

Cluster Serialization, the Person Case Constraint, Person, Number and case Syncretism

I take as a starting point a puzzle for syntactic approaches to the PCC, namely that it arises in clusters of weak objects/clitics regardless of their relative order. The literature on clitics has mostly remained silent about this, implicitly or explicitly resorting to templatic clitic ordering. But since templates are implausible for weak pronouns, different serializations in clusters showing PCC effects in e.g. German vs. English force us to spell out the relationship between different ordering patterns and the emergence of PCC effects in a way that explains the observed indifference to word order variation. Following Richards (1997), I argue that IO>DO orders involve movement of the two objects to a single probe which results in crossing (1) (as in Anagnostopoulou 2003, 2005), while DO>IO orders result from targeting two probes and nesting (2) (as in Preminger 2014). In this analysis, the higher IO blocks person licensing of the 1st/2nd DO in both orders.

(1) [IO DO H^0 [~~IO~~ ~~DO~~]] (2) [DO Z^0 [IO Y^0 [~~IO~~ ~~DO~~]]]

The fact that the pattern in (2) is an archaic pattern while the pattern in (1) is a Modern pattern and is never the other way round (Wanner 1974, Nicol 2005, Pescarini 2014, 2015; cf. Michelioudakis 2012 for Greek) is expected under the present proposal which takes the heads in (2) to be #(number) and π (person): they start as atomic heads which are then fused into a single head at some step in the historic evolution of languages. Independent evidence for the proposed syntax comes from Italian clitics discussed in Cardinaletti (2008) and Pescarini (2014, 2015). They argue convincingly that IO>DO clusters in behave like morpho-phonological units with respect to a number of phenomena, while in DO>IO clusters the DO and the IO attach to different heads and thus they behave as though they are separate. Further evidence for the attachment to a single head in (1) vs. two heads in (2) comes from a difference w.r.t. 3rd person case syncretisms in the two patterns (Nicol 2005). I discuss the implications for the syntax of clitics and object agreement markers more generally.