

John Benjamins Publishing Company



This is a contribution from *Cyclical Change Continued*.

Edited by Elly van Gelderen.

© 2016. John Benjamins Publishing Company

This electronic file may not be altered in any way.

The author(s) of this article is/are permitted to use this PDF file to generate printed copies to be used by way of offprints, for their personal use only.

Permission is granted by the publishers to post this file on a closed server which is accessible to members (students and staff) only of the author's/s' institute, it is not permitted to post this PDF on the open internet.

For any other use of this material prior written permission should be obtained from the publishers or through the Copyright Clearance Center (for USA: www.copyright.com).

Please contact rights@benjamins.nl or consult our website: www.benjamins.com

Tables of Contents, abstracts and guidelines are available at www.benjamins.com

The interaction between the French subject and object cycles

Mariana Bahtchevanova and Elly van Gelderen*

Arizona State University

In Colloquial French, first and second person preverbal subject pronouns function as agreement markers on the finite verb because they are obligatory and adjacent to the finite verb (e.g. von Wartburg 1943). In other spoken varieties of French, third person pronouns are also agreement markers, having lost gender and number (Fonseca-Greber 2000 for Swiss French). This paper adds new data on third person subjects for Colloquial French, namely third person emphatic pronouns being used on their own, and shows how these data fit the subject cycle. Because, like subject markers, object pronouns are preverbal, they ‘interfere’ with the preverbal subject agreement markers. Our hypothesis was therefore that preverbal object clitics would be replaced by postverbal pronouns (cf. van Gelderen 2011: 52) or would be deleted, as Lambrecht et al. (1996) had already observed. We investigated postverbal placement of object pronouns and found some evidence of this but, more interestingly, we found that object markers were reinterpreted as agreement markers. The important insights for cyclical change this paper provides are that different person markings can be at different stages, that some stages can be skipped, and that one cycle can influence another.

1. Introduction

It has been observed for a long time that subject pronouns in Modern Colloquial French, especially first and second person ones, are more like agreement markers than like independent pronouns (von Wartburg 1943; Lambrecht 1981). This change has other consequences, such as the appearance of new emphatic subjects. In this paper, we examine instances of third person subject pronouns in various corpora (the *Corpus d’entretiens spontanés*, the *Orléans Corpus*, part of the *ELICOP Corpus*, and the *Corpus*

* Authors are listed in alphabetical order since both have contributed to the data and account. We thank Annette Hornung, Daniela Kostadinovska, William Kruger, JJ LaTourelle, and Sayantan Mukerjee for comments and special thanks are due to Bonnie Fonseca-Greber who made very helpful and specific comments.

de français parlé au Québec)¹ and find a lot of variation but definitely a change of the pronoun towards an agreement marker and the loss of that agreement marker. The corpora do not indicate clitic or affix forms but transcribe them mostly as independent words; we follow this. Our glosses do not distinguish among pronoun, clitic, or agreement affix because we think these categories are in transition. For a clear pronoun, we use the English oblique pronoun and, for clear agreement markers, we use person and number markers, such as 1S or 2P.

Secondly, we examine object pronouns because we expect preverbal pronominal objects to be a factor complicating the changes affecting subjects. Subject agreement is not adjacent to the verb if an object (or negative or adverbial) appears in between. Our results show some replacements by postverbal objects and some reanalysis to agreement markers. We investigate how we can see this in terms of a cycle.

The outline is as follows. Section 2 provides an overview of the Subject Cycle in general and in French in particular. Section 3 presents new data on the situation with third person subjects in French. Sections 4 and 5 are concerned with changes in object pronouns in French and how these can be analyzed. Section 6 presents some puzzles and a conclusion.

2. The subject cycle in general and in French

The subject cycle involves the reanalysis of an independent personal pronoun as a subject agreement marker on the verb. Cross-linguistically, there are many examples of the Subject Agreement Cycle, both synchronically and diachronically (cf. van Gelderen 2011). We'll first explain what a subject cycle is and then provide the stages that the French subject has undergone.

The typical stages of the subject cycle are given in (1) where we have used English words for convenience.

- (1) a. They (often) eat lasagna.
 b. They^eeat lasagna.
 c. Them th^eeat lasagna.
 d. Them (often) eat lasagna.

In (1a), the pronoun is fully independent and need not be adjacent to the finite verb whereas, in (1b), it is cliticized to the verb. If the pronoun is interpreted as agreement marker, this stage will be one of null subject (or pro-drop). In (1c), the earlier

1. See the reference section for descriptions of these corpora.

independent pronoun is renewed by a new one that is ambiguous between being in topic or in subject position. If *them* is in topic position, the clitic could still count as the subject; if *them* is the subject, the clitic is now a marker on the verb. Stage (1d) is the same as (1a).² Languages can thus be seen as being in different stages of the cycle; they can have just pronouns, just agreement, or both.

If languages acquire agreement markers from erstwhile pronouns, one expects them to resemble these and that is indeed the case in many languages (see van Gelderen 2011, Chapter 2). One also expects cross-linguistic surveys of languages to show perhaps a 30% distribution of each stage in (1). There is typological work that provides percentages of agreement and pronouns in the world's languages but, since it is hard to decide in (1b) and (1c) if the agreement occurs, it may be twice 30%, i.e. 60%. This is indeed the case. Bybee (1985) estimates that 56% of languages have verbal agreement with the subject; Siewierska's (2008) data put that at 72% and Dryer's (2013) data at 61%. Subject pronouns appear in 30% of Dryer's (2013) languages (some optionally and some obligatorily). Here too, it is notoriously hard, however, to determine this, especially if we take the pronominal argument languages into account where the verbal affixes count as pronouns (see Jelinek 1984). We conclude the typological data fit the scenario in (1) because the agreement between 56% and 72% illustrates stages (1bc), two-thirds of the cycle.

