

ACCUSATIVE CLITICS, NULL OBJECTS,
AND THE OBJECT AGREEMENT CYCLE:
MICROVARIATION IN SPANISH AND ROMANCE*

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ABSTRACT Conservative varieties of Modern Spanish exhibit clitic left-dislocation and accusative clitic doubling of pronominal objects. Clitic left-dislocation occurs in Old Spanish but accusative clitic doubling first appears in the fifteenth century, becoming regular in the sixteenth century. Conservative Modern Spanish allows some non-referential null objects but generally lacks null *referential* objects. However, null referential objects do occur in Rioplatense Spanish (Schwenter 2006). In this paper, I show how these patterns are related. My main claim is that clitic left-dislocation, accusative clitic doubling, and null referential objects become available diachronically as a result of the grammaticalization of object clitics; i.e., van Gelderen's (2011) Object Agreement Cycle. The stage of the cycle a language is in correlates with whether the language has clitic left-dislocation, accusative clitic doubling, and/or null referential objects. I extend Holmberg, Nayudu & Sheehan's (2009) D-in-T analysis of null subjects to null objects. I propose that the D-feature that licenses null objects on *v* is there due to the cycle; i.e., re-analysis of object clitics. My analysis accounts for the distribution of clitic left-dislocation, accusative clitic doubling, and null referential objects in Romance and it leads to the prediction that a language with clitic-less null referential objects will have developed less restricted accusative clitic doubling first.

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1 INTRODUCTION

In this paper I focus on three constructions in Conservative varieties of Modern Spanish which I argue to be interrelated: (1) clitic-left dislocation (CLLD), (2) accusative clitic doubling (ACD), and null referential objects (NROS), as in the Rioplatense Spanish example in (3) below.¹

- (1) *Los libros_i los_i compré ayer.* (Conservative Spanish)
 the books them I-bought yesterday
 ‘I bought the books yesterday.’
- (2) *Juan la_i abrazó (a ella)_i* (Conservative Spanish)
 Juan her he-hugged DOM her
 ‘Juan hugged her.’
- (3) (a) *Queremos el postre_i.* (Rioplatense Spanish)
 we-want the dessert
 ‘We want the dessert.’
 (b) *Ya traigo pro_i.*
 now I-bring it
 ‘I’m bringing it now.’
 (from Schwenter 2006: 28)

In this paper I show that, historically, CLLD of direct objects appears prior to ACD.² Both constructions involve a clitic, yet they emerge at different diachronic periods. Why should this be the case? Furthermore, while most modern varieties of Spanish disallow NROs Rioplatense Spanish, which is well-known for having less restricted ACD (Jaeggli 1982, 1986; Suñer 1988), allows NROs. I claim that these patterns can be explained as the result of the grammaticalization of direct object clitics. I adopt the model of the Object Agreement Cycle (OAC) from van Gelderen (2011). Direct object CLLD, ACD, and NROs become available at different stages of the OAC. This is due to the changing status of the object clitic from a full phrase to a head.

I extend Holmberg’s (2005, 2010) and Holmberg et al.’s (2009) D-in-T analysis of null subjects to null objects. I propose that the D-feature that licenses NROs on *v* is there due to the reanalysis of object clitics; i.e., the OAC. The OAC is comprised of three stages. At stage (a), the clitic is a fully phrasal

1 Throughout I use the term “Conservative Spanish” to refer to varieties of Modern Spanish that are conservative with respect to their object clitic system. Rioplatense Spanish is an innovative variety of Modern Spanish.

2 Throughout this paper “CLLD” refers to CLLD of direct objects specifically.

coreferential pronoun that merges as verbal complement. At stage (b), the clitic moves out of DP as a D-head to adjoin *v*. At stage (c), the clitic has been reanalyzed as a *v*-head with a D-feature and either *pro* or a lexical object can be in complement position. This is a type of “renewal” of the cycle.

I adopt [Matushansky’s \(2006\)](#) m-merger, a synchronic operation that forms a complex head between a maximal projection and a head. I propose m-merger is actually diachronic reanalysis. The clitic in a DP is reanalyzed as a complex D-*v* head, which is how the D-feature ends up on *v*. Once a language has D-in-*v*, NROs can be licensed. First, D is realized as a clitic and there occur “simplex cliticization” structures where the clitic occurs without an overt double, as in (4).

- (4) *Juan lo leyó.* → Stage (b): [_{vP} lo-*v* [_{VP} leyó <lo>]]
 Juan it read Stage (c): [_{vP} lo_i [_{VP} leyó *pro*_i]]
 ‘Juan read it.’

At stage (c) of the OAC a string like (4) involves an NRO but at stage (b) it does not. A prediction that arises from this is that a language with clitic-less NROs will have developed less ACD first. I show this to be the case and my analysis accounts for CLLD, ACD, and NROs diachronically and synchronically throughout Romance.

This paper is organized as follows. In Section 2, I present background information on grammaticalization, the OAC, and the licensing of null arguments. In Section 3, I illustrate the distributional patterns of CLLD, ACD, and NROs in more detail. Section 4 is my analysis of these constructions, based in part on [Harizanov \(2014\)](#) and [Kramer \(2014\)](#). I consider the consequences of this analysis and the cross-linguistic patterns in Section 5. In Section 6, I summarize my findings.

2 BACKGROUND

In this section, I present my theoretical assumptions regarding language change and grammaticalization, following [van Gelderen \(2011\)](#). I discuss the diagnostics that can be employed to determine different stages of a linguistic cycle. I present the details of the Object Agreement Cycle (OAC), which takes full object pronouns and turns them into object agreement morphology on the verb. I also explain how null arguments are formally licensed, based on [Holmberg \(2005, 2010\)](#) and [Holmberg et al. \(2009\)](#).

2.1 *Language change and grammaticalization*

2.1.1 *Linguistic cycles*

In van Gelderen's (2004, 2011) linguistic cycles framework, based in the Minimalist Program (Chomsky 1995, 2001, 2004), language change is motivated by principles of economy. The most relevant principle for the grammaticalization of clitics is the Head Preference Principle (HPP) in (5) below:

- (5) Head Preference Principle (HPP):
Be a head rather than a phrase.

The HPP motivates reanalysis of phrases (XP) to heads (X). In the acquisition process, if the Primary Linguistic Data to which the child is exposed is superficially ambiguous as to whether a pronoun, for example, is a head or a phrase, the child tends to reanalyze it as a head. Examples of reanalysis due to the HPP include demonstrative pronouns like English *that* becoming complementizers, adverbs becoming aspect markers, pronouns becoming agreement, etc.

Language change is cyclic, hence "linguistic cycles," because once an element is reanalyzed as a head or features on a head, a new element can merge to contribute the features that have been lost. This then renews the cycle. A well-known example of a linguistic cycle is the Negative or Jespersen's Cycle in (6) below whereby negation underwent reanalysis from preverbal to postverbal position in the history of French.³

- (6) (a) jeo **ne** dis (Old French)
(b) je **ne** dis **pas** (Conservative Modern French)
(c) je dis **pas** (Colloquial Modern French)

Within this framework, different elements may be at distinct stages of a cycle depending on the categorial status; i.e., head or phrase. In order to distinguish between a head or a phrase, van Gelderen adopts several diagnostics, based in part on previous work by Zwicky & Pullum (1983), Cardinaletti & Starke (1999), and Mithun (1991, 2003).⁴ These diagnostics are phonological reduction, coordination, modification, and separation from the verb. Within a Minimalist approach, formal features of lexical items play an integral role in representing phrase structure. There are two types of features:

³ For more on the Negative Cycle see van Gelderen (2011: 292ff); Breitbarth, Lucas & Willis (2013, 2020).

⁴ Data in this section are from van Gelderen (2011) and references therein.

interpretable and uninterpretable. Interpretable features affect semantic interpretation while uninterpretable features are relevant to building syntactic structure. Uninterpretable features have to be deleted before being sent to the semantic interface. During the course of a syntactic derivation, a head (probe) merges and searches for an element with interpretable features (a goal) to check their uninterpretable features. This is agreement or “Agree.” In the case of subject agreement, the person, number, and gender features (φ -features) on the subject DP are interpretable while the φ -features on a T head are uninterpretable.⁵

In the course of grammaticalization, phrases are reanalyzed as heads and arguments as agreement. In the Subject Agreement Cycle, for example, pronominal subject DPs are arguments that become agreement morphology on the verb. Crucially, what looks like a full pronoun can be either a phrase or a head, but if it still has interpretable φ -features it is a DP that receives a theta-role. Agreement is always a head but may still have interpretable φ -features, depending on the stage of the cycle. An element is fully grammaticalized as agreement when its φ -features are uninterpretable. They are uninterpretable at this point because they are solely a reflection of an agreement relation with some other constituent and, consequently, no longer semantically relevant. If an element displays head-like properties but still receives a theta-role, it is an argument.

As mentioned above, the HPP motivates the reanalysis from phrase to head. Another principle, the Feature Economy Principle, drives the change in features, as in (7) below ([iF] = interpretable features, [uF] = uninterpretable features).

- (7) (a) Feature Economy Principle: minimize the semantic and interpretable features in the derivation.
- (b) Adjunct/Phrasal > Specifier/Phrasal > Head > Affix/Agreement
 semantic features > [iF] > [iF] > [uF]

The cline in (7b) represents different stages of an agreement cycle along with the relevant features. Early in the cycle the pronoun or nominal may not be an argument but rather an adjunct, such as a topic, where it only has semantic features. Later it is reanalyzed as an argument, occupying a specifier and contributing interpretable features. When the pronoun is reanalyzed as a head it still has interpretable features but no longer occurs in a specifier. The former pronoun is agreement morphology when it only has uninterpretable features.

⁵ For more details on formal features in the Minimalist Program see [Hornstein, Nunes & Grohmann \(2005: 290ff\)](#) and [Corbett \(2006: 124–125\)](#).

2.1.2 Object Agreement Cycle

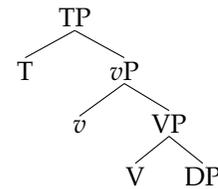
The OAC is a grammaticalization process whereby direct object pronouns become object agreement morphology on the verb.⁶ While languages like English lack object agreement, having only subject agreement, other languages like Taqbaylit Berber (8) have both.

- (8) *zri-x-t umcic.*⁷ (Taqbaylit Berber)
 saw-I-OBJ the-cat
 'I saw the cat.'

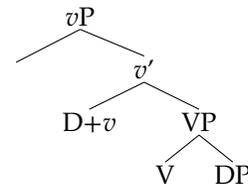
In (8), the affix *-t* is an agreement marker correlating to the direct object *umcic*.

Object agreement morphology is absent from Latin and most varieties of modern Romance. Nevertheless, direct object clitics in Spanish are currently undergoing grammaticalization into object agreement morphology via the OAC. The cycle is comprised of three stages and different languages can be at distinct stages as summarized in (9) below.

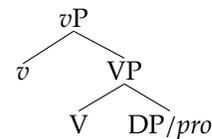
- (9) Stage (a) – Urdu, Hindi
 Object pronoun = DP [*iφ*, *uAsp*]



- Stage (b) – Modern English, Arabic
 Object pronoun/clitic = DP/D [*iφ*, *uAsp*]
v [*uφ*, *iAsp*]



- Stage (c) – Kambara, Southern Slavic
 Object clitic = *v* [*uφ*, *iAsp*]
 Lexical DP or *pro* merges as argument



⁶ For full discussion see [van Gelderen \(2011: 86ff\)](#).

⁷ From [van Gelderen \(2011\)](#) and references therein.

