advocated here – (40). Given (30), the existence of v-stranding ellipsis in Irish is expected and natural; within the perspective of (39), it is anomalous and exceptional.

The ellipsis of (43)-(44) has another deeply strange property. Pedagogical grammars often introduce v-stranding ellipsis with the dictum that to answer a polar question 'one repeats the verb of the question'. And that is an accurate prescription, since, as it turns out, the stranded verb in such ellipses must be identical to the verb of its antecedent. Call this effect the *Verbal Identity Condition*. That condition is violated in the examples of (45), and they are all ill-formed.

(45) a. *Níor cheannaigh mé teach ariamh, ach dhíol.
         nior buy   I   house ever   but sold
          'I never bought a house, but I sold one.'

   b. *Cé   gur mhol an bainisteoir na himreoirí inné,   cháin   inniu.
         although C.PAST praise the manager   the players   yesterday, criticized today
         'Although the manager praised the players yesterday, he criticized them today.'

   c. *Níor   éist sí le-n-a   cuid   daltái ach labhair.
         C.NEG-PAST listen she with-her portion pupils but spoke
         'She didn't listen to her pupils but she spoke to them'

   d. *Cháin   sé é   féin,   ach ag an am chéanna chosain.
         criticized he him REFL.LOG but at the time same   defended
         'He criticized himself, but at the same time he defended himself.'

The ill-formedness of the examples in (45) was re-confirmed by six native speaker consultants; judgments were clear and there was no disagreement. Speakers have no difficulty in calculating appropriate meanings for such examples, the necessary inferential steps being straightforward and salient; the examples are, nevertheless, systematically judged unacceptable.[14] But complete identity of form between the two verbs is not required:

(46) a. Chuireadh   sé as do Bhreandán dul   ar cuairt chuici agus is   annamh a
         put.PAST.HABIT it out to   go.VN on visit   to-her and COP.PRES rare   C
         théadh.
         go.PAST.HABIT
         'It bothered Breandán to go to visit her and he would seldom go.'   IA 333

   b. ní   theastaíonn sin uaim.   Cén fáth   a dteastódh?
         C.NEG.FIN want.PRES   that from-me what reason C want.COND
         'I don't want that. Why would I?'   FF 7

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[14]The textual evidence also suggests massive compliance with the Verbal Identity Condition. Examples which seem to violate the identity condition occur occasionally (and see Ó Curnáin (2007: Volume Two, p. 968)):

(i)   d'   iarr   mé scilling air   agus fuair.
         TM1 ask.PAST I   shilling on.MS3 and get.PAST
         'I asked him for a shilling and I got one.'   NLAB 25

The effect is familiar in studies of ellipsis (see Anand et al. (2021) for some discussion), and it is unsurprising. Ellipsis is a discourse-anaphoric process (an appropriate antecedent must be sought in the local discourse context) and it is therefore subject to accommodation effects. These effects need to be studied and understood, but clear judgments of unacceptability offered by native speakers should not be set aside on the basis of such finds.

c. Gabh ar mo dhroim anseo. Chuaigh.
go.IMPV on my back here go.PAST
'Get up here on my back. He did.' CD 242

Nonfinite forms may antecede finite forms (in (46a), the nonfinite (and suppletive) *dul* matches the finite past habitual form *théadh*). Present tense forms may antecede conditional forms, as in (46b). In (46c), the imperative (and again suppletive) form *gabh* matches the simple past form *chuaigh*. And so on. As long as the requirement is observed that the two roots be identical (*modulo* suppletive allomorphy), the ellipsis site and the antecedent may vary with respect to tense, mood, aspect, force and finiteness. In pre-theoretical terms, such observations are profoundly surprising: the isolated finite verbs of (45) and (46) seem to be entirely outside the elided constituent; why, then, should they be required to be identical to anything? And why should the required identity be partial – applying to roots but not to other aspects of verbal form and meaning?

When we take on the commitments argued for here though, we understand why such patterns are the ones observed. It is well established that a requirement of lexical and syntactic parallelism holds between the form of an elided constituent and that of its antecedent.[15] But recent research (Chung (2013), Rudin (2019), Anand et al. (2021, 2022), Bruening (2021)) strongly suggests that that requirement holds not for the entire elided constituent, but only for its predicative core. A crucial property of (30) is that it entails a structural demarcation between the predicative core (VP) and the extended projection above VP, in which force, tense, modality, aspect and finiteness have their syntactic expression. (30) also entails the existence of an uninflected form of the verb in VP. But since VP is the domain over which the identity requirement on ellipsis is imposed, we expect that the bare verb will be required to be identical with the verb of the antecedent clause; we also expect that elements of the clause expressed syntactically outside VP should be subject to no such condition. We expect, that is, exactly what we observe in (45) and (46) and those initially bizarre observations fall into place as a predicted outcome. When we eliminate such anomalies, we earn the right to claim an advance in understanding.