A language where we have evidence of all the stages in (1) is French. Old French has optional pronouns that need not be adjacent to the verb, as (2) shows for the second person singular *tu* 'you'. Foulet (1961:330) confirms that all personal pronouns can be separated from the verb in Old French. By the time of Modern (colloquial) French, *je* obligatorily precedes the finite verb, as the ungrammaticality of (3) shows, and this is true for *tu* as well. See Kayne (1975:82–5) for additional arguments. In addition, a frequent renewal in the form of *moi* (and *toi*) appears, as in (4).³

- (2) *Si con tu meismes le preuves* Old French
 If when you self it prove
 'If you prove it yourself.' (<http://romandelarose.org>), Selden Supra 57, 40v)
- (3) **Je probablement ai lu ça* Colloquial French
 I_s probably have read that
 'I've probably read that.'

2. See Heine & Song (2011) for sources of pronominal renewal.

3. In the *Corpus d'entretiens spontanés*, this doubling occurs in 8.5% with first person (239 out of 2818 *je/j'*) and, in the *Orléans Corpus*, it occurs in 13% of the first person singulars (187 out of 1424 *je/j'*).

- (4) *euh moi je trouve ce qui en souffre* Colloquial French
 Eh me 1s find that who of.it suffers
le plus ...
 the most

‘I think that the one that suffers the most is ...’ (*Orléans Corpus*).

The forms of all the pronouns with a verb are given in Table 1, both the formal and the colloquial ones. Note that the endings of most of these are only visible in the writing not audible.

Table 1. The present tense of the verb *chanter* ‘to sing’

Formal French			Colloquial French			
S	1	je	chante	je	chant	[ʃãt]
	2	tu	chantes	tu	chant	[ʃãt]
	3	il/elle	chante	il/elle	chant	[ʃãt]
P	1	nous	chantons	on	chant	[ʃãt]
	2	vous	chantez	vous	chantez	[ʃãte]
	3	ils/elles	chantent	ils/elles	chant	[ʃãt]

Other phenomena connected to the cliticization/affixation of the subject pronoun to the finite verb are a loss of subject-auxiliary inversion in questions and changes in preverbal negative markers and object clitics. Subject-auxiliary inversion occurs in formal French, as seen in (5a), but as mentioned in e.g. Lambrecht (1981), de Wind (1995), and Auger (1996), it is lost in more colloquial versions shown in (5bc). Inversion, as in (5a), “is extremely rare in spoken French and is expected to disappear ultimately” (de Wind 1995: 24).

- (5) a. *Où es-tu* Formal French
 where be-2s
 ‘Where are you?’
- b. *tu es où* Colloquial French
 2s be where
 ‘Where are you?’
- c. *où t’es* Colloquial French
 where 2s.be
 ‘Where are you?’

The negative preverbal Formal French *ne*, as in (6a), is left out in Colloquial French, as (6b) shows. Objects in French occur postverbally when they are fully nominal and preverbally when they are clitic pronouns. The preverbal object clitics are undergoing a

number of changes that will be discussed more in this paper. The example given in (6) shows the change from preverbal to postverbal object marker and the loss of the negative *ne*. These changes conspire to enable the subject pronoun to cliticize to the verb.

- (6) a. *je ne l'ai pas encore démontré* Formal French
 1s NEG 3s.have NEG yet proven
 b. *j'ai pas encore démontré ça* Colloquial French
 1s.have NEG yet proven that
 'I haven't yet proven that.'

It is usually agreed that the first and second person singulars (*je* and *tu*) have reached the agreement stage. The third person singular is not seen as having reached that stage although Ashby (1977: 18) argues all preverbal pronominal forms form a breath group with the finite verb and there are also many doublings with third person. Third person *il* and *elle* also undergo phonetic reduction before a consonant (Morin 1979: 12). The reason for not considering the pronoun as agreement is that not all DPs allow doubling. For instance, doubling with indefinites, as in (7a), is ungrammatical for most speakers, but we have found instances of generic use in the *Orléans corpus*, namely (7b) and (7c).

- (7) a. **Un homme i(l) est venu me dire quelque chose.*
 a man 3SM is come me say some thing
 'A man came to tell me something.'
 b. *si un homme il a besoin d'une augmentation*
 If a man 3SM has need of.a augmentation
de quelque chose.
 of something
 'If a man needs an augmentation of some kind.'
 c. *maintenant si un gosse il apprend il apprend*
 now if a kid 3SM learns 3SM learns
 'Now if a kid is learning, he is learning.'

The doublings usually occur with definite nominals, as in (8), or with pronouns, as in (9), or with both, as in (10), all from the *Corpus d'entretiens spontanés*. There are generic nominals, as in (10b), and an occasional quantified one, as in (11a). Zribi-Hertz (1994) similarly reports about quantifiers with a third person pronoun in Colloquial French, given as (11b), so speakers of these varieties definitely treat *il* as agreement.

- (8) a. *Alors Madame Jagou, elle elle faisait la blanchisserie et*
 so Madame Jagou, her 3SG.F did the laundry and
le repassage.
 the ironing
 'So Madame Jagou used to do the laundry and the ironing.'

- b. *Et les pièces, elles ont été montées par la*
and the plays 3PF have been put on by the
Mère Thérèse
Mother Therese
'And the plays were put on by Mother Theresa.'
- c. *La maison, elle est 1820.*
the house 3SF is 1820
'The house is from 1820.'
- (9) a. *Eux, ils sont de gauche.*
them 3PM are of left
'They are left-wing.'
- b. *Eux, ils vont partir juste un après-midi*
them 3PM go.FUT.3P leave just an afternoon
'They are going to leave some afternoon.'
- c. *donc eux, ils vivent plus mal qu'ils vivaient ...*
therefore them 3PM live more bad than.3PM lived
'Therefore they live worse than they used to live.'
- (10) a. *Pompidou, lui, il allait dans un restaurant ...*
Pompidou him 3SM went to a restaurant
'Pompidou was going to a restaurant.'
- b. *Parce que le cultivateur français, lui, il est tellement, il*
because the farmer French him 3SM is so 3SM
a tellement de matériel
has so much material
'Because the French farmer, he is, he has so much material.'
- (11) a. *Tout chacun il avait son carnet*
all everyone 3SM had his carnet
'Everyone had his carnet.'
- b. *Personne, il a rien dit*
nobody 3SM has nothing said
'Nobody said anything.'

(Zribi-Hertz 1994: 137)

The doubling of third person *lui* and *il* is relatively rare in the *Corpus d'entretiens spontanés*. For instance, there are 12 instances of *lui il* out of 2154 occurrences of *il*, making this doubling 0.6 % of the sentences involving *il*.

