

RESIDUAL TOBLER-MUSSAFIA IN FRENCH DIALECTS*

Paul Hirschbühler (University of Ottawa) & Marie Labelle (UQAM)

1. Introduction

Roberge & Cummins (1994) study the position of object clitics (henceforth, clitics) in 21 Romance dialects of Southern France and Northern Italy. They observe that while clitics are always to the left of the verb (henceforth, V) in simple finite tenses, there is a wide variation in the position of clitics with respect to V in compound tenses, imperatives, gerunds, and infinitives. They find no cross-linguistic correlation regarding clitic position in the various constructions. Table (1) represents a small sample (5/21) of their data.

(1) Position of clitics in various dialects (from Roberge & Cummins 1994)

	Positive imperatives	Negative imperatives	Infinitives	Gerunds
Vendéen	–	–	+	
Saintongeais	+/-	+	+	+
Valdôtain	–	–	+	+
Piedmontese	–		–	–
Valais	–	+/-	+/-	

(+ = cl-V ; – = V-cl ; +/- = both orders possible.)

Roberge & Cummins' analysis treats this data as a case of trivial morphological variation: bundles of (clitic) features are associated presyntactically to the verb and are spelled-out postsyntactically as prefixes or suffixes according to language particular morphological templates.

Focusing on imperatives in French dialects, we show that, from an historical perspective, the variation receives a coherent and explanatory account. Sections 2 to 4 show the workings of a NONINITIAL constraint resulting in a residual Tobler-Mussafia effect. Section 5 outlines a syntactic analysis deriving most of the facts from the possibility of V movement to the left of clitics.

2. Residual Tobler-Mussafia effects

In Old Romance, including early Old French, clitics are excluded from clause initial position in all types of clauses (declaratives, imperatives, questions), a generalization known as the Tobler-Mussafia “law” (TM): they are preverbal everywhere except in (absolute) V1 contexts, where they are postverbal (2) (clitics are in bold, verbs are underlined). In other words, clitics, which were not affixes (Labelle & Hirschbühler 2001), were positioned not according to verb morphology but according to the syntactic position or environment of the verb.

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- (2) a. Pursiu **les**, senz dute **les** prendras, sis ociras. (QLR I, XXX,8)
 ‘Chase them, without doubt you will catch them, and kill them.’
- b. Vint **s'en** al tabernacle; (QLR I, I,9)
 ‘[She] went to the tabernacle’
- c. As I'oid? (QLR III, XXII,18)
 ‘Did you hear this?’

Assuming that the V2 character of Old French requires V to be in C⁰, Hirschbühler & Labelle (2000) express the TM “law” as the NONINITIAL constraint on clitics in (3b), which finds its place in a series of Optimality Theory (OT) ranked violable constraints, an analysis inspired by Anderson (1996, 2000) and Legendre (1996, and many subsequent articles):

- (3) a. {cl, [+T]} (clitics adjoined to finite V)
 b. NONINITIAL (cl, CP) (clitics noninitial in CP)
 c. LEFTMOST (cl, CP) (clitics as far left as possible)

Ranking: (a) >> (b) >> (c) (‘>>’ = dominates)

We retain this general analysis here, though we show in section 5 that an account in terms of V movement accounts for most of the facts, at least up to and including standard contemporary French.

The grammar started to change around 1170. First, while in early Old French the order in main clauses was *et V-cl*, towards 1170, clitics started to

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Roberge & Cummins's data (R&C) on positive imperatives reveal the existence of two types of dialects.

3.1. Type I dialects

In some dialects (type I), clitics are postverbal in V1 positive imperatives, and preverbal in a second conjunct after *et* or *pi*. This type is found in Savoyard (6a) and Vendéen (6b), and can be seen as a direct continuation of the grammar of clitics that existed in (the dialects of) French from 1230 until Classical French.

(6) a. m^oezi e tî kizò (Ratel 1958, in R&C 1994: 243)

eat and REFL be quiet

b. Va ché li pi yi di... ('Va chez lui et dis-lui') (Rézeau 1976:67)

'Go to him and tell-him...'

