Origin of Post-Copular Pronouns in Irish

NASHIMOTO, Kuninao

Origin of Post-Copular Pronouns in Irish

Kuninao Nashimoto

Origin of Post-Copular Pronouns in Irish[1]

Kuninao Nashimoto

Introduction

In identificatory copula sentences, the post-copular pronoun often appears in Old and Middle Irish, but it must follow the copula in Modern Irish. The origin of these post-copular pronouns has been partially explained by Ó Nualláin (1911, 137–44) and Mac Coisdealbha (1974, 72–8). Both of them have reached almost the same conclusion that the post-copular pronoun in the copula sentence structures CpPS[2] is modelled on the CpSP (remote prolepsis[3]) construction. This analogy explains why the post-copular pronoun is optional in the CpPS structure in Old and Middle Irish. However, it does not explain how the CpSP structure has come into existence in the first place. Moreover, this analogy between the CpSP and CpPS structures can not accommodate the case where a third person pronoun appears as the predicate of the CPS construction, as there is only one definite noun phrase as a subject in the CPS construction with a post-copular predicate pronoun.

The purpose of this paper is to find possible solutions to the origin of post-copular pronouns in identificatory copula sentences.

Remote Prolepsis Origin

Ó Nualláin (1911, 141–2) gives the next cleft construction to illustrate this analogy. Slash marks are inserted to indicate the constituent divisions of the syntactic structure.

(1)   CpPS: *is- / hé / in-peccad / rogéni anuile comaccobor* (Wb. 3ᶜ25)

Translation[4]: 'it is sin which has wrought every concupiscence.'

He argues that this immediate prolepsis in the CpPS structure is created by analogy with the sentences of the PCpS and CpSP structures where the post-copular pronoun is obligatory as in:

(1a)   PCpS: *in peccad / is / hé / rogéni anuile comaccobor*
(1b)   CpSP: *is / hé / rogéni anuile comaccobor / in peccad*

In this way the obligatory post-copular pronoun in remote prolepsis in (1b) spreads to the immediate prolepsis construction CpPS as in (1). Therefore the CpSP structure is seen as the primary structure for the other types of post-copular pronouns. Mac Coisdealbha (1974, 76–78) gives a similar argument without using a cleft construction saying that 'cataphora is recognized as one of the main channels for the introduction of the intrusive post-copular pronoun in non-cataphoric constructions' (ibid. 77). Thus cataphoric constructions in the CpSP structure are the source of the expansion of the post-copular pronoun.

In (1a) the post-copular pronoun is anaphoric whereas in (1b) it becomes cataphoric. Let's look at how the cataphoric constructions are formed from the anaphoric use of the post-copular pronoun. In the following examples, the anaphoric post-copular pronoun refers to the Latin text *Deus* in (2). and the Latin word *deus* within the same gloss in (3). A referent other than the Latin appears in (4).

(2)   CPS: *is- / hé / as-airchinnech inna-nuile* (Wb.4ᶜ3)
        Translation: 'it is He who is the chief of all.'
        Latin text: Deus
(3)   PCpS: deus *is- / hé-side dano / as-éola and ní cumme et tuss(u)*
        (Wb.6ᵇ25)

—2—

'*Deus*: it is He, also, that is wise therein, not even as thou.'

(4)   PCpS: *a-ní as-maith la-dia do-guidi / is- / hed / tinfet-som dia-nóibaib*
        (Wb.4[b]2)
        'that which God would have (us) pray for is that with which He inspires
        His saints.'

As the predicate is resumed in (3) and (4), their structures are expressed
as PCpS rather than CPS. The post-copular predicate pronoun becomes always a
rheme in these cases as they are all cleft sentences. If the relocation of the
referents at the head of the sentences (3) and (4) to the sentence-final position
happens, the cataphoric constructions will be created. There are four possible
causes for cataphora: (i) complexity — to avoid a cumbersome predicate, (ii)
communicative dynamism, (iii) natural association of the subject-predicate order
to the theme-rheme structure, and (iv) natural sequence of main clause to
subordinate clause.[5] With these motivations for cataphora identified, it could be
said that the CpSP structure with a cataphoric post-copular pronoun is 'marked'
compared to the structure with an anaphoric post-copular pronoun.

Two examples of this type in the cleft construction from the Glosses are:

(5)   CpSP: *in- / ed / fodera báas domsa / a-timne sainemail-sin* (Wb.3[c]33)
        'is what causes death to me that excellent commandment?'

