Clitic placement in the dialect of S. Valentino in Abruzzo citeriore

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The dialect of S. Valentino in Abruzzo cit. exhibits two, arguably related, peculiarities:

i. clitics can be proclitic to the auxiliary, as in (1a), enclitic to the auxiliary, as in (1b), enclitic to the participle, as in (1c). In the latter case, our informants prefer to express the subject postverbally.

ii. the particle a occurs only in combination with proclitic elements, as in (1a), giving rise to an emphatic interpretation:

(1) a. (a) me l’âje magnäte
   PRT to.me it have.1SG eaten

   b. áje=me=le magnäte
      have.1SG=to.me=it eaten

   c. àje magnäte=me=lu (jî)
      have.1SG eaten=to.me=it (I)

In wh-/focus structures, like (2a), both the particle a and enclitics are not allowed, as shown in (2b) and (2c) respectively.

(2) a. Chi/peccà t’ â fatte scrâvere da l’ avvucäte?
   Who/why to.you have.2SG made write from the lawyer

   b. *Chi/peccà a t’ â fatte scrâvere da l’ avvucäte?
      Who/why PRT to.you have.2SG made write from the lawyer

   c. *Chi/peccà à fatte=te scrâvere da l’ avvucäte?
      Who/why have.2SG made=to.you write from the lawyer

In our talk we will try to account for the pattern in (1)-(2) in the light of Benincà’s analysis of the so-called Tobler-Mussafia law in medieval Romance (Benincà 1993, 2006). The framework is that of the Certographic project in its more restrictive version (as outlined in Cinque 1999, Benincà & Munaro 2010).

In the traditional formulation, the Tobler-Mussafia law states that complement clitics cannot appear in first position in a sentence. As a consequence, since they must be adjacent to the verb, they become enclitic when the verb is first.

(3) levò=ssi questa femmina e aiutò=llo
    Rised=herself this woman and helped=him

However, Benincà notices that this formulation is not descriptively adequate; enclisis cannot depend on the impossibility for clitics to appear in first position, because we find cases of sentence-internal enclisis, and, moreover, cases in which the clitics are actually in first position. (4a) illustrates internal enclisis, (4b,c) show clitics in first position in main yes-no interrogatives, which is not found in Florentine, but in other Romance varieties, all showing a very rigid Tobler-Mussafia Law:

(4) a. levò=ssi questa femmina e aiutò=llo
    Rised=herself this woman and helped=him

b. áje=me=le magnäte
   have.1SG=to.me=it eaten

c. àje magnäte=me=lu (jî)
   have.1SG eaten=to.me=it (I)
(4) a A voi [le mie poche parole ch’avete intese] holle dette con grande fede (oFl.; Schiaffini, 282) to you the my few words that you-have heard I-have-them said with great faith “The few words that you heard from me I pronounced with great faith.”

b Me voj=tu dar la taverna?
To.me want=you give the tavern?
‘Do you want to give me the tavern?’

c Se vastarave lo pes (...)?
itself would.taint the fish (...)?

Benincà argues that the Tobler-Mussafia law is a by-product of V-to-C movement, which makes the verb move past the clitic. According to this hypothesis, cases like (4) entail that the preverbal constituent – between square brackets – occupies a position in the left periphery above the landing site of V.

Crucially, Benincà ascertains that such preverbal constituents that can co-occur with enclitics cannot be in the syntactic position of Focus, but above it in Topic position.

The talk aims to verify whether the S. Valentino pattern in (1)-(2) is in some way consistent with the medieval system illustrated in (3)-(4). In the medieval system, enclisis follows first of all from V-to-C movement and depends on the position the Verb can reach. If an argument is in Focus position, the Verb cannot move further up; if the Focus position is empty, the Verb has to move above it (to license a visible or silent Topic), crossing over the position of clitics, which appear enclitic, as in (2c). In San Valentino dialect, the presence of a wh or a Focus seem to have the same effect, blocking the verb in a low position in CP, which renders enclisis impossible.

Moreover, in medieval Romance enclisis is impossible in dependent clauses with a complementizer. We will explore, then, the behaviour of enclisis in different types of embedded clauses; in principle, if the subordinate only engages a high position in CP, and the Focus position is empty, the verb could move above the Focus position, producing enclisis of the clitics.

Second, building on the previous assumption, we address the distribution of the particle *a*, exemplified in (1a) vs (1b,c). *A*, as enclisis, is incompatible with the presence of a wh or a Focus; since this depends from the fact that the verb has to stay on a low head in C, we could determine the precise position of *a*, which has interesting pragmatic and syntactic analogies with particle *a* in Paduan.

References


