USING SYNCHRONIC MICROVARIATION TO UNDERSTAND PATHWAYS OF CHANGE: SUBJECT CLITIC DOUBLING IN ROMANCE DIALECTS[*]

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1.   Introduction

The varying degrees of agreement-like properties of subject clitics in Romance languages are argued to be the synchronic evidence of a grammaticalization cline that is nestled between the *clitic* and *agreement* stages on traditional grammaticalization clines. Drawing upon synchronic studies of microvariation among subject clitic doubling languages (primarily Rizzi 1986, Roberge 1990, Auger 1993), this cline is articulated using evidence from Standard French, two dialects of Quebec French, Pied Noir French, and Northern Italian dialects.

This paper contributes to the refinement of the traditional grammaticalization cline used for the development of agreement, and makes predictions concerning possible pathways of grammaticalization. It will be shown that the grammaticalization of clitics into agreement markers follows a predictable subject doubling cline. In terms of methodology, synchronic microvariation between dialects can be used to better understand the space of variation, and diachronic movement through this space.

The layout of this paper is as follows: first the background information on reanalysis and the grammaticalization of pronominals will be discussed. The relationship between synchronic and diachronic grammars will be explicated to show why this researcher believes it is possible to make diachronic predictions based on synchronic microvariation.

The five dialects mentioned above are used to exemplify five possible states of subject pronominals in human language[1]. For each language, properties of the subject marker, as well as the types of subjects that can and cannot be doubled, are examined. It will be shown that as the subject marker becomes less formally restricted it appears in more and more environments. Remarkably, the subject properties of the dialects show a sub-setting effect whereby they can be ordered from least to most grammaticalized.
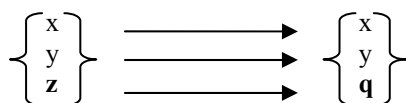
2.   The Grammaticalization of Clitic Pronouns to Agreement Markers

The view of grammar change (including grammaticalization-type changes) taken here is one where reanalysis occurs during the L1 acquisition process. Normal acquisition gives rise to formal innovation when what is acquired (posited as a property of the mental grammar of the child acquirer) does not match what is present in the mental grammars of the speakers of the PLD. Grammar change, on this view, may be seen formally as the set of differences between consecutive grammars (Hale 2007). This is schematized in the figure in (1).

(1) Grammars of the PLD   Innovating Grammar

$$\left\{\begin{matrix} x \\ y \\ \mathbf{z} \end{matrix}\right\} \Longrightarrow \left\{\begin{matrix} x \\ y \\ \mathbf{q} \end{matrix}\right\}$$

In (1) the grammars of the PLD represent the source from which the language-acquirer acquires her/his grammar. The PLD consists of the output of a number of grammars (all those that the child-acquirer used as evidence to construct her/his grammar). The Innovating Grammar in (1) is the adult steady-state grammar of the innovating language acquirer. In figure (1), the property z, present for speakers of the PLD, was reanalysed as the property q by the language acquirer. Reanalysis, which is essentially inaccurate acquisition whereby a new analysis is posited by an innovating language-acquirer for a given element/sequence, is seen as the key source of grammar change, including grammaticalization-type change (see Roberts and Roussou 2003).

   Grammar change never spans multiple generations, nor can it take centuries for a change to be completed[2]; grammar change is simply the set of differences between two synchronic grammars. Diachronic linguistics of the type expounded here thus reduces to synchronic linguistics: is it the study of synchronic grammars in a descent relationship and the reanalyses that occur between them (Hale 2007).

   Grammaticalization is the ubiquitous diachronic process via which functional elements are created from content elements (Meillet 1912; Hopper and Traugott 1993). As they grammaticalize morphemes grow less syntactically independent, lose deictic properties, go from more lexical to more functional in nature, and phonologically reduce. The general pathway, or cline, of grammaticalization is given in (2).

