The influence of sentence type
on the position of special clitics

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1. The background

In my current research, I investigate a cross-linguistic sample of languages that show (special) pronominal clitics. Special clitics are defined here as personal pronouns that behave syntactically different when unstressed/reduced. In particular, I am interested in clitics that refer to arguments of the verb. By comparing various instantiations of such argument-clitics, I am collecting evidence for various paths of grammaticalisation of pronouns into inflectional cross-reference of arguments on verbs.

Of central importance is the investigation of variation. Variation can shed some light on ongoing historical processes. I investigate variation on three levels:

– between linguistic families
– between languages within one linguistic family
– within languages

In this talk, I want to present some thoughts about the variation of the placement of pronominal clitics within individual languages. While writing the abstract for this talk, I pursued the idea that the type of sentence might be of influence on the placement. I will first present why this might seem plausible, only to conclude that this is not the case. The apparent pattern was no correlation with sentence type, but with focus markers that sometimes overlap with sentence type.

(Note: due to font-problems, the examples in this handout are not always accurately copied from the source)

2. The Idea

It is well known that Romance clitics behave differently in imperatives than in other sentence types. Normally, this is related to the fact that these imperatives are alike to other non-finite forms. However, any influence of sentence types has never been explicitly investigated.

(1) **ITALIAN**

    a.   *Gianni*   ***lo***   *ha*   *letto*   DECL: preposed
          NAME   **3SG.MASC.ACC**   has   read
          'Gianni has read it.'

    b.   *quando*   ***lo***   *ha*   *letto?*   WH: preposed
          when   **3SG.MASC.ACC**   has   read
          'When did he read it?'

    c.   *mangia-**lo**!*   IMP: postposed
          eat-**3SG.MASC.ACC**
          'eat it!'

This same pattern is found in most Romance languages (Spanish, Catalan, French, Rumanian) and also as an areal effect in Southeastern Europe (Albanian, Greek, Macedonian). However, at the fringes of these areas, other patterns turn out to exist:

(2) **CYPRIOT GREEK**

    a.   *poli*   *anthropi*   *panda*   *kamnoun*   ***to***   *sosta*   DECL: postposed
          many   people   always   do.3PL   **it**   correctly
          'Many people always do it correctly.'

    b.   *pjos*   ***ton***   *idhe?*   WH: preposed
          who   **3SG.ACC**   saw
          'Who saw him?'

    c.   *touto*   *to*   *vivlio*   *dose*   ***tou**!*   IMP: postposed
          DEM   ART   book   give.IMP   **3SG.DAT**
          'Give this book to him!'

(3) **PORTUGUESE**

    a.   *o*   *João*   *ajudou-**me***   DECL: postposed
          ART   NAME   helped-**1SG.ACC**
          'Joao helped me.'

    b.   *onde*   ***a***   *viste?*   WH: preposed
          where   **3SG.FEM.ACC**   saw.2SG
          'Where did you see her?'

    c.   *come-**o**!*   IMP: postposed
          eat-**3SG.MASC.ACC**
          'Eat it!'

From these examples, there appears to be a hierarchy:

(4)

	Prefix	Italian (and others)	Cypriot Greek, Portuguese	Suffix
WH	pre	pre	pre	post
DECL	pre	pre	post	post
IMP	pre	post	post	post

At the writing of the abstract, I started to put this hierarchy (based on just a few European languages) to the cross-linguistic test. Do other languages with pronominal clitics show comparable structures? Potentially interesting families are Pama-Nyungan (Australia), Uto-Aztecan (Mexico), Iranian and some other languages with pronominal clitics.

Some preliminary backing from Pama-Nyungan:

'The bound personal pronouns in Southern Bagandji are normally attached to the verb … The only major exception is: when an interrogative adverb begins a sentence the bound personal pronouns are attached to that adverb.' (Hercus 1982: 156)

In Djaru sentences, ŋa-plus-bound pronoun almost always occurs as the second constituent of the sentence. The bound pronoun also cliticises onto interrogative words, adverbs of modality, conjunctions, imperative/purposive/hortative verbs (Tsunoda 1981: 124-126).

