

'Tis.... Pattern in Hiberno-English as a Grammatical Innovation

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Abstract

This paper highlights the *'tis...* pattern (e.g. *'Tis writing a letter he is*) in Southwest Hiberno-English (SwHE < HE). The *'tis...* pattern, despite the apparent resemblance to the *it*-cleft in general English, has a different information structure, and the discrepancy between the two can be explained by taking substratal Irish into account. HE has inherited grammatical opposition for mapping information structure into sentence forms from Irish and has imposed it into English morphosyntax. While the *it*-cleft in general English is a syntactic expression of focus, the *'tis...* pattern in HE is an outcome of the *'tis(~it is)* clause in which a salient constituent in the clause can be fronted. This paper describes properties of the *'tis....* pattern and discusses grammatical innovations that have taken place in HE.

1. Introduction

There is a group of language varieties referred to as creoles on one hand and as dialects of a European language on the other. Studies on the grammatical features that define a language as creole and the surrounding debates (e.g. DeGraff 2001, 2005, McWhorter 1998, 2005, Mufwene 1996, 2009, Bakker et al. 2011) are inspiring for students of language-contact phenomena, including the emergence and development of Hiberno-English (HE). HE is a language spoken in Ireland and is generally regarded as a local English dialect of the British Isles. It should be remembered, however, that HE would not exist if the imported or imposed English language had not been in contact with the native Irish language. This dual status, as an English dialect and as the outcome of language contact, makes HE an interesting subject not only in English studies but also in contact linguistics, especially in the general question of the status of creoles as a typological class.

An intriguing field of enquiry lies in the continuum from the varieties labelled as English-based (English-lexifier) creoles and those regarded as English dialects. Mufwene (2009), disputing the traditional opposition between, on the one hand, “native” Englishes and, on the other hand, indigenised Englishes and creoles, argues that English creoles are outcomes of the same restructuring process that can be found in the evolution of English everywhere and thus “there is nothing wrong with treating creoles as dialects of their lexifiers” (ibid:281). Mufwene assumes that any variety of English, regardless of the labels of “creoles” or “native Englishes”, underwent the same restructuring process. Similarities in linguistic features between English-based creoles and

indigenised varieties of English are discussed by Winford (2001, 2009) in the context of second language acquisition. Winford (2009) attempts to argue that in indigenised varieties such as Irish English and Singapore English and in English-lexicon creoles like Bajan, a Caribbean creole, there are basic similarities in the paths of development characteristics, shaped by the interaction of L1 knowledge and universals of language creation.¹ Finding interest in the “same restructuring process” and “basic similarities in the paths”, this paper focuses on HE and will investigate the contact-induced grammatical formation.

The paper is particularly concerned with language-particular strategies of expressing information structure in sentence forms in HE. The background to this investigation is that I have worked on the “cleft-like” *'tis....* pattern in HE (e.g. *'Tis lovely she is*) and reached the conclusion that this pattern, in spite of the similarities in appearance with *it*-cleft (It is X [focus] that Y) in mainstream English varieties including general British English, exhibits different distribution in semantics and pragmatics. However, there still remains a puzzling issue concerning how such discrepancies have arisen in varieties of HE. This paper attempts to address the question in terms of the contact-induced language change, in which grammatical innovations have occurred to result in the form of *'tis....*

2. Preliminaries

In general British English, both (1a) and (1b) are possible answers to the question “Who invited Mary?”

(1) Who invited Mary?

- a. It was Joe that invited her.
- b. JOE invited her.

In (1a), the focus is syntactically marked in the *it*-cleft construction, whereas in (1b), the canonical statement, it is prosodically marked by pitch accent (represented by the capitalisation of JOE). It is important to note, however, that if the sentence is not stated as an answer to the *wh*-question, but rather is found within a sequence of speech, we should assume that (1a) and (1b) denote incongruent information structures. This is obvious from the distributions of the two forms in natural speech: (1b) is more frequent than (1a) and unmarked.² The *it*-cleft construction expresses an identificational

¹ Winford's (2009) conclusion drawn from the comparison of tense/aspect categories in these varieties includes the neutral recognition that the different outcomes in tense/aspect categories among the listed languages is evidence of differences in the linguistic input as well as differences in social settings. Winford's (2001) study on Bajan suggests that a substrate influence from West African has resulted in the structural reanalysis and modification of mainly a southwestern English input. This may be compared with the case in southern varieties of HE.

² The occurrence of *it*-clefts in British English is, for example, as low as 752 in 1,435,000, according to Collins (1991), who uses the London-Lund Corpus, consisting of material with origins in various types of speech (totalling 435,000 words, 87 texts), and the Lancaster-Oslo/Bergen Corpus, composed of printed materials (totalling around a million words, 500 texts). The relative item of the 752 occurrences includes *that* (483 occurrences, 64.2%), *which*, *who*, *when*, \emptyset , and Prep+*which*. The proportion of the *it*-cleft's occurrence is 0.52% on a 10 words-per-sentence

focus that is considered new information with respect to a presupposition. Pitch accent, on the other hand, does not necessarily denote such a restricted focus. In other words, the semantic status of *Joe* is distinguishable in (1a) and (1b).

This distinction between the *it*-cleft and pitch accent as an expression of focus and of what I will refer to as salience is significant when clarifying what grammatical opposition for information-structuring is associated with sentence forms in various languages. This paper considers information-structuring in HE. I argue that an “*it*-cleft-like” pattern (i.e. the sentence construction that appears similar to the *it*-cleft; e.g. *'Tis lovely she is*) in HE does not have the same information structure as the *it*-cleft in general British English. While the *it*-cleft is a syntactic expression of focus, the HE pattern displaying an *it*-cleft-like appearance is an outcome of the *'tis(~it is)* clause in which a salient constituent is fronted. My claim, in short, is that HE is salience-sensitive; informational saliency determines not only prosodic presentations but also syntactic forms. This trait, which is likely to have been inherited from Irish, is involved in forming the cleft-like pattern in HE.