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[2] In sociolinguistic work the concept of "change in progress" uses the terminology *change*, but in the framework I am using in this paper what is "in progress" is the *diffusion* of an innovated variable through an E-language speech community. What I am concerned with here, in sociolinguistic terminology, is the creation of new variables (*actuation*): that is, the creation of formal linguistic variables that may then diffuse, via normal acquisition and known sociolinguistic processes, throughout the speech community.

(2)   content item > grammatical word > clitic > inflectional affix
        (Hopper and Traugott 1993: 7)

Grammaticalization is traditionally viewed as non-random, with predictable, seemingly teleological, pathways of change. In a generative view of grammaticalization, whereby innovations are discrete and non-teleological, this phenomenon is explained by the fact that the grammar of an innovating language acquirer will very closely resemble the grammars of the PLD, but with the innovation causing the newly acquired language to be plotted in a closely neighbouring point in this space of variation. Changes from innovating grammar to innovating grammar in a language continuum will appear to follow a deterministic pathway over time, but the mechanisms that lead to the creation of this pathway are based on discrete, non-deterministic 'accidents' of the acquisition process.

Since reanalysis causes the innovating grammar to be plotted in a neighbouring point to the PLD in the space of variation, it makes sense to compare closely related dialects, and/or languages with similar properties with respect to a certain element/construction, in order to better understand language change.

3.   A Comparison of Romance Dialects

In this section Romance dialects will be discussed in the order from the least grammaticalized (or most conservative) to the most grammaticalized (or most innovative) subject markers. The sub-setting effect revealed by the types of subjects which can be doubled in each dialect will become apparent upon discussing the data.

3.1   Standard French

In Standard French (SF)-type grammars[3], it is not necessary to repeat a subject marker on both verbs in coordination (3). Clitic doubling is not licit with any type of subject (4).

(3)   Elle chante et   (**elle**) danse.
        she sings   and she   dances
        'She sings and dances.'

(4)   * Jean il   aime danser.
        Jean he likes to.dance
        'Jean likes dancing.'

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[3] I refer to SF-type grammars because it is not clear that SF is truly a spoken language, however, the properties of the subject clitics of SF are not unusual.

3.2   Québec French[1]

In Québec French[1] (QF1), clitic doubling is possible, but it is restricted and always optional. Unlike in SF, subject markers are obligatorily repeated on each verb in coordination (5).

(5)   [**a**] chante pis *([**a**]) danse.
      she sings   and   she dances
      'She sings and dances.'

Subject doubling is referred to as *restricted* in QF because it is only possible with definite subjects (Roberge 1990), as seen in (6). Unlike clitic doubling in languages like Spanish (Suñer 1988), QF subject doubling is not sensitive to specificity, therefore (6b) is ungrammatical regardless of whether the mermaid is specific or non-specific.

(6)   a.   La sirène   **[a]** chante chaque matin.
              the mermaid she sing   every   morning
              'The mermaid sings every morning.'

      b.   * Une sirène   **[a]** chante chaque matin.
              a   mermaid she sing   every   morning
              'A mermaid sings every morning.'

Subject doubling is not permitted in the following environments in QF[1]: in the subject gap of a relative clause (7), with quantified DP subjects (8), nor with bare quantifier subjects (9).

(7) * Une fille qu'**[a]**   pleurait…
       a   girl who.she was.crying
       'A girl who was crying…' (Bouchard 1982: 104)

(8)   Plusieurs/quelques gars (*[**i**])   aiment danser.
      many   /some   guys   they like   to.dance
      'Many/Some guys like to dance.'

(9) * en campagne, quand quelqu'un **il**   dansait...
       in country,   when   someone he was.dancing
       'In the country, when someone danced...' (Auger 1994: 97)

With generic subjects the situation is slightly more complicated. In QF, the core set of pronominal clitics do not allow a generic reading when doubling. Thus, (10a) is ungrammatical with a generic reading; only a definite reading is possible. However, *ça* ([sa]), can be used to double generic subjects (10b).