At stage (a) of the OAC the object pronoun is in a full DP with interpretable φ and Aspect features; it is the goal for the v -head to probe in order to have v 's uninterpretable φ -feature checked. At stage (b), the object merges in a DP but moves as a D-head to v . At stage (c), the features of v are reanalyzed onto the clitic, such that the clitic now spells out the v -head. The clitic now has uninterpretable φ -features and so a new nominal argument will need to merge to contribute interpretable φ -features. This “renewal” of the cycle can be brought about by an overt lexical DP or object *pro*. On [van Gelderen's](#) original (2011) analysis, accusative clitic doubling will only be possible at stage (c), where the complement position is open. However, I propose an adjustment to this aspect of the cycle in Section 4.

2.2 Licensing null arguments

I adopt [Holmberg's](#) (2005, 2010) analysis whereby a D-feature in T is responsible for licensing null subjects in consistent null subject languages such as Spanish (10).

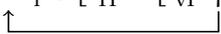
- (10) *Juan_i compró el libro. Luego, pro_i leyó el libro en el tren.*
 Juan bought the book later he read the book on the train.
 ‘Juan bought the book. Later, he read it on the train.’

On this analysis, the null subject is a deficient φ P with an unvalued D-feature. In null subject languages, T has a valued D-feature. D-in-T values the φ P's D-feature resulting in a definite, referential interpretation. To derive a non-referential, generic null subject, languages with D-in-T have to resort to other mechanisms such as impersonal reflexives.⁸

This analysis is modified somewhat in [Holmberg et al. \(2009\)](#). The authors propose that the D-feature in T is unvalued rather than valued. The D-feature in T is then valued by an overt subject or, following [Frascarelli \(2007\)](#), the D-feature is valued by a null Aboutness topic base-generated in the left periphery. Crucially, on this analysis, every clause has a topic; i.e., [Frascarelli's](#) “Topic Criterion.” Valuing of the D-feature on the φ P results in copying of the referential index of the topic. The φ P incorporates into T following [Roberts \(2007\)](#) and the EPP is satisfied by the topic. The structure of (10) is repre-

⁸ [Maddox \(2018\)](#) shows that, contra [Holmberg \(2005, 2010\)](#), consistent null subject languages such as Spanish and Italian actually do allow null generic subjects when discourse-licensed by an overt generic pronoun such as *uno*, English *one*.

sented in (11) below. The arrow in Sentence 2 indicates Agree between topic and the null subject:

- (11) Sentence 1: [_{CP} Juan_i C [_{TP} <Juan>_i T [_{vP} <Juan>_i compró el libro]]]
 Sentence 2: [_{CP} Juan_i C [_{TP} T [_{vP} φ_P_i leyó el libro ...]]]
- 

3 DISTRIBUTION OF ACCUSATIVE CLITIC DOUBLING, CLITIC-LEFT DISLOCATION, AND NULL OBJECTS

In this section, I illustrate how accusative clitic doubling, clitic-left dislocation, and null objects vary both synchronically and diachronically. The data are taken from Old Spanish, Conservative Modern Spanish, and Rioplatense Modern Spanish.⁹ While Old Spanish had CLLD but lacked regular ACD, Conservative Spanish has CLLD with ACD restricted to pronominal objects. Rioplatense Spanish has less restricted ACD, CLLD with epithets, and allows null objects in certain environments.

3.1 Accusative clitic doubling

Maddox (2019: 69ff) shows that patterns of interpolation, omission in VP conjuncts, and ACD can be used to identify the different stages of the OAC from Latin to Spanish. These patterns show that Latin and Old Spanish were at stage (a), Conservative Spanish is at stage (b), and Rioplatense Spanish is at stage (c) of the cycle. With respect to ACD, consider the following data.

- (12) (a) **(Lo_i) vimos a él_i.* (Conservative Spanish)
 him we-saw DOM he
 'We saw him.'
- (b) *Pedro (*lo_i) vio a Juan_i.*
 Pedro him saw DOM Juan
 'Pedro saw Juan.'
- (c) *Pedro (*lo_i) vio a un amigo_i.*
 Pedro him saw DOM a friend
 'Pedro saw a friend.'

⁹ I use "conservative" Spanish to refer to non-leísta varieties in which ACD is restricted. I consider these varieties conservative only with respect to their clitic system. Rioplatense Spanish (also called *Porteño*) is spoken in the River Plate region in South America. In the glosses, DOM stands for Direct Object Marker.

- (d) *Pedro (*la_i) vio a la mujer_i.*
 Pedro her saw DOM the woman
 ‘Pedro saw the woman.’
- (e) *(*La_i) vimos la casa_i.*
 it we-saw the house
 ‘We saw the house’

The data in (12) represent conservative patterns where ACD is restricted (obligatorily) to pronominal direct objects as in (12 a). ACD cannot occur in these varieties with proper nouns (12 b), indefinites (12 c), definites (12 d), and inanimates (12 e).

In Old Spanish, ACD of pronominal objects starts in the 15th century but is not the majority pattern until the 16th century (Gabriel & Rinke 2010), as in (13) and (14) below.

- (13) *e matáronlo a él e a uno de los*
 and they-killed-him DOM he and DOM one of those
que yvan con él.
 that went with he
 ‘And they killed him and one of those that went with him.’
 (Anonymous, *Crónica de Juan II de Castilla*, para.201; 1406–1411)
- (14) *y después lo prendieron a él, como*
 and afterwards him they-captured DOM he as
diremos...
 we-will-tell
 ‘And afterwards they captured him, as we will tell...’
 (Pedro Cieza de León, *Las guerras civiles peruanas*,
 para. 577; c. 1553–1584)

That ACD was not obligatory is shown in (15) and (16) below, where the pronominal object *él* is not doubled by the expected *lo* clitic.

- (15) *y ella muy bien veía a él.*
 and she very well saw DOM he
 ‘And she saw him very well.’
 (Anon., *Libro del conde Partinuplés*; c. 1500)
- (16) *Otrosy, sy matare a él & non a la muger...*
 however if he-kill DOM he and not DOM the woman
 ‘However, if he shall kill him and not the woman...’
 (Anon., *Fuero de Úbeda*; 1251–1285)

The datum in (17) below is particularly interesting since it shows that the same object can be realized as a stressed pronoun in the first clause and as an enclitic in the second clause.

- (17) *y tomó a mí_i en la boca & llevó-me_i*
 and she-took DOM me in the mouth and took-me_i
al monte.
 to-the mountain
 ‘and she (the lioness) took me in her mouth and took me to the mountain.’
 (Anon., *Libro del cavallero Cifar*; 1300–1305)

However, what looks like ACD in early Old Spanish should actually be considered clitic-right dislocation (Fontana 1993, Eberenz 2000, Gabriel & Rinke 2010).

In Rioplatense Spanish, ACD patterns differently. Consider the following data.¹⁰

- (18) (a) **(Lo_i) vimos a él_i.* (Rioplatense Spanish)
 him we-saw DOM he
 ‘We saw him.’
 (b) *Pedro (lo_i) vio a Juan_i.*
 Pedro him saw DOM Juan
 ‘Pedro saw Juan.’
 (c) *Pedro (*lo_i) vio a un amigo_i.*
 Pedro him saw DOM a friend
 ‘Pedro saw a friend.’
 (d) *Pedro (la_i) vio a la mujer_i.*
 Pedro her saw DOM the woman
 ‘Pedro saw the woman.’
 (e) *(*La_i) vimos la casa_i.*
 it we-saw the house
 ‘We saw the house’

In Rioplatense, ACD is obligatory with pronominal objects (18 a), optional with proper nouns (18 b) and definites (18 d), and unacceptable with indef-

¹⁰ For full discussion of ACD patterns in Rioplatense specifically see Jaeggli (1982, 1986), Suñer (1988), Franco (1993), Parodi (1998), Zdrojewski (2008), Saab & Zdrojewski (2013), DiTullio, Saab & Zdrojewski (2019). For Andean Spanish see Luján (1987); Basque Spanish, Franco (1993), Franco & Mejías-Bikandi (1997); Dominican Spanish, Abreu (2014).

inites (18c) and inanimates (18e).¹¹ Thus, while Conservative Spanish only allows ACD in one of the five contexts considered here (pronominal objects), Rioplatense allows it in three out of five. Hence, ACD is less restricted in Rioplatense.

Zdrojewski (2008) claims there are two licensing conditions on ACD in Rioplatense. The first is the presence of differential object marking (DOM), the preposition *a*. Thus, Rioplatense obeys Kayne’s Generalization; i.e., ACD is allowed when the doubled DP is preceded by a preposition (Kayne 1975). The second condition is that the doubled DP must be [+definite]. Other features such as [+human] and [+specific] are irrelevant since all DPs preceded by DOM already include those features.¹²

3.2 Clitic left dislocation

In CLLD constructions, there is a topicalized constituent in the left periphery with a coreferential resumptive clitic. Consider the Conservative Spanish data below, adapted from Olarrea (2012: 610–613; examples 16b, 19a, 27b).

- (19) (a) *Las flores_i las_i compré ayer.*
the flowers them I-bought yesterday
‘The flowers, I bought them yesterday.’
- (b) *(A) *Juan_i lo_i vimos en la fiesta.*
DOM Juan him we-saw at the party
‘Juan, we saw him at the party.’
- (20) *Juan#, estaba pensando en él en este momento.*
Juan I-was thinking about him at this moment
‘Juan, I was thinking about him at this moment.’

In (19a), the direct object *las flores* is topicalized and resumed by the object clitic *las*. The dislocated topic and clitic must agree in case and number. In (19b) *Juan* is preceded obligatorily by DOM as a case marker and the object clitic is masculine singular. Example (20) is not CLLD but rather a left-dislocated hanging topic since the dislocate is separated by a prosodic break and not preceded by the expected preposition *en*.

¹¹ Zdrojewski & Sánchez (2014: 166n6) observe that indefinite animates can be doubled in Rioplatense, but only when modified by a first-person possessive pronoun: *Los vi a todos mis amigos*. Furthermore, inanimates can only be doubled when definite and preceded by DOM (p. 169).

¹² See Zdrojewski (2008: 22ff) for a critique of Suñer’s (1988) claim that specificity is the critical feature licensing ACD.

CLLD occurs in some of the earliest Old Spanish documents, as in (21) and (22) below.

- (21) [La tierra del Rey Alfonso]_i esta noch la_i podemos
 the land of-the king Alfonso this night it we-can
 quitar.
 leave
 ‘Tonight we can leave King Alfonso’s land.’
 (Anonymous, *El Cid*, l. 423; c. 1207)
- (22) [vuestras mannas]_i bien las_i sabemos.
 your abilities well them we-know
 ‘We know your abilities well.’
 (Anonymous, *Razones d’Amor*, l. 175; c. 1205)

Interestingly, CLLD does display some variation in Spanish. In Rioplatense, for example, CLLD can occur with epithets, as in the data below from [Suñer \(2006\)](#).¹³

- (23) [A mi mejor amiga]_i, la_i vi [a esa loca
 DOM my best friend her I-saw DOM that crazy
 linda]_i el jueves.
 beautiful the Thursday
 ‘I saw my best friend, that crazy beautiful girl, on Thursday.’
- (24) [A Menem]_i, nadie lo_i votará [a ese
 DOM Menem no-one him will-vote DOM that
 estafador sinvergüenza]_i.
 swindler shameless
 ‘Menem, no one will vote for that shameless swindler.’