Substantial studies have investigated the English *it*-cleft, especially discussing the types into which they can be subcategorised. The types of clefts are generally discussed according to the type of information the cleaved constituent and the un-cleaved constituents refer to, namely new vs. old/known (Prince 1978, Declerck 1983, 1984, Collins 1991), and their semantic and syntactic differences (É. Kiss 1998). The discussion of these *it*-cleft varieties alerts us to a generalisation about the information structure of the English *it*-cleft. *It*-clefts include not only stress-focus clefts but also informative-presupposition clefts (Prince 1978). However, in fact, we can envisage the “typical” cleft as how clefts are most likely to be defined as a focusing construction, for example, as in Collins’ (1991:109-11) terminology, “unmarked cleft”. By the term “unmarked cleft”, Collins refers to the type in which X is new or contrastive while Y is given or inferable. Ball (1994), whose central concern is “marked cleft” or “informative cleft”, notes that the stress-focus *it*-cleft is considered basic and the informative-presupposition *it*-cleft is treated by many analysts as an exceptional type. Following these practices, in this paper, I restrict my definition of the *it*-cleft to only stress-focus clefts, the prototypical type.

In the cleft sentence *it is X that Y*, the constituent X is, syntactically, cleaved out of a more elementary clause to be given focus (Greenbaum 1996:175, Huddleston and Pullum 2002:1414); moreover, semantically, X expresses focus, which can be more precisely defined as “stressed focus” (Prince 1978) or “identificational focus” (É. Kiss 1998). The information structure of the *it*-cleft (1a) can be represented as in (1)’.³

(1)’ It was Joe that invited her.

Presupposition: ‘somebody (x) invited her’

Focus: Joe

basis.

³ See Lambrecht (1994, 2001), É. Kiss (1999), Jackendoff (1972), and Van Valin and LaPolla (1997).

Assertion: ‘x=Joe, i.e., of a set of relevant persons it is true of Joe and no one else that he invited her.’

The *it*-cleft in general British English is defined as the syntactic representation of identificational focus.

The purpose of this paper is to consider information-structuring in HE via the *it*-cleft-like pattern. This *it*-cleft-like pattern will be referred to as ‘*tis~it is* pattern’, or simply ‘*tis...* pattern’, in the later section (see §3). To begin, I compare “*it*-clefts” in HE to their counterparts in British English. I argue that the discrepancy in the behaviour between the *it*-cleft-like pattern in HE and the typical *it*-cleft can be attributed to the difference in the manner of expression of grammatical opposition concerning information structure. I further argue that these inconsistencies have arisen from language contact between Irish and English. Finally, this paper examines grammatical innovations that have taken place in HE of their own accord.

2.1. Focus and salience

Let us discuss the difference between salience and focus in order to address salience-sensitivity in HE. In addition to the observation assigned to (1), a similar example (2) is given, in which the informational status of *Mike* in (2a) and (2b) is not congruent or coherent. Note that (2a) and (2b) differ in acceptability.

(2) A: What happened?

B: a. Elsie met MIKE.

b. #It was Mike that Elsie met.

(2a), which has prosodic prominence on the constituent *Mike*, serves as an answer to the question *What happened?*, which entails the expectation that new information will be given to the interlocutor. The *it*-cleft sentence (2b), on the other hand, is infelicitous in response to this question. In the *it*-cleft, only *Mike* is focused on as a new piece of information vis-à-vis the presupposition that Elsie met somebody. This presupposition is not obtained when Speaker A asks *What happened?*, which is followed by B’s utterance. In (2a), the speaker is assumed to emphasise or highlight an element of a state of affairs; thus, a clause conveying new information includes a more salient constituent than any others in the clause.

(2)’ A: What happened?

B: a. Elsie met [_{SALIENCE} Mike].

b. #It was [_{FOCUS} Mike] that Elsie met.

I introduce SALIENCE to describe the uneven status of informational load which each constituent carries in the clause. Salience, by definition, is placed upon a more salient constituent in

the information that the clause expresses. It refers to informational saliency in the relative relationship of constituents within the clause.

(3) is another example that motivates the distinction between focus and saliency. Speaker B answers the question *Did you meet Mike?*

(3) A: Did you meet Mike?

B: a. Yes, I met Mike [_{SALIENCY} at the river bank].

b. #Yes, it was [_{FOCUS} at the river bank] that I met Mike.

In (3a), B is introducing a new piece of information about where she met Mike by including the phrase *at the river bank*.⁴ B chooses to offer this additional information which A may not necessarily require or expect. In contrast, the *it*-cleft construction (3b) does not provide an appropriate answer to A's question. The presupposition of the utterance by A to cast on B is that (s)he may have met or may not have met Mike. The *it*-cleft could occur in the condition where the new information is obligated to meet A's command based on the presupposition that she met Mike somewhere.

The observations regarding (2) and (3) maintain saliency as a discrete concept separate from focus.⁵ Saliency is optionally expressed by the speaker in order to transmit the information structure of the sentence and is realised in linguistic forms. That is, the speaker linguistically expresses the unequal status of elements in their mental picture of a certain state of affairs. A relatively heavier informational load is expressed in the manner of speech, such as through pitch accent on the salient constituent, or syntactically or lexically, for example, by fronting the constituent or adding a particle that marks saliency. If a particular constituent is more salient in terms of the informational value placed on it by the speaker, we can say that saliency lies on the constituent. In example (3a) "I met Mike [_{SALIENCY} at the river bank]", the speaker is likely to highlight the particular constituent *at the river bank* using pitch accent. In another case, the speaker might say *I met Mike at the river bank in the evening* with a higher pitch on *evening*, if he or she wanted to express the relatively greater value of the temporal information about the event that (s)he met Mike at the river bank in the evening.

In summary, (4) illustrates all logical possibilities for the statement "Elsie met Mike" in terms of saliency.

⁴ The constituent *at the river bank* might be regarded as focus, if this only refers to the old versus new information; however, the phrase *at the river bank* does not exhibit an equal informational status that the same phrase in the *it*-cleft construction does in (3b). We must see the presupposition that A's question implies.

⁵ Saliency, in other words relative informational saliency, may overlap with focus addressing the relationship with the presupposition, in the expressed meaning of the given constituent. The following is an example analogous to (1).

A: Where did you meet Mike?

B: (i) I met Mike [_{SALIENCY} at the river bank].

(ii) It was [_{FOCUS} at the river bank] that I met Mike.

