

Accounting for “free Wackernagel elements”: weakness without dependency

Wackernagel elements, aka second position (henceforth 2P) clitics, are characterized by their unconventional syntax: they are positioned after the first element of their domain (the definition of “element” and “domain” having generated much debate). There are two basic problems in accounting for 2P: (i) determining the *underlying* position of 2P elements and (ii) explaining the ban on initial position. This paper offers a new approach to both of these questions. Intuitively and empirically, it appears that in the majority of cases the phonological component is at least partly responsible for the ban on initial position. Anderson (2005:141), however, notes that there is yet to be a convincing analysis of a single language which relies entirely on prosody. Worse yet, he notes that there are languages such as Tagalog, many of whose 2P clitics show no evidence whatsoever of prosodic dependency. Anderson thus gives up on phonology in the strict sense and rather relies on a morphologically oriented NON-INITIAL constraint. The problem with this is that non-initiality makes no more sense as a morphological constraint and that there are directional asymmetries which cannot be captured naturally by a purely morphological constraint. The alternative offered here is a generalized ONSET type constraint dubbed *WEAKSTART, which is violated by prosodic categories beginning with weak elements. This constraint is responsible for onset and fortition effects on all levels of the prosodic hierarchy. Its natural bias for s(trong)-w(eak) ordered dyads explains asymmetries from the prosodic phrase down to the syllable (1), c.f. Hooper’s (1976:199) observation: “Processes generally known under the name ‘strengthening’ always occur in syllable-initial position and never in syllable-final or second position”, and Ito & Mester’s (2006) use of ONSET (ω_{\max}) to derive r-insertion in English dialects.

One key to solving the dependency paradox lies in recognizing the *generality* of weakness. Functional (closed-class) elements, while not always prosodically dependent, are inherently weak, and it can be shown that they avoid initial position in many more cases than has been generally recognized. When they are further aligned to syntactic elements with which they are not in a sisterhood relationship, 2P is the natural outcome, as the syntactic bonds between syntactic non-sisters is inherently weaker than that of non-sisters. The underlying structural difference between syntactic sisterhood and feature adjunction accounts for a striking and previously unappreciated fact: unambiguous syntactic heads such as prepositions and case markers are never found in 2P but rather encliticize (away from their complements) when avoiding initiality while non-head elements such as definiteness, argument and possessor person features consistently employ syntactic misalignment (to 2P) when they are adjoined to phrases which are not their complements. The difference is in part derived by two types of structure building ALIGN constraints: CONCATENATE and ADJOIN (2). CONCATENATE creates binary structures with a head and complement while ADJOIN positions features on the edge of syntactic nodes. Crucially, features inserted by ADJOIN are not dominated by their host and are not subject to constraints on head directionality.

The prosodic side of the analysis recognizes two sub-categories of prosodic words: PWd and PWd_{Head}. Both are independent but only the latter may bear narrow focus marking, representing a weakness which is claimed here to be common to all 2P elements. Lexical words are mapped to PWd_{Head} and functional words which satisfy minimality are mapped to PWd (cf. Zec 2005). Because non-head PWds are counted among the weak members of the dyads (1) they are penalized by *WEAKSTART in initial position.

Together, these elements can account for particularly thorny cases such as K^wak^w’ala (3) which has both encliticizing prepositions and 2P clitics in the same grammar (Anderson 2005:112). The best K^wak^w’ala structures evaluated for (3) are shown as in Autolexical Theory (Sadock 1991) in (4). (4a) wins because it preserves the CONCATENATE relationship between the D and NP unlike (4b) as well as preserving that between V and DP, unlike (4c). In this manner, the current analysis can solve some of the toughest cases of clisis without having to resort to the purely morphological and ungrounded notion of NON-INITIAL.

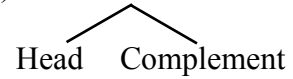
(1) Unmarked binary structures:



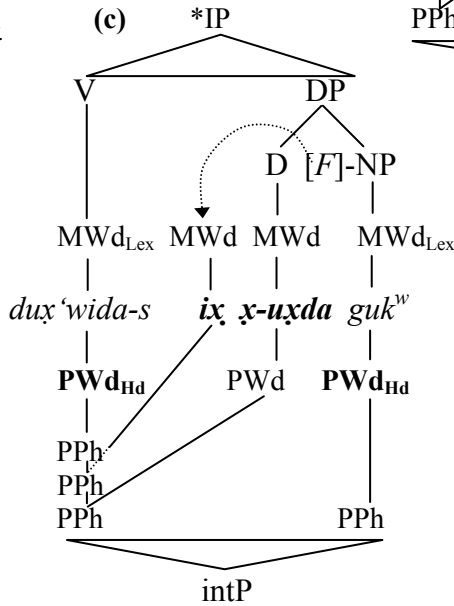
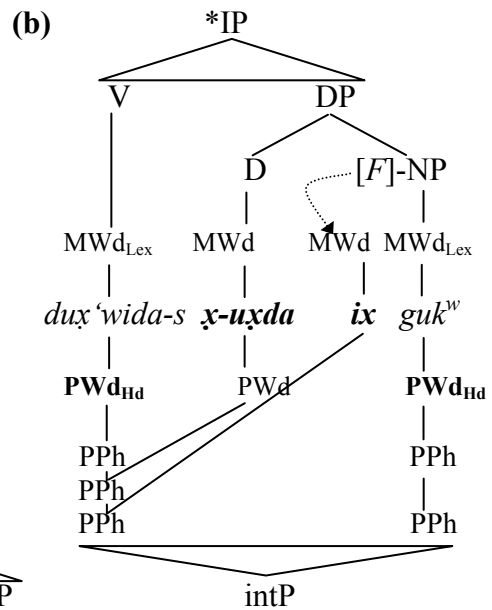
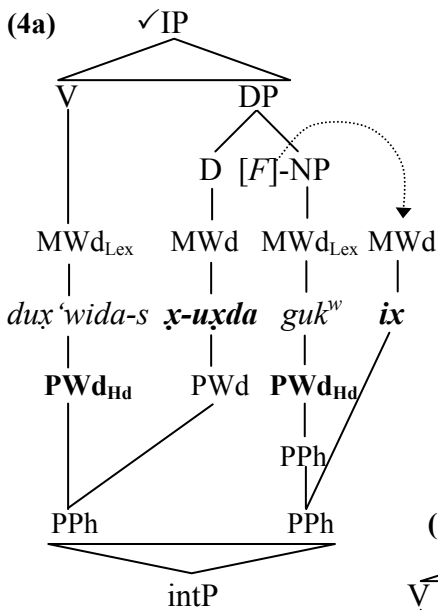
(2a) Output of CONCATENATE-L (Hd,Cmp): XP



Output of ADJOIN-L (F, XP): F-XP



(3) dux^w 'wida-s= x - $uxda$ guk^w = ix
 see-you-OBJ=DEM(2) house=DEM(2.VIS)
 'Do you see this house (near 2nd person, visible)?' (Anderson 2005:102)



References: Anderson, Stephen. 2005. Aspects of the Theory of Clitics. CUP; Ito, Junko & Mester, Armin. 2006. The onset of the prosodic word. ms. University of California at Santa Cruz; Sadock, Jerrold. 1991. Autolexical Theory. University of Chicago Press; Zec, Draga. 2005. Prosodic differences among function words. Phonology 22:77-112.