Second Position, Focus and Multiple Spell-out: Toward an Analysis of the Armenian Auxiliary

The verbal auxiliary 'be' in Eastern Armenian (henceforth EA) is a clitic that carries tense and agreement features and appears on seemingly unrelated elements within the clause in focus-neutral sentences (1) (underlining indicates main clausal stress).

(1) a. šun-ə *vaz-um* **a** *on the verb*
dog- SP run- PROG is
'The dog is running.'

b. Ara-n *girk^h* **a** kart^h-um *on nonspecific object*
Ara- SP book is read- PROG
'Ara is reading a book / Ara reads books.'

c. es šun-ə *arag* **a** vaz-um *on manner adverb*
this dog- SP fast is run- PROG
'This dog runs fast.'

The goal of this paper is to account for the puzzling positional distribution of this clitic. Based on (1), the clitic may appear to follow the element carrying the main stress in the clause, behaving as a prosodic clitic (Tarmazian 1994). However, further evidence from EA seems to undermine the prosodic/phonological analysis of this clitic. For instance, when main stress is on an element inside a more complex nonspecific object, the auxiliary follows the whole object NP, rather than the word with main stress and shows no splitting effects. We argue that the position of the clitic is syntactically determined independently from the computation of sentential stress. In particular, the EA clitic illustrated above is argued to be a case of a second position clitic found across languages (e.g., Bošković 2001 for Serbo-Coratian, Roberts 2001 for Pashto), with the difference that it is second position in the *v*P rather than the whole CP. As such, we draw heavily on the parallel between CP and *v*P in recent syntactic literature, in particular their status as phases in the minimalist framework (e.g. Chomsky 2001).

The interaction between the clitic and focus introduces another fascinating dimension to the question of the EA clitic's distribution. In focused contexts, the clitic appears after the focused constituent. We argue that the position of the auxiliary in this case is the result of its movement to a focus head (akin to Brody's 1995 proposal for verb movement in Hungarian) followed by movement of the focused constituent to SpecFocP. Interestingly, when an element within a constituent is focused (and receives highest stress), the auxiliary follows the whole constituent and not the focused element (2), providing additional evidence against the phonological/prosodic treatment of the auxiliary.

(2) Ara-n [KAPUYT (***a**) maz-er-ov tegh-in] **a** hravir-el
Ara- SP BLUE (*is) hair-PL-INST boy-DAT is invite-PERF
'It's the BLUE-hair boy that Ara has invited.'

In this paper, we provide a novel analysis of the EA auxiliary in neutral and focus clauses. The Armenian auxiliary emerges as an interesting example of a second position phenomenon, where second position is defined with respect to the *v*P domain rather than the more traditionally postulated clausal domain. The analysis has implications for the growing literature on the syntax-phonology interface and the parallel between the *v*P and CP domains.

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