[NOTES AND DISCUSSION]

PUZZLES WITH THE SUBJECT POSITION IN IRISH

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1. Introduction

This paper points out two puzzles that arise from the syntactic phenomena involving the subject position in Irish. First, as shown in (1b), a wh-phrase in the subject position may co-occur with an adjunct wh-phrase in CP SPEC. This is a puzzle, as the corresponding English sentence is totally ungrammatical, as shown in (2b).

(1) a. Cén fáth ar cheannaigh Seán cad é?
   what reason aN bought John what
   ‘Why did John buy what?’
   b. Cén fáth ar cheannaigh cé an leabhar?
   what reason aN bought who the book
   ‘Why did who buy the book?’

(2) a. Why did John buy what?
   b. *Why did who buy the book?

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Second, a phrase in the subject position cannot undergo Heavy NP Shift (HNPS) in Irish, as shown in (4), which is derived from (3), in spite of the fact that the position seems head-governed by the verb, which does not seem inert in the sense of Rizzi (1990).

(3) Cheannaigh [an fear a bhí ag staidéar teangeolaíochta] carr.
    bought the man aL was at studying linguistics car
    ‘The man who was studying linguistics bought a car.’

(4) *Cheannaigh \( t_1 \) carr [an fear a bhí ag staidéar
    bought car the man aL was at studying
    teangeolaíochta],
    linguistics
    ‘The man who was studying linguistics bought a car.’

In this paper, we will argue that these puzzles suggest (i) that Irish allows argument wh-phrases to stay in the base-generated positions throughout the derivation, (ii) that HNPS is triggered by agreement with \( v \), not \( T \), in Irish and English, and (iii) that Irish is an ECM-less language.

The organization of this paper is as follows. Section 2 reviews the properties of the wh-interrogative construction in Irish as the background to subsequent sections. Section 3 provides more data related to the two puzzles, and examines what factors lie behind them. Finally, Section 4 concludes this paper.

2. Background

This section reviews (i) the complementizer system and (ii) the properties of the wh-construction in Irish. Irish has three types of complementizers: the \([-Q]\) marker, the direct relative marker, and the indirect relative marker. The properties of the three COMPs are summarized in (5).

(5) Complementizers in Irish

|          | types of COMPs | non-past form | past form | symbol |
|----------|----------------|---------------|-----------|--------|
| a.       | the \([-Q]\) marker | go            | go/gur    | that   |
| b.       | the direct relative marker | a             | a         | aL     |
| c.       | the indirect relative marker | a             | a/ar      | aN     |

Below, the properties of the COMPs are illustrated by relevant examples. (6) is a declarative sentence, and the embedded clause is headed by the \([-Q]\) COMP \( gur \) ‘that.’ When the sentence involves wh-interrogative clause formation, as in (7), the embedded COMP must change to the direct
relative marker $aL$, and at the same time, another COMP $aL$ must be inserted right after the wh-phrase. In this paper, for expository purposes only, we represent $A'$-chains using the symbols $aL/aN$ rather than the wh-phrase itself, as in $(aL, aL, t)$.

(6) Creideann Seán gur cheannaigh Máire an carr.
believe John that bought Mary the car
‘John believes that Mary bought the car.’

(7) Cad é a chreideann tú a cheannaigh Seán $t$?
what aL believe you aL bought John
‘What do you believe that John bought?’ (movement) $(aL, aL, t)$

There is another way to form a wh-interrogative clause in Irish, as shown in (8).

(8) Cad é a gcreideann tú gur cheannaigh Seán $é/*t$?
what aN believe you that bought John it
‘What do you believe that John bought?’ (resumption) $(aN, that, RP)$

In (8), the topmost COMP of the wh-interrogative clause is an indirect relative marker $a$, the COMP of the embedded clause is a $[−Q]$ COMP, and the embedded clause contains a resumptive pronoun $é$ ‘it’ instead of a gap. Note that (8) is ungrammatical, if the resumptive pronoun is replaced by a trace.

Next, let us review the properties of the wh-construction in Irish. Ó Baoill and Maki (2014) originally point out that Irish has a $[+Q]$ COMP that may or may not attract a wh-phrase in overt syntax. Therefore, Irish allows both (9a) and (9b).