In the example, (i), in which saliency is expressed by pitch accent, and (ii), which uses the *it*-cleft, are both acceptable. This might confuse saliency with focus, but they differ from each other as illustrated.

(4) (Response to the question *What happened?*)

Elsie met Mike. (Information value of all constituents is even)

[_{SALIENCE} Elsie] met Mike.

Elsie [_{SALIENCE} met] Mike.

Elsie met [_{SALIENCE} Mike].

Each of the four statements can answer the question *What happened?*; and each introduces new information. The speaker can choose to emphasize any constituent by increasing its salience.⁶ It is noted that salience does not depend on the presupposition in terms of the contrast between new and old information. In the sentence offered as new, speaker will mark salience on a constituent which (s)he finds important.

Thus far, I have introduced salience vis-à-vis focus. The following part of this paper argues that the *'tis...* pattern in HE, which on surface appears similar to the *it*-cleft in general British English, exhibits differences in its information structure. Salience is a useful concept to describe information-structuring in HE. HE's *'tis...* pattern, when contrasted with the *it*-cleft in general British English, sheds light on distinctive properties concerning how HE maps information structures onto sentence forms.

3. The *'tis...* pattern in Southwest Hiberno-English

In the study of HE, Markku Filppula (1986), among others, has conducted meticulous work on “clefting in HE” by using his own corpus of recorded interviews with elderly persons from four counties including Kerry.⁷ He has divided his collected examples into two main categories suggested by Prince (1978), “Stressed-focus (SF) clefts” and “Informative-presupposition (IP) clefts”. The examples of SF clefts are classified into the following sub-groups: “contrastive”, “specificational”, “confirmatory”, “reassertive” and “emphatic”; IP clefts are classified into “thematic scene”, “VP-specifying” and “Subject-specifying”. “In the SF clefts, the proposition expressed by the *that*-clause was presupposed, i.e., it represented information which was assumed to be given to the hearer”; in the IP clefts, on the other hand, the proposition expressed by the *that*-clause is new information to the hearer (ibid:93). Filppula presents (5) as an example of the

⁶ The word “salience” may remind one of Kuno’s (1978) “informational saliency”, which is used in explaining constraints in the omission or optionality of a phrase in a sentence. His theory is based on the cases in which the significance of constituents is uneven in default of the speaker’s intention. For example, different outcomes rise in the acceptability between (i) and (ii).

(i) A: Were you still a small boy in 1960? B: Yes, I was still a small boy.

(ii) A: Were you born in 1960? B: *Yes, I was born. (ibid:16)

In (ii), the phrase *in 1960* is more salient, because *was born* is old information, given that A is talking to someone living. In (i), on the other hand, *in 1960* is a topical adverbial which restricts the temporal reference; therefore it is optional and can be omitted in B’s answer. My use of salience is rather speaker’s-intension-oriented, while salience, like Kuno’s informational saliency, also refers to the relative relationship between constituents in a sentence.

⁷ Filppula’s recent paper on the development of *it*-clefting in English is noteworthy. He argues that “contacts with the Celtic languages provide the most plausible explanation for the development of this feature [*it*-clefting] of English” (2009:267). His argument implies that not only HE but also English has been under the Celtic influence for the rise of the *it*-cleft. This paper focuses on HE and discusses the Irish influence on English in Ireland.

contrastive SF cleft. He notes that in (5) the proposition expressed by the *that*-clause *they are speaking now* is inferable. (6) and (7) are examples of IP clefts.

(5) a: And did they speak English and Irish?

I: There's more spoke Irish one time. It have died away. Our language is dying away, since we got our own, independence. *It is more English they are speaking now.* [Kerry] (Filppula 1986:93, changed into my transcription)

(6) I: Raha over near Corofin there, between between, this like, and Corofin now near the chapel of Raha, there's supposed to be a monster there.

b: Any story about it?

I: A serpent. Well I don't know. *'Twas some saint or something put him into it.* [Clare] (Filppula 1986:93-94, changed into my transcription)

(7) He [i.e. Daniel O'Connell] went in to be a member of parliament couple o' times. 'Twas a member of parliament that time, not a T.D. And, *it is in Clare, County Clare, he was elected.* [Kerry] (Filppula 1999:246)

It is useful to describe HE *'tis(~it is)*... sentences under the division of SF clefts and IP clefts and compare them with general English *it*-clefts. We must be careful, however, to adopt the framework induced by the analysis of general English *it*-clefts since HE may employ a different system of sentence construction.⁸

My attempt in this paper is to suggest a uniform account that could capture language-particular properties of sentence construction in HE. Here the initial assumption is that if a linguist who has never spoken or learned any variety of English encounters HE for the first time for linguistic description, (s)he could find a better, or at least different, way of describing *'tis(~it is)*... and the things involved in light of the empirical data. The fundamental idea is that HE may have a separate system from general British English in terms of decoding information structure and the functions of grammatical components, and therefore, *it*-cleft-like patterns should not necessarily share the same description as the *it*-cleft. There should be a more economical and thus suitable description which allows for a uniform explanation for the HE data on its own.

For example, (5)-(7) raise my interest in the common functions of the component *'tis(~it is)* regardless of the SF and IP types and the presence/absence of informational prominence given in the minimal constituent following *'tis(~it is)*. These types can be located in a single continuity on the ground of the common function of the sentence components. The following description is aimed at

⁸ The following question is worth addressing: Is a sentence which is comprehensible in two varieties believed to be dialects of the same language necessarily understood on the same semantic basis in the two varieties? In other words, apparently similar sentential forms between two varieties may not have equivalent meanings, and the components may not have congruent functions.

giving a uniform account of the *'tis(~it is)...* construction and examining what determines sentential forms in HE.

Specifically, this investigation focuses on Southwest Hiberno-English (SwHE), the variety of HE spoken in counties Cork and Kerry, where the impact of Irish is particularly strong. This paper serves as a summary of my study on the *'tis...* pattern. In the initial stage, the data observation and analysis were conducted as follows: (i) More than 250 examples of *'tis(~it is)...* from written materials by a local playwright were classified according to the syntactic function and phrasal category of the minimal constituent following *'tis(~it is)*; (ii) distribution was displayed, with SwHE and general British English behaviours being compared, and the collected examples were examined in context for facilitating assumptions regarding their construction and function in discourse; and (iii) the assumptions were elaborated in interviews with SwHE speakers.

