

## The 'be + p.p.' Construction in Irish

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### 0. Introduction

In Irish<sup>11</sup>, there are several passive-like constructions.

Among these, the following three constructions seem to be considered as major ones (named by Nolan (2006):

- The Impersonal Passive (e.g. *-tar / -tear* in the habitual present tense)
- The Perfective<sup>12</sup> Passive (*tá* 'be' + verbal adjective)
- The Progressive Passive (*tá* 'be' + *a* 'his / her / their' + verbal noun)

In this paper, I will consider the second one, *the Perfective Passive*, which has been studied in several ways. This construction, called 'passive' in some studies, seems to have a problem on the point of whether or not it is truly 'passive'.

It is expressed with the substantial verb *bí* 'be' (*tá* in the present tense) and verbal adjective (past participle) and exemplified like (1) and (2) (note that in all of the examples, the symbols S, A and P and the text effects are added by me):

- 1) *Tá* an leabhar<sub>P</sub> *léite* agam<sub>A</sub>  
 be.PRS DEF.M.NOM book.M.NOM read.PP at+I.SG  
 'I<sub>A</sub> *have* the book<sub>P</sub> *read*.'

- 2) *Tá* sé<sub>S</sub> *imithe*  
 be.PRS he.SG.CNJTV<sup>13</sup> leave.PP  
 'He<sub>S</sub> *is gone* off'

[Ó Siadhail (1989: 299-300), with his translations]

<sup>11</sup> Indo-European, Celtic, Insular, Goidelic; with 138,000 speakers in Ireland (Ethnologue). The typological characteristics are: the basic word order is VSO; the adjective is placed after the noun which it modifies; it has an inflectional morphology.

<sup>12</sup> It seems that they use the term *perfective* simply as an adjective form of the noun *perfect*, not as *perfective aspect*.

<sup>13</sup> The *conjunctive* form (CNJTV) is a form of personal pronouns which is placed just after the finite verb, while the *disjunctive* form (DSJTV) elsewhere. In most cases, this distinction corresponds to that of nominative (conjunctive) / accusative (disjunctive).

Ó Siadhail (1989) calls this construction *passive perfective aspect*, so that the example (1) can be translated as ‘The book<sub>P</sub> *is read* by me<sub>A</sub>’. There are, however, two cases in which this construction is used, i.e. you can see a transitive verb *léite* (< *léigh* ‘read’) in (1), while an intransitive verb *imithe* (< *imigh* ‘leave’) in (2). In this paper, I would like to reveal its function with the corpus available on the Internet.

With the terms *subject* (S), *agent* (A) and *patient* (P), I mean *semantically* the *subject* in the intransitive notion, the *agent* in the transitive notion and the *patient* in the transitive notion respectively. In addition, words in **bold** and *italic* indicate a verbal phrase concerned, underlined an agent or a subject and placed in a rectangle a patient, *semantically* again. Furthermore, Ø ‘zero’ denotes a deleted (not appeared) element.

For the sake of simplicity, I will use the term *past participle* (*p.p.*, and *PP* in the gloss) for the *verbal adjective*. The other terms typical to the Irish language, the Goidelic languages or the Celtic languages follow Ó Siadhail (1989) and translations in my survey and all the glosses are responsible to me.

## 1. Preceding Studies

### 1.1. Overview

Constructions like (1) and (2) have been described in various ways. Ó Sé (1992) summarised some interpretations which had been done since 1966 as following:

- (i) perfective (in the Slavic sence)
- (ii) completive
- (iii) stative / perfective passive
- (iv) passive perfective aspect
- (v) ergative

(i) and (ii) have to do with mainly an *aspect*, while the (iii) and (iv), which have a lot in common, and (v) include a *syntactic* analysis for which I aim in this paper, so that I would like to argue the last two. That is, in following sections, I will give a brief summary about analyses of (iv) *the passive perfective aspect* and (v) *the ergative*.