The data in (23) and (24) differ from (19) crucially in that there are three coreferential elements rather than two, as in canonical CLLD. In (23), for example, *mi mejor amiga*, *la*, and *esa loca linda*, all refer to the same direct object. [Suñer \(2006: 129\)](#) notes that CLLD with epithets can also occur with non-human animates (25). With inanimates (26 a), however, it is not acceptable, unless it is a hanging topic as in (26 b).

¹³ See also [Estigarribia \(2017\)](#) for a semantic analysis of CLLD with epithets.

- (25) [A nuestro gato]_i, mi hija no lo_i quiere más
 DOM our cat mi daughter not him loves more
 [a ese bribón]_i.
 DOM that rascal
 ‘Our cat, my daughter doesn’t love him anymore, that rascal.’

- (26) (a) *[Esa motocicleta]_i, ¿a qué demente se le
 that motorcycle to what deranged REFL to-him
 ocurrió comprar-la_i [a esa máquina infernal]_i?
 it-occurred buy-it DOM that machine infernal
 ‘That motorcycle, what deranged person thought to buy it, that
 infernal machine?’
- (b) Esa motocicleta, ¿a qué demente se le
 that motorcycle to what deranged REFL to-him
 ocurrió comprar esa máquina infernal?
 it-occurred buy-it that machine infernal
 ‘That motorcycle, what deranged person thought to buy that
 infernal machine?’

Suñer (2006: 134ff) shows CLLD with epithets in Rioplatense patterns just like canonical CLLD with respect to certain properties. Both are recursive in that more than one dislocate is allowed. Both may occur in matrix or embedded clauses. They are both sensitive to selective islands. They do not license parasitic gaps or display Weak Crossover Effects. And, finally, both pattern the same vis-à-vis reconstruction.

The primary question raised in the debate over CLLD is whether the dislocate is base-generated or the result of movement. CLLD with epithets raises obstacles to any movement analysis because there are three coreferential elements: the dislocate, the clitic, and the epithet in object position. If the dislocate is in the left periphery due to movement, where did it first merge? It could not have merged as verbal complement because the epithet occupies that position. Suñer (2006: 149) proposes that the dislocate is indeed base-generated in a Topic Phrase. The clitic heads a BigDP with the epithet as its complement. In CLLDs without epithets, *pro* is the complement of the D-clitic head. The dislocate, the clitic, and the epithet are all connected, in a sense, via long-distance agreement. This explains the reconstruction and connectivity effects.¹⁴

¹⁴ See López (2009: 229) for defense of a movement analysis of CLLD with epithets, *contra* Suñer (2006).

One issue [Suñer \(2006\)](#) does not address in her analysis is: why CLLD with epithets is acceptable in Rioplatense.¹⁵ Recall that Conservative Spanish has canonical CLLD. She argues that both types of CLLD involve a base-generated topic. If that is the case for Conservative Spanish, then it is still unclear why an epithet is allowed only in Rioplatense. What is it about Rioplatense that make it special in this respect? I argue in [Section 4](#) that the critical factor distinguishing Rioplatense and Conservative Spanish in the licensing of CLLD with epithets is the categorial status of the accusative clitic.

3.3 Null objects

While Conservative Spanish is a non-null object language in the traditional sense, it does allow null objects under certain conditions, as in the data below, adapted from [Campos \(1986: 353–354, examples 1 and 2\)](#), who was the first to observe these patterns.

- (27) (a) *¿Compraste un/el libro_i?*
 you-bought a/the book
 ‘Did you buy a/the book?’
 (b) *Sí, *(lo_i) compré.*
 it I-bought
 ‘Yes, I bought it.’
- (28) (a) *¿Compraste café?*
 you-bought coffee
 ‘Did you buy coffee?’
 (b) *Sí, compré Ø.*
 yes I-bought
 ‘Yes, I bought some.’
- (29) (a) *¿Compraste algunos regalos?*
 you-bought any gifts
 ‘Did you buy any gifts?’
 (b) *Sí, compré *(algunos).*
 yes I-bought some
 ‘Yes, I bought some.’

¹⁵ [Estigarribia \(2017\)](#) notes that CLLD with epithets may exist in Peruvian Spanish or other varieties, but there is a dearth of published work on this phenomenon. Interestingly, CLLD with epithets is acceptable in Romanian, as is discussed in [Section 5.5](#) below.

In (27b), the object clitic *lo* refers to the direct object of (27a), *libro*, and it is obligatorily present. However, the direct object *café* in (28a) does not have to be repeated by a clitic in (28b). And in (29a), the object *regalos* is modified by a quantifier. In this case, it has to be repeated by another quantifier as in (29b). Campos takes the critical difference between (27) and (28) to be that the object is allowed to be null when indefinite and he argues that the null object is the trace of an operator. Clements (1994) further clarifies that null objects in Spanish must not only be indefinite, but also be mass nouns or bare plurals. On Clements' analysis, these are the null realizations of a partitive pronoun, similar to the overt partitives found in Catalan, French, and Italian.

Null objects in Conservative Spanish are not limited to question/answer contexts, as the following data from Schwenter (2006: 27, examples 4 and 5) show.

- (30) *Fui a la tienda a comprar café_i pero no tenían*
 I-went to the store to buy coffee but not they-had
 Ø.
 (it)
 'I went to the store to buy coffee but they did not have it.'

- (31) *Fui a la tienda a comprar el periódico_i pero no*
 I-went to the store to buy the newspaper but not
 *(*lo_i*) *tenían.*
 it they-had
 'I went to the store to buy the newspaper but they did not have it.'

In (30), the direct object *café* is overt in the first clause and null in the second. Again, however, it is a mass noun. In (31) the object *el periódico* cannot be null in a later clause because it is definite and specific.

I found no evidence of null objects in Old Spanish but there are contexts where what looks like a null object is possible, as in the following data from cited in Martins (2003: 215).

- (32) (a) *¿I traedes uostros escriptos?*
 and you-bring your books
 'And did you bring your books?'
 (b) *Rei, si traemos.*
 king yes we-bring
 'Yes King, we do.'
 (12th century; cf. Gifford & Hodcroft 1959: 42)

- (33) (a) *Pues ¿quien esta arriba?*
 well who is above
 ‘Well, who is upstairs?’
 (b) *¿Quiéreslo saber?*
 you-want-it know
 ‘Do you want to know?’
 (c) *Quiero.*
 I-want
 ‘Yes, I do.’

(Late 15th century; Cejador y Frauca 1913: 62)

- (34) (a) *¿Sois vos alguno dellos?*
 you-are you anyone of-them
 ‘Are you one of them?’
 (b) *Si soy.*
 yes I-am
 ‘Yes, I am.’

(16th century; Cf. Keniston 1937: 593)

In (32b) and (33c) there is a direct object which was introduced in the preceding sentence; i.e., a putative null object. However, Martins (2003) considers these to be VP-ellipsis based on a comparison with Old Portuguese and other varieties of Romance. Note that (32) to (34) are all unacceptable in Conservative Spanish. Compare these with (27b) above which is acceptable but the object clitic is obligatorily present. Of course, (34) could not qualify as a null object since the verb is not transitive. Thus, while (34) is evidently VP-ellipsis, one might question if this the most appropriate way to characterize (32) and (33).

Nevertheless, assuming these are VP-ellipses, Martins argues that in the languages that allow them there is a Sigma head (Σ), as in Laka (1990), with a strong V-feature. The Σ -head encodes polarity values such as affirmation, negation, and modality. In Old Spanish, V moves to Σ , which licenses the null VP in VP-ellipsis. In Conservative Spanish, Σ lacks the strong V-feature and thus V only moves as high as AgrS. Consequently, null VPs are no longer allowed. Martins suggests *sí* was reanalyzed as a Σ -head and this triggered the change in the V-feature on Σ from strong to weak.

Cyrino (2012, 2016) examines null objects throughout Spanish spoken in South America. She shows that “American” or “South American” Spanish allows the following types of null objects: null objects inside a VP ellipsis

(35), cognate null objects (36), omission of the propositional clitic *lo* (37), and null objects with bare plurals or indefinites as antecedents (38).¹⁶

- (35) (a) *¿Extrañas mucho a tu papá?*
 you-miss a-lot DOM your father
 ‘Do you miss your father a lot?’
 (b) *Sí, sí extraño Ø.*
 yes yes I-miss him
 ‘Yes, yes I miss him.’

(Camacho, Paredes & Sánchez 1997)

- (36) *Tienes este mural de cuna o portapañales que se puede colocar en un perchero de pared o en el lateral del cambiador de la cuna. También se puede adaptar Ø a la barra de la cuna.*
 you-have this board of crib or diaper-holder that REFL can place in a rack of wall or in the side of-the diaper-changer of the crib also REFL can adapt it to the bar of the crib
 ‘You have this crib board or diaper holder that can be placed on a wall rack or at the side of the diaper changer of the crib. You can also adapt it to the crib bar.’

- (37) *...y si te interesa saber quienes leen los blogs y quienes son, podrías hacer un pequeño esfuerzo e investigar Ø.*
 and if you it-interests know who read the blogs and who they-are you-could make a little effort and investigate it
 ‘And if you are interested in knowing who reads blogs and who they are, you could make a little effort and investigate it.’

- (38) *Quería comprar libros pero no encontraba Ø.*
 I-wanted buy books but not found them
 ‘I wanted to buy books but I didn’t find them.’

(Alamillo & Schwenter 2007)

The VP-ellipsis in (35) is similar to Old Spanish (32–34) above, but this datum is from a speaker bilingual in Quechua and Spanish; i.e., a contact variety. In

¹⁶ See Sánchez (1999) for an analysis of null referential objects in Spanish in contact with Quechua.

(36) and (37) the object clitic is omitted, and (38) is the indefinite null object already discussed for Conservative Spanish.

The types of null objects identified in Cyrino (2012, 2016) are also available in Rioplatense specifically. However, Masullo (2003) observes that Rioplatense allows an additional type of null object whose antecedent must be recovered from the discourse context. Consider the data in (39) to (41) below.

- (39) (a) *Mozo, le pedí agua con gas.*
waiter CL.DAT.3S I-asked water with gas
'Waiter, I asked you for water with gas.'
- (b) *Bueno, ahora le cambiamos Ø.*
okay now CL.DAT.3S we-change it
'Okay, we'll change it for you now'
- (Masullo 2003, cited in Cyrino 2012: 49)

- (40) (a) *Queremos el postre.*
we-want the dessert
'We want dessert.'
- (b) *Ya traigo Ø.*
now I-bring it
'I'm bringing it now.'
- (from Masullo p.c. cited in Schwenter 2006)

- (41) (a) *¿Dónde guardaste los archivos?*
where you-placed the files
'Where did you place the files?'
- (b) **Guardé Ø en el cajón del escritorio.*
I-placed them in the drawer of-the desk
'I placed them in the desk drawer.'
- (Masullo 2003, cited in Cyrino 2012: 49)

If we compare the acceptable null objects in (39) and (40) with the unacceptable one in (41), the only difference appears to be tense and aspect; i.e., present tense in (39b) and (40b), preterite (past) tense in (41b). Indeed, Masullo's (2003) analysis, as summarized in Cyrino (2012), is that the availability of NROs is grammaticalized in the choice of tense and aspect.

Masullo (2017: 55ff), follows this line of argument and provides more data, a selection of which I reproduce here (Masullo's examples 1, 6, 18, 57). The antecedent of the null object is given in parentheses.