Consider a morphological approach to (6). A verb like *dire* 'say' with features [+imp, +3sACC] would be spelled out *dis-le* in V1 contexts and *le-dis* after *et/pi*. This is not a trivial case of morphological spell-out, as the morphology would have to access the syntactic environment of the verb.

The influence of a coordinator on the position of clitics is attested in various languages. As in Old French, Bulgarian verbal clitics are postverbal in V initial sentences (7a) but preverbal after *i* (7b). They precede the verb after a

parenthetical (7c), showing that they are not phonological enclitics (see also Legendre 2001: 446).

(7) a. Dade **ti go** Vera včera. (Franks 2000: 30)

gave you it Vera yesterday

‘Vera gave it to you yesterday.’

b. *i* **ti go** dade Vera včera. (Franks 2000 : 37.)

and you it gave Vera yesterday

‘and Vera gave it to you yesterday.’

c. Az, tvojta majka, **ti** dadox edna igračka. (Arnaudova, p.c.)

I, your mother, you gave a toy

‘I, your mother, gave you a toy.’

In Serbo-Croatian, clitics are second-position phonological enclitics (8a-b), but immediately follow the coordinator *i* (8c) (Franks 2000):

(8) Serbo-Croatian (second position clitics):

a. Kupio **mi je** zeleno auto. (Franks 2000:16)

bought me.DAT AUX.SG green car

‘He bought me a green car.’

b. Ja, tvoja mama, obecala **sam ti** igračku. (Franks 2000:7)

I, your mother, promised AUX you a toy

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‘I, your mother, promised you a toy.’

c. *I ti go dade Vera včera* (Franks 2000:37)

and you.DAT it.ACC gave Vera yesterday

‘And Vera gave it to you yesterday.’

In Megleno-Romance, the reduced form of pronominal clitics may not be initial, but it is preverbal after a coordinator (Campos 1995:253). In Medieval Portuguese main clauses, clitics are postverbal V is in absolute initial position, but preverbal after a coordinator (Martins 1994 :49-50). In all those cases, the preverbal position of clitics after a coordinator follows from the particular syntactic configuration associated to coordinators, not from language-specific exceptions to a morphological rule.

The NONINITIAL constraint in (3) accounts for (4), (5) and (6) if, after 1170, clitics preceded by a coordinator are no longer initial in CP. Observing that the change from *et V-cl* to *et cl-V* occurred when V1 declaratives came to be disfavored, Skårup (1975) suggests that *et* was reanalyzed as occupying the position of the initial XPs in V2 clauses, SpecCP in modern terms :

(9) [_{CP} et [_C V] [_{IP}...]]

More attractive is an unbalanced coordination approach where the second conjunct introduces some projection lower than CP (FP in (10) ; see section 5). This type of approach is proposed by Benincà (1995) for Old French,

and by Kiparsky (1995), where it accounts for alternative positions of the verb in a second conjunct in Old German.

(10) [_{CP} ...] [_{&P} *et* [_{FP} ...]]

We suggest that the NONINITIAL constraint did not change, but that speakers came to avoid V-to-C movement where possible, which would explain the ban against V1 declaratives: V started to occupy a position lower than C in coordinations. The OT grammar in (3) yields preverbal clitics in the second conjunct of (8), provided that (3) refers strictly to clitics in the CP layer. If avoidance of V-to-C movement generalized to all V-initial declaratives and questions, the systematic clause initial position of clitics after 1230 there is also explained without recourse to a change in the grammar of clitics.

3.2. *Type II dialects*

In Type II dialects, *et* does not affect the position of clitics (11).

(11) Prépare-toi *et* dis-le.

‘Get ready and say it’

In a NONINITIAL constraint approach, the switch from *et le dis* to *et dis-le* results from loss of coordination at a level lower than CP. In a morphological template approach, one might say that once they are postverbal only in positive imperatives, clitics are morphologized. A morphological template approach

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would spell out clitic features as suffixes in positive imperatives and as prefixes elsewhere, in particular in negative imperatives:

(12) $V[+imp, -neg, +3sACC] \Rightarrow dis-le$

$V[+imp, +neg, +3sACC] \Rightarrow ne\ le\ dis$

$V[-imp, ..., +3sACC] \Rightarrow le\ dis$

This approach requires the imperative verb to have a [+/-neg] feature. The [+neg] feature could be inherited from *ne*, assuming that it is part of verb morphology; in the absence of *ne*, V would be [-neg].

