

Mapping Romance clitic pronouns

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1. Introduction

Romance clitic pronouns (henceforth ‘clitics’) are normally *clustered* in a rigid order, which is subject to cross-linguistic variation¹. In Italian, for instance, the 3p (= third person) dative clitic precedes the impersonal clitic, as shown in (1a), while Spanish displays the opposite order, in (1b).

- (1) a. *Le si parla.* (Italian)
to-her.CL one.CL speaks
‘One speaks to her’
- b. *Se le habla* (Spanish)
one.CL to-him/her.CL speaks
‘One speaks to him/her’

On the basis of data like those in (1) scholars agree in claiming that the order of clitics within a cluster cannot derive transparently from the order of the corresponding elements in the structure of the clause. Rather, they seem to occupy dedicated positions, whose order is set on a language-specific basis. The nature of these positions, however, is a much more debated question, which has been addressed from at least two points of view: we can try to derive the surface order via syntactic procedures (merge and move). or postulate an intermediate level of representation mapping syntactic structures into linear sequences by means of surface constraints (Perlmutter 1971), morphological templates (Bonet 1991, 1995), precedence conditions (Harris 1994), OT constraints (Heap 1998), etc., just to mention some proposals within the generative framework.

¹ Several languages exhibit differences between the orders allowed enclitically and proclitically, see Cardinaletti (2008) a.o. In what follows, I will not address this issue as I will focus only on preverbal sequences.

In a nutshell, the former account entails that the rigidity of the sequence is an epiphenomenon due to the linearization of a hierarchical structure like (2a), while the latter provides a *flat* representation of clusters, like (2b), which does not derive from any independent principle of grammar. Although theories on clitic linearization are more articulated than the simplistic representation in (2), the dichotomy between ‘surface/flat/morphological’ and ‘deep/hierarchical/syntactic’ models underlies the debate since the early 70s and there is no shared position on the horizon.

- (2) a. [α [β]]
b. $\alpha > \beta$

Surface accounts² mainly differ from syntactic explanations in excluding the possibility of further changes after the order has been set, i.e., they entail that the order of clitics cannot be rearranged cyclically (see, among others, Radford 1977). This prediction – actually, the only one originating from template-based accounts – is however problematic in the case of languages allowing *optional* and *non-transitive* orders: in the former case different orders are allowed *within* the same cluster, e.g. $\alpha\beta$, $\beta\alpha$; in the latter case the order is not consistent *across* different clusters, e.g. $\alpha\beta$, $\beta\gamma$, but $\gamma\alpha\beta$ instead of the expected $*\alpha\beta\gamma$.

Above all, surface accounts are particularly problematic for logical and methodological reasons, as they are often assumed in violation of Occam’s razor. In fact, frequently they do not follow from a thorough falsification of syntactic accounts, but rather from straw man arguments. In particular, they are still supported on the basis of Perlmutter’s (1971) original arguments, although our knowledge of functional structures has radically improved in the last decades. As a matter of fact, we are now used to very detailed³ representations of functional elements, whose basic order is detected on the basis of cross-linguistic evidence regarding word order phenomena, semantic scope, mirror effects, locality constraints, etc. Fine-grained maps have been proposed also for object clitics, which have been argued to occupy a hierarchy of syntactic projections encoding grammatical features (Bianchi 2006, Savescu 2007) and categories (Manzini & Savoia 2002, 2004).

Furthermore, ‘surface/flat/morphological’ models are usually assumed to be exhaustive, i.e., they normally entail that syntactic structures are irremediably hidden by

² This argument is against standard templatic approaches, while it does not regard OT and Distributed Morphology approaches, where the surface order is due to an articulated interaction of constraints and rules within a post-syntactic module of UG.

³ *Cartographic*, in Cinque and Rizzi’s (2008) terms.

further operations and, hence, they are beyond the scope of scientific inquiry. As a consequence, alternative explanations end up being excluded *a priori*. On the contrary, syntactic approaches like those previously mentioned do not exclude that in some cases the output order might be conditioned by extra-syntactic factors like the denotational properties of each clitic item (see Manzini and Savoia 2002, 2004, cf. section 2.1 below) or its morphological shape. Poletto (2000), for instance, notices that subject clitics expressed by a vocalic element tend to occupy a dedicated position, while Cattaneo (2009) (cf. sections 6-7 below) shows that in the dialect of Bellinzona (Switzerland) 3p object clitics optionally rise to the position of the homophonous subject clitics.

Given the arguments above, in this article I will illustrate the basic tenants of a comprehensive syntactic account of clitic sequences on the basis of various pieces of evidence from Italian (Lepschy and Lepschy 1977, Radford 1977), Spanish (Cuervo 2002, Heap 1998, Ordoñez 2002), northern Italo-Romance (in particular from Vicentino, a dialect spoken in North-Eastern Italy), and the Gallo-Italic dialect spoken in Bellinzona, Switzerland (Cattaneo 2009). I will argue that an articulated syntactic framework can account for the observed data and shed light on some peculiar irregularities without postulating further levels of analysis.

The article is organized as follows: section 2 illustrates the theoretical framework, section 3 deals with a comparison of Italian and Spanish, section 4 with data from Vicentino, in 5 I will discuss the morphology of sequences formed by impersonal and reflexive clitics, in section 6 I will compare my findings with those of Cattaneo (2009), following his hypothesis that dialects differ with respect to the accessibility of a higher layer of clitic positions. Finally, in section 7 I will address further sequences of three clitics that cannot be derived directly from the supposed order of functional projections.

2. Ingredients for a non-trivial syntactic analysis

Given the set of clitics α , β , γ , clusters of two clitics normally display the following generalized properties:

(3) a. *rigidity*:

if a language allows the order $\alpha\beta$, it will disallow the opposite one (e.g. $*\beta\alpha$);

b. *transitivity*:

if α precedes β and β precedes γ , in the same language α will precede γ .

