

# Week 4

## Pronominal clitics

May 18, 2009

**Warning:** clitics, by the admission of anyone who has worked on them, are very complicated. This class might be disappointing in that several questions will remain unanswered.

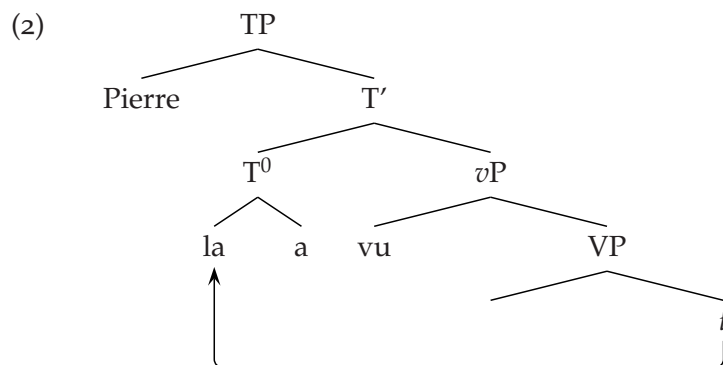
### 1 Introduction

In the last few weeks, we have devoted some time to constructions with clitics in them, but we haven't said much about what clitics really are. The literature has proposed various analyses.

#### 1.1 The movement analysis

In this analysis, the clitic replaces a DP as the argument of the verb, and then adjoins to the verb. This is appropriate for French, where a clitic cannot co-occur with a full DP argument.

- (1) a. Pierre la a vue  
      Pierri CL has seen  
      b. \* Pierre la a vue Marie  
          Pierre CL has seen Marie

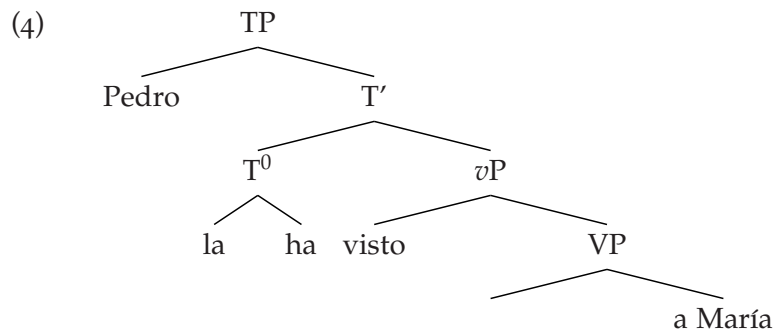


This, however, doesn't work for Spanish, because Spanish allows clitic doubling.

- (3) a. Pedro la ha visto  
      Pedro CL has seen  
      b. Pedro la ha visto a María  
          Pedro CL has seen to María

## 1.2 The base generation analysis

In this analysis, the clitic is generated directly as a constituent with the verb, and there is no movement. The clitic and the DP in object position are coindexed through a semantic rule.



However, this analysis has difficulties explaining cases where there is no DP coindexed with the clitic, as Spanish has no independent rule of object drop.

- (5)
- a. Pedro ha visto a María  
Pedro has seen to María
  - b. Pedro la ha visto  
Pedro CL has seen
  - c. \* Pedro ha visto  
Pedro has seen

Clitic climbing is problematic, too, because it involves separating parts of a word.

- (6)
- a. Juan puede haberla visto  
Juan may have.CL seen  
"Juan may have seen her"
  - b. Juan la puede haber visto  
Juan CL may have seen  
"Juan may have seen her"

## 1.3 Important properties of Spanish object clitics

- They can co-occur with an overt object.
- They license exceptional omission of the object.
- They have some degree of syntactic independence.
- Despite the last point, they always appear next to the verb, and in a fixed order.

- (7)
- a. Juan ya lo vió  
Juan already CL saw  
"Juan already saw it"
  - b. \* Juan lo ya vió  
Juan CL already saw  
"Juan already saw it"

- (8) a. Juan se lo mandó  
 Juan CL.DAT CL.ACC sent  
 "Juan sent it to him"
- b. \* Juan lo se mandó  
 Juan CL.ACC CL.DAT sent  
 "Juan sent it to him"

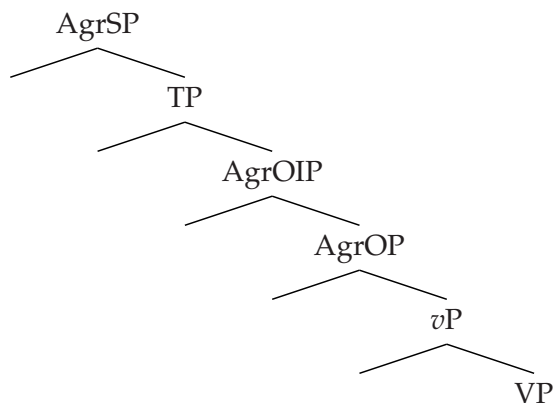
## 2 Franco 2000: clitics as agreement morphemes

Franco notices that there is an opposition between agreement morphology and independent words.

