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# On Cimbrian enclisis: a case study on parallel phases

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In this work we intend to examine the interaction between verb movement, verbal morphology and clitic placement in Cimbrian, a Germanic language spoken in some villages in the Veneto and Trentino regions in Northern Italy. The theoretical contribution of this investigation is framed in the general discussion on the properties of the interface between morphology and syntax. More specifically, we address the question of how the presence or the absence of verbal morphology can provide a clues for the availability of syntactic positions for clitics. Moreover, the analysis of enclisis and verb movement can help us to shed light on the parallel structure of different phases. Cimbrian is a Germanic VO language, which has lost V2 since at least the XIX century: the word order pattern of main declaratives allows for more than one element located to the left of the verb and it does not tolerate inverted subjects DP when another XP is found in front of the inflected verb.

- (1) Gheistar in Giani hat gahakat iz holtz ime balje (/in balt)  
Yesterday G. has cut the wood in the forest
- (2) De muotar gheistar kam Abato hat kost iz mel  
The mother yesterday in Badia has bought the meal
- (3) \*gheistar kam Abato hat ee muotar kost iz mel  
Yesterday in Badia has the mother bought the meal

Cimbrian has a fully fledged system of subject and object clitics, all of which systematically appear in an enclitic position to the inflected verb:

- (4) Hoite [**de muuutar**] hat-**se** gakhoofet de ojar in merkatén (Roana)  
Today the mother has-she bought the eggs at-the market
- (5) Der Tatta hat-**ze** gekoaft (Luserna)  
The father has-her bought
- (6) Der Tatta \*ze hat gekoaft

Standard cliticization tests of lack of coordination, modification, use in isolation and focussing show that Cimbrian, contrary to other Germanic languages has developed clitic heads similar to Romance clitics, which can also double DPs. On the other side, we show that although clitic pronouns in Cimbrian systematically occur in enclisis to the inflected verb both in main and embedded clauses, (as shown by (7)), they cannot be analyzed as agreement morphemes, as they are not obligatorily present (cf. the contrast between the non doubling case in (2) and the doubling case of subject clitic in (4)):

- (7) I woas ke der Tatta hat**ze** (net) gekoaft (Luserna)  
I know that the father has-her (not) bought

The question is why Cimbrian, although being VO and non-V2, hence similar to modern Romance languages, does not allow any proclisis to the verb, but only enclisis. Another interesting property of Cimbrian is that it does not display any agreement morphology on the past participle. We propose that the two phenomena (enclisis to the inflected verb and lack of past participle agreement) are related. In other words, enclisis is due to the interaction between morphology on one

side and the syntactic makeup of the sentence on the other: in the Romance languages agreement is visible on the past participle (with different degrees of application, in some cases, like Spanish only in very limited domain as passive subjects, in others it is more widespread, as in Italian and French). Morphological strength corresponds to syntactic strength, hence a projection which can host clitics (following Kayne (1991) we will call it AgrO, although nothing really important hinges on the label, it could also be some AspP) is available in the low phase (which we assume to contain some functional projections, not only thematic positions, as will be made clear in the discussion). Romance clitics are moving through this projection (creating a chain with the argumental position inside the VP) located on the edge of the low phase and then to the higher phase, more precisely to the high clitic position(s) in IP. Therefore, proclisis in Modern Romance is to be analyzed as a sort of long clitic climbing from the (edge of the) low phase to the clitic position in the high phase. Independent empirical evidence in favour of this analysis comes from the positioning of clitics in Romance languages like Piedmontese, where clitics systematically occur on the past participle and thus realize only the first step of the movement.

Given that the low clitic position on the edge of the low phase is not available in Cimbrian, as attested by the lack of past participle agreement morphology, clitics are forced to move directly to the higher phase. But this would amount to a direct movement from the thematic position to the clitic position of the high phase. We propose a condition on the parallelism between phases: if the low clitic position is not active, the high one cannot be activated unless it is licensed by some independent device as verb movement, which systematically yields enclisis. In this way the empirical generalization that connects enclisis to the inflected verb to lack of morphology of the past participle is accounted for. Other cases of enclisis inside Romance (as the Tobler Mussafia law active in Old Romance) could also be interpreted along the same lines: enclisis is found whenever a clitic projection needs to be independently licensed through verb movement. This line of research will be explored in the talk.

More generally, we can conclude that although Cimbrian apparently reproduces the order of German pronouns, which occur in a position adjacent to the inflected verb located in C°, it has a different syntax (as attested by cases like (7) which are ungrammatical in German.)

On the other side, although Cimbrian is influenced by the neighbouring Northern Italian dialects of Veneto and Trentino, it has not borrowed the syntax of clitics from them. General principles on sentence structure (the fact that long movement of clitics directly from the thematic position to the high clitic position has to be licensed) and interface with morphology (the fact that the low clitic projection has to be somehow morphologically visible) ban the simple borrowing of proclisis from the Veneto and Trentino dialects into Cimbrian, yielding a system which is neither Germanic nor Romance.

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