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Aspect Phrase in Modern Scottish Gaelic

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1 Introduction

This paper deals with some intriguing data in Modern Scottish Gaelic, which show some interesting correspondences between semantic characteristics and Phrase Structure, in the domain of aspectual interpretation and the interpretation of direct object NPs. Specifically I am going to argue for the existence of a functional projection, Aspect Phrase, which lies in an intermediate position between the INFL projection and the lexical part of the verb.

Consider the following sentences in Scottish Gaelic

- (1) a Chunnaic Calum am balach.
See-PAST Calum the boy-DIR
“Calum saw the boy.”
- b *Chunnaic Calum a’bhalaich.
See-PAST Calum the boy-GEN
“Calum saw the boy.”
- (2) a Bha Calum air am balach (a) fhaicinn
Be-PAST Calum ‘air’ the boy-DIR ‘a’ see-VNOUN
“Calum had seen the boy.”

416 ASPECT PHRASE IN MODERN SCOTTISH GAELIC

b *Bha Calum air a'bhalach (a) fhaicinn .
 Be-PAST Calum 'air' the boy-GEN 'a' see-VNOUN
 "Calum had seen the boy."

(3) a Bha Calum a' faicinn a'bhalach
 Be-PAST Calum 'ag' see-VNOUN the boy-GEN
 "Calum was seeing the boy."

b *Bha Calum a'faicinn am balach.
 Be-PAST Calum 'ag' see-VNOUN the boy-DIR
 "Calum was seeing the boy."

SGaelic is a VSO language, meaning that the tensed verb is always the first element in its clause, even in subordinate clauses. In sentences like (1), there is one verb, which is inflected for tense and appears sentence initially. In sentences like (2) and (3), the tense appears on the auxiliary verb *Bi* 'to be' and it is this verb which is sentence initial. The substantive, or main verb in these cases is in the verbal noun form and appears later in the sentence without any tense morphology (see Cram (1978)). In Scottish Gaelic, the case on Subjects is no different from the case found on direct Objects in the simple tenses. In Irish, a closely related language, there is a difference between nominative and accusative in the pronoun declension. However, there is only one case form in SGaelic, which I will call 'Direct' case. I will call constructions like (1) the 'simple' tense form, and ones like (2) and (3) the 'periphrastic' tense forms. The subject in all three types of sentence immediately follows the tensed element. In sentence (3) we find the particle *ag* which is the reflex of the 'progressive' construction in SGaelic, and the verbal noun (in this case, *faicinn*). In (2), we see the particle *air* which is the reflex of the 'perfect' construction, and particle *a* which always precedes the verbal noun in this and infinitival constructions.

Objects in 'progressive' sentences appear immediately after the verbal noun and are in the genitive case. A sentence in the 'progressive' is ungrammatical if the object is expressed in Direct case (3b). In both the 'simple' past tense and the 'perfect' constructions we find Direct case on the object, and we get an ungrammatical result if we try to express these objects in the genitive (1b and 2b). The Object occurs directly before the verbal noun in the 'perfect', but after the verbal noun in the 'progressive'. Changing the position of the object and/or changing the casemarking produces ungrammatical results for both sentence types.

(4) *Bha Calum air faicinn a'bhalach.
 Be-PAST Calum 'air' see-VNOUN the boy-GEN
 "Calum had seen the boy."

(5) *Bha Calum ag am balach faicinn.
 Be-PAST Calum 'ag' the boy-DIR see-VNOUN
 "Calum was seeing the boy."

In the periphrastic sentences, the tense information, the aspectual particles and the substantive, the verbal noun, all appear in different places in the phrase structure. What are the relationships between these parts of the verb phrase, and how do they affect the position and case-marking of the direct Object in these sentences? These are the questions I wish to address in this paper.

2 Aspectual Differences

I have called the sentence type in (3) the ‘progressive’ which is its traditional name in the literature. Many traditional grammarians have assumed that the SGaelic construction has the same kind of semantic and grammatical characteristics as the English progressive, and is just a little more common in terms of actual usage. There are a number of facts which undermine this general belief. The first is that SGaelic has no present tense of substantive verbs at all,¹ so that this construction is the only way to express present meaning in the language. The second fact is that the SGaelic ‘progressive’ regularly occurs with stative predicates, conveying unambiguously stative meanings (Black (1989)). Recall that one of the central properties of the English progressive in the literature has been its incompatibility with stative predicates. Consider the following examples in SGaelic.

