

From pronoun to agreement:

diachrony and typology
of pronominal clitics



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Grammaticalization à la Givón

‘Agreement arises via topic-shifting constructions in which the topicalised NP is coreferential to one argument of the verb. ... When a language reanalysed the topic constituent as the normal subject or object of the neutral, non-topicalised sentence pattern, it per-force also has reanalyzed subject-topic agreement as subject agreement and object-topic agreement as object agreement.’ (Givón 1976: 151)

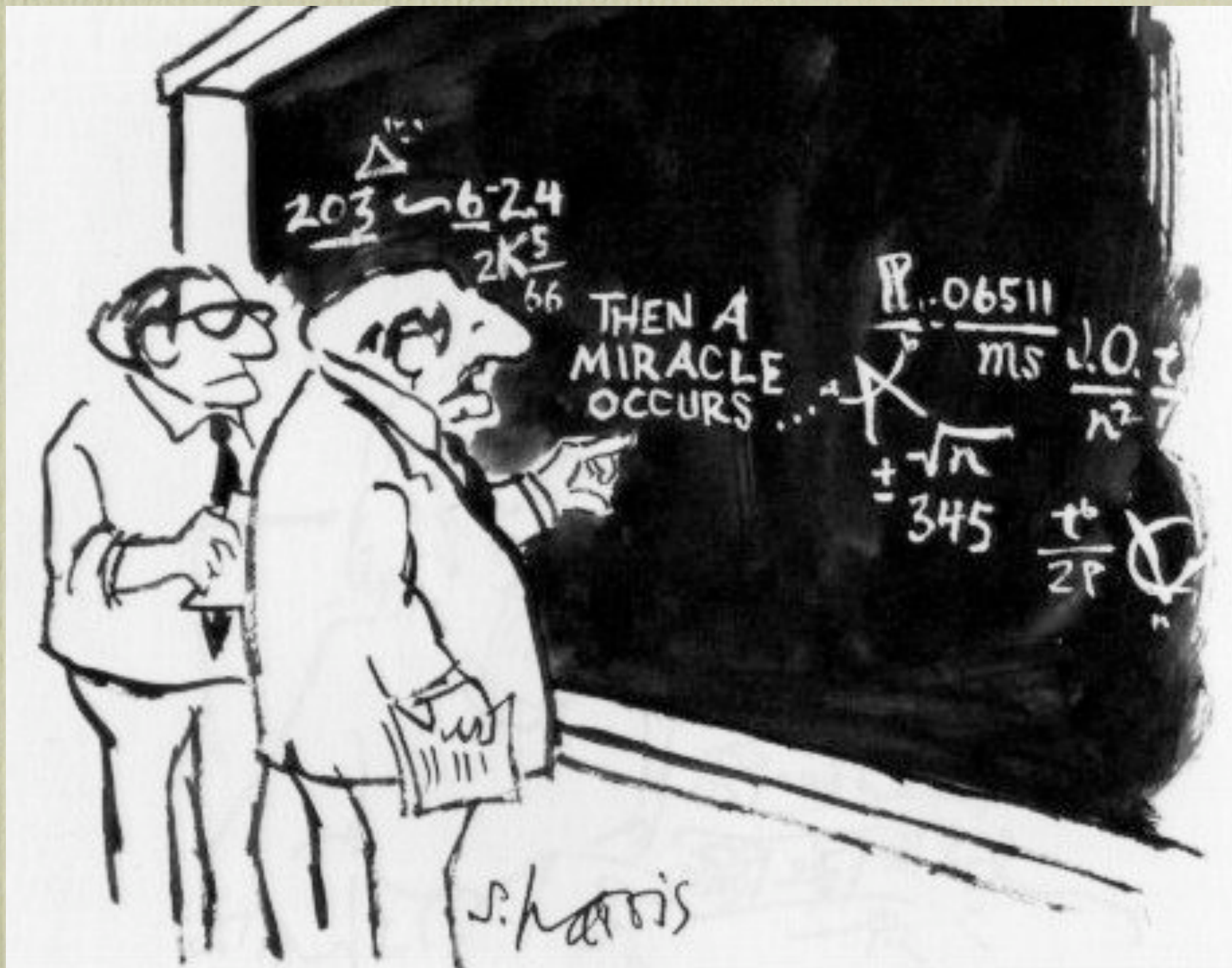
The man, he came
TOPIC, PRO VERB

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The man, he came
TOPIC, PRO VERB

The man he-came
SUBJECT AGR-VERB



“I think you should be more explicit here in step two.”

from *What's so Funny about Science?* by Sidney Harris (1977)

Grammaticalization of person markers (not necessarily in this order)

- Rise in frequency of use
- Phonological reduction
- Loss of morphological independence
- Become associated with a lexical class
- Become obligatory with this lexical class

Questions

- How do person markers find their way to the lexical predicate/verb ?
- How do they become obligatory part of the morphology of a lexical class of verbs ?

