Clitic blocking as a side-effect of 1st/2nd person licensing: The case of -suu in Punjabi

GURMEET KAUR, *Indian Institute of Technology Delhi*

ABSTRACT

The 3rd person object clitic –suu in Punjabi is blocked with 1st/2nd subjects, but not 3rd subjects. Presenting these novel facts, this paper explains blocking effects on -suu as a side-effect of the person licensing requirements of 1st/2nd subjects. I propose that –suu is licensed at FP, to which it moves via the Part/T head. In a derivation with 1st/2nd subjects, this movement is impeded due to mismatching person features on the licensing Part head. Conversely, in a structure with 3rd subjects, there is no 1st/2nd person feature bearing PartP to obstruct the clitic's movement.

1   Introduction

Punjabi[1] has 3rd person 'argument replacing morphemes' that occur attached to the verb (Akhtar 1997, Butt 2007)[2]. Consider the following examples where the 3rd person ergative subject in (1) has been replaced by -suu in (2).

(1) karan=ne   roTTii   khaddii
      karan=erg   bread.f.sg   eat.perf.f.sg
      'Karan ate bread.'

(2) roTTii   khaddii=suu
      bread.f.sg   eat.perf.f.sg=3sg
      '(S)he ate bread.'

Similarly, a 3rd person object can also be replaced by–suu. This is shown in (3)-(4), for the 3rd person object 'girl'.

(3) karan=ne   kuRii=nuu   vekhyaa
      Karan=erg   girl=nuu   see.perf.m.sg
      'Karan saw the girl.'

(4) karan=ne   vekhyaa=suu
      Karan=erg   see.perf.m.sg=3sg
      'Karan saw him/her.'

However, the construction with –suu in the presence of a 3rd person subject in (4) becomes ungrammatical if the subject is 1st/2nd person, as illustrated in (5).

(5) *maĩ/tuu   vekhyaa=suu
   1.sg.obl/2.sg.obl   see.perf.m.sg=3sg
      'I/you saw him/her.'

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[1] The variety of Punjabi discussed in this work is spoken in Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh.

[2] The language also has 2nd person singular and plural argument replacing morphemes *ii* and *je*. However, I do not consider them for this study since these forms are ambiguous with regard to their clitic versus agreement status. For more discussion on the said forms, see Akhtar (1997), Butt (2007) and Kaur (in prep.)

The ungrammaticality of (5) is interesting since there is no restriction on the presence of a 3rd person full pronominal object with a $1^{st}/2^{nd}$ person subject (6).

(6) maĩ/tuu   o=nuu vekhyaa
 1.sg.obl/2.sg.obl 3.sg=nuu see.perf.m.sg
 'I/you saw him/her.'

   This paper attempts to explain the blocking effect on –suu in (5) as following from the person licensing requirements of the $1^{st}/2^{nd}$ subjects. Specifically, I argue that -suu is licensed at FP (in the sense of Uriagereka 1995) to which it must climb via Part(icipant)/T(ense) heads. However, this licensing is obstructed in a derivation with $1^{st}/2^{nd}$ subjects. I assume with Chandra and Kaur (2014), and Kaur (2015) that $1^{st}/2^{nd}$ perfective subjects in the language are licensed at PartP, a +1/+2 person valued head located between TP and vP. Given the presence of PartP, movement of the 3rd person clitic -suu to FP via the person valued Part head results in a mismatch of features, preventing further clitic climbing and licensing. This is represented schematically in (7). On the other hand, a 3rd person subject does not have any person licensing requirement, which in turn prevents a PartP from projecting. This allows the clitic to raise to FP without any mismatch of features and get licensed (8).

(7) [FP[TP[PartP1st/2ndEA [vP EA$_t$ [vP Cl-Obj [VP..]]]]]]

(8) [FP [TP [vP 3rdSubj [vP Cl-Obj [VP…]]]]
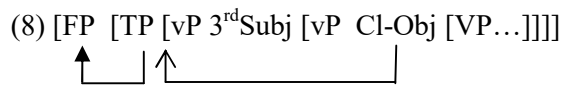
   The paper is organized as follows. In section 2, I introduce the 3rd person morpheme under investigation (-suu) and establish that it is a clitic (as opposed to an affix). Employing insights from Butt (2007), section 3 provides an account of –suu licensing. Following this, in section 4, I provide a feature-mismatch based explanation for the ban on –suu with $1^{st}/2^{nd}$ person subjects. Section 5 concludes the paper.