It is worth stressing that the syntactic deconstruction of the inflected verb, which is the central component of the analysis of VSO order presented here, is crucial in allowing this understanding.

THE CLAUSE EDGE

We should turn finally to the element of the extended projection about which we have said least – C, the class of complementizers. These are important elements in syntactic systems (partly for reasons we are about to discuss) and their distinctive properties in Irish have been important in theoretical discussions of locality in syntax.

The unifying (and initially unanticipated) theme in contemporary syntactic research has been locality – syntactic interactions are local. Locality requirements manifest themselves in many ways and it is therefore not surprising that they manifest themselves in the internal workings of extended projections. When that concept was introduced, at (22) above, we noted that C *closes off the extended projection*. This was not intended casually. The different kinds of interaction that elements in an extended projection may enter into (agreement, case-assignment and movement by attraction, for instance) are local in the sense that the interacting elements must all be within the same extended projection. C 'closes off' an extended projection in the sense that we do not expect to find interactions across a CP-boundary, interactions which would by definition involve elements of distinct extended projections.

It emerged very early, however, that there was a class of movements that seemed to violate

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[15]For authoritative overviews of the status of this requirement, see Merchant (2005), Craenenbroeck and Merchant (2013:710–714), Merchant (2016), Anand et al. (2021).

this otherwise general restriction. In many languages, for example, the movement of a phrase to clause-initial position in a constituent question or cleft may cross multiple CP-boundaries:

(47) a.   I have no idea [CP what you think [CP (that) you might have discovered _ .]]
      b.   It was [his ankle] [CP that he thought [CP that he'd injured _]]

In (47a), we have a syntactic dependency which spans the distance between the position of the missing object of *discover* and the interrogative pronoun *what*. That dependency seems to cross a CP-boundary – that of the clausal complement of *think*. In (47b), a cleft construction, there is a dependency again between an embedded object position and the focus position to the right of the verb to be. It too seems to span a CP-boundary.

For this reason, such dependencies were initially called *unbounded dependencies*. The long-distance interactions they seem to implicate are characteristic of a range of construction-types found in many languages – relative clauses, clefts, comparative and equative clauses among many others. It was apparent by the early 1970's that what such constructions had in common was movement of a phrase from within a clause (a CP) to its left edge. The theoretical question then became: why should this class of movements appear to be non-local?

Discussions of Irish have played an important role in the investigation of these questions (see McCloskey (1979, 1985, 2001b, 2002), Sells (1984), Chung and McCloskey (1987), Noonan (1992), Duffield (1995), Maki and Ó Baoill (2011: Chaps 2, 8, 11), Oda (2012), Maki and Ó Baoill (2017: Chaps 5, 7, 8)). This is because it became clear firstly that the set of constructions which show such effects corresponds with truly extraordinary exactitude to what was known in the Irish grammatical tradition as the 'direct relative' clause. Furthermore, such clauses are marked by the appearance of a distinctive complementizer – the 'direct relative' particle, or *mír dhíreach*. Use of that complementizer is in turn linked with the appearance of a 'gap' of some kind in the sentential complement that it introduces. But what is most striking is that that complementizer introduces each clause which contains the gap but not its binder:

(48) a.   Níl   barúil ar bith agam caidé [a] shíleas   tú [a] fuair   tú amach _ .
            is-not idea   any   at.s1 what C.DIR think.PRES.REL you C.DIR find.PAST you out
            'I have no idea what you think you discovered.'   AM 401
      b.   Rúitín [a] cheap   sé [a] ghortaigh sé _ .
            ankle C.DIR think.PAST he C.DIR injure.PAST he
            'It was an ankle that he thought that he had injured.'   RNAG 26-6-16

These facts can be understood if we make one important addition to our system of assumptions. Assume that syntactic interactions are local in the sense that they may involve only elements within a single extended projection. We will expect of course, that elements in the highest such position (members of the class C) will participate in interactions of agreement, case-assignment and movement (they do). We will also anticipate that when C participates in such interactions it may attract its dependent into the specifier position to its left. This option is just what unites the class of constructions called 'direct relatives' in the Irish grammatical tradition or WH-movements (or $\overline{\text{A}}$-dependencies) in the generative tradition. But Irish is, as we have seen, a strongly head-marking language; it is far from surprising, then, that movement to the clause-edge is marked by a distinctive form of C– the *mír dhíreach* seen in all such contexts in Irish.

