Romanian loves Me: Clitic Clusters, Ethics & Cyclic AGREE

I. INTRODUCTION & PROPOSAL. Romanian clitic clusters pose interesting challenges for Agreement: not only do these clusters exhibit both person and case hierarchies, but these hierarchies interact with number, rendering Nevins' (2007) *Me-First* condition insufficient when it comes to accounting for the Romanian data. We argue, however, that a Cyclic Agree approach, along the lines of Béjar & Rezac (2009), can capture the DO/IO clitic clusters, as well as the complications that arise with the *Ethical Dative* position, provided that the π (person)-probe and the #(number)-probe can operate simultaneously.

II. IO/DO CLITIC CLUSTERS. ***Case matters.*** Dative clitics necessarily precede Accusative clitics. The examples in (1) illustrate that while the Dative >> Accusative order is possible, the reverse is not.

(1) a. ***Mi*** *te* *-a* *trimis.* *b.* ****Te*** ***mi*** *-a* *trimis.*
1st.SG.DAT 2nd.SG. ACC has sent 2nd.SG.ACC 1st.SG.DAT has sent
'He/She sent you to me'.

Person matters. Although the Dative >> Accusative hierarchy should render (2) grammatical, Romanian clitic clusters are also sensitive to personhood: 1st person clitics always come first (Nevins 2007).

(2) **** Ţi*** *m-* *a* *trimis.*
2nd.SG.DAT. 1st.SG.ACC has sent

Number matters. Finally, number also plays a role in the restrictions on clitic ordering in Romanian. Namely, if one of the two clitics is plural, then the Person hierarchy of 1>>2>>3 is in effect. Otherwise, if both clitics are singular, the hierarchy seems to be 1 >> 2, 3. These facts are summarized in Table 1.

	1st sg Acc	2nd sg Acc	3rd sg Acc	1st pl Acc	2nd pl Acc	3rd pl Acc
1st sg Dat		**Mi** te-	**Mi** l-		**Mi** v-	**Mi** i- / **Mi** le
2nd sg Dat			**Ţi** l -			**Ţi** i- / **Ţi** le
3rd sg Dat		**I** te	**I** l-		***I** v-	**I-** / **I** le
1st pl Dat		**Ni** te	**Ni** l-		***Ni** v-	**Ni** i- / **Ni** le
2nd pl Dat			**Vi** l-			**Vi** i- / **Vi** le
3rd pl Dat		***Li** te	**Li** l-		***Li** v-	**Li** i- **/ Li** le

Table 1. Dative-Accusative wars.

Table 1 lists all the possible, impossible and informatively ungrammatical clitic clusters. The darker shade of gray highlights the ungrammaticality due to the 1st person hierarchy constraints and Binding issues (such as 2nd Acc – 2nd Dat). The lighter shade of gray highlights ungrammaticality due to number restrictions.

Generalizations. 1. Romanian loves Me: whenever the ACC clitic is 1st person, it cannot be preceded by a Dative clitic. 2. It doesn't care about Him: 3rd person ACC clitics are the exact opposite: no restrictions on co-occurrence. 3. It's complicated with You: if the ACC clitic is a 2nd person SG then only 3rd PL datives are ungrammatical; if the ACC clitic is a 2nd person PL, then it can only be preceded by a 1st SG dative clitic.

Problems with Me-First. Nevins (2007) assumes that there is a probe which searches for marked values of [Author], thus basically ignoring 2nd and 3rd person. He concludes that this probe will render a 3>2 Dative-Accusative cluster grammatical. His conclusion is indeed borne out when looking at a 3rd SG DAT – 2nd SG ACC cluster, but as shown above, any [+plural] in either (or both) of the clitics leads to the ungrammaticality of the clitic cluster. The overgeneration arises from the assumption that [+Author] is the only relevant feature responsible for the Dative-Accusative interactions in Romanian. We suggest that a Béjar & Rezac (2009) Cyclic Agree aproach, whereby a probe may remerge if and when it still has unchecked features, can account for the data in *Table 1*, as long as a #-probe is also in play.