(10)   a.   * Les chiens [**i**]   mangent beaucoup.
               the dogs   they eat   a.lot
               'The dogs eat a lot.'

   b. Les chiens [**sa**] mange(nt) beaucoup.
       the dogs 3sg.neut eat   a.lot
       'Dogs eat a lot.'

Doubling is also not possible in the subject gap of a WH-question (11a). However, here there are also some complications. Auger (1994) argues that the [ki] in (11b) contains masculine default agreement (i.e. *que + il*). However, in (11b) the complementizer must also be repeated. This is not straightforwardly subject doubling as it is a feature of the C-domain, rather than the T-domain. Furthermore, other subject doubling Romance languages without the complicated left-periphery properties of Quebec French bar doubling with a WH subject (as will be seen below).

(11) a. * Qui **il** est allé?
     who he is   gone
     'Who went?' (Roberge 1990: 118)

   b. Qui [**ki**] est venu?
     who [ki] has come
     'Who came?' (Auger 1994: 91)

3.3 Québec French$_2$

Québec French$_2$ (QF$_2$) behaves almost exactly like QF$_1$, except that it allows subject doubling in two environments that QF$_1$ bars. It is grammatical to double in the subject gap of a relative clause (12), and with a bare quantifier (13). In all other respects relevant to this paper, QF$_2$ is like QF$_1$.

(12) Une fille qu'**[a]** pleurait…
   a   girl who.she was.crying
   'A girl who was crying…' (Bouchard 1982: 104)

(13) En campagne, quand quelqu'un **il** dansait...
   in country,   when someone he was.dancing
   'In the country, when someone danced...' (Auger 1994: 97)

3.4 Pied Noir French

In Pied Noir French (PNF), subject doubling is optional, as with QF dialects, however, it is also unrestricted. Subject clitics must be repeated on each verb in coordination (14).

(14) Elle chante et *(**elle**) danse.
   she sings   and she dances
   'She sings and dances.' (Vinet, p.c.)

Like in QF$_2$, doubling is possible in the gap of a subject relative clause (15) and with bare quantifiers (16).

(15) C'est une femme qu'**elle**   etait très malheureuse avec son mari.
     it.be a   woman who.she was very unhappy   with her husband
     'She's a woman who was very unhappy with her husband.' (Vinet, p.c.)

(16) Personne **il** sait   qui c' est leur mere.
     nobody   he knows who it.be their mother
     'Nobody knows who their mother is.' (Roberge 1990:120)

Unlike in QF$_2$, doubling in PNF is also possible with indefinite subjects (17) (it is *unrestricted* for Roberge (1990)), and quantified DP subjects (18).

(17) Un homme **il** vient.
     a   man   he comes
     'A man comes.' (Roberge 1990:120)

(18) Plusieurs femmes **elles** sont   venues.
     many   women   they have.$_{3PL}$ come
     'Many women came.' (Roberge 1990:120)

In PNF, unlike in the QF dialects, it is also possible to double generic subjects with the core set of clitics and maintain a generic reading (19).

(19) Les chiens **ils**   mangent beaucoup.
     the dogs   they eat   a.lot
     'Dogs eat a lot.' (Vinet, p.c)

Doubling is still impossible in the subject gap of WH-questions (20).

(20) *Qui **il** vient?
     who he come
     'Who comes?' (Roberge 1990: 120)

3.5   Northern Italian Dialects

There is dialect variation among the Northern Italian Dialects (NID)[4], however all dialects show further grammaticalized subject clitics than the French dialects discussed. Doubling is *obligatory* in many dialects (i.e. Fiorentino, Trentino, Bolognese (21)).

(21) Trentino (Roberge 1990: 86)
     El Mario *(**el**) magna.
     the Mario   he eat.$_{3SG}$
     'Mario eats.'

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[4] A pervasive issue in the study of NID subjects are person splits (Poletto 1995, Roberts and Roussou 2003). For simplicity's sake, it suffices for this paper to acknowledge that the dialects examined here are further grammaticalized than the French dialects discussed.

