

On the losses of enclisis and clitic climbing in the diachrony of French

Introduction: In infinitival clauses, Modern French has systematic proclisis. Old French, on the other hand, allowed enclisis (1) and clitic climbing (2) (henceforth, CC), which is similar to what is found in Standard Italian, Spanish and Catalan.

(1) il doit connoistre le lignage ou noier le.
 he must know.INF the lineage or deny.INF it
 “He must either acknowledge the lineage or deny it.” (*Grand Coutumier*, Seq 261-262)

(2) et ou il le poet faire.
 and where he it can do.INF
 “And where he can do it.”
 (*Corpus Philippicum*, J 1034, n54)

In this paper, we investigate the full diachrony of clitic placement in infinitival contexts in French and argue that the loss of enclisis and the loss of CC should be considered as two independent changes. Furthermore, we claim that enclisis and CC are not necessarily part of the same system, as Middle French is a language that has CC and proclisis (like Sardinian, see Jones, 1997).

Methodology: To investigate the diachrony of clitic placement with infinitives in French, we have created a corpus of 19 legal texts which covers 7 centuries (1150-1856). None of the texts has been explored with regards to clitic placement before. A total of 3,541 sentences have been extracted and analyzed.

Findings: The data show that CC is the most attested ordering in the early periods, and that it disappeared at the dawn of the Modern French period, around 1800 (Figure 1). Enclisis is present in Old French only, and its last occurrence dates back from ca. 1350. Proclisis is found in all periods, yet it is rare in Old French. It becomes more prevalent at the turn of the 14th century.

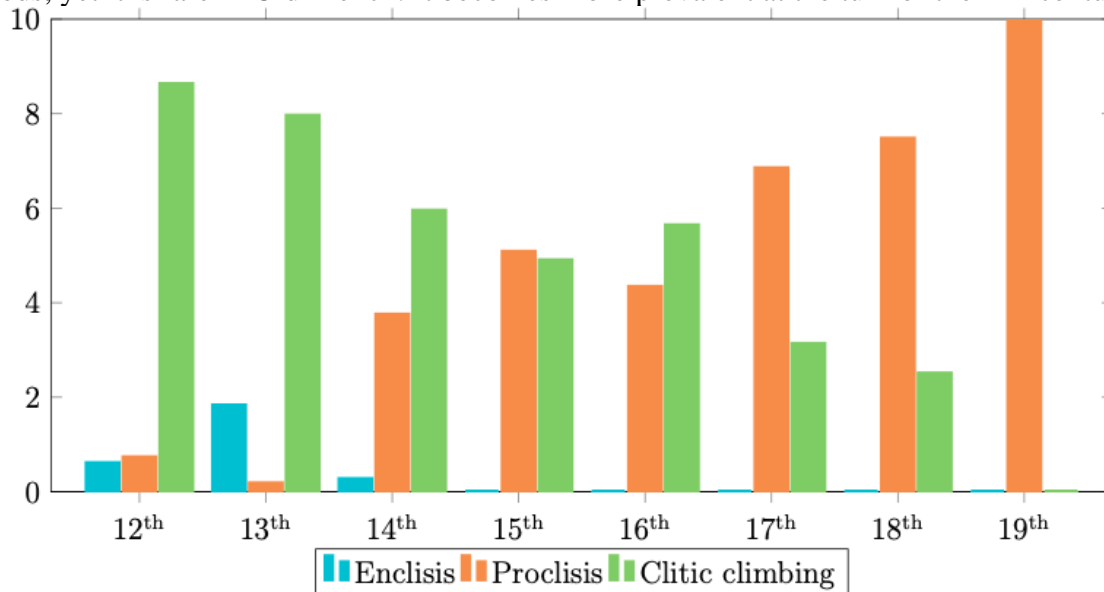


Figure 1 Clitic placement in all infinitival clauses

The relevance of the findings is more significant when we contrast restructuring clauses (Figure 2) with non-restructuring clauses (Figure 3). We find that in the former, CC is the most common ordering in Old French, and it tops 100% in Middle French. It decreases during the early Modern

French period. In non-restructuring clauses, enclisis is prevalent in Old French (the data for the 12th century are insufficient to draw conclusions) and disappears early on.

