

## One referent, one contrasting feature: voiding the ban on clitic coordination

Irene Amato (*University of Leipzig*) & Adrian Stegovec (*UConn*)

The inability of clitic pronouns to be coordinated is taken to be one of their defining properties (Kayne 1975; Cardinaletti & Starke 1994; i.a.), and is usually directly attributed to their deficient syntactic or prosodic status. In this talk we show, based on new data from Italian, Spanish, and Slovenian, that the coordination ban is not absolute: it can be voided with pronouns in a disjunction if the pronouns share a referent and one of their features (e.g. gender) is contrasted. We thus argue that the coordination ban is actually tied to differences in interpretation between clitic pronouns and their strong pronoun counterparts.

**The coordination ban.** In languages like Italian, where pronouns have clitic and strong counterparts, clitic pronouns cannot be coordinated (1a), while strong pronouns can be (1b). We also see in (1) that this asymmetry is observed with both conjunction and disjunction.

- (1) a. \*Lo e/o la chiamo.                      b. Chiamo lui e/o lei.  
          him and/or her call.1SG                      call.1SG him and/or her  
          ‘I call him and/or her.’                      ‘I call him and/or her.’

This pattern appears to hold universally for languages with clitic and strong pronouns (see Cardinaletti & Starke 1994; we set aside weak pronouns in the abstract for the sake of space, but everything said about clitic pronouns crucially also holds for weak pronouns).

**Voiding the ban.** What has not been noted before is that disjunction of clitics becomes fully grammatical when the clitic pronouns share an antecedent, but are contrasted with respect to the value of some interpretable feature, such as gender. For instance, in the context of a competition where we do not yet know the identity and gender of the eventual winner, (2) can be felicitously uttered (the judgments come from a survey of 10 speakers).

- (2) Quando decidono chi e' il vincitore, lo o la chiamano sul palco.  
          when decide.3PL who be.3SG the winner, him or her call.3PL on.the stage  
          ‘When they decide who the winner is, they call him or her on the stage.’

In (2) the entire disjunction denotes a single individual (‘the winner’) and the pronouns do not require different referents (they can pick out the same person of unknown gender). This becomes clearer if we replace clitics with strong pronouns, as in (3). Then, the interpretation can only be that there are two known individuals, where only one of them can win.

- (3) Quando decidono chi e' il vincitore, chiamano lui o lei sul palco.  
          when decide.3PL who be.3SG the winner, call.3PL him or her on.the stage  
          ‘When they decide who the winner is, they call him or her on the stage.’

The singular referent interpretation in (2) is reflected in the impossibility of using a plural pronoun to refer back to the two pronouns, and the infelicity of continuations like *entrambi però riceveranno un premio* ‘both of them, though, will receive a prize’, or *in quanto campioni* ‘as champions’. In contrast, all of the above are felicitous in the case of (3).

Moreover, if a plural antecedent is established in the discourse, like with the conjunction in (4), clitic disjunction is highly degraded and strong pronouns must be used instead.

- (4) Quando Albano e Romina dovranno ritirare il premio,  
          when Albano and Romina have.FUT.3PL pick.up the prize  
          { ??lo o la } chiameranno { lui o lei } sul palco.  
          him or her call.FUT.3PL him or her on.the stage  
          ‘When A. and R. will have to pick up the prize, they will call him or her on the stage.’

We have so far identified the same pattern also in Spanish and Slovenian, so it is not limited to Italian or Romance. Additionally, disjunction of clitic pronouns similar to (2), but where number or person is contrasted, is also possible with the right interpretation (e.g. ‘the winner’ is an individual vs. a team, or the speaker’s vs. the addressee’s team). The relevant examples will be discussed in detail in the talk, but what is crucial is that in all the grammatical cases the pronouns in the disjunction count as having the same antecedent (cf. ‘the winner’ in (2)).

**Proposal.** The clitic coordination ban can be voided with disjunction but not with conjunction because conjunction of pronouns has to result in the creation of a new plural discourse referent, which is only possible if the conjuncts are distinct referents in the first place. Disjunction, conversely, does not have to create a plural discourse referent (cf. ‘*The soprano<sub>i</sub> or the alto<sub>i</sub> will sing. She<sub>i</sub> will perform Mozart*’; see e.g. Stone 1992, Simons 2000). But the singular referent reading of disjunction is crucially absent when two individuals are identified (cf. ‘*Jane<sub>i</sub> or Maud<sub>i</sub> will sing. #She<sub>i</sub> will perform Mozart*’; Simons 2000). We propose that the distinct behavior of clitic and strong pronouns with disjunction follows from this.

Strong pronouns are semantically more rigid than clitics: they need human referents, cannot be bound variables, and need linguistic antecedents. This has been linked to extra structure absent in clitics (Cardinaletti & Starke 1994; i.a.), which we identify as an *index head* (Patel-Grosz & Grosz 2017, Hanink 2018). This is what makes strong pronouns only pick out salient linguistic antecedents, and, we argue, incompatible with disjunction under the singular referent reading. In contrast, clitics consist of only interpretable  $\phi$ -features, which makes them semantically more flexible, including the ability to pick out properties rather than specific individuals (Stegovec 2019), which is also what distinguishes DPs that allow the singular referent reading under disjunction from those that do not (Simons 2000).

Lastly, we need to explain why clitics, despite their semantic flexibility, cannot occur in conjunctions. With disjunction of pronouns contrast is always involved, due to the focus-like semantics of disjunction (Simons 2000, Alonso-Ovalle 2006; i.a.): with strong pronouns the antecedents are contrasted, while with clitics the contrast is only between  $\phi$ -feature values and antecedent must be the same for both pronouns. This is because the whole pronoun is focused with strong pronouns, including the index head, while only a subset of  $\phi$ -features is focused with clitics (see Artstein 2004 on sub-word level focus). With strong pronouns reference is constrained by the index head, which can be scoped over, but with clitics equivalent readings are achieved via semantic mapping rules (Tomioka 2003, Stegovec 2019), so there is no syntactic locus of reference to scope over, making the contrasting of antecedents impossible. Since conjunction needs distinct referents as the input to create a new plural discourse referent, the result is that clitics can never be used with conjunction.

**Discussion.** In addition to the new insight into the nature of the ban on the coordination of clitics and the possible relationships between pronouns and their antecedents, our research also has implications for the relationship between the clitic/strong pronoun distinction and focus. Cardinaletti & Starke (1994) have shown that clitics may in fact be contrastively focused, although they do not identify the conditions under which it is a possibility. Our research suggests that this is possible only if a sub-set of a clitic’s  $\phi$ -features is focused.

**Selected references.** Stone 1992. *Or and anaphora*. Proceedings of SALT 2. • Simons 2000. *Issues in the semantics and pragmatics of disjunction*. • Stegovec 2019. *Crop to fit: Pronoun size and its relation to strict/sloppy identity and animacy*. LSA Talk.