Romance clitics: syntactic and morphological properties

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1 Introduction

- Clitics are an interesting subject of research because of their problematic status: their behaviour is intermediate between that of *independent words* and that of *affixes*.

- Even though they seem to be more autonomous than affixes, they attach phonologically to a host, contrary to words.

- The problematic status of clitics with respect to the interaction of syntax, morphology and phonology was neglected in the early works in generative grammar (cf. Kayne (1975))

- In Zwicky (1977) clitics are looked at from a broader perspective: their interface properties are taken into consideration.

- Two classes of clitics: *simple clitics* and *special clitics*.

- Do the elements which are grouped under the *clitics* label constitute a separate class or there is no unified category of clitics and they should be analyzed as independent words or as affixes according to the situation?

2 Affixes vs. nonaffixes

- Several tests have been proposed by Zwicky (1977), Zwicky and Pullum (1983), Zwicky (1985) in for distinguishing affixes from nonaffixes (or words from nonwords).

- A summary of the relevant criteria is given in Joseph (1990).

- Selectivity in combination.
  Affix: high selectivity; nonaffix: low selectivity.

- Idiosyncratic behavior.
  Affix: shows idiosyncrasies; nonaffix: shows few or none.

- Parallel to morphophonological process.
  Affix: such parallels exist; nonaffix: none.

- Ordering.
  Nonword: strictly ordered; word: some degree of free ordering.

- Phonological dependence.
  Nonword:dependent; word: independent.

3 Syntactic properties of Romance clitics

3.1 Clitic position within the sentence

3.1.1 Clitics and finite verbs

- Clitics occur in a special position within a sentence and this is different from the one in which full phrases occur.

(1) a. (I) Martina legge il libro.

b. (F) Martine lit le livre.

c. (I) Martina lo legge.

d. (F) Martine le lit.

e. (I) *Martina legge lo.

f. (F) *Martine lit le.

- Clitics occur in a fixed order and this order is usually different from that of the corresponding full phrases.

(2) a. (F) Martine donnera le livre à Jean / à Jean le livre.

b. (I) Martina darà il libro a Gianni / a Gianni il libro.

c. (F) Martine le lui /*lui le donnera.

d. (I) Martina glielo /*logli darà .

e. (F) Martine me le / *le me donnera.

f. (I) Martina me lo / *lo me darà .

3.1.2 Clitics and non-finite verbs

- (3) If a clitic combines with a non-finite verb, enclisis is most common.

a. (I) Martina vuole leggerlo.

b. (I) Lettolo, fu facile decidere.

c. (I) Avendolo letto, fu facile decidere.

d. (S) Martina quiere leerlo.

e. (S) *Leídolo, fue fácil decidir.

f. (S) Habiéndolo leído, fácil decidir.

- French constitutes an exception.

(4) a. (F) Martine veut le lire. (vs. *lire-le)

b. (F) En l'ayant lu / En le lisant, il fut facile de décider. (vs. *ayant-le lu / *lisantle)

c. (F) *Lu-le / *Le lu, il fut facile de décider.

3.1.3 Clitics and imperatives

- Clitics are enclitic with positive imperatives, but they are proclitic with negative imperatives. Italian is slightly different.

(5) a. (F) Lis-le !

b. (F) Ne le lis pas !

c. (S) Léelo !

d. (S) No lo leas !

e. (P) Lê-o !

f. (P) Não o leias !

g. (R) Citiţi-l !

h. (R) Nu-l citiţi !

i. (I) Leggi-lo !

j. (I) Non lo leggere !

k. (I) Non leggerlo !

- If there is a combination of clitics, they follow a rigid order also if they are enclitics. There migth be differences in the enclitic and in the proclitic order.

(6) a. (I) Dammelo !

b. (F) Donne-le-moi

3.2 Verb contiguity

- Nothing can intervene between the clitic and the verb.

  (7)   a. (F) *Martine le souvent lit.

         b. (I) *Martina lo non legge.

         c. (S)*Martina lo no lee.

- In Romanian, monosyllabic intensifiers can intervene.

  (8)   î mai văd. (lo vedo ancora)

- Clitics must combine with a verb.

  (9)   a. (F) *Un article lui incompréhensible

         b. (I) *Un articolo gli incomprensibile

         c. (S) *Un artículo le incomprensible

3.3 Clitic climbing

- In certain configurations, clitic pronouns do not appear on the verb that subcategorizes for them but on a higher verb.

- Auxiliary verbs trigger this phenomenon in all the Romance languages under consideration.

