

Definiteness and Clitic Predicativization (GGE) in Slovenian

One of the striking peculiarities of the Slovenian are elliptical omissions in transitive constructions, in which clitic pronouns of (predominantly) accusative and dative case can overtake predicative functions (see Dvořák 2003, Dvořák/Gergel 2004) forming thus short one-word verbless sentences of the type (1 (B)):

- (1) A: A *ga* *vidiš?* B: *Ga.*
Q CL.Akk.m see2 CL.Akk.m
„Do You see him?“ „Him.“ (I do.)

Whereas some initial discussion was dedicated to what should be the possible technical conditions for those constructions in Slovenian so far (Dvořák/Gergel 2004, Bošković 2001, Franks 2000), it still remains unclear in which semantic contexts speakers can apply the pronominal clitic forms in the above verbal function. As the data analysis in Dvořák/Gergel 2004 (where the phenomenon is analysed as a VP-ellipsis and called GGE thereafter) has shown, this is mostly the case if the pronominal clitic already occurs in the question (1), whereas a clitic after an overtly mentioned object shifts the sense of the answer from an affirmative to a confirmative (and that of the question to a dubitative) meaning, comparable to the German “doch” or the French “si” (2). Those questions are normally answered by full verb forms (except after negated questions – see below);

- (2) A: A *poznáš* *Bóruta?* B: *Poznám.* B' *#Ga.*
Q know2 Borut-Akk Know1 Him.
„Do You know Borut?“ „I do.“ „I DO know him.“

Additionally there are some restrictions in the use of clitics with respect to the nature of a verb, as was clearly demonstrated on *iméti* (to have (3)) and the modal verbs, due to a lack of transitivity or activity;

- (3) A: A *ga* *imàš?* B: *Imàm.* B' **Ga.*
Q CL.Akk.m have2 Have1 Him.
„Do You have him?“ „I have.“

Beyond that it can be easily noticed that in certain situations clitics are never used as positive answers even if they are expected to occur with regard to the construction constraints; contrary, they regularly appear in other situations after the same questions;

- (4) A: A *ne* *píješ* *vína?* B: *Píjem.* B' *#Ga.*
Q neg. drink2 vineGen Drink1 It.
„Don't You drink vine?“ „I do.“

- (4') A: *Ne* *píješ* *tégale* *vína?* B: *Ga./ Ga, ga./ Sevéda ga.*
Neg. drink2 dem vineGen It./ (redupl.)/ of course it.
„Don't You drink that vine (here)?“ „I do./ I do, I do./ Of course I do.“

A widely productive constraint on whether a clitic may be used as an answer or not by a speaker, is, as we will show in our contribution, that of the definiteness degree of the object in question; the more definite the nature of an object is, the less impediments there are for the elliptical GGE construction to be applied; as can be seen in (4), where the first question addressed to the speaker refers to a general context (drinking vine), while by the second a

more concrete object is referred to, namely the vine in a bottle in front of the asked person. In the following we quote some examples out of the big collection, by which we systematically checked out the available data amount. As the occurrence of clitic answers, for economical reasons, can be defined as most stable after negated questions (when used as positive answers, as “yes” is semantically ambiguous in those cases), we particularly considered such data in order to gain a reliable list of „minimal pairs” (see (5) and (6) below);

(5) A: Saj ne poznáš kakšnega dobrega advokata?
 part. neg. know2 someGen goodGen lawyerGen
 „You certainly don’t know a good lawyer?”

B: Poznam. B’: *Ga.
 Know1
 „I do.”

(5’) A: Saj ne poznáš téga dobrega advokata?
 part. neg. know2 demGen goodGen lawyerGen
 „You certainly don’t know this good lawyer?”

B: Ga. B’: Pa ga./ Ga, ga. B’’: #Poznam.
 „I do.” „But I do./I do, I do.”

(6) A: Mi ne odpustiš? B: Ti. B’: #Odpustim.
 Cl1Datneg. forgive1 Cl2Dat
 „Don’t You forgive me?” „I do.”

(6’) A: Ne odpustiš prijatelju? B: Odpustim. B’: *Mu.
 Neg. forgive2 friendDat forgive1
 „Don’t You forgive to a friend?” „I do.”

Though the Slovenian doesn’t show any formal difference between definite and indefinite objects by a corresponding (in)definite article, there is evidence for a different treatment of them from this very peculiar, typologically unusual characteristic of this language.

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