(8)-(12) are examples of the types of SwHE sentences that display similarities in appearance to the *it*-cleft in British English. The primary source of the data is John B. Keane's (1928-2002) play scripts;⁹ these are supplemented by fieldwork-based research which I have undertaken in the local area, which includes Listowel where the playwright lived. This paper also includes examples that I happened to record and encounter during my fieldwork in Cork and Listowel.

(8) 'Tis everything in that book happened in this area. [2005, Listowel]

(9) Maybe 'tis cancer I'm getting. [STD 56]

(10) How do we know but maybe 'tis dead you are, or worse. [STD 11]

(11) I suppose 'tis boozing on brandy you are with Feccker McFillen. [STD 56]

(12) 'Twas at the river bank I met {x=name}. [2004, Cork]

These types of sentences are described as *it*-clefts in the literature: In HE, clefts occur frequently and cover wider ranges of phrasal categories in the focus position than they do in British English (e.g. Filppula 1986, 1999, Guilfoyle 1985, Henry 1995). For the phrasal categories, (10) and (11) confirm that AdjP and non-finite VP can occur in the so-called focus position in HE. In SwHE, a majority of the examples have procliticised forms beginning with *'t* (e.g. *'tis*, *'twas*, *'tishn't*). Hence, the pattern is labelled as the *'tis...* pattern in this paper although *'tis(~it is)* is occasionally used in reference to other studies and examples allowing these variants.

The high frequency of *'tis(~it is)...* in HE is often acknowledged (Curme 1931, Taniguchi 1972, Filppula 1999),¹⁰ but it is important to note, in addition, that many of the examples do not

⁹ Examples from John B. Keane's plays and letter series written mainly in the 1960s and 1970s are cited with their abbreviations; the collection of examples is referred to as the 'Keane corpus'. The examples are sorted by the grammatical features or categories; one of the features is *'Tis(~it is)...* sentences. The Keane corpus, as a whole, comprises over 18,000 words. Keane is a local writer and his work, cherished by local people, has provided an invaluable source of the local language from the 1950-70s. He is known as a major Irish writer with many successful plays and books (Smith and Hickey 2002). The following is a list of his works cited in this paper, headed with their abbreviations: SIV *Sive* (1959), HHM *The Highest House on the Mountain* (1961), and STD *Letters of a Successful TD* (1967). The spellings used in the citations are those used in Keane's plays.

¹⁰ According to statistics presented by Filppula (1986:113-119, 1999:248-250), the research areas of Kerry and Clare have the highest average frequency of use of the *'tis(it-is)* formation—2.8 uses for each speaker per 1,000 words of

have *that* within them. This “*that*-less-ness” is one of the major characteristics of HE sentences. It is especially noted that there are no “with-*that*” examples of AdjP, and non-finite VP in the supposed focus position and the Obj-NP examples are extremely rare in SwHE data.¹¹ The insertion of *that* significantly lessens acceptability in the respective uses, which is attested in the contrast between (13) and (14). This judgement was given by my consultants, who were middle-aged to senior native speakers of SwHE.

- (13) a. 'Tis dead you are.
b. 'Tis grumbling he is.
c. He likes you, an' 'tis very few he likes!

- (14) a. *~?? 'Tis dead *that* you are.¹²
b. *~?? 'Tis grumbling *that* he is.
c. *~?? He likes you, an' 'tis very few *that* he likes!

The '*tis*.... pattern in SwHE is thus characterised by its frequency of use, the wider phrasal categories in the supposed focus position, and the *that*-less construction. Importantly, these characteristics can be attributed to the fundamental differences in sentence construction in British English and SwHE.

3.1. The use of '*tis* and its clause

One of the clues to this difference is the clause-initial element '*tis*. '*Tis* (pronounced as /tiz/) is a procliticised form, including the major representations '*tis*, '*twas* and '*tisn't*. It is recognised by SwHE speakers as a single unit, and not as two units (*it plus is*), especially in Kerry. '*Tis* is frequently used in SwHE daily conversation, both in cleft-like patterns and apart from them. In particular, the procliticised words are often used as answers to yes-no and tag questions, and also as affirmative responses to sections of dialogue. Examples (15)-(17) illustrate these usages.

- (15) A: '*Tis* a grand day thank God!
B: '*Tis!* (*with a nod*) [2004, Cork]

SwHE (in his research areas of Kerry and Clare), compared to Dublin (1.3 usages per 1,000 words) and British English (0.7 uses).

¹¹ In my data, there are respectively in [X (supposed focus position)=NP-Subj] 48 examples of the *that*-less type and 60 tokens of the ‘with *that*’ type; in [X=PP/AdvP] 60 and 21, in [X=NP-Obj] 43 and 1; and in [X=AdjP/Non-finite VP] 18 and 0. Takeda’s (2001:254) survey confirms that there are no “with *that*” tokens in the types of [X=PP/AdvP] and [X=NP-Obj]. In Takeda’s survey of five literary sources mainly by John M. Synge (1871-1909), there are only 11 occurrences of the “with *that*” type of the total 179 examples (seven from subject NP and four from PP/AdvP for constituent X); and the remaining 168 are of the *that*-less type. The data that other studies present, though they do not give numerical information, also display this distributional tendency (Taniguchi 1972, Filppula 1986, 1999, Ó hÚrdail 1997).

¹² The mark *~?? indicates low acceptability, and * no acceptability (*'*Tis dead you that are*). Sentences marked with *~?? are unnatural and unacceptable to most speakers of the language.

(16) A: Marks and Spencer comes to Tralee?

B and C: *'Tis*. [2005, Listowel]

(17) Ellen: But Glory be to God is anyone safe? That's a dead loss.

Nora: *Tis*.

Ellen: That's a dead loss that place.

Nora: *Tis tis*. [cited from Murphy (2006)]

This usage of *'tis* as a single-word utterance may gain the idiomatical status of a response token.¹³ Besides, *'tis* is often used in HE discourse for giving responses, as observed in (18) cited from the International Corpus of English (ICE)-Ireland (Kallen and Kirk 2008).

