

Accusative Clitic/Null Object Variation in Spanish and the Object Agreement Cycle

Intro.: Spanish has clitic-left dislocation (CLDT) (1) and accusative clitic doubling (ACD) (2).
 (1) Los libros_i los compré ayer_i (2) Juan la_i abrazó (a ella)_i / % (a María)_i
 the books them I-bought yesterday Juan her he-hugged DOM she DOM María
 ‘I bought the books yesterday.’ ‘Juan hugged her / María.’

CLDT developed prior to ACD historically. Standard Modern Spanish (ModS) disallows null referential objects (NROs); non-standard varieties like Rioplatense allow NROs. I argue these patterns result from the reanalysis of object clitics. I extend Holmberg’s (2005) D-in-T analysis of null referential subjects to NROs. My main claim is that a D-feature is present on *v* due to the Object Agreement Cycle (OAC), by which object clitics become agreement morphemes. In CLDT the clitic merges with a D-feature and moves to Spec,*v* where it is reanalyzed as a feature of *v*. After reanalysis there is D-in-*v* and the clitic does not occupy complement position so ACD and later NROs are licensed. Two predictions fall out of this analysis: i) a language with ACD will have developed CLDT first; ii) a language with NROs will have developed unrestricted ACD first. These predictions hold throughout Romance. As a consequence I propose a typology of null object languages similar to Holmberg’s (2005, 2010) typology of null subject languages.

Patterns/Analysis: The OAC has three stages per Gelderen (2011). At stage (a) the clitic is a full DP. At stage (b) the clitic merges as DP and moves as a D-head following Chomsky (1995). At stage (c) the clitic and its features are reanalyzed as *v*. Licensing of CLDT, ACD, and NROs varies diachronically. CLDT occurs in OldS as in (3). ACD (4) is very rare until the 16th century, and putative instances are clitic-right dislocation (Fontana 1993, Gabriel & Rinke 2010).

(3) [La tierra del Rey Alfonso]_i ... la_i podemos quitar. (4) no lo_i quieren a él_i
 the land of-the king Alfonso it we-can leave not him they-love DOM he
 ‘We can leave King Alfonso’s land.’ ‘...they do not love him.’

CLDT occurs in ModS (1); ACD is restricted to pronominal objects (2). This constraint does not hold in Rioplatense (Ormazabal & Romero 2013), where doubling is unrestricted as with *María* in (2) above. Only Rioplatense has CLDT with and without epithets as in (5) from Suñer (2006).

(5) [A mi mejor amiga]_i, la_i vi [a esa loca linda]_i el jueves.
 DOM my best friend her I-saw DOM that crazy beautiful the Thursday
 ‘I saw my best friend, that crazy beautiful girl, on Thursday.’

OldS and ModS only allow non-referential null objects (6). Rioplatense allows NROs, as in (7).

(6)a. ¿Compraste pan_i / el libro?_i (7)a. Queremos el postre_i. -- (Schwenter 2006)
 you-bought bread the book we-want the dessert
 ‘Did you buy bread / the book?’ ‘We want the dessert.’
 b. Sí, compré *pro*_i / **pro*_j b. Ya traigo *pro*_i.
 yes I-bought some it now I-bring it
 ‘Yes, I bought some / it.’ ‘I’m bringing it now.’

CLDT, ACD, and NROs are tied to the stages of the OAC as follows. CLDT becomes possible when the clitic is a DP/D, stage (b). In OldS the clitic is a full DP that merges as complement and moves to Spec,*v*. In ModS the clitic merges as complement and moves as a D-head to *v*. Rioplatense is at stage (c); the clitic is the spellout of *v* and either *pro* or an epithet merges as complement. Unrestricted ACD occurs at stage (c), as in Rioplatense. Since the clitic is a *v*-head, the complement position is open for *pro* or a lexical DP; i.e., renewal. The D-feature in *v* licenses NROs. D is present in *v* due to reanalysis of the clitic at stage (c). As in Holmberg et al’s (2009) analysis of null subjects, for NROs D-in-*v* is valued by a topic which may be null; *pro* merges as complement. Rioplatense CLDT differs from ModS CLDT since they are at different stages of the OAC. In ModS CLDT the clitic merges as DP complement and moves as

D-head to *v*. The topic is base-generated. In Rioplatense CLDT *pro* is licensed as complement by D-in-*v* and it agrees with the base-generated topic. Rioplatense CLDT involves *pro*; ModS does not. CLDT occurs at stage (b) and (c) of the OAC; unrestricted ACD only becomes possible at stage (c), when the clitic is *v* and argument position is open for a lexical DP or *pro*.