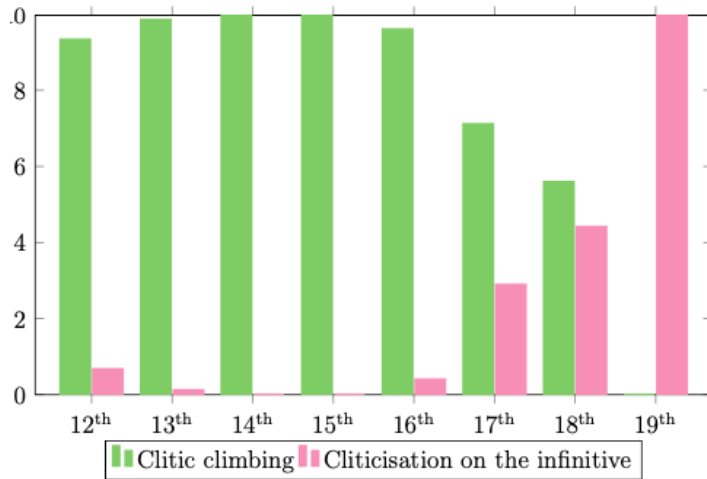


Figure 2 : Clitic placement in restructuring clauses

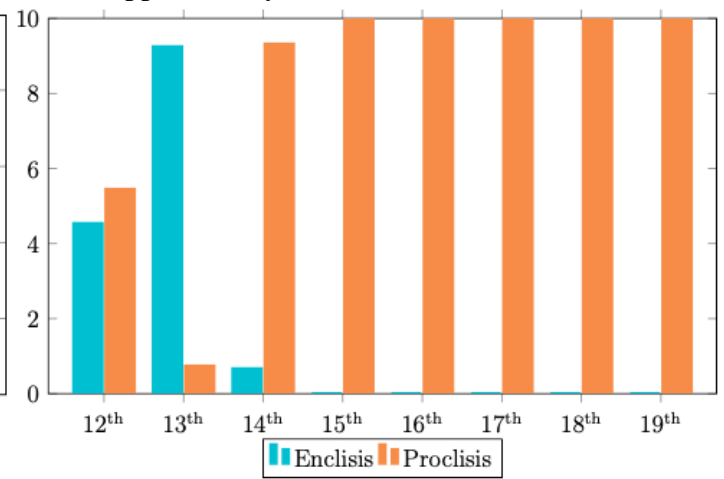


Figure 3 : Clitic placement in non-restructuring clauses

	Restructuring clauses	Non-restructuring clauses
Old French (1150-1300)	CC	enclisis
Middle French (1300-1750)	CC	proclisis
Modern French (1750-present)	proclisis	proclisis

Discussion: We adopt Kayne’s (1991) hypothesis that clitics target a constant functional projection, which we assume to be v (Roberts, 2010). In Old French non-restructuring clauses, we argue that the infinitive moves to T to pick up infinitival morphology $-r$, which yields enclisis at PF. Grammarians have reported the loss of the $-r$ suffix towards the end of the Old French period (Vising, 1899), which matches the shift *enclisis* \rightarrow *proclisis* in our data. We interpret this as the loss of V-to-T movement: with the loss of $-r$, no movement trigger (in the sense of Roberts, 2019) was available for speakers, and V-to-T was not acquired. In Middle French, the clitic is still in v but the infinitive remains low, yielding proclisis at PF. The low position of infinitives in French is evidenced by the syntax of adverbs (Schifano, 2018). For restructuring clauses, we adopt a monoclausal hypothesis à la Cinque (2004) and Wurmbrand (2004): [TP [v_1 P [VP [v_2 P [V_{INFP}]]]]]. We argue that CC is found when cliticization is realized on v_1 . Bekowies and McLaughlin (2020) report that CC becomes optional in Romance between the 15th and the 17th centuries. This indicates that cliticization on v_2 became available (i.e. cliticization on the infinitive). Whilst Standard Italian, Spanish and Catalan have kept optional CC (i.e. cliticization on v_1 or v_2), cliticization in Modern French restructuring clauses is always on v_2 . To account for the loss of CC, we adopt Ledgeway and Lombardi’s (2005) view that cliticization is either a syntactic phenomenon (taking place before Spell-Out) or a phonological one (taking place at PF). We argue that in French, a shift *phonological* \rightarrow *syntactic* took place around 1800, therefore the clitic is not ‘free’ to cliticize on v_1 or v_2 , but it must cliticize on the infinitive early in the derivation, hence the loss of CC. This claim is further supported by the loss of interpolation, whereby an adverb can intervene between the clitic and the infinitive [clitic Adv V_{INFP}]. This construction shows PF-cliticization and is lost around 1800.

Selected references: Kayne, R. (1991), ‘Romance clitics, verb movement and PRO’, *Linguistic Inquiry* 22.
 • Ledgeway, A. and Lombardi, A. (2005), ‘Verb movement, adverbs and clitic positions in romance’, *Probus* 17.
 • Roberts, I (2019), *Parameter Hierarchies & Universal Grammar*, Oxford University Press.