	Agreement	Words
Syntactic independence	yes	no
Can be stressed	yes	no

Clitics are in between, because they cannot be stressed, but they have some degree of syntactic independence. Franco's proposal is that they are the spell out of object agreement projections (AgrOPs).

- (9) *Basic clause structure*

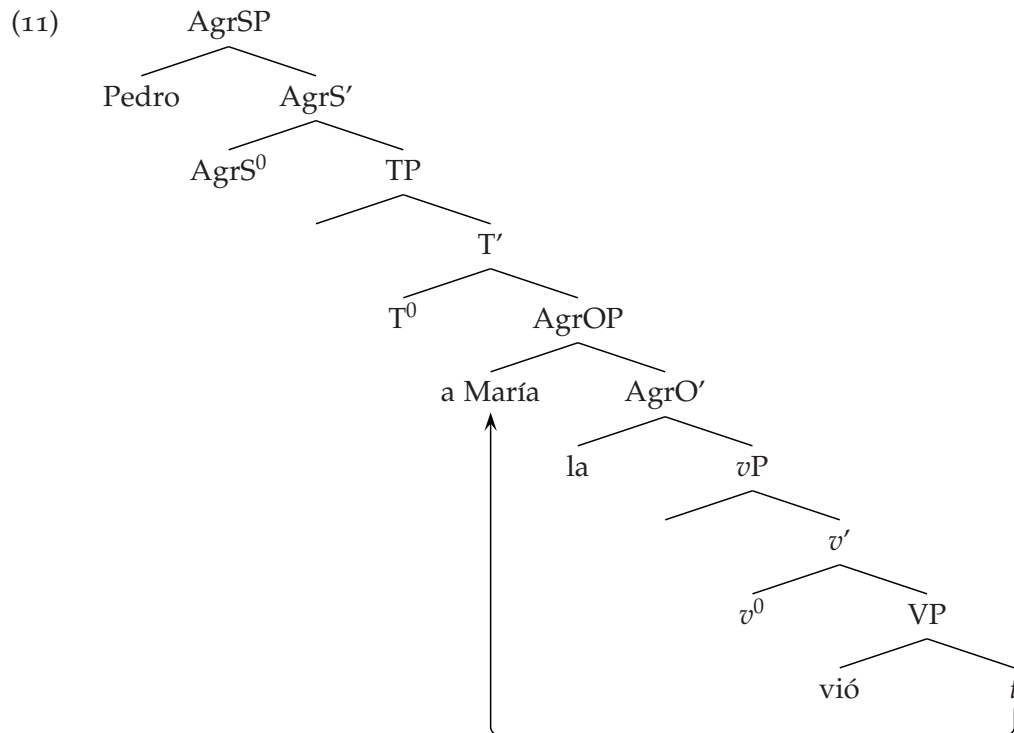


## 3 Trying to explain the properties

### 3.1 Co-occurrence with overt objects

Clitics and objects can co-occur because they are not competing for the same position.

- (10) Pedro la vió a María  
 Pedro CL saw to María



The object moves to the specifier of AgrOP in order to establish an agreement relation. A good side effect of this movement is that explains why clitic-doubled objects are necessarily specific.

- (12) a. Yo he visto a una chica  
 I have seen to a girl  
 Non-specific reading: there is some random girl that I have seen.
- b. Yo la he visto a una chica  
 I CL have seen to a girl  
 Specific reading: there is a particular girl (e.g., María) such that I have seen her.

(13) *Diesing's (1992) partition hypothesis*  
 An object that has moved out of *vP* is always interpreted as specific.

- (14) a. ... weil er wahrscheinlich kein Buch gekauft hat.  
 b. ... weil er wahrscheinlich ein Buch nicht gekauft hat.

- (15) a. ... omdat Jan-Wouter [<sub>vP</sub> altijd **twee boeken** leest]  
 because Jan-Wouter always two books reads  
 =any two books
- b. ... omdat Jan-Wouter **twee boeken** [<sub>vP</sub> altijd *t* leest]  
 because Jan-Wouter two books always reads  
 =two specific books

