

**FRENCH CLITICS AND OBJECT SPLITS**  
**A CASE STUDY IN MICROVARIATION\***

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**1. Introduction**

In this paper, I would like to address two main sets of questions. The first set of questions is concerned with basic notions on the study of variation in a Universal Grammar. What is microvariation? Should studies in microvariation be treated differently from studies in macrovariation? The second range of questions pertains to the empirical study itself which deals with French object clitics. Why is the distribution of a deficient *ça* in the grammar of a moribund Swiss French dialect so different from the distribution of other French object clitics? This last topic has received very little attention in the otherwise very rich literature on object clitics in Romance.

One aspect of the present research is based on the findings of Ritter & Rosen (2001). In a study on unrelated languages, they have observed that one could find object splits or two classes of direct objects based on their syntactic and semantic properties. I therefore want to argue through a study in microvariation that there can also be splits in the way French object clitics are interpreted and checked in the derivation. Studies on French object clitics up to now have shown that clitics are correlated with their morphological feature-content, as well as definiteness or specificity (cf. Kayne 1994, 2000a, Sportiche 1995). However, it is not excluded to find cases in the grammar of French where the interpretation of a clitic can correlate not only with definiteness or specificity properties but also with event properties.

It is this possible split in interpretation, observed in a variety of languages around the world, that is also found with the clitic or deficient *ça* in this dialect of French. The distribution of this object can be sensitive to the event, namely

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\* I would like to thank the audience at LSRL 32 for their comments and interest. I also thank for their warm and friendly welcome the organizers of the colloquium which was held at the University of Toronto (19-21 April 2002). This research was partially funded by SSHRC (410-2000-0954) and (410-2001-0119).

the lexical type of verb, its temporal properties as well as the referential properties of *ça* itself. The crucial facts are given in (1) below where we find a clear contrast with the transitive stative verb *aimer*. They belong to a moribund Swiss French mostly spoken till the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (cf. Pierrehumbert 1926, Destraz 1990). Since these forms were mostly used by speakers of the Canton de Vaud, they are here identified as Vaudois French (henceforth VdF). Note that they are rarely heard today.

- (1) a. *Bon ça, tu ça laisses là* (Destraz 1990) (VdF)  
 Well that, you that-CL leave there  
 “Well that, you leave it there”
- b. *J’aime ça, le café/ visiter des foires* (Colloquial French = CFr)  
 I like that, coffee / to visit fairs
- c. *\*Je ça aime, le café/ visiter des foires* (VdF) / CFr  
 I that-CL like, coffee/ to visit fairs
- d. *J’ai toujours ça aimé, visiter des foires* (VdF / \*CF)  
 I have always that liked, visit fairs  
 “I have always enjoyed visiting fairs”
- e. *Je ça aimais* (VdF / \*CFr)  
 I that-CL liked-imparfait  
 “I used to like that”

The present study draws heavily on previous research with Christian Rubattel, namely Vinet & Rubattel (2000), Vinet (2001), cf. also Vinet (2000) and Vinet & Rubattel (1999). The article is organized as follows. In section 2 I first address some of the main concerns about studies on microvariation in the framework of UG. Section 3 presents the general background, namely the features and properties of clitics in Romance as well as their derivation in a minimalist framework. Section 4 introduces Ritter & Rosen (2001) and shows how the facts they discuss are related to the facts in the dialect reported here. In section 5, I discuss the feature matrix of a deficient *ça* and show how its different properties are clearly distinct from the properties of definite or specific clitics. In general, French clitics check their features irrespective of the event type on the verb. Moreover, it is demonstrated that *ça* lacks structural Case. It behaves differently with respect to Topicalization, Right-Dislocation and Complex Inversion facts. Section 6 concludes briefly.

## 2. *Studies in microvariation*

In his study on linguistic diversity, Hale (1995) presented his “essentialist” view of Universal Grammar. It reads as follows :

Hale (1995) : an essentialist view of linguistic diversity

A. Universal grammar consists in the basic linguistic elements and their essential properties.

B. There are no stipulations beyond (A).

... There are no limitations on the interaction of linguistic elements, or systems of elements, apart from those which follow essentially from the elements and their properties. This is the source of linguistic diversity.

This is the view I also assume throughout this study on the representation as well as the limits of microvariation. In other words, the distribution of the object clitic *ça* can be explained by the interaction of the properties of *ça* itself and the properties of the predicate with which it merges in the derivation.

The term microvariation generally refers to interpersonal, style levels of the same language as well as geographical variation between speakers of the same language. From this perspective, the study of the deficient *ça* can be identified as a geographical form of variation in the grammar of French. It is certainly not accidental that such data have been observed in certain areas of Switzerland and Belgium, but not elsewhere. A possible connection can be made with a local francoprovençal patois. There exists a demonstrative pronominal form *sin* or *cein* in a francoprovençal patois which was also used as a weak DP form, as in (2a). Moreover, the weak DP *ça* was also found in the writings of Mme. De Charrière in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, as illustrated in (2b). However, in both these grammars *sin/ça* never appear as clitics.

