That's that construction analyzed: *that be* 'resultatives' in Scottish English and beyond*

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1 Introduction

I investigate the following dialectal construction, to my knowledge previously discussed only by Miller 2000, 2003, 2004a,b, which I will refer to neutrally as *that be DP Pred* constructions: *that* followed by a form of *be*, followed by a DP, followed by some kind of predicate.

(1) a. That's the car repaired.
b. That's the clothes ironed.

(2) a. That's him on the train.
b. That's him upset.

(3) a. That's me cooking dinner now.
b. That's him left the school now.

- The meaning of this construction is different from, say, looking at a picture and saying *That's John on a boat/cooking dinner*.
- It is rather a temporal or aspectual construction; the meaning the construction conveys appears to be roughly-speaking inchoative, or 'perfect-like'.
- They can generally be paraphrased with 'have just' (or 'have just started'), or – in the case of the examples in (1) – with resultative participles.

(4) a. The car is repaired.
b. The clothes are ironed.

(5) a. He has just got on the train.
b. He has just become upset.

(6) a. I have just started cooking dinner.
b. He has just left (the) school.

- The construction as a whole is British English, but within British English, sentences like (1), with a passive participle and one argument, are more widely accepted than those in (3), which are 'active-like' and contain two arguments.

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- For example, Miller 2004b identifies sentences like (1) as having a fairly wide distribution in the British Isles, but states that sentences like (3) seem to be restricted to Scottish (or Northern British) English.
- The examples in (2), with PPs and adjectives in the predicate position, are fine for Scottish English speakers; they seem to be of intermediate status (in a way to be discussed) for Southern British English speakers.
- American English speakers I have consulted reject all of these constructions (or tag them as 'British-sounding').
- I will refer to examples like (1) as 'passive-like' or 'general British' examples of the construction, and to examples like (3) as 'active-like' or 'Scottish' examples.

Key questions:

- What is the syntax of the construction?
- What is the semantics of the construction, i.e what is the precise nature of the 'inchoative/perfect-like' meaning, and how does this meaning come about?
- What is the locus of the inter-dialectal variation: why do some Englishes lack the construction altogether, some allow only the 'passive-like' cases in (1), and some allow the less restricted cases in (3)?

I address the syntax first in section 2, and then propose a semantic analysis in section 3.

2 Syntax

(7) that 's the car repaired
that be DP predicate

The DP is the argument of the predicate, so I'm going to take it as read that the DP must be in the projection of the predicate: that is, we have (8a) and not a structure where the DP is a complement of *be* (8b).

(8) a. [that [be [the car repaired]]]
b. [that [[be the car] repaired]]

Two questions considered in this section:

- What kind of thing can the 'predicate' part be?
- What is the syntax of the whole construction?

2.1 Nature of the predicate: data

Miller 2000, 2003, 2004a,b discusses the construction, specifically discussing the variant that involves past/passive participles. Miller 2004b gives the examples in (9), noting that (9a), the 'passive-like' construction, has a wider dialectal distribution than the 'active-like' (9b, c, d).

(9) a. That's him consulted. (≈ He has been consulted)
b. That's me seen it. (≈ I've seen it now)
c. Is that you left the school now? (≈ Have you left school?)
d. That's her finished. (≈ She has finished)

- On the basis of examples using these participles, Miller refers to the construction as 'resultative', and this seems apt given both the form of the participle and the 'inchoative' meaning.
- As we will see, the 'resultative' label is likely to be very apt for the general British, 'passive-like' construction, i.e. (9a).
- However, it does not take account of the wider range of predicates that Scottish English allows. As well as the forms in (9b–d), all of the below forms are grammatical in Scottish English.

(10) (Scottish English)

a. That's him asleep. (adjective)
b. That's your father home/back at work. (PP)
c. That's him cooking the dinner. (present participle)

The post-DP predicate cannot be a non-participial form of a verb, whether finite or not:

(11) a. *That's him cook the dinner now.
b. *That's him cooks the dinner now.
c. *That's him be in Scotland for six months.

