

### **Non-thematic binding and syntactic syncretism**

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The paper takes as its starting point the progressive passive in Irish. This differs from passives in other languages in that the internal argument of the verb surfaces twice, first in subject position, and secondly as a pronominal proclitic on the verb:

- (1) Tá an leabhar í léamh.  
is the book at-its read.Verbal Noun  
'The book is being read'.

As can be seen, the pronominal is bound by the subject, and thus resembles a reflexive anaphor. However, there are substantial morphological and syntactic differences between reflexive anaphors and the passive proclitics which prevent us from treating them in a uniform fashion. Instead, following Burzio (1986), we propose that the proclitics of the progressive passive are non-thematically bound by the subject, since the proclitics lack a theta-role of their own.

This kind of binding also manifests itself in another construction in Irish, namely, reflexive verbs formed by means of prepositional pronouns, such as:

- (2) Bhain sé de.  
took he off-him  
'He undressed'.

Once again, the pronominal in the inflected preposition lacks a theta-role, and is non-thematically bound by the subject.

Recent work (e.g. Embick 2004) has stressed the morphological syncretism that is frequently displayed by reflexives, passives and unaccusatives cross-linguistically. This paper is written in the same spirit, in that it argues for what might be called "syntactic syncretism", which involves a particular binding relation. Thus, the language-particular data discussed here can be seen to exemplify a broader, and, it is hoped, linguistically significant pattern.

## References

Burzio, L. (1986). *Italian Syntax*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.

Embick, D. (2004). 'Unaccusative syntax and verbal alternations'. In A. Alexiadou, E. Anagnostopoulou and M. Evaraert (eds.) *The Unaccusativity Puzzle*, 137–158. Oxford: OUP.