- (42) *¡Tené Ø!*
 have.IMP.2s it
 ‘Have/take it!’ (the package)
- (43) *¿Ponemos Ø en una bolsa?*
 put.PRES.IND.1P them in a bag
 ‘Shall we put them in a bag?’ (articles bought at the supermarket)
- (44) *¿Te firmé Ø?*
 CL.DAT.2S signed.PRET.IND.1s it
 ‘Did I sign it for you?’ (the coupon)
- (45) *¡Mozo! Ahí le dejé Ø.*
 waiter there CL.3S.DAT left.PRET.IND.1s it
 ‘Waiter! I left it there for you.’ (money to pay for the coffee)

Masullo (2017) analyzes the null objects in Rioplatense to be a variable bound by an operator, following Huang (1984) and Campos (1986). The operator merges as complement to V and moves from there up to the specifier of a focus projection, FocP, assuming Rizzi’s (1997) structure for the left periphery. Here, the operator is bound by a null topic in TopP.

With respect to the pragmatic and temporal restrictions on these null objects, Masullo (2017: 64) observes that the referent must be prominent in the situational context. This means the antecedent of the null object cannot refer to anything outside of the visual or perceptual field of the speakers. Furthermore, the antecedent has to be anchored in the tense of the utterance. Thus, the majority of the acceptable null objects are in present tense or imperative mood, and what Masullo (p. 66) refers to as “punctual” aspect (*puntual* in Spanish). These are the tense and aspect that ensure that the event is anchored in the time. And this allows that the null object, the operator-variable chain, receives a referential index. The full structure of a clause with a null object is as in (46) below.

- (46)
$$[\text{ForceP } F_i [\text{TopP } \text{Top}_{\text{deictic-i}} [\text{FocP } \text{OP}_i \dots [\text{TP } T_i [\text{AspP } \text{Asp}_{\text{punctual-i}} [\text{VP } e_i \dots]]]]]]]$$

In (46), the operator has moved from verbal complement position up to Spec,Foc, presumably through Spec,Asp and Spec,T. The topic, operator, and empty category (null object) all share the same referential index. Masullo (2017: 62) claims that the null objects in Rioplatense are of the same type as

in Chinese, hence the suitability of a Huang-type analysis. Nevertheless, he also comments that Rioplatense null objects are more restricted than Chinese. Cyrino (2012: 49) observes that the types of null objects studied by Masullo (2003) are unique to Rioplatense. Thus, one might question the appropriateness of an analysis based on Chinese being applied to Rioplatense.

My Rioplatense informants also generally disallow null objects with a verb in the preterite tense, as in the following:

- (47) (a) *¿Dónde encontraste esa camisa?*
 where bought.PRET.IND.2s that shirt
 ‘Where did you buy that shirt?’
 (b) **Compré Ø en la tienda.*
 bought.PRET.IND.1s it in the store
 ‘I bought it in the store.’
- (48) (a) *¿Viste la nueva película de George Clooney?*
 see.PRET.IND.2s the new film of George Clooney
 ‘Did you see the new George Clooney film?’
 (b) **Sí, fui a ver Ø con María.*
 yes went.PRET.IND.2s to see it with María
 ‘Yes, I went to see it with María.’

However, a preterite tense null object was allowed in one specific context, as in (49) below.

- (49) *Situation:* You and your partner are at the dinner table having a conversation. Your partner leaves to check on the children. Your partner observes the children in their room putting their toys in a box. S/he returns to the dinner table and you ask her/him:
- (a) *¿Guardaron Ø? (the toys)*
 put-away.PRET.IND.3P them
 ‘Did they put them away?’
 (b) *¿Los guardaron?*
 them put-away.PRET.IND.3P
 ‘Did they put them away?’
 (c) **¿Guardaron Ø en la caja?*
 put-away.PRET.IND.3P them in the box
 ‘Did they put them away in the box?’

In (49 a), a null object or an object clitic is possible. However, if a prepositional phrase is added, as in (49 c), the null object becomes unacceptable.

3.4 Summary

Given the data and discussion presented above, the relevant patterns are summarized in Table 1 below.

	Old Spanish	Conservative Modern Spanish	Rioplátense Spanish
Clitic-left dislocation	✓	✓ Epithets disallowed	✓ Epithets allowed
Accusative clitic doubling	<i>x</i>	✓ [-pronominal] disallowed	✓ [-pronominal] allowed
Null referential objects	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>	✓

Table 1 Diachronic and synchronic variation in Spanish

Table 1 shows an overall loosening of restrictions on CLLD, ACD, and NROs, from Old Spanish to Rioplátense. CLLD is allowed in Old Spanish and Conservative Spanish, but only in Rioplátense does it occur with epithets. Additionally, Conservative Spanish has ACD but it is restricted to pronominal objects. In Rioplátense, ACD is much less restricted and only Rioplátense allows NROs.

4 ANALYSIS: STAGES OF THE OBJECT AGREEMENT CYCLE AND THE ROLE OF THE D-FEATURE

In this section, I argue that the distributional patterns seen in Section 3 above are tied to the stages of the OAC. Based on the observation that ACD can occur at both stages (b) and (c), I propose the stages be revised as follows:

(50) Stages of the Object Agreement Cycle (REVISED)

Stage (a): the pronoun heads a full DP that merges as complement and can undergo subsequent movement; i.e., object movement.

Stage (b): pronoun merges in DP. In ACD, the whole DP moves to Spec,*v*. M-merger with *v* results in realization of upper copy

as a D-clitic; both the high and low copy of the DP object are spelled out.

Stage (c): clitic/pronoun is reanalyzed as features of *v*; *pro* or lexical object can merge to renew cycle. ACD is object agreement between the clitic and the lexical object.

In the history of Spanish, the stages of the OAC are represented diachronically and synchronically as follows: stage (a) is Old Spanish, stage (b) is Conservative Modern Spanish, and stage (c) is Rioplatense Spanish. CLLD, ACD, and null objects become available depending on which stage the language is at; i.e., the status of the object clitic.

4.1 *Accusative clitic doubling*

A vast amount of research has been conducted on ACD. Prior to presenting the details of my analysis, I summarize here some relevant recent work done from both a diachronic and synchronic perspective. Since Navarro, Fischer, and Vilanova also propose a grammaticalization cycle for clitics, I discuss their work in Section 4.1.1. I adopt various aspects of Harizanov (2014) and Kramer (2014) whose analyses I summarize in 4.1.2.

4.1.1 *Previous diachronic work*

Vilanova, Navarro & Fischer (2016), Navarro, Fischer & Vilanova (2017), and Vilanova, Fischer & Navarro (2018) investigate the grammaticalization of object clitics and Spanish dialectal variation based on quantitative/corpus data on doubling. They carry out a comparative analysis with Catalan and connect reanalysis of clitics to verb movement.¹⁷ Vilanova et al.'s (2018) study focuses on general word order change as a contributing factor to the rise of clitic doubling. Their data show that doubling of pronominal objects was optional in Old Spanish (up until the 15th century). They show that obligatory doubling of pronominal objects develops from the 16th to the 20th century.

Fischer et al propose that clitic doubling is a cycle comprised of five stages ranging from no doubling at all, as in Latin and Proto-Romance, to generalized doubling including animate direct objects as in Lima and Andean Spanish. The categorial status of the clitic is related to the doubling possibilities,

¹⁷ Data in this section adapted from Vilanova et al. (2016, 2018) and Navarro et al. (2017) and references therein. These authors also provide data from Catalan which will not be discussed here.

but so too is the availability of verb movement because it provides a position for A'-movement. As doubling becomes less restricted, verb movement becomes more restricted. Word-order also becomes much less flexible and "does not convey discourse information" (Vilanova et al. 2018: 15). In sum, doubling takes over for verb movement as an influencer of information structure (the authors do not go into detail as to what specific information structure they are referring; i.e. topic, focus, something else?). They propose that changes in word order and grammaticalization status of the clitic motivate the development of doubling. In Old Romance, word order was more flexible as it was tied to information structure; as word order becomes less flexible, doubling develops as a replacement.

Vilanova et al. (2016, 2018) and Navarro et al. (2017) analyze data from a corpus that is wide-ranging both diachronically and synchronically. However, they group direct object and indirect object clitics as if they are in the same cycle. And the claim that doubling replaces verb-movement for information structure rests on the assumption that these two phenomena are semantically equivalent for discourse purposes. The same can be said for Vilanova et al.'s (2018) claim about word order. This has yet to be demonstrated.

4.1.2 Previous synchronic work

Harizanov (2014) studies clitic doubling in Bulgarian and argues that it is a type of A-movement based on diagnostics of binding and quantifier stranding. Harizanov's analysis of clitic doubling is as follows. First, following Franks & Rudin (2005), the verbal complement is a KP (Kase Phrase) with unvalued Case and φ -features. When the KP merges as complement it probes for a goal to have its features valued; i.e., Agree. The v -head has an optional EPP-feature which can trigger movement of the KP object to Spec, v . In order to account for the double representation of a single argument, Harizanov adopts and modifies Matushansky's (2006) notion of "m-merger" whereby the head of a phrase in the specifier of some head can adjoin to the higher head. Harizanov extends m-merger so that it applies to both branching and non-branching maximal projections. Thus, the K-head m-merges with v and the K+ v compound head is realized as a clitic. Both the clitic and its associate are pronounced in clitic doubling constructions via multiple spell-out.

Kramer's (2014) study of the object marker in Amharic is similar to Harizanov (2014) since they both rely on m-merger and movement to Spec, v in their formal analysis. Kramer applies a battery of diagnostics such as optionality, number of marker per clause, presence/absence of an obligatory default, etc., to illustrate that the object marker in ACD is a doubled clitic, which means it is not object agreement in the true sense. She then reviews

the morphological properties of the Amharic object marker which also suggest it is D rather than *v*, which means instances of ACD are just that, a doubled clitic construction and not object agreement. Since the object marker affects binding relationships, it is subject to A-movement. Kramer argues that the “doubled” object merges as DP verbal complement where it is probed by *v* (Agree) and then the DP object moves to Spec,*v*, where it undergoes m-merger with *v*, as in Harizanov (2014). In ACD, there are two copies of the DP object: one in argument position and the other in Spec,*v*. Following work by Kandybowicz (2007) and Nunes (2004), *inter alios*, Kramer proposes that both copies are pronounced because they are distinct at PF. Kramer points out that movement of the object DP to Spec,*v* is basically object shift. Since on her account ACD relies on this movement, “object shift feeds clitic doubling, causing a doubled DP to be close enough to *v* for *v* to Agree with it” (Kramer 2014: 622).

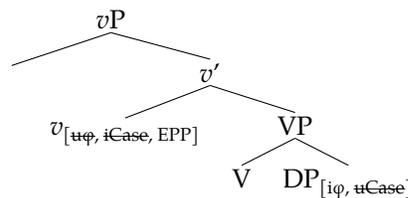
4.1.3 Extension of Harizanov (2014) and Kramer (2014) to Spanish

Different patterns of ACD are a consequence of the categorial status of the object clitic; i.e., which stage of the OAC the language is at. In Latin, object pronouns were full DPs and ACD did not occur. Thus, it was at stage (a) of the OAC. Conservative Spanish represents stage (b), with ACD restricted to pronominal objects. Since Rioplatense exhibits much less restricted ACD, it is at stage (c) of the OAC, where object clitics are now *v*-heads.

Crucially, ACD actually occurs at stages (b) and (c). However, while stage (b) and stage (c) appear to be superficially identical strings, they are derivationally distinct. I propose a copy analysis for stage (b) ACD which involves movement of the full DP object clitic to Spec,*v*, followed by m-merger, as in (51) below.¹⁸

(51) Stage (b) Accusative Clitic Doubling – Conservative Modern Spanish

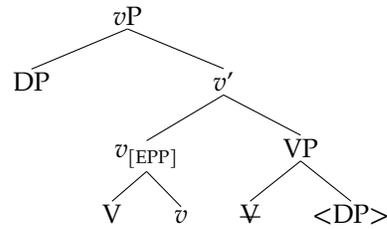
Step 1 → Object DP merges and Agrees with *v*.