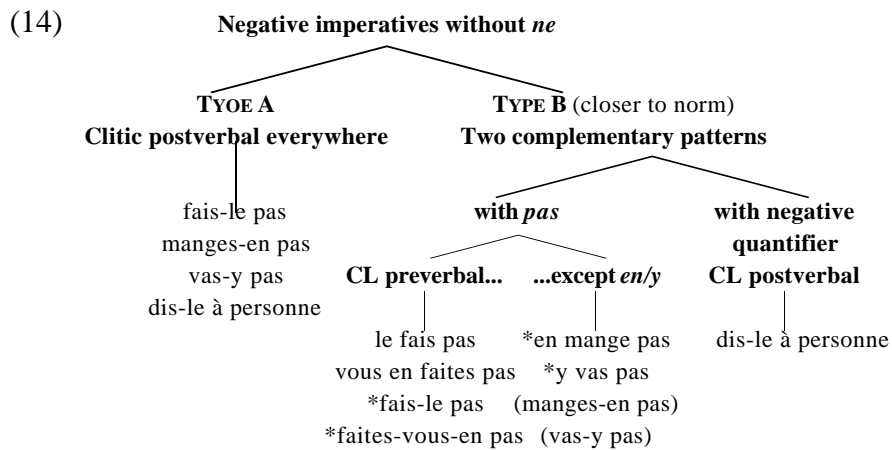
To conclude, we have shown that a NONINITIAL constraint accounts for the differences between type I and type II dialects as well as for their historical filiation, if one takes into account changes in the syntax of V and of the conjunction. A morphological approach should address the question of why the morphological templates change over time, going from *V-cl* to *cl-V* in clause initial position and after *et*, or when there is a switch from a rule-governed system to a purely morphological system of clitic positioning. The morphological rules would not be trivial spell-out rules, as they would have to take into account the syntactic environment of V.

4. The case of ne: negative imperatives

In normative French, negative imperatives are as in (13), with a preverbal clitic. The clitic position follows from the NONINITIAL constraint in (3): *ne* protects object clitics from clause initial position.

(13) *ne le fais pas* ('don't do it')

Given that *ne* has disappeared from many dialects and is largely omitted in spoken French, we can ask what happens when *ne* is absent from negative imperatives. Basically, dialects split along the lines schematized in (14). We first discuss the case of type A, then that of type B.



4.1. Type A

Type A is typical of Québécois and of various dialects of France spoken mostly along the Atlantic coast and along a west-east line in central France. As shown in (15), object clitics are postverbal in negative imperatives without *ne*.

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(15) a. Québécois (as far back as the end of the 19th. c.):

Dis-moi pas ça, j'vas t'embrasser encore... (Larose 1898:180)

'Don't tell me that, I'm going to kiss you again...'

b. Picard (some varieties; see also Dupas 1980 :33):

Gênez-vous pons! ('Ne vous gênez pas.') (Joly 1998: 76)

'Don't be shy'

c. Perche:

Attends-moi pas. ('Ne m'attends pas.') (Laurence Labrune, p.c.)

'Don't wait for me'

d. Gallo (Bretagne romane) :

Fâche-toi pas pour ça (pronounced: fachtèpa pourèla)

'Don't get angry because of that' (Hervé 1973)

e. Vendée (see also Svenson 1959 :93):

Argard moe pa. ('Ne me regarde pas.') (Rézeau 1976: 67)

'Don't look at me'

f. Marais poitevin:

Fouès-ou pas. ('Ne le fais pas.') (Gachignard 1983)

'Don't do it'

g. Bourbonnais:

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... les curés je les aime point. Aime-les point, mon gars,

‘... priests I don’t like them. Don’t like them, boy, ...’

