

On phasal domains and the difference between subject and object clitics

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Subject clitics (SCL), in those Romance varieties that display them (French, Northern Italian varieties), come in two fashions: fully-pronominal (**D-clitics**, with both D and ϕ features), or merely inflectional (**-clitics**, with no D feature), according to the notation used by Roberts (2010). A number of tests, like obligatory repetition in coordinate structures (for -clitics, as in 1 but not for pronominal ones, as in 2), behavior with respect to negation, etc. have shown the existence of these two classes of SCL (Rizzi 1986, Poletto 2000). SCLs in many Venetan and Trentino varieties are -clitics, for instance, while French clitics are fully pronominal (D-clitics).

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| <p>(1) -clitic_{SUBJ} (<i>la</i>) (Trentino)
 La magna e *(la) bef
 she-SCL eats and she-SCL drinks
 'She eats and drinks'</p> | <p>(2) D-clitic_{OBJ} (<i>lo</i>) (Italian)
 Lo leggo e ___ rileggo ogni giorno
 it-OCL read and (it-OCL)re-read dail
 'I read it over and over again'</p> |
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Differently from SCL, object clitics (OCL) are only pronominal (D-clitics), see (2). Even in Romance varieties that allow object doubling (without topicalization), like Spanish dialects, the doubling clitic is a D-clitic (Raposo & Uriagereka 2005). This difference has always been considered merely lexical: there simply is no reason why SCL have a weaker alternative. In this paper, we show that this difference is not a lexical accident, but it is instead determined by syntax. Specifically, we will show that:

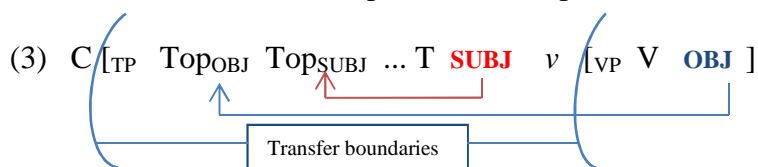
1. The diachronic emergence of clitics is linked to argument topicalization.
2. If topicalization involves crossing a Transfer domain boundary (or PIC-domain, Chomsky 2001 ff.), a full doubling of all the features of the topicalized element is necessary. If no Transfer boundary is crossed, only the ϕ set suffices.

→ Therefore, subject clitics can be weaker/poorer than object clitics, as they originally resumed topicalized elements within their own domain (no boundary crossing involved).

Crossing Transfer Domains. Following the intuition behind many functional approaches to cliticization, we take clitic resumption to be used to “recall” an element already introduced in the discourse. We translate this intuition by proposing that, when elements exit their Transfer domain (Chomsky 2001 ff.) for topicalization in Romance, their features must be repeated in full, i.e. by means of a D-clitic, in their first-merge domain. If the cliticized elements stay within their first-merge domain, a partial repetition (-clitic) suffices, perhaps because of a Prolific Domain effect (Grohmann 2000, 2003).

While clitics reach their final position at PF, we assume that they are first-merged in the same domain as the element they double (Raposo & Uriagereka 2005, Belletti's Big DP, a.o.). That clitics can move at PF is shown, for instance, by the fact that the same clitic can be proclitic to finite verbs but enclitic to infinitives in Italian (**lo**=vedo, **it**=I-see vs veder**lo**, to.see=**it**), for no apparent syntactic reason.

Topicalized objects are always doubled by D-clitics because objects are in a different Transfer domain than Topics, which are in the left periphery (Rizzi 1997). Subjects can be doubled instead both by D-clitics (redundantly) and by -clitics because their topicalization does not involve crossing a PIC boundary (see 3). We follow Chomsky (2001) in identifying a Transfer domain as the complement of the phase heads C and v.



Object topicalization involves crossing a Transfer domain boundary, while subject topicalization does not (even in the case of unaccusative subjects, because of their defective v). When the VP is Transferred, the topicalized object has moved outside the VP, so it must be resumed by a full set of features (D, \bar{A}), i.e. a D-clitic. Cliticization takes place at PF. Subjects topicalize within the same Transfer domain, hence they can be resumed by both a full set (D, \bar{A}), i.e. D-clitics, or a partial set (\bar{A}), i.e. \bar{A} -clitics (see 4).

(4) C [TP Top_{OBJ} Top_{SUBJ} **SCL T SUBJ** v [VP V **OBJ OCL**]

Hanging Topics (HT) offer important corroborating evidence for our analysis, as they are usually analyzed as not being part of the clause. They are assigned default nominative case in Romance, and are usually doubled by a DP, a strong pronoun, or a D-clitic, as in (5) for Old Italian. This doubling shows that HT need to be anchored to some Transfer domain, in order to be part of the syntactic derivation (HT can bind anaphors, for instance). Given that they are outside the clause, their resumptive element must be very feature-heavy.

Foci are a different issue altogether, in that they are not resumed (Rizzi 1997, Benincà & Poletto 2004, a.o). Since they play no role in the development of clitics, we leave them aside.

The development of clitics. Clitics come in different fashions because they are related to topicalization. Of course, not all clitics are used as resumptive elements synchronically. Their featural setup emerged in topic constructions, though, and only later were they extended to other uses.

If we observe the diachronic evolution of doubling, we note that HT had resumption already in Latin. This resumption was inherited by Old Italian (in 5):

(5) **Il maestro**_i [...] che fa l'arca, è mistieri che in **lui**_i sia una arca ... (*Quares. fior.* 61)
the craftsman who makes the casket, it is necessary that in **him** there be a casket

Resumption in early Romance was extended to Referential Topics (6), not resumed in Latin, while Aboutness Topics (7) continued not to be resumed until later (ca. C16th). As soon as clitics appear in resumption, they also start appearing in other contexts. Modern Standard Italian resumes all topics (Benincà 2006, Frascarelli 2007, Frascarelli & Hinterhölzl 2007):

(6) **La bona femina**_i per nullo modo tu non **la**_i devi gelosare (Sidrac, 316, 9-10)
The good wife, by no means you should make **her** jealous

(7) **Lo vino** ___fanno di riso [...]. **La moneta** hanno ___d'oro (Milione, 119)
The wine they make ___ with rice [...]. **The money** they have ___of gold

(8) **El Paolo**_i *(**el**_i) magna la polenta (Trentino)
The Paolo (he.CL) eats the polenta

A further innovation regards subject clitics, which are found in all northern Italian varieties. You can find one example in (8). While it is difficult to ascertain historically whether a subject clitic was a D-clitic or a \bar{A} -clitic by means of tests, we know that \bar{A} -clitics are an innovation. They are in fact found in a much more restricted area than pronominal clitics. Historically, the resumption of subjects, especially pronominal, starts out as optional in topicalization contexts, but is then reanalysed as an instance of feature doubling and becomes obligatory.

Selected references. Raposo, E. & J. Uriagereka. 2005. Clitic placement in Western Iberian: a Minimalist view. In Cinque&Kayne (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Syntax*, 639-697. OUP. Grohmann, K. 2003. *Prolific Domains*. John Benjamins. Frascarelli, M. 2007. Subjects, Topics and the interpretation of referential pro. An interface approach to the linking of (null) pronouns. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory*, 25, 691-734.