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VARIA I

The use of an overt subject with a third-person verb + *nota augens*¹

In his paper on animacy hierarchy and the distribution of the *notae augentes* in Old Irish, Griffith provides a very detailed survey and selection of examples of these emphasisers from Old Irish sources. Among his conclusions is the statement that ‘... a *nota* may never appear as subject agreement on a verb when an overt subject is present ...’ (Griffith 2008, 67). In this short contribution to the subject I would like to draw attention to an exception to this statement. To illustrate his argument, Griffith uses the example **ad-cí-som dúa in mnaí* ‘God sees the woman’, noting that such a sentence is impossible in Old Irish. In this hypothetical example, the third-person masc. *nota* is in subject agreement with the verb and is also followed by the nom. sg. masc. *dúa*, that is, the overt subject. I have collected several examples from Early Irish texts whereby a third-person verb + *nota augens* is followed by an overt subject. More specifically, the overt subject is always a proper name which is highlighted by a preceding article + deictic particle *í*.² It will be suggested that the use of such an overt subject can serve as an ‘after-thought’ in apposition to the *nota* or can provide additional elaboration on the emphasis expressed by the *nota*.³ Therefore, this construction represents a special exception or qualification to Griffith’s rule.

For clarity I have highlighted in bold face in the examples below the third-person verb + *nota augens* and the overt subject.

In examples (1) to (3), the overt subject immediately follows the third-person verb + *nota augens*:

- (1) *Fecht n-and didiu **baí-seom int-í Noísi** a óenur for dóe inna rrátha .i. inna Emna, oc andord*, ‘On one occasion, then, the aforementioned Noisiu was alone on the rampart of the earthwork (that is, of Emain) singing in a tenor (?) voice’, *Longes mac nUisleinn* (ed. Hull 1949; henceforth *LMU*), §8, l. 100, p. 45, trans. p. 63.⁴
- (2) *Fecht and didiu **do-lluid-sem, intí Cet**, sair for creich co tuc táin mbó a Feraib Rois*, ‘Once, he, the aforementioned Cet, went eastwards upon a plundering expedition and he took a drove of

¹ I am deeply grateful to Damian McManus for discussing the contents of this *varium* with me. I am also indebted to Dr Jürgen Uhlich and Dr Mícheál Hoyne for their comments and suggestions on an earlier draft. I am solely responsible for any remaining errors or shortcomings that might remain.

² For an instance of a proper name without a preceding article + *í*, Liam Breatnach has kindly provided me with the following example from the version of the Life of Patrick in the *Leabhar Breac*, p. 28a15: *Doratsam immurro Cillíne fáilte dó*, Trip. ii 468.1. As the corresponding passage from the *Vita Tripartita* edited by Mulchrone has *Durat im- Cillíne fáilti dóu*, Trip.2, 2180f.), Breatnach suggests that the *nota* in the *Leabhar Breac* is best explained as simply an error.

³ For a discussion of the term ‘after-thought’, see Givón (1976, 154).

⁴ Hull (1949, 29, 30) suggested that, although the archetype of *LMU* was composed in the Old Irish period, the text was subsequently revised ‘at the very end of the Old Irish period or shortly thereafter’.

cows from the territory of the Fir Rois’, *Aided Chonchobair* (ed. Kobel 2015; henceforth *AC*), §5, p. 219, trans. p. 222.⁵

- (3) *Is and as-bert-som inti Cano, Scéla Cano meic Gartnáin* (ed. Binchy 1963; henceforth *SCano*), §11, l. 189,⁶ ‘Then he, the aforementioned Cano, said’ (my translation).

In examples (4) to (6), the overt subject is separated syntactically from the third-person verb + *nota augens* either by a phrase or clause (underlined in the examples below):

- (4) *A mboī-seom didiu a oínur int-í Noísi i-mmaig . . .* ‘While, therefore, the aforesaid Noisiu was alone outside . . .’, *LMU* §9, l. 109, p.46, trans. p. 63.⁷
- (5) *Dolluid-seom tra do gíallad fri claideb do Diarmait inti Gúari*, ‘Then Guaire went to make submission to Diarmait at the sword(’s point)’, *Cath Cairn Chonaill* (ed. Stokes 1901; henceforth *CCC*), §22, pp 212–13.⁸
- (6) *Luid-seom iarom inti Gúari do áenuch Talten arcend Diarmata*, ‘Then Guaire went to the Assembly of Tailtiu to meet Diarmait’, *CCC* §29, pp 216–17.

The postponement of the overt subject until the end of the sentence in examples (4) to (6) supports the argument that this construction serves as an explanatory ‘after-thought’ and does not conflict with the use of a *nota augens*. A parallel is found in *Echtrae Chonnlai*, albeit with no *nota augens*: *A llaa ba lán a mmí, boí for láim a athar hi Maig Arcommin inti Connle* ‘The day their month was up (lit. full) the aforesaid Connlae was at his father’s side (lit. on his father’s hand) in the plain of Arcommin’, *Echtrae Chonnlai* (ed. McCone 2000; henceforth *EC*), §9, p. 164–5.⁹ The overt subject *inti Connle* is separated from *boí* and functions as an explanatory ‘after-thought’.

In all of the above examples, the third-person verb + *nota augens* is found with an overt subject of the type article + deictic particle + proper name. This results in the double-marking of the subject, that is, the overt subject stands in apposition to the verb and what amounts to a proleptic *nota*.

⁵ I provide the reading and translation from my PhD thesis, which is a critical edition of *Aided Chonchobair (AC)*, rather than from Kuno Meyer’s diplomatic edition in *The Death-Tales of the Ulster Heroes* (1906). Version A of *AC* is datable to the latter half of the Classical Old Irish period or early Middle Irish period (see Kobel 2015, 86).