As in QF and PNF, subject clitics are obligatory on each coordinated verb (22).

(22)   Trentino (Rizzi 1986 cited in Roberge 1990)
        La canta e   *(**la**) balla.
        she sings and she dances
        'She sings and dances.'

Subject doubling is also possible in all the following environments: in the subject gap of a relative clause (23), with bare quantifier subjects (24) and quantified DP subjects (25), and with indefinite (26) and generic subjects (27).

(23)   Bolognese: Relative Clause Subject Gap
        La ragazôla q'   **la**   zugheva...
        the litte.girl   who she was.playing
        'The little girl who was playing...'

(24)   Bolognese: Bare Quantifier
        Un quaidón **al** bossa   ala   pórta.
        a   someone he is.knocking at.the door
        'Someone is knocking at the door.'

(25)   Trentino: Quantified DP (Roberge 1990: 122)
        Qualche putel **l**'   é   vegnú.
        some   boys they be.$_{3LP}$ come
        'Some boys came.'

(26)   Bolognese: Indefinite Subject
        Inchón **al** bossa   ala   pórta.
        no.one he is.knocking at.the door
        'Nobody is knocking at the door.'

(27)   Bolognese: Generic DP
        Le galéines **agl**' ein bon.
        the hens   they are good
        'Hens are good.'

Despite widespread, obligatory subject doubling, it remains impossible to have a clitic double in the subject gap of a WH question (28).

(28)   Bolognese: WH-subject gap
        * Qui **l**' é   bel?
        who he be.$_{3SG}$ beautiful
        'Who is beautiful?'

3.6   Agreement

Canonical subject agreement markers[5], here exemplified by the suffixal subject markers of QF, show up in all the environments discussed above for the dialects under discussion (29-34), including the subject gap of WH-questions (34), and are obligatory.

(29)   Coordination
        Ils   manger**ont** et   ils   boir**ont.**
        they eat.$_{3PL.FUT}$ and they drink.$_{3PL.FUT}$
        'They will eat and drink.'

(30)   Relative Clause Subject Gap
        Mes amies qui   **sont**   belles.
        my friend who be-$_{3PL}$ beautiful-$_{F.3PL}$
        'My friends who are beautiful.'

(31)   Bare Quantifier
        Personne manger**a**   ça.
        no.one   eat.$_{3SG.FUT}$ that
        'No one will eat that.'

(32)   Quantified DP
        Plusieurs gars **sont**   grands.
        many   guys be-$_{3PL}$ tall
        'Many guys are tall.'

(33)   Agreement with definite and indefinite subjects
        a.   L' homme arriver**a.**
                the man   arrive.$_{3SG \cdot FUT}$
                'The man will arrive.'

        b.   Un homme arriver**a.**
                a   man   arrive.$_{3SG \cdot FUT}$
                'A man will arrive.'

(34)   Qui **sont**   venus?
        who be.$_{3PL}$ come
        'Who(pl) came?'

4.   A Cline of Subject Clitic Doubling

The *clitic doubling cline* proposed here is based on the dialects discussed above and fits between the clitic and agreement stages on the traditional

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[5] There are many issues concerning the exact nature of agreement. Here the model of agreement is that of Julien (2002:258) who does not treat *agreement markers* as projecting heads like other inflectional markers, but rather assumes that agreement features are added to heads already containing other content (i.e T^0, or Fin^0).

grammaticalization cline. It includes reanalysis events which happen to the clitic and alter its effects on the derivation well *before* it is subsequently reanalyzed as an agreement marker (if it is ever).

In (35) the *clitic → agreement* segment of the grammaticalization cline that traditionally includes only one reanalysis event is expanded. It is proposed that *at least* 4 more stages exist between a *clitic* of the SF type and the *agreement* stage.

