

ON CLITICS AND CLITICIZATION

The Interaction of Morphology,
Phonology, and Syntax

Judith L. Klavans

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Foreword

by Arnold M. Zwicky

The problematic nature of items that are word-like in some ways but affix-like in others — clitics, in the broadest sense of that term — has been appreciated for millennia. The term ‘enclitic’ originates with the grammarians of Ancient Greek; ‘proclitic’ and the generic term ‘clitic’ were coined as grammarians and, eventually, linguists (in the modern sense) attempted to describe languages of a wide variety of structures.

In modern descriptions, until recently, clitics have been generally treated as constituting a special external layer of affixation, exterior to all uncontroversially inflectional affixes, and thus as a kind of (literally) marginal morphology, though as in the Sapir quotation with which Klavans began her 1980 University College London dissertation, (*Some Problems in a Theory of Clitics*), many analysts have expressed the intuition that clitics are syntactic formatives.

Further advances in understanding the nature of clitics had to wait upon the development of formal grammatical frameworks, especially for syntax; a certain level of explicitness is necessary for problems even to be seen and articulated. Within the broad family of frameworks known as ‘generative grammar’, this level does not seem to have been reached until the late 1970s. Though it builds on much earlier theoretical and descriptive work, Klavans’s dissertation (known especially through the version distributed in 1982 by the Indiana University Linguistics Club) is in fact the first attempt to fit clitics of all types within a generative grammar.

The proposal is to treat clitics as (forms of) lexical items, with each such item marked for a small number of special syntactic and phonological properties, the 'parameters' of cliticization. The distribution of any particular clitic is thus seen as resulting from the simultaneous satisfaction of two types of distributional requirements on lexical items, syntactic and phonological.

Not surprisingly, the ensuing literature takes issue with virtually every detail of this proposal. Is there really a place for all clitics within this system, or are there two or more distinct types, subject to different sorts of distributional requirements? Are there eight different possible types of clitics within a particular syntactic domain, or does Klavans's system exaggerate the range of clitic phenomena? Are there no truly morphological requirements on clitic distributions, or does morphology provide parameters in addition to, or instead of, the ones Klavans lists? The richness of the literature on clitics since 1980 is in large part attributable to the fact that Klavans put forward clear, strong hypotheses that others could pursue, elaborate upon, reject, or replace with better ones.

Arnold M. Zwicky
University Professor
Ohio State University

Acknowledgments

Outstanding Dissertations in Linguistics Acknowledgments – 1994

I was somewhat astounded and certainly honored to receive the letter with the nomination to publish this dissertation in the Garland series. The original dissertation was published in 1980, and such a hiatus is hardly common in a field that builds its reputation on the biannual creation of new theories. I was certainly very pleased to be able to provide some improvements for this version, to update the bibliography significantly, to provide several new indices (by subject, author, language), and to permit the linguistics community to have better access to other chapters of the original dissertation that did not find their way into published form. For example, my view is that the final chapter on Stress and Cliticization constitutes a contribution to the understanding of lexical and phrasal stress, as it expresses itself over the phrasal affix, known as the clitic. I did not spin articles from this chapter, so although it was available in the Indiana University Linguistics Club version of the dissertation, I feel it has stayed less available to the larger community than the parameterized view proposed in Chapter III, and later revised and published in *Language* (Klavans 1985).

In addition to the contribution of the Five Parameter, and then Three Parameter universal view of clitics, and in addition to the characterization of stress and cliticization, the dissertation contains many examples of different clitic types from several dozen languages, thus providing a valuable resource for subsequent research on clitics and cliticization. My primary dissertation advi-

sor, Dr. Neil Smith, Professor of linguistics at University College London, correctly insisted on data, and lots of it, counterbalanced with a strong abstract focus. This was reinforced by Geoffrey Pullum, Richard Hudson, and Deirdre Wilson, all faculty members at University College London of the University of London. It has been nearly twenty years since I first met these scholars. The profound impact of their teaching, tutelage, and training remains with me, and has served in many aspects of my own career as a scholar.

For the Garland edition, Professor Tony Kroch of the University of Pennsylvania, and Professor Beatrice Santorini must be acknowledged for encouraging me to publish the work. With gratitude, I thank Dr. Evelyne Tzoukermann of A.T. & T. Bell Laboratories for valuable assistance and support in more aspects of the rewriting than I can enumerate. Martina Sharp has patiently provided expert formatting skills in producing the final camera ready form for this version.