### 1.2. The Perfective Passive

As mentioned above, Ó Siadhail (1989) calls this construction *the Perfective Passive* and claims that it corresponds to the *perfective active* construction with *tar éis* or *i ndiaidh*, both of which mean ‘after’, like (3):

- 3) *Tá* mé<sub>A</sub> { *thar éis*<sup>14</sup> / *i ndéidh*<sup>15</sup> } an leabhar<sub>P</sub> a *léamh*  
 be.PRS I.SG.CNJTV after DEF.M.NOM book.M.NOM to read.VN.M.NOM  
 'I<sub>A</sub> *have* just *read* the book<sub>P</sub>'

[Ó Siadhail (1989: 299)]

He pointed out that from the sentence in (1), the agent can be deleted, as exemplified in (4):

- 4) *Tá* an leabhar<sub>P</sub> *léite* Ø<sub>A</sub>  
 be.PRS DEF.M.NOM book.M.NOM read.PP (at+Ø)  
 'The book<sub>P</sub> *is read* (by Ø<sub>A</sub>)'

[Ó Siadhail (1989: 299)]

He also pointed out that this construction can be derived from intransitive verbs, as (2) (already mentioned above):

- 2) *Tá* sé<sub>S</sub> *imithe*  
 be.PRS he.SG.CNJTV leave.PP  
 'He<sub>S</sub> *is gone* off'

[Ó Siadhail (1989: 300)]

This construction seems to be a passive one with intransitive verbs. The intransitive passive can be found in some languages like German in (5):

- 5) de. Gestern *wurde* *getanzt*  
 yesterday become.IND.PST.3SG dance.PP  
 'Yesterday there *was dancing*'

[Keenan and Dryer (2007: 346)]

Passive constructions with intransitive verbs are described in Keenan and Dryer (2007) like following:

[...] many languages with basic passives allow the passive morphology to apply to intransitive verbs as well. For example, just as from *amare* 'to love' in Latin we form *amatur* 'he is loved', from *currere* 'to run' we form *curritur* 'it is run' in the sense 'there is running going on, running is being done'.

[Keenan and Dryer (2007: 332)]

<sup>14</sup> Dialectal Variation.

<sup>15</sup> Dialectal Variation.

This explanation can be applied to the German example (5) above with an unspecified agent and without any overt subjects, but it seems to be very different from the Irish example (2), where the agent is specified and a grammatical subject is given. In other words, in German, this construction is an *impersonal passive*, but contrary to that, in Irish, this is a *personal* one.

The Irish language has another construction for the *impersonal passive*, which is expressed by the conjugation of so-called *autonomous form* (e.g. *bristear* ‘there is broken’ < *bris* ‘break’) and clearly, this passive-like construction with intransitive verbs like (2) is *not* the passive and simply denotes an action which has been already done.

In addition to this, Ó Siadhail (1989) says that some verbs can be used either *transitively* or *intransitively*, i.e. in some cases the object can be deleted like (6) according to the context, and that when such a clause is rendered into the construction concerned in this paper like (6’), there will be some ambiguity of interpretation:

- 6) **D’ith** sé<sub>A</sub> (é)<sub>P</sub> → 6’) **Tá** sé<sub>A/P</sub> **ite**  
 eat.PST he.SG.CNJTV (he.SG.DSJTV) be.PRS he.SG.CNJTV eat.PP  
 ‘He<sub>A</sub> **has eaten** (it)<sub>P</sub>’ ‘(It)<sub>P</sub> **is eaten** (by Ø<sub>A</sub>) / He<sub>A</sub> **has eaten** (Ø)<sub>P</sub>’  
 [Changed partly from Ó Siadhail (1989: 300)]

(6) is an unmarked construction in Irish, which has a VS(O) word order. However, according to Ó Siadhail (1989), when this is rendered like (6’) without a prepositional agent phrase (e.g. *aige* ‘by him’), the only argument *sé* ‘it / he’ can be interpreted as both P and A. This is visually illustrated with following two different constructions:

- 6a) **D’ith** sé<sub>A</sub> (é)<sub>P</sub>  
 eat.PST he.SG.CNJTV he.SG.DSJTV  
 ↙ ↘  
 6’a) **Tá** sé<sub>P</sub> **ite** Ø<sub>A</sub>  
 be.PRS he.SG.CNJTV eat.PP (at+Ø)  
 ‘(It)<sub>P</sub> **is eaten** (by Ø<sub>A</sub>)’
- 6b) **D’ith** sé<sub>A</sub> (é)<sub>P</sub>  
 eat.PST he.SG.CNJTV (he.SG.DSJTV)  
 ↓  
 6’b) **Tá** sé<sub>A</sub> **ite**  
 be.PRS he.SG.CNJTV eat.PP  
 ‘He<sub>A</sub> **has eaten** (Ø)<sub>P</sub>’  
 [Changed partly from Ó Siadhail (1989: 300)]

In (6a) the *grammatical object* appears, and in (6’a) it is promoted to the *grammatical subject* (i.e. placed just after the verb) and the original subject is demoted (here, rather deleted). To the contrary, in (6b) the *grammatical object* does not appear and the *grammatical subject* remains the *grammatical subject* even in (6’b).

### 1.3. The Ergativity

Some linguists analyse this construction in Irish as the *ergativity* in the *perfective* aspect.

The basic word order in Irish is VSO, where the subject is placed just after the verb and the object follows. As for nouns, the grammatical subject and the direct object are morphologically unmarked and distinguished only by the word order.

However, according to this analysis, like Noonan (1994), the different system of the case alignment can be seen between the *imperfective* aspect in (7a) and the *perfective* in (7b):

- 7a) **Chonaic** an garraíodóir<sub>A</sub> an gadhar<sub>P</sub>.  
 see.PST DEF.M.NOM gardener.M.NOM DEF.M.NOM dog.M.NOM  
 'The gardener<sub>A</sub> saw the dog<sub>P</sub>'
- 7b) **Bhí** an gadhar<sub>P</sub> **feicthe** **ag** an ngarraíodóir<sub>A</sub>  
 be.PST DEF.M.NOM dog.M.NOM see.PP at DEF.M.NOM gardener.M.NOM  
 'The gardener<sub>A</sub> had seen the dog<sub>P</sub>'

[(7b) from Noonan (1994: 297), (7a) is transformed from (7b)]

In (7a), the agent *an garraíodóir* 'the gardener' occupies the verb-after (i.e. subject) position and the patient *an gadhar* 'the dog' follows it. In contrast, in (7b), the patient is placed just after the verb with the subject function, and the agent is demoted to the oblique, the prepositional phrase.

With intransitive verbs as well, this analysis as the *ergativity* seems to be the case, as shown by example (8):

- 8) **Tá** na mic léinn<sub>S</sub> **imithe** **abhaile** **ar** **saoire**  
 be.PRS DEF.PL.NOM son.PL.NOM learn.VN.M.GEN leave.PP home on feast.F.NOM  
 na Cásca  
 DEF.F.GEN Easter.F.GEN  
 'The students<sub>S</sub> had gone home for Easter'

[Noonan (1994: 297)]

Here, the argument just after the finite verb *na mic léinn* 'the students' is very different from that in (7b) regarding its semantic role. This system can be formularised like following:

Table1: The Irish Split Ergativity

	transitive	intransitive
Imperfective:	V + <u>A</u> + <u>P</u>	V + <u>S</u>
Perfective:	V + <u>P</u> + <i>p.p.</i> + [ <i>ag</i> 'at' + A]	V + <u>S</u> + <i>p.p.</i>

[Summarised from Noonan (1994: 296-297)]

## 2. Questions

Then, *which analysis is suitable to describe the Irish 'be + p.p.' construction?*

If the first – the analysis as *the perfective passive aspect* is suitable, two different constructions in the single morphosyntactic instance 'be + p.p.' have to be distinguished: one of these denotes *the passive perfective* (transitive) and the other *the active perfective* (intransitive).

