



## Research Article

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### Linguistic Study on "Clitics"

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**Abstract:** This paper demonstrates the linguistic properties of the term "clitics". This study concerns information collected from the native speakers of the Spanish language and of course from the already existing published sources. I examine, here, several constructions formed with different clitics, which display the significant properties of clitics in the language.

**Keywords:** Clitics, Spanish, Pronouns.

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## INTRODUCTION

Clitic is a term normally used for the syntactic elements that appear before or after a host word or phrase. "Historically, the label 'clitic' was first applied (by the grammarians of Ancient Greek) to elements that are words from the syntactic point of view but are phonologically dependent (specifically, prosodically dependent, inflect, accentless) upon a neighboring word (specifically, the preceding word) and constitute some sort of morphological unit with this word (specifically, by determining the placement of word accent)" (Zwicky, 1994). Spencer (1991) says "...they can't stand alone, but have to be attached phonologically to a host". Some scholars define clitic as a prosodically weak (unaccented) element which is not a canonical inflectional or derivational affix. "In broad sense, clitics are the elements that have some characteristics of independent words and some of affixes within words" (Zwicky, 1994).

Clitics are function words like modal participles, conjunctions, pronominals or auxiliary verbs. They look like affixes because of certain reduction processes. As in the case of English 'll the reduced form of the word 'will' or 'shall', so when 'will' is combined with a pronoun 'he' e.g.

1. He'll come tomorrow.

In the above example 'will' is reduced to 'll, which is a reduced auxiliary.

There must be a debate on the explanation given in this section (i.e. attachment of the clitic to the independent word) so that we would be able to define

the clitic accurately and also we will find out its right place and role in linguistics. I think, the theories given by scholars about cliticization and clitic (as an element) are not satisfactory, if we take the examples given by Sadock (1991) to define clitic like- 'd in the following sentence (I am taking one of the examples):

2. He'd have done it

It can be seen in (1, 2) that most of us cannot solve many problems related to it and the problems are- whether 'll is a reduced form of **will** or **shall**; 'd can also be used as a reduced form of **could** or **should** (**by chance in e-mails, messages or sms**) and not only **would**. This study is, actually, not based on the problems regarding reduction. This work illustrates a very interesting morphosyntactic study of various forms of clitics in Spanish.

## ROMANCE CLITICS

As we know, clitic cannot stand on its own therefore it needs to attach to any complete (=independent) form (word or phrase) [as already discussed in First section]. Clitics have a special position in modern Romance languages. They appear in the special position in the clause (generally before and after the verb).

In Romance languages the use of pronominal clitics is quite common. Pronominal clitics are the elements (like clitics as discussed earlier) which serve as syntactic constituents, but which are phonologically dependent. Pronominal clitics (proCl) are actually pronouns which are associated with verbs so that they

behave like normal clitics but they have some special characteristics (unlike normal clitics).

The first relevant observation about the pronominal clitic in Romance languages is that in most

of the Romance languages pronominal clitic (proCl) immediately precedes the verb in finite clause (as shown in Fig. 1).

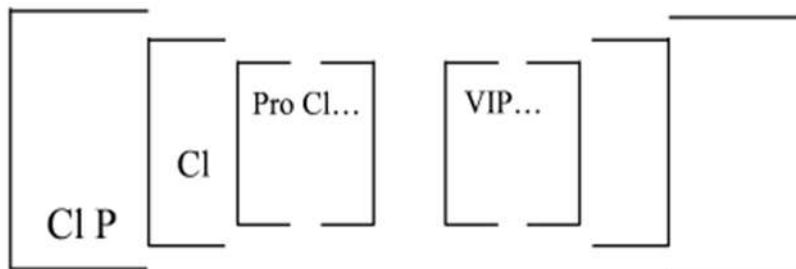


Fig. 1.

Here, Cl P- Clitic Phrase, Cl- Clitic, proCl- pronominal Clitic, VP- Verb Phrase. In this study, Spanish language is examined to trace out the facts about the Romance pronominal clitics [The data for this study were collected from Hutchinson (1996) and also from the native speakers of the language. Certain examples were modified for this paper.] .

### SPANISH PRONOMINAL CLITICS

In Spanish, pronominal clitic (**proCl**) immediately precedes the verb in finite clause. **lo**, here, is not the accusative **lo/le** of **el**.

3. lo creo  
it believe (I)  
'I believe it'
4. lo daré al hermano de vd.  
It will (I) give to the brother of you  
'I will give it to your brother'

In examples (3&4), **lo** is the accusative form of **ello** (neuter). Actually **el** has 2-forms: **le** or **lo**. There is no clear-cut distinction between the two. But it is adopted that **le** is used when the meaning is **him** i.e. when the pronoun stands for a male person and **lo** is used when the meaning is **it** i.e. when the pronoun

stands for a thing for which the Spanish noun is masculine.

