

**\*\*PLEASE NOTE THAT SOME CHANGES WERE MADE AT PROOF-STAGE\*\***

STRUCTURAL AMBIGUITY AND RESUMPTIVE PRONOUNS:  
THE PRAGMATICS OF THE TRANSITIVE ‘DIRECT’ AND ‘INDIRECT’ RELATIVES  
IN MODERN IRISH

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ABSTRACT

On the basis of a corpus of transitive relative clauses from authentic texts this paper seeks to shed light on the 'direct' and 'indirect' transitive relative clauses in Modern Irish. 'Direct' transitive relative clauses in Irish are sometimes structurally ambiguous, that is, it is sometimes unclear whether the antecedent is the subject or the direct object of the relative clause. The present paper seeks to identify how such ambiguous clauses are correctly interpreted. It is frequently claimed that the 'indirect' relative is used to disambiguate potentially ambiguous object-relative constructions. This paper argues, however, that the use of the indirect relative is better explained by accessibility theory. The claim is that the 'indirect' relative is used when the antecedent is less accessible at the point at which it is reactivated in the relative clause.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research was carried out as part of the LOEWE Project ‘Establishing basic categories of language’ in the Philipps-Universität Marburg under the supervision of Professor Elisabeth Rieken. I am grateful to Professor Rieken and to my colleagues in the sub-project ‘The Syntax-Semantics Interface’ for their support and advice. A version of this paper was presented in the Marburg Linguistics Colloquium on 20 June 2014 and I would like to thank those who attended for their valuable feedback. I am indebted to Dr Simon Kasper, Christina Cleary, Aoife Crawford, Professor Erich Poppe and Stephen Stacey for their comments on various issues, and I am particularly grateful to the two anonymous readers, who saved me from a number of errors and suggested valuable improvements. I alone am responsible for the errors and inconsistencies that remain in this paper.

INTRODUCTION

**1.** In the course of his discussion of transitive relative clauses (RCs) in Modern Irish, Cormac Ó Cadhlaigh (1940, 376) draws attention to the following passage from the seventeenth-

century satire *Pairlement Chloinne Tomáis*, which describes a legal wrangle between Bernárd (who speaks first in the quotation below) and Tomás, adjudicated by Muiris mac Dáibhí:

(1) '[A]gas dar do láimhse dhuitse, agus dar láimh mo chairdios Chríosa, a Mhuiris mhic Dáibhí, an banbh rug an chráin úd, dob fhiú eadrumsa agus tusa srughán mine nó eorna a gceann a sheachtmhuine é'. 'Cia aca rug a chéile', ar Tomás, 'an banbh nó an chráin?' Do thógbhadur cách uile gáir mhagaidh 7 fhomhaid faoi Bhernárd, 7 do mholsad uile gurab ealadhanta sgafánta fuair Tomás an tagra sin a bfiaghnuise na ndaoine math sin.

'By your hand, I tell you, and the hand of my Godfather, O Muiris, son of Dáibhí, a piglet that that sow would bear, between you and me, would be worth a cake of meal or barley when a week old.' 'Which bore which', asked Tomás, 'the piglet or the sow?' They all raised a cry of ridicule and mockery at Bernard, and they all agreed that Tomás's defence in the presence of those nobles was both elegant and sharp-witted.

(Williams 1981, ll. 899-905)

The joke is, of course, lost in the English translation. The boorish Tomás is (wilfully?) ignorant of whether the transitive RC *an banbh rug an chráin úd* was intended to mean 'that sow that bore the piglet' or 'the piglet that bore that sow'. Formally both are possible interpretations of this utterance, but obviously only the former meaning was intended. Put rather pedantically, the humour here lies in Tomás' (pretended?) inability to interpret the RC as Bernárd intended.<sup>1</sup> This passage is an appropriate introduction to a discussion of transitive RCs in Irish because it highlights two important features of the transitive 'direct' relative in Irish: firstly, such utterances can be structurally ambiguous, i.e. capable of more than one interpretation; secondly, even though speakers of the language are aware of the potential ambiguity of some of these utterances, structurally ambiguous utterances continue to be made

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1 Williams' interpretation of this passage is, in my opinion, over-complicated. 'In strictly correct Classical Irish there is no ambiguity. Bernard's statement properly can only mean that the sow gave birth to the pig. Had the sow been the object of the verb, the form strictly would have been in the accusative, i.e. with eclipse of the first consonant: \**an banbh rug an gcráin*. We may suppose, therefore, that the author is ridiculing Clan Thomas's ignorance of correct Irish.' But the ambiguity described could, indeed, survive in 'strictly correct Classical Irish': as the noun *cráin* has the same form in the nominative and accusative singular, both *an chráin* and *an gcráin* (treated as a nominative in the former and as an accusative in the latter) would be acceptable forms of the article + noun in direct object position in Classical Irish. It seems to me more likely that the passage is simply mocking the intelligence or disposition of Clan Thomas more generally, rather than drawing attention to Tomás' unfamiliarity with the complexities of declension in Classical Irish. For the argument, authorship and date of *Pairlement Chloinne Tomáis*, see Williams 1981, Caball 1993 and de Barra 1991-2.

with the expectation that the hearer/reader's pragmatic competence (their ability to correctly interpret the intended meaning) will be sufficient to allow for successful communication.

Ó Cadhlaigh draws attention to the passage cited above as part of his discussion of the 'indirect' relative in Modern Irish, a clause of the type *siné an fear gur bhuail Tadhg é* 'that is the man whom Tadhg struck', more literally 'that is the man that Tadhg struck him'. In Ó Cadhlaigh's account of the transitive indirect relative (376-7), as in more recent grammars, the emphasis is on the indirect relative as a disambiguating construction, a construction that does not allow the structural ambiguity characteristic of some direct relatives, such as Example 1. More recent research (and, indeed, some of Ó Cadhlaigh's own remarks in this regard) has drawn attention to the 'superfluous' use of the transitive indirect relative, that is, its use in contexts where the pragmatic competence of the hearer/reader should have allowed for the correct interpretation of the utterance had the 'direct' relative construction been used. Furthermore, the indirect relative is often not used when, in fact, the risk of the utterance being misunderstood appears to be considerable. This has led to the conclusion that the choice between the direct and indirect relative may be free, with a secondary and marginal disambiguating function distinguishing the indirect relative from its direct counterpart (McCloskey 1985, 64-5; 1979, 7-8).

The present article presents the results of a case-study of transitive RCs in Modern Irish conducted as part of the LOEWE Project 'Establishing basic categories of language', based in the Philipps-Universität in Marburg, which aimed to empirically establish fundamental linguistic factors. The present writer was tasked with examining Modern Irish transitive RCs. For the purpose of this research project, a corpus of transitive RCs was compiled. Several issues were investigated. Firstly, how are structurally ambiguous RCs understood? What role, if any, do animacy and accessibility hierarchies play in the interpretation of structurally ambiguous direct relatives? Secondly, the frequency of the indirect relative construction was examined. Thirdly, I attempted to establish whether the use of the indirect relative construction is in fact free, as has been claimed, or whether other factors can be identified which better explain its distribution. Arising out of these discussions, an attempt will also be made in this paper to trace something of the history of the indirect transitive relative and an outline for further research will be sketched.

## TERMINOLOGY

2. By 'transitive RC', I mean a RC which contains a transitive verb and whose headword or antecedent functions as the subject or direct object of that verb. There are two types of such RCs in Modern Irish: the direct relative (henceforth described by the siglum 'DR(t)') and the indirect relative ('IR(t)').<sup>2</sup>

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2 Beginning with McCloskey 1979, the custom has been to refer to the direct relative with the siglum  $a^L$  and the indirect relative with the siglum  $a^N$ . I have opted to adopt different sigla here, as the present discussion concerns only transitive subject and object clauses, as defined above, and not all of the various clause types traditionally classified as 'direct' ( $a^L$ ) and 'indirect' ( $a^N$ ).

**3.1** In the direct relative construction DR(t), the antecedent is normally followed by the relative verbal particle *a*, which lenites the initial of the following verb where possible.<sup>3</sup> (The relative particle, which is unstressed, may be elided after a vowel.) In dialects in which the relative endings of the 3 singular present and future indicative of the verb have been preserved these endings may be employed; otherwise the standard independent form of the verb will be used (see *SNG* VI §8.10, VII §5.5, VIII §7.6).<sup>4</sup> The most significant aspect of the DR(t)-construction for the present paper is that the antecedent, which may be either the subject or object of the transitive verb, is ‘dropped’, i.e. it is not repeated or expressed as a resumptive pronoun (RP) in the RC.

(2) *a’ chéad bhuille a<sup>L</sup> tharraing sé*

‘the first blow’      *a<sup>L</sup>* ‘drew’      ‘he’.NOM

‘the first blow that he struck’ (*SAB*, 232-3)

(3) *fear ar bith a<sup>L</sup> bhainfeadh gáire aisti*

‘any man’              *a<sup>L</sup>* ‘would extract’      ‘laughter’      ‘from her’

‘any man who could make her laugh’ (lit. ‘any man who would get a laugh out of her’)  
(*ibid.*, 238-9)

In negative clauses *a<sup>L</sup>* is replaced by the negative verbal particle *nach<sup>N</sup>* (in Munster often *ná*) in the present, future, conditional and past habitual, and by *nár<sup>H</sup>* in the past.<sup>5</sup> The dependent form of the verb is required after the negative verbal particle (see Example 4 where *faca*, the dependent form of *chonaic* ‘saw’, is used).

(4) *buachaill mór scailleaganta nach<sup>N</sup> bhfaca siad ariamh*

‘a big, lively, young fellow’      *a<sup>L</sup>NEG* ‘saw’DEPENDENT ‘they’NOM ‘ever’

<sup>3</sup> This picture is complicated somewhat by an apparent ‘nasalising’ direct relative in Ulster Irish. See Section 7.5 below.

<sup>4</sup> Relative verbal endings are extremely marginal in Munster Irish. None occur in the corpus generated for this research (see Section 6 below for details on the corpus). In *RMS*, two examples of the present indicative relative ending *-(e)as* occur, against one example of the non-relative ending *-(e)ann*. In the same text, there are two examples of the future relative ending *-(e)as*, against no examples of the non-relative ending. In *SAB*, one example of the 3 sg. present verb without relative ending occurs against two examples with the relative ending. There are five examples of the 3 sg. future without the relative ending (all of which occur in the ‘nasalising’ direct relative described in Section 7.5) against ten examples with the relative ending. No examples of the relative ending *-(e)anns* occur in the corpus under examination.

<sup>5</sup> *Nach* is used in the past tense with some irregular verbs. Note also that in some dialects of contemporary Irish the verbal particles historically used in the present tense are also used in other tenses (*SNG* VI, §§8.52-3, VII, §5.24).

‘a big, lively, young fellow they had never seen before’ (ibid., 224-5)

(5) *rud nach<sup>N</sup> bhfuair mé*

‘a thing’ *a<sup>L</sup>NEG* ‘got’ ‘I’.NOM/ACC

‘something I haven’t had’ (ibid., 100-1)

The verbal particles *a<sup>L</sup>*, *nach<sup>N</sup>*, etc. are not declined for number, gender or case, and do not help to clarify the role of the antecedent or the argument expressed in the RC.

**3.2** As discussed above, the DR(t)-construction is of particular interest because it can give rise to ‘structural ambiguity’, i.e. utterances which are, at least formally, capable of more than one interpretation. When no formal or syntactic information (see Section 7 below) clarifies the role played by the antecedent and the expressed argument in the RC, the RC can be interpreted in such a way that either the antecedent or the argument expressed in the RC is the subject of that clause. For example:

(6) <i>Bonnaí Dubha Ó Dubhthaigh</i>	<i>a<sup>L</sup></i>	<i>cheangail</i>
‘Bonnaí Dubha Ó Dubhthaigh’		‘tie’PAST
<i>a’ Bás</i>	<i>agus</i>	<i>Aingeal a’ Bháis</i>
‘Death’	‘and’	‘the Angel of Death’

(ibid., 190-1)

Two interpretations of this utterance are possible, as there is no formal, syntactic or semantic information to clarify the role played by the expressed arguments in the RC: ‘Death and the Angel of Death, who tied up Bonnaí Dubha Ó Dubhthaigh’ or, as the editor of the text correctly translates, ‘[Bonnaí Dubha Ó Dubhthaigh], who tied up Death and the Angel of Death’.<sup>6</sup>

**4.1** In the indirect relative construction IR(t), the antecedent is normally followed by the relative particle *a<sup>N</sup>/go<sup>N</sup>* (negative *nach<sup>N</sup>/ná*) in the present, future, conditional and past habitual, and by *ar<sup>H</sup>/gur<sup>H</sup>* (negative *nár<sup>H</sup>*) in the past.<sup>7</sup> These relative particles are followed by the dependent form of the verb. In the IR(t)-construction, the antecedent is always the object

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<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that intonation appears to play no role in the interpretation of these clauses (Dooley Collberg 1988, 97). Even if intonation were a disambiguating factor, this would not explain how written examples of DR(t)-constructions are correctly interpreted by readers or why so many are produced in purely written texts.