- (2) a. *On va sin fer a marts* (Glossaire des patois de la Suisse romande)  
 On va *ça* faire à marcher  
 “We are going to make that work”
- b. *Je courus... chez la Jeanne-Aimée pour tout ça lui dire*  
 I ran... to the Jeanne-Aimée to all that her tell  
 “I ran...to Jeanne-Aimée to tell her all that”  
 (1784, Mme. De Charrière, *Lettres neuchâtelaises*)

## 3. *General theoretical background*

The generative enterprise has always assumed, as in Chomsky (1999), that languages are uniform, with variety restricted to easily detectable properties of utterances. As is well known, the most visible or easily detectable part of any type of linguistic variation is connected to PF options and lexical arbitrariness

but I will ignore these aspects of variation in this study. I mainly focus on the syntactic and semantic properties of object clitics.

Variation is deeply rooted in human nature. It is assumed that research in microvariation should not be treated differently from research in cross-linguistic variation. A comparative analysis of two extremely different language systems or a comparative analysis of two dialects of the same language must be substantially identical. Within minimalist terms, variation has been identified on features of functional heads or non substantive parts of the lexicon, and this has been the position held for approximately the last ten years. It is therefore expected that grammars through time and space will choose some of these features on basic linguistic elements to create a variety of forms. However, there are limits to the possible variety that can be found. This study on microvariation examines how linguistic diversity can be restricted by the general features and properties of clitics or pronouns in Romance.

Ritter & Rosen (2001), who have discussed the interpretive values of object splits in unrelated languages, provided inspiration for our own research on microvariation. Their study deals with language systems that are extremely different. They have shown that accusative Case checking, object agreement, as well as Object shift can occur irrespective of event type in certain languages (namely Hebrew, Turkish, Bantu and Icelandic) while in other languages such as Finnish, Palauan and Mandarin, agreement, Case and position may be used to express event classification. I argue that a similar object split can be observed between closely related grammars of the same language. I will show how the clitic *ça* can be connected to the countability of nominals and events illustrating therefore how the grammar of French can also display splits in the position of objects. Object clitics in French usually check their features irrespective of the event type on the verb. Clitics like *le, la, les, en* may be sensitive to definiteness or specificity, gender, animacy, count/mass features. They are not sensitive to the *aktionsart* of the verb or the Tense on the verb.

- (3) a. *Je les connais/connaissais/donne, les livres sur la rénovation*  
 "I know/ knew/ give, the books on renovation"  
 b. *J'en connais/connaissais/donne, des livres*  
 I of-them know/ knew/ give books  
 "I know/knew/give a lot of books"

As is well known, the boundedness or delimitation properties of an event can be determined by the *aktionsart* of the verb combined to the mass/count distinction and other referential properties of the object. The verb interacts

closely with the preverbal and postverbal elements. When types of verbs are considered, namely the classification given by Vendler (1967), Dowty (1979) and others, it is the verb phrase rather than the verb itself that becomes significant. The object clitic *ça*, which has rarely been analyzed, from a descriptive as well as a theoretical point of view, offers an interesting piece of study for a new perspective on clitics in Romance since that clitic is sensitive to boundedness or event properties. Example (4a) is therefore ruled out in this dialect even though (4b) is perfectly acceptable.

- (4) a. \**Je ça connais/aime, ces livres* (VdF)  
 I that-CL know/like those books  
 "I know/ like books"  
 b. *Tu me ça donnes (ce truc)* (VdF)  
 You to-me that-CL give this thing  
 "You give me that"

A rough descriptive generalization for the distribution of the deficient form *ça* in this grammar reads as in (5) where the term deficient refers to "weak DP", in the sense of Cardinaletti & Starke (1998).

- (5) Descriptive generalization :  
 The interpretation of the deficient object *ça* in a moribund French dialect is correlated with its internal quantitatively indeterminate properties as well as the boundedness of the event. It is acceptable with event transitives in all tenses but it is excluded with certain predicates in the present tense, namely transitive statives. Moreover, *ça* attaches as a head to a verb inflected for person but it attaches as a maximal projection to a verb which is non inflected for Person, namely a past participle, an infinitive or a gerundive.

The data will be discussed in more details in section 5 below but before we do, let us look at the general properties of clitics, as well as the framework which will be used to account for these facts.