I welcome the opportunity to express gratitude to my my very esteemed, respected, and adored colleague, Arnold M. Zwicky, University Professor at the Ohio State University, Department of Linguistics. Arnold was nick-named “Mr. Clitics” in the mid-seventies, with the release of his short descriptive and revealing paper “On Clitics”. It was this paper that started my questioning. A then uppity young graduate student, having just completed by M.A. in Linguistics, *summa cum laude*, I wrote a long scathing criticism of this paper. Arnold replied, point for point, and the rest, as they say, is history. His influence on my thinking, both professional and personal, is profound and far-reaching.

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Dissertation Acknowledgments – 1980

I am happy to have this opportunity to acknowledge some of those whose advice and assistance have contributed to this thesis. Most important are the members of Department of Linguistics at University College London: Neil Smith, Richard Hudson, Geoff Pullum and Deirdre Wilson. My supervisor, Neil Smith, deserves special mention; without the challenge he provided for me throughout my training, I am sure I would never have taken the steps I did in developing as a linguist and a scholar. For specific help on individual languages, I wish to thank: Tamsin Donaldson (Ngiyam-baa), Desmond Derbyshire (Hixkaryana), John Baldwin (Turkish), Jean Aitchison and John Wells (Classical Greek), and Dick Hudson (Beja). For help in typing, I thank Alison Jarvis, and my parents, who made me learn to type for myself. For financial support, I am grateful to the Jackson Lewis Foundation at University College London, and to the Social Science Research Council (Grant Number HR 5322).

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Preface

The impetus for this thesis came from a quotation in Sapir (1930), *Southern Paiute, a Shoshonean language*, in which the following discussion of ENCLISIS is given:

By enclisis is meant the suffixing of certain elements to any word in the sentence, the resulting complex constituting a firm phonetic, but not a strictly formal, unit. Enclitic elements, except for some of the pronouns, never occur in other than enclitic form. In a "word" like *ivi'ŋunt'car'ʔanI* 'did I take a drink?', the preterital *-ntca-*, the interrogative *-r'ʔa-*, and the pronominal *-nI* 'I' are enclitic elements, not true suffixes, the true "word," formally speaking, consisting only of *ivi'ŋU* 'to take a drink' (*ivi-* 'to drink' + momentaneous suffix *-ŋu-*). This is shown by the fact that the enclitic cluster *(n)tcar'ʔanI* can be appended, without bringing about any formal modifications, to a preceding word in the sentence; e.g. *qan-i'va-tcar'ʔan* *ivi'ŋU* 'house-at-preterite-interrogative-I drink-momentaneous', 'did I drink at the house?'. Phonetically, the form 'did-I-at-the-house?' is a perfect unit, morphologically it is a word (*qan-i-va-* 'house at') plus a number of exteriorly segmented elements that have no independent existence. *Enclisis is neither true suffixation nor juxtaposition of independent elements. It has the external characteristics of the former (including strict adherence to certain principles of order), the inner feeling of the latter. It is one of the most characteristic processes*

of Paiute, doubtless of Plateau Shoshonean generally
... (Sapir 1930:70–71, my emphasis – JLK)

The word-like and the suffix-like properties of clitics still pose problems for linguistic theory today.

Indeed, many languages contain a set of elements called CLITICS which seem to exhibit some of the properties of the word and some of the properties of the affix. Due to this unclear linguistic status, clitics present interesting theoretical problems to analyses of language in which words are treated at a different level of description and analysis from affixes. The aim of this thesis is to clarify the status of clitics in linguistic theory.

This investigation shows that cliticization is not a totally unified phenomenon. Asymmetries in the behavior of phonological and syntactic clitics show that no single principle predicts all clitic behavior. Instead a set of five independent parameters is shown to be necessary to an adequate analysis of clitics. While the five parameters are the same for all clitics, the way a single lexically marked clitic interacts with these principles will affect what type of cliticization results, that is, whether cliticization is predominantly syntactic by nature, or predominantly phonological.

The introductory sections explain modifications to the original five parameter system to a more efficient analysis in terms of three parameters. Additional data not known to me at the time the thesis was written are presented to instantiate predictions arising from the theory. Chapter 1 gives examples of some of the types of item which have been called clitics, and points out their different characteristics. Chapter 2 considers some of the problems in arriving at a coherent typology of clitics, and in formulating a universal definition of the notion ‘clitic’. Chapter 3 reviews the failure of previous analyses for deriving and placing clitics, including Copying, Migration, Base-Generation, Subcategorization Features, Readjustment Rules, Boundary Reduction, and Metrical Restructuring. Chapter 4 presents an alternative way to view cliticization in terms of five independent parameters which make empirical predictions about

about possible clitic types. These predictions, and other implications of the proposed analysis, are discussed. It is argued that the only way to formulate a unified analysis of cliticization is by distinguishing these five parameters as independent, but inter-related. Finally, Chapter 5 considers the morphology of host-clitic groups with particular emphasis on the relation between stress and cliticization.