The agreement status of *il* is very clear in other varieties of French. Fonseca-Greber's (2000) study of Spoken Swiss French, illustrates that definite overt subject NPs have additional pronouns around 60% of the time, with human singulars the highest (2000: 329). Surprisingly, doubled pronouns occur more frequently with indefinite

subjects, as in (12), on average 77%. Quantifiers, as in (13), are the least likely to be doubled although they still occur about 20% of the time.

- (12) *une omelette elle est comme ça* Swiss Spoken French
 an omelet 3SF is like this
 'An omelet is like this.' (Fonseca-Greber 2000: 335).
- (13) *c'est que chacun il a sa manière de ...* Swiss Spoken French
 it.is that everyone 3s has his way of
 'Everyone has his own way of ...' (Fonseca-Greber 2000: 338).

The stage in (13) is the last stage in the reanalysis of third person pronouns as agreement markers. Once quantifiers occur with the pronoun, the latter cannot be an argument but has to be an agreement marker. Swiss French is different from other varieties in that number and gender remain marked on the new agreement marker.

Having looked at the status of the first, second, and third person singular, we'll turn to the plurals. The formal and colloquial French pronouns are given in Table 1. First person plural *nous* is replaced by *on* in Colloquial French (cf. Fonseca-Greber & Waugh 2003: 108). This *on* also functions as the generic 'one'. In the case of the first person plural, we get doublings, as in (14), from the *Corpus d'entretiens spontanés* with the *nous* as the oblique 'real' pronoun and *on* the agreement marker.

- (14) a. *Nous, on a un an de différence. C'est bien, hein?*
 us 1P has one year of difference. It is good, right
 'We differ one year in age. Not bad, right?'
- b. *nous on appelle ça un k-way.*
 us 1P call this a windbreaker
 'We call this a windbreaker.'
- c. *parce que c'est le travail que que, que nous, on ferait pas*
 because it.is the work that that that us 1P would.do NEG
 'because it was the work that that we wouldn't do.'

The second person plural is perhaps the 'strongest' pronominal because it is also used for the second person singular polite form, so it has a lot of 'extra baggage', i.e. semantic features. In addition, the ending on the (regular) verb for these subjects is the only one that is distinct in Spoken French (see Table 1). Therefore, doubling, as in (15), is not as common and seems more contrastive. The doublings usually involve singular (polite) subjects; for instance, in the *Corpus d'entretiens spontanés*, they only exist with singular meaning, as in (15).

- (15) *Et vous vous êtes Parisien*
 and you you are Parisian
 'And you are Parisian.'

An interesting development is the erosion of *vous* to *z* in (16a), from a song. Although these phonological erosions are not found in the corpora we examined, they occur in Fonseca-Greber and Waugh's data, see (16b), are mentioned in other literature (Morin 1979: 35) and can also be heard.

- (16) a. *Z'avez de la chance qu'on vous aime.*
 2P.have PRT the luck that.1P you love
 'You are lucky that we love you.' (Stromae, *Tous les Mêmes*)
- b. *J-espère que vz-arrivez à réparer ces problèmes*
 I-hope that 2P-can to repair the problems
 'I-hope y-can get the problems fixed.'
 (Fonseca-Greber & Waugh 2003: 102)

For third person plural, there are signs that the pronoun is an agreement marker. Thus, gender and number are not indicated in (17) when the pronoun becomes the agreement marker. Here *i* is marked for only third person singular although *les tomates* are feminine and plural (see also von Wartburg 1943:62).

- (17) *Les tomates, i sont encore vertes* Spoken French
 The tomatoes 3 are still green
 'The tomatoes, they are still green.'
 (Lambrecht 1981:40)

So, first and second person singular in Colloquial French have become agreement markers and have undergone changes consistent with a subject cycle. However, it has often been assumed that third person singular and the plurals are (still) not part of this change. In the current section, we have shown that this is not the case and, in the next section, we provide further evidence of this by adding data for the third person.

3. Changes in the third person subject pronoun

The literature discusses doubling, as in (8) to (17), quite frequently. Doubling is expected if the original subject pronouns have been reanalyzed as agreement markers and the emphatic forms have become the subject pronouns. Thus, technically, there is no doubling but replacement. In this section, we discuss some interesting developments with third person where the agreement marker is left out. We have not seen much discussion of this phenomenon and address it as an acceleration of a stage in the cycle: the new third person agreement marker is left out and the new pronoun might in turn be in a position to be reanalyzed.

All the instances of emphatic pronouns by themselves from the *Corpus d'entretiens spontanés*⁴ are given in (18) and (19). In (18), there is only the emphatic *lui* and *i(l)* is missing; the same is true in (19) where the emphatic *eux* appears by itself.

4. Obtained by manually examining all instances of *lui* and *eux*.

- (18) a. *Et lui n'est pas d'ici, mon beau-fils.*
and him not.is not from.here my son-in-law
'and he's not from here, my son-in-law.'
- b. *"Oh non, "lui dit "vous savez, ...*
Oh no him said you know
'Oh, no, he said "you know ...".
- c. *mais lui sait très bien présenter euh ses thèses et...*
but him knows very well present uh his theses and ...
'But he knows how to present his theses very well.'
- d. *Et lui va sentir les traces et il va les suivre.*
and him will smell the track and he will them follow
'And he will smell the track and will follow them.'
- e. *le chômeur qui, lui, va se débrouiller pour faire ...*
the unemployed who him will REFL find a way to do ...
'The unemployed who will manage to do ...'
- f. *Et lui ne veut pas quitter sa femme.*
and him NEG wants NEG leave his wife
'And he doesn't want to leave his wife.'
- (19) a. *Et des points qui eux ne sont pas jetés au hasard.⁵*
and some dots that them NEG are NEG thrown randomly
'and some dots that are not randomly marked.'
- b. *peut-être eux se sont trouvés un peu lésés à un certain moment ... de leur vie.*
Maybe them REFL are found a little hurt at a given moment ... of their life
'Maybe they found themselves a little hurt at a given moment of their live.'
- c. *ils reprochent aux professeurs sans voir que eux sont responsables de ...*
3P reproach to-the teachers without see that them are responsible about ...
'They reproach the teachers without seeing that they are responsible for ...'
- d. *qui, eux, n'ont pas l'intention de fonctionner dans cet ordre*
who them NEG.have NEG the.intention to function in this line
'... (majorities) who have no intention of functioning in the same way.'

