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Celtic influence and genitive resumptives

A b s t r a c t : This paper deals with resumptive pronouns in the genitive case in relative clauses and the influence that might be exerted upon these structures by Celtic languages. It is claimed that some arguments put forward in favor of possible Celtic influence upon resumptives (Roma 2007) need re-examination and the Celtic hypothesis in resumption should be treated with reserve. Specifically, it will be shown that neither geographical, chronological nor syntactic factors point unambiguously to Celtic influence. Despite some apparent similarities in the relativization systems of Early English and Celtic such as the use of personal pronouns as resumptives we need more evidence to claim that Celtic affected the relative system in the history of English.

K e y w o r d s : resumption, genitive, Celtic languages

1. Introduction

Although the traditional view holds that Celtic influence, if it exists at all, is most noticeable in place names and river names (Kastovsky 1992, § 5.2.2) many scholars have long emphasized that it extends beyond the lexical level. For example, Preusler (1956) draws up a long list of Celtic morphosyntactic traits present in English. Among other things, he mentions the English progressive, *do* periphrasis, cleft sentences, preposition stranding or contact clauses. Recently, a number of those aspects have received a lot of attention and cogent reasons have been put forward to show a Celtic substratum in English. For instance, attrition of inflections, in particular the loss of gender and case, in Northern England can be attributed not only to Scandinavians but also to the British who shifted their language earlier in the northern parts than in the west (Tristram 2002; White 2002; Fischer 2011). Next, the northern subject rule, common only in Verb-initial languages such as Celtic, applied in the north not in the west (White 2002: 158–160). Similarly, the preservation of the dual paradigm of the verb *to be* in Old English may well be due to Celtic influence (Lutz 2009; Wischer 2010) just like the use of gerund (the OE *–ung* form),

used with or without a preposition in Celtic languages (Tristram 2002: 126; Poppe 2002; White, 2002: 161–164). The use of *and* as a temporal, concessive or causal subordinator (Ronan 2002; Vennemann, 2002: 305) and the use of cleft sentences to convey emphasis, typical in Verb-initial languages, might also have arisen in a language-contact situation (Ahlqvist 2002; Filppula 2009). Finally, various pronominal constructions have been explained by Celtic influence. Poppe (2009) notes a formal and functional identity between intensifiers and reflexive pronouns such as *myself*, typical of Celtic and English only in Europe. He also discusses the external possessor structure in Old and Middle English such as *him bræcon alle þe limes* 'him [they] broke all the limbs' (ChronE 1137), which can be translated as 'they broke all his limbs'. All these contributions suggest that Celtic contact in Old and Middle English was rather strong affecting syntax, not only lexicon.

This paper deals with yet another pronominal construction which, according to Preusler's (1956) list, could have been influenced by Celtic languages, namely, genitive resumptive pronouns in relative clauses. In what follows we will re-examine the linguistic evidence for possible Celtic influence upon English resumptive constructions given in the literature. It will be shown that the Celtic hypothesis must be treated with reserve despite some arguments in favor of it. Before we compare the resumptive strategy in both languages, we will briefly present the relativization systems in Celtic (Section 2) and in English (Section 3) in a diachronic perspective. Section 4 offers a critical evaluation of the arguments for Celtic influence upon English. Section 5 concludes the paper.

2. The genitive in relative clauses in Early Irish and Welsh

Let us first discuss the relativization of the genitive case in Celtic languages, which will be based on Roma (2007). As she notes, in Old and Middle Irish the genitive is marked only through nominal inflection because relativizers are not marked for the genitive. This is illustrated below:

(1) biit alaili and   rofinnatar <u>a</u>   pecthe resíu   docói grád forru
     be   other there know   their sins   before go   order on
     'There are others there whose sins are known before they are given any grade'
     (quorundam hominum (.i. ordinandorum) peccata manifesta sunt)
     Wb 29ᵃ28 [Old Irish], Roma (2007: 253)