(18) B: A lot of, a lot of them now we get, come from Beechwood or, some of these [...] yeah yeah.

And they can't understand, that the measure of care they get, by comparison with paying a wad of money.

A: Mm

B: For nothing. *'Tis only ... basically ... get them up and feed them* [ICE-Republic of Ireland, S1A055]

This usage of *'tis* for giving responses appears to be important to analyse the formally cleft-like *'tis...* pattern in HE. The discourse function is common in the initial element of the *'tis...* sentences.

Example (19) may be one of the conspicuous examples that reveal continuity of the function of *'tis* (*'twas*) between the lexical usage, seen in (15)-(18), and the usage in the *it*-cleft-like sentence. Both usages appear in (19).

(19) I: But *'twas the tenants put up that*, like, his tenants. I believe, that put up that.

b: I didn't know that.

I: *'Twas, 'twas*, I don't know, but it is written on it, that *it is his tenants put up that*, like. (Filppula 1986:171, changed into my transcription)

The first sentence, in which *'twas* is used, is likely to have been spoken to connect things in mind with the preceding utterance. In the third line, *'twas* is used to recall things in mind. The following *it is* may reveal the speaker's affirmation that the event (i.e. his tenants put up that) is true.

Furthermore, the continuity of the discourse function of the *'tis...* pattern can be observed in the usage of *'tis* in (20), which I happened to hear in a conversation during my fieldwork in Listowel. B is explaining why A should read the book.

¹³ Murphy (2006), who conducted a corpus-based survey on response tokens, shows that in the Limerick corpus on which her study relies, '*tis*' is the second most frequent response token used by the 70s-80s age group, following 'yeah yeah'.

(20) A: Why do you say so?

B: 'Tis everything in that book happened in this area. [= (8)]

Significantly, the 'tis clause in (20) displays an apparent similarity to an *it*-cleft sentence; this sentential pattern has, in fact, been described as HE clefts in prior studies. However, such examples demonstrate a separable property of HE 'tis... sentences from the *it*-cleft in British English.

4. 'Tis... and information structure

The clause-initial 'tis in SwHE, whether it is used in the cleft-like pattern or not, links its clause with the discourse context. While new information may be given by delivering a new utterance without 'tis, but the clause-initial 'tis marks a positive subjective commitment by the speaker to the utterance. This clause-initial element is concerned with the speaker's "attitude of mind", which may indicate a "mood" in Jespersen's (1924:313) sense. With this in mind, 'tis in this usage can be described as a mood marker. Also, Palmer (1986:16) states: "Modality in language is [...] concerned with subjective characteristics of an utterance, and it could even be further argued that subjectivity is an essential criterion for modality." In this sense, 'tis(~ it is) displays significant relevancy of modality by virtue of its subjectivity. Moreover, since mood is considered as a category which results from the grammaticalisation of subjective modality (Lyons 1995:179), 'tis can be addressed as a marker of subjective modality, independently of whether a sentence is construed epistemically or deontically (see Lyons 1995 for the terminology).¹⁴ It can thus be suggested that in SwHE 'tis is a grammaticalised form of subjective modality; the meaning of 'tis is something like "as I (the speaker) assure" or "this (the content of the clause) is ascertained in my recognition".

'Tis... clauses are used in contexts such as the following: giving the reason or complementing the previous utterance, for example, (21); assuring oneself or someone else, (22); recollecting an event in the past or opening a discourse, (23) and (24); and presenting a supposition or suggesting a condition with an *if*-clause. It is important to note that 'tis... clauses in SwHE occurs in different contextual environments from those where the stress-focus *it*-cleft does in general British English.

¹⁴ We have to be careful to adopt the terms of "mood" and "modality". Describing 'tis(~it is) as a modality marker seems to be more or less misleading, given that modality, with "modal" being in the base, primarily refers to the relation to the "proposition". Modality is defined as speakers' attitudes expressed by "the non-propositional elements of the sentence" (Palmer 1986:15). Modality, generally in formal semantics, concerns evaluation of the factuality of a given "proposition" with particular reference to the truth condition. 'Tis in HE does not admit substantial association with a "proposition", by which content to be evaluated in terms of factuality is supposed to mean. However, I would like to emphasise Lyon's (1995) insight, which leads to a demonstration of the fact that "there are certain aspects of sentence-meaning that cannot be adequately represented by standard propositional logic" (ibid:153); a sentence has meaning encoded in the lexical and grammatical structure, "regardless of whether it is truth-conditionally analysable or not" (ibid:342).

- (21) I do like to be beside the seaside. *'Tis far away from the seaside we are*, God bless us and save us in the warm weather. Far away indeed from the time I was a slip of a girl walking the streets of Ballybunion in my figure and you winking at me. [STD 56]
- (22) ...and I here in bed with my nerves in a bad state and my left breast sore. Maybe *'tis cancer I'm getting* or maybe *'tis something wrong altogether*. [= (8)]
- (23) (In the beginning of a column) *'Twas at the river bank I met {X=name}*. She stopped to talk to my dog. I told her it wasn't my dog and that I was walking Dougal for a friend. [= (12)]
- (24) The date is set for the Saturday before Christmas. A woman is a great thing in a house if *'twas only for wetting the tea you wanted her*. [MAT 326]

Let us now consider the *'tis...* pattern in terms of information structure. Three examples are closely examined. First, consider (25), which is the same type as (20).

- (25) Connie: ...The Bishop asked him who crucified Our Lord? You should hear the answer he gave.
Sonny (Defensively): *'Twas fellows behind me whispered it in my ear*.
Connie: You know the answer he gave... (Driving it home hard): 'Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves', he said. [HHM25]

The *'tis...* pattern is used in (25) in the context of clarifying the preceding utterance; its use indicates that the speaker Sonny is linguistically encoding his subjective notions. This example, attested by SwHE speakers, suggests that *'twas* in the sentence indicates a link to the preceding statement and presents content in the speaker's mind in the context of discourse. It is noted that unlike in the case of the NP-focus *it*-cleft, there is neither prosodic prominence in *fellows behind me* nor a break between this constituent and the rest *whispered it in my ear*. *'Twas* introduces the whole clause, but the first minimal constituent following *'twas* is not more salient or contrasted than the rest of the clause. In general English, the *it*-cleft is generally not used in this context, as confirmed by non-HE, namely British English, speakers. Without context, one would take the HE sentence *'Twas fellows behind me whispered it in my ear* as the equivalent of *It was fellows behind me that whispered it in my ear*, which resembles an *it*-cleft; however, the discourse context is not the case.