- (6) Dè tha thu a’ciallachadh?
 What be-PRES you-NOM ‘ag’ mean-VNOUN
 “What do you mean?”

- (7) Tha mi ag iarraidh cupa ti.
 Be-PRES I-NOM ‘ag’ want-VNOUN cup of tea
 “I want a cup of tea.”

In fact, the crucial thing about the SGaelic ‘progressive’ is that it may express states, or activities, but never achievements or accomplishments (to use the terminology of Vendler (1965)). The following two examples show that the periphrastic (‘progressive’) tense is compatible with the phrase with the question cleft ‘for how long’.

- (8) Bha mi ag òl leann.
 Be-PAST I-NOM ‘ag’ drink-VNOUN beer
 “I drank beer.”

- (9) Dè cho fada ’s a bha thu ag òl leann?
 How long that be-PAST you-NOM ‘ag’ drink-VNOUN beer
 “How long were you drinking beer for?”

The simple past, on the other hand, is unambiguously perfective and is ungrammatical with the cleft ‘for how long’.

¹The two verbs ‘to be’ both have present tense forms, but no other verbs do.

418 ASPECT PHRASE IN MODERN SCOTTISH GAELIC

- (10) Dh'òl mi leann.
 Drink-PAST I-NOM beer
 "I drank beer."
- (11) *Dè cho fada 's a dh'òl thu leann?
 How long that drink-PAST you-NOM beer
 "How long did you drink beer for?"

However it must be stressed that the SGaelic simple past cannot be 'perfective' in precisely the same way that the Romance perfective is. Notice that in SGaelic, the past tense produces a telic reading regardless of structure of the NP object it appears with. In English and Romance, the form of the Object NP has a demonstrable influence on the telicity of the past tense: with a singular definite Object the sentence is telic, but with a bare plural or mass term the sentence is atelic.

- (12) (a) ?I caught the fish for hours. (b) I caught fish for hours.
 (13) (a) I caught the fish in an hour. (b)? I caught fish in an hour.

In SGaelic on the other hand, the sentence "How long did you drink beer for?" (14) with a mass term object, is just as bad as "How long did you drink the cup of tea for?" (15) with a countable object.

- (14) *Dè cho fada 's a dh'òl thu leann?
 How long that drink-PAST you-NOM beer
 "How long did you drink beer for?"
- (15) *Dè cho fada 's a dh'òl thu an cupa tì?
 How long that drink-PAST you-NOM the cup of tea
 "How long did you drink the cup of tea for?"

Also, in English, the telicity of the past tense sentence seems to depend in part on the lexical classification of the verb in question. For example, accomplishments in the past tense can get telic readings with definite Objects (16), but activity verbs do not (17).

- (16) Alasdair found the treasure ?for an hour/in an hour.
 (17) Alasdair pushed the cart for an hour/?in an hour.

And in general, intransitive activity verbs in the past tense in English do not get a telic reading.

- (18) Alasdair ran for an hour/?in an hour.

However, the situation is very different in SGaelic, the past tense seems to create an unambiguously telic reading regardless of the verb or its arguments. Consider the activity of 'running', if you use the verb 'to run' in SGaelic in the simple past tense, you get a sentence like the following:

- (19) Ruith e
Run-PAST he-NOM
“He ran.”

This utterance can only refer to a *completed* action in the past, and is usually only felicitous with direct measure phrases like ‘to the store’, or ‘away’, or ‘past’, unless some specific running event is inferred from the context. Significantly, the question cleft ‘how long for’ is also ungrammatical with the activity verb under the relevant reading.

- (20) *Dè cho fada ’s a ruith e
How long that ran he
*How long did he run for?

Similarly, while it is possible to use the stative English verbs in the past tense, as in

- (21) Alasdair wanted a biscuit.

This is systematically impossible in SGaelic. You simply *cannot* express statives in the simple past in SGaelic. To convey the meaning expressed by the English sentence (21) above, the past ‘progressive’ would have to be used.