However, as mentioned a bit in Ó Sé (1992), this contrast of meaning itself is not so surprising. Other languages in Western Europe, like French, Italian, German, etc. have contrasts like this, exemplified in French (9) (*être* 'be' + p.p.) and in German (10) (*sein* 'be' + p.p.):

9a) fr. Il<sub>S</sub> *est* *parti*  
 he.SG.NOM be.IND.PRS.3SG depart.PP.M.SG  
 'He<sub>S</sub> *has departed*' (perfect)

9b) Le fer<sub>P</sub> *est attiré* par l'aimant<sub>A</sub>  
 DEF.M.SG iron.M.SG be.IND.PRS.3SG attract.PP.M.SG by DEF.M.SG magnet.M.SG  
 'The iron<sub>P</sub> *is attracted* by the magnet<sub>A</sub>' (passive)

[Tamura et al. (eds.) (2005: 785)]

10a) de. Er<sub>S</sub> *ist* nach Hause *gegangen*  
 he.SG.NOM be.IND.PRS.3SG to house.M.DAT go.PP  
 'He<sub>S</sub> *has gone* home' (perfect)

10b) Das Geschäft<sub>P</sub> *ist* schon seit einer Stunde *geöffnet*  
 DEF.N.NOM shop.N.NOM be.IND.PRS.3SG already since one.F.DAT hour.F.DAT open.PP  
 'The shop<sub>P</sub> *has been* already *opened* since one hour' (stative passive)

[Zaima (ed.) (2003:1105)]

In these languages, the 'be + p.p.' construction has two functions: the one, in (9a) and (10a), is the auxiliary verb of *the perfect aspect* with some intransitive verbs, especially denoting actions of movement, changing, appearance, etc., while others take the *have* verb as the auxiliary; the other, (9b) and (10b) is *the (stative) passive* marker.

Has Irish also these usages of the auxiliary? Even so, in Irish, they are overlapped to some degree so that the ambiguity arises (as the pair of translations in (6') shows), while in other languages like French, Italian, German, etc. they are clearly separated according to the verb type.

At least, it is very problematic that Ó Siadhail (1989) calls this construction *the perfective passive aspect*.

Then, how is the second one – the explanation of *the ergativity*?

Taking intransitive examples like (2) into consideration, this is more likely to be the case. However, on patientless examples like (6) below (already mentioned), which are still problematic, Noonan (1994) does not mention to it, nor cite any example.

- 6) *D'ith*  $\underline{sé}_A$  ( $\underline{é}_P$ )  $\longrightarrow$  6') *Tá*  $\underline{sé}_{A/P}$  *ite*  
 eat.PST he.SG.CNJTV (he.SG.DSJTIV) be.PRS he.SG.CNJTV eat.PP  
 'He<sub>A</sub> *has eaten* ( $\underline{it}_P$ )' 'It<sub>P</sub> *is eaten* (by  $\emptyset_A$ ) / He<sub>A</sub> *has eaten* ( $\emptyset_P$ )'  
 [Changed partly from Ó Siadhail (1989: 300)]

Both two interpretations seem to have a problem.

Even when the *patient* is deleted from the surface structure as in (6), I think that the grammatical subject *sé* 'he' will remain an *agent*, so that the whole clause remains a *transitive* clause in the underlying structure. And, transforming (6) into (6'), is not the *agent* to be deleted or demoted? Even more, does such an example truly exist?

In order to consider by which analysis the Irish 'be + p.p.' construction can be explained more properly, I will carry out the research in the next section.

### 3. Research

#### 3.1. Methodology

This time, I use the corpus available on the Internet *Nua-Chorpas na hÉireann* (The New Corpus for Ireland), which contains 30 million words (no further information cannot be found because of the dead link).

The data I used here are limited only to the texts written *by native speakers* and *originally in Irish* (i.e. not by translation). Concerning dialectal variations, there is no option of *Standard*, so that some dialects are included.

Using this online corpus, I have searched the following two *p.p.* forms *ite* 'eaten' (< *ith* 'eat') and *ólta* 'drunk' (< *ól* 'drink'), in order to observe the situation surrounding examples such as (6). From the data retrieved, I have extracted those examples where the substantial verb *bí* 'be' appears in the finite form (i.e. the verbal noun is excluded).

After that, I have categorised them according to their constructions: *whether or not agentive prepositional phrases were used* and *what kind of nouns appeared in the subject position*.