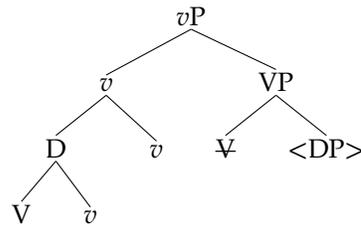
¹⁸ See Ledgeway (2012) for a similar analysis of clitic doubling in Neapolitan.

Accusative clitics, null objects, and the object agreement cycle

Step 2 → V moves to *v*; Object DP moves to Spec,*v*.



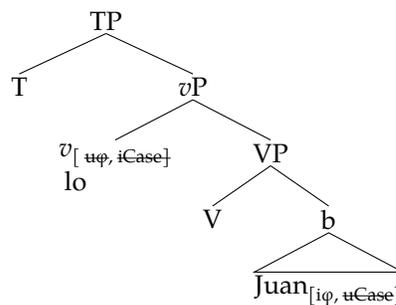
Step → 3 M-merger between object DP and *v*.



During the first step of the derivation in (51), the object clitic merges within a DP. The *v*-head probes for a goal to have its uninterpretable ϕ -features valued; i.e., Agree between *v* and the object DP. In the second step, the verb moves to *v*. There is an EPP-feature on *v* that triggers movement of the DP to Spec,*v*. At the third step, m-merger applies between the DP and *v*. The result of this is that the DP is reduced to a clitic D-head. Both the higher and lower copies of the object are spelled out; i.e., doubling.

In stage (c) ACD, the object clitic is the realization of the *v*-head and the doubled object merges as complement. In other words, stage (c) is object agreement with renewal via a lexical object, as represented in (52).¹⁹

(52) Stage (c) Accusative Clitic Doubling – Rioplatense Spanish



¹⁹ I assume the differential object marker *a* is the morphological realization of accusative case and is inserted post-syntactically, similar to Zdrojewski (2008).

Regarding diachrony, m-merger is the synchronic equivalent of diachronic reanalysis. Stage (b) ACD serves as Primary Linguistic Data to language learners, who reanalyze the complex head formed by the D-clitic and *v* as object agreement (stage c).

4.1.4 On optional doubling of lexical objects and clitics without doubles

Recall that in Rioplatense, ACD of non-pronominal objects is optional as in (53) below. Furthermore, in both Conservative Spanish and Rioplatense, a pronominal (strong) object pronoun must be doubled by a clitic. However, clitics can of course occur without the strong pronoun as in (54c). How can the above analysis deal with these facts?²⁰

(53) *Yo (lo) vi a Juan.*
I him saw DOM Juan
'I saw Juan.'

(54) (a) *Yo lo vi a él.*
I him saw DOM him
'I saw him.'

(b) **Yo vi a él.*

(c) *Yo lo vi.*

Starting with the first question, we can resort to Kramer (2014). Her data show that the object marker in Amharic is always optional (55) except when the internal argument has an inalienable possessor (56).

(55) *Almaz tāmari-w-in ayy-ätʃʃ(-iw).*
Almaz.F student-DEF.M-ACC see-3FS.S-(3MS.O)
'Almaz saw the male student.'

(56) *bärr-u t'at-e-n k'ärät't'äf-ä-(ññ).*
door-DEF.M finger-my-ACC pinch-3MS.S-1s.O
'The door pinched my finger.'

In (55) the object *tāmari-w-in* is optionally doubled by the object marker *iw* on the verb, while in (56) the object marker *-ññ* obligatorily doubles the object *t'at-e-n*. Interestingly, Kramer (2014: 602) states explicitly that the distribution of the Amharic object marker and Rioplatense object clitics are “nearly

²⁰ I thank the reviewers for raising these important issues.

identical.” Consequently, we can adopt her explanation for optionality in Amharic for Rioplatense. There are two possibilities. The first is that the movement of the object DP to Spec,*v* (object shift) is optional. Recall that Spec,*v* is where the DP is in a position to undergo m-merger with *v* on this analysis. However, since object shift is optional here, the object DP does not always move up to Spec,*v* and thus m-merger does not occur. In other words, if the object DP remains in situ there will be no m-merger and no ACD. Kramer (2014: 622), following Preminger (2011), states that “clitic doubling always happens if it can, but there is no crash if it cannot.”

An alternative which Kramer alludes to in her footnote 40, is that the EPP feature on *v* that triggers object shift to Spec,*v* is optional as in Chomsky (2000, 2001). This may be a better explanation since it is consistent with Mensching’s (2012) and Maddox’s (2019) postulation of an optional EPP-feature on *v* in Old Spanish that allowed for some types of object movement to a preverbal position. I propose that Conservative Spanish still has this EPP-in-*v* but Rioplatense lacks it completely. Hence, ACD in Rioplatense does not involve object shift to Spec,*v*. A lack of EPP-in-*v* in Rioplatense is further supported by this variety’s more fixed word order (Gabriel & Kireva 2012). Finally, the loss of the EPP-feature is expected given Feature Economy as discussed above in Section 2.1.1.

Now let us return to the second issue: how to account for object clitics occurring without a double (54c); i.e., simplex cliticization. Since I have already claimed that ACD is derivationally distinct in Conservative Spanish compared with Rioplatense, I now propose that simplex cliticization is also distinct in these varieties. Starting with Conservative Spanish, we can ask: what is the difference between ACD and simplex cliticization? Compare the two versions in (57) below.

- (57) (a) *Yo lo vi a él.*
 I him saw DOM him
- (b) *Yo lo vi.*
 I him saw
 ‘I saw him.’

It has been noted in the literature that there are two different interpretations possible. In (57a) the reading can be emphatic and in (57b) it is neutral (Gutierrez-Rexach 1999). This is not very descriptively accurate but if we approach these data from the perspective of information structure, we get a clearer picture. First, note that (57a) can introduce a new referent or con-

trast a known referent with one that has not been introduced previously into the discourse. Consider the following data:

- (58) (a) *¿A quién viste en la biblioteca ayer?*
 DOM whom you-saw in the library yesterday
 ‘Whom did you see in the library yesterday?’
 (b) *Lo vi a él.*
 him I-saw DOM him
 ‘I saw him.’
 (c) *#Lo vi.*
 ‘I saw him.’
- (59) (a) *¿Viste a Juan ayer?*
 you-saw DOM Juan yesterday
 ‘Did you see Juan yesterday?’
 (b) *Sí, lo vi.*
 Yes, I saw him.’
 (c) *#Sí, lo vi a él.*
- (60) (a) *¿Viste a María en la biblioteca ayer?*
 you-saw DOM María in the library yesterday
 ‘Did you see María in the library yesterday?’
 (b) *No vi a María pero lo vi a Él.*
 not I-saw DOM María but him I-saw DOM him
 ‘I did not see María but I did see him.’

In (58b), the answer refers either to a male whose name is unknown or whom both interlocutors know but avoid mentioning his name, perhaps to avoid others from hearing. The answer in (59c) would not be appropriate because *lo* when not doubled has to refer to someone already known in the discourse. In other words, the non-doubled clitic must refer to old information, a topic. Thus in (59), the appropriate answer is the non-doubled one (59b) because the referent *Juan* was already introduced into the discourse and is a topic. When the clitic is doubled, it can introduce new information; i.e., focus. It can also be contrastively focused as in (60b), where the speaker may be gesturing towards an unknown individual. In fact, Zdrojewski (2008) also notes the availability of focus readings for ACD. How do these patterns bear on an analysis of simplex cliticization? For Conservative Spanish I propose that, as opposed to ACD where the object DP moves to Spec,*v* and m-merger occurs, in simplex cliticization, the whole DP does not move. Rather, the D-head

moves out of DP and adjoins to v , leaving a copy in first-merge complement position.²¹ D-in- v is spelled out as *lo*. Additionally, there is a low null topic within vP that forms a chain with the D-head and its copy, resulting in a coreferential interpretation.

$$(61) \quad [{}_{L\text{-TopP}} \text{Juan}_i [{}_{vP} \text{lo}_i\text{-}v [{}_{VP} v_i \langle \text{lo}_i \rangle]]]$$

Simplex cliticization is different in Rioplatense. Recall that since Rioplatense is at stage (c) of the OAC, the D-features has already been reanalyzed on v . I propose that having D-in- v in Rioplatense licenses *pro* in complement position. Thus, simplex cliticization in Rioplatense is actually a null object construction, the details of which are presented in Section 4.3 below.

4.2 Clitic left dislocation at different stages

4.2.1 Clitic left dislocation in conservative Modern Spanish

Given the analysis provided above for simplex cliticization as involving a null topic, an obvious parallel can be applied to canonical CLLD in Conservative Spanish, as in (62) below.

$$(62) \quad \begin{array}{l} [\text{Las flores}]_i \text{ yo las}_i \text{ compré ayer.} \\ \text{the flowers I them bought yesterday} \\ \text{'The flowers, I bought them yesterday.'} \end{array}$$

In (62), let us assume, following Suñer (2006), that the dislocated topic *las flores* is base-generated. Once again, the clitic merges as verbal complement, heading a DP. It then moves and adjoins to v , leaving a copy behind. Here there is no m-merger because the whole DP did not move, just the D-head. The topic, D-head, and original copy form a chain, resulting in coreferential interpretation, as in (63) below.²²

$$(63) \quad [{}_{H\text{-TopP}} \text{las flores}_i [{}_{TP} \text{yo} [{}_{vP} \langle \text{yo} \rangle \text{las}_i\text{-}v [{}_{VP} \text{compré} \langle \text{las}_i \rangle]]]]$$

21 One might instead posit a BigDP, per Uriagereka (1995), where the D-head moves up and leaves *pro* in complement position.

22 In an earlier version, I adopted Harizanov's (2014) analysis of CLLD for Conservative Spanish whereby m-merger still takes place, as in ACD, and the original copy of the object moves to the left periphery. However, as a reviewer points out, this incorrectly predicts that any object should be able to be doubled then since basically any object can occur in CLLD structures. This current analysis better captures the facts since in Conservative Spanish ACD is restricted to pronominal objects.

Note that CLLD and simplex cliticization are thus very similar, the only relevant difference being the position of the topic which I assume is in a high topic position in the left periphery since the subject pronoun *yo* can intervene between it and the clitic.

4.2.2 *Clitic left dislocation in Old Spanish*

“CLLD” in Old Spanish, as in (64) below, is actually a base-generated topic with a resumptive DP pronoun.

- (64) *vuestras mannas_i bien las_i sabemos.*
 your abilities well them we-know
 ‘We know your abilities well.’
 (Anonymous, *Razones d’Amor*, l. 175; c. 1205)

In putative CLLD structures, the clitic merges within a DP complement where it checks Case and receives its theta-role. It also values the ϕ -features on *v*. Object movement in Old Spanish is triggered by an optional EPP-feature on *v* (Mackenzie & van der Wurff 2012, Mensching 2012, Maddox 2019). This feature is also at work in Old Spanish CLLD; i.e., the clitic DP moves to Spec,*v*. The dislocated topic is base-generated in the left-periphery. Old Spanish “CLLD” is derivationally distinct from Conservative Spanish CLLD because the Old Spanish object “clitic” is just a resumptive full DP pronoun; i.e., *m-merger* does not apply. This makes sense given that Latin also had topicalization with resumptive pronouns (Bortolussi 2017). The same strategy was used in both Latin and Old Spanish since both languages were at stage (a) of the OAC.