### 3.2 Possibility of dropping the object

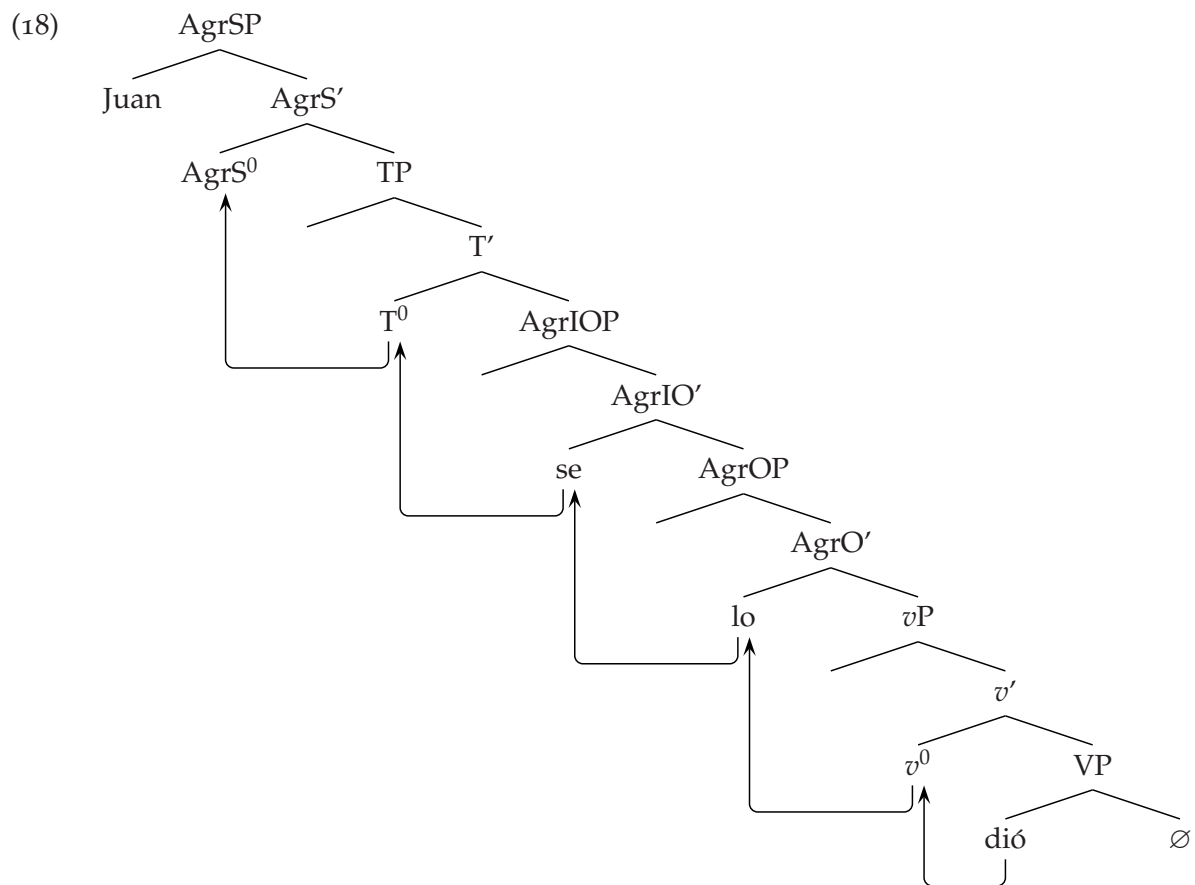
A clitic licenses object drop because of the same reason that subject agreement licenses subject drop: the  $\phi$  features of the object (person, gender, number) can be recovered through the clitic.

- (16) a.  $\emptyset$  leyó el libro  
 read.3SG the book  
 "He/she read the book"  
 b. Juan lo leyó  $\emptyset$   
 Juan CL.3SG read  
 "Juan read it"

### 3.3 Fixed order of clitics

Franco assumes that, when the verb moves from V to T, it picks up the clitics along the way.

- (17) Juan se lo dió  
 Juan CL.DAT CL.ACC gave  
 "Juan gave it to him"



However, in order for this to work, one has to assume the opposite of the Mirror Principle:

- (19) *The Mirror Principle* (Baker 1988)  
 The order of morphemes within one word is the mirror image of the hierarchy of functional projections.

### 3.4 Syntactic independence

As we saw, clitics can appear on a higher verb than usual. This phenomenon is called *clitic climbing*.

- (20) a. Juan puede haberla visto  
Juan may have.CL seen  
"Juan may have seen her"  
b. Juan la puede haber visto  
Juan CL may have seen  
"Juan may have seen her"

But if clitics are functional projections incorporated into the verb, it is not clear how clitic climbing is going to work. Franco simply claims that there is an (undefined) morphological process that can reorder clitics whenever two verbs are adjacent to each other. Evidence for this hypothesis comes from the observation that clitic climbing is impossible if the two verbs are separated.

- (21) a. Hicieron al bedel mandarsela por fax  
made to.the janitor send.CL.DAT.CL.ACC by fax  
"They made the janitor fax it to him"  
b. \* Se la hicieron al bedel mandar por fax  
CL.DAT CL.ACC made to.the janitor send by fax  
"They made the janitor fax it to him"

A trickier context is imperative clauses, where the clitic is necessarily postposed. Some people (Rivero and Terzi 1995) have argued that this is because, in imperatives, the verb moves higher than AgrS<sup>0</sup>, and strands the clitics behind. This, however, is difficult to do if the clitics are incorporated into the verb.

- (22) a. ¡Mándaselo!  
send.CL.DAT.CL.ACC  
"Send it to him!"  
b. \* ¡Se lo mandas!  
CL.DAT CL.ACC send  
"Send it to him!"

## 4 Summary

Franco's proposal that clitics are agreement morphemes is good in that:

- It explains why clitics and objects can co-occur.
- It explains why clitics license object drop.

However, it fails in that:

- It needs to violate the Mirror Principle, which is otherwise very robust (Julien 2002).
- It has difficulties accounting for the syntactic independence of clitics.

Unfortunately, there is no easy solution for these problems! One could argue that clitics form a cluster with the verb because they are phonologically weak, but this idea is not so easy to implement.