(35)   Traditional Cline: Pronoun→Weak Pronoun→**Clitic→Agreement**→Ø

Proposed Modification: [Clitic$_1$→Clitic$_{...}$→Clitic$_5$→Agreement]

The data discussed in section 3 is summarized in (36) below. The sub-setting effect is highlighted: each language hypothesized to be later in the grammaticalization process contains all the environments for subject doubling of the previous language, plus new environments, and so on.

(36)   Environments for clitic doubling and clitic properties.

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5	Stage 6
Language that evidences the stage:	SF	QF$_1$ Roberge 1990; Cournane 2008	QF$_2$ Auger 1994	PNF Roberge 1990	NID Rizzi 1986; Roberge 1990	Agreement
Proposed Changes→ / **Environments where subject markers appear↓**	Subj. clitic absorbs NOM case	Subj. clitic opt. absorbs NOM case / Word → Affix	*pro* doubled	Loss of Definite Feature	NOM case never absorbed by clitic	Former X^0 → unvalued φ-features on another head
With a DP$_{subj}$ (clitic doubling)	NO	YES (opt.)	YES (opt.)	YES (opt.)	YES	YES
Subject Gap of Coordinated Verbs		YES	YES	YES	YES	
Subject Gap of Relative Clause		NO	YES	YES	YES	
Bare Quantifier		NO	YES	YES	YES	
Quantified DP		NO	NO	YES	YES	
Indefinite DP		NO	NO	YES	YES	
Generic DP		NO	NO	YES	YES	
Obligatorily Doubled		NO	NO	NO	YES	
Subject Gap of WH-questions		NO	NO	NO	NO	

The languages discussed in section 3 can be ordered from least to most grammaticalized (37).

(37) $SF \rightarrow QF_1 \rightarrow QF_2 \rightarrow PNF \rightarrow NID$

In the subsections that follow, the reanalyses proposed to account for the differences between each stage on the cline will be discussed. Bear in mind that it is not strictly SF being reanalysed into QF_1, but rather each synchronic dialect represents a typological possibility of language.

4.1   From SF to QF1

If we imagine SF and QF_1as two stages on a cline, then from the SF-type stage to the QF_1-type stage, a reanalysis of the subject clitic allows it to double the canonical subject. Additionally, another reanalysis forces the subject marker to be required on each verb in coordination.

To explain the former change, from a non-clitic doubling language to a clitic doubling language, an analysis proposed by Roberge (1990) can be invoked. He proposes (cf. Rizzi 1986) that there should be a unified syntax of subject clitics; in *both* SF and subject-doubling languages the clitic is in I^0. However, in SF the clitic always absorbs nominative case, while in QF_1 the clitic has been reanalysed to only optionally absorb case. Thus, in QF_1 there is optional subject doubling.

The latter change, from being optional on the second verb of coordination to becoming obligatory, can be explained by a change in status from an independent word to a subcategorized-for affix. Affixes, unlike words, cannot scope into coordination structures and thus must be repeated on each coordinated element.

4.2   From QF1 to QF2

The clitic in QF_2 can appear in the subject gap of a relative clause and with bare quantifiers, unlike in its theoretical predecessor exemplified by QF_1.

An explanation for this reanalysis is that in QF_2 and dialects later on the cline, but not in QF_1, it is possible to double *pro* in in-situ relative clauses. WH movement in ex-situ relative clauses should pattern with WH-subjects, since both involve overt extraction. Since they pattern separately in this dialect, it is likely that what QF_2 allows is the doubling of *pro* in in-situ relative clauses (Roberge, p.c.). Further research is necessary to explain why bare quantifiers pattern separately from quantified DPs in QF_2.

4.3   From QF2 to PNF

In PNF the environments that allow subject doubling which aren't available in the QF dialects, are with indefinite, quantified, and generic DPs. These differences can be attributed to a difference in covert extraction rules. Roberge (1990) calls the restriction in QF the *no quantifier effect*, linking definiteness to quantification. Indefinite DPs are inherently quantified and all quantified expressions must undergo covert extraction (QR) at LF for scope purposes.