But how are 'long' movements like those in (47) or (48) to be reconciled with the principle of locality of interaction? In a pair of revolutionary papers published in the 1970's, Noam Chomsky (1973, 1977) proposed that the appearance of unbounded movement is illusory and that in CP there is in fact a position – its highest specifier position – which is accessible to probes in the higher clause. The specifier position of C is, in a sense, a borderland belonging simultaneously to

a lower and to a higher extended projection. In a complex structure like (48a), then, the pronoun *caidé* must undergo an initial movement within the embedded clause alone (in which the lower c acts as a probe and attracts the pronoun to its specifier position). From that more accessible position a second movement becomes possible, within the bounds of the higher (interrogative) clause, in which the higher c acts as probe. It attracts the pronoun into its own specifier position, its final position. The apparently long movements in (47) and (48), then, are in fact sequences of local (that is purely clause-internal) interactions which build on one another in a cyclic fashion to create the illusion of unboundedness.

Crucially, however, in a language like Irish which, because of its head-marking tendencies, realizes the attracting complementizer in a distinctive form (*an mhír dhíreach*), we will expect to find that form introducing each CP which contains the initial position of the moved phrase but not its final position. This is what we observe in (48) and more generally. The identification and investigation of these patterns played an important role in confirming the central thesis that is at stake here: the locality thesis for syntactic interactions.

Conclusion

This has been a very swift review of a long research-record to which many have contributed. That long effort has deepened our knowledge of Irish and has yielded results of some importance for the development of syntactic theory. What is most important, though, is that the view of the Irish syntactic system which emerges is one in which it is not *sui generis* or exotic but is rather a rich set of variations on very general themes – a local expression of the combinatorial richness of natural language.

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APPENDIX A: EXPLANATION OF GLOSSING CONVENTIONS

ACC:	Accusative case
C-PAST:	Complementizer with preverbal marker of past tense (*-r*)
C.COND:	Conditional complementizer (*má*)
C.COND.IRR:	Conditional complementizer, irrealis (*dá*)
C.DIR:	The 'direct relative' complementizer
C.NEG-PAST:	Negative complementizer, finite, with preverbal marker of past tense (*-r*)
C.NEG:	The negative complementizer (finite)
C.NEG.Q:	Negative interrogative complementizer
C.Q-PAST:	Interrogative complementizer (*an*) with preverbal marker of past tense (*-r*)
C.Q:	Interrogative complementizer (*an*)
C.RP:	The 'indirect relative' complementizer
COMPAR:	Comparative
COND:	Conditional mood/tense
CONTR:	The contrastive augments which may follow personal pronouns
COP.NEG:	Negative copula
COP:	Copula
C:	Complementizer (*go*, *a*, *má*, *dá* …)
DAT:	Dative case
DEMON:	Demonstrative determiner (*seo*, *sin*, *siúd* …)
FEM:	Feminine gender
FIN:	Finite
FS3:	Third person singular feminine
FUT:	Future tense
FWH:	Relative forms of verbs, future tense
GEN:	Genitive case
HABIT:	Habitual aspect
IMPERS:	Impersonal ('Autonomous') form
IMPERV:	Imperative
MASC:	Masculine gender
MS3:	Third person singular masculine
NEG.NONFIN:	Negative particle, nonfinite (*gan*)
NOM:	Nominative case
NON-FIN:	Nonfinite
P1:	First person plural
P2:	Second person plural
P3:	Third person plural
PASS:	Passive
PAST:	Past tense
PERF:	Perfect or perfective
PL:	Plural
PRES:	Present tense
PROG:	Marker of progressive aspect (*ag*)
REFL.LOG:	The reflexive/logophoric particle *féin*
REL:	'Relative' suffixes on finite verbs

S1:   First person singular
S2:   Second person singular
SG: Singular
TM1:   The preverbal markers of tense-modality (*d-*, *-r* etc)
TM2:   The postverbal tense-modality suffixes
VCE: Marker of transitive voice in nonfinite clauses (*a*)
VN: Verbal noun
VOC: The vocative particle