<sup>7</sup> This distribution of the verbal particles holds for regular verbs. The usage of verbal particles with irregular verbs is somewhat more complicated in that some irregular verbs are also preceded by *a<sup>N</sup>/go<sup>N</sup>* (and negative *nach<sup>N</sup>/ná*) in the past tense. See also footnote 5 above.

of the transitive verb in the RC, where it is repeated as a pronoun which generally agrees in gender and number with the antecedent.<sup>8</sup>

(7) *jab ar<sup>L</sup> fhág an oiread sin oibrithe é* (TTO, 114)

‘job’ *a<sup>N</sup>PAST* ‘left’ ‘that many workers’ ‘it’RP

‘a job that so many workers left’

**4.2** The disambiguating function of the IR(t)-construction is emphasised in modern-day grammars (for example, *Graiméar Gaeilge na mBráithre Críostaí* §27.10, Ó Dónaill 2008, 148-9, Mac Giolla Phádraig 1963, 121, *Gramadach na Gaeilge* §11.2(a), (b)). Indeed, the impression is sometimes given that the IR(t)-construction should only be used when an unacceptable ambiguity might result from the use of the DR(t)-construction which can be avoided through the use of the IR(t)-construction. However, as part of a broader discussion of the use of the direct and indirect relative, McCloskey (1985, 64) remarks that ‘the observation that a RP is often used to resolve this kind of [structural] ambiguity clearly does not reflect the operation of a grammatical rule, since there are many cases in which the direct relative is used despite the resultant ambiguity’. He cites

(8) *an t-oifigeach sgannruighthe... a tharrtháil mé an oidhche roimhe sin*

‘the frightened officer... that I saved the night before’ / ‘...that saved me the night before’

as an example of a structurally ambiguous sentence where the ambiguity could have been avoided by the use of the IR(t)-construction. (The first translation is the correct one.) He continues, ‘There are also many cases in which the RP is used where there would be no ambiguity if the direct relative were used instead’, and cites among others

(9) *na tithe seo nár fhág aon duine fós iad*

‘these houses that no-one had so far left’

as an example.<sup>9</sup> McCloskey concludes that the choice between the two constructions is free and that ‘we are dealing here with statistical tendencies in usage: in a direct object relative, use of a gap [the DR(t)-construction] is more frequent than use of a pronoun [the IR(t)-construction] in the general case. But in the case where ambiguity may arise, use of the pronoun is more common than use of a gap’. He proposes that the choice between the two constructions might be accounted for by a theory of performance (McCloskey 1985, 64-5;

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<sup>8</sup> In some cases, the RP reflects the natural rather than the grammatical gender and/or number of the antecedent. An interesting case is *Tá corrrhéiplíneach a ngortaíonn an imirce iad* (Ó Ceallaigh 1990), ‘There is the odd curate who is distressed by the immigration’. Here the antecedent is a sg. masculine noun but the RP is 3 pl. Obviously the existence of more than one concerned cleric is envisaged by the sentence and therefore a plural pronoun is employed.

<sup>9</sup> A similar observation is made by Ó Cadhlaigh (1940, 376-7).

1979, 7-8). At this point it should be noted that the DR(t)-construction is overwhelmingly the more common of the two (McCloskey 1979, 6; Goodluck et al 2006, 644, 654-5; Section 9.1 below).<sup>10</sup>

5. With the help of a corpus of transitive RCs, the present article seeks to contribute to our understanding of the pragmatics of transitive RCs in Modern Irish. In Section 6, the corpus compiled for this task will be described. Section 7 will discuss the formal, syntactic and semantic factors which can prevent structural ambiguity in DR(t)-constructions and the ratio of structurally ambiguous to structurally unambiguous texts in the corpus examined. Section 8 details semantic and pragmatic factors which were investigated in the hope of identifying more precisely the factors which disambiguate structurally ambiguous DR(t)-clauses. Section 9 will consider the frequency of IR(t)-constructions in the corpus and attempt to draw some conclusions about the use of this construction in the corpus examined and in Modern Irish in general. Finally, Section 10 traces something of the history of the IR(t)-construction.

## THE CORPUS

6. In order to investigate the distribution of the DR(t)- and IR(t)-constructions and the interpretation of structurally ambiguous clauses, a corpus of transitive clauses<sup>11</sup> extracted from texts by native speakers of two of the traditional dialects of Modern Irish, Ulster and Munster,<sup>12</sup> was created.<sup>13</sup>

10 It has been my experience that, at least among non-native speakers, the mistaken impression that the IR(t)-construction is quite common is widespread. This might be explained by the prominence afforded the construction in modern-day grammars.

11 Only sentences of the type [(pro-)nominal antecedent + transitive verb + (pro-)nominal argument (+ resumptive pronoun)] were selected for analysis. Both clefts (such as *Is é Dia a choisreac thú* ‘it is God that blessed you’) as well as ‘proper’ relatives were input. Verbal-noun and passive-verb constructions were not examined. Sentences in which the object of the transitive verb was an entire sentence (e.g. reported speech after forms of the verb *deireann* ‘says’) were not analysed. Interrogative sentences were analysed, but only when the antecedent of the transitive RC was not an interrogative pronoun; sentences such as *Cé a thug dó é?* ‘Who gave it to him?’ were not analysed, though sentences of the type *Cé hé an fear a thug dó é?* were. Quotations from songs and poems, as well as proverbs and set-phrases were also excluded from the analysis, as unreliable indicators of actual contemporary usage.

12 The exclusion of texts of Connacht origin from the corpus was sadly necessitated by time-constraints.

13 Once selected for analysis, the relevant clauses were entered into a browser-based database designed to process formal, syntactic and semantic information relevant for the cross-linguistic Marburg LOEWE sub-project ‘The Syntax-Semantics Interface’. Data input to the database were classified in depth at sentence-, clause-, phrase- and word-level, according to common formal, syntactic and semantic categories for all the languages investigated as part of this research project. Information relevant to the present paper was subsequently extracted using SQL-based search queries. Though the database proved enormously helpful, some language-specific technical difficulties were

The Munster texts consulted were:

*A thig ná tit orm (TTO)*: the autobiography of Maidhc Dainín Ó Sé (1942-2013), a native of Corca Dhuibhne, Co. Kerry, first published in 1985.

*Bibeanna*: a collection of short oral histories gathered from twenty-five older women from Corca Dhuibhne, Co. Kerry in the early 2000s.

The Ulster texts consulted were:

*Rotha Mór an tSaoil (RMT)*: the autobiography of Micí Mac Gabhann (1865-1948) of Cloich Cheannfhaola, Co. Donegal, transcribed by Seán Ó hEochaidh and edited by Proinsias Ó Conluain.

*Seanchas Annie Bhán (SAB)*: an edition of folktales, anecdotes and oral history by Annie Bhán Nic Grianna, recorded in 1937, 1939 and 1961. Annie Bhán (1893-1963) was a native of Rann na Feirste, Co. Donegal.

With the exception of *TTO*, all of the texts are transcriptions or editions of oral material.<sup>14</sup> Though *TTO* is a written rather than an oral autobiography, its style and language are very close to the spoken language. It is of interest here as a text intended exclusively for a reading audience (see footnote 6 above).

Though the range of texts consulted was relatively small, a total corpus of 539 RCs was generated (see Table 1), which I believe is a sufficient basis to draw some conclusions concerning the interpretation of structurally ambiguous DR(t)-clauses and the use and distribution of the IR(t)-construction.

	No. of relevant transitive RCs
<b><i>TTO</i></b>	151
<b><i>Bibeanna</i></b>	55
<b><i>RMT</i></b>	248
<b><i>SAB</i></b>	82
<b>Total</b>	<b>539</b>

Table 1 *Number of transitive RCs in the corpus examined*

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unavoidable; as a result, some of the information extracted from the database had to be manually altered, while some of the information presented in this paper was compiled manually. Simon Kasper played a crucial role in the linguistic conception of the database. The database itself was designed and constructed by Frank Nagel, Slawomir Messner and Raphael Stroh. I am grateful to my colleagues in 'The Syntax-Semantic Interface' sub-project for their assistance with the database. For more information on the LOEWE project 'Establishing basic categories of language', see <http://www.uni-marburg.de/fb09/lingbas/> (accessed 09:29, 02/06/2014).

14 While *SAB* appears to be simply a transcript of oral material, *Bibeanna* and *RMS* are better classified as 'editions' as a certain amount of editorial intervention appears to have taken place in preparing the texts for publication.



## DR(t)-CLAUSES

7 Before addressing the question of how structurally ambiguous transitive RCs are correctly interpreted, we must first establish what factors formally, syntactically and/or semantically prevent structural ambiguity in transitive RCs and how many transitive RCs are, in fact, structurally ambiguous in our corpus. The following strategies were identified which prevent structural ambiguity in DR(t)-clauses: synthetic verbal forms and the case-marking of the expressed argument in the RC; the word-order of the RC, specifically the presence of an intervening word or phrase between the verb and the object in the RC; and the use of reflexive verbal constructions, when the subject and object of the RC do not agree in number and/or gender. At the outset it should be noted that this list is by no means exhaustive; it pertains only to the corpus under examination.

7.1 When the subject of the verb in the RC is expressed synthetically, i.e. when the verb and its subject are expressed by a single word, there is no ambiguity concerning the role played by the antecedent in the RC: the antecedent is the object and the person indicated by the verbal ending is the subject.

(10) *cloch a<sup>L</sup> chuirimis 'on tine (Bibeanna, 174)*

'stone' a<sup>L</sup> 'we used to put' 'into the fire'

'[it was] a stone that we used to put in the fire'

7.2 Some pronouns have distinct nominative and accusative forms.<sup>15</sup> In Example 11, the subject of the RC is marked nominative. As such, only one interpretation of the RC is possible: the antecedent is the object of the RC, the expressed argument the subject. In Example 12, the object of the RC is marked accusative and the antecedent must therefore be interpreted as the subject of the clause.

(11) *fá choinne tarr a<sup>L</sup> chuirfeadh sé ar a' bhád* (SAB, 68)

'tar' a<sup>L</sup> 'would put' 'he'NOM 'on the boat'

'for tar that he would put on his boat'

(12) *Is é Dia a<sup>L</sup> choisreac thú* (RMS, 209)

'God' a<sup>L</sup> 'blessed' 'you'ACC

'It was God that blessed you'

7.3 The placement of the object in the RC can disambiguate a DR(t)-clause. When the expressed argument in the RC is the subject, it always follows the verb (as in Examples 8 and 11). When the expressed argument of the RC is the object, however, the word order is more flexible. Sometimes the object appears directly after the verb, even when the RC contains other phrases (for example, adverbs, prepositional objects or predicative adjectives):

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15 All 3 sing. pronouns have distinct nom. and acc. forms: masc. *sé* (nom.), *é* (acc.); fem. *sí* (nom.), *í* (acc.); pl. *siad* (nom.), *iad* (acc.). In addition, the 2 sing. pronoun has a distinct nominative form (*tú*) and acc. form (*thú*). Occasionally, 3 person acc. forms are employed in nom. position, sometimes combined with a *nota augens* (see *SNG* V, §5.1, VII, §6.1, VIII, §10.1-3), and, indeed, Greene (1958, 11; cited in *SNG* VIII, §10.3), writing of an earlier period of the language, argues that 'it is impossible to speak of "nominative" and "accusative" forms of the pronouns; we can say only that the *s*- forms do not occur as objects'. In the present corpus, no vowel-initial 3 sg. pronouns occur in subject position, and it would, indeed, be interesting to see if an 'acc.' form could ever occur in subject position in DR(t)-clauses, given the formal ambiguity this might cause. In addition to the complication with regards to pronouns with *s*- nom. forms, it should be noted that some (but not all) Munster Irish dialects have developed new accusative forms of the 1 sing. and 2 sing. pronouns: *me/mi* (nom. *mé*) and *t(h)u* (nom. *tú*) (*SNG* V, §5.1). See also footnote 21 below for 1 pl. pronouns.

In the vast majority of cases, nouns no longer distinguish between nom. and acc. forms in direct object position in Modern Irish. With the dubious exception of *Éirinn*, historically the dat./acc. form of *Éire*, in *an fear a d'fhág ø Éirinn i mo chuideachta* (*RMS*, 173), 'the man who left Ireland with me', these do not occur in our corpus. In the example quoted (from an Ulster text), we probably have to do with an acc. for nom. Cf. *Cá bhfuil Éirinn?* in a novel by a modern-day Donegal writer (Nic Giolla Bhríde 2003), where *Éirinn* is the subject of the verb. (That *Éirinn* here could be an example of the survival of the earlier usage whereby the noun following dependent *fuil* took the acc. is highly unlikely.) But see *SNG* VIII, §5.12 for mention of nom. *Éire* in Ulster Irish. For radical *Éirinn* in Munster and Connacht, see Ó Sé 2000, §236 and *SNG* VII, §3.17.

(13) *cupla rud a<sup>L</sup> shocraigh na gnoithe domh de mo dheoin nó de m'ainneoin*

‘a few things’ a<sup>L</sup> ‘settled’ ‘matters’ ‘for me’ ‘by my will or against it’

‘a few things which resolved matters for me, whether I liked it or not [or ‘willingly or unwillingly’]’

In Example 13, the expressed argument in the RC (*na gnoithe* ‘the matters’) follows the verb and is in turn followed by the prepositional phrase *domh* ‘for me’ and the adverbial expression *de mo dheoin nó de m'ainneoin* ‘willingly or unwillingly’. In this example, word order is of no assistance in determining the role played by the antecedent and the expressed argument in the RC: the expressed argument could either be the subject or the object of the RC in which it appears. But consider Example 14:

(14) *scéal nuaidhe a<sup>L</sup> chuirfeadh thart an oíche (RMS, 210)*

‘a new story’ a<sup>L</sup> ‘would put past’ ‘the night’

‘a new story that would pass [lit. ‘put past’] the night’

In this case, the expressed argument in the RC (*an oíche* ‘the night’) does not immediately follow the verb; *cuireann thart* ‘passes’ is a phrasal verb, and *thart* ‘past’, historically a prepositional pronoun, intervenes between the verb and the expressed argument. In all the examples known to me in which the expressed argument is separated from the verb by an intervening word or phrase, the expressed argument can only be the object of the RC.