4.2.3 *Clitic left dislocation in Rioplatense Spanish*

Rioplatense is at stage (c) of the OAC, where the clitic is the spell-out of *v*. In ACD, the complement position is open for a lexical object or *pro*. This is essentially the same for CLLD, which is why only in Rioplatense that CLLD can occur with epithets, as in (65).

- (65) *A mi mejor amiga_i, la_i vi a esa loca*
 DOM my best friend her I-saw DOM that crazy
linda_i el jueves.
 beautiful the Thursday
 ‘I saw my best friend, that crazy beautiful girl, on Thursday.’

In (65), the topic is base-generated, the clitic is the realization of v , and the epithet merges as the complement. This derivation is represented in (66) below.

- (66) $[_{H-TopP}$ a mi mejor amiga $[_{TP}$ pro $[_{vP}$ $\langle pro \rangle$ v_{la} $[_{VP}$ vi a esa loca linda $]]]]$

4.3 Analysis of null objects

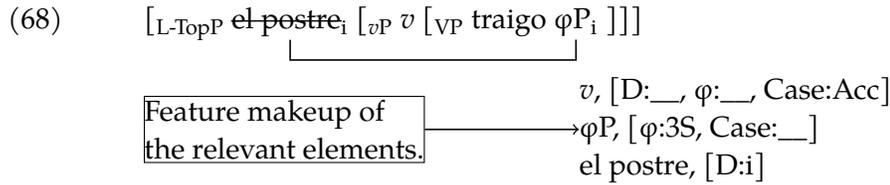
Recall that null referential objects (NROs) are allowed in Rioplatense but disallowed in Old Spanish and Conservative Spanish. I propose that this is to be expected given how the OAC works; i.e., null objects are a by-product of the reanalysis of object clitics. Consequently, NROs in Rioplatense are licensed by a D-feature in v . Consider how [Holmberg et al.'s \(2009\)](#) analysis of null subjects (see Section 2.2 above) can be extended to null objects. On these authors' analysis the ingredients required for a null argument are as follows: 1) a D-feature on a functional head (T for subjects), 2) incorporation of a φP , and 3) a base-generated topic. Now let us apply this to NROs in Rioplatense as in (67) below.

- (67) (a) *Queremos el postre.*
 we-want the dessert
 'We want dessert.'
 (b) *Ya traigo Ø.*
 now I-bring it
 'I'm bringing it now.'

(from Masullo p.c. cited in [Schwenter 2006](#))

Following a Holmberg-type analysis we can postulate an unvalued D-feature on v . A φP merges as complement and v probes the φP to have its unvalued φ -features valued. The φP has its Case feature valued by v . The φP is a defective probe since v 's features are a superset of the φP 's; i.e. v has the unvalued D-feature which the φP lacks. Since the φP is defective it incorporates into v , chain reduction applies and the φP is unpronounced.

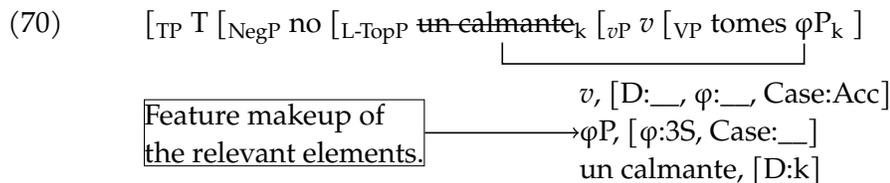
The D-feature on v is valued by a null topic, *el postre*, introduced into the discourse by the interlocutor. The structure of the null object clause in in (67b) above is in (68) below.



In [Holmberg et al. \(2009\)](#), topics are only “definite” in the sense that they have a referential index which is shared between the topic and φP through Agree. One might object that indefinite null objects as in (69) below pose a problem for this analysis.

- (69) (a) *Tengo un calmante_i para dormir.*
 I-have a sedative to sleep
 ‘I have a sedative in order to sleep.’
- (b) *No tomes pro_i. Te va a hacer mal.*
 not take it you it-goes to make ill
 ‘Don’t take it. It will make you ill.’
- (from [Schwenter 2006: 28](#))

However, in this case we can assume that if the topic is indefinite, so will the null object be. More importantly, the topic and null object will be coreferential. Thus, the derivation of (69b), given in (70) below, is essentially the same as (68) above.



4.4 CLLD, ACD, NROs and stages of the OAC

Returning now to the OAC, it is evident that each construction becomes available at a different stage of the cycle as a result of the categorial status of the clitic. In Old Spanish and Conservative Spanish CLLD of direct objects, there is no D-feature in v . In Old Spanish the clitic merges in a DP. In Conservative Spanish the clitic heads a DP that moves to $Spec,v$ and undergoes m-merger with v (DP/D- v) in ACD. The only D-feature involved is on the clitic itself. In Conservative Spanish ACD the clitic undergoes m-merger with v . It is only at stage (b) ACD where the clitic DP moves to $Spec,v$, a position where it is

associated with *v* via m-merger. Thus, ACD feeds reanalysis of the clitic as *v*. Once the clitic is fully reanalyzed as *v* (stage c), NROs become possible, as in Rioplatense, because *v* now has a D-feature. As is expected in grammaticalization cycles, the agreement morphology (the clitic) will eventually disappear through deflection.²³ The overt realization of the D-feature is no longer expressed, but there is still a D-feature on *v* and thus NROs are still licensed. The constructions under discussion and the stages with which they correlate are summarized in (71) below.

- (71) Stage (a): clitic = DP; only CLLD allowed
Stage (b): clitic = DP/D-*v*; CLLD and restricted ACD allowed
Stage (c): clitic = *v*; CLLD + epithets, less restricted ACD, NROs allowed

5 CONSEQUENCES AND CROSS-LINGUISTIC PATTERNS

One of the objectives of this study is to account for the distribution of direct object CLLD, ACD, and NROs throughout Romance. Thus far, I have shown that in Spanish, CLLD appears before ACD because Old Spanish CLLD is actually a topic with a resumptive DP pronoun, which may be generally available in all languages with fully phrasal pronouns, such as English (72).

- (72) That guy, I hate him.

Conservative Spanish CLLD looks like Old Spanish “CLLD” superficially, but they are derivationally distinct, as I proposed in Section 4 above. A prediction falls out of my analysis such that if a language allows NROs it will have developed less restricted ACD first, as in Rioplatense.²⁴ NROs arise after ACD because it is ACD where m-merger of the object DP and *v* takes place. Since NROs are licensed by D-in-*v*, there must be an operation whereby D becomes associated with *v*. On my analysis, following Harizanov (2014), this is the m-merger operation. We have already seen that this prediction holds throughout Spanish. Let us now consider how this prediction fares across Latin and Romance languages other than Spanish.

5.1 Latin

Latin pronouns were fully phrasal and thus it lacked pronominal clitics (Mad-dox 2019). Consequently, this rules out the presence of ACD and CLLD. Latin

²³ See van Gelderen (2011: 42).

²⁴ This prediction does not apply to radical or discourse argument drop languages like Chinese.

did have topicalization with resumptive pronoun structures as in [Bortolussi's](#) (2017:109) datum below.

- (73) [Amicos domini]_i, eos_i habeat sibi
 friends.ACC master.GEN them.ACC he-hold himself.DAT
 amicos.
 friends.ACC
 'The master's friends, he must consider them his own friends.'
 (Cato, *De Agri Cultura* 5,3)

Latin is not generally considered a null object language, but there have been some studies on the topic.²⁵ [Luraghi](#) (2004) shows that Latin had null objects of two kinds: pragmatically/discourse conditioned (74) and syntactically conditioned.

- (74) Voco, quaero, ecquid litterarum. Negant. "Quid
 I-call I-ask whether letters.GEN they-deny what
 ais?" – inquam – "nihilne a Pomponio?"
 you-say I-say nothing-even from Pomponius.ABL
 Perterriti voce et vultu confessi sunt se
 frightened.NOM voice.ABL and face.ABL confess AUX REFL
 accepisse Ø sed excidisse Ø in via.
 took some but lost them on way
 'I call and I ask if there are any letters. They say no. 'What are you saying?' I say. 'Not even from Pomponius?' Frightened in voice and features they confessed that they had taken some but that they lost them on the way.'
 (Cicero, *Epistulae ad Atticum* 2.8)

While the first kind express highly topical information the latter occur in the following contexts: coordinated clauses (75), ablative absolute clauses (76), and yes/no questions (77).

- (75) Caesar exercitum reduxit et. ...in hibernis
 Caesar.NOM army.ACC led-back and in winter-camp.ABL
 conlocavit Ø.
 stationed it
 'Caesar led his army back and stationed it in the winter camp.'
 (Caesar, *de Bello Gallico* 3.29.3)

²⁵ [Ledgeway](#) (2012: 72n87) references multiple studies of Latin null objects.

Accusative clitics, null objects, and the object agreement cycle

- (76) *convocatis suis clientibus, facile incendit*
summoned.ABL his.ABL dependents.ABL easily he-excited
Ø.
them
'Having summoned his dependents, he easily excited them.'
(Caesar, *de Bello Gallico* 7.4.1)

- (77) (a) *novistine hominem?*
you-know-even man.ACC
'Do you know the man?'
- (b) *novi Ø.*
I-know him
'I know him.'

(Plautus, *Bacchides* 837)

Luraghi, following [van der Wurff \(1997\)](#), considers the null objects in yes/no questions to be VP ellipsis, which is similar what was observed in Section 3.3 above for Old Spanish and some varieties of Spanish spoken in South America. This is not unexpected given the relationship between Spanish and Latin. However, the cases of null objects in coordinate and absolute clauses are more difficult to account for. Latin lacks object agreement morphology on the verb and object clitics, yet it still allows for some null objects. This appears to contradict my prediction but it may be that null objects in Latin are a type of topic drop unrelated to what is seen Rioplatense and other Spanish varieties. Furthermore, Latin is not the best language to test a prediction that involves ACD since it lacked pronominal clitics altogether.

5.2 Italian

The following data from [Cinque \(1990\)](#) show that in "standard" Italian CLLD (78 a) is acceptable, but ACD (78 b) is unacceptable.²⁶

- (78) (a) *Gianni, lo conosciamo.*
Gianni him we-know
'Gianni, we know him.'
- (b) **Lo conosciamo a Gianni.*
'We know Gianni.'

ACD is also unacceptable with stressed pronominal objects.

²⁶ See [Ledgeway \(2000: 37\)](#) for Neapolitan which does have ACD.

- (79) **Lo conosciamo lui.*
 him we-know him
 'We know him.'

With respect to null objects, Rizzi (1986) pointed out that a null generic or arbitrary type is allowed.

- (80) *Questo conduce Ø alla seguente conclusione.*
 this leads people to-the following conclusion
 'This leads (people) to the following conclusion.'

However, since the null object cannot be definite or referential, Italian is consistent with my prediction. It has CLLD but lacks ACD and NROs.²⁷

5.3 French

French regularly exhibits CLLD (81). ACD is also allowed but it is restricted to pronominal objects (82) per Kayne (2000).

- (81) *Jean, nous le connaissons.*
 Jean we him know
 'Jean, we know him.'

- (82) (a) *Jean la connaît elle.*
 Jean her knows her
 'Jean knows her.'
- (b) **Jean la connaît Marie.*
 Jean her knows Marie
 'Jean knows Marie.'

