

Constraints on *have*-cliticisation and accessibility of Universal Grammar in native speakers and foreign language learners



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Received 2 November 2015; received in revised form 9 May 2016; accepted 10 May 2016

Available online 6 June 2016

Abstract

The cliticisation of *have* onto a preceding word has been argued to be constrained by principles of Universal Grammar. In particular, *have*-cliticisation appears to be blocked when an empty T constituent that follows from Universal Grammar intervenes between *have* and its host provided that the host c-commands *have* and that the host ends with a vowel or diphthong. The study investigated knowledge of these constraints in (31) adult native speakers of American English and (162) adult Jordanian learners of English as a foreign language. The results of a grammaticality judgment test showed that both the group of native speakers and the group of foreign language learners exhibited differentiating patterns of response to sentences with licit and illicit *have*-cliticisation suggesting that their production of *have*-cliticisation is constrained by Universal Grammar. However, both groups showed imperfect knowledge of the constraints on *have*-cliticisation especially on the part of foreign language learners. This imperfect knowledge is argued to be the result of a concealing effect of performance factors.

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Keywords: *Have*-cliticisation; Universal Grammar; Foreign language learning; Imperfect knowledge

1. Introduction

1.1. Constraints on *have*-cliticisation

In English, *have* (in the guise of its contracted clitic variant /v/) can attach to an immediately preceding word ending in a vowel or diphthong, resulting in forms such as *I've*, *we've*, *they've* etc. However, *have*-cliticisation does not happen invariably. While examples such as (1) below allow *have*-cliticisation, examples such as (2) do not.

- (1) They've left. (Radford, 2009:99)
- (2) *They've their car serviced regularly. (Radford, 2009:109)

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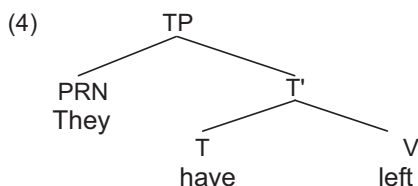
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Both perfective *have* in (1) and causative *have* in (2) are preceded by a word that ends in a vowel; however, *have*-cliticisation is allowed in (1) but not in (2).

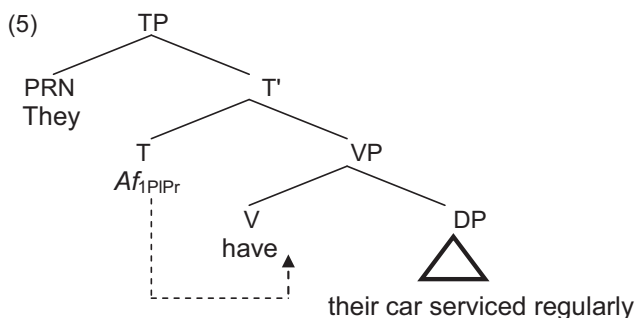
Radford (1997, 2009) provides a syntactic account for the constraints on *have*-cliticisation based on the recent assumptions of Chomsky's Universal Grammar (UG) framework for syntactic theory, namely the Minimalist Program (Chomsky, 1993, 1995, 2008). Radford (2009:99) proposes the conditions in (3) below on *have*-cliticisation.

- (3) *Have*-cliticisation:
Have can encliticise onto a word *W* ending in a vowel or diphthong provided that
- (i) *W* c-commands *have* and
 - (ii) *W* is immediately adjacent to *have*

Accordingly, the example in (1) above allows *have*-cliticisation because it obeys the conditions on *have*-cliticisation. The personal pronoun *they* ends with the vowel /e/, *they* c-commands *have*, and *they* is immediately adjacent to *have* as illustrated in the structure in (4) below.



The example in (2), on the other hand, does not allow *have*-cliticisation because it violates the adjacency condition on *have*-cliticisation. Radford argues that, unlike perfective *have* in examples such as (1), causative *have* in examples such as (2) occupies the head V position of VP rather than the head T position of TP. He further argues that an abstract tense affix occupies the head T position of TP in examples such as (2). The presumed abstract tense affix is argued to later lower to attach to the head of VP by an Affix Hopping operation in the PF component of grammar as shown in (5) below (where *Af* is an abstract tense affix and the arrow marks the operation of Affix Hopping).



This structure makes the ungrammaticality of *have*-cliticisation in (2) above straightforward: an empty tense category intervenes between *have* and its host thus violating the adjacency condition on *have*-cliticisation.²

The account presented here presumes that the source of the empty tense category in cases such as (2) above is UG. In particular, this empty tense category is considered to be an instantiation of the general assumption that “all finite and infinitival clauses contain a TP, and that T is overt in clauses containing a finite auxiliary or infinitival *to*, but is null

² Experiential *have* is assumed to have the same analysis as causative *have* as shown below:

- (1) *They've students walk out on them sometimes. (Radford, 2009:106)

Experiential *have* in examples such as (1) above is assumed to be a main verb that occupies the head V position of a VP complement of an abstract finite T constituent that intervenes between the verb *have* and the pronoun *they* thus blocking *have*-cliticisation as shown in the structure in (2) below.

- (2) [TP They [T Af_{1PIP_r}] [VP [V have] [DP students walk out on them sometimes]]]

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