Then, I will give the data retrieved from this research in the following section.

#### 3.2. Result

Table 2 below presents the frequency concerning the co-occurrence with prepositional agent phrases:

Table 2: The co-occurrence with agentive prepositional phrases

	<i>ite</i> ‘eaten’	<i>ólta</i> ‘drunk’	total
with AGT	145	186	331
without AGT	38	12	50
total	183	198	381

As a result, the great majority of examples show co-occurrence with prepositional agent phrases (and this tendency is much stronger in *ólta* ‘drunk’).

In addition, I have classified these prepositional agent phrases according to the person and the number, as following Table 3:

Table 3: The person and the number of prepositional agent phrases

	<i>ite</i> ‘eaten’			<i>ólta</i> ‘drunk’			total		
	SG	PL	total	SG	PL	total	SG	PL	total
1ST	<b>21</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>81</b>
2ND	6	0	6	10	0	10	16	0	16
3RD	64	43	107	86	41	127	150	84	234
total	91	54	145	131	55	186	222	109	331

As you can see, the use of the first person is quite often, 22.1% for *ite* ‘eaten’ and 26.3% for *ólta* ‘drunk’, 24.5% as a whole. This frequency of the first person may reflect the true function of the ‘be + p.p.’ construction in Irish, i.e. it may not be the *passive perfective aspect*, but the *ergative* (however, a further study on the frequency of the person in the passive construction is required).

Table 4 below presents the categorisation of nouns appeared in the grammatical subject position. Here, ‘food / drink’ includes some concrete food to eat or beverage to drink, like *arán* ‘bread’, *tae* ‘tea’, *bricfeasta* ‘breakfast’ etc., and ‘quantity’ includes some terms which can be used a unit to measure the quantity of food or beverage, like *dóthain* ‘enough (noun)’, *braon* ‘drop’ or, even as a concrete item like *buidéal* ‘bottle’, etc. In the final column, ‘others’ include some examples difficult to classify, which are not considered in this paper.

Table 4: Categorisation of nouns in the subject position

	<i>ite</i> 'eaten'	<i>ólta</i> 'drunk'	total
food / drink	71	27	98
quantity	60	141	201
human	0	2	2
pronoun	34	11	45
no subject	10	8	18
others	8	9	17
total	183	198	381

Here, there is a gap between the two verbs: for *ite* 'eaten', the most frequent one is 'food / drink' and the second is 'quantity'; in contrast, for *ólta* 'drunk', they are reversed, and furthermore, there is a quite strong tendency toward 'quantity'. They two, however, can be seen as the patient in clauses concerned here (but note that this classification seems to be a little doubtful for its difficulty of judgement).

Now, I would like to consider the data in detail in the next section.

### 3.3. Consideration

In the following part, the English translation is responsible to me, in which I use the English 'have + been + p.p.' (*perfect passive*) construction for convenience.

#### i) 'food / drink'

In (11) and (12) you can see the grammatical subject as concrete entities to eat or to drink:

- 11) Nuair a *bhí* an príomhbhéile<sub>P</sub> *ite*, tháinig an  
 when REL.DIR be.PST DEF.M.NOM main\_meal.M.NOM eat.PP come.PST DEF.F.NOM  
 mhilseog.  
 dessert.F.NOM

'[ When the main meal<sub>P</sub> *had been eaten*, ] the dessert came'

- 12) agus nuair a *bhí* an tae<sub>P</sub> *ólta*<sub>P</sub> *acu*<sub>A</sub> tháinig  
 and when REL.DIR be.PST DEF.M.NOM tea.M.NOM drink.PP at+they.PL come.PST  
 beirt fhear thart le huisce beatha,  
 two\_people.F.NOM man.PL.GEN over with water.M.NOM life.F.GEN

'and [ when the tea<sub>P</sub> *had been drunk* by them<sub>A</sub> ] two men came over with whiskey,'