Rigidity (3a) has to do with the order of clitic elements within the cluster, while transitivity (3b) deals with the order of clitic elements across clusters. A rigid and transitive system is therefore the one in which all the possible combinations – for instance, those in (4) – follow from the same, abstract order – e.g. $\alpha > \beta > \gamma$ – even if the whole sequence $\alpha\beta\gamma$ is never attested.

(4) $\alpha\beta, \beta\gamma, \alpha\gamma$

We can therefore claim that such an abstract order is part of the native speaker's competence and, within a generative framework, we are expected to assume the most restrictive hypothesis, viz, that the basic underlying hierarchy is universal and can be represented as a set of embedded functional projections like the one in (5).

(5) $[\alpha [\beta [\gamma [\dots]]]]$

In terms of the structural representation, such an account is as rigid as a standard template: the only difference is that here clitics are not sisters, but only-daughters. However, unlike a surface template, the hierarchy in (5) is supposed to undergo further changes responsible for interlinguistic and intralinguistic variants.

2.1. Interlinguistic variation

Within the adopted framework, interlinguistic variants originate from two kinds of causes (neither of them can be excluded a priori). First, different languages can exploit different portions of the same hierarchy: for instance, a specific projection (or set of projections) is accessible only in a given set of languages, which will therefore organise their morphological material according to a peculiar superficial array. Second, the denotation of a specific morphological item can vary crosslinguistically and, as a consequence, its position within the universal hierarchy can be subject to variation. In other words, the same exponent can express

different features in different languages (hence: same exponent, different positions⁴) and, on the other hand, the same feature can be expressed by different exponents in different languages (hence: two exponents, same position).

The latter point has been extensively addressed in Manzini and Savoia (2002, 2004), who noticed that the correspondence between categories and morphological exponents is not universal, but subject to language specific choices. In the Vagli dialect, for instance, exhibit the order *dat* > *acc* because the 3p accusative clitic *l* lexicalises the category N, while the dative clitic *ʃi* is inserted in Q “[i]n virtue of its Q properties” (roughly, because it is syncretic with the plural accusative clitic, see Manzini and Savoia 2002: 126).

(6) a. *i ʃi l ða.* (Vagli, Tuscany)

He to.him.cl it.cl gives
 ‘He gives it/them to him.’

b. ... R Q P Loc N I
 | |
 ʃi *l*

On the other hand, the dialect spoken in Olivetta San Michele (Manzini and Savoia 2002: 129) shows the opposite order (*acc* > *dat*), which entails that the accusative clitic in Olivetta lexicalises a higher category like R, as shown in (7b):

(7) a. *el u i 'duna.* (Olivetta San Michele, Liguria)

he it-m./it-f./them-m./them-f. to.him gives
 ‘He gives it/them to him.’

b. ... R Q P Loc N I
 | |
 u i

⁴ This case is commonly shown even within the same language, as clitic elements are frequently syncretic. For instance, in many Italo-Romance dialects – including Vicentino, see below – the 3p dative clitic is syncretic with the locative exponent. In such cases, the question is whether the syncretic element occupies a) distinct positions, b) the basic position of the 3p dative clitic, c) the basic position of the locative clitic.

As Manzini and Savoia (2002: 129) pointed out, the parametrization between Vagli and Olivetta must depend on the denotational properties of the items *l* and *u*. Such an analysis is rather appealing in cases, like Vagli and Olivetta, where the two clitics are morphologically different.

2.2. Intralinguistic variation

Several Romance languages allow different orders within a cluster of clitic elements, e.g. $\alpha\beta$, $\beta\alpha$. A promising solution to the problem is provided by independently motivated models assuming several domains of clitic placement within the same clause. Since Poletto (2000) we use to distinguish a specific clitic domain for subject clitics (which she calls ‘Higher Field’), while object clitics are supposed to occupy a single set of projections (which I will refer to as the ‘Lower Field’). Moreover, recent proposals – see Benincà and Tortora (2009, 2010) and references therein – argue for a layered system of domains dedicated to the placement of object clitics. As a consequence, optional orders within the same language and cross-linguistic variants can therefore follow from the possibility of hosting the same clitic in different domains of the clause:

- (8) a. $[\alpha [\beta [\gamma \dots [\alpha [\delta [\epsilon \]]]]]]$
 | |
 $\alpha \beta$
- b. $[\alpha [\beta [\gamma \dots [\alpha [\delta [\epsilon \]]]]]]$
 | |
 $\beta \qquad \alpha$

Alternatively, non rigid and non transitive orders can be accounted for on the basis of Kayne’s hypothesis (Kayne 1994: 19-21) suggesting that the surface order can be derived also through movement and left-adjunction of a clitic to another clitic. For instance, given two clitics α , β , the order $\alpha\beta$ can be due to a “split” configuration like (9a), where clitics occupy distinct syntactic projections, and the reverse order might be due to a “cluster” configuration like (9b), in which the leftmost clitic has moved from a lower position and left adjoined to the higher clitic. Such an account has been extensively adopted to account for languages showing optional orders or different orders in enclisis and proclisis (Terzi 1999, Ordoñez 2002).

- (9) a. [α [β]]
 b. [β α [t_β]]

Again, the choice between the explanation in (8) and the one in (9) is a matter of empirical verification.