(6)   CpSP: *ni- / hed / not-beir í-nem / ciaba-loingthech* (Wb.6[c]9)
        'it is not this that brings thee into heaven, that thou shouldest be a
        glutton.'

Some non-cleft examples of the CpSP structure from the Glosses are:

(7)   CpSP *na-bad / hé / for-nimbradud / nách maith a-ní i-táa* (Wb.6[b]6)
        'let it not be your opinion that his state (of mind) is not good.'

(8)   CpSP *is- / sí didiu / trebaire chollno / cecha dethidnea domundi do-*

imradud cen imradud na-nemde (Wb.3ᵈ30)

'this then is 'prudence of the flesh,' to consider all mundane cares without considering the heavenly.'

Recursive Demonstratives / Pronouns

When demonstratives appear in identificatory copula sentences, the following two curious instances have been found. Each of them contains two demonstratives.

(9)   *is-/ i inso / ind-rún / inso .i. esseírge inna-nuile marb* (Wb. 13ᵈ16)
'this is the mystery, to wit, the resurrection of all the dead.'

(10)   *it / he inse / ind-focháinn / inso* (Ml. 86ᶜ3)
'these are the causes.'

With regard to the first demonstratives after the post-copular pronouns, GOI (§478) says that 'where the demonstrative stands immediately beside a personal pronoun the two words coalesce to some extent'. Mac Coisdealbha (1974, 85) sees this 'coalescence' as 'the desubstantivization of the demonstrative' which means that such a demonstrative becomes a demonstrative adjective modifying its preceding pronoun. As for the second demonstrative pronoun, GOI (§478) says that 'since in such sentences there is no clear-cut distinction between subject and predicate [...] the demonstrative may actually occur twice.' Mac Coisdealbha (1974, 85) thinks that these examples represent a 'contamination' of the two structures as in:

	C	p	S	P⁶			C	p	P	S
(9a)	*is-*	*/ i /*	*inso*	*/ ind-rún*		(9b)	*is-*	*/ i /*	*ind-rún*	*/ inso*
(10a)	*it /*	*he /*	*inse /*	*ind-focháinn*		(10b)	*it /*	*he /*	*ind-focháinn /*	*inso*

Ó Máille (1911, 67) gives a comment on the same examples that 'either the first or second *inso* here must be omitted'. But, Mac Coisdealbha (1974, 85) says that 'the question as to the correctness/well-formedness of the sentence is in the context irrelevant'. Be that as it may, the appearance of these recursive demonstratives is clear evidence for the confusion of the syntactic interpretation between the CpSP and CpPS structures on these sentences. This confusion might have contributed to giving rise to the appearance of the post-copular pronoun in the CpPS structure with immediate prolepsis.

These recursive demonstrative constructions may be seen as an Old Irish version of the recursive pronoun structure in Early Modern/Modern Irish. Some examples of the CpPS structure with a pronoun subject are:

(11)   CpPS: *as / é / céd-duine tárla do / hé ar tuidhecht asin tsídh amach, ...* (AS 0624)
        'the chief being the first man that was come in his way since he had emerged out of the sídh' (O'Grady); 'he (Finn) is the first man who happened to (meet) him (= musician) after (his) coming out of the *sídh*' (KN)

(12)   CpPS: *adeireadh gach aon i gcoitchinne gurab / é / adhbhar ríogh Éireann / é.* (SC 15.09)
        'people generally said that he was the heir-presumptive to the sovereignty of Ireland.'

(13)   CpPS: *Chuala Bríd sean-fhunndúirí ag rá gurbh / é / 'deireadh an tsaoil' / é.* (BB 135.11)
        'She heard old people say it was the end of the world.' (EOT)

I have not found any example of this type in my materials of Middle Irish. This recursive pronoun did not occur in Old Irish since no independent subject pronoun has yet developed at that time. Instead, as we have seen, it was done by a demonstrative pronoun albeit sporadically.

Another Cause for Immediate Prolepsis

In the arguments so far, there are two stages in the post-copular pronoun development. Firstly, remote prolepsis is created by means of putting the predicate forward to the sentence-final position for functional reasons. Secondly, immediate prolepsis is formed by analogy with this remote prolepsis. But there is another possible origin for immediate prolepsis from the CPS structure where the predicate is an anaphoric pronoun.

