

Parameters in the Syntax of Clitics

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Parameters in the Syntax of Clitics

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0. Introduction

In this paper it will be argued that cliticization is a two-step process as in (1), consisting of movement of the maximal projection containing the clitic (DP) to a position where it receives case, and subsequent movement of the head of the moved projection (D^0) to an appropriate host, the highest functional head in the extended projection of V that is available to the clitic without violating the ECP.¹

- (1) ... D^0_i +AGR ... [_{DP} t_i]_j ... t_j ...

The distance over which the clitic can move is determined by the distance over which the verb raises, which in turn is determined by lexical features on the heads in its extended projection (Pollock 1989, Chomsky 1991). The verb voids intermediate barriers, thus enabling the clitic to reach an appropriate host by means of head movement. Under this scenario parametrization of clitic movement is a side effect of parameters in the syntax of verbs.

1. Cliticization as Movement

Cliticization in Romance has a number of properties in common with instances of movement that involve maximal projections, thus supporting the hypothesis that syntactic movement is involved: clitics can move long-distance (2a), they obey the SSC (2b), they cannot strand a preposition (2c), they cannot move out of an NP if there is an overt possessor present (2d), and they trigger past participle agreement (2e), as illustrated with the following sentences from French.

- (2) a. Jean les a entendu réciter par Paul
 Jean them has heard recite by Paul
 b. * Jean les a entendu Paul réciter
 Jean them has heard Paul recite
 c. * Paul lui a voté pour
 Paul him has voted for
 d. Paul en a vu une/*ma photo
 Paul thereof has seen a/my picture
 e. Christina les a peintes
 Christina them has painted-AGR

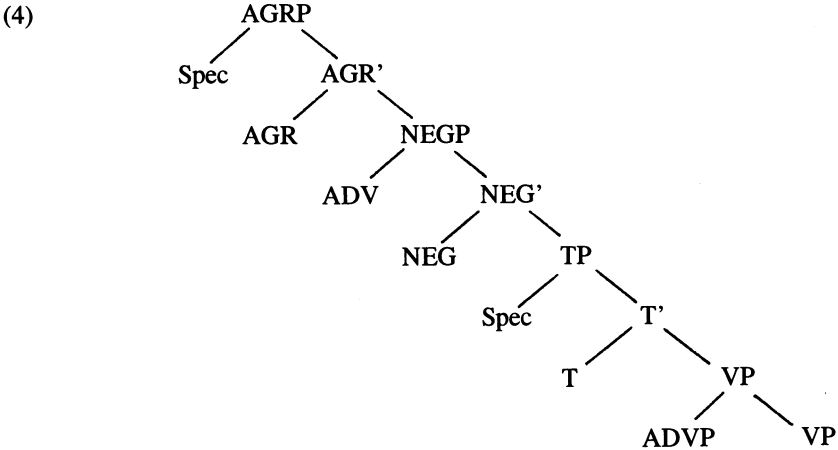
Especially past participle agreement, a process associated with specifier-head agreement between the participle and a moved object NP which moves through its specifier (Chomsky 1991), shows that an analysis of cliticization solely in terms of head movement, as proposed by Kayne (1989, 1991) is insufficient (see also the discussion of ECM-verbs in section 5 below).

2. The Blocking Nature of Heads

The traditional arguments in favor of an analysis of clitic movement as an instance of head movement concentrate on the blocking effect of other heads, especially complementizers and negation. Upon closer scrutiny, however, the evidence turns out to be not very strong. Kayne (1989) gives examples like the following to illustrate the blocking effect of negation:

- (3) a. Gianni non li vuole vedere
Gianni not them wants to see
- b. * Gianni li vuole non vedere
 Gianni them wants not to see

Whereas in (3a) the clitic can climb, because it does not have to cross negation, according to Kayne, such climbing is excluded in (3b), apparently because the clitic crosses negation. Italian infinitives, however, unlike their French counterparts, move all the way to AGR, appearing in a position preceding the base position of negation. The relative positions of functional heads in the extended projection of V in Romance is given below (Belletti 1992):



As the following sentences show, the infinitival verb must occur in a position preceding the negative adverb *più*, which indicates the base position of negation. The negative clitic *non* precedes the verb, because it must adjoin to an appropriate host at s-structure.²

