

Prefixes count, suffixes don't: Second position clitics in Kurdish

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The cliticization domain in Kurdish is considered to be VP (Mackenzie 1961, Samvelian 2007, Haig 2008, Jügel 2009, Dabir-Moghaddam 2012, Opengin 2013). In Sanandaji Kurdish, Northwestern Iranian, the subject clitic follows the direct object, if there is one; the indirect object, if there is no direct object; the nonverbal component of the complex predicate, if there is no indirect object; and the verb itself if none of these elements are present. This distribution is shown schematically in (1).

1)

S [O=SCL IO V]
S [IO=SCL V]
S [NVE=SCL LV]
S [V=SCL]

We posit that this distribution is best accounted for as second position in the domain of the lower phase vP. Verbal prefixes can serve as the host for the subject clitic. In (2a) and (2b), we can see the negative marker or the durative marker hosting the clitic in the absence of any preceding VP-internal element.

2)

- a. næ=man-æ-di.
NEG=SCL.1PL-IMPREF-see.PST.3SG
'We were not seeing (them)'
- b. æ=man-di
IMPREF=SCL.1PL-see.PST.3SG
'We were seeing (them)'

Further data reveal a striking contrast between prefixes and suffixes with respect to this distribution. While we have seen above that prefixes are involved in determining what counts as second position, examples such as (3a) and (3b), show that suffixes are not transparent to this process. Thus, for example, in (3a) and (3b) the subject clitic does not intervene between the verb and the suffixes but rather attaches to the whole complex.

3)

We argue in this talk that the second position generalization for the distribution of the subject clitic in Kurdish can be maintained in a system that derives prefixes and suffixes via different mechanisms. We posit that suffixes, on the one hand, are the result of head movement (Koopman 1984; Travis 1984) in Kurdish, with the subject clitic treating the complex head-adjunction structure as a unitary host. Prefixes, on the other hand, are attached to the spine as independent morphosyntactic elements and gain affixal status only post-syntactically. Therefore, at the point of spell-out, when second position is established, prefixes are not distinguished from heads of phrases attached to the spine.

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