Example (26) is different in that the *'tis* clause includes a salient constituent within, while the discourse function of *'tis* remains consistent.

- (26) (Starting a new paragraph in a letter) I suppose *'tis boozing on brandy you are with fecker McFillen*.¹⁵ He's not fit company for anyone... [= (11)]

¹⁵ The word *fecker* is a "term of abuse: perhaps a euphemism for fucker" (Dolan 1999:107).

In (26), *'tis* is used to present a supposition. The clause exhibits a marked constituent order; the fronted constituent *boozing on brandy* is salient in the clause *you are boozing on brandy with fecker McFillen*. The sentence expresses that this particular component of the state of affairs is highlighted at the forefront of the speaker's mind. Thus, in the linguistic representation, the constituent *boozing on brandy* carries a more important or heavier informational load than other constituents in the clause. Based on the definition in (1)', *boozing on brandy* is not a focus in this sense, even if the clause of *'tis* as a whole might be described as such in light of its new information status. In other words, the sentence *'Tis boozing on brandy you are with fecker McFillen* does not mean that "of a set of continuous actions it is true of boozing on brandy and nothing else that you are doing with fecker McFillen", as *it*-clefts would postulate. (26) is an example of the *'tis....* pattern in which the non-finite VP is more salient than other constituents in the complement of *'tis*.

The third example, (27), exhibits the same behaviour as (26), despite including *that* in the clause. It is important to remember that in the HE pattern, the presence of *that* is marginal in the distribution. *That* is present only where NP-Subj, PP, or AdvP is salient in the clause, while the use of *that* in the case of AdjP and non-finite VP salience is ungrammatical or infelicitous, as noted in (13) and (14). The data survey confirmed that *that* is present in the condition where the chunk of the fronted constituent (NP-subj, AdvP, PP) is comparatively large, as in (27).

(27) He's doing well for himself when you consider he left the national school from the fourth class. *'Twas from studying the television programmes in the papers that he learned how to read.*
[STD 10]

The salient constituent *from studying the television programmes in the papers* is clearly expressed with the support of *that*. Besides, *that* occurring in this pattern is spoken with or without a break after the salient constituent on some occasions (e.g. in reading aloud), but it is also true that SwHE speakers find the *that*-less sentence *'Twas from studying the television programmes in the papers he learned how to read* preferable in spoken language.¹⁶ *That* occurs when informational saliency is not entirely expressed with the fronting of a salient constituent in the *'tis* complement and pitch accent of the fronted constituent. It is used to supplement saliency marking.

5. Similarity between Hiberno-English and Irish: Syntactic expression of saliency

As described in §4, the *'tis...* pattern in SwHE can be understood as the combination of the clause-initial *'tis* and a finite clause, in which saliency marking may operate. *'Tis* marks subjective modality; saliency is marked by fronting a salient constituent in cooperation with prosodic prominence, sometimes with the supplement of *that* placed after the salient constituent. It should be

¹⁶ Some SwHE speakers who pronounce *that* rather clearly in AdvP-saliency sentences report that such examples are "modern" [2003, Listowel]. This may suggest the influence of their awareness of normative grammar. It is assumed that this awareness motivates an innovative use of *that* in HE.

noted, for the argument, that salience can be syntactically expressed in HE if not accompanied by *'tis*. An example of fronting in SwHE is given in (28).

(28) Pats: I saw the young girl, Sive, and the other one going the road to town airy[<early] in the day.

Nanna: *Gone to buy the wedding clothes they are. Fifty pounds Dota gave to buy the clothes and the drink for the wedding.*

Pats: 'Tis about the wedding I came. Last night we made a plan in the caravan. [SIV 34]

Marked constituent order is often used for expressing informational saliency in SwHE,¹⁷ and this strategy for expressing salience is manifested in the *'tis...* pattern. In British English, this type of informational saliency is likely to be prosodically decoded.

The behaviour of the *'tis...* pattern in HE, distinct from the *it*-cleft in British English, is better explained when substratal Irish is taken into account. The analysis of the *'tis...* pattern as a combination of *'tis* and a clause in which salience marking may operate highlights an affinity to the behaviour of the corresponding Irish constructions. (29a) resembles the *'tis...* pattern in HE; (29b) shows fronting of the salient constituent without a copula.

- (29) a. *Is* lúchorpán a chuartaíonn Seán. [Irish]
 COP leprechaun REL seeks John
 b. Lúchorpán a chuartaíonn Seán.
 leprechaun REL seeks John (McCloskey 1979:116)

In Irish, the clause-initial *IS*, a copula, can be omitted, as in (29a). The translation is given in general English by McCloskey as 'It's a leprechaun that John seeks' for both (29a) and (29b). The information structures are more comprehensible in their HE translations: '*Tis a leprechaun John seeks' in (29a) and 'A leprechaun John seeks' in (29b). As illustrated in §4, the sentence form of 'tis... reveals an association with the expression of salience rather than focus. There seems to be an obvious similarity between HE and Irish in the syntactic expression of salience. This can become evident in further survey of the Irish construction.*

Unlike in general British English, prosodic marking is not a common strategy for denoting information structure in Irish. Greene (1966:42) states that "Irish expresses emphasis by grammatical means rather than by intonation, and any stressed word can be brought to the head of a sentence, with is [*IS*] before it".¹⁸ Cotter (1994:134), contrasting the Irish and English systems, notes that,

¹⁷ The basic word order of HE, including SwHE, is SVO. It is often said, however, that the order of HE is not so rigid because "topicalisation is more frequently used in the rural varieties of HE" (Filppula 1990:44). "Topicalisation" in Filppula's words refers to the movement of a constituent from an unmarked to a marked, i.e. the clause initial, position. According to his data on the frequencies of topicalisation per 1,000 words (1986:190-194), Kerry and Clare, where SwHE is spoken, show the highest level (1.4) compared to HE dialects and British English (BrE) [cf. Dublin 0.9, BrE 0.4].