### 3.1 *General Features and Properties of Clitics in Romance*

Clitics in Romance are pronominal elements which present a highly constrained set of morphological features. Pronominal elements have generally been identified as a bundle of nominal features, namely person, gender or number, and this hierarchically organized set of nominal features usually follows the path of verbal features in the derivation, namely Tense, Aspect or other functional projections used to encode event properties in the clause (cf. Borer 1994). Such nominal and verbal features interact to produce grammatical

sequences. Assuming a minimalist framework, the verb and the clitic will undergo merging with a T-related head to produce an ordered set (Cl, T) and clitics always merge on a functional head above VP.

There are many approaches to the study of clitics in Romance within the field of generative grammar, cf. van Riemsdijk (1999), Heap & Roberge (2001) for a review of the literature on the topic. In this study, I will explore an hypothesis which assumes that French clitics are hosted by a “Clitic shell” where clitic positions which correspond to aspectually characterized positions are rigidly ordered, following studies by Manzini & Savoia (1998), among others. As in Tenny (1994) and Borer (1994) I adopt an aspectual view of thematic structure, using the notions of Originator, Measure or Delimiter of the event. The main empirical arguments for an analysis in terms of a Clitic shell, from Manzini & Savoia (1998 : 117), are repeated in (6) below.

- (6) Empirical arguments for a Clitic shell analysis
- There is a fixed number of Cl projections and this number is smaller than the number of arguments that can be cliticized;
  - Clitic positions in Italian (as well as in French) are rigidly ordered with respect to one another;
  - There are mutual exclusions of clitics that do not mirror mutual exclusions between the corresponding lexical arguments.

Instead of being generated inside the VP and being moved to the functional head positions, clitics in this framework are generated in the position where they appear. They become attractors of the aspectual features associated with the lexical verb. It is then assumed that an abstract movement of the aspectual F features of the verb to the position where the clitics (7a) or weak DP forms (7b) are generated can pair them successfully or not. Note that in (7), VP\* stands for Past participle, Infinitival or Gerundive verbal forms whereas VP stands for verbs inflected for Person.

- (7) a.  $TP [ Cl_{Meas} \zeta a_T [ V_{+F} ] VP [ t-V_F ]$   
 b.  $TP [ [T V] \dots MeasP [ (tol:t) \zeta a_{Meas} [ V^*_{+F} ] ] VP^* [ t-V^*_F ] ]$

With some minor modifications to the framework of Borer (1994), namely in allowing MeasureP to appear in a position between the inflected T and the T uninflected for Person, as in (1d), this analysis provides a better explanation for the fact that the boundedness properties of an event are determined by the lexical properties of the verb in combination with the referential properties of

the argument *ça*. As will be demonstrated, the internal features of clitics, namely pronominal phi-features which can also account for countability features then play a crucial role in identifying the correct pairing between clitic positions and the predicate. Furthermore, it is generally assumed that Clitics need not check Case since they are overtly marked for Case. The clitic *ça*, however, is not overtly marked for Case. It is argued below that it lacks Case.

Apart from *ça*, there are other clitics which can also refer to a direct object in the clause, namely the definite *l* clitics (*le, la, les*) and the indefinite *en*. However, there is a mutual exclusion, both in Standard French and in this moribund VdF, between the clitics *les, en* and *ça*, for instance, which all serve to establish the interpretation of a direct object. Even though *ça, en* and *les* all bear a plural feature, they do not correspond to the same meaning and cannot be interchanged (cf. Vinet & Rubattel 1999, 2000). The clitic *ça* is also rigidly ordered with respect to Person, as observed in (8) below. It is always the most embedded clitic in a clitic cluster, as is also the case for *en* (cf. Boivin 1999). Note that this rigid ordering is not observed when *ça* is a weak DP form, with infinitives for instance one can find both forms : *pour tout ça vous dire/ pour vous tout ça dire* (in order to (all that you) tell / ... (you all that) tell).

- (8) a. *Tu me ça donnes* (VdF)  
 b. \**Tu ça me donnes* (VdF)  
     You that-cl me-cl give  
 c. *Tu m' en donnes*  
     You me-CL of-it-CL give  
     ‘‘You give me some’’

#### 4. Ritter & Rosen (2001) on object splits

Ritter & Rosen (2001) have argued that splits in object marking always correlate with specificity or definiteness of the object and in a subset of languages it also correlates with boundedness of the event. In order to illustrate this split they have proposed, based on Krifka (1992), that a feature [Quantization] is present or absent on the object DP to characterize the countability of nominals and events. They claim that [Quant] can either be a feature of the verb or a feature of the functional head Agr-O (where Agr-O here has semantic content) and the observed cross-linguistic variation is attributed to the language specific choice between these two heads.

