Passives and Impersonals.

A diachronic study of the Irish autonomous verb in the framework of Lexical Functional Grammar

Jenny Graver

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Department of Linguistics and Scandinavian Studies
University of Oslo

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It was a long story, and like most of the stories in the world, never finished. There was an ending - there always is - but the story went on past the ending - it always does.

-- Jeanette Winterson: *Lighthousekeeping*

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A note on the examples and glosses

Unless otherwise noted, the glosses and translations of the Irish examples taken from the primary sources used in this thesis are my own. I have freely emphasised the relevant constituents in the examples in boldface. The following glossing abbreviations are used:

ACC	– accusative case
ADV	– adverbal particle
AUT	– autonomous form
AUX	– auxiliary
COMPL	– complementiser
COMPAR	– comparative
COND	– conditional
CONS-PRES	– consuetudinal present[1]
COP	– copula
DEF	– definite article
EMPH	– emphasising suffix[2]
EXPL	– expletive pronoun
F	– feminine
FUT	– future
GEN	– genitive case
IMPER	– imperative
IMP	– impersonal
INFIX	– infixed pronoun
M	– masculine
NEG	– negation
NOM	– nominative case
NEUT	– neuter case
PART	– particle
PAST	– past tense, Modern Irish
PERF	– perfective, Old Irish

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[1] The habitual present of the substantive verb (Stifter 2006: 179).

[2] This is the gloss for the *notae augentes*, cf. section 4.1.2.2.2.

PL	– plural
PRES	– present tense
PRET	– preterite tense, Old Irish
PREV	– preverb
PROG	– progressive
Q	– question particle
REFL	– reflexive
REL	– relative
SG	– singular
SUBJ	– subjunctive
SUPER	– superlative
VADJ	– verbal adjective
VN	– verbal noun
VOC	– vocative

Chapter 1: Introduction

The object of study in this thesis is the syntax of the so-called autonomous verb form in Irish from the Old Irish period (eighth and ninth centuries) until the Modern Irish period (c. 1950). 'Autonomous' is the descriptive grammar term for this verb form in Modern Irish; the Irish equivalent is *an briathar saor* or *an saorbhriathar*, meaning 'the free verb'. One explanation of 'autonomous' is provided by Micheál Ó Siadhail, who states that this term implies that the verb stands on its own and does not need a specific subject (2000: 8); we will see in the subsequent sections a first approximation of what Ó Siadhail's explanation entails. I will refer to the verb form in question as 'autonomous' at all stages of the language, even though it is usually termed 'passive' in the descriptive grammars of Old Irish, since by making this distinction, we are able to reserve the term 'passive' for the theoretic category.

Specifically, it will be shown in this study that the autonomous verb, with some few exceptions, is an active verb form in Modern Irish,[3] and that it contains or indicates an unrealised pronominal subject with an 'impersonal' interpretation. This unrealised subject can never co-occur with a phonologically realised subject of any type. This analysis represents the current state of the art for the autonomous verb in Modern Irish. It will furthermore be argued that this construction, which I will call the active subject impersonal construction (ASI), has developed from a passive construction in Old Irish. It will be shown that the syntactic construction types involved in this development, the ASI construction as well as two passive construction types, are cross-linguistically well established. The constructions in which the autonomous verb is used, co-exist together with other types of passive and impersonal constructions, including the Modern Irish periphrastic passive, in the various periods of the language.

Furthermore, I will argue that the autonomous verb is synchronically ambiguous both in Old and Modern Irish. In Modern Irish, it is used in a number of lexically idiosyncratic, subjectless constructions; these constructions appear to have syntactic

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[3] The term 'active' is used in two different senses in this study. When I speak of the Modern Irish autonomous verb as 'active', I refer to the relationship between grammatical functions and thematic roles; the agent is the subject and the patient is the object of the autonomous verb in Modern Irish, just as in regular active verbs. In the previous sentence 'active' is used in its second sense to refer to regular, finite verbs that are morphologically unmarked compared to the autonomous form.

ancestors in Old Irish. In Old Irish, the autonomous verb may be used in two types of passive constructions, as well as in the ASI construction with a closed group of various unaccusative-types of verbs. The two passive constructions are the canonical and the impersonal passive; in the canonical passive, the patient argument is the subject of the autonomous verb, while in the impersonal passive the patient argument is the object.

The development subsequent to Old Irish, I will argue, takes place in two steps. First the grammatical function of the patient changes from subject to object following the Old Irish period; this development entails a change from canonical to impersonal passive. At this point the impersonal passive use co-exists with the ASI construction, a situation which sets the stage for the spread of the ASI-construction and the subsequent disappearance of the passive use.

In sum, the picture to be painted of the Irish autonomous verb form is one of variation, both on a diachronic and a synchronic level. It will be shown throughout this study that while this variation might seem outlandish at first glance, it appears for the most part to be both natural and expected in terms of the theoretic background used and the diachronic development that preceded the Old Irish period.

It should be made clear at this point that this study is qualitative rather than quantitative. I aim to provide theoretical analyses of the construction types in which the autonomous verb is used and the ways in which these construction types change. It is my sincere hope that there will be quantitative studies to confirm – or contradict – my theoretical conclusions at a later stage. At certain points in the thesis I will attempt to pinpoint areas in which quantitative studies of Irish-language corpora would be particularly useful.

Obviously, the proposed study involves a number of complex issues and problems. Some of these are problems that face any researcher attempting to study languages that precede the generations alive today. While Irish is in a fortunate position due to a substantial and early written tradition, one has to contend with issues like problems of interpretation – Old Irish has a very complicated verbal system – and gaps in the paradigms. Fortunately, Old Irish is blessed with good descriptive grammars and a thorough dictionary that can be used as support. Other problems concern the autonomous verb specifically and the categories in which it is used; there are only small details that distinguish these categories from each other, and the categories can be hard to distinguish from one another in actual language use.

Subsequently in this chapter, section 1.1 presents the data and some of the intricacies involved; this section includes an overview of the argument structure of the autonomous verb and the morphological expression of its arguments as they appear in Old and Modern Irish. Section 1.2 presents the main hypothesis and content of this study, while in section 1.3 I provide an overview of the state of the art in the current literature on the Irish autonomous verb, in order to show what has already been done in order to conquer the complexities involved in this issue.

1.1 Introducing the data

In this section I present the main morphosyntactic properties of the autonomous verb in Old and Modern Irish. To my knowledge there is no theoretical linguistic analysis of the Old Irish autonomous verb specifically. In other words, what I will present in this section concerning Old Irish are the main morphosyntactic properties of the autonomous verb as it appears in the descriptive grammars. A tentative first analysis of these facts will follow in section 1.2, while an in-depth analysis of the Old Irish autonomous verb is provided in chapter 4.

Examples of the autonomous verb are provided in (1) for Modern Irish and (2) for Old Irish. I am using transitive verbs for ease of exposition. We note first of all that the autonomous verb is marked with a different morphological form than the active verb. Additionally, an important point to note at this stage is that the expression of the verb's arguments will change depending on whether the verb in question is active or in the autonomous form.

(1) The Modern Irish autonomous verb

a. active

chuir	*an*	*gasúr*	*ar*	*a*	*cheann*	*é*
put.PAST	DEF	boy	on	his	head	it

'the boy put it on his head' (CÓ 16)[4]

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[4] A list of primary sources with abbreviations is found on page 243.

b. autonomous

tugadh	*an*	*corp*	*chun*	*na*	*reilige*	*agus*	**cuireadh**	*é*
bring.PAST.AUT	DEF	corpse	to	DEF	graveyard	and	put.PAST.AUT	it

'the corpse was brought to the graveyard and it was buried' (CiD 76)

The Modern Irish examples both contain the verb *cuir* – 'put'. In the active clause in (a), the past tense form *chuir* takes a subject – *an gasúr* – 'the boy'. The autonomous form *cuireadh* in (b) has no overt subject. In both cases the verbs take an object pronoun *é*, a third person masculine singular form here used to refer to inanimate arguments.

(2) The Old Irish autonomous verb

a. active

gonaid-*som*	*dano*	*in*	*fer*	*sin*
kill.PRES.3SG-EMPH	then	DEF	man	that

7	*dobert*	*a*	*chend*	*7*	*a*	*ḟodb*	*lais*
and	bring.PRET.3SG	his	head		his	spoils	with.3SG.M

'he then kills that man and brought away his head and his spoils' (TBC-1 23:746)

b. autonomous, third person

gontar-*som*	*co*	*mór*	*co*	*lluid*	*cona*	*inathar*
kill.PRES.AUT.3SG-EMPH	ADV	big	COMPL	go.PRET.3SG	with.his	intestines

ima	*chosa*	*dochum*	*Con Chulaind*	*triasin*	*cath*
about.his	legs	to	C. C.	through.DEF	battle

'he is greatly wounded and went through the battle to Cú Chulainn with his intestines around his legs' (TBC-1 96:3173)

c. autonomous, first person

acht	*má*	**no-n-gontar**	*uli*
only	if	PREV-1PL-kill.PRES.AUT	all

'unless we are all killed' (TBC-1 6:165)

In the Old Irish active clause (a), the subject and agent argument of the verb 'kills' is a silent third person singular pronominal whose features are indicated by the verb In the third person autonomous form (b), there is no mention of an agent argument. The autonomous form indicates a third person pronominal subject argument as well, but this time the subject is the patient of the verb. In the second autonomous example (c) there is still no mention of the agent argument, and there does not appear to be a subject argument

indicated by the verb form itself. Instead, the patient is now expressed by an infixed pronoun *-n-*. In other words, we note that the patient of the Old Irish autonomous verb is expressed differently depending on whether it is a first or second person pronoun, or a third person pronoun (or noun).

Another important point to note about the autonomous verb form in all periods of the language is that there does not seem to be any restrictions on the argument structure of the equivalent active verb (cf. Stenson 1989: 380). The autonomous verb is illustrated with different types of argument structures for Modern and Old Irish in (3) and (4) respectively. The predicates in question are the substantive verb in its auxiliary and predicative usages,[5] intransitive verbs of motion, intransitive two-place verbs that take a subject and an oblique in their active forms, three-place verbs that take a subject, an object and an oblique in their active forms and verbs that take a finite clause complement.

(3) The Modern Irish autonomous verb

      a.   intransitive auxiliary

táthar	*a*	*rádh*	*go*	*bhfacthas*
be.PRES.AUT	PART	say.VN	that	see.PAST.AUT

'people are saying that they saw'
(Séamus 'ac Grianna: *Nuair a Bhí Mé Óg*, 140 – *Tobar*)

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[5] Both Modern and Old Irish possess two predicates meaning 'to be': the copula, which is not a verb but a complementiser particle, at least in Modern Irish (Carnie and Harley 1995: 3 and references therein), and the substantive verb. Carnie and Harley (1995: 3) show that the Modern Irish substantive verb is never found with nominal predicates, while the predicates of the copula are almost exclusively nominal. According to Cathal Doherty (1996), the semantic differences between the copula and the substantive verb are related to the stage-level/individual-level distinction; Doherty argues that the copula cannot admit stage-level predicates. As Carnie and Harley (1995: 4) shows, this distinction is not without exceptions, since there are individual-level predicates that occur with the substantive verb.

In Old Irish the situation is slightly different, at least in terms of the syntax of the two predicates. As Quinn points out (1975: 58), the use of the substantive verb with adjective predicates – which is very common in Modern Irish – is exceptional in Old Irish; the copula is used when the predicate is a noun, a pronoun or an adjective (1975: 58). Tigges (2006: 43) sums up the semantics of the copula and the substantive verb as follows: '[T]he substantive verb is used to indicate *that*, *where*, *when* or *how* someone or something is, whereas the copula is used to identify, describe or classify *what* someone or something is (cf. Modern Spanish *estar* and *ser*; this distinction is still functional in ModI although gradually being weakened due to influence of English).'

b. intransitive verb of motion

chuathas   *amach*   *á*   *chuartú*
go.PAST.AUT   out   PROG.his   search-for.VN
'people went out searching for him' (CiD 96)

 c. intransitive two-place verb

deirim   *leat*   *nach*   **n-*éistfear***   *leis*   *an*   *gcaint* *sin*
say.PRES.1SG   with.2SG   that.NEG   listen.FUT.AUT   with.DEF   DEF   talk   that

anseo
here

'I'll tell you that people won't listen to that talk here' (CnC 84)

 d. three-place verb

cuireadh   *fáilte*   *roimhe*   *agus*   ***tugadh***   *cathaoir* *dó*
put.PAST.AUT   welcome   before.3SG.M   and   give.PAST.AUT   chair   to.3SG.M
'they welcomed him and gave him a chair' (CiD 45)

 e. verb with a finite clause complement

dúradh   *liom*   *go*   *gceannaíonn* *sí*   *an*   *draoi*   *acu*
say.PAST.AUT   with.1SG   that   buy.PRES   she   DEF   great-amount   of.3PL
'I was told that she buys a lot of them' (CnC 204)

 (4) The Old Irish autonomous verb

 a. 'be' used predicatively

is   *and*   *asgniintar*   *incharait*   *intan* *mbither*   in periculis
COP   then   recognise.PRES.AUT   DEF.friends   when   be.PRES.AUT
 'then friends are recognised, when people are *in periculis*' (Ml.108b4, quoted in Lloyd 1904)

 b. intransitive verb of motion

tancas   *o*   *Ailill* *ocus* *o Meidb* *do*   *chungid*   *in*   *chon*
come.PRET.AUT   from   A   and   from M   to   seek.VN   DEF   hound.GEN
'messengers came from Ailill and Medb seeking the hound' (SMMD-LL 1: sect. 1)

 c. three-place verb

doberar   *dó*   *íarom* *carpat* *Conchobair*
give.PRES.AUT   to.3SG.M   then   chariot   C.
'Conchobair's chariot is given to him then' (TBC-1 20:651)

d. verb with a finite complement

asberar	*friss*	*ra*	*mbíat*	*na*	*mná*	*dóera*
say.PRES.AUT	to.3SG.M	PREV.INFIX	be.CONS-PRES.AUT	DEF	women	unfree

7	*na*	*baí*	*blichta*
and	DEF	cows	milk-giving

'he is told that he will have the unfree women and the milch cows' (TBC-1 40:1272)

These, then, are the main morphosyntactic properties of the autonomous verb at the Old and Modern Irish stages of the language. Perhaps the most important property to be discussed in this study is the following: there is at no stage of the language an overt expression of the agent of the autonomous verb as the subject of the clause. In the next section it will be shown that the autonomous agent may be present as a non-overt subject in the ASI construction, as a thematic role that is not grammatically realised in the passive, or not present at all in the bare subjectless constructions.

1.2 Introducing the hypothesis

In this section I provide an overview of the main hypothesis and chapter layout of this study. In the introduction to this section I described a number of variations in the syntax of the autonomous verb, variations that appear both synchronically and diachronically. Using a standard notation of Lexical Functional Grammar (LFG)[6], this variation can be summarised as in (5). In this notation *x* and *y* represent thematic roles, while the diagonal lines illustrate the mapping relationship between thematic roles and grammatical functions. Where possible, the notation is based on transitive predicates for ease of exposition, since the differences in the function of the patient argument highlight some of the main differences between these construction types. The *Ø* represents what will be termed 'mapping to zero' of the agent in the passive.

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[6] This notation will be discussed in detail and then revised in chapter 2.

(5) Variation and development of the Irish autonomous verb

    a. Modern Irish

        i. active subject impersonal (ASI)

$$< \quad \underset{\text{SUBJ}_{\text{imp}}}{\overset{|}{x}} \quad \underset{\text{OBJ}}{\overset{|}{y}} \quad >$$

        ii. bare subjectless structures

$$< \quad \underset{\text{(COMPLEMENT)}}{\overset{|}{x}} \quad >$$
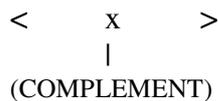
    b. Old Irish

        i. canonical passive

$$< \quad \underset{\varnothing}{\overset{|}{x}} \quad \underset{\text{SUBJ}}{\overset{|}{y}} \quad >$$

        ii. impersonal passive

$$< \quad \underset{\varnothing}{\overset{|}{x}} \quad \underset{\text{OBJ}}{\overset{|}{y}} \quad >$$

        iii. active subject impersonal (ASI)

$$< \quad \underset{\text{SUBJ}_{\text{imp}}}{\overset{|}{x}} \quad \underset{\text{OBJ}}{\overset{|}{y}} \quad >$$

The construction types represented in (5) will be defined in terms of LFG in section 2.2, which additionally contains general background on the theory of LFG. In the same section, the constructions are discussed in terms of their respective properties and how they may be distinguished from one another. They are also provided with a cross-linguistic background.

In Modern Irish the autonomous verb is mainly used in the ASI-construction. Additionally it is found in various types of idiomatic, non-passive subjectless structures, which are represented in (ii). This generalised subjectless mapping structure represents several construction types in Modern Irish, and possibly in Old Irish, which have two traits in common: none of their arguments map to the subject function, and unlike in the passive, there is no thematic role in the argument structure that is not mapped to a grammatical function. The Modern Irish idiomatic subjectless constructions are discussed in depth in chapter 5.

The ASI structure in (5) makes two claims for examples like (6). First, the overt patient arguments *an corp* – 'the corpse' – and *é* – (here) 'it' – are analysed as the object. Additionally the ASI structure suggests that the autonomous verb forms *tugadh* and *cuireadh* indicate a subject. Specifically, this subject is a phonologically null, pronominal subject with an impersonal/arbitrary interpretation. This hypothesis is based on the state of the art discussion in section 1.3 in this chapter and will be further expanded on in chapter 3.

(6) The ASI construction in Modern Irish

tugadh	*an*	*corp*	*chun*	*na*	*reilige*	*agus*	***cuireadh***	*é*
bring.PAST.AUT	DEF	corpse	to	DEF	graveyard	and	put.PAST.AUT	it

'the corpse was brought to the graveyard and it was buried' (CiD 76)

Observing the structures (5) for Old Irish, we note that the situation is portrayed as more complicated than in Modern Irish. It is hypothesised that the autonomous verb is used for three different construction types. The distribution of the ASI vs. the passive constructions is in terms of initial argument structure: the ASI construction is found with a closed group of various unaccusative-types of verbs. One example of the ASI construction in Old Irish is provided in (7). Here the form *bither*, autonomous form of the substantive verb, is assumed to contain the active impersonal subject specifying an undefined group of people.

(7) The ASI construction in Old Irish

is	*and*	*asgniintar*	*incharait*	*intan*	***mbither***	in periculis
COP	then	recognise.PRES.AUT	DEF.friends	when	be.PRES.AUT	

'then friends are recognised, when people are *in periculis*' (Ml.108b4, quoted in Lloyd 1904)

The impersonal and canonical passive, on the other hand, are distributed in terms of the person and number features of the patient argument; when the patient is a third person pronoun or a noun phrase, the construction in question is the canonical passive, while the impersonal passive is found with first and second person pronominal patients. In other words, the mapping structures in (5) hypothesise that the patient is a subject in the (a) example in (8) below. Since the autonomous verb *gontar* has no overt arguments in this example, I take the verb form to indicate the pronominal patient. In example (b) on the other hand, a claim is made that the infixed pronoun patient *-n-* is the object of the autonomous verb.

(8) The passive in Old Irish

      a.   third person patient

gontar-*som*	*co*	*mór*	*co*	*lluid*	*cona*	*inathar*
kill.PRES.AUT-EMPH	ADV	big	COMPL	go.PRET.3SG	with.his	intestines

ima	*chosa*	*dochum*	*Con Chulaind*	*triasin*	*cath*
about.his	legs	to	C. C.	through.DEF	battle

'he is greatly wounded and went through the battle to Cú Chulainn with his intestines around his legs' (TBC-1 96:3173)

      b.   first person patient

acht	*má*	**no-n-gontar**	*uli*
only	if	PREV-1PL-kill.PRES.AUT	all

'unless we are all killed' (TBC-1 6:165)

The above interpretation of the morphological and morphosyntactic facts of the Old Irish autonomous verb will be expanded on and argued for in chapter 4; this chapter also contains a discussion on the development of the autonomous verb from Old to Modern Irish. It will be argued that the canonical passive gives way to the impersonal passive through a change in the grammatical function of the patient argument from subject to object. Subsequently the impersonal active subject appears, and the impersonal passive gives way to the active subject impersonal construction. I use generative diachronic theory to account for this historical development from passive to impersonal active; this development is explained and discussed in detail in section 4.2.

In addition to discussions of LFG and diachronic theory, chapter 2 also contains a review of the data used in the thesis and how these data have been collected, as well as some notes on the history and periods of the Irish language. In chapter 2 are additionally found reviews of two general topics of grammar, specifically modal verbs and the semantics of arbitrary/impersonal subject, which provide background for the discussion of these topics in relation to the autonomous verb in later chapters.

1.3   State of the art

In this section I provide an overview of the state of the art concerning the syntax of the Modern Irish autonomous verb. Section 1.3.1 introduces the issues in question through a

look at what is said of the autonomous verb in some of the descriptive grammars. Section 1.3.2 discusses the Principles and Parameters theoretic analyses of Stenson (1989) and McCloskey (2007). Section 1.3.3 provides an overview of various information structure studies of the Modern and Old Irish autonomous verb.

1.3.1 The autonomous verb in the descriptive grammars of Modern Irish

In this section I describe how the autonomous verb is treated in some of the descriptive grammars on Modern Irish. Two issues in particular are highlighted in these works. On the one hand, it is shown that the autonomous verb appears to be used in the same way as an English passive verb, i.e. that the Irish autonomous verb and the English passive share functional characteristics. On the other hand it is recognised that the autonomous verb possesses formal properties that are different from its English counterpart.

The first point to note concerning the autonomous verb is that it occurs in all combinations of tense, mood and aspect. The descriptive grammars place the autonomous verb in the verb paradigms together with the active forms; this is illustrated in (9) with the verb *bris* – 'to break' – in the present, past and future tenses.

(9) Part of a Modern Irish verbal paradigm
(*New Irish grammar by the Christian Brothers* 2002: 95, original emphasis of the synthetic verb endings)[7]

	Present tense	Past tense	Future tense
1sg.	*bris**im***	*bhris mé*	*brisfidh mé*
2sg.	*briseann tú*	*bhris tú*	*brisfidh tú*
3sg. m/f	*briseann sé/sí*	*bhris sé/sí*	*brisfidh sé/sí*
1pl.	*bris**imid***	*bhris**eamar***	*bris**fimid***
2pl.	*briseann sibh*	*bhris sibh*	*brisfidh sibh*
3pl.	*briseann siad*	*bhris siad*	*brisfidh siad*
autonomous	*bris**tear***	*bris**eadh***	*bris**fear***

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[7] As is traditional in Irish grammar, I will be using the term 'synthetic' to refer to verb forms that express a subject, as opposed to analytic forms that have a separate pronoun as their subject.

In *Graiméar Gaeilge* (Ó hAnluain 1985: 204-206), the most important issue raised concerning the autonomous verb is that it is used when it is not desirable or necessary or possible to mention the agent. The autonomous verb is mentioned along the same lines in Stenson's grammar and workbook *Intermediate Irish* (2008b: 37-44), where she introduces it by saying that it often translates into passive sentences in English. This statement is an indication of the fact that the Irish autonomous verb has much the same functional and information structure properties as a passive verb; this point will be made clear in section 1.3.3, where I present the state of the art of the research concerning information structure properties of the autonomous verb.

Nancy Stenson's *Basic Irish* (2008a), on the other hand, does not mention the autonomous verb at all; one may wonder if the author omitted the autonomous verb because its differences from English makes it advanced enough to be inappropriate for an introductory grammar of Irish. Indeed, Stenson (2008b: 37) highlights three properties of the autonomous verb that distinguishes it from the English passive: the autonomous verb is found with all Irish verbs including intransitive verbs like 'be' and 'come', the 'actor or subject' of the autonomous verb may not be mentioned in a prepositional phrase and while the patient is a subject in an English passive sentence, it is the object of the autonomous verb.

Along the same lines, Micheál Ó Siadhail, in his grammar book *Learning Irish* (2000: 8) introduces the autonomous verb with the example in (10), where *táthar* is the present tense autonomous form of the substantive verb.

(10)

táthar   *sásta*   *anseo*
be.PRES.AUT   content   here
'people are content here'

Ó Siadhail says of this example that the autonomous form 'expresses the idea "one is" or "people (in general) are"'. Clearly, when Ó Siadhail introduces the autonomous verb first with a verb like 'to be', which cannot occur in the passive in English, the focus is on the differences between the Irish autonomous verb and the English passive rather than the similarities.

In sum, we may note as a first tentative analysis that the Modern Irish autonomous verb is formally different from the English passive but functionally similar.

1.3.2 The syntax of the Modern Irish autonomous verb

The syntax of the Modern Irish autonomous verb is well studied and familiar from the work of, in particular, Nancy Stenson (1989) and James McCloskey (2007) (see also Nolan 2006; Harley 2000 among others). The main conclusion of their studies is that the Modern Irish autonomous verb contains an impersonal, phonologically null subject. In this respect the Modern Irish autonomous verb is seen as similar to constructions with impersonal subject pronouns in other languages, e.g. German *man*, French *on*, Italian *si*, Swedish *man*, etc. (McCloskey 2007: 831).

In this section I describe and discuss the arguments in favour of this conclusion. There are two main issues to deal with, concerning the grammatical function of the first and second arguments respectively. In section 1.3.2.1 I show that the patient is taken to fill the object function. In section 1.3.2.2 I discuss arguments in favour of saying that the agent is mapped to an impersonal null-subject. Section 1.3.2.3 describes McCloskey's (2007) Minimalist analysis in some detail, while section 1.3.2.4 provides a summary and examples of some verbs with autonomous morphology that do not have impersonal subjects at all.

1.3.2.1 The object function of the second argument

This section discusses the arguments in favour of analysing the patient argument of the Modern Irish autonomous verb as the object of the clause. The phenomena to be discussed concern pronouns, and specifically their morphological case marking and the possibility for resumption.

There no longer remains a distinction between nominative and accusative case on nouns in Modern Irish (see Mac Eoin 2002: 113-115 and references therein). However, a distinction between subjective and objective form is still retained for certain personal pronouns, as seen in the paradigm in (11) (Mac Eoin 2002: 121-122):

(11)   Pronominal inflection in Modern Irish

	singular, subject form	singular, object form	plural, subject form	plural, object form
1st person	*mé*	*mé*	*sinn*	*sinn*
2nd person	*tú*	*tú* [8]	*sibh*	*sibh*
3rd person	**sé/sí**	**é/í**	**siad**	**iad**

The patient argument of the autonomous verb occurs in the objective form when it is a third person pronominal. Another property of the objective pronoun is that it is postposed to the end of the clause (Ó Siadhail 2000: 35). An example of this is shown in (12); (13) illustrates the ungrammaticality of the subjective form as the patient argument of an autonomous verb.

(12)   Objective pronoun form of the second argument of an autonomous verb

*deir   siad   go   **gcuirfear**   ar   athchúirt   **é***
say.PRES   they   that   put.FUT.AUT   on   re.court   it
'they are saying that it will be appealed' (CnC 118)

(13)   Ungrammaticality of the subjective pronominal form (Stenson 1989: 384)

buaileadh   *aríst*   **iad/*siad**
beat.PAST.AUT   again   them/*they
 'they were beaten again'

     McCloskey (2007: 827) provides another argument in favour of regarding the second argument of an autonomous verb as the object of the clause. Resumptive pronouns are excluded from one position only, the highest subject of a clause (McCloskey 1990: 210). An example of how the resumptive pronoun may not be a subject is provided in (14) (McCloskey 2007: 827).

(14)   Ungrammaticality of resumptive pronouns as subjects (McCloskey 2007: 827):

***fear** gur   bhuail   **sé** le   camán   mé*
man   that.PAST   strike.PAST   he   with   hurley-stick   me
'a man that (he) struck me with a hurley stick'

---

[8] The form *tú* used as object represents the written standard, cf. *Graiméar Gaeilge* (Ó hAnluain 1985: 138). However, the form *thú* is frequently used as the second person singular object in the dialects, as shown by e.g. Ó Siadhail (2000: 35).

Resumptive pronouns may occur freely in other clausal positions (McCloskey 1990: 210). Similarly, the patient of an autonomous verb may be a resumptive pronoun, which then provides an additional argument in favour of analysing the patient as an object.

One of McCloskey's (2007: 827) examples of the second argument of an autonomous verb as a resumptive pronoun are provided in (15), where the head noun of the relative clause, *fear* – 'a man' – co-refers with the second argument of the autonomous clause *é* – 'him'.

(15)   The second argument of an autonomous verb as a resumptive pronoun (McCloskey 2007: 827):

fear *gur   bualadh   le   camán   é*
man   that.PAST   strike.PAST.AUT   with   hurley-stick   him
'a man that was struck with a hurley-stick'

Noonan (1994: 7) provides an additional argument in favour of the object status of the patient that should be considered, even though, as we will see, the argument may not be relevant. Specifically, Noonan takes the lack of agreement between the autonomous verb and the patient argument as an additional reason why the patient argument should not be considered the subject. Noonan's example illustrating this lack of agreement is provided in (16), where he shows that the autonomous form does not vary depending on the person and number features of the patient.

(16)   Lack of agreement between the autonomous verb and its second argument (Noonan 1994: 286)

gortaíodh   *mé/tú/é/sinn/sibh/iad*
hurt.PAST.AUT   me/you.SG/him/us/you.PL/them
'I/you(SG)/he/we/you(PL)/they was/were hurt'

Noonan points out that the autonomous verb differs from the active forms with respect to this property, since the active paradigm retains some person-number verb forms in varying degrees in the different dialects.

It is unclear to me how this argument is meant to work. It is true that under no circumstance may a pronominal patient of the autonomous verb be indicated by the verb

morphology in Modern Irish.[9] However, as shown by McCloskey and Hale (1984: 490-491), the synthetic person and number forms of Irish verbs may not occur together with an overtly expressed subject; an example of which is shown in (17).[10] In other words, if the subject of an active verb is overtly expressed, it will occur with a verb form that does not vary with the person and number features of the subject, as was seen in the paradigm in (9).

(17)   Ungrammaticality of a synthetic form and an overt subject (McCloskey and Hale 1984: 490)

*__chuirfinn__   __mé__   *isteach*   *ar*   *an*   *phost*   *sin*
put.COND.1SG   I   in   on   DEF   job   EMPH
'I would apply for that job'

In my view, the ungrammaticality of (17) then means that the invariant form of the autonomous verb independent of the person and number features of the patient, as seen in (16), cannot be taken as an argument for or against the subject status of the patient.

In sum, both the morphological form, the word order and the possibility for resumption indicates that a pronominal patient of the autonomous verb is the object of the

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[9] A pronominal patient may be indicated by the autonomous morphology in Old Irish when the patient argument is a phonologically null third person pronoun, cf. section 4.1.2.2. The lack of this possibility in Modern Irish is caused by the change from canonical passive to active impersonal as described in section 4.2.

[10] It is possible to find exceptions to this rule in recent literature, particularly from the Munster dialect area. For instance in *Séadna* by Munster writer Peadar Ua Laoghaire (1907: 70) we read the following example, where the third person plural form *táid* occurs together with a plural noun subject *na fir eile* – 'the other men'.

(i) (Ua Laoghaire 1907: 70)

__táid__   __na__   __fir__   __eile__   *ag*   *teacht*
be.PRES.3PL   DEF   men   other   PROG   come.VN
'the other men are coming'

Further examples are found in Brian Ó Cuív's (1944) dialect description from West Muskerry in Cork, also in the Munster dialect area, in texts transcribed from one of his informants Amhlaoibh Ó Loinsigh, who was 71 years of age when the book was published (1944: x). One example from Ó Loinsigh's texts is provided in (ii):

(ii) (Ó Cuív 1944: 80, 8)

is   *sleamhain*   __atáid__   __na__   __leacacha__
COP   slippery   REL.be.PRES.3PL   DEF   stones
'and it's slippery, the stones are'

clause. This conclusion is taken to apply to autonomous patients in general, independent of their morphological category.

1.3.2.2   The subject function of the first argument

I showed in the previous section that the second argument of an autonomous verb, if there is one, should be taken to be the object of the clause. This conclusion raises the question of the subject function, of whether there is a subject of the autonomous verb at all, and if so what the nature of this subject is. In this section I discuss the arguments of Stenson (1989) and McCloskey (2007) in favour of positing a syntactically active, phonologically null impersonal subject with the autonomous verb.

The arguments in favour of positing an impersonal active subject may be divided into two groups, negative arguments, where the ungrammaticality of certain phenomena indicate that the impersonal subject analysis is correct, and positive arguments, where the analysis of certain phenomena appear to require an impersonal active subject. I will be treating these two groups separately for clarity. The theory behind these arguments will be provided in chapter 2.

The two most important negative arguments are the ungrammaticality of the agentive *by*-phrase with the autonomous verb and the fact that verbs that take an expletive subject cannot occur in the autonomous form. Intuitively, the agentive *by*-phrase is expected not to occur with the impersonal subject, since these two arguments would then be realising the same participant role of the verb; this situation is illustrated in (18).

(18)   The ungrammaticality of the agentive *by*-phrase with the autonomous verb
           (Stenson 1989: 382).

*__buaileadh__   Ciarraí {ag, le }   Gaillimh
bit.PAST.AUT   Kerry   by, with   Galway
Intended: 'Kerry was beaten by Galway' [in a hurling match or similar].

The second negative argument deals with verbs that take an expletive subject in the active form. Two such examples are given in (19):

(19)   Complements with expletive subjects in their active form (Stenson 1989: 389)

a.

chuir   sé   sneachta
put.PAST   EXPL   snow
'it snowed'

b.

tá   sé   deacair   Gaeilge   a   fhoghlaim
be.PRES   EXPL   difficult Irish   PART   learn.VN
'it is difficult to learn Irish'

Predicates like these are shown by Stenson to be impossible in the autonomous form, as illustrated in (20). This ungrammaticality would be unexpected if the autonomous verb were to be analysed as lacking a thematic subject argument; on the other hand, this ungrammaticality is what we expect when we take the autonomous verb to have a phonologically null thematic subject.

(20)   Ungrammaticality of predicates that take an expletive subject in the autonomous form (Stenson 1989: 389-390).

a.

cuireadh   sneachta
put.PAST.AUT   snow
Intended: 'it snowed'.

b.

táthar   deacair   Gaeilge   a   fhoghlaim
be.PRES.AUT   difficult Irish   PART   learn
Intended: 'it is difficult to learn Irish'

The positive arguments in favour of the silent impersonal subject of the autonomous verb concern phenomena that are taken to require a subject in order to appear in the clause. The following arguments will be discussed in turn below: I will show that autonomous verbs may appear with subjective adverb material, with subordinate non-finite clauses where the referential null-subject argument of the non-finite clause is controlled by the phonologically null subject of the autonomous verb, and with reciprocal pronouns bound by the autonomous subject. In addition the autonomous subject of a raising verb may carry the patient role of a subordinate predicate where the agent has been passivised.

18

One of Stenson's examples of a subjective adverb is repeated in (21). In this example the phrase *go toilteanach* – 'willingly' – is taken to require a subject which it can modify.

(21)   The autonomous verb with subject-oriented adverbs (quoted in Stenson 1989: 391 from LsigC 27)

dúradar	*le*	*Fianna Fáil*	*go*	**n**glacfaí	**go**	**toilteanach**
say.PAST.3PL	with	FF	that	accept.COND.AUT	ADV	willing

le	*ainm*	*Shéamais uí Chonghaile*
with	name	SÓC

'they told Fianna Fáil that they would willingly accept the name of Séamas Ó Conghaile'

Example (22) illustrates that the autonomous subject may be the antecedent of the phonologically null subject of a non-finite clause. In this sentence, the subject of the modal verb *caithfí* has the same reference as the subject of the non-finite form *cur* – 'put'.

(22)   The impersonal subject as antecedent of the PRO subject of a non-finite verb

shíl	*muid*	*go*	**g**caithfí	*mná*	*a*	*chur*	*faoin*	*gcorp*
think.PAST	we	that	must.COND.AUT	women	PART	put.VN	under.DEF	corpse

'we thought we would have to put women to carry the corpse' (CnC 200)

The question of reflexive and reciprocal pronouns and how they interact with the autonomous verb is slightly complicated. We expect that the autonomous subject, just like subjects of regular active verbs, would be able to bind reflexives and reciprocals, but as it happens, this is not entirely the case. Nancy Stenson's informants judge reflexives and reciprocals to be ungrammatical when bound by the autonomous subject argument. Her examples illustrating this fact are shown in (23):

(23)   Ungrammaticality of reflexives and reciprocals following Nancy Stenson (1989: 384)

       a. reflexive

*gortaíodh   é   féin[11]
hurt.PAST.AUT   him   self
Intended: 'someone hurt himself'

       b. reciprocal

*maraíodh   a chéile
kill.PAST.AUT   each other
Intended: 'someone killed each other'

McCloskey (2007: 829-830) suggests an independent reason for why the reflexive cannot be bound by the impersonal subject. As seen in (a) above, the reflexive in Irish is formed by adding *féin* – 'self' to a personal pronoun; in (a) above this pronoun is the masculine third person singular *é*. McCloskey suggests that the impersonal subject lacks the necessary person and number features to bind the reflexive when the reflexive itself carries these features.

McCloskey (830-831) furthermore shows that the reciprocal may be bound by the autonomous subject 'if conditions are right'. He provides attested examples, but specifies that not all of these examples are accepted by his informants out of context. One of his examples is shown in (24), where the impersonal subject of the auxiliary *táthar*, present autonomous of the substantive verb, binds the reciprocal object *a chéile*.

(24)   Reciprocal bound by the autonomous subject (McCloskey 2007: 830)

táthar   a'strócadh   a chéile [12]
be.PRES.AUT   PROG'tear.VN   each other
'people are tearing each other apart'

The next examples (25) show the autonomous form of the substantive verb. In these examples the forms of the substantive verb occur together with the participle called the verbal adjective (see Stenson 1981: 145-156 for a discussion of these and other passive structures in Modern Irish).

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[11] The element *féin* can have either a reflexive or an emphatic interpretation (McCloskey and Hale 1984: 493). This example is ungrammatical on the *reflexive* reading of *féin*.

[12] McCloskey (2007) attributes this example to *Unaga* by Eoghan Ó Neachtain.

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(25)	The autonomous form in perfective passive clauses (Stenson 1989: 392-393)

a.

táthar	*maraithe*
be.PRES.AUT	kill.VADJ
'one has been killed / is dead'

b.

táthar	*buailte*
be.PRES.AUT	beat.VADJ
'they've been beaten'

Stenson (1989: 392-393) takes examples such as those in (25) to show that the autonomous verb must have a subject, since the subject in these examples realise the patient argument of the subordinate predicate. The agent argument of the subordinate predicate has been passivised; this argument can also be realised as an agent phrase, as shown in (26).

(26)	The perfective passive with agent phrase (Stenson 1989: 393)

táthar	*buailte*	*againn*
be.PRES.AUT	beat.VADJ	by.1PL
'they have been beaten by us'

At this point there remains to mention one other argument that Stenson (1989: 385-386) provides in favour of the impersonal active subject. She shows a contrast between one-place unaccusative verbs in the active form and what she suggests are two-place causative verbs in the autonomous form. Her examples are repeated in (27):

(27)	The inchoative/causative alternation following Stenson (1989: 385-386)

a.

bhris	*an*	*fhuinneog*
break.PAST	DEF	window
'the window broke'

b.

bhris	*sí*
break.PAST	it
'it broke'

c.

briseadh   *an*   *fhuinneoig* [sic]
break.PAST.AUT   DEF   window
'the window was broken'

d.

briseadh   *í*
break.PAST.AUT   it
'it was broken'

Stenson's argument is based on the intuition that there is a contrast between (a-b) and (c-d) in terms of the implication of an outside agency. She suggests that only the examples in (a-b) may express a 'spontaneous event', while the autonomous forms in (c-d) strongly imply outside agency. Based on this contrast she argues that it is necessary to posit a silent pronominal subject in the autonomous forms.

The above examples are not the full story of the interaction of the autonomous form with unaccusative argument structure, however. I will show in chapter 5 that the autonomous form may express one-place change-of-state meaning with no implication of outside agency.

1.3.2.3 *McCloskey's (2007) Minimalist analysis*

I showed in section 1.3.1 that the Modern Irish descriptive grammars list the autonomous form next to the other person-and-number forms in the paradigm, and previously in this section that there is good evidence for a silent impersonal subject indicated by the autonomous form. In this section I tie these two observations together and discuss the theoretic mechanics of McCloskey's (2007) analysis of the Modern Irish autonomous verb.

McCloskey's (2007: 839-842) analysis is quite simple in terms of content and formal apparatus. As indicated by the descriptive grammars, he equates the impersonal subject with the silent pronoun subjects of the active synthetic verb forms. Specifically, he views the impersonal subject as a silent pronominal 'with interpretive properties similar to, or identical with, those of arbitrary PRO' (2007: 839). The specific structure underlying subject-verb agreement in Irish according to McCloskey is sketched in (28). I have called the dominating mother node in this structure (finite) Tense but as McCloskey (2007: 839) points out, this is the structure through which agreement takes place in e.g. DP and PP as

well, giving rise to possessor agreement in DP and agreement between a preposition and its object.

(28)   Subject-verb agreement in Modern Irish following McCloskey (2007: 839).

TenseP

Tense
$\begin{bmatrix} \alpha \text{ Num} \\ \beta \text{ Pers} \end{bmatrix}$

pro
$\begin{bmatrix} \alpha \text{ Num} \\ \beta \text{ Pers} \end{bmatrix}$
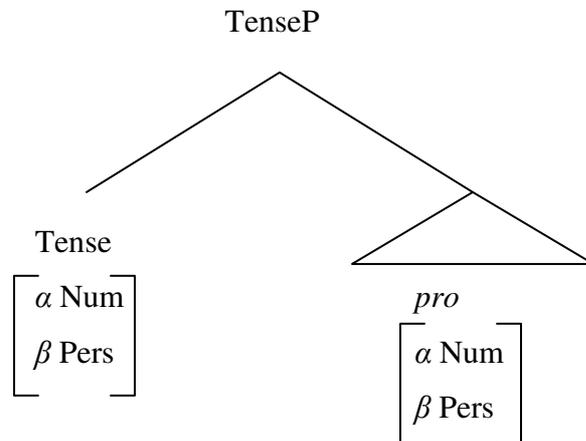
The Tense head of an active synthetic verb carries person and number features that agree with the person and number features on *pro* as shown in (28). Similarly, the Tense head of an autonomous verb will carry a feature *Arb*, which agrees with a feature *Arb* on the impersonal *pro* subject. This agreement mechanism results in active synthetic and autonomous verb forms like those illustrated in (29). In (a), the active synthetic form *cuirim* indicates a first person singular subject while the autonomous form *cuireadh* in (b) indicates the impersonal subject.

(29)   Modern Irish subject-verb agreement

      a.   Active synthetic verb

cuirim   *i gcás an   scéal a   chuala   ón   gCriothanach*
put.PRES.1SG in case DEF story REL hear.PAST from.DEF C.
'I take as an example the story (I) heard from the Criothanach' (NhAóT 100)

      b.   Autonomous verb

cuireadh   *fáilte   roimhe   agus tugadh   cathaoir dó*
put.PAST.AUT wecome before.3SG.M and give.PAST.AUT chair to.3SG.M
'they welcomed him and gave him a chair' (CiD 45)

There is one potential problem with the above analysis, and specifically with equating the autonomous pro subject with the synthetic forms. McCloskey and Hale (1984: 493-496), in their article 'Person-Number Inflection in Irish', discuss a number of particles

and enclitics that in general are taken to attach to basic pronouns. They show how these elements attach both to overt pronouns and to synthetic verb forms; this fact is subsequently taken as one argument in favour of regarding the synthetic verb forms as containing a phonologically null subject. However, as pointed out by Stenson (1989: 396-398), the autonomous inflection does not behave in the same way as the synthetic forms in terms of these and other processes in the language (like co-ordination and serving as the head of a relative clause).[13]

One of the abovementioned elements, which may serve as an example in the discussion, is an enclitic suffix that attach to pronouns to provide contrastive stress (Ó Siadhail 2000: 8; *New Irish grammar by the Christian Brothers* 2002: 84; Ó hAnluain 1985: 148-149). The examples in (30) illustrate how this suffix may attach to a separate pronoun (a) and an active synthetic verb form (b), but not to an autonomous form (c).

(30) Emphatic stress clitics[14]

a. may attach to an overt pronoun (*mise < mé + -se*)

tá	***mise***	*sásta,*	*fosta*
be.PRES	I.EMPH	satisfied	also

'I too am satisfied' (CiD 50)

b. may attach to a synthetic form

"tá	*Labhras*	*a*	*gabhail*	*a*	*bheith*	*'na*	*shagart,*
be.PRES	Labhras	PART	go.VN	PART	be.VN	in.his	priest,

chluinim-sa"	*arsa*	*fear*	*eile*
hear.PAST.1SG-EMPH	say	man	other

' "Labhras is going to be a priest, I heard" said another man' (Séamus 'ac Grianna: *Mo Dhá Róisín*, 33 – *Tobar*)

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[13] For this reason among others, Stenson (1989) concludes that the autonomous subject cannot be *pro*; she suggests instead arbitrary PRO as the best candidate.

[14] The interaction of the abovementioned emphatic suffixes with the autonomous form is particularly interesting from a diachronic perspective. As will be shown in section 4.1.2.2.2, the ancestors of these suffixes may e.g. attach to the third person forms of the Old Irish autonomous verb. Thus they provide one argument in favour of regarding the Old Irish third person forms as passive forms expressing a pronominal patient subject.

      c.   may not attach to an autonomous form

buaileadh-sa   *Ciarraí*
beat.PAST.AUT-EMPH   Kerry
Intended: 'Kerry was beaten' (Stenson 1989: 397)

McCloskey (2007: 842n) suggests that the differences that Stenson points out between synthetic active forms and autonomous forms are due to general properties of impersonal pronouns. As regards the emphatic suffixes illustrated above, he suggests that these attach only to focused pronouns, which is implied to come into conflict with the properties of the autonomous subject. Specifically, the autonomous subject is seen as de-topicalised; this property will be discussed in detail in the information structure analyses of the Modern Irish autonomous verb to follow in section 1.3.3.

1.3.2.4   Summary and the subjectless structures

In sum, it has been shown in the previous sections that the current consensus concerning the autonomous verb is that it contains a phonologically null subject with an impersonal interpretation. It follows from this analysis and from independent considerations concerning pronominal case marking etc. that the patient argument of the autonomous verb is the object. The arguments in favour of this analysis will be revisited in chapter 2, where the theory behind them will be explained and provided with a cross-linguistic background. Additionally certain topics from this section will be picked up again in chapter 3. These topics are the use of the agent phrase with the autonomous verb, unaccusative verbs in the autonomous form and the semantics of the autonomous subject.

There is also in Modern Irish a closed group of verbs that cannot be analysed as containing an active impersonal subject in the autonomous form. Rather, these verbs can form subjectless structures in the autonomous form, as suggested by McCloskey (2007: 843-847) and Stenson (1989: 387-388). Some examples of these verbs are provided in (31).

(31)   Examples of subjectless structures from Stenson (1989: 387)

      a.

cailleadh   *a*   *hathair*
lose.PAST.AUT   her   father
'her father died'

b.

báthadh   *naonúr* *iascairí*
drown.PAST.AUT nine fishermen
'nine fishermen drowned'

c.

feictear *dom* *go* *bhfuil* *an* *ceart* *agat*
see.PRES.AUT to.1SG that be.PRES DEF right at.2SG
'it seems to me that you are right'

d.

casadh   *orm* *é*
turn.PAST.AUT on.1SG him
'I met him'

In (a) above, the predicate is the autonomous form *cailleadh*, from the verb *caill* – 'to lose'. In the autonomous form this verb can take on the idiomatic meaning 'to die'. The one argument must be taken to be the object of the clause due to the same arguments that were discussed in the previous sections. Similarly in (b), the autonomous form *báthadh* – 'is drowned' – takes one nominal object argument. Common to both of these autonomous forms is that they are used in contexts where it is clear that there is no agent performing the killing or drowning referred to. In other words there is no phonologically null subject indicated by these forms, and they are therefore taken to be subjectless.

In the two latter examples, (c) and (d), all the potential arguments are present in the clause. In (c) the two arguments are an experiencer, referred to following the preposition *do*, and a finite subordinate clause. This autonomous usage expresses psychological states like 'seem to' in (c) or 'imagine', 'appear to', etc. Example (d) has a reciprocal meaning, and expresses a meeting between two participants. These participants are expressed as an object – the object pronoun *é* in (d) – and in a prepositional phrase – *orm*. Neither of these autonomous forms have meanings that allow for an argument other than those that are overtly expressed. In other words there is no candidate for a phonologically null active subject in these autonomous forms either, and they are for this reason considered subjectless as well. The subjectless autonomous forms are discussed in depth in chapter 5.

1.3.3 Information structure analyses of the autonomous verb

In this section I review to information structure analyses of the autonomous verb in Modern Irish (section 1.3.3.1) and Old Irish (section 1.3.3.2). While there are differences between the approaches and material of the studies under discussion, they all reach similar conclusions, namely that the autonomous verb, in both the Old and Modern periods of the language, appears to have the same information structure function – to delete or defocus or background the agent and to topicalise or foreground the patient.

1.3.3.1 Modern Irish

This section discusses the information structure analysis of the Modern Irish autonomous verb found in Noonan (1994) (section 1.3.3.1.1) and Hansson (2004) (section 1.3.3.1.2).

1.3.3.1.1 Noonan (1994)

In his (1994) paper, Michael Noonan discusses the syntax and information structure of the autonomous verb and the periphrastic passive in Modern Irish. Concerning the autonomous verb, he concludes that it conforms to the functional characteristics of a passive but not to the structural characteristics. In this section I review his arguments in favour of this conclusion.

Noonan takes the demotion of the subject to an oblique and the promotion of the direct object to subject to be the formal characteristics of a passive construction (1994: 279). He lists several properties of the autonomous verb to show that this grammatical function change does not take place with the autonomous verb (1994: 284-290). The most important of his arguments involves the claim that the autonomous verb has no grammatical subject. In other words, Noonan's view of the syntax of the Modern Irish autonomous verb diverges slightly from the current state of the art as it was presented previously in this chapter, where it was concluded that the autonomous verb indicates a phonologically null subject. Noonan's syntactic arguments overlap with the arguments previously discussed, and will not be repeated again here; the main point is that Noonan's (1994) conclusion concerning the absence of the impersonal subject in the autonomous verb does not contradict his point that the formal syntactic properties of the autonomous verb differ from the usual syntactic characteristics of the passive.

Having established that the autonomous verb is not structurally a passive, Noonan (1994) goes on to show that it corresponds to the functional characteristics of a passive. He lists three properties that he takes to belong to a prototypical passive (1994: 280); these are listed in (32) and are based on the works of Langacker and Munro (1975), Givón (1981; 1989) and Shibatani (1985).

    (32)   Functional properties of the prototypical passive
              a. patient topicalisation
              b. agent deletion/defocusing
              c. stativisation

Noonan (1994: 291-293) uses two topicality measurements, 'referential distance' and 'persistence', in order to measure the information structure status of the autonomous arguments. These measurements are taken from Givón (1983) and Thompson (1989). Both of them measure the topicality of a reference by assessing its predictability and local importance respectively, as described by Noonan (1994: 308n).

Referential distance measures the predictability of a reference by counting the number of clauses since it was last referred to. If the previous reference is in the previous clause, the referential distance is 1. If the previous reference is in the second-to-last clause, the referential distance is 2, and so on. 20 is the arbitrary maximum that a referential distance can be; 20 is also the value automatically assigned to a new reference (e.g. an indefinite).

Persistence measures the local importance of a reference by counting the number of times it reoccurs in the following ten clauses. If the reference occurs in all the following clauses, its persistence value is 10, while it has a persistence value of 0 if it occurs in none of the ten following clauses.

Applying the method just described to a corpus consisting of 400 written clauses and 400 spoken clauses, Noonan (1994: 291-293) concludes that the patient argument of an autonomous verb is similar in topicality values to the intransitive subject of an active verb and unlike an active object. The results for his written corpus are repeated in the table in (33). He points out that all the clauses in the written sample (and with two exceptions in the spoken sample) are 'notionally transitive'.

(33)   Topicality of autonomous and active arguments, written corpus (Noonan 1994: 291)

	Referential distance	Persistence	n
Autonomous patient	8.76	2.43	52
Active intransitive subject	9.00	2.22	46
Active transitive subject	5.67	2.98	84
Active transitive object	14.76	.35	84

As mentioned, Noonan (1994: 291-293) observes from these numbers that the patient argument of the autonomous verb is similar in topicality values to an active intransitive subject and dissimilar in topicality values to the active transitive object. From this observation he concludes that the patient argument of the autonomous verb has been 'functionally promoted' to the topicality of an active impersonal subject even though it remains a syntactic object. In other words, the autonomous verb corresponds to the first functional property of a prototypical passive mentioned in (32), namely patent topicalisation.

The second property mentioned in (32) is agent deletion or defocusing. Noonan argues that this property is present as well since none of the clauses he considers are, in his words, 'agentful', which I take to mean that the agent is expressed neither as a syntactic subject nor as an agent phrase (recall that Noonan considers the autonomous verb entirely without a grammatical subject).

The third property mentioned in (32), stativisation, is not a property of the autonomous verb; Noonan illustrates this point with examples of the autonomous verb used in the imperative and progressive aspects.

Finally it should be asked to what extent Noonan's (1994) conclusions concerning agent defocusing in the autonomous verb are affected by a syntactic analysis of the autonomous verb that includes a silent impersonal active subject along the lines of McCloskey (2007). I would suggest that the impersonal active subject shows a similar lack of topicality due to its semantics. The semantics of the impersonal active subject will be discussed in depth in section 3.2.

1.3.3.1.2 Hansson (2004)

In her PhD dissertation (2004), Karin Hansson studies, among other things, the use of the Modern Irish autonomous verb. Hansson classifies the autonomous verb using two sets of variables (2004: 43, 79-80). In this section I discuss the variables that are the most relevant for studying the information structure of the autonomous verb. This set of variables include properties such as the way the patient of the autonomous verb is expressed in terms of morphological case marking, as well as definiteness, given and new information and continuity and co-reference with an active subject. These variables are relevant for the information structure of sentences with the autonomous verb since they concern the question of how information is presented throughout a given clause and its context.

Hansson applies these variables to a corpus of c. 600.000 words (2004: 37), out of which she finds 2.956 instances of the autonomous verb (2004: 66). Her corpus is evenly distributed between the three dialect areas of Ulster, Connacht and Munster, and consists of written texts published between 1917 and 1967 (2004: 37-39). The texts are all narrative but are from different genres (autobiographical and fictional novels, short story collections and newspaper essays).

Concerning the expression of the autonomous patient, she notes that the patient of the autonomous verb, if there is one, may take the form of a definite or an indefinite NP, a relative particle or a subordinate clause (2004: 51). The classification of given vs. new is based on whether or not there has been an explicit mention of a certain referent previously in the same chapter or short story (2004: 54): a patient is classified as given if such a mention has been made.

The feature of continuity concerns co-reference. An autonomous patient is said to have continuity if it co-refers with an element before or after in the same clause or in the preceding or following clause (2004: 58). Co-reference with an active subject is restricted to the same range as continuity, i.e. before or after in the same clause or in the preceding or following clause. Co-reference with an active subject is in other words a sub-set of the continuity feature (2004: 62).

In sum, Hansson (2004: 103-105) reaches results that supports Noonan's (1994) conclusions, namely that the patient of the autonomous verb is more topical than its (non-overt) agent and correspondingly that the autonomous verb has much the same information structure properties expected of a passive. The difference between the two studies is, as Hansson (2004: 34) points out, that Noonan's material (the written and the spoken both) is not described in detail, which renders difficult the evaluation of his results.