The identificatory sentence with a post-copular pronoun, *is hé dia*, can be interpreted in two ways according to the theme-rheme structure in utterance.[7] It means either 'he is God' or 'God is him' (which comes from a reprise construction 'it's him, God').[8] On the other hand, without a post-copular pronoun *is dia* allows only one interpretation 'he is God'. Thus, *is hé dia* and *is dia* become identical when they mean 'he is God'. At the same time, we see *is hé dia* (Wb. 8^{d}23, 15^{c}17) and *is dia* (Wb. 1^{a}2, 4^{b}14, 4^{c}4, 6^{a}3) appearing side by side in Old Irish. Then, it would not be surprising if *is hé dia*, which is originally a CPS reprise sentence, is re-interpreted as CspP (lower-case s: pronominal inflection; lower-case p: proleptic pronoun) by analogy with a CsP sentence like *is dia*.

Cs P	Cs p P (originally CPS)
is dia	*is hé dia*

Through this analogy with the 3sg. pronominal element in the copula, the post-copular pronoun may have been felt to be optional as it functions merely as a marker to indicate a following definite NP predicate. When an explicit definite NP subject or a subordinate clause subject is required it is simply added to the sentence-final position creating a CpPS structure.

Two examples of such sentences which allow this dual interpretation of CPS and CspP from my materials of the Glosses are:

(14)   *is- / hé / ar-nathir iar-colinn* quia de genere abrachae fuerunt (Wb. 2ᵇ23)

'he is our father according to the flesh, [for they were of Abraham's people].'

Latin text: Abraham, patrem nostrum, secundum carnem

(15)   *in-ísu crist .i. imba immalei do occar-taithchricc* et *occar-náinsem náte níba-hed ni- / sí / ar-sercc less* (Wb. 4ᵇ16)

'is it Jesus Christ? i.e. will He be at the same time redeeming us and accusing us? Not so: it will not be that, that is not the love He has for us.'

(14) is a translation gloss. The post-copular pronoun refers to Abraham in the Latin text. At the same time, the association with an alternative sentence without the post-copular pronoun *is ar n-athir* makes this pronoun optional. Therefore, it allows two interpretations: the CPS structure with an anaphoric pronoun as the thematic predicate and the CspP structure with a subpredicate for immediate prolepsis. In (15), the post-copular pronoun refers to the way of His redeeming and accusing us at the same time in the previous sentence. It is equally possible to see the pronominal element of the copula referring to the same. However, the post-copular pronoun *sí* is feminine and in agreement with the noun *sercc*. This gender agreement could support the interpretation of CspP rather than CPS. According to Ó Nualláin (1911, 368), the gender assimilation of the post-copular pronoun to the immediately following subject noun phrase in the CpSP structure is very common. But gender agreement must occur in the CpPS structure of immediate prolepsis. GOI (§815) cites a similar example, *crist didiu, is- / sí / in-chathir* 'Christ, then, he is the city' (Wb. 21ᶜ5). The post-copular pronoun agrees with the following noun phrase in gender (fem.) but not with *crist* (masc.) at the head of the sentence. This gender agreement may be an indication of the fact that the pronoun is felt as a subpredicate in immediate prolepsis though it anaphorically refers to *crist* at the same time.

If this dual interpretation theory is the case, the creation of the CpPS structure is just a matter of the appearance of an explicit subject phrase at the end of the sentence. The following are examples with the subject of a demonstrative pronoun, a definite NP and a relative clause.

(16)   *is- / hed / for-nainm / in-sin* (Wb. 5ª17)
         'that is your name.'
(17)   *ní-ceil-som tra as- / né / crist / in-lie as-rubart* (Wb. 4ᵈ16)
         'so he conceals not that Christ is the stone he has mentioned.'
(18)   *is- / sí / ind-ainim / as-airlam do-chomalnad recto dé ní in-corpp* (Wb. 3ᵈ11)
         'it is the soul that is ready to fulfil God's law, not the body.'

The appearance of the recursive demonstratives discussed in the previous section is also evidence for this dual interpretation of the Copula + Pronoun + definite NP structure, that is, CPS and CspP. The basic sentence, *is- / sí / ind-rún*, can be interpreted in these two ways. When a demonstrative is required, there are two possible positions to insert it according to whether the interpretation is CPS or CspP. If the structure is felt to be CPS, the demonstrative adjective will be inserted after the post-copular pronoun where the theme of the sentence falls. If the structure is felt to be CspP, the demonstrative must be added to the sentence-final position as the new explicit subject pronoun because the pronominal element of the copula cannot be modified by the demonstrative. Thus, a CpPS sentence is formed.