So, the problem is worse than some putative overgeneralization of the the notion of activity in this language, or the classification of the past tense as a perfective tense. It is not simply that the ‘progressive’ in SGaelic is *compatible* with statives, it seems to actually induce stative readings in otherwise eventive predicates. Likewise, it is not merely that the simple past can have telic interpretations, it actually forces an accomplishment interpretation of the predicate. There are many stative/accomplishment oppositions of this kind in SGaelic for the same lexical entry. In the simple past, a lexical item is interpreted as an achievement or an accomplishment; whereas in the ‘progressive’ it can get a stative meaning. Summarizing, the simple past tense in SG is:

- (a) Perfective *independent* of the semantic contribution of the Direct Object
- (b) Perfective *independent* of the lexical classification of the verb.
- (c) Not possible with stative interpretations.

Consider the following example to illustrate the point. The verb ‘*iarr-*’ can mean either ‘get’ or ‘want’ depending on whether it appears in the progressive construction or not. In the former case, the verb takes on an explicitly accomplishment-like meaning, whereas in the latter the subject is claimed to possess a state of wanting something.

- (22) Dh’iarr e not.
‘*iarr-*’-PAST he-NOM pound.
“He got a pound.”
- (23) Bha e ag iarraidh not
Be-PAST he-NOM ‘*ag*’ ‘*iarr-*’-VNOUN pound
“He wanted a pound.”

It is important to note that while the English must use two different verbs to gloss these different examples, this is a reflection of the lack of a suitable equivalent in that language of the quite specific and consistent content of the SGaelic root. The SGaelic verb means really something more like ‘seek to get’– the accomplishment interpretation expresses the completion of that act, and thus can imply the actual ‘getting’, whereas the stative or process interpretation emphasises the state of ‘wanting’.

So, there is a substantial difference in the ways in which the sentences in the periphrastic and simple constructions are interpreted aspectually. In addition, the periphrastic construction is formed from ‘verbal nouns’ and a separate tense carrying element, whereas the accomplishment sentences use tense-carrying verbs. How can we make sense of these separate morphological, syntactic and semantic distinctions? I claim that there are systematic relationships at work here, and that there is a difference in the ways in which objects of verbal nouns are interpreted as opposed to objects of true tensed verbs. The tensed verb seems to govern objects which are completely affected. Genitive marked objects of the verbal noun cannot get a completely affected reading, and even allow the *non*-affected reading.

3 Object Interpretation and Phrase Structural Position

So far I have been ignoring the ‘perfect’ construction. But it is here that the evidence from this construction type becomes crucial. I will argue that the difference in interpretation of the Object in the two kinds of sentence we have examined already is correlated with a difference in phrase-structural position, and is not merely a difference between the simple tenses and ‘periphrasis’. Recall that the ‘perfect’ tenses also contain the auxiliary verb ‘*Bi*’-to be, and the verbal noun form of the substantive verb. However, the case-marking of the object is the same as in the simple past tense, and the *position* of the object is clearly different from that in the ‘progressive’ construction.

In the simple past tense construction, it is not easy to see the difference in object *position* clearly. The perfect construction offers the possibility of comparing the two object positions more directly since the word order and syntax are more clearly parallel. What we saw as a simple casemarking difference before now emerges as a positional difference as well. And indeed the difference in the interpretation of the Object NP crucially carries over to the perfect construction as well. Consider again the verb *iarr*-‘to want/ask for’ discussed earlier. In the progressive construction the object has an unaffected reading:

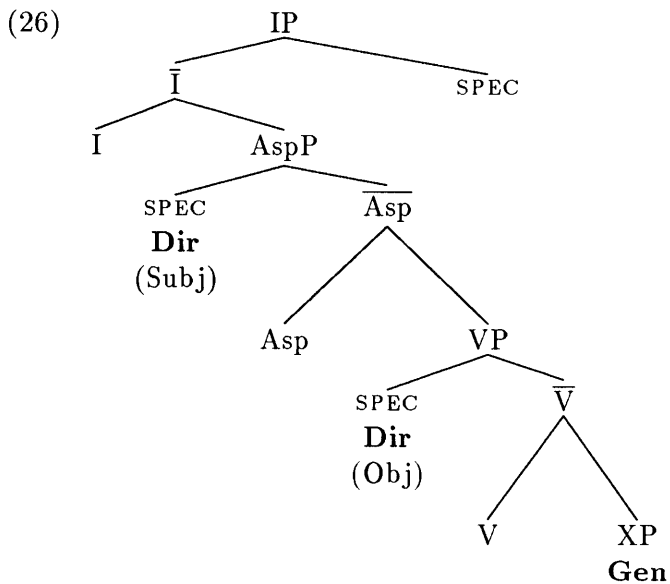
- (24) Tha mi ag iarraidh a’bhuill.
 Be-PRES I-NOM ‘*ag*’ want-VNOUN the ball-GEN
 “I want the ball.”