  (10)   a. (F) Jean a lu le livre.

         b. (F) *Jean a le lu.

         c. (F) Jean l'a lu.

         d. (I) Gianni ha letto il libro.

         e. (I) *Gianni ha lettolo.

         f. (I) Gianni l'ha letto.

- In certain Romance languages, such as Italian and Spanish, there are other verbs which allow clitic climbing, that is modal, aspectual and motion verbs.

  (11)   a. (I) Gianni vuole leggere il libro.

         b. (I) Gianni vuole leggerlo.

         c. (I) Gianni lo vuole leggere.

         d. (I) Gianni vuole darglielo.

         e. (I) Gianni glielo vuole dare.

         f. (I) *Gianni gli vuole darlo.

         g. (I) *Gianni lo vuole dargli.

3.4 Clitic doubling

- In French and Italian, clitics are in complementary distribution with the correspondent full phrase. Exceptions are cases of dislocation.

  (12)   a. (F)

         b. (F) Martine le_i lit, le $livre_i$.

         c. (I) *Martina lo_i legge il $libro_i$.

         d. (I) Martina lo_i legge, il $libro_i$.

- In Romanian or in Spanish, clitics can or in certain cases must combine with the correspondent full phrase.

  (13)   a. (S) Lo veo a él.

    b. (S) *Veo a él.
    c. (S) Le hablo a él.
    d. (S) *Hablo a él.
    e. (S) Le hablo a Juan.
    f. (S) Hablo a Juan.
    g. (S) *Lo veo a Juan.
    h. (S) Veo a Juan.
    i. (S) *La veo la mesa.
    j. (S) Veo la mesa.

4 Clitics and coordination

- Clitics behave differently from full phrases with respect to coordination.

- Clitics cannot be coordinated.

    (14) a. (F) *Martine le et la voit.
         b. (I) *Martina lo e la vede.
         c. (S) *Martina lo y la ve.

- Clitics cannot have wide scope over coordination.

    (15) a. (F) *Martine la voit et écoute.
         b. (I) *Martina la vede e ascolta.

5 Morphological properties of Romance clitics

- The morphophonological interaction between clitics and their host as well as the interaction among clitics can help answer the question on whether clitics behave more as affixes or as words.

- There are, however, problems since the morphophonological interactions can differ for different types of affixes.

5.1 Morphophonological idiosyncrasies: Italian

- Vowel deletion with *lo, la* before a verb which starts with a vowel and also with *mi, ti, ci, vi, si,* though mainly in spoken language.

    (16) Martina l'accetta.

- Clitics ending in *-i* have their ending changed into *-e* if they are followed by another clitic which begins with *l-* or *n-*.

    (17) a. Martina *ti/te lo spedirà.
         b. Martina *mi/me ne spedirà molti.

- Hosts with the required phonological form do not induce it.

- The form *gli* is used instead of *le* if this precedes a clitic beginning with *l-* or *n-*.

    (18) *Le/glie-le ho date.

- Modification in the presence of two identical clitics.

    (19) a. Ci/*si si veste pesanti.
         b. Vi ci/*vi porta.

- Variation with respect to the possibility of having two identical morphemes (Guasti and Nespor, 1999).

    (20) Se se la sente.

- It seems that it is not possible to have *vi* in combination with an accusative clitic.

    (21) a. Mi ci/*vi porta.
         b. Ti ci/*vi porta.

5.2 Morphophonological idiosyncrasies: French

- Cases of idiosyncrasies in the realization of a verbal root and a clitic (Miller, 1992).

- In spoken French, the sequences *je suis* 'I am' and *je sais* 'I know' are usually realized as [ʃyi] and [ʃe], which can be written as *chuis* and *chais*.

- The homonimous form *je suis* 'I follow' which is derived from the verb *suivre* 'to follow' cannot be realized as *chuis*.

- The sequence *y ir-* 'will go there' where *ir-* is the allomorph of the future of the verb *aller* 'to go' is obligatorily realized with the reduction of the sequence of two [i] to only one.

(22)   a. Pierre ira à Paris.
          Peter will go to Paris

          'Peter will go to Paris.'

    b. * Pierre y ira.
        Peter CL.LOC will go

    c. Pierre ira.
       Peter CL.LOC will go

       'Peter will go there.'

- Reduction occurs also with the idiomatic expression *y aller de* 'to be at stake'.