Note the use of 'how': I am basically interested what diachronic steps were taken for a particular situation to occur.

Approach

- Investigate the intermediate stage ‘clitics’
- Typological survey of person clitics
- Reconstruction of diachrony in selected cases
 - Romance
 - (South) Slavic
 - Iranian
 - Munda (Austro-Asiatic)
 - Sulawesi (Austronesian)
 - Ngumpin (Pama-Nyungan)
 - Salish
 - Uto-Aztecan

The intermediate stage: clitics

- No consensus about the definition of clitics
- Something in between a free word and an affix
- My interests:
 - **floating clitics:** no unitary lexical class as host for person markers (phrasal clitics?)
 - **non-obligatory affixes:** person markers on predicate, but overt marking depends on contextual factors

Northern Talyshi (Iranian, Indo-European)



Konjo (South Sulawesi, Austronesian)



Observation A:

Loss of independence precedes fixed position on the verb

- Pronouns cliticize in various positions and on various hosts
- Hardly evidence for cliticization directly on the verb

Lotuho (Southern Nilotic, Nilo-Saharan)



Word order and person affixes

	Agent		Patient	
	Prefix	Suffix	Prefix	Suffix
VO	56	25	26	55
OV	29	70	42	31

(Siewierska 2004: 165)

Word order and person affixes

	Agent		Patient	
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Word order and person affixes

Preference for: a-V O V-p O
 O V-a O p-V

	Agent		Patient	
	Prefix	Suffix	Prefix	Suffix
VO	56	25	26	55
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(Siewierska 2004: 165)

Order of Agent and Patient affixes

	A – P	P – A
Prefixes	28	16
Suffixes	21	22

(Siewierska 2004: 167)

Order of Agent and Patient affixes

Preferred order in line with relevance (Bybee 1985)

	A – P	P – A
Prefixes	28	16
Suffixes	21	22

(Siewierska 2004: 167)

Order of Agent and Patient affixes

Diachronically older forms are closer to stems (Bybee 1991)

	A – P	P – A
Prefixes	28	16
Suffixes	21	22

(Siewierska 2004: 167)

Summary of person affixation

- There are typological preferences attested as for the placement of person affixes
- However: all possible orders are well attested
- Every explanation for ordering-preferences gets at least some support (syntactic, semantic, diachronic, processing, etc.)
- Morphology does not represent yesterday's word-order

Observation B:

Person clitics show ‘wanderlust’

- Cross-linguistically: large variation in the kinds of hosts
- Diachronically: different kinds of host in closely related languages
- Information structure seems to play a role: clitics are often attached to ‘emphatic’ constituents

Cypriot Greek (Greek, Indo-European)



Portuguese (Romance, Indo-European)



Ngumpin family (Pama-Nyungan)



Cliticization away from verb

Negation, WH-pronouns

Focused NPs

Clause linkers, Adverbs of time/place

Indefinite/quantified NPs

... (?)

Irrealis, Future

Imperative/hortative

Cliticization on the verb

Cliticization away from verb

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Cliticization on the verb

Strongest non-verb focus

Inherent focus

Intended focus

Stage setting

Sentence operators (?)

Unmarked sentence

Focus on verb

Strong focus on verb

Strongest Verb focus

Observation C:

Where have all the proclitics gone?

- Enclitic person markers are widespread
- In contrast: proclitic person markers appear to be exceedingly rare
- More precise: proclitics always (?) are ‘non-obligatory affixes’ (cf. Konjo)

Suffixing preference for person affixes?