3. Italian and Spanish

In Italian, the 3p dative *gli* (f. *le*) precedes the 3p reflexive *si* (10a), which precedes the accusative clitics *lo*, *la*, *li*, *le* (10b), which precede the impersonal *si* (10c). Transitively, the 3p dative *gli* precedes 3p accusative and impersonal clitics, in (10d) and (10e) respectively:

- (10) a. *Gli si presenta.*
 to.him.CL himself/herself.CL introduces
 ‘He/she introduces himself/herself to him.’
- b. *Se lo compra.*
 to.himself/herself.CL it.CL buys.
 ‘He/she buys it for himself/herself’
- c. *Lo si compra.*
 it.CL one.CL buys
 ‘One buys it.’
- d. *Glielo compra.*
 to.him.CL it.CL buys
 ‘He/she buys it for him’
- e. *Gli si compra un libro.*
 to.him.CL one.CL buys a book
 ‘One buys a book for him’

The orders above are therefore consistent with the scheme below. Since I am comparing 3p forms from now on I will omit person specifications. The order is always Dative > Accusative, even if one clitic is reflexive (this option is signalled by the superscript ^(R)), while the impersonal *si* always follows the other pronouns.

(11) Dative^(R) > Accusative^(R) > Impersonal

Spanish differs from Italian in two main aspects, as shown by the Spanish translations, in (12) of the examples in (10). First, the 3p dative *le(s)* is always replaced by the reflexive exponent *se* when it combines with the 3p accusative (m. *lo(s)*, f. *la(s)*). The replacing clitic *se* is usually called ‘spurious’ as it does not have a reflexive interpretation. Second, *se* (impersonal, reflexive and spurious) always precedes the other clitics.

- (12) a. *Se le presenta*
himself/herself.CL to.him.CL introduces
‘He/she introduces himself/herself to him.’
- b. *Se lo compra*
to.himself/herself.CL it.CL buys.
‘He/she buys it for himself/herself’
- c. *Se lo compra*
one.CL it.CL buys
‘One buys it.’
- d. *Se lo compra*
to.him.CL it.CL buys
‘He/she buys it for him’
- e. *Se le compra un libro*
one.CL to.him.CL buys a book
‘One buys a book for him’

Following Perlmutter (1971), both the effects noticed above can follow from the template in (13), in which all types of *se* occupy the leftmost position, while 3p clitics compete for the same slot.

(13) *se* > 3p

The comparison of Italian and Spanish orders – in (14) – does not seem very promising, as the order of the four elements under examination is rather different and the shape of the resulting templates is far from similar:

(14) a. Dative^(R) > Accusative^(R) > Impersonal (Italian)

b. *se* > 3p (Spanish)

In the following section, however, I will suggest that the pattern found in northern Italo-Romance, here exemplified with data from the variety spoken in Vicenza, can provide the keystone to compare the orders in (14).

4. Vicentino

Vicentino exhibits cases of optional order involving the clitic *se*. It is worth noting that these orders are in free variation and their distribution does not depend on socio-linguistic or stylistic factors. Moreover, the pattern described below is typical of northern Italian dialects; the following examples are therefore representative of a typological pattern found in many varieties and spread in a rather vast area.

First, both impersonal (15) and reflexive (16) *se* can either precede or follow the 3p dative clitic *ghe*:

(15) a. *Ghe se porta un libro.* Dat Imp (Vicentino)
to-him.CL one.CL bring a book
'One brings him a book'

- b. *Se ghe porta un libro.* Imp Dat
one.CL to-him.CL bring a book
'One brings him a book'
- (16) a. *El ghe se ga presentà nuò.* Dat Refl (Vicentino)
He.CL to-him.CL himself.CL has introduced naked
'He has introduced himself to him naked'
- b. *El se ghe ga presentà nuò.* Refl Dat
He.CL himself.CL to-him.CL has introduced naked
'He has introduced himself to him naked'

Second, impersonal *se* can either precede or follow the 3p accusative clitic *lo* (17), while the reflexive clitic cannot follow *lo*, as shown in (18):

- (17) a. *Lo se vede in giro.* Acc Imp (Vicentino)
Him.CL one.CL see around.
'One sees him around.'
- b. *Se lo vede in giro.* Imp Acc
One.CL him.CL see around.
'One sees him around.'
- (18) a. **lo se magna.* * Acc Refl (Vicentino)
it.CL to.him/herself.CL eats.
'He/she eats it.'
- b. *Se lo magna.* Refl Acc
to.him/herself.CL it.CL eats.
'He/she eats it.'

Third, the 3p accusative *lo* must follow the 3p dative clitic *ghe*:

- (19) a. *Ghe lo regalemo.* Dat Acc (Vicentino)
to.him.CL it.CL give.1.PL
‘We give it to him’
- b. * *Lo ghe regalemo.* * Acc Dat
it.CL to.him.CL give.1.PL
‘We give it to him’

Moreover, as shown by clusters formed by three clitics, the impersonal clitic *se* cannot appear between *ghe* and *lo*, as shown in (20a), but it occupies either the leftmost or the rightmost position of the cluster:

- (20) a. * *Ghe se lo regalemo.* * Dat Imp Acc (Vicentino)
it.CL to.him.CL give.1.PL
‘We give it to him’
- b. *Se ghe lo regala.* Imp Dat Acc
one.CL to.him.CL it.CL gives
‘One gives it to him’
- c. *Ghe lo se regala.* Dat Acc Imp
one.CL to.him.CL it.CL gives
‘One gives it to him’

If we compare the orders of Vicentino with those of standard Spanish and Italian, we will obtain the following combinations:

		Spanish	Italian	Vicentino
a.	Dat Acc	<i>se lo</i> ⁵	<i>glielo</i>	<i>ghe lo</i>
b.	Acc Dat	*	*	*
c.	Dat Imp	*	<i>gli si</i>	<i>ghe se</i>
d.	Imp Dat	<i>se le</i>	*	<i>se ghe</i>
e.	Dat Refl	*	<i>gli si</i>	<i>ghe se</i>
f.	Refl Dat	<i>se le</i>	*	<i>se ghe</i>
g.	Acc Imp	*	<i>lo si</i>	<i>lo se</i>
h.	Imp Acc	<i>se lo</i>	*	<i>se lo</i>
i.	Acc Refl	*	*	*
j.	Refl Acc	<i>se lo</i>	<i>se lo</i>	<i>se lo</i>
k.	Imp Dat Acc	*	*	<i>se ghe lo</i>
l.	Dat Acc Imp	*	<i>glielo si</i>	<i>ghe lo se</i>