2 On –*suu* as a clitic

To understand the nature and licensing of –suu, I begin with probing into its clitic versus affix status (cf. Zwicky and Pullum 1983, Arregi and Nevins 2008, Preminger 2009, Kramer 2010, Baker 2012). To elaborate, across many languages, phi features are represented twice in the structure: once on the noun phrase that bears them and once on a morpheme that attaches itself either to the verb. This second instance of the phi features can either be an agreement affix or clitic. While the two bear resemblance in that they are verbal morphemes, they are different entities. An agreement affix obtains on the verb as a consequence of a formal Agree relation (à la Chomsky 2000, 2001) between a functional head and a DP. A clitic, in contrast is a component of the DP itself which moves from within the DP and attaches itself to a verbal host (in keeping with Uriagereka 1995, Torrego 1988, Arregi and Nevins 2008 among others). Whether a given verbal morpheme is a clitic or an agreement affix is crucial to determining its syntactic behaviour. I thereby devote this section to investigate the clitic/affixal status of –suu.

TEST I. The first test that I employ comes from Preminger's (2009) study on verbal markers in Basque. Specifically, Preminger proposes that in the absence of an agreement relation being established between a functional head and a DP, default morphology obtains on the functional head. On the other hand, there is

no default option available if cliticization fails to come through. Given this test, let us examine the behaviour of –suu. As seen in example (5), the presence of –suu is banned if the subject is 1st/2nd person. This construction without -suu is ungrammatical with no available default version of the clitic to save the derivation

Conversely, consider the case of agreement in Punjabi. In a construction where all arguments are marked with adpositional case markers (*ne* and *nuu*), none of the arguments can trigger agreement on the verb. For lack of an agreement trigger, the verb ends up manifesting default agreement/3msg (9).

(9) raam=ne kuRii=nuu   vekhyaa
 Ram=erg girl=acc   see.perf.m.sg (def)
 'Ram saw a girl.'

TEST II. The second diagnostic that I employ comes from Arregi and Nevins (2008) and Nevins (2011). Specifically, Nevins (2011) proposes that clitics are tense-invariant since they are D elements. Agreement affixes, in contrast, by virtue of being non-D elements, are predicted to change with the change in tense/aspect. Let us explore –suu in light of this diagnostic. Consider the following examples where the argument replaced by –suu is indicated by a ~~strikethrough~~.

(10) raam=ne ~~kuRii=nuu~~ vekhyaa=suu
 Ram=erg ~~girl=nuu~~   see.perf.m.sg =3sg
 'Ram saw him/her.'

(11) raam   ~~kuRii=nuu~~ roz   vekhdaa=suu
 Ram.nom ~~girl=acc~~ everyday see.hab.m.sg=3sg
 'Ram sees him/her every day.'

(12) raam   ~~kuRii=nuu~~ vekh reyaa=suu
 Ram   ~~girl=nuu~~   see prog.m.sg=3sg
 'Ram is looking at him/her.'

(10) is a perfective structure marked by the presence of –yaa on the verb. In (11), we see a habitual structure, and (12) is a construction in progressive aspect. We notice that the form of –suu remains unchanged across the three aspects[3]. Compare the facts for –suu with the agreement affix on the verb. In the non-perfective examples in (11)-(12), where the nominative subject triggers agreement on the verb, we see that the form of the verb changes from *vekhdaa* to *vekh reyaa*. This test, like the previous one, hints at the pronominal (and not affixal) status of –suu.

Test III. Moving on, the third diagnostic that can help understand the nature of -suu relates to the semantic restrictions that it imposes on the co-referred argument. Cross-linguistically, it has been noted that while clitics impose semantic restrictions on the argument that they co-reference, agreement markers are not sensitive to the semantic properties of the agreed with noun (Sũner 1988, Uriagereka 1995, Anagnostopoulou 2003 among others).

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[3] Since -suu is strictly banned in the presence of an auxiliary, we cannot test the invariability of –suu across past and present tenses which are realised by an auxiliary in the language. However, the future marker in Punjabi is not an auxiliary verb, such that the marker –g is attached directly to the verb. –suu is found unchanged in the future tense, thereby affirming its tense-invariance.
i. karan   vekhegaa=suu
 Karan.nom see.fut.m.sg=3sg
 'Karan will see him/her.'

As for -suu in Punjabi, we see that in order to refer to an object, -suu requires it to be definite and familiar to both the speaker and the hearer. Thus, a non-familiar, or indefinite object cannot be co-referred by – suu, as shown in (13).

(13) *raam=ne   kissii/ikk   kuRii=nuu   vekhyaa=suu
    Ram=erg   some/one   girl=nuu   see.perf.m.sg=3sg
    'Ram saw some girl/boy (intended).'

For agreement affixes, on the contrary, there is no semantic restriction on the argument that is able to trigger the presence of an agreement marker; it only needs to be unmarked; i.e. without an adposition (14).

(14) raam=ne   o   waal-ii   kitaab/koyii kitaab   veccii
    Ram=erg   that   waala-f.sg   book/some   book   sell.perf.f.sg
    'Ram sold that particular book/some book.'