- (9) a.  $\text{AgrOP} [ \text{Agr-O}_{\text{VP}} [ \text{V}[\text{Quant}] \text{ Obj} ] ]$  (Ritter & Rosen)  
 b.  $\text{AgrOP} [ \text{Agr-O}[\text{Quant}]_{\text{VP}} [ \text{V}[\text{Quant}] \text{ Obj} ] ]$

They indicate that direct objects in Finnish, for instance, can only bear Accusative Case if both the object and the event are bounded. Partitive case is rather associated with quantitatively indeterminate DPs and with unbounded events. The comparison with the *bǎ* construction in Mandarin Chinese is particularly interesting for our study. In Mandarin, as discussed in Cheng (1988), Wang (1999) and others, the *bǎ* NP-construction corresponds to the object-shift of an NP interpreted as specific and compatible only with delimited or bounded predicates. It is incompatible with a particle which marks an unbounded event. As illustrated in (10), *zài* is a progressive marker and is therefore ruled out with *bǎ*. The argument NP must be specific or definite, as shown in (11a), or an indefinite specific as in (11b). It can never correspond to an indefinite. Therefore, even though Chinese has no overt determiner, the DP *xìn* in (11a) can only have the interpretation *I have written the letter or the letters*, but not *I have written letters*:

- (10) a. *tā bǎ Zhangsan shā-le* (Cheng 1988)  
 He BA Zhangsan kill-ASP  
 “He killed Zhangsan”  
 b. \**tā zài bǎ Zhangsan shā*  
 He ASP BA Zhangsan kill  
 “He is killing Zhangsan”
- (11) a. *wǒ bǎ xìn xiě le* (Wang 1999)  
 I BA letter write-Asp  
 “I have written the letter/the letters/\*letters”  
 b. *wǒ bǎ yí wǎn fàn chī le* (Qu 1994)  
 I BA one bowl rice eat LE  
 “I ate one bowl of rice”

The object-shift with BA is also incompatible with transitive statives like *xǐhuan* (love), *rènshi* (know) and with other stative verbs like *shì* (be), *yǒu* (have), all predicates which do not measure an event. Example (12b) in Mandarin presents an interesting parallel with (3c) in this VdF dialect, in (12c).

- (12) a. *wǒ xǐhuan/rènshi tā le*  
 I love/know 3p Asp  
 “I loved/knew her/him”



- b. \**wǒ bǎ tā xǐhuan/rènshi le* (Huijun Zhou, p.c.)  
 I BA him love/know ASP  
 “I loved/knew her/him”
- c. \**Je ça connais/aime, ces livres* (VdF)  
 I that-CL know/ like these books  
 “I know/like these books”

The accusative Case marking in Finnish as well as the movement of the *bǎ*-NP phrase in Mandarin are the results of the combination of the object properties and of the event they appear in. This situation is illustrated in (9b) above where a quantized feature on the verb is checked on Agro and the feature attracts a definite or specific DP to Spec,AgroP. On the contrary, the Hebrew *et*-construction which introduces a definite direct object is characterized as an Accusative case marker only realized in the context of a definite direct object. Accusative Case marking in Hebrew, as well as in Turkish, is not correlated with the event but only with definiteness.

In a similar fashion and to summarize, it is here argued that a quantitatively indeterminate clitic-*ça* with a plural/mass reading combined to a deictic feature is correlated with the event. On the contrary, *l* clitics which are definite and specific clitics are overtly marked for Accusative Case, they are not correlated with the event but only with definiteness.

##### 5. *More on the properties of a deficient ça*

There are many aspects of the deficient form *ça* which are distinct from the usual properties of French clitics. First, there appears to be no morphological distinction between the strong pronoun *ça* as a postverbal full DP-projection in Colloquial French and the clitic D form of *ça* in this dialect. However, the clitic *ça* conforms to the general criteria presented for cliticness, namely the absence of modification, conjunction or contrastive stress.

- (13) a. \**Tu me ça aussi donnes* (VdF)  
 You me-DAT that-CL also give
- b. \**Tu me ça et ça donnes* (VdF)  
 You me-DAT that and that give
- c. \**Tu me ÇA donnes (et non l'autre)* (VdF)  
 You me-DAT THAT give (and not the other one)

Furthermore, *ça* in this grammar can also intervene between the two elements of a compound tense, as in (14a), illustrating a particular case of split

clitics where a clitic and a deficient form are adjoined to two different aspectually related functional heads, cf. also Kayne (1991). This split clitic phenomenon can be represented as in (14b) where Delimiter and Measure correspond to aspectual functional projections and T can either be an inflected T or a past participle  $T_{pp}$ . Many authors have argued that past participle is also a tensed form, cf. Ambar (1998) among others. The deficient *ça* is attached to the main verb in four different environments. The host verb can be inflected for Person (15a), it can be an infinitive (15b) and it can also be a small clause with a past participle preceded by an inflected auxiliary (15c). It can also appear adjoined to a gerundive (15d):