However, participial forms of auxiliary *be* are OK:

(12) (Scottish English)

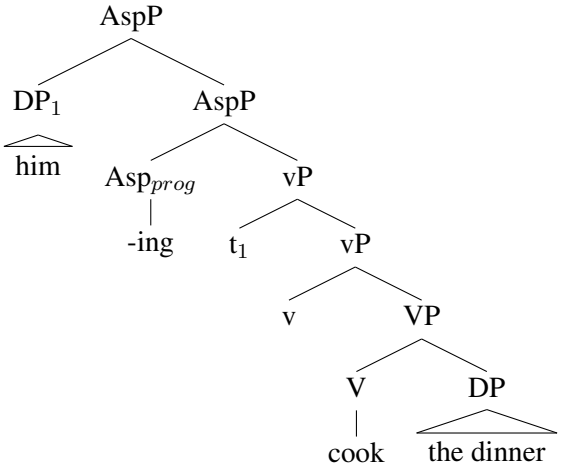
a. That's him being consulted now.
b. That's him been in Scotland for six months.

2.2 Nature of the predicate: analysis

I propose that the predicate in the Scottish English version of the construction is simply any kind of Asp(ect)P, with the DP inside this projection (raising from its first-merge position).

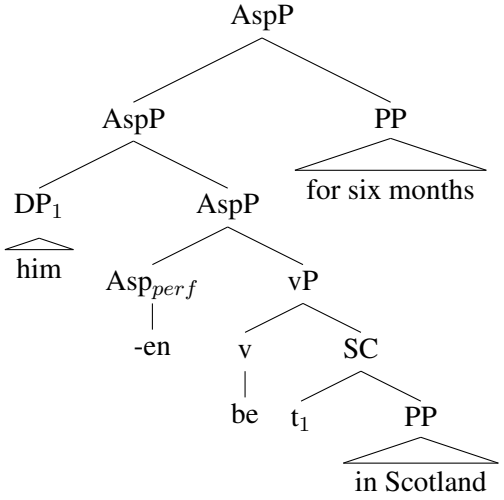
(13) a. That's him cooking the dinner.

b.



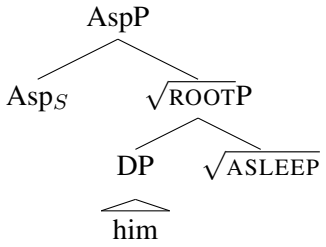
(14) a. That's him been in Scotland for six months.

b.



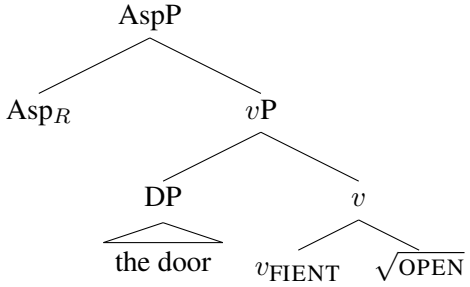
I assume, following Embick 2003, 2004, that an Asp head (Embick's Asp_S) can be marged with 'adjectival' roots resulting in a 'stative participle' ($\approx$ adjectival) form:[1]

(15) a. That's him asleep.

b.


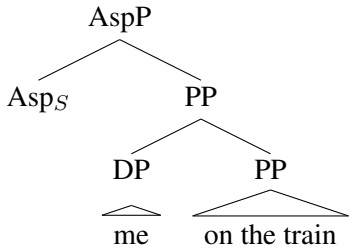
- Embick derives contrasts between 'stative' forms (like *open*) and 'resultative' forms (like *opened*) in terms of whether Asp selects a vP, or directly selects a root.
- In resultative participles, an Asp_R head merges with a vP headed by a fientive/inchoative little v, which in turn combines with a root or phrase that denotes a state.
- That is the syntax that I suppose is present in the 'general British' pattern (e.g. *That's the door opened*)

(16) a. That's the door opened.

b.


- Given this kind of flexibility already suggested for Asp, I propose that Asp_S can also select a PP, giving us forms like *that's me on the train*.
- This is plausibly what is going on when PPs are used predicatively, e.g. *He's in the kitchen*, *he stayed in the kitchen*, etc.
- I suppose also that *me* here is an external argument within (the extended projection of) the PP (following e.g. Svenonius 2007, a.o.)