¹⁸ The Irish word *is* is represented as *IS* in this paper to avoid confusion with *is* in English.

“Much of what is signalled by intonation in English is encoded grammatically in Irish. In particular, the most ‘important’ aspect of an utterance will be moved toward the front of a sentence in Irish or be marked morphologically”. It is important to note that Cotter, for the purpose of illustrating the “focus-marking” system in Irish, defines focus as a “highlighting or emphasis of a particular constituent in an utterance” but “not in relation to presuppositions or background”. Here, it is worth stressing that in order to illustrate the Irish “focusing” constructions, the primary definition of focus must be discarded. In the description of information-structuring in HE, a similar adjustment or compromise is necessary. Rather than redefining focus, this paper makes a distinction between focus and salience for a refined description (see §2.1).

The Irish tendency that Greene and Cotter describe is illustrated in (30) and (31), the translations of which I have provided in HE and Standard English (StE).

(30) *Is ag caint a bhíodar.* [Irish]

IS at talk.VN PRT were.they (Doyle 2001:89)

‘ ’Tis talking they were.’ [HE]

‘They were TALKING. / (*It is talking that they are.)’ [StE]

(31) *Is é an t-arbhar a bhaineann m’athair le speal.* [Irish]

IS it the grain REL reaps my father with scythe

(Cotter 1994:136, 139)

‘ ’Tis the grain my father reaps with a scythe.’ [HE]

‘My father reaps the GRAIN with a scythe. / (It is the grain that my father reaps with a scythe.)’ [StE]

It is suggested that HE, which employs English as a lexifier, retains substratal semantic opposition to denote information structure. In Irish and HE, salience is associated with sentence structure instead of focus. The StE translations in (30) and (31) are given for both pitch accent and the *it*-cleft, which is bracketed. Both of these translations are given because the information status of the focus constituent in StE may well be absorbed in the expression of salience in HE. The systems of HE and StE are not directly comparable due to the grammatical discrepancy between the two; while salience provides an efficient description in HE, it does not guarantee any fit in StE. It is important to highlight here, however, that the information structures expressed in these Irish examples correspond to examples of prosodic accentuation in StE, as noted by Greene and Cotter. The semantic status of the salient constituent in Irish sentences such as (30) and (31) bears more of a resemblance to that of the pitch-accented constituent in a canonical sentence than to the cleaved constituent in a cleft sentence in StE.

6. *'Tis....* as a grammatical innovation

HE and Irish are significantly similar in regards to the expression of information structure. In addition, they allow a similar range of phrasal categories in the position of a salient constituent. As in HE, in the Irish pattern (*IS* + X + relative particle *a* + Y), NP-Subj, NP-Obj, AdvP, PP, and AdjP can occur in the X position (McCloskey 1979:110-144; Stenson 1981:99; Ó Siadhail 1989:236-239; Doyle 2001:89). It is also noteworthy that the sentence-initial usage of *'twas*, *'tishn't*, *'twasn't*, *ishn't it*, and *is it*, respectively corresponds to the Irish copula forms of past *ba*, non-past negative *ní*, past negative *níor*, negative interrogative *nach*, and the interrogative *an*.

The continuum between Irish and HE is thus illustrated, but the issue is more complex than such a comparison demonstrates when *'tis...* is considered in terms of contact-induced grammatical development. The *'tis....* pattern is, in fact, not the exact transfer of the corresponding Irish construction. If components of the *'tis...* pattern in HE and its Irish correspondent are carefully compared and contrasted, it can be seen that their functional distributions in the individual languages are not equivalent.

Irish *IS* is first and foremost a copula, whatever pragmatic functions it may possess. While the HE *'tis* cannot be used as a copula, in Irish, a VSO language, the occurrence of the copula *IS* in the sentence/clause initial position is conspicuous. Stenson (1981:99) illustrates the Irish construction corresponding to *'tis...* in HE as the use of the copula for emphasis. Properties of the Irish copula are described by McCloskey (2005:159): “The copula itself is an instance of the category T—the inflectional head which provides a specification of Tense and Mood for the sentence (or at least that it occupies the T-position by the end of the derivation)”. Dohery (1996:2) proposes that “copular sentences are simply tensed clause in which I⁰ [functional head of the inflectional clause] takes an XP complement (the predicate)”. DeGraff (1998), who analyses non-verbal predication in Haitian Creole and Irish in order to capture the pronoun-copula connection, addresses the copula as C⁰, which takes an I_HP [inflectional-high, headed by INFL_{high} and complemented by I_LP (inflectional-lower)] complement.

The clause-initial *'tis* in HE behaves in a similar manner. *'Tis* in HE can function as a TMA marker in the clause-initial position while allowing a finite clause. More precisely, they are especially functionalised for modality marking. The HE procliticised *'tis* forms may be one of the guideposts where the substratal influence of Irish is in evidence, although *'tis* itself is found in Early Modern English, for example, in Shakespeare's plays. It is likely that a copula-like word that stocks the TMA information in a single entity is convenient and advantageous in HE. Hence, the *'tis* in the clause initial position becomes robust and has developed its pragmatic function as described in §3.1 and §4.

Another important component, *that*, displays a restrictive and marginal presence in HE *'tis...*, whereas in Irish patterns, the relative particle *a* occurs obligatorily after a salient constituent, and the relative verb is lenited.

- (32) a. Is ag déanamh a chuid ceachtannaí atá Tadhg. [Irish]
 COP at do.VN his portion lessons REL.be Tim (Stenson 1989:99)¹⁹
 ‘‘Tis doing his lessons Tim is. [HE] / Tim is DOING his LESSONS. [StE]’
- b. Níl sé tinn; (is) caochta atá sé. [Irish]
 NEG.be he sick COP drunk REL.be he (ibid.)
 ‘‘Tisn’t sick he is; ’tis drunk he is. [HE] / He’s not sick; he’s DRUNK. [StE]’
- c. Is ar an mbóthar a bhuaifidh mé leat. [Irish]
 COP on the road REL meet.FUT I with.you (ibid.)
 ‘‘Tis on the road I’ll meet you. [HE] / I will meet you on the ROAD. [StE]’

In the HE pattern, *that* displays limited distribution and functionality as a supplemental salience marker, as illustrated in (27). The HE and Irish patterns exhibit semantic parallelism in terms of information structure, although the distribution of key components, *’tis* (IS [Irish]) and *that* (a [Irish]), differs while yielding some functional overlap in the TMA(-like) usage of the clause initial element.