(2) Bied bes<u>s</u> ngairit <u>a</u> ree   coícuit mblédna i mbith chee
     be   shall   short   his period fifty   year   in world here
     'He whose time shall be short shall be fifty years in this world'
     Murphy, Lyrics 39 [Middle Irish], Roma (2007: 254)

(3)   A rí   rímter flaithe
      o king count   prince
      'o King whose princes are numbered'
      Fél. Prol.286 [Old Irish], Roma (2007: 254)

In (1) the case of the relativized constituent is not marked on the relativizer, which is absent, but in the resumptive pronoun *a*. Similarly, in (2) the genitive is marked unambiguously on the personal pronoun *a*. However, relativization is additionally signalled by the relative ending *–s* on the copula *bess*. The resumptive pronoun *a* has no antecedent, which is quite common in Old Irish, as suggested by Roma (2007: 254) (see also Thurneysen 1946: § 496). As regards example (3), there is no clue as to the relative status of the clause; nor is there any overt resumptive element indicating the case of the relativized constituent. The language user has no indication that he has just encountered a relative clause. Therefore he has to rely on the inflections of the remaining elements to identify the grammatical roles of those constituents. In short, Irish structures which relativize the genitive case contain either a genitive resumptive pronoun (an adnominal case) or no relativizing elements because the relativizer cannot bear the genitive case.

As far as Welsh is concerned, Preusler (1956: 339), quoted by Poppe (2006), draws a parallelism between Early Welsh and Early English in structures with genitive resumptive pronouns:

> Das Kymrische verwendet statt des genitivs des relativs folgende fügung: *y weddw y lladwyd ei gwr yn y rhyfel* (= die witwe + relativ + man tötete ihren mann in dem krieg). Die fügung kommt schon ae. vor; Jespersen … zitiert Elene 161 *Se god þe þis his beacen wæs* etc.; sie verbreitet sich stark im Me., wo sie bis ins 15./16. jh. häufig ist; die volkssprache bewahrt die alte tradition bis heute. (Preusler 1956: 339, quoted by Poppe 2006: 194)

Interestingly, this construction was severely limited in Middle Welsh so that it is debatable if it is attested at all (Poppe 2006: 208). Resumptive pronouns were present in some contexts but normally as (in)direct objects (Evans, 1964: 63–64; Poppe 2006: 208). Since these are not genitive structures we will leave them aside.

Roma (2007: 261), however, does not seem to share Poppe's intuitions and considers resumptive genitive pronouns as a regular strategy present throughout the history of Welsh. She gives the following example from Middle Welsh:

(4)   Cledyf <u>a</u>   uo eur neu aryant ar <u>y</u>   aual
      sword which be gold or   silver on its pommel

'a sword on the pommel of which there is gold or silver'
LIB 98, 15–16 [Middle Welsh], Roma (2007: 261)

Notice that the relative clause in (4) is introduced by the relativizer *a*, which normally introduces direct (including the nominative and accusative) rather than indirect (including the genitive) relative clauses, which are introduced by *y* or its variant. It is *y* in the form of the possessive pronoun that realizes the resumptive function further in the sentence. However, when a genitive resumptive structure in Modern Welsh is quoted we have a typical situation where the proper relativizer *y* is used to introduce an indirect clause. Consider (5):

(5)   Hwn yw 'r   dyn   y̱   gyrraist ei gar
      this is the man who drove   his car
      'This is the man whose car you drove'
      [Modern Welsh], Roma (2007: 261)

This might suggest that typical genitive resumptives were rather hard to find in Middle Welsh. While Welsh restricted the use of (genitive) resumptives in the medieval period, English seemed to use them more and more frequently as noted by Preusler (1956: 339) in the quote above. Mustanoja (1960: 202) also suggests that genitive resumptive pronouns were rather frequent:

> A not infrequent construction in ME is *that* followed by a personal pronoun or a possessive … The personal pronoun and the possessive seem to be partly for emphasis, partly to indicate the case of the indeclinable relative pronoun. (Mustanoja 1960: 202)

This brief description of the genitive in relative clauses shows that these structures did not develop in the same way in Celtic languages. In Irish, the genitive was present already in the oldest texts and it was marked on the pronoun. In Welsh, by contrast, we can notice some fluctuations in the use of genitive resumptives. Also the genitive constructions were normally introduced by special relativizers.