In a nutshell, Vicentino exhibits all the clusters that are allowed either in Spanish or Italian, while it does not admit the combinations that both Spanish and Italian do not allow. In terms of a template, the pattern found in Vicentino is therefore supposed to be due to a combination of those displayed by Spanish and Italian, in (14): like Spanish it exhibits a leftmost position hosting any type of *se* and, like Italian, it allows the reflexive *se* to occupy the Accusative/Dative positions (on the basis of its Case), while the impersonal one can occupy also a dedicated position below the accusative:

(21) a. $se > 3p$ (Spanish)

b. $Dat^{(R)} > Acc^{(R)} > Imp$ (Italian)

c. $se > Dat^{(R)} > Acc^{(R)} > Imp$ (Vicentino)

Given the schemes in (21), we can therefore account for the observed variation on the basis of a single hierarchy, in (22), as languages seem to differ on the basis of the portion of the hierarchy that is accessible: Vicentino can exploit the whole string, Spanish the upper side, Italian the lower one.

(22) $se > 3p > Imp$

Furthermore, they differ with respect to the parameter in (23).

⁵ When a 3rd person dative (e.g. *le*) combines with a 3rd person accusative clitic (e.g. *lo*), the former is expressed by a ‘spurious’ *se* element, namely a *se* without reflexive interpretation.

In Vicentino, on the contrary, the combination of an impersonal and a 3p reflexive clitic is possible and transparent, as shown in (33):

- (26) *Se se lava le man.* (Vicentino)
himself.CL one.CL wash the hands
'You(imp.) wash your hands'

The difference between Spanish and the other languages follows straightforwardly from the parameter in (23), while the distinction between Italian and Vicentino, concerning the opacity of the Italian cluster, deserves further attention.

As suggested by Grimshaw (1997, 2000), Maiden (2000) among others, such an opacity is probably triggered by an OCP-like⁶ principle preventing the insertion of two identical exponents within the same cluster. If so, one can argue that Vicentino is not targeted by such an OCP-like constraint because its clitics, though phonologically adjacent, are far enough to avoid its violation. This hypothesis can be verified by observing the position of the impersonal and the 3p reflexive *s-* with respect to the accusative clitic *lo* ('it/him'). The orders displayed by Italian and Vicentino are different: in Italian the clitic *lo* is in the middle of the cluster, while in Vicentino it is on the right:

- (27) a. *Ce lo si beve.* (Italian)
to.himself.CL it.CL one.CL drinks
'One drinks it'
- b. * *Ci se lo beve.*
to.himself.CL it.CL one.CL drinks
'One drinks it'
- (28) a. * *Se lo se beve.* (Vicentino)
to.himself.CL it.CL one.CL drinks
'One drinks it'
- b. *Se se lo beve.*

⁶ The Obligatory Contour Principle (OCP) is a phonological hypothesis that states that consecutive identical features are banned in underlying representations.

one.CL to.himself.CL it.CL drinks
 ‘One drinks it’

Given the structures of Italian and Vicentino in (21), we can therefore conclude that Vicentino allows a transparent combination of two *s*’ if the leftmost one occupies the higher position, as shown by the following diagram:

(29) [Imp/Refl [Dat [Acc [Imp ... (Vicentino)
 | | |
 se *se* *lo*

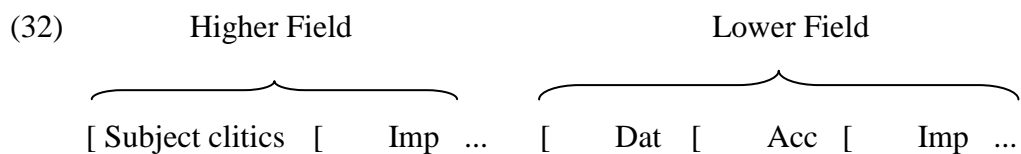
Italian, on the other hand, is targeted by dissimilation because the impersonal clitic occupies the lower position as the higher one is not available in Italian (in the scheme below the unavailable position is barred):

(30) [~~Imp/Refl~~ [Dat [Acc [Imp ... (Italian)
 | | |
 ce *lo* *se*

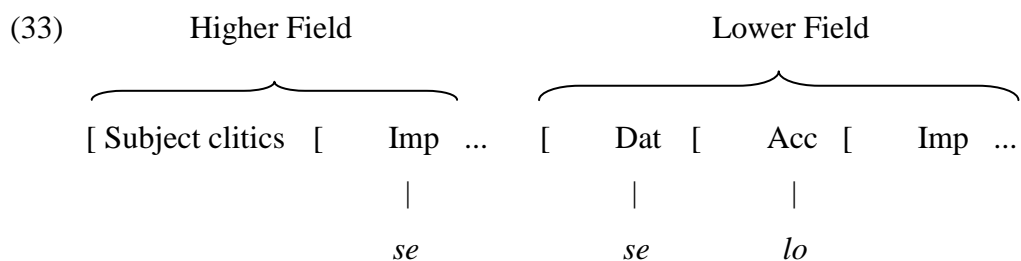
A possible account of the nature of such an extra higher position in Vicentino is provided by Benincà and Tortora (2009) on the basis of data from several Piedmontese dialects (north-western Italy, see Tortora 2002 and Parry 1998). In these dialects object clitics are always enclitic while the impersonal clitic, on the contrary, appears to the left of the verb, in the position that is normally dedicated to subject clitics. For instance, the following pair of examples from the dialect spoken in Borgomanero (Benincà and Tortora 2009) shows that the reflexive *si* must be enclitic also with finite verbs, while the impersonal *as* must be proclitic:

(31) a. *Al vônga-si.* (Borgomanerese, Benincà and Tortora 2009)
 He.CL sees-himself.CL
 ‘He sees himself.’
 b. *As môngia bej chilonsé.*
 One.CL eats well here
 ‘One eats well here.’

