

Acknowledging optionality: almost Wackernagel clitics in East Iranian

Category: Oral

Modern theoretical approaches to grammar still have difficulties accommodating truly optional phenomena. Therefore it is all the more important for typologists to recognize and investigate instances of optionality in grammar. In my talk, I explore the optionality of placement of clitics in (still very little studied) East Iranian languages, and discuss how these data bear on possible explanations of obligatory second position phenomena (see a review in Anderson 2005).

Most East Iranian languages have clitics that tend to appear in the Wackernagel position in the clause, and in recorded texts, these clitics are almost always placed there. However, elicitation data show that the second position is truly obligatory for them only in a few languages (Iron Ossetic, Pashto, Rushani, and, probably, Khufi). The talk is based on my field work with Ossetic, Wakhi, Shugni, Rushani, Bartangi, and Ishkashimi speakers, and on published texts in some of East Iranian languages.

For instance, in Yagnobi (North East Iranian, North Tajikistan) pronominal clitics may be placed after the first constituent in a clause (1b) or in a non-Wackernagel position (1a).

- (1) a. Yagnobi (Khromov 1972:158, text 26)

ke kut-i=š a-wid-im
then dog-OBL=OBL.3SG PST-throw-PST.1PL
'Then we threw it to the dog.'

- b. Yagnobi (Andreev, Peshchereva 1957:14, sentence 26)

[tabib a-vow], [doru=iš a-kun]
doctor PST-come:3SG healthy=OBL.3SG PST-do:PST.3SG
'The doctor came and cured her'

Moreover, in most of Pamiri languages, clitic auxiliaries may optionally occur several times in a clause (remarkably, the same is true for the Russian non-indicative marker *by*):

- (2) a. Ishkashimi (South East Iranian) (Pakhalina 1959, re-checked with a consultant)

az(=m) pə uždən sar(=əm) vəd
I=1SG PREP millet on=1SG be:PST
'I was working in the millet field.'

- b. Wakhi (South East Iranian) (Grünberg, Steblin-Kamensky 1976:49, sentence from a narrative)

wuz=əm pay=əm ar xə sar ýirovdaj
I=1SG curdled.milk=1SG on self's head turn.over:PST
'I spilled the curdled milk on my head.'

Second position clitics are known to be diachronically unstable (Fontana 1993). The history of East Iranian languages is poorly documented and it is impossible to tell whether the observed systems of optional second position clitics are a step to or from the obligatory 2P, and grammaticalization-theory-like approaches are unfortunately rather inefficient in this case.

To account for these phenomena, I suggest the following model. The phonological realization of clitics is regulated by a number of stochastically ordered constraints, which in principle do not rule out a multiple spell out of a clitic. However, some of constraints may become inviolable (which explains the existence of systems with obligatory 2P placement of clitics). To conclude, my approach emphasizes the importance of randomness in the natural language.

References

- Anderson, S. 2005. *Aspects of the Theory of Clitics*. Oxford-NY. OUP. Andreev M., E. Peshchereva. 1957. *Yagnobskie teksty i slovar'*. Moscow. Khromov, A. 1972. *Yagnobskij jazyk*. Moscow. Nauka. Fontana, J. 1993. *Phrase Structure and the Syntax of Clitics in the History of Spanish*. PhD Thesis, University of Pennsylvania. Grünberg, A., I. Steblin-Kamensky. 1976. *Vakhanskij jazyk*. Moscow. Nauka. Pakhalina, T. 1959. *Ishkashimskij jazyk (issledovanija i materialy)*. Moscow. Nauka