

Clitic climbing without restructuring in Czech and Polish

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Clitic climbing refers to the realization of a pronominal or reflexive clitic in a syntactic constituent different from, i.e. hierarchically higher than the domain it is licenced by. Originally proposed for Romance languages (cf. Aissen & Perlmutter 1976, Rivas 1977, Rizzi 1982), mono-clausal analyses have been adopted to account for clitic climbing in Slavic, namely the restructuring approach of defective infinitival complementation (cf. Wurmbrand 2001). According to such an approach, clitic climbing does not appear in bi-clausal environments, but from restructuring infinitives, which as bare VPs lack functional structure (vP, TP). As a consequence, restructuring infinitives neither are capable of licencing case and ϕ -features nor do they contain subjects (PRO).

Restructuring was suggested to be either a necessary – but not sufficient – condition for clitic climbing (Stjepanović 2004 for BCS) or a syntactic structure – both necessary and sufficient – which affects clitics immediately (Aljović 2004 for BCS, Rezac 2005 for Czech). Whereas the former type of approach regards restructuring as a pre-condition for clitic climbing, which may still occur optionally, the latter one lays the ground for a strict dichotomy of two mutually exclusive syntactic configurations. Under restructuring, clitics unavoidably move to a higher phrase for feature licencing due to the infinitive's defectiveness. Correspondingly, the lack of restructuring forces the clitics to remain in situ, since they check their features within the domain of the embedded infinitive.

It will be shown that predictions by the restructuring analysis are not borne out with regard to Czech and Polish. Clitics may climb from embedded infinitives, which show bi-clausal, i.e. non-restructuring properties: the infinitives are case-licensors, allow ambiguous pronominal binding, possess independent temporal reference, permit split-clitic constructions (cf. Jurkiewicz-Rohrbacher et al. 2017 for BSC), or are adjuncts (cf. Junghanns 2002, Golden 2008). Further implications made by Rezac (2005) in order to attribute clitic climbing to general properties of the A-system are not supported as well. On the one hand, the order dative > accusative is by no means inviolable irrespective of whether clitics climb or remain in situ. This observation also challenges other approaches, which take word order within the clitic cluster to mirror the hierarchical cascade of functional heads like the OT-mapping from syntax to PF proposed by Franks & King (2000) and Franks (2010). On the other hand, the Person Case Constraint may be violated within the clitic cluster, too (cf. Cetnarowska 2003 for Polish, Lenertová 2004 for Czech).

If bi-clausality does not prevent clitics from climbing, then restructuring does not contribute to an understanding of clitic climbing and both phenomena should be regarded as independent from one another, at least in the languages explored here. More generally, any account of CC, which attributes clitic climbing to the licencing of syntactic features, faces serious empirical problems. Instead, it appears worthwhile to follow suggestions that draw attention to the role of information structure for clitic climbing and its ban across CP (Junghanns 2002, Stjepanović 2004: 206–207, Dotlačil 2004: 93–99, 2007).

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