5. Many of these examples involve relative clauses; we don't know why.

- e. *il ya un petit problème ... d'une*
 there is a small problem with a
population maghrébine
 population North African
qui, eux, ne voulaient pas faire de la musique
 who them NEG wanted NEG to.do of the music
 'there was a small problem... with a group of North Africans who
 didn't want to play music.'
- f. *eux n'ont pas besoin nécessitent pas n'ont pas*
 them NEG.have NEG need need NEG NEG.have NEG
besoin de vacances
 need of vacation
 'They don't need ... need not ... don't need vacation.'

These occurrences of the oblique pronoun by itself are relatively rare in the *Corpus d'entretiens spontanés* as the total numbers for masculine singular and plural, given in Table 2, show. For the numbers of *il*, we have ignored the *il y'a* construction.

Table 2. Third person masculine and plural subjects
 in the *Corpus d'entretiens spontanés*

<i>il</i>	1213	<i>ils</i>	746
<i>lui il</i>	12 (.97%)	<i>eux ils</i>	4 (.5%)
<i>lui</i>	6 (.49%)	<i>eux</i>	6 (.8%)
Total	1231		756

Although the numbers are small, it is striking that many of the pronouns by themselves precede a negative prefix, as in (18a), (18f), (19a), (19d), and (19f), or an object pronoun, as in (19b). This may mean that the lack of *il(s)* is due to the negative and object that would otherwise intervene.

In the larger *Orléans Corpus*, *lui* appears as subject by itself more frequently than together with *il* (11 to 5); *il* as subject on its own is of course the most frequent but the exact number is not available.⁶ The number of *eux* subjects on its own is smaller, i.e. 5, and that means they take up 0.7% of all third person plural masculine subjects because *ils* occurs 699 times; *eux ils* doesn't appear. The data are given in Table 3. Respective examples are given in (20) and (21).

6. The *Orléans Corpus* search engine only gives up to 999 results.

Table 3. Third person subjects in the *Orléans Corpus*

il	999	ils	699
lui il	5	eux ils	0
lui	11	eux	5 (.7%)
Total	751		704

- (20) a. *est-ce que lui vous reprend ?*
is-it that **him** you take back
'Does he take you back?'
- b. *alors comme lui gagne plus cher que moi*
then as **him** earn more expensive than me
'and as he makes more money than me...'
- c. *et lui ne peut pas prendre de vacances*
and **him** NEG can NEG take of vacation
'and he cannot take any vacation.'
- d. *lui a essayé de réparer*
him has tried to repair
'He has tried to repair it.'
- (21) a. *on a un appui technique que eux n'ont pas*
1P have a support technical that them NEG.have NEG
'We have technical support that they do not have.'
- b. *...parce que eux voient un seul ensemble dans*
...because them see a single unit in
leur département
their department
'because they see a single unit in their department.'
- c. *c'est que eux ont quelquefois des avis à donner qui*
it.is that them have sometimes some opinions to give that
sont intéressants
are interesting
'It's that sometimes they have interesting opinions to give.'
- d. *parce que eux sont tranquilles*
because them are calm
'because they are not worried'.

Other interesting renewals of third person pronouns have appeared, e.g. the strengthening of the plural pronouns in some varieties of French (cf. Baissac 1880; Offroy 1975). One such variety is Quebec French, as (22) shows, from the *Corpus de français parlé au Québec*. Like their non-augmented counterparts, the renewed forms can

occur without *ils*, as (23) shows. The latter comprise 19% of the total (21 instances of (23) and 91 instances of (22)).

- (22) a. *eux-autres ils ont pris du porto*
 them-others 3P have taken of.the port
 ‘They had some port.’
- b. *l’Armée du Salut eux-autres ils sont au ...*
 the.Salvation Army them-others 3P are at
 ‘The Salvation Army, they are at ...’
- (23) a. *mais eux-autres sont en ville là*
 but them-others are in town there
 ‘But they are in town.’
- b. *que eux-autres sont pas conscients*
 that them-others are NEG aware
 ‘They are not aware.’

The reinforcement by *autres* ‘others’ also appears with first and second person plural. It is significant that *ils autres* doesn’t appear, another indication that *ils* is no longer the (phrasal) subject in this variety as well.

Having shown that third person pronouns, such as *il* and *ils*, were perhaps late to reanalyze as agreement, we will argue that they are now possibly ahead in terms of the subject cycle because they are left out in favor of the emphatic pronoun. This shows that certain stages in the cycle can be skipped. We’ll turn to objects next.

4. Changes in object pronouns

The preverbal object pronoun interferes with the preverbal subject agreement by separating it from the verb. Because of this interference with the subject cycle, we hypothesized that some changes might occur with the objects as well: (a) some preverbal object pronouns are reanalyzed as postverbal, (b) the object pronoun is itself becoming an agreement marker, and (c) the object pronoun disappears and the verb becomes intransitive. We’ll discuss these three possible changes after first examining the frequency of subject markers used on their own as well as their frequency with intervening object and negative clitics. This is important because it constitutes the input for the child learning the language (and changing it).

4.1 Acquisition

In the Corpus d’entretiens spontanés, there are 63 instances of the first person pronoun followed by a clitic, as in (24), and then the inflected form of *avoir* ‘have’. There are 16 instances of the negative clitic preceding the verb and 441

instances of *je* immediately followed by this verb, as in (25). That means 84% have *j'* immediately preceding the finite verb and that's the input a child gets for agreement status.⁷ There are a few instances with two preverbal clitics, as in (26) but we didn't count those as a separate category.

- (24) *Moi, mes quatre enfants, je les ai mis à l'école...*
 Me, my four kids, 1s 3P.ACC have put in the.school
 'I've put my four kids in school.'
- (25) *J'ai appris moi-même, avec des livres et ... parce que j'aime ça.*
 1s.have learned my-self with PRT books and ... because
 1s.love that
 'I have taught myself with books because I love it.'
- (26) *Je ne l'ai pas vu*
 1s not 3S.ACC.have not seen
 'I haven't seen it.'