(17) a. That's me on the train.

b.


- Saying that only AspPs appear in the *that be DP predicate* construction, combined with independently proposed flexibility in what Asp heads can select, allows for enough flexibility to capture the many categories that can fill the Predicate role.
- But it also captures those categories that are ruled out, i.e. non-aspectual (non-participial) forms of verbs, like **that's him be in Scotland*.

An additional benefit of this analysis is that it lets us specify clearly what the restriction is on the 'general British' pattern:

- In Scottish(/Northern) English, the predicate may be any Asp phrase.
- In other British English dialects, the predicate may only be a phrase headed by Asp_R, as in (16b).

[1] I depart from Embick here by showing *him* as generated within the projection of the Root, rather than in [Spec, AspP].

- Importantly, there is no room for an external argument in the structure of resultative participles (16b), only the theme *the door*.
- We do not therefore find forms with external arguments, like *that's him left the school*, in the 'general British' pattern.
- However, the Scottish pattern allows for Asp heads that select v_{ag} (as in (13), (14)), allowing for such examples.

Proposing this syntax also gives us a handle on a particular interpretive difference between the general British pattern and the Scottish pattern, in examples like (18):

(18) That's him dead.

This string is grammatical in both dialects, but their interpretation is different.

- In Scottish English, (18) can mean simply 'he has recently died'.
- However, in the 'general British' pattern, (18) only has what has been characterized as the 'job done'/'that's over' interpretation (Kratzer 2000, Embick 2004)
- i.e. it most naturally implies either that someone has killed him, or that we're somehow putting a focus on the culmination of the dying event. (This reading is accessible in Scottish English, too, but isn't the only one)
- This is just the kind of interpretation that resultative participles get; e.g. as Kratzer 2000 and Embick 2004 discuss, sentences like (19) are strange out of the blue, but fine in a context where it's my job to kick each of a series of tires to check if they're pumped up:

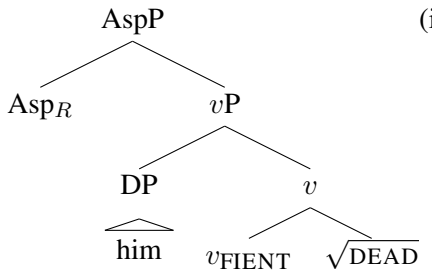
(19) The tires are kicked (so now I can go home for the day).

Suppose that the root *dead* can work similarly.[2]

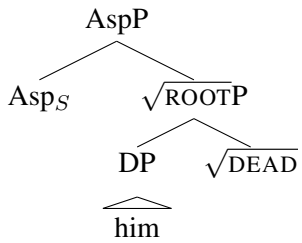
- In construction with Asp_R, the root $\sqrt{\text{DEAD}}$ only gets the 'job done'/'finally'/'that's over' interpretation.
- In construction with Asp_S, the root $\sqrt{\text{DEAD}}$ ends up denoting simply the state of being dead.

(20) a. That's him dead.

b. (i)



(ii)



The 'general British' pattern only allows the structure on the left, but Scottish English additionally allows the structure on the right, accounting for the extra interpretation available in Scottish English.

2.3 Syntax of the whole construction

Miller 2000, 2004b proposes that constructions like (21a) are to be analogized with reverse (pseudo-)cleft structures such as (21b).

(21) a. That's the car repaired.
b. That's what I mean.

- For Miller, the *that* in (21a) is a discourse anaphor, being identified with a noun phrase modified by a postnominal participle, e.g. *the car which is repaired*.

[2] Lots of questions are being put aside here – e.g. how/why does the 'job done' reading actually come about for a resultative participle, and why is there homophony between the two structures illustrated here (both pronounced *dead*). See Kratzer 2000, Embick 2004, 2009 for discussion of these issues. All I want to establish here, though, is that a syntax that assumes that the 'general BrE' pattern can only contain Asp_R captures the obligatory 'job done' interpretation as well as the other syntactic facts.

