Category Fusion. Prepositional Constructions in Q-Celtic Languages.

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One of the characteristic (and archaic) features of the Celtic languages is the absence of a singular verbal form with the meaning 'to have'. The principal way of expressing possession is through phrases with prepositions (e.g. Irish *ag* 'at', Scottish Gaelic *aig* 'at'). Pronominal prepositions (also known as 'conjugated prepositions' or 'prepositional pronouns'), another distinctive feature of the Celtic languages, consist of a preposition and a suffixed pronoun, or rather a pronominal personal ending. This construction may be analyzed as an instance of **category fusion** or **conflation** (in the extended sense of Hale and Keyser 2002). Thus the Irish equivalents of the English sentence 'I have money' is *Tá airgead agam*, literally 'is money <u>at-me</u>', where *agam* '<u>at-me</u>' is an instance of the discussed construction.

Celtic prepositions not only display a multitude of meanings, they also appear frequently in metaphorical and idiomatic expressions (one of their characteristic usages is in the above mentioned possessive constructions). It may be claimed that Celtic prepositional phrases (especially with nominal elements) convey meanings which in other languages are expressed by other categories (such as verbs, adjectives, adverbs). It has been observed already by A. G. van Hamel (1912) that: "in Irish syntax prepositions take a much more prominent place than in that of any other language". Consequently, Celtic Englishes are also rich in expressions with prepositions, some of them literal translations from the respective Celtic languages (e.g. *It's forgotten at me* or *The health isn't great with her*).

This paper will focus on the properties of prepositional constructions (and especially possessive constructions) in Q-Celtic languages (and in Celtic Englishes), and comment on some historical developments leading to this formation.

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