3. The genitive in relative clauses in Early English

In this section we will briefly examine the relativization of the genitive case in Early English. As in Celtic languages, the realization of the genitive case in relative clauses could be overt or covert. In the latter case, obviously far less frequent, genitive relatives were always introduced by *þe* (see Filppula et al. 2008: §2.2.7 on contact clauses). The relativized material

could be either an argument, as shown in (6), or a non-complement genitive noun phrase, as shown in (7).

(6)   nolde   his onbyrian for þære biternysse. Þes gebiterode
       not-would his taste   for the   bitterness this embittered
       drenc hæfde
       drink had
       getacnunge his deaðes biternysse, ðe he ða   onbyride
       symbol   his death's bitterness   which he then tasted
       'He would not taste it for his bitterness. This embittered drink betokened the bitterness of his death which he then tasted'
       (Mitchell 1985: §2147)

(7)   of þæm mere þe   Truso standeð in staðe
       of the   sea   which Truso stand   on shore
       'from the sea on the shore of which Truso stands'
       (coorosiu,Or_1:1.16.32.311)

In (7) above, the lower NP (*the sea*) that appears within the higher NP (headed by *shore*) is relativized.

In a more common situation, the genitive was overtly marked either on an inflected relativizer, an unavailable option in Old Irish, or on a resumptive pronoun, common also in Early Irish and Welsh. The former case is presented in (8).

(8)   þonne ðu   ænig ðing begyte <u>þæs ðe</u> þu   wene þæt me licie
       then   you any   thing prepare which   you think that I   like
       'Then prepare for me any savoury food which I like'
       (cootest,Gen:27.4.1047)

Typical resumptive pronouns in the genitive are illustrated in (9, 10):

(9)   &   ðæra   mægða ealdras beoð mid inc   mid heora   hiredum,
       and of-the tribes   leaders are   with you-two with their   retinues
       ðe <u>ðis</u> synd heora naman: of   Rubene, Elisur, Sedeures sunu.
       who these are   their Names: from Reuben, Elizur, Shedeur's son
       'And the leaders of the tribes are with you two with their retinues, whose names are these: from Reuben, Elizur, the son of Shedeur'
       (cootest,Num:1.4.3948)

(10)   7   he bletsode Iosep hys sunu, 7   cwæþ : Drihten, þu   þe   mine
       and he blessed Joseph his   son   and said: Lord,   you who my

fæderas on <u>þinre</u> sihðe eodon, Abraham 7   Isaac; God, ðu   þe
fathers on your sight walked Abraham and Isaac God, you who
me feddest fram cyldhade oþ   ðysne dæg
me fed   from childhood until this   day
'And he blessed Joseph, his son, and said: Lord, you in whose sight my
fathers, Abraham and Isaac, walked. God, you who have fed me from my
childhood until today.'
(cootest,Gen:48.15.2127)

In both cases the relative clauses are introduced by the uninflected *þe*. Note
that possession could also be located within the prepositional phrase, as shown
in (10). Additionally, resumptive pronouns could be used with inflected relativ-
izers, an unavailable option in Old Irish, since relativizers were not inflected
there. Consider (11, 12):

(11) Ðæt wolde ða openlicor æteawan seo godcunde arfæstnes, in hu
     That wished then openly manifest the divine goodness in how
     myclum wuldre se Dryhtnes wer Cuðbyrht æfter his deaðe lifde;
     great glory the Lord's man Cubyrht after his death lived
     <u>þæs</u>   <u>his</u> lif ær   ðam deaðe mid healicum tacnum heofenlicra
     of whom his life before the death with great signs of heavenly
     wundra openade & æteawde.
     miracles opened and manifested
     'The divine piety wished to manifest that openly in how great glory the
     man of od, Cuthbert, lived after his death, whose life before the death
     opened and manifested itself with great signs of heavenly miracles.'
     (cobede,Bede_4:31.374.15.3740)