- (5) a. * Per non più mangiare
for not anymore eat
b. Per non mangiare più
for not to eat anymore

When a pronominal clitic and the negative clitic appear together, the former is always internal to the latter with respect to the verb, as can be seen in (3a) above, i.e. the relative order is: negative clitic - pronominal clitic - verb. If this reflects the order of derivation, it means that the pronominal clitic has attached to the verb in its surface position before the negative clitic has. This means that the verb and the clitic must both have moved over the base position of negation when it was still occupied by the negative clitic. This, in turn, means that negation cannot by definition have a blocking effect for movement of pronominal clitics: the facts in (3) need to receive an alternative explanation (see section 6 below).

The blocking effect of an overt complementizer Kayne (1989) illustrates with the following contrast, once again from Italian:

- (6) a. * Gianni li vuole che Maria veda
Gianni them wants that Maria see-SUBJ
b. Non ti saprei che dire
not you know-1S what to say

These examples seem to show that an overt complementizer blocks clitic climbing, whereas the presence of a *wh*-phrase in the specifier of COMP does not. It should be noticed that the contrast is only apparent: the (b)-sentence is marginal at best; the sentence is only acceptable with a second person dative clitic, but degrades with other clitics, presence of the negation on the matrix verb is a prerequisite, and only *sapere* can occur as matrix verb (see Moore 1991 for discussion of parallel facts in Spanish).

In general, though, intervening heads do not seem to have a blocking effect on clitic movement, as the following examples, where clitic movement takes place over a quantifier and a main verb, and an adjective and a copula, respectively, show:

- (7) a. Christine en a lu deux
Christine thereof has read two

- b. Paul leur est resté fidèle
Paul them is remained faithful

The fact that only a small subset of heads, viz. negation in multi-clausal structures, complementizers and other clitics (see section 6 below), block clitic movement needs to be explained. Another fact that needs to be explained is that clitics can escape L-barriers under certain conditions. In clitic climbing structures, the embedded verb raises over a certain distance, clearing the way for the clitic, because it voids barriers on its way, by lexicalizing functional heads; but since the verb never raises further than AGR, AGRP will by definition retain its barrierhood: it is governed by C, which does not L-mark it. The next section will deal with this problem.

3. L-Barriers and Specifiers

The notion of L-marking is defined as follows by Chomsky (1986: 24):

- (8) Where α is a lexical category, α L-marks β iff β agrees with the head of γ that is θ -governed by α

The notion of agreement in this definition is motivated by a contrast in the acceptability of extraction from subjects: as the following cases from Spanish show, extraction from a subject in its base position gives a worse result than extraction from a subject that occupies the specifier position of the embedded CP. The only difference is that the CP is L-marked by the matrix verb, whereas the IP is not L-marked by C, so the difference must be explained in terms of precisely this difference in structure.

- (9) a. * Esta es la autora [de la que]_i [_{IP} [varias traducciones t_i] han ganado premios internacionales]
This is the author by whom several translations have won international awards
b. [De qué autora]_i, no sabes [_{CP} [qué traducciones t_i] han ganado premios internacionales]
By what author don't you know what translations have won international awards

Unlike what has been proposed by Sternefeld (1991), the PP *de qué autora* cannot be interpreted as an independent satellite of the matrix verb; it must be interpreted as part of the subject. It can never remain in situ, while the embedded subject is moved, for instance:

- (10) * Qué traducciones_i no sabes de qué autora [_i han ganado premios internacionales
Which translations don't you know by which author have won international awards

Specifier-head agreement is the only mechanism available to account for these facts. The following facts also support such an analysis (cf. Torrego 1988). As (11b) shows, *cuántos* cannot move over a wh-element. This means that in (11a) it cannot have moved out of the object position, but must have moved along to the specifier of the embedded CP as part of the questioned object.

- (11) a. Cuántos_i no sabes [_{CP} [_i de qué autora]_j [_{IP} mandar _{t_j}]]
How many don't you know of what author to send
b. * Cuántos_i no sabes si leíste [_i de esos] el año pasado
How many don't you know whether you read of those last year

An alternative derivation, whereby *cuántos* has moved to the matrix clause before the object has been moved to the specifier of the embedded CP is ruled out for independent reasons, since under such a derivation the intermediate trace of the former would be covered up by the latter, and hence be irrecoverable, resulting in an illicit representation.