(9) a. Cad é a cheannaigh Seán $t$?
what aL bought John
‘What did John buy $t$?’ (movement)

b. Cheannaigh Seán cad $é$?
bought John what
‘[Q [John bought what]].’ (in-situ)

A wh-phrase may also be in situ in the embedded clause, as shown in (10b).

(10) a. Cad é a chreideann tú a cheannaigh Seán $t$?
what aL believe you aL bought John
‘What do you believe that John bought?’

b. Creideann tú gur ceannaigh Seán cad $é$?
believe you that bought John what
‘What do you believe that John bought?’

Furthermore, wh-in-situ is possible within a complex NP island, while wh-
movement out of a complex NP island is not, as shown in (11).

(11) a. *Cad é a chonaic siad [an fear a cheannaigh t]? what aL saw they the man aL bought ‘What did they see [the man who bought t]?’
b. Chonaic siad [an fear a cheannaigh cad é]? saw they the man aL bought what ‘[Q [they saw [the man who bought what]]].’

3. Data and Discussion

Having established the particular background, we now consider the two puzzles. Let us first address the subject wh-phrase puzzle. Huang (1982) and Lasnik and Saito (1992), among others, point out that in English, a wh-phrase in the subject position cannot co-occur with an adjunct wh-phrase in CP SPEC, as shown in (2b), and attribute the ungrammaticality to the Empty Category Principle (ECP) that applies to the LF trace of the subject wh-phrase.

Suppose that the wh-phrase in the subject position in (1b) moves to CP SPEC at LF in Irish, just like English. Then, the subject trace is not antecedent-governed by the COMP, and (1b) would be incorrectly ruled out. One might argue, however, that the subject position in Irish is a lexically governed position, hence a properly governed position, so that the LF trace will not cause an ECP violation. However, Maki and Ó Baoill (2011) show, on the basis of extraction data in Irish, that the subject position is not a lexically governed position. Therefore, as shown in the contrast between (12a) and (12b), extraction out of the subject position leads to ungrammaticality.

(12) a. De cé a tharraing Seán [píctiúr l]?
of whom aL took John picture ‘Who did John take a picture of l?’
b. *De cé atá [píctiúr l] ar an bhalla?
of whom aL+is picture on the wall ‘Of whom is a picture l on the wall?’

Thus, the hypothesis that the subject wh-phrase undergoes LF movement will incorrectly predict that (1b) is ungrammatical in Irish.

However, there is a crucial difference between Irish and English. As shown in Section 2, in Irish, argument wh-phrases may appear in their base-generated positions, unlike English, as shown in (10b) and (11b). Based on this fact, we claim that in Irish, the subject wh-phrase in situ in (1b) is li-
censed by being bound by the [+Q] COMP, and because of this, it does not move to CP SPEC at LF. Note that the adjunct wh-phrase cén fáth ‘why’ is merged to CP SPEC. If an adjunct wh-phrase base-generated in CP SPEC can take scope at that position, no trace will be created that would cause an ECP violation. As long as this is correct, the subject wh-phrase puzzle suggests that an argument wh-phrase in situ in Irish may not move to CP SPEC throughout the derivation.

Let us then turn to the HNPS puzzle. Rizzi (1990) provides a set of HNPS data in English, as shown in (13)–(19).

(13) [All the students who can solve this problem] are intelligent.
(14) *[t₁ are intelligent] [all the students who can solve this problem].
(15) *Are₂ [t₁ t₂ intelligent] [all the students who can solve this problem].
(16) I would like to introduce [all the students who can solve this problem] to Mary.
(17) I would like to introduce t₁ to Mary [all the students who can solve this problem].
(18) I believe [all the students who can solve this problem] to be intelligent.
(19) I believe t₁ to be intelligent [all the students who can solve this problem].

Rizzi (1990) states that (14) and (15) are ungrammatical, and argues that in (14), the subject trace is not head-governed, causing an ECP violation, because there is no head that m-commands the trace of the HNPS subject, and in (15), the subject trace is not head-governed, either, as the element in COMP are is inert. Note that Rizzi (1990: 32) defines the ECP in such a way that a non-pronominal empty category must be (i) properly head-governed (Formal Licensing), and (ii) antecedent governed or Theta-governed (Identification). Therefore, in order for a trace to be legitimate, it must be properly head-governed in any case.