(12) Hwæs onlicnesse hæfde Assael ða   buton <u>ðara ðe</u> <u>hiera</u>
     of-whose type   had Asahel those but whose their
     hatheortnes hie suiðe hrædlice on færspild gelæd?
     hastiness them very soon into destruction leads
     'Of whom was Asahel the type, but of those whose hastiness very soon
     draws them into destruction?'
     (cocura,CP:40.295.18.1951)

In (11) the relativizer *þæs* is followed by *his*, while in (12) the complex rela-
tive pronoun *ðara ðe* is accompanied by *hiera*. All these elements are overtly
marked for the genitive.

     To sum up, it is clear that the relative systems in English and Celtic were
similar to some extent since the relativized genitive material could be covert or
overt in both languages. However, in the case of overt realization, only genitive

resumptives should be compared as inflected relativizers were available only in English. This conclusion leads to the following question: since resumptive systems were similar, could they influence each other? Of course, a satisfactory answer should be multi-layered and include sociolinguistic or even extralinguistic factors. For lack of space in the next section we will review only some linguistic arguments produced by Roma (2007), who advocates Celtic influence upon English in the earlier periods. We will see that even language itself does not give a simple answer to the question above.

4. Celtic influence upon genitive resumptives

When discussing relativization strategies in Insular Celtic languages, Roma (2007) draws the following conclusion:

> One of the most likely candidates for Celtic influence on English […] is the analytic pattern with resumptive pronoun, which occurred alongside synthetic and non-case-marking strategies and was not very frequent except in some areas and in some contexts; that is to say, it was rather restricted geographically, chronologically and syntactically. (Roma 2007: 284)

A detailed analysis of genitive resumptives in English suggests that these structures did not seem to be constrained in a way mentioned by Roma (2007). First, the geographical factor implies that the analytic, that is, resumptive pattern spread in the course of the history of English, which might be indicative of its Celtic origin. According to Roma (2007: 267–271), structures with resumptive pronouns were restricted to some texts only. More precisely, they were frequent in *King Alfred's Orosius*, *Gregory's Cura Pastoralis* in the 9th century and in *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*. Later, as she argues, similar constructions could be found in *The Blicking Homilies* and *Anglo-Saxon Charters* but they declined around the 12th century.

Her arguments are based on secondary sources (mainly Bourcier 1977) and no statistics are provided. My corpus analysis does not show any significant geographical restrictions on the use of genitive resumptives. Apart from the texts Roma mentions, we can find a number of resumptive constructions in *Gregory's Dialogues*, *Gospel of Nicodemus* or *Heptateuch*. Other texts such as *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies*, *Vercelli Homilies*, *West-Saxon Gospels*, *Benedictine Rule*, *Chrodegang of Metz Rule*, *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, *Ælfric's Letter to Wulfsige* and *Martyrology, III* also contain genitive resumptives. Of course, these structures will never be very common. In *The York-Toronto-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Old English Prose* (YCOE) their number normally does not exceed ten per

text. Nevertheless, their use suggests that resumptive genitives were one of the options available in relativization strategies. Additionally, Roma (2007) herself admits in a few places that some of these restrictions concern indirect rather than genitive relatives. For instance, she reports that resumption strategy with an indirect object is rare but "it can be found for genitives" (Roma 2007: 268).

A second point that Roma (2007) raises is the decline of the analytic strategy in the 12th century, though it does not seem to affect genitive resumptives because, as even admitted by Roma (2007: 267), it [the analytic strategy] "occurs for genitives." Mustanoja (1960 :202) treats resumptive constructions as "not uncommon" in Middle English, while Visser (1963–1973: §604) argues that the structure did not decline in Middle English but "pass[ed] into obsolescence after the first half of the eighteen century." Additionally, in Middle and Early Modern English new resumptive constructions appeared such as the so-called island resumption (Truswell 2011). All this suggests that it is very hard to assume any decline at the beginning of Middle English. On the contrary, resumptive structures flourished at that time.