APPENDIX B: SOURCES OF EXAMPLES

ABFS: *An Baile i bhFad Siar*, Domhnall Mac an tSíthigh, Coiscéim, 2000
AN: *Athnuachan*, Máirtín Ó Cadhain, Coiscéim, 1995
AM: *An Mhiorbhailt*, C.B Kelland, translated Niall Mac Suibhne, 1936
ANNF   *Ar Nós na bhFáinleog*, Siobhán Ní Shúilleabháin, Coiscéim, 2004
        Cló Iar-Chonnachta, 1999
BM: *Bullaí Mhártain*, Síle Ní Chéileachair agus Donncha Ó Céilleachair, Sáirséal agus Dill, 1969
CCC: *Cnuasach Céad Conlach*, Seán Bán Mac Meanman, Coiscéim, 1989
CD: *Cith is Dealán*, Séamus Ó Grianna (Máire), Cló Mercier, 1976
CE: *An Chuid Eile Díom Féin – Aistí le Máirtín Ó Direáin*, ed. Síobhra Aiken,
        Cló Iar-Chonnacht, 2018
CGC: *Caillte i gConamara, Scéalta Aniar*, ed. Brian Ó Conchubhair, Cló Iar-Chonnacht, 2014
EBS: *Éamon A Búrc Scéalta*, ed. Peadar Ó Ceannabháin, (Leabhair Taighde, Imleabhar 42),
        An Clóchomhar, 1983
EMPP: *Eachtraí Mara Phaidí Pheadair as Toraigh*, Séamus Mac a' Bhaird, ed. Aingeal Nic a' Bhaird,
        Caoimhín Mac a' Bhaird, Nollaig Mac Congail, Arlen House, 2019
FF: *Fonn na Fola*, Beairtle Ó Conaire, Cló Iar-Chonnachta, 2005
FI: *Fan Inti*, Domhnall Mac Síthigh, Coiscéim, 2003
GB: *Gan Baisteadh*, Tomás Bairéad, Sáirséal agus Dill, 1972
GOG: *Glórtha ón Ghorta: Béaloideas na Gaeilge agus an Gorta Mór*, Cathal Póirtéir, Coiscéim, 1996
IA: *Iomramh Aonair*, Liam Mac Con Iomaire, Cló Iarr-Chonnachta, 2000
IB: *Iomramh Bhréanainn MMXI: Ón nDaingean go hÍoslainn*, Domhnall Mac Síthigh,
        An Sagart, An Daingean, 2013
        An tAthair Lorcán Ó Searcaigh, Cló Oirghialla, 1983
LG: *Le Gealaigh*, Pádraig Ó Cíobháin, Coiscéim, 1991
LNT: *An Leacht Nár Tógadh*, Séamas Ó Conghaile, Coiscéim, 1982
MABAT: *Mar a Bhí Ar dTús: Cuimhne Seanghasúir*, Joe Steve Ó Neachtain, Cló Iarr-Chonnacht, 2018
MCL: *Muintir Chois Locha*, Shan F. Bullock, translated Niall Ó Domhnaill, Oifig Díolta
        Foilseacháin Rialtais, 1934
MSF: *Mo Sgéal Féin*, Peadar Ua Laoghaire, Brún agus Ó Nualláin, 1915
NBMO: *Nuair a Bhí Mé Óg*, Séamas Ó Grianna (Máire), ed. Niall ó Domhnaill, Cló Mercier, 1979
NBN: *Nuadha agus Breoghan ar Neamh*, Maidhc Dainín Ó Sé, Coiscéim, 2006
NGTTS: *Na Gabh Thar Tí Stiofáin*, Máire Uí Fhlatharta, Coiscéim, 2008
NLAB: *Na Laetha a Bhí*, Eoghan Ó Domhnaill, Eagrán Scoile, Oifig an tSoláthair, 1968
OCF: *Ó Cadhain i bhFeasta*, ed. Seán Ó Laighin, Clódhanna Teoranta, 1990
        Coiscéim, 2011
OCTC: *Ó Cadhain i dTír Chonaill, Béaloideas na Gaeltachta*, ed. Pádraig Ó Baoighill, Coiscéim 2007
OTA: *Ón tSeanam Anall, Scéalta Mhicí Bháin Uí Bheirn*, edited. Mícheál Mac Giolla Easbuic,
        Cló Iarr-Chonnachta, 2008
PNG: *Pobal na Gaeltachta*, edited. Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh, Liam Lillis Ó Laoire,
        Seán Ua Súillebháin, Cló Iarr-Chonnachta, 2000
RNAG: *RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta* (number represents date of broadcast)
SAI: *Suipín an Iolair*, Séamas Ó Grianna (Máire), Oifig an tSoláthair, 1962
SHS: *Scéal Hiúdaí Sheáinín*, Eoghan Ó Domhnaill, Oifig an tSoláthair, 1940

SMC: *Stairsheanchas Mhicil Chonraí – Ón Máimín go ráth Chairn*, ed. Conchúr Ó Giollagáin, Cló Iar-Chonnachta, 1999

SRNF: *Seanchas Rann na Feirste*, Maelsheachlainn Mac Cionaoith, Coiscéim, 2006

SSGD: *Stairsheanchas Ghaoth Dobhair*, Cáit Nic Ghiolla Bhríde, Coiscéim, 1996

ST: *An Sean-Teach*, Séamas Ó Grianna (Máire), Oifig an tSoláthair, 1968

SUSS: *Scéal Úr agus Sean-Scéal*, Séamus Ó Grianna (Máire), Oifig an tSoláthair, 1945/1950

UMI: *Uaill-Mhian Iúdaigh*, Roy Bridges, translated Tadhg Ó Rabhartaigh, Oifig Díolta Foilseacháin Rialtais, 1936