- As I'll discuss in section 3, I don't think this is the right semantic treatment of the AspP.
- However, I argue that Miller's syntactic proposal is very close to the mark, in the sense that sentences like (21a) are *identificational* sentences in the sense of Higgins 1973.
- That is, they are exactly on a par with sentences like (22), involving a 'presentational' deictic pronoun *that*, a copula, and a phrase which 'identifies' the entity being picked out by *that*:

(22) a. That's Mary.
b. That is the mayor of Cambridge.

We find many syntactic parallels between identificational sentences and *that be DP Pred* constructions (see e.g. Higgins 1973, den Dikken 2006, Moltmann 2013 for discussion of these sorts of tests).

- Subextraction from the post-copular phrase is degraded both in identificational sentences and in *that be DP Pred* constructions.[3]

(23) *The subject which that is [a teacher of t] is quite difficult.

(24) *The school which that's [John left t] has good results.

- Identificational structures cannot be 'inverted' (unlike specificational sentences like *John is the culprit/the culprit is John*, and identity sentences like *Clark Kent is Superman*); neither can *that be DP Pred*:

(25) *The mayor of Cambridge is that.

(26) *The door opened is that.

- Identificational *that* can be subsequently pronominalized as *it*; so too can the *that* in *that be DP Pred*:

(27) Is that Mary/the mayor of Cambridge? — Yes, **it** is.

(28) Is that you left the school now? — Yes, **it** is (?me left the school).[4]

- Identificational sentences don't tolerate negation very well 'out of the blue', and ditto *that be DP Pred*...

(29) ?#That isn't the mayor of Cambridge. (said out of the blue)

(30) a. #That isn't John left the school.
b. #That isn't the clothes ironed.
(cf. *John hasn't left the school* and *The clothes aren't ironed*, which are fine)

- ...but when given more context (for example, contrasting with some other assertion), both become much better:

(31) a. ?We're not at a society dinner, that isn't the mayor of Cambridge over there or anything.
b. That isn't the mayor of Cambridge, is it?
c. That is the mayor of Cambridge. — No it isn't.

[3] The effect is a bit variable. I illustrate with relatives as they show a sharp effect. In both identificational sentences and *that be DP Pred* sentences, question formation is rather better, but still degraded:

(i) a. ??Which subject is that [a teacher of t]?
b. ??Which school is that [John left t]?

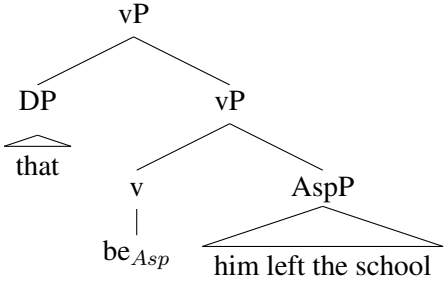
[4] As indicated, it is possible to express the AspP here, but eliding it is preferred.

(32) a. ?That's not him left the school or anything, he's just taking a college course in addition.
b. That's not him left the school already, is it?
c. That's him left the school. — No it isn't.

All of these tests point towards *that be DP Pred* constructions being identificational.

The syntax, then, involves a kind of *be* which selects for an aspectual phrase, with *that* generated in its Spec.[5] I label this as be_{Asp}.

(33) a. That's him left the school.
b.



- The variation between the different Englishes can then be captured in terms of selectional restrictions of be_{Asp}.
- In Southern British English, be_{Asp} only selects AspR; in Scottish English, be_{Asp} selects any 'flavor' of Asp.

Importantly, even though this *be* selects an AspP, it is a 'copular-type' *be*, not an 'auxiliary-type' *be*; and it has a semantics to match, to which I now turn.

3 Semantics

Two questions:

- If the sentence is identificational, what is *that* being identified with, and how?
- What is the interpretation of *that* in the first place?

The semantics I adopt for the construction as a whole is that put forward for specificational sentences by Romero 2005 (see also Heycock 2012), adapted by Moltmann 2013 for identificational sentences (which Moltmann argues to be a subtype of specificational sentence).

In a 'standard' specificational sentence such as *The winner is John*, Romero's specificational *be* equates the denotation of the individual concept denoted by the subject *the winner* at situation s with the denotation of the postcopular DP (*John*).