7.4 A fourth strategy concerns reflexive verbal constructions.

(15) *Leaid é seo nár scaoil puinn tosaithe laistigh de riamh (TTO, 46)*

‘a lad’ a<sup>L</sup>NEG.PAST ‘let’ ‘any forwards’ ‘behind him’ ‘ever’

‘This was a chap who never let any forwards [get] behind him’

Here the prepositional phrase *laistigh de* in the verbal phrase *scaoileann X Y laistigh de Z* ‘X allows Y to get behind Z’ is used reflexively, referring back to the subject of the verb (*scaoileann X Y laistigh de X*, ‘X allows Y to get behind X’). The prepositional pronoun *de* in the compound preposition *laistigh de* is 3 sg. masc. The only argument within this sentence to which this prepositional pronoun *de* ‘of him’ can be taken to refer to is sg. masc. *leaid* ‘a chap’, the antecedent. (We would expect *puinn tosaithe* to be referred to by a pl. pronoun.) An interpretation, therefore, in which *puinn tosaithe* ‘any forwards’ is taken to be the subject can be discounted: \*‘this was a chap whom no forwards ever let [get] behind him’.<sup>16</sup>

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16 This sentence would be structurally ambiguous in the event that both arguments (the antecedent and the argument expressed in the RC) were the same gender in the singular or were both plural. For example, the phrase *leaid é seo nár scaoil tosaí taobh thiar de riamh* is structurally ambiguous as two translations are (at least formally) possible: ‘this was a lad who never let a forward

Similarly, the reflexive verbal construction *tugann X Y le X* ‘X brings Y with X’ allows only one interpretation in Example 16:

(16) *faoi sholas na gcoinneall a<sup>L</sup> thug muid isteach linn* (RMS, 110)

‘the candles’ *a<sup>L</sup>* ‘brought’ ‘we’NOM/ACC ‘in’ ‘with us’

‘under the light of the candles we brought in with us’

The interpretation \*‘under the light of the candles that brought us in with us’, formally possibly, can be discounted.

7.5 A further disambiguating strategy was considered but ultimately not classified as a reliable disambiguating factor: the ‘nasalising’ direct relative in Ulster Irish.<sup>17</sup>

(17) *achan chineál a<sup>N</sup> n-iarrfaidh mé ort* (SAB, 148)

‘every favour’ *a<sup>N</sup>* ‘will ask’ ‘I’NOM/ACC ‘of you’

‘every favour I will ask of you’

In Example 17 above, we would expect the relative particle *a* to lenite a following consonant, to leave a following vowel unaffected and, in the Ulster dialect, to be followed by the relative form *iarrfas*. However, in this case, the initial vowel of *iarrfaidh* is nasalised, as one would expect with IR(t)-relatives. Similarly, the verbal particle in the past tense with regular verbs is *ar<sup>H</sup>*, not *a<sup>H</sup>*:

(18) *aon mhart ar<sup>H</sup> mharaigh Pádraig ariamh*

‘every cow’ *a<sup>N</sup>PAST* ‘killed’ ‘Pádraig’ ‘ever’

‘any cow that Patrick had ever slaughtered’ (SAB, 100)

Note also that the dependent form of the verb follows the relative particle in the ‘nasalising’ direct relative:

(19) *aon mheascán ime a<sup>N</sup> dtearn sí ariamh*

‘any print of butter’ *a<sup>N</sup>* ‘made’DEPENDENT ‘she’NOM ‘ever’

‘any print of butter she had ever made’ (SAB, 100)

(20) *forrach a<sup>N</sup> bhfuigheadh siad* (RMS, 30)

[get] behind him’ / ‘this was a lad whom a forward never let get behind him’. Similarly, *leaideanna* (pl.) *iad seo nár scaoil puinn tosaithe* (pl.) *laistigh díobh riamh*: ‘these were chaps who never let any forwards [get] behind them’ or ‘these were lads whom no forwards ever let [get] behind them’.

17 The term ‘nasalising direct relative’ is used here for convenience, though this construction is not characterised by nasalisation in every tense (see below).

‘forage’ *a<sup>N</sup>* ‘used to get’/‘would get’DEPENDENT ‘they’NOM

‘forage that they [cattle] used to get [or ‘would get’]’

This ‘nasalising’ direct relative has obvious parallels with the IR(t)-construction. In all but two of the examples in *SAB* (11/13)<sup>18</sup> and in the sole example in *RMS*, the antecedent is an object; the antecedent of the IR(t)-construction must also be an object. The use of the relative particles *a<sup>N</sup>* and *ar<sup>H</sup>*, followed by the dependent form of the verb, are also characteristics of the indirect relative IR(t). However, it will be noted that unlike the IR(t)-construction, the object-antecedent is not repeated as a RP in the RC. In addition, while the antecedent of the ‘nasalising’ direct relative is normally an object, this is not always the case:

(21) *a’ duine*                      *’dtug leis é*

‘the person’    elided *a<sup>N</sup>*    ‘took’ ‘with him’ ‘it’

‘the person who took it’ (*SAB*, 70)

In other words, though the ‘nasalising’ direct relative in Ulster Irish tends to be an object relative, structural ambiguity may still arise with such constructions, as this is not always the case. For this reason, the ‘nasalising’ direct relative in Ulster is not considered a disambiguating feature.

How should this ‘nasalising’ direct relative be analysed? One of the anonymous readers has suggested to me that at least some of the examples of this construction may in fact be examples of constructions of the type [noun + preposition *de* + *a(r)* ‘all that’ + dependent verb], in which *da(r)/dá(r)* ‘of all that’ has been reduced to *a* and *ar*. This is an attractive explanation for (17), (18) and (19), in which the antecedent is qualified by *achan* ‘every’ and *aon* ‘any’ – precisely the context in which one would expect *da(r)/dá(r)*-constructions. In (20) would might assume an implied ‘any’ before ‘forage’, though it is not expressed. In this regard, it should be noted that in 10/13 of the examples of the ‘nasalising’ relative in *SAB* the antecedent is qualified by ‘any’ (i.e. the antecedent is preceded by *aon* or followed by *ar bith*) or ‘every’ (i.e. preceded by *achan*). The other three ‘nasalising’ relatives in *SAB* follow ‘short definite descriptions’. All the ‘nasalising’ relatives in our corpus have discourse-new headwords. However, while this explanation may account for the origin of the ‘nasalising’ direct relative, not all examples of the ‘nasalising’ direct relative can be categorised as examples of a reduced *da(r)/dá(r)*-construction. In (21), where the antecedent is a definite subject, a *da(r)/dá(r)*-construction would make no sense (\*‘the person of all that took it’).<sup>19</sup> While the ‘nasalising’ direct relative may ultimately be traced back to a reduced

18        This figure of 11/13 (84.61%) compares to 33/69 (47.83%) in the non-nasalising DR(t)-clauses in *SAB*.

19        The clause in question occurs in the following context: “...*agus fágaímsa eadar dhá láimh Dé,*” *a dúirt sé,* “*a’ duine ’dtug leis é,*” *dúirt sé,* “*agus tá barúil mhór agam cé rinn.*” “...and I’ll leave in God’s hands the person who took it,” said he, “and I’ve a good idea who it was” (*SAB*, 70-1).

*da(r)/dá(r)*-construction, there seems to be confusion between constructions of the type [nominal antecedent + RC] and those of the type [noun + *da(r)/dá(r)* + dependent verb]. Including evidence outside of the corpus generated for this research project, the picture is complicated even further. Nua-Chorpas na Gaeilge has an interesting example of a subject relative with nasalisation in Ulster Irish: *aon duine a ndéarfás í* (Ó Baoill), 'any person who says it'. In this example, the *a<sup>N</sup>* cannot be a reduced *da/dá* 'of all that', though the subject antecedent would suit such a clause ('any person'), as the verb has the relative ending *-as* rather than the dependent form with no relative ending. Contrast *SAB*, where six 3 sg. future indicative verbs occur in 'nasalising' direct relatives but none has the relative ending *-(e)as* (see footnote 4 above).<sup>20</sup>

In summary, though in origin likely a reduction of *da(r)/dá(r)* 'all that', it seems that *a<sup>N</sup>*, *ar<sup>L</sup>* in the 'nasalising' direct relatives in Ulster Irish has developed into a relative particle connecting low accessibility head-words (see Sections 8.2 and 9.1) and direct RCs. I have therefore decided not to exclude such clauses from the present corpus (provided they meet the criteria set out in footnote 11), despite the fact that some might be analysed as genuine examples of the *da(r)/dá(r)*-construction.

**7.6** Tables 2-5 present information on the structurally unambiguous DR(t)-clauses in the four texts examined. Two figures are given for word-order and structurally unambiguous reflexive verbal phrases (see Section 7.3 and 7.4 above): the first is the number of clauses exclusively disambiguated by the named factor; the second figure refers to the total number of clauses where the relevant disambiguating factor clarifies the role of the antecedent and the expressed argument in the RC.

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20 It is tempting, given the tendency for the 'nasalising' direct relative in Ulster to consist of object relatives, to consider whether this construction might be a remnant of the Old Irish nasalising object relative (for which, see Thurneysen 1946, 316-20 and *SNG* II, §34.4). (Lambert 1992 suggests that accessibility considerations (see Sections 8.2 and 9.1 below) played a role in the choice between the nasalising and leniting direct object relative in Old Irish.) One could compare this survival with the archaism of the non-lenited initial of relative *bíos* in Ulster Irish (Ahlqvist 1988, 28-9). The partial breakdown to allow nasalised subject relatives would, under this explanation, most likely be a later development. However, in the nasalising object relative construction in Old Irish the verb retained its independent form. If the 'nasalising' direct relative in Ulster Irish were an inheritance from Old Irish, then the use of the dependent verbal form with the verbal particles *a<sup>N</sup>*, *ar<sup>N</sup>* etc. might plausibly have arisen through analogy with the indirect relative, which is similarly an object relative associated with nasalisation in the present indicative, future etc. However, it seems unlikely to me that the Old Irish nasalising object relative could have had such a long subterranean existence having disappeared from the written record, and confusion between transitive direct relatives and *da(r)/dá(r)* 'of all that'-constructions is a more likely explanation.

<b>Disambiguating factor</b>	<b>No. of clauses</b>	<b>Percentage of all DR(t)-clauses (no. = 150)</b>
Synthetic form of the verb	58	38.67%
Subject marked nom.	15	10%
Object marked acc.	11	7.33%
Word order	7 (13)	4.67% (8.67%)
Agreement within a reflexive verbal construction	1 (3)	0.67% (2%)
<b>Total no. of structurally unambiguous clauses</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>61.33%</b>

Table 2 *Structurally unambiguous DR(t)-clauses in TTO*

<b>Disambiguating factor</b>	<b>No. of clauses</b>	<b>Percentage of all DR(t)-clauses (no. = 55)</b>
Synthetic form of the verb	17	30.9%
Subject marked nom.	6	10.9%
Object marked acc.	7	12.73%
Word order	0 (1)	0% (1.82%)
Agreement within a reflexive verbal construction	0 (2)	0% (3.64%)
<b>Total no. of structurally unambiguous clauses</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>54.54%</b>

Table 3 *Structurally unambiguous DR(t)-clauses in Bibeanna*

<b>Disambiguating factor</b>	<b>No. of clauses</b>	<b>Percentage of all DR(t)-clauses (no. = 246)</b>
Synthetic form of the verb	15	6.1%
Subject marked nom.	50	20.32%
Object marked acc.	10	4.07%
Word order	10 (16)	4.06% (6.5%)
Agreement within a reflexive verbal construction	4 (5)	1.63% (2.03%)
<b>Total no. of structurally unambiguous clauses</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>36.18%</b>

Table 4 *Structurally unambiguous DR(t)-clauses in RMS*

Disambiguating factor	No. of clauses	Percentage of all DR(t)-clauses (no. = 82)
Synthetic form of the verb	2	2.44%
Subject marked nom.	38	46.34%
Object marked acc.	8	9.76%
Word order	3 (8)	3.66% (9.76%)
Agreement within a reflexive verbal construction	0	0%
<b>Total no. of structurally unambiguous clauses</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>62.19%</b>

Table 5 Structurally unambiguous DR(t)-clauses in SAB

Some observations on these tables are called for. Firstly, it will be noted that the synthetic forms of the verb are more common in the Munster texts (Tables 2 and 3) than in the Ulster texts (Tables 4 and 5). This is to be expected, as the synthetic forms of the verb are quite well preserved in Munster and quite marginal in Ulster. As analytical subjects are more common in Ulster texts, the figure for (pronominal) subjects marked exclusively as nominative is correspondingly higher in the Ulster texts.

It will be noted that *RMS* (Table 4) has a significantly higher percentage of structurally ambiguous DR(t)-clauses than any of the other texts. This is probably due to the more frequent use of 1 pl. pronouns in the text. In the Munster texts examined (*TTO* and *Bibeanna*), 1 pl. subjects are always expressed using the synthetic form of the verb, while the acc. form *sinn* is used for 1 pl. pronominal objects. In *SAB*, an Ulster text, 1 pl. *muid* (or stressed *muidinne*) occurs three times, always as a subject. There are no examples of a 1 pl. pronoun in object position in this text. In *RMS*, however, much of the narrative is told in the 1 pl. and the 1 pl. pronouns *muid* and *sinn* occur as both nom. and acc.<sup>21</sup> As a result, the number of subjects marked exclusively as acc. is lower in this text than in the other Ulster text (Table 5).

**8** As Tables 2-5 indicate, a large minority (in *RMS*, a majority) of DR(t)-clauses are structurally ambiguous: no formal or syntactic information ensures that only a single interpretation of the clause is possible. How then are these clauses correctly understood? What allows hearers/readers to correctly assign the role of subject and direct object to either the antecedent or the expressed argument in the RC (see Table 6)?