- (14) a. *Il nous a ça raconté*  
 (Vallothon, B. *Porte entr'ouvertes*, p. 186, Lausanne, 1905)  
 He us-CL has that told  
 "He told us that"
- b. ...CIDel [ Del-nous ]<sub>T</sub> [ a ]<sub>MeasP</sub> [ Meas-ça ]<sub>Tpp</sub>[raconté]
- (15) a. *On ça met dans l'eau* (VdF)  
 You that put into the water
- b. *Pour (tout) ça faire, il faut...* (VdF)  
 In order to (all) that do, you must...
- c. *J'ai déjà (tout) ça vu* (VdF)  
 I have already (all) that seen
- d. *Les frites, on ça prépare en (tout) ça mettant dans une friteuse*  
 Fries one that-CL prepares by (all) that dumping into a fryer  
 "One prepares fries by dumping all of it into a deep fryer"

In (15b) through (15d), *ça* corresponds to a maximal projection DP since it can be modified by the quantifier *tout*. For some still unclear reasons, *ça* cannot be attached to a present participle in the grammar of this dialect. The same situation is observed with the quantifier *tout* in SF: *\*J'ai trouvé un mot ça/tout expliquant* (VdF/ CollF) (I found a word that/all explaining). The other French clitics exhibit very few of these characteristics. They can be a host to an infinitive in (16) but they can never be modified since they are clitic heads: *\*Je veux le aussi voir* (I want it also see).

- (16) a. *Je veux [le] voir* "I want to see him"  
 b. *Je veux [lui] donner un livre* "I want to give him a book"  
 c. *Je veux [y] aller* "I want to go there"

However, these clitics can never appear between the inflected verb and the past participle, as illustrated in (17) :

- (17) a. *Je l'ai lu* (cf. \*J'ai [le] lu)  
 I it have read I have it-cl read  
 b. *Je lui ai donné un livre* (cf. \*J'ai [lui] donné un livre)  
 I to him have given a book I have to him-cl given a book  
 c. *J'y suis allé* (cf. \*Je suis [y] allé)  
 I there have been I have there been

One of the crucial and most visible difference between the distribution of the weak form *ça* and the other proclitics of French is that only the former can be adjoined to an inflectional head related to the tense of the past participle. Kayne (1991) has given examples of proclitics and enclitics adjoined to past participle forms in other grammars of Romance (examples are given in (18)) and Tortora (2000) has shown that enclitics in a dialect spoken in the North of Italy (cf. 18e) can also be hosted by adverbs or resultative prepositions. However, none of these sequences in (18) present the bundle of properties characterizing the weak form *ça* in the dialect under study.

- (18) a. *Conosciutala*, ... (Belletti, 1990)  
 Known-sg.fem her-cl, ...  
 "Having known her, ..."  
 b. *O José tinha realmente me deceptionado* (Br. Port.) (Galvès, 1997)  
 José had really me-cl disappointed  
 "José had really disappointed me"  
 c. *Études (...) lui offertes par ses collègues...* (Walloon Fr.)  
 (Grevisse et Goosse, 1993)  
 Studies...to him-cl offered by his colleagues  
 d. *le document ci-joint* (FS)  
 the document here-cl-attached  
 e. *i vænghi piö-lla* (Borgomanerese, Tortora 2000)  
 SCL see-1sg no.more-her  
 "I don't see her anymore."

In his seminal work on French inversion and clitics, Kayne (1972) has indicated that *ça* and *ce* in Standard French could not appear as cliticized objects, as shown in (19).

- (19) a. \**Jean ça/ce comprend* (SF) (Kayne 1972 : 94)  
       John that-cl understands  
       b. *Jean comprend ça* (Standard French)  
       c. *Jean ça comprend* (VdF/ SF)  
       Jean that-cl understands

He then explained that this situation was due to a lack of parallelism in terms of features between such forms and the other well-known definite object *l* clitics *le*, *la*, *lui* and *les*. But clitics in Romance are not necessarily definite and specific, they can have a variety of referential properties connected to the features of their internal structures. Moreover, phonologically, there is nothing that prohibits the monosyllabic morphological form *ça* from being a clitic. Note that *cela*, which is usually considered the non-reduced form of *ça* in French is not found as a clitic form in this Swiss dialect \**Elle cela comprend* (She understands that).

*Ça* can appear as a subject or an object. Auger (1993) has discussed the features of *ça* in subject position. It is interesting to note that subject *ça* also corresponds to an unspecified quantity and an undetermined content. In some cases, as argued by (Reed 1999), *ça/ce* in subject positions, can also be sensitive to aspectual effects.

#### 5.1 *The internal feature matrix of ça*

In SF, as well as in VdF, the object *ça* refers to an unspecified quantity or an undetermined content of N (Zribi-Hertz 2000). It can therefore refer to a mass, a collective noun, plural individuals or a propositional event, as in (20).