Let us then examine the Irish HNPS data in (20)–(23), along with (3) and (4).

(20) Thug Seán [an leabhar a scriobh Máire] do Shiubhán.
gave John the book aL wrote Mary to Susan
‘John gave the book which Mary wrote to Susan.’
(21) Thug Seán t₁ do Shiubhán [an leabhar a scriobh Máire].
gave John to Susan the book aL wrote Mary
‘John gave to Susan the book which Mary wrote.’
(22) Creideann Máire [an fear a bhí ag staidéar teangeolaíochta] believe Mary the man aL was at studying linguistics a bheith cliste.
to be(VN) smart
‘Mary believes [the man who used to be studying linguistics] to be smart.’

(23) *Creideann Máire $t_1$ a bheith cliste [an fear a bhí ag believe Mary to be(VN) smart the man aL was at staidéar teangeolaíochta].
studying linguistics
‘Mary believes [the man who used to be studying linguistics] to be smart.’

(4) shows that HNPS is not possible from the subject of a finite clause in Irish. (23) shows that HNPS is not possible from the subject of an infinitival clause in Irish, either.

Let us first consider the ungrammaticality of (4). Let us assume with Maki and Ó Baoill (2011) that the verb is in T, and the subject is within vP, as shown in (24).

(24) $[T' \ V \ vP \ Sbj \ [VP \ t_1 \ Obj]]$

Let us also assume that vP is L-marked by T, and thus, it is not a barrier, extending Lasnik and Saito’s (1992: 106) original idea that VP can be L-marked by INFL, and thus, it is not a barrier. Then, in (4), the subject position is head-governed by the verb in T in Irish. Furthermore, in (4), the verb should not be inert, since it has a full semantic content. Therefore, the head-government requirement is satisfied in (4).

On the other hand, (21) is grammatical with the direct object undergoing HNPS. Maki and Ó Baoill (2011) argue that rightward movement of the direct object across the indirect object targets vP SEPC, essentially following Nishikawa’s (1990) analysis of HNPS in English. Then, the relevant structure of (21) should be (25).

(25) $[T' \ V \ [vP \ Sbj \ [vP \ t_1 \ IObj] \ DObj_1]]$

This movement should be allowed, as the trace of the direct object is head-governed by V. Then, what is wrong with (4)? The relevant structure should be either (26) or (27).

(26) $[T' \ V \ [vP \ t_1 \ [vP \ Obj] \ Sbj_1]]$

(27) $[TP \ [T' \ V \ [vP \ t_1 \ [vP \ Obj]]] \ Sbj_1]$

In (26), the subject in vP SPEC moves to vP SPEC in the right side of the head, which means that it virtually does not move at all. In (27), the subject in vP SPEC moves to TP SPEC on the right side of the head.
In (27), the movement involved seems legitimate, yet, the resulting sentence is not grammatical. This is apparently a problem. However, if we return to the English example in (15), it may provide an indication as to why (4) is ungrammatical.

Rizzi (1990) argues that are in C in (15) is inert, so that it cannot head-govern the subject trace, which leads to an ECP violation. However, (28) is grammatical in English.

(28) Are you t₁ Irish?

Since (28) is grammatical, are₁ should be able to antecedent-govern and head-govern its own trace t₁. If it is inert, or if it becomes inert in the domain of C’, it should not be able to antecedent-govern or head-govern its own trace t₁, so that (28) would be incorrectly ruled out. The fact that (28) is grammatical thus indicates that are in C is not inert, and can function as a head-governor for any trace that needs to be formally licensed, namely, head-governed. Therefore, contrary to Rizzi’s (1990) claim that are in C in (15) is inert, so that it cannot head-govern the subject trace, which leads to an ECP violation, it must be assumed that the head-government requirement is actually met in (15), and the ungrammaticality of the sentence must follow from some other factor. Now, what is common to (15) and (27) is the fact that the element that undergoes HNPS adjoins to TP or moves to TP SPEC. This seems to indicate that HNPS cannot target T'/TP in either English or Irish, which in turn suggests that T does not have a relevant feature that triggers HNPS. Then, this idea correctly accounts for the ungrammaticality of (14) and (15) in English, along with the ungrammaticality of (26) is structurally identical to its non-moved counterpart in (i).