	Structurally ambiguous DR(t)-	Structurally unambiguous DR(t)-
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21 For nom. *muid*, see *Seacht mbliana ar fad a chaith muid sa chábán sin* (*RMS*, 106), ‘We spent seven years in total in that cabin’. For acc. *muid*, see *ba é Dia féin a shábháil muid go minic* (*RMS*, 140), ‘It was God, who often saved us’. For nom. *sinn* in this text, see *eochair an chábáin bhig a d’fhág sinn inár ndiaidh* (*RMS*, 206), ‘the key of the small cabin that we had left behind us’. For acc. *sinn*, see *traen bheag chúng [...] a thug ní b’fhaide isteach sna cnoic sinn* (*RMS*, 97), ‘a small, narrow train that brought us deeper into the hills’.



	clauses		clauses	
	S = ∅	DO = ∅	S = ∅	DO = ∅
<b>TTO</b>	34/58 (58.62%)	24/58 (41.38%)	19/92 (20.65%)	73/92 (79.35%)
<b>Bibeanna</b>	21/25 (84%)	4/25 (16%)	7/30 (23.33%)	23/30 (76.67%)
<b>RMS</b>	65/157 (41.4%)	92/157 (58.6%)	21/89 (23.6%)	68/89 (76.4%)
<b>SAB</b>	17/31 (54.84%)	14/31 (45.16%)	11/51 (21.57%)	40/51 (78.43%)

Table 6 *DR(t)*-clauses in which the subject (S) or the direct object (DO) are the ‘dropped’ argument

Learners of the language who enquire of their instructors “How do you know who does what to whom?” when introduced to the concept of structural ambiguity in transitive RCs in Irish are normally reassured that “One can tell from the context”. Grammars too are of little help in this regard. The structural ambiguity of *DR(t)*-constructions was not, to my knowledge, addressed in the Bardic grammars of the Early Modern Irish period or in eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century grammars (Mac Curtin 1727, Haliday 1808, Walsh 1809). The first discussion of the potential structural ambiguity of the *DR(t)*-construction known to me in a grammar is that by John O’Donovan (1845, 377-8), but he draws attention to structural ambiguity without offering any explanation of how (or if) such utterances can correctly be deciphered.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, modern-day grammars (for example, *Graiméar Gaeilge na mBráithre Críostaí*, §27.10, Ó Dónaill 2008, 148-9, Mac Giolla Phádraig 1963, 121) draw attention to structural ambiguity but normally only to introduce the *IR(t)*-construction. *Gramadach na Gaeilge* (§11.2(a), (b)) supplies a brief but nuanced discussion with the aid of several examples: the potential ambiguity of *DR(t)*-constructions such as

(22) *an bhean a phóg Seán* ‘the woman that kissed Seán’ / ‘the woman that Seán kissed’

and

(23) *an fear a bhuail an sliotar* ‘the man whom the hurley ball struck’ / ‘the man who hit the hurley ball’

is highlighted, but it is added that the clause

(24) *an dán a chum an fear* ‘the poem that the man composed’

<sup>22</sup> O’Donovan went so far as to suggest (to my mind, rather implausibly) that the very ambiguity of the construction may have proved useful on occasion, for instance ‘in equivocation, or false swearing’: ‘as if a man swore *dearbhaim gur ab é seo an fear a bhuail mé*; no one could possibly know whether he meant, “I swear that this is the man *who struck me*,” or “I swear that this is the man *whom I struck*”! Cf. Example 1 above, which occurs in an imagined legal context.

is not ambiguous on the grounds that *dán* ‘poem’ is unlikely to be the subject of the verb *cumann* ‘composes’.

**8.1** The discussion of structural ambiguity in *Gramadach na Gaeilge* touches upon one of the issues investigated cross-linguistically as part of this research project (see footnote 13), namely, the role of an animacy hierarchy in the interpretation of structurally ambiguous utterances. Across languages, it appears that the subject will tend to be ‘more animate’ than the object of a sentence.<sup>23</sup> As in Example 24, we might then expect that the argument higher on the animacy hierarchy (*an fear* ‘the man’) would be the subject of a structurally ambiguous DR(t)-relative and the argument lower on the hierarchy the object (*dán* ‘the poem’) in at least the majority of cases. If this is true, it could be argued that the animacy hierarchy is responsible for the correct interpretation of (at least the majority of) structurally ambiguous DR(t)-clauses. However, Example 23 demonstrates that the reverse pattern is entirely possible, i.e. that the subject (*an sliotar* ‘the hurley ball’) can (at least occasionally) occupy a lower position on the animacy hierarchy than the object (*an fear* ‘the man’). One might wonder whether the animacy hierarchy really plays a disambiguating role in Example 22, where *Seán* (a named human) is only marginally higher on the Silverstein animacy hierarchy than *an bhean* ‘the women’: does this marginal difference in animacy generally disambiguate the RC? An investigation of a corpus is here of particular importance because it will provide some idea about the effectiveness of the animacy hierarchy as a disambiguating factor and about the number of cases such as Examples 22 and 23 which actually arise in real texts.

Turning then to the corpus examined as part of this research project, Tables 7-11 illustrate the animacy of the subject and object in DR(t)-clauses in the corpus under examination. As we would expect, the subject is higher on the animacy scale, i.e. more animate, than the object in the majority of the clauses investigated. This pattern also holds for those clauses which were identified as being structurally unambiguous.

	Structurally ambiguous clauses		Structurally unambiguous clauses	
	S	DO	S	DO
self	1	2	49	9

<sup>23</sup> The simplified animacy hierarchy incorporated into the database of ‘The Syntax-Semantic Interface’ (see footnote 13) was based on Silverstein 1976. In brief, ‘self’ refers to 1 person pronouns, ‘kin/name’ to named human beings, ‘human’ to human beings not designated by a personal name or similar expression, ‘animate’ to animate creatures besides humans, ‘inanimate’ to inanimate objects, ‘location’ to places, ‘abstract’ to abstract concepts, ‘mass’ to inanimate non-count nouns. This ‘animacy hierarchy’ does not, of course, reflect perfectly the commonly-held understanding of animacy in that, for example, a 1 person is regarded as more animate than another human being: Silverstein’s hierarchy incorporates also information on the referring expressions used to designate arguments and is perhaps better understood as an ‘agentive hierarchy’. See Griffith 2008 for the importance of the animacy hierarchy in understanding the distribution of *notae augentes* in Old Irish.

kin/name	<b>11</b>	0	2	0
human	<b>36</b>	2	<b>34</b>	8
animate	1	4	0	0
inanimate	4	<b>15</b>	6	<b>31</b>
location	0	2	0	0
abstract	5	<b>33</b>	3	<b>44</b>
mass	0	0	0	0

Table 7 *Animacy values in TTO*

	Structurally ambiguous clauses		Structurally unambiguous clauses	
	S	DO	S	DO
<b>Animacy hierarchy</b>				
self	1	0	<b>14</b>	1
kin/name	<b>6</b>	0	0	0
human	<b>9</b>	1	<b>9</b>	3
animate	2	1	0	0
inanimate	<b>6</b>	<b>11</b>	3	<b>9</b>
location	0	0	0	0
abstract	1	<b>11</b>	4	<b>17</b>
mass	0	1	0	0

Table 8 *Animacy values in Bibeanna*

	Structurally ambiguous clauses		Structurally unambiguous clauses	
	S	DO	S	DO
<b>Animacy hierarchy</b>				
self	<b>70</b>	4	<b>17</b>	6
kin/name	6	2	2	0
human	<b>56</b>	10	<b>52</b>	13
animate	4	5	3	3
inanimate	11	<b>55</b>	11	<b>28</b>
location	0	2	0	2
abstract	11	<b>76</b>	2	<b>35</b>
mass	0	3	2	3

Table 9 *Animacy values in RMS*

	Structurally ambiguous clauses		Structurally unambiguous clauses	
	S	DO	S	DO
<b>Animacy hierarchy</b>				

self	12	1	2	0
kin/name	2	3	0	0
human	13	2	42	7
animate	0	1	1	2
inanimate	3	11	2	20
location	0	1	0	2
abstract	0	13	4	19
mass	1	0	0	1

Table 10 Animacy values in SAB

	Structurally ambiguous clauses where animacy $O \geq S$	Structurally unambiguous clauses where animacy $O \geq S$
<b>TIG</b>	9/58 (15.52%)	15/92 (16.3%)
<b>Bibeanna</b>	6/25 (24%)	8/30 (26.67%)
<b>RMS</b>	23/157 (14.65%)	21/89 (23.59%)
<b>SAB</b>	6/31 (19.35%)	9/51 (17.65%)

Table 11 DR(t)-clauses where animacy of the DO is higher or equal to the animacy of the S

Table 11 illustrates, however, that there is a significant number of structurally ambiguous clauses where the object occupies a higher position on the animacy hierarchy or where both the antecedent and the argument expressed in the RC occupy the same point on the animacy hierarchy. Some of these clauses are, separated from their context, truly ambiguous.

(25) *an bheirt a d'fhág mé* (RMS, 153)

'the two' 'left' 'me'

could entirely plausibly be translated either as 'the two that left me' or 'the two that I left'. (In this case, the former is the correct translation.) However, at this point in the narrative, the events which led to the speaker being abandoned by his companions have already been recounted and the hearer/reader has no difficulty in assigning the role of subject and object to the two arguments, although the argument higher on the animacy scale (*mé* 'I, me') is here the subject and the argument lower on the animacy scale (*an bheirt* 'the two people') the object.

Other such clauses, however, though formally capable of two different interpretations, are, in fact, not truly ambiguous when separated from their context. Consider Example 26, where both arguments occupy the same point on the animacy hierarchy, and Example 27, where the subject is less animate than the object.

(26) *Is é an cat a chacann an piscín (TTO, 17)*

'the cat' 'shits (out)' 'the kitten'

(27) *an suathadh nó an mhíshocracht a bhuaileadh na mianadóirí ó am go ham (RMS, 202)*

'the edginess or unease' 'used to strike' 'the miners'

The two arguments of the (transitive) verb *cacann* 'shits' in Example 26 are *an cat* 'the cat' and *an piscín* 'the kitten' and the clause can be translated 'it is the cat that shits out the kitten'. This vulgar formulation was supposedly uttered by a pupil during an Irish oral exam conducted by an inspector when the child was asked to justify his reason for claiming that a cat is larger than a kitten. Though both arguments (cat and kitten) occupy the same point on the animacy scale, their respective roles as arguments in a transitive RC with the verb *cacann* 'shits out' (here 'gives birth') is not in any doubt. Example 27 meanwhile could be interpreted as 'the edginess or unease that the miners would strike from time to time' (with the more animate argument taken to be the subject) or 'the edginess or unease that would seize [lit. 'strike'] the miners from time to time' (with the less animate argument taken as the subject). The former translation makes no sense (how can the miners strike an emotion?), while the latter is an example of the common construction *buaileann* [emotion] [human] '[emotion] seizes [human]' in a RC.

The deficiencies of the animacy hierarchy as an explanation for how structurally ambiguous RCs are correctly interpreted are also apparent in those clauses where the subject is in fact more animate than the object. Consider a modified Example 18:<sup>24</sup>

(18a) *\*mart a mharaigh Pádraig*

'a cow that Patrick killed'/'a cow that killed Patrick'

Semantically, this clause appears to pose no difficulties. While it is within the realm of possibility that a cow might kill a human being, our assumption upon hearing/reading this clause will be that the cow was slaughtered by Patrick. (In addition, this interpretation will be confirmed by our pragmatic knowledge. If we imagine this remark being made in the same context as the genuine Example 18, it occurs in an outburst by Oisín concerning the hospitality he receives in St Patrick's house, a context which demands a particular interpretation of the utterance.) But is the animacy hierarchy a disambiguating factor with all verbal constructions with the verb *maráíonn* 'kills, slaughters'? How would we interpret a similar sentence, without any context, if the arguments were 'wolf' and 'Pádraig', or 'snowstorm' and 'Pádraig', or 'Seán' and 'Pádraig'?<sup>25</sup> The animacy hierarchy would not of

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24 I have reworked Example 18 as a simple direct relative rather than a 'nasalising' direct relative here for illustrative purposes. For the difficulties involved in interpreting 'nasalising' direct relatives, see the discussion above. That the issues raised in relation to Example 18a are attested in genuine discourse, however, is not in question; see footnote 25.

itself guarantee the correction interpretation of the utterance. Another interesting case is Example 28:

(28) *na daoine a dhíbir Cromaill ó thithe agus ó thalamh na hÉireann (TTO, 17)*

‘the people that Cromwell banished from the houses and land of Ireland’

*Cromaill*, a personal name, is higher on the modified Silverstein animacy hierarchy adopted for the purpose of this research project than humans described by, in this instance, a definite noun (*na daoine* ‘the people’) (see footnote 23). Is it this marginal difference on the animacy hierarchy which allows the reader to correctly interpret this utterance? It seems to me more likely that the utterance is correctly interpreted by the reader by drawing upon his/her knowledge both of the context specific to this utterance and of Irish history. *Na daoine* ‘the people’ are Travellers. They have been harassed by school children of the settled community. Example 28 is spoken by a furious teacher reprimanding the errant pupils, reminding them of the respect that they should show towards the dispossessed community. His remark is a reference to the commonly held belief that Travellers are the descendants of those dispossessed by Oliver Cromwell during his campaigns in Ireland in the 1640s. Surely this knowledge, or at least the knowledge that Oliver Cromwell was a villain of Irish history, which the teacher (and the author) presumes will be shared by the schoolchildren (and the readers), is more likely to explain how Example 28 is correctly understood than a marginal difference on the animacy hierarchy. (Note also that the object of the verb in Example 28 was expelled from many houses, a detail which would support the identification of the plural argument as the object of the RC.)

Returning to the discussion of structural ambiguity in *Gramadach na Gaeilge*, it is clear that it serves as a good summary of the difficulties encountered in real texts. It is obvious from the figures presented above with regard to the modified Silverstein animacy hierarchy that in most cases the expectation of the roles of the arguments in a particular verbal construction are such that the subject will occupy a higher point on the scale and the object a lower. There is, however, a sizeable number of clauses in our corpus where both arguments occupy the same point on the animacy scale or in which the subject is less animate than the object. Furthermore, it has been argued that some clauses in which the subject is higher on the animacy scale than the object are not necessarily disambiguated by this animacy distribution. In view of these findings, I conclude that the animacy hierarchy does not itself play a (major) role in the disambiguation of structurally ambiguous DR(t)-clauses. I believe that the significant number of sentences in which the subject and object occupy the same position on the hierarchy or the object occupies a higher position is inconsistent with the Silverstein hierarchy being a disambiguating factor in the case of structurally ambiguous

25 These difficulties are not merely hypothetical. For an example of a RC with the verb *maráíonn* 'kills' (literally and figuratively), in which the subject is lower on the animacy hierarchy than the object, consider *Ach b'é an níochán an buille a mharaigh mé* (Ó Ceallaigh 1990), 'But the cleaning was the blow that killed me', in which abstract *buille* 'blow' is the subject and the 1 sing. pronoun the direct object.

sentences. (Note the close correspondence between the animacy values in structurally unambiguous and ambiguous sentences.) If one wishes to assume that the animacy hierarchy does indeed have a disambiguating function, then one must account for the high number of 'exceptions' to the expected subject-object animacy value-distribution through an appeal to pragmatic knowledge, i.e. one must assume an initial stage of processing wherein hearers/readers attempt to interpret an utterance working on the assumption that the subject will occupy a higher position on the animacy hierarchy than the object; one must then imagine a further stage in which the conclusions arrived at are 'tested' against the hearer/reader's pragmatic knowledge. Such an explanation does not seem convincing to me.