In the *Orléans Corpus*, the percentage of preverbal object pronouns is much lower and therefore the number of cases where *j'* immediately precedes the finite *ai* is high, namely 91%.

Let's say the input of additional material between the subject and verb is between 9% (*Orléans Corpus*) and 16% (*CdES*). This is apparently enough for objects to continue to be able to precede the verb. Children learning French experiment a little, as (27) shows with the non-adult forms in bold. Madeleine is one of the children described in the *Paris Corpus* (cf. Parisse & Morgenstern 2010), available from the Childes database.

- (27) a. *là il en boit de l'eau*
 there 3SM of.it drinks PRT PRT.water
 'He is drinking water.' (Madeleine, 1.09.03)
- b. *le ça mets là*
 3S.ACC that put there
 'Put it there.' (Madeleine, 1.09.03)

In (27a), *en* doubles the object *de l'eau*, which is not possible in Formal French, although we find it in the corpora, as we'll discuss in Section 4.2. In formal adult French, *en* is used as partitive but, in (27a), it is used as doubling, a sign that the object marker *en* is treated as agreement. In (27b), there are two preverbal objects, *le* and *ça*, which both refer to the

7. With the verbs *être* 'to be' and *avoir* 'to have', there is still an audible difference between first person singular and the second/third person. We calculated the numbers for *avoir* because it is a frequent verb and auxiliary.

same object and which are therefore not possible in adult French.⁸ Their order is not as expected either because *le* should be closer to the verb and follow it and *ça* should also follow the verb. The child is obviously experimenting with the status of these forms.

If we look at the triggers for these sentences, it is clear the child is not hearing the forms in the input but is making them up. Thus, (27a) is in response to the mother's utterance in (28a) where the mother's sentence lacks the preverbal *en*. The mother repeats it as (28b) after the child's sentence, again without *en*.

- (28) a. *et i(l) boit son lait dans sa ... dans sa tasse*
 and 3SM drinks his milk in his in his cup
 'and he drinks his milk from his cup.' (Madeleine's mother)
- b. *et oui là i(l) peut boire l'eau*
 and yes there 3SM can drink the water
 'and, yes, he can drink the water there.' (Madeleine's mother)

A month or so later, the child has come closer to the adult forms, as (29) shows.

- (29) *i(l) boit le lait*
 3SM drinks the milk
 'He is drinking the milk.' (Madeleine, 1.10.07)

In (27a), the child is experimenting with preverbal clitics; in (27b), the use of both *le* and *ça* shows that the status of these forms is not immediately clear to the child. The clitics change to the adult forms quickly but they give us insight into why the language is changing.

4.2 Three changes

As mentioned above, three responses are possible to the problem of a pronoun that is stuck between an agreement marker and the verb, namely (a) its loss, and thereby a loss of transitivity, (b) a change in status, from pronoun to agreement, and (c) a change in position, from preverbal to postverbal object.

Much is known from the literature about the phenomenon in (a) and we therefore won't examine it any further here. Object loss, as between (30a) and (30b), has been documented by Lambrecht & Lemoine (1996), Larjavaara (2000), and Noailly (1997) for adult French and for L1 acquisition by Jakubowicz et al. (1997) and Grüter (2006a) and for L2 acquisition by Grüter (2006b).

- (30) a. *Je l'ai trouvé hier*
 1s it.have found yesterday

8. As was pointed out by a reviewer, the first *le* could be an article.

- b. *J'ai trouvé hier.*
 1s.have found yesterday
 'I found it yesterday.'

Object loss is of course the least complex way to remove the object pronoun but since it loses a lot of the underlying structure it probably cannot occur full scale.

The second change is related to the status of the pronoun. There are specific changes in the phonology of preverbal markers, as outlined in e.g. Morin (1979). There is variation in how two preverbal syllables with a schwa vowel are pronounced in spoken French: either, as in (31a), the second schwa deletes or, as in (31b), the first schwa deletes. Table 4 provides some of these combinations.

- (31) a. [ʒəlvwa]
 b. [ʒləvwa]
 je le vois
 1s him see
 'I see him.'

Table 4. Portmanteau morphemes with first and second person subjects and other objects

1S subject je			2S subject tu	
and 1S object	je me	[ʒəm] or [ʒmə]	tu me	[tym]
and 2S	je te	[ftə]	tu te	[tyt]
and 3SM	je le	[ʒəl] or [ʒlə]	tu le	[tyl]
and 3SF	je la	[ʒəla] or [ʒla]	tu la	[tyla]
and 1P	je nous	[ʒnu]	tu nous	[tynu]
and 2P	je vous	[ʒvu]	tu vous	[tyvu]
and 3P	je les	[ʒələ] or [ʒle]	tu les	[tyle]
and 3SM.DAT	je lui	[ʒəlɥi], [ʒlɥi], [ʒɥi], or [ʒi]	tu lui	[tylɥi]
and 3P.Dat	je leur	[ʒləœʁ]	tu leur	[tyləœʁ]
and en	j'en	[ʒɑ̃]	tu en	[tɑ̃]
and y	j'y	[ʒi]	tu y	[tyi] or [ti]

If both subject and object pronouns are reanalyzed as agreement markers, we could analyze [ʒlə] and [ʒəl] in (31) as portmanteau morphemes spelling out the features of the subject and object. The evidence for such a reanalysis would be if *le*, *y*, and *en* became obligatory with the verbs that select PPs. Instances such as (32), where the clitic and the PP are both present, have indeed become frequent in Colloquial French but haven't reached the stage where they are obligatorily used.

- (32) a. *J'y vais à la piscine*
 1s.there go to the pool
 'I am going to the pool.'
- b. *J'en parle de ce film*
 1s.about.it speak about that film
 'I am talking about the film.'

There is evidence in the corpora for this change in some speakers, as shown in (33), from the *Orléans corpus*.