(Kayne 2000: 165)

With respect to null objects, the picture is more complicated. According to Cummins & Roberge (2005), the following types of null objects are allowed: D-linked null objects (83), null objects recovered by deixis (84), cognate null objects with a situational antecedent (85), and regular cognate null objects (86).²⁸

²⁷ Luraghi (2004: 246) observes that Old Italian allowed null objects in contexts similar to Latin, where modern Italian disallows them. And she states in footnote 8 that null objects "occasionally occur" in Modern Italian "with verbs that express repetition...".

²⁸ French spoken in the Ivory Coast also allows null referential objects (Aboa 2014).

- (83) (a) *Tu veux ce livre?*
 you want this book
 ‘Do you want this book?’
- (b) *Oh! Mais j’ai déjà lu Ø.*
 oh but I-have already read it
 ‘Oh, but I have already read it.’
- (84) (A gives B the newspaper and says:)
Tiens, lis Ø.
 have read it
 ‘Here it is, read it.’
- (85) *Je vais acheter un magazine au kiosque, et je*
 I go buy a magazine at-the kiosk and I
lirai Ø en t’attendant.
 will-read it while you-waiting
 ‘I’ll go buy a magazine at the kiosk and I’ll read it while I wait for you.’
- (86) *Pendant mon congé sabbatique j’ai surtout*
 during my leave sabbatical I-have moreover
l’intention de lire Ø.
 the-intention of read it
 ‘During my sabbatical I have, moreover, the intention of reading it.’

These null objects are the same restricted type found in the non-Rioplatense South American varieties of Spanish as discussed above in Section 3.3.²⁹ Consequently, French appears to pattern like Conservative Spanish, which is expected since it only has ACD restricted to pronominal objects.

5.4 Variation in Portuguese

5.4.1 Old Portuguese

Old Portuguese had CLLD (87) and ACD apparently restricted to pronominal objects (88).

²⁹ According to Donaldson (2013: 83), Old French also had null objects and allowed them in a wider variety of contexts than Modern French.

- (87) [A *verdade daquesta profecia*]_i *mais claramente a_i vemos*
 the truth of-this prophecy more clearly it we-see
cadadia...
 every-day
 ‘The truth of this prophecy, we see it more clearly every day.’
 (*Os Diálogos de São Gregório*, 14th cent.;
 cited in [Ribeiro & Torres Morais 2012](#): 101)
- (88) *e chagarom-no_i a el_i de muitas chagas.*
 and they-injured-him to him of many injuries
 ‘and they injured him with many injuries.’
 (*A Demanda do Santo Graal*, 13th century;
 cited in [de Castilho 2005](#): 33)

In (88) the direct object *el* is doubled by the clitic *no*. Notice that if we consider this ACD, it is similar to what is found in Conservative Spanish with doubling of pronominal objects. However, these authors do not go into detail on patterns of ACD in Old Portuguese. For example, is ACD in Old Portuguese limited to pronominal objects or not? Also, is it optional and how frequently does it occur? Could it be clitic right dislocation instead?

Regarding null objects, [Jansen \(2016\)](#) found very few examples, the earliest of which date from the 14th and 15th centuries. This is apparently subsequent to the development of ACD which would be consistent with my prediction. Nevertheless, it is difficult to make any conclusions at this point regarding Old Portuguese without further examination of patterns of ACD and CLLD.

5.4.2 Brazilian Portuguese

Much more work has been done on these patterns in the modern varieties of Portuguese. In Brazilian Portuguese, CLLD can occur (89 a) but the clitic tends to be replaced by a full pronoun like *ela* as in (89 b) below. Nevertheless, CLLD with epithets is not acceptable (89 c).

- (89) (a) [A *minha amiga*]_i, *eu a_i vi na quinta.*³⁰
 the my friend I her saw on-the farm
 (b) [A *minha amiga*]_i, *eu vi ela_i na quinta.*
 the my friend I saw her on-the farm
 ‘My friend, I saw her on the farm.’

³⁰ I thank Janayna Carvalho for these data via personal communication.

- (c) **[A minha amiga]_i, eu a_i vi [aquela menina bonita]_i*
 the my friend I her saw that girl beautiful
na quinta.
 on-the farm
 'My friend, I saw that beautiful girl on the farm.'

For ACD, [Machado-Rocha & Martins Ramos \(2016\)](#) show that it occurs optionally in conservative written Brazilian Portuguese (90) and in a variety spoken in Minas Gerais, where it is limited to first- and second-person pronominal objects (91).

- (90) *Viu-me a mim.*
 he-saw-me to me
 'He saw me.'

- (91) (a) *Ele me_i ajuda eu_i.*
 'He helps me.'
 (b) *Eu te_i ajudo você_i.*
 'I help you.'

(from [Machado-Rocha & Martins Ramos 2016](#))

Thus, Brazilian Portuguese patterns somewhat like Conservative Spanish in that ACD is restricted to pronominal objects. However, it departs from Conservative Spanish in that ACD is optional; it rarely occurs in most spoken varieties, and it does not occur with third-person pronominal objects.

As for null objects, Brazilian Portuguese does allow them in a wide variety of contexts. [Schwenter \(2006\)](#) shows most frequently the antecedent is third-person and inanimate as in (92) below.

- (92) *O João comprou [um livro novo]_i. Ontem ele*
 the Juan bought a book new yesterday he
trouxe Ø_i à aula.
 brought it to class
 'Juan bought a new book. Yesterday he brought it to class.'

(from [Schwenter 2006](#))

According to [Cyrino \(2012: 54ff\)](#), the following properties characterize null objects in Brazilian Portuguese: having an inanimate antecedent and occurring in later coordinate clauses (93), having an inanimate antecedent not related to the lexical content of the object's verb (94), having a specific interpre-

tation recoverable from an inanimate antecedent (95), having the a sloppy identity interpretation recoverable from an inanimate antecedent (96).³¹

- (93) (a) *João descascou a banana e Maria comeu Ø.*
 João peeled the banana and Maria ate it
 ‘João peeled the banana and Maria ate it.’
- (b) **João viu Maria e Pedro beijou Ø.*
 João saw Maria and Pedro kissed her
 ‘João saw Maria and Pedro kissed her.’
- (94) (a) *Maria comprou aquela saia quando ela viu Ø na loja.*
 Maria bought that skirt when she saw it in-the shop
 ‘Maria bought that skirt when she saw it in the shop.’
- (b) **Maria beijou aquele rapaz quando ela viu Ø na escola.*
 Maria kissed that boy when she saw him in-the school
 ‘Maria kissed that boy when she saw him in the school.’
- (95) *Minha avó fez sushis porque seus filhos queriam continuar comendo Ø depois que voltaram da praia.*
 my grandmother made sushi because her children wanted to-continue eating them after that they-returned from-the beach
 ‘My grandmother made sushi because her children wanted to continue eating them after they returned from the beach.’
- (96) *Ontem o João pôs o dinheiro no cofre, mas Pedro guardou Ø na gaveta.*
 yesterday the João put the money in-the safe but Pedro kept it in-the drawer
 ‘Yesterday João put the money in the safe but Pedro kept it in the drawer.’

Cyrino points out that NOs in Brazilian Portuguese are distinct from those in American Spanish since only the former allow sloppy readings and have

³¹ These data are adapted from Cyrino (2012: 54–55), examples (33)–(36).

inanimate antecedents. Building on previous work (Cyrino 1994, 1997) she analyzes Brazilian Portuguese NOs as DP ellipsis. Cyrino (2019: 3483) observes that some putative null objects with animate antecedents can occur as in (97) below.

- (97) *A Maria, (ele) sempre reclama quando eu levo Ø/ela*
 the Maria she always complains when I take her
no médico.
 in-the doctor
 ‘Maria, she always complains when I take her to the doctor.’

While (97) appears to contain a null object, Cyrino argues that the gap is not the result of DP ellipsis but rather movement of a topic to the left-periphery.

From this brief discussion one might posit that Brazilian Portuguese is at a late stage of the OAC. ACD has, for the most part been lost and now object clitics, especially in the third person, are typically null (Luís & Kaiser 2016). Interestingly, Nunes (2015) argues that third-person object clitics are not part of the grammar for most speakers but are acquired in school. This suggests Brazilian Portuguese is undergoing or has undergone deflection; i.e., the loss of object clitics as object agreement inflection. In order to truly test my prediction in Brazilian Portuguese, a diachronic analysis of ACD in Brazilian Portuguese specifically needs to be conducted. The expectation is that Brazilian Portuguese would exhibit unrestricted ACD before it began to allow null objects and losing object clitics. On the other hand, it has been shown that a stage can be skipped in the course of a linguistic cycle. For example, Bahtchevanova & van Gelderen (2016) demonstrate that Modern Colloquial French may have skipped stage (c) of the OAC and has now replaced postverbal object clitics with strong pronouns. This may be the case in Brazilian Portuguese as well.

5.4.3 European Portuguese

European Portuguese exhibits CLLD (98) and patterns like Conservative Spanish with respect to ACD (99).

- (98) *A sopa_i comeu-a_i O Paulo.*
 the soup ate-it the Paul
 ‘Paul ate the soup.’ (from Farren 2016)
- (99) (a) *Vi-*(os) a eles*
 I-saw-them DOM them
 ‘I saw them.’

- (b) *Vi-(*os) aos meninos*
 I-saw-them DOM-the boys
 ‘I saw the boys.’ (from [Dubert & Galves 2016: 434](#))
- (c) *Vimo-(*lo) ao João.*
 we-saw-him DOM-the João
 ‘We saw João.’ (from [Magro 2019: 33](#))

In (99 a), ACD of a pronominal object is obligatory but unlike in Rioplatense, ACD of animate and definite non-pronominal objects is not acceptable (99 b, 99 c). European Portuguese also allows null objects (100), but not to the same extent as Brazilian Portuguese.

- (100) *A Joana viu Ø na TV ontem.*
 the Joana saw it on-the TV yesterday
 ‘Joana saw it/him/her/them on TV yesterday.’
 (from [Raposo 1986](#))

In fact, [Cyrino \(1994: 137\)](#) states that Brazilian Portuguese null objects occur much more freely than they do in European Portuguese. One of the differences is that European Portuguese null objects cannot occur in islands (101).

- (101) **O pirata partiu para as Caraíbas depois de ter*
 the pirate left for the Caribbean after of having
guardado Ø no cofre.
 placed it in-the safe
 ‘The pirate left for the Caribbean after having placed it in the safe.’

Thus, ACD restricted to pronominal objects and fewer contexts for the licensing of null objects suggest that European Portuguese is at an earlier stage of the OAC than Rioplatense. Additional evidence for this comes from the following data.

- (102) *Apenas a minha mãe me ajudou e (me)*
 only the my mother me helped and me
incentivou.
 encouraged
 ‘Only my mother helped me and encouraged me.’
 (from [Luís & Kaiser 2016: 218](#))

- (103) *Se me não engano, ela faz anos a 21 de janeiro.*
 if me not mistake she makes years at 21 of January
 ‘If I am not mistaken, her birthday is on January 21.’
 (from [Luís & Kaiser 2016](#): 218)

In European Portuguese the object clitic can be omitted in a second VP conjunct (102) and the clitic can be separated from the verb by negation (103). [Maddox \(2019\)](#) shows that the same patterns occurred in Old Spanish, as in (104) and (105) below, indicating it was at stage (a) of the OAC.