⁶ This tale survives in YBL only (cols 786–94). Binchy (1963, xii) writes that the text ‘is a conflation of old and later material made during the Mid. Ir. period’. He further adds ‘basically the language of [the text], prose and verse alike, is Old Irish, but it is not earlier than the second half of the ninth century’.

⁷ I am grateful to Damian McManus for this example.

⁸ Mac Eoin (1989, 170) dates the prose passages of *CCC* to c. 900.

⁹ I am grateful to Jürgen Uhlich for bringing this example to my attention. McCone (2000, 41) dates the archetype of *EC* to the eighth, or possibly ninth, century. For a more detailed discussion of the dating of *EC*, see McCone (2000, 29–43).

A comparable construction can perhaps be found in the double-marking of objects in Old and Middle Irish, with an infixed pronoun and overt object, for example, *ni-s-toirchi in muicc fon indas sin* ‘Du bekommst das Schwein nicht auf diese Weise’.¹⁰ In this sentence, the pig is signified by both an object infixed pronoun and an overt object, that is, by *-s-* and *in muicc* (acc. sg.).

It is odd to find this type of overt subject in use with a third-person verb + *nota*, when a third-person verb + *nota* or *int-í* + proper name construction would be expected.¹¹ It is not feasible to take the overt subject of the type article + deictic particle + proper name as an incorporated explanatory gloss, given the number of examples collected. The question arises, therefore, as to what purpose or function this specific overt subject has. If the overt subject is omitted in the examples above, the use of the *nota* alone gives little clue as to who the referent is within the individual narrative setting. It appears, therefore, that article + *í* + proper name is added for clarity.¹²

In order to understand better the function of the construction under discussion, and any pragmatic effect it may have, I will now examine the narrative context in which these examples are located.

In *LMU*, Deirdriu describes the physical attributes she desires in her perfect lover, to which Leborcham replies: *Atá is 'taig it arrad .i. Noísi mac Usnig*, ‘He is inside near to you, even Noísiu son of Uisliu’, whereupon Deirdriu replies that she must meet him. A new episode begins then with Noísiu depicted singing on the rampart (see (1) above), after which follows a narrative description of the sons of Uisliu. The use of *int-íNoísi* serves to highlight Noísiu as the main topic of discourse in this new episode and sets him apart from his brothers.

The sentence taken from version A of *AC* (see (2) above) represents an episode that takes place outside of the current narrative setting of the tale, when Cet mac Mágach goes on a cattle-raid to the territory of Fir Rois. Cet is mentioned in the text immediately preceding this sentence.¹³ It seems that the author added *int-íCet* in parentheses,¹⁴ highlighting to the reader/

¹⁰ Thurneysen (1936, §9, 8). Lucht (1994, 84–7) has collected numerous examples from the Glosses in which the overt object follows the verb + inf. pron., as well as examples in which the overt object is separated from the verb + inf. pron. by a word or clause, similar to examples (4) to (6) here, for instance, . . . *air nisluindi dies hic aimsir deirb* ‘. . . for here *dies* does not express a certain time’, Sg. 66b18. I am grateful to Mícheál Hoyne for pointing out this comparable construction.

¹¹ The article + deictic particle preceding a proper name is a feature found frequently in Old Irish (cf. *GOI* §474.2).

¹² For the use of *.i.* to identify a person already referred to in a pronoun or pronominal, see Ó Cathasaigh (1985, 127).

¹³ *Cach cath 7 cach irgal no bíd do Chonnachtaib fri Ultu, do-bered Cet a n-inchinn inna chris dúis in tetaised écht n-amrae di Ulaib do marbad de*, ‘Every battle and every combat which the men of Connacht had with the Ulstermen, Cet used to carry the brain in his girdle to see whether he could accomplish killing a famous warrior of the Ulstermen with it’, 4e–f (Kobel 2015, 219).

¹⁴ I use the term parentheses here meaning an explanatory aside, or an ‘after-thought’, which was added by the author. This example is similar to the analogy given by Givón (1976, 154): ‘He lived in África, the wizard did’.

audience that Cet is specifically in question here, rather than any other person. Thus, the overt subject aims in this instance to bring further attention to the discourse topic.

In *SCano*, Díarmait advises Cano to go to court to seek protection, after which Cano recites a verse (see (3) above). The overt subject *intí Cano* following *as-bert-som* ‘he said’ in this instance clarifies to the reader/audience that it is Cano who uttered the verse and not Díarmait.

Once again in *LMU* (example (4)), Nóisiu is brought back into focus in the text after the description of the sons of Uisliu. In this instance, *int-í Nóisi* is found separated from the third-person verb + *nota*.

Two examples of this type of overt subject are found in *CCC*. In the text preceding example (5), Gúaire’s servant prepares him a salmon to eat and Gúaire recites a verse thanking God for his food.¹⁵ Then he goes to submit to Díarmait (see (5) above). The overt subject *intí Gúari* is found at the end of this sentence, separated syntactically from *dolluid-seom* ‘he went’. Without this specific overt subject, *dolluid-seom* is ambiguous and ‘he went’ could also refer to the servant. Therefore, *intí Gúari* is in parentheses and serves to highlight the appropriate character.

In example (6), the overt subject is used to bring Gúaire back into focus after Sinech Cró’s recital of a praise poem to Díarmait.¹⁶

In conclusion, the attested examples above show that an overt subject of the type article + *í* + proper name following a third-person verb + subject referent *nota* serves typically as an explanatory ‘after-thought’ and does not conflict with the *nota augens* itself. I have not found any examples where this construction is used to refer to a new discourse topic.

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¹⁵ Stokes (1906, 212 §21).

¹⁶ Stokes (1906, 216 §28).

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