4. Clitic Climbing and Vacuous Movement

The fact that specifier positions of L-marked maximal projections are indirectly L-marked via specifier-head agreement, can also explain whether or not a language has clitic climbing. Consider the following well-known contrast between French and Italian: though these languages are closely related, clitic climbing in so-called restructuring contexts is possible in Italian but not in French.

- (12) a. * Jean les veut voir
Jean them wants to see
b. Gianni li vuole vedere
Gianni them wants to see

This difference correlates with another difference between the two languages, viz. the distance over which infinitival verbs raise: as mentioned before, Italian infinitivals raise all the way to AGR; French infinitivals, on the other hand, can optionally raise to T, but no higher, as illustrated in the following examples, where the verb must follow the negative adverb (compare the sentences in (5) above):

- (13) a. Ne pas comprendre l'italien
 NEG not to understand Italian
 b. * Ne comprendre pas l'italien
 NEG to understand not Italian

This correlation between the distance over which the verb raises and the presence or absence of clitic climbing also holds in older stages of Romance (see Haverkort 1993), as illustrated by the following Old French sentences: the clitic can climb, and the infinitival raises to AGR, preceding the negative adverb.³

- (14) a. Je la voudrai marier bien
 I her want-FUT marry gladly
 b. Car elle commença à ne le chercher pas
 because she started to NEG her to look for not

As a consequence of this difference in the distance over which the verb moves, a different number of barriers intervenes between the clitic in the embedded clause and the matrix AGR in Old French and Italian, and Modern French, respectively (barriers indicated in boldface):

- (15) a. V [_{CP} Spec [_{C'} C [_{AGRP} NP [_{AGR'} V+T+AGR [_{TP} Spec [_{T'} t [_{VP} t
 clitic ...
 b. V [_{CP} Spec [_{C'} C [_{AGRP} NP [_{AGR'} AGR [_{TP} Spec [_{T'} V+T [_{VP} t clitic
 ...

In Italian and Old French, there is only one barrier intervening between the clitic in the embedded clause and its potential matrix host, viz. AGR; barrierhood of VP and TP has been voided by verb raising to AGR. The embedded CP is L-marked by the matrix verb, which selects it and assigns it a thematic role, so it is not a barrier. Under the definition of L-marking given in the preceding section, L-marking extends over the specifier of the CP, under specifier-head agreement. Thus, if the AGRP is vacuously moved into the specifier of CP, its barrierhood can be voided.

In Modern French, on the other hand, two barriers are intervening, since the verb has not raised further than T: AGRP and TP. Similar movement of AGRP to the specifier of CP is possible; that way, the barrierhood of AGRP is voided, but TP retains its barrierhood. Vacuous movement of TP into the specifier of AGRP does not have the desired effect: since C is by definition not an L-marking category: it is not lexical, and in this context it is not lexicalized by the verb. Consequently, the clitic cannot move out of the embedded clause, since then it would violate the ECP.

Vacuous movement of the barrier that contains the clitic to an L-marked specifier position accounts immediately for the marginal status of sentence (6b) above, and for the generally very degraded status of cases where a clitic climbs over a wh-phrase: the specifier of the embedded CP is occupied by the wh-phrase, and therefore not available as a landing site for the moved barrier; thus barrierhood cannot be voided by this mechanism when a wh-phrase is present.

5. A Dual Chain Analysis

An analysis along these lines predicts that clitic climbing should be possible in Modern French in cases where the infinitival complement is not a full-fledged clause. The complements of ECM-verbs, which select an AGRP instead of a full CP, are a case in point. As the following examples show, the subject of the complement of an ECM-verb can get assigned accusative case by the matrix verb, indicative of the fact that this verb is in a government relation with the specifier of AGRP (not surprisingly, since it selects and hence L-marks AGRP, and via specifier-head agreement L-marking is extended to the specifier of AGRP).

