

On possessive dative constructions in Serbian and what they can tell us about second position clitics

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A significant generalization about Possessive Dative Constructions (PDC) is that the possessum in such constructions cannot be an agentive subject (Borer and Grodzinsky 1986, Landau 1999, Shibatani 1994 etc.). I argue in this presentation, however, that this generalization can only be a tendency, not a universal. I show based on previously undiscussed facts from Serbian that the projection which licenses possessive datives (PDs) (Aff(ect)P), can project below and above VoiceP (or both at the same time; e.g., Bosse et al. 2012). I also argue that the PD and the possessum are not related by movement in Serbian, but by binding (e.g., Guéron 1985, Borer and Grodzinsky 1986, Cheng and Ritter 1987; contra Landau 1999). Furthermore, the external PDs can also have their own PDs (i.e., the dative possessor can seemingly be iterated), but only if that latter is a pronominal clitic, not a full NP argument. These facts raise several issues about the nature of second position clitics in Serbian (e.g., Browne 1974, 1975, Zec and Inkelas 1992, Progovac 1996, Stjepanović 1998, 1999, Bošković 2001, Diesing et al. 2009, Diesing and Zec 2011, 2017 etc.), which motivate a (somewhat) novel approach to clitics, which I will try to spell-out in this talk. In a nutshell, I propose that second position clitics are RootP-less nominals, i.e., they are essentially nominalized collections of φ -features, without a (pronominal) Root. Inflectional φ -features of clitics are left unvalued in their base-generated position because they lack pronominal roots, which otherwise contribute valued φ -features. To be licensed clitics must move to a head which can license a finite verb (typically C). Second position clitics cannot be coordinated (e.g., Cardinaletti and Starke 1999) or be complements of Ps (e.g., Abels 2003) - on the approach I suggest, these are straightforward violations of syntactic locality. Also, since clitics lack pronominal roots, at PF they are morphologically suffixes in need of a host. Thus, there is also a post-syntactic component of the cliticization process, in which second position clitics are ordered after the 1st word/phrase, to find a phonological host (similar to Halpern's 1995 Prosodic Inversion). These assumptions not only derive the correct clitic order but also provide a principled way of accounting for the unexpected position of the auxiliary *je* 'is'.