Like the previous tests, this test also points at the clitic-hood of -suu.

Test IV. Based on her study of Amharic, Kramer (2010) suggests that an agreement marker, even if default, must obtain in a structure. A clitic, on the contrary, is only optional. Consider the case of Punjabi, where the agreement marker must obtain. If all the arguments in a structure are adposition marked, such that they cannot control agreement, the verb manifests default agreement. Thus, consider the example in (15), where the marker -iiyaaN (perf.f.pl) is obligatory and cannot be dropped.

(15) karan=ne   kitaabaã   vecciyaã/*vec
    Karan=erg   book.f.pl   sell.perf.f.pl/*sell
    'Karan sold books.'

Contrary to the affix, -suu is optionally present to co-refer to a dropped argument, as seen so far.

Test V: This test for clitic-hood first discussed in Kayne (1969), and then in Sportiche (1996), Muller (1992) pertains to conjunction of clitics. Specifically, it is claimed that clitics cannot conjoin independently of their host. Employing this test on -suu, we observe that -suu cannot be conjoined independently of the host (16)[4].

(16) *raam   jaandaa=suu$_i$ te   suu$_j$
    Ram   know.hab.m.sg=3g   and   3sg
    'Ram knows her/him and her/him.'

To summarise the findings of this section, we have seen that -suu in Punjabi is a clitic and not an affix based on the following observations: (a) -suu does not have a default form, (b) -suu is tense-invariant, (c) -suu imposes semantic restrictions on the co-referenced argument, (d) -suu is optional and (e) conjoining -suu independently of the verbal host results in ungrammaticality.

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[4] It must be noted that the auxiliary in the language also cannot join independently of the host (i). However, this seems to emerge from a semantic ban on conjunction of two differing tenses.
i. *karan   kuRii=nuu jaandaa   e   te   sii
    Karan   girl=nuu   know.hab.m.sg   be.pres   and   be.past
    'Karan knows and knew the girl.'

3   Licensing -suu

Given its clitic-hood, I posit a DP-structure in (17) for -suu, in keeping with Uriagereka (1995), Arregi and Nevins (2008), Kramer (2010) among others.

(17) [$_{DP}$ (doubled argument)[$_{DP}$ clitic$_{[iperson,inumber,ucase]}$...]]

As shown in (17), the clitic is a bundle of person, number and case features. Following the standard assumption, I propose that the clitic DP originates as a complement to the V head (Anagnostopoulou 2006, Mavrogiorgos 2010). This clitic initially merged in a theta position moves to the edge of v, where it is valued for case by the v head. It must be noted that the clitic is both a head and a phrasal category at the same time (in keeping with Chomsky 1995:402-403); as such, it can merge both as a head and as a phrasal projection. I suggest that the clitic moves to the specifier of vP as a phrasal projection and gets valued for case.

From the edge of vP, the clitic moves higher to FP (in the sense of Uriagereka 1995) for information structure reasons. Specifically, I claim that the clitic can be understood neither as the topic nor as the focus of the sentence. Instead, with Butt (2007) I suggest that it is best understood as backgrounded information. To this end, I provide some evidence to show that the clitic does not correspond to a focussed or a topicalised element. I start with 'focus' first. One of the classical pragmatic uses of focus is to highlight the part of an answer that corresponds to the wh-part of a constituent question (Paul 1880, Hamblin 1973, Krifka 2006). Employing this test on –suu, we see that it cannot refer to a DP that is the answer of a wh-question word (18).

(18) karan=ne   ki=nuu   vekhyaa
     Karan=erg   who=nuu   see.perf.m.sg
     'Who did Karan see?'
   Answer: #Karan=ne   vekhyaa=suu
            'Karan saw him/her (intended).'

Further, DPs marked with an overt focus particle such as 'only' and 'also' cannot be replaced by –suu, as in (19).

(19) karan=ne   ~~kuRii=nuu=ii/vii~~   vekhyaa=suu
     Karan=erg   ~~girl=nuu=only/also~~   see.perf.m.sg=3.sg
    #'Karan saw him/her only/also.'

Moving on, -suu also cannot be understood as the topic of a clause. Punjabi uses marking an argument with *te* 'as for' as a topicalisation strategy. We note that such a topicalised argument cannot be cliticised using –suu, as is demonstrated in (20).

(20) karan=ne   ~~kuRii=nuu=te~~ vyaa   vicc   nayii   bulaayaa=suu
     Karan=erg   ~~girl=nuu=top~~ wedding in   neg   call.perf.m.sg=3sg
   #'As for him/her, Karan did not call him/her to the   wedding.'
    'Karan did not call him/her (familiar) to the wedding.'