It is interesting to note that the *that*-less feature is not found in the Irish constructions but is found in Atlantic Creoles. For example, Sebba (1997) points out a significant difference between StE and Atlantic Creoles: ‘‘The Sranan construction is different from the English in that it uses the equative copula *na* (sometimes called a highlighter in this context) without a subject corresponding to the English ‘dummy *it*’ and does not require any relative pronoun or complementiser to introduce the rest of the sentence. A less common construction, not found in English but found in the Atlantic creoles and West African languages, is predicate cleft. Notice that in Standard English we cannot say something like *It is discussing creoles we are* in order to bring the verb into focused position (Sebba 1997:187-188).’’²⁰ It is noteworthy that this difference parallels the one between general British English and SwHE. It seems that languages generated in contact develop its grammatical strategies for expressing salience, rather than focus, as saliency in information structure is one of the prior and unmarked references in language. It is, therefore, quite understandable that salience is marked by a lexical form such as a highlighter copula or a particle in Atlantic Creoles.

¹⁹ It should be noted that Stenson’s translation is: ‘‘*It’s doing his lessons that Tim is’’, which is a formal representation corresponding to Irish words. My translation above is based on semantics. This discrepancy in form-based or meaning-based translation implies the formation of *’tis...* as a contact-induced grammatical development.

²⁰ Concerning the presence/absence of a relativiser or complementiser, Bickerton provides the significant statement that in French Creoles, as in Standard English, the relativiser is obligatory if a subject is focused, whereas in English-based Creoles, as in the Guyanese example (i) the relativiser *we* never occurs.

(i) *A Jaan (*we) sii mi.* [Guyanese]
 ‘It was John who saw me.’ (Bickerton 1993:207)

The structures presented by Bickerton (1993:207-208) are (ii) to a French-based creole and (iii) to (i).

(ii) *se* [CP *Mari* [C’ [C *ki*][IP *t* [VP *aste fle*]]]]
 (iii) *a* [IP *Jaan* [VP *sii mi*]]

When we take Bickerton’s statement into consideration, it is likely that the *that*-less feature can be marked as an English-based-creole characteristic. It is important to note that the contemporary HE construction is ‘‘in between’’, that is, the *that*-less types do not comprise the whole distribution in HE, while they do in English-based Creoles in general.

It is fair to assume, based on the examination so far, that HE has developed manners of expressing information structure on its own, not like English and not the entire copy or calque from Irish. Grammatical innovations can be observed, at the micro levels, in the discourse function of the clause-initial *'tis*, including a TMA-like usage of *'twas*, *'tish't*, *'twasn't*, *isn't it*, and *is it*, and the use of *that* as a salience marker. *'Tis* indicates the speaker's positive commitment to the content denoted in the clause in the context of discourse; this usage is common in the *'tis...* pattern in general. *That*, occurring only occasionally in the pattern, additionally marks the informational saliency of a single constituent. In a macroscopic view, a grammatical innovation can be noted in the mapping of the Irish manner of expression onto the English morphosyntactic plane. Sentence construction in HE is, as described in §4 and §5, saliency-sensitive; that is, informational saliency determines not only prosodic presentations but also morphosyntactic forms. Saliency can be expressed syntactically in SwHE, and this tendency is noted in Irish but not very much so in general English. It thus seems reasonable to assume that the saliency-oriented information-structuring, which is inherited from Irish, is realised in English morphosyntax.

7. Conclusion

The *'tis...* pattern in HE, despite an apparent resemblance to the *it*-cleft in general English, exhibits a different information structure decoded in the sentence. The *'tis...* pattern is better described as an innovation in the contact-induced grammatical formation, fostered in the convergence between forms serving a similar purpose in the two source languages. HE has inherited the strategy of mapping information structure into sentence forms from substratal Irish and realised this on the English morphosyntactic plane. In a microscopic view of the *'tis...* pattern, a grammatical innovation that HE has created on its own, not as an exact substrate transfer, nor through the same development as general British English, is detected in the functions of *'tis* and *that*. The forms that were generated as a result of language contact have gained new functions in organising a system to express grammatical oppositions.

It becomes difficult to specify grammatical properties in which HE exhibits an obvious transfer from Irish now that varieties of HE are today exposed to secondary contact with other major varieties of English. It is nevertheless possible to argue that HE has nurtured its grammar by impressing grammatical oppositions inherited from Irish onto the English-driven morphosyntax. This paper has argued that saliency-sensitive information structuring inherited from Irish is collaborated with English morphosyntax. The *'tis...* pattern, with its use of the clause-initial *'tis* and salience-marking *that*, can be regarded as an example of the Irish-English collaboration that induces innovations in the grammatical formation of HE. Contact-induced development is assumed even in a language variety regarded as a local English dialect of the British Isles.

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アイルランド英語 'tis....文にみる文法的イノベーション

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アイルランド英語には、'tis writing a letter he is といった文にみるように分裂文に似た構文がある（その多くは 'tis で始まるので 'tis....文とよぶことにする）。'tis....文はこれまでの研究において分裂文として記述されてきたものであるが、標準的な英語の分裂文が焦点(focus)の統語的な表現であるのに対して、アイルランド英語の 'tis....文はそうではない。アイルランド英語は情報構造の文表現における文法的対立をアイルランド語から引き継いでおり、'tis....文にはそれがあらわれている。本論文はアイルランド英語南西部方言のデータを用いて、'tis....文がどのような性質をもつのかを明らかにし、'tis....文がいかにしてそのような性質をもつことになったかを考察する。アイルランド英語における 'tis の用法と 'tis....文における that の限定的分布、アイルランド語の IS 文との情報構造上の共通性に注目して、ミクロには 'tis....文の構成要素の機能に、マクロにはその文構成に、文法的イノベーションが見出せることを論じる。

(しまだ・たまみ)