In this section I describe the conclusion of Nicole Müller's (1994) paper on the autonomous verb in Old Irish. The central topic of her paper is, in her own words, 'the usage of the passive construction, i.e. the functions it fulfils in context' (1994: 192). It will be shown that she reaches mainly the same conclusions that Hansson (2003) and Noonan (1994) did for Modern Irish, namely that the information structure function of the autonomous verb is – in Müller's terms – to 'foreground' a patient argument if it is an NP, and to 'background' the agent argument. In the following I discuss her arguments in favour of this conclusion. It will also become clear that Müller does not base the discussion on a specific syntactic analysis, but rather that she lets information structure considerations affect her analysis of the autonomous syntax.

Her discussion centres on the basic facts of the morphosyntax of the Old Irish autonomous verb. Some of these were described in section 1.1; I provide a summary of the relevant facts in the following. Crucially, there are two autonomous verb forms for each category of tense/aspect/mood. One form is used when the patient is in the third person plural, while the other form is used everywhere else. There is no overt expression of third person pronominal patients. When the patient is a first or second person pronoun, it is expressed as an infixed pronoun, similar to active pronominal objects. These facts are illustrated by the paradigm in (34) (from Thurneysen 1998: 349).

(34)   Paradigm of the Old Irish verb.

	Singular	Plural
1st person	no-*m*-charthar PREV-1SG-love.AUT 'I am loved'	no-*n*-carthar PREV-1PL-love.AUT 'we are loved'
2nd person	no-*t*-charthar PREV-2SG-love.AUT 'you (sg.) are loved'	no-*b*-carthar PREV-2PL-love.AUT 'you (pl.) are loved'
3rd person	carthair love.AUT.3SG 'he/she is loved'	**cartair** love.AUT.3PL 'they are loved'

When the patient is a noun, it is marked with nominative case and it agrees in number with the autonomous form. The agent phrase is possible, but occurs apparently only with definite complements and only together with transitive verbs.

Müller (1994: 196-197) takes Foley and Van Valin (1985) and their term 'pivot' as her theoretical basis. She quotes the following definition of 'pivot' from Foley and Van Valin: a pivot is 'any NP type to which a particular grammatical process is sensitive'. The pivot will be the subject in many languages. Müller suggests that the choice of which argument to be the pivot in early Irish, as in e.g. German and English, is controlled by discourse requirements, i.e. that these languages have a 'pragmatic pivot'.

The unmarked choice for the pivot in early Irish is the agent. The use of the autonomous verb is taken to be one possibility when discourse requirements demand that the agent not be the pivot. It was mentioned above that two such discourse requirements are distinguished: to background the agent and to foreground the patient. Each of these will be discussed in the following.

Müller (1994: 197) mentions three different types of agent backgrounding. First of all the agent may be removed from the subject position because it is not possible to identify it exactly. Secondly it may be so well known in the context that it is redundant as the subject/pivot. Müller uses the examples in (35) to illustrate these two categories.

(35)   Backgrounding the agent[15] (TBC-1 43:1385-1386)

   a. unspecified agent

Cladar   *a   ḟert   íarom.*
dig.PRES.AUT   his   grave   then
'His grave is dug then.'

Sátir   *a   lia.*
erect.PRES.AUT   his   headstone
'His headstone is put up.'

Scríbthair   *a   ainm   n-ogaim*
write.PRES.AUT   his   name   ogam
'His name is written in ogam.'

Agair   *a   gubae.*
celebrate.PRES.AUT   his   mourning
'He is mourned.'

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[15] Unless otherwise noted, the translations are Müller's and the glosses mine in this section.

b. familiar agent

Ansait	*and sin*	*trá*	***corrubad***	*and*
stay.PRET.3PL	there	then	slay.PRET/PERF.AUT	there

Cáur mac Da Láth	*7*	*Láth mac Da Bró*
C	and	L

7	*Foirc mac Trí nAignech*	*7*	*Srubgaile mac Eóbith.*
and	F	and	S

Ar	*galaib*	*óenḟir*	***ro***	***gáeta***	*uli.*
on	combat	one.man	PERF	kill.PRET.AUT	all

'They stayed there then until Cáur mac Da Láth and Láth mac Da Bró and Foirc mac Trí nAignech and Srubgaile mac Eóbith were slain. They were all killed in single combat.' (TBC-1 53:1734)

Finally the agent need not be completely removed, but can be left behind as an agent phrase. Müller (1994: 197) notes that 'the typical AG [agent – JG] in a passive [autonomous – JG] clause in early Irish is human, definite and known'. One of Müller's examples of the agent phrase in an autonomous clause is quoted in part in (36):

(36)   Agent phrase

má	*tá*	*culén*	*do*	*ṡíl*	*in*	*chon*	*út*	*i*	*nHérind,*
if	be.PRES	whelp	of	seed	DEF	dog	that	in	Ireland

ailēbthair	***lim***-*sa*
rear.FUT.AUT	with.1.SG-EMPH

'if there is a whelp of the seed of that dog in Ireland, I will raise it' (TBC-LL 25:903)

Notice in (36) that the patient of the autonomous form *ailébthar* – 'it will be reared' – is the previously mentioned whelp, which is introduced in the conditional clause and then foregrounded in the autonomous clause. As such, this example serves as the introduction to the question of exactly how the patient is foregrounded in an autonomous clause following Müller (1994).

According to Müller (1994: 198-199), there are in principle two possible interpretations of how the early Irish autonomous verb foregrounds the patient. She suggests that the patient is foregrounded if and only if that patient is either a) in the third person, or

b) a full NP. She suggests that determining which of these possibilities is correct depends on the interpretation of the grammatical properties of the autonomous form.

In Müller's opinion alternative a) has the advantage that there is no problem with the third person plural form: under this approach, the plural passive form represents simply the regular rules of number agreement in the language. A plural form agrees with a plural noun phrase and indicates a plural pronominal subject. However, the disadvantage of the a) approach according to Müller has to do with the first and second person patients. She claims that it is problematic to say that the same verb form is used at the same time both to indicate a third person singular patient as well as together with first and second person infixed pronoun patients, since the autonomous verb obviously cannot indicate a third person patient when it occurs together with first and second person patients.

Müller (1994: 198) says that she herself tends towards alternative b), that is, that the patient is foregrounded if and only if it is a full NP. This option leaves a pronominal third person patient to be inferred from the context rather than indicated by the verb form. The plural form may be seen as a problem for this view; however, Müller suggests that the use of the plural form arises out of the general rules of subject agreement in the language, and that this is extended 'by semantic analogy' to apply to plural patients in the autonomous verb, whether or not the patient is an NP and therefore the subject, or a pronoun to be inferred from the context. The b) analysis furthermore raises the question of why NP patients and pronominal patients are treated differently from one another. Müller suggests the explanation is found in a mechanism that only foregrounds and casts as pivot/subject the patient if the patient is to receive 'special focus' in the clause.

Müller suggests two motivations for casting an NP patient as the pivot/subject of the clause: if the NP represents new information, it is introduced as a 'new topic', i.e. a piece of new information that is commented on simultaneously to its introduction. If the NP patient represents given information on the other hand, it is cast as the subject in order to increase its salience, for instance because it is to serve as the topic of the following discourse, or because it has been introduced some time ago and is no longer immediately accessible to the hearer/reader. Müller provides the examples in (37) to illustrate a 'new topic' (a) and a given NP patient as subject (b):

(37)   Motivations for promoting an NP patient in an autonomous clause (Müller 1994: 197 and 199)

a. new topic

ebéltair   culén din   chúani chétna lem-sa   duit
raise.FUT.AUT whelp of.DEF   litter   same   with.1SG-EMPH for.2SG
'a whelp of the same litter will be raised by me for you' (TBC-1 19:598; my translation)

b. given information

ro   irgabad   in   mac bec   isin   charput
PERF seize.PRET.AUT   DEF boy small in.DEF   chariot
'the little boy was seized in the chariot' (TBC-LL 32:1192)

In (a) the whelp in question has not been mentioned before, but is here both introduced and commented on – the speaker will raise it – at the same time. In (b) Müller suggests that while the patient is given and familiar in the context, he is promoted to subject and referred to as 'the little boy' in order to emphasise his youth.

A pronominal patient represents given information, and Müller (1994: 199) suggests that as such it is it is identifiable and accessible at once for the speaker and hearer. For that reason she argues that there is no need to break with the unmarked pattern of *not* casting the patient as the subject/pivot. While she does not mention the first and second person infixed pronoun patients explicitly, it must be assumed that the above holds for those as well.

Summing up: I have shown in this section that Müller (1994) views the use of the Old Irish autonomous verb in terms of information structure as a strategy that demotes/removes the agent from view and promotes the patient. The agent is demoted because it is unknown or because it is so well known that it need not be mentioned. It may also be demoted but not removed from view, showing up instead as an agent phrase. The patient is seen as promoted to subject if it is a noun phrase; as such the patient can be either given or new information. When the patient is expressed as a pronoun – and therefore represents given information – Müller argues that it is not promoted to subject but realised either as an unstressed infixed pronoun or left unexpressed. We will see in chapter 5 that I will be arguing in favour of a slightly different syntactic analysis than Müller's of these Old Irish facts.

1.4 Summary

In this chapter I have presented the object of study and hypothesis of this thesis, and I have introduced the state of the art knowledge concerning these topics. In sum it has been shown that the Irish autonomous verb is a special verb form that occurs in every combination of tense, aspect and mood, and with practically any verb independent of its original argument structure. At no stage of the language does the autonomous verb form occur with an overt subject realising the agent argument.

In Old Irish, the agent argument of the autonomous form has, in the main, been passivised. The patient argument, if there is one, will be either the subject of the autonomous verb or the object, depending on the person and number features of the patient. Between the Old and Modern Irish periods, the possibility for the patient to be the subject disappears. In Modern Irish, there is consensus for an analysis where the autonomous verb is said to occur in an active construction with an impersonal subject. In this analysis the patient of the autonomous verb is the object of the clause while the agent is a phonologically null subject with an impersonal interpretation; this subject is indicated by the autonomous morphology.

I will also argue that the autonomous verb occurs, at all stages of the language, in subjectless clauses that exist next to and independently of the change from passive to active. Implicit in this description of the autonomous verb is the idea that the autonomous verb form can occur in more than one type of construction; this synchronic variation will be taken as one explanation for the diachronic change we know took place.

Chapter 2: Context

In the previous chapter I presented the claims of this thesis and the previous research on the topic of the autonomous verb. I introduced three main points to be considered for when the Irish autonomous verb is analysed in the subsequent chapters: first, the Modern Irish autonomous verb is seen as an active verb with a phonologically null subject. Secondly, the claim is made that the ancestor of the Modern Irish autonomous verb was a passive verb in Old Irish. Finally it is suggested that the autonomous verb can be used in bare subjectless constructions at least in Modern Irish and possibly also in Old Irish, a usage which would exist independently of the development from passive to active impersonal.

In this chapter I describe the context of this analysis and its claims, in terms of theory and relevant background. Since this thesis is a linguistic work and my object of study a verb form in the Irish language, the topics of this chapter stretch from general assumptions on the nature of language to narrow theoretic definitions of the construction types in question, to an overview of the periods of the Irish language and the texts I have used as data for each period.

In sum, in section 2.1 I present an overview of the historical periods of the Irish language and the literature I have used as data for each period. In section 2.2 I provide an overview of Lexical Functional Grammar (LFG), the syntactic theory that I use to formalise my analysis. It will be shown that LFG is a generative theory with a lexicalist focus and a parallel architecture in which separate levels of representation stand in formally defined relationships with each other. This section includes LFG-based definitions of the construction types involved, specifically the canonical and impersonal passive, the active subject impersonal (ASI construction) and the inchoative. The status of these construction types is subsequently discussed from a general and cross-linguistic perspective. In section 2.3 I provide an overview of the theoretic background for the diachronic analysis in the thesis; this overview will be tied to the general generative approach of the thesis. Section 2.4 provides some additional grammatical context for the main analysis; specifically, I discuss modal verbs as well as some general theoretic and cross-linguistic assumptions concerning the semantics of the subject of the Modern Irish autonomous verb.

2.1 Irish language and literature

In this section I describe the historical periods of the Irish language as well as the texts I have used as data for my study of the autonomous verb. A full list of primary sources with abbreviations, as well as original year of publication and year of edition used for the Modern Irish texts, is found on page 243 just ahead of the main bibliography.

I have chosen to use narrative prose works for the most part, with some few exceptions such as the Old Irish glosses. I use written data for Modern Irish of today as well, and I restrict myself mainly to material from the first half of the twentieth century. There are two main reasons for this methodological choice. First of all, I am not solely interested in the syntax of the autonomous verb, but will also be considering the uses and functions of this verb in a written context. This research interest, coupled with the obvious fact that I am forced to rely on written data for the earlier linguistic periods, leads to a greater sense of continuity in my data when I use written texts for every period of the language. Secondly, as will be discussed below, much of the Irish of the present day is heavily influenced by English. While the development of the autonomous verb under the influence of English would be an interesting topic in itself, I view it as outside of the main topic of this thesis, i.e. the development of the autonomous verb from Old Irish and onwards.

I have not been concerned with the Modern Irish dialects in my selection of data for the most recent period of the language, since there does not appear to be significant differences concerning the autonomous verb between the three dialect areas (Connacht, Munster and Ulster). Karin Hansson (2004), having studied the comparative frequency and use of the autonomous verb, as well as the passive progressive construction, in the three dialect areas, shows that there is some variation in the frequency of the autonomous verb but rather little variation in how the autonomous verb is used (2004: 123-124).

2.1.1 The stages of the Irish language and their texts

The three main periods of the Irish language are Old Irish, Middle Irish and Modern Irish. In this section I provide approximate dates for these periods and detail some of the characteristic traits of each. I will also provide an overview of the texts I use as data for each period and how I have collected data from these sources.

2.1.1.1 *Old Irish*

The central period of Old Irish is dated to the eighth and ninth centuries, though see McCone (1994: 63 and references therein) for a more fine-grained distinction between Early (seventh century) and Classical Old Irish. The most important source of Old Irish in the eighth and ninth centuries is a set of contemporary glosses, i.e. Irish explanations of Latin texts, where the Irish material is found in the margin or between the lines of the Latin manuscripts. These glosses have been preserved in manuscripts on the Continent. The main collection of the glosses is found in the *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus*, collected and edited by Whitley Stokes and John Strachan (1901; 1903).

Two of the most important sets of glosses are the Würzburg glosses on the Epistles of St. Paul and the Milan glosses on a Latin commentary on the Psalms (more details on which is found in Thurneysen 1998: 4-5). I use examples from both of these in the chapter on Old Irish. I refer to the Würzburg and Milan glosses by the standard abbreviations *Wb* for the Würzburg glosses and *Ml* for the Milan glosses, together with the folio and gloss number following the *Thesaurus*.

Kim McCone (1987: 177-178) points out that while the contemporary Old Irish records are substantial, they leave unattested gaps in the grammar. In order to fill these gaps, Old Irish forms have been deduced from manuscripts which were written later than the Old Irish period, but which contain material assumed to be composed earlier than the time in which the manuscript was written. This method is behind the standard descriptive grammatical work on Old Irish, Rudolph Thurneysen's *A Grammar of Old Irish* (Thurneysen 1998). In the words of McCone (1987: 178), 'the Old Irish so deduced appears to have had a rather firmly regulated grammar conducive to its retention as a relatively stable medium of written vernacular discourse for some two or three centuries'.

The two most important later manuscript collections used as sources of Old Irish forms are the *Lebor na h-Uidre*, 'Book of the Dun Cow' (LU) and *Leabhar Laighneach*, 'Book of Leinster' (LL). The main portions of LU is written around 1100, while LL is written c. 1160 (Thurneysen 1998: 8). Both of these manuscripts contain, among many other stories, versions of the long epic tale called *Táin Bó Cúalnge*, 'The Cattle-Raid of Cooley' (TBC). The TBC is my main source of Old Irish examples other than the glosses.

The TBC is found in three recensions. Recension I is contained in four manuscripts; the story is not complete in any of them. I have used Cecile O'Rahilly's edition of Recension 1 (C. O'Rahilly 2003); this edition contains the tale from LU and includes a part of the story form the *Yellow Book of Lecan* (late fourteenth century) for the part that is

missing in LU. The *Yellow Book of Lecan* is a manuscript collection written down in the late fourteenth century (J. E. C. Williams and Ford 1992: 123, 146n and references therein). Examples from the first recension of the TBC are annotated with the abbreviation 'TBC-1' together with page and line number. Recension II is found in two manuscripts, LL and the Stowe manuscript; the latter is dated to c. 1633. The versions of the TBC in these manuscripts are edited by O'Rahilly (1969; 1961 respectively). I have used examples from the LL version of Recension II; these examples will be marked with 'TBC-LL' as well as page and line number. There are only fragments of Recension III preserved; these are edited by Max Nettlau (1893) and Thurneysen (1912); I have not used examples from Recension III in my thesis.

In addition to the TBC I have drawn a few examples from other texts, the three most important of which are the *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* (TBDD) – 'the destruction of Da Derga's hostel', the *Scéla Mucce Meic Dathó* (SMMD) – 'the story of Mac Dathó's pig' and the *Orgain denna Ríg* (ODR) – 'the destruction of Dind Ríg'.

For the *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* I have used Eleanor Knott's edition of the version of the tale in the *Yellow Book of Lecan*. The *Scéla Mucce Meic Dathó* is found in six manuscripts; the earliest version is in the Book of Leinster. I am using Nora Chadwick's (1927) edition of the LL version, which will be referred to as SMMD-LL. In addition to the LL version I will also be using a few examples from the story as it appears in the Rawlinson B. 512 manuscript, which was written in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. This version is edited by Kuno Meyer (1894: appendix p. 51-64), and will be referred to as SMMD-R. The *Orgain Denna Ríg* exists today in three manuscripts, LL, YBL and Rawlinson B 502. I use an edition of the text found in LL, edited by David Greene (1955).

I have collected examples from the Old Irish sources by reading the texts, whole or in part, and by using the indices and glossaries of the various editions if such are provided. In my search for examples in the Würzburg glosses I have made good use of the Lexicon covering this set of glosses (Kavanagh 2001). Examples of specific verbs I have been interested in have also been collected from the *Dictionary of the Irish Language* (DIL), in which case I have indicated that the example is found in DIL and under which headword. Finally, I have used secondary works on the Old Irish language as sources of examples. In the case of examples found in DIL and in secondary works, I have attempted as far as I have been able to refer to the primary sources of the examples rather than solely the dictionary or a secondary work. In the few cases where this has not been possible, it has been noted in the reference.

2.1.1.2 Middle Irish

The Middle Irish period is usually dated from the tenth to the twelfth centuries, c. 900-1200, though see Breatnach (1994: 221) for a discussion of previous attempts of dating that differ from this one. As pointed out by McCone (1987: 176-183; see also Ó Béarra 2007: 261), Middle Irish as a period of the Irish language represents a somewhat special case. Both Old Irish and Classical Modern Irish (c. 1200-1600, see below) represent relatively stable literary norms, and can be defined by a number of criteria internal to each standard. However, such criteria are far more difficult to find for the intervening, Middle Irish period.

McCone suggests that three linguistic strata should be acknowledged, consisting of, respectively, forms that follow the Old Irish standard, forms that correspond to the Classical Modern Irish norm and forms that do neither. A 'Middle Irish' text, on this view, is a text that combines at least two of these strata. As McCone points out, this criterion is strictly descriptive, and does not take into account whether the properties of a given text represent the language when the text was composed or whether the text is the result of the modernisation of an Old Irish text by later scribes.

The focus of this thesis is on Modern and Old Irish, and for this reason I have not read any Middle Irish texts independently of the secondary literature for the purpose of studying 'Middle Irish' as such. The Middle Irish examples provided are for the most part taken from the thirteenth century *Imtheachta Æniasa*, the Irish *Æneid* (Calder 1907).

2.1.1.3 Modern Irish

The Modern Irish period is usually taken to begin c. 1200. It is customary to distinguish between Early or Classical Modern Irish (c. 1200-1600) and Modern Irish (c. 1600-). As Ó Dochartaigh (1992: 14) points out, this is a sociohistorical more than a linguistic distinction. In the years between c. 1200-1600, the written language – 'Classical' Modern Irish – was the domain of a social caste of bards, poets and literati. This guild of writers had their own internal structure, ran schools and recruited from within their own ranks, and had the support of the political leaders. As a consequence, a written high-register standard developed and was maintained until the collapse of the native ruling order following the battle of Kinsale in 1601. At that point what emerges in the manuscripts begin to show the distinction between the three main dialect areas of Modern Irish, Connacht, Munster and Ulster, and the language forms are 'to all intents and purposes […] identical to those found in the twentieth-century dialects' (Ó Dochartaigh 1992: 15).

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The most important prose writer in the Modern Irish period before the twentieth century is Seathrún Céitinn, Geoffrey Keating in English (c. 1580-c.1644). He was educated both in Ireland – likely in one of the schools of poetry – and on the Continent, in France, where he became a Doctor of Divinity (J. E. C. Williams and Ford 1992: 209-210; Ó Cuív 1978: 531). His language, according to Osborn Bergin (1931: xiii), is 'the standard dialect of the Early Modern period […]. It is essentially the dialect taught and practised in the bardic schools, less strict indeed in morphology, less archaic in diction, but almost as free from provincialisms'.

I draw on two of Céitinn's works as sources for examples of Early Modern Irish. *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* (Comyn and Dinneen (eds.) 1902-1914) – 'a basis of knowledge about Ireland' – which I abbreviate FF, is an enormous work based on a great amount of traditional sources that together make up a narrative of Ireland's history until the twelfth century (Ó Cuív 1978: 531). *Trí Bíor-Ghaoithe an Bháis* (Bergin 1931) – 'the three shafts of death', abbreviated *Three Shafts* – is a religious treatise. In order to search for examples in Céitinn's works, the electronic corpus of the Royal Irish Academy, which covers the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries (*Corpas na Gaeilge 1600-1882. Foclóir na Nua-Ghaeilge. The Irish Language Corpus* 2004) has been very useful.

Feargal Ó Béarra (2007: 261-262) uses the term Traditional Late Modern Irish for the language period following Early Modern Irish period. He times the beginning of the Traditional Late Modern Irish period to c. 1700, and suggests that this period lasts up until a certain time in the twentieth century. Specifically, he views Traditional Late Modern Irish as the language that were spoken and passed on to the next generation in the Gaeltacht (Irish-language areas) up until c. 1960, but which is now spoken mainly by people in their 50s and older. Among the sources for Traditional Late Modern Irish mentioned are the novel *Cré na Cille* by Máirtín Ó Cadhain (Ó Cadhain 1970) and the collection of spoken material from the Connacht dialect area called *Caint Ros Muc* (Wigger 2004a). I use both of these as sources of examples for Modern Irish in the twentieth century, and will present these in more detail below.

The most recent period of Irish according to Ó Béarra (2007: 261-262) is what he terms Non-Traditional Late Modern Irish; this language is characterised by heavy borrowing from English, in the areas of syntax and phonology as well as the lexicon, to such an extent that a monoglot Irish speaker would have problems understanding it.

A full sociolinguistic review of the reason for this state of affairs is beyond the scope of this thesis; see e.g. Ó Murchú (2002) for a neutral overview of the sociolinguistic state of

the Irish language today. Suffice it to say that the language has been declared moribund or even dead by e.g. Hindley (1990); however, as McCloskey (2001a: 46-47) points out, the language is thriving among a community of people who have learned Irish as a second language. Therein lies the problem according to Ó Béarra (2007: 266), who claims that 90% of the speakers of Irish today are non-native. McCloskey (2001a: 45) provides numbers which indicate a slightly higher percentage of native speakers, listing some 20.000 or 30.000 native speakers and perhaps 100.000 people who use Irish regularly in their day-to-day life. Whatever the exact numbers are, it seems obvious that a minority language, with hardly any monoglots anymore and many non-native speakers, is bound to become influenced by the dominant language. The future will show whether Ó Béarra's prediction that the ratio between Traditional and Non-Traditional Late Modern Irish will be 20:80 in fifty years will come true.

The distinction between Traditional and Non-Traditional Late Modern Irish is relevant for this thesis because the autonomous verb is currently showing influence from English, as will be shown briefly in section 3.4.1. Since this thesis is mainly a diachronic study, I have made the choice to exclude texts written after 1950 for the most part. While the development of the autonomous verb in Non-Traditional Late Modern Irish would be an interesting study in itself, I view it as a separate phenomenon from the development of the Traditional Late Modern Irish autonomous verb that goes back to Old Irish and beyond.

One of my main sources of twentieth century examples is the novel *Cré na Cille* (abbreviated as CnC) by Máirtín Ó Cadhain (1907-1970). *Cré na Cille* – 'churchyard clay' – was first published in 1949, and it is hardly exaggeration to say that it is the most important literary work in Irish in the twentieth century. I have collected some 350 examples of the autonomous verb from *Cré na Cille* by reading manually through the text.

Cré na Cille takes place underground in a cemetery on the west coast of Ireland sometime in the later years of World War II. The characters are people from the surrounding area who are dead and buried. Through the conversations between the people in the cemetery, a picture is painted of the lives of the characters while they were alive and the relations between them both in life and death. The language of the characters in the *Cré na Cille* is the traditional language of the Conamara Gaeltacht that Ó Cadhain grew up in (see the translator's afterword by Jan Erik Rekdal in Ó Cadhain 1995: 339; J. E. C. Williams and Ford 1992: 288-289). As such, the language in the novel draws heavily on idioms and expressions from the long-running oral tradition of storytelling as well as earlier written literature in Irish. Consequently the novel is well suited for the purpose of this thesis, since

it represents a modern twentieth-century continuation of the linguistic tradition of which parts are used as data for the diachronic study.

I have drawn examples from a number of other twentieth-century writers in addition to Máirtin Ó Cadhain in the *Cré na Cille*, among others Tomás Ó Criomhthain (1856–1937), Liam Ó Flaitheartha (1897-1984) and Séamus Ó Grianna (1891-1969).

The electronic corpus *Tobar na Gaedhilge* (Ó Duibhín 2009, freely downloadable from http://www.smo.uhi.ac.uk/~oduibhin/tobar/index.htm) covers the early to middle part of the twentieth century and contains some three million words of text from sources written by native speakers. In spite of the fact that it is not lemmatised, this corpus has been of great assistance in my search for Modern Irish twentieth century examples. I have attempted to the best of my ability to check the examples uncovered by *Tobar* with the original sources. In the cases where this has not been possible, the example will be referenced as *Tobar* with the author and title of the work from which the example is taken according to the search result.

In addition to searching through *Tobar* I have gathered examples by reading the various prose works and from the substantive dictionary volume of Arndt Wigger's collection of oral material from the Connacht dialect area in *Caint Ros Muc* (Wigger 2004a, 2004b).

2.2 Lexical Functional Grammar

The theoretic basis of this study is Lexical Functional Grammar (LFG). In this section I present an overview of LFG. I will also take a closer look at the module of LFG that details the relationship between grammatical functions and thematic roles, since this module will be revised and then used in the analysis of the Irish autonomous verb in the subsequent chapters.

LFG is a generative theory in the tradition of Noam Chomsky. This fact carries with it certain implications for the view of the nature of language and what a linguistic theory is supposed to do;[16] these issues are the topic in what follows. Further terms related to

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[16] See Pinker (1994) for a very readable popular science introduction to generative grammar. Adger (2003: chapter 1) provides a useful introduction geared towards students of generative syntax. Jackendoff (2003: part 1) is a thorough survey of the fundamental issues involved in generative linguistics.

Generative Grammar will be explained as the need arises in section 2.3 when we discuss the generative approach to historical syntax.

In brief, language is seen as a distinct and specifically human biological, innate mental ability. The common denominator of the human language ability is Universal Grammar (UG). UG is the basis for first language acquisition together with the utterances that a child hears when she is growing up.

Chomsky (1986: 19-24) makes a distinction between what he terms I-language (internal(ized) language) and E-language (external(ized) language), where I-language is the native speaker's internal, subconscious knowledge of her language. The concept of I-language is similar – but not identical – to Chomsky's (1965) term 'competence', i.e. knowledge of language; Chomsky additionally makes a distinction between competence and performance, where performance is seen as actual language use in specific situations (Chomsky 1965: 4). A point is made that performance is a direct reflection of competence only in an idealised situation in a completely heterogeneous speech community where no limitations such as errors, memory limitations, etc. apply.

Crucially, I-language – or competence – is the object of study for generative theories. In other words, when generative theorists study 'language', it is language in a very different sense from the everyday use of the term. 'Language', in the sense of Norwegian or Irish or English, is only a generalisation over the more or less similar I-languages of a number of speakers with a connection to a nation-state.

Obviously, the goals of the generative study of language is very ambitious and far beyond the current state of linguistic science. What I aim to do in this study is to show that the Irish autonomous verb occurs in construction types that have been found to occur in a greater or lesser number of other languages, many of which are unrelated to each other, in the hopes that establishing common traits between languages may work towards establishing the nature of Universal Grammar.

A further caveat must be added concerning the nature of the data. In section 2.1 I showed that the data used in this thesis consist of written texts, an obvious and necessary consequence of working with languages of the past. However, such data further complicate the goal of studying the innate human language ability, since these texts represent performance or collections of E-language utterances, and are as such only indirectly connected to I-language as the object of study. However, I do not discount E-language as an interesting object of study in its own right, and will be including topics that involve the use

of the autonomous verb in the textual context in which it appears as well. Relevant to these issues is the following summary by David Adger (2003: 12) of the task of theoretic syntax:

> Without I-language, that is, without an internalized syntax, we would be unable to communicate fluently, because we would be unable to externalize our messages except in the crudest ways. Syntax is, then, key to human achievement at a fundamental level. The project of modern linguistics is to investigate and try to understand this crucial phenomenon within the human mind, both as a goal in itself, and as part of a broader attempt to map our cognitive abilities. (Adger 2003: 12)

In my opinion there is no contradiction in the desire to study both the external syntax in which our messages take shape when we formulate them and the internal syntax that enables us to produce these messages.

Kristin Eide (2005: 12) takes a similar stance in her study of Norwegian modals. After mentioning that many theoretical linguists follow Chomsky and have very little concern for language in itself other than as a tool for developing the formal theory and describing the mental entity that I-language is, she goes on to say the following concerning her interests and choice of theory:

> I readily confess that I harbor a fascination for language and linguistic data, and I have selected parts of the P&P Theory [one incarnation of Chomsky's theory – JG] with the explicit aim to account for and explain these data (a common tactic for linguists within our framework, one which gives rise to what one might be inclined to dub 'shopping linguistics'). Of course, this does not amount to rejecting the hypothesis that language reflects mental structures and cognitive capacities. Instead, I find this hypothesis to be most credible; it constitutes the context within which I conduct my linguistic investigations. (Eide 2005: 12)

In addition to being a generative theory, it is important for the purposes of this thesis that LFG takes a lexicalist approach to the nature of grammar. The main consequence of the lexicalist nature of LFG for our purposes concerns the nature of the construction types in question. It was described in chapter 1 how the Irish verbal system includes a category with a distinct suffix termed 'autonomous'. Given a lexical approach, the autonomous verb is formed in the Lexicon; contrary to derivational approaches, the autonomous ending is not present in the constituent structure tree in any way in an LFG based analysis.

I take the autonomous suffix to indicate that the lexical entry of a given autonomous form includes a relationship between thematic roles and argument functions (subject, object, etc.) that is distinct from active verb forms in clearly defined ways. The precise nature of

exactly how autonomous verb forms are distinct from active forms is the topic of the next section. In brief, I will argue that the autonomous suffix may indicate two or more distinct types of non-active syntax. In other words, it will be seen that the autonomous ending is partially ambiguous in specific ways, and that a given autonomous verb form may have several lexical entries, each of which is specified with its own type of syntax that differs from regular active verbs.

This lexical approach to the autonomous verb contrasts for instance with McCloskey's (2007) derivational analysis of the Modern Irish autonomous verb that was presented in section 1.3.2.3. In McCloskey's analysis, the autonomous ending takes part in the derivation of an autonomous clause as a separate unit in the constituent structure tree. Another example of a derivational approach, this time to the passive, is the classic Government and Binding studies of the passive by Jaeggli (1986) and Baker et al. (1989), where the English passive morpheme *–en* in a sentence like 'the book was writt-*en*' similarly participates in the tree-structure derivation to bring about passive sentences. This type of approach is not possible in LFG at all (cf. the discussion in Falk 2001: 6-8). The standard LFG analysis of the passive is provided in section 2.2.4.1, and as we will see, it involves a lexical rule stating that the first thematic role of the argument structure of the passive predicate does not map to a grammatical function in functional structure.

In sum, section 2.2.1 in this chapter provides a brief overview of the basic properties of LFG in terms of its parallel architecture of separate but related levels of information. This section also discusses functional structure (f-structure), a level of LFG in which syntactic function such as subject and object are primitives. In section 2.2.2 I illustrate briefly Lexical Mapping Theory (LMT), which specifies the relationship between the thematic roles of argument structure and the syntactic functions of f-structure. Section 2.2.3 provides a revised version of LMT based on Kibort (2007), while section 2.2.4 applies this version of LMT to define the syntactic constructions relevant in this study.

2.2.1   Basics of the theory: parallel architecture and f-structures

In this section I discuss the parallel architecture of LFG and provide arguments in favour of distinguishing between the three main levels of representation. Additionally I provide an overview of the details of functional structure and some of the phenomena accounted for at this level of representation.

One of the basic properties of LFG is its parallel architecture (Bresnan 2001: 5-10, chapter 14, etc.; Falk 2001: 22-27): different types of information are represented as belonging to different kinds of structures. These structures stand in formally defined relationships with each other. The three main syntactic levels are constituent structure, functional structure and argument structure; in addition one may posit phonological structure, semantic structure and information structure among others. In the following I will describe the characteristics of the three main syntactic structures and some of the motivations for distinguishing between them.

Constituent structure (Bresnan 2001: 98-112; Falk 2001: chapter 2) represents the phrase structure of languages. C-structure is organised either hierarchically according to X'-Theory, where syntactic functions are distinguished by their position in the hierarchy, or in flat structures with all the arguments as sisters. The latter type is used for non-configurational languages where syntactic functions are marked e.g. by case and verb agreement. Languages may have one type of structure or the other, or a mixture of both.

Moving on to f-structure, we note that grammatical functions such as subject and object represent the most important information contained on this level (Lødrup to appear; Bresnan 2001: 46-50; Falk 2001: chapter 3). The most important reason why I chose LFG for this study is the possibility provided by LFG to separate grammatical functions, as linguistically universal categories, from constituent structure, which varies across languages.

Bresnan (2001: 5-10) provides a very illustrative example that shows the advantages of separating grammatical functions from phrase structure, by comparing English with the non-configurational language Warlpiri. One of her Warlpiri examples is provided in (1):

(1) Non-configurationality in Warlpiri

wita-jarra-rlu   ka-pala   wajili-pi-nyi   yalumpu kurdu-jarra-rlu   maliki
small-DUAL-ERG   pres-3duSUBJ   chase-NPAST that.ABS   child-DUAL-ERG   dog.ABS
'the two small children are chasing that dog' (Bresnan 2001: 6)

As Bresnan points out, every variation of the word order in (1) is possible as long as the auxiliary tense marker, *ka-pala* in this example, occurs in the second position. The organisation of words into conceptual phrases and the grammatical functions of these phrases are indicated by the morphology of the words; we notice for instance that the words making up the object, the phrase meaning 'that dog', are separated by a part of the phrase making up the subject. This kind of word order variation is obviously not possible in a

configurational language like English, where word order and phrase structure serve to group phrases together and indicate the grammatical function of the phrases in the clause.

By distinguishing between constituent structure and functional structure, we are able to abstract away from phrase structure variation such as is represented here by the difference between English and Warlpiri, and acknowledge that both languages use grammatical functions that behave in the same way across languages. A grammatical function is defined by Bresnan (2001: 94) as 'a class of c-structure expressions which are equivalently mapped [to argument structure]'. Different structural forms, like e.g. case, verbal morphology or a specific phrase structure configuration, may serve to indicate that a particular phrase fills a particular grammatical function, e.g. the subject.

All these different structural forms will have two things in common. First, when they are mapped from c-structure to the subject function in f-structure, they participate in the same grammatical processes that involve the subject, for example reflexive binding and control of subjects of non-finite, subordinate predicates. Second, the different structural forms that may express the subject relate in the same way to argument structure, since the subject function is mapped to thematic roles in specific ways. The relationship between c- and f-structure is not the concern of this thesis; see Bresnan (2001: chapter 6) in particular for a detailed description of the topic. The standard view of the relationship between f-structure and argument structure is described in section 2.2.2, while section 2.2.3 presents a revised version.

There are four main argument functions defined in LFG, excluding the clausal arguments COMP and XCOMP, as well as a number of non-argument functions which need not concern us here (Bresnan 2001: 94-98; Falk 2001: 57-60; Lødrup to appear: 2-6). The argument functions are SUBJ, OBJ, OBJ_θ and OBL_θ. SUBJ and OBJ represent subject and object; OBJ_θ and OBL_θ stand for 'object theta' and 'oblique theta'. OBJ_θ represents secondary or indirect objects, while OBL_θ stands for various types of obliques, typically prepositional phrases selected by the verb in languages like English. I will not be concerned with secondary objects beyond this chapter, but the three other argument functions will be important in the analysis to come.

A regular f-structure of a simple clause like 'I bought a dog' is provided in (2) (example from Lødrup to appear: 1):

(2) Example f-structure

```
┌                                              ┐
│  PRED       'buy < (↑SUBJ) (↑OBJ) >'         │
│  TENSE      PAST                             │
│          ┌                        ┐          │
│          │  PRED        'PRO'     │          │
│  SUBJ    │  NUM         SG        │          │
│          │  PERS        1         │          │
│          └                        ┘          │
│          ┌                        ┐          │
│          │  PRED        'dog'     │          │
│  OBJ     │  NUM         SG        │          │
│          │  PERS        3         │          │
│          │  DEF         -         │          │
│          └                        ┘          │
└                                              ┘
```

Formally, an f-structure is an 'attribute-value matrix'. The most important attribute is the PRED – the predicate – of the clause, which specifies its own semantic meaning and grammatical functions. The grammatical functions of the PRED are determined by the mapping relationship with argument structure. Other attributes in this example are the grammatical functions as well as TENSE. The grammatical functions have their own f-structures as attributes, while TENSE, as well as NUM, PERS and DEF – representing number, person and definiteness – are specified by feature values.

The argument functions can be arranged in a relational hierarchy going back to Keenan and Comrie (1977):

(3) Relational hierarchy

$SUBJ > OBJ > OBJ_\theta > OBL_\theta$

In the words of Lødrup (to appear: 5-6), '[t]his hierarchy has turned out to be relevant to a variety of grammatical phenomena, from relative clause formation to binding.' Both relative clause formation and the binding of anaphors (reflexives, reciprocals, etc.) are phenomena that are accounted for in f-structure.

Another example of an f-structure phenomenon is control in secondary predication (Bresnan 2001: 287-301; Falk 2001: chapter 5; Lødrup to appear: 16-27). To see how control works, consider a sentence with secondary predication like *John seems to win*. *John* is the subject of *seem*, but appears to get a thematic role from *win*. In addition to these facts, it is necessary to account for the implicit subject of *win* and how and why this subject is *John* (example and following f-structure from Lødrup to appear: 16-18).

(4) F-structure, illustrating control

```
┌                                                    ┐
│  PRED        'seem < (↑ XCOMP) > (↑ SUBJ) '        │
│  TENSE       NON-PAST                              │
│              ┌                        ┐            │
│              │  PRED        'John'    │            │
│  SUBJ        │  NUM         SG        │            │
│              │  PERS        3         │            │
│              └                        ┘            │
│                                                    │
│  XCOMP       ┌                        ┐            │
│              │  PRED        'win < (↑ SUBJ) >'     │
│              │  SUBJ                  │            │
│              └                        ┘            │
└                                                    ┘
```
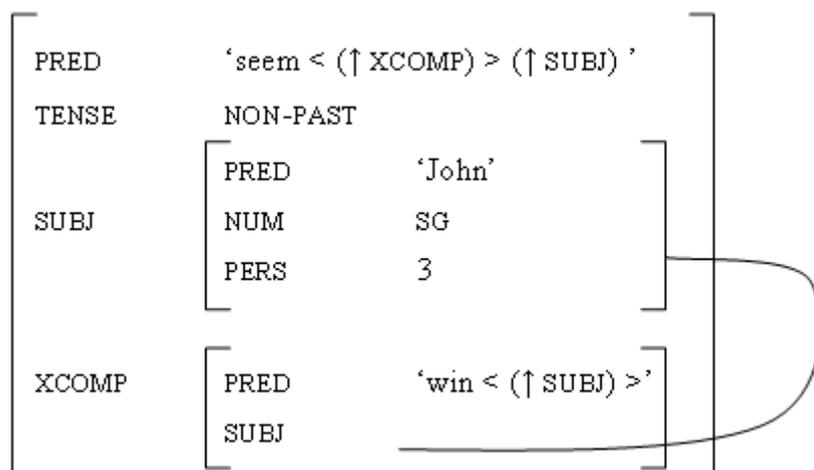
In the basic LFG analysis of functional control, the verb 'seem' selects for a grammatical function called XCOMP. An XCOMP is a so-called 'open' function, which means that it always shares an argument with the verb that selects it. This structure sharing between the XCOMP subject and the subject of the main clause is shown by the curved line in the f-structure in (4). In addition to the XCOMP, 'seem' selects for a subject argument that does not have a thematic role; that the SUBJ of 'seem' does not have a thematic role is shown by placing it outside of the brackets in the PRED function. The curved line indicates 'structure sharing', i.e. that the subject of the XCOMP and the subject of 'seem' share the same f-structure. We will have use for the theory of control in section 2.4.1, where I discuss the syntax of modal verbs in general and specifically in Irish.

2.2.2   LMT

In this section I discuss Lexical Mapping Theory – LMT – as it is presented in the standard work of Bresnan (2001; LMT in its current form first took shape in Bresnan and Kanerva 1989). The main purpose of LMT is to formalise the relationship between thematic roles and grammatical functions.

In LMT as presented by Bresnan (2001: 307-311), an argument structure consists of three elements, the first and most essential of which is the predicate with its argument roles. Second, these roles come in a specific order which reflects their relative prominence on a hierarchy of thematic roles. This hierarchy may take different forms (see F. J. Newmeyer 2002: 65-71 for a critical discussion). Bresnan's version is presented in (5):

(5) The thematic hierarchy (Bresnan 2001: 307)

agent > beneficiary > experiencer/goal > instrument > patient/theme > locative

Third, each role in the a-structure comes with a syntactic classification that is indicated by a feature. The features are [±o] and [±r], where *o* stands for 'objectlike' and *r* for 'restricted'. 'Restricted' refers to whether or not an argument function must carry a specific thematic role; these features will be further discussed below.

Examples of a-structures are provided in (6).

(**6**) Examples of argument structures (Bresnan 2001: 307)

a.

put   <   x   y   z   >
             [-o]   [-r]   [-o]

b.

pound <   x   y   >
             [-o]   [-r]

c.

freeze <   x   >
              [-r]

The most prominent role of a predicate is the logical subject role, designated $\hat{\theta}$ - 'theta-hat'.

The feature specification of a-structure roles is based on the semantics of the roles themselves. There are three general rules of a-structure role classification (Bresnan 2001: 309):

(**7**) General rules of a-structure role classification:
   a.   patientlike roles are [-r]
   b.   secondary patientlike roles (i.e. in ditransitives) are [+o]
   c.   other semantic roles are [-o].

There may also be empty argument roles, that is, roles with no semantic content, one example of which is the verb *seem*, which we remember from the description of functional control in section 2.2. An empty argument role can only come pre-specified as [-r] (Bresnan 2001: 309 and references therein). The argument structure of *seem*, e.g. in a sentence like *he seems to me to be happy*, is provided in (8); notice the athematic argument outside the

brackets. We will be revising this view of the argument structure of raising verbs like *seem* in section 2.2.3.

(8)

seem   _   <   x   y   >
     [-r]   [-o]   [-o]

Moving on to the mapping relationship between a- and f-structures, we note that the mapping is based on a decomposition of the f-structure functions using the same features with which the roles in the a-structure come pre-specified.

(9) Feature decomposition of f-structure functions (Bresnan 2001: 308)

	[-r]	[+r]
[-o]	SUBJ	OBL_θ
[+o]	OBJ	OBJ_θ

The feature [±restricted] refers to whether or not the function is restricted to one specific thematic role. Subject and object may occur with practically any role, while OBJ_θ and OBL_θ. – secondary objects and obliques – may not; the theta-sign is shorthand for the thematic role they take in a given context. The other feature, [±objective], has a negative value for the subject and the OBL_θ and a positive value for the object and secondary object.

The negative feature values are the least marked values. From this assumption follows a partial ordering of syntactic functions according to markedness:

(10)   Partial ordering of syntactic functions in terms of markedness
        (Bresnan 2001: 309)

SUBJ > OBJ, OBL_θ > OBJ_θ

Based on the partial ordering of functions in terms of markedness and their feature decomposition, two principles of mapping have been formulated; these are provided in (11).

(11)   Mapping Principles (Bresnan 2001: 311)

     a. Subject roles:

        i. $\hat{\theta}$ is mapped onto SUBJ when initial in the a-structure;
           [-o]

           otherwise

        ii. θ is mapped onto SUBJ
           [-r]

     b. Other roles are mapped onto the lowest compatible function in the partial ordering [(10) – JG]

There are two other constraints on mapping between a- and f-structure. Function-Argument Bi-uniqueness states that '[e]ach a-structure role must be associated with a unique function, and conversely' (Bresnan 2001: 311). The other constraint, the Subject Condition, is formulated in (12).

(12)   The Subject Condition (Bresnan 2001: 311)

Every predicator must have a subject.

Now, there are a number of predicate types in Irish that appear to lack a subject, some examples of which will be shown in the next section as well as in chapters 4 and 5. If these were to be analysed in LMT as presented here, it would be necessary to formulate some exception to the Subject Condition. In the next section I will describe a revised version of LMT, and we will see that that version of the theory can handle subjectless clauses not as exceptions to a universal condition but as more marked instantiations of a basic mapping principle.

Intuitively, the subject role of an active verb is not syntactically active in the passive equivalent. This intuition is implemented in standard LFG by formulating a lexical rule which specifies that the logical subject role in argument structure cannot be mapped onto a syntactic argument in the f-structure. This rule, which is illustrated in (13), will be referred to as 'mapping to zero'. In what I will term the canonical passive, the second thematic role, if there is one, will follow regular mapping and become the subject. In the impersonal passive on the other hand, which is a more marked and less frequent type of passive, a second thematic role will become the object. Both of these passive construction types will be discussed in the subsequent sections.

(13)   Passive lexical rule (Bresnan 2001: 310)

∧
θ
|
Ø

The mapping-to-zero lexical rule implies a conception of the passive construction where a passive verb is seen as a separate lexical entry from the active verb. This conception of the passive will be brought over to the revised LMT.

2.2.3   Revising LMT

Recall from the previous section that the standard Lexical Functional Grammar as presented by Joan Bresnan (2001) distinguishes two levels of structure that relate c-structure to meaning: functional structure (f-structure) and argument structure (a-structure). In this section I review Anna Kibort's revision of this state of affairs (see Kibort 2007 and references therein). The most basic intuition in the revised LMT is a distinction between *three* levels of representation; f-structure, a-structure and theta structure, where a-structure refers to the argument positions of the verb while theta structure refers to the semantic participants.

A regular transitive predicate will look like in (14):

(14)   A transitive predicate in the revised LMT

		x	y		
							→ *theta-structure: thematic roles*
					- mapping may be affected by morphosemantic operations
verb [trans.]	<	arg1 [-o]	arg2 [-r]	>	→ *argument structure: argument positions*
		[-r]	[+o]		- mapping may be affected by morphosyntactic operations
		SUBJ	OBJ		→ *functional structure*

Here and in the subsequent section I discuss the revised theta- and argument structure and their properties. Furthermore I look at the mapping relations that hold between them and between a-structure and f-structure, and various operations that may affect these mapping relations. I will also be defining the construction types relevant for this thesis in

terms of the revised LMT. The relevant construction types are the canonical and the impersonal passive, the active subject impersonal and some bare subjectless structures.

Kibort lists four types of arguments in favour of distinguishing between syntactic argument positions and thematic roles (Kibort 2007: 4-6 and references therein). I will discuss two of these arguments in what follows, concerning functional control and passivisation. Having established the distinction between argument and theta-structure, the next step will be to look at the properties of the two structures and the mapping relation that holds between them. Following Kibort (2007), I assume that the argument positions in argument structure come with a fixed ordering; in other words, the argument positions of a predicate may not change their order. As we will see below, argument structure contrasts with thematic roles in terms of this possibility, since the thematic roles of a predicate are able to change their order. Kibort (2007: 8) provides the argument position template in (15) for a non-derived predicate:

(15)

$$< \quad \text{arg}_1 \quad \text{arg}_2 \quad \text{arg}_3 \quad \text{arg}_4 \text{ ... arg}_n \quad >$$
$$[-o/-r] \; [-r] \quad [+o] \quad [-o] \quad [-o]$$

Furthermore there is only one principle of mapping between argument structure and functional structure, contrary to the 'standard' LFG of Bresnan (2001). Note that Kibort's mapping principle renders a subject condition redundant, since mapping to subject will take place as the least marked option in most cases.

(16) Mapping Principle (Kibort 2007: 16)
The ordered arguments are mapped onto the highest (i.e. least *marked) compatible function on the markedness hierarchy.* [emphasis original]

The markedness hierarchy referred to in (16) was provided in (10).

The regular active mapping I showed previously, repeated here as (17), follows from the markedness ordering and the Mapping Principle. The first argument in a-structure, which is pre-specified as non-objective, is mapped onto the least marked function, namely the subject, and acquires the feature [-r]. The second argument, which is pre-specified as non-restricted, is mapped to object and receives the feature [-o]. We note that this Mapping

Principle renders a subject condition redundant; the first argument is mapped to the subject as the regular and unmarked option.

(17)   Regular active mapping

verb [trans.]   <   arg1   arg2   >
                        [-o]   [-r]

                        [-r]   [+o]   → feature specification / mapping
                        SUBJ   OBJ
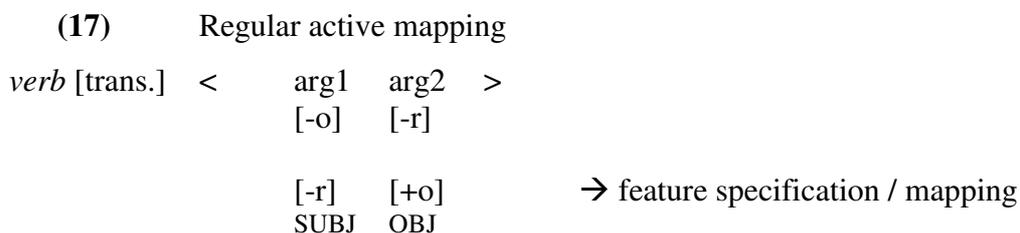
Functional control provides a useful illustration of how the revised LMT differs from the standard version of the theory that was presented in the previous section. Recall that the raising verb *seem* was taken in the previous section to contain a semantically empty, non-thematic argument role in its a-structure. We looked at the example *John seems to win*, where *John* is the subject of *seem*, but appears to get a thematic role from the PRED of the XCOMP of *seem.*

Kibort (2007: 5-6) takes the standard LFG analysis of raising verbs to imply a distinction between thematic roles and argument positions: the empty slot in the diagram in (18), for *seem* in a sentence like *he seems to me to be happy*, represents an argument which is semantically empty but which participates in the syntax through being mapped to a function in f-structure.

(18)

seem   _   <   x   y   >
         [-r]   [-o]   [-o]
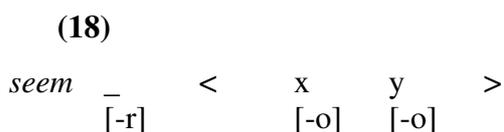
As an alternative, Kibort (2007: 6) provides the theta- and argument structure in (19) for the main predicate *seem* in *he seems to me to be happy*. In these structures *seem* is associated with two thematic roles but three argument positions. Making the distinction between thematic roles and argument positions, and positing a mismatch in number between these, serves to, as it were, 'unpack' the standard LMT analysis. The three argument roles, where one is athematic and semantically empty, now turn into three regular argument positions and two thematic roles. As a consequence of the fact that there is one less thematic role than argument position, one of the argument positions must be athematic.

(19)   Raising in the revised LMT

```
                    x       y
                    |       |
seem    <       arg    arg    arg    >
                [-r]   [-o]   [-o]
```

The mapping structure in (19) applies to both the raising sentence *he seems to me to be happy* and the non-raising version *it seems to me that he is happy*. The argument position that is not associated with a thematic role may be associated in the f-structure either with an expletive subject or with an argument of the subordinate predicate through structure sharing.

2.2.4   Morphosyntactic and morphosemantic operations

In this section I discuss the operations that may apply to the different levels of representation in the revised LMT. These operations serve to change the mapping applying between the levels by rendering it more marked. The construction types relevant for the study of the autonomous verb are defined on the basis of these operations.

In Kibort's theory, various operations may apply to the different levels of representation. First of all, thematic roles may be re-ordered in relation to the argument positions; Kibort terms this morphosemantic operations. Additionally, operations that apply to the relationship between argument positions and syntactic functions are termed morphosyntactic operations.

(20)   Morphosemantic and morphosyntactic operations (Kibort 2007)

```
                    x       y
                    |       |            → Morphosemantic operations
verb [trans.]   <       arg1   arg2   >
                [-o]   [-r]

                [-r]   [+o]            → Morphosyntactic operations
                SUBJ   OBJ
```

In the following I discuss some examples of both morphosyntactic and morphosemantic operations.

2.2.4.1 *Morphosyntactic operations*

Generally, morphosyntactic operations are seen as a mechanism of increasing the markedness of the mapping to syntactic functions. I will discuss two of the operations Kibort mentions; passivisation and object preservation.

. As previously mentioned, Bresnan (2001) views passivisation as a lexical rule which specifies 'mapping to zero' for the role of the predicate that is the highest on the thematic hierarchy.

> **(21)** Passivisation: mapping to zero in the canonical passive (cf. Bresnan 2001: 310)

verb[can. pass.]	<	arg1	arg2	>
		[-o]	[-r]	
		Ø	[-o]	
			SUBJ	

I will take the mapping-to-zero lexical rule as the basic description of passivisation. In (21) the second argument position is mapped to the subject function following the Mapping Principle; this is the canonical passive clause type. The second argument position may also be retained as the object; this type of passive is termed impersonal passive, and will be described below. Looking at the bigger picture, the mapping to zero approach to passivisation described here represents the by now common view of the passive, namely that it is 'demotional' in the sense that demotion – or more generally, removal or deletion – of the agent is seen as defining of the passive construction. This defining property is independent of what happens with a patient argument.

Kibort (2007) views passivisation as a morphosyntactic operation of 'increasing markedness', where the mapping of the first argument position is marked in that it maps to OBL_θ instead of to the subject, as illustrated in (22).

> **(22)** Morphosyntactic operations: Passivisation (Kibort 2007: 17-19)
>
> - Adding [+r] to a first-position [-o] argument.

verb[pass.]	<	arg1	arg2	>
		[-o]	[-r]	
		[+r]	[-o]	
		OBL_θ	SUBJ	

A morphosyntactic operation works by increasing the markedness of an argument's mapping. Increase of markedness takes place by adding the 'marked' feature specifications of [+r] and [+o] to a syntactically pre-specified argument position. In the case of the mapping structure in (22), the first argument comes pre-specified as [-o]. To add [+o] to this argument would go against LFG's principle of monotonicity, which states that information may be added but cannot be changed or deleted. In other words, the only possible increase in markedness for the argument in question is for it to receive [+r], from which it follows that it will be mapped to the OBL_θ function.