- (33) a. *mais en FRANCE ils en mangent du pain*
 but in France 3P it eat PRT bread
 'But in France, they eat bread.'
- b. *j'en parle de ça en même temps*
 1s.about.it talk about that at same time
 'I talk about it at the same time.'
- c. *comme des fois on en discute de ça*
 like the times 1P about.it discusses about that
 'Like when we discussed it.'

The third reanalysis that could occur is a change in the position of the pronoun, as from (34a) and (35a) to (34b) and (35b) respectively. This situation is complicated because a myriad of clitics can appear, both locative and argumental *y*, partitive *en*, and various object clitics. We'll restrict ourselves to examining *y* and *le*, *l'*, and *la*.

- (34) a. *J'y travaille*
 1s.there work
 'I work there.'
- b. *Je travaille là*
 1s work there
 'I work there.'
- (35) a. *L'agressivité, j'y travaille*
 Aggression 1s.on.it work
 'Aggression, I am working on it.' (from <www.leparisien.fr>)
- b. *Je travaille/pense à ça*
 1s work/think on that
 'I'm working on it'

This shift in position is a change we can check for using corpus data. In the *Orléans corpus*, there are 844 instances of *y* – we have excluded the existential *il y a* 'there is/are', idiomatic expressions, and *y* preceding non-finite verbs. This leaves 45 instances of *y* preceding the verb, as in (36).

- (36) a. *j' y ai laissé pour ainsi dire ma santé*
 1s.there have left for so say my health
 'I have left my health there so to speak.'
- b. *les cours on y va on y va pas*
 the classes 1P there go 1P there go NEG
 'We go to classes, we don't go to classes'
- c. *ça choque pas on y est habitué maintenant*
 this shocks NEG 1P to.it is accustomed now
 'This doesn't shock (us), we are used to it now.'
- d. *j' y suis un peu habituée du fait que MICHEL*
 1s.to.it am a little accustomed to.the fact that MICHEL
euh il cause anglais très bien
 eh 3s speaks English very well
 'I am somewhat used to the fact that Michel speaks English very well.'

In comparison, the postverbal *là*, *là-dedans*, *là-dessus*, *là-bas*, and *à ça*, as in (37), which can be replaced by *y*, are much more frequent, numbering 70.

- (37) a. *qui veulent que leurs enfants aillent jouer là-dedans*
 who want that their children go play over-there
 'who want for their children to go play over there.'
- b. *il y a presque personne qui va là-dedans*
 3s there is almost nobody who goes there
 'Hardly anybody goes there.'
- c. *ils se basent là-dessus*
 they REFL base there
 'They are based on that.'

We also looked at *le*, *l'*, and *la* objects before finite verbs in the *Orléans Corpus*, as in (38), of which there are 196 occurrences. In comparison, there are 106 cases with a postverbal object *ça*, as in (39), that could be *le*, *l'*, or *la*, i.e. 35% of the combined numbers. The data appear in Table 5.

- (38) *la langue de Bretagne je ne l'a comprends pas*
 the language of Brittany 1s NEG it.have understood NEG
 'I don't understand the language of Brittany.'
- (39) *le gouvernement aura compris ça*
 the government will.have understood that
 'The government will have understood it.'

Table 5. Some pre- and post-verbal objects in the *Orléans corpus*

Preverbal			Postverbal		
locative	y	45	locative	là, etc	70
argument	le, l', la	196	argument	ça	106
Total		241	Total		176

These data indicate that, although preverbal markers are more frequent, the postverbal pronouns are not rare.

In this section, we have seen that preverbal objects occur in the data (possibly between 9 and 16%) but that some of them are lost, reordered, or reanalyzed. These are alternative strategies to avoid preverbal objects. We don't have spoken data from earlier periods so it is hard to see a change in progress. The change in the behavior of pronominal objects triggered by the grammaticalization processes affecting the subject markers can be understood in terms of an object cycle. In the next section, we will examine the processes involved in the object cycle.

5. The object cycle in general and in French

A typical object cycle is given in (40), again a fictitious case for ease of exposition. Let's say that a language has a fully independent object pronoun, as in stage (40a). Since this pronoun can be coordinated and modified and need not be close to a verb, it is a full phrase. A possible next stage is for speakers to optionally analyze this object pronoun as a head, as in (40b). This head cannot be coordinated or modified and is phonologically dependent on the verb. The next stage might be for the object to be reanalyzed as an agreement marker. Once it has these features, it could be renewed through an emphatic or some other form, as in (40c). The last stage, as in (40d), is similar to the first with the agreement lost and the emphatic counting as the regular argument.

- (40) a. I saw yesterday her (and him).
 b. I saw 'r (*and him).
 c. I saw'r HER.
 d. I saw her.

As in the case of the subject cycle, if languages reanalyze pronouns as agreement markers, one expects cross-linguistic surveys of languages to reflect this. Siewierska's (2013) data suggest that verbal object marking occurs in 57% of the languages surveyed, i.e. stage (b), but not much is known about the obligatory appearance of object pronouns.

What is the stage of the object cycle that French is in? Kayne (1975: 82) notes that they are clitics and not pronouns in that they cannot be contrastively stressed. They

need not appear when nominal objects are present so are not yet agreement markers and seem between stage (40a) and (40b). There are of course frequent doublings, as in (33) above and in (41), but these are not as frequent as subject doublings and have a different prosody from the subject doublings (see Culbertson & Legendre 2008).

- (41) *Celui-là, je l'ai pas vu.*
 That.there 1s 3s.have NEG seen
 'I haven't seen that one.'

If the changes to the preverbal objects that we have discussed in Section 4.2 continue, however, we expect to see many preverbal object pronouns reanalyze as agreement markers, i.e. from stage (40b) to (40c). So, the reaction of object pronouns to changes in subjects may accelerate the object cycle.

The change where preverbal objects are being replaced by postverbal pronouns is interesting in that this development, when seen in terms of the cycle in (40), seems to be a fast version of the object cycle, skipping the stage where the object clitic is an agreement marker, so from stage (40b) to (40d).

6. Account and puzzles

The Subject Cycle is pretty advanced in spoken French. Pre-theoretically, this means that the object clitic/pronoun doesn't fit the templatic order any more. In this section, we discuss this order and a contemporary generative tree structure where a subject agreement is incompatible with the other clitics.