Benincà and Tortora (2009) claim that the impersonal clitic in these dialects is inserted into a higher position, which I will assume to be the lowest position of the Higher Functional field (Poletto 2000), i.e. the layer of syntactic projections that in northern Italian dialects hosts subject clitics:



This analysis accounts for the contrast between Italian and Vicentino with respect to the sequence impersonal + reflexive: in Vicentino it is not targeted by the OCP-like constraint because these clitics, are in different fields:



6. Rebellling clitics (Cattaneo 2009)

According to Cattaneo's (2009) accurate description, the Italo-Romance dialect spoken in Bellinzona (Switzerland) shows other cases of optional orders that resemble the one just discussed. In Bellinzoneese the impersonal clitic must precede the 3p dative *ga* (34), which, in turn, must precede the accusative clitic *la* (35), but the latter can either precede or follow the impersonal clitic, as shown in (36):

- (34) a. Sa ga dà al libru
 one.CL to.him.CL give the book
 'One gives the book to him/her/us/them'

- b. * Ga sa dà al libru
to.him.CL one.CL give the book
'One gives the book to him/her/us/them'

- (35) a. Ga la dō
to.him.CL her.CL give
'I give it to him/her/them'

- b. * la ga dō
her.CL to.him.CL give
'I give it to him/her/them'

- (36) a. Sa la ved tüt i matin in piazza
one.CL her.CL see.3sg all the morning in square
'One sees her/it at the square every morning'

- b. La sa ved tüt i matin in piazza
her.CL one.CL see.3sg all the morning in square
'One sees her/it at the square every morning'

The order of Bellinzoneese object clitics is summarized as follows (the parentheses mean that the impersonal clitic can occupy that position only in combination with the accusative element):

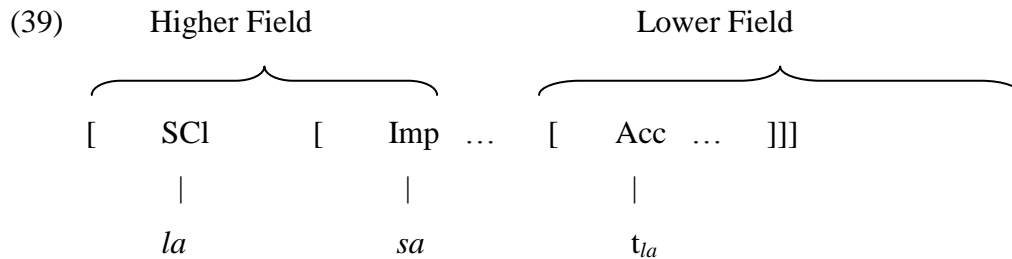
- (37) Impersonal > Dative > Accusative (Impersonal) (Bellinzoneese)

Bellinzoneese and Vicentino – whose order is recapitulated in (38) – are therefore isomorphic, even if they differ radically with respect to the lower position of the impersonal clitic:

- (38) Impersonal > Dative > Accusative > Impersonal (Vicentino)

An account of such a difference is provided by Cattaneo (2009), who, on the basis of independent evidence (see below), argues that in Bellinzoneese 3p object clitics like *la* can

‘rebel’ and exceptionally rise to the positions dedicated to the homophonous 3p subject clitics. The orders of Bellinzoneese can be therefore derived suggesting that the impersonal clitic is always in the Higher Field and that the order *la sa* in (36b) is in fact due to the movement of the accusative clitic to the Higher Field, above the impersonal:



This analysis is strongly supported by the behaviour of the subject clitic *a*⁷, which can combine with the object *la*, but is ungrammatical in combination with the homophonous subject clitic:

- (40) a. (A) *la legi, la riviscta*
 SCI her.CL read, the magazine
 ‘I read it, the magazine’
- b. (*A) *la va a Padova*
 SCI she.CL goes to Padova
 ‘She goes to Padova’

Crucially, when the rebelled object clitic *la* precedes the impersonal *sa*, *a* is ruled out:

- (41) a. (A) *sa la ved tüt i matin in piazza*
 SCL one.CL her.CL see.3sg all the morning in square
 ‘One sees her/it at the square every morning’
- b. (*A) *la sa ved tüt i matin in piazza*
 SubjCL her.CL one.CL see.3sg all the morning in square

⁷ For an in-depth account of *a*, see Cattaneo (2009:27-49). In Bellinzoneese *a* does not bear a person specification and it is not related to a specific pragmatic interpretation. Cattaneo (2009:32) argues that it is related to the presence of a subject, either overt or covert, in the left-periphery.

‘One sees her/it at the square every morning’

This confirms that in (41b) the object clitic *la* is not in its canonical position within the Lower Field, but occupies a subject-like position in the Higher Field⁸.

7. Sequencing three clitics

On the basis of Cattaneo’s account, a Bellinzonese cluster formed by the impersonal *sa*, the 3p dative *ga*, and the accusative *la* is expected to show either the order *sa ga la* (if *la* is in the Lower Field) or *la sa ga* (if *la* is a rebel in the Higher Field). However, the latter combination is in fact ungrammatical, while speakers allow the unexpected order *ga la sa*.