(23)   a. * Quand il y irait de tout mon bien.
          when he CL.LOC will go of all my good

    b. Quand il irait de tout mon bien.
       when he CL.LOC.will go of all my good

       'Even if all of my possessions were at stake.'

i reduction is impossible: no productive rule of French phonology.

(24)   * Il illustrera sa valeur.
        he will show his skills

        'He will show his value.'

- Idiosyncrasies in the realization of sequences of French clitic pronouns which cannot be explained in terms of productive phonological rules (Morin, 1979).

- The sequence *je lui* is reduced to *jui*.

- The sequence *le/la/les lui* is reduced to *lui* and *le/la/les leur* is reduced to *leur*.

- Deletion of the vowels [a] and [y] in the case of *la* and *tu* before a host which begins with a vowel.

5.3 Morphophonological idiosyncrasies: Portuguese

- Deletion of a consonant preceding an accusative clitic (Vigario, 1999).

(25)   a. dá-lo.
       give.CL.ACC

       'to give it.'

    b. dar-nos.
       give.CL.DAT

       'to give to us.'

- Consonant deletion occurs also with verbs marked for first person plural in combination with a first or second person plural dative clitic.

(26)   a. damo-nos.
       give.PRES.1PL-CL.1PL.DAT

       'We give to us.'

     b. damo-vos.
       give.PRES.1PL-CL.2PL.DAT
       'We give to you.'

- The process doesn't occur if the verb is in the first, second or third person singular.

  (27) a. pus-nos.
        put.PRES.1SG-CL.1PL.DAT
        'I put to us.'

        b. dás-nos.
        give.PRES.2SG-CL.1PL.DAT
        'You give to us.'

        c. faz-nos.
        give.PRES.3SG-CL.1PL.DAT
        'He does to us.'

- Consonant deletion is not triggered if the clitic is a second or third person singular clitic or a third person plural:

  (28) a. damos-te.
        give.PRES.1PL-CL.2SG.DAT
        'We give to you.'

        b. damos-lhe.
        give.PRES.1PL-CL.3SG.DAT
        'We give to her/him.'

        c. damos-lhes.
        give.PRES.1PL-CL.3PL.DAT
        'We give to them.'

- Consonant deletion occurs in combination of clitics if a third person accusative clitic is preceded by a first or second person dative clitic: *no-lo* or *vo-lo*.

- Alternation in the form of the accusative pronoun, which may be *lo* (preceding verb ends in consonant), *no* (preceding verb ends in a nasal diphthong) and *o* (in the other cases).

- The alternation occurs only when the clitic is preceded by a verb or by another clitic, but not by other elements.

  (29) a. Apenas o   dou.
        only   CL.ACC give
        'I only give it.'

        b. não o   dou.
        not CL.ACC
        'I don't give it.'

- Cases of fusion are attested in the combination of a third person accusative clitic *o(s)/a(s)* with the third person dative plural *lhes* resulting in *lho(s)* or *lha(s)* (Crysmann, 2000a).

5.4 Morphophonological idiosyncrasies: Romanian

- Optional vowel deletion occurs if a clitic ending in *ă* precedes a verb beginning with unstressed *a* or *o*.

  (30) a. mă   aşteaptă.
        CL.ACC waits
        'He waits for me.'

        b. m-aşteaptă.
        CL.ACC waits

- If the verb is an auxiliary, vowel deletion is obligatory.

    (31) m-a   invitat.
          CL.ACC has   invited

- The clitic *se* undergoes optional vowel deletion in front of a verb which begins with unstressed *a* or *o*.

    (32) a. se   aşeză.
              CL.ACC sits

              'He sits.'

          b. s-aşeză.
              CL.ACC sits

              'He sits.'

          c. s-aşeză.
              CL.ACC sits

- There is no vowel deletion if the clitics *te, ne* or *le* occur in a similar context.

    (33) a. te   aşteaptă.
              CL.ACC waits

              'He waits for you.'

          b. * t-aşteaptă.
              CL.ACC waits

5.5   Arbitrary gaps

- Zwicky and Pullum (1983) point out that arbitrary gaps can occur occasionally in inflectional paradigms; this is the case also in several Romance languages where some verbs lack certain verbal forms.

- Arbitrary gaps are also present in the case of clitics both when they combine with a host and when they combine among each other.

5.5.1   Combination of clitics with the verb

- In Italian, present participles cannot combine with third person accusative clitics Benincà and Cinque (1991).

    (34)   Gli argomenti riguardanti*-lo/*-la/*-le/?-li.