This approach to the passive implies a view of the agent phrase as an oblique – which may or may not be overtly expressed – rather than an adjunct. I will similarly be analysing the agent phrase as an oblique, but it must be stressed that such an analysis is far from the final answer. In general, the agent phrase is notoriously difficult to pin down (see Åfarli 1992: 46-50 for a useful summary of the issues involved). It is characterised in the first place by the fact that it appears to receive a thematic role, and additionally by the fact that it is not restricted to a specific thematic role. Rather, it appears to get whichever thematic role is mapped to zero in the basic passive equivalent; as such, 'agent phrase' is a somewhat inaccurate term. These facts would seem to speak in favour of analysing the agent phrase as an oblique. However, there is one major argument against such an analysis: the agent phrase is not mandatory, and as such it has properties in common with adjuncts as well.

Now, it must be pointed out that analysing the agent phrase as an oblique is not at first glance compatible with the mapping-to-zero approach to passivisation that was outlined above; the first argument in a-structure obviously cannot map to zero and to an oblique at the same time. However, an analysis where the agent phrase is taken to be an adjunct runs into problems of its own. One example is Zaenen and Engdahl's (1994: 193n) view of the agent phrase as an adjunct which is 'not strictly speaking the expression of the same role as the subject in an active sentence'. As Kibort (2004: 362) points out, there is a problematic consequence of this analysis, namely that the passive predicate is said to have two argument positions – or two thematic roles, depending on ones view of LMT – relating to the same semantic participant. This consequence is problematic because the semantics of a passive verb are usually not taken to be modified to introduce an additional argument position or role compared to the active equivalent.

In sum, I have chosen in this thesis to maintain mapping to zero as the basic analysis of the passive. As a consequence, if the agent phrase is to be maintained as an oblique, a

passive verb with an agent phrase argument must be seen as a separate lexical entry from the passive without an agent phrase. The mapping properties of the lexical entries of a two-place canonical passive verb with and without an agent phrase are provided in (23):

(23)   Canonical passive with and without the agent phrase

      a. with the agent phrase

verb[pass.]   <   arg1   arg2   >
           [-o]   [-r]

           [+r]   [-o]
           OBL$_\theta$ SUBJ

      b. without the agent phrase

verb[pass.]   <   arg1   arg2   >
           [-o]   [-r]

           Ø   [-o]
              SUBJ

I make this choice first and foremost for clarity in the subsequent analysis of the autonomous verb; I would like to repeat that this is by no means the final answer to how the agent phrase should be analysed. The description in (23) has two main advantages in the analysis to follow in the subsequent chapters. The first advantage relates to the diachronic development from passive to impersonal. It will be shown in section 4.2 that I take the active subject of the Modern Irish autonomous verb to have developed from a subjectless impersonal passive (this construction will be discussed and defined below). The mapping structures involved in this development are shown in (24).

(24)   The impersonal passive and the active subject impersonal construction

      a. the impersonal passive

verb[imp. pass.]   <   arg1   arg2   >
                [-o]   [-r]

                Ø   **[+o]**
                  OBJ

b. the active subject impersonal construction

verb[ASI]   <   arg1   arg2   >
                              [-o]   [-r]

                              [-r]   [-o]
                              SUBJ$_{imp}$ OBJ

One of the contributing reasons for the change from (a) to (b) in (24) will be said to be the subjectless status of the impersonal passive in (a). This subjectless state, which is seen as marked, and the intuition behind the subsequent emergence of the impersonal active subject, is illustrated clearly by means of taking the mapping to zero in (a) as the starting point.

The second advantage of assuming two separate lexical entries for passives with and without the agent phrase as in (23) has to do with other types of constructions in Irish which involve oblique arguments. It will be shown in the following section that Modern Irish possesses a construction where the first argument alternates between being expressed as the subject of the clause and an oblique. By saying that the passive with agent phrase represents a separate lexical entry, we are able to bring the passive with agent phrase into line with this other construction; it will be shown that the first argument position of a-structure is mapped to an oblique through the same morphosyntactic process in both cases.

Passivisation is, as a general rule, taken to be incompatible with unaccusative predicates (see e.g. Perlmutter 1978: 166); in the transformational theories, this restriction is usually formulated by saying that passivisation can only apply to verbs with an external role (e.g. Jaeggli 1986: 593). In the lexical rule as formulated by Bresnan (2001: 310) – provided in (13) above – mapping to zero applies to the logical subject role $\hat{\theta}$, which is defined as 'the most prominent semantic role of a predicator' (Bresnan 2001: 307). In other words, the LFG approach to passivisation does not in itself limit passivisation to non-unaccusative verbs. In order to ensure that the theory restricts passivisation from applying to unaccusatives, Bresnan and Kanerva (1989: 27n, attributed to Alex Alsina) propose that the passivisation is limited to $\hat{\theta}$ roles that are higher than theme on the thematic hierarchy. Anna Kibort (2007: 10) solves this issue by limiting passivisation, in the sense of mapping to oblique through an increase in markedness, to a first argument position that is pre-specified as [-o].

It should additionally be noted that it seems to be possible to find empirical exceptions to the generalisation that unaccusatives cannot passivise. E.g. in some Bantu languages, it appears that passivisation of unaccusatives is a possibility (cf. e.g. Khumalo

2007; Demuth and Mmusi 1997). In spite of these exceptions, I maintain that unaccusative verbs cannot be passivised in the following study of the Irish autonomous verb.

There is a second morphosyntactic operation relevant to this study, termed object preservation. In this operation, the mapping of a primary object argument that comes pre-specified as [-r] increases in markedness by providing the object argument with the specification [+o]. Object preservation applies together with the mapping to zero lexical rule to form the impersonal passive construction. The first argument in a-structure is mapped to zero; if the second argument had mapped to the subject function according to the Mapping Principle, we would have got the canonical passive (21). In the impersonal passive however, the second argument maps in a marked way to the object function rather than to the subject function. The mapping relations of an impersonal passive without an expletive subject are presented in (25):

(25)   Morphosyntactic operations: object preservation (Kibort 2004: 368-372)

-    Adding [+o] to a second-position [-r] argument

verb[imp. pass.]   <   arg1   arg2   >
                             [-o]   [-r]

                             Ø   **[+o]**
                                      OBJ

It should be noted that I take the impersonal passive to be subjectless in Irish both at f- and c-structure; this is in contrast to e.g. Norwegian and French, where the subject position of the impersonal passive is filled by an expletive pronoun.

It has been previously implied that the approach to the impersonal passive sketched here follows Comrie (1977) and subsequent work in treating the removal of the agent as distinct from what happens to the patient argument, thereby enabling a coherent treatment of passives where the patient is the subject and passives of one-place verbs and passives where the patient is retained as a direct object. Passives of the latter two types are discussed in various theoretic incarnations for e.g. Icelandic as well as Norwegian and Faroese (Eythórsson 2008), Ukrainian (Lavine 2005), Norwegian (Åfarli 1992), French (Legendre 1990), Welsh (Comrie 1977)[17] and in a cross-linguistic perspective by Keenan and Dryer (2007: 345-348), Baker et al. (1989: 234-241) and Siewierska (1984: chapter 3). It is clear,

---

[17] It must be mentioned that the status of the Welsh construction as either impersonal passive or active with an impersonal subject is unclear. The cognate Welsh autonomous verb is discussed briefly in section 4.2.2

in other words, that the impersonal passive is a well-established category in general linguistic theory. However, it must be noted, at least for the impersonal passive that retains a direct object, that this construction is somewhat marked in the world's languages, and that it has its opponents (e.g. Blevins 2003).

Examples of the impersonal passive in French, Ukrainian and Norwegian are provided in (26).

(26)   The impersonal passive

a. French (Legendre 1990: 82, her gloss/translation)

il a été arrêté plusieurs terroristes à la frontière
there were arrested several terrorists at the border

b. Ukrainian (Lavine 2005: 76)

nemovlja   bulo   znajdeno   u   košyku
baby.ACC   AUX.PAST   found-NO[18]   in   basket
'a baby was found in a basket'

c. Norwegian (example from google)

det   ble   drept   en   utenlandsk   soldat   i   Longwar-provinsen
EXPL   became   killed   a   foreign   soldier   in   L.-province.DEF
'there was killed a foreign soldier in the Longwar-province'

The impersonal passive will be further discussed in connection with the active subject impersonal construction in section 2.2.4.3.

2.2.4.2 *Morphosemantic operations*

It was mentioned previously that argument structure is seen as the primary syntactic structure, and that the argument positions in this structure come with a fixed ordering. In theta-structure on the other hand, the thematic roles, while they do have a default ordering, can rearrange, thereby associating with argument positions in different ways. This rearrangement accounts for how the same thematic role can be realised as different arguments in e.g. *Peter handed a drink **to John*** vs. *Peter handed **John** a drink*, where the

---

[18] This gloss indicates the Ukrainian construction in question, which is commonly referred to as the *no-/to* construction after the shape of the morphology.

beneficiary role is realised as an oblique – *to John* – and an indirect object – *John* – respectively (Kibort 2007: 9-11)

Another verb type that is handled at the level of thematic structure is the inchoative. 'Inchoative' is a semantic term referring to the unaccusative intransitive verb participating in the causative alternation (cf. Haspelmath 1993: 90). The causative alternation is illustrated in (27).

(27)   The causative alternation (Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1995: 79)
   a. Pat **broke** the window.
   b. The window **broke**.

I take the causative predicate to have the semantic representation in (28). Furthermore, I follow Kibort (2004: chapter 3) and Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995) among others in regarding the inchoative verb as a lexically detransitivised version of the transitive causative verb .

(28)   Semantic representation of a causative predicate *break* (Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1995: 83)

break: [[*x* DO-SOMETHING] CAUSE [*y* BECOME **BROKEN**]]

The basic assumption concerning inchoative linking structures in Kibort's theory (2007: 11) portrays inchoatives as the result of a morphosemantic operation she terms lexical detransitivisation, an operation that targets argument positions. Specifically, when lexical detransitivisation applies in the inchoative, it deletes the first core argument of the verb's argument structure, the causer argument *x* in (28). The resulting mapping from theta- to argument structure is shown in (29).

(29)   Unaccusative mapping from theta- to a-structure

```
              x       y
                      |
verb    <           arg2    >
                    [-r]
```

In the inchoative verbs familiar to us from English, the [-r] argument in (29) will map to the subject function as the least marked compatible function according to the Mapping Principle. This mapping is illustrated in (30).

(30)   Mapping from theta- to f-structure, the putative unaccusative

```
          x       y
                  |
verb   <          arg2   >
                  [-r]

                  [-o]
                  SUBJ
```
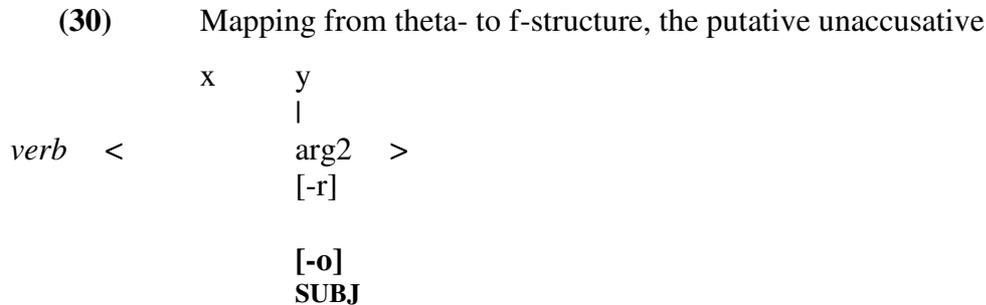
In the following I discuss the mapping of two types of unaccusative mapping structures in Irish. The unaccusative type represented by the inchoative mapping in (30) is found in Irish as well. Examples of this type are termed 'putative unaccusatives' by McCloskey (1996). While 'putative unaccusative' may not be a very common term, I will be using it in the following to refer to Irish unaccusatives with mapping to subject as described in (30). Examples of putative unaccusative verbs are provided in (31).

(31)   The putative unaccusative

       a.

*dhorchuigh   an   spéarthaí agus   **mhéadaigh**   an   ceo*
darken.PAST   DEF   sky   and   increase.PAST   DEF   fog
'the sky darkened and the fog thickened' (Séamus 'ac Grianna: *Mo Dhá Róisin*, 14 – *Tobar*)

       b.

*sa   tréimhse idir 1841 agus 1911   **laghdaigh**   líon   na   ndaoine*
in.DEF   period   between 1841 and 1911   decrease.PAST number DEF   people

*i dTír Chonaill   43%;   **mhéadaigh**   líon   na   Rosann   14%*
in TC   increase.PAST number DEF   R

'in the period between 1841 and 1911 the number of people in Tír Chonaill decreased by 43%; the population of Rosann increased by 14%' (Níall Ó Domhnaill: *Na Glúnta Rosannacha*, 66 – *Tobar*)

It has been established by McCloskey (McCloskey 2001b, 1996) that Modern Irish possesses a number of structures that should be analysed as lacking a subject. One of these structures, termed the salient unaccusative by McCloskey, is an unaccusative structure

where the one argument of the clause is realised as a prepositional phrase.[19] One example of this construction is given in (32):

(32)   Salient unaccusative (McCloskey 1996: 276)

mhéadaigh   ***ar***   *a*   *neart*
increase.PAST   on   his   strength
'his strength increased'

The largest class of verbs in this construction denote involuntary changes of state (McCloskey 1996: 242). The predicates take one argument, which is marked with a preposition. If the prepositional phrase is a true oblique and not a quirkily marked subject of some type, we would expect that the putative and the salient unaccusative behave differently in terms of constituency tests and selectional restrictions. McCloskey (1996: 242-250) shows that this is in fact the case: prepositions used in the salient unaccusative pattern are subject to the same selectional restrictions as when they are used as regular prepositions, and the salient unaccusative prepositional phrases do not raise out of their original position in the contexts where putative unaccusative subjects do raise.

Two theoretical steps must be taken in order to account for mapping of the salient unaccusative in the revised LMT. First of all, lexical detransitivisation has applied to delete the first argument position of the verb. Additionally it must be ensured that the remaining argument position maps to the oblique rather than the subject function. Mapping to subject would follow the Mapping Principle, since the subject function is the least marked function compatible with a [-o] feature.

I suggest that the mapping to oblique in the salient unaccusative can be accounted for by assuming that a morphosyntactic operation has applied to the mapping between argument- and functional structure. The resulting mapping is shown in (33):

(33)   Mapping relations of the salient unaccusative

$$
\begin{array}{cc}
x & y \\
 & | \\
\end{array}
$$

meadaigh ar   <   arg4   >
                              [-o]

                              [+r]
                              OBL_θ

---

[19] Other types of unaccusative constructions will be illustrated in section 5.2.

Recall that a morphosyntactic operation works by increasing the markedness of an argument's mapping. In the case of the mapping structure in (33), the second argument comes pre-specified as [-o]; the only possible increase in markedness for the mapping of the argument in question is for it to receive [+r], from which it follows that it will be mapped to the OBL_0 function.

Note that adding [+r] to a [-o] argument is similar to what happens in the mapping of a passive verb with an oblique agent phrase (cf. Kibort 2007: 18 and references therein and the discussion in the previous section). The passive with agent phrase is repeated in (34); this approach to passivisation includes the agent phrase as an oblique. Additionally it will be shown in section 5.5 that the morphosyntactic operation of adding [+r] to a [-o] argument also applies to a lexically idiosyncratic subjectless structure with the autonomous verb.

(34)   Passive mapping with oblique agent phrase

$$
\begin{array}{llll}
 & & x & y \\
 & & | & | \\
verb[\text{pass}] & < & \text{arg1} & \text{arg2} \quad > \\
 & & [\text{-o}] & [\text{-r}] \\
 & & & \\
 & & \mathbf{[+r]} & [\text{-o}] \\
 & & \mathbf{\text{OBL}_0} & \text{SUBJ}
\end{array}
$$

There is nothing unique about the fact that the one markedness-increasing operation may work to create different constructions depending on which argument it applies to, as shown by Kibort (2007). In the canonical passive mapping structure in (34), it is the first argument of the predicate that increases in markedness. The second argument maps to the subject function by the standard Mapping Principle. In the salient unaccusative structure in (33) however, the first argument is not available, and it is the second argument of the predicate that increases in markedness and maps to the oblique function. The salient unaccusative relation is distinguished from the passive relation because it is the second argument of the salient unaccusative predicate that is mapped to the oblique function through an increase in markedness. In the salient unaccusative the first argument has been deleted; this state of affairs contrasts with the agented passive, where the first argument is mapped to the oblique.

2.2.4.3　The active subject impersonal construction

The active subject impersonal (ASI-) construction, as is implicit in its name, is an active construction, and so it involves mapping from a- to f-structure according to the Mapping Principle. This construction possesses a phonologically null subject with an impersonal/arbitrary interpretation; in the case of Modern Irish, this subject is indicated by the autonomous morphology. The mapping structure from a- to f-structure is provided in (35); the impersonal nature of the subject is shown informally on the SUBJ function.

(35)　　　The ASI construction

verb[ASI]	<	arg1	arg2	>
		[-o]	[-r]	
		[-r]	[+o]	
		SUBJ$_{imp}$	OBJ	

In the following I show that the ASI category, while not as well known or frequent as the passive, is well established in analyses of different languages, particularly in Europe, but also to some extent in the rest of the world.

The Irish ASI construction takes its place in the general picture as a type of impersonal construction that contains a subject which is not fully specified or referential, but which may have a generic human interpretation or refer to an unspecified group of people. As Anna Siewierska (2008: 116-117) points out, this type of impersonal construction can take different forms. Siewierska distinguishes between two major subgroups. The constructions in the first subgroup are found with 'a generalised noun or personal pronoun'; this noun or pronoun may take the shape of a) a separate pronoun subject, b) bound forms / clitics, c) verb inflection comparable to regular person and number inflection in *pro*-drop languages or d) it may be phonologically null entirely. The Irish ASI construction belongs to category c). Category a) constructions, impersonal constructions with a separate pronoun subject, are found with English *they* and German *man* among others. This type will be further illustrated in section 2.4.2 when the semantics of the autonomous subject is discussed.

The second subgroup of impersonal constructions involves morphology that does *not* indicate a pronoun. To the second subgroup belong e.g. the reflexive impersonals of Romance, which will be described in section 2.4.2 as well. Other examples of this group are 'existential and locative constructions with non-canonical subject marking' (Siewierska

2008: 118) that lack an expletive subject; examples of this type are found e.g. in Finnish and Russian.

As previously mentioned, the Irish ASI construction is analysed in the present thesis as belonging to the group of impersonals where the subject is expressed by the verb form in a way comparable to regular person and number inflection in *pro*-drop languages. Among the languages with impersonals belonging to this category are, potentially, Icelandic, as well as Polish. One possible analysis of languages in this category argues that the impersonal subject is arbitrary PRO; the Polish *no-/to-* construction has been analysed in this way (Lavine 2005; Kibort 2006: 8-11; 2008: 265-270). Recall from chapter 1 that the arbitrary PRO analysis has been set forward for Irish as well and that the autonomous subject is said to have interpretative properties that are comparable to arbitrary PRO.

The relevant construction in Icelandic is the so-called 'new passive' construction – or 'new impersonal', depending on how it is analysed. An example of the new Icelandic construction is shown in (36).

(36)   The new Icelandic construction
(example from Maling and Sigurjónsdóttir 2002: 98)

það   var   lamið   stúlkuna   í   klessu
EXPL   was   hit.NEUT.SG   the.girl-f.sg.ACC   in   mess
'the girl was badly beaten'

There are three main areas in which the new construction as shown in (36) is different from a standard passive: there is accusative rather than nominative case on the patient – 'the girl', there is no NP movement to subject position, and the definiteness effect does not apply (Maling and Sigurjónsdóttir 2002: 100). Generally, the definiteness effect affects postposed subjects, which must be indefinite in Icelandic both in active and passive sentences (Maling and Sigurjónsdóttir 2002: 99). In (36) however, the postposed argument *stúlkuna* – 'the girl' in accusative case – is definite.

Joan Maling and Sigríður Sigurjónsdóttir (2002; as well as their pilot study in 1997) analyse the new construction in Icelandic as an active construction with a phonologically null impersonal subject. Their interpretation of the results of their study, and subsequently their conclusions, are disputed by Thórhallur Eythórsson (2008). Eythórsson views the new Icelandic construction as an impersonal passive comparable to the impersonal passives in Norwegian and Faroese; similar conclusions are reached by Sigurðsson (2009).

In sum, the main point to note is that researchers will frequently disagree on whether a particular construction in a particular language should be analysed as passive or as an active subject impersonal construction. I suggest two reasons for this confusion. First of all, one researcher's analysis will hinge on her theoretic arsenal. As previously mentioned, not every researcher accepts that impersonal passive clauses can be formed from transitive active equivalents. A transitive ASI clause with a null-subject will have much in common with an impersonal passive based on a transitive active equivalent in languages without an expletive subject in the impersonal passive. Specifically, they both have an agent argument that is unrealised in some way, and they both have a patient argument realised as the object. If the impersonal passive construction is not part of one's theory, analysing the clause in question as active with a silent impersonal subject is the obvious step to take.

The Ukrainian *no-/to-* construction provides another example. This construction is analysed by e.g. Lavine (2005: 8-13), who shows that this construction has accusative marking on patients. Additionally, the construction accepts agent phrases, it is not compatible with unaccusative verbs, it cannot occur with raising verbs – since the implicit agent argument cannot control the subject of non-finite verb forms – and finally, the agent argument cannot bind anaphors. Blevins (2003) excludes subjectless passives that retain the object of their active equivalent from his theory. As a consequence he argues that the Ukrainian *no-/to-* is active with a suppressed impersonal subject (Blevins 2003: 492-495). He further suggests that this suppressed subject is underspecified and interpreted as indefinite, which enables it to be specified further by an agentive *by*-phrase. In contrast, both Lavine (2005), as well as Maling and Sigurjónsdóttir (2002: 105-106 and references therein), analyse the Ukrainian *no-/to-* construction as impersonal passive.

A second reason why researchers disagree on the status of particular constructions as passive or active impersonal is probably that the two construction types carry something of the same functional load. This fact was illustrated in chapter 1, where I showed that the Irish autonomous verb appears to have the same information structure properties in both Old and Modern Irish independent of how the syntax of the autonomous verb has changed. In the same vein, Keenan and Dryer (2007: 329) suggest that the most common alternative for languages that lack passives is to use 'an active sentence with an "impersonal" third person plural subject', defining 'impersonal' as a third person element that does not refer to a specified group of individuals.

2.2.4.4 *Distinguishing the construction types*

In this section I have used the revised LMT to define the construction types in which the Irish autonomous verb occurs. The three most important constructions are the canonical and impersonal passive and the active subject impersonal construction; the mapping relations of these constructions are repeated in (37). I have also provided the putative unaccusative / inchoative in (38).

(37)   Construction types

      a. canonical passive

verb[can. pass.]	<	arg1	arg2	>
		[-o]	[-r]	
		Ø	[-o]	
			SUBJ	

      b. impersonal passive

verb[imp. pass.]	<	arg1	arg2	>
		[-o]	[-r]	
		Ø	[+o]	
			OBJ	

      c. active subject impersonal [ASI]

verb [ASI]	<	arg1	arg2	>
		[-o]	[-r]	
		[-r]	[+o]	
		$SUBJ_{imp}$	OBJ	

(38)   Inchoative (putative unaccusative mapping to f-structure)

verb [inchoative]	<	arg2	>
		[-r]	
		[-o]	
		SUBJ	

In the remainder of this section I would like to make two general points regarding the constructions represented by the mapping structures in (37) and (38), concerning first of all how they can be expressed by the same verbal morphology in various languages, and second, what overt properties may serve to distinguish between them.

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It is widely recognised that the same morphology is used in many languages to mark different types of valency alternations, among others the passive and the anticausative as well as the middle and the reflexive (Mendikoetxea 2008 for Romance; Keenan and Dryer 2007: 334; Kibort 2004: 290-291 for Polish; Haspelmath 1990: 32-37; H. J. J. Dyvik 1980 for Old Norse; Langacker and Munro 1975: 800-802 etc., among many others).

This variation is established for example for the reflexive clitic impersonals in Romance and Slavic (Rivero 2002: 169-170); this fact is interesting because the Modern Irish impersonal subject is very similar, in terms of its semantics, to the impersonal subject in this construction in Romance and Slavic, cf. the discussion in section 2.4.2. Some examples from Spanish are provided in (39):

(39)   The different uses of impersonal *se* in Spanish (Rivero 2002: 170)

a. reflexive/reciprocal

Juan   se   viste
J   REFL   dresses
'John gets dressed'

b. middle/passive

este   coche   se   conduce   fácilemente
this   car   REFL   drives   easily
'this car drives easily'

c. anticausative

el   vaso   se   rompió
the   glass REFL   broke
'the glass broke'

Another language in which the same morphological marking is used both for the passive and other construction types is Norwegian; some examples are provided in (40):

(40)   Different uses of the –*s* suffix in Norwegian (categories and example verbs from Endresen and Simonsen 2001: 82, example sentences via google)

a. passive: *kjøpes* – 'be bought'

julegavene   kjøpe-s   i   Sverige
Christmas.presents.DEF   buy-S   in Sweden
'the Christmas presents are bought in Sweden'

b.   reciprocal: *møtes* – 'meet'

*kule   pappaer   **møte-s**   og   prater*
cool   Dads   meet-S   and   chat
'cool Dads meet and chat'

c.   deponent: *synes* – 'think'

*hva   **syne-s**   elevene   om   skolen?*
what   think-S   students.DEF   about   school.DEF
'what do the students think about school?'

The second point I wish to make concerns how the construction types illustrated in (37) have taken part in the process of diachronic change undergone by the autonomous verb. In section 2.3 I ask the question of how language change happens. It will be shown that I make use of the assumptions of generative diachronic theory, in which language change is said to take place when a child acquires a mental grammar that differs from the grammars of the generation before her. Assuming that a child acquires her language by means of her innate Universal Grammar as well as the data she hears around her, one of the main challenges of this theory is to determine how the data produced by one generation with one mental grammar can result in a different grammar in the next generation.

One approach to this paradox is to consider the overt properties by which a child analyses a particular clause as an instance of e.g. the canonical passive construction, and how these overt properties can change and become ambiguous. The overt properties to consider for the construction types in (37) are properties that indicate the grammatical functions of the overt arguments as well as the status of the covert agent arguments. I will focus on four main areas in the subsequent chapters.[20]

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[20] In chapter 1 two other properties of the active subject impersonal construction were discussed as a part of the presentation of the state of the art analyses of the Modern Irish autonomous verb: the active subject of an ASI verb is expected to be able to bind reflexives and reciprocals and subject-oriented adverbs. It was shown by Stenson (1989) and McCloskey (2007) that the autonomous subject cannot bind reflexives for independent reasons and that it may bind reciprocals only under certain conditions. Stenson (1989) additionally showed that the autonomous subject may bind subject-oriented adverbs. I will not be considering these issues in my analysis for the following reasons: the interaction of the autonomous subject with reciprocals and reflexives is already detailed by Stenson and McCloskey, and is limited enough to be of little interest. On the topic of subject-oriented adverbs, there are a number of difficult questions to determine, concerning what constitutes a subject-oriented adverb, and whether a given adverb requires a thematic null subject as a binder or may be bound by a passivised agent role (cf. the discussion in Eythórsson 2008: 196-197). It is hard to imagine that

The first area is case marking, agreement and morphological form; we expect the overt arguments of the constructions in (37) to behave similarly to regular active arguments in this respect. Properties of subject case marking ensure a distinction between the canonical passive and the two impersonal constructions, since the patient of a canonical passive predicate maps to the subject function.

Second, the presence of the agent phrase indicates a passive analysis instead of an active subject impersonal (ASI) analysis, since the agent argument cannot be mapped both to an oblique and an active subject at the same time. Nothing can be concluded from the absence of the agent phrase, since there might be independent reasons why the agent phrase is excluded. For instance, many languages appear to have a restriction in place against the agent phrase appearing in impersonal passives (see e.g. Siewierska 1984: 100).

Control in secondary predication is the third area to be considered. Recall that control is an f-structure phenomenon. In other words, the mapped-to-zero agent argument of the passive is predicted not to be able to control the null-subject of a non-finite verb form, since the mapped-to-zero agent is not present in the f-structure. As a consequence, a clause in which the silent agent argument of the main predicate co-refers with the silent subordinate clause subject will be interpreted as an example of the active subject impersonal construction.

Fourth, we may consider the presence of the autonomous verb with various types of unaccusative verbs. Recall that unaccusative verbs were taken to be incompatible with passivisation. The presence of unaccusative verbs in the autonomous form may in other words be taken as an overt indication of the presence of the active subject impersonal construction. It was noted that there were some potential exceptions to this generalisation to be found, at least in the Bantu languages. In spite of this fact I choose to maintain this generalisation for Irish in the absence of additional evidence that it should be discarded, thereby analysing any unaccusative verbs in the autonomous form as belonging to the active subject impersonal construction rather than the impersonal passive.

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these issues can be treated with any degree of certainty when working with the Irish language of the past; for this reason I will leave the question of subject-oriented adverbs aside.

2.2.5 Summary

The topic of this section has been the theoretic background of the present study. The theory in question is Lexical Functional Grammar; I have discussed the generative background of this theory, its parallel architecture (section 2.2.1) and some of the theoretic mechanisms that enable us to formally define the construction types involved in this study (sections 2.2.2-2.2.4). In the next section I resume the topic of what it entails to work in the generative paradigm, when I look at the generative approach to historical syntax.

2.3 Diachrony

In this section I present the basics of generative diachronic theory, where the main idea is that language change is tied to child language acquisition (section 2.3.1). I suggest that the change from undergone by the Irish autonomous verb from passive to active impersonal should be seen as a reanalysis; this term is defined and discussed in section 2.3.2.

As I will be applying generative diachronic theory to LFG in the following chapters, it must be mentioned I do not subscribe to this theory in its strictest form, which is tied to the Principles and Parameters theoretic idea that that possible human language can be fully described in terms of binary parameters. Rather, there are three main intuitions of this theory that I take with me in the LFG-based diachronic analysis to follow. First, language change happens when a child acquires a mental grammar that is different from the grammars of the people surrounding her. Second, language change involves reanalysis of lexical properties of words. Third, language aquisition takes place on the basis of the data available to the child; when these data change and become ambiguous, language change may follow.

2.3.1 Basics of generative diachronic theory

In the previous chapter I introduced the object of study and main hypothesis of this thesis. Specifically I presented a hypothesis which stated that the Irish autonomous verb has developed, broadly speaking, from a passive verb in Old Irish to an active verb with a phonologically null subject in Modern Irish. In other words, it is necessary to make explicit some ideas concerning the nature of language and language change.

In section 2.2 it was described how the theoretic basis of this thesis is Lexical Functional Grammar, which is a part of the generative tradition. Furthermore it was shown that this theoretic choice forces a particular view of the nature of language. Specifically, language is taken to be a mental entity with no existence outside of the minds of people. This view of language as a mental entity renders 'language' in its every-day sense, as the shared manner of speech of the inhabitants of a country, a social construct abstracted from the language of people who speak in approximately the same way within the borders of a political unit. It follows from this view that when we speak of language change, we speak of changes in people's mental grammars. In particular, the main idea of generative diachronic theory as presented by e.g. Hale (2007; 1998), Lightfoot (1999), Roberts (2007), and Roberts and Roussou (2003), is that language change happens when the grammar acquired by a child is different from the grammar of her parents.

From a theoretic point of view, language change is subsumed under the mechanisms of language acquisition and variation, and the notion of 'parameter' is crucial in generative diachronic theory as sketched here. A parameter can be defined as features of functional lexical items, e.g. finite T, finite C, etc. (see e.g. Roberts 2007: 267-272). In its strong version, the parameter hypothesis states that possible human language can be fully described in terms of binary parameters; Mark Baker's popularly written *Atoms of Language* (2001) is probably the most thorough exploration of this hypothesis in its strongest form. While acquiring her language, a child fixes each parameter to a positive or negative value based on the linguistic data that surrounds her.

In a parameter-based approach to these issues then, we reduce the differences between languages to different values of the parameters of Universal Grammar, and say that children learn their native tongue by deducing its parameter values on the basis of the primary linguistic data. Language change would then take place when something in the process of fixing the parameter values causes the child to set a parameter differently from her parents.

Now, the parameter concept both can and has been criticised, the debate between Newmeyer (2004; 2006) on the one side and Roberts and Holmberg (2005) on the other being particularly illuminating. However, it is not necessary to subscribe to the idea of parameters in order to make use of the diachronic ideas concerning language change as child language acquisition. The crucial point for our purposes is that language change is located to the grammatical or functional properties of lexical elements independent of the status of these properties as values of a given parameter in a given language.

Additionally, it is crucial to note that language change in this view is instantaneous. As Mark Hale puts it: (1998: 2-3, emphasis original)

> "Change" (…) is simply the set of differences between the source grammar, G_1, and the constructed grammar, G_2. Note that "change" therefore has no temporal properties – it is a *set* of differences. (…) Under I-language assumptions of the type sketched above, however, change is, by definition, instantaneous. It comes into being at the moment G_2 is established.

This view forces a distinction between 'change' and 'diffusion', where diffusion is the spread of a change throughout a linguistic community (see e.g. Hale 2007: 36). I will not be concerned in this thesis with the diffusion of the changes undergone by the autonomous verb.

The idea that language change involves changes in the lexical properties of a word ties in well with the intuitions of Lexical Functional Grammar. Recall from section 2.2.4 that I defined three construction types that participate in the change from passive to active impersonal in Irish: the canonical passive, the impersonal passive and the active subject impersonal. Their mapping structures are repeated in (41):

(41)   The passive and the active subject impersonal construction types

    a.   canonical passive

verb[can. pass.]	<	arg1	arg2	>
		[-o]	[-r]	
		Ø	[-o]	
			SUBJ	

    b.   impersonal passive

verb[imp. pass.]	<	arg1	arg2	>
		[-o]	[-r]	
		Ø	**[+o]**	
			OBJ	

    c.   active subject impersonal [ASI]

verb [ASI]	<	arg1	arg2	>
		[-o]	[-r]	
		[-r]	[+o]	
		SUBJ$_{imp}$ OBJ		

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I suggested in the discussion on construction types in the revised LMT that the properties of the construction types are associated with the autonomous morphology in the Lexicon. These properties include the morphosyntactic operations that ensure the mapping from argument structure to functional structure when the mapping does not correspond to the Mapping Principle. In the next section I show that the change from canonical passive through impersonal passive and to the active subject impersonal construction can be taken to involve a reanalysis of the mapping properties associated with the autonomous verb.

2.3.2   Reanalysis, actualisation and triggers

In this section I define the notion of reanalysis and look at possible solutions for how we can determine what triggers a reanalysis and what consequences the reanalysis will lead to.

For our purposes, there are three main problems involved in the study of language change from a generative perspective: the logical problem of language change, the regress problem and the chicken-and-egg problem. These problems – and the solutions to them – appear to have been formulated in order to counter the idea that children usually converge deterministically and without error on the target grammar that is behind the linguistic data that the children are exposed to (see the discussion in Roberts and Roussou 2003: 12-13). The logical problem of language change takes this idea on face value and asks, if it is the case that language acquisition is deterministic, how it can be that language undergoes any changes at all.

Formulating a solution to the logical problem of language change which goes back to Lightfoot (1979), Roberts and Roussou (2003: 12) suggest that language acquisition is only weakly deterministic in the sense that children are required only to set all the parameters. In most cases the children converge on a grammar similar to the adult grammar producing their input. However, in some cases the input may be ambiguous or obscure and thereby consistent with more than one grammar; this is a necessary assumption given that the same linguistic data are taken to serve as input for the formation of a child grammar, a grammar which ends up being different from the adult grammar that produced the data in the first place.

However, a solution to the logical problem of language change along the lines formulated above runs into the regress problem (see e.g. Roberts 2007: 125-127 and references therein): again on the basis of a deterministic view, how can it be that the adult grammar can produce data leading to a change in a child grammar without having gone

through the change in the first place? Following on from the regress problem is the chicken-and-egg problem: when we observe two innovations, how do we know which innovation is the cause and which is the effect? One example of the chicken-and-egg problem will appear in chapter 4: we hypothesise that the function of the patient argument changes from subject to object during the Middle Irish period. At the same time we observe various morphological changes such as the disappearance of number agreement between the autonomous verb and the patient. There is in principle no way to tell whether the disappearance of number agreement contributed towards the change in function or the other way around. It is clear from the literature that there is no single answer to these problems that everyone agrees on.

In the following I will present Harris and Campbell's (1995) approach to reanalysis, since this approach appears to correspond well with the Irish data. The change that the autonomous verb undergoes is taken to be a reanalysis: the autonomous morphology remains the same while its underlying properties of mapping change, cf. the diagrams in (41). Harris and Campbell (1995: 50) define reanalysis as follows:

> **Reanalysis** is a mechanism which changes the underlying structure of a syntactic pattern and which does not involve any modification of its surface manifestation. We understand **underlying structure** in this sense to include at least (i) constituency, (ii) hierarchical structure, (iii) category labels, and (iv) grammatical relations. **Surface manifestation** includes (i) morphological marking, such as morphological case, agreement and gender-class, and (ii) word order. [Emphasis original.]

Subsequently, Harris and Campbell (1995: 81-82) distinguish between three stages of reanalysis. They are listed in (42):

(42)   Three stages of reanalysis (quoted from Harris and Campbell 1995: 81-82)
   a. *Stage A, Input*: The input structure has all of the superficial characteristics of the input analysis.
   b. *Stage B, Actualization*: The structure is subject to multiple analysis; it gradually acquires the characteristics of an innovative analysis, distinct from that of Stage A.
   c. *Stage C, Completion*: The innovative analysis has all of the superficial characteristics of the innovative analysis.

Two important points may be drawn from the way the stages in (42) are formulated. First, the transition from stage A to stage B represents the reanalysis itself. The second point has

to do with the possibility for multiple analyses during stage B. I will be dealing with these points in turn in what follows.

As a consequence of stating that reanalysis represents the transition from stage A to stage B and that stage B is the actualisation period, reanalysis is said to precede actualisation. Harris and Campbell (1995: 77) define actualisation as 'the gradual mapping out of the consequences of the reanalysis', quoting Timberlake (1977: 141). In other words, Harris and Campbell solve the chicken-and-egg problem by taking a stand and saying that a reanalysis happens before the changes associated with it (see also Harris 2005). While this is not an unambiguous conclusion, cf. Roberts (2007: 126-127), it is a useful starting point for the subsequent analysis of the Irish autonomous verb.

Stating that reanalysis precedes actualisation brings up the question of what caused the reanalysis in the first place. This question brings up the issues of ambiguity and triggers or cues. Harris and Campbell sum up their discussion on the notion of ambiguity as follows (1995: 72):

> To summarize, the conditions necessary for reanalysis to take place are that a subset of the tokens of a particular constructional type must be open to the possibility of multiple structural analyses, where one potential analysis is the old one (applicable to all tokens) and the other potential analysis is the new one (applicable to a subset).

Looking at the issue from the perspective of child language acquisition, we are back to the question of how the linguistic data surrounding the child may be ambiguous in such a way that she ends up analysing it differently than the adults around her who produced it. Generative theorists working on diachrony provide us with the notions of cues, triggers and P(arameter)-expression and P-ambiguity (see Lightfoot 1999: chapter 6; Lightfoot 2005; as well as the formally defined notions of Roberts and Roussou 2003: 14-15; Roberts 2007: 132-139, 242-245). In a parameter-based approach to language change like Roberts (2007), reanalysis is a change that accompanies a change in a parameter. A trigger is seen as a substring of an input text that expresses a parameter (2007: 133). Roberts's definitions of parameter expression and triggers are provided in (43)

(43)   P-expression and triggers (Roberts 2007: 133)
   a. P-expression (quoting Roberts and Roussou 2003: 15)
A substring of the input text S expresses a parameter p_i *just in case a grammar must have* p_i *set to a definite value in order to assign a well-formed representation to S.*

b. Trigger

A substring of the input text S is a trigger for parameter p_i *if S expresses* p_i.

In other words, a substring of an input text is a trigger for a particular parameter if the parameter must be set to one specific value in order for the grammar to assign a 'well-formed representation' to the input text. This trigger can be strongly or weakly (P-) ambiguous; if it is strongly ambiguous it expresses either value of the relevant parameter, while it expresses neither value if it is weakly ambiguous. Strong ambiguity of an input substring is seen as a potential driving force behind reanalysis together with a preference for the *simplest* analysis.

Independently of how the notions of cues or triggers have been formally defined, the main point is that we need to find the overtly visible properties of the constructions involved in the change and look at how these properties changed in ways that might have caused the reanalysis. These properties were defined for the autonomous verb and the constructions in which it occurs in section 2.2 as well as in chapter 1; these properties will be applied in a diachronic analysis in section 4.2.

Ideally, in order to deal with the chicken-and-egg problem, we would like to attribute the cause of the triggering ambiguity to a part of the grammar other than syntax. As we will see in chapter 5, prime candidates relevant for the Irish autonomous verb are morphology and phonology (Roberts 2007: 129-132; Harris and Campbell 1995: 75-77).

Complicating matters further, the second important consequence of Harris and Campbell's definition of reanalysis is the idea that the old and the new analysis may exist side by side over time; this appears to have been the case with the Irish autonomous verb as we will see in chapter 5, and is a simple explanation for the apparently contradictory properties of the autonomous verb. As we will see in chapter 5 in the discussion of the diachronic development of the autonomous verb, the old and the new analysis will be hypothesised to co-exist even within the mental grammars of single speakers.

2.3.3 Summary

The approach to reanalysis that I have described in the previous section can be summed up in terms of what this approach entails for the study of the diachronic development of the Irish autonomous verb. In section 2.2 I defined the construction types involved in the

change and the overt properties that can be taken to serve as a trigger for a child to establish the constructions in her emerging grammar. In section 4.2 I describe the nature of the reanalysis in question and, as a consequence, the ongoing change that had several construction types existing together over a long period of time. I also attempt to establish unrelated changes in the grammar that might have preceded and perhaps helped trigger the reanalysis as well as the subsequent changes that took place as the actualisation of the reanalysis progressed.

It should be stressed that the approach presented above is one hypothesis out of many possible ones concerning the nature of language change. As a hypothesis, the above approach to reanalysis has two main advantages: at least in principle, it is easy to falsify, since the hypothesised order of the changes may be contradicted by data. Secondly it is well-founded in terms of being based on cross-linguistic work such as Harris and Campbell (1995).

2.4 Grammatical context

In this section I describe two grammatical phenomena that will be relevant for the analyses of the Irish autonomous verb that follow in the subsequent chapters. First I discuss modal verbs, and provide an overview of some general hypotheses concerning the syntax and semantics of modal verbs in general as well as in Modern Irish (section 2.4.1). This discussion serves as a background for the discussion of modal verbs in the autonomous form in section 3.3.2. In section 2.4.2 I discuss the semantics of arbitrary pronouns from a cross-linguistic perspective, for the purpose of observing how the autonomous subject fits into the general picture in section 3.2.

2.4.1 Modal verbs

In this section I discuss the distinction between epistemic and root interpretation of modal verbs. I will briefly discuss the classical analysis, in which the syntax of modal verbs is said to parallel this semantic distinction: epistemic modals are taken to be one-place verbs while root modals are two-place verbs. It is stressed that this generalisation does not hold universally. Subsequently it is shown that the relevant distinction for Irish modals has been taken to be not the valency of the modal predicates so much as the finiteness of the

complement clauses. Epistemic modals are said to take finite complement clauses while root modals take non-finite clauses; it is then made clear that not even this generalisation holds completely.

2.4.1.1 General theory of modals

It appears that modal verbs represent one area where it is particularly difficult to make cross-linguistic generalisations, and even the modal verbs of one language may not be amendable to sustainable generalisations but require individual analyses (see e.g. Eide 2005: 7; Falk 2008). Because of this difficulty I will not go into detail concerning the general discussion of modal verbs, but settle for brief sketches of the terminology involved in the classical analysis of modals before moving on to a discussion of Irish modals in the next section.

The notions of 'epistemic' and 'root' modals are crucial in the literature on modal verbs. I follow Kristin Eide (2002: 8) and take Christer Platzack's definition of root and epistemic meaning as the starting point for my discussion of modal verbs. Platzack states (1979: 44):

> The epistemic sense of a modal auxiliary qualifies the truth value of the sentence containing the modal. […] The root sense of a modal auxiliary is used to express necessity […], obligation, permission, volition, or ability on behalf of an agent, which usually, but not necessarily, is expressed by the […] subject of the sentence.

As Eide (2005: 25-28) points out, the epistemic-root dichotomy is frequently discussed because it is syntactically relevant (see below); however, modal verbs are usually given much more fine-grained descriptions in the realms of philosophy and modal logic.

Perhaps the most well-known analysis of modal verbs predicts that root modals are control verbs while epistemic modals are raising verbs; see Kristin Eide (2005: 172-191) for a thorough discussion of this hypothesis with references to previous works as well as problems associated with this analysis. In terms of LFG, this classical analysis predicts that root modals are two-place predicates that select for a thematic subject as well as an XCOMP. Epistemic modals, on the other hand, are one-place predicates that select for an XCOMP; the subject of the XCOMP shares its structure with the non-thematic subject of the epistemic modal. F-structures for root and epistemic modals are provided in (44) for the sentence 'the children may take syntax' (from Falk 2008: 881-883).

(44)   F-structure of root and epistemic modals (Falk 2008: 883)

      a. root modal

```
┌                                                              ┐
│ SUBJ            ["the children"] ─────────────────╮          │
│                                                    │         │
│ TENSE           PRES                               │         │
│                                                    │         │
│ PRED            'may_root <SUBJ, XCOMP>'           │         │
│                 ┌─────────────────────────┐       │         │
│                 │ SUBJ    ────────────────────────╯         │
│ XCOMP           │ PRED         'take <SUBJ, OBJ>'  │         │
│                 │ OBJ          ["syntax"]          │         │
│                 └─────────────────────────┘       │         │
└                                                              ┘
```

      b. epistemic modal

```
┌                                                              ┐
│ SUBJ            ["the children"] ─────────────────╮          │
│ TENSE           PRES                               │         │
│ PRED            'may_epist <XCOMP> SUBJ'           │         │
│                 ┌─────────────────────────┐       │         │
│                 │ SUBJ    ────────────────────────╯         │
│ XCOMP           │ PRED         'take <SUBJ, OBJ>'  │         │
│                 │ OBJ          ["syntax"]          │         │
│                 └─────────────────────────┘       │         │
└                                                              ┘
```
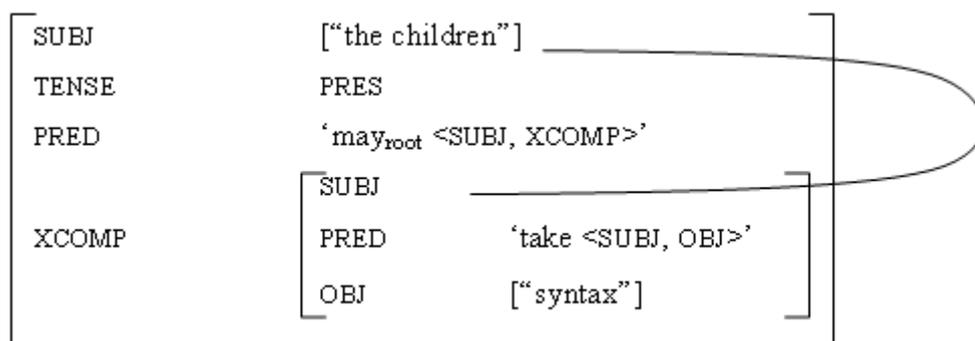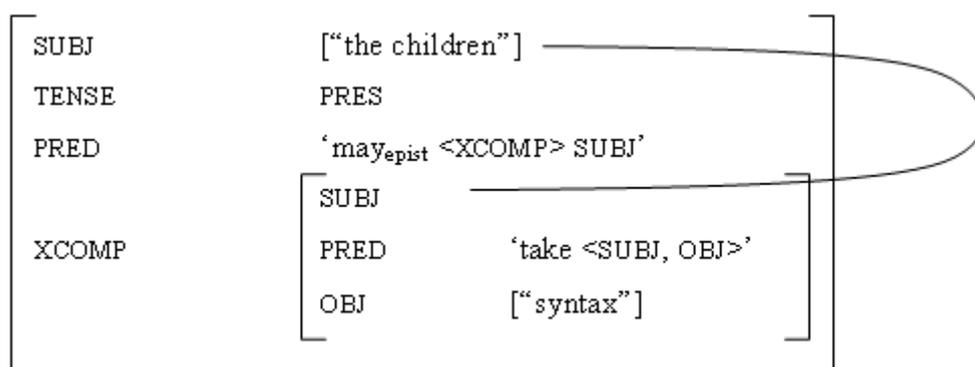
It will be shown in the subsequent sections that the classical hypothesis should be modified to some extent in order to apply to Modern Irish modal verbs and other modal predicates. Specifically, it has been hypothesised that the relevant distinction between epistemic and root modals in Irish concerns finiteness of the complement clause: epistemic modals are said to take finite complement clauses while root modals require non-finite complements. It will be shown that this hypothesis must be further nuanced as well.

Another general discussion on the issue of modal verbs concerns the question of whether modal verbs are a special category of main verbs, or whether they are a separate functional category (see e.g. H. Dyvik 1999 and references therein). This too is a complicated question that must likely be answered separately for different modal verbs and different languages; I will not be further concerned with it here, since there are good reasons to view Irish modal verbs as a special category of main verbs cf. the arguments that follow in the next section.

2.4.1.2   Irish modals

In this section I discuss the syntactic analysis of modal verbs in Modern Irish. It will be shown that there are four types of modal predicates. As a starting point, I discuss the idea that an Irish modal predicate takes a finite or a non-finite complement clause depending on whether it receives an epistemic or a root interpretation respectively. However, we will see that there is no watertight one-to-one relationship between syntax and modal semantics in Irish either.

We may distinguish between four types of modal predicates: finite verbs, finite verbs with a prepositional phrase, periphrastic expressions with the copula and periphrastic expressions with the substantive verb (Ó Siadhail 1989: 287; see also McCloskey 1984; Stenson 1981: 86). Examples of these four types are provided in (45):

(45)　　　　Types of modal predicates

　　　　a.　finite verb: *caith* – 'must'

agus **caithfidh** *sí   freagra   a   thabhairt   ort*
and   must.FUT   she answer   PART   give.VN   on.2SG
'and she must give you an answer' (CiD 33)

　　　　b.　finite verb with a prepositional phrase

thig   *le   gach   duine   an   cleas   céanna   a   dhéanamh*
come.PAST   with   every person DEF feat   same   PART   do.VN
'everyone could do the same trick' (CÓ 11)

　　　　c.　periphrastic expressions with the copula: *is féidir* – 'is possible; can, may'

ní   **féidir**   *go   bhfuil   tú   ar   fáil*
NEG.COP   possible   that   be.PRES   you   on   find.VN
'it is not possible that you're around' (CnC 27)

　　　　d.　periphrastic expressions with the substantive verb: *bí in ann* – 'is able to,
　　　　　　can'

níl   *sí*   **in ann**   *a   dhul   chuig   an   Aifreann*
NEG.be.PRES   she   able   PART   go.VN   to   DEF   Mass

mar   tá   sí   ró-shean   agus   bacach
for   is   she   too-old   and   lame

'she isn't able to go to Mass because she is too old and lame' (FB 9)

I will restrict the discussion mainly to the modal predicates that take the form of finite verbs, since these are the relevant ones for the discussion of the autonomous morphology that will follow in section 3.3.2.

Both Stenson (1981: 86) and McCloskey (1984: 447) state that modal verbs in Irish do not belong to a separate group of predicates, but are in fact no different from other complement-taking predicates in the language. Stenson (1981: 86) argues that the surface form of modal predicates is similar to other predicates in the language that take a sentential complement, and that the complement predicate of modal verbs are correspondingly similar to other subordinate predicates. These facts may be illustrated through the following examples, where the (a) clauses involve a modal verb while the (b) clauses do not.

(46) Modal verbs are main verbs: finite complements

a. modal verb

caithfidh sé go bhfuil lá an bhreithiúnais ann
must.FUT EXPL that is day DEF judgement.GEN here
'it must be that Judgement Day is here' (CiD 91)

b. non-modal verb

ní chreidim go bhfuil sé i ndán domh
NEG believe.PRES.1SG that be.PRES EXPL in lot to.1SG

titim i ngrá an dara huair
fall.VN in love DEF second time

'I don't believe it is in store for me to fall in love a second time' (CiD 33)

(47) Modal verbs are main verbs: non-finite complements

a. modal verb

agus caithfidh sí freagra a thabhairt ort
and must.FUT she answer PART give.VN on.2SG
'and she must give you an answer' (CiD 33)

b. non-modal verb

gur   *iarr*   *mé*   *uirthi*   *a*   *theacht*
COMPL.PAST   ask.PRES   I   on.3SG.F   PART   come.VN

agus   **mo**   **leaba**   **a**   **chóiriú**
and   my   bed   PART   make.VN

'I asked her to come and make my bed' (CiD 104)

Ó Siadhail (1989: 288-291) discusses three areas in which modals behave differently from other predicate types in the language. First, a subordinate non-finite clause may on the one hand take the function of XCOMP and occur without an overt subject because this subject can be identical to an argument of the main verb – in other words, the subject of the non-finite verb may share its f-structure with a main verb argument under functional control. On the other hand, a non-finite clause may also take the closed COMP function and occur with a noun phrase or a pronoun to express the first-position argument. One example of this latter construction is provided in (48), where the pronoun *tú* is the agent argument of the verbal noun *déanamh* – 'to do':

(48)   (Ó Siadhail 1989: 288, his translation with my glosses)
ba   *mhaith*   *liom*   **tú**   *é*   *a*   *dhéanamh*
COP.PAST   good   with.1SG   you   it   PART   do.VN
'I would like you to do it'

In the case of modals, the subject of a verbal noun complement will *always* share its reference with the first-position argument of the modal. In other words, the non-finite complement of a modal will always take the open XCOMP-function.

Second, the same modal predicate may take both finite and non-finite complements, with a corresponding difference in meaning. This difference in meaning has to do with the distinction between root and epistemic meaning, and will be treated in the next section. Third, several of the Irish modal predicates have defective paradigms; see Ó Siadhail (1989: 291-293) for an overview.

In this section I discuss three types of modal verb structures in Modern Irish. The basic distinction is drawn between modals with finite complements and modals with non-finite complements. The former group will always take an epistemic reading. Modals with non-finite complements, on the other hand, will usually take a root reading, but may get an epistemic reading in certain contexts in the Ulster dialect in particular.

The 'classical' analysis

The 'classical' analysis of modal verbs, discussed in section 2.4.1.1, predicts that epistemic modals will be one-place predicates while root modals will be two-place predicates. We notice from the pattern in (49), that when we only look at the finite modal verbs in Modern Irish, they correspond well to the classical analysis: taking the finite modal *caith* – 'must' – as an example, we note that this is a one-place verb in its epistemic reading, selecting only one thematic argument, the COMP, and a two-place verb in the root reading, selecting for a thematic subject as well as an XCOMP. Note that two versions are provided for the epistemic reading, since whether or not the verb requires a proleptic / expletive pronoun is a point of dialectal variation; according to Ó Siadhail (1989: 272), the proleptic pronoun is not used in the dialect of Munster, but is the norm elsewhere.[21]

> **(49)** Root and epistemic modal verbs in terms of LFG
>   a. *caith*-epistemic
>
> PRED 'must <(↑COMP)> (↑SUBJ)'
> PRED 'must <(↑COMP)>'
>
>   b. *caith*-root
>
> PRED 'must <(↑SUBJ) (↑XCOMP)>'

As Stenson (1981: 87) points out, the classical analysis of modal verbs may not be valid in Irish in terms of transitivity when we take into account the many modal predicates that take the form of periphrastic expressions with a different argument structure than finite verbs. One example illustrating this point is given in (50). The modal predicate in this clause is the periphrastic expression *is féidir le*, consisting of the copula form *is*, a defective form

---

[21] The use of the proleptic pronoun with epistemic modals might be another area in which present-day Irish is changing.

féidir and the preposition *le*, meaning 'it is possible for'. Stenson takes the complement clause *móin a bhaint* – 'to cut turf' – to be the subject of the main predicate.