(42) a. *Sa ga la dà quando ...*
 one.CL to.him/her/them.CL her.CL give when
 ‘One gives it/them to him/her/them when ...’

b. * *La sa ga dà quando ...*
 her.CL one.CL to.him/her/them.CL give when
 ‘One gives it to him/her/them when...’

c. *Ga la sa dà quando ...*
 to.him/her/them.CL her.CL one.CL give when

⁸ I depart from Cattaneo’s analysis, which assumes that in this case *la* is a true subject clitic, and that *sa* is not an impersonal clitic, but a sort of passivizer, as suggested by Lepschy (1989: 139) about Venetian:

(i) (Le putee) le se vede doman. (Venetian)
 (the girls) they.cl PASSIVE sees tomorrow
 ‘(The girls) They will be seen tomorrow’ = ‘One will see them tomorrow’

While this proposal is consistent with the historical evolution (impersonal *s-* originates from reflexive/passive *s-*), such a hypothesis is rather problematic for a synchronic analysis. Observe, for instance, the following example, which resembles the one in (i), except for the person of the object clitic (*me* ‘me’ instead of *le* ‘them/they’):

(ii) me se vede doman. (Venetian)
 me.cl PASSIVE sees tomorrow
 I will be seen tomorrow’

In this case the passive analysis is untenable as Venetian does not display any subject clitic *me* (which, on the contrary is a clear object pronoun).

‘One gives it to him/her/them when...’

Moreover, it is worth noting that when *ga la* precedes the impersonal *sa*, like in (42c), the subject clitic *a* is ungrammatical (remember that *a* does not co-occur with other elements in the Higher Field):

(43) a. (A) *sa ga la dà quando ...*

SCI one.CL to.him/her/them.CL her.CL give when

‘One gives it to him/her/them when’

b. (*A) *ga sa la dà quando ...*

SCI to.him/her/them.CL one.CL her.CL give when

‘One gives it to him/her/them when ...’

Therefore, according to (42c) and (43b), the dative *ga* seems exceptionally to occupy a position within the Higher Field, which is an undesirable result since we have evidence that the clitic *ga* cannot normally precede the impersonal *sa* (I repeat here the relevant example).

(44) a. *Sa ga dà al libru*

one.CL to.him.CL give the book

‘One gives the book to him/her/us/them’

b. * *Ga sa dà al libru*

to.him.CL one.CL give the book

‘One gives the book to him/her/us/them’

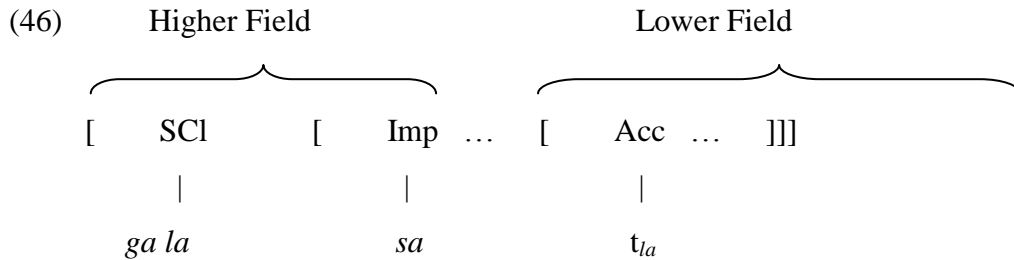
Moreover, while the clitic *la* is homophonous with the corresponding subject form, the same condition does not hold for *ga*, which is far from being similar to any nominative form (etymologically it is a locative particle). Hence, in this case we cannot argue that morphological identity is the trigger of such an exceptional movement to the Higher Field.

The exceptional behaviour of *ga* seems therefore to require an alternative analysis, which, in my opinion, can be based on Kayne’s hypothesis (Kayne 1994: 19-21) that clitics can be either split from each other or left-adjoined to the same head.

(45) a. [XP α [YP β ...]]

b. [XP βα [YP t_β ...]]

According to this hypothesis, the Dative clitic *ga* when it precedes *la sa* does not occupy a specific syntactic position in the Higher Field, but it is left adjoined to the rebel *la*:



Such an exceptional left adjunction can be triggered by two – possibly co-occurring – requirements. First, it can follow from an *order-preservation* principle keeping the order of elements constant across clitic domains, as already suggested by Haegeman (1993) for West Flemish and Săvescu Ciucivara (2007) for Rumanian⁹. According to this explanation, the Dative clitic is base-generated in the Lower Field, above the accusative clitic¹⁰. Then, when the latter moves to the Higher Field and ends up behaving like a subject clitic, the dative *ga* follows and left adjoins to *la* in order to preserve the original order:

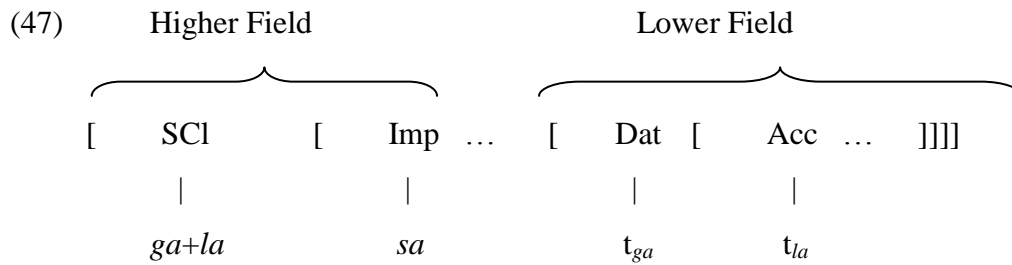
⁹ Săvescu Ciucivara (2007), dealing with Rumanian (a language allowing only dative > accusative combinations), suggests that before landing in their specific positions, clitics move through a sub-layer of case positions (KPs) determining the dative > accusative order. According to this proposal, KPs normally host enclitic pronouns, while proclitics move to a field of Person Projections (see also Bianchi 2006) corresponding to my Lower Field. Săvescu's proposal is schematized below:

(i) Pers1P>Pers3P>Pers2P>Refl3P>Pers3P>TP>KP-dat>KP-acc (Săvescu Ciucivara 2007: (33))

This proposal allows Săvescu Ciucivara to explain why all clitic combinations are allowed postverbally (with the Dative > Accusative order), while preverbal clusters are allowed if and only if the movement towards the preverbal field gives rise to crossing dependencies preserving the dat > acc order:

(ii) a. Pers1P>Pers3P>Pers2P>Refl3P>Pers3P>TP>KP-dat>KP-acc grammatical
 b. Pers1P>Pers3P>Pers2P>Refl3P>Pers3P>TP>KP-dat>KP-acc ungrammatical

¹⁰ Alternatively, one could assume that the left adjunction takes place in the Lower Field and then the whole *ga+sa* cluster moves to the Higher Field. Crucially, this hypothesis entails that the Dative clitic is base-generated below the accusative one. Consequently, the surface order of Italo-Romance would be derived, while the basic one would correspond to the one of French, e.g. *le lui* 'it/him to-him'.