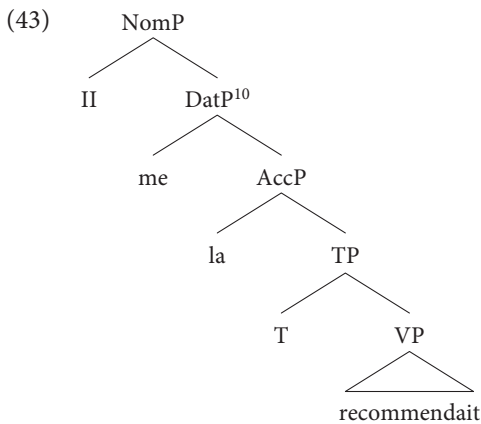
The preverbal template for French, and for many other Romance languages, is often given as it appears in Table 6 (cf. e.g. Jones 1996: 253) where items from column 4 can appear with those from 1, 2, and 3 and with those from 1 and 5. These combinatorial restrictions are also known as the Person Case Constraint (see e.g. Béjar & Rizac 2003), which basically says that first and second person don't like to be the lowest arguments. This is a complication we won't address.

Structural representations for this template have been given by, among others, Sportiche (1996) and Ciucivara (2009). For Sportiche, each clitic has a voice projection in the head of which the clitic is base generated and to the Spec of which the (empty) argument DP moves at Logical Form; for Ciucivara, there are separate case (KP) and person (PersonP) phrases that clitics move to as they first check their case and then move to a position specific to their person. A derivation of this kind for Standard French in (42) has clitic phrases that house the clitics. These phrases would be above the T to which head the verb moves and the order of object clitics and finite verbs would be derived. The nominative *il* would be in a clitic phrase that is the highest, as in (43).

Table 6. Formal French pronoun/clitic template

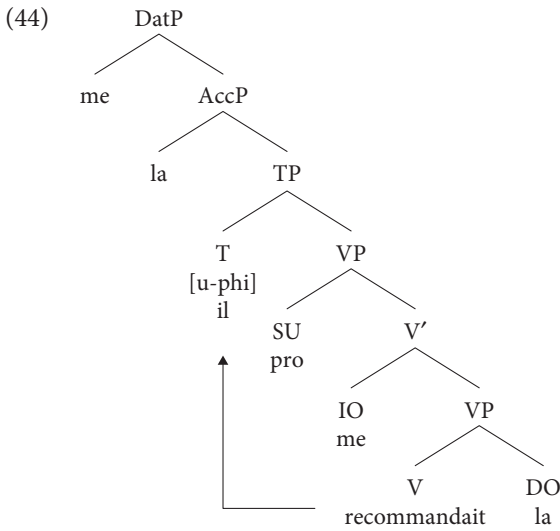
Position	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Subject	Negative	1+2+refl se	3	3	LOC	PART/ARG VERB
			ACC+DAT	ACC	DAT		
	je	ne	me			y	en
	tu		te				
	il/elle			le/la	lui		
	nous/on		nous				
	vous		vous				
	ils/elles			les	leur		

(42) *Il me la recommandait.* Formal French
 3SM 1S.DAT 3SF.ACC recommended
 'He recommended her to me.'

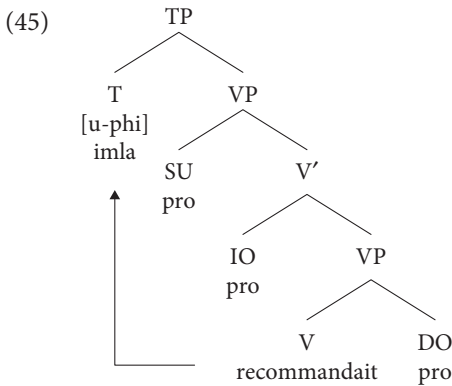


We will now discuss the issue of what is happening to the subject when it becomes agreement in spoken French. We assume with Sportiche and others that a tree with object clitics includes case phrases; we have represented the subject agreement *je* on T (but it could be an Agr(eement)P as well). This configuration, sketched as (44), cannot result in a grammatical output because the object pronouns would not occur between the subject and the verb.

9. Sportiche (1996) actually gives third person direct and indirect object examples and then the order of the AccP and DatP is reversed.



It is therefore either avoided in the spoken colloquial variety, as in (6b), (29b), (33b) and (34b), or reanalyzed as a portmanteau, as in (31) and (32). The structure with portmanteau morpheme for (41) is given in (45).



In (45), there is a portmanteau morpheme in T checking the phi-features of the null pronouns in argument positions.

7. Conclusion

In keeping with the literature on the status of French subject pronouns, we see many changes occurring both with subjects and with preverbal objects. In this paper, after reviewing the situation with the different person markers in Section 2, we add a

discussion of some new developments in third person subject pronouns in Section 3. We consider these as an acceleration of the subject cycle in that the agreement prefix is left out and the emphatic form serves as the regular pronoun.

A second point to the paper is to see if there are changes to preverbal object pronouns and, in Section 4, we argue that there are three kinds of changes, namely a loss of the object pronoun, a reanalysis to agreement marker, and a change from pre- to postverbal position. These changes are to be expected because we are mixing object clitics and inflectional subject affixes. The result may be an accelerated object cycle, as pointed out in Section 5. In Section 6, we have provided an account for the changes in object pronouns that result from the changes in subject markers using a generative model with feature checking.

