

Exhortative clauses in Scots

To form imperatives and similar exhortations, West Central Belt varieties of Scots can use a Standard English-like strategy such as (1a), or use the special forms *gonnae* (1b) or *wantae* (1c), which differ only in their exhortative strength (*gonnae* is stronger than *wantae*):

- (1) a. (Don't) sit there.
b. Wantae leave me alane right now. (cf. (*Will you please*) *leave me alone right now*)
c. Gonnae drop it right now. (cf. (*Will you please*) *drop it right now*)

We claim that these forms are grammaticalized particles (historically a non-finite periphrasis, i.e. *going/want to*) unique to such exhortative clause types. Drawing on data from the *Scots Syntax Atlas* Smith (2015-2019), we argue that this phenomenon is a recent innovation (particularly with *wantae*), but that it is gaining ground in the region. Adopting a microcomparative approach with Standard English (StE), we show how data from negation, overt subjects, and ellipsis indicate that such clauses constitute novel inversion environments in which *gonnae/wantae* move from T-to-C. (As the syntactic distribution of *gonnae* and *wantae* is identical, henceforth we refer mostly to *gonnae*; see also McCloskey 1997:214 on West Ulster *gon.*)

Historically derived from (reduced) questions (e.g. ~~*Are you going tae sit there?*~~), *gonnae/wantae* arise in clausal environments that are interpreted as imperatives, albeit with weaker force (which we refer to as *exhortatives*). Their syntax is decidedly non-interrogative, and, as we show, non-imperative as well. Evidence comes from several sources, including subject restrictions (2nd person only) and NPI licensing. We illustrate just one source here: medial *please*, a particle normally licensed in imperatives/exhortations (2a), but which cannot be embedded in a non-finite environment (reduced interrogative or otherwise) (2b).

- (2) a. Gonnae please shut up.
b. (Are you) gonna (*please) buy me a drink?

However, *gonnae* does show up in a high position in the clause. This becomes clear when the subject is optionally expressed (Weir 2013), as it must follow *gonnae* (3). If the subject is in [Spec, TP] as normal, then *gonnae* is higher than TP. Recently, Weir (2017) has argued that overt subjects in Scots imperatives remain low, inside *vP*. But evidence from negative overt-subject *gonnae* clauses suggests otherwise: negation (*no*) appears below the subject (4), unexpected if the subject remains within *vP*.

- (3) (*You) gonnae (you) drop it right now.
(4) Gonnae (*no) you (no) dae that.

We therefore claim that overt subjects in *gonnae* clauses raise out of *vP*, to [Spec, TP] (see Potsdam 2007 for a similar conclusion regarding StE imperatives), and *gonnae* is higher than TP.

Note, however, that the form of negation in *gonnae* clauses is *no* (akin to StE *not*), and not the expected negative form *don't* found in regular imperatives in these varieties of Scots (cf. also StE *Let's not do that* vs. ??*Let's don't do that*).

- (5) a. Don't dae that.
b. *Gonnae (you) don't dae that.

The lack of *do*-support is surprising: Scots is like StE in requiring that T have a verbal host. Two plausible explanations arise: (i) *gonnae* clauses lack T entirely (as various authors have proposed for imperatives in StE), or (ii) T is in fact properly hosted in *gonnae* clauses, despite appearances.

One argument against (i) and in favor of (ii) comes from VP ellipsis (“VPE”), which is possible in *gonnae* clauses:

- (6) [Context: speaker asks whether she should buy another round at the pub]
- a. Naw, gonnae (you) no. (cf. *No, (please) don't.*)
- b. ?Aye, gonnae. (cf. *Yes, ?(please) do.*)

VPE must be properly licensed by overt material occupying T at some stage of the derivation (Zagona 1982, Lobeck 1995), even if T later moves away (compare e.g. elliptical polar questions in StE: *Don't you?*). That this is VPE and not a larger, clause-sized ellipsis is revealed by the ability of negation and the optional subject to survive the ellipsis. Thus, given that VPE is possible in *gonnae* clauses, we argue that T is not only present in such clauses, but is in fact overtly filled, supporting position (ii). (These facts also militate against an analysis in which the subject remains low, within the verbal domain, as in Weir 2017.)

Specifically, we propose that VPE is licensed (and *do*-support precluded) by an element in T that then moves away: namely, *gonnae* or *wantae*. We suggest that these grammaticalized elements are in fact modals expressing a type of speaker-oriented modality (Bybee et al. 1994:§6.2.2) (similar to, but distinct from, agent-oriented modality such as necessity/obligation: *ibid.*:§6.2]), and thus are generated in T as other modals are, with *gonnae* encoding a stronger modal force than *wantae*. Their reanalysis from [V+*to*] complexes into modal elements generated in T is a clear example of upward grammaticalization (Roberts and Roussou 2003), and one that marks a new clause type. That is, we claim that these varieties of Scots have innovated a novel clausal environment – *exhortative* – in which *gonnae/wantae* are uniquely licensed, and that such clauses have been innovated as inversion environments by analogy with other non-indicative clause types in Scots and StE (cf. interrogatives, polar exclamatives, etc.; see Sailor *forthcoming* on innovative “partial verb second” environments in StE and elsewhere). This phenomenon therefore sheds light not only on broader differences in the syntax of Scots vs. StE, but also on recent cases of microvariation developing within varieties of Scots, as well.

References

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