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Simple Clitics in English

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1. Introduction

This paper deals with clitics and distinguishes between special clitics and simple clitics. Special clitics are those that combine the characteristics of the syntactic clitics and the phonological clitics. That is, they form a constituent with a host both in the syntactic and in the phonological tree. The formation of syntactic constituent takes place in the syntactic component at a certain point of the derivation before surface structure; the phonological constituent is formed by the mapping rules that create prosodic constituents, among others, the clitic group. These clitics have usually been called special clitics, and manifest a phonological dependency and behave syntactically in a different way than their strong counterpart. This type of clitics consists of the weak pronouns of Romance languages and Greek. Simple clitics are usually deaccented, sometimes phonologically reduced function words, like the French preposition *de*, the reduced auxiliaries *'s, 'd, 'll,* etc. in English. This kind of clitics does not seem to present far-reaching syntactic differences when compared to their nonclitic counterparts or equivalent forms. (English *is*, *would*, *will*, etc.).

In this paper, we will discuss the simple clitics that form a constituent together with a host only in phonological structure, but not in syntactic structure. These clitics have the same syntactic position and syntactic constituency as their nonclitic counterpart.

Section 2 is concerned with cliticization in English. Section 3 discusses the simple cliticization through the English auxiliaries. Section 4 concludes the paper.

2. Cliticization in English

2.1. Reduction vs. Contraction

(1) a. She is not studying.

    b. She isn't studying. (contraction)

    c. She's not studying. (reduction)

    d. *She'sn't studying (contraction+reduction)

Reduction and combination of clitics

(2) a. I would have done it if you'd asked me.

    b. I'd have done it if you'd asked me.

    c. I would've done it if you'd asked me.

    d. I'd've done it if you'd asked me.

2.2. Three types of word forms

All properties separating deficient from strong forms uniformly hold of both clitic and weak forms. The two relations which hold in <deficient; strong> pairs extend to <clitic; weak> pairs, transparently showing the ranking between the classes. The morphological asymmetries between the three classes of forms give an explicit illustration of the relation between the three series:

(3) clitic < weak < strong

The two deficient series are not simply opposed to the strong one: Weak elements enjoys an intermediate status. Whenever the two forms are in principle possible, a deficient form takes precedence over a strong form. This is true of both weak forms and clitics. Whenever a clitic and a weak form compete, it is the clitic that takes precedence. As soon as deficient form is impossible for independent reason, the strong form is possible again. The complete precedence pattern mirrors the morphological pattern: Weak forms are again intermediate between clitic and strong forms. (Cardinaletti & Starke 1999)

	Prosody		morphology
	reduction rules	no word-stress	+reduced
clitic	+	+	1

weak	+	–	2
strong	–	–	3

3. Reduced Auxiliaries

Cliticization occurs when function words are unstressed.

First, we will consider the English auxiliaries. Since the so-called Auxiliary Reduction is fundamentally a phonological phenomenon, a phonological account is necessary anyway. While the reduced forms of the auxiliaries may be derived phonologically, the clitic forms may not. While there is in English an independently motivated rule that centralizes vowels to schwa, there is no rule that deletes a vowel before [z] to derive *'s* for *is*. Now let us see the sentences in (4) in which the reduced form may be grammatical and the clitic ungrammatical.

(4) a. No way has he been happy there!
            [əz]
            *'s
    b. No way is he gonna do that!
            [əz]
            *'s

For the vowel reduction to schwa, we can assume that the only condition to its application is that the auxiliary does not bear the primary stress, that is, it must be a weak node within the phonological phrase that contains it.

As for the English auxiliary clitics, we assume that they are allomorphs of their tonic counterpart as illustrated in (5). The idea is that during lexical insertion the choice of the appropriate allomorph is made.

(5) clitic   nonclitic
     a. [s].[z]   is
     b. [r]   are
     c. [m]   am
     d. [s].[z]   has

e. [v]   have
f. [d]   had
g. [l]   will
h. [d]   would

This assumption is motivated by the fact that there are no phonological rules of English that would derive the clitic forms from the stressed ones. It should be observed, however, that the proposal that follows is valid regardless of whether they are phonologically derived or stored in the lexicon as allomorphs of their nonclitic counterpart. That is, the analysis offered below is possibly extendable to languages in which the so called simple clitics may be phonologically derived from their nonclitic counterpart.