(i) [ᵣ V [ᵣ [VP Obj Sbj]]]

In this paper, we hypothesize that syntactic structure is created from the bottom up, as in (26). Phillips (1996, 2003), however, proposes that it is built from left to right, as in (i). Note here that whichever structure building is correct, both (26) and (i) are ill-formed, and demand an explanation. Therefore, we will leave open the issue of the manner of structure building.

As this is a strong claim, it will be necessary to carefully examine the traditional data and arguments of HNPS analysis. Ross (1967/1986) found a rule he called Complex NP Shift, which we now call Heavy NP Shift, and claimed (i).
cality of (4) in Irish, where the subject NP moves to TP SPEC. We thus conclude, based on the HNPS data in English and Irish, (i) that superfluous steps of movement are prohibited, and (ii) that T does not have a feature that motivates HNPS.

Let us now consider the Irish example in (23), which involves HNPS of the subject of the Exceptional Case Marking (ECM) complement. As shown above, the English counterpart in (19) is grammatical. If (23) is an instance of ECM structure, the question remains as to why HNPS of the subject of the ECM complement is allowed in English, while it is not in Irish. To address this question, it is worth examining whether Irish really has the same ECM construction as English. There are two pieces of evidence that the Irish ECM is different from the English ECM. First, the ECM subject cannot be separated from the matrix predicate by an adverb in English, but it can in Irish, as shown by the contrast between (29a, b) and (30).

(i) Any rule whose structural index is of the form ... A Y, and whose structural change specifies that A is to be adjoined to the right of Y, is upward bounded.

(Ross (1986: 179))

He states that he knows of no exceptions to this generalization.

The data that fall under this generalization are shown below. First, an object can undergo rightward movement within the sentence, as shown in (ii).

(ii) I gave e₁ to the officer in charge [the blackjack which I had found in the cookie jar].

(Ross (1986: 140) slightly edited)

Second, as (14) shows, subject NPs in tensed clauses cannot undergo rightward movement. Third, as Postal (1974) points out, an NP cannot move out of a tensed clause, as (iii) shows.

(iii) *I have expected [that I would find e₁] since 1939 [the treasure said to have been buried on that island].

(Postal (1974: 93) slightly edited)

It seems that the generalization in (i) has not been challenged since Ross (1967). Shiobara (2010) also claims (iv).

(iv) Heavy NP Shift in English

When an NP is prosodically heavier than the neighboring element, it may appear in the VP-internal position.

(Shiobara (2010: 9) slightly edited)

Therefore, it seems correct to assume that HNPS cannot target T'/TP in English.

At the same time, HNPS cannot target T'/TP in Irish, either. First, (21) shows that an object can undergo rightward movement within the sentence in Irish. Second, as (4) shows, subject NPs in tensed clauses cannot undergo rightward movement. Third, an NP cannot move out of a tensed clause, as the Irish counterpart of (iii) is ungrammatical. Therefore, it seems correct to assume that HNPS cannot target T'/TP in Irish, either.
(29) a. *John believes sincerely [Bill to be the best man].
   (Chomsky and Lasnik (1977: 478))

b. *Mary believes firmly [the man who used to be studying linguistics] to be smart.

(30) Creideann Máire go daingean [[án fear a bhí ag staídéar believe Mary firmly the man aL was at studying teangeolaíochta] a bheith cliste].
linguistics to be(VN) smart

(*)‘Mary believes firmly [the man who used to be studying linguistics] to be smart.’

Second, when the ECM subject is wh-extracted in Irish, the chain can terminate with a trace, as in (31), or as a resumptive pronoun, as in (32).

(31) Cé a chreideann Máire go daingean [t a bheith cliste]? who aL believe Mary firmly to be(VN) smart
‘Who does Mary firmly believe to be smart?’ (aL, t)

(32) Cé a gcreideann Máire go daingean [é a bheith cliste]? who aN believe Mary firmly him to be(VN) smart
‘Who does Mary firmly believe to be smart?’ (aN, RP)

If the Irish ECM is the same as the English ECM, the question immediately arises as to how the ECM subjects in (30) and (32) can get accusative Case.

Note here that in Irish, accusative Case is a default Case, as shown by (33).