However, in the perfect construction, where the object is preposed and in direct case, the object gets an affected reading, and the interpretation changes correspondingly.

- (25) Tha mi air am ball iarraidh .
 Be-PRES I-NOM 'air' the ball-DIR want-VNOUN
 "I have asked for (and got) the ball."

This minimal pair in terms of construction type suggests that the particular phrase-structural position of an argument has a direct effect on how that argument is interpreted aspectually. The change in position of the direct object is especially interesting in this regard. There has been a considerable amount of work done recently on derived objects, and what their putative landing site must be. Many linguists seem to agree that there must be an A-position in the phrase structure to which the object may move (Massam (1985), Mahajan (1990), Sportiche (1990)), although they disagree as to what position this is precisely, and where it appears in the phrase structure. In her paper on 'derived objects', Travis (1991) argues that there is a landing site for derived objects within the verbal projection, which is the SPEC position of the functional projection of Aspect. The Austronesian evidence points to the additional functional projection as lying in between the VP-internal subject and the other verbal arguments. Moreover, the semantics of derived objects in these and other languages is correlated with perfectivity and specificity, and this is what motivates the label of Aspect for this functional projection. SGaelic, I claim constitutes direct evidence for a version of phrase structure which includes an explicit aspect projection within the VP (much as in Travis (1991)).

The skeletal phrase structure I will argue for looks like the following:

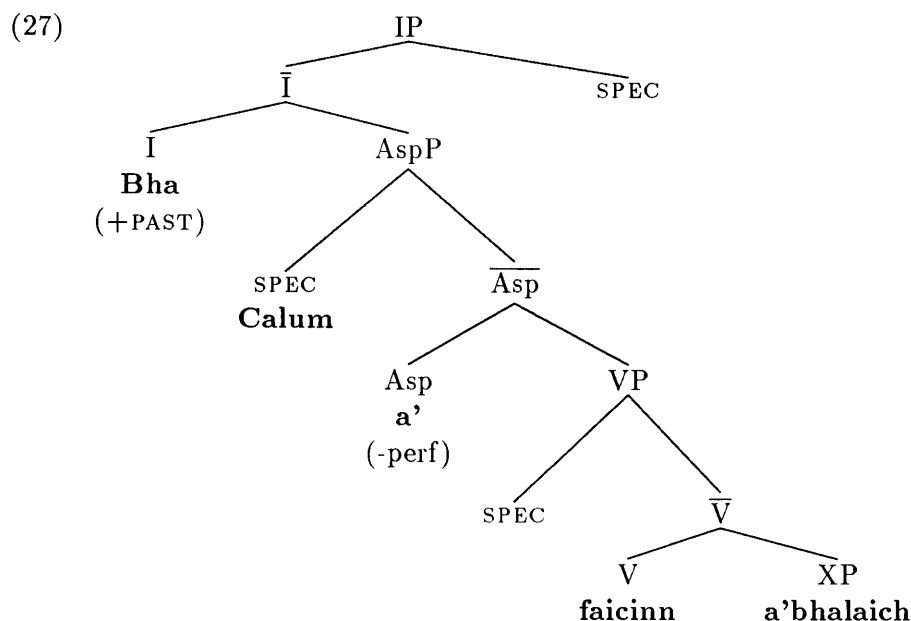


I will assume that in SGaelic, government is only from left to right, as one would expect from a head-initial language. Moreover, following McCloskey (1984, 1990), I will assume that in these languages the head can govern the SPEC position of its complement. In particular, this means that I can govern SPEC of AspP, and that Asp can govern SPEC of VP. The only position that the V can govern is the complement position to the right of it. I follow McCloskey (1984) in assuming that

the Subject in SGaelic (as in Irish) is in the SPEC position of the projection which is sister to the tensed verb. This is, then, the equivalent of base-generating a VP internal subject. However, in Irish and SGaelic, the subject does not need to move since heads can govern the SPEC positions of their complements in these languages.²