(34) a. $[\![\text{be}_{spec}]\!] = \lambda x_e.\lambda y_{\langle s,e\rangle}.\lambda s.y(s) = x$
b. $[\![\text{the winner}]\!] = \lambda s.$ the winner in s
c. $[\![\text{John}]\!] = \text{John}$
d. $[\![\text{the winner is John}]\!] = \lambda s.[[\![\text{the winner}]\!](s) = \text{John}]$

I use a version of Moltmann 2013's semantics for identificational sentences, in which presentational *that* is also an individual concept, mapping a situation to an entity.[6]

(35) $[\![\text{that}]\!] = \lambda s.$ the entity deictically indicated in s

[5] If we don't want *be* to be a transitive verb with an argument in its Spec, we can adopt a variant of Heycock 2012's syntax, in which a semantically vacuous *be* selects a functional head F, as in (i).

(i) [$_{vP}$ be [$_{FP}$ that [$_{FP}$ F [$_{AspP}$ the clothes ironed]]]]

I don't know that anything crucial for the present story hinges on choosing between these two alternatives.

[6] Actually, for Moltmann, *that* maps a situation to a trope; she identifies this *that* with the usage in a sentence like *John looks like/sounds like that*. Identificational sentences pick out entities as being the bearers of deictically-indicated tropes. What is crucial for present purposes, though, is just the treatment of *that* as an individual concept, i.e. a function from world/situations to some other basic type.

Identificational sentences are then basically a type of specificational sentence, using Romero's specificational *be*:

(36) $[\![\text{that be}_{spec}\ \text{Mary}]\!] = \lambda s.[[\![\text{that}]\!](s) = \text{Mary}]$

If this is right, then what is *that* being identified with in a case like *That's the clothes ironed*?

- I suppose that *that* in such cases is not an individual concept mapping worlds to entities, but rather one that maps worlds (or better situations) to *times*.
- It maps the situation of evaluation to the 'now' of that situation.

(37) $[\![\text{that}_{\text{time}}]\!] = \lambda s.\iota t.t = \text{NOW}(s)$

Support for this comes from sentences like (38), which are apparently simple identificational sentences where the postcopular phrase is a moment of time.

(38) a. Well, that's 7 p.m. and the pizza guy's not here yet.
≈ it's now 7 p.m.
b. That's dinnertime, children! Put your toys away!
≈ it's now dinnertime[7]

American English speakers I have consulted reject sentences like (38), suggesting that $\textit{that}_{\text{time}}$ simply doesn't exist in AmE. If the analysis I propose is on the right lines, that explains why AmE speakers also reject any kind of *that be DP Pred* sentence like *That's the clothes ironed*.

- Note that believing that $\textit{that}_{\text{temp}}$ maps a situation of evaluation onto a moment (rather than an interval) requires that the situation being evaluated be 'momentary' (rather than having an extended 'timeslice').
- That seems right: if we manipulate the situation of evaluation with a *when*-clause, only 'momentary' situations (e.g. if we are talking about the culmination of accomplishments or achievements) are compatible with *that be DP Pred* sentences.

(39) a. When the inspectors got on the train, that was me in trouble.
b. #When I was travelling to London, that was me in trouble.

Suppose, then, that be_{Asp} has a semantics like that of Romero's specificational *be* except that it takes *times* and individual concepts of times rather than entities:

(40) $[\![\text{be}_{Asp}]\!] = \lambda t_i.\lambda T_{\langle \text{s,i}\rangle}.\lambda s.T(s) = t$

So a sentence like (41a) (ignoring tense of *be*) will end up with the semantics in (41b) – where the contribution of the AspP still has to be filled in.

(41) a. That's the clothes ironed.
b. $[\![\text{that be}_{Asp}\ [\text{AspP the clothes ironed}]]\!] = \lambda s.[\text{NOW}(s) = \textbf{???}]$

- The AspP has to contribute a time for the 'now' to be equated to.
- Aspect Phrases denote properties of times, as in (42).[8]

(42) a. $[\![[\text{Asp}_{prog}\ [\text{John cooking the dinner}]]]\!]$
$= \lambda t.\lambda s.\exists e.\text{cook}(\text{John})(\text{dinner})(e)(s)\ \&\ \tau(e) \supseteq t$
b. $[\![[\text{Asp}_{R}\ [\text{the clothes ironed}]]]\!]$
$= \lambda t.\lambda s.\exists e.\text{BECOME}(\lambda s'.\text{ironed}(\text{clothes})(s'))(e)(s)\ \&\ \tau(e) < t$

[7] *Dinnertime* seems to be ambiguous between a 'moment' reading (*Dinnertime is 6 p.m.* = dinner starts at 6 p.m.) and an 'interval' reading (*Dinnertime is between 6 and 7*). The example shows the 'moment' reading, i.e. the start of the interval.)