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

(Chung and McCloskey (1987: 175), with brackets added)

In (33), the small clause is positioned after agus ‘and,’ which does not assign/check any Case. Therefore, it is plausible to assume that accusative Case is default in Irish, and one may say that an NP bears accusative Case as an inherent Case in Irish when no Case is structurally assigned to it. If this is true, the accusative Case on the ECM subjects in (30) and (32) is inherent, and is not structurally assigned to them, which in turn accounts for the contrast between (29a, b) and (30) in English and Irish.

Let us now consider what is wrong with HNPS of the ‘ECM’ subject in Irish, as shown in (23), under the assumption that the ‘ECM’ subject bears inherent Case in Irish. If T does not have a relevant feature that triggers HNPS, as argued above, v is the only head that may attract the ‘ECM’ subject in (23). Let us first consider cases in which v has accusative Case. In such cases, since the ‘ECM’ subject has inherent Case, which is different
from structural accusative Case, the inherent Case on the subject and the accusative Case on the head are not compatible. Therefore, the accusative Case on \( v \) is not properly checked/licensed due to the feature mismatch, and thus, (23) will be correctly ruled out.

Next, let us consider cases in which \( v \) does not have any Case, which should be possible, since the verb *creideann* ‘believe’ in Irish can take either an infinitival complement, as shown in (22), or a finite complement, as shown in (34), where the complement clause does not seem to bear accusative Case.

(34) Creideann Máire go bhfuil an fear a bhí ag staidéar believe Mary that be.Pres the man aL was at studying teangeolaiochta cliste. linguistics smart

‘Mary believes that the man who used to be studying linguistics is smart.’

In such cases, too, there seems to arise a feature mismatch, because the head \( v \), which does not have any Case, attracts the ‘ECM’ subject that bears inherent Case to its SPEC, so that the head which does not need any Case by hypothesis and an NP with inherent Case will be in the same local domain, or the checking domain of the head in Chomsky’s (1995) terms, where features on the head and the NP should be compatible in terms of Case. Therefore, in any event, HNPS of the ‘ECM’ subject in Irish causes a Case-related problem. Hence, (23) is ungrammatical in Irish.\(^3\)

Let us then examine why (19), the English counterpart of (23), is gram-

\(^3\) Woolford (2006) claims that Icelandic datives are inherent Cases, because the regular dative on DP goals remains dative when the sentence passivizes, as shown in (ib).

(i) a. Þeir skiluðu Mariu bókinni.
   they returned Mary-Dat book-the-Dat
   ‘They returned the book to Mary.’ (Jónsson (1996: 137))

b. Mariu var skilað Þessari bók.
   Mary-Dat was returned this book-Dat (Jónsson (1996: 139))

Since the subject of the sentence has nominative Case in (ia), there seems to be a Case mismatch between the Case assigner (T) and the dative NP in (ib), yet the passive sentence is grammatical. If the claim in our paper is generalized to these cases, they would be incorrectly ruled out. However, there is one crucial difference between these cases and the Irish case. That is, the head that tolerates inherent Case is T in Icelandic, while it is not in Irish. Several languages have been reported to allow non-nominative subjects, which seems to suggest that T is more tolerant than the other Case-licensing heads in allowing Cases other than nominative. Of course, a careful examination is in order to prove that this line of analysis is correct, which we will leave for future research.
matical. The ECM subject in English bears accusative Case, as shown in (35).

(35) I believe him to be intelligent.

Following the essential insight of Nishikawa (1990), we assume that the ECM subject undergoes rightward movement into the SPEC of the matrix $v$, when it is subject to HNPS. In this case, the head $v$ has accusative Case, and the ECM subject also has accusative Case, so that there is no Case mismatch in the derived structure. Hence, (19) is correctly predicted to be grammatical in English.

If the above argument is correct, HNPS is possible in English and Irish only when the head $v$ and the NP that is to undergo HNPS have structural accusative Case. Therefore, one may say that the feature that triggers HNPS is parasitic to accusative Case on a head, and HNPS is a feature-driven movement operation.

4. Conclusion

This paper addressed two puzzles arising from syntactic phenomena involving the subject position in Irish, and argued (i) that Irish allows argument wh-phrases to stay in the base-generated positions throughout the derivation, (ii) that HNPS is triggered by agreement with $v$, not T, in Irish and English, and (iii) that the Irish ECM is different from the English ECM, and in this sense, Irish is an ECM-less language.

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