For the English auxiliaries, we will try to show that there is neither syntactic procliticization, nor syntactic encliticization and will account for the distribution of clitics in a sentence, solely on the base of their position in the prosodic tree.

As for the procliticization, first of all, if the phenomenon under consideration were procliticization, it should be possible to have auxiliary clitics sentence initially. While the reduced form may occur in this position, however, the clitic may not, as shown (6).

(6) Is that right?
       [əz]
       *'s

Second, if the AUX would procliticize to a host, the whole constituent should be able to undergo deletion under identity, but this is not the case, as shown in (7).

(7) a. John's going and Herb's going too.
    b. *John's going and Herb too.

As for the encliticization, if this phenomenon is a syntactic operation, it should be sensitive to the presence of syntactic constituents without phonetic realization intervening between the clitic and the host. Encliticization, however, does take place in such cases, as in (8)

(8) a. The man you met [e]'s just arrived   (< has)

b. The man you met [e]'s making an awful fuss.   (<is)

Second, syntactic cliticizations have the property of choosing the syntactic category of their host. English auxiliaries, however, can attach to any category, as illustrated in (9).

(9) a. [Mary]$_N$'s going.

b. The man just [came]$_V$'s been feeling sick.

c. The man you are looking [at]$_P$'s going to get sick.

Let us now consider the phonology of auxiliary clitics. The problem is to define the contexts in which the clitic allomorph may optionally be inserted. The rules that build clitic groups in the prosodic tree map syntactic structure onto phonological structure and form a phonological constituent consisting of a host and one or more adjacent clitics. In the unmarked case, the clitics are joined into a phonological unit together with the nonclitic word with which they share more category membership in the syntactic tree. In special cases, they are marked either for being phonologically directional, or for not cliticizing phonologically. In the first special case, they are always either proclitics or enclitics, independently from the syntactic constituency; in the second case, they are not joined to form a clitic group with any host, but behave as phonologically independent words.

If, however, cliticization is a purely phonological phenomenon, these clitics are not present as such at the moment of the mapping from syntactic onto prosodic structure. We propose that it is only after the first part of lexical insertion has taken place, that is, after the insertion of an index accompanied by the syntactic and semantic specifications of the lexical item involved, that a prosodic restructuring rule optionally groups an AUX together with the preceding word. If restructuring takes place, then the clitic allomorph must be selected and inserted in the appropriate context.

The central argument in favor of a phonological incorporation analysis of *is*, is based on the fact that the clitcs *'s* undergoes voicing assimilation under influence of the preceding consonant as in (10).

(10) a. Jack'[s] leaving
     b. John'[z] leaving
     c. cat[s]
     d. dog[z]

In addition, the enclitic, rather than proclitic, nature of *'s* is shown by the impossibility of *'s* sentence initially as in (11)

(11) a. *'s that true?
     b. *'s two enough?
     c. *'s Anne leaving?

It has been observed that one reason to have restructuring and not direct construction of prosodic structure for the so called simple clitics is that they are not visible in the syntax, since there is no syntactic operation of cliticization that involves them.

The above proposal for phonological cliticization accounts also for the fact that syntactic categories without phonetic content do not block the process as in (12), which are as good as the cliticizations in (13), where no empty category intervenes.

(12) a. The man you met [e]'s just arrived   (has)
     b. The man you met [e]'s making an awful fuss.   (is)
(13) a. The man who ate's been feeling sick. (has)
      b. The man who ate's going to get sick (is)

4. Conclusion

First, in English the weak form (not strong form) of the auxiliary may occur in just about all contexts and we must define where the clitic form may optionally occur. It has been proposed above that optional allomorphs are inserted after the restructuring of prosodic categories. Second, simple clitics in English has the nonsyllabic nature and incorporate into prosodic tree.

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