

1 About Clitics

The three articles entitled “Clitic constructions”, “Subject Clitics in French and Romance, Complex Inversion and Clitic Doubling” and “French Predicate Clitics and Clause Structure” deal with various aspects of the syntax of pronominal clitic constructions (primarily in French with obvious consequences elsewhere). The first one, Sportiche (1992), was written in late 1991, early 1992 and circulated as a manuscript then. The last two assume the framework put in place in the first one which contain three central ideas.

1.1 Clitic Constructions

The first idea arises essentially from taking *wh*-movement as the paradigm case for movement: *wh*-movement takes place to a designated projection, and in order to license a particular property of the moving item. This view of *wh*-movement, which goes back to May’s 1985 book is clearest in Rizzi’s 1991 biconditional criterion formulation in terms of specifier/head relationship. Since Case/Agreement is checked in a specifier/head relationship and my construal (in “Movement, Agreement and Case”, section 5) of Larson’s VP shell idea also makes theta assignment a specifier/head relationship, it appeared natural to assume that:

- (1) All licensing conditions hold in specifier/head relationships

So that indeed, *wh*-movement is a paradigm case. The idea expressed in (1) is, in my own work, explored furthest in Sportiche (1993b) (Sketch of a Reductionist Approach). “Clitic Constructions” explores this idea in the case of pronominal clitic constructions. It thus assumes the existence of a “Clitic Projection” involved in Clitic Movement Constructions in the same way that a Q(uestion) projection is involved in *wh*-movement constructions. It departs from the *wh*-movement model in that it assumes there are as many Clitic Projections in a clause as there are pronominal clitics (one for Nominative clitics, one for Accusative Clitics, one for Dative Clitics etc., hence the perhaps misleading names of NomP, AccP, etc. given to various clitic projections). Clitic movement can then be viewed as movement of an XP to a particular [spec,CIP].

This view is independent from a subsidiary issue also dealt with in this article: Is the clitic itself moving into CIP or not? In this article and in Sportiche (1993) (Subject Clitics in French and Romance, Complex Inversion and Clitic Doubling), I suggest that it is not and instead is generated as the head of the CIP itself (whence it may incorporate to a higher head). This, I argue among other things would allow a simple treatment of Clitic Doubling constructions. Alternatively, it is possible that the clitic is the head of the XP moving into [spec,CIP] (whence it would incorporate to a higher head).

The second idea is to relate the properties of (a subset of pronominal) Clitic Constructions to Scrambling in the Germanic languages (and in Hindi). The CIP approach allows the treatment of Scrambling as simply being movement of a full phrase into [spec,CIP]. This reasoning assumes that Scrambling and Clitic “placement” involve the satisfaction of the same property of the moving XP: in “Clitic Constructions”, I suggest with moderate confidence that it is Specificity.ⁱ What I considered important in this result is the reduction to the same underlying phenomenon of two classes of constructions, Clitics and Scrambling, one in Romance, the other in Germanic, with no apparent counterpart in the other. Why such conclusions should at all be reached suggests the view, further articulated in “Sketch of a Reductionist Approach”, that, despite appearances, syntax is strongly invariant, i.e. that reductions of this sort is an absolute norm.

The third idea, perhaps the most important one when it comes to syntactic analysis, and already alluded to above, is the idea of Layering and Partitioning. It is based on the specific conclusions reached on the syntax of pronominal clitics.

1.2 Subject Clitics and French Predicate Clitics

The second and third papers exploit this framework of analysis. Sportiche (1993) was written shortly after Sportiche (1992). It is an exploration of how the distinction between Clitic Projections and Agreement Projections, particularly NomP (for Nominative Clitics) and AGRsP can be profitably put to use to describe the complex array of data found in Subject Clitic Inversion and Complex Inversion In French.

The third one, written in 1994 and published as Sportiche (1995a) attempts to extend this kind of approach to the predicate clitic *le* (*Jean l'est, malade/ John is it, sick*) to try to derive some of the rather surprising properties of this construction. It argues that a proper analysis of its distribution leads naturally to the proposal that small clauses in Stowell's terminology should be analyzed as full clauses. It also capitalizes on Kayne's 1993 analysis of the have/be alternation and to the analysis of reflexive clitics found in Movement Agreement and Case to explain intriguing distributional restrictions predicate le is subject to (it cannot occur without the verb *be* and is incompatible with reflexive clitics).

ⁱ In a slightly different version of this paper, namely Sportiche (to appear), I suggest instead that the property in question is whatever the definite article encodes.