[8] For brevity I show external arguments/agents as arguments of predicates, disregarding issues of 'severing' external arguments from the verb (Kratzer 1996). (42b) is a rough approximation to what we want resultative participles to mean. The point is less the precise denotation and more just the point that they denote properties of times.

I propose that these properties of times can be coerced, via (for example) choice-function mechanisms, into times that satisfy the properties.[9]

(43) $f(\lambda t.\lambda s.\exists e.\text{cook}(\text{John})(\text{dinner})(e)(s)\ \&\ \tau(e) \supseteq t)$
= t', where t' is a time within the runtime of the event of John cooking dinner

(44) [Asp$_R$ the clothes ironed] $\rightsquigarrow t'$, where t' is a time after the runtime of the event of the clothes becoming ironed

And so we have:

(45) a. ⟦that's me cooking the dinner⟧ =
$\lambda s.\text{NOW}(s) = t'$, where t' is a time in which I am cooking the dinner
b. ⟦that's the clothes ironed⟧ =
$\lambda s.\text{NOW}(s) = t'$, where t' is a time after the completion of the event of the clothes becoming ironed

- We can note here that this doesn't quite capture the 'inchoative' or 'just started/just happened' meaning of *that be DP Pred* sentences.
- (45a), for example, is true of any situation taking place during my cooking the dinner – but it most naturally means that I have just *started* cooking the dinner.
- Similarly (45b) will be true at any time after the clothes have become ironed.
- However, I argue that this 'just started/happened' meaning of the construction is an implicature, and not part of the semantics on its own.
- For example, the below dialogues are coherent, but represent a cancellation of the 'recentness' implicature:

(46) (I get on a train. I take some time to find a seat, make myself comfortable, get my laptop out, drink a coffee, etc. and only then phone my wife to let her know:)
a. That's me on the train. Well, in fact I've been on it for a while.
b. That's me travelling home. Well, in fact I have been for a while.

(47) A: Haven't seen you in a while! How's your son doing?
B: Aye, good. That's him left the school now of course. Well actually that was six months ago, but he's been doing fine at university.

The predicate does not have to have started holding of the argument in the very recent past;[10] that is, the semantics only requires that the 'now' is a moment within the denotation of the AspP.

- I suggest that pragmatically, making specific reference to the 'now' of a situation implies that the moments just before it were different, i.e. that the condition describes has just begun.
- In support of this, note that there is a reading of the word *now* (particularly when preposed) that works very similarly.

(48) a. This is a wug. **Now** there are two of them.
b. **Now** he's cooking dinner.
c. **Now** he's finished school.

Treating 'temporal *that*' as an anaphor that refers to a situation's 'now' therefore captures both the truth-conditional meaning and the implicated meaning of the construction.

[9] The reader might wonder if it would not be easier to simply predicate the AspP of (the extension of) *that*, allowing us to avoid this kind of coercion. This would indeed be easier, but would run against the syntactic tests in section 2.3 indicating that the *that be DP Pred* construction is identificational, not predicative.

[10] Note that *just* encodes in the assetoric semantics the 'very recent' meaning that is a mere implicature in *that be DP Pred*:

(i) My son's just left school. ?#Well actually that was six months ago.

4 Conclusion

The *that be DP Pred* construction:

- is better called the *that be AspP* construction;
- is an identificational construction that identifies a temporal anaphor *that* with a time within the denotation of the AspP;
- is unavailable in American English because AmE lacks the relevant *that*;
- only allows a restricted set of AspPs in Southern British English (namely Asp_RPs), but a much wider variety in Scottish (and possibly Northern British) English.

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