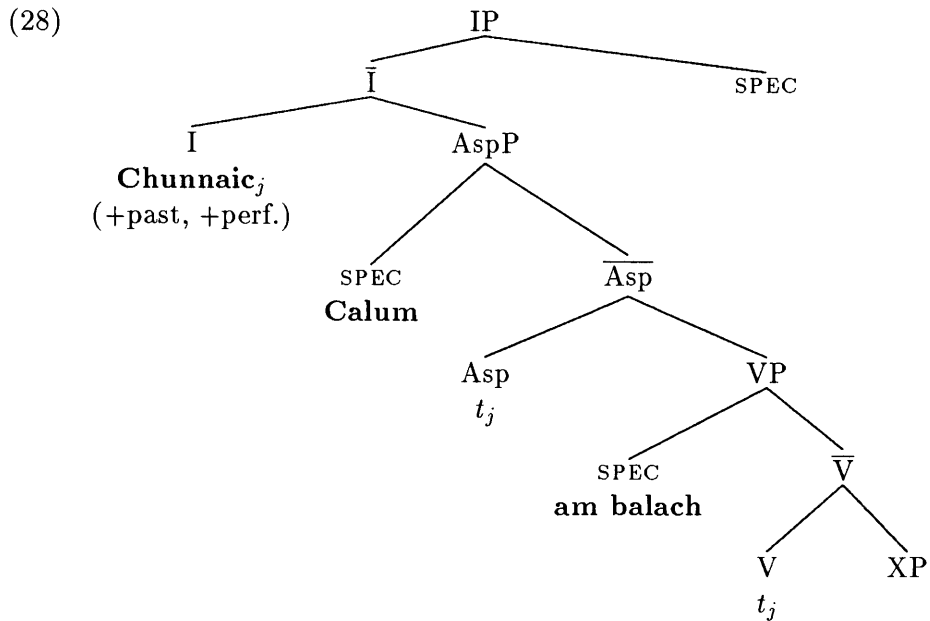
The difference between my conception of the phrase structure and that found in Travis(1991) is that Travis assumes that there are three levels, and thus three SPEC positions within the verbal projection. I will be assuming that there are only two levels– the SPEC position of AspP is where the subject is generated, the SPEC position of VP is the site of ‘derived objects’ in Travis’ sense, and the VP complement position is the position where non-derived objects appear.

What I am arguing for, then, is the existence of the functional projection AspP. In the periphrastic sentences in the language, the head of this projection has actual phonological content: the particle *ag* is a reflex of [-perf] and the particle *air* a reflex of [+perf]. In the simple tenses the verb raises through Asp to Infl and carries [+perf] specification. What this view of things predicts is that when the object is in the direct case, it is actually in the SPEC of VP position governed by Asp, but when it is in the genitive case, it is the direct complement of, and governed by, the verbal noun. In other words, sentences (1) and (3) would have phrase structures as in (28) and (27) respectively.



²There is also an issue about the SPEC of IP position which I have placed to the right. There is crucial data relating to the position of the subject of individual-level predicates noticed by Cathal O'Doherty (1991) and replicated in SGaelic, which suggests that the SPEC of IP position is actually sentence final. However, this will not be crucial for any of the evidence used in this paper.

