Internal and external factors for clitic-shape variation in north-eastern Catalan

Traditional studies of Catalan dialectology have always included the variety spoken in the north-eastern area in the group of dialects that have CV pronominal clitics instead of the innovative VC standard forms (e.g., me instead of em ‘me’) (cf. Veny 1982). It is also well accepted that nowadays there is variation between CV and VC clitics, the latter being considered the result of the increasing influence of the standard. Our goal is to check the scope of this variation and determine if there are internal factors that favour the shift to VC forms.

Unlike previous studies, our description will not be based on data from questionnaires but on data from spontaneous texts recorded in two corpus: the Atles lingüístic del domini català, compiled in the 60s with old speakers from small villages, and the Corpus Oral Dialectal, compiled in the 90s with middle-age speakers from towns. The data unexpectedly show that, although there is a tendency towards the loss of CV clitics along the time, all the speakers, including the oldest ones, use more VC than CV forms, which cannot be entirely attributed to the influence of the standard. We conclude that VC clitics have a deep-rooted presence and are favoured by certain syntactic contexts that are well determined by language universals (cf. Cysouw 2004).

References