- In Portuguese, clitics cannot combine with absolute past participles (Crysmann, 2000a).

    (35) a. * Lidos-os   às   crianças, vamos passear.
              read.CL.ACC to.the children go   walk

          b. * Lidos-lhes   os   livros, vamos passear.
              read.CL.DAT the books go   walk

              'Having read the books to the children, we go out for a walk.'

- In French, the first person singular subject clitic *je* cannot occur in an inverted configuration with the majority of verbs while this is not the case with other persons clitics (Miller, 1992).

    (36) a. * Sors-je?
              go out I

              'Do I go out?'

          b. * Chante-je?
              sing I

              'Do I sing?'

(37)   a. Sors-tu?
            go out you

            'Do you go out?'

        b. Chante-tu?
            sing I

            'Do you sing?'

5.5.2   Combination of clitics among each other

- Impossibility to combine a first or second person accusative clitic together with a dative one.

    (38)   a. (I) * Martina gli mi presenta.

            b. (S) * Martina le me presenta.

            c. (F) * Martine me lui présénte.

- The combination of a first and second person clitic doesn't produce acceptable results.

    (39)   a. (I) * Mi ti raccomanda.

            b. (S) * Me te recomienda.

            c. (F) * Il me te recommande.

- In Portuguese, the direct object clitic *me* is compatible both with a pronominal and a reflexive interpretation when it combines with another clitic (Crysmann, 2000a).

    (40)   a. Ela apresentou-me-lhe   como sendo o   representante da Microsoft.
                she introduced.CL.ACC.CL.DAT as   being the representative of Microsoft

                'She introduced me to him as Microsoft's representative.'

            b. Eu apresentei-me-lhe   como sendo o   representante da Microsoft.
                I   introduced.CL.ACC.CL.DAT as   being the representative of Microsoft

                'I introduced myself to him as Microsoft's representative.'

- Indirect object *me* can only be interpreted as a pronominal when it combines with a direct object clitic.

    (41)   a. Ela ofereceu-mo.
                she offered.CL.DAT.CL.ACC

                'She offered it to me.'

            b. * Eu ofreci-mo.
                 I   offered.CL.DAT.CL.ACC

                 'I offered it to myself.'

- If the indirect object is realized as a full NP, a reflexive interpretation of *me* is possible.

    (42)   Eu ofreci-o   a mim.
            I   offered.CL.ACC to me

            'I offered it to myself.'

- In Romanian, not all *dative-accusative* person and number combinations are grammatical. It is not possible to have the first person accusative clitic *mă* together with a dative one Farkas and Kazazis (1980).

    (43)   a. * ţi   m-au   dat de nevastă numai pentru că ai   insistat.
                 CL.DAT CL.ACC) HAVE given as wife   only   because   have insisted

                 'They gave me in marriage to you only because you have insisted.'

            b. * am auzit că părinţi mei vor să i   mă   dea de nevastă.
                 have heard that parents mine want that CL.DAT CL.ACC give as wife

                 'I have heard that my parents want to give me in marriage to him.'

- A first person singular or plural clitic together with a second person plural one doesn't yield a grammatical result.

(44) a. * vor să mi vă omoare.
        want that CL.DAT CL.ACC kill

        'They want to kill you on me.'

    b. * vor să ni vă omoare.
        want that CL.DAT CL.ACC kill

        'They want to kill you on us.'

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5.6 Mesoclisis

- In Portuguese, pronominal clitics occur before the marker of future (or conditional).

(45) a. falaremos
       speak

       'We will speak.'

    b. falar-lhe-emos
       speak.CL.DAT.FUT.1PL

       'We will speak to him/her.'

    c. * falaremos-lhe
       speak.FUT.1PL.CL.DAT

       'We will speak to him/her.'

- Mesoclisis has been used as evidence by Zwicky (1987) and Halpern (1995) in favor of the affixal nature of Portuguese clitics.

- There can be alternative ways to evaluate this evidence.

6 Status of Romance clitics

- On the basis of the syntactic and morphological properties of Romance clitics, what can be concluded about their status?

- Are they words, affixes or clitics?

- For different views, check: Miller (1992), Monachesi (1999), Monachesi (2000), Crysmann (2000b), Kayne (1975), Perlmutter (1971) Rivas (1977), Strozer (1976), Jaeggli (1982), Borer (1984), Uriagereka (1995), Cardinaletti and Starke (1999), Sportiche (1996), Bonet (1991), Popescu (2000), Riemsdijk (1999), Gerlach (2001)

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