- (104) *lo_i mató y Ø_i despedaçó...*
 him it-killed and him it-tore-apart
 ‘It killed him and tore him apart...’
 (Pedro Mejía, *Silva de varia lección*; c. 1540–1550)

- (105) *ella si me non engaña, parece que ama a*
 she if me not deceives it-seems that she-loves DOM
mí.
 me
 ‘She, if she is not deceiving me, it seems that she loves me.’
 (Juan Ruiz, *Libro de Buen Amor*; 1330–1343)

In Conservative Spanish, however, object clitics must be repeated in VP conjuncts (106) and interpolation is no longer possible (107).

- (106) *lo_i mató y *(lo_i) despedazó.*
 him it-killed and him it-tore-apart
 ‘It killed him and tore him apart.’

- (107) *Si (*me) no *(me) engaño...*
 if me not me I-deceive
 ‘If I do not deceive myself.’

The patterns in (102) and (103) above suggest that European Portuguese is more like Old Spanish than Conservative Spanish. However, if that is the case then why does European Portuguese allow null objects, while Old Spanish apparently does not allow them?

It may be that the null objects in European Portuguese and the null objects in Brazilian Portuguese and Rioplatense are simply not the same element. In fact, there is not currently a consensus on the analysis of null objects in European Portuguese and Brazilian Portuguese (v. [Rinke, Flores & Barbosa 2018](#)),

and not much theoretical work has been done on null objects in Rioplatense. A further wrinkle is that Latin also allowed null objects, as seen in Section 5.1 above. Latin was at stage (a) of the OAC with full DP pronouns (Maddox 2019) but null objects should only occur at the stage (c) of the OAC on my analysis. It may be that the null objects in European Portuguese are a Latin relic.³² Null objects in Brazilian Portuguese and Rioplatense, on the other hand, may actually be connected to the grammaticalization of object clitics. Alternatively, Ledgeway (2012: 74) suggests, following Galves (1993) and Morais (2003), that Brazilian Portuguese null objects may be an independent development related to the loss of Brazilian Portuguese null subjects. At this point these suggestions are merely speculative and for now I leave them to be addressed in future research.

5.5 Romanian

Compared with the other Romance languages, Romanian allows for more diverse patterns of ACD, as the following data show.³³

- (108) (a) **(L-)am invitat pe el.*
 him-I-have invited DOM him
 'I have invited him.'
- (b) *(L-)am văzut pe Ion.*
 him-I-have seen DOM Ion
 'I have seen Ion.'
- (c) *(L-)am văzut pe copil.*
 him-I-have seen DOM child-the
 'I have seen the child.'
- (d) *(L-)au spălat pe câțel.*
 him-they-have washed DOM dog-the
 'They have washed the dog.'
- (e) *(L-)am salutată pe un vecin.*
 him-I-have greeted DOM a neighbor
 (from Avram & Coene 2009 and references therein)
- (f) *A citit-(*o) bibliografia.*
 she-has read-it bibliography-the
 'She has read the bibliography.'
- (from Dindelegan 2013: 137)

³² This is also inferred in Luraghi (2004: 247).

³³ I am indebted to Alexandru Nicolae (p.c.) for much of the CLLD and null object data in this section.

As in Conservative Spanish, European Portuguese, and French, ACD in Romanian is obligatory with pronominal objects (108 a). However, ACD is also optionally possible with animates preceded by the differential object marker *pe* (108 b–108 d). This makes Romanian similar to Rioplatense, as seen in Section 3.1 above. Interestingly, Romanian ACD is even less restricted since, unlike Rioplatense, it allows doubling of indefinites (108 e).

Romanian exhibits canonical CLLD (109 a) and, importantly, even CLLD with epithets as in (109 b).

- (109) (a) [*Pe prietena mea Maria*]_i, *am văzut-o_i luni*.
 DOM friend.DEF my Maria I-have seen-her Monday
 ‘My friend Maria, I saw her on Monday.’
- (b) [*Pe prietena mea Maria*]_i, *am văzut-o_i luni*
 DOM friend.DEF my Maria I-have seen-her Monday
 [*pe acea nebună*]_i.
 DOM that crazy-girl
 ‘My friend Maria, I saw that crazy girl on Monday.’

As in Rioplatense, CLLD with epithets is allowed with animates, as in (110) and (111) below, but not with inanimates (112).

- (110) [*Pe Ion*]_i, *nimeni nu-l_i va alege [pe acel escroc]*_i.
 DOM Ion no-one not-him go choose DOM that
 crook
 ‘Ion, no one will choose him, that crook.’
- (111) [*Pe pisica noastră*]_i, *fica mea nu o_i atinge*
 DOM cat.DEF our daughter.DEF my not her touch
 [*pe acea ticăloasă*]_i.
 DOM that rascal
 ‘Our cat, my daughter does not touch her, that rascal.’
- (112) **[Motocicleta aceea]*_i, *Petru o_i urăște [mașinăria aceea infernală]*_i.
 motorcycle.DEF that Petru it hates machine.DEF that
 infernal
 ‘That motorcycle, Petru hates it, that infernal machine.’

Patterns of CLLD with epithets in Romanian have not been observed before, as far as I am aware. However, they are expected on my account. Given that

ACD is rather unrestricted, the object clitics are more highly grammaticalized; i.e., at a later stage of the OAC. Consequently, they have been reanalyzed as *v* and thus the verbal complement position is open for *pro* or lexical objects to merge, as in Rioplatense.

Romanian also allows some types of null objects, as the following data from Avram & Coene (2009) show.

(113) (a) *Cauți cartea?*
 you-look book-the
 'Are you looking for the book?'

(b) *Gata, am găsit Ø.*
 ready I-have found it
 'It's okay. I found it.'

(114) (a) *Citești cartea?*
 you-reading book-the
 'Are you reading the book?'

(b) **Gata, am citit Ø.*
 ready I-have read it
 'It's okay. I have read it.'

(115) (a) *Repari mașina?*
 you-repair car-the
 'Are you repairing the car?'

(b) **Da, repar Ø.*
 yes I-repair it
 'Yes, I'm repairing it.'

(116) (a) *Mănânci merele?*
 you-eating apples-the
 'Will you eat these apples?'

(b) *Bine, mănânc Ø.*
 okay I-eat them
 'Okay, I'll eat them.'

(Avram & Coene 2009: 240n5)

Avram & Coene (2009) claim that null objects are allowed when the antecedent can be determined from extralinguistic (pragmatic) context. These authors do not give a full account of these types of null objects in Romanian but they propose the ungrammaticality of (114b) and (115b) to be related to the verb

not being associated with a prototypical object. They also suggest that aspect is not relevant but they do not provide any data to support this. Does Romanian pattern with Rioplatense with respect to the licensing of null objects? Compare the novel data below with those seen for Rioplatense in Section 3.3 above.

- (117) (a) *Am un calmant pentru somn.*
 I-have a painkiller for sleeping
 'I have a painkiller for sleeping.'
- (b) *Nu bea Ø. Îți va face rău.*
 not take it you it-goes make ill
 'Don't take it. It'll make you ill.'
- (118) (a) *Unde ai găsit cămașa aia?*
 where have-you found shirt.DEF that
 'Where did you find that shirt?'
- (b) **Am cumpărat Ø în magazin.*
 I-have bought it in store
 'I bought it in the store.'
- (119) (a) *Ai văzut noul film cu George Clooney?*
 have-you seen new-the film with George Clooney
 'Did you see the new George Clooney film?'
- (b) **Da, am văzut Ø cu Ioana.*
 yes I-have seen it with Ioana
 'Yes, I saw it with Ioana.'

Like Rioplatense, null objects appear to be allowed only in the present tense or imperative mood, hence the unacceptability of (118) and (119). Recall, however, Rioplatense does occasionally allow preterite tense null objects, especially if pragmatically conditioned. Here Romanian appears to depart from Rioplatense, as in (120).

- (120) Situation: You and your partner are at the dinner table having a conversation. Your partner leaves to check on the children. Your partner observes the children in their room putting their toys in a box. S/he returns to the dinner table and you ask her/him:
- (a) *Le-au pus? (the toys)*
 them-they-have put
 'Did they put them away?'

- (b) **Ei au pus Ø?*
 they have put them
 ‘Did they put them away?’
- (c) **Au pus Ø în cutie?*
 they-have put them in box
 ‘Did they put them away in the box?’

Romanian patterns like Rioplatense in allowing (120 a) and disallowing (120 c). However, the Spanish version of (120 b) was acceptable in Rioplatense. Why should this be the case?³⁴ The question calls for a more detailed analysis focused solely on null objects and the contexts in which these two languages specifically allow them. I leave this for future work.

6 CONCLUSION

In this study I have shown that different varieties of Spanish are at different stages of the Object Agreement Cycle. Old Spanish is stage (a), Conservative Modern Spanish is stage (b), Rioplatense Spanish is at stage (c). CLLD, ACD, and NROs become available as the OAC progresses. The derivation of CLLD and ACD will vary depending on the stage of the OAC. NROs become available last. I analyzed NROs in Rioplatense as being licensed via a D-feature in *v*. This D-feature is there due to reanalysis of the D-clitic as the *v*-head. Based on the patterns observed in Section 5 above, different varieties of Romance are at distinct stages of the OAC, as represented in (121) below.³⁵

- (121) Old Spanish, Italian →
 Stage (a): clitic = DP; only CLLD
 European Portuguese, French, Conservative Modern Spanish →
 Stage (b): clitic = DP/D-*v*; CLLD and ACD
 Rioplatense Spanish, Romanian →
 Stage (c): clitic = *v*; CLLD + epithets, ACD, NROs

A prediction falls out of my analysis such that if a language allows NROs it will have developed less restricted ACD first. NROs arise after ACD because

³⁴ Romanian also departs from Conservative Spanish and Rioplatense in not allowing arbitrary or generic null objects:

- (i) **Muzica asta face Ø fericiți*
 ‘This music makes people happy.’ (Avram & Coene 2009: 239)

³⁵ I leave out Brazilian Portuguese here because it is difficult to assign a stage to it at this point. A clearer understanding of the diachrony of ACD in this language will shed further light on this problem.

it is ACD where m-merger of the object DP and *v* takes place. This prediction appears to hold throughout Romance, though more work needs to be done on the different types of null objects allowed. My analysis also provides a straightforward explanation for the presence of CLLD with epithets in Rioplatense and Romanian. Only in these two varieties of Romance is the clitic fully grammaticalized as object agreement, a *v*-head. Consequently, the verbal complement position is open for the epithet to merge.

ABBREVIATIONS

ABL = ablative	NOM = nominative
ACC = accusative	NRO = null referential object
ACD = accusative clitic doubling	.o = object marker
AUX = auxiliary	OAC = object agreement cycle
CL = clitic	OBJ = object agreement morpheme
CLLD = clitic-left dislocation	PF = phonetic form
DAT = dative	PRET = preterite
DEF = definite	REFL = reflexive
DOM = differential object marker	.s = subject agreement
DP = determiner phrase	s = singular
EPP = Extended Projection Principle	TopP = topic phrase
F = feminine	TP = tense phrase
GEN = genitive	uAsp = uninterpretable aspect feature
H-TopP = high topic phrase	uCase = uninterpretable case feature
HPP = Head Preference Principle	u ϕ = uninterpretable phi-features
IMP = imperative	ϕ P = phi phrase
IND = indicative	<i>v</i> P = little <i>v</i> phrase
iAsp = interpretable aspect feature	VP = verb phrase
iCase = interpretable case feature	1s = first-person singular
i ϕ = interpretable phi-features	2s = second-person singular
KP = kase phrase	3s = third-person singular
L-TopP = low topic phrase	1P = first-person plural
M = masculine	2P = second-person plural
NegP = negation phrase	3P = third-person plural

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