References

- Ashby, William. 1977. *Clitic Inflection in French*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Auger, Julie. 1996. Subject-clitic inversion in Romance: A morphological analysis. In *Aspects of Romance Linguistics*, Claudia Parodi, Carlos Quicoli, Mario Saltarelli & Maria Luisa Zubizarreta (eds). Washington DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Baissac, Charles. 1880. *Etude sur le patois créole mauricien*. Nancy: Berger-Levrault.
- Béjar, Susana & Rezac, Milan. 2003. Person Licensing and the derivation of PCC effects. In *Romance Linguistics. Theory and Acquisition* [Current Issues in Linguistic Theory 244], Ana Teresa Pérez-Leroux & Yves Roberge (eds), 49–62. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. doi:10.1075/cilt.244.07bej
- Bybee, Joan. 1985. *Morphology*. Armstrdam: John Benjamins. doi:10.1075/tsl.9
- Ciucivara, Oana. 2009. A Syntactic Analysis of Pronominal Clitic Clusters in Romance. Ph.D. dissertation, New York University.
- Corpus de français parlé au Québec, CFPQ*, is a multi-modal corpus that contains 471,575 words from the current century. (<http://recherche.flsh.usherbrooke.ca/cfpq/index.php/site/index>)
- Corpus d'entretiens spontanés, CdES*, contains 155,000 words or transcribed spoken French from 1988 to 1990. (<https://www.llas.ac.uk/resourcedownloads/80/mb016corpus.pdf>)
- Culbertson, Jenny & Legendre, Géraldine. 2008. Qu'en est-il des clitiques sujet en français oral contemporain? In *Actes du 1er Congrès Mondial de Linguistique Française*, Jacques Durand, Benoît Habert & Bernard Laks (eds), 2651–2662. Paris: EDP Sciences.
- Dryer, Matthew. 2013. Expression of pronominal subjects. In *The World Atlas of Language Structures*, Matthew S. Dryer & Martin Haspelmath (eds). Leipzig: Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology. (<http://wals.info/chapter/101>) (8 October 2014).
- ELICOP Corpus*, includes the Orléans, Tours, and Auvergne corpora. The *Orléans Corpus* (ESLO) contains 902,755 words of transcribed spoken French from 1966 to 1970. (<http://bach.arts.kuleuven.be/pmertens/corpus/search/t.html>)
- Fonseca-Greber, Bonnibeth. 2000. The Change from Pronoun to Clitic to prefix and the Rise of Null Subjects in Spoken Swiss French. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Arizona.
- Fonseca-Greber, Bonnie & Waugh, Linda. 2003. The subject clitics of European Conversational French: Morphologization, grammatical change, semantic change, and change in progress. In *A Romance Perspective on Language Knowledge and Use* [Current Issues in Linguistic Theory 238], Rafael Núñez-Cedeño, Luis López & Richard Cameron (eds), 99–118. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. doi:10.1075/cilt.238.10fon

- Foulet, Lucien. 1919. *Petite Syntaxe de L'ancien Français*. Paris: Honoré Champion. 3rd edn 1961.
- van Gelderen, Elly. 2011. *The Linguistic Cycle*. Oxford: OUP.
doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199756056.001.0001
- Grüter, Therese. 2006a. Object clitics and null objects in the acquisition of French. Ph.D. dissertation, McGill University.
- Grüter, Therese. 2006b. Object (clitic) omission in L2 French. In *GASLA Proceedings*, Mary Grantham O'Brien, Christine Shea & John Archibald (eds), 63–71. Somerville MA: Cascadilla.
- Heine, Bernd & Song, Kyung-an. 2011. On the grammaticalization of personal pronouns. *Journal of Linguistics* 47: 587–630. doi:10.1017/S0022226711000016
- Jakubowicz, Celia, Müller, Natascha, Riemer, Beate & Rigaut, Catherine. 1997. The case of subject and object omissions in French and German. In *Proceedings of the 21st Annual Boston University Conference on Language Development*, Elizabeth Hughes, Mary Hughes & Annabel Greenhill (eds), 331–342. Somerville MA: Cascadilla.
- Jelinek, Eloise. 1984. Empty categories, case, and configurationality. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 2: 39–76. doi:10.1007/BF00233713
- Jones, Michael. 1996. *Foundations of French Syntax*. Cambridge: CUP.
doi:10.1017/CBO9780511620591
- Kayne, Richard. 1975. *French Syntax*. Cambridge MA: The MIT Press.
- Lambrecht, Knud. 1981. *Topic, Antitopic, and Verb Agreement in Non-Standard French* [Pragmatics & Beyond II:6]. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. doi:10.1075/pb.ii.6
- Lambrecht, Knud & Lemoine, Kevin. 1996. Vers une grammaire des compléments zéro en français parlé. In *Travaux linguistiques de CERLICO 9*, Jean Chuquet & Marc Fryd (eds), 279–309. Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes.
- Larjavaara, Meri. 2000. Présence ou absence de l'object. (<http://ethesis.helsinki.fi/julkaisut/hum/romaa/vk/larjavaara/presence.pdf>)
- Morin, Yves-Charles. 1979. La morphophonologie des pronoms clitiques en français populaire. *Cahier de Linguistique* 9: 1–36. doi:10.7202/800076ar
- Noailly, Michèle. 1997. Les mystères de la transitivité invisible. *Languages* 127: 96–109.
doi:10.3406/lgqe.1997.2127
- Offroy, Geneviève. 1975. Contribution à l'étude de la syntaxe québécoise d'après la langue des journaux. *Travaux de linguistique du Quebec* 1: 257–322.
- Parisse, Christophe & Morgenstern, Aliyah. 2010. Transcrire et analyser les corpus d'enfant. In *Acquisition du langage et interaction*, Edy Veneziano, Anne Salazar Orvig & Josie Bernicot (eds), 201–222. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Sportiche, Dominique. 1996. Clitic constructions. In *Phrase Structure and the Lexicon* [Studies in Natural Language and Linguistic Theory 33], Johan Rooryck & Laurie Zaring (eds), 213–276. Dordrecht: Kluwer. doi:10.1007/978-94-015-8617-7_9
- Siewierska, Anna. 2008. Verbal person marking. In *The world Atlas of Language Structures Online*, Martin Haspelmath, David Gil & Bernard Comrie (eds). Munich: Max Planck Digital Library, chapter 102. Available online at <http://wals.info/feature/102>.
- Siewierska, Anna. 2013. Verbal person marking. In *The World Atlas of Language Structures*, Matthew S. Dryer & Martin Haspelmath (eds). Leipzig: Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology. (<http://wals.info/chapter/102>) (8 October 2014).
- von Wartburg, Walter. 1943. *Einführung in die Problematik und Methodik der Sprachwissenschaft*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.
- de Wind, Maarten. 1995. Inversion in French. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Groningen.
- Zribi-Hertz, Anne. 1994. La syntaxe des clitiques nominatifs. *Travaux de Linguistique et Littérature* XXXII: 131–147.