Third, syntactically they were not restricted either, since they could be used with inflected relativizers, as evidenced by examples (11) and (12).

Roma (2007) makes another very interesting point as far as Celtic influence is concerned. She claims that Old English used personal not demonstrative pronouns in resumptive constructions in contrast to some other Germanic languages:

> The OE pattern corresponds to the Celtic one as a simple anaphoric personal pronoun is used to mark case rather than a demonstrative/relative one: in contrast to e.g. Middle Low German *de…des*, *de…dem* (Rösler, 2002: 53–57) OE used: *þe…his*, *þe…him* … etc. not **þe…þæs*, *þe…þæm* etc. Roma (2007: 271)

Two remarks are in order in this place. First, personal pronouns were not the only option in resumptive structures in the oblique cases. Demonstrative pronouns were also possible. Consider:

(13) Se   Drihten, se   ð<u>æs</u> setl ys on heofenum
     The Lord,   who his   saet is in heaven
     'The Lord, whose seat is in heaven'
     Ps.TH.10.4 [Bosworth and Toller], Allen (1977: 93)

(14) &   mid micle wundre, þætte se leg þurhæt   þa næglas
     and with great wonder though the fire through-consumed the nails
     in þæm þyrelum, þe   heo mid þæm to þæm timbre gefæstnad wæs,
     in the holes   which it with them to the timber fastened   was

'and, miraculously, though the fire broke through the holes of the nails wherewith it was fixed to the building'
(cobede,Bede_3:14.204.22.2081)

In (13), the genitive resumptive pronoun, *þæs*, is demonstrative. Similarly, in (14), the resumptive pronoun in the prepositional phrase is demonstrative rather than personal.

 Second, other Germanic languages could also use personal pronouns in resumptive constructions, though they were clearly limited. For example, while overt resumptive pronouns in Gothic relative clauses did not occur, they were attested in left-dislocation structures. Significantly, these resumptives could be personal pronouns as shown in (15), where *imma* serves as a resumptive pronoun:

(15) þishvammeh saei habaiþ gibada   <u>imma</u>
     to-whomever who has   is-given him
     'the man who has will be given more'
     Mar 4: 25 (adapted from Ferraresi, 2005: 132)

As a matter of fact, even Middle Low Saxon, which basically equals to Middle Low German quoted by Roma (2007) above, could use personal pronouns in the resumptive function. Consider the examples in (16–18):

(16) de gene, des   dat hûs   <u>sîn</u> is
     the one whose the house its is
     'the one whose house it is'
     Lübben (1882: 108)

(17) mit al den vaders, der   <u>er</u>   name gode is bekant
     with all the fathers whose their name good is known
     'with all the fathers (godfathers) whose name is well known'
     Lübben (1882: 108)

(18) ên backer, de <u>sîn</u> brôt to licht were
     a   baker who his bread too light was
     'a baker whose bread was too light'
     Lübben (1882: 108)

In the examples above the resumptive personal pronouns are used with inflected relativizers in the genitive (*des, der*) and in the nominative (*de*), a situation found in Old English as well (see examples 11 and 12).

5. Conclusions

This paper is not meant to reject the Celtic hypothesis altogether in the evo-
lution of resumptive constructions in English. There is indeed strong evidence
that Celtic impact upon syntactic structures in the Old and Middle English
period was very strong, comparable even to Scandinavian influence (Fischer
2011). However, the utmost caution must be exercised when handling the syn-
tactic influence because it is not always easy to pinpoint the exact scope and
result of this influence. It seems that neither geographical factors nor contextual
constraints nor uniqueness of Celtic and English resumptives can unambigu-
ously indicate that Celtic affected the relative system in English. Mere structural
similarity between resumptive structures in Early English and Celtic is not suf-
ficient to put forward such a claim. More evidence is needed in this respect.

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