- (20) a. *Je déteste ça, partir /la vermine/ les cadeaux/\*le/\*deux cadeau(x)*  
       (SF)  
       “I hate that, to leave/ vermin/gifts / \*the/ \*two gift(s)”  
       b. *Il faudrait ça laisser crever, cette vermine/\*deux escrocs/\*l'escroc*  
       (VdF)  
       “One should let that die out, this vermin/ \*two crooks / \*the crook”  
       c. *Chaque génération a son genre. Il faut ça admettre* (VdF)  
       “Every generation has its style. One must admit that”  
       (Vallotton, B. *Ce qu'en pense Potterat*. 1915)

The illustration model which represents the internal structure of clitics in (21) and (22) is borrowed from Bibis & Roberge (1999) who have used it to discuss other clitic forms in a variety of languages. The feature representation

indicates how the object clitic *ça* differs markedly from the *l*-object clitics with respect to its referential properties.

- (21) 
$$\begin{array}{c} \text{P} \quad (\text{P} = \text{phonological, F} = \text{formal, S} = \text{semantic}) \\ \text{le/la/les object clitics} \\ \begin{array}{cc} \text{F} & \text{S} \\ \text{D} & \text{specific/definite} \\ \text{gender} & \\ \text{number} & \\ \text{Acc. Case} & \\ \text{3p} & \end{array} \end{array}$$
- (22) 
$$\begin{array}{c} \text{P} \\ \text{clitic/deficient object } \textit{\text{ç}a} \\ \begin{array}{cc} \text{F} & \text{S} \\ \text{D/DP} & \text{specific indef. / unspecified quantity (mass, collective N, plural individuals)} \\ & \text{(abstract) locative N (referent distant from the speaker)} \end{array} \end{array}$$

The feature matrix for this deficient *ça* simply selects a set of values among the features available to characterize this pronominal argument in the grammar of French. The crucial difference between *ça* and the *l* clitics is the unspecified quantity feature and the abstract locative or deictic N. *Ça* is bimorphic: *c* translates deixis, *a* refers to an [ $\pm$ abstract] locative N where the referent is interpreted as being distant from the speaker. We could also adopt Kayne's (2000b) proposal that the deictic words *here* and *there* involve an abstract locative noun labelled PLACE, where PLACE is contextually defined. Within these terms, *ça* would indicate that the location is not adjacent to the speaker. Moreover, the clitic or weak DP reading of *ça* always refers. It cannot have a non referential or expletive reading. Roberge (2001) has shown that the object *ça* in Quebec French (QF) can get an expletive reading in certain expressions as in (23a,b). In this Swiss dialect, a clitic *ça*, as in (23c), is completely ruled out. Note also that the internal features of *ça* prohibit a reference to indefinite DPs (24a). However it can refer to a specific indefinite DP, as in (24b):

- (23) a. *Lui, il connaît ça* (QF)  
 him, he knows that  
 'He knows (quite well about this particular) stuff.'

- b. *Il t'a dansé ça* (QF/CollF)  
 He 2psDat-clitic has danced it  
 'He danced frenetically.'
- d. *\*Lui, il ça connaît / \*il t'a ça dansé* (VdF)
- (24) a. *\*J'ai déjà ça lu, des livres* (Vinet & Rubattel 1999)  
 I have already that read, books
- b. *On a déjà ça vu, des femmes qui pilotent des avions* (V & R 1999)  
 We have already that seen, women who can fly planes

Furthermore, there is no direct connection with "Object Shift" in Germanic. As illustrated in (25), *ça* behaves as a D head or a deficient DP pronoun. It never behaves like a lexical DP and (25b) is ruled out in this dialect. (25a) shows that QPs favoring this same position between the inflected verb and the past participle in the grammar of SF or this Swiss dialect also do not contain full  $X^{\text{max}}$  structure.

- (25) a. *J'ai tout/rien vu* (SF) / *J'ai personne vu* (Swiss Dialect)  
 I have everything/nothing seen / I have nobody seen
- b. *\*J'ai aucun ours vu* (VdF/SF)
- c. *Ich habe keine Bären gesehen* (German)  
 I have no bear seen

### 5.2 *Ça* lacks Structural Case

There are more syntactic situations where the object clitic *ça* is clearly different from the other ordinary clitics. It is argued that many of these different characteristics can be explained by the internal structure of *ça*, namely its lack of structural Case. In a discussion on clitic doubling in French, Kayne (2000a:165) made the proposal in (26). From this perspective, *ça* is clearly unmarked for structural Case since contrary to *l*-clitics and person clitics, it cannot be doubled on the right, as illustrated in (27):

- (26) Structurally case-marked pronominal arguments in Fr. must be doubled by a clitic.