Thus the *no quantifier effect* bars clitic doubling with indefinite, generic[6] and quantified DPs because one cannot extract covertly out of clitic doubled expressions. The *no quantifier effect* is active in QF but not in PNF.

This change can also be viewed as a definite feature being present on the clitic in QF which is lost in PNF, allowing the clitic to be compatible with indefinites.

4.4   From PNF to NID

The only change from PNF to NID discussed here is that clitic doubling becomes obligatory. Roberge's (1990) case absorption parameter can again be used to explain this change. In languages like Trentino the subject clitic is reanalysed as *never* absorbing nominative case, making it always necessary to have a subject double to value nominative case.

4.5   From NID to Agreement

The significant difference between subject doubling in NID and agreement markers discussed here is that agreement is possible with WH subjects. This fact can be attributed to restrictions on overt extraction: overt extraction, as in WH movement, from a clitic doubled construction is barred (Jaeggli 1982, Roberge 1990). Overt extraction is possible on the final stage of the cline proposed here because the construction is an agreement construction not a CD construction. It is for this reason that agreement, but not clitic doubling, can appear with WH subjects.

In this final step from clitic to agreement marker the structural change from clitic (a head in the syntax) to an agreement marker (parasitic φ-features on another functional head) is finally realized (38).

(38) $[_{CP} [_{TP} [_{DP} \text{double}]_i [_{T'} \text{CL} [_{vP} t_i ... \rightarrow [_{CP} [_{TP} \text{subject}_i [_{T'} \text{Agr+T} [_{vP} t_i ...$

The table in (39) summarizes the reanalyses discussed above. The formal features of the clitic at each stage of the cline are shown from the SF stage to the agreement stage.

(39)   Formal properties of the clitic at each stage along the cline

	Clitic$_{SF}$►	Clitic$_1$►	Clitic$_2$►	Clitic$_3$►	Clitic$_4$►	Agr
Lang. →	SF	QF$_1$	QF$_2$	PNF	NID	
φ-features	φ	φ	φ	φ	φ	φ
structure	X^0	$X^0_{[\_V]}$	$X^0_{[\_V]}$	$X^0_{[\_V]}$	$X^0_{[\_V]}$	
case	+NOM	(+NOM)	(+NOM)	(+NOM)		
def.feature	+DEF	+DEF	+DEF			
double *pro*	No	No				

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[6] It is not clear that generic DPs are indefinite, despite the fact that in these dialects they pattern with indefinites.

5.   Using Synchronic Microvariation to Predict Diachronic Pathways

Sub-setting effects between synchronic dialects have been used to show a potential diachronic pathway. This methodology is promising for historical research as well as learnability.

For learnability, smaller differences between stages of grammaticalization are argued to be advantageous to our theory of reanalysis during acquisition as language acquirers are not likely to radically misjudge the evidence from the PLD by the time they reach an adult steady-state grammar. This fact favours minimal changes with each reanalysis and more finely articulated grammaticalization clines like the one proposed here. Additionally, this type of grammaticalization cline, where many of the reanalyses are not structural, is in keeping with a feature-based theory of grammar like minimalism (Chomsky 1995).

For diachronic linguistics this is a promising methodology given the lack of historical records for the majority of human languages. Deeper understanding of the space of variation and pathways of change can be theorized using only synchronic languages. In combination with the comparative method, among other research methods, the methodology proposed here, when developed further, promotes a strong dialogue between synchronic theory and diachronic investigation. Historical texts, or languages without written records, cannot be asked for grammaticality judgements. Thus, developing a methodology of the type explored here, can help us understand a wider range of historical phenomena, and help us map human linguistic history.

4.   Conclusion

In this paper the grammaticalization cline from *subject clitic pronoun →️ subject agreement marker* has been refined to include four additional intermediate stages based on evidence from Standard French, two Quebec French dialects, Pied Noir French and some Northern Italian dialects (principally Bolognese). Sub-setting effects between synchronic micro-variation have been used to show a possible diachronic pathway. It is this researcher's hope that future research will further articulate and explain this cline.

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