Instead I propose that the solution to how structurally ambiguous RCs are interpreted lies in the hearer/reader's ability to exploit his/her pragmatic knowledge to select the correct argument for the subject and for the object position in an RC. The hearer/reader is required to make more refined pragmatic interpretations based on the meaning of the verb in the RC, the expectation of the semantic roles that will be played by arguments of that verb, information gleaned about the arguments in the immediate context of the utterance, and background knowledge (knowledge of the world, shared cultural and historical knowledge etc.). The case of *cumann* 'composes' is relatively straight-forward. Selectional restriction means that the hearer/reader expects that one of the two arguments of the verb will be the composer (a human), the other that which is composed (an inanimate or abstract entity). The verb *pógann* is more problematic. In a verbal construction with *pógann* we expect both arguments to be human. As such, a clause such as (22) *an bhean a phóg Seán* 'the woman who kissed Seán' / 'the woman whom Seán kissed' remains ambiguous. In order to interpret this utterance as intended, the hearer/reader must draw on pragmatic information, presumably gleaned in the course of a preceding conversation or narrative concerning the actions or character of either the woman or Seán; for his/her part, the speaker/writer expects that the hearer/reader will be capable of deciphering this information. Examples (26) and (28) illustrate that the speaker/writer can also rely on common knowledge shared more generally with other members of the community (what a kitten is, what a cat is, who Cromwell is, the supposed origin of the Travelling community, that one person tends to reside in one house and not many). The case of *buailleann* 'strikes' is particularly complicated. *Gramadach na Gaeilge* correctly draws attention to the fact that the combinations *buailleann* [human] [inanimate object] and *buailleann* [inanimate object] [human] (Example 23 above) are both possible. Once again, the speaker/writer must presumably rely on the listener/reader's previous knowledge or understanding of the context in which the utterance is made: in the event that the speaker/writer wishes to employ the relative phrase *an sliotar a bhuail an fear* in the sense 'the man whom the hurley ball struck', the incident in which the hurley ball struck the man will presumably have already been described. The combination *buailleann* [emotion] [human] (as in Example 27 above) poses no difficulty, even in a structurally ambiguous RC when the clause is analysed out of context: the emotion will be the subject and the human the object. The fact that the tendency outlined above concerning the animacy hierarchy is not

observed in this case is no bar to comprehension; the hearer/reader of such an utterance can assign the subject and object roles without difficulty.

In summary, the present author is unconvinced that the animacy hierarchy guarantees the correct interpretation of structurally ambiguous RCs. The figures presented in Tables 7-11 above confirm that the agent of a sentence will tend to hold a higher position on the animacy hierarchy than the object of the sentence, but, as I hope to have demonstrated in the discussion above, it does not automatically follow that this constitutes a disambiguating strategy; rather the evidence presented in the tables above allows us only to conclude that speakers tend to formulate sentences with this argument animacy-distribution. Instead I have argued that pragmatics holds the key to how structurally ambiguous sentences are correctly deciphered by hearers/readers. To determine how a particular sentence is deciphered requires close attention to the semantics of the arguments and the verb in a particular context, the immediate context in which the utterance was made as well as cognisance of the shared knowledge of the interlocutors.<sup>26</sup>

**8.2** Another factor identified as being potentially relevant to the interpretation of structurally ambiguous clauses and investigated as part of this research project was accessibility. 'Accessibility' here refers to the relative degree of ease with which a mental representation of the argument in question is activated in the memory of the hearer/reader. See Ariel 1988, 1991 and 2008 for more information on accessibility theory and its implications. Here it suffices to say that lexical items such as pronouns indicate high accessibility, while definite descriptions mark low accessibility: a pronoun is, semantically speaking, relatively uninformative, unlike a definite description which semantically encodes more information concerning the entity it represents; the pronoun could in theory refer to a large array of entities, while the entities denoted by a definite description is smaller; a pronoun is shorter than a definite description. The use of a pronoun rather than a definite description indicates the speaker/writer's expectation that the hearer/reader can re-activate a mental representation of the entity in question with minimal assistance. Conversely, the use of a definite description suggests a new item in the discourse or an item which is less easily activated in the memory of the hearer/reader. Consider Example 29:

(29) *B'í a thug furmhór gach aon leanbh sa dúthaigh seo ar an saol (Bibeanna, 158)*

'it was she [the midwife] who brought most every baby in this area into the world'

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26 It is now uncontroversial in linguistics that context plays an important part in how all utterances are understood, and pragmatic information is, of course, not only necessary to correctly interpret structurally ambiguous RCs in Irish. While the fairly strict VSO word-order of Irish ensures that non-RCs are formally and semantically unambiguous, i.e. there is, for example, no question as to which argument is the subject and which the object in a non-RC, context and shared knowledge are nonetheless necessary for hearers/readers to arrive at a full enough understanding of any utterance to engage in effective communication. While the interpretation of structurally ambiguous RCs, under the explanation I have offered above, is particularly dependent on pragmatic information, I believe that it is unnecessary to suppose a separate process for the interpretation of RCs and non-RCs.



In this example, the referring expression which indicates the subject is the 3 sg. fem. pronoun *í*, while the object is indicated by a long indefinite noun-phrase (*furmhór gach aon leanbh sa dúthaigh seo* ‘the majority of all the children in this area’); the subject here is highly accessible, as the speaker needed only provide a ‘short-hand’, so to speak, for the memory of the person signified to be activated, while a longer description was necessary to describe the object (in this case, a new item to the discourse). As with the animacy hierarchy, cross-linguistic research carried out by the Marburg LOEWE sub-project ‘The syntax-semantics interface’ confirms that the subject will tend in general to be more ‘accessible’ than the object.<sup>27</sup> It is conceivable that an accessibility strategy might be employed more generally to clarify the roles played by the antecedent and the argument expressed in the RC. We might then expect subjects to be more accessible than objects in transitive RCs in Irish.

The accessibility values of the referring expressions used to signify subjects and objects in the RCs under examination are presented in Tables 12-15 below. The distinction between the accessibility values of subjects and direct objects in structurally ambiguous DR(t)-clauses is not as clear-cut as the corresponding animacy values, but the trend is nonetheless for the subject to be more accessible than the direct object (Table 16). If the accessibility pattern identified is a disambiguating factor, it is marginally less effective than the animacy hierarchy (cf. Table 11).

	Structurally ambiguous clauses		Structurally unambiguous clauses	
	S	DO	S	DO
<b>Accessibility hierarchy of referring expressions</b>				
verbal person	0	0	<b>58</b>	0
unstressed pronoun	1	4	<b>15</b>	0
stressed pronoun	3	0	3	17
proximate demonstrative	0	0	0	0
distal demonstrative	0	0	0	0
proximate demonstrative + modifier	1	0	0	0
distal demonstrative + modifier	0	1	0	0
first name	6	2	3	1

27 An accessibility scale was developed for this research project (see footnote 13) drawing on Ariel 1988 and 1991. ‘Indefinite description’ is an addition to the hierarchy not used by Ariel. In the figures below, only points on the accessibility hierarchy of referring expressions relevant to the texts in question are shown.

last name	3	1	0	0
short definite description	<b>17</b>	<b>28</b>	10	<b>40</b>
long definite description	3	0	0	5
full name	2	0	0	1
indefinite description	<b>22</b>	<b>22</b>	5	<b>28</b>
indefinite pronoun	0	0	0	0

Table 12 Accessibility values in DR(t)-clauses in TTO

Accessibility hierarchy	Structurally ambiguous clauses		Structurally unambiguous clauses	
	S	DO	S	DO
verbal person	0	0	<b>17</b>	0
unstressed pronoun	1	2	<b>7</b>	0
stressed pronoun	1	0	0	<b>12</b>
proximate demonstrative	0	0	0	0
distal demonstrative	0	0	0	0
proximate demonstrative + modifier	0	0	0	0
distal demonstrative + modifier	0	0	0	0
first name	1	0	0	0
last name	0	0	0	0
short definite description	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9</b>
long definite description	2	2	0	0
full name	0	0	0	0
indefinite description	<b>11</b>	<b>14</b>	5	<b>9</b>
indefinite pronoun	0	0	0	0

Table 13 Accessibility values in DR(t)-clauses in Bibeanna

	Structurally ambiguous clauses	Structurally unambiguous clauses
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Accessibility hierarchy			clauses	
	S	DO	S	DO
verbal person	0	0	15	0
unstressed pronoun	65	4	48	15
stressed pronoun	8	0	5	0
proximate demonstrative	0	0	0	0
distal demonstrative	0	2	0	0
proximate demonstrative + modifier	0	2	0	0
distal demonstrative + modifier	0	4	0	1
first name	3	2	2	3
last name	1	0	0	0
short definite description	32	73	7	39
long definite description	1	6	0	2
full name	3	2	0	0
indefinite description	40	62	12	29
indefinite pronoun	3	0	0	0

Table 14 Accessibility values in DR(t)-clauses in RMS

Accessibility hierarchy	Structurally ambiguous clauses		Structurally unambiguous clauses	
	S	DO	S	DO
verbal person	0	0	0	0
unstressed pronoun	13	0	36	0
stressed pronoun	5	1	3	8
proximate demonstrative	0	0	0	0
distal demonstrative	0	0	0	0

proximate demonstrative + modifier	0	0	0	0
distal demonstrative + modifier	0	0	0	0
first name	1	3	0	0
last name	0	0	0	0
short definite description	4	16	3	24
long definite description	0	0	0	2
full name	1	0	0	0
indefinite description	7	12	7	17
indefinite pronoun	0	0	0	0

Table 15 Accessibility values in DR(t)-clauses in SAB

	<b>Structurally ambiguous clauses where accessibility O≥S</b>	<b>Structurally unambiguous clauses where accessibility O≥S</b>
<b>TIG</b>	9/58 (15.52%)	16/92 (17.39%)
<b>Bibeanna</b>	6/25 (24%)	8/30 (26.67%)
<b>RMS</b>	23/157 (14.65%)	21/89 (23.6%)
<b>SAB</b>	8/31 (25.81%)	10/51 (19.6%)

Table 16 DR(t)-clauses where the accessibility values of the DO are greater than or equal to those of the S

It is important to note that the clauses in which the object is as accessible or more accessible than the subject do not prove any more difficult to interpret than clauses with the reverse value distribution:

(30) *inneall [...] a thaispeánfadh na scannáin dúinn (Bibeanna, 215)*

‘a device that would show the films to us’

(31) *rud* [...] *a chuirfeadh éirí croí orm* (TTO, 63)

‘something which would fill me with joy’, lit. ‘which would put elation upon me’

In Example 30, the discourse-new antecedent (*inneall* ‘a device’) is the subject of the RC but the direct object (discourse-old *na scannáin* ‘the films’) is the more accessible argument. In Example 31, both the antecedent (discourse-old *rud* ‘a thing’, here in the abstract sense referring back to an event mentioned earlier in the sentence) and the argument expressed in the RC (discourse-new *éirí croí* ‘elation’) are denoted by equally accessible (and animate) referring expressions, yet the hearer/reader has no difficulty in assigning the correct roles to both arguments. Revisiting Example 25, we see that the proposed typical accessibility values fail to clarify the role of the subject and the direct object.

(25) *an bheirt a d’fhág mé* (RMS, 153)

‘the two that left me’ / ‘the two that I left’

Here the highly accessible (and animate) 1 sg. pronoun *mé* describes the direct object, while the less accessible definite noun *an bheirt* ‘the two people’ describes the subject.

Does the accessibility hierarchy of expressions used to refer to the subject and direct object in the RC account for the ability of hearers/readers to correctly interpret structurally ambiguous DR(t)-clauses? It is possible that accessibility, like animacy, is a factor which facilitates comprehension. Given the overwhelming tendency for subjects to be more accessible than direct objects (in both structurally ambiguous and unambiguous clauses), accessibility might be one of the factors which are processed by hearers/readers when determining the roles played by the antecedent and the expressed argument in the RC, but, as Table 16 makes clear, accessibility alone cannot guarantee the correct interpretation of DR(t)-clauses. Even when combined with the animacy hierarchy (setting aside momentarily the many weaknesses of the animacy hierarchy as a disambiguating factor outlined in Section 8.1), the number of clauses in each text in which the values of the direct object are equal to or higher than those of the subject remains the same or decreases only marginally (Table 17). If one wishes to maintain that the animacy and accessibility scales are key to the disambiguation of structurally ambiguous utterances, one must explain away a significant minority of clauses by appealing to pragmatic information. In the present author's opinion, it is more economical to conclude that pragmatic information is itself the key to the correct interpretation of such utterances.

	<b>Structurally ambiguous clauses where the animacy and accessibility of O ≥ S</b>	<b>Structurally unambiguous clauses where animacy and accessibility of O ≥ S</b>
<b>TIG</b>	8/58	13/92

	(13.79%)	(14.13%)
<b><i>Bibeanna</i></b>	4/25 (16%)	6/30 (20%)
<b><i>RMS</i></b>	19/157 (12.1%)	11/89 (12.36%)
<b><i>SAB</i></b>	5/31 (16.13%)	7/51 (13.72%)

Table 17 *DR(t)*-clauses where the animacy and accessibility of the *DO* are greater than or equal to those of the *S*

**8.3** In summary, let us return to the question of how hearers/readers interpret structurally ambiguous *DR(t)*-clauses. In Section 8.1, it was demonstrated that in the majority of these clauses the subject occupies a higher point on the animacy hierarchy than the direct object. A sizeable minority of clauses, however, was characterised by the reverse distribution (the subject was the less animate argument) or contained arguments which occupied the same point on the animacy hierarchy. In addition, attention was drawn to potential ambiguities within clauses in which the subject happened to be the more animate argument. In Section 8.2, the accessibility of the expressions used to refer to subject and direct object arguments was examined. A similar distribution to the animacy values emerged; a sizeable minority of clauses remained in which the direct object was less accessible or as accessible as the subject. Neither scale (or indeed a combination of both scales) is sufficient to explain how structurally ambiguous *DR(t)*-clauses are correctly interpreted.