Consequences: My analysis accounts for the distribution of CLDT, ACD, and NROs in Romance and makes two predictions: i) if a language has ACD it will have developed CLDT first; ii) if a language allows NROs and has clitics, it will allow unrestricted ACD since its clitics are agreement. Prediction (i) holds in Romance. OldS, Italian, and French have CLDT and lack ACD. Evidence that clitics are less advanced in French is they can be omitted in VP conjuncts (Kayne 1975). OldS (8) and Italian (9) also pattern like French (Luraghi 1997, Maddox 2018).

(8) lo_i mató y Ø_i despedaçó... (9) li'ho baciato e Ø_i abbracciato.
 Him it-killed and him it-tore-apart him-I-have kissed and him hugged
 'It killed him and tore him apart...' 'I kissed him and hugged him.'

Rioplatense has unrestricted ACD and inherited CLDT from OldS. Rioplatense allows NROs, which is consistent with both predictions. European Portuguese (EP) has CLDT but lacks ACD (Barrie 2000), so its clitics should be at an early stage in the OAC. This is the case since EP clitics pattern like French in VP conjuncts (10) and, as in OldS, occur in interpolation, as in (11) from Luís & Kaiser (2016). EP's constrained NROs are variables rather than *pro* (Raposo 1986).

(10) Apenas a minha mãe me ajudou e (me) incentivou. (11) Se me não engano...
 only the my mother me helped and me encouraged if me not mistake
 'Only my mother helped me and encouraged me.' 'If I am not mistaken...'

Brazilian Portuguese (BP) is more advanced than Rioplatense Spanish. BP has CLDT but a full pronoun tends to replace the clitic (p.c. J. Carvalho). ACD was present in Old Portuguese but lost in the 19th century (Castilho 2005), at which point NROs developed (Cyrino 1997). Clitics are being lost and NROs are much less restricted in BP than in EP. BP NROs are *pro* rather than variables (Galves 1989, Kato 1993). BP clitics were at stage (c) and the cycle is now being renewed by strong pronouns, so they are back at stage (a). NROs now occur frequently in BP.

Final Remark: An additional consequence of this analysis is that Holmberg's (2005) proposed typology of null subject languages may apply to null objects, since both rely on the D-feature, but in distinct domains; i.e., T for subjects or *v* for objects. Consistent null subject languages have D-in-T which licenses null referential subjects. Partial null subject languages lack D-in-T and thus only have null nonreferential subjects. Null referential subjects can occur when bound by a DP subject. Extending this to null objects, ModS is a partial null object language, because its object agreement morphology (object clitics) is not fully grammaticalized, and only nonreferential null objects are licensed; i.e., it lacks D-in-*v*. Pashto is a consistent null object language that has "rich" object agreement morphology and NROs are common (Roberts 2010).

References: Cyrino, S. 1997. *O Objeto Nulo no Português do Brasil: Um Estudo Sintático-Diacrónico*. Londrina: Editora UEL. Fontana, J.M. 1993. *Phrase Structure and the Syntax of Clitics in the History of Spanish*. Diss., University of Pennsylvania. Gelderen, E. van. 2011. *The Linguistic Cycle*. Oxford: UP. Holmberg, A. 2005. Is there a little *pro*? Evidence from Finnish. *Linguistic Inquiry* 36:533-564. Holmberg, A., A. Nayudu & M. Sheehan. 2009. Three Partial Null Subject Languages: A Comparison of Brazilian Portuguese, Finnish, and Marathi. *Studia Linguistica* 63:59-97. Luís, A.R. & G.A. Kaiser. 2016. Clitic Pronouns: Phonology, Morphology, and Syntax. In W.L. Wetzels, J. Costa & S. Menuzzi (eds.), *The Handbook of Portuguese Linguistics*. Ormazabal, J. & J. Romero. 2013. Object Clitics, Agreement & Dialectal Variation. *Probus* 25:301-344. Suñer, M. 2006. Left dislocations with and without epithets. *Probus* 18:127-158. **Diachronic data:** (3)-Anon., *El Cid*, c. 1207; (4)-Juan de Arce de Otárola, *Coloquios de Palatino y Pinciano*, c. 1550; (8)- Pedro Mejía, *Silva de varia lección*, para. 264; c. 1540-1550.