GILLIAN CATRIONA RAMCHAND

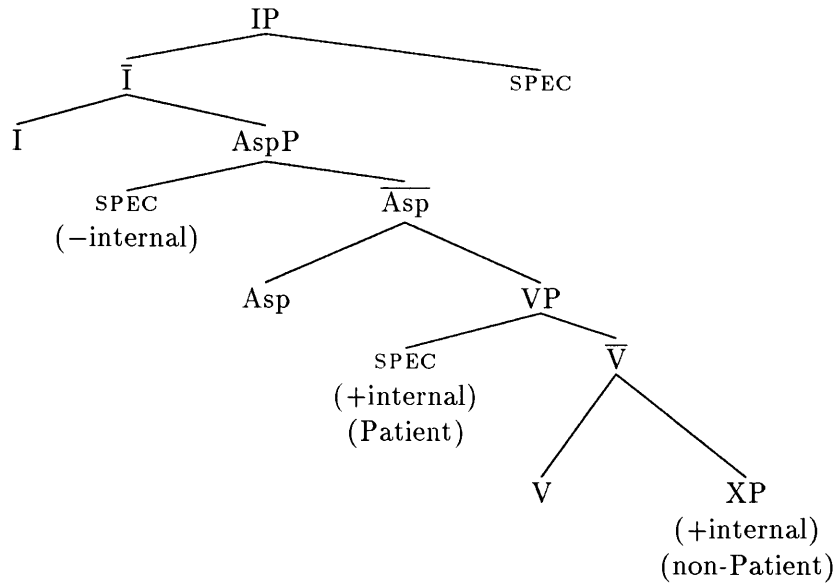


In the Lexicon, the arguments of a predicate are only specified in SGaelic according to whether they are internal or external. The internal arguments are the subset of role types that affect the aspectual character of the verb phrase. These are the arguments which are in the ‘scope’ of aspect in the D-structure. If an argument is internal it can be further distinguished by whether the event is inherently perfective or not: a perfective value produces what I will call **Patient** or completely affected arguments, and an imperfective value produces **non-Patient** arguments.³ The correspondence between aspectual role type and phrase-structural position is shown in (29).

There is no directionality of cause and effect here between the phrase-structural positions, the case-marking and the semantic interpretations. What I am arguing is that corresponding relationships are being encoded at the levels of syntax, semantics and morphology respectively. These correspondences I claim, are systematic across languages. They are more perspicuous in SGaelic because in this domain at least we find one-to-one mappings between the semantics and the syntax. We might say that SGaelic is a particularly useful language because it wears its aspectual information on its syntactic sleeve.

³This use of θ -role labels is shorthand for a classification I would want to make more semantically precise, and does not necessarily conform to traditional treatments of θ -roles in the literature. Briefly, I see this distinction in terms of the Verkuyl (1992) partition of NPs into [+SQA] (specified quantity of A) and [-SQA]. The formalization of these notions in Verkuyl’s system seems to capture most accurately the semantic difference found here in SGaelic. However, I do not have space to go into the details of the treatment here.

(29)



Now, I turn to some independent evidence that there is a difference in phrase structural position corresponding to the different kinds of Objects in the language.

4 Object Marking

The independent evidence comes from an analysis of the mysterious particle *a* which appears before the verbal noun in the perfect construction. McCloskey (1984) and McCloskey and Sells (1988) assume that this is the infinitival marker, since it also shows up in non-finite clauses. However, this cannot be the case, since there are non-finite clauses which do not contain this particle in SGaelic. Rather, it seems to co-occur with the preposed 3rd person object.

Let us look at what happens when the preposed object is not 3rd person. If the *a* is really an infinitival marker which licenses the preposing of the object, we would expect the following sentence to be grammatical.

- (30) *Bha Calum air mi (a) fhaicinn.
 Be-PAST Calum 'air' me-DIR 'a' see-VNOUN
 "Calum had seen me."

However, sentence (30) above is completely ungrammatical in SGaelic (although grammatical in Irish). What we get instead is sentence (31) below.

- (31) Bha Calum air mo fhaicinn.
 Be-PAST Calum 'air' me-GEN see-VNOUN
 "Calum had seen me."

This is surprising, since it looks as if the personal pronouns are following the *genitive* pattern of objects even though they are in the perfect construction here! In fact, this looks like a counterexample to the claim that the Objects in the perfect

periphrastic tense are always pre-posed and in the Direct case. This pattern looks more like the genitive pattern we find in the progressive, since in general all pronoun genitive objects are clitics which must attach pre-verbally. The only difference is that in the progressive construction, the possessive pronouns form a synthetic compound with the *ag* of that construction.

However, it cannot be a simply ‘progressive’ construction pattern we are seeing with the pronouns because the emphatic version of the Direct case pronoun *is* possible in pre-verbal position in these perfect constructions.

- (32) Bha Calum air mise (a) fhaicinn.
 Be-PAST Calum ‘*air*’ me-EMPH ‘*a*’ see-VNOUN
 “Calum had seen ME.”

In the progressive construction, the use of the emphatic pronoun does *not* sanction Direct casemarked objects, and the corresponding construction is not an option. But that doesn’t answer the following questions: Why is the genitive marking on the pronoun possible in the perfect? And why does this genitive marking option *only* show up with the pronouns?