(50) A periphrastic modal predicate (Stenson 1981: 86)

is	*féidir*	*linn*	*móin*	*a*	*bhaint*	*inniu*
COP	possible	with.1PL	turf	PART	cut	today

'we can cut turf today'

However, the lexical entries in (49) show that Irish modal verbs correspond to the classical analysis in terms of valency: the epistemic modals take one thematic argument, the XCOMP, while the root modals take a thematic subject as well as the XCOMP.

Ó Siadhail (1989: 289-290) and Stenson (1981: 87-89) show that one relevant distinction for Irish modal verbs is based on the finiteness of the complement clauses rather than the valency of the modal verbs, because the syntactic shape of the modal predicate varies to such an extent. They suggest specifically that root modals take non-finite clause complements while epistemic modals take finite clause complements. Stenson (1981: 87-89) phrases the distinction in terms of Equi; she argues that root modals require a complement where Equi has applied – i.e. an XCOMP in modern LFG terms, where the XCOMP subject is functionally controlled by the thematic subject of the root modal (cf. Stenson 1981: 71-81).

Stenson (1981: 87) furthermore suggests that the non-finite complement clause of a root modal is plausibly analysed as the object of the clause. She does not give any arguments for or against such an analysis. However, she does show that non-finite complements of root modals cannot be questioned or undergo pseudo-clefting or pronominalisation (1981: 90), and I have therefore analysed these complements as having the function of XCOMP or COMP and not OBJ; the ability to be questioned, undergo pseudo-clefting or pronominalisation is taken as an indication of object status, cf. Lødrup (2004: 63-64).

The distinction between root and epistemic modals based on the type of complement clause they take is seen in the clauses in (46), repeated here as (51):

(51) Irish modals

a. epistemic reading, finite complement clause

caithfidh	*sé*	*go*	*bhfuil*	*lá*	*an*	*bhreithiúnais*	*ann*
must.FUT	EXPL	that	is	day	DEF	judgement.GEN	here

'it must be that Judgement Day is here' (CiD 91)

      b. root reading, XCOMP complement

agus	***caithfidh***	*sí*	*freagra*	*a*	*thabhairt*	*ort*
and	must.FUT	she	answer	PART	give.VN	on.2SG

'and she must give you an answer' (CiD 33)

In example (a), the modal verb *caith* expresses the speaker's evaluation of the proposition expressed in the finite complement clause – 'that Judgment Day is here' – as true. Note the proleptic pronoun *sé*, which makes the clause lend itself easily to the 'classic' epistemic paraphrase 'it must be that…'. In example (b) on the other hand, *caith* states that its subject – 'she' – is obligated to perform the action expressed in the non-finite clause *freagar a thabhairt ort* – 'to give an answer to you'.

Dialectal exceptions

The distinction between root and epistemic modals appears to be remarkably overt and clear-cut from the discussion so far, since as we have seen, a root modal will take a non-finite complement while an epistemic modal takes a finite complement clause. However, I will show in the following that, just as in other languages, the one-to-one relationship between modal semantics and syntactic form does not hold completely. As pointed out by Ó Siadhail (1989: 289-290), it appears that if a modal is followed by a finite complement, it is always epistemic. However, Irish modals with a non-finite complement may also receive an epistemic reading. This holds true particularly for the Ulster dialect area, but sporadic examples of the same phenomenon may be found also in the other dialects. The PRED for epistemic modals with non-finite complements is provided in (52). We note that this modal is said to take an XCOMP and a non-thematic subject whose structure is shared with the XCOMP subject.

    (52)   Epistemic modal with a non-finite complement

PRED '… <(↑XCOMP)> (↑SUBJ)'

Ó Siadhail's examples of epistemic modals with non-finite complements are repeated in (53).

(53)   Non-finite complement, epistemic reading (Ó Siadhail 1989: 289-290, his translation with my glosses)

a.

thiocfadh	*le*	*sin*	*a*	***bheith***	*fíor*
come.COND	with	that	PART	be.VN	true

'that could be true'

b.

ba	*cheart*	*dó*	*sin*	*féin*	*a*	***bheith***	*agamsa,*
COP.PAST	right	to.3SG.M	that	EMPH	PART	be.VN	with.1SG

mara	*chaill*	*mé*	*é*
if.not	lose	I	it

'I should have that at least, if I haven't lost it'

c.

chaithfeadh	*sé*	*a*	***bheith***	*anonn*	*go*	*maith*	*san*	*oíche*	*an*	*tráth*	*seo*
must.COND	it	PART	be.VN	late	ADV	good	in.DEF	night	DEF	time	this

'it would have to be far into the night by now'

McCloskey (1984: 449-450) lists a number of similar examples, some of which are repeated in (54):

(54)   McCloskey's examples of epistemic modals with a non-finite complement

a.

ní	*thig*	*dó*	*a*	***bheith***	*níos*	*lugha*	*ná*
NEG	come.PRES	to.3SG.M	PART	be.VN	less	small.COMPAR	than

cúig	*bliana*	*agus*	*ceithre*	*fichid*
five	years	and	four	twenty

'he can't be less than eighty-five years old'

b.

ba	*chóir*	*do*	*dhream*	***teacht***
COP.COND	proper	to	group	come.VN

a	*chuirfeadh*	*bláth*	*ar*	*anam*	*na*	*teanga*
REL	put.COND	flower	on	soul	DEF	language.GEN

'a group should come along who would make the soul of the language blossom'

Interestingly, and perhaps significantly, *bheith*, the verbal noun of the substantive verb, is usually the subordinate predicate of the modals above that get an epistemic reading with a non-finite complement. I have seen one exception to this, namely (b) above, where the subordinate predicate is *teacht*, verbal noun of 'to come'.

The issue involved here has to do with the interaction of epistemic semantics with the semantics of the subordinate predicate: recall from section 2.4.1.1 that epistemic meaning involves a statement over the truth value of a proposition, while root meaning involve an agent over which obligation, permission, volition, ability etc. is predicated. It seems clear that the interpretation of a modal predicate affects which type of verb is found as the subordinate predicate. Stenson's discussion of the epistemic-modal distinction provides the relevant argument: she argues that example (b) below is an obvious candidate for an epistemic reading, since it makes little sense to predicate obligation of an inanimate noun like *an cluiche* – 'the game'.[22]

(55)   Stenson on the lack of epistemic modals with non-finite complements (1981: 88)

   a.

caithfidh	*go*	*bhfuil*	*an*	*cluiche*	*thart*
must.FUT	that	is	DEF	game	over

'the game must be over'

   b.

*?caithfidh	*an*	*cluiche*	*a*	*bheith*	*thart*
must.FUT	DEF	game	PART	be.VN	over

Similarly, it makes little sense to predicate of the first-position argument of 'to be' in example (54) the ability or volition to be a certain age. Rather, the possibility for an epistemic interpretation of the modal verb appears to open up for non-agentive verbs like 'be' to occur as the non-finite modal complement.

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[22] Stenson's informants take the structure in (b) to be 'strained at best'. Stenson's informants all speak the Western dialect (1981: 15), so her conclusions on this issue probably result from the dialectal differences previously mentioned.

Summary

The main purpose of this section has been to illustrate the various structures of Modern Irish modal verb clauses, for the purpose of discussing how these structures interact with the active subject impersonal construction described in chapter 1 and section 2.2.4.3. I have shown that there are four types of modal predicates; these are summed up in (56):

> **(56)** Types of modal predicates
> a. finite verb: *caith* – 'must'
> b. finite verb with a prepositional phrase: *tar le* – 'be able'
> c. periphrastic expressions with the copula: *is féidir* – 'is possible; can, may'
> d. periphrastic expressions with the substantive verb: *bí in ann* – 'is able to, can'

Additionally I have discussed three types of modal complement structures, which vary between modal and epistemic readings and finite and non-finite complements:

> **(57)**
> a. finite complement; epistemic reading, with and without proleptic pronoun
>   PRED '… <(↑COMP)> (↑SUBJ)'
>   PRED '… <(↑COMP)>'
> b. non-finite complement, root reading
>   PRED '… <(↑SUBJ) (↑XCOMP)>'
> c. non-finite complement, epistemic reading
>   PRED '… <(↑XCOMP)> (↑SUBJ)'

In section 3.3.2 I look at how the modal verb syntax outlined in (57) interacts with the autonomous verb and the syntax of the active subject impersonal construction in Modern Irish.

2.4.2   Semantics of the impersonal active subject

The issue in question in this section is the variation in interpretation shown by the cross-linguistic equivalents to the autonomous impersonal subject. I distinguish between three

main features of interpretation, generic, arbitrary and specific. In what follows I provide definitions of the three types of meaning (section 2.4.2.1) and show how impersonal subjects in a number of other languages can be interpreted in terms of these types (section 2.4.2.2). In section 3.2 I go on to illustrate the three features of interpretation in Modern Irish, and look at how each of the three types interacts with the context in which they occur. I suggest that the autonomous impersonal subject is lexically empty except for a feature [+human], and that other features of interpretation are acquired through the context. It will be seen that the use of the three-way distinction between generic, arbitrary and specific parallels McCloskey's (2007: 832-834) analysis of the semantics of the impersonal subject in Modern Irish.

2.4.2.1 *Theoretic definitions*

I take as my starting point the idea that the basic property of the autonomous impersonal subject, and its only lexical property, is a feature [+human]. This idea is presented by Egerland (2003: 89) among others for the impersonal pronouns *man* in Swedish, *on* in French and *si* in Italian, in contrast with the Icelandic *maður* and English *you*, which do have lexical content.

As McCloskey (2007: 833) points out, Krifka et al. (1995: 123-124) sum up the then recent research on arbitrary interpretation in a similar way, stating that the basic interpretation of an arbitrary pronoun is unspecified/indefinite and referring to people, while a generic interpretation requires an additional operator:

> Recent research on a number of languages […] points towards the view that arbitrary interpretations are essentially like a general indefinite referring to persons; if the sentences have a generic flavor, then this is due to additional generic operators in them.

The hypothesis that the Irish impersonal subject lacks lexical content other than a feature [+human] fits with the discussion of the diachronic development of the autonomous verb as well. I argue in chapter 5 that the Old Irish autonomous verb was found in at least three different constructions, two of which were the canonical and the impersonal passive. Throughout the Middle Irish period, the canonical passive disappeared in favour of the impersonal passive. The impersonal passive is subjectless both in f- and c-structure, and I will show that such a construction is liable to be re-interpreted as containing a [+human]

subject. This section, then, as well as section 3.2, discuss the endpoint of this development, showing how the [+human] subject of the autonomous verb may acquire additional features of meaning when it is used in different contexts.

The view of the impersonal subject as lexically empty except for a feature [+human] similarly ties in with the discussion in chapter 1 about the impersonal subject as binder for reflexives. I showed there that the impersonal subject is ungrammatical as the binder of reflexives. McCloskey (2007: 841) explains this fact by suggesting that the impersonal subject lacks the necessary person and number features to bind the Modern Irish reflexive, which is formed by adding *féin* – 'self' – to a personal pronoun. In essence, the point is that the [+human] feature is not specific enough in terms of person and number to bind a reflexive based on a fully specified personal pronoun.

The basic idea, then, is that the autonomous impersonal subject is an indefinite pronoun referring to people. I will call this the arbitrary meaning. With that idea as a starting point, I will show in the following how the context may modify the interpretation of the impersonal subject, giving rise to the generic and specific meanings in addition to the arbitrary one. The same intuition is expressed by Cinque (1988: 536), who states of the Italian clitic *si* that it is non-referential, 'in the sense that it is *by itself* incapable of contributing toward picking out a specific referent'[23] [my emphasis]. Along the same lines, Cinque (1988: 545) takes the categories he terms 'quasi-existential' and 'quasi-universal' to be 'two *contextual variants* of one and the same *arb*' [my emphasis]. The terms 'quasi-existential' and 'quasi-universal' refer to interpretations that are close to full existential and universal quantification (Cinque 1988: 545). Both of these terms will be described in more detail below.

I use the definitions in (58) for the notions of arbitrary, generic and specific:

(58)   Definitions (Sigurðsson and Egerland 2009: 161)
- a. Generic: non-restricted +HUMAN reading, i.e. people in general
- b. Arbitrary: a non-specific +HUMAN reading, excluding the speaker or the hearer
- c. Specific: a specific +HUMAN reading, referring to a wholly or a partly specific set of individuals, most commonly including the speaker

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[23] It must be pointed out that my approach is slightly different from Cinque's, since he assumes that the clitic *si* in question has person, number and gender features (1998: 536).

While the definitions above are useful, they are not particularly detailed, and I will look closer at what they contain in the following. While Sigurðsson and Egerland write that the arbitrary category excludes the speaker *or* the hearer in the definition quoted above, it is subsequently made clear that the arbitrary category excludes *both* the speaker and the hearer. Specifically, they stress further down on the same page that 'the arbitrary reading is always *speaker and hearer exclusive*' (Sigurðsson and Egerland 2009: 161; original emphasis).

Beginning with the generic category: as pointed out by Sigurðsson and Egerland (2009: 174), this reading of the impersonal subject is not strictly universal, but rather quasi-universal in the sense of Cinque (1988; cf. also McCloskey 2007: 832). Cinque (1988: 546; as well as Chierchia 1995: 108 among others) distinguishes between two categories of interpretation for the Italian impersonal clitic *si*: the quasi-universal and the (quasi-) existential Cinque notes five properties of the quasi-universal category, four of which are general enough to be of use here.[24] The four relevant properties are listed in (59):

(59)   Properties of the quasi-universal interpretation (Cinque 1988: 546)
a. incompatible with specific time reference
b. compatible with generic time reference
c. compatible with contexts suspending the specificity of the time reference
d. incompatible with the existence of a single individual satisfying the description

Additional features to note concerning the generic category is that it may potentially include the speaker and the hearer (Sigurðsson and Egerland 2009: 161). In my opinion this feature is useful because it serves to distinguish the generic from the arbitrary category; more details concerning this point will be discussed below.

In sum, the generic category is said to refer to 'people in general', which may potentially include the speaker and the hearer. A single, previously mentioned individual may not satisfy its description. It is found with generic time reference and is incompatible with specific time reference.

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[24] Cinque's fifth property of the quasi-universal category states that it is not restricted to [NP, IP] θ-marked in D-Structure (546).

As Sigurðsson and Egerland (2009: 174n) points out, the generic reading, in their words, 'can be excluded by "grammatical limits" (temporal, aspectual), but not by "real world limits", except when such limits lead to speaker and hearer exclusion […]'. In other words, a specific time reference such as an episodic tense or a temporal adverb can exclude the generic reading, but the world to which 'people in general' applies can be curtailed by 'real world limits' without the generic reading being lost. To see how this real-world curtailment may apply, Sigurðsson and Egerland provide the example in (60). They suggest that this example may be read generically if the sentence describes what happens generally in a particular place, e.g. a prison.

    (60)   Generic reading in Icelandic curtailed by real-world limits (Sigurðsson and Egerland 2009: 174).

það	er	spilað	allan	daginn
it	is	played	all	day.the

'NN play(s) all day'

The main point here is that it is possible to get a reading detailing what 'people in general' do even when 'people in general' is restricted to a specific place, e.g. perhaps a country, a school, a prison or even a family. The restriction stating that speaker and hearer must be included for a generic reading to apply may perhaps be seen as a consequence of the 'universal' nature of the generic reading: a universal reading may apply also in specific subsets of the world like a prison if the speaker and hearer are included in this subset. However, once the speaker and hearer are excluded, the universal aspect would be lost in favour of an arbitrary reading that details an unspecified group of people.

    Cinque's second category, the quasi-existential interpretation, is said to have the properties in (61);[25] see also McCloskey's (2007: 833) category 'existential', which he states is found 'in the context of episodic tense or aspect'.

    (61)   Properties of the quasi-existential interpretation (Cinque 1988: 546)

        a. compatible with specific time reference

        b. incompatible with generic time reference

---

[25] Excluding again the GB-specific feature mentioned in the previous footnote; the quasi-existential interpretation has the opposite relation to this feature, as it is said to *be* restricted to [NP, IP] θ-marked in D-Structure (Cinque 1998: 546).

c. incompatible with contexts suspending the specificity of the time reference

d. compatible with the existence of a single individual satisfying the description

It would appear that the features in (61) cover both the arbitrary and specific categories of Sigurðsson and Egerland. The specific and arbitrary categories are distinguished from one another in terms of two properties: specific / non-specific and the inclusion or non-inclusion of the speaker and hearer. I take the speaker/hearer inclusion to follow from the specificity: the specific category is wholly or partly specific, and may therefore include the speaker and the hearer.

The distinction between the arbitrary and the specific categories raises the question of what is involved in the notion of specificity. As pointed out by Haspelmath (1997: 37), there is no universal agreement on what this notion includes. Haspelmath's (1997: 38) definition of specificity may provide us with a useful starting point: Haspelmath defines an expression as specific 'if the speaker presupposes the existence and unique identifiability of its referent'. Correspondingly, non-specific would involve a referent whose existence is not presupposed and which is not uniquely identifiable.

As we will see, this conception of non-specific is too strong for the arbitrary interpretation of the impersonal subject; the arbitrary interpretation is not restricted only to referents whose existence is not presupposed. However, I take the key notion to be identifiability, and the arbitrary interpretation to involve referents that are not uniquely identifiable. This interpretation corresponds to Krifka et al.'s (1995: 123-124) description of the arbitrary interpretation as a 'general indefinite referring to persons' that was quoted above.

Sigurðsson and Egerland's definition of the specific category is now easy to understand; the specific category involves referents that may be uniquely identified, wholly or in part.[26] A wholly identified specific reading is likely to be a first person reading in the singular or plural, i.e. 'I' or 'we'. A first person plural reading is the common reading for the specific category in Romance, while the first person singular reading is found with e.g.

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[26] McCloskey (2007: 833) defines his category 'pseudo-specific' somewhat stricter. A pseudo-specific use of the autonomous subject according to his analysis occurs when 'the reference of the autonomous argument has been clearly and unambiguously established before the autonomous form itself is used'. I choose a somewhat wider definition in order to acknowledge the ambiguity of the categories and the fluid borderlines between them.

Swedish *man* and Icelandic *maður* (Sigurðsson and Egerland 2009: 163). In addition there may be a third person specific reading, referring to one or more identified referents that might be part of a group where the rest of the members are unidentified.

Furthermore we may note an interesting tendency that varies between languages: the specific category is under a restriction which states that the specific category is not available 'in the absence of aspectual and temporal limits' (Sigurðsson and Egerland 2009: 173). This generalisation cuts across the specific/generic time reference distinction that separates the generic from the arbitrary/specific categories; Sigurðsson and Egerland show that both the generic and arbitrary categories may apply in the absence of an aspectual or temporal delimitation of the predicate in question.

2.4.2.2 *Parallels in other languages*

The distinction between arbitrary, generic and specific has been established for impersonal constructions in a substantial number of different languages. In the following I list some examples from various languages. It will be shown that there are interesting differences in how the three categories are realised for a given impersonal pronoun.[27]

Generic and episodic interpretations are illustrated for the Italian clitic *si* in (62) (Chierchia 1995: 108). Chierchia's 'episodic interpretation' may or may not include the speaker and the hearer (Chierchia 1995: 122), and appears for that reason to correspond to the both the arbitrary and specific categories that were defined in the previous section. According to Chierchia, the generic example can be taken to say something about 'people in general' in Italy. The episodic example may get a generic reading of 'people in Italy' as well, but is likely to be interpreted as being about some group of people, i.e. a football team.

(62)   Generic and episodic, Italian *si* (Chierchia 1995: 108)

a. generic

In Italia si beve molto vino
in Italy si drinks a lot of wine
'in Italy, everybody/people drink a lot of wine'

---

[27] See McCloskey (2007: 832-834) for additional examples compared with the Irish autonomous form.

      b. episodic

In Italia ieri si è giocato male
yesterday in Italy si played poorly
'yesterday people in Italy played poorly'

   Three basic uses of the French impersonal clitic *on* can be listed: first person plural, generic, and indefinite (Jisa and Viguié 2005: 130-131; M. A. Jones 1996: 286-287). These would appear to correspond roughly to the inclusive, generic and arbitrary interpretations discussed in the previous section; however, the first person plural use of *on* in French is different from the other languages we have looked at because it is used as a regular colloquial alternative to the regular first person plural subject clitic *nous*.[28]

   Examples are provided in (63) (from Jisa and Viguié 2005: 130-131; M. A. Jones 1996: 286-287).

(63)   Three basic uses of French *on*:

     a. first person plural

on a passé les vacances dans le Midi
'we spent our vacation in the Midi'

     b. generic

en France on mange les escargots
'in France one eats snails'

     c. indefinite

on a vole mon stylo
'someone stole my pen'

   French *on* may also have singular reference. This is shown in (64), where the following clause makes it clear that *on* in the first clause refers to one man.

(64)   French *on* with singular reference (Koenig 1999: 242)
On a tué le president. Le meurtrier était du Berry.
'The president was killed. The murderer was from the Berry.'

Notice that this example is very similar to McCloskey's example of the autonomous subject with singular reference (2007: 837). McCloskey's example is provided in (65):

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[28] Compare the speaker-inclusive singular readings of Icelandic and Swedish presented in (66) and (67).

(65)   The autonomous subject referring to one person (McCloskey 2007: 837)[29]

siúladh   *suas   go dtí   Robert Kennedy*
walk.PAST.AUT   up   to   RK
'someone walked up to Robert Kennedy'

According to McCloskey (2007: 837), the clause in (65) is taken from a narrative about the murder of Robert Kennedy, and he says it is clear from the narrative in which (65) occurs that only one attacker is involved. McCloskey (2007: 837) takes the clause in (65) as an illustration of the lack of restriction on the autonomous subject in terms of the number of its referent. Furthermore he suggests that the autonomous subject diverges on this point from the impersonal pronouns in other languages to which the autonomous subject has been compared. It is however unclear to me how (65) is significantly different from the French example in (64); I leave this question open.

The generic, arbitrary and specific interpretations are similarly defined in (66) for Swedish by Egerland (2003). Notice for the Swedish examples that the specific reading is inclusive in the first person singular.

(66)   Impersonal pronoun *man* in Swedish (Egerland 2003: 75-76)

a.   generic

man   måste   arbeta   till   65
IMP   must   work   until
'people have to work until the age of 65'

b.   arbitrary

man   arbetade   i   två   månader   för   att   lösa   problemet
IMP   worked   for two   months   for   to   solve problem.DEF
'some people / they worked for two months to solve the problem'

c.   specific

i går   på   eftermiddagen   blev   man   avskedad
yesterday   on   afternoon   became   IMP   fired
'yesterday afternoon I was fired'

Generic and specific interpretations of Icelandic *maður* are shown in (67). It is interesting to note that *maður* cannot have an arbitrary interpretation, as shown in (68).

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[29] Quoted by McCloskey from B. Ó Curnáin (1996) *Aspects of the Irish of Iorras Aithneach, County Galway.* Ph.D. thesis, University College Dublin, Dublin, Ireland

Sigurðsson and Egerland (2009: 164) suggest that this fact is due to the inability of *maður* to exclude both speaker and hearer. Egerland (2003: 93) presents a diachronic explanation suggesting that impersonal pronouns that develop from a lexical noun phrase meaning 'man' will acquire the generic interpretation before the arbitrary one, and that *maður* has not yet reached the arbitrary stage of its development.

(67)   Icelandic *maður* (Sigurðsson and Egerland 2009: 161-164)

a.   generic

til að finna stöðina   beygir   maður fyrst til hægri
to   find   station.DEF turns.3SG one   first to   right
'to find the station, one first turns to the right'

b.   specific

já,   maður var   óheppinn í gær
yes   one   was   unlucky   in yesterday
'yes, I was unlucky yesterday'

(68)   Ungrammaticality of arbitrary interpretation of *maður* (Sigurðsson and Egerland 2009: 162)

*ég heyrði í gærdag   að maður sé   i verkfalli á hótelinu
I   heard in yesterday that one   is.3SG in strike   in hotel.DEF
'I heard yesterday that they are on strike in the hotel'

2.5 Summary

In this chapter I have provided some background and context for the Irish autonomous verb and my analysis of it. In section 2.1 I gave an overview of the main periods of the Irish language and the sources I have used for each period.

I showed in sections 2.2 and 2.3 that the theoretic background for my work is Lexical Functional Grammar. LFG is a theory in the tradition of Generative Grammar; this fact has concrete consequences for the underlying view of the nature of language and language change. Specifically, language is seen as an innate mental ability. Language in this sense changes through first-language acquisition, which forces a distinction between the two terms 'change' and 'diffusion': a change has taken place when a child acquires a mental grammar that is different in at least one property from the language of the people around

her. This change may or may not diffuse through the linguistic community and replace the original option.

Also contained in section 2.2 is an overview of the mechanics of LFG. The most important points I made is that LFG is a lexicalist theory with parallel architecture, and that morphosyntactic and morphosemantic constructions like the passive and the ASI construction are located to the argument structure and thematic structure of a predicate and to the relationship between these structures. As a consequence, the autonomous verb is said to have several lexical entries with different properties depending on how many construction types the autonomous verb may occur in at a given period of the language.

Section 2.4 provided some grammatical context for the study of the autonomous verb, both from a cross-linguistic perspective and from within Irish grammar. I looked at some general theory of modal verbs and I applied this theory to Irish modal verbs, in preparation for the study of modal verbs in the autonomous form in the next chapter. Additionally I defined different types of interpretation possible for arbitrary pronouns in languages as diverse as French/Italian and Icelandic. These types of interpretation will be applied to the Modern Irish autonomous subject in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Modern Irish I – the active subject impersonal construction

In chapter 1 I illustrated the state of the art of the moment in the study of the syntax of the modern Irish autonomous verb. The active subject impersonal (ASI) construction was shown to be the main construction in which the autonomous verb is used in Modern Irish. In this chapter I provide a more detailed look at selected properties of the Modern Irish ASI construction: first, section 3.2 discusses the possible semantic interpretations of the autonomous subject. This discussion builds on the categories defined for equivalent constructions in other languages that were presented in section 2.2.4. In section 3.3 I look at the autonomous form of different types of unaccusative verbs. Section 3.4 reviews the agent phrase, how it disappeared in the recent history of the language and how the agent phrase today is presented in the literature.

3.1 Introduction

The autonomous verb in Modern Irish is relatively well studied, and the established consensus, based on the work of Nancy Stenson (1989) and James McCloskey (2007) among others, takes the syntax of the autonomous verb in this period to be the syntax of the active subject impersonal construction (ASI).[30] The mapping properties of the ASI construction are repeated in (1) for a two-place predicate:

(1) The active subject impersonal construction: mapping structures

verb [ASI]	<	arg1	arg2	>
		[-o]	[-r]	
		[-r]	[+o]	
		SUBJ$_{imp}$	OBJ	

The most important arguments in favour of this conclusion were discussed in section 1.3, and will not be repeated here. In this chapter I discuss in depth some specific properties of

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[30] As mentioned in chapter 1, there are some lexically restricted, idiomatic exceptions to this conclusion. These exceptions are mentioned sporadically in this chapter and discussed in depth in chapter 5.

the Modern Irish autonomous verb. This discussion will serve two purposes: first of all it will provide a more detailed picture of the Modern Irish ASI construction. Second, the issues raised in this chapter will be tied in with the diachronic discussion of chapter 5.

In essence this chapter provides a (temporary) endpoint for the diachronic development under discussion in this thesis. In particular, I will show in section 4.1.4 that the Old Irish autonomous verb is found with unaccusative verbs of different types, and argue that such data force us to say that the ASI construction is present already in Old Irish. This analysis ties in with one of the most important claims of this study, namely that the ASI construction type is the main construction in which the autonomous verb is used in Modern Irish, and that this situation developed from Old Irish, where the autonomous verb was mainly used in passive constructions.

3.2   Semantics of the impersonal active subject

In section 2.4.2 I defined three categories of semantic interpretation said to be relevant for the autonomous subject. These categories were arbitrary, generic and specific. They were discussed with the definitions in (2) as a starting point.

(**2**) Categories of semantic interpretation (Sigurðsson and Egerland 2009: 161)
  a. Generic: non-restricted +HUMAN reading, i.e. people in general
  b. Arbitrary: a non-specific +HUMAN reading, excluding the speaker or the hearer[31]
  c. Specific: a specific +HUMAN reading, referring to a wholly or a partly specific set of individuals, most commonly including the speaker

I suggest that the autonomous subject is a lexically underspecified pronoun with [+human] as its only semantic feature. Furthermore I take the arbitrary interpretation to be the basic interpretation of this [+human] subject. The arbitrary interpretation is indefinite and refers to an undefined, non-specific group of people that excludes the speaker and the hearer. The arbitrary interpretation is distinguished from the specific one through the notion of

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[31] Recall from section 2.4.2 that the arbitrary category must be taken to exclude *both* the speaker and the hearer in Sigurðsson and Egerland's theory.

specificity, while the generic interpretation includes the speaker and the hearer and refers to 'people' either in general or in a contextually defined sub-world.

Section 3.2.1 makes some introductory remarks concerning the [+human] feature, and argues counter to McCloskey (2007) that there are no inanimate autonomous subjects. In section 3.2.2 the three categories of interpretation are applied to the Modern Irish material. Section 3.2.3 compares the three categories of interpretation to Karin Hansson's (2004) information-structure categories of recoverability for the autonomous subject. Section 3.2.4 provides a summary.

3.2.1   The restriction to [+human]

The basic assumption and starting point for the discussion in this section is a view of the autonomous impersonal subject as a lexically underspecified silent pronoun. Its only lexical content is a feature [+human]. The details of this proposal were reviewed in section 2.4.2 and will be discussed in section 3.2.2 for Modern Irish. Here I want to briefly mention a potential problem with and objection to this analysis.

McCloskey (2007: 837-838) argues that the Irish impersonal pronoun is not subject to restrictions in terms of the animacy of its referent, since the autonomous form regularly appears with inanimate causers instead of animate agents. McCloskey suggests that there is nothing surprising about this, since the impersonal pronouns that are subject to such a restriction are pronouns that have developed from words meaning 'human' or 'man'. Examples of this are French *on* deriving from Latin *homo* (L. Williams and van Compernolle 2009: 409) and Swedish *man* and Icelandic *maður*, both of which have 'man' as their basic meaning (Ragnarsdóttir and Strömqvist 2005: 144). The silent impersonal subject of the autonomous verb in Modern Irish is on the other hand a result of an entirely different diachronic development, meaning that we should perhaps not expect the same restriction to hold.

Two of McCloskey's examples of autonomous forms with inanimate causers are provided in (3). In an analysis where these forms are said to contain inanimate subjects, the implication is that these verbs describe inchoative meaning, i.e. changes of state – 'to be burned' and 'to be wrecked' respectively – that took place without an agent consciously setting fire or wrecking something.

(3) Autonomous verbs with inanimate impersonal subjects (McCloskey 2007: 837)

a.

níor	***dóghadh***	*na*	*nótaí* [32]
NEG.PAST	burn.PAST.AUT	DEF	notes

'the notes were not burned'

b.

raiceáladh	*ar*	*chósta*	*na*	*Síne*	*é*	*tráth*
wreck.PAST.AUT	on	coast	DEF	China.GEN	him	time

'he was wrecked on the coast of China once'

Examples of this type will be discussed in depth in chapter 5. I describe in that chapter how I view examples like those in (3) as subjectless rather than as containing an inanimate silent subject.

My main argument in favour of a subjectless analysis is part theoretic, part data-related. Starting with the theory; one important strain in the analysis of inchoative/anticausative predicates states that they are formed in a different module of the grammar from passive clauses (cf. e.g. Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1995; but see for example Kallulli 2007 for a differing view). This distinction is difficult to maintain if inchoatives like in (3) have active mapping to a silent inanimate subject. An analysis that maintains the distinction between the passive and the inchoative is advantageous because it provides an explicit formulation of the interpretative differences between these two construction types. These differences are illustrated by the mapping structures in (4). We note here that in the passive, the thematic role notated as *x* is present in argument structure, but is mapped to zero rather than to a function in f-structure. In the inchoative mapping structure, the first argument position in a-structure is deleted, and the thematic role in question is present only in theta-structure.

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[32] Both of the examples in (3) are credited to *In Aimsir Emmet*, translated by Colm Ó Gaora.

(4) Mapping structures of the passive and the inchoative

    a.   canonical passive

```
                          x           y
                          |           |
verb[can. pass.]    <     arg         arg     >
                          [-o]        [-r]

                          Ø           [-o]
                                      SUBJ
```

    b.   autonomous inchoative

```
                          x           y
                                      |
verb [inchoative]    <                arg     >
                                      [-r]

                                      [-o]
                                      OBJ
```

On a data-related note I showed in section 2.2.4.4 that it is fairly common for languages to use the same morphological marking for various valency alternation types. In other words there is nothing unexpected about an analysis where the autonomous form is taken to be used for passive clauses and/or active impersonal and inchoative clauses at the same time. These issues will be further discussed in chapter 5.

Additionally the presence of prepositional phrases expressing the cause of the verbal event must be taken into account. One such example is provided in (5), where the cause of the verbal event – 'choking' – appears to be expressed in the prepositional phrase *le feirg* – 'from anger'. If the presence of an agent phrase in a given clause excludes a silent impersonal *animate* subject analysis, cf. section 2.2.4, then the presence of a cause phrase should lead to the same conclusion concerning the inanimate subject.

(5)

tachtadh   le   feirg   mé
choke.PAST.AUT   with   anger   me
'I choked from anger' (Seosamh 'ac Grianna: *Dochartach Dhuibhlionna*, 12 – *Tobar*)

The issue of the interpretation of the autonomous subject ties in with the diachronic development of the autonomous verb. I argue in chapter 5 that the subjectless impersonal passive that resulted from the Old Irish state of affairs was reanalysed as active with a phonologically null subject with an impersonal interpretation. I take this reanalysis to occur

at least in part because subjectless impersonal passives tend to carry a strong implication of indefinite human agency (cf. Blevins 2003: 481). In other words, what happened was that a feature [+human], which was associated with the mapped-to-zero first argument position of the passive predicate, went on to become associated with the f-structure subject function through reanalysis. This process is further described in chapter 4, which deals with Old Irish and the subsequent diachronic development.

To sum up: the basic idea of this section is that the impersonal active subject is underspecified and contains a feature [+human]; this is its only lexical content. It follows from this view that any other feature of interpretation of the impersonal subject must come from elsewhere. I will argue in the following that the impersonal subject acquires other features of interpretation from the context. These features include singular/plural and varieties of generic and specific.

3.2.2 Arbitrary, generic and specific interpretations of the autonomous subject

In this section I apply the three categories of interpretation defined in chapter 2 to the Modern Irish material. I start with the arbitrary category, since this category is seen as the most basic possibility for the impersonal subject when it is lexically specified as [+human] and nothing else. Recall that this interpretation is taken to be a general indefinite interpretation, and that its referents are not uniquely identifiable and exclude the speaker and hearer. It is related to specific or episodic time reference.

In *Cré na Cille* the autonomous verb is frequently used in the past with an arbitrary interpretation when the characters, who are dead and talking to each other in their graves, relate stories of what happened to them above the earth when they were alive. Two examples of this usage are provided in (6):

(6) Arbitrary interpretation, episodic time reference

        a.

ach	*dheamhan*	*smid*	*a*	*chuala*	*mé*	*faoi*
but	NEG	nothing	REL	hear.PAST	I	about.3SG.M

go dtí	*an*	*oíche*	*ar*	**cuireadh**	*thú*
until	DEF	night	REL	put.PAST.AUT	you

'but I didn't hear a thing about it until the night when they buried you' (CnC 198)

b.

baineadh	*an*	*leoraí*	*dhe,*	*agus*	***díoladh***	*air*	*é*
take.PAST.AUT	DEF	lorry	from.3SG.M	and	sell.PAST.AUT	on.3SG.M	it

'they took the lorry from him and sold it' (CnC 29)

In (a) a newly buried man is telling the main character, who has been in her grave since the beginning of the book, why he did not come to her funeral. The autonomous form is *cuireadh*, past autonomous of the verb *cuir*, which has 'put' as its basic meaning but which here means 'bury'. The speaker knows the existence of a group of people involved in the burial, but their exact identity is not important. In the (b) example one of the characters is talking about a man from the village who was in debt and got his lorry seized and sold. Again it is implied that some person or group of people performed this action, but their specific identity is unimportant.

Moving on to the generic group, we recall that it has a quasi-universal meaning of 'people in general', that it is incompatible with specific time reference and that it cannot refer to one individual only. Additionally it was shown that the generic reading does not need to refer to a universal 'people in general', but that real-world limits may curtail the place to which 'people in general' applies.

McCloskey (2007: 832-833) mentions two categories in this group, namely gnomic as well as quasi-universal. A gnomic statement is shown in (7) in the present tense, which has a habitual aspect (Mac Eoin 2002: 124; Ó Siadhail 2000: 116).

(7) Generic / gnomic in the present tense

dá fhad	*dhá*	*dtéann*	*an*	*madadh*	*rua,*
however long	COMPL	go.PRES	DEF	dog	red

beirtear	*air*	*sa*	*deireadh*
seize.PRES.AUT	on.3SG.M	in.DEF	end

'no matter how far the fox goes, someone catches it in the end' (CnC 151)

An autonomous form that occurs several times with a generic interpretation in *Cré na Cille* is *deirtear* – the present tense autonomous form of *abair* – 'to say'. With a generic interpretation it has the meaning 'they say' or 'people say'. Two clauses with *deirtear* are given in (8). In (a) the subordinate clause expresses a general statement, and the generic impersonal subject can here be taken to be close to universal. In (b) on the other hand, the

subordinate clause refers to village gossip. The generic subject in (b) appears for this reason to be more restricted and to refer to people in general *in the village*.

(8) *deirtear*: 'people say'

a.

deirtear	*go*	*bhfuil*	*copógaí*	*agus*	*neantógaí*	*brúite*
say.PRES.AUT	that	be.PRES	dock	and	nettle	crushed

thar	*cionn*	*i*	*bpíopaí*	*cailce*
over	head	in	pipes	chalk.GEN

'people say that crushed leaves of dock and nettle are excellent in chalk pipes' (CnC 338)

b.

deirtear	*gur*	*rug*	*sé*	*fhéin*	*agus*	*mac*	*Thomáisín*	*orthu*
say.PRES.AUT	that.PAST	seize	he	self	and	son	Tomáisín	on.3PL

i	*do*	*chruach*	*mhóna*	*roimh*	*lá*
in	your	stack	turf	before	day

'they say that he and Tomáisín's son caught them in your stack of turf before dawn' (CnC 352)

Example (9) shows an autonomous verb with a generic reading where the autonomous subject is curtailed by what Sigurðsson and Egerland (2009) call 'real world limits': in this example the reference of the 'people in general' is limited by the adverb *anseo* – 'here' – which refers to the world of the graveyard in which the novel takes place. We may note that the arbitrary reading is excluded in this example. The arbitrary reading excludes the speaker and hearer, but the speaker has told the hearer to stop whining just before (9) occurs, and as such she appears to include herself in the autonomous subject.

(9) Generic in terms of the world of the novel *Cré na Cille*

deirim	*leat*	*nach*	***n-éistfear***	*leis*	*an*	*gcaint*	*sin*
say.PRES.1SG	with.2SG	that.NEG	listen.FUT.AUT	with.DEF	DEF	talk	that

anseo
here

'I'll tell you that people won't listen to that talk here' (CnC 84)

One of McCloskey's (2007: 832) examples of the quasi-universal/gnomic interpretation is repeated in (10). This example involves an idiomatic use of the autonomous form of the verb *tabhair* – 'to give' – and the preposition *ar* – 'on' – to express 'to be called'.

(10)   'to be called' (McCloskey 2007: 832)

tugtar   *"madadh   uisce"   (go minic)   ar   an   dobharchú*
give.PRES.AUT   dog   water   (often)   on   DEF   otter
'the otter is often called "a water-dog" '

The arguments involved are a generic autonomous subject 'people', a name as the object of the autonomous verb, and the entity named following the preposition *ar*. This idiom can be used for various types of named entities, for example a species as in (10), a concept or a person; the two latter are illustrated in (11) and (12) respectively. .

(11)   'to be called', applied to a concept

*an   triantán   suthain   a   **thugtar**   sa   gcultúr   air*
DEF   triangle   eternal   REL   give.PRES.AUT   in.DEF   culture   on.3SG.M
'it is called "the golden triangle" in culture' (CnC 37)

(12)   'to be called', applied to a person

*Nóra   a   **thiúrfar**   uirthi*
N   REL   give.FUT.AUT   on.3SG.F
'she shall be called Nóra' (CnC 123)

The active autonomous subject of this idiom may be ambiguous between the generic and the specific reading. The example in (12) is found in a sequence in the novel describing the main character's discussion with her son over what to name the son's first child, who has just been born. It starts with a neighbour asking the main character what the child's name will be (13):

(13)   'to be called' with active morphology

*cén   t-ainm   a   **thiúrfas**   sibh   ar   an   somacháinín*
what.COP.DEF   name   REL   give.FUT.REL   you (pl.)   on   DEF   little-one
'what will you call the little one?' (CnC 122)

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We note that the clause in (13) is in the active with an overt subject *sibh* – 'you (pl.)'. On the basis of this context the subsequent clause in (12) may be taken as ambiguous between 'people (in general) will call her Nóra (during her life)' and 'we will call her Nóra'.

The final category to be discussed is the specific interpretation. Recall from chapter 2 that this category involves referents that may be uniquely identified in part or in full. It often includes the speaker. McCloskey (2007: 837) remarks that the Irish autonomous subject 'goes its own way' compared to other languages because it is not restricted to plural referents. However, this question would appear to be more complicated than at first glance, since we have seen in chapter 2 that there are impersonal subjects in other languages that may have a singular reference in the first person (Swedish) as well as in the third person (French). It is not clear to me how restrictions on number features interact with person features, and I will leave this question open.

In the following examples I will distinguish between non-inclusive and inclusive specific for ease of exposition, where inclusive refers to the speaker. A specific and non-inclusive example with what appears to be singular reference is provided in (14).

(14)   Specific / non-inclusive, singular

B'éigean   do   mo   mháthair   staonadh   den   mhóin,
COP'necessity to   my   mother   stop   from.DEF turf

agus   cluas   a   thabhairt   don   pheata   a   bhí   tar éis   múscailt
and   ear   PART   give.VN   to.DEF   pet   REL   be.PAST   after   awake.VN

*as   a   chodladh.   **Cuireadh**   an   cóta   glas   orm,*
out-of his   sleep   put.PAST.AUT   DEF coat   grey   on.1SG

tugadh   *gráinseáil   le   n-ithe   dom (…).*
give.PAST.AUT   small.portion to   eat.VN   to.1SG

'She had to leave the turf alone then and lend an ear [to the pet] now he was awake. She dressed me in the grey petticoat and gave me a bit to eat (…).' (AtO 15, translation from O'Crohan 2000: 3)

The preceding context of this example relates how the storyteller's father was going out fishing one morning while his mother had to go bring some of their turf back home, since they had been told that their turf had been stolen. The mother carries several loads of turf home before 'the pet' wakes up; I take 'the pet' to be a reference by the storyteller to himself, as he is a young child at the time. It seems clear, from the way the mother has to leave the turf in order to take care of her child when he wakes up, that she is the only

potential referent of the autonomous subjects in the forms *cuireadh* – 'put' and *tugadh* – 'give' in (14).

In (15) is shown a specific / non-inclusive example with a plural reference:

(15)　　　Specific / non-inclusive, plural

Ach	*an*	*bhfeiceann*	*tú*	*an*	*bhail*	*a*	*chuir*	***sí***	***fhéin***
but	Q	see.PRES	you	DEF	treatment	REL	put.PAST	she	self

agus	***an***	***ghlibín***	***Neil***	*ormsa,*	*a*	*Bhileachaí?*
and	DEF	slattern	N	on.1SG	VOC	B

Leabhar	*Eoin*	*a*	*fháil*	*ón*	*sagart*	*agus*	*mise*	*a*	*bhúrláil*
book	John	PART	get.VN	from.DEF	priest	and	me	PART	bundle

anuas	*san*	*almóir*	*seo*	*deich*	*mbliana*	*fichead*	*roimh*	*an*	*am.*
down	in.DEF	niche	this	ten	years	twenty	before	DEF	time

An	*cleas*	*céanna*	*a*	***rinneadh***	*ar*	*Jeaic*	*bocht…*
DEF	trick	same	REL	do.PAST.AUT	on	J	poor

'But do you see the way she and that slattern Neil has treated me, Bileachaí? To get the Book of John from the priest and to pack me off into this niche thirty years before time. The same trick they played on poor Jeaic…' (CnC 355-356)

In this example the main character claims that her daughter-in-law and her sister Neil (referred to in the phrase *sí fhéin agus an ghlibín Neil*) have conspired to use the Book of John to put her in her grave before her time. Subsequently she states that the same trick has been made on a man named Jeaic (*an cleas céanna a rinneadh ar Jeaic bocht*). The natural interpretation is that the autonomous subject of *rinneadh* refers to the same two people.

Finally in (16) I give an example of the specific / inclusive interpretation.

(16)　　　Specific / inclusive

ní	*bheidh*	*bacainn*	*ar*	*dhuine*	*ar*	*bith*	*dhá*	***nglacfar***
NEG	be.FUT	obstruction	on	person	any		of-all.REL	admit.FUT.AUT

sa	*gcumann*	*a*	*bharúil*	*fhoilsiú,*	*agus*	*ní*	*bheidh*	*de*
in.DEF	society	his	opinion	disclose.VN	and	NEG	be.FUT	of

cháilíocht	*chomhaltais*	***againn***	*ach*	*gur*	*caraid*	*don*	*chultúr*	*é*
qualification	membership.GEN	at.2PL	but	that.COP	friend	to.DEF	culture	him

'no one who is admitted to the society will be hindered from expressing his opinion, and we will not have any membership qualifications other than that he is a friend of culture' (CnC 237)

The context of this example is a conversation between two women. One of the women wants to start a cultural society. In this example she describes what the membership conditions are to be. The story makes it clear that the society is the one woman's idea and that she is so far the only one involved in it. In other words it is clear that she is included in the reference of the autonomous subject (of *glacfar*), or even the only one referred to. The first person reading is confirmed by the first person plural prepositional form *againn* in the next clause.

3.2.3   Semantics vs. recoverability of the impersonal subject

In this section I present Karin Hansson's (2004: 55-58 and 85-90) discussion of the recoverability of the autonomous subject. She distinguishes between four categories in order to study the recoverability of what she terms 'implicit agents', i.e. autonomous subjects as well as mapped-to-zero agent arguments of the periphrastic passive. The categories are: textually inferable, pragmatically inferable, generic and non-recoverable (55-58). All of these categories have to do with how the listener/reader identify or recover the referent of the implicit subject. In this section I will apply these categories to the autonomous subject, leaving aside the mapped-to-zero agent of the periphrastic passive.

It is possible to criticise these categories on several counts. First of all, the non-recoverable category refers to 'implicit agents' that cannot be recovered. I will argue that these implicit agents, rather than being impossible to recover, are not present at all. The three other categories, the textually and pragmatically inferable and the generic, are based on different properties of the autonomous subject: the two former refer to information structure, while the generic category refers to the semantic properties of the autonomous subject. In spite of these potential problems, it is still interesting and relevant to look at Hansson's categories of recoverability because her work is thorough and corpus-based. She lists numbers and percentages for how frequently the different categories of recoverability occur with the autonomous verb; by comparing her categories with the categories of semantic interpretation, it is possible to find some indication of the comparative frequency of the latter categories. It will be shown that while there is no one-to-one relationship

between the sets of categories, enough similarities may be pinpointed that we can conclude that the generic interpretation is comparatively less frequent than the arbitrary and specific interpretations.

Starting with the non-recoverable agent; this is an agent that is not logically implied at all (Hansson 2004: 56). I will provide two examples of the non-recoverable category in the following, to show that this category says nothing about the autonomous subject and is not really relevant here, but concerns the subjectless use of the autonomous verb discussed in chapter 5. Hansson (2004: 86-87) distinguishes between two types of non-recoverable agents. The first category concerns verbs that are frequently used in the autonomous form with certain idiomatic meanings. By far the most frequent verb in this category is *cas*, meaning 'twist, turn' in the active but 'meet' in the idiomatic use of the autonomous verb under discussion, which occurs in 303 out of the 617 instances of non-recoverable agents. One example of this idiomatic usage of the autonomous form of *cas* is provided in (17). In this example we see that the two groups of people meeting each other are expressed as a noun phrase *chuile dhuine* – 'everyone' – and a prepositional phrase *linn*, the second person plural form of the preposition *le* – 'with'.

(17)   Autonomous verb with 'non-recoverable agent': *cas*

mar	*léigh*	*sé*	*an*	*"lesson"*	*do*	*chuile*	*dhuine*	*dhár*
for	read.PAST	he	DEF		for	every	person	of.all.REL

casadh	*linn*	*faoi*	*bhealach*
met.PAST.AUT	with.2PL	under	way

'for he read a "lesson" for everyone we met on the way' (CnC 164)

The other type of non-recoverable agents contains verbs where, a) the autonomous form is not required in the current context, and b) 'the implicit agent does not refer to a participant responsible for the action' (Hansson 2004: 87). The most frequent verb in this subgroup is *bain*, meaning 'take' in the active form, with 58 out of the 617 non-recoverable instances. The autonomous form of *bain* may be used in a large number of expressions. Her two examples of this group are repeated in (18).

(18)   Examples of non-recoverable agents from Hansson (2004: 88)[33]

　　　a.

nuair	*a*	*thánamair*	*go dtí*	*claí*	*na*	*páirce*	*atá*		*ar*
when	REL	come.PAST.1PL	to	wall	DEF	field.GEN	be.PRES.REL		on

an	*dtaobh*	*amuigh*	*don*	*dtígh,*	***baineadh***	*geit*	*asam*
DEF	side	outside	of.DEF	house	take.PAST.AUT	start	out-of.1SG

'when we came to the wall of the field outside the house, I was startled'

　　　b.

deir	*daoine*	*gur*	*tuitim*	*ó*	*sgafall*	*a*	*rinne*	*sé*	*nuair*	*a*
say.PRES	people	that.COP	fall	from	scaffolding	REL	do.PAST	he	when	REL

bhí	*sé*	*'na*	*stócach,*	*gur*	***loiteadh***		*an*	*chloigeann*
be.PAST	he	in.his	youth	so-that.PAST	injure.PAST.AUT	DEF	head

aige	*agus*	*go*	*bhfuil*	*an*	*inchinn*	*corrach*	*ariamh*	*ó shoin*	*aige*
at.3SG.M	and	that	be.PRES	DEF	mind	troubled	ever	since then	at.3SG.M

'people say that he fell from a scaffolding when he was young so that he injured his head and that he hasn't been right since'

It is not clear to me from these two examples what Hansson means by the implicit agent in these examples not referring to 'a participant responsible for the action'. There is no mention in the context we are given of any cause of the events at all. Particularly in (b) it seems to be clearly implied that the fall happened without outside interference; for this reason I question whether the term 'agent' should be used at all in this context. One possible analysis for these examples is the inanimate impersonal subject of McCloskey (2007) as mentioned in section 3.2.1. However, I mentioned in that section that I prefer to avoid using the inanimate impersonal subject in this thesis. Instead I will be analyzing examples like in (17) and (18) as subjectless predicates. This predicate type is the topic of chapter 5. For this reason, Hansson's non-recoverable agent category will not be further discussed here.

Hansson attributes the textually and pragmatically inferable categories to Givón (1979). In the textually inferable category, an implicit agent is recoverable from the

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[33] These examples are credited to *Fiche Bliain ag Fás* by Muiris Ó Súilleabháin and *Saoghal Corrach* by Séamus 'ac Grianna respectively.

surrounding discourse either preceding or following the predicate in question. In the pragmatically inferable category, the reader/listener recovers the implicit agent from her knowledge of the world. Hansson's examples of the pragmatically and textually inferable categories are provided in (19).

    (19)   Textually and pragmatically inferable (Hansson 2004: 56-57)

        a. textually inferable

Hubradh	*ar ndóigh*	*go*	*rabh*	*fáilte*	*aige,*
say.PAST.AUT	of course	that	be.PAST	welcome	at.3SG.M

cé	*nach*	*raibh*	*mórán*	*dúile*
although	COMPL.NEG	be.PAST	much	desire

ag	*Peadar a' Mhuilinn*	*ná*	*ag*	*Muintir Chanann*	*ann.*
at	P a'M		or	at	the C family	in.3SG.M

'One said of course that he was welcome, although Peadar a'Mhuilinn and the Cannings did not much like him'

        b. pragmatically inferable

-Ambriathar	*féin,*	*arsa*	*m'athair,*	*go*	*bhfuil*	*sé*	*ráite*
upon my word	own	say.PAST	my'father	that	be.PRES	EXPL	said

gur	*cuireadh*	*a lán*	*daoine*	*fé*	*dhraíocht*	*anso*	*fadó,*
that.PAST	put.PAST.AUT	many	people	under	spell	here	long ago

agus	*b'fhéidir*	*gur*	*cuid*	*acu*	*iad*	*sin.*
and	maybe	that.PAST	some	of.3PL	them	that

'Upon my word, said my father, it is said that many people were put under a spell here long ago, and maybe that those are some of them.'

        The generic category differs from the textually and pragmatically inferable categories. A generic implicit agent is 'some unspecified person or people in general' (Hansson 2004: 56). Additionally Hansson says that the generic category contains implicit agents that cannot be recovered either through the surrounding textual context or through the speaker/listener's real-world knowledge. In other words, we note here that 'generic' refers to the semantic properties of the autonomous agent while 'textually inferable' and 'pragmatically inferable' refers to the relationship between the referent of the implicit agent and the surrounding discourse and the real-world knowledge of the reader/listener.

Hansson's example of the generic category is provided in (20).

(20) Generic autonomous subject (Hansson 2004: 57)[34]

Más fear pinn tú ní mór duit bás a fháil
if.COP man pen.GEN you it is necessary for.2SG death PART get.VN

*sula **dtugtar** ómós nó onóir duit:*
before give.PRES.AUT respect or honour to.2SG

Seven wealthy towns contend for Homer- dead,

through which the living Homer begged his bread

'If you're a penman, you have to die before you are given respect and honour: *Seven wealthy towns contend for Homer – dead, through which the living Homer begged his bread.'*

In Hansson's corpus of 2956 instances with the autonomous verb, 62% have textually inferable agents. The next-largest group is the non-recoverable agents, which makes up 21% of the whole. The generic and the pragmatically inferable agents were the least frequent, with 12% and 6% respectively (Hansson 2004: 89).

At this point the question to ask is how the three types of recoverability relate to the arbitrary, generic and specific categories that were defined in the previous sections. There is no easily defined one-to-one relationship between the two sets of categories, but a comparison is still fruitful because it provides us with a tentative idea of the relative frequency of the three semantic interpretations of the impersonal subject in Modern Irish.

It seems likely that the generic category that was defined in the previous sections has a wider application than Hansson's generic category of recoverability because of the possibility for the notion of 'people in general' to be limited to e.g. to specific places, cf. the example in (9) and the possibility for 'people in general' to apply to a subset of the world as a whole. In all likelihood, the consequence of this assumption is that the examples I would define as semantically generic within a contextually limited world should be seen as pragmatically or textually recoverable in Hansson's terms. One case in point is example (9) above, repeated here as (21). In this example the limitations on the generic 'people in

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[34] This example is credited to *An Mothall sin ort* by Seán Ó Ruadháin.

general' interpretation is recoverable from the following context through the adverb *anseo* – 'here'.