These examples have not any (or at least, few) problems. Grammatical subjects appeared in

such clauses can easily identified as a *patient*, even though there is no overt agent like (11), because *the main meal* or *the tea* does not eat or drink something by itself. 71 / 183 (38.8%) of the examples for *ite* ‘eaten’ and 27 / 198 (13.6%) for *ólta* ‘drunk’, and 98 / 381 (25.7%) as a whole in my corpus have such a semantic feature, (i) ‘**food / drink**’.

ii) ‘**quantity**’

In the following examples (13) and (14), the grammatical subjects as ‘quantity’ are found:

- 13) Nuair a **bhí** a ndóthain <sub>P</sub> **ite** acu <sub>A</sub> agus iad  
 when REL.DIR be.PST their.POSS sufficiency.F.NOM eat.PP at+they.PL and they.PL.DSJT  
 luite ansúd ar an easair,  
 lie.PP yonder on DEF.F.NOM bedding.F.NOM  
 ‘[ When their sufficiency <sub>P</sub> **had been eaten** by them <sub>A</sub> ] and they had lied yonder on the bedding’

- 14) Níl a fhios agam cá mhéad deochanna <sub>P</sub>  
 NEG+be.PRS his.POSS knowledge.M.NOM at+I.SG what+his.POSS many.M.NOM drink.PL.NOM  
 a bhí ólta agam <sub>A</sub>; <sup>16</sup>  
 REL.DIR be.PST drink.PP at+I.SG  
 ‘I don’t know [ how much drink <sub>P</sub> **had been drunk** by me <sub>A</sub> ]’

These examples also have not any problems to analyse. This is, again, because *their sufficiency* or *the unknown quantity of drink* does not eat or drink something by itself. 60 / 183 (32.8%) of the examples for *ite* ‘eaten’ and 141 / 198 (71.2%) for *ólta* ‘drunk’, and 201 / 381 (52.8%) as a whole in my corpus have such a semantic feature, (ii) ‘**quantity**’. The inequality of occurrence between the two verbs may reflect the pragmatic situation surrounding them: it seems to be more likely to say, ‘I have *drunk* too much’ than to say ‘I have *eaten* too much’, or something.

Both (i) and (ii) above are normally understood as a patient (possibly with few exception, of course). Unifying these two types, 131 / 183 (71.6%) of the examples for *ite* ‘eaten’, 168 / 198 (84.8%) for *ólta* ‘drunk’ and 299 / 381 (78.5%) as a whole, are found in this survey. It is found that the verb-after position (= the grammatical subject) of the ‘be + p.p.’ construction is very likely to be filled with a *patient*.

<sup>16</sup> In Irish, the interrogative pronoun has to be placed in the beginning and requires, whether the question is *direct* or *indirect*, the *relative* clause construction which is realised by a relative particle before a verb:

i) Cá mhéad míle a shiúil tú?  
 what+his.POSS many.M.NOM mile.M.NOM REL.DIR walk.PST thou.SG.CNJTV  
 ‘How many miles did you walk?’

[An example from Ó Dónaill (1977), ‘cá’]

Regarding the use where the patient of the 'be + p.p.' construction is a **(ii) 'quantity'**, Ó Sé (1992) gives us a remarkable explanation, with the following examples from an advertisement of Radio about a landrover for sale (= *sí* 'she' in the examples) (15) and a plain expression corresponding to it (16):

15) *Tá* seachtó míle míle<sub>P</sub> *déanta* aici<sub>A</sub>  
 be.PRS seventy thousand.M.NOM mile.M.NOM do.PP at+she.SG  
 'She<sub>A</sub> *has done* seventy thousand miles<sub>P</sub>'

16) *Rinne* sí<sub>A</sub> seachtó míle míle<sub>P</sub>  
 do.PST she.SG.CNJV seventy thousand.M.NOM mile.M.NOM  
 'She<sub>A</sub> *did* seventy thousand miles<sub>P</sub>'

[Ó Sé (1992: 59)]

This conveys that the vehicle has accumulated the mileage in question and continues to run normally. The past tense (16) would be more suitable for referring to a vehicle which was no longer being driven (...)

This is much the same contrast as that between the (resultative) perfect and past tense in English; the perfect expresses the continuing relevance of a previous event or action.