5. le hallé  
him found (I)  
'I found him' (suppose a doctor)
6. lo hallé  
it found (I)  
'I found it' (suppose a thing or the money)
7. a hemor hallado  
her have (we) found  
'we have found her'

**la** in (7) is the accusative of **ella** (feminine). **le** is a typical pronominal clitic because **le** can change its meaning as per the context. It may be **him**, **to him**, **to her** and also **to you**, for instance:

8. le Veo  
you/her/him see (I)  
'I see you/her/him'

In example (8), **le** can be either **him** or **you** or **her** i.e. **I see him** or **I see you** or **I see her**. In Spanish, this type of difficulty is easily overcome by putting a **él** or a **vd**, according to the situations, like:

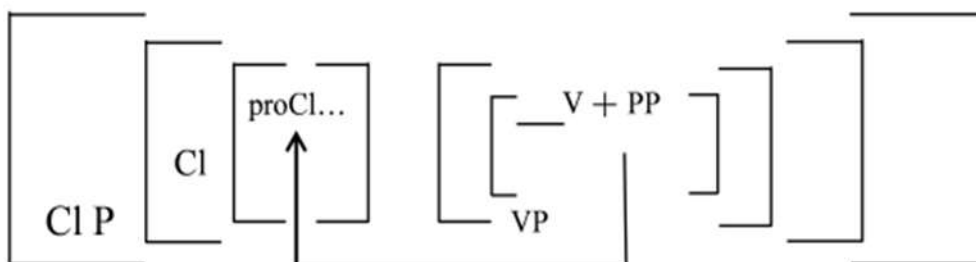
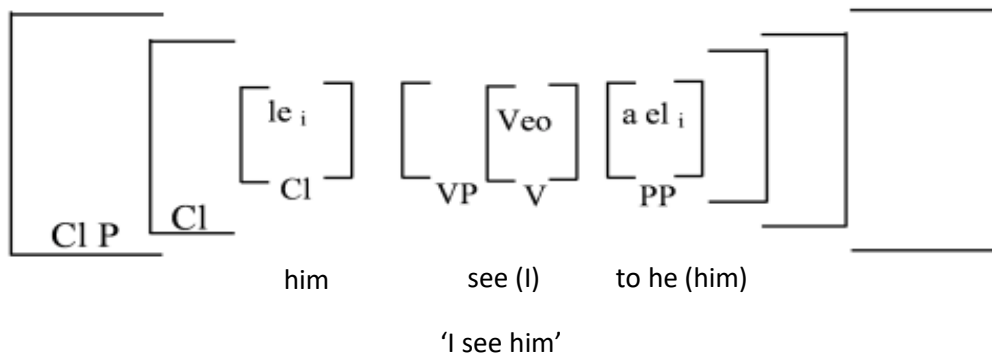


Fig. 2.

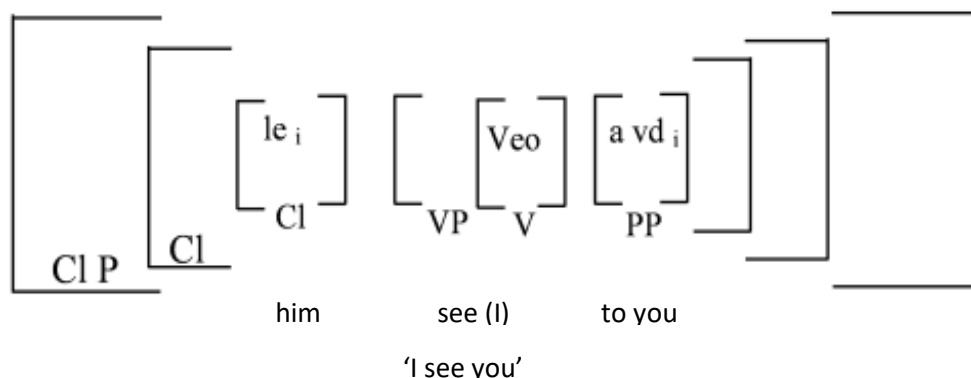
In Fig. 2, pp is co-indexed with proCl. This point is explained in the following sentences

(9, 10):

9.



10.



(note:- **le** cannot be omitted because the construction like:- \* **veo a vd/él** is ungrammatical]

In the presence of both- direct and indirect object; if the sentence is –

In English-

11. He will lend it to him  
 Or  
 I will lend it to you

We are expected to use **le** as in (12):

In Spanish-

12. \*yo le lo prestaré  
 I to it (him/you) will lend (I)

But (12) is ungrammatical and **le** is changed to **se**.

le → se

**Fig. 3.**

And the correct form is:

13. (yo) se lo prestaré  
 I to it (him/you) will lend (I)

For **to him** and **to you**, normally **a él** and **a vd** (as in (9&10)) are used.

## CONCLUSION

The present work is limited to the linguistic study of Spanish. The fundamental goal of this morphosyntactic study is to make a sketch of clitic placement the language. Based on the critical analysis, it is observed that in normal situation clitics (pronominal clitics) in Romance languages are syntactically attached to the verbs. In Spanish, clitic, normally, precedes the verb.

I do not claim that this work provides a complete picture of the placement and the significance of Spanish clitics, but I do believe that it is an attempt to build a broad picture of the placement and the significance of Spanish clitics.

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