III. PROPOSAL. ***The person probe:*** The Dative-Accusative wars in *Table 1* indicate that the ACC (DO) person probe is checked first, since a 1st person ACC clitic cannot be preceded by any DAT clitic. We propose that this π-probe has the following unvalued features: [u2 u1] and that a 1st person ACC clitic will check both features. This captures the PCC effects and correctly predicts that whenever the Accusative clitic is 1st person, no Dative clitic can surface. Furthermore, if the DO is 3rd person, then the [u2 u1] probe will license the 3rd person, but neither feature will be checked, hence, [u2 u1] are still available and 1st and 2nd person Dative clitics are licensed upon remerging / upward-agreeing with IO. A necessary and logical assumption is that [u1 u2] may further license any other 3rd DAT clitic. ***Merging person & number:*** If the ACC clitic were 2nd person, [u2] would be checked off the π-probe, with only [u1] left. This remaining [u1] probe would remerge and be able to license a 1st person DAT or a 3rd person DAT (since 3rd is vacuously licensed). However, 3rd DAT PL 2ND ACC clitic clusters are ungrammatical. This motivates the existence of a joint person and number probe. Crucially, the number probe is ***not sensitive*** to 3rd plural clitics: the unvalued number feature can only be checked by 1st and 2nd person clitics. Assuming that the cyclic probe is fully specified as [u1 u2 upl], then, according to the date in *Table 1*, the licensing of various Dative clitics is possible only when the relicensed probe has (at least) the following features left unchecked.

(3) DATIVE CLITIC LICENSING

Dative Clitic	2nd pl	**2nd sg**	**3rd pl**	3rd sg	1st pl	1st sg
Minimally requires:	[u1 u2 upl]	**[u1 u2 ~~upl~~]**	**[u1 u2 ~~upl~~]**	**[u1 u2 ~~upl~~] or [u1 ~~u2~~ upl]**	[**u1 ~~u2~~ upl**]	[**u1 ~~u2 upl~~**]

Unsurprisingly, a 1st sg DAT clitic requires that the remerged cyclic probe still have an unchecked [u1] feature and that the 1st pl DAT clitic requires that both [u1] and [upl] still be available. Also unsurprising is that the 2nd plural minimally requires that [u2 u1] and [upl] still be unchecked on the remerged probe. The truly interesting observation is that 3rd PL DAT clitics are only possible if both [u2 u1] are left unchecked – whether [upl] has been valued or not is of no consequence. The interactions between person and number evince the following intricate hierarchy, where 2nd person singular clitics are on a par with 3rd person plurals:

(4) CLITIC CLUSTER HIERARCHY

1st plural & singular >> 2nd plural >> 2nd singular, 3rd plural >> 3rd singular

IV. CYCLIC UPSHOT: ACCOUNTING FOR ETHICAL DATIVE. A cyclic agree probe which is sensitive to both number and person does not only account for the DO/IO clitic clusters, but it also predicts the availability of the *Ethical Dative*. This clitic is not related to an argument position, its presence simply implies some form of involvement on the part of the Speaker/Hearer. In (5), both Dative clitics are *ethical*.

(5)	***Mi***	***ţi-***	*l-*	*or*	*bate*	*pe*	*Paul*
	1st.DAT.SG	2nd. DAT.SG	3rd.ACC.SG	will	beat	Acc.marker	Paul

'They would beat (our poor) Paul.'

The ethical dative clitics are generally 1st and 2nd singular clitics which may either co-occur as in (5) or occur on their own preceding either DAT or ACC argument clitics. The schema below lists the predictions of the cyclic probe account based on the features of a potential licensed argument clitic:

(6) ETHICAL DATIVE LICENSING

If the argument clitic is a….	*the probe is left with….*	*…possible ethical dative*
1st Acc / Dative	→ [~~u2~~ ~~u1~~] : no features left	→ none
2nd Acc / Dative	→ [~~u2~~ u1]: only [u1] left	→ ***mi*** (only 1st person)
3rd Acc/ Dative	→ [u2 u1]: [u2] and [u1] left	→ ***mi*** and/or **ţi**

The predictions in (6) are borne out. Plural ethical datives are very rare, but for these restricted cases, if the DO/IO clitic is plural, then the ethical Dative clitic cannot be plural – predicted pattern since the [upl] feature has already been checked. The only data generalization which is not captured by the cyclic agree probe regarding the argument-ethical clitic clusters is that there can only be (maximally) two dative clitics. Nevertheless, the analysis sketched out above is currently the only one on the market that can predict both argument and non-argument PCC effects for clitic pronouns as well as their interactions with number.