How then are these clauses successfully disambiguated? I can propose no better explanation than the traditional appeal to “context”. In Section 8.1, I proposed that the correct interpretation of structurally ambiguous *DR(t)*-clauses is possible because of selectional restriction (*cumann* ‘composes’ [composer] [composee]; *pógann* [kisser] [kisee]; *buailleann* [striker] [strikee] / [sensation] [experiencer] etc.) and the hearer/reader’s ability to assign those roles to the antecedent and the expressed argument in the RC based on pragmatic information (knowledge gleaned from the immediate context, social norms, cultural and historical knowledge etc.). Given the importance of pragmatic information to successful communication in all types of clauses, including structurally unambiguous utterances, I believe this “context”-based explanation is logical and economical. The animacy and accessibility values presented above reflect something of the process of role-assignment (in most verbal constructions, the subject will tend to be more animate and more accessible than the object), but do not themselves explain how structurally ambiguous clauses are interpreted.

#### IR(t)-CLAUSES

**9.1** Let us turn now to the *IR(t)*-clauses in the corpus under investigation and examine their distribution. In total, only 3 *IR(t)*-clauses occurred in the corpus under investigation, despite the fact that a significant number of *DR(t)*-clauses were (structurally ambiguous) object relatives (see Table 6, the clauses in which *DO* =  $\emptyset$ ) and could potentially have been

formulated as IR(t)-clauses. The figures presented in Table 18 below confirm the observation (Section 4.2) that the IR(t)-construction is, in fact, extremely marginal.

	<b>No. of IR(t)-clauses as a percentage of all clauses</b>	<b>No. of IR(t)-clauses as a percentage of all object RCs</b>
<b>TTO</b>	1/151 (0.66%)	1/97 (1.03%)
<b>Bibeanna</b>	0/55 (0%)	0/27 (0%)
<b>RMT</b>	2/248 (0.81%)	2/160 (1.25%)
<b>SAB</b>	0/82 (0%)	0/54 (0%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>3/539 (0.56%)</b>	<b>3/338 (0.89%)</b>

Table 18 *IR(t)-clauses in the corpus examined*

The three examples which occur in our corpus are:

(32) *an áit a rabh an bás ag stánadh idir an dá shúil*

*ar an té a<sup>N</sup> mbuailfeadh an fuacht é (RMS, 155)*

‘the one’ a<sup>N</sup> ‘would strike’ ‘the cold’ ‘him’ ACC.RP

‘the place where death was staring directly into the eyes

of whomever the cold struck’

(33) *gur chuir mé*

*ar an talamh iad ar<sup>H</sup> iarr fear an tí orm é (RMS, 38)*

‘the land’ [...] a<sup>N</sup>PAST ‘requested’ ‘the man of the house’ ‘of me’ ‘it’ ACC.RP

‘until I put them [the cattle] on the land

which the man of the house requested me to’

(34) *Ní fheaca riamh ina dhiaidh sin*

*jab ar<sup>H</sup> fhág an oiread sin oibrithe é (TTO, 114)*

‘a job’ a<sup>N</sup>PAST ‘left’ ‘that amount of workers’ ‘it’ ACC.RP

‘I never saw

a job that that many workers left’

**9.2** What motivated the speaker (examples 32 and 33) and the writer (example 34) to employ the IR(t)-construction in these instances? Despite the oft-repeated characterisation of the IR(t)-construction as a ‘disambiguating’ construction, none of these clauses would have posed any difficult to comprehension had they been rendered as DR(t)-clauses. In the case of

(32a) *\*an té a bhuailfeadh an fuacht*

‘the person’ ‘would strike’ ‘the cold’

\*‘the person who would strike the cold’ is not a viable translation and would not make sense in the context (where the speaker is addressing the dangers of conditions in the far north of the American continent). Similarly

(33a) *\*an talamh a d’iarr fear an tí orm*

‘the land’ ‘requested’ ‘the man of the house’ ‘of me’

and

(34a) *\*jab a d’fhág an oiread sin oibrithe*

‘job’ ‘left’ ‘that many workers’

could hardly present any real difficulty to the hearer/reader either as stand-alone DR(t)-clauses or in the contexts in which they appear (a discussion of herding in 33a and of an unpleasant job in 34a). In the texts examined for this research project, the fact that IR(t)-constructions are not structurally ambiguous appears incidental; the construction does not seem to have been employed, as one might expect given the treatment of this construction in grammar books, to avoid an unacceptable level of structural ambiguity. Why then was the IR(t)-construction employed in these three instances? Is the choice between DR(t)- and IR(t)-constructions with direct object antecedents genuinely free, as has been suggested (Section 4.2)?

Far from being a free (if little used) alternative to an DR(t)-object relative, I suggest, drawing upon the work of Mira Ariel (see especially Ariel 1999), that the concept of accessibility (introduced in Section 8.2) holds the key to the distribution of IR(t)-relatives. Specifically, I argue that the evidence from Modern Irish transitive RCs supports Ariel’s contention that cross-linguistically RPs (the most decisive feature of the IR(t)-construction for our present purposes) are employed in RCs to recover less accessible antecedents (or ‘heads’). Accessibility here refers not only to the relative accessibility of the (pro)nominal categories outlined in Tables 12-17 but more generally to the speech-act participant’s ability to visualise/remember a given argument. Accordingly, Ariel 1999 argues that the distance between the antecedent and the point in the RC where it must be re-processed (this time as an argument within the RC) is also a significant feature in the distribution of RPs in RCs, as is the restrictive/non-restrictive distinction.

(34) is the sole instance of the IR(t)-relative in *TTO* and offers a good example of the role played by accessibility in the choice between the DR(t)- and IR(t)-constructions. Let us examine the imagined DR(t)-construction corresponding to (34) again:

(34a) *\*jab a d’fhág an oiread sin oibrithe ∅*



‘job’ ‘left’ ‘that amount of workers’

The  $\emptyset$  in Example 34a indicates the point where we can imagine that the antecedent, which is first processed as an argument in the main clause, is recalled and processed mentally a second time, this time as an argument within the RC.<sup>28</sup> It will be noted that the object antecedent *jab* ‘a job’ is not very accessible; in addition to being low on the accessibility hierarchy of referring expressions, it does not refer to a specific job but to a hypothetical one. The antecedent is not only indefinite (a feature of low accessibility) but it is separated from the ‘gap’ where we imagine the antecedent will be processed again by five words (*d’fhág* ‘left’, *an* ‘the’, *oiread* ‘amount’, *sin* ‘that’ and *oibrithe* ‘workers’). In the 97 DR(t)-object relatives in the same text, no subject is as long or contains as many words as *an oiread sin oibrithe*. The ‘physical’ distance between the antecedent and the relativised position is, of course, not the real issue in Example 34, rather the accessibility conditions to which this distance gives rise. The antecedent, which is characterised here by low accessibility, is an expressed argument in a main clause (it is the direct object of *ní fheaca* ‘I did not see’). Upon its occurrence in this clause, it is processed for the first time as an argument of that clause. It must later then be recalled and processed as an argument in the RC. In the intervening period between the two occasions on which the antecedent must be visualised, the verb and the subject are processed. The subject of Example 34 requires, as mentioned above, the processing of five words for the reader to envisage an indefinite, discourse-new entity. By the time the antecedent must be recalled and processed as an argument in the RC, a significant amount of information has already been processed in order to activate a mental representation of the subject (*an oiread sin daoine*). Taking into account the increased difficulty in recalling a less accessible antecedent after a greater time has elapsed and a significant amount of additional information processed, a need is felt to introduce a RP in the RC to, so to speak, re-establish a link with the antecedent. Contrast Examples 35 and 36, two DR(t)-clauses, from the same text.<sup>29</sup>

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28 This  $\emptyset$  does not necessarily represent the location where a RP would be employed. Indeed, the issue of where we should imagine a ‘gap’ or ‘dropped’ RP in DR(t)-constructions is somewhat complicated by the variable position of pronouns in general in Irish. (Compare the following non-relative transitive constructions with *caitheann isteach ar*: *caith isteach é ar an phláta sin* (Nic Giolla Bhríde 2003), ‘throw it in on to that plate’, *caitheadh isteach ar an charraig é* (Ó Grianna 1993), ‘he was thrown over onto the rock’ and *chaitheadar isteach ar an súsa é* (Ó Laoghaire 2001), ‘he was thrown inside onto the rug’. In the first example, the pronoun precedes the prepositional phrase, while in the final two it follows them.) It appears likely to me that we would be wrong to assume the location of the RP is the point at which the antecedent is re-processed as an argument in the RC; rather it is the location where the RC is ‘repaired’, where the low accessibility of the antecedent in the RC is compensated for.

29 In the following examples, I note the place of the antecedent on the accessibility scale used in Section 8.2 in square brackets before the antecedent, I underline the words intervening between the antecedent and the point in the RC where it is processed and provide an overview of the intervening words in square brackets after the citation.

(35) [short definite description] *na cearta sibhialta a thug Lincoln ø don gcine ghorm* (TTO, 169) [intervening words: V, last name]

‘the civil rights Lincoln gave to the African-Americans’

(36) [indefinite description] *rud éigin a chonac ø sna seanaphictiúirí cowboy* (TTO, 55) [intervening words: V]

‘something I saw in the old cowboy films’

Cf. also two examples from *RMS*:

(37) *cha rabh* [indefinite description] *aon phort Gaelach dar chuala sinn ariamh nár bhuail an píobaire ø ar an bhealach síos an gleann* [intervening words: ADV, V, short NP] (*RMS*, 196)

‘there was no Gaelic tune that we had ever heard that the piper did not play on the way down the valley’

(38) *go rabh* [indefinite description] *gléas acu ar dhéanamh an Iodh Morainn a chuireadh siad ø isteach ar mhuinéal na sagart a ghearradh ø an ceann díobh* [intervening words: V, SUB pronoun] (*RMS*, 225)

‘a device like the Iodh Morainn which they used to put around the necks of priests that would cut their heads off’

The choice of the DR(t)-construction over the IR(t)-construction in Examples 35-8 is explicable by the same analysis as that used to justify the use of the IR(t)-construction in Example 34. In Example 35, 36 and 38, the expressions referring to the subject in the RC are higher on the accessibility hierarchy (a last name, a verbal subject, a pronoun) than the antecedents and occur very soon after them. The relatively high accessibility of the expressed arguments in the RC, occurring so soon after the antecedent and the verb, ensures that both the arguments of the RC (the antecedent and the argument expressed in the RC) and the verbal construction in which they occur can easily be processed. In other words, because of the relatively high accessibility of the name ‘Lincoln’ in Example 35, the verbal subject in Example 36 and the pronoun in Example 38, the need does not arise to repeat the antecedent again in the form of a RP; the intervening phrase has not required much time to visualise and the antecedent can, therefore, still easily be recovered. Example 37 looks like a prime candidate for a RP but in this instance it was evidently felt that the rather unwieldy antecedent (the complex noun-phrase *aon phort Gaelach dar chuala sinn ariamh*) could be recovered without difficulty after the intervening verb and the short subject noun-phrase (*an píobaire* ‘the piper’).

Turning now to the two examples of the IR(t)-construction from *RMS*, accessibility considerations also provide an explanation for the use of a RP. In

(33) *gur chuir mé*

*ar an talamh iad ar<sup>H</sup> iarr fear an tí orm é (RMS, 38)*

‘the land’ [...] *a<sup>N</sup>PAST* ‘requested’ ‘the man of the house’ ‘of me’ ‘it’ *ACC.RP*

‘until I put them [the cattle] on the land

which the man of the house requested me to’

*an talamh* ‘the land’ (a discourse-new short definite description) is separated from the point in the RC where it is processed again (this time as an argument of the RC) by the direct object of the preceding transitive clause (*iad*), the verb (*iarr*), the noun-phrase *fear an tí* and the conjugated preposition *orm*. It is significant that *fear an tí* is relatively low on the hierarchy of referring expressions (a short definite description). Given the additional time necessary to visualise the subject (*fear an tí*) and the distance between the antecedent and the point in the RC where we expect the antecedent to be processed, the need was felt to re-activate the mental representation of the antecedent and the antecedent-object was repeated in the RC by means of a RP.

Distance between the antecedent and the point in the RC where we expect it to be processed again plays no role in Example 32 but the choice of the IR(t)-construction is still explicable through accessibility theory.

(32) *an áit a rabh an bás ag stánadh idir an dá shúil*

*ar an té a<sup>N</sup> mbuailfeadh an fuacht é (RMS, 155)*

‘the one’ *a<sup>N</sup>* ‘would strike’ ‘the cold’ ‘him’ *ACC.RP*

‘the place where death was staring directly into the eyes

of whomever the cold struck’

The distance between the antecedent (*an té*) and the point in the RC where it is processed is not particularly great. Indeed, there are many examples of DR(t)-clauses in the same text, in which the antecedent is equally or more distant from the point at which it is processed, e.g.:

(39) [indefinite description] *rud a chaoifegas na daoine*  $\emptyset$  (RMS, 218) [intervening words: V, short definite NP]

‘something the people lament’

(40) [short definitive description] *an t-ainm a bheireadh na seandaoine*  $\emptyset$  *ar uisce beatha Watt* (RMS, 217) [intervening words: V, short definite NP]

‘the name the old people used to give Watts’ whiskey’

(41) [indefinite description] *tá turas ansin a shiúlas daoine cráifeacha* ∅ (RMS, 15)  
[intervening words: ADV, V, short indefinite NP]

‘there is a pattern there that pious people walk’

(42) [short definite description] *an scéal a d’inis Aodh Mac Fhionnaíle* ∅ *dúinn* [intervening words: V, full name] (RMS, 191)

‘the story that Aodh Mac Fhionnaíle told us’

The accessibility of the antecedent in Example 32 is, however, particularly low: *an té* is an indefinite personal pronoun (‘the one’). It signifies a discourse-new non-specific individual. Cf. two examples from outside the corpus generated for this research project.<sup>30</sup>

(43) [indefinite personal pronoun] *an t-é n-a dtógfidh an Tighearna é* [intervening words: V, short definite NP/name] (cited in Ó Cadhlaigh 1940, 377)

‘the one whom the Lord will raise up (?)’