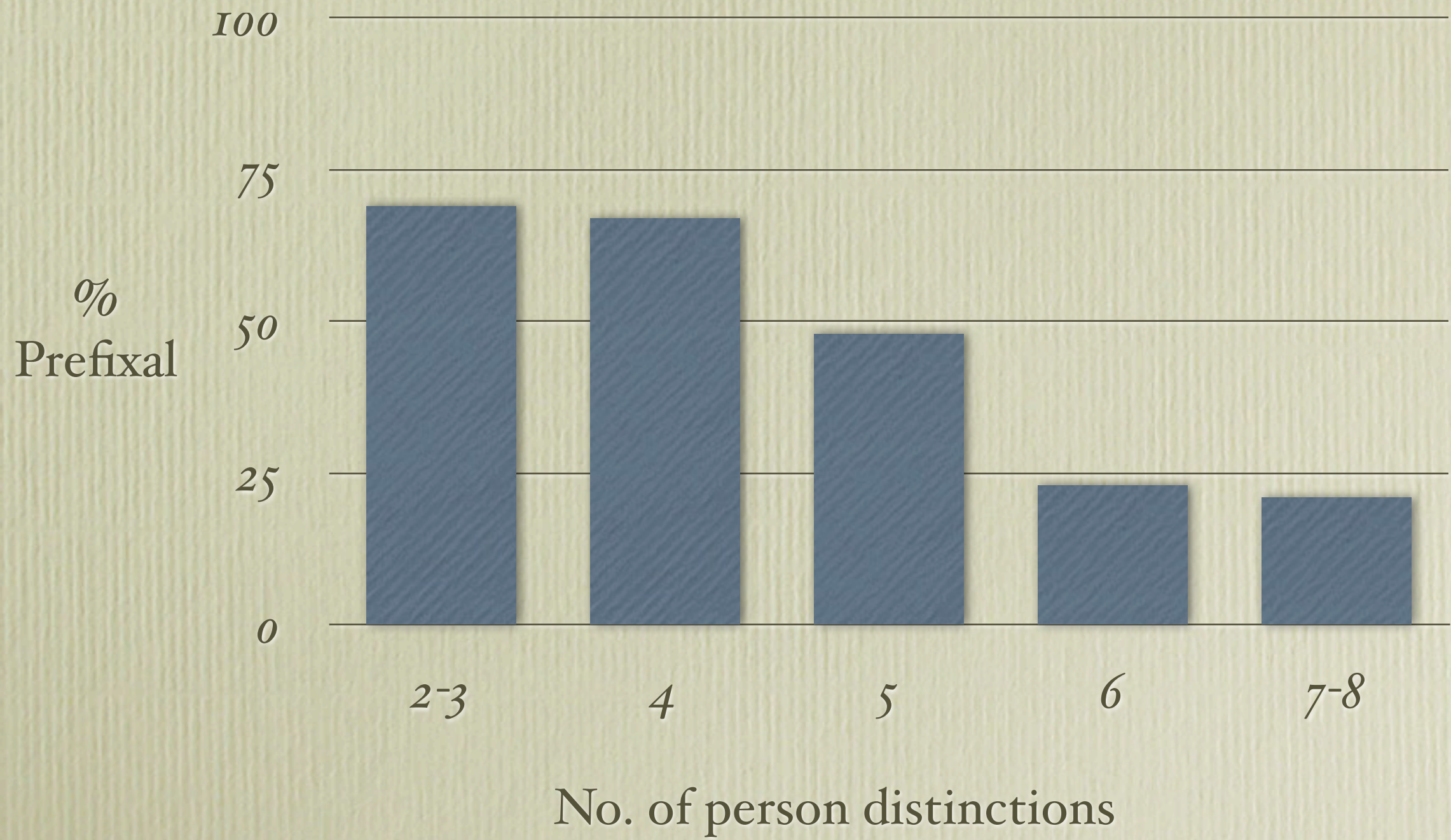
- 426 prefixed (26%) vs. 1236 suffixed (74%) grams (Bybee et al. 1990: 4)
- 240 prefixed (40%) vs. 354 suffixed (60%) person grams (Bybee et al. 1990: 9, 13, 15)
- 89 prefixal (53%) vs. 80 suffixal (47%) person paradigms (Cysouw 2003: 316)

Suffixing preference for person affixes?

	No. of person distinctions				
	2-3	4	5	6	7-8
Prefixal	24	36	21	5	3
Suffixal	11	18	23	17	1
% Prefixal	69	67	48	23	21

(Cysouw 2003: 316)

Suffixing preference for person affixes?



Origin of prefixes

- Reanalysis: **X-clitic** Verb → X **clitic-Verb**
- Cases with comparative evidence available:
 - Salish (Kroeber 1999: 16)
 - Uto-Aztecan (Steele 1977, 1995)
 - Munda (Cysouw 2004 Ms.)
 - Iranian
 - Sulawesi

Lari (Iranian, Indo-European)



Padoe (Bungku-Tolaki, Austronesian)



From pronouns to agreement

- Pronouns can grammaticalize into verb agreement
- However: this development is generally not straightforward
- Pronouns first cliticize, then float, and eventually attach to the verb

The End