(Fallet, René. 1973. Le braconnier de dieu, 12. Paris ; Denoël)

h. Saint-Etienne (still in use – Eric Mathieu (p.c.)):

D’accord, mais enviens-toi pas trop tard (Veÿ. 1978: 12)

‘OK, but don’t come back too late.’

i. Valais (Franco-provencal) :

Dì mè pa dè hlè tchyòrne ! (Marzys, 1964: 48)

‘Don’t tell me this nonsense’

Roberge and Cummins also document it for Valdôtain (Franco-provencal) and it is reported for the Brie region, in Seine-et-Marne (Yves-Charles Morin, p.c.).

The fact that Canadian French features the word order observed in the areas which provided the bulk of settlers during the 17th c. suggests that this feature of the Québec pattern is an importation. This follows if *ne* started being omitted in the relevant dialects during the 17th century or before and if a NONINITIAL constraint was active at the time *ne* started being omitted.

The dialect of Vendée described by Rézeau (1976) is particularly interesting in that, while clitics are postverbal in negative imperatives without *ne* (16a), they are preverbal after the conjunction *pi*, the local equivalent of *et*.

(16) a. Argard moe pa. (‘Ne me regarde pas.’) (= [15e])

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‘Don’t look at me’

- b. Va ché li *pi yi di*... (‘Va chez lui et dis-lui’) (= [6b])

‘Go to him and tell him...’

This follows from a NONINITIAL constraint with domain CP, assuming unbalanced coordination. In (16a) clitics are postverbal in order to avoid the CP initial position. They are preverbal following *pi* because *pi* does not introduce a full CP. This predicts that this dialect (as well as Savoyard, given (6a)) should have coordinated negative imperatives with preverbal clitics (*pis yi di pa*). A simple morphological template does not account for (16), given that the relevant factor is the syntactic environment, not the polarity of the imperative clause.

In those dialects of type A where the coordinator does not play a role in clitic placement, while the NONINITIAL constraint straightforwardly accounts for the facts, a morphological template as in (17) also describes the facts.

(17) [V-cl] if V is [+imp]

[cl-V] elsewhere.

For those dialects, it is possible that the order of verb and clitic has become morphologized some time after the loss of *ne* and the establishment of a rigid order of clitic placement according to verb morphology.

4.2. Type B

In Type B, typical of mainstream contemporary spoken French, clitics are preverbal in negative imperatives and postverbal in positive imperatives.

- (18) a. dis-le b. **le** dis pas.
 ‘say it’ ‘don’t say it’

This word order is attested as early as 1607 in the speech of the child who would become Louis XIII (Héroard 1601-1628) (19) and it is well-documented as a feature of popular language from the beginning of the second quarter of the 19th c, starting with the work of Monnier (20):

- (19) Je vous pie (prie) **vous en allé(és)** pa. (age 5;10; Héroard :1251)
 ‘I beg you, don’t leave.’

- (20) T’nez, **la laissez** pas tomber. (Monnier:14)
 ‘Here, don’t drop it’

There are, at first sight, three possible analyses for the *cl-V* order in negative imperatives:

- *Analysis A.* A phonologically null but syntactically present *ne* in these clauses prevent clitics from being clause-initial (Hulk 1996).
- *Analysis B.* A morphological template accounts for the facts. A verb with clitic features is spelled-out: [V-cl] if V is [+imp, -neg]; [cl-V] elsewhere.

The [-neg] feature on V in the first template should follow from the fact that V

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is not marked [+neg]. This requires some mechanism ensuring that V has a [+neg] feature in the absence of *ne*. We can assume, for example, that *pas* is in SpecNegP and that V stops in Neg⁰ on its way to T. In Neg⁰, V is marked [+neg] by Spec-Head agreement with *pas*.

(21) [_{TP} T [_{NegP} Neg [_{VP} V ...]]]

- *Analysis C*. The NONINITIAL constraint is limited to *positive* imperatives in this variant of French: NONINITIAL (cl, CP[+imp,–neg])

Here again, some mechanism of the type spelled-out above is required to ensure that CP is marked [+imp, –neg]. We assume that the features percolate from the verb in C⁰.

In the following sections we present some support in favor of a constraint approach of type C. We first discuss the case of negative imperatives with *pas*, then that of imperatives with negative quantifiers.