(5)   **PERSIAN** (Majidi 1990: 119, 123)

a.   *mî-bin-ad-**am***
     DUR-see-3SG.NOM-**1SG.ACC**
     'He sees me'
b.   *kojáj-**at**   dárd   mî-kon-ad*
     where-**2SG.ACC**   pain   DUR-make-3SG
     'Where do you have pain?' (colloquial)

3. Problems

–   Polar questions very regularly, in language after language, pattern with declarative structures, not with the WH-sentences: the phenomenon might depend on the presence of a WH-element, and not on the fact that the construction is a question.
–   There are many other 'functional' elements that attract (or influence the placement of) the argument clitics.

Negation:

(6)   **DJARU** (Tsunoda 1981: 256)

　　　*wagura-**lija**　　　　ŋara-man-inura　　　　ŋura　gaarara　ganimbara*
　　　NEG-**1DU.EXCL**　　know-PAST-NARR　　camp　east　　　down creek
　　　'We did not know the camp east down the creek.'

(7)   **CYPRIOT GREEK** (Terzi 1999: 230)

　　　*en　　**ton**　　　iksero*
　　　NEG　**3SG.ACC**　know.1SG
　　　'I don't know him.'

Modal adverbs:

(8)   **DJARU** (Tsunoda 1981: 262)

　　　*wari-**nya**　　　　wadybany-ŋi　　mula　　wiŋgi-ŋunin*
　　　possibly-**1SG.NOM**　throw-POT　　　DEM　　tail-from
　　　'I wanted to throw the kangaroo by the tail.'

Quantifiers:

(9)   **PORTUGUESE** (Madeira 1992: 117)

　　　a.　*os　　rapazes　ajudaram-**me***
　　　　　ART　boys　　helped.3PL-**1SG.ACC**
　　　　　'The boys helped me.'
　　　b.　*todos　os　　　rapazes　**me**　　　　ajudaram*
　　　　　all　　ART　boys　　**1SG.ACC**　helped.3PL
　　　　　'All the boys helped me.'
　　　c.　*alguém　**me**　　　　ajudou*
　　　　　someone　**1SG.ACC**　helped.3SG
　　　　　'Someone helped me.'

4. (Contrastive) Focus

It appears that in various languages, the host of the clitic is an element with (contrastive) focus. Of course, the clitic itself is highly topical information (otherwise it would not be reduced in form). However, in its placement the highly topical clitic is in some languages drawn towards the high information value of the focus.

(10) **PORTUGUESE** (Madeira 1992:119)

até *o* *Pedro* ***me*** *deu* *uma* *prenda*
even DEM NAME **1SG.DAT** gave.3SG ART present
'EVEN PEDRO gave me a present.'

(11) **CYPRIOT GREEK** (Terzi 1999: 230)

tuto *to* *vivlio* ***su*** *edhoken* *i* *Maria*
DEM ART book **2SG.ACC** gave.3SG ART NAME
'THIS BOOK Mary gave to you.'

(12) **GURINDJI** (McConvell 1996: 318-319)

a. *yirrap-ma* *ngu-**rna-yina*** *parik* *wanyja* *VRD-la*
 one mob-TOP AUX-**1SG.S-3PL.O** leave leave.PAST VRD-LOC
 'One lot I left at VRD.'
b. *yirrap-ma-**rna-yina*** *wart* *ka-nya* *murla-ngkurra*
 one mob-TOP-**1SG.S-3PL.O** back take-PAST here-ALL
 'THE OTHER LOT I brought back here.'

(13) **NORTHERN TALYSH** (Schulze 2000: 55, 53)

a. *de*   *cic-**e*** *epist-a?*
 2SG.PRON what-**2SG** tie up-PERF
 'What did you tie up?'
b. *cay* *leng-on-**em*** *epest-a*
 3SG.POSS leg-PL-**1SG** tie up-PERF
 'I tied up his leg.'
c. *albahal-**em*** *tifang* *ba* *po* *pekeru-i*
 this moment-**1SG** rifle to down take up-AOR
 'In this moment I took up the rifle from below.'

See also Udi (Harris 2002) and Sandawe (Elderkin 1986, Eaton 2001)

5. Conclusion

–   In the grammaticalisation of independent pronouns into argument cross-referencing, there can be an intermediate stage in which topical pronouns cliticise onto a highly focussed element.

–   WH-elements are normally interpreted as being necessarily in focus. This is probably the reason for the special behaviour of Portuguese and Cypriot Greek, as noted in section 2.

–   In imperatives, it is normally (though not necessary) the verb that is in focus. This may be the reason for the commonly occurring exceptional cliticization with imperatives.

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