Now, there is a curious difference between Scottish and Irish Gaelic which emerges at this point. Whereas Irish has both nominative and accusative forms for the pronouns, SGaelic has only one form, the direct case form. The direct case form in SGaelic is more like the nominative form in Irish. Moreover, there are a number of contexts where an accusative pronoun would be found in Irish, but where the direct case pronoun is ungrammatical in SGaelic. The generalization seems to be that the direct case clitic pronoun is only sanctioned when it is governed by INFL. The emphatic form of the pronoun seems to have no such restriction. However we wish to state this constraint on the appearance of direct object pronouns, the point is simply that these pronouns are unacceptable in this context for completely independent reasons, since the emphatic versions are systematically grammatical.

What then is the explanation for the construction in (30) above? I argue that what we are seeing here is the existence of a ‘pro’ object in SPEC of VP in conjunction with Object marking. The verb thus may show object agreement and requires pro-drop much like the subject agreement cases in Irish. When a full NP is present, the verb has the object marking *a* which is neutralized for person and number information.⁴ Since the personal pronouns cannot appear in Direct case in these contexts, the pro-drop option is the only possibility. This surprising quirk in the grammar of SGaelic has gone completely unexplained in the literature up till now. But if we assume the Object marking hypothesis, a seemingly unmotivated and strange difference between Scottish and Irish is readily intelligible.

Moreover, if this is true, then we have yet another argument for the phrase structure I proposed above. Namely, when the object is preposed it is in SPEC of VP position and this is precisely the position where we find object marking appearing on the verb. This is what we would expect from the standard assumption about subject

⁴Much like Weak Agreement in Welsh, see Rouveret (1992)

and object marking being instances of SPEC-Head agreement. Crucially, when the object NP is in complement position, no agreement marker can be induced on the verbal noun. This argues again for the difference in structural position between the two Objects, and for the preposed Object, not the genitive object being in SPEC position. So, what initially looked like a problem for the SPEC of VP analysis of direct objects in these constructions turns out in fact to provide more evidence in favour of it.

5 Independent Evidence for the Projection AspP

Now I turn to some more independent evidence for the existence of the additional functional projection I am proposing. Recall that what I am arguing for implies that the particles *ag* and *air* head a maximal projection in the sentences in which they appear, the projection AspP. This means that all the material following and including the particles in the progressive and the perfect should pass any test for maximal projections in the language. There is indeed evidence that this is the case. Evidence from Right Node Raising, coordination and ellipsis show that the material immediately following the tensed element is a syntactic constituent. For example, the constituent labelled AspP can participate in coordination, as the following grammatical sentence in SGaelic indicates,

- (33) Cha robh [XP na coin a'cluich] no [XP na cait ag òl bainne]
 Be-PRES/NOT the dogs *ag* play-VNOUN or the cats *ag* drink-VNOUN milk
 "The dogs were not playing, nor were the cats drinking milk."

See McCloskey (1990) for detailed evidence and argumentation in Irish, all of which may be duplicated for Scottish Gaelic. This is not enough of course, since we have no evidence that the constituent in question here is actually AspP. But now consider the following two complex sentences in the language.

- (34) Bu thoil leam [PRO taigh a cheannach]
 Cop-PAST liking with + me house-DIR OM-buy-VNOUN
 "I would like to build a house."
- (35) Dh'iàrr e orm [PRO an dorus a dhùnadh]
 ask-PAST he-DIR on + me the door-DIR OM-close-VNOUN
 "He asked me to close the door."

Both sentences contain non-finite complement clauses. Both contain a subject position which is controlled by an NP in the higher clause. McCloskey (1988) labels both these clauses 'infinitival complement's (or IPs) in Irish, and the preverbal particle '*a*' is taken to be the infinitive marker. However, I do not believe that this simple correspondence between overt morphology and category type will hold up in practice. Consider the phrase structure I hypothesize for SGaelic for the basic sentence type, shown in (41). Given that phrase structure, it is theoretically possible for complements containing the particle '*a*' and a null subject position to be *either* IPs or AspPs, since the subject is generated in the SPEC of AspP position.

IPs would be non-finite clauses proper, but AspPs would be complements with no tense information encoded at all. I will show here that the class of ‘infinitivals’ in the McCloskeyan sense is not a unified one, but exhibits internal distinctions which require different syntactic representations.

The cleft ‘S e’ is used in SGaelic to cleft NP arguments. (see (36) (37)),

- (36) 'S e mise a chunnaic a-raoir e.
It is I-EMPH that see-PAST last night he.
“It’s me who saw him last night.”