4.2.1. Negative imperatives with *pas*

For many (perhaps most) speakers producing negative imperatives of type *le dis pas*, clitics *en* and *y* are excluded from the initial position of imperatives:

- (22) a. ***En** parle pas. ‘Don’t say anything about it.’
 b. ***Y** goûte pas. ‘Don’t taste it.’

The preverbal position of these clitics in negative imperatives without *ne* is fine

for the clitics to be NONINITIAL in their relevant domain than to be preverbal.

The ranking between the two noninitial constraints is indifferent.

(30) Ranking: {cl, [+T]} >> NONINITIAL >> LEFTMOST

To account for the difference between speakers requiring *ne*, and speakers placing *en/y* postverbally, we need another constraint, favoring the avoidance of *ne*. Assuming that for modern-day speakers *ne* has no semantic content, the negative import being provided by *pas* and negative quantifiers, we can use the economy constraint (31), a specific instantiation of an input-output faithfulness constraint (“do not spell out more than is required”). The different speakers are then considered as having different rankings of (31) in the constraint hierarchy, as shown in (32) and (33).

(31) AVOID EXPLETIVE HEAD

(32) Speakers of type A: ‘N’*en* mange pas’

Ranking: NONINITIAL(*en/y*) >> LEFTMOST >> AVOID EXPL.

(more important to avoid initial *en/y* than to avoid *ne*)

Input	NONINITIAL(<i>en,y</i>)	LEFTMOST(<i>cl,V</i>)	AVOID EXPL.
mange+en+neg			
en mange pas	*		
manges-en pas		*	
☞ n’ <i>en</i> mange pas			*
ne manges-en pas		**	*

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(33) Speakers of type B: ‘Mange-en pas’

Ranking: AVOID EXPL. >> NONINITIAL(*en/y*) >> LEFTMOST

(more important to avoid *ne* & noninitial *en/y* than for cl to be preverbal)

Input	AVOID EXPL.	NONINITIAL(<i>en,y</i>)	LEFTMOST(<i>cl,V</i>)
mange+en+neg			
en mange pas		*	
☞ manges-en pas			*
n'en mange pas	*		*
ne manges-en pas	*		**

Postulating that *en* and *y* are subject to a more conservative constraint than the other clitics is consistent with the fact they displayed a conservative character by appearing to the left of *pas* in infinitival clauses (*n'en pas être étonné* ‘not be surprised by it’; *n'y pas aller* ‘not go there’) much longer than the other clitics (cf. Hirschbühler & Labelle 1994). Also, Restaut (1766: 241, in de Kok 1985: 315) states that clitics are placed before or after the verb after *et* in imperatives, but he prefers the postverbal position for *en* and *y* in the same context, these clitics displaying at that time a more ‘modern’ grammar.

(34) “il est plus ordinaire de dire, *écoutez ma proposition, et réfléchissez-y; recevez ma remontrance, & profitez-en; que y réfléchissez, en profitez*”.

‘it is more normal to say *écoutez ma proposition, et réfléchissez-y; recevez ma remontrance, & profitez-en* than to say *y réfléchissez, en profitez*.’

4.2.2 *Negative imperatives with a negative quantifier.*

All speakers reject the preverbal position for the clitic in negative imperatives without *ne* when the negative element is a quantifier is contained in a DP (35). Crucially, this is true even of our informants who produce *le dis pas* ‘don’t say it’ and forcefully reject *dis-le pas*.

- (35) a. montrez-les à *personne*! a’. ***les** montrez à *personne*!
 ‘Don’t show them to anybody!’
- b. donnes-en à *personne*. b’. ***en** donne à *personne*.
 ‘Don’t give any to anybody!’

The data in (35) show, first, that there is no implicit *ne* in these clauses (arguing against Analysis A), second, that negative quantifiers in a DP do not imply a NegP in syntax. If there is no NegP in (35), V is not marked [+neg], and the clitics follow the pattern of positive imperatives.

5. *Syntactic account*

We have shown that the dialectal facts receive an explanatory account if consi-

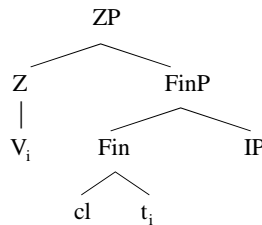
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dered in a historical perspective and that a constraint approach accounts for the facts better than a morphological template approach.