(21)   Generic in terms of the world of the novel *Cré na Cille*

deirim	*leat*	*nach*	***n-éistfear***	*leis*	*an*	*gcaint*	*sin*
say.PRES.1SG	with.2SG	that.NEG	listen.FUT.AUT	with.DEF	DEF	talk	that

anseo
here

'I'll tell you that people won't listen to that talk here' (CnC 84)

I take the textually and pragmatically recoverable categories to cover the arbitrary and specific interpretations in addition to the contextually limited generic interpretation of e.g. example (21). Recall from the previous sections that McCloskey (2007: 833) defined his pseudo-specific interpretation as occurring when the reference of the autonomous subject has been *clearly and unambiguously established* in the preceding context. This definition can be taken to cover a core group of textually referable autonomous subjects. However, it was pointed out in the previous section that I define the specific category less strictly, in the sense that I take the specific interpretation to involve referents that are uniquely identified *wholly or in part*.

Similarly, Hansson (2004: 86) points out that there are degrees to how precisely the referent of an autonomous verb can be established from the context. She uses the example in (22) to illustrate this point.

(22)   Non-specific, textually recoverable (Hansson 2004: 87, her emphasis)[35]

Dúradh	*liom*	<u>*sa*</u>	<u>*chathair*</u>	<u>*seo*</u>	*nuair*	*a*	*d'inis*	*mé*
say.PAST.AUT	with.1SG	in.DEF	city	this	when	REL	tell.PAST	I

an	*scéal*	*gurbh*	*é*	*the creative urge*	*a*	*bhí*	*ag*	*gabháil*	*dom*
DEF	story	that.COP	it		REL	be.PAST	PROG	take.VN	to.1SG

an	*tráth*	*úd.*	*B'fhéidir*	*gurbh*	*amhlaidh*	*a*	*bhí*	*ach*	*níor*
DEF	time	that	maybe		that.COP	like	REL	be.PAST	but	NEG.PAST

chuimhnigh	*mé*	*féin*	*ar*	*a*	*leithéid*	*d'ainm*	*a*	*thabhairt*	*air,*
remember.PAST	I	self	on	its	like	of'name	PART	give.VN	on.3SG.M

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[35] Hansson (2004: 87) credits this example to FB 14.

mar	*ba*		*bheag*	*é*	*m'eolas*		*ar*	*an*	*urge*	*céanna,*
for	COP.PAST		little	it	my'knowledge		on	DEF		same

agus	*dá*	*gcuimhnínn*			*féin*	*ba*		*bheag*	*an*	*chosaint*
and	if	remember.PAST.SUBJ.1SG			self	COP.PAST		little	DEF	defence

dom	*é.*	*Ba*		*bheag*	*an*	*aird*	*a*	***thabharfaí***	*orm.*
to.1SG	it	COP.PAST		little	DEF	attention	REL	give.COND.AUT	on.1SG

'I was told <u>in this city</u> when I told the story that it was the creative urge that was affecting me at that time. Maybe that was the case but I didn't think of calling it any such thing, for I had little knowledge of that urge, and if I had thought of it, it wouldn't have been much of a defence. **People would have paid** scant attention to me.'

In (22) the adverbial phrase *sa chathair seo* – 'in this city' – serves to establish 'people of the city' as the referent of the following autonomous form *thabharfaí* – 'would be given', 'people would give'. According to the semantic classification of the previous sections I would term this example arbitrary, since it refers to a non-specific group of people that excludes the speaker.

    The most unambiguous conclusion to be made in this section concerns the relative distribution of the three semantic categories. Recall that Hansson's generic category was the next to least frequently occurring type of recoverability in her corpus, with only 12% and 347 instances out of a total of 2956[36] (2004: 89). In comparison, the textually inferable category was the most frequent, with 62% and 1818 instances of the whole. Given that Hansson's generic category appears to consist of the universal and unlimited 'people in general' interpretation, we may conclude that this interpretation is relatively rare compared to the arbitrary and specific interpretations.

3.2.4 Summary

In this section I have returned to the three categories of interpretation that were defined in chapter 2: generic, arbitrary and specific. In chapter 2 it was shown that these categories apply to impersonal subject pronouns in other languages that are comparable to the Irish

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[36] The non-recoverable / subjectless category is included in these numbers, meaning that the percentages would be slightly higher if the 617 non-recoverable instances were removed from the whole.

autonomous subject; in this section the categories were applied specifically to the Modern Irish autonomous subject. It was tentatively concluded that the arbitrary and specific interpretations are more frequent than the (strictly defined) generic interpretation.

3.3 Autonomous morphology with raising verbs and unaccusative verbs

As discussed in sections 1.3.2 and 2.2.4, one important argument in favour of regarding a given type of verbal morphology as being used in the ASI construction rather than in the impersonal passive is its occurrence with various types of unaccusative verbs. I will show in section 4.1.4 that the autonomous verb occurred with certain unaccusative verbs already in Old Irish, and I argue that these unaccusative autonomous forms should be analysed as occurring in the ASI construction already in that time period. In this section I look at a selection of unaccusative verbs with autonomous morphology in Modern Irish, which includes some of the descendants of unaccusative autonomous forms of Old Irish.

3.3.1 The substantive verb

In this section I provide examples of the autonomous form of the substantive verb.[37] I show that this verb may occur in the autonomous form both when it is used predicatively (23) and as an auxiliary in the progressive construction (24).

The examples in (23) both contain complements with the preposition *i* – 'in' used figuratively (a) and physically (b). In (a) the autonomous subject is stated to be *i ngrádh* – literally 'in love' – while in (b) the autonomous subject is said to be in the stables and in the carriages.

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[37] Concerning the frequency of the autonomous form of the substantive verb, Brian Ó Curnáin (2007: 891) mentions in his extensive dialect description of Iorras Aithneach in County Galway that '[g]eneral use of the verb *bí* [i.e. the substantive verb – JG] (and other intransitive verbs) in the impersonal is limited to a minority of speakers, some of whom use it quite extensively […].' I do not know what to make of these comments, since it would seem that the autonomous form of the substantive verb is relatively frequent. E.g. searching the available Ulster texts in the *Tobar na Gaedhilge* corpus (Ó Duibhín 2009) results in 354 hits for the past autonomous form *bhíthear*, out of 50 books / 44,252 word-forms. Likely, there are dialectal differences involved.

(23)   Predicative use of the substantive verb in the autonomous form

a.

bhíthear   *i*   *ngrádh*   *ar fad*   *le*   *Rousille*
be.PAST.AUT   in   love   always   with   Rousille
'men always loved Rousille'
(Séamus 'ac Grianna: *Faoi Chrann Smola* [translation of *La Terre Qui Meurt*], 227 – *Tobar*)

b.

nó ***bhíthear***   *ins*   *na*   *stáblaí*   *agus*   *i*   *dtoighthe*   *na*   *gcóistí*
or   be.PAST.AUT   in   DEF   stables   and   in   houses   DEF   carriages
'or they were in the stables and inside the carriages'
(Séamus 'ac Grianna: *Faoi Chrann Smola* [translation of *La Terre Qui Meurt*], 227 – *Tobar*)

I take the substantive verb to be a raising verb in the active progressive, selecting an XCOMP with which it shares its subject.[38] In the examples in (24) this subject is expressed by the autonomous verb.[39]

(24)   Auxiliary use of the substantive verb in the autonomous form

a.

nuair   *a*   ***bhíothas***   ***ag***   ***tabhairt***   *a*   *chuid*   *bocsaí*
when   REL   be.PAST.AUT   PROG   give.VN   his   part   boxes

ar   *bord*   *tháinig*   *fear*   *thart*
on   bord   come.PAST   man   past

'when they were bringing his boxes on board, a man came past' (CÓ 133)

b.

hinseadh   *dó*   *go*   *raibh*   *muintir*   *na*   *hÉireann*
tell.PAST.AUT   to.3SG.M   that   be.PAST   people   DEF   Ireland.GEN

ag   *marbhadh*   *a chéile*   *agus*   *gurbh*   *é*   *an*   *fáth*
PROG   kill.VN   each other   and   that.COP   it   DEF   reason

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[38] Cf. McCloskey (1996: 247 and references therein), who suggests that the substantive verb takes a small clause complement whose subject will raise to the subject position of the substantive verb.

[39] These examples, especially (a), also illustrate the progressive aspect; in (a) the progressive autonomous is used to describe how an undefined group of people are in the process of loading boxes onto a ship when a man arrives on the scene.

a   **rabhthas**   **ag**   **cuartú**   *na*   *mbocsaí*
REL   be.PAST.AUT   PROG   search.VN   DEF   boxes.GEN

'they told him that the people of Ireland was killing each other and that this was the reason why they were searching the boxes' (CÓ 133)

         c.

an   *bhfaca*   *tú,*   *tá*   *píosa*   *déanta*   *acu*
Q   see.PAST   you   be.PRES   piece   make.VADJ   by.3PL

as   *cloich*   *ghearrtha*   *ansin,*   *cloich*   *Ros an Mhíl*   *sin,*
out-of   stone   cut.VADJ   there   stone   Rossaveal   that

táthar   **ag**   **baint**   *go leor*   *úsáid*   *aisti*   *le gairid*
be.PRES.AUT   PROG   take.VN   much   use   out-of.3SG.F   of late

'did you see, a piece have been made by them of stone cut there, stone from Rossaveal, they are making much use of it [the stone] lately' (CRM 403)

3.3.2   Modal verbs

In this section I discuss modal verbs with autonomous morphology, drawing on the discussion of Modern Irish modal verbs and the theoretic discussion of the active subject impersonal in chapter 2. Since many modal predicates are expressed through other means than by finite verbs, the discussion will be restricted to the two finite modal verbs *caith* – 'must' and *féad* – 'can'.

       Recall from the discussion of modal verbs in Modern Irish in chapter 2 that epistemic modals are hypothesised to take finite complement clauses while root modals take non-finite complement clauses. Additionally it was shown that this hypothesis must to some extent be modified because epistemic readings of modals with non-finite complements are possible. These exceptions were shown to occur particularly in the Ulster dialect and sporadically in other dialects. The PRED functions of modals in the epistemic reading, with both finite and non-finite clauses, and root modals are listed in (25) for the modal verb *caith* – 'must':

(25)

    a) finite modal predicate – epistemic

            PRED 'must <(↑COMP)> (↑SUBJ)'[40]

            PRED 'must <(↑COMP)>'

    b) finite modal predicate – root

            PRED 'must <(↑SUBJ) (↑XCOMP)>'

The question I ask in this section is how these PRED specifications interact with the argument structure of the active subject impersonal construction (26):

(26)   Argument structure of the ASI construction (transitive and intransitive):

verb [ASI]   <   arg1   arg2   >
                            [-o]   [-r]

verb [ASI]   <   arg1   >
                            [-o]

I will be working with the assumption that the following modal verbs with non-finite complements have the root interpretation, since my examples are mainly from the Connacht dialect area. As mentioned, an epistemic interpretation of modals with non-finite complements occurs only sporadically outside of the Ulster dialect. Additionally, an epistemic interpretation of modals with a non-finite complement is completely out for the informants of Stenson (1981: 88).

The first point to note is that we expect only root modals to occur in the ASI-construction, since there is no nominal argument in the epistemic PRED to which the impersonal subject can map, and we have seen in chapter 1 that the autonomous subject cannot be expletive. A root modal, on the other hand, could in theory predicate just as well of an impersonal subject as of any other type of subject.

At first glance, the above prediction would appear to hold true: I have not found any modal verbs in the autonomous form with a finite complement clause. One example of the verb *caith* in the autonomous form with a non-finite complement and a fairly clear root reading is provided in (27). In this example, the impersonal subject – which I take to be a

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[40] Where the SUBJ, if present, takes the form of an expletive/proleptic pronoun.

generic 'you' – is said to be hypothetically obligated to swallow a pill on the doctor's orders.

(27)

ar	*nós*	*táibléad*	*mór*	*a*	*mbeadh*	*blas*	*gránna*	*air*
on	manner	pill	big	REL	be.COND	tastes	horrible	on.3SG.M

a	***chaithfí***	*a*	*thógáil*	*ar*	*ordú*	*dochtúra*
REL	must.COND.AUT	PART	take.VN	on	order	doctor.GEN

'like a big pill that would taste horrible that you would have to take on the doctor's orders' (*Athair* 218)

Example (28) is also a fairly unambiguous example of a modal verb with a root reading. It would appear that the speaker refers to a specific group of people who thought they might have had to put women to carry the coffin:

(28)

shíl	*muid*	*go*	***gcaithfí***	*mná*	*a*	*chur*	*faoin*	*gcorp*
think.PAST	we	that	must.COND.AUT	women	PART	put.VN	under.DEF	corpse

'we thought we would have to put women to carry the corpse' (CnC 200)

Both the examples so far have been with *caith* – 'must'. In (29) I show some examples with the modal verb *féad* – 'can' in the autonomous form.

(29)   *féad* – 'can' – in the autonomous form

a.

ní	***fhéadfar***	*thú*	*a*	*ghlacadh*
NEG	can.FUT.AUT	you	PART	admit.VN

'it will not be possible to admit you' / 'you cannot be admitted' (CnC 239)

b.

nó gur	*bhris*	*siad*	*an*	*round-table*
so that	break.PAST	they	DEF	round-table

sul	*ar*	***féadadh***	*a*	*ndealú*
before	PAST	can.PAST.AUT	their	separate.VN

'so that they broke the round-table before they could be separated' / 'before people managed to separate them' (CnC 193)

In (a) the person talking is a woman who wants to start a cultural society. She is telling one of the others that he will not be accepted into the society. I take the autonomous subject to refer at least to the speaker, and possibly also to an undefined group of other people that is to be part of starting the society. Example (b) is part of a story that is being told about a wake where people got drunk and started fighting. The autonomous subject refers to an arbitrary group of people at the wake that went between the two people fighting. The expected analysis of the examples in (29) would be to say that the modal verb predicates of the autonomous subject the ability to perform what is expressed in the subordinate clause.

In addition it should be asked whether the use of the autonomous form affects the modal interpretation. It was described in section 1.3.3.1 in that one information structure property of the autonomous verb is to de-focus the subject / remove it from view. I suggest that the use of the autonomous form may move the focus of the modal predicate onto the complement clause when the subject is removed from view. If this is the case, the interpretation of the examples in (29) could be taken to come closer to the epistemic reading, as the focus would be more on the possibility for 'you' to be accepted and for the fighters to be separated rather than the ability of a (partially) non-specific group to perform these actions.

Compare also the examples in (30) and (31). These examples involve the modal predicate *is féidir le* – 'can'. The predicate in these clauses is the copula plus the defective form *féidir*. Stenson (1981: 88) argues that when this predicate takes a non-finite complement, the root reading is the only one possible. In the root reading, possibility is predicated over an argument realised by the preposition *le* as shown in (30), where we are told that the first person plural argument expressed in the prepositional form *linn* can cut turf today.

(30)   *is féidir le* – 'can': root reading with prepositional phrase (Stenson 1981: 86)

is	*féidir*	*linn*	*móin*	*a*	*bhaint*	*inniu*
COP	possible	with.1PL	turf	PART	cut.VN	today

'we can cut turf today'

However *is féidir* may occur also without the prepositional phrase, as illustrated in (31). In other words, these examples lack an argument over which to predicate the root meaning. One possible analysis of the examples in (31) is that removing the prepositional phrase leads to a change towards an epistemic interpretation.

(31) *is féidir* without the prepositional phrase

a. without prepositional phrase

ní	*féidir*	*Cáit*	*Bheag*	*a*	*choinneál*	*ó*	*choirp*
NEG.COP	possible	C	little	PART	hold.VN	from	corpse

'it isn't possible to keep Little-Cáit from a corpse' (CnC 13)

b. without prepositional phrase

an	*féidir*	*telegram*	*a*	*chur*	*go*	*Meireacá*	*as*	*seo?*
COP.Q	possible	telegram	PART	send	to	America	out-of.3SG.M	EMPH

'is it possible to send a telegram to America from this place?' (*Dúil* 174)

In an epistemic interpretation, the modal predicate *ní féidir* in (a) would negate the possibility for keeping Cáit from a corpse; the context here is the women of the village coming to lay out the corpse of a recently deceased villager for the wake. Similarly in (b) the predicate would, in an epistemic interpretation, question whether it might be possible to send a telegram to America from the place in which the story takes place.

I leave open the question of the exact interpretation of the examples in (a) and (b) above. However, I suggest that using a root modal in the autonomous form may have something of the same effect as using *is féidir* without a prepositional phrase, since the subject of the root predication is removed from view to a greater or lesser extent in both cases.

In sum I have shown in this section that the expected interaction between the syntax of modal verbs and the syntax of the active subject impersonal construction does indeed take place: the modal verbs *caith* and *féad* occurs in the autonomous form with a root interpretation, predicting obligation and possibility, respectively, of the autonomous subject. In addition I speculated on the effect of the de-focusing of the subject that happens when the autonomous form is used, and whether the use of the autonomous form may lead to a more epistemic type of reading of the modal verbs than one would otherwise get in the active.

3.3.3 Unaccusative verbs

In this section I consider two groups of unaccusative verbs, namely verbs of inherently directed motion and inchoative verbs (i.e. externally caused verbs of change of state, following Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1995). I show that while the verbs of inherently directed motion *are* found in the autonomous form with their one argument as the

autonomous subject, the change of state verbs in question do not appear to be present in the same way but are found in the autonomous form in two other related constructions.

I will begin with the inchoative verbs, that is one-place unaccusative verbs that alternate with two-place causative verbs in the causative alternation – *John broke the window* vs. **the window broke**. In this context it is necessary to distinguish between animate and inanimate arguments: we do not expect to find inchoative verbs with an inanimate argument in the autonomous form with their one argument expressed as the silent impersonal subject, since the impersonal subject is specified as [+human], as described in section 3.2. Animate arguments of one-place predicates such as 'choke' and 'blush' tend to be expressed either with subjectless forms of the autonomous verb or with active verbs; this topic is discussed in brief below and in depth in chapter 5.

As it happens, we do find what may look like inchoative verbs in the autonomous form. In those cases they can be analysed in one of two ways according to the context: either they represent the two-place causative verb with the animate causer/agent as the autonomous subject, or they are inchoative and subjectless, with the one argument of the inchoative predicate realised as the object of the clause.

Two examples are shown in (32). Example (a) shows the active subject impersonal construction; here the verb 'break' is transitive, taking a subject (the silent autonomous subject) and an object *aon fhuinneog* – 'any window'. In (b) on the other hand, the autonomous form is subjectless, and takes one argument *an long* – 'the ship' – which has the function of object.

(32)   Inchoative/causative verbs in the autonomous form
        a.   causative 'break'

níor	**briseadh**	*aon*	*fhuinneog*	*fhad*	*is*	*a*	*bhí*
NEG.PAST	break.PAST.AUT	any	window	long	COP	REL	be.PAST

an	*garda*	*ar*	*dualgas*
DEF	police	on	duty

'no windows were broken as long as the police was on duty' (Ó Baoill and Ó Tuathail 1992: 63)

        b.   subjectless, inchoative 'break'

mar	*is*	*sa*	*chladach*	*seo*	*a*	**briseadh**	*an*	*long*
for	COP	in.DEF	beach	this	REL	break.PAST.AUT	DEF	ship

'for it is on this beach that the ship was wrecked' (AtO 16)

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This alternation was briefly touched upon in section 3.2 and will be discussed in depth in chapter 4.

The second group of unaccusative verbs to be presented are the verbs of inherently directed motion. These verbs specify a direction of motion, may take an agentive and animate subject, and are noted to show unaccusative behaviour in e.g. English, Basque and Italian (see Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1995: 147-148 and 162-163). Examples of the verbs *téigh* – 'go' – and *tar* – 'come', 'arrive' in the autonomous form are provided in (33).

(33)   Verbs of inherently directed motion in the autonomous form

a. 'go', past autonomous

sa	*deireadh*	**chuathas**	*amach*	*á*	*chuartú*
in.DEF	end	go.PAST.AUT	out	PROG.his	search-for.VN

'in the end they went out searching for him' (CiD 96)

b. 'come', future autonomous

caithfear	*dul*	*síos*	*go*	**dtiocfar**	*ar*	*an*	*ór,*	*arsa*	*Éamann*
must.FUT.AUT	go	down	until	come.FUT.AUT	on	DEF	gold	said	É

'we must go down until we come at the gold, said Éamann' (NhAóTh 49)

In sum it has been shown in this section that the presence of verbs of inherently directed motion provides another argument in favour of an ASI analysis of the Modern Irish autonomous verb. Contrary to expectations, the same is not the case for inchoative verbs in the autonomous form, which will be discussed in depth in chapter 5.

3.4   The agent phrase and its disappearance

Recall from section 1.3 that the ungrammaticality of the agent phrase in the Modern Irish of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is taken as an argument in favour of the impersonal active subject analysis, since the agent phrase is seen as incompatible with the impersonal subject. In this section I show in detail that the agent phrase is mainly ungrammatical in twentieth-century Modern Irish, though with some potential exceptions. I take the disappearance of the agent phrase to coincide with the re-analysis of the impersonal passive to contain the active impersonal subject; this will be discussed in depth in the diachronic analysis in chapter 4.

The mapping relations of the impersonal passive with agent phrase and the active subject impersonal, and the reanalysis that took place, are illustrated for a transitive verb in (34). These structures display the assumption that the same argument cannot map to both the oblique agent phrase and the active impersonal subject at the same time.

(34)   Reanalysis from impersonal passive to active subject impersonal:

verb[imp pass.]   <   arg1   arg2   >
                          [-o]   [-r]

                          [+r]   [+o]
                          OBL_θ OBJ

$$\Downarrow$$

verb [ASI]   <   arg1   arg2   >
                     [-o]   [-r]

                     [-r]   [+o]
                     $SUBJ_{imp}$ OBJ
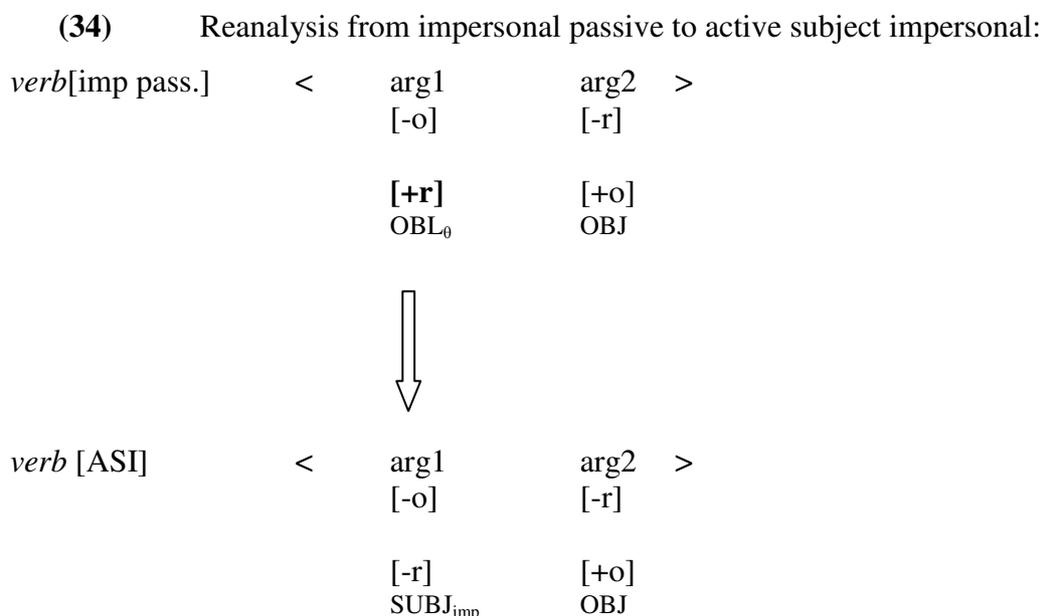
3.4.1   The agent phrase in the twentieth century

In much of the literature on the language of today, the status of the agent phrase remains unclear, with Diarmuid Ó Sé's (2006) article being the only thorough and authoritative study. In this section I discuss various treatments of the agent phrase in the most recent literature. It will be seen that the agent phrase is considered ungrammatical by most of the studies under discussion. The researchers that do postulate the existence of the agent phrase often illustrate the subject with examples that are problematic. In conclusion I will summarise Ó Sé's (2006) findings, which show that while the agent phrase is mainly ungrammatical in twentieth-century Irish, some exceptions can be found.

According to Mícheál Ó Siadhail (1989: 294), it is not possible to express the agent in an adjunct prepositional phrase after the autonomous verb. In her (1989) article, Nancy Stenson agrees with Ó Siadhail (1989), and states that agent phrases are not possible with the autonomous verb (382). However, Stenson qualifies this statement on two counts (1989: 382n): first, she refers to personal communication from James McCloskey, who has recorded a couple of very rare examples of agent phrases with the autonomous verb in his

work. Second, the restriction on agent phrases is said to hold firmly for the Connacht dialect area, the source of Stenson's data. The latter in other words implies that the restriction might hold less firmly in the other Modern Irish dialects.

Michael Noonan (1994: 306-307n) criticises Stenson (1989) on the issue of agent phrases. He suggests that her claim that there are no agent phrases with the autonomous verb in the modern language might be valid for the Connacht area, but that it is too strong for the language as a whole. He provides three examples from the modern language to support his claim, which are provided in (35) with his own glosses and translations:

(35) Noonan's agent phrase examples (1994: 306-307n, his translations and glosses)

a.

ollmhuighthear   *long*   *leis*
equipped-IMPERS   ship   with+him
'a ship is equipped by him'

b.

céad   *moladh*   *lem*   *mháistir*
hundred   praised-IMPERS   with+my   master
'a hundred were praised by my master'

c.

hoirníodh   *ó*   *Dhia*   *é*
ordained-IMPERS   from   God   him
'he was ordained by God'

However, a closer look at these examples will show that none of them provide a clear-cut example of a Modern Irish autonomous clause with an agent phrase.

Example (a) is from Geoffrey Keating's *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* (quoted by Noonan from O'Nolan (1934: 174)). Keating wrote during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, so these examples are obviously problematical as data for Modern Irish of today. Example (b) is taken from Ó Cuív (1944: 86). As pointed out by Ó Se (2006: 87-88), the word *moladh* is not the past autonomous form of the verb *mol* as assumed by Noonan. Rather, what we have here is the verbal noun of the same verb; this is confirmed by the entry for *moladh* in Ó Cuív's index (1944: 149). One may suggest an interpretation with the glosses and translation in (36) for the clause in (b) (translation cf. Ó Sé (2006: 88)):

(36)

*céad   moladh   **lem**   **mháistir***
hundred   praise   with.my   master
'one hundred praises to my master'

Noonan's example (c) above is credited to his informants. Ó Se (2006: 106) accepts this as a plausible example of an autonomous clause with an agentive *by*-phrase in spite of his lack of documentation. However, I would argue that not even (c) above is an entirely clear-cut example of a modern agentive *by*-phrase. While the phrase *ó Dhia* can be seen as an agent phrase in this example, such an interpretation is certainly not unambiguous; the preposition *ó* in the clause in (c) could also refer to the source or origin of the action expressed by the verb, rather than the actual performer of the action.

Müller's (1999: 142-143) discussion of the preposition *ó* in the old language (cf. section 4.1.2.2.3) is interesting in this context. Müller looks at how *ó* can be ambiguous between expressing the agent or a source or indirect agent. An indirect agent is seen as a subcategory of the category of cause, and is defined as a prototypically human entity that is 'causally involved in a process taking place' (Müller 1999: 5). Specifically, Müller looks at verbs of giving and speaking, which both involves a transfer between a sender and a receiver. One of her examples (1999:142) is repeated in (37).

(37)

*da   **idnaicthea**   comraind   **úad**   díb*
if   send.PRET.AUT   equal-share   from.3SG.M   of.3PL
'if an equal share of them was sent from him'
(TBC-LL 86: 3130; Müller's translation with my glosses)

Müller (1999: 142) suggests that one analysis of the sentence in (37) involves a situation where there is no direct contact between the giver and the receiver, making the source (expressed in *úad* – 'from him') and the actual agent of the giving/sending (the mapped-to-zero second-position argument of the verb) two different entities. The same analysis might be applied to the Modern Irish example (c) in (35) above – that God can be seen as the source of the authority by which the unspecified, impersonal agent performs the ordination.

Mac Eoin (2002: 126) informs us that the agent can be expressed with an autonomous verb after the preposition *le* – 'with'; however, he does not provide an example. Paul Russell, in his book *An Introduction to the Celtic Languages* (1995), states that the

autonomous verb can occur with an agent marked by the preposition *le* (102). He illustrates this assertion using the example provided in (38).

(38)

bristear   *í*   *liom*
break.PRES.AUT   it   with.1SG
'it is broken by me'

As pointed out by Hewitt (2002: 18), the word order in (38) is wrong; the object pronouns (here: *í*) are usually placed to the far right of the clause.

       Karin Hansson, in her PhD dissertation (2004), studied a corpus consisting of eleven texts by authors born between 1839 and 1911. The texts are evenly distributed across the three main dialect areas (Connacht, Munster and Ulster), totalling about 600.000 words (37-39). She finds no instances of agent phrases with the autonomous verb in this material (14n), a result which supports Stenson's (1989) conclusion that the agentive *by*-phrase is ungrammatical in Modern Irish.

       So far, we have seen the status of the agentive *by*-phrase in Modern Irish is unclear in much of the literature. However, the examples that have been mentioned so far have been shown to be problematic. As a consequence it would seem that we can safely state that the agent phrase is ungrammatical for many (or even most?) speakers. However, as described by Ó Sé (2006), there are potential exceptions to this statement even in the present-day language.

       Ó Sé (2006: 105-106) shows that the agent phrase has been in use in the twentieth century with the preposition *ó*, lit. 'from', in the dialect of west Galway. One of the examples he provides is from de Bhaldraithe (1985: 199); I present this example in (39):

(39)   Agentive phrase with the preposition *ó*, 20th century

ar   *díonadh*   *ón*   *siúinéara*   *é*
Q   do.PAST.AUT   from.DEF   carpenter   it
'was it made by the carpenter?'

Additionally, Ó Sé (2006: 109-110) shows that agentive *by*-phrases with the preposition *ag* ('by') are also found in the present-day language, and specifically in high-register genres of folk-speech from west Cork and in official documents and journalism. He provides one example of the latter, from the 1937 Constitution, which is repeated in (40):

(40) Agentive phrase with the preposition *ag*, 20th century[41]

is	*ag*	*an*	*Uachtarán*	*a*	*ceapfar*
is	by	DEF	President	REL	appoint.FUT.AUT

breithiúin	*na*	*Cúirte*	*Uachtaraí*
judges	DEF	Court.GEN	Supreme

'it is by the President that judges of the Supreme Court will be appointed'

Ó Sé (2006: 110) explains the relatively high frequency of agentive phrases with *ag* in official documents and journalism as a 'direct imitation' of English syntax.

Excluding the written-language agent phrases, Ó Sé (2006: 112) makes an interesting observation concerning the present-day agentive phrases found in spoken-language sources: they are all found in clauses where the verb is in the past tense. On the same topic, he quotes personal communication from Tomás de Bhaldraithe:

> During his course on Irish dialects in the Department of Modern Irish, UCD, in the academic year 1974-5, de Bhaldraithe offered some comments on the grammatical status of the autonomous verb. I recall him saying that he felt it to be a true passive in the past tense but an impersonal similar to French *on* + verb in the present and future tenses.

Now if it is in fact the case that the speakers who accept the agentive *by*-phrase today, only accepts it in the past, this apparent restriction would need to be further considered in light of verbal aspect and related issues. I leave this question open.[42]

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[41] Jan Erik Rekdal points out to me that even this example can be seen as ambiguous, with an interpretation along the lines of 'it is through the President's power that judges of the Supreme Court will be appointed' or 'with the President [rests the power to] appoint judges of the Supreme Court'. Compare the phrase *ó Dhia* in example (c) in (35) above.

[42] Hewitt (2002: 33n) quotes a passage from Ó Siadhail (2000) in which the following autonomous verbs are used to described what happens to a car and its driver in an accident: *crochadh* – 'was lifted' (off the road), *buaileadh* – 'was flung' (against a stone wall), *caitheadh* – 'was thrown' (the driver was thrown out of the car) and *gortaíodh* – 'was hurt' (in the accident). Hewitt notes that none of these forms imply human agency and that they are all in the past tense. He goes on to tie these facts to the observation that the most recent examples of agent phrases with the autonomous verb tend to occur in the past as well, and makes the following suggestion: 'if human agency is not necessarily implied, even today, by the past tense form *-adh*, there may have been less reason, historically, not to allow agentive phrases to be used with that form.' While Hewitt's

Summing up this and the previous section: we have seen that the while the agent phrase has become ungrammatical to a large extent, it does still show up in certain dialects and registers even in the twentieth century. The conclusion to draw from this state of affairs would be that the impersonal passive category coexisted next to the active subject impersonal for a long time, and that it does so for certain speakers even today. This conclusion is not unexpected. I will show in chapter 4 how the impersonal passive co-existed with the canonical passive in Old and Middle Irish, and in chapter 5 I discuss the bare subjectless impersonal autonomous, which I suggest is present to a smaller or larger extent next to the passive-to-impersonal development at all recorded stages of the language.

3.5 Summary

In this chapter I have taken a closer look at some of the properties of the active impersonal subject construction as it was described in chapters 1 and 2. I showed in section 3.2 that the categories of arbitrary, generic and specific may be applied to the interpretation of the autonomous subject. In section 3.3 I took a closer look at the interaction between the active subject impersonal construction and various types of unaccusative verbs, specifically the substantive verb used both predicatively and as an auxiliary, modal verbs, inchoative verbs and verbs of inherently directed motion. Section 3.4 looked at the details of the ungrammaticality of the agent phrase in Modern Irish and how this topic is presented in the current literature.

This chapter has served a two-fold purpose. First of all it has given arguments in addition to those presented in chapter 1 in favour of the active subject impersonal analysis in Modern Irish. It has also helped to distinguish the ASI construction from the idiomatic subjectless constructions that are the topic of chapter 5. Second, this chapter has shown the current end-point of the development of the autonomous verb. Many of the issues raised in this chapter will be taken up again in chapter 4, where I discuss the autonomous verb in the Old Irish period and its subsequent development.

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suggestion might indicate a tendency, it is far from the only explanation; it will be shown in chapter 5 that the autonomous verb can occur without human agency in other tenses than the past as well, and I will be arguing that autonomous forms with and without implied human agency are not a unitary phenomenon but represent different construction types.

Chapter 4: Old Irish and subsequent development

It was pointed out in chapter 1 that the Irish autonomous verb is characterised by variation both synchronically and diachronically. Chapter 3 on the Modern Irish impersonal subject clause and chapter 5 on the Modern Irish subjectless clause together made this variation explicit for the Modern Irish period. In this chapter I describe the Old Irish period and the variation present there. Following that I go on to discuss the prehistory of the Old Irish autonomous verb and the development from 'passive' in Old Irish to 'active impersonal' in Modern Irish.

Recall from the theoretic discussion on diachronic syntax in chapter 2 that I made a distinction between change and diffusion. To this dichotomy may be added a third term, 'diachronic correspondence', (cf. Janda and Joseph 2005: 12-14 and references therein). A diachronic correspondence is a comparison of two temporally distinct and not necessarily adjacent stages of the same language. Comparing the Modern Irish autonomous verb as it was presented in the previous chapters with the description of the Old Irish autonomous verb that follows in section 4.1 would constitute a diachronic correspondence; by juxtaposing the Old Irish state of affairs with its Modern Irish descendant, we would be able to pinpoint how the properties of the autonomous verb are different in Old and Modern Irish.

However, a diachronic correspondence is bound to remain unsatisfying in the sense that we would be able to say far less about *how* the development of the autonomous verb took place. For that reason, section 4.2 is dedicated to a discussion of the specific changes that appear to have taken place between Old and Modern Irish. By using 'change' in this context I refer to a number of hypothesised changes that can be said to have taken place when a child interprets the linguistic data she hears around her to settle on a mental grammar that is slightly different from the grammar of the adults around her. I will have nothing to say concerning the diffusion of these changes that resulted in them being adopted by the linguistic community making up the Irish language as a whole.

4.1 Old Irish

It is apparent from the descriptive grammars that there is variation present in the syntax of the Old Irish autonomous verb.[43] While the autonomous verb is usually termed 'passive' in the grammars, it is clear from the descriptions that it is more than a canonical passive where the patient is mapped to the subject function. For instance, David Greene (1958: 108) speaks of the Old Irish autonomous form as 'personal' in some cases and 'non-personal' in others; it will be made clear in the following how this personal/non-personal distinction applies.

David Stifter (2006: 155) compares forms such as *ráittir* – 'it is said' and *do-gnither* – 'it is done' to the German forms *man sagt, man tut.* We recall from chapter 3 that the Modern Irish phonologically null, active subject was compared to the overt impersonal pronouns of *man* in German among others. In other words Stifter seems to imply that the Old Irish autonomous verb may not be entirely passive but rather carries the seed, so to speak, of the active impersonal subject construction already at that early stage.

Wim Tigges (2006: 124) states explicitly that the Old Irish autonomous verb has two functions: '1) that of the passive properly speaking, and 2) that of an impersonal form of the verb'. Using the verb *léicid*, which he translates with 'let go' and 'release', he suggests that the autonomous form *léic(i)tir* of this verb may mean either 'they [a known plural object to the act of releasing] are released' or 'they [people in general, "they", "one"] release' [original translations].

In the same vein, as Tigges points out, Lehmann and Lehmann (1975: 79-80) states that '[i]n Old Irish the passive [i.e. autonomous – JG] sentence is not a modified form of an active sentence. The term "passive" can be highly misleading if interpreted in this way.' To illustrate this point they use the clauses *do-eth ó Ailill* – 'there was a coming from Ailill' and *égthir immum* – 'there was screaming around me' among others. The form *do-eth* is an autonomous form of the verb 'to come' together with a prepositional phrase 'from Ailill'. The verb form *égthir* is the autonomous form of a verb meaning 'to scream', and *immum* is a prepositional phrase meaning 'around me'. Lehmann and Lehmann stress that it is the

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[43] The syntax of the Old Irish autonomous form as presented in this section is based on the idealised and generalised picture of Old Irish portrayed in the descriptive grammar books (Thurneysen 1998 etc.). In my search for good examples to illustrate specific aspects of this picture I have not taken into consideration any Middle Irish traits of the examples in question, or of the texts in which they are found, as long as the autonomous syntax corresponds to the property of the Old Irish 'ideal' that I wish to illustrate with a given example. A discussion of the diachronic changes in the syntax of the autonomous verb into and beyond the Middle Irish period will follow in section 4.2.

action and not the person involved in the action that is important here. It is unclear to me why the autonomous verb cannot be seen as a modified form of an active sentence even though the autonomous verb focuses on the action described by the verb rather than the arguments. This question is not relevant here, however; the main point is that we see once again that the Old Irish autonomous verb is more than a regular canonical passive.

Subsequently in this section I will analyse the Old Irish autonomous verb based on two features: the argument structure of its active equivalent and the person and number features of its patient argument. Specifically I will be painting a picture where the Old Irish autonomous verb is seen as passive if it is based on a transitive verb, but active with an unrealised impersonal subject if it based on an unaccusative intransitive verb. The passive category will furthermore be portrayed as split, with the patient as the object if it is a first or second person pronoun and as the subject if it is in the third person (noun or pronoun).

The mapping structures of the construction types in question are illustrated in (1).

(1) Mapping relations of the experiencer argument

verb[can. pass.]   <   arg1   arg2   >
                           [-o]   [-r]

                           Ø   [-o]
                                            SUBJ

verb[imp. pass.]   <   arg1   arg2   >
                           [-o]   [-r]

                           Ø   [+o]
                                            OBJ

verb [ASI]   <   arg1   arg2   >
                           [-o]   [-r]

                           [-r]   [+o]
                           SUBJ$_{imp}$ OBJ

In the analysis of the Old Irish autonomous verb that follows, I will be focusing on two types of autonomous verbs: two-place verbs whose active equivalents take a subject and an object (section 4.1.2) and unaccusative intransitive verbs (section 4.1.4). I focus on these verb types because they show properties that are compatible or not compatible with one or more of the construction types in (1). Specifically, the patient argument of a verb in the first group will show subject or object properties depending on whether it occurs in the canonical

passive on the one hand or in the impersonal passive or ASI construction on the other. The unaccusative intransitive verbs in the second group are taken to be incompatible with the two passive constructions.

Additionally the autonomous form occurs with agentive intransitive verbs and two-place verbs whose active equivalents take obliques or subordinate clauses as their patient argument. These forms will not be discussed in depth because their properties are compatible with both the passive construction and the ASI construction and because their arguments will not show function changes depending on which construction they occur in; in other words they contribute little to the analysis of the Old Irish autonomous verb beyond supporting the idea that 'promotion' – mapping of the patient argument to subject – cannot be defining of the passive category.

In sum, my analysis of the Old Irish autonomous verb is based on concrete and observable indications such as case marking, verbal agreement, the agent phrase, etc., cf. the discussion of overt 'cues' in chapter 2. Even so, this analysis does present an idealised picture, and it will be shown in section 4.1.5 how the theory can predict more fluid borderlines between the theoretical categories, in the sense that there is less of a one-to-one relationship between the theoretical categories and the valency of the verbs with which the categories are found.

It should be obvious already at this point that even such an idealised analysis paints what appears to be an overly complicated picture of the Old Irish state of affairs. Throughout the rest of this chapter I will argue that the picture presented in (1), while it looks complicated, is in fact the simplest analysis, in terms of both the internal evidence of Old Irish and what we know of the subsequent diachronic development.

In section 4.1.1 I introduce the autonomous verb and its morphosyntax, and take a brief look at the singular and plural autonomous verb form and the expression of its arguments. Section 4.1.2 discusses the canonical and the impersonal passive. Specifically I present the hypothesis of the split paradigm, where an autonomous verb which is based on a transitive active verb is said to be used in the canonical passive construction if the patient is a third person pronoun or a noun, and in the impersonal passive construction if the patient is a first or second person pronoun. In section 4.1.3 the pre-history of the Old Irish autonomous view is presented, with a view towards explaining the split paradigm presented in section 4.1.2.

4.1.1 Introduction: morphology and morphosyntax

In this section I describe some of the morphological and morphosyntactic features of the Old Irish autonomous verb. The purpose of this section is to provide a starting point for the subsequent discussion of the syntax of the Old Irish autonomous verb and its prehistory as well as its development towards Modern Irish.

The Old Irish autonomous verbal morphology occurs in opposition to the active forms with almost every verb, both transitive and intransitive. In McCone's words (1987: 82): 'The passive is commonest in transitive verbs but is by no means confined to them […]. Consequently almost any Old Irish verb can be expected to oppose active (whether with basic active or deponent inflection) and passive forms […].'

The Old Irish categories of tense, mood and aspect can be presented as in the table in (2):

(2) Tense/mood/aspect in Old Irish (McCone 1987: 22)

	(i)	(ii)	(iii)
(a)	Present indicative	Imperfect	Imperative
(b)	Present subjunctive	Past subjunctive	
(c)	Future	Conditional	
(d)	Preterite		

The vertical columns are distinguished from one another by means of different suffixes applied to the same stem, while the horizontal rows represent different stems. In each of the categories there are both active and autonomous forms. With one exception, the preterite, the autonomous is formed by exchanging the active for the autonomous suffix on the same stem. There are two sets of suffixes, the present suffixes (i), one form of which is also used in the imperative (iii), and then the imperfect suffixes (ii). In the preterite however, a set of unique suffixes are added to a specific passive preterite stem. See McCone (1987: chapter 7, as well as page 82-89) for specific details of the morphology of the autonomous suffixes and how they interact with the many processes that participate in making the Old Irish verbal morphology as complicated as it is.

In this section I discuss autonomous verbs that are based on transitive active equivalents; unaccusative intransitive forms will be discussed in section 4.1.4. The first thing to note about the transitive paradigm of the Old Irish autonomous verb is that five of

the six cells contain the same form. The present tense paradigm of the verb *caraid* – 'love' –
is given in (3).

(3) Paradigm of the Old Irish verb (from Thurneysen 1998: 349)

	Singular	Plural
1st person	no-*m*-charthar PREV-1SG-love.AUT 'I am loved'	no-*n*-carthar PREV-1PL-love.AUT 'we are loved'
2nd person	no-*t*-charthar PREV-2SG-love.AUT 'you (sg.) are loved'	no-*b*-carthar PREV-2PL-love.AUT 'you (pl.) are loved'
3rd person	carthair love.AUT.3SG 'he/she is loved'	**cartair** love.AUT.3PL 'they are loved'

The paradigm in (3) possesses some interesting morphosyntactic properties: when the
patient argument is a first or second person pronoun, it appears with the autonomous verb as
a so-called infixed pronoun.[44] The infixed pronouns are italicised and glossed with the
relevant person and number in the paradigm. On the other hand, there is no overt expression
of the patient argument when it is a third person pronoun.

The next point to note is that there are only two distinct autonomous forms in the
paradigm. There is one form in the third person plural – which is boldfaced in (3) – and then
one form which is used in all the other person/number combinations. However, it is not
readily apparent that the combinations of letters used in every cell except in the third person
plural in fact represent the same form. We note differences between the first and second
person singular form *-charthar*, the first and second person plural form *-carthar* and the
third person singular form *carthair*, but these differences are due to independent
morphological and morphophonological processes in Old Irish.

In writing, the differences between the singular and plural first and second person
forms are represented by the *-h-* after the initial *c-* in the singular forms. This writing

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[44] The infixed pronouns are treated by Thurneysen (1998: 255-270) and McCone (1987: 10-15); see also
section 4.1.2.3. The infixed pronouns require an element in front of the verb after which they can attach. The
verb *caraid* – 'loves' – in the paradigm in (3) does not possess such a prefix; for this reason the semantically
empty prefix *no-* shows up when *caraid* occurs with an infixed pronoun.

convention represents the phonological mutation[45] undergone by the first consonant of the verb form when it is preceded by an infixed pronoun. The type of infixed pronoun used in the paradigm in (3) is listed in (4), with their accompanying mutation included, specifically *l* for lenition and *n* for nasalisation/eclipsis.

(4) Infixed pronouns, type A (Thurneysen 1998: 260)

Sg.	1	*-m^l-*
	2	*-t^l-*
	3m	*-a^n-*
	3f	*-s$^{(n)}$-*
	3n	*-a^l-*
Pl.	1	*-n-*
	2	*-b-*
	3	*-s$^{(n)}$-*

We note that the first and second person singular forms cause lenition. In the paradigm in (3) lenition causes a change in the initial consonant of *–carthar* from /k/ to /x/, which is notated by the *-h-*. The first and second person plural infixed pronouns cause no change.

The difference between the third person forms and the first and second person forms in the paradigm in (3) is represented in writing by the *-i-* before the final consonant in the

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[45] Mutation is a phenomenon common to all the Celtic languages. Mutation, in the words of S. J. Hannahs (1996: 47), is 'a phonological process in which the surface form of the initial consonant of a word appears to depend on the morphosyntactic context in which the word appears'. Stifter (2006: 29-33) and Tigges (2006: 15-16) provide useful overviews of mutation in Old Irish; see Mac Eoin (2002: 112-113) for the mutations in Modern Irish. In the main, there are two mutations in Irish, lenition and eclipsis/nasalisation (additionally Old Irish shows 'aspiration', see Stifter 2006: 33). Lenition and eclipsis affect initial consonants in the following way in Old Irish, where the pronounciation is listed next to its written realisation (from Tigges 2006: 16):

Initial:	Lenition:	Eclipsis
c /k/	ch /x/	c /g/
p /p/	ph /f/	p /b/
t /t/	th /θ/	t /d/
g /g/	g /ɣ/	ng /ŋ/
b /b/	b /v/	mb /m/
d /d/	d /ð/	nd /n/
m /m/	m /ṽ/	-
f /f/	ḟ /-/	f /v/
s /s/	ṡ /h/	-

third person forms. This letter indicates that the final *-r* is slender rather than broad. Now, the personal endings of Old Irish verbs have two forms in most tenses and moods, the absolute form and the conjunct form; the conjunct form is used when the verbal root is preceded by any type of element (Thurneysen 1998: 350; Stifter 2006: 54; Tigges 2006: 28). In the paradigm in (3), the semantically empty preverb *no*+infixed pronoun complex is followed by the conjunct form.[46] In the verb in the paradigm in (3), the conjunct form has a broad rather than a slender final consonant, i.e. /r/ rather than /r´/.

The morphosyntactic properties noted in the paradigm in (3) will be the topic of the next section. In section 4.1.3 I discuss the pre-history of the Old Irish autonomous verb and of the transitive paradigm in particular, as an attempt to show how this paradigm might have come about.

4.1.2   Canonical and impersonal passive

In this section I discuss and analyse the transitive paradigm of the Old Irish autonomous verb. I will argue that two-place verbs with autonomous morphology are used in canonical passive clauses when the patient is in the third person (section 4.1.2.2), but in impersonal passive clauses when the patient is in the first and second person (section 4.1.2.3). The canonical passive category, as described in chapter 2, has the agent argument mapped to zero in the functional structure (ignoring the agent phrase), while the patient argument maps to the subject function. The impersonal passive is distinguished from the canonical passive only in terms of the function of the patient argument, which maps to the object function in the impersonal passive. I take the Irish impersonal passive to be subjectless, cf. the discussion of the impersonal passive in general in chapter 2 section 2.2.4.

The arguments to be discussed in favour of a passive analysis, and specifically this kind of split passive analysis, are as follows: morphological case marking of the patient argument, agreement in number between the verb and its subject, the presence of emphatic clitic particles and the presence of the agentive *by*-phrase.

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[46] A preverb is a particle that occurs in pretonic position to form compound verbs. See Stifter (2006: 77-78) for a useful first overview of compound verbs and preverbs.

4.1.2.1 The transitive paradigm again

I argue in this section that the transitive paradigm of the Old Irish autonomous verb is split between canonical and impersonal passive, or in other words, that the patient argument fills the subject function when it is in the third person, but the object function when it is in the first or second person.

I repeat the paradigm of the autonomous verb in (5) for ease of reference (from Thurneysen 1998: 349).

(5) Paradigm of the Old Irish autonomous verb.

	Singular	Plural
1st person	no-*m*-charthar PREV-1SG-love.AUT 'I am loved'	no-*n*-carthar PREV-1PL-love.AUT 'we are loved'
2nd person	no-*t*-charthar PREV-2SG-love.AUT 'you (sg.) are loved'	no-*b*-carthar PREV-2PL-love.AUT 'you (pl.) are loved'
3rd person	carthair love.AUT.3SG 'he/she is loved'	**cartair** love.AUT.3PL 'they are loved'

4.1.2.2 Canonical passive: third person

In this section I discuss arguments in favour of a canonical passive analysis of the third person forms of a basic transitive verb with autonomous morphology. With 'third person forms' I mean specifically autonomous forms based on transitive active predicates, whose patient argument is a noun phrase or a third person pronoun.

(6) Canonical passive:

verb[can. pass.]　　< 　arg1　　arg2　>
　　　　　　　　　　　[-o]　　[-r]

　　　　　　　　　　Ø　　　[-o]
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　SUBJ

The arguments in favour of the analysis in (6) are based on the morphological expression of the patient argument and agreement in number between the patient argument and the verb (section 4.1.2.2.1), the possibility for emphasising clitics that attach to silent pronominal

arguments of the autonomous verb (section 4.1.2.2.2) and the presence of the agent phrase (section 4.1.2.2.3).

4.1.2.2.1 Case marking and number agreement

In this section I discuss the properties of the third person autonomous patient argument. I show that a third person patient of the autonomous verb possesses properties comparable to active subjects both in terms of nominal case marking, verbal morphology and number agreement.

When the lower role is a full noun phrase, it is in the nominative case (Müller 1994: 193) as illustrated in (7), where the lower role argument *fir (Hērenn)* – 'men (of Ireland)' is in the nominative plural.

(7) Autonomous verb, third person nominal lower role

con-gairther	*fir*	*Hērenn*	*do*	*Chobthach*
summon.PRES.AUT	men	Ireland.GEN	to	C

do	*thomailt*	*Fesse Temrach*
to	partake.VN	Feast of Tara

'the men of Ireland are summoned to Cobthach to partake in the Feast of Tara' (ODR 338-9)

In the third person, a pronominal patient – singular and plural – is expressed by an infixed pronoun when the verb is active, but by the verb itself if the verb is in the autonomous form.[47] Example (8) shows how an active verb form *gonaid* – 'kills' – expresses a third person singular subject 'he' that refers back to a previously mentioned character in the story. This example can then be compared with the autonomous clause in (9) Here the verb form similarly expresses an argument, which in this example is the patient rather than the agent as in (8). An autonomous verb with a third person plural patient is shown in (10).

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[47] There is also a group of suffixed pronouns; these may in theory attach to all verbs, but in practice they attach nearly exclusively to third person singular forms (Stifter 2006: 295). The most numerous group of suffixed pronouns are used as direct objects (Thurneysen 1998: 270).

(8) Active verb, subject indicated by the verbal morphology

gonaid-som   *dano*   *in*   *fer*   *sin*
kill.PRES.3SG-EMPH   then   DEF   man   that

7   *dobert*   *a*   *chend*   *7*   *a*   *ḟodb*   *lais*
and   bring.PRET.3SG   his   head   his   spoils   with.3SG.M

'he then kills that man and brought away his head and his spoils' (TBC-1 23:746)

(9) Autonomous verb, patient argument indicated by the verbal morphology

gontar-som   *co*   *mór*   *co*   *lluid*   *cona*   *inathar*
kill.PRES.AUT.3SG-EMPH   ADV   big   COMPL   go.PRET.3SG   with.his   intestines

ima   *chosa*   *dochum*   *Con Chulaind*   *triasin*   *cath*
about.his   legs   to   C. C.   through.DEF   battle

'he is greatly wounded and went through the battle to Cú Chulainn with his intestines around his legs' (TBC-1 96:3173)

(10)   Plural autonomous verb indicating a plural patient.

a   *Hērind*   *dūib-si*   *immorro,*   *ol Cobthach (…)*   **dlomtair**   *iarum*
out-of   Ireland   to.2PL-EMPH   indeed   said C.   expel.PRES.AUT.3PL   then
'out of Ireland with you, indeed, said C (…) they are then expelled' (ODR 351-3)

The context of example (10) is a group of people who are being exiled from Ireland by the ruler Cobthach. The preceding context is a conversation between the exiles and Cobthach, after which we are told that *dlomtair iarum* – 'they were then expelled', where the form *dlomtair* indicates a plural subject that refers back to the exiles in the previous discussion.

As a general rule in the language, verbs agree with their subjects in number (Thurneysen 1998: 349). This rule holds for the autonomous verb as well; the plural autonomous verb is used to agree with a plural noun-phrase patient. This agreement is illustrated in (11), where the plural form *do-bertar* agrees with the patient 'threescore hundred milch-cows…'.

(11) Plural autonomous verb agreeing with a plural patient argument

dobertar	*tri*	*fichit*	*cét*	*lilgach*	*a*	*chét-óir*	*ocus*	*carpat*
bring.FUT.AUT.3PL	three	scores	hundred	milch-cow	in	first-time	and	chariot

ocus	*da*	*ech*	*bas*	*ḟerr*	*la*	*Connachta*
and	two	horse	COP	good.SUPER	with	C.

'threescore hundred milch-cows shall be brought to begin with and a chariot and two horses that are the best in Connacht' (SMMD-LL 1: sect. 2)

Finally we may sum up the different contexts in which the two forms in the paradigm in (5) are used. As we have seen, the plural form of the autonomous verb is used in two contexts only: to agree with a plural patient noun-phrase argument ('threescore hundred milch-cows…'; example (11)) and to indicate a silent third person plural patient argument (10). The 'singular' autonomous form is used in all other contexts, as shown in (12). The contexts in question are (a) to agree with the patient when the patient is a singular noun phrase and (b) to indicate a third person patient. Compare also (c), which involves the same singular form as (a) and (b). In (b) this form is used to indicate a third person singular patient; in (c) it is used together with an infixed pronoun patient. This latter variation will be further discussed in section 4.1.2.3.