- (16) a. Jean a entendu Paul réciter le poème
 Jean has heard Paul recite the poem
 b. Jean l'a entendu réciter le poème
 Jean him has heard recite the poem

Since there is no barrier intervening between the position where the maximal projection containing the clitic gets case and the matrix AGR (after the matrix verb has raised), the subject clitic can climb from the specifier of AGRP (as in (16b)). Since nothing is blocking it, it must even climb, as the ungrammaticality of the following example shows.

- (17) * Jean a entendu le réciter le poème
 Jean has heard him recite the poem

The idea that clitic movement proceeds in two distinct steps, the first involving movement of the whole DP containing the clitic to a position where it receives case (the specifier of AGRP in the above examples), the second subsequent head movement to an appropriate host position, predicts that climbing of the object clitic should be impossible. This is corroborated by the facts:

- (18) a. * Jean l'a entendu Paul réciter
 Jean it has heard Paul recite
 b. * Jean le l'a entendu réciter
 Jean him it heard recite

The infinitival verb can raise to T, but no higher. This means that TP remains a barrier, unless its barrierhood can be voided somehow. Vacuous movement of the TP barrier into the specifier of AGRP is excluded in these cases, in view of the fact that that position is occupied by the subject DP; it is the position where the latter receives accusative case. The DP containing the object clitic gets accusative case in a position that is dominated by TP; hence, a barrier intervenes between the clitic and a potential matrix host, and the object clitic is forced to find a functional head in the embedded clause as its host.

Interestingly, the subject of an ECM-complement can also get dative or oblique case from a preposition; in that case, it does not occupy the specifier of AGRP, but occurs in post-VP position. The analysis proposed here predicts that in exactly those contexts, object clitics should be able to climb: the barrierhood of TP can be voided by moving it into the vacant specifier of AGRP, and consequently no barriers intervene between the object clitic and the matrix AGR (after the matrix verb has raised), forcing the object clitic to climb. The facts bear this prediction out:

- (19) a. Jean l'a entendu réciter à/par Paul
 Jean it has heard recite by Paul
 b. Jean le lui a entendu réciter
 Jean it him has heard recite

As the following sentences show, if both DPs are realized as clitics, they must both climb, since no barriers intervene between either one of them and the functional head in the matrix clause that acts as host position, i.e. AGR.

- (20) a. * Jean l'a entendu lui réciter
 Jean it has heard him recite
 b. * Jean lui a entendu le réciter
 Jean him has heard it recite

6. Adjunction and Substitution of Heads

The obligatory climbing together of the clitics can also be explained in terms of Relativized Minimality: both processes of cliticization are instances of adjunction, so in terms of Relativized Minimality, one clitic acts as a closer governor for the trace of the other, leading to an ECP-violation. As the following abstract representations show, the only configurations that are allowed in terms of Relativized Minimality are ones where the chains of the two clitics do not overlap, or ones where the two clitics are adjoined to the same head and therefore are not in an asymmetric c-command configuration with respect of each other.

- (21) a. ... clitic_i ... t_i ... clitic_j ... t_j
 b. ... clitic_i+clitic_j+AGR ... t_i t_j ...
 c. * ... clitic_i+AGR ... clitic_j+AGR ... t_i t_j ...

Similar facts have been brought up by Aissen & Perlmutter (1983) in their discussion of clause reduction in Spanish:

- (22) a. Quiero permitir-te hacer-lo
 (I) want to allow you to do it
 b. Quiero permitir-te-lo hacer
 (I) want to allow you it to do
 c. Te lo quiero permitir hacer
 you it (I) want to allow to do
 d. Te quiero permitir hacer-lo
 you (I) want to allow to do it
 e. * Te quiero permitir-lo hacer
 you (I) want to allow it to do

Intermediate clitic traces do not exist, under the assumption that clitic move to the highest accessible host in one big swoop; barriers are voided by movement of the verb or via specifier head agreement (vacuous movement of the barrier into the specifier of an L-marked category). The verb and its intermediate traces in the head positions in its extended projection do not create a minimality barrier for the clitic traces in terms of Relativized Minimality, since verb movement is an instance of substitution, not adjunction, like cliticization. Thus two types of heads and head movement can be distinguished, on a par with A- and A-bar movement.