It might be felt that a constraint approach is not truly explanatory and that a more syntactic approach is preferable, as it accounts for other phenomena (see Kiparsky 1995). In this section, we show that a syntactic approach can indeed account for most of the facts discussed above, except for the case of *en/y* in Type B dialects of Modern spoken French. The account is merely sketched here; see Labelle & Hirschbühler 2002 for more details.

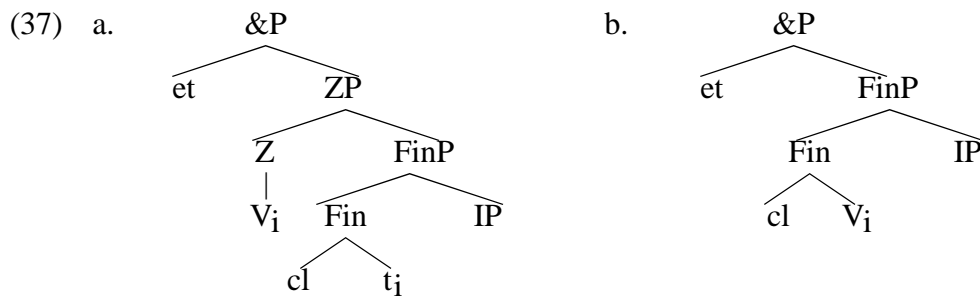
We assume a split CP system (Rizzi 1997) with two layers: FinP dominated by a discourse-related ZP, Z akin to Laka's \bar{C} . In contemporary imperative clauses, V moves to Fin, and clitics adjoin to Fin. In positive imperatives, V further moves to Z, possibly to check an illocutionary feature.

(36) Post-verbal clitics:

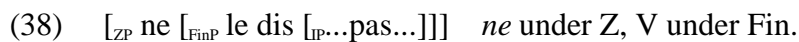


For Old French, we assume that V-to-Fin occurred in all clause types, with some XP in Spec,ZP in V2 clauses. In V1 clauses, V moved to Z, to the left of clitics. This V-to-Z movement was later abandoned in declaratives and questions. For coordinated positive imperatives, the V-cl order results from a

balanced coordination, that is, a structure where *et* introduces a full ZP (37a). The *et cl-V* order appearing in French around 1170 follows if *et* started to introduce an unbalanced coordination, i.e. FinP instead of a full CP (37b). In (37b), there is no Z head for the verb to move to. In that case the illocutionary feature of the clause is obtained from the first conjunct.



In negative imperatives, the standard French order follows if *ne* fills the Z head (or an intermediate negative head), preventing V from moving there :



This general approach accounts for the historical facts. However, it does not account straightforwardly for the difference between *en/y* and other clitics in Type B modern spoken French. Assuming that *le dis pas* has an abstract *ne* preventing V from moving to Z, how are we to derive *parles-en pas*? By an absence of null *ne* in that specific case (as in the first line of (39b))? Or by a late linearization rule in the case of *en/y*? Neither solution is very attractive.

(39) Type B dialects (Modern spoken French):

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- a. le dis pas [_{ZP} ∅ [_{FinP} le dis [_{IP}...pas...]]]
- b. parles-en pas [_{ZP} parles [_{FinP} en [_{IP}...pas...]]]
- [_{ZP} ∅ [_{FinP} parles-en [_{IP}...pas...]]]

This approach faces a similar problem accounting for Restaut's judgements.

6. Conclusion

We have shown that the variation observed by Roberge and Cummins (1994) in clitic position in various French dialects receives a coherent account if seen from a diachronic perspective. We have then argued that a constraint approach to clitic placement (in interaction with changes in syntactic structure across time) accounts neatly for the facts and sheds some light on them, while this is not the case for a morphological template account.

Work on many languages and on language change points to strong connections between phrase structure and clitic placement. The syntactic account sketched at the end of the talk explains most of the facts and takes into account clausal organisation and the special role of the various heads within the split-CP layer. At this point, however, it covers less ground than a constraint approach when it comes to accounting for the special behavior of *en* and *y*.

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