[Ó Sé (1992: 59); the number is changed by me]

The continuing relevance discussed here is to be considered in the future, but a patient categorised as **(ii) 'quantity'** in this paper should have something to do with the explanation of Ó Sé (1992). This time, at least, it is found that nouns of 'quantity' are preferable as the grammatical subject of this construction.

### iii) 'human'

There are only two examples where the grammatical subject is apparently categorised as 'human', as following:

17) Is minic a bhí an t-ádh ar an  
 be.COP.PRS.REL.DIR often REL.DIR be.PST DEF.M.NOM luck.M.NOM on DEF.M.NOM  
bhfean<sub>A/P</sub> a *bhí ólta*.  
 man.M.NOM REL.DIR be.PST drink.PP  
 'It is often [that the man<sub>A</sub> who *had drunk* ] had the luck' /  
 ?? 'It is often [that the man<sub>P</sub> who *had been drunk* ] had the luck'

- 18) Duine<sub>A/P</sub> nach *bhfuil ólta* tá sé ar a chiall.  
 person.M.NOM REL.DIR.NEG be.PRS drink.PP be.PRS he.SG.CNJTV on his.POSS sense.F.NOM  
 ‘[ A person<sub>A</sub> who *has not drunk* ] he is in his sense’ /  
 ?? ‘[ A person<sub>P</sub> who *has not been drunk* ] he is in his sense’

In these examples, there is no overt agent and the grammatical subjects (*ar an bhfear* ‘(on) the man’ in (17) and *duine* (18) appear, both of which are placed in superordinate clauses as antecedents. Superficially, it is quite difficult to predict their semantic roles, however, a situation like ‘someone is drunk by something’ is very bizarre (of course, such a context can be made, e.g. as a metaphor), so these two, normally, can be understood as an agent of each examples, without ambiguity.

More simply, in these two examples, the past participle *ólta* ‘drunk’ seems to function as an adjective derived from the verb *ól* ‘drink’, which is similar to that of English. In addition to that, there is no example of *ith* ‘eaten’. These situations may suggest that a human subject is not permitted in the ‘be + p.p’ construction in Irish (on which, however, further studies are to be done).

Concerning these (i) - (iii) above, it can be predicted whether they are an agent or a patient, according to their status of animacy. The function of the next one, however, cannot be easily identified.

#### iv.) ‘pronoun’

Here I will argue some cases where the pronoun appears in the subject position. In these cases, a sort of ambiguity may arise, as following:

- 19) (...) nuair a chuaigh mé á lorg an lá  
 when REL.DIR go.PST I.SG.CNJTV to+his.POSS trace.M.NOM DEF.M.NOM day.M.NOM  
 eile *bhí* sé<sub>P</sub> *ite* ag na lucha<sub>A</sub>  
 other.M.NOM be.PST he.SG.CNJTV eat.PP at DEF.PL.NOM mouse.PL.NOM

‘(...) when I went to look for it the other day [ it<sub>P</sub> *had been eaten* by the mice<sub>A</sub> ]’

- 20) D’fhéadfadh sé a bheith contráilte go leor nuair a  
 can.COND he.SG.CNJTV his.POSS being.VN wrong PART plenty when REL.DIR  
*bheadh* sé<sub>A/P</sub> *ólta*  
 be.COND he.SG.CNJTV drink.PP

‘He could be wrong enough [ when he<sub>A</sub> *would have drunk* ]’ /

?? ‘He could be wrong enough [ when it<sub>P</sub> *would have been drunk* ]’

Pronouns have no distinction between animate / inanimate reference in Irish (cf. *he/she* vs. *it* in English), and it is difficult to predict their semantic role, an *agent* or a *patient*. In (19), however, the





analysed as the passive construction (and for intransitive examples like (2), my explanation may be adapted).

The cases of (v) 'no subject', like (6'c), however, seem to clearly show the characteristic of the *ergativity*, and if this is the ergative construction, it can be easily applied to intransitive clauses. In this paper I have not taken it into consideration in detail, but the frequency of the first person agent may also reflect its function of *ergativity*.