(44) [indefinite personal pronoun] *an té go mbuaileann an teidhe sin anois é* [intervening words: V, short definite NP, adverb] (Ó Cíobháin 1992)

‘anyone whom that notion strikes now’

The very low accessibility of the object-antecedent *an té* contributes to the need to employ a RP in these RCs.

The three examples from the texts examined in detail for this research project are, of course, insufficient to draw any conclusions regarding the use of the IR(t)-construction in general. Indeed, the very rarity of the construction makes it somewhat difficult to study. Confining myself to examples from native speakers of the three traditional dialects, I have extracted some further examples of IR(t)-constructions from Nua-Chorpas na Gaeilge. With the aid of these additional examples, I hope to demonstrate that the low accessibility of the antecedent in the IR(t)-clauses in the corpus under examination is not coincidental but a feature of IR(t)-constructions in general.<sup>31</sup>

30 All of the examples cited in this paper are, to the best of my knowledge, by native speakers of the traditional dialects. It should be borne in mind, of course, that even native speakers of the language may be influenced in their use of IR(t)-clauses by instruction in grammar.

31 In addition, I have analysed examples of the IR(t)-construction, the provenance of which is not always clear, from scholarly literature on Irish RCs. With regard to examples already published, it will be noted that in all of the five examples cited by McCloskey 1985, 64 (51) a-e the antecedent is relatively less accessible (3 indefinite nouns, one definite noun, one prox. demonstrative + modifier) and in each case the distance between the antecedent and the point in the RC where it is processed is considerable. See also the examples cited by Ó Cadhlaigh 1940, 377-8. *Sin an sórt coirpigh a leanfadh na gardaí go deireadh an domhain é* (*Graiméar Gaeilge na mBráithre Críostaí*), ‘that is the sort of criminal whom the gardaí would follow to the ends of the earth’, is a good example of a IR(t)-

Example 45 consists of two transitive RCs. The object-antecedent (*labradór óg*) is an indefinite noun-phrase, which is low on the accessibility scale of referring expressions, but is nonetheless recalled as a gap in the first RC. This first RC, however, increases the distance between the antecedent and the second relativised position. As a result, it is felt necessary to repeat the antecedent as a RP in the second RC.

(45) [indefinite description] *Labradór óg a fuair athair Mháirtín ø ag imeacht ar strae, agus ar thug sé abhaile é le trua dó* [intervening words: V, short definite NP, VP, CONJ, V, S pronoun, ADV] (Ní Shúilleabháin 1994)

‘a Labrador puppy that Máirtín’s father found wandering stray and that he brought home out of pity for it’

Example 46 is another example of the low accessibility of the antecedent and the distance to the relativised position giving rise to conditions where a RP was felt to be necessary:

(46) *Bhí sé mar bheadh* [indefinite description] *fear ann a bheadh ø i ndiaidh tamall a chaitheamh sa dorchadas agus a ndallfadh an solas é* [intervening words: intransitive RC, CONJ, V, definite NP] (Ó Grianna 1993)

‘He was like a man who was after having spent a time in darkness and whom the light blinded’

The antecedent in Example 47, discourse-new *an corp* ‘the body’, does not refer to any specific body and so is more difficult to visualise, i.e. it is more costly in terms of mental processing. The intervening intransitive RC and verbal noun-phrase, as well as the subject of the transitive RC, further contribute to accessibility conditions in which a RP is felt to be necessary at the relativised position in the transitive RC.

(47) *Is mar sin a chruthaítear* [short definite description] *an corp ar féidir leis an domhan a shealbhú agus a sealbhaíonn an domhan é* [copula RC, VP, CONJ, V, definite NP] (Ó Laoire 2002)

‘That is how the body is created that can take possession of the world and that the world takes possession of’<sup>32</sup>

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clause motivated by the low accessibility of the antecedent. As these examples are already available in print in scholarly publications, I confine myself primarily to hitherto ‘unpublished’ examples in the remainder of the discussion.

32 Note the RP in the prepositional copular RC *ar féidir leis* in this example. The present paper is concerned exclusively with transitive RCs, though it is hoped to account for RPs in other constructions in future research (see Section 9 below). It is worth noting in passing that the syntax of the copula in general is particularly curious with regard to the use of RPs (see McCloskey 1990, 258, n. 41).

Some complications of the accessibility account of the use of RPs in examples such as those cited above need to be addressed. Consider the following double DR(t)-clause taken from the database compiled for this research project:

(48) [indefinite description] *cloch a chuirimis'on tine ø go raibh sí dearg, agus ansin a chuirimis isteach i gcás iarainn ø* [intervening words: transitive RC, subordinate clause, CONJ, ADV, V, PP] (*Bibeanna*, 174)

‘a stone which we used to put in the fire until it was red and which we then put into an iron case’

In Example 48, the antecedent is an indefinite description (low accessibility) and a very large number of words intervene between the antecedent and the point where we imagine it will be processed in the second RC. Surely this great distance and the amount of information processed in it should require a RP. Why then is a dropped DO (or ‘gap’) used to indicate the antecedent in the second RC here? The answer seems to be that the accessibility of the antecedent is ‘reinforced’ between its initial occurrence as a referring expression with low accessibility at the head of the first RC and the point where it is processed in the second RC. The antecedent is initially processed as a gap in the first RC *a chuirimis 'on tine* ‘that we used to put in the fire’ (in which the verbal subject is highly accessible and therefore more quickly processed). The antecedent is then repeated as a subject pronoun in the subordinated clause *go raibh sí dearg* ‘until it was red’. By the time the antecedent is processed again in the second transitive RC it has already been recovered twice (on the latter occasion as a highly accessible pronoun) and is therefore more accessible than might appear on first analysis. There are, however, some examples that raise questions about the explanation I have just proposed. Two will suffice to illustrate the problem:

(49) [short definite description] *an rud go bhfuaramair mórán d'á dhuadh, agus ná fuaramair é ach ar éigin* [intervening words: genitival RC, CONJ, V] (cited in Ó Cadhlaigh 1940, 377)

‘the thing because of which we received a great deal of trouble and that we only just managed to get’

(50) *ar dhéanamh* [indefinite description] *méise a mbainfí taobh amháin aisti agus a bhfágfaí 'na suidhe ar an talamh í* [intervening words: prepositional RC, CONJ, V, PP, PP]

‘in the shape of a bowl from which one side had been removed and which had been left sitting on the ground’ (cited in McCloskey 1985, 64)

In Example 49, the antecedent *an rud* ‘the thing’ is separated from the IR(t)-clause which concerns us (*ná fuaramair é* ‘that we did not get’) by a genitival indirect RC with a resumptive possessive pronoun *a* ‘its’ (*go bhfuaramair mórán d'á dhuadh*, lit. ‘that we got a lot of its trouble’). Does the possessive pronoun not serve to reinforce the accessibility of the antecedent? Similarly, in Example 50, a prepositional indirect RC intervenes between the

antecedent and the IR(t)-clause which concerns us. The prepositional RC also contains a RP, on this occasion the prepositional pronoun *aisti* ('that one side was taken off it'). Why does the prepositional pronoun not bolster the accessibility of the antecedent and render the subsequent IR(t)-clause redundant? Ó Cadhlaigh (1940, 377) raises the possibility that the IR(t)-clause in clauses such as Example 50 may simply be used through analogy with the preceding prepositional indirect relative: both the IR(t)-construction and the prepositional relative require the same morphosyntactic mutations and RPs. While I do not discount Ó Cadhlaigh's suggestion as a contributory factor, I think that the explanation for this apparent discrepancy still lies in accessibility theory. It seems to me that the prepositional pronoun *aisti* and the possessive pronoun *a* are insufficiently salient, i.e. they are too costly in terms of mental processing, to re-activate the antecedent before the relativised position in Examples 49 and 50 is reached. Cf. also Example 47 where the conjugated RP in the copular RC *ar féidir leis* does not remove the need for a RP in the following transitive RC.

As has already been argued in the case of Example 32 from our corpus, distance between the antecedent and the point in the RC where it is processed is not a requirement for the employment of RPs in RCs in Irish. In Example 51, the distance between the antecedent and the point of recovery in the RC is not particularly great but the accessibility of the antecedent is particularly low (*corr-* 'odd, occasional' + *séiplíneach* 'a priest'), or, put another way, it is particularly difficult to activate a mental representation of the entity/entities in question, a fact which motivates the use of a RP.

(51) [indefinite description] *Tá corrshéiplíneach a ngortaíonn an imirce iad* [intervening words: verb, definite NP] (Ó Ceallaigh 1990)

'There is the odd chaplain that is distressed by the emigration'

Indeed, the very fact that the RP here does not agree with the grammatical number/gender of the antecedent (pl. *iad* rather than masc. sg. *é*) is evidence of the low accessibility of the antecedent: the referring expression *corrshéiplíneach* describes a whole range of undefined, discourse-new individuals; a specific entity is not envisaged in this case. Cf. Example 52:

(52) *Níl crann is fearr chun tine ná* [short definite description] *an crann a mbuaileann an chaor é* [intervening words: V, short definite NP] (Ua Ciarmhaic 1996)

'There is no better tree for a fire than the tree that is struck by lightning'

Once again, the distance from the antecedent to the point where the antecedent is processed is not particularly great. The accessibility of the antecedent, however, is very low, lower indeed than the definite noun-phrase might suggest. A specific tree is not meant here; the speaker is making a more general statement concerning firewood. Cf. also Example 47 above, where the antecedent is also a short definite noun-phrase but a specific entity is not activated in one's memory by this referring expression. This would also explain the use of a RP in

(53) *gach aoinne gur sprioc Dia é chun dul suas* (cited in Ó Cadhlaigh 1940, 377)

‘everyone whom God inspired to go up’

One final factor in the use of RPs in transitive RCs in Irish remains to be mentioned. Ariel 1999 argues that non-restrictive RCs are also characterised by low accessibility and may therefore be accompanied by RPs. In a restrictive (or 'integrated') RC, the antecedent and the RC form a single unit, a cohesion that is normally made clear in intonation and, in English at least, in punctuation. Consider (using English examples inspired by Example 56 below) 'the man whom God moved to call the Council'. In this example, there is no pause between 'the man' and the RC beginning 'whom', and the RC provides information necessary to define the antecedent. In a non-restrictive (or 'supplementary') RC, additional information is supplied about the antecedent, but the antecedent and the RC do not form a single cohesive unit and normally a pause will be observed between the antecedent and the non-restrictive RC. Consider 'John XXIII, whom God moved to call the Council'. A pause separates the antecedent and the following RC, which provides additional information on the antecedent, but information that is not necessary to define the antecedent itself. The distinction between restrictive and non-restrictive RCs thus has implications for the accessibility of the antecedent in the RC: the less cohesive the antecedent and the RC, the greater the difficulty of activating a mental representation of the antecedent at the point where it is processed in the RC. This difficulty is reflected in the preference for RPs in non-restrictive object RCs in Irish.

(54) *agus an chisteanach anois ploduighthe le* [indefinite NP] *daoine ar bhuail sost iad ar a theacht di i láthair* [intervening words: V, indefinite NP] (Ó Cadhain 1984)

‘while the kitchen was now packed with people, who fell silent [lit. ‘whom silence struck’] when she entered’

(55) *Ní hionann Seáinín is* [proper name] *JR a léigheasfadh gloine bhrandaí é* [intervening words: V, indefinite NP] (Ó Fathartaigh 2003)

‘Seáinín was not like JR, whom a glass of brandy would cure’

(56) [long definite description] *an Pápa Eoin XXIII, ar bhíog Dia é chun an Chomhairle a thionól* [intervening words: V, proper noun/name] (Ó Conchúir and Uí Chuill 2002)

‘Pope John XXIII, whom God moved to call the Council’

Distance from the antecedent to the point where it is processed in the RC can hardly have motivated the use of the construction in those examples. See also:

(57) *an túr úd Bhabel go leagfadh díle uisge é* (cited in Ó Cadhlaigh 1940, 377)

‘that tower of Babel, which a deluge would topple’

and



(58) *Tháinig an saighdiúir eile, nach bhfaca mé roimhe é, aníos chughainn* (cited in McCloskey 1990)

‘The other soldier, whom I had not seen before, came up to us’

I am unsure whether all non-restrictive direct object RCs in Irish must contain a RP, i.e. be constructed using the IR(t)-structure, but I have no counter-examples to demonstrate otherwise at this time.

At this point, I would like to stress that I do not deny that the IR(t)-construction can also be used as a disambiguating construction when accessibility considerations do not play a (prominent) role. Indeed, given the emphasis on this aspect of the construction in grammar books and the consequent awareness of the IR(t)-construction as a ‘disambiguating’ construction, it would be remarkable if the possibilities of the construction were not taken advantage of, particularly in contexts where structural ambiguity could prove particularly problematic (didactic and official literature, for instance). It is probably for this reason that five of the IR(t)-clauses extracted from *Nua-Chorpas na Gaeilge* originate in table-quiz books. A single example will suffice:

(59) [short definite description] *Cén chontae ar bhuail Ciarraí iad le 17 bpointe i gCluiche Leathcheannais 1975?* [intervening words: V, proper noun] (Ó Gallchóir 1991)

‘Which county did Kerry beat by 17 points in the semi-final 1975?’