- (27) a. *\*Je ça mets ça* (VdF)  
 I that-cl put that
- b. *Je le connais lui*  
 I him-cl know him

- c. *Elle nous protège, nous*  
She us-cl protects us

Another important difference is observed between the object clitic *ça* and the ordinary *l*-clitics when it comes to Dislocation and Topicalisation. As is well-known since Kayne (1994), Right Dislocation and Topicalisation present different properties and one can find a confirmation of this with the clitic *ça*. With *l*-Clitics in (28), we see that there is no difference in acceptability whether the DP appears on the left or the right of the proposition. The situation is totally different with *ça*, as illustrated in (29) from Vinet & Rubattel (2000). A clear contrast can be observed in (29e) and (29f):

- (28) a. *Ces jouets/les jouets, je les veux*  
These toys/the toys, I want them  
b. *Je les veux, ces jouets/les jouets*  
I want them, these toys/the toys
- (29) a. *Ces jouets, tu veux bien me tout ça ramasser* (VdF)  
These toys, could you please all that pick up  
b. *??Tu veux bien me tout ça ramasser, ces jouets* (VdF)  
Could you please all that pick up, these toys  
c. *Les frites, tu ça prépares en ça mettant dans une friteuse* (VdF)  
French fries, you that prepare by that putting into an electric fryer  
d. *??Tu ça prépares en ça mettant dans une friteuse, les frites* (VdF)  
You that prepare by that dipping into an electric fryer, French fries  
e. *Ruines et décombres, on y regarde à soixante fois avant de ça provoquer.* (Valloton, B., *Ce qu'en pense Potterat*, p.432, 1915)  
Ruins and rubble, one looks into it more than sixty times before that causing  
f. *\*On y regarde à soixante fois avant de ça provoquer, ruines et décombres*  
One looks into it more than sixty times before that causing, ruins and rubble

Topics are different from right-dislocated structures. Topics can have a very loose link with the comment in the CP domain. Right-dislocated elements repeat and emphasize an information. The information concerning Case must therefore be repeated. This explains the unacceptability of (30c) compared to (30d) where Case information is given.

- (30) a. *La mer, j'ai toujours cru qu'ils y étaient allés l'été dernier* (SF)  
 The sea, I always thought they there-cl had gone last summer  
 b. *\*?A la mer, j'ai toujours cru qu'ils y étaient allés l'été dernier* (SF)  
 At sea, I always thought they there-cl had gone last summer  
 c. *\*J'ai toujours cru qu'ils y étaient allés l'été dernier, la mer* (SF)  
 I always thought they there-cl had gone last summer, the seaside  
 d. *J'ai toujours cru qu'ils y étaient allés l'été dernier, à la mer* (SF)  
 I always thought they there-cl had gone last summer, at sea

*Ça* is morphologically ambiguous between a full DP projection and a head D. This has been shown through the distribution of a clitic or deficient *ça* in this dialect but it can also be illustrated through facts from Complex Inversion. In (31a), an expression from formal French, *cela* can appear in a position where neither a full DP or a clitic can appear in French. In this Swiss dialect, the clitic *ça* is also allowed in this position. It is ruled out in a postverbal position where full DPs are regularly accepted in French. Following Poletto and Pollock (2000) *que* must have the verb in the head of its projection in order to check the features of Interrogative Force in the left periphery. Such facts are clearly unusual in the grammar of French (cf. 31a) and must be explained through a diachronic study, as shown from (31d), an example from Middle French (cf. Tobler 1905).

- (31) a. *Que cela signifie-t-il?* (cf. *\*Que Jean/il dit-il?*)  
 What that means-T-3sg.masc / What Jean/he says-he  
 "What does that mean?" / "What is Jean/he saying?"  
 b. *Oh! Que ça fait-il?* (VdF/\*Fr) (Vallotton, *Portes entr'ouvertes*, 1905:86)  
 What that-cl does-3sg.masc-cl.  
 "What difference does it make?"  
 c. *\*Que fait ça? / Que font les enfants?* (VdF / Fr)  
 What does that? / What do the children?  
 "What does it matter? / What are the children doing?"  
 d. *Dist Gaselins : Oncles, que ce sera?* (Mitth., 13,23) (Tobler 1905)  
 Gaselins says : Uncles, what that will be?  
 "Gaselins says : Uncles, what will it be?"

Moreover, *ça* can never appear as an enclitic, contrary to other pronominal forms, namely *ce*. Note that *ce* is possible as an enclitic in some limited contexts. As mentioned in Kayne (2000a), *ça* is more complex than *ce* and this



distinction can explain the difference observed here. As a maximal DP *ça* in standard French cannot appear as an enclitic. Enclitics in French must always be clitic heads.

### 5.3 *Why a restriction with the present Tense?*

A deficient *ça* in the present tense is only possible with agentive predicates which express a single event reading, as in (32). The accepted reading with stative transitives is an habitual reading which rules out a single event reading as in (33). This situation is rather puzzling at first sight.

