

## Groups of Clitics in West and South Slavic languages

Wayles Browne

Most of the Slavic languages have two kinds of personal pronouns.<sup>1</sup> For example, the accusative case of the third-person singular masculine and neuter pronoun in Serbian (and Bosnian and Croatian) is *ga* and *nje-ga*. *Ga* is a clitic (or enclitic) form, which means a) that it is pronounced without an accent and b) it is not free to appear in all places in a sentence. It must come after some other word in the sentence. Example (1) is a good Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian sentence, but example (2) is not a possible BCS sentence. (Examples which are not possible in a language are marked with \*.)

- (1) Vidim *ga*.  
I-see him/it
- (2) \**Ga* vidim.

On the other hand, *nje-ga* is not a clitic. It is pronounced with an accent on the first syllable, and it can come in many different positions in a sentence. It can come after another word or at the beginning of the

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sentence, as in examples (3) and (4). We call it a non-clitic or full form. If a full form is used in an example where a clitic might have been used, the full form usually carries special emphasis or is contrasted with some other word (example (5)).

- (3) Vidim njega.  
I-see **him/it**.
- (4) Njega vidim.
- (5) Njega vidim, a ne tebe.  
I see **him/it** and not **you**.

As an example, here is a table of full forms and clitic forms in the accusative for BCS:

clitic	me	te	ga	je (or ju)	nas	vas	ih	se
full form	mene	tebe	njega	nju	nâs	vâs	njih	sebe
	1st sing.	2nd sing.	3rd sing. masc/neut.	3rd sing. fem.	1st plural	2nd plural	3rd plural	reflexive
	‘me’	‘you’	‘him/it’	‘her’	‘us’	‘you’	‘them’	‘...self’

The modern West and South Slavic language groups all distinguish clitic pronouns like *ga* from full forms like *njega*. Modern East Slavic standard languages (Russian, Belarusian, Ukrainian) have no clitic pronouns and thus do not have this distinction, but early East Slavic had it for some pronouns (in particular the language of medieval Novgorod had it, see Zaliznjak 2008).

Some of the Slavic languages (BCS) also have two kinds of auxiliary verbs and copular verbs (forms of ‘to be’): clitic forms and full forms.

As an example, here is a table of full forms and clitic forms of the present tense of ‘to be’ for BCS. This is also the auxiliary for the perfect tense.

clitic	sam	si	je	smo	ste	su
full form	jesam	jesi	jest, jeste	jesmo	jeste	jesu
	1st sing.	2nd sing.	3rd sing.	1st plural	2nd plural	3rd plural
	‘I am’	‘you are’	‘he/she/ it is’	‘we are’	‘you are’	‘they are’

*Sam* means ‘(I) am’, e.g. *Ja sam student* ‘I am a student’, but *Ja jesam student* means ‘I **am** a student’ with special emphasis: maybe somebody said I am not a student, but I insist that I am a student.

II. If a language has clitic forms (clitic pronouns and/or clitic verb forms), we usually find that, in any given clause, all the clitics come together in a group. We then ask two questions: a) where does the group of clitics come in the clause, and b) within the group, what is the ordering? Which clitic comes first, which clitic comes second, etc.? Is it *sam ga* or *ga sam*? Many Slavic linguists have been working on a) and b) since the 1970s (see Franks and King 2000 for extensive references), and both these questions have also aroused interest among general linguists. There are many articles devoted to the topic of clitic placement and ordering in Slavic languages.

The focus of this paper is the second question: the ordering of clitics within the group. We will first say briefly that the placement of the clitic group in the clause is similar in many of the languages (Slovenian, BCS, Czech, Slovak...). An approximate description is that the group comes in second position in the clause, i.e. after the first word as we see in (1) or after the first group of words, as ‘my student’ in (6).

- (6) Moj student ga je našao. (Serbian and Bosnian)  
 my student him Aux found  
 ‘My student found him.’

In BCS, in most kinds of clauses, it is also possible to “ignore” a group of words at the beginning of the sentence, and put the clitic(s) after a later word (or group of words). In (7), the group *prošle ili pretprošle godine*, literally ‘last year or before-last year’, can be ignored, so that *ga*

*je* follows the later word *student*:

- (7) Prošle ili pretprošle godine moj student ga je našao.  
 ‘Last year or the year before last, my student found him.’

