

The best position for object clitics in the history of Romance languages

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Organization of the talk

- 1 Position of object clitics
- 2 Feature matrix for clitic placement
- 3 Nature & base-generation of clitics
- 4 OT analysis
- 5 Discussion and summary

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Introduction - Position of object clitics

Modern Romance Languages

- (1a) Fre(nch) Le facteur **leur distribue** les lettres.
the mailman them distributes the letters
- (1b) Fre **Distribue-leur** les lettres ! (IMP)
distribute-them the letters

--> nearly all Modern Romance languages allow postposition with finite verbs in imperatives only

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Introduction - Position of object clitics

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Introduction - Position of object clitics

- (2a) Spa(nish) *El perro **viome**.
- (2b) Spa El perro **me vio**.
the dog me saw
- (3a) EP O cão **viu-me**.
(European Portuguese) the dog saw-me
- (3b) EP *O cão **me viu**. (* as unmarked sentence)
- > exception EP (& Galician, Ast(urian), Leonese): generalized postposition in unmarked main clauses

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Introduction - Position of object clitics

Medieval Romance Languages

- (4a) OPor elle **lho outorgou**.
(Old Portuguese) he him-it granted (from Martins 1997: 140)
- (4b) OPor elle **outorgou lho**.
he granted him-it (from Martins 1997: 140)

--> optional postposition with finite verbs in unmarked main clauses: all medieval Romance languages (except Old French): OPor, OSpa, OCatalan, OOcc(itan), OItalian

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Feature matrix for clitic placement

Three features and two subfeatures

- [+TM] the Tobler-Mussafia Law is respected, i.e. a sentence must not start with a clitic object pronoun

--> postposition to the finite verb is required in verb-first sentences in all Old Romance languages - in Old French it is the only possibility for postverbal clitics

- (5) OFre **empeint le** ben.
strikes-he it well
(Ch. Rol. 1754, from Tobler 1875: 1063)

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Feature matrix for clitic placement

Three features and two subfeatures

- [+N] the postposition is possible in unmarked main clauses - independent of verb-first position
variation of pre- and postposition of the clitic is possible
- [+N_{obj}] the postposition is obligatory in unmarked main clauses
variation is ruled out

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Feature matrix for clitic placement

Three features and two subfeatures

- [+I] interpolation, i.e. the separation of object clitic and verb by another element like negation, subject pronoun, etc. is possible
interpolation exists in OPor, OSpa, OItalian, Rom(anian), & Italian dialects

- (6) OPor Isto que **lles eu mado**.
that that you-pl I send
(from Martins 1994a:

171)

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Feature matrix for clitic placement

Three features and two subfeatures

- $[+I_{true}]$ true interpolation is possible: the interpolation constructions are of the Old Romance “true” type, i.e. the interpolated element can be also a (non-pronominal) DP or more than one constituent
interpolation is extremely frequent

Feature matrix for clitic placement

	I OPor	Ia EP	II OOcc	IIa Ast	III OFre	IV Spa	IVa Rom
[TM]	+	+	+	+	+	-	-
[N]	+	+	+	+	-	-	-
[+N]:					/	/	/
[N _{obj}]	-	+	-	+			
[I]	+	+	-	-	-	-	+
[+I]:			/	/	/	/	
[I _{true}]	+	-					-

[+TM] Tobler-Mussafia Law respected

[+N] Postposition possible (obligatory) in unmarked sentences

[+I] (“true”) Interpolation possible

Nature & base-generation of clitics

Theoretical assumptions - affix-like behavior of Romance object clitics

(7) Spa Los mendigos **lo ven** a él.
 the beggars him see-3p/ to him

(8) Spa $\begin{matrix} \text{---} \text{agreement}_{obj} \text{---} \\ \text{pro}_{subj} \text{ lo } \text{ven} \text{ pro}_{obj} \\ \text{---} \text{agreement}_{subj} \text{---} \end{matrix}$

Nature & base-generation of clitics

Theoretical assumptions - two base-generation positions: C° and I°

- in Old Romance and in Modern European Portuguese, clitics are base-generated in C° and incorporated enclitically into every element in this position, e.g. a complementizer or the finite verb

--> the clitic occurs in postverbal position when the verb is in C°

Nature & base-generation of clitics

Theoretical assumptions - two base-generation positions: C° and I°

Evidence for the clitic in C°

- the interpolation phenomenon clearly indicates the possibility of syntactic clitic attachment to another element than the finite verb
- amalgamates like OOcc *que.is, que.us, que.s, si.i, si.us*, etc. (from Cremonesi 1967: 95) or OSpa *quemblo < que me lo* show phonological (and syntactic) attachment to complementizers

Nature & base-generation of clitics

Theoretical assumptions - two base-generation positions: C° and I°

- in Modern Romance languages (except EP), the clitic is base-generated in I° and attached proclitically to its only possible host, the finite verb

OT analysis: constraints

Five constraints for Romance clitic placement

2 alignment constraints:

- C°-ENCL Enclisis in C°
- PRCL-I° Proclisis in I°

--> position the clitic to the right of the host in C° and to the left of the verb in I°

OT analysis: constraints

- DIR-HOST Direct host

--> demands a host to occur in the same phrase where the clitic is realized

==> accounts for forced movement of the finite verb in front of the clitic in V1 sentences where the clitic otherwise would occur sentence-initially and without a host in the CP

OT analysis: constraints

Five constraints for Romance clitic placement

- V-ADJ Verb adjacency
--> requests the clitic to be adjacent to the verb

- STAY
--> punishes movement