Given these observations, I contend with Butt (2007) that –suu is neither focus nor topic; instead, it represents back-grounded material. Since it is back-grounded material, it fails to be the topic (what the sentence is about). Moreover, its back-grounding function also prevents it from being the focus. I posit that the clitic is licensed as the bearer of back-grounded material by moving to FP (à la Uriagereka, 1995) located above the TP. Concretely, I suggest that from the edge of vP, the clitic moves like a head and

adjoins to the T head, where it forms a cl-T complex. This entire complex then raises to FP and left adjoins to the F head (à la Kayne 1994, Ouhalla 2005), as schematised in (21).

(21) [FP [TP [vP [VP Obj-cl$_t$ V] v] Cl-T] [*Cl-T*-F]

4 Explaining blocking effects

Given the account for licensing of –suu, I now return to our initial question regarding the ban on object – suu with 1st/2nd person subjects. The object clitic originates as a complement of VP and the 1st/2nd subject is base generated in the specifier of vP. Located in the specifier of vP, the subject cannot be valued for case since it has a person feature that needs licensing. Thus, it raises to the edge of PartP in order to get its person feature valued. The object clitic moves to the inner specifier of vP (in the sense of Richards 1997), where it gets case. From the edge of vP, it also needs to raise to FP for semantic-pragmatic reasons. Thus the object clitic raises and adjoins to the Part head on its way up in the structure. The presence of 1st/2nd person features on the Part head do not match with the 3rd person feature on –suu, which is not specified for 1st/2nd], leading to a derivational crash, as illustrated in figure I.
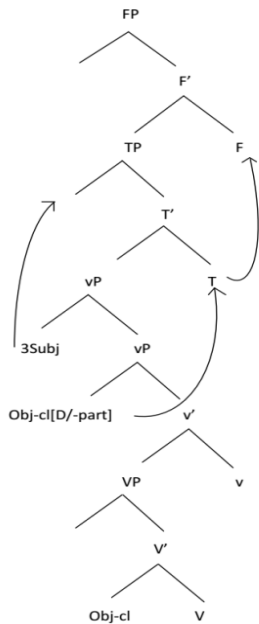
Figure I. Ban on –suu with 1st/2nd subject
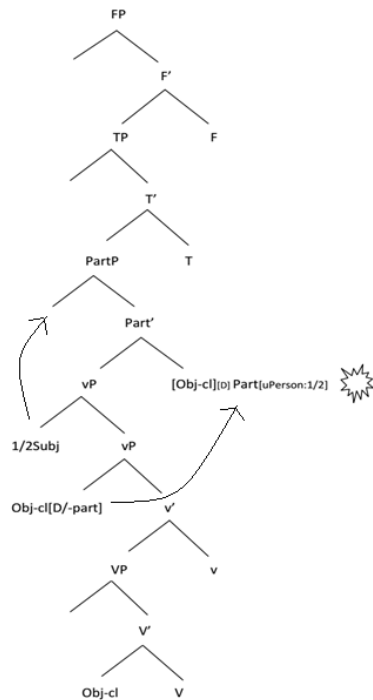
A crucial theoretical assumption that my proposal relies upon pertains to the delayed deletion of uninterpretable person features on the Part head. Specifically, in contrast to the assumption (à la Chomsky 2001) which requires uninterpretable features to get deleted as soon as they are agreed with, Pesetsky & Torrego (2001) (also see Carstens, 2003) propose that the lifespan of an uninterpretable feature can be extended in syntax. Thus, an uninterpretable feature can remain syntactically active at least till the completion of the phase it is located in. I assume P&T's account to suggest that the uninterpretable person features on the Part head remain active till the completion of the CP phase. Therefore, when the object clitic moves to FP via the Part head, it encounters the active and mismatching person features.

The 3rd person subject does not have any person features that need valuation. Consequently, there is no person projection (PartP) in a structure with a 3rd person subject. This subject stays insitu and gets ergative marked in its base generated position, i.e. the specifier of vP. It can move to spec, TP for EPP reasons. As for the object clitic, it gets its case in the inner specifier of vP; the absence of PartP in the structure permits the object clitic to raise from the edge of vP to FP via the T head without any interference. Hence, no ban is observed on –suu with 3rd person subjects. This is shown in figure II.

Figure II. Presence of –suu with 3rd subject

5   Conclusion

In this paper, I have presented and explained novel facts from Punjabi showing the ban on -suu with 1st/2nd person subjects. These facts add to the existing literature on blocking effects as observed with reflexives such as *taan* in Malayalam and *ziji* in Chinese (see Jayaseelan 1998 for Malayalam, Huang and Tang 1991 for Chinese). Additionally, the analysis of these blocking effects as following from the person licensing requirement of the 1st/2nd subjects corroborates the 1st/2nd versus 3rd person divide in syntax.

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