However, even if there are few, but some examples with an agent in its grammatical subject position like (6'b) do exist, some of which are presented in this paper as (iii) 'human' and (iv) 'pronoun'. So, in some cases, verbs like *ith* 'eat' or *ól* 'drink' would become *completely intransitive*, and the syntactic process could be applied to them. This is to be researched even more in the future.

6'b) *Tá*      sé<sub>A</sub>            *ite*  
 be.PRS   he.SG.CNJTV   eat.PP  
 'He<sub>A</sub> *has eaten* (∅<sub>P</sub>)'

6'c) *Tá*      ∅<sub>P</sub>            *ite*      aige<sub>A</sub>  
 be.PRS   he.SG.CNJTV   eat.PP   at+he.SG  
 'He<sub>A</sub> *has eaten* (∅<sub>P</sub>)'

[Changed partly from Ó Siadhail (1989: 300)]

#### 4. For Further Studies

This time, I limited the data to texts by native speakers and originally written in Irish, but I do not take dialectal variations into consideration (which can be selected in the corpus). It is pointed out that there are quite different varieties among each dialect.

At this point, the website *Gramadach na Gaeilge* (The Grammar of the Irish) describes: 'With verbs which can be used transitively and intransitively, (in Munster) only 'ag + agent' can appear as well, and the grammatical subject drops (my translation)'. Here, it is also pointed out that, in Connacht, examples like (6'b) exist. If so, I would like to consider the dialectal variations more in detail and to make a unified conclusion concerning the 'be + p.p.' construction in Irish.

It will be needed to understand the situation surrounding dialects, somewhat a dialectal continuum including Scottish Gaelic, to achieve an academic success.

### Abbreviations

3	3rd person	DSJTV	disjunctive	PART	particle
-	morpheme boundary	F	feminine	PST	past
+	fusion	FUT	future	PL	plural
CNJTV	conjunctive	GEN	genitive	POSS	possessive
COND	conditional	IND	indicative	PP	past participle
COP	copula	M	masculine	PRS	present
DAT	dative	N	neuter	REL	relative
DEF	definite	NEG	negative	SG	singular
DIR	direct	NOM	nominative	VN	verbal noun

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## アイルランド語における「be+過去分詞」構文について

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本稿では、アイルランド語(インド＝ヨーロッパ語族ケルト語派ゲール諸語)における「be+過去分詞」という構文について考察をおこなった。

この構文は一見すると受動文のようにも見えるが、他動詞だけでなく、自動詞から作ることも出来る。どちらの場合も完了アスペクトを表すようであるが、他動詞では統語的な項表示が変化するのに対し、自動詞ではそうした変化が見られない。

この構文の解釈については諸説ある。例えば Ó Siadhail (1989)などは「完了受動」と呼んでいるが、Noonan (1994)などは「能格構文」としてしている。

前者の解釈を取った場合、「be+過去分詞」という1つの構文が「完了受動(他動詞)」と「完了(自動詞)」という2つの機能を持つことになる。ただしそのこと自体は奇妙なことではなく、例えばフランス語やドイツ語では「be+過去分詞」という構文が動詞の自他などに応じて2つの機能を持っている。

後者の解釈を取った場合、「be+過去分詞」が自動詞にも他動詞にも用いられるという点を簡潔に記述することができ、また他動詞の場合に起こる項の昇格・降格についても説明することが可能である。

とはいえどちらの解釈も研究が不十分であるため、本稿ではインターネット上で公開されているコーパスを用いて、この構文が現実にどのように使用されているのかを調査した。

その結果、先行研究で挙げられていない形である、他動詞を用いて「被動作主を表す文法的な主語が現れず、動作主を表す前置詞句のみが現れる例」が見出された。アイルランド語において、他動詞文の被動作主がしばしば省略されることは Ó Siadhail (1989)が指摘しており、この形はそれに対応する「be+過去分詞」構文であると考えられる。また、この形の存在から、アイルランド語における「be+過去分詞」構文が「完了受動」ではなく、「能格項文」の性格を持っているということ結論付けた。