The problem noticed in the discussion above with regard to the blocking status of negation can be explained along similar lines. In sentences where the pronominal clitic ends up adjoined to the same head as the negative clitic, no Relativized Minimality violation arises (see (3a) above). In multi-clausal contexts, though, where the pronominal clitic climbs, but the negative clitic remains in the embedded clause, a context where Relativized Minimality is violated does arise: the negative clitic blocks the pronominal clitic from antecedent governing its trace, because it is a closer potential governor, since both instances of cliticization involve adjunction (see (3b)).

7. The Interplay of Syntactic and Lexical Factors

Clitic climbing is a process that is restricted by syntactic properties of specific languages, such as the distance over which the verb moves in the analysis sketched here, but there are also lexical factors at play: even in languages like

Italian that allow clitic climbing, there are restrictions, in that only a subset of verbs allows the clitic to leave its own clause. The analysis which makes use of vacuous movement of the barrier that contains the clitic into the specifier of an L-marked category allows a unification of these two factors.

Because clitic climbing by definition involves movement of a barrier into the specifier of the verb allowing the clitic to climb, licensing of the process can be expressed in terms of selection: the relevant verbs select for a CP with a specific agreement feature, μ , and some extension of the wh-criterion (Rizzi 1991) applies,⁴ which requires agreement between the C and its specifier, forcing movement of AGRP into the specifier position of the embedded CP with appropriate matrix verbs.⁵

(23) **μ -criterion**

- a. A μ -operator must be in a specifier-head relation with an $X^0[+\mu]$
- b. An $X^0[+\mu]$ must be in a specifier-head relation with a μ -operator

Under this scenario, nothing would rule out vacuous movement in languages like French, where clitic climbing with so-called restructuring verbs is not allowed, in principle; the retained barrierhood of TP (due, in turn, to the fact that the verb has not raised beyond T) prevents the clitic from climbing under that perspective.

In terms of historical development, though, the class of verbs that allow clitic climbing decreases gradually (Galet 1971): even though syntactically the option of clitic climbing might still be open, in the sense that the verb still raises to the highest functional head in the clause, only leaving one barrier between the clitic and the matrix host, that barrier can never be voided, because vacuous movement into an L-marked specifier position is not licensed by the matrix verb, due to the absence of μ -selection.⁶

8. Conclusion

The approach to cliticization sketched in this paper has the advantage that no distinct parameters need to be invoked for the syntax of clitics. Different behaviors across languages are due to independently motivated differences in the syntax of verbs, which in turn are due to lexical features on the functional heads in their extended projection (\pm opaque or \pm strong, cf. Pollock 1989, Chomsky 1991), which license verb raising or do not. Schematically:

- (24) features on AGR and T
 ↓
 distance over which V raises
 ↓
 distance over which clitics can move

In line with recent proposals in the literature, parametrization can thus be constrained to lexical features on functional heads, strongly restricting the power of parameters (cf. Ouhalla 1991).

Notes

1. In the Germanic languages, the second step involves movement of a maximal projection, too, unlike in Romance (Haverkort 1994).
2. Contrary to claims by Zanuttini (1991), Italian *non*, like its French counterpart, behaves as a clitic in a number of respects, adjoining to an appropriate host at s-structure. As the following example indicates, it moves along with the verb in instances of subject-verb inversion:
 - (i) *Suppongo non essere la situazione suscettibile ...*
 suppose-1S NEG to be the situation susceptible ...
3. The loss of clitic climbing in 17th century French is also linked up with the simultaneous loss of V-raising to AGR in infinitival sentences (see Haverkort 1993).
4. The relevant bijective specifier-head agreement has already been extended in the literature to NEG, cf. Haegeman (1991).
5. This approach also provides an account of the impossibility of clitic climbing over an overt complementizer: the feature $[+\mu]$ is only compatible with empty finite complementizers.
6. This observation can help account for the fact that clitic climbing in French is impossible, even when the embedded infinitival verb has raised all the way to AGR, as with *avoir* (to have) and *être* (to be): in these cases, the final barrier cannot be voided because vacuous movement of it into the specifier of CP is not licensed. ECM-verbs on the other hand, have retained this licensing feature.

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