There is also a degree of overlap between sentences which could be analysed as examples of deliberate disambiguation through use of the IR(t)-construction and those where the low accessibility of the argument may have motivated the use of that construction. In Example 60, the low accessibility of the antecedent could certainly explain the use of the IR(t)-construction but the desire to avoid a false interpretation of the clause (‘the values and goals you have that would satisfy [the requirements of] this job’) may also have been a factor in this text (a schoolbook):

(60) [definite description] *Na luachanna agus na cuspóirí atá agat a sásódh an post seo iad* [intervening words: intransitive RC, V, demonstrative NP] (Elliott 1990)

‘the values and goals you have that this job would satisfy’

Similarly, see Example 61 (from a history-book), where the antecedent is relatively less accessible, but where the IR(t)-construction may also have been employed to remove any structural ambiguity:

(61) *bhí* [indefinite description] *bean ansin ar dhíbir a cliamhaineacha í nuair a fuair a fear bás* [intervening words: ADV, V, definite NP] (Mac Con Iomaire 2002)

‘there was a woman there whose in-laws threw her out when her husband died’

Had the DR(t)-construction been used, Example 61 could also have been interpreted ‘who threw her in-laws out’. However, it must be emphasised again that, as mentioned already and illustrated by many of the examples cited in this discussion, the popular notion that the IR(t)-construction is primarily concerned with disambiguating potentially ambiguous sentences is not borne out by the majority of genuine examples.

(62) *Ní duine* [indefinite description] *a bhí ann ar mharaigh a dheifir ariamh é* [intervening words: intransitive RC, V, short definite NP, ADV] (Ó Ceallaigh 1990)

‘He was not the sort of person whom haste ever killed [i.e. he tended not to rush]’

The use of the IR(t)-construction in Example 62 can hardly have been motivated by a desire to avoid the interpretation \*‘He was not the sort of person who ever killed his haste’; accessibility considerations, as outlined above, account far better for the choice of IR(t)-construction here.

In conclusion, the use of the IR(t)-construction to disambiguate potential ambiguous object RCs is marginal and may have to do with a folk understanding of that construction. I do not believe that the choice between the DR(t)-construction and the IR(t)-construction of the object relative is free or that the distribution is random. I have argued above that accessibility considerations hold the key to understanding the distribution of the DR(t)- and IR(t)-constructions: antecedents which are more easily recalled/envisaged in the RC are more likely to be dropped, while antecedents which are less accessible in the RC will be indicated by a RP. The preliminary analysis presented above may not be sufficient to prove that accessibility conditions provides the best account for the choice between the DR(t)-construction and the IR(t)-construction, particularly given the small number of IR(t)-constructions analysed, but, in my opinion, this cognitively-based explanation is the best yet offered to account for the distribution of these constructions in authentic texts and, furthermore, is an explanation which has been proposed to account for the distribution of RPs in RCs cross-linguistically (Ariel 1999).<sup>33</sup> The IR(t)-construction should undoubtedly be the subject of further research and the work of collecting examples continues. The patterns of RP-usage in transitive RCs presented above may not be exhaustive and it is unlikely that strict rules can be extrapolated concerning exactly when the antecedent ceases to be accessible enough to be represented by a gap at the point in the RC where it is processed again. Indeed, it would be no surprise to find comparable examples where one speaker/writer opts for the DR(t)-construction and another for the IR(t)-constructions when the memory-

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33 The significance of accessibility has featured in some scholarship on the earlier period of the language. Lambert 1992 argues that the distinction between restrictive and non-restrictive RCs was a factor in the distribution of the leniting and nasalising object relatives in Old Irish. Lucht 1994 discusses accessibility in the context of the double-marking of the accusative in transitive constructions (e.g. *ni-s-toirchi* [3 sg. infixed object pronoun] *in muicc* [DO marked acc.] *fon indas sin*, ‘Du bekommst das Schwein nicht auf diese Weise’) in Old and Middle Irish. I am grateful to Axel Harlos for drawing my attention to Lucht’s article.

activation conditions appear identical. We are dealing here with tendencies rather than a strict grammatical rule.

#### HISTORY OF THE IR(t)-CONSTRUCTION

**10.** To my knowledge, the history of the IR(t)-construction has not yet been the subject of any study. Section 9 has argued that RPs tend to be introduced as a way to make less accessible antecedents more accessible in the RC. Let us now revisit the imagined example

(32a) \**an té a<sup>L</sup> bhuaifeadh an fuacht ø*

‘the one’ *a<sup>L</sup>* ‘would strike’ ‘the cold’

‘he whom the cold would strike’

The discussion in Section 9 has argued that the low accessibility of the indefinite personal pronoun *an té* justifies the use of a RP at the point where a gap would ‘occur’ in a DR(t)-construction (indicated here by ø). Only the use of the RP is explained by accessibility theory. The question remains: why is Example 32b impossible?

(32b) \**an té a<sup>L</sup> bhuaifeadh an fuacht é*

‘the one’ *a<sup>L</sup>* ‘would strike’ ‘the cold’ ‘him’ ACC.RP

32b resolves the low accessibility of the antecedent by introducing a RP in the RC. The use of the nasalising particle *a<sup>N</sup>* (in northern and western dialects) / *go<sup>N</sup>* (in southern dialects) does not, as far as I can tell, assist the recovery of the antecedent at the relativised position in the RC.

(32) *ar an té a<sup>N</sup> mbuaifeadh an fuacht é* (RMS, 155)

‘the one’ *a<sup>N</sup>* ‘would strike’ ‘the cold’ ‘him’ ACC.RP

Why then has the IR(t)-construction developed these morphosyntactic features? Specifically, why are different relative particles used in IR(t)-constructions from those in DR(t)-constructions and why is the dependent form of the verb required in IR(t)-constructions?

The IR(t)-construction would appear to be a relatively late development (cf. Ó hUiginn 1986, 83). The very rarity of the construction in contemporary Irish should, of course, be a warning that tracing the construction’s history will prove to be difficult. Such a construction, of course, could not exist in Old Irish, where independent object pronouns do not occur. The IR(t)-construction does not appear in Scottish Gaelic (Adgar and Ramchand 2006). The construction is not mentioned in the didactic writings of the Bardic schools in the Early Modern Irish period or in Mac Curtin 1728 or O’Donovan 1845. At present, I know of no examples of the construction earlier than the late nineteenth century (cited in Ó Cadhlaigh 1940, 377). The following sketch is, therefore, highly tentative. The matter will have to be investigated in more depth on another occasion.

RPs occur only marginally in Irish until well into the Early Modern Irish period (c. 1200-1650).<sup>34</sup> (The following account is a crude summary of *SNG IV*, §7.34-5 and Ó hUiginn 2013, 165-9.) The standard language of the professional poets only allows ‘gapped’ genitive relative constructions such as<sup>35</sup>

(63) *as tú an fear mhealluim ø mhnaoi*  
‘the man’ ‘I seduce’ dropped possessive RP ‘wife’ ACC  
‘you are the man whose wife I seduce’

Meanwhile the ‘pied-piping’ form of the prepositional relative is the sole construction which occurs in their poetry:

(64) *cú neimhe lé [le + a<sup>N</sup>] gcuirthe cath*  
‘vicious hound’ PREP‘by’+a<sup>N</sup> ‘used to be put’ ‘battle’  
‘a vicious hound by which battle used to be made’

In Early Modern Irish prose, however, we encounter an innovation, which ultimately led to the Modern Irish RP-prepositional and genitival indirect relative. The preposition *ag* + the nasalising rel. particle (and sometimes *in* + the nasalising rel. particle), which preceded the ‘pied-piping’ style prepositional relative ((65) is an example with *le*), became grammaticalised as an ‘indirect’ relative particle. It is found before prepositional and genitival RCs with RPs (the RPs being conjugated prepositions in the former clauses and possessive pronouns in the latter):

(65) *mathghamhain... agá rabhadar trí cíora fiacal ’na chionn*  
‘a bear’ *agá<sup>N</sup>* ‘were’.3PL.DEPENDENT ‘three rows of teeth’ ‘in his.RP head’  
‘a bear... that had three rows of teeth [more literally ‘that three rows of teeth were at it’]’

(66) *daoine agá mbí eagla na péine ifreannda amháin orra*  
‘people’ *agá<sup>N</sup>* ‘is’.DEPENDENT ‘fear of the pain of hell’ ‘alone’ ‘on them.RP’  
‘people who only feared the pain of hell [more literally ‘people whom only the fear of hell was on them’]’

34 For isolated instances of RPs with the prepositional relative in Early Irish, see McCone 1985, 96 and Ó hUiginn 2013, 165-9. (The RPs in question are, of course, conjugated prepositions.) For proleptic pronouns in Early Irish, see Lucht 1994.

35 Note the absence of a leniting relative particle in the examples from Bardic poetry. The leniting relative particle developed from the preverb *do<sup>L</sup>* (Modern Irish *a<sup>L</sup>*) in the course of the Early Modern Irish period (*SNG IV*, §7.32).

I hope to investigate the development of the prepositional and genitival relatives in Early Modern Irish in depth at a later point. It is sufficient here to say that this development occurred in Early Modern Irish and, to judge from the newly grammaticalised relative particles, began with the prepositional relative and spread to the genitive relative.<sup>36</sup> Grammaticalised *agá*<sup>N</sup> was reduced in Modern Irish to *a*<sup>N</sup> in northern dialects and *go*<sup>N</sup> in southern dialects and precedes the RP-prepositional relative in Modern Irish.<sup>37</sup>

I wish to suggest that the morphological features which distinguish the IR(t)-construction from the DR(t)-construction might be explained by analogy with the RP-prepositional relative.

(68) *an scannán ar chuala mé faoi*  
 antecedent *a*<sup>N</sup>.PAST dependent V S prepositional RP

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36 The development of an RP-prepositional relative, probably began with a ‘doubling’ of the relevant preposition, i.e. a combination of the pied-piping strategy with a prepositional RP, as in *duine fora tá omun báis fair* [...] ‘a man who fears [...]’ (Hughes 1991, 88 l. 165) (cited by McManus in SNG IV, §7.35). The grammaticalisation of *agá* and *ina* as prepositional relative particles was likely a later development, beginning with ‘double’ prepositional relatives with *agá* and *ina* (note the examples cited in Ó hUiginn 2013, 167-8). It is noteworthy that both *agá* and *ina* are unstressed, frequently elided (to *’ga* and *’na* respectively) and that prepositional RCs with these prepositions are common in Early Modern Irish, factors which presumably hastened their grammaticalisation. Once the RP prepositional relative construction had established itself, it expanded to the genitival relative, cross-linguistically an even more difficult position on which to relativise (see Keenan and Comrie 1977). This outline of the development of the prepositional and genitival relatives is, of course, speculative; I intend to investigate these issues in depth in a future study and, in particular, the influence of accessibility considerations on the development of both the ‘double’ prepositional relative and the RP prepositional relative.

37 It has already been mentioned that isolated examples of the prepositional relative with RPs are attested in Early Irish, where the ‘pied-piping’ strategy is overwhelmingly the norm (McCone 1985, 96; Ó hUiginn 2013, 165-9). These isolated examples of the Old Irish prepositional relative with RPs (claimed as a southern dialect feature by McCone; see also Alqvist 1988, 28) are regarded by some scholars as ancestors of the Modern Irish prepositional indirect RC. While it is possible to imagine a long sub-literary history for the RP-prepositional indirect relative (and, indeed, should accessibility considerations be proven to be a factor in the use of RPs in both Old Irish and Early Modern Irish RP-prepositional relatives, it would also be possible to argue for universal synchronic tendencies to the use of RPs in prepositional relatives in Irish), I am unconvinced that the Modern Irish RP-prepositional relative is simply the direct descendant of an equivalent sub-literary Old Irish construction. It seems to me too unlikely that the RP-relative would not be better attested before the Early Modern Irish period, when prepositional and genitival RCs with prepositional and possessive RPs begin to proliferate in prose texts. An Old Irish origin theory also leaves unexplained the grammaticalised relative particles *agá*<sup>N</sup> in Early Modern Irish and *a*<sup>N</sup>/*go*<sup>N</sup> in Modern Irish, as well as intermediary developments like *duine fora tá omun báis fair* [...] ‘a man who fears [...]’ (Hughes 1991, 88 l. 165). See footnote 34 and cf. Ó hUiginn 2013, 169.

'the film that I heard about'

In the prepositional relative, the antecedent is followed by the nasalising relative particle  $a^N/go^N$  ( $ar^L/gur^L$  etc.) which requires the dependent form of the verb. The antecedent (a prepositional object in the RC) is represented in the RC by a prepositional RP. IR(t)-clauses have the exact same structure as these prepositional relatives, except that the antecedent is a direct object and the RP a resumptive object pronoun. Not only do both constructions share obvious morphosyntactic similarities, but the prepositional RP-construction emerged earlier than the IR(t)-construction and became quite common and is, therefore, a likely candidate to have given rise to a later generalisation in direct object relatives.<sup>38</sup> It will be noted that, unlike the RP-prepositional construction, the IR(t)-construction has not proliferated in Irish, presumably because the 'gap' or 'dropped' DO in DR(t)-relatives is sufficiently accessible in the vast majority of cases for such a construction to be unnecessary.

#### Abbreviations

*Bibeanna* = *Bibeanna: memories from a corner of Ireland*, B. Ní Shúilleabháin (ed.) (2007). Mercier Press: Cork.

*RMS* = *Rotha mór an tsaoil: Micí Mac Gabhann d'inis*, S. Ó hEochaidh and P. Ó Conluain (eds) (1959). Foilseacháin Náisiúnta Tta: Dublin.

*SAB* = *Scéalta Annie Bhán: the lore of Annie Bhán*, G. W. MacLennan (ed.) (1997). The Seanchas Annie Bhán Publication Committee: Dublin.

*SNG* = *Stair na Gaeilge in ómós do Pádraig Ó Fiannachta*, K. McCone, D. McManus, C. Ó Háinle, N. Williams and L. Breatnach (eds) (1994). Roinn na Sean-Ghaeilge, Coláiste Phádraig, Maigh Nuad: Maynooth.

*TTO* = *A thig ná tit orm*, M. D. Ó Sé (first published 1985; 1995 edition). CJ Fallon: Dublin.

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38 From a comparative perspective, it is interesting to note that a RP-prepositional relative does not appear to exist in Scots-Gaelic, where 'pied-piping' and a 'gap'-strategy (using stereotyped 3 sg. prepositional pronouns) are the methods of forming prepositional relatives in speech (Adger and Ramchand 2006).

39 Citations from publications preceded by the sign ‡ were obtained using the on-line database Nua-Chorpas na Gaeilge (<http://corpas.focloir.ie/>). I have not consulted these texts in full. The details of publication are those given on Nua-Chorpas na Gaeilge.

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