Conclusion

It should be noted that this dual interpretation for the creation of immediate prolepsis is complementary to the remote prolepsis analogy presented by Ó Nualláin and Mac Coisdealbha. Both of the causes are likely to have contributed to the creation and establishment of the CpPS structure.

Notes

[1] This paper is based on Chapter 5 of my PhD thesis (Nashimoto 1999, 213-219).

[2] The following syntactic notations are used in this paper.

C	Copula
Cs	Copula with pronominal inflection
P	Predicate
p (lower-case) in CpPS	Subpredicate (a third person pronoun)
p (lower-case) in CpSP	Predicate substituens (a third person pronoun)
P in CpSP	Predicate substituendum
S	Subject

[3] The term 'remote prolepsis' is used when the propletic pronoun refers to the predicate at the sentence final position of the CpSP construction. On the other hand, the term 'immediate prolepsis' is employed when the proleptic pronoun refers to the immediately following predicate noun phrase in the CpPS construction.

[4] The translation of the Glosses are from *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus*.

[5] For further details, see Nashimoto (1999, 212-3).

[6] Mac Coisdealbha takes a subject-first CS (*i inso*) P interpretation for this type.

[7] The syntactic structure of *is hé dia* is a CPS, not a subject-first CSP. Therefore, the predicate becomes a theme and the subject a rheme in an unmarked context. This theme-rheme structure (C P: theme S: rheme) overrides the ordinary association of the predicate with a rheme and the subject with a theme, as is the case with Modern Irish. For further details, see Nashimoto (1999, 194-197).

[8] See Greene (1958, 109) for the explanation of a reprise construction.

Abbreviation of Source & Reference Materials

AS Stokes (1900) *Acallam na Senórach*

BB Ó Cadhain (1948) *An Braon Broghach*

DIL Royal Irish Academy (1983) *Dictionary of the Irish Language*, compact edn.

EOT Ó Tuairisc (1981) *The Road to Brightcity*

GOI Thurneysen (1946) *A Grammar of Old Irish*

Ml. The Milan Glosses

KN The author's translation

SC Bergin (1930) *Sgéalaigheacht Chéitinn*

Wb. The Würzburg Glosses

Bibliography

Bergin, Osborn., ed., 1930. *Sgéalaigheacht Chéitinn: Stories from Keating's History of Ireland*, 3rd edn, Dublin: RIA; repr. 1981

Greene, David. 1958. 'The Analytic Forms of the Verb in Irish', *Ériu*, 18, 108–112

Mac Coisdealbha, Pádraig. 1974. 'The Syntax of the Sentence in Old Irish: Selected Studies from a Descriptive, Historical and Comparative Point of View', doctoral thesis, Ruhr-Universität Bochum

Nashimoto, Kuninao. 1999. 'On the Historical Syntax of the Copula in Irish: Descriptive Studies on Selected Prose Texts from Diachronic and Synchronic points of View', unpublished doctoral thesis, National University of Ireland, Galway

Ó Cadhain, Máirtín. 1948. *An Braon Broghach*, Dublin: Oifig an tSoláthair

Ó Máille, Tomás. 1911. 'Contributions to the History of the Verbs of Existence in Irish', *Ériu*, 6, 1–102

Ó Nualláin [= O'Nolan], Gearóid. 1911. 'Gadelica Minora: Parts I–V', *The Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 30, (fourth series), 33–42, 137–144, 361–368, 501–508, 609–619

O'Grady, Standish H., ed. & trans., 1892. *Silva Gadelica: A Collection of Tales in Irish*, 2 vols, London: Williams and Norgate, II, 101–265

Stokes, Whitley and Strachan, John., eds, 1901. *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus*, 2 vols, Cambridge: CUP; repr. Dublin: DIAS, 1975

Stokes, Whitley., ed., 1900. *Acallamh na Senórach*, Irische Texte, IV, Leipzig: Verlag von S. Hirzel

Thurneysen, Rudolf. 1946. *A Grammar of Old Irish*, trans. by D.A. Binchy and Osborn Bergin, Dublin: DIAS; repr. 1980