- (32) a. *Tu me ça donnes* (VdF)  
 You that give me  
 “You give that to me”  
 b. *On ça regarde* (VdF)  
 One that looks at  
 “One looks at that”  
 c. *Qui t’a ça dit?* (VdF)  
 Who you<sub>DAT</sub> has that said  
 “Who told you that?”
- (33) a. *J’ai toujours ça aimé, le café* (VdF)  
 I have always that liked, coffee  
 “I have always liked coffee”  
 b. *\*J’ai pas ça aimé hier, ce que tu as fait* (VdF)  
 I did not that like yesterday, what you have done  
 “I didn’t like what you have done yesterday”  
 c. *J’ai pas aimé ça hier, ce que tu as fait* (CFr)  
 “I didn’t like what you have done yesterday”

The proposed analysis is the following. As is well-known, the French Present Tense, as well as the Italian Present tense, is less specified. It expresses a real present reading or a future reading and it contrasts with what is found in the grammar of English or European Portuguese. As mentioned by Ambar (1998), the French Present Tense is a real zero Tense, as illustrated in (34).

- (34) a. \*John speaks now / \**O Joao fala agora* (Ambar 1998)  
 b. *Jean parle maintenant*

- c. *Jean parle demain*  
 Jean speaks tomorrow  
 “Jean will speak tomorrow”

There is then a Feature mismatch with stative transitives in the present Tense in the sense that the clitic *ça* bears a feature which clashes with the non-iterative reading of the antecedent.

- (35) a. \**Je ça aime* (VdF) (= \**Je ça aime en ce moment, partir*)  
 I that like now, to leave  
 b. \* TP [ C<sub>IMEAS</sub>ça T [ aime<sub>+F</sub> ] VP [ t-aime<sub>F</sub> ]

On the contrary, there is a Feature agreement with eventive verbs in the Present Tense. A relationship is established between two identical features on V and *ça*. Recall that it is assumed, as in Borer (1994), Ramchand (1997) and Ritter and Rošen (2001), that the syntactic head responsible for Accusative Case checks a feature that encodes information about the terminal bound of the event. Since *ça* lacks structural Case, MeasureP encodes information about the boundedness properties of the event in combination with the lexical properties of the predicate, as illustrated in (36b).

- (36) a. *Tu ça donnes maintenant* (VdF)  
 You that give now  
 b. TP [ C<sub>IMEAS</sub>ça T [ donne<sub>+F</sub> ] VP [ t-donne<sub>F</sub> ]

One must note that the Present Tense in French is different with statives. It does not appear as less specified, as the contrast in (37) below and (34) above with the agentive verb *parler* illustrates.

- (37) a. *Je t'aime/je te connais aujourd'hui* (SF)  
 I love/know you today  
 b. \**Je t'aime/je te connais demain* (SF)  
 I love/know you tomorrow

Furthermore, the unacceptable expression in (38) shows that agentivity is not the only element to consider. (38a) is rejected because of the single event reading which is dominant with the clitic *ça*. This reading is not found when *ça* appears as a maximal projection in a topic position, as in (39).

- (38) a. \**Je ça bois, du lait de chèvre* (VdF)  
 (= I that drink now, goat milk)  
 b. \* $_{TP} [ C_{Meas} \zeta a \text{ } _T [ \text{bo}^{\hat{u}}_{+F} ] \text{ } _{VP} [ \text{t-bo}^{\hat{u}}_{-F} ]$   
 c. *Je bois ça, du lait de chèvre* (CFr)  
 I (often) drink that (goat milk)
- (39) a. *Ça j'aime, partir en vacances* (VdF/ CollF)  
 That I like, to go on vacation  
 b. *Ça je bois, du lait de chèvre* (VdF/ CollF)  
 That I drink, goat milk

This situation clearly shows that the clitic *ça* is a different syntactic object, it behaves differently from the maximal projection and weak DP *ça*, in terms of event properties.

#### 6. Conclusion

I have here argued through the study of a clitic or weak DP *ça* in French, a form which can be correlated with the countability of nominals and events, that there can also be splits in the interpretive values of French object clitics.

This split in the interpretation of objects has been previously observed by Ritter & Rosen (2001) in a comparative analysis of unrelated languages. Following this last study, the same analysis was proposed to account for the distribution of a clitic or weak DP *ça* in a moribund dialect of French. The syntactic head (MeasureP) responsible for checking the features of *ça* in the derivation encodes information about the terminal bound of the event.

The boundedness properties of an event are determined by both the lexical properties of the verb in combination with the referential properties of the argument *ça*. In establishing this parallel between unrelated languages and between dialects or closely related grammars, I have therefore contributed to demonstrate that research in microvariation should not be treated differently from research in cross-linguistic variation.

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