Furthermore, left-adjunction can follow from an *adjacency* constraint, requiring object clitics (namely pronouns referencing internal arguments) to be adjacent. In the case above, for instance, *ga* is forced to leave the Lower Field as the impersonal *sa* intervenes between the pronouns referencing the indirect and direct objects.

This requirement can shed light on non transitive orders shown by sequences of three clitics in Italian (Lepschy and Lepschy 1977, Radford 1977) and Spanish (Cuervo 2002).

Italian, as previously mentioned, exhibits a rigid and transitive pattern in sequences of two clitics (see section 3) since the order within and across couples of clitic exponents is always consistent. However, if we focus on clusters formed by three clitics, we will find an interesting counterexample. In what follows, I will take into consideration sequences formed by the 3p dative *gli*, the impersonal *si* and the partitive clitic *ne*. The latter has a rather complex status, as it references DPs governed by Qs and genitive PPs, but, crucially *ne* extraction is allowed if the containing constituent is base-generated in object position¹¹. The following examples show that *ne* pronominalizes a genitive PP if it modifies the direct object as in (48a-b), otherwise it is ungrammatical, as shown in (48c).

- (48) a. *ne conosco l'autore del libro*
of-it know.1.sg the author of the book
'I know the author of it'
- b. *ne chiedo una copia del libro all'autore*
of-it ask-for.1.sg a copy of the book to-the author

¹¹ Moreover, *ne* extraction is allowed when the PP is governed by verbs like *parlare*, *discutere* 'talk, discuss', even if such PP does not modify any overt object:

- (i) *ne parlo sempre di soldi*
Of-it.CL talk.1.SG always of money
'I always talk about it (money)'

A possible solution to provide a unified analysis is to assume that verbs like *parlare*, *discutere* can be decomposed into a light verb (SAY) and a covert internal object, which is then modified by the PP.

‘I ask the author for a copy of it’

- c. *ne chiedo una copia del giornale all’autore ~~del libro~~
of-it ask-for.1.sg a copy of-the newspaper to-the author ~~of-the book~~
‘I ask the author of it for a copy’

As a consequence, the clitic *ne* in modern Italian¹² cannot co-occur with an accusative clitic (e.g. *lo, la, li, le* ‘him, her, them’) as the former references a subcomponent of the latter. Nevertheless, even if their syntactic scope partially overlap, accusative and partitive clitics exhibit different surface positions: the former precedes the impersonal *si*, while *ne* follows it:

(49) *Gli, le* (‘to him/her’) > *lo, la, li, le* (‘him/her/them.m/f’) > *si* (‘one’) > *ne* (‘of.it/them’)

Combinations of two clitics containing *ne* are always consistent with the template above: *gli* precedes the impersonal clitic *si/se*¹³, while both *gli* and the impersonal *si* precede the partitive clitic *ne*:

- (50) a. *Gli si* regalano due libri
to.him. CL one.CL give two books
‘One gives him two books’

- b. * *Si gli* regalano due libri.
one.CL to.him. CL give two books
‘One gives him two books’

- (51) a. *Se ne* regalano due.
One.CL of-them.CL give two
‘One gives two of them’

- b. * *Ne se* regalano due.
of-them.CL one.CL give two

¹² Pace Wanner (1977), who reports cases of sequences *ne lo* (unattested in modern Italian), where *ne* has an ablative reading.

¹³ The alternation *si/se* depends on a contextual allomorphy: *-i* becomes *-e* when the clitic precedes an accusative (e.g. *lo*) or partitive (*ne*) pronoun.

‘One gives two of them’

- (52) a. *Glie-ne regalano due*
to.him.CL-of.them.CL give two
‘They give him two of them’
- b. **Ne gli regalano due*
of.them.CL to.him.CL give two
‘They give him two of them’

If we try to combine *gli, si, ne*, the transitive, expected order is therefore the one in (53a), but, crucially, northern speakers – including myself – accept only the non-transitive one in (53b):

- (53) a. % *Gli se ne regalano due.*
To.him.CL one.CL of.them.CL give two
‘One give him two of them’
- b. % *Gliene si regalano due.*
To.him.CL of.them.CL one.CL give two
‘One give him two of them’

It is worth noticing that these orders are not in free distribution: speakers allowing the former usually do not allow the latter and vice versa. It means that the latter combination is not due to an optional movement – like those discussed in the previous sections on Vicentino and Bellinzonese data – but depends on different native speakers’ competences.

In my opinion, such a variability follows from the tension between constraints on clitic sequences. On the one hand, clitic combinations tend to be transitive, i.e., consistent with the basic order, as in the sequence (53a). On the other hand, the basic array can undergo further modifications due to an adjacency requirement when a third clitic intervenes between the pronouns referencing the internal arguments, like in Bellinzonese, cfr. (47). In the case of Italian, one could argue that the intransitive order in (53b) is due to the same requirement, which is satisfied by moving the partitive clitic to the vacant Accusative position, as shown in (54). In other words, I am claiming that the same surface constraint (say, internal objects must

be adjacent) makes Bellinzonese *la* behave like a fake subject clitic and, on the other hand, Italian *ne* behave like a fake accusative.