(12) Uses of the singular form

a. agreeing with a noun in the singular.

do-berar	*i-mmach*	*in*	*carpat*
PREV-bring.PRES.AUT	out	DEF	chariot

'the chariot is brought out' (ODR 326)

b. singular autonomous verb indicating a singular patient argument

do-berar	*dóib*	*íarom*	*7*	*cláemchlóit*	*inad*
PREV-give.PRES.AUT.3SG	to.3PL	then	and	change.PRES.3PL	place

'it [permission to change place] is given to them and they change place' (TBC-1 50:1628)

c. with an infixed pronoun patient

dom-berar	*im*	*charpat*
PREV.1SG-bring.PRES.AUT	in.my	chariot

'I am brought in my chariot' (ODR 323)

In the next section I provide further arguments in favour of the presence of a phonologically null third person patient when the autonomous verb is used without a noun phrase patient.

4.1.2.2.2 *Notae augentes*

The *notae augentes* are clitics that attach to some pronominal element, including pronominal arguments expressed by verbs; their basic function is taken to be emphasising the pronominal element to which they attach (Griffith 2008: 55-56 and references therein). According to McCone (1987: 19) the form and function of these clitics are much the same in Old and Modern Irish; see McCloskey and Hale (493-496) on the function of the descendants of the *notae augentes* in Modern Irish.

One example of a *nota augens* attaching to an active verb is provided in (13):

(13) *Nota augens* attaching to active verbs (Thurneysen 1998: 252)

baitsim-se
baptise.PRES.1SG-EMPH
'I baptise'

Examples of *notae augentes* with autonomous verbs are provided in (14).

(14) Autonomous verbs with *notae* and non-overt patient arguments

a.

alta-som   ém,   ol   Fergus, la   máthair 7   la   athair
rear.PRET.AUT.3SG-EMPH   then   said F   with mother   and with father
'he was reared, said Fergus, by his mother and his father' (TBC-1 13:399)

b.

fácabar-som   inna   chotlud
leave.PRES.AUT.3SG-NOTA   in.his   sleep
'he was left behind sleeping' (TBC-1 15:483)

The example in (a) occurs in an episode in the *Táin* where Fergus is telling the story of Cú Chulainn's childhood. Cú Chulainn is very much the topic of the episode, and it seems clear from the context that he is the patient argument of the verb *alta* – 'rear'. The prepositional phrase *la máthar 7 la athair* is, as Müller (1999: 140-142) points out, ambiguous between a locative ('he was reared *with* his mother and father') and an agent phrase ('he was reared *by* his mother and father'). Assuming that the prepositional phrase

does express the agent of the autonomous verb *alta*, the only candidate for a pronominal element for the *nota* to attach to is the patient.

Example (b) is similarly part of Fergus's tales of Cú Chulainn's childhood. This sentence tells how Cú Chulainn was left behind sleeping while the Ulstermen go to fight. Cú Chulainn is the topic of the sequence, and it seems clear that he is the referent of the patient argument of the autonomous verb *fácabar*. The *nota augens* attaches to this argument. Notice also that the patient argument co-refers with the possessive pronoun that is compounded with the preposition in the form *inna*.

In sum, the *notae* thus provide further evidence in favour of a canonical passive analysis of autonomous verbs with third person patients.

4.1.2.2.3 The agent phrase

In this section I discuss the agent phrase with the Old Irish autonomous verb. I argue that while the agent phrase does not occur very frequently, it is still an argument in favour of analysing the third person autonomous verb as passive

Recall from section 2.2.4.4 that the intuition behind the agent phrase as a construction type diagnostic has to do with a perceived impossibility for the agent phrase to occur together with an active impersonal subject along the lines of **someone hit John by Mary*, where both 'someone' and 'Mary' are taken fill the agent role of the clause. However, as we will see, this intuition is not universally accepted, Blevins (2003) being one example. However, I will not discuss counter-arguments to the agent phrase diagnostic here; it has already been established in the previous sections that there are a number of solid arguments in favour of regarding the patient as the subject of the autonomous verb when the patient is a noun phrase or a third person pronoun. When the patient is the subject, there obviously cannot be an impersonal subject as well, and so the occurrence of the agent phrase is perfectly natural together with third person patients. There is in other words no pressing reason to question the agent phrase as a diagnostic in this section, but I will come back to the issue in section 4.2, when the subsequent diachronic development is discussed.

Müller (1999: 140 and 189n) states that agentive passives in Irish may occur with transitive verbs only. It seems clear that this statement holds for the language in general and not just for the three versions of the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, even though she does not state it explicitly as far as I can see. The agent phrase is not a very common phenomenon in Early Irish. Müller's results show that there are a total of 77 autonomous clauses in the three

recensions of the TBC containing a prepositional phrase that may be interpreted as agentive (Müller 1999: 141). Her results furthermore show a total of 957 autonomous clauses in the three recensions (Müller 1999: 195); in other words, c. 8% of the autonomous clauses in the TBC include an agentive prepositional phrase.

One of Müller's (1999) main points is that prepositional phrases may frequently be found that are ambiguous between agent phrases and other types of obliques. In order to illustrate this point, while at the same time showing some data on the Old Irish agent phrase, I will discuss examples of the agent phrase with the two most frequent prepositions, *la* – 'by, with' and *ó* – 'from'. The preposition *la* occurs in 36 of the 77 potential agent phrase clauses in the three recensions of the TBC, while *ó* occurs in 21 clauses. These numbers equal 46,6% and 27,3% respectively. The other prepositions used are *oc* (15,6%), *do* (7,8%) and *ra/re* (2,6%) (all numbers from Müller 1999: 141). It will become clear that selecting which preposition to use with a given verb does not happen randomly but is tied to the semantics of the verb.

Like every preposition, *la* has a great number of different but interrelated meanings. The first meaning complex listed for this preposition in DIL involves 'spatial proximity', and includes 'beside', 'by', 'along by', 'touching', 'along with' 'with' and 'in the company of'. Some examples from DIL are provided in (15). The clause in (a) illustrates the sense 'along with', while example (b) is listed under the sense 'in the company of'.

(15)   Some examples of *la* phrases

       a.

*ar   tuidecht   **leu**   do   brith   macc nIsrahel   i   ndoiri*
for   come.VN   with.3PL   to   carry.VN   Israel's children   in   captivity
'for going with them to carry the Children of Israel into captivity'
(Mi113c8, my glosses with Stokes and Strachan's translation)

          b.

*conrobith   i   n-indocbáil   **la**   **Crist***
be.PRES.SUBJ.2PL   in   glory   with   Christ
'so that ye be in glory with Christ'
(Wb26a28, my glosses with Stokes and Strachan's translation)

The examples in (16), listed by Müller (1999: 241) as examples of autonomous verbs with the agent phrase, show the potential ambiguity of *la* phrases between agent and location: in (a), we may ask if the boy in question is said to have been reared *by* or *with* his mother and

father. Müller (1999: 152n) points out concerning (b) that while O'Rahilly translates both of the *la* phrases as agent phrases, it is possible to interpret *la Connachtu* as a locative phrase – 'in Connacht' – and the next phrase *la hAilill 7 la Medb* as the actual agent phrase.

(**16**) Potential agent phrases with *la*

a.

alta-som		*ém,*	*ol*	*Fergus,*	*la*	*máthair*	*7*	*la*	*athair*
rear.PRET.AUT.3SG-EMPH		then	said	F	with	mother	and	with	father

'he was reared, said Fergus, by his mother and his father' (TBC-1 13:399)

b.

tarcomlad	*slóiged*	*mór*	***la***	*Connachtu*
gather.PERF.AUT	army	big	with	Connacht

.i.	***la***	*hAilill*	*7*	***la***	*Meidb*
i.e.	with	A	and	with	M

'a great army was mustered by the Connachtmen, that is, by Ailill and Medb'
(TBC-1 1:1, O'Rahilly's translation)

Müller (1999: 195-197) ties the agentive and the locative meanings of *la* together by suggesting that 'the person in whose vicinity a process takes place can be interpreted as AG if the verbal element requires an AG as P1,[48] but where no other AG is mentioned or to be inferred from the context' (1999: 195). This interpretation takes place, she says, through the establishment of a link between a process and 'the entity defining an area in which a process takes place'. If the entity is capable of doing so, the link ensures that the entity is seen to provide the cause or condition for the process or to carry the responsibility for it. I assume that the capability in question involves issues of animacy and volition.

Example (a) above may serve as an example of this linking process and through this process the ambiguity involved. There is no agent other than *la máthair 7 la athair* mentioned or to be inferred from the context. The phrase 'with his mother and father' defines the area in which the boy was reared, and since his parents are certainly capable of taking the responsibility for raising their son, they will be interpreted as the agent. In this way the ambiguity of *la* between the locative and the agentive is tied together; the *la* phrase

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[48] Müller's term P1 refers to 'participant 1', typically the subject of a finite clause (Müller 1999: 2).

in this example is interpreted as the agent by means of its locative meaning together with the context and the animacy of its complement.

When it comes to the preposition *ó*, the basic meaning Müller (1999: 188-189) focuses on is 'origin, source from which something comes or is obtained' (DIL). DIL goes on to list a number of verb groups and meanings with which *ó* is used: verbs of motion, sending, bringing, taking, receiving, getting, asking and desiring among others. Some examples are provided in (17):

(17)   Some examples of *ó* phrases (cf. DIL [*ó*])

          a.

comma	*rí*		*far*	*ṅdígal*	**huaim-se**
that	come.PRES.SUBJ.3SG	your	vengeance	from.1SG-EMPH

'in order that vengeance for you may happen from me'
(Wb5d37; my glosses with Stokes and Strachan's translation)

          b.

fóidis	*Echaid*	*techta*	*cach*	*cóicid*	**úad**
send.PRET.3SG	E	messengers	every	fifth	from.3SG.M

'Echaid sent messengers (from him) to every province' (IT 118: 32)

Example (a) above appears to be somewhat loosely translated; the verb form *-rí* is from a verb *do-icc*, meaning 'come'. The sense is that the first person referent in the *ó* phrase *huaim-se* is the source of vengeance coming to the second person referent of the possessive in the phrase *far ṅdígal* – 'your vengeance'. In (b) the complement of the source phrase *úad* would appear from the context to co-refer with the subject Echaid. In other words, the same referent is here presented as both the agent, as the subject, and the source of the sending referred to by the verb.

Müller (1999: 188-189) points out that *ó* usually occurs as an agent marker with autonomous verbs of giving and sending; both of these meanings are included in the list of general meanings of *ó* above. Müller concludes that *ó* 'describes a relation between a process and its point of origin, but the point of origin and the AG are not necessarily identical' (1999: 189).

One of Müller's (1999: 241) examples of agent phrases with *ó* are provided in (18).

(18)   Sources and agents with *ó*

        a.

ocus   foíte   techta   ó   Ailill   co   secht   macu   Mágach
and   send.PRET.AUT   messengers   from   A   to   seven   sons   Mágu.GEN
'and messengers were sent by Ailill to the seven sons of Mágu' (TBC-1 1:2-3)

        b.

 hetha   húaidib   cossna   trí   chóiced   aili.
go.PRET.AUT   from.3PL   to.DEF   three   province   other
'word went from them to the three other provinces'
(TBC-1 1:2-3; my glosses with O'Rahilly's translation)

The *ó* phrase in (a), *ó Ailill*, occurs with the autonomous verb *foíte*. This is the autonomous form of the verb *fóidid*, which means 'send'. An active preterite form of this verb was shown in (17) above, where it was seen that the clause included both the agent and the source of the sending. In other words the phrase *ó Ailill* is in theory ambiguous as both agent and source of the autonomous form *foíte*.

        The *ó* phrase in (b) occurs together with the predicate *hetha*, a preterite autonomous form meaning 'go'. Müller (1999: 189n) notes concerning this example that there appears to be a constraint in place against agent phrases occurring with autonomous forms of intransitive verbs, and that the ambiguity between source and agent in the clause *hetha húaidib* does not exist. In other words, the prepositional phrase *húaidib* here specifies the sender of the referents of the agent argument of *hetha*.

        In sum we may note that *ó* phrases may express the source unambiguously or may be ambiguous between agent and source. We observed that a comparable ambiguity was present in agent phrases with *la*. This ambiguity, while interesting in itself, does not detract from the agent phrase as an argument in favour of a canonical passive analysis of autonomous forms with third person patients.

4.1.2.2.4 Summary

In this section I have provided a number of arguments in favour of analysing third person patients of Old Irish autonomous verbs as subjects, and consequently the clauses in which these patients occur as canonical passive constructions. The arguments dealt with concern case marking, number agreement, emphasising clitics and the agent phrase.

Concerning case marking and number agreement, it was shown that a third person autonomous patient acts in a way comparable to active subjects in both these areas. It receives nominative case if it is a noun and is otherwise indicated by the autonomous morphology. Plural nouns agree in number with the verb both when the noun is an autonomous patient and an active subject. Further support for the third person patient as subject analysis came from the presence of the agent phrase as well as a group of emphasising clitics. These clitics, termed *notae augentes*, were said to require a pronominal element to attach to when they appear on verbs. It was shown that the *notae augentes* appear on autonomous verbs where the natural candidate for the pronominal element in question was the patient.

The three previously mentioned arguments establish that the patient is treated as the subject of the clause and that it is present in a phonologically null form and indicated by the verbal morphology if it is a pronoun.[49] The presence of the agent phrase confirms these conclusions since the agent phrase is taken to be incompatible with an unrealised active impersonal subject realising the agent.

Having established that third person autonomous patients appear as subjects in the canonical passive construction, it will be shown in the next section that this is not the case when the autonomous patient is a first or second person pronoun. Rather, we will see that there are arguments in favour of analysing first and second person autonomous patients as objects.

4.1.2.3 *Impersonal passive: first and second person*

It was shown in the previous section that when the patient of the Old Irish autonomous verb is a noun or a third person pronoun, it takes the function of subject in the clause. Of the three construction types that have been defined in this thesis (excluding the subjectless/idiomatic ones), the only one compatible with a patient subject is the canonical passive construction; when the subject function is taken by the patient argument, the agent argument must be mapped to zero (or to an agent phrase) since the agent argument cannot be the subject as well.

The mapping structures of the construction types in question are repeated in (19) for convenience:

_____

[49] As will be shown in section 4.2.1.2.1, there are no independent subject or object pronouns in Old Irish.

(19) The Old Irish construction types

verb[can. pass.]	<	arg1 [-o]	arg2 [-r]	>
		Ø	[-o] SUBJ	
verb[imp. pass.]	<	arg1 [-o]	arg2 [-r]	>
		Ø	[+o] OBJ	
verb [ASI]	<	arg1 [-o]	arg2 [-r]	>
		[-r] SUBJ$_{imp}$	[+o] OBJ	

In this section I discuss the syntax of the autonomous verb when the patient is a first or second person pronoun. It will be shown that the morphological form taken by these patient arguments speaks in favour of analysing them as objects. Consequently, it must be determined what happens with the agent argument, specifically, whether it is mapped to zero or to a phonologically null subject that is syntactically active. In other words, we are asking whether this sub-group of the autonomous verb is used is in the impersonal passive or in the ASI construction. An answer to this question will not be attempted here, but will be left to the diachronic discussion in section 4.2.

When the patient argument of an autonomous verb in Old Irish is a first or second person pronoun, the 'singular' autonomous form is used. The patient argument takes the form of an infixed pronoun (cf. the paradigm in (5)). Pronominal patient arguments of active verbs, i.e. objects, are expressed by the same set of infixed pronouns. In the following I will begin by establishing how the expression of first and second person autonomous patients differs from that of third person patients. I go on to compare first and second person autonomous patients to pronominal patients of active verbs and to discuss a special use of the infixed pronoun for other types of arguments.

The fact that the patient is mapped to the object function when it is a first or second person pronoun implies that the mapping structure of the singular autonomous verb form is different with a first and second person patient than with a third person patient.

Consequently it is necessary to posit two different lexical entries with separate argument structures where the patient argument is mapped to subject if it is in the third person and to object if it is in the first or second person. The difference between autonomous verbs with first and second person patients on the one hand and third person patients on the other is illustrated through the examples in (20) and (21).

In examples (20) and (21), the verb forms in question are *do-berar* and *gontar* respectively, present tense singular autonomous forms meaning 'bring' and 'kill/wound'. In the (a) examples the patient is in the third person, the noun *in carpat* – 'the chariot' and a phonologically null pronoun respectively. In the (b) examples the patient is an infixed pronoun. In the form *do-m-berar* the infixed pronoun comes between the preverb *do-* and the stem *-berar*. The form *gontar* does not have a preverb, so the pronoun is infixed after the semantically empty dummy preverb *no-*.

(20) Third person vs. first and second person

a. singular autonomous verb agreeing with a noun in the singular

do-berar	*i-mmach*	*in*	*carpat*
PREV-bring.PRES.AUT	out	DEF	chariot

'the chariot is brought out' (ODR 326)

b. singular autonomous verb with first person infixed pronoun patient

do-m-berar	*im*	*charpat*
PREV-1SG-bring.PRES.AUT	in.my	chariot

'I am brought in my chariot' (ODR 323)

(21) Third person vs. first and second person

a. third person patient indicated by the verb form

gontar*-som*	*co*	*mór*	*co*	*lluid*	*cona*	*inathar*
kill.PRES.AUT-EMPH	ADV	big	COMPL	go.PRET.3SG	with.his	intestines

ima	*chosa*	*dochum*	*Con Chulaind*	*triasin*	*cath*
about.his	legs	to	C. C.	through.DEF	battle

'he is greatly wounded and went through the battle to Cú Chulainn with his intestines around his legs' (TBC-1 96:3173)

b. first person infixed pronoun patient

*acht   má   **no-n-gontar**   uli*
only   if   PREV-1PL-kill.PRES.AUT   all
'unless we are all killed' (TBC-1 6:165)

Moving on to the similarity between autonomous first and second person patients and pronominal patients of active verbs, we see in example (22) a regular active clause with the third person plural form of the verb *gonaid* – 'to kill' – in the past tense. The pronominal object 'them' is realised as an infixed pronoun; compare example (b) above, where the predicate is *gontar*, the autonomous present singular of *gonaid* with the patient realised as an infixed pronoun.

(22)   Active verb, infixed pronoun object

no-s-gonat
PREV-3PL-kill.3PL
'they kill them' (TBC-1 6:185)

At this point it must be asked to what extent it may be inferred from the similarity to active objects that the first and second person patients of the autonomous verb are objects as well. One potential argument against such a conclusion is a number of instances where the infixed pronoun is used for arguments which carry thematic roles that, while not agents, may still be seen as the highest thematic role of their predicates. Among the thematic roles in question are the possessor role, various dative and benefactive roles and the subject of existential predication. The question then becomes what the function of the infixed pronoun is in the special usage, and whether the infixed pronouns that occur with the autonomous verb should be analysed similar to the special usage or to the active pronominal objects.

Thurneysen (1998: 255-256) distinguishes between three functions of the infixed pronoun: in addition to being used to express the patient role of transitive active verbs and of autonomous verbs, it may express the subject of existential predication and a possessor role in constructions with the substantive verb. Additionally we can include the usage of infixed pronoun with the copula, where the infixed pronoun is used to express various dative arguments. (See Matasović 2004 for further discussion of these and other minor functions of the infixed pronoun.) Some of the relevant examples are provided in (23)-(27).

As mentioned, the infixed pronoun is used with the substantive verb in two contexts. First of all, it is used with the suppletive form *fil* to express the subject of an existential

predication (see also Strachan 1998 (1949): 69). The stem *fil* is used in the present tense after certain verbal particles and in one type of relative clause (Thurneysen 1998: 479). One example with *fil* is given in (23). The context of this example is the king, Conaire, asking for a drink – *dig*, accusative singular of *deog* – 'drink', which is feminine. The verbal complex *ní-s-fil* expresses the non-existence of drink in the place where the participants are situated; the verbal complex consists of, in addition to *fil*, the negative particle *ní* and the infixed pronoun third person feminine *-s-*, which refers to the feminine noun *dig*/*deog*.

(23)   The substantive verb, *fil*, with infixed pronoun expressing existence

is	*ann*	*sin*	*con-aitchecht*	*Conaire*	*dig*	*co*	*a*	*dáilemnaib* (…)
and	then		ask.PERF.3SG	C	drink	to	his	cup-bearers

nís-fil	*and*	*chétamus,*	*ol*	*seat*
NEG-3SG.F-be.PRES	there	firstly	said	they

'then C. asked a drink of his cup-bearers […] firstly, there is none, said they'
(TBDD 43: sect. 146, 1430)

The etymology of *fil* connects it to the Middle Welsh verb *gwelet*, which means 'to see' (Thurneysen 1998: 479). Noun phrase subjects of *fil* take accusative case (1998: 479; see also Tigges 2006: 71); in other words the infixed pronoun alternates with an accusative noun with *fil* in the same way as with regular active verbs, the difference being that the infixed pronoun expresses the agent argument with *fil* but the patient / object argument with regular active verbs. It is likely that the accusative case marking of the higher role argument of *fil* is a reflection of its origin as a transitive verb, and I suggest that it should be seen as a quirky subject marking for that reason. An example of *fil* with a noun phrase subject is provided in (24); the subject *óclaig* – 'warrior' – has accusative case marking.

(24)   Existential predication with *fil* and a noun phrase subject

ní	*fil*	*i*	*nÉre*	*óclaig*	*bas*	*amru*
NEG	is	in	Ireland	warrior.ACC	COP.REL	wonderful.COMPAR

'there is not in Ireland a warrior equally wonderful' (TBC-1 13:405)

Secondly the infixed pronoun can be used with the substantive verb to express the possessor role. Example (25) is taken from an episode in the *Táin* where an injured man is in the process of being healed. He complains in (25) that he does not possess any ribs, a

matter which is subsequently rectified by putting ribs of a chariot frame inside of him. The verbal complex *ní-m-that* can be taken to express the non-existence of what I take to be the subject – *asnai* – 'ribs' – for the person speaking, who is referred to by the infixed pronoun *-m-*.

(25)   The substantive verb, expressing possession with possessor infixed pronoun

ní-m-that   *asnai*
NEG-1SG-be.PRES   ribs
 'I don't have any ribs' (TBC-1 100:3303)

When the possessor is a noun, on the other hand, it appears after the prepositions *la* – 'with – or *oc* – 'at' (Matasović 2004: 182). One example, where the possessor appears in the prepositional phrase *lem-sa* is provided in (26).

(26)   The substantive verb, expressing possession with possessor prepositional phrase

atá   *árchú*   **lem-sa**
be.PRES   bloodhound   with.1SG-EMPH
'I have a bloodhound' (TBC-1 18:572)

Example (27) shows a copula construction with an infixed pronoun. In this example the verbal noun phrase *precept armetiuth et mothoschid* – 'teaching for my clothing and food' is stated to be necessary for the referent of the infixed pronoun by the copula complex *iss-um-ecen*, which consists of the copula + infixed pronoun + noun meaning 'necessity'.

(27)   Copula with infixed pronoun

iss-um-ecen   *precept*   *ar-m-etiuth*   *et*   *mo-thoschid*
COP-1SG-necessity teaching for-my-clothing and my-food
'it is necessary for me to preach for my raiment and my sustenance'
(Wb10d24, quoted in Matasović 2004: 182)

The infixed pronoun alternates with a prepositional phrase in the copula construction as well; as Matasović (2004: 183) points out, *ní-écen dond fiur* would mean 'it is not necessary to the man' (*dond fiur* – 'to the man'). The preposition used in this construction is *do* – 'to, for'.

In sum it can be seen that the special uses of the infixed pronoun appear to represent quirky subject marking (with *fil*), or oblique marking[50] in the constructions where the infixed pronoun alternates with a prepositional phrase. Independent of which function it is used for, it seems clear that the special uses of the infixed pronoun are very limited and only possible in a closed group of constructions. The use of the infixed pronoun to express the patient of the autonomous verb must on the other hand be seen as productive.

In other words I would argue that the use of the infixed pronoun for autonomous patients should not be seen as a special subject marking but rather as object marking similar to how infixed pronouns are used with active verbs. Clearly, an analysis where the infixed patient arguments of the autonomous verb are taken to be objects is the *simpler* analysis, in the sense that it is said to represent the regular use of infixed pronouns in the language to mark patient arguments.

There is an additional argument against the special case marking analysis that ties in with the previous reflections on simplicity. We know that the patient argument of the autonomous verb is the object in Modern Irish (cf. the discussion in chapter 1). If we were to say that the infixed pronoun arguments of the autonomous verb in Old Irish are a type of quirky subjects, an additional step would be required in order to explain the subsequent diachronic development. This argument will be discussed further in chapter 4.2.

Finally, it should be mentioned that the autonomous form may occur with intransitive verbs that take prepositional and clausal complements. Two examples are shown in (28), where we note that *gessa* in (a) take a prepositional phrase and a non-finite complement clause, while *dogéntar* in (b) take a prepositional phrase. Such examples provide an additional argument in favour of an impersonal passive analysis of autonomous verbs with first and second person patients, since it shows that the autonomous verb does not occur otherwise only with the patient mapped to subject as in the canonical passive.

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[50] The exact analysis of the possessor PP in examples like (26) – as an oblique or other functions – is not relevant to the purpose of this study. Adger and Ramchand (2006) on related constructions in modern Scottish-Gaelic might be an interesting starting point to an analysis that ufortunately falls outside of the scope of this thesis.

(28)   Autonomous form of intransitive verbs

    a.

gessa   *do Fergus mac Róich   techt   ara   c[h]end-som*
beg.PRET.AUT   to   F mac R   go.VN   against.his   head-EMPH
'it was begged to Fergus Mac Róich to go against him' (TBC-1 76:2501)

    b.

*cid   **dogéntar**   friu*
what   do.FUT.AUT   against.3PL
'what shall be done with them?' (TBC-1 5:160)

In sum I have shown that I will analyse first and second person patients of the autonomous verb as objects. I have not touched upon the question of what happens to the higher argument position when the patient is a first or second person infixed pronoun. I will take as my basic analysis the idea that the higher argument position of the autonomous verb is consistently mapped to zero in Old Irish, excluding the unaccusative intransitive verbs. This analysis, in other words, takes the autonomous verb to form impersonal passive clauses when the patient argument is an infixed pronoun. The alternative is to say that the agent argument is mapped to the phonologically null impersonal subject. This issue will be further discussed in term of diachronic theory and change in section 4.2.

4.1.3   Pre-history of the autonomous verb

So far in this chapter I have described how two-place autonomous verbs show a split paradigm in Old Irish: when the patient is a first or second person pronoun, it is realised by an infixed pronoun, while a third person patient takes the form of a nominative noun or is indicated by the autonomous verb form itself. In this section I look at how this state of affairs might have come about. It will be hypothesised that the source of the autonomous inflection lies in the middle inflection together with a particular participle. The main conclusion of the discussion in this section is two-fold: there does not appear to have been a purely canonical passive paradigm to serve as the ancestor for the Old Irish autonomous verb, and the Old Irish system appears to have come about through unrelated morphological changes in the language.

4.1.3.1 The deponent verb

This section contains an overview of the semantics of the Old Irish deponent verb. Specifically I will discuss some generalisations over what types of verb meaning are expressed through the deponent morphology. It will be shown that the Old Irish deponent verb is descended from the Indo-European middle inflection. The middle will subsequently be the topic of section 4.1.3.2, where it will be shown that the middle inflection went through a split where the first and second person forms were retained as deponents while the third person forms began to be used as 'passive' forms in what became the autonomous inflection.

Kim McCone (1987: 76) states that the difference between the deponent and the regular active morphology is 'purely lexical and has no semantic significance whatever'. This statement is perhaps slightly misleading. Certainly, the deponent inflection is not an inflectional category, but a lexical category in the sense that verbs take either the deponent or the active endings.[51] However, it is perfectly possible to make some generalisations over the semantics of the deponent verbs.

Ailbhe Ó Córrain (2001: 105) takes the deponent inflection to represent a middle voice, stating among other things that the deponent inflection is semantically related to the Greek and Sanskrit middle voice. Furthermore he says that the deponents take patients or experiencers as subjects (Ó Corráin 2001: 111). Looking at the middle category as it is defined in terms of Indo-European syntax (Clackson 2007: 142-143; Szemerényi 1996: 253-254), we find that the middle is seen as a form that takes an affected subject – under which heading patients and experiencers must be said to fall. Clackson makes an additional distinction in terms of transitivity. He states that the middle inflection is preferred with *intransitive* verbs when 'there is some notion of control over the verbal action', from which follows a distinction between intransitive verbs such as 'think' and 'speak' on the one hand and 'be', 'vomit' and 'wait' on the other.

The following categories can be put forward as further examples of middle semantics (Clackson 2007: 142-143; Szemerényi 1996: 253-254): the reciprocal – e.g. 'taking each other by the hand', the reflexive – 'I wash myself' etc., bodily functions such as sitting, lying, jumping, etc. and psychological states such as to be ashamed, afraid or pleased. Finally there is the passive category. According to Clackson (2007: 143), the

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[51] According to McCone (1987: 76), there are some exceptions to this generalisation, namely some verbs caught in the diachronic transition between the deponent and the active in the Old Irish period.

passive is the default meaning of the Latin and Gothic reflections of the Indo-European middle, and is also found in Greek and Anatolian. Szemerényi (1996: 254-257 and references therein) takes the passive to be a secondary development arising from the reflexive use of the middle inflection.

Clackson (2007: 143) states that the opposition between the active and the middle diathesis in Proto-Indo-European does not appear to be related to a distinction between verbs in terms of transitivity or valency. In his own words (2007: 143): 'Some verbs which are conjugated as active may be used transitively or intransitively without any change in voice, and in [the function of the middle inflection expressing personal involvement – JG] verbs may be conjugated as middle with no effect on their syntactic arguments.' For this reason he takes the distinction between the active and the middle to be based on semantics rather than syntax. The passive on the other hand, as it was defined in section 2.2.4, is a syntactic category: the number of argument positions of a passive verb is decreased by one compared to its active equivalent when the agent is mapped to zero rather than to a grammatical function in the f-structure.

Ó Córrain mentions four semantic categories that are covered by the Old Irish deponent inflection: the stative, mental states (being ashamed, afraid, pleased) and bodily actions and operations of the vocal organs (intransitive verbs like 'speak' and 'think', where the subject retains some control over the verbal action). In the following I provide examples of deponent verbs expressing each of these categories.

Ó Corráin (2001: 105) lists the following as examples of stative deponent verbs in Old Irish: *ad-ágathar* – 'he fears', *for-muinethar* – 'he envies', *ro-fitir* – 'he knows' and *do-futhraccair* – 'he wishes'.

(29) Stative deponent verbs

a. 'be afraid'

nísn-áigfimis   *anocht*
NEG.3PL-fear.COND.1PL   tonight
'we should not have feared them tonight' (TBDD 15: sect. 56, 506)

b. 'know'

ní   ***fitir-som***   *aní sin*
NEG   know.PRET.3SG-EMPH   that thing
'he didn't know that' (TBC-1 14:419-420)

As examples of mental states, Ó Córrain mentions *ad-ágathar* – 'fears' and *ro-fitir* – 'knows' again, while for bodily actions and the operations of the vocal organs, the following are mentioned: *do-fuisledar* – 'trips', *fo-luathar* – 'flies', *labrithir* – 'speaks' and *búirithir* – 'bellows' (Ó Corráin 2001: 112)

    (30)   Deponent verbs expressing mental states

        a. 'become afraid '

imus-rola		*in*	*t-omon*	*íar*	*sin*
PREV.3PL-bewilder.PRET.3SG	DEF	fear	after	that	

'the fear bewildered them then' (TBDD 8: sect. 27, 251)

        b. 'dare'

ní	*lomethar*	*nech*	*dul*	*don*	*imdae*	*cen*	*airíasacht*	*doib*
NEG	dare.PRES.3SG	anyone	go.VN	to.DEF	cubicle	without	permission	to.3PL

'no one dares to go to the cubicle without permission' (TBDD 36: sect. 126, 1207)

In sum it has been shown in this section that the Old Irish deponent verbs are descended from the Indo-European middle category. In the next section I show how the Indo-European middle category is the source of the autonomous as well as the deponent inflection in Old Irish.

4.1.3.2 *Development of the autonomous inflection*

In this section I give a brief overview of the pre-history of the Old Irish autonomous verb, as a contribution towards understanding how the synchronic Old Irish stage came to be. My discussion is based in the main on Warren Cowgill's (1983) article. I will show that in Cowgill's opinion, the Old Irish autonomous verb originates in a particular participle as well as the middle inflection.

The autonomous verb in Old Irish is a descendant of the Indo-European mediopassive,[52] as shown by Cowgill (1983), cf. the discussion of the middle category in the previous section. The mediopassive paradigm went through a split that resulted in the

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[52] Cowgill (1983: 73) makes it clear that he uses 'mediopassive' to refer to a category that subsumes both the passive and the deponent/middle.

old first and second person forms being used as deponents, while the third person became the autonomous verb (Cowgill 1983: 104)[53].

Cowgill (1983) suggests that the key to understanding how the Old Irish situation came about is in the creation of the preterite autonomous forms. Synchronically in Old Irish, the preterite autonomous is distinct from the autonomous forms in the other TAM-categories (see McCone 1987: chapter 7; Thurneysen 1998: 437-440 for examples). The preterite autonomous was created from participles in *-to-*, comparable to Latin *scriptum est* (Cowgill 1983: 104-106; see also Thurneysen 1998: 437). Once the preterite autonomous was in place, there was a model for distinguishing the autonomous from the deponent, as seen for instance in the following examples from Cowgill's discussion: autonomous *arrudérged* – 'which was intended' (Wb2b10) versus deponent *arrudérgestar* – 'which he intended' (Wb4c13). This distinction subsequently served as the model for distinguishing between the deponent and the autonomous elsewhere.

At this point we are in a position to say something about the diachronic process that lead to the split paradigm described in section 4.1.2. The abovementioned participles in *-to-* distinguished gender and number in addition to case, but not person (Cowgill 1983: 104). While the gender distinction was lost, the singular and plural forms were retained. As Cowgill (1983: 105) points out, a copula is used in comparable contexts to mark the first and second person in various other languages, e.g. Polish, Persian and Latin (cf. P. V. Jones and Sidwell 1986: 151; Embick 2000: 189-190). However, we find the infixed pronoun rather than the copula performing this function in Old Irish (cf. McCone 1994: 172 and section 5.1.2.3), leading to the question of how the system of marking the first and second person with infixed pronouns came to appear.

Cowgill (1983: 105) suggests a previous state where person (and number) was expressed by nominative pronouns, which later acquired 'enclitic, oblique shapes'. He reconstructs the following preterite autonomous forms for Primitive Irish in the first and second person singular (31). If the pronouns in these examples are ambiguous in form between the nominative and the accusative, the only clue, as Cowgill states, to the nominative function of the pronouns are the nominative case endings on the forms *messas* and *messā*, since the pronouns would agree with the verb forms in terms of case.

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[53] The deponent morphology and its similarities to the autonomous morphology are described in McCone (1987: 76-82).

(31)   The autonomous preterite in Primitive Irish, following Cowgill (1983: 105)
- 1st person singular:
    - *ro-s me messas* – 'I (m.) have been judged' (cf. Lat. *aestimatus sum*)
    - *ro-s me messā* – I (f.) have been judged (cf. Lat. *aestimata sum*)
- 2nd person singular:
    - *ro-s tu messas/messā* – you (m./f.) have been judged (cf. Lat. *aestimatus/-a es*)

When the case endings on the participles disappeared – Cowgill dates this to c. AD 500 or possibly even earlier – we are left with e.g. *ro-m-mess* in the first person, meaning 'I (m./f.) have been judged'. In other words, there is no longer agreement in person between the patient argument and the verb. Cowgill suggests that the reanalysis of forms like *ro-m-mess* as an 'impersonal' verb form with an object pronoun is 'practically automatic'. Subsequently, the usage of the now unmarked verbform with object pronouns is extended to the first and second person plural, and then from the preterite indicative to other TAM categories. The third person middle forms in other TAM categories began to be used similarly to the third person preterite forms, and the deponent inflection developed new third person forms (Cowgill 1983: 104).

The conclusion we may draw from this view of the pre-history of the Old Irish autonomous form for our purposes is that it is unlikely that there has been a full, canonical passive paradigm ancestor of the Old Irish autonomous verb.

Additionally Cowgill's story of the reanalysis of the ancestor of the infixed pronouns from nominative to accusative has an interesting consequence: he argues that the pronoun in question was reanalysed as objective when the verbal ending that showed case agreement with the pronoun disappeared. I take this reanalysis to involve a change from canonical to impersonal passive in the first and second person, i.e. that the grammatical function of the pronouns changed. Interestingly, what I am saying, in other words, is that the change from canonical to impersonal passive in the first and second person was due to morphological changes that took place in the language, changes that were unrelated to the syntactic passive category. Interestingly, I will argue the same thing for the change from canonical to impersonal passive in the third person in Middle Irish (section 4.2) Anticipating the discussion a little, I will show in that section how the change from subject to object function in the third person for patient arguments appears, at least to some extent, to have been a

result of independent morphological changes to the verbal complex, the pronominal inventory and the case marking of nouns.

On a more general level, this view of the change from canonical to impersonal passive, in the first and second person in Primitive Irish and in the third person in Middle Irish, implies that the difference between the canonical and the impersonal passive in Irish is based on a difference in argument linking that has been caused by formally driven morphological processes rather than functionally based changes.

4.1.4   The active subject impersonal

I described in the introduction to this chapter how both David Stifter (2006: 155) and Wim Tigges (2006: 124) mention in their introductions to Old Irish that two-place autonomous verbs may be used in an active sense where the meaning involves an impersonal subject comparable to English general *they* or German impersonal *man*. I showed in section 4.1.2 that there are good arguments in favour of a passive analysis of some sort for two-place autonomous verbs, and that while I do not exclude the possibility for an active impersonal subject analysis, I chose to focus on the passive as the main construction in which two-place autonomous verbs occur in Old Irish.

In this section I focus on groups of unaccusative one-place verbs that occur in the autonomous form. I take these forms to be unambiguously incompatible with a passive analysis, since they represent predicates that are seen as impossible to passivise due to their initial argument structure, cf. the discussion in section 2.2.4. For this reason, I take these verbs to participate in the active subject impersonal construction (ASI) when they occur in the autonomous form. The verbs in question are the substantive verb and intransitive verbs of motion. These verbs were among the verbs used to argue in favour of an active subject impersonal analysis in section 3.3. The topic of how the different construction types might vary across categories of argument structure is taken up again in section 4.1.5.

The mapping structure of the intransitive ASI construction is repeated in (32) for reference:

(32)

verb [ASI]   <   arg1   >
                                      [-o]/[-r]

                                      [-r]/[-o]
                                      SUBJ$_{imp}$

4.1.4.1   Introduction

Intransitive verbs do not appear to be very frequent in the autonomous form in Early Irish. Müller (1994: 195) presents the following table of the autonomous clauses in three versions of the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, where we see that only 4% of the autonomous verbs are intransitive in Recension 1, and only between 1,5-2% in the LL and St. versions. Additionally, about 5% of the autonomous clauses in all three versions are what Müller terms 'verbs of motion'.

(33)   Distribution of verb types with autonomous morphology in three versions of
                the TBC (from Müller 1994: 195)

	transitive	intransitive	motion	total
TBC-1	277 (90.23%)	13 (4.23%)	17 (5.54%)	307
TBC-LL	292 (93.59%)	5 (1.60%)	15 (4.81%)	312
TBC St.	313 (92.60%)	6 (1.78%)	19 (5.62%)	338

It is unclear to me how Müller distinguishes 'verbs of motion' from other intransitive verbs. She points out that verbs of motion may be followed by an 'accusative phrase denoting the goal or end point of a motion' (1994: 195); however, she has not found any examples where such a phrase is the patient argument of an autonomous verb. Based on her comment about verbs of motion with accusative phrases, I take it that she excludes two-place intransitives from her intransitive verb group, i.e. verbs that take a subject and a prepositional phrase; this is however not clearly defined.

Specifically, the verb types to be discussed in this section are the substantive verb and verbs of inherently directed motion. These two are chosen because they appear to be the most frequent intransitive verbs found in the autonomous form both in Old and Modern

Irish (cf. chapter 3). In other words, the implication is that the use of the autonomous verb with these verb types has undergone few if any changes.

4.1.4.1.1 *The substantive verb*

In this section I discuss the general use of the substantive verb in Early Irish as well as the use of the substantive verb in the autonomous form.[54] I take a traditional and non-theoretic view of the syntax and semantics of being as the basis of the discussion, because I see the specific theoretic details of the syntax of the substantive verb as irrelevant in this context. Based on the general discussion in this section, I will show in the next section that the Old Irish substantive verb is found in the autonomous form in most of the general categories mentioned. For an updated discussion on the syntax of being within the framework of Principles and Parameters Theory, see Pereltsvaig (2007) and the additional references mentioned in Andrew Carnie's (2008) review of Pereltsvaig.

Tomás Ó Máille (1912) distinguishes between eight different uses of the substantive verb; these are listed in (34). Ó Máille notes that (b) and (d) should possibly be grouped together.

(34) Uses of the substantive verb according to Ó Máille (1912: 61-66)
   a. to denote existence
   b. to denote location and position
   c. used as an auxiliary to denote action with the preposition *oc* and a verbal noun
   d. to denote possession and accompaniment with the preposition *la*
   e. with adverbs of manner and position
   f. with adjectives
   g. with nouns
   h. with the infixed pronoun to express possession ('to have')

Of these categories we do not expect to find the autonomous form used with noun phrase complements or in clauses expressing possession. Additionally, we expect that the semantics of the autonomous subject is not compatible with the specification provided by a

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[54] Some general information concerning the substantive verb was provided in footnote 5 on page xi.

noun phrase complement in an equative clause. We noted in section 4.1.2.3 that a possessor can be realised either as an infixed pronoun or as the complement of a preposition, while the possessee is the subject. The possessee is likely to be an inanimate referent, and as such I do not expect that it can be expressed by the active impersonal subject, since this subject is hypothesised to be restricted to animate referents (cf. section 3.2).

In the traditional view of the syntax and semantics of being (see e.g. Lyons 1968: 388-390), we may distinguish between two different meanings: existence and predication. Predication may be further divided into three sub-groups: equation, attribution and location. Existence and the various types of predication are summed up in the table in (35):

(35)   Existence and predication.

Existence	Predication		
	equation	attribution	location

If we include Ó Máille's categories, excluding the categories that we do not expect in the autonomous form, the table will look like in (36):

(36)   Ó Máille's (1912) categories of the Old Irish substantive verb

Existence	Predication		
	equation	*attribution*	*location*
(a) denoting existence	(g) n/a	(e) with adverbs of manner (f) with adjectives (g) n/a	(b) denoting location and position (c) used as an auxiliary with the preposition *oc* (d) n/a (e) with adverbs of position (h) n/a

In (37) are listed a number of examples of the Old Irish substantive verb in the autonomous form. Example (a) asks in what way, or how – *cia crúth* – an undefined group of people fares in the camp in question. Similarly in (b) the autonomous form *-bither* predicates of an unspecified group of people that they are in danger – *in periculis*. In example (c) the prepositional phrase *indib* – 'in them' – refers to locations in which it is not

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possible for the referents of the autonomous subject to be. It might be seen as ambiguous between location and existence in the sense that the example may be interpreted to be speaking of the impossibility of existing in a certain place. The autonomous forms of the substantive verb *bethir* and the somewhat later *-bás* are used as auxiliaries of what I take to be the progressive construction in (d). Both of these examples involve a noun expressing an action as their main predicate (*-ingrim* and *etargude* – 'persecuting' and 'appealing') following the preposition *oc* and a possessive adjective expressing the object of the main predicate. The subject of both the main predicate and the substantive verb is an unspecified group of people.

(37) Substantive verb

a. predicating manner

cia	*cruth*	***imtháthar***	*isin*	*dúnud*
what.COP	manner	be-around.PRES.AUT	in.DEF	camp

'how they/people are in the camp' (TBC-1 55: 1803-1804)

b. predicating manner (/location?)

is	*and*	*asgniintar*	*incharait*	*intan*	***mbither***	in periculis
COP	then	recognise.PRES.AUT	DEF.friends	when	be.PRES.AUT	

'then friends are recognised, when people are *in periculis*'
(Ml108b4, quoted in Lloyd 1904)

c. denoting location (/existence?)

air	*meit*	*ind*	*huachta*	*ní*	***rubthar***	*indib*
for	magnitude	DEF	cold.GEN	NEG	be.PRES.AUT	in.3PL

'for the greatness of the cold no one may dwell in them'
(Ml94b23, quoted in Lloyd 1904: 52-53, my glosses with Stokes and Strachan's translation)

d. used as an auxiliary

i.

cia	***bethir***	*oc*	*far*	*ningrim*
though	be.PRES.SUBJ.AUT	at	your	persecuting

'though they are persecuting you' (Wb5d33, quoted in Lloyd 1904: 53)

ii.

téit	*ass*	*íarom*
go.PRET.3SG	out-of.3SG.M/N	then

ó	*ro*	***bás***	*ocá*	*etargude*	*co*	*tromda*
since	PERF	be.PRET.AUT	at.his	appeal	ADV	heavy

'so then he went forth since they were so earnestly importuning him'
(TBC-1 76:2503, O'Rahilly's translation)

Recall from chapter 1 that Stenson (1989: 390-391) argued in favour of an active subject with the Modern Irish autonomous verb, and that one of the arguments she used was the possibility for PRO subjects of non-finite verbs to be controlled by the autonomous subjects. She used the progressive construction among others to illustrate this fact. We find what appears to be exactly the same phenomenon in the progressive examples in (d), where the interpretation of the PRO subjects of the verbal nouns *–ingrim* and *etargude* is controlled by the unspecified autonomous subjects.

4.1.4.1.2 Verbs of inherently directed motion

One important group of unaccusative intransitive verbs that we find with autonomous morphology is the so-called 'verbs of inherently directed motion' (Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1995), i.e. verbs that mean e.g. 'go' and 'come'. I will argue that these verbs realise the active subject impersonal in their autonomous form. It was stated in section 3.3.3 that this group contains unaccusative verbs that are taken to refer to an achieved change of location (cf. (Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1995: 58).

(38)   'Come', preterite autonomous

tancas	*o*	*Ailill*	*ocus*	*o Meidb*	*do*	*chungid*	*in*	*chon*
come.PRET.AUT	from	A	and	from M	to	seek.VN	DEF	hound.GEN

'messengers came from Ailill and Medb seeking the hound (SMMD-LL 1: sect. 1)

Example (38) shows a frequent use of verbs of inherently directed motion in the autonomous form in Old Irish, where it is stated that someone came or went with a message from one place to another. This example is taken from the beginning of the story called *Scéla Mucce Meic Dathó* – 'tidings of Mac Dathó's pig'. The story opens with a presentation of Mac Dathó. We are told that he is king of Leinster and in possession of a

marvellous hound which is famous all over Ireland. The sentence in (38) follows, where we are told that messengers came from Ailill and Medb to ask for the hound. Ailill and Medb are king and queen of another province, and represent the starting point of the messengers' movement. The perspective of the tale rests with Mac Dathó in Leinster, so he represents the (implicit) end point of the movement.

In (38) above I translated the sentence with *messengers* as the subject of an active verb form. This manner of expression, almost word by word, is found in the parallel sentence in the late version of the tale in R, where we have an active form *do-tiaghat* with the subject *techta* – 'messengers', as seen in example (39). A different formulation in a later manuscript version obviously does not provide a final and unambiguous analysis of the earlier sentence, but is an indication of how the later scribe interpreted the earlier material.

(39)   'Messengers came', 15th century

dotiaghat	*in tan sin*	*techta*	*o*	*Meidhb*	*7*	*o*	*Ailill*
come.PRES.3PL	then	messengers	from	M	and	from	A

co	*Mac Dá Thó*	*do*	*chuindghid*	*a*	*chon*	*fair*
to	M D-T	to	seek.VN	his	hound	on.3SG.M

'then messengers come from Meidhb and Ailill to Mac Dá Thó to ask for his hound from him' (SMMD-R 51: sect. 1)

The same meaning is found also with verbs meaning 'go', i.e. motion from the place where the viewpoint of the tale is located and to somewhere else. This is illustrated in (40), where the tale is told from the perspective of Ailill and Medb, who are sending messages out to the other provinces:

(40)   'Go', preterite autonomous

hetha	*húaidib*	*cossna*	*trí*	*chóiced*	*aili*
go.PRET.AUT	from.3PL	to.DEF	three	province	other

'messengers went from them to the three other provinces' (TBC-1 1:2)

As mentioned, we find a similar use of the verbs of inherently directed motion in the autonomous form in Modern Irish. This fact is illustrated in (41), where we again have an unspecified set of people who perform the movement, this time out to look for someone.

(41)   'Go', past autonomous, Modern Irish

sa   *deireadh*   ***chuathas***   *amach*   *á*   *chuartú*
in.DEF   end   go.PAST.AUT   out   PROG.his   search-for.VN

ach   *ní*   *raibh*   *sé*   *le*   *fáil*   *thoir*   *nó*   *thiar*
but   NEG   was   he   with   find.VN   east   or   west

'in the end they went out searching for him, but he wasn't to be found either here or there'
(CiD 96)

One of the arguments I posited in favour of an ASI analysis for the Modern Irish autonomous verb was the ability of the hypothesised subject to stand as the antecedent in a functional control relation. The sentence in (41) is one such example. Here the impersonal active subject of *chuathas* refers to the same unspecified group of people as the subject of the verbal noun *cuartú* – 'seeking'. I take the two predicates to share a subject and the verbal noun to take the open XCOMP function. Interestingly, we find the same type of control relation in example (38); the autonomous verb *tancas* – 'come' – shares its subject with the verbal noun *cu(i)ngid* – 'searching for'. Compare also the examples of the progressive construction with the autonomous form of the auxiliary in the previous section, where the substantive verb was similarly hypothesised to share its subject with the subordinate verbal noun.

4.1.4.1.3 Summary of the intransitive verbs

It has been shown in this section that the Old Irish autonomous form may be used with verbs of inherently directed motion and the substantive verbs. This fact necessitates an active subject impersonal analysis of the verbs in question for two reasons. First, as unaccusative verbs, these verbs are taken to be impossible to passivise, cf. the discussion in 2.2.4, and second, they occur with subordinate non-finite predicates whose subjects are controlled by the autonomous subject.

4.1.5   Summary of the Old Irish autonomous verb

So far in this chapter I have presented an analysis of the Old Irish autonomous verb where the autonomous verb was said to occur in three different constructions. The three

construction types in question are the canonical passive, the impersonal passive and the active subject impersonal, as presented in (42).

The canonical passive is used when the patient is a noun or a third person pronoun, in which case the patient is mapped to the subject function (section 4.1.2.2). When the patient is a first or second person pronoun, it was analysed as the object of the clause, and in that case I hypothesised the autonomous clause to be impersonal passive (section 4.1.2.3). Finally I analysed the autonomous form of certain unaccusative intransitive verbs, specifically the substantive verb and verbs of inherently directed motion, as being used in the ASI construction and therefore containing an active impersonal subject (section 4.1.4).

(42)   The Old Irish clause types

verb[can. pass.]	<	arg1	arg2	>
		[-o]	[-r]	
		Ø	[-o]	
			SUBJ	

verb[imp. pass.]	<	arg1	arg2	>
		[-o]	[-r]	
		Ø	[+o]	
			OBJ	

verb [ASI]	<	arg1	arg2	>
		[-o]	[-r]	
		[-r]	[+o]	
		SUBJ$_{imp}$	OBJ	

Now, two main arguments can be brought forward against the analysis I have presented. Specifically, my analysis can be criticised on the one hand for being idealised and simplistic, and the other hand for being complicated.

In order to make the analysis less complicated, one would have to dispense with one or more of the construction types. Now, I have shown that the canonical passive and the ASI construction are well established. On the other hand, the impersonal passive is less unambiguously present, and is as such the best candidate for removal; since the only difference between the impersonal passive and the ASI construction is the silent impersonal subject, it would be an easy analytical step to analyse the first and second person patient autonomous verbs as occurring in ASI clauses similar to the unaccusative intransitive verbs.

I will argue against dispensing with the impersonal passive in the next section on the basis of diachronic considerations. Specifically I will show that the agent phrase persists for so long in the transitive paradigm that it seems premature to posit the ASI construction as the general option everywhere but with third person patients. Secondly I will argue that when language change is located to first language acquisition, it is necessary to establish the theoretical steps of a hypothesised change. Specifically I will suggest that including the impersonal passive in the change from canonical passive to the ASI construction makes for a simpler and better analysis than positing a direct change from canonical passive to ASI.

There is no doubt that my analysis of the Old Irish autonomous verb as it is presented in (42) is simplistic and idealised, based as it is in part on the descriptive ideal of the 'Old Irish' autonomous paradigm. I have sorted the various construction types into groups based on verb type depending on how the overt properties of the verb types correspond with the properties of the constructions: the autonomous form of a two-place verb with a noun phrase patient was said to occur in the canonical passive, and so on. However, there will be a number of verbs that are compatible with more than one construction type. This fact is behind the previously discussed issues concerning the impersonal passive: in theory, an autonomous verb with an infixed pronoun object is compatible with both an impersonal passive and an ASI analysis. Similarly, a two-place verb that takes an agent and an oblique argument of some sort is compatible with both a mapping-to-zero and an active impersonal subject analysis.

In sum, it is both possible and expected that one speaker's lexicon will contain for instance both a passive and an ASI lexical entry for a given autonomous verb where another speaker contemporary with her has only the passive version, provided that the two construction types are available at the given synchronic stage. The role of this variation in the development of the autonomous verb following the Old Irish period is the topic of the next section.

4.2   From canonical to impersonal passive, to impersonal active

It will have become clear at this point that this study provides qualitative rather than quantitative analyses of the Irish autonomous verb. The consequences of this methodological choice are perhaps particularly significant for the diachronic analysis. Specifically, this thesis does *not* provide detailed dating for the changes from passive to

impersonal based on the comparative and changing frequency of certain phenomena in the manuscripts. Rather, the diachronic analysis as a whole contains two parts: in the previous chapters I have attempted to establish and analyse the synchronic stages of the autonomous verb in Modern and Old Irish respectively. In this section I tie these two stages together.

The analysis in this section is twofold: on the one hand I look at the data and observe the overt signs of the reanalysis undergone by the autonomous verb in the Middle Irish period (section 4.2.1). In addition I discuss theoretic predictions for how the change from passive to impersonal might happen (section 4.2.2). As described in chapter 2, my theoretic starting point is the idea that language change is tied to first language acquisition and therefore takes place when a child reanalyses the data she hears around her to converge on a grammar that is slightly different from her parents'. In section 4.2.2 I attempt to reduce the development from Old to Modern Irish to changes that can be said to have taken place through first language acquisition.

Before looking at the specific details of the changes that takes place following the Old Irish period, I will sum up what characterises the autonomous verb at the Old Irish stage, to provide a basis for the subsequent discussion. The properties of the Old Irish autonomous verb are provided in (43):

(43)   Properties of the Old Irish autonomous verb:
   a. It is found included in the paradigm for practically any verb in every category of tense/aspect/mood, including intransitive and unaccusative verbs such as the substantive verb and verbs of inherently directed motion.
   b. A third person patient is marked as subject, by nominative case on nouns, agreement in number with the verb and by the verb itself if the patient is a pronoun.
   c. There is object marking on first and second person patients, with infixed pronouns.
   d. The agent phrase is possible with transitive verbs.

Now, (a) describes a general property of the autonomous verb at *all* stages of the language. As this property does not appear to change, it will not be further treated here. The properties in (b) and (c) involve the question of the grammatical function of autonomous patients and their morphological marking. These are exactly the type of properties we expect to change as part of a reanalysis, and their development in the Middle Irish period is the subject of

section 4.2.1. The property in (d), the agent phrase, is similarly expected to change in connection with a reanalysis from passive to active. It seems that the agent phrase disappeared during the Modern Irish time period; in other words, this change is later than the changes in the morphological marking and grammatical function of the autonomous patient. The changes involved in the disappearance of the agent phrase are treated in section 4.2.2.

