Problem: The study of clitic placement alternations in Western Iberian Romance languages (that is, in European Portuguese, Galician and Asturian) has generally concentrated on matrix environments like those in (1) and (2).

(1) Téoles tayaes [*Les teo]  
have1SG cut
“I have them (my hands) cut”

(2) Cómo t’atreves? [*atréveste] how reflexiveCL-dare2SG
how dare you?”

Traditionally, these alternations have been analyzed by capitalizing on the enclitic phonological status of clitics in this group of languages; that is, by arguing that clitics require a phonological host to their left (see for instance, Barbosa 1995 for European Portuguese and Campos 1989 for Galician). The postverbal clitic pattern in (1) is derived as last-resort verb-movement in order to provide a phonological host for the enclitic. In turn, the wb-element in (2) acts as a host for the enclitic and explains the preverbal clitic pattern observed. The goal of this talk is to draw attention to the behavior of clitic placement alternations in finite embedded contexts in Asturian. As (3)-(4) show, in Asturian, not only a preverbal, but also a postverbal clitic pattern can be found, a pattern that speakers of the other Western Iberian Romance languages reject as ungrammatical.

(3) a. Digo qu’ayúdame say1SG that-help1SG+meCL  
Isabel left1SG of the party because told3SG-herCL-itCL the-brother
b. Digo que me ayude  
Isabel left1SG of the party because herCL-itCL told3SG the-brother
“I say that s/he helps me out”  “Isabel left the party because her brother told her to”

If clitics in Western Iberian are enclitic elements and require a phonological host to their left, the que “that” and porque “because” complementizers can host the enclitic explaining the preverbal clitic pattern we find in (3b) and (4b). However, this analysis leaves the postverbal patterns in (3a) and (4a) unexplained, as last-resort verb-movement should be unnecessary under the presence of a complementizer – see (3b) and (4b).

Analysis: Assuming a left-periphery approach to CP as that in (5) (Rizzi 1997 and subs.), I argue that Finitenessº (Finº) constitutes the CP-phase (cf. Chomsky 2008), and that this phase-head has an edge-condition in Western Iberian.

(5) [Finitº] [FocusP Focusº [Topº Topºº [FocusP Focusº] [Finitºº Finitºº [FP  Tº . . .]]]]

Following the analysis proposed in Fernández-Rubiera (2009), I contend that the proposed edge-condition of Finº triggers and ensures the displacement of an element, and that this edge-condition of Finº explains the different clitic patterns we find in matrix environments as follows. The postverbal clitic pattern in (1) arises as a result of Tº-to-Finº movement in the absence of A’-movement or a closer head to Finº. On the other hand, A’-movement of the wb-element cómo “how” through Finº on its way to FocusP licenses this edge-condition and explains the preverbal clitic pattern we find in cases as that in (2). In turn, I claim that the analysis proposed can easily account for the different clitic patterns we find in finite embedded contexts as those in (3)-(4). Following Demonte and Fernández Soriano’s (2009) analysis of the complementizer system in Spanish, I extend it to Asturian and claim that this language too exhibits two different que “that” complementizers mapped in two different heads in the left-periphery, namely que1 “that1” mapped in Forceº and que2 “that2” in Finº. With this, I contend that digo “I say” and porque “because” may select for Forceº or Finº in Asturian, and each selection explains the different clitic patterns we find as follows. If Forceº mapped as que1 “that1” is selected, the proposed edge-condition of Finº triggers Tº-to-Finº movement in the absence of A’-movement or a closer head, thus accounting for the postverbal clitic pattern we find in (3a) and (4a). Selection of Finº on the other hand, is mapped as a que2 “that2” complementizer, and merger of que2 in Finº licenses the edge-condition of this phase-head and explains the preverbal clitic pattern in (3b) and (4b).
Further predictions and evidence: Clitic placement alternations as those in (3) and (4) are also reported to differ in interpretation – see Viejo 2008, Fernandez-Rubiera 2009. Briefly put, speakers report that the postverbal clitic pattern in (3a) and (4a) gives rise to an interpretation that marks the content of the embedded clause as part of the belief state of the matrix predicate’s subject or the speaker, what I call a [+conviction] pragmatic interpretation. Evidence for this interpretation is given in (6), which shows that a fragment as that in brackets canceling this [+conviction] is pragmatically odd. The preverbal clitic pattern in (3b) and (4b) on the other hand, is interpreted as [-conviction], and thus the fragment in brackets in (7) is not perceived as pragmatically odd – cf. (6).

(6) Digo que ayuda [perse nun toi seguru]
   say1SG that-help3SG:meCL but not am sure
   “I say that s/he helps me, but I am not sure (that s/he does help me)”

(7) Digo que me ayuda [perse nun toi seguru]
   say1SG that meCL help3SG but not am sure
   “I say that s/he helps me, but I am not sure (that s/he does help me)”

While these interpretation differences are assumed to result from a phonological approach to clitic placement alternations (cf. Barbosa, etc.), I argue that they can be naturally explained under the analysis I propose. Thus, I argue that selection of Forceº correlates with a [+conviction] interpretation – cf. (6), while selection of Finº with a [-conviction] interpretation (see (7)). As noted, the different clitic patterns observed can also be explained: selection of Forceº and que1 “that1” and the proposed edge-condition explains the postverbal clitic pattern, while selection of Finº and que2 satisfies Finº’s edge-condition and explains the preverbal clitic pattern. Further evidence for the analysis I propose comes from (8). The wh-word onde “where” can only be interpreted with a matrix reading (i.e., where it was that Xulia said it), and the embedded clause is reported to have a [+conviction] interpretation. Under my analysis, (8) is analyzed as follows: dixo selects Forceº mapped as que1 “that1”, which explains the [+conviction] interpretation, and the postverbal clitic pattern arises as a result of Tº-to-Finº triggered by Finº’s edge-condition in the absence of A’-movement or a closer head.

(8) Onde dixo Xulia que comprólo?
   where saidSG Xulia that bought3SG-itCL
   “Where did Xulia say that she bought it?”

In turn, I will show how the exclusive proclitic pattern that speakers of Galician and European Portuguese report for finite embedded clauses exhibiting enclisis (i.e., the ungrammaticality that the examples in (3a), (4a) and (8) gives rise to) can naturally be accounted for with the same analysis. I hypothesize that this microparametric variation may be attributed to differences in the complementizer system in this group of languages. I contend that Galician and European Portuguese, differently from Asturian, exhibit a complementizer in Finº even when Forceº is selected by the matrix predicate. This analysis explains uniformly why (a) enclisis is barred in Galician and European Portuguese, as the presence of a complementizer (overt or covert) in Finº will block Tº-to-Finº and consequently enclisis, and (b) a [+conviction] interpretation of the content in the embedded clause is also ensured in Galician and Portuguese regardless of the unavailability of enclisis, as it will ultimately depend on whether Forceº is selected and on the complementizer system found in these languages.