- (54) [Dat [Acc [Imp [Part]]]]
 | | | |
 glie *ne* *si* *t_{ne}*

Another case of non-transitivity within a sequence of three clitics has been noticed in Spanish by Cuervo 2002. As shown in section 2, Standard Spanish is a transitive language, whose clitic order can be derived from Perlmutter's (1971) template, repeated below:

- (55) *se* > 1/2p > 3p

According to the template, a 2nd person clitic is expected to follow the clitic *se*, as shown by the reply in (56), where the inherent reflexive *se* ('to itself') combines with a benefactive 2nd person *te*, and with the direct object *lo*.

- (56) - *La grúa se me llevó el auto.*
 The tow truck to.itself.CL to.me.CL took the car
 'The tow truck took (with it) the car from me. (My car has been towed).'
- *¿En serio se te lo llevó?*
 Really, to.itself.CL to.you.CL it.CL took3rdSg ?
 'Oh, really it took it?'

However, Cuervo 2002 noticed that when *se* is 'spurious', namely when it references a non-reflexive dative clitic, the 2nd person clitic – here with an ethical interpretation – has to precede the dative-accusative sequence¹⁴:

¹⁴ This deviant order might be due to the interference of dialects like Murcian, where the order of 1/2p clitics and the clitic *se* is not rigid: both orders are in fact allowed independently from the interpretation of *se*, which can be a true reflexive, an inherent reflexive, or an impersonal pronoun (Heap 1998, Ordoñez 2002):

- (i) a. *se te escapa.* (Murcian and standard Spanish)
 Him/herself.CL to.you.SG.CL escapes
 'I'm losing it.'
 b. *te se escapa.* (Murcian Spanish only)
 To.you.SG.CL him/herself.CL escapes
 'I'm losing it'

- (57) - *Me le llevé el auto (a Emilio)* (Spanish, Cuervo 2002)
for.myself.CL to.him.CL took.1.SG the car (to Emilio)
'I took his car for myself'
- [?] *¿En serio te se lo llevaste?*
Really for.yourself.CL to.him.CL it.CL took.2.SG
'Oh, really you took it from him for yourself?'

Cuervo's 2002 conclusion is that the template in (55) fails to capture the order in (57) and that the spurious *se* and the reflexive *se* occupy different positions. Following the hypothesis of an adjacency requirement, we can alternatively suggest that in this case the so-called spurious *se* – again, a dative pronoun – left adjoins to the accusative clitic *lo*, without reaching its target position in the template, in order to prevent the inherent 2p clitic from intervening between the internal objects.

- (58) [1/2p [3p]]
| |
te se lo

8. Conclusions

In this article I have argued that clitic orders require an account based on a universal and layered hierarchy of syntactic projections, like the one developed by Benincà and Tortora (2009, 2010) among others. In particular, I have argued that this approach can shed light on some minor phenomena that, within a surface account, would remain otherwise unexplored.

Given a universal set of dedicated clitic positions, interlinguistic variation originates from i) the portion of such a hierarchy that is available in every single language and ii) the denotational properties of each clitic item, which can vary crosslinguistically (Manzini and Savoia 1999, 2002). Intralinguistic variation, on the other hand, is due to movement across layers and/or left adjunction of a clitic to another one (Kayne 1994). Each of these options is in principle valid and they must be therefore excluded on the basis of empirical evidence.

Subsequently, I carried out a principled comparison of Italian, Spanish and Vicentino according to the framework above. I argued that the observed variation is due to the portion of the hierarchy in (59) that is accessible (Vicentino can exploit the whole string, Spanish the upper part, Italian the lower one) and the parameter in (60).

(59) $se > 3p > Imp$

(60) parameter: clitic placement is Case-sensitive

Italian and Vicentino are sensitive to Case: they therefore split the 3p position into a Dative > Accusative subsequence and the reflexive clitic is sequenced on the basis of its Case. Spanish, on the contrary, is Case-insensitive: its clitics are sequenced only on the basis of Person distinctions, the 3p position remains ‘unzipped’ (giving rise to the spurious *se* pattern as two 3p non-reflexive clitics cannot occupy the same position), and reflexive *se* occupies a fixed position independently from its Case.

As for the highest position of the hierarchy, I argued that it is the rightmost part of the Higher Field, which in northern Italo-Romance like Vicentino normally hosts subject clitics (see Benincà and Tortora 2009, 2010). Such hypothesis provides a straightforward explanation for the morphology and the order of clusters formed by a 3p dative, a 3p accusative and an impersonal clitic, repeated here as (61) and (62). According to this hypothesis, Vicentino sequences are not targeted by the OCP-like constraint (which triggers the change $se \rightarrow ce$) because the impersonal and the reflexive clitic occupy positions in different layers:

(61) [Imp/Refl ... [Dat [Acc [Imp ... (Vicentino)
 | | |
 se *se* *lo*

(62) [~~Imp/Refl~~ ... [Dat [Acc [Imp ... (Italian)
 | | |
 **se/ce* *lo* *se*

Such a claim is supported by Cattaneo’s (2009) account of Bellinzinese, who furthermore argues that in that dialect an object 3p clitic can optionally rise to the position

that normally hosts the homophonous 3p subject clitic (in Cattaneo's terms, the 3p object 'rebels' and becomes a sort of fake nominative). This analysis brings further evidence in support of the layered analysis proposed here and, furthermore, it accounts nicely for the observed differences between Bellinzonese and Vicentino (whose object clitics never rebel).

Lastly, I have focused on sequences of three clitics, whose order is often unpredictable even in transitive languages like Italian and Spanish. I provided two possible explanations for these irregularities: order preservation and/or adjacency requirements. The former aims to maintain the same order across different layers of the structure, for instance when clitics rebel and move upwards. The latter prevents a third clitic from intervening between the pronouns referencing the internal arguments. Although both hypotheses deserve further confirmation from a larger database, the latter is particularly promising because it allows a unified analysis of non-transitive orders found in Bellinzonese, Italian and Spanish.

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