We know from studying the Modern Irish autonomous verb that it is an active verb form with a phonologically null subject and an object patient. As a consequence, two changes must take place, given the Old Irish state of affairs: third person patients must change their function from subject to object, and the mapping to zero must be replaced by the active impersonal subject. In order to achieve something more than a diachronic correspondence between the Old and the Modern Irish periods, an analysis of what took place in the period between Old and Modern Irish must be attempted. I suggest that these changes took place in two separate steps: throughout the Middle Irish period, the Old Irish autonomous verb underwent a change from canonical to impersonal passive in the third person, thereby ensuring that the autonomous verb is used in the impersonal passive independent of the person and number features of the patient argument. Subsequent to that, sometime in the Modern Irish period, the active impersonal subject develops. Once again it must be stressed that what is presented here is an idealised picture, and that there must have been far greater variation. Some of this variation and the shape it may have taken will be discussed in section 4.2.2.

4.2.1   From canonical to impersonal passive

In this section I discuss some of the characteristics of the development that took place following the Old Irish period, when the autonomous patient took on the function of object across the paradigm and began to be expressed by the independent pronoun. As we will see, it appears that this change is a morphological development of the language that is mostly unrelated to the autonomous category in itself.

From a syntactic perspective, this section posits the disappearance of the canonical passive and its replacement by the impersonal passive. The mapping structures involved are repeated in (44); we note that this development involves a change from subject to object for a third person patient of the autonomous verb.

(44) The canonical and the impersonal passive

verb[can. pass.]   <   arg1   arg2   >
                                      [-o]   [-r]

                                      Ø   [-o]
                                                SUBJ

verb[imp. pass.]   <   arg1   arg2   >
                                        [-o]   [-r]

                                      Ø   **[+o]**
                                                OBJ

Specifically, there are several different issues involved in the development of the grammatical function and case marking of autonomous patients. Looking first at the noun phrase patient, we note that even though the nominative/accusative distinction is disappearing in this period, we find examples of accusative case marking on noun phrase patients. In other words, a noun phrase autonomous patient ceases to be marked with nominative case. The breakdown of the distinction between the singular and the plural autonomous form has something of the same consequences as the breakdown of the case system, since there will no longer be agreement in number between a noun phrase patient and the autonomous verb as an overt indication of the subject status of this patient. A similar development is undergone by the third person pronominal patient. In Old Irish, this patient is indicated by the verb form, but throughout the Middle Irish period it begins to be expressed by the independent object pronoun. The move towards accusative case marking, lack of number agreement and expression as an independent pronoun in the third person are related to a change in the third person patient's function from subject to object.

Second, consider the first and second person autonomous patients, which are expressed by the infixed pronoun in Old Irish. Following the Old Irish period the infixed pronoun is replaced by the independent object pronoun. This development affects both active objects and first and second person autonomous patients.

Breatnach (1994: 289) lists four indications of the development of the Old Irish autonomous verb towards an impersonal form throughout the Middle Irish period:

(45) Middle Irish developments of the autonomous verb (Breatnach 1994: 289)

    a. The accusative singular is used to mark the patient of the autonomous verb.

    b. Plural nouns are used as patients of the singular autonomous verb.

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c. The infixed pronoun is used in the third person with the autonomous form.

d. The singular autonomous form is used together with the independent pronoun as object.

These developments will be treated in more detail in the sections to follow.

Going beyond the visible changes in the argument realisation of the autonomous verb, we note that there would have been a potential model for the impersonal passive in Old Irish autonomous verbs that lack a noun phrase patient argument to promote. Recall that the autonomous verb may occur with intransitive verbs that take prepositional and clausal complements. Two such examples are repeated in (46). The autonomous form *gessa* – 'beg' – in (a) takes a prepositional phrase and a non-finite subordinate clause, while *dogéntar* – 'do' – in (b) takes a prepositional phrase only. Both of these examples model the possibility for the autonomous verb to occur without a syntactic subject.

(46) Autonomous form of intransitive verbs

a.

gessa   *do Fergus mac Róich*   *techt*   *ara*   *c[h]end-som*
beg.PRET.AUT   to   F mac R   go.VN   against.his   head-EMPH
'it was begged to Fergus Mac Róich to go against him' (TBC-1 76:2501)

b.

cid   **dogéntar**   *friu*
what   do.FUT.AUT   against.3PL
'what should be done with them?' (TBC-1 5:160)

4.2.1.1 *Case and number agreement*

In this section I discuss morphological case marking on noun phrase patients following the Old Irish period. It will be shown that though the distinction between the nominative and the accusative is in the process of breaking down in the Middle Irish period, we find examples of autonomous patients with accusative case marking. Subsequently I discuss the disappearance of the plural autonomous form. It will be concluded that both of these developments are involved in the autonomous noun phrase patient no longer being analysed as the subject of the autonomous clause.

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During the Middle Irish period, the distinction between the nominative and the accusative cases is in the process of collapsing (McManus 1994: 364; see Breatnach 1994: 238-251 for specific details of nominal case marking in Middle Irish and the use of eclipsis following the accusative case). However, as Breatnach (1994: 289) points out, we find examples of autonomous noun-phrase patients with accusative case marking. The use of accusative case with patient arguments of the autonomous verb, in those cases where a distinct accusative form remains, is as we have seen a significant change from the earlier period, when the nominative case was used (cf. section 4.1.2.2.1). One of Breatnach's examples of an autonomous patient with accusative marking is shown in (47).

(47)   Autonomous verb with accusative marking on the patient argument[55]

*do-ārfas   gnīm **n-**ingnad   dōib*
show.PRET.AUT   deed   ACC-wonderful   to.3PL
'a wonderful deed was shown to them'

In this example, the eclipsing *n-* on the adjective *ingnad* – 'wonderful' – indicate that the noun *gnim* – 'deed' – is in the accusative. In other words, it appears from data like in (47) that the function of the noun phrase patient of the autonomous verb changed from subject to object before all traces of a distinction between nominative and accusative case marking had disappeared.[56]

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[55] Quoted in Breatnach (1994: 240) from *Saltair na Rann* 4089.

[56] Similar conclusions, i.e. that the function change took place before the autonomous verb ceases to indicate a third person patient, may possibly be drawn from the following examples, where third person pronominal patients of the autonomous verb are expressed by infixed pronouns rather than left to be indicated by the verb form as was the situation in Old Irish.

(i)

*a   hEspáin   **do-s-fucad***
from   Spain   PREV-INFIX-bring.PERF.AUT
'it was brought from Spain' (TBC-1 18:573)

(ii)

ra   ṅ gontar-som
PREV.INFIX   wound.AUT-EMPH
'he too is wounded' (TBC-LL 101:3631, quoted in Breatnach 1994: 289)

The replacement of the infixed pronoun / verbal inflection with independent pronouns is further discussed in section 4.2.1.2.

Recall from section 4.1.2.2 that both nominative case marking on the autonomous patient and agreement in number between the patient and the autonomous verb were taken as arguments in favour of the subject status of a noun phrase autonomous patient. Nominative case marking disappears as an indication of subject status when the distinction between the nominative and the accusative collapses. Similarly, the disappearance of the plural autonomous form serves to remove another indication of the subject status of a noun phrase patient.

The distinction between the singular and the plural autonomous verb was maintained in the beginning of the Middle Irish period (Breatnach 1994: 289). Elisa Roma's (2000) corpus study of the spread of subject pronouns in Irish provides us with data for when the disappearance of the plural autonomous form took place. Her data show that the distinction between singular and plural autonomous forms disappeared at the start of the Modern Irish period (2000: 113), which is usually taken to be c. 1200-1250. However, as Roma points out and her tables of verb occurrences in the various texts show, the plural form lingered on in the past tense for some time; the latest text in which Roma (2000: 113) distinguishes an autonomous plural form is the fourteenth century *Gaelic Marco Polo*.

One indication of the loss of the plural autonomous form is the occurrence of plural noun patients with the singular autonomous form, some examples of which are provided in (48):

(48)   Plural noun patient with singular autonomous form

a.

con-gairther   *fir*   *Hērenn*   *do*   *Chobthach*
summon.PRES.AUT.SG   men   Ireland.GEN   to   C

do   *thomailt*   *Fesse Temrach*
to   partake.VN   Feast of Tara

'the men of Ireland are summoned to Cobthach to partake in the Feast of Tara' (ODR 338-9)

b.

ara   *scorthea*   *a*   *eich*
that   unyoke.PRET.AUT.SG   her   horses
'that her horses were unyoked' (TBC-LL 9:312-313, quoted in Breatnach 1994: 289)

4.2.1.2   *Towards the independent pronoun*

We know from Modern Irish that the independent pronoun came to realise the pronominal patient of the autonomous verb independent of the person and number features of the patient. When considering how this happened, there are two developments to take into account: on the one hand, the independent pronoun replaced the infixed pronouns. On the other hand, the independent pronoun also replaced the autonomous morphology in the function of indicating a third person pronominal patient. It will be shown in the following that these two developments are at least partially distinct. Liam Breatnach (1994: 271) suggests that the use of the independent pronoun with the autonomous verb began in the literary language of the eleventh century. In other words we may hypothesise that this development is older, given the obvious assumption that the language used in the written texts takes time to absorb the ongoing changes in the spoken language.

As far as I know, there are two main hypotheses concerning how the independent subject and object pronouns arose in Irish. David Greene (1958) and Kim McCone (1987) argue that clauses with the copula, as well as the autonomous verb, served as models for independent pronouns to appear with regular active verbs. Elisa Roma (2000) criticises this hypothesis on the basis of her corpus study, and suggests instead a functional explanation based on considerations of reference tracking.[57] In the following I discuss both of these approaches in brief.

It must be noted that a formal distinction between independent subject pronouns and independent object pronouns – in terms of morphological form and placement in the clause – likely did not appear immediately, as shown by Greene (1958: 110-111; see also Breatnach 1994: 271). For that reason I will speak of 'independent pronouns' without reference to their status as subjects or objects in the following; similarly, the pronouns in question will be glossed in this section with person and number without reference to a specific grammatical function.

Section 4.2.1.2.1 provides an overview of the independent pronouns present in Old Irish and which contexts they appeared in. In section 4.2.1.2.2 I go on to discuss the infixed pronoun, its uses in contexts relevant to the development at hand, and its disappearance. Section 4.2.1.2.3 discusses the hypotheses of Greene (1958), McCone (1987) and Roma (2000).

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[57] A third partial analysis, which relates in part to the other two, is found in Greene (1973).

4.2.1.2.1 The Old Irish independent pronoun and its use in clefting

In this section I discuss independent pronouns in Old Irish, with a view towards establishing their properties when the changes under discussion took place. The changes in question concern what happened when the independent pronoun began to express the autonomous patient, thereby replacing the infixed pronoun and verbal inflection in this function. It is shown that the independent pronouns occurred at the head of cleft sentences, a context in which both active and autonomous patients were expressed in the same way.

There are no independent subject or object pronouns in Old Irish (McCone 1987: 18-19; Thurneysen 1998: 253-255); verbal inflection and various types of affixes, including the infixed pronouns, are used to express pronominal arguments. However, there does exist a set of stressed independent pronouns that are used in certain contexts. The stressed pronouns are mostly limited to the use as what Thurneysen terms 'predicative nominatives after the copula' (1998: 254). Some examples include *is mé* – 'it is I', *ní mé* – 'it is not I', *is tú* – 'it is you (sg.)', etc.

One of the contexts in which the Old Irish independent pronouns are used with the copula is in cleft sentences. It is interesting for our purposes that the cleft construction is one context where a pronominal patient argument is expressed similarly in the active and the autonomous: when the patient argument appears in front of the verb through clefting, it is expressed by the same separate pronoun independent of whether the verb is active or autonomous.

The use of independent pronouns in the cleft construction is shown in (49). Example (a) is active, and has the pronoun *é* as the object in front of the verb *furamar*. Similarly, (b) and (c) show the pronouns *hé* and *mé* as fronted patient arguments of the respective verbs.

   (49)   Old Irish pronouns and clefting

         a. active

cia   no bemis-ni   ica   thogu,   iss   é   ḟuaramar   and
if   PREV be.PAST.SUBJ.1PL-EMPH at.his choosing COP 3SG find.PRET.1PL here
'if we were to choose him [i.e. someone/anyone?], it is the one [i.e. him] that we have found here' (ODR 392-3)

            b. autonomous

gid   hé   gontair   and dano
if   3SG   kill.PRES.AUT.3SG   there
'if he is killed there' (TBC-1 52:1697)

c. autonomous

bid   mé   ceta-ortábthar
COP.FUT   1SG   first-slay.FUT.AUT
'for I shall be the first slain'
(quoted in DIL [*oirgid*])

Thurneysen (1998: 254) furthermore points out that the copula in a cleft construction agrees with a clefted pronoun in number in the third person; in other words, a third person plural pronoun always takes the plural form of the copula. With a first and second person plural pronoun however, we find both singular and plural copula forms. Some examples of this fact are shown in (50):

> **(50)**   Number agreement between copula and clefted pronoun

>   a. first person plural pronoun, singular copula

***is   snisni   ata*   bobes**
COP.3SG   1PL   is   *boues*
'it is we who are *boues*'
(Wb10d7, quoted in Thurneysen 1998: 254, his translations with my glosses)

>   b. second person plural pronoun, plural copula

it   sib   ata   chomarpi
COP.3PL   2PL   is   heirs
'it is ye that are heirs'
(Wb19c20, quoted in Thurneysen 1998: 254, his translations with my glosses)

The main clause verb in a cleft sentence will be in the third person independent of the person features of the clefted pronoun. This point is shown in e.g. (b) above, where the substantive verb form *ata* is in the third person while the clefted word is a second person plural pronoun *sib*.

Greene (1958: 108) furthermore points out the following concerning Old Irish pronouns:

> This brings about the curious situation that the pronouns in Old Irish function in fact like nouns, with no distinction except that of number; in any sentence we may substitute a noun like *fer* ['man'], *ben* ['woman'] for *mé* ['I'/'me'], *tú* ['you', sg.] without affecting the construction. [My translations.]

In other words we see that the Old Irish independent pronouns share with the infixed pronoun patients of the autonomous verb a lack of agreement in terms of person features. Consequently we may note that there existed a model for having independent, non-agreeing pronouns realise patient arguments also outside of the autonomous inflection.

4.2.1.2.2   The infixed pronoun and its disappearance

In this section I look at properties of the infixed pronoun and of the process through which these pronouns disappeared. I show that some of the infixed pronouns became ambiguous as their pronunciation became similar. I will also discuss the proleptic use of the infixed pronoun, and show how this construction might be taken to parallel the examples we have seen from the transitional period (fn. 56) of the infixed and independent pronouns occurring together in the same autonomous clause to express the patient argument.

John Strachan (1904: 153) argues that the infixed pronoun was moribund already in *Lebor na hUidre* (c. 1100). Similarly, Myles Dillon (1927: 330) states that his collection of forms from *The Book of Leinster* (c. 1150) shows 'a proportion of more than 2:1 in favour of the infixed pronoun', i.e. twice as many infixed as independent pronouns. These numbers indicate that the collapse of the infixed pronoun must have started well before 1100, given the tendency for the development of the written language to lag behind the development of the spoken language.

There are a substantial number of phonological and other changes affecting the infixed pronoun during the Middle Irish period; see McCone (1987: 183-186) for a detailed description of these changes. One example, which is perhaps particularly significant for our purposes, is the merging of proclitic vowels as schwa /ə/. This merging affected infixed pronouns that attached to proclitic preverbs and particles. To see how the infixed pronouns were affected, we may take as a starting point the third singular form *ro-gab* – 'has seized' (examples adapted from McCone 1987: 183). With a masculine third person singular infixed pronoun we get the form *r-a:ngab* – 'has seized him', and with a first person singular infixed pronoun we get *ro-m:gab* – 'has seized me'. The stress is on the syllable following the colon sign. The proclitic vowels are distinct in Old Irish, as /a/ and /o/ respectively (cf. Stifter 2006: 124-125). However, when the proclitic vowels merge into schwa, the only element indicating a third person singular masculine infixed pronoun is the accompanying eclipsis, signified by the *n-* in front of the stem *gab* in the form *r-a:ngab* (McCone 1987: 191).

It is easy to imagine that when the mutation was the only property signifying the presence of a third person singular masculine infixed pronoun, some 'formal reinforcement' of the pronoun, in McCone's words, was necessary. In particular, such reinforcement would be necessary in the cases where the initial consonant of the stem is not affected by eclipsis, as for instance in *ra:marb (…) hé* – 'killed him' (McCone 1987: 191). Here, the initial consonant *m-* cannot undergo eclipsis, and we note that the infixed pronoun in the compound *ra:* occurs together with the independent pronoun *hé*. As McCone points out, this usage spread quickly to areas where there was no ambiguity.

What we seem to get, then, is a situation where the infixed and the independent pronoun occur together; further examples of this situation will be provided below. This situation can be seen in light of an Old Irish construction that Thurneysen (1998: 266) terms the 'proleptic' use of the infixed pronoun (see also Strachan 1904: 168), i.e. when the infixed pronoun anticipates a following object noun or clause with which the pronoun co-refers. One example of this is given in (51).

(51)   Proleptic use of the infixed pronoun, active verb (Ml123c3, quoted in Thurneysen 1998: 266, his translation)

duda-ánaic   *inna ríga*
PREV.3PL-come.PRET.REL   DEF   kings
 'which had come to them, to the kings'

The example in (51) shows the preterite form of *do-icc*. This verb means 'to come', and the endpoint of the movement expressed by the verb may be realised as an accusative noun / infixed pronoun. In (51) this endpoint is expressed both by the infixed pronoun (third person plural) and by the noun phrase object *inna ríga* – 'the kings', which is anticipated by the infixed pronoun.

As Strachan (1904: 168-170) points out, the proleptic use of the infixed pronoun is particularly noteworthy when the infixed pronoun anticipates an independent pronoun. An example of the infixed and independent pronoun together is shown in (52):

(52)   Infixed and independent pronouns together

        a.

is   e   dos-fuc   sindi
COP   3SG.M   PREV.INFIX-bring.PERF   1PL
'it is he that brought us'

(quoted in Strachan 1904: 169, from IÆ 1578 with my glosses and Calder's translation)

b.

ros-gab   *míad*   *7*   *imtholtu*   ***íad***
PERF.INFIX-seize.PRET   desire   and   greed   3PL
'desire and greed seized them' (TBDD 7: sect. 20, 204, quoted in McCone 1987: 192)

In (a) the infixed pronoun seems to anticipate the independent pronoun *sindi*, while in (b) the infixed pronoun occurs together with and seems to anticipate the independent pronoun *íad*.

Now the question becomes whether the infixed pronoun represents a deliberate use of the proleptic construction, a synchronic reflex of the transitional stage, or whether it lingers on 'as a literary ornament' (Strachan 1904: 169). McCone (1987: 192) suggests that the actual examples represent an artificial modification, occurring while copying an older text, of the by then obsolete infixed pronoun. I leave this question aside for future research; what seems clear – and the point I intended to show in this section – is that the infixed pronoun paradigms broke down following the Old Irish period, and that they were replaced by independent pronouns in a construction that is similar to the already established proleptic use of the infixed pronoun.

4.2.1.2.3 Development of the independent pronoun

In this section I discuss the development leading up to examples like in (53), where the patient argument of the autonomous verb is indicated by the verb form in the older version (a), but expressed by an independent pronoun in (b). It will be concluded that the most likely hypothesis so far to explain this development is provided by Elisa Roma (2000), who ties the appearance of the independent pronoun to systems of reference tracking.

    (53)   Use of the independent pronoun with the autonomous verb

           a. no independent pronoun, patient argument indicated by the plural autonomous verb

ructha   *chuci-sium*   *isin*   *ṁ-bruidin*
bring.PRET.AUT.3PL   to.3SG.M-EMPH   in.DEF   hall
'they were brought to him in the hall' (SMMD-LL 9: sect. 1)

        b. independent pronoun

ructha	*chuigi-sium*	*isin*	*m-bruidin*	*íat*
bring.PRET.AUT	to.3SG.M-EMPH	in.DEF	hall	them

(SMMD-R 51: sect. 1)

    Greene (1958) and McCone (1987: 192) argue that the autonomous inflection was one of the models for the development of the independent subject pronoun, since the autonomous inflection 'used infixed pronouns as subjects outside the third person in Old Irish' (McCone 1987: 192). Along these lines, McCone (1987: 192) goes on to argue that there was only a small step from the autonomous inflection to 'quasi-passive intransitive types' to intransitive active constructions. His examples are provided in (54):

  (54)   Development of the independent pronoun following McCone (1987: 192, my glosses with his translations)[58]

        a. autonomous

fritháilter	*misi*
attend.IMPER.AUT	1SG

'let me be looked after'

        b. 'quasi-passive'

da:fuit	*leis-sium*	*hé*
fall.PRES	with.3SG.M-EMPH	3SG

'he falls at his hand'

        c. intransitive

arnach:tíssad	*friss*	*hé*
that.NEG:come.PRES.SUBJ	against.3SG.M	3SG

'that he should not come against him'

In example (a) the first person singular pronoun *misi* realises the patient role of the imperative autonomous verb form meaning 'attend'. In (b) we have an active unaccusative verb meaning 'fall', where the independent pronoun *hé* is used to realise the patient-like, only argument of the verb. In example (c) the independent pronoun is used for the one argument of an active verb 'come'.

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[58] These examples are quoted from McCone (1987: 192) from LU 3101, LL 31217 and LL 30875 respectively.

Elisa Roma (2000) criticises the hypothesis advocated by Greene and McCone on the basis of her data. In particular, she focuses on a text called *Imtheachta Æniasa*, 'The Irish Æenid' (Calder 1907). Roma dates this text to the thirteenth century at the latest (2000: 120). The text is found in the Book of Ballymote, which was written at the beginning of the fifteenth century (Roma 2000: 123).

In this text Roma (2000: 122-123) finds various third person autonomous forms with independent pronoun patients, but with first and second person patients, only infixed pronouns are used. She points out that infixed pronouns are the predominant expression of active pronominal objects in this text. Some examples from *Imtheachta Æniasa* are provided in (55):

(55)   Examples from *Imtheactha Æniasa*; Calder's translations with my glosses

      a.   third person patient, independent pronoun

            i.

focerd	*de*	*a*	*cheasta*	*7*	***cudrumaigther***
throw.PAST	from.3SG.M	his	cestus.PL	and	make-equally-heavy.PAST.SUBJ.AUT

la hAchaistes 7 la hÆnias	***iat***	*fri*	*ceasta*	*Daired*
by A and Æ	them	with	cestus.PL	D

'he cast his cestus from him and they were by Acestes and by Æneas made equal with the cestus of Dares (IÆ 1094-1095)

            ii.

rogairmedh	***he***	*dochum*	*a*	*adnacail*
summon.PAST.AUT	him	to	his	tomb

'he was called to his tomb' (IÆ 201)

      b.   first and second person patient, infixed pronoun

            i.

dom-radad-sa	*o*	*Priaim*[59]
PREV.INFIX-send.PERF-EMPH	from	P

'I was sent by Priam' (IÆ 77)

---

[59] Notice the prepositional phrase here, which appears to be ambiguous between agent ('by Priam') and source ('from Priam'), comparable to example (18) in section 4.1.2.2.3.

ii.

not-berthar   *ar   eigin   for tir   ar culu*
PREV.INFIX-bring.FUT.AUT by   force   to   land   back
'you will be brought by force back to land' (IÆ 884)

Recall that by Greene and McCone's hypothesis the use of independent pronouns with the autonomous form was related to the independent pronouns replacing the infixes. Roma (2000: 123) points out that it is surprising on this view to find third person independent pronoun patients with the autonomous form when the first and second person patients are still expressed by infixed pronouns.

As an alternative analysis, Roma (2000: 142-146) suggests that independent third person pronouns arose as a morphosyntactic device of reference tracking on the basis of the phonological similarity between the third person *notae augentes* and the third person pronouns.[60] Specifically, she shows that the *notae augentes* and the independent pronouns are used in more or less the same 'syntactic-pragmatic contexts', two of which are listed in (56) and will be further explained below:

(56)   Uses of *notae augentes* and independent pronouns (Roma 2000: 142-143)[61]

        a. *subject shift*, i.e. to mark that that the subject refers to a different participant than the subject in the previous clause

        b. *subject/object distinction*, i.e. to mark which constituent is the object and which one is the subject in the clause

Some of Roma's examples of the *notae augentes* and the independent pronouns used to distinguish between subject and object are provided in (57):

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[60] See also Greene (1979) on the role of the *notae augentes* in the development of independent pronouns used with the copula and the hypothesised role of these copula clauses for the independent pronouns with active verbs.

[61] Roma (2000: 142-143) adds a third usage, namely new topic resumption, which includes answer extension as a sub-group.

(57) *Notae augentes* and independent pronouns used to distinguish between subject and object (adapted from Roma 2000: 142-143)

a. *notae augentes* (my glosses with Calder's translation)

7	***berid-si***	*Ænias*	*le*	*sechnon*	*na*	*cathrach*
and	bring.PRES.3SG-EMPH	Æ	with.3SG.F	throughout	DEF	city

'and she brought Æneas with her throughout the city' (IÆ709)

b. independent pronoun (my glosses and translation)[62]

&	***do***	*c[h]uir*	*sé*	*Derg Damsa*	*draoi*	*go*	*Mag Siúil*
and	PAST	send.PAST	he	DD	magician	to	M S

'and he sent Derg Damsa the magician to Mag Siúil'

Now, in both of these examples we find a transitive verb, *berid* – 'brings' and *do chuir* – 'put, sent' respectively. The objects of these verbs are *Ænias* and *Derg Damsa*. Given that there is no morphological distinction between the nominative and the accusative, there is in principle no way to tell from these arguments themselves if they are the subject or the object of the clause, because of the VSO word order. However, the *nota augens –si* and the independent pronoun *sé* serves to indicate that the names are the objects: the *nota augens* requires that there is a silent argument indicated by the verb to which it can attach, while the independent pronoun indicates the subject by itself.

Roma (2000: 146) transfers the above hypothesis to the autonomous inflection. She shows that all the instances of autonomous forms with third person independent pronoun patients in *Imtheachta Æniasa* are used in connection with the abovementioned systems for what she terms reference tracking, e.g. 'subject shift' among others. One example of subject shift involving the autonomous form is shown in (58).

(58) Subject shift with independent pronoun patient in the autonomous

rofhuadaig	*a*	*hingen*	*le*	*a*	*ndiamraib*	*7*	*a*	*coilltib*
abducted.PAST.3SG	her	daughter	with.3SG.F	to	secret-places	and	to	forests

ar	*na*	***tuctai***	*do*	*Ænias*	***hi***
for	NEG	give.COND.AUT	to	Æ	her

'she abducted her daughter with her to unfrequented places and woods that she might not be given to Æneas' (IÆ1663-1664; my glosses with Calder's translation)

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[62] Roma quotes this example from *Cath Maighe Léna*, edited by Kenneth Jackson (1938).

In this example the subject of the inflected form *rofhuadaig* – 'she abducted' has a different referent than the patient argument of the autonomous form *tuctai*. On Roma's hypothesis, the independent pronoun was used to mark this lack of co-reference.

If the above analysis by Roma is correct, it follows, as Roma points out, that the development of third person pronouns is at least partly independent of the replacement of the infixed pronouns by independent ones: third person independent pronouns would have developed as a means of ensuring easier reference tracking, an area in which the infixed pronouns would not have been affected in the same way since they already represented an overt means of argument expression.

4.2.2 Subsequent development and theoretic musings

In this section I have discussed two interconnected issues. We have seen how the infixed pronoun was replaced by the independent pronoun for realising first and second person patients of the autonomous verb. This replacement was related to general morphological developments of the language, most importantly the loss of the infixed pronoun paradigms and the appearance of independent pronouns in active verbs. Additionally I have discussed the loss of the plural third person autonomous form, the appearance of accusative case on noun phrase patients and the appearance of independent pronouns to take the job of the verbal morphology to express third person patients. In total, these changes were taken to represent a reanalysis from canonical to impersonal passive.

In sum, I argue that while many morphological changes affected the expression of autonomous patients, the only syntactic development to affect the autonomous verb in this period is a change from the canonical to the impersonal passive with third person patients. Autonomous verbs with first and second person patients remain the same. The mapping structures of the canonical and the impersonal passive based on two-place verbs are listed in (59). Specifically, the canonical passive mapping structure ceased to be associated with the autonomous verb and was replaced by the impersonal passive structure.

(59) The canonical and the impersonal passive

verb[can. pass.]	<	arg1	arg2	>
		[-o]	[-r]	
		Ø	[-o]	
			SUBJ	

verb[imp. pass.]	<	arg1	arg2	>
		[-o]	[-r]	
		Ø	[+o]	
			OBJ	

Having looked at the data in some detail in the previous sections, it is now time to discuss the bigger picture, and ask what the data may tell us about the development of the autonomous verb from the perspective of generative diachronic theory. Specifically, there are two theoretical questions to ask at this point, namely what caused the reanalysis from canonical to impersonal passive, and which alternative analyses we may imagine.

As discussed in section 2.3, the question of what caused a particular reanalysis is something of a chicken-and-egg problem. Even so, it is still fruitful to consider the details of how a hypothetical Irish child ended up reanalysing the canonical passive autonomous verb as an impersonal passive. Specifically, we must attempt to define which properties a child would take as overt signs of the canonical passive status of a particular verb form. Recall from section 2.3 that Harris and Campbell (1995: 81-82) took reanalysis to precede actualisation, where the actualisation period was defined as the period when the changes associated with the preceding reanalysis became visible in the language. In other words, it should additionally be considered which changes may be taken to represent the actualisation of the reanalysis from canonical to impersonal passive, and if it is indeed likely that these changes followed the reanalysis and not the other way around.

The obvious candidates for overt signs of the subject status of the noun phrase patient are nominative case marking and agreement in number with the autonomous verb. While it is not possible to determine the exact sequence of events without a detailed quantitative study of these properties in a number of Middle Irish texts, we may imagine several options: one possibility is that the ongoing collapse of the nominative/accusative distinction may have worked together with the disappearance of the plural autonomous form to create few enough overt signs of the subject status of the noun phrase patient that the child began to analyse this patient as the object on the basis of the first and second person

pronouns. On the other hand, and perhaps more likely, the disappearance of the plural autonomous form and the presence of accusative case marking on noun phrase patients may have been caused by a change in the status of the noun phrase patient from subject to object. What is clear from all this is that the changes in question were gradual, and that they must have spread from speaker to speaker through generations and from predicate to predicate throughout the speakers' Lexicons.

At this point I would like to pick up from section 2.2.4 the question of the impersonal passive, and ask to what extent this category is justified, or whether it is better to argue like I did in Graver (2008) that the autonomous verb changed from canonical passive to impersonal active when the patient changes from subject to object. In the following I discuss some reasons why I prefer an analysis that includes the impersonal passive category, and I mention some possible explanations for the subsequent development when the impersonal passive was reanalysed as containing an active impersonal subject. In sum it will be clear that it is difficult to find good explanations for the changes that have taken place and the theoretical questions raised by these changes.

The impersonal passive and active subject impersonal mapping structures are repeated in (60) for purposes of comparison.

(60)   The impersonal passive and active subject impersonal mapping structures

verb[imp. pass.]   <   arg1   arg2   >
                             [-o]   [-r]

                             Ø   [+o]
                                      OBJ

verb [ASI]   <   arg1   arg2   >
                       [-o]   [-r]

                       [-r]   [+o]
                       SUBJ$_{imp}$ OBJ

The first reason for maintaining the impersonal passive takes us back to generative diachronic theory: it is difficult to imagine how the reanalysis from canonical passive to active subject impersonal could take place if not in two distinct steps. We have seen that various morphological changes in the language conspired to change the status of the third person patient from subject to object. Additionally, we have seen that the change from canonical to impersonal passive for autonomous verbs with third person patients may have been caused by unrelated morphological changes in the language. At the hypothetical point

where the patient of an autonomous verb was reanalysed from subject to object for the first time by a child acquiring her first language, there would have been no overt signs for the child to pick up on that this verb should have an active impersonal subject beyond the existence of unaccusative autonomous verbs. In other words, the question becomes whether the presence of the active subject impersonal construction in a closed group of verbs would be sufficient data for an additional reanalysis to take place and the impersonal subject to appear immediately when the canonical passive disappeared. If the ASI construction with unaccusative verbs is *not* sufficient, we need to consider other reasons why the change of the patient from subject to object would have immediately triggered the appearance of the impersonal active subject; one possible alternative analysis will be considered below.

Second, the agent phrase must be taken into account.[63] The agent phrase is usually assumed to disappear during the Modern Irish period, cf. section 3.4 (see Ó Sé 2006: 85 and references therein); in other words, it persisted far longer than it took the autonomous third person patient to become the object of the autonomous verb. Some examples of Modern Irish agent phrases from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are provided in (61):

(61)   Examples of the agent phrase from the Modern Irish period
    a. Céitinn, seventeenth century

*óir do   bhí   ocras   oram, 7   níor **biathadh**   **libh**   mé;*
for PAST be.PAST hunger on.1SG and NEG feed.PAST.AUT with.2PL me

do   bhí   íota   oram, 7   ní   thugabhair   deoch dhamh
PAST be.PAST thirst on.1SG and NEG give. PAST.2PL drink to.1SG

'for I was hungry, and I wasn't given food by you; I was thirsty, and you didn't give me anything to drink' (*Three Shafts*, 224: 7150-7152)

    b. Céitinn, seventeenth century

an tan marbhthar   leis   é
when   kill.PRES.AUT with.3SG.M   him
'when he is killed by him' (FF Vol. 1 10: 30)

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[63] According to Müller (1999), it does not appear to be possible to have indefinite complements in agent phrases in early Irish. However, as shown by Ó Sé (2007), indefinite agent phrase complements are possible in the later language. I believe this development might be related to the appearance of the impersonal active subject, but I have no explanation for this fact at the present time.

c. from a bilingual poem by eighteenth-century poet Aindrias Mac Craith

I swear I'll not be ruined **le réic** *gan* *rath* *gan* *chlú*
                             by   rake without prosperity without reputation
'I swear I'll not be ruined by a rake without prosperity and reputation'
(quoted by Ó Sé 2006: 100, my glosses with his translation)

d. from a *caoineadh* – 'keen' – composed in the last half of the eighteenth
century

mar *ar* *leagadh* *ar* *lár* *tu* /
where COMPL lay.PAST.AUT   on   ground   you

i *ndoras* *na* *ceártan* / **le dailtíní sráide**
in   door   DEF   forge   by   ruffians   street.GEN

'where you were laid low, in the doorway of the forge, by blackguards of the street'
(Ní Dhonnchadha 2002: 200-201; translations by Ó Sé 2006: 101 with my glosses)

Now, if we were to say that the active impersonal subject appeared as soon as the patient became the object of the autonomous clause, we would be forced to conclude along the same lines as e.g. Blevins (2003: 492-495) concludes for the *no/to* forms in Ukrainian, namely that they are 'morphosyntactic impersonals that convey a passive meaning' (Blevins 2003: 495; recall also the differing analyses of Maling and Sigurjónsdóttir 2002; and Eythórsson 2008 on the syntax of the new Icelandic construction).

In an analysis where the Irish autonomous verb possessed an active syntax but a passive meaning, we would say that the active impersonal subject possesses interpretative properties compatible with the agent phrase. These properties would later change when the agent phrase disappeared from the language. Such an analysis seems less than ideal, for reasons which will be made clear below. As an alternative, I suggest an analysis which includes the impersonal passive, and where the impersonal passive and impersonal active mapping structures co-existed for a long period of time, until finally the impersonal passive disappeared completely when we reach the twentieth century. We have already seen, among other examples, that the impersonal active co-existed with the canonical passive in Old Irish, and it will be made clear in the next chapter that there are idiomatic subjectless structures co-existing with the active impersonal construction in today's Modern Irish. There is in other words nothing unexpected about two mapping structures co-existing for a length of time.

I prefer the latter analysis not least because it is both simpler and more explicit than positing an active subject impersonal construction with passive interpretation. For one thing, it would be necessary to specify the 'passive' interpretative properties of the impersonal subject and how it is compatible with the agent phrase. This step is not necessary to take when the impersonal passive is included and said to co-exist with the active subject impersonal construction. I propose that an analysis where the impersonal passive and the ASI construction co-exist is more explicit because it maintains a firmer distinction between the clause types and their theoretical properties while at the same time taking into account their similarities by allowing them to co-exist.

Obviously, my choice of analysis is also a question of previous theoretic choices: an active subject with a passive interpretation requires that the agent phrase is seen as an adjunct in order to avoid having the same thematic role shared by both the impersonal subject and the agent phrase. However, as described in section 2.2.4, I prefer to view the agent phrase as an oblique. Additionally, positing an impersonal subject compatible with the agent phrase would weaken the parallel with overt impersonal pronouns such as German *man* and French *on*, since to my knowledge these types of overt pronouns are not compatible with the agent phrase.

In sum, it is clear that while the two alternative analyses are based on diverging theoretic inventories and have different theoretic consequences, they both attempt to make sense of the same material, namely the contradictory properties of the Irish autonomous verb during its changes.

It is possible to find traces of the spread of the active impersonal subject before the agent phrase declines. We find in DIL, under the headword *caithid*, that this verb is the ancestor of the Modern Irish modal verb *caith* – 'must' – which occurs in the autonomous form in Modern Irish, cf. section 3.3.2. DIL states that this verb begins to be used in both the autonomous and the active in the future and the conditional tenses to mean 'is obliged' and 'must', and that the verb can occur with verbal noun complements in this meaning. In other words it appears that the modal use of this verb, in which an impersonal active subject controls the subject of the non-finite verbal noun complements, came into use quite early.

At this point it must be asked why the active impersonal subject appeared at all with transitive verbs. Several factors may be relevant. First, there is a general tendency for subjectless / impersonal passives to have an indefinite human agent interpretation (Blevins 2003: 480-481 and references therein). Blevins (2003: 481) furthermore states the following on this subject:

> One would surely not expect a passive process that defined only subjectless constructions to be stable. The output of such a process would be nearly indistinguishable from the output of impersonalization. Consequently, a passive system with no personal constructions would be highly susceptible to reinterpretation as an impersonal system.

I would suggest here that positing a diachronic mechanism on the basis of a typological tendency is not without problems. In particular, it is necessary to ask what would be the cause of a reanalysis from passive to active impersonal on the basis of this tendency.

On a view where the subjectless impersonal passive does not exist, we could for instance locate to Universal Grammar a restriction against this structure. On this view, a child which was faced with a passive predicate with an object patient would reanalyse this predicate as containing a silent impersonal active subject. I see two problems with this approach. First of all there is a question of timing: if we were to say that the impersonal subject came into being simultaneously with the change in the status of the patient from subject to object, we are faced with the same dilemma as previously, where we need to account for the agent phrase. On the other hand, if we admit that the impersonal passive existed for some time before being reanalysed, we must ask why the reanalysis did not happen immediately, given the hypothetical restriction against the subjectless impersonal passive.

I have no suggestions for why the impersonal active subject appeared beyond what has already been mentioned. Positing the autonomous forms of the substantive verb and verbs of inherently directed motion, which were analysed as containing the impersonal active subject, as patterns for the reanalysis runs into the same problem of timing; there is no reason why they should start to serve as patterns for a reanalysis in the Modern Irish period when they have co-existed with the passive autonomous forms since the Old Irish period.

I leave open for further research the exact explanation for why the reanalysis from impersonal passive to active subject impersonal took place. I believe the answer is likely to be related to the assumed markedness of the impersonal passive construction with objects but no subjects, cf. the discussion in section 2.2.4. Formulating the change in terms of the revised LMT, the markedness issues are clear: when the impersonal passive disappears, there is no longer a need for the object preservation process that increases the markedness of the construction by mapping the patient argument to object. Instead, the impersonal passive is replaced by the ASI construction, in which both the agent and the patient arguments map

to subject and object respectively as the least marked functions, following the regular Mapping Principle.

Having discussed how and why the autonomous verb changed in Irish, I would like to make a quick note on the development of the autonomous verb in the some of the other Celtic languages. In sum, both the Q-Celtic Scottish Gaelic and the P-Celtic Welsh appear to retain the impersonal passive as a possibility for the autonomous verb to a larger extent than Modern Irish. I have no suggestions for why the autonomous verb has changed more quickly in Irish than in Scottish Gaelic and Welsh; any analysis of this issue would run into the same problems of timing explained above.

Scottish-Gaelic – and Manx – are both descendants of Old Irish. They began to diverge from Irish at the start of the Early Modern Irish period, and in the fifteenth century Manx and Scottish Gaelic went their separate ways (Broderick 2002: 228). Gillies (2002: 187) notes that the autonomous verb is vital in today's spoken Scottish Gaelic, that it retains the agent phrase and that it can occur with intransitive verbs like 'be' and 'come'. In Manx before the last native speakers died in the 1970s, only one autonomous form was retained, the fossilised *ruggyr* 'was born'. This form is the past tense form of the verb *brey* (Irish *breith*) (Broderick 2002: 271; N. Williams 1994: 743; T. F. O'Rahilly 1972: 119).

In Welsh, which makes a strong distinction between the spoken and the literary language, the autonomous verb is mostly a feature of the literary language (Watkins 2002: 327, though see King 2003: 224, who claims that the autonomous verb is not as close to extinction in the spoken language as it has been claimed). We find the same contradictory properties of the autonomous verb in Welsh as in Scottish Gaelic: the Welsh autonomous verb can occur with an agent phrase and with unaccusative verbs (King 2003: 226; Watkins 2002: 327; S. J. Williams 1980: 78-79). Additionally the Welsh object mutation provides an argument against an impersonal subject analysis: in Welsh, as a general rule, the patient argument of a regular active verb undergoes mutation. Contrary to expectations, this does not happen to autonomous patients, a fact which has lead researchers to posit subject status for the autonomous patient (cf. e.g. the discussion in Fife 1985: 98-99). However, Maggie Tallerman presents the XP Trigger Hypothesis to account for Welsh object mutation; this hypothesis states that a constituent will receive soft mutation if it is 'immediately preceded by a some phrasal constituent, XP' (Tallerman 2005: 1752). Crucially, a post-verbal patient argument of the autonomous verb will not receive mutation under this hypothesis since it is immediately preceded by the verb, which is not phrasal constituent in its own right. On the other hand, a phonologically null autonomous subject *would* trigger this mutation, which

leads us to take Tallerman's XP Trigger Hypothesis as an argument against an ASI construction analysis of the Welsh autonomous verb.

4.3 Summary and conclusions

In this chapter I have discussed two main topics, the syntax of the autonomous verb at the Old Irish stage (section 4.1) and the development of the autonomous verb that took place between Old and Modern Irish (section 4.2).

In section 4.1 I analysed the Old Irish autonomous verb as canonical passive with third person patients, impersonal passive with first and second person patients and active subject impersonal with the substantive verb and verbs of inherently directed motion. It was stressed that this analysis represents an idealised picture of the autonomous verb as it is presented in the Old Irish standard of the descriptive grammar books, and that there is bound to have been greater variation. I went on to describe the pre-history of the Old Irish split between the canonical and impersonal passive. It was shown that there has likely never been a full canonical passive paradigm of the autonomous verb even before the Old Irish period.

Section 4.2 discussed the development of the autonomous verb from Old to Modern Irish. I began with an overview of the disappearance of the canonical passive category and its replacement by the impersonal passive. This development was hypothesised to be related to ongoing morphological changes in the language. I then went on to discuss the change from canonical to impersonal passive from a theoretical perspective, as well as the appearance of the impersonal active subject. It was shown that it is very difficult to make unambiguous statements concerning why these changes took place, and the question of what caused the development of the autonomous verb was left to future research.

Chapter 5: Modern Irish II – autonomous subjectless constructions

The main purpose of this chapter is to discuss a lexically idiosyncratic usage of the autonomous verb form in Modern Irish. This usage appears to exist independently of the diachronic change from passive to impersonal that was described in chapter 4, in the sense that there is no unexpressed agent role present in the lexically idiosyncratic forms, either as a silent impersonal subject or as a mapped-to-zero role in the passive.[64] While it is difficult

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[64] It would appear that there are lexically idiosyncratic autonomous forms in Old and Middle Irish that are comparable to the Modern Irish forms that will be discussed in this chapter. This fact implies that the autonomous verb displays variation in Old Irish even beyond what was discussed in chapter 4, where I showed that the Old Irish autonomous verb is used both in the canonical and the impersonal passive as well as the active subject impersonal construction. Some idiosyncratic examples from Old Irish are shown in the following. Example (i) is one of Thurneysen's (1998: 255-256) examples of dative infixed pronouns used with verbs other than the substantive verb. In particular, he says, most instances occur – crucially – '*when the passive force is no longer felt*' [my emphasis] (1998: 255). I take the idea that 'the passive force' ceases to be felt to mean that the verb has gone from passive with a mapped-to-zero agentive argument to having *all* its arguments mapped to the functional structure. In the passive translation 'it has been showed to thee', there would be a passivised agent argument performing the showing of the subject argument 'it', while in the idiosyncratic translation the subject argument has appeared by itself. Example (ii) shows an idiosyncratic use of the verb *maidid* – 'break, burst' – which is here used in the autonomous form to express what we may interpret as a change of state towards being victorious in a battle. The victor is expressed after a preposition, here *roim* – 'before', and there does not appear to be any implication of an agent argument present. Other examples of this idom, both in the autonomous and active form, are TBC-LL 130:4725 and TBC-1 51:1680. Example (iii) describes Cú Chulainn's transformation in the *Táin*. While there is much to be said from a literary perspective about his transformation, I take the basic interpretation of this predicate to be that it expresses a change of state for Cú Chulainn, and that there is no passivised agent argument implied as responsible for his transformation. This example is truly subjectless, since Cú Chulainn is referred to in the prepositional phrase *immi*.

(i)

do-t-árfas
PREV-2SG-show.PRET.AUT
'it has appeared to thee', lit. 'it has been shown to thee'

 (ii) (quoted in DIL [*maidid*])
xxx. cath   ro   mhebadh   roime
300 battles   PERF   break.PRET.AUT   before.3SG.M
'300 battles broke before him' / 'he was victorious in 300 battles'

to generalise over a lexically idiosyncratic group of predicates, it is possible to find one or more properties that they have in common. I suggest that the most important property they share is the lack of a subject.

I argued in section 2.2.4 that the Irish impersonal passive is subjectless at both c- and f-structure. The subjectless state of the impersonal passive is due to the interaction of two processes. First, the agent argument has been mapped to zero instead of to an f-structure function. This mapping-to-zero takes place in any passive clause without an agent phrase, impersonal or otherwise. In addition, the patient argument of the impersonal passive, if there is one, maps to the object function through a morphosyntactic operation that increases the markedness of the construction. In the lexically restricted examples discussed in this chapter there does not appear to be any implication of an unmapped agent argument like in the passive. All the argument positions of the lexically restricted examples are mapped to f-structure. These arguments do not, for the most part, map according to the Mapping Principle, but rather according to various mechanisms of increasing markedness. Section 5.5 provides an analysis within the revised LMT of these mechanisms for the two main groups of subjectless autonomous predicates.

In the following sections I discuss a selection of subjectless autonomous predicates in Modern Irish and attempt to show that it is possible to divide some of them into groups based on systematic similarities in their mapping properties. Section 5.1 introduces the problem and provides an overview of some of the previous theoretic literature on the topic of subjectless autonomous clauses. Section 5.2 discusses the role of the autonomous verb in the causative alternation, while section 5.3 describes a group of subjectless predicates expressing psychological states. Section 5.4 gathers together a number of other subjectless predicates that are otherwise difficult to classify.

5.1 Introduction

David Greene (1966: 52) writes of the autonomous form that '[t]he Celtic languages have inspired some curious fantasies but surely none more remarkable than that of the German

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(iii)

ríastartha   ***immi**-seom*   *i*   *sudiu.*
distort.PRET.AUT   around.3SG.M-EMPH   thereupon
'thereupon he became distorted' (TBC-1 14:428)

scholar who, noting that Irish uses an autonomous in the phrase corresponding to *I tripped up* – Anglo-Irish *a trip was taken out of me* – conjectured that, to the Irish mind, the shadowy agents were the fairies!'

The idiom Greene refers to is *baineadh tuisle as* – 'to trip' or 'to stumble'. The idiom consists of the verb *bain* – which has 'to dig out, extract, take out' as its basic meaning, the noun *tuisle* – 'a fall, a stumble' and the preposition *as* – 'out of' – whose complement will express the person who trips. From the previous chapters' analyses it might be assumed that this example too should be analysed as the active subject impersonal (ASI) construction, and that the autonomous form will contain an impersonal active subject that expresses the agent of the tripping, i.e. that someone intentionally set out to make someone trip. FGB provides a good example of this idiom that illustrates the *lack* of such an agent (Ó Dónaill 1992: 1286):

   (1) *baineadh tuisle as*

baineadh	*tuisle*	*asam*	*ar*	*chnap*	*cloch*
take.PAST.AUT	fall	out-of.1SG	on	heap	stone

'I stumbled over a heap of stones'

The example in (1) makes it clear that the cause of the stumbling is a heap of stones, expressed in the adverbial phrase *ar chnap cloch.* And while one can imagine finding ideas in folklore concerning how fairies may cause you to trip over a heap of stones, such an analysis is hardly something to take into grammar. In other words, it seems that the clause in (1) must be taken to be subjectless both in f- and c-structure.

Example (1) illustrates one syntactic and semantic type of subjectless structure; I will show in this chapter that there is a variety of other subjectless types with the autonomous verb in Irish.

5.1.1   Previous theoretic discussions

In this section I summarise and criticise McCloskey's (2007) analysis. It will be shown that he considers subjectless only a small group of lexically idiosyncratic autonomous verbs. In addition he includes an inanimate impersonal subject in his theoretic arsenal. I suggest that this inanimate impersonal subject should be dispensed with, and that the predicates for

which this subject would be relevant are better viewed as subjectless as well. I will argue that this provides a simpler and more general analysis of the Modern Irish autonomous verb.

Stenson (1989: 387-388) shows four examples of autonomous forms that she suggests might be best analysed as subjectless structures, though she does not pursue this point in her article. Her examples are provided in (2); these are among the most frequent subjectless predicates, and as such they provide a useful starting point for the following discussion.

(2) Examples of subjectless structures from Stenson (1989: 387, her translations with my glosses)

a.

cailleadh   *a*   *hathair*
lose.PAST.AUT   her   father
'her father died'

b.

báthadh   *naonúr*   *iascairí*
drown.PAST.AUT   nine   fishermen
'nine fishermen drowned'

c.

feictear   *dom*   *go*   *bhfuil*   *an*   *ceart*   *agat*
see.PRES.AUT   to.1SG   that   be.PRES   DEF   right   at.2SG
'it seems to me that you are right'

d.

casadh   *orm*   *é*
turn.PAST.AUT   on.1SG   him
'I met him'

The (a) example contains the autonomous form of the verb *caill*, which has as its basic meaning 'to lose'. However, it means 'to die' in its idiosyncratic autonomous use. In example (b) we find the verb *báigh*, which means 'to drown'. The autonomous form of this verb, which is seen in (b), *may* mean that unspecified individuals drowned someone, but is more commonly used as a one-place unaccusative verb with 'no entailment about the existence of an agent or cause of the drowning' (McCloskey 2007: 843).

The predicate in (c) is *feictear*, the present tense autonomous form of *feic*, which means 'to see'. This verb in the autonomous form may denote the psychological state of

belief in the proposition expressed in the subordinate clause for the experiencer, which is expressed in a prepositional phrase with the preposition *do*. The last example (d) contains the autonomous form of the verb *cas*, which has as its basic meaning 'to twist' and 'to turn'. However, it will frequently mean 'to meet' when found in the autonomous form, with one of its arguments expressed as the object (here *é* – 'him') and the other in a prepositional phrase (here with the preposition *ar* – 'on' – in the first person singular form *orm*).

I have extracted c. 350 autonomous clauses from the *Cré na Cille*. Out of these 350, c. 85 may to a greater or lesser extent be considered lexically idiosyncratic subjectless. In the table in (3) I present the most frequent and unambiguous predicates in this group.

(3) Lexically idiosyncratic subjectless clauses in *Cré na Cille*

Verb	Basic meaning	Lexically restricted autonomous meaning (if different)	Occurrences in the CnC
cas	'twist, turn'	'meet'	13
caill	'lose'	'die'	11
feic (do)	'see'	'seem to' (psychological state)	8
buail (tinn)	'strike, hit'	'become ill'	8
leigheas	'heal'		7
tabhair	'give'	'be called'	4
gortaigh	'hurt'		3
croith/craith	'shake'		2
bris	'break'		1
others			28
Total			85

Significantly, the three most frequent predicates in this table represent three out of Stenson's (1989) four potentially subjectless structures (these were illustrated in (31)). I have not found the fourth verb mentioned by Stenson (1989), *báigh* – 'drown' – in the autonomous form in *Cré na Cille*, but that is likely due to the contents of the novel more than a difference in frequency between *báigh* and the others.

5.1.1.1 McCloskey (2007)

The most important treatment of the Modern Irish idiosyncratic autonomous forms is found in McCloskey (2007). In this article, McCloskey makes distinctions between the various usages of the autonomous verb that are slightly different than what is done in this thesis. On the one hand, he treats the four types illustrated in (2) as lexically restricted subjectless clauses. In addition he discusses a number of clauses that he suggests contains inanimate impersonal subjects. In the following I will discuss these two groups in turn, and show why I prefer to dispense with the inanimate subject of the second group and claim instead that the predicates in question should be seen as subjectless.

The lexically restricted group, as exemplified in (2), is treated by McCloskey (2007: 843-847) as a special case of his general analysis of the (ASI usage of the) autonomous verb. He identifies two main challenges presented by the lexically restricted cases: how to account for their idiomatic meaning and its link to the autonomous inflection and how to account for their lack of a subject.

I described in section 1.3.2.3 that McCloskey (2007) analyses the ASI usage of the Modern Irish autonomous verb through a mechanism where the finite Tense of the autonomous verb is taken to carry an uninterpretable feature *Arb*. This feature is responsible for the appearance of the autonomous morphology. The *Arb* feature on Tense will enter into an agreement relation with the interpretable feature *Arb* on the impersonal *pro* argument. This analysis is an extension of the general analysis of *pro*-drop in Modern Irish (cf. McCloskey and Hale 1984).

In order to account for the lexically restricted cases, McCloskey (2007: 846) suggests that the feature *Arb* on Tense agrees with a feature *Arb* residing on the lexically restricted predicates themselves. In other words, there are two instances of agreement with the feature *Arb* on Tense. In one relation, this feature agrees with *Arb* on the impersonal *pro*, giving rise to the ASI construction. In the other relation it agrees with a lexically specified feature *Arb* on the lexically restricted predicates; this agreement process gives rise to their idiomatic meaning.

McCloskey (2007: 837-838) additionally provides a number of examples of unaccusative predicates where he suggests that the autonomous verb is used with an inanimate impersonal subject.[65] Some of these examples are repeated in (4):

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[65] McCloskey (2007: 837-838) provides four examples of verbs that he suggests take inanimate causers as their subjects. These verbs are, in addition to *dóg* – 'to burn' and *ráiceáil* – 'to wreck', *cuir iontas ar* – 'to be

(4) Autonomous verbs with inanimate impersonal subjects (McCloskey 2007:837-838)

      a.

níor	***dóghadh***	*na*	*nótaí* [66]
NEG.PAST	burn.PAST.AUT	DEF	notes

'the notes were not burned'

      b.

raiceáladh	*ar*	*chósta*	*na*	*Síne*	*é*	*tráth*
wreck.PAST.AUT	on	coast	DEF	China.GEN	him	time

'he was wrecked on the coast of China once'

The predicate in (a) is the autonomous form of the verb *dóigh*, meaning 'to burn'. The unaccusative interpretation of this example would be something along the lines that the notes did not catch fire. In contrast, the ASI interpretation would indicate that someone purposely abstained from setting fire to the notes. In (b) the one-place interpretation would indicate a ship that was wrecked by inanimate causes such as wind, waves, reefs or similar.