- (37) 'S e mise a bha ag òl leann a-raoir
It is I-EMPH that ‘ag’ drink-VNOUN beer last night.
“It’s me who was drinking beer last night.”

It can also be used to cleft CPs as in (38),

- (38) 'S e [gun robh mi sgith] a thuir mi.
It is that I was tired that say-PAST I
“It’s that I was tired that I said.”

The clefting construction shown here can be shown independently to be sensitive to syntactic category in SGaelic. So, for example, while NPs and CPs will cleft with ‘S e’, PPs and VPs may not. Note that CPs quite often pattern with NPs in other languages with respect to syntactic phenomena, and can often have NP distribution. The same is true of IPs, and we might expect the IP complements in the sentences under scrutiny here to cleft as well. In fact, for sentence (34) this is so. The non-finite complement may cleft with ‘S e’, as shown in (39) below.

- (39) 'S e [PRO an dorus a dhùnadh] a dh’iarr e orm
It is shutting the door that ask-PAST he on + me
“It’s shutting the door that he asked of me.”

However, the non-finite complement found in example (33) may *not* cleft in this way.

- (40) *'S e [PRO taigh a cheannach] a bu thoil leam
It is buying a house that cop-PAST liking with + me
“It’s buying a house that I would like.”

There is nothing independently wrong with clefting from this position, since an NP complement of this verb will cleft without any problems (41).

- (41) 'S e cofaidh a bu thoil leam.
It is cofaidh that cop-PAST liking with + me
“It’s coffee that I would like.”

What this shows is that there must be a distinction in category type between the complements in the two cases here. We must either assume an infinitely extendible VP to include the subject in the highest SPEC position, or we must admit the existence of an intermediate functional projection between VP and IP here.

It is interesting to note that the non-finite complements shown here seem to have very different semantic properties: (33) occurs in distinctly modal contexts with no simple time reference, (34) occurs in sentences which contain two events related by some verb of communication (classical Object control cases in English). The latter type, the type that does cleft, I would take to be simple IPs, whereas the former I would hypothesize to be AspP.

Now, we started off with the information that these particles *ag* and *air* co-occur with explicitly aspectual differences. We also know that the constituent I label AspP in my phrase structure is a syntactic constituent (the constituent that McCloskey (1990) calls a small clause). We also now know that there is some projection which shows up in non-finite complements which is not IP. We seem to have a missing functional projection here. While the evidence at this point is circumstantial, I claim that this functional projection is the same as the one found headed by these particles *ag* and *air*, and moreover that this projection is AspP.

6 Conclusion

To summarize, in SGaelic, arguments are lexically distinguished as being either internal or external. Internal arguments must all appear within the verbal projection. The aspect marking then determines the precise role/phrase structural position.

(i) If Asp has the value [+perfect], the internal argument is a Patient and is governed by Asp.

(ii) If Asp has the value [−perfect], the internal argument is a non-Patient, and is governed by the verb. The impossibility of the internal argument appearing

in SPEC of VP in the imperfective sentences is due to the incompatibility of [−perf] specification with the interpretation of SPEC objects as being completely affected (or more precisely [+SQA]). In SGaelic, arguments governed by functional heads get Direct case, whereas arguments governed by lexical heads get Lexical case (in the case of verbs and nouns, this case is Genitive).

In addition, I believe that the relationship between the VP and the AspP I am proposing is a particularly tight one— they are part of the same extended projection (in the sense of Grimshaw), and in fact the existence of the Aspect node is responsible for the explicitly verb-like behaviour of the construction containing the verbal noun. Thus, this analysis also sheds some light on the status of the verbal noun in this language, and maybe in others as well. The verbal noun in SGaelic has been the subject of much controversy: is it a verb or is it a noun? The literature on event nominals in other languages, and the status of the arguments it theta-marks, is also extremely interesting in this regard. What I would claim here is that the verbal

noun in SGaelic is precisely that substantive part of the verb which contains no aspectual specification. This is why the lexical items in SGaelic are underspecified for aspectual type.

The parametric difference between the two languages is that English verbs are inherently aspectual and hence come with their arguments already specified for aspectual role, whereas, at least in the periphrastic constructions in SGaelic, the arguments must receive their interpretation via explicit phrase-structural relationship with an aspectual head.

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