The question to ask at this point is whether it is necessary to maintain the distinction that McCloskey (2007) makes between the unaccusative readings of the examples in (4) and the inchoative autonomous clauses with *báigh* and *caill* – 'to drown' and 'to die' respectively – that were discussed above. The implication of McCloskey's distinction can be stated in terms of entailment of a cause: according to his analysis, a cause is present in the inanimate impersonal subjects in (4). In the 'die' and 'drown' clauses however, there is no cause present anywhere (in the syntax).

I will show in what follows that McCloskey's distinction might be less clear-cut than how it appears on first impression. For this reason I suggest that it might be more economical to dispense with the inanimate impersonal subjects altogether, and include the predicates in question in the subjectless group. The arguments in favour of this conclusion involve the expression of causes in the preceding context or in a prepositional phrase.

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amazed', literally 'to put wonder on' and *déan de* – 'to make of', in the sense 'to make little pieces of', 'smash to pieces' in McCloskey's example. He does not mention other predicates that may take an inanimate causer as their autonomous subject. In searching for examples to illustrate this group I have attempted to look for additional verbs that express a change of state with an inanimate cause.

[66] Both of the examples in (4) are credited to *In Aimsir Emmet*, translated by Colm Ó Gaora.

First of all it is easy to find examples with the one-place autonomous 'drown' where the preceding context implies various causes of the drowning. Two examples of this are provided in (5):

(5) One-place 'drown', autonomous form

a.

tháinig	*stoirm*	*ceatha*	*air*	*a*	*lion*	*a'curach*
come.PAST	storm	shower.GEN	on.3SG.M	REL	fill.PAST	DEF'currach

agus	***báitheadh***	*é*
and	drown.PAST.AUT	him

'a rainstorm came on him that filled his currach, and he drowned'
(Séamus 'ac Grianna: *Micheál Ruadh*, 46 – *Tobar*)

b.

acht	*caidé*	*tháinig*	*acht*	*oidhche*	*mhilltineach*	*gaoithe*	*móire*
but	what	come.PAST	but	night	terrible	wind.GEN	big.GEN

agus	***báitheadh***	*an*	*soitheach*
and	drown.PAST.AUT	DEF	vessel

'but what happened but there came a terrible night of great wind and the vessel went down'
(Séamus 'ac Grianna: *Saoghal Corrach*, 5 – *Tobar*)

In both of these examples some weather phenomenon is mentioned, and it appears that this weather phenomenon is taken as the cause of the drowning.

Secondly it is possible to express the cause of an autonomous verbal event in a prepositional phrase. This fact holds both for McCloskey's (2007) lexically restricted subjectless cases and for the type of autonomous verbs that would take an inanimate impersonal subject. In theory at least, this realisation of the cause(r) should conflict with the inanimate impersonal subject in the same way that the agent phrase conflicts with the regular impersonal subject. Some examples of this type of prepositional phrase are provided in (6):

(6) Prepositional phrases expressing the cause of the autonomous verbal event

a.

buaileadh *síos mé le tinneas mo bháis*
hit.PAST.AUT down me with sickness my death.GEN
'I became mortally ill', lit. 'I was struck down by the sickness of my death' (CnC 28)

b.

chaillfi [sic] *le náire mé*
lose.COND.AUT with shame me
'I would have died of shame' (CnC 75)

In (a), the predicate is *buail síos* – 'to strike down', i.e. 'to become ill' in this context. I take the cause of the sickness to be expressed in the phrase *le tinneas mo bháis* – literally 'with the sickness of my death'. The predicate in (b) is the subjectless autonomous form of *caill* meaning 'to die', with the cause of the in this case hypothetical death expressed as *le náire* – literally 'with shame'.

In sum I suggest that the above examples show that it is difficult to maintain a rigid distinction between e.g. the examples in (6) based on the entailment of a cause of the verbal event. For this reason I will dispense with the inanimate impersonal subjects in the cases where such subjects appear to be required. I suggest instead that the cases in question should be analysed as subjectless along the same lines as the idiomatic autonomous forms of *báigh* – 'to drown' – and *caill* – 'to die'.

There are also a number of theoretical arguments against an inanimate subject analysis. In section 5.2 I show that I maintain the well-known analysis of inchoative verbs that takes them to be formed at a different syntactic level than e.g. passives, following Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995) among others. This distinction is lost if we provide inchoative autonomous forms with a silent inanimate cause(r) subject. This result might be desirable as an argument in favour of reducing the theoretical distinction between inchoatives and passives (see e.g. Kallulli 2007); however, that discussion is beyond the scope of this project.

Another consequence of McCloskey's inanimate impersonal subject solution is that we would be forced to say that a whole host of predicates, including the above *was wrecked*, have two arguments in Irish but only one in e.g. English. This consequence is similarly avoided if the inanimate impersonal subject is dispensed with in favour of a subjectless analysis.

It was discussed in section 2.2.4.4 that the same morphology can be used in many languages to mark different types of valency alternations / construction types. If we accept that the lexically restricted autonomous forms represent construction types with different mapping properties than the active subject impersonal construction, we bring Irish into line with this general linguistic tendency. The mapping relations of the ASI construction and the idiosyncratic subjectless constructions would all be related to the autonomous morphology in the lexicon, making the autonomous verb ambiguous in the sense that it is related to more than one type of mapping relation / construction type.

It is possible to extract a tentative division of the subjectless clauses into groups based on the above discussion. In particular I will distinguish two groups. What is perhaps the biggest group includes the abovementioned examples with the autonomous predicates 'to drown', 'to die', 'to burn', 'to be wrecked', etc. I view these examples as inchoative verbs where a cause is implied somewhere in the semantics of the verb. This group will be further discussed in section 5.2. The second main group is McCloskey's (2007: 843-844) group of psychological state predicates. This group was illustrated in (2) with the predicate *feictear (dom)* – 'it seems to me'. This group is discussed in section 5.3. Additionally I will look at various other examples of subjectless autonomous verbs that are even more idiosyncratic and therefore difficult to classify, in section 5.4. Section 5.5 provides an account of the two first groups in the revised LMT.

5.2 The causative alternation

In section 2.2.4.2 I described the inchoative clause type, which was defined in semantic terms as the intransitive verb participating in the causative alternation (cf. Haspelmath 1993: 90). I described how I take the inchoative verb to be a lexically detransitivised version of the transitive causative verb. The lexical detransitivisation was said to take place through deletion of the first argument position in the argument structure of the predicate. In other words, the cause(r) role is still present in the thematic structure, but it is not mapped to argument structure or functional structure, ignoring the possibility for the cause(r) being overtly expressed in a prepositional phrase.

Moving on to the Irish data, we note that when the inchoative is found with active morphology in Modern Irish, the second argument position maps to the subject function according to the Mapping Principle. On the occasions that the inchoative is marked with

autonomous morphology on the other hand, the second argument position is retained as the object.

Haspelmath (1987: 13-21) discusses various semantic condition that hold for what he terms the anticausative.[67] Among these is a condition stating that when the typical state of affairs holds, the change of state takes place due to conscious outside interference. As Haspelmath points out, this condition is based on simple markedness: if it regularly happens that there is outside interference effecting the change of state, it is expected that there will be special morphology to mark a predicate that deviates from the norm by conceptualising the change of state as happening *without* outside interference.

The mapping relations of the inchoative active and the inchoative autonomous are illustrated in (7):

(7) Mapping relations of the inchoative active and autonomous:
   a. the inchoative active

$$
\begin{array}{ccc}
x & y & \\
 & | & \\
< & \text{arg} & > \\
 & | & \\
 & \text{SUBJ} &
\end{array}
$$

   b. the inchoative autonomous

$$
\begin{array}{ccc}
x & y & \\
 & | & \\
< & \text{arg} & > \\
 & | & \\
 & \text{OBJ} &
\end{array}
$$
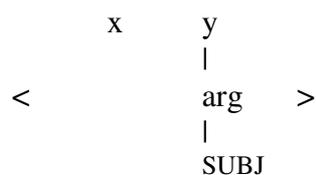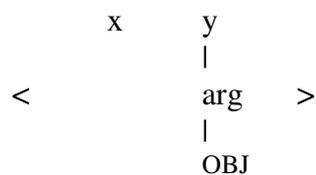
The definition of the inchoative given here may now be seen in connection with the theoretic discussion in the previous section. Recall from section 5.1.1 that McCloskey (2007) posits an inanimate impersonal subject for the example repeated in (8) among others:

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[67] Haspelmath (1987: 5) gives the following definition of the anticausative: 'An anticausative is the marked member of privative morphological transitivity alternation.' A privative transitivity alternation is defined as an alternation where one member of the alternation is morphologically marked and the other member is not. In addition, he suggests that the anticausative is characterised by the object of the transitive equivalent becoming the subject in the anticausative.

(8)

raiceáladh   *ar   chósta   na   Síne   é   tráth*
wreck.PAST.AUT   on   coast   DEF   China.GEN him   time
'he was wrecked on the coast of China once'

In McCloskey's analysis the causer argument of the semantic representation in (8) is present also in the argument structure and syntax; crucially, the causer argument is present independently of the extent to which it interferes with the ongoing change of state expressed by the predicate. The analysis sketched here, on the other hand, has two main advantages. First of all it enables us to maintain that the impersonal active pronoun is restricted to human referents in Irish as well as the languages we have been comparing with Irish.[68] Second, we maintain the intuition that the inchoative represents a different type of detransitivisation from the passive and the active subject impersonal, which takes place at the interface between a- and f-structure and in f-structure respectively, cf. the discussion in section 5.5.

In the next section I discuss the verb list in (9):

(9) Causative predicates discussed in this section.

> *caill* – 'lose' (idiomatic meaning in the autonomous form 'die')
>
> *báigh* – 'drown'
>
> *bris* – 'break'
>
> *leigheas* – 'heal'
>
> *gortaigh* – 'hurt'
>
> *croith* – 'shake'

These verbs are selected in two different ways. The two first predicates, *caill* and *báigh*, are among the four predicate types treated as subjectless by both Stenson (1989) and McCloskey (2007) (recall the discussion in section 5.1.1), and are probably among the most frequent predicates participating in the causative alternation in the autonomous form in Modern Irish. The other four predicates are taken from the list of potentially subjectless autonomous clauses I have extracted from *Cré na Cille*, cf. the table in (3).

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[68] See the discussion on the semantics of the impersonal active subject in section 3.2 and the diachronic discussion in chapter 5 for further reasons for restricting the impersonal active subject to human referents.

The two first predicates differ slightly from the others in the list. The autonomous form of *caill* in the meaning 'to die' does not alternate with an active, causative version of *caill* meaning 'to kill'. Rather, 'to kill' is expressed by other verb stems in Modern Irish, so that *caill* participates rather in a lexical transitivity alternation (Haspelmath 1987: 3). The inchoative form of *báigh* – 'to drown' – does not represent a change of state normally caused by outside interference. The other four predicates alternate with active causative forms of the same verb stem, and all of them represent a change of state that may be said to typically take place due to outside interference.

5.2.1   The causative alternation in the literature on Modern Irish

The examples in (10) are used by Stenson (1989) to show that there is a strong implication of outside agency in the autonomous version of these examples as compared to the intransitive active versions. Additionally she states of these examples that 'Only the first [10a-b] can express a spontaneous event, with no implication of outside agency. The impersonal [i.e. autonomous – JG] forms strongly imply that some agent or event brought about the breakage, that is, that there is an external argument in the verb's lexical structure.' (Stenson 1989: 386)

(10)   The causative alternation following Stenson (1989: 385-386)

a.

bhris   *an*   *fhuinneog*
break.PAST   DEF   window
'the window broke'

b.

bhris   *sí*
break.PAST   it
'it broke'

c.

briseadh   *an*   *fhuinneoig* [sic]
break.PAST.AUT   DEF   window
'the window was broken'

d.

briseadh   *í*
break.PAST.AUT   it
'it was broken'

The main point of this section is to illustrate that this topic is more complicated than what is claimed by Stenson. Specifically, I argue that the autonomous form of a verb like *bris* may be a one-place inchoative predicate as well as a two-place causative predicate with an active impersonal subject. In other words, one-place inchoative predicates may come both in the active with the one argument as the subject and in the autonomous form with the one argument as the object. As we will see, it seems that this variation might be at least partly related to the development of Irish under the influence of English from the last half of the twentieth century and onwards.

This variation will be picked up in section 5.5 when I discuss the subjectless autonomous predicates in terms of the revised LMT. It will be shown that the causative alternation, where the one-place inchoative version is marked by the autonomous form, fits in with a larger pattern in Irish in which the non-agentive first position argument of a predicate may map either to the subject function or to a lower function.

Both Eithne Guilfoyle (1996) and Ailbhe Ó Corráin (2001) present material that appears to contradict Stenson (1989). Guilfoyle claims that the only role that can be the external argument in Irish is the initiator of the event (1996: 299). In her theory this fact then excludes instruments, experiencers and unaccusative subjects as external arguments (1996: 300). We note that Guilfoyle's theory ought to exclude Stenson's examples (a) and (b) above, since 'the unaccusative subject' is here the subject of the clause (taking 'external argument' to mean the argument position that maps to the subject function in regular mapping terms of LFG).

Guilfoyle illustrates her point with the examples in (11) among others:

(11)   Examples from Guilfoyle (1996: 300)

a.

*d'oscail   *an*   *eochair*   *an*   *doras*
open.PAST   DEF   key   DEF   door
'the key opened the door'

b.

d'oscail   Seán   an   dorais [sic]
open.PAST S   DEF   door
'Seán opened the door'

c.

tá   eagla   orm
be.PRES   fear   on.1SG
'I am afraid'

d.   (attributed to McCloskey 1996)[69]

d'éirigh   idir   na   fir
rise.PAST   between   DEF   men
'the men quarreled'

Guilfoyle attributes the ungrammaticality of (a) to the fact that *the key* is not the initiator of the event and therefore cannot be the external argument / subject. The example in (b) on the other hand is fine, since *Seán* is the initiator. She includes the two last examples to show that experiencers (c) and unaccusative arguments (d) can be expressed after a preposition rather than as the subject.

In the same vein Ailbhe Ó Corráin shows that an experiencer or affected participant – human or animate – will often be realised as an oblique rather than the grammatical subject in Irish. Among the expressions he mentions are 'he died' (*cailleadh é*), 'he drowned' (*báitheadh é*), 'he lost his balance', 'he panicked', 'he blushed', 'he broke his leg' and 'he disappears'. He illustrates this point with the examples in (12) among others:

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[69] Guilfoyle (1996: 300) quotes this example from McCloskey (1996). This example illustrates one of the large group of predicates called 'salient unaccusatives', which is one of the topics of McCloskey's article (see section 2.2.4.2 for an analysis within the revised LMT of these predicates). McCloskey shows that this group of predicates show typical unaccusative behaviour in terms of both syntax and semantics. While 'quarrel' might not seem like an unaccusative predicate, I suspect the unaccusativity is to be found in the literal meaning of the verb and the preposition used, namely 'rose between'.

(12)   Animate or human experiencer in the oblique function (Ó Corráin 2001: 116-
117)

  a. active progressive

?bhí   sé   ag   tachtadh
be.PAST he   PROG   choke.VN
'he was choking'

  b. active

?thacht   sé
choke.PAST   he
'he choked'

  c. autonomous, progressive passive

bhíthear   *á*   *thachtadh*
be.PAST.AUT   PROG.his   choke.VN
'he was choking'

  d. autonomous

tachtaíodh   *é*
choke.PAST.VN   him
'he choked'

The examples in (12) show that the one-place clause 'he choked' is rendered by the autonomous clauses in (c) and (d) rather than the active (a) and (b). The autonomous clauses in (c) and (d) must in other words be seen as subjectless, since there can be no higher argument position present unless one wishes to operate with an inanimate impersonal subject, cf. the discussion in section 5.1.1. In keeping with these facts, Ó Corráin further mentions that the form *thacht sé* – 'he choked' is normally only used if the verb is transitive and the agent is the subject (2001: 117).

The same properties hold also for inanimate participants, as illustrated by the examples in (13) for the inchoative clauses 'the door opened' and 'the glass broke'. Ó Corráin states of these examples that they will normally be rendered with the inanimate argument as the object of the autonomous verb (c) and (d) rather than as the subject of an active verb (a) and (b). In this sense they are similar to the examples in (12). Once again I take the autonomous clauses to be subjectless, for the reasons discussed above.

(13)   Inanimate participants as objects (Ó Corráin 2001: 117)

          a.

?d'oscail   an   doras
open.PAST DEF door
'the door opened'

          b.

osclaíodh   *an   doras*
open.PAST.AUT DEF door
'the door opened'

          c.

?bhris   an   gloine
break.PAST DEF glass
'the glass broke'

          d.

briseadh   *an   gloine*
break.PAST.AUT DEF glass
'the glass broke'

The question now becomes how we can explain the apparent contradictions present in the literature on inchoative meaning and the autonomous verb, where the autonomous form of of a verb like *bris* is said to express both one-place and two-place 'break'. One possible explanation for the variation described in this section is the differences between what we may call Traditional Modern Irish on the one hand and the Modern Irish that is becoming heavily influenced by English in many areas on the other, cf. section 2.1.1.3. This observation highlights some of the difficulties of working with a minority language that is under pressure from a dominant language in a contact situation: it becomes necessary to keep in mind that Ó Corráin uses written sources from the first half of the twentieth century while Stenson works with informants in the 1970s and 1980s, and that they may reach different conclusions for this reason.

The influence of English on how inchoative meaning is expressed in Irish is treated in the same vein by Antain Mac Lochlainn (2000: 101). Mac Lochlainn refers to the 1957 book *Lorg an Bhéarla* ('The mark of English') by Seán Mac Maoláin, and quotes the examples given in (14). In (a) we have the active form of the verb *tosaigh*, which means 'to begin', with a subject *na ranganna* – 'the classes'. The (b) example, on the other hand,

expresses the same proposition, but with the verb *cuir*, meaning 'to put', in the autonomous form. There is furthermore an idiomatic object to the autonomous verb, *tús* ('beginning'), and the entity that is said to begin, the classes, is expressed in an adverbial phrase after the preposition *le*.

(14)

a.

tosaíonn	*na*	*ranganna*	*Déardaoin*
begin.PRES	DEF classes		Thursday

'the classes begin on Thursday'

b.

cuirfear	***tús***	*leis*	*na*	*ranganna*	*Déardaoin*
put.FUT.AUT	beginning	with	DEF classes		Thursday

'the classes will begin on Thursday'

According to Mac Lochlainn (2000: 101-102), Mac Maolain prefers (b) to (a) to express that the classes will begin, because a class is not capable of doing anything on its own, echoing the idea that Irish prefers agents in the subject position as well as the intuition that the change of state expressed in these clauses is externally caused. Mac Lochlainn goes on to say that many people today see Mac Maolain's opinion as pedantic, and that plenty of examples of sentences like (a) are found in the literature today.

The possibility for the autonomous verb to be a one-place unaccusative predicate opens up for some interesting ambiguity. This point is illustrated by the clause in (15). Here one may ask whether the autonomous form *tachtadh* is a one-place form with *é* as its only argument, or whether there is an impersonal subject which is co-referent with the impersonal subject of the previously occurring autonomous form *bhíthear*.

(15)

dubhairt	*an*	*fear*	*a*	***bhíthear***	*a*	*chrochadh*	*focla*	*eighinteacht*
say.PAST	DEF	man	REL	be.PAST.AUT	PART	hang.VN	word.PL	some

sul	*ar*	***tachtadh***	*é*
before	REL	strangle.PAST.AUT	him

'the man they were hanging said some words before he choked / before they strangled him' (Seosamh 'ac Grianna: *Pádraic Ó Conaire agus Aistí Eile*, 319 – *Tobar*)

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The following examples all contain clauses with various forms of the verb *bris* – 'break'. They illustrate some of the variation in genre, dialect and time that must be taken into account when generalising over the subjectless usage of the autonomous verb form in Modern Irish.

The examples in (16) show the subjectless usage of the autonomous form to express the intransitive inchoative 'break', from the Munster and the Connacht dialects respectively. They are taken from an autobiographical novel from the Blasket islands in the south (*An tOileánach*, published in 1929) and a collection of conversations between speakers in the west that was recorded in the 1960s (*Caint Ros Muc*, CRM). The examples in (17), on the other hand, show the same inchoative meaning expressed by the active form of *bris*; example (a) is from a folk song written by traditional musician and songwriter Proinsias Ó Maonaigh while (b) is from the online journal of a self-admitted learner of Irish.

(16)   Inchoative 'break' in the autonomous form

a.   Munster dialect

mar	*is*	*sa*	*chladach*	*seo*	*a*	***briseadh***	*an*	*long*
for	COP	in.DEF	beach	this	REL	break.PAST.AUT	DEF	ship

'for it is on this beach that the ship was wrecked' (AtO 16)

b.   Connacht dialect

briseadh	*an*	*bád*	*céanna*	*thoir*	*in*	*Órán*	*drochoíche*	*stoirme*
break.PAST.AUT	DEF	boat	same	east	in	Ó	bad.night	storm.GEN

'the very ship was wrecked east in Órán a bad stormy night' (CRM 64)

(17)   Inchoative 'break' in the active form

a.   from a song written by folk musician Proinsias Ó Maonaigh (1922-2006) from Donegal

is	*beag*	*nár*	***bhris***	*mo*	*chroí*
COP	little	REL.NEG.PAST	break.PAST	my	heart

'my heart almost broke' (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gleanntáin_Ghlas'_Ghaoth_Dobhair)

b.   from the online journal of a learner of Irish

nuair	*a*	*chonaic*	*mé*	*é,*	***bhris***	*mo*	*chroí*
when	REL	see.PAST	I	him	break.PAST	my	heart

'when I saw him, my heart broke'

The example in (18) shows again the subjectless autonomous form being used to express the inchoative meaning. Additionally this example includes a prepositional phrase *le scéimh-mheanga bruinnile* – 'with the beautiful smile of the fair maiden' – that expresses the cause of the verbal event. This example is taken from *Cré na Cille*, and specifically from one of the sections that render the voice of an entity known as *Stoc na Cille* – the Churchyard Horn. The language in these sections is quite different from the language in the parts where the characters of the novel talk to each other; as a consequence, this example might not be representative of twentieth-century Irish even though the novel it is taken from was published in 1949.

    (18)   Inchoative 'break' in the autonomous form, with cause expressed in a PP.

sé	*a*	*bhata*	*an*	*lionndubh*	*nach*	*m**bristear***
COP.it	his	stick	DEF	black-humour	that.NEG	break.PRES.AUT

le	*scéimh-mheanga*	*bruinnile*
with	beauty-smile	fair.maiden

'his stick is the melancholia that doesn't break from the fair maiden's beautiful smile' (CnC 174)

The two examples in (19) are taken from the same short story by Liam Ó Flaithearta, from the Connacht dialect area. These examples show two progressive clauses. In (a) the active progressive is used to express inchoative 'break'; the undergoer of the breaking is the subject. In (b) on the other hand we find the passive progressive expressing transitive causative 'break' with an implication of an agent performing the breaking. The only difference between the two clauses is the presence of a pronoun in the compound *á* before the verbal noun in the passive progressive; this pronoun co-refers with the patient subject in the passive clause (b). This pronoun is the only element that marks the clause as two-place and passive rather than one-place and active.

(19)   'Break' in the progressive

    a.   active inchoative

ar	*nós*	*sioscadh*	*na*	*toinne*	***ag***	***briseadh***	*go*	*réidh*
on	manner	whisper	DEF	wave.GEN	PROG	break.VN	ADV	soft

ar	*dhuirling*	*mhionchlochach*
on	beach	pebbly

'like the whisper of a wave breaking softly on a pebble beach' (*Dúil* 193)

    b.   passive transitive/causative[70]

mar	*bheadh*	*na*	*mílte*	*agus*	*na*	*mílte*	*buidéal*
like	be.COND	DEF	thousands	and	DEF	thousands	bottle

á	***mbriseadh***	*in*	*aghaidh*	*balla*
PROG.their	break.VN	against		wall

'like thousands and thousands of bottles were being broken against a wall' (*Dúil* 193)

Finally, the example in (20) illustrates the autonomous form of *bris* in the ASI construction. Here, in other words, the autonomous form expresses a phonologically null, animate subject in a transitive clause. The example is taken from *Úrchúrsa Gaeilge*, a coursebook of Irish written in the Official Standard.

    (20)   Transitive/causative 'break' in the autonomous (i.e. the ASI construction)

níor	***briseadh***	*aon*	*fhuinneog*	*fhad*	*is*	*a*	*bhí*
NEG.PAST	break.PAST.AUT	any	window	long	COP	REL	be.PAST

an	*garda*	*ar*	*dualgas*
DEF	police	on	duty

'no windows were broken as long as the police was on duty' (Ó Baoill and Ó Tuathail 1992: 63)

    In sum, it is clear that there is significant variation to be found in a) how the autonomous verb is used and how the one-place inchoative meaning is expressed, and b) how this variation is portrayed in the linguistic literature. However, I hope to have established in this section that the autonomous verb may be used to express subjectless

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[70] See McCloskey (1996: 247) on the syntax of the periphrastic/progressive passive.

inchoative clauses at least with certain verbs in twentieth-century Modern Irish. In the rest of this section I discuss both common and clear instances and not-so-common and less clear cases.

5.2.2 Selected inchoative verbs in the autonomous form

In this section I discuss each of the verbs in the following list:

> **(21)**   *caill* – 'lose' (idiomatic meaning in the autonomous form 'die')
>   *báigh* – 'drown'
>   *leigheas* – 'heal'
>   *gortaigh* – 'hurt'
>   *croith* – 'shake'

5.2.2.1   caill – 'to die'

I mentioned in the previous sections that the concept 'to die', expressed by the autonomous form of the verb *caill* – 'to lose' – is one of the predicates most frequently mentioned as a subjectless autonomous form.[71] This fact probably reflects its frequency in use; it was shown in the table in (3) that c. 11 of the approximately 85 potentially subjectless autonomous clauses extracted from *Cré na Cille* involve this idiomatic use of *caill*.[72] The examples in (22) illustrate the idiomatic use of *caill* in the autonomous form:

> **(22)**   Modern Irish: the idiomatic use of *caill* in the autonomous form – 'to die'

      a.

cailleadh   *faoi*   *shlí* *é*   *timpeall* *Thrá Lí*
lose.PAST.AUT around way him around   Tralee
'he died on the way, near Tralee' (AtO 67)

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[71] See Aidan Doyle (2004) for a discussion of *cailleadh* in its idiomatic meaning of 'to die' in connection with other unaccusative predicate types in the Modern Irish language.

[72] Though, just as with the lack of *báigh*, the high frequency of *caill* in its idiomatic meaning 'to die' is very likely due to the content of the novel – which, after all, takes place among the corpses on the churchyard – and may or may not reflect the frequency of the idiom in the language in general.

b.

*cupla   lá   sul   ar   **cailleadh** é*
couple day   before PAST lose.AUT   him
'a couple of days before he died' (CnC 126)

I will not discuss to what extent the basic meaning of *caill* – 'lose' – is retained in this idiom. However, I wish to point out that the use of this verb for the idiom makes the presence of an agent as the cause of death – i.e. a killer – unlikely.

The concept 'to kill' is expressed by other verbs than *caill*, which makes 'kill/die' is a suppletive causative alternation (cf. Haspelmath 1993: 92). Interestingly, this transitivity alternation is commonly expressed by suppletion. Out of Haspelmath's (1993) sample of 21 languages, 16 languages express the verb pair 'kill/die' by suppletion.

5.2.2.2   *báigh* – 'to drown'

I have previously shown that *báigh* was one of the two autonomous subjectless inchoative forms mentioned by both Stenson (1989) and McCloskey (2007) (the other being *caill*). Two examples of *báigh* in the autonomous form are shown in (23).

(23)

a.

báithfear   *é   chomh cinnte agus rachas sé i   bhfarraige anocht*
drown.FUT.AUT him as   certain and   go.FUT he in ocean   tonight
'he will drown as surely as he will go into the ocean tonight' (CiD 55)

b.

*níor   **bádh**   aoinne   acu*
NEG.PAST   drown.PAST.AUT   any.person   of.3SG.PL
'none of them drowned' (AtO 65)

Robin Flower's translation of the sequence in which (b) occurs in *The Islandman* may serve as an example to make it clear that there is no agent involved in the verbal event expressed by *báigh*:

'How do you make that out?' said the other. 'You know **not a soul of them was drowned** when the bottom dropped out of their old tub. What was it saved them?'

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'A great big boat they had tied to her, and when the water came spouting up they all went into her,' said Tom. (O'Crohan 2000: 57, my emphasis)

5.2.2.3 leigheas – 'heal'

The verb *leigheas* is listed in the FGB as meaning 'heal', 'cure' and 'remedy' (Ó Dónaill 1992: 775). Various transitive causative usages are mentioned, for example *leigheas sé mo lámh* – 'he cured my hand'. The examples in (24) show the inchoative use with the autonomous verb.

(24)

a.

leigheasadh   ag   Tobar Chill Íne   é
heal.PAST.AUT   by   Well of Cill Íne   him
'he was healed at the Well of Cill Íne' (CnC 117)

b.

caithfidh   duine   eicínt   eile   anois   bás   a   fháil   ina   ómós
must.FUT   person   some   other   now   death PART get.VN   in.its   return

*ó   **leigheasadh**   le   leabhar   Eoin   é*
since   heal.PAST.AUT   with   book   John   him

'now someone else must die in return for that, since he was healed by the Book of John' (CnC 117-118)

It is made clear in the context of the story in *Cré na Cille* that there is no outside animate agent performing healing in these examples. Rather, the characters have tried various religious remedies, a holy well and the Book of John, to affect a cure. Once again I take the autonomous forms in this section to be subjectless but containing a cause in the thematic structure.

5.2.2.4 gortaigh – 'hurt'

The verb *gortaigh* in the active form means 'hurt' and 'injure'. Interestingly, FGB (Ó Dónaill 1992: 661) lists this verb as transitive only. However, the event in question in *Cré na Cille* is an accident; the context in other words makes it clear that *gortaigh* here is used

in the autonomous form as an intransitive inchoative predicate with the one argument *Peadar*.

(25)

tá	*Neil*	*cloíte*	*go*	*leor*	*ó*	**gortaíodh**	*Peadar*
be.PRES	N	reduced	ADV	sufficient	since	hurt.PAST.AUT	P

'Neil is much reduced since Peadar was injured' (CnC 64)

5.2.2.5   *croith* – *'shake'*

The last verb in this section is *croith*, meaning 'to shake'. The context of these examples is a funeral procession where someone is afraid that the intestines of the body would shake too much if the coffin were carried on people's shoulders. In other words it is clear once again that there is a cause participant in the verbal event but no animate agent to fill the subject function.

(26)

a.

chroithfí	*a*	*phutógaí*	*bochta*	*ró-mhór*	*ar*	*ghuaillí*	*daoine*
shake.COND.AUT	his	intestines	poor	too-great	on	shoulders	people.GEN

nó	*ar*	*shean-chairt*
or	on	old-cart

'his poor intestines would shake too much [if he were carried] on people's shoulders or on an old cart' (CnC 199)

b.

chuir	*a*	*shean-chailín*	*hearse*	*faoi*	*ar*	*fhaitíos*
put.PAST	his	old-girl	hearse	under.3SG.M	on	fear

a	**gcraithfí**	*a*	*phutógaí*	*bochta*
COMPL	shake.COND.AUT	his	intestines	poor

'his old girl put a hearse under him for fear that his poor intestines would be shaken' (CnC 241)

5.3 The psychological state predicates

The group of verbs in question in this section involve a number of verbs expressing psychological states. In the autonomous form, they are found with an experiencer marked with the preposition *do* and a finite subordinate clause. As I will show in this section, they should be taken to be subjectless when they occur in the autonomous form in this usage.

McCloskey (2007: 843-844) lists five psychological state verbs that occur in the autonomous form with a preposition-marked experiencer. These verbs are provided in (27). Not all of these verbs are available in the autonomous usage in all dialects.

(27)   Psychological state verbs that occur in the autonomous form with a preposition-marked experiencer

feic – 'to see'

samhlaigh – 'to imagine'

ceap – 'to think'

tuig – 'to understand'

meas – 'to think'

The examples in (28) show how the verb *feic* – 'to see' – may alternate between the active and the autonomous form. McCloskey (2007: 845) is not clear on what the difference between the active and autonomous usage is, but suggests that it has something to do with evidentiality, i.e. that the speaker is less certain about the truth of the subordinate clause proposition when the autonomous form is used.

(28)   Psychological state use of *feic* – 'to see'

a. Autonomous form

facthas **dom** *muise gur leagadh amach an-ghaelach thusa*
see.PAST.AUT to.1SG indeed that.PAST lay.PAST.AUT out very-ordinary you
'it seemed to me that you were laid out in a very ordinary way' (CnC 193)

b. Active form

feicim *go bhfuil aon duine dhéag curtha san uaigh seo*
see.PRES.1SG that be.PRES one person teen put.VADJ in.DEF grave this
'I believe eleven people have been put into this grave'
(Séamus Mag Uidhir: *Fánaidheacht i gConndae Mhuigheo*, 21 – *Tobar*)

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The mapping relations of the experiencer role in the two alternating forms are provided in (28). These mapping structures represent another valency alternation in the language which will be further discussed in section 5.5.

(29)   Mapping relations of the experiencer argument
        a. Active

                        x
                        |
                       arg
                       [-o]

                       [-r]
                       SUBJ

        b. Autonomous

                        x
                        |
                       arg
                       [-o]

                       [+r]
                       OBL

5.4 Various other subjectless autonomous verb types

In this section I discuss various other instances of subjectless autonomous predicates. These are more difficult to classify than the ones previously discussed in terms of their syntax, and are therefore discussed separately as such. The verbs in question are *cas*, *buail* and various instances of *bain* with idiomatic objects. The basic meaning of *cas* is 'twist' and 'turn'; when this verb is used in the autonomous form, it may acquire the reciprocal, idiomatic meaning 'meet'. The basic meaning of *buail* is 'hit' and 'strike'. This verb is used in the autonomous form in various ways, with or without idiomatic objects, to express a change of state from well to unwell/sick. The last verb *bain* has a great number of meanings, of which may be mentioned 'dig out' and 'pick' (Ó Dónaill 1992: 77-79). In the autonomous form it is used with various idiomatic complements to express verb meanings like 'become startled', 'stop', 'become panicked', etc.

5.4.1 The reciprocal: 'to meet'

As previously mentioned, the verb *cas*, whose basic meaning is 'twist' and 'turn', is one of the most frequent verbs to occur as a subjectless autonomous form in Modern Irish. It is included in Nancy Stenson's group of 'special cases' (1989: 387-388) and James McCloskey's 'lexically restricted cases' (2007: 843-847).

The basic meaning of *cas* – 'twist', 'turn' – is illustrated in (30), where *cas* is used of turning the selector dial on an old-fashioned phone:

(30) Basic active meaning of *cas*

rug	*sé*	*greim*	*cruaidh*	*ar*	*an*	*nglaochán (…)*
took	he	grip	hard	on	DEF	handset

agus	*thosaigh*	*sé*	***ag***	***casadh***	*go*	*tréan*
and	began	he	PROG	twist.VN	ADV	violent

'he gripped the handset hard and began dialling violently' (*Dúil* 192)

In the idiomatic usage of the autonomous form, *cas* has a different meaning, namely the reflexive 'meet'. This usage of the verb is illustrated in (31):

(31) *Cas* as a subjectless autonomous form meaning 'meet':

a.

mar	*léigh*	*sé*	*an*	*"lesson"*	*do*	*chuile*	*dhuine*	*dhár*
for	read.PAST	he	DEF		for	every	person	of.all.REL

casadh	*linn*	*faoi*	*bhealach*
met.PAST.AUT	with.2PL	under	way

'for he read a "lesson" for everyone we met on the way' (CnC 164)

b.

sin	*é*	*an*	*uair*	*a*	***casadh***	*an*	*mairnéalach*	*dom*
that	it	DEF	time	REL	turn.PAST.AUT	DEF	seaman	to.1SG

'that was the time I met the mariner' (CnC 242)

The two examples in (31) show that the person meeting someone is realised after a preposition (*le* and *do* respectively), while the person met is realised as an object. It seems

clear that all the participants of the verbal event are overtly realised, and thus there is no candidate for a silent impersonal active subject. An ASI analysis of this idiom is thus excluded, and I take this usage of the autonomous verb to be subjectless.

5.4.2 'buail'

The Modern Irish verb *buail* has (transitive) 'beat' and 'strike' as the basic meaning. In this section I show that it may occur in the autonomous subjectless form with idiomatic adverbials and objects to express a change of state towards being unwell.

(32)

a.

bhí	*tú*	*le*	*dhul*	*go*	*Sasana*	*marach*	*gur*	***buaileadh***	***síos***	***tinn***	*thú*
was	you	with	go.VN	to	England	only	that	hit.PAST.AUT	down	sick	you

'you were about to go to England, only you got sick' (CnC 144)

b.

nach	*éard*	*adúirt*	*Briain*	*Mór*
NEG.Q	that	REL.said	B	big

an t-	*am*	*ar*	***buaileadh***	*Bileachaí*	***tinn***
DEF	time	REL.PAST	hit.PAST.AUT	B	ill

'isn't that what Briain Mór said when Bileachaí became ill' (CnC 333)

c.

bhí	*caint*	*mhór*	*aige*	*a*	*dhul*	*go*	*Sasana (…),*
was	talk	big	by.3SG.M	PART	go.VN	to	England

sul	*má*	***buaileadh***	*síos*	*é*
before	if	hit.PAST.AUT	down	him

'he talked a lot about going to England before he got struck down' (CnC 158)

d.

buaileadh	*síos*	*mé*	*le*	*tinneas*	*mo*	*bháis*
hit.PAST.AUT	down	me	with	sickness	my	death.GEN

'I became mortally ill' (CnC 28)

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The examples in (32) show different versions of this autonomous idiom with *buail*. In (a) we find both the adverb *síos* – 'down' – and the adjective *tinn* – 'sick', leading to a literal translation 'to be struck down sick'. The (b) example includes *tinn* only, while (c) and (d) have *síos* but not *tinn*. Example (d) includes the prepositional phrase *le tinneas mo bháis* – literally 'with the sickness of my death' – which specifies the cause of the sickness. As previously argued, I take a prepositional phrase like this as an argument against positing an inanimate impersonal subject, and so I take the examples in (32) to be subjectless.

In sum, it may be concluded concerning the idiom *buaileadh (síos) (tinn)* that whether we follow the dictionary and translate the expression with 'was struck down', 'was laid low' (Ó Dónaill 1992: 152) or 'became sick', it seems clear that there is no impersonal subject present. The main point seems to be a change of state from well to sick, and I therefore argue that the verb is inchoative and subjectless.

5.4.3 'bain'

There are a great number of idiomatic expressions with *bain* in the autonomous form. Some examples are provided in (33)-(36).

> **(33)**   Some of the idioms mentioned by Ó Corráin (2001) with the preposition *as* –
>   'out of' – to express the undergoer

baineadh tuisle as – 'to fall' (*tuisle* – 'a fall', 'a stumble')

baineadh leagan as – 'to fall' (*leagan* – 'act of knocking down')

baineadh mealladh as – 'to be disappointed' (*mealladh* – 'disappointment')

baineadh crothadh as – 'to be shaken' (*crothadh* – 'a shake')

baineadh lasadh as – 'to blush' (*lasadh* – 'a blush')

> **(34)**

baineadh   *tuisle   asam   ar   chnap   cloch*
take.PAST.AUT   fall   out-of.1SG   on   heap   stone
'I stumbled over a heap of stones' (Ó Dónaill 1992: 1286)

> **(35)**

baineadh   *na   deora   aisti*
take.PAST.AUT   DEF   tears   out-of.3SG.F
'she was moved to tears' (Ó Dónaill 1992: 78)

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(36) Idioms with *baineadh* in context (CiD 29)

Bhí	*cailín*	*amháin*	*ina*	*suí*	*sa*	*choirnéal*	*ab*	*faide*
be.PAST	girl	one	in.her	sitting	in.DEF	corner	COP	long.COMPAR

'There was one girl sitting in the farthest corner

ar	*shiúl*	*den*	*tseomra.*	*D'amharc*	*Tarlach*	*uirthi.*
away		from.DEF	room	look.PAST	T	on.3SG.F

away from the room. Tarlach looked at her.

Baineadh	*cliseadh*	*as.*	*Thug*	*sé*	*coiscéim*	*anonn*	*ina*	*haice.*
take.PAST.AUT	jump	out-of.3SG.M	take.PAST	he	step	over	in.her	nearness

He started. He took a step over in her direction.

Baineadh	*stad*	*as.*	*Níorbh*	*í*	*a*	*bhí*	*ann.*
take.PAST.AUT	stop	out-of.3SG.M	NEG.COP	she	REL	be.PRET	there

He stopped. It wasn't she who was there.'

We observe that all of these examples involve *bain* in the autonomous form, some noun specifying the verbal event and a preposition to express the undergoer. All the events are connected to the body of the undergoer in some sense and refer to some change of state either related to the undergoer's emotions ('to blush', 'to start', etc.) or to an outwardly physical event ('to fall' etc.).

These idioms alternate with a causative version in which the cause of the change of state is the subject an active form of *bain*; this is shown in (37).

(37) Causative version of *baineadh lasadh as* – 'to blush' with inanimate subject

bhain	***an***	***chainnt***	***seo***	*lasadh*	*as*	*a*	*gruaidh*
take.PAST	DEF	talk	this	blush	out-of	her	cheeks

'this talk made her blush' (Tadhg Ó Rabhartaigh: *Thiar i nGleann Ceo*, 102 – *Tobar*)

In other words it could be argued that the examples in (33)-(36) should be analysed as containing either an animate or an inanimate impersonal subject depending on the context. However, it is clear for instance in (34) that there can be no impersonal subject, animate or inanimate, present; the cause of the stumbling is expressed in the prepositional phrase *ar chnap cloch* – 'on a heap of stones'. In sum I take these idioms to occur in the autonomous form as subjectless clauses when a) there is no animate agentive cause and b) there is no need and/or possibility to specify an inanimate cause.

5.5 A revised LMT treatment

Revised LMT mapping structures for the inchoative autonomous forms and the psychological state predicates have been provided earlier in this chapter. In this section I pick up the thread of the discussion from chapter 2 on how the revised LMT deals with subjectless structures. I show that the autonomous inchoative and psychological state predicates involve an increase in markedness in the mapping from a- to f-structure, following Anna Kibort (2007). Additionally it will be shown that the mapping structures in question enter into a general pattern of alternations in Modern Irish where a given argument may appear as two different f-structure functions.

As discussed in chapter 2, I take the mapping principle in (38) to account for the regular mapping between argument structure and functional structure. Crucially, this principle makes the standard LFG Subject Condition (Bresnan 2001: 311) redundant, since the subject is the least marked function on the hierarchy.

(38)   Mapping Principle (Kibort 2007: 16)
The ordered arguments are mapped onto the highest (i.e. least marked) compatible function on the markedness hierarchy.

As I showed in chapter 2, a number of morphosyntactic operations may apply and interfere with the mapping between a- and f-structure. These operations involve an increase in markedness. In other words, when such an operation applies, the mapping is more marked than it would have been, had it taken place according to the Mapping Principle.

An inchoative verb with active morphology – which I term a putative unaccusative following McCloskey (1996) – will have the mapping relations in (39). A morphosemantic operation has applied to delete the first argument position, while the second argument maps to the subject according to the Mapping Principle.

(39)   The putative unaccusative

```
          x        y
                   |
     <             arg2    >
                   [-r]

                   [-o]
                   SUBJ
```

The putative unaccusative mapping contrasts with both the inchoative autonomous form discussed in section 5.2 and with another unaccusative clause type in Irish, called the salient unaccusative, where the one argument of the predicate is mapped to the oblique function (cf. section 2.2.4.2). These mapping relations are illustrated in (40) and (41), and examples of these clause types are provided in (42).

(40)   The inchoative autonomous

```
          x       y
                  |
    <            arg    >
                 [-r]

                 [+o]
                 OBJ
```
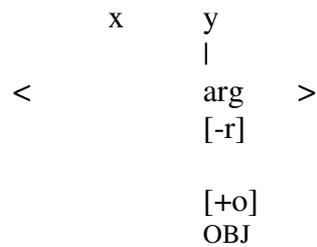
(41)   The salient unaccusative

```
          x       y
                  |
    <            arg    >
                 [-o]

                 [+r]
                 OBL
```
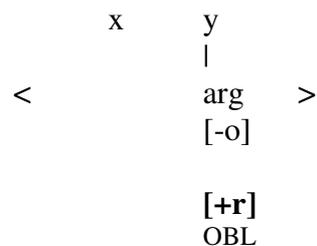
(42)   Modern Irish unaccusative types

        a.   the putative unaccusative

bhris   *an*   *fhuinneog*
break.PAST   DEF   window
'the window broke'

        b.   the inchoative autonomous

mar *is*   *sa*   *chladach* *seo* *a*   ***briseadh***   *an*   *long*
for   COP   in.DEF   beach   this   REL   break.PAST.AUT   DEF   ship
'for it is on this beach that the ship was wrecked' (AtO 16)

        c.   the salient unaccusative

chuaigh   *[de*   *mo*   *neart]*
go.PAST   of   my   strength
'my strength waned' (McCloskey 2001b: 164)

I showed in section 5.3 that some five verbs meaning 'think', 'feel' and similar may be used in subjectless clauses in the autonomous form, with the experiencer role marked with the preposition *do*. The relevant examples are repeated in (43), where the autonomous form of the verb *feic* – 'to see' – alternates with an active version with the experiencer as subject:

(43)   Psychological state use of *feic* – 'to see'

a.   Autonomous form

facthas	***dom***	*muise*	*gur*	*leagadh*	*amach*	*an-ghaelach*	*thusa*
see.PAST.AUT	to.1SG	indeed	that.PAST	lay.PAST.AUT	out	very-ordinary	you

'it seemed to me that you were laid out in a very ordinary way' (CnC 193)

b.   Active form

feicim	*go*	*bhfuil*	*aon*	*duine*	*dhéag*	*curtha*	*san*	*uaigh*	*seo*
see.PRES.1SG	that	be.PRES	one	person	teen	put	in.DEF	grave	this

'I believe eleven people have been put into this grave'
(Séamus Mag Uidhir: *Fánaidheacht i gConndae Mhuigheo*, 21 – *Tobar*)

The differing f-structure function of the experiencer role can be accounted for through the morphosyntactic operation that increases the markedness of the mapping between argument- and functional structure. The experiencer argument will map to the subject function following the Mapping Principle in the active form. The autonomous form, on the other hand, signals that the mapping of its first argument position, the experiencer argument, increases in markedness through a morphosyntactic operation, cf. section 2.2.4.1., making the experiencer map to the oblique function.

The mapping relations of the active and the autonomous forms are illustrated in (44), where *x* represents the experiencer role; I'm ignoring the mapping of the subordinate clause for ease of exposition.

(44)   Mapping relations of the experiencer argument

    a. Active

                        x
                        |
                       arg
                       [-o]

                       [-r]
                       SUBJ

    b. Autonomous

                        x
                        |
                       arg
                       [-o]

                       [+r]
                       OBL

5.6   Summary and conclusions

In the previous chapters it has been described how the Modern Irish autonomous verb occurs in the active subject impersonal construction; this is the regular and productive usage. In this chapter I have argued that the autonomous verb may additionally occur in different types of idiomatic subjectless constructions. In other words, the autonomous morphology has been shown to be ambiguous in Modern Irish, and I have shown that only the context may determine e.g. if a given instance of the autonomous verb is inchoative or causative and active with an impersonal subject in Modern Irish. It was stressed that this type of ambiguity, where the same morphology is used in different construction types, is found in many other languages. I defined two of the idiomatic subjectless constructions within the framework of the revised LMT, the inchoative and the psychological state predicates.

Chapter 6: In sum

I set out in this study to analyse the Irish autonomous verb in the Old and Modern Irish periods and to describe how the autonomous verb developed during the centuries that separate these periods. In closing I would like to summarise the main conclusions on these topics and some of the generalisations and ideas we may draw from these conclusions.

It was shown for Modern Irish that the main construction type in which the autonomous verb occurs is the active subject impersonal construction. As the name implies, the ASI construction was said to be active and to have a phonologically null subject. This subject was taken to apply only to [+human] referents; the feature [+human] was said to be the basic property of this autonomous subject. Restricting the subject to [+human] referents enabled us to bring the Irish ASI construction into line with constructions with overt impersonal pronouns such as French *on* and German *man*.

Studying the Old Irish ancestor of the modern autonomous ASI-construction, we noted that the autonomous verb in Old Irish possessed a number of seemingly contradictory properties. These contradictions led us to posit a three-way ambiguity: I took the Old Irish autonomous verb to be used in three different constructions, specifically the canonical passive and the impersonal passive as well as the ASI-construction. Now, these constructions were pinpointed by means of examples displaying overt properties of each construction: e.g. the canonical passive, which has the patient argument mapped to the subject function, was illustrated by examples where the patient argument showed typical subject marking such as nominative case and number agreement with the verb. The ASI construction, on the other hand, was illustrated e.g. by examples of the substantive verb in the autonomous form, where the subject argument of the substantive verb controlled the phonologically null subject of a non-finite subordinate verb. Additionally the point was made that there are many instances of the autonomous verb which are ambiguous between one or the other of the construction types.

When the overt indications of the construction types were considered, it was shown that the passive construction types have a particular distribution in Old Irish. Specifically, the canonical passive occurs when the autonomous patient argument is a noun or a third person pronoun. The impersonal passive is found when the patient is a first or second person pronoun. In order to suggest at least a partial explanation for this distribution, I provided an overview of the pre-history of the Old Irish autonomous verb, in which we saw that the Old

Irish state of affairs does not appear to have a full canonical passive paradigm as its ancestor.

The distribution of the two passive categories in Old Irish provided the starting point for the subsequent study of how the autonomous verb developed following the Old Irish period. I attempted to take this development apart into component properties, each of which was seen as a possible candidate for reanalysis when a child acquires her language. Specifically, a given property was said to change when the child analysed the linguistic data surrounding her in such a way that this property occurred in one form in the mental grammar of the child and in a different form in the grammars of the people from which she learned her language.

The properties in question were the following: first, the autonomous morphology could no longer supply a patient argument; this function was taken over by the independent pronoun. The infixed pronoun paradigms disappeared, and were replaced by the independent pronoun. The function of a noun phrase autonomous patient changed from subject to object, as shown by examples of noun phrase patients with accusative case marking. Each of these separate and distinct changes adds up to the disappearance of the canonical passive construction in favour of the impersonal passive, at which point the stage was set for the replacement of the impersonal passive by the ASI construction. The subjectless impersonal passive was reanalysed as containing the active impersonal subject; in connection with this reanalysis, the agent phrase – which was taken to be incompatible with the active subject – disappeared from the language. At the end of this process, the twentieth century Modern Irish state of affairs had come into being.

In addition to this change from passive to impersonal, I showed that there is a group of subjectless constructions in which various lexically idiosyncratic autonomous verbs are used. This group is fairly extensive in Modern Irish, and it was tentatively suggested that comparable constructions may be found in Old Irish. Among these constructions were found subjectless inchoatives expressing a change of state.

Having summarised the main points of my analysis of the autonomous verb, I would like to highlight some general conclusions to be drawn from this material. Specifically, there are two main issues I would like to focus on: the variation present in the different construction types in which the autonomous verb occurs and the consequences for our view of the nature of diachronic change.

It has been made clear throughout that the differences between the various construction types are very small. This fact is illustrated by the mapping relations in (1), all

of which illustrate construction types in which the autonomous verb is or has been used throughout the history of the language.

(1) Construction types

    a. canonical passive

```
                          x              y
                          |              |
verb[can. pass.]     <    arg            arg      >
                          [-o]           [-r]

                          Ø              [-o]
                                         SUBJ
```
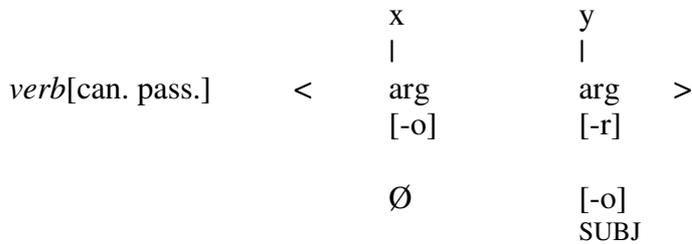
    b. autonomous inchoative (cf. chapter 5)

```
                          x              y
                                         |
verb [inchoative]    <                   arg      >
                                         [-r]
                                         [+o]
                                         OBJ
```

    c. impersonal passive

```
                          x              y
                          |              |
verb[imp. pass.]     <    arg            arg      >
                          [-o]           [-r]

                          Ø              [+o]
                                         OBJ
```

    d. active subject impersonal [ASI]

```
                          x              y
                          |              |
verb [ASI]           <    arg            arg      >
                          [-o]           [-r]

                          [-r]           [+o]
                          SUBJimp        OBJ
```
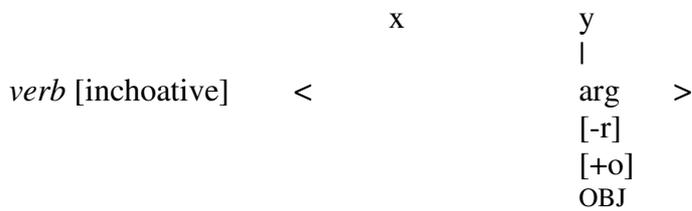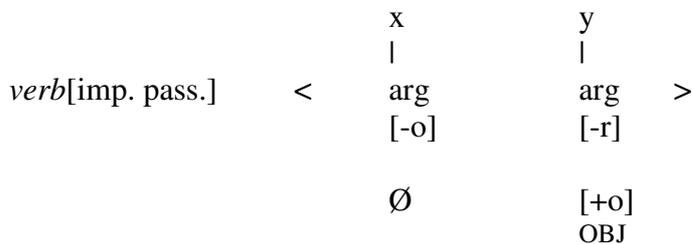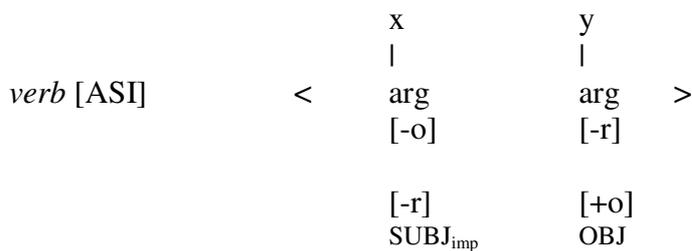
We note in these diagrams that the only thing to distinguish a two-place impersonal passive from a two-place canonical passive is the function of the patient argument.

       Furthermore and more importantly, we observe the three last constructions, the impersonal passive, the ASI and the inchoative, are even more similar: they all their patient

argument mapped to the object function as well as a non-overt thematic role, denoted as *x*. In the ASI-construction and the impersonal passive, this role is mapped to the first argument position of the predicate. In the ASI construction alone, the first argument position is mapped on to the phonologically null active subject. In the impersonal passive, the first argument position is mapped to zero. In the inchoative, the first argument position is deleted, leaving the highest thematic role present only in the lexical semantics of the predicate. These minimal syntactic differences lead to an interpretative similarity between these three construction types. It is likely that this similarity is behind the possibility for these construction types to be expressed by the same verbal morphology as well as the diachronic development that replaced the impersonal passive with the ASI construction.

Studying the development 'from passive to impersonal' in Irish, we noted that this development consisted of a number of smaller changes, some of which were affected by unrelated morphological changes in the language such as the disappearance of the infixed pronoun paradigms. As a consequence, it becomes clear that the autonomous verb does not exist in the language as a separate entity beyond its morphological form. In the same vein, the autonomous verb cannot 'change' as a distinct entity. Rather, as we have seen, different types of autonomous predicates changed at different times. The changes in question were related to other types of changes in the language as well as single properties of the autonomous constructions such as the subjectless state of the impersonal passive.

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