If one or more groups of words come before the predicate, all these words can be “ignored” and then the clitic(s) come after the first word of the predicate (in (8), after *našao*):

- (8) Prošle ili pretprošle godine moj student našao ga je.

However, if the clause begins with a subordinating conjunction like *da* ‘that’ or *ako* ‘if’ or an interrogative or relative word like *kada* ‘when’, *šta* ‘what’, *ko* ‘who’, *koga* ‘whom’, the clitics have to follow this immediately, as does *je* in (9) and not (10) and (11).

- (9) Koga je moj student našao prošle ili pretprošle godine?  
 ‘whom did my student find last year or the year before last’  
 (10) \*Koga moj student je našao prošle ili pretprošle godine?  
 (11) \*Koga moj student našao je prošle ili pretprošle godine?

In all these respects, Bosnian clitic placement is similar to Serbian. It differs, e.g., from standard Croatian, because Croatian often places clitics after the first word within the first group of words, as in (6C), while this is rarer in Serbian and in Bosnian.

- (6C) Moj ga je student našao.

III. Now let’s look at the ordering of clitics within the group. West and South Slavic languages require two or more clitics to come in a certain order. BCS puts *sam* before *ga* (masculine accusative third person singular pronoun), as in:

- (12) Našao sam ga.  
 ‘I found him’.

If we combined the clitics in another order, as *\*Našao ga sam*, the result would not have a different meaning, but would be ungrammatical. However, if the clitic is *je* for the 3rd person singular, the order must be

- (13) Našao ga je.  
‘He found him.’

It is not possible to say *\*Našao je ga*.

We can show the order of clitics of BCS in a table:

The Standard Croatian (and Bosnian and Serbian) clitic group

li	sg. sam, si, _; pl. smo, ste, su	sg. mi, ti, mu <sub>3M/N'</sub> joj <sub>3F'</sub> pl. nam, vam, im	sg. me, te, ga <sub>3M/N'</sub> je <sub>3F</sub> (~ju <sub>3FAcc</sub> ); pl. nas, vas, ih	se	je
	sg. ću, ćeš, će; pl. ćemo, ćete, će	(si)			
	sg. bih, bi, bi; pl. bis- mo, biste, bi				
yes-no in- terrogative particle	present ‘be’ and Aux of past (but not 3sg); ‘will’, Aux of future; ‘would’, Aux of condit.	dative pronouns; reflexive dative (used in Croatian)	accusative and genitive pronouns	reflexive	3sg of pres- ent copula and of Aux of past
1	2	3	4	5	6

Or, writing it in a simpler way:

particle - Auxs - datives - accusative/genitives - reflexive - 3sg Aux.

Slovenian has a different order, as we see in the next table:

## Slovenian

sg. sem, si, _; du. sva, sta, sta; pl. smo, ste, so	se; si	sg. mi, ti, mu, ji; du. nama, vama, jima; pl. nam, vam, jim	sg. me, te, ga, FAcc jo/FGen je; du. naju, vaju, ju/jih; pl. nas, vas, jih	je
bi				sg. bom, boš, bo; du. bova, bo- sta, bosta; pl. bomo, bo- ste, bodo/bojo
present copula and Aux of past (but not 3sg); 'would', mark of conditional	reflexive; re- flexive dative	dative pronouns	accusative and genitive pro- nouns (if both, Acc before Gen)	3sg present copula and 3sg Aux of past; 'will', Aux of future
1	2	3	4	5

We can write this more simply:

Auxs - reflexives - datives - genitive/accusatives - 3sg Aux/future Aux

BCS and Slovenian are similar in that they have a special place for the 3rd person singular clitic copula/auxiliary verb *je*. All the other person forms of 'to be' come before the pronoun clitics, but *je* comes after the pronoun clitics. The two languages have different future-tense auxiliaries, and the Slovenian one *bom*, *boš* comes in a different place from BCS *ću*. The two languages also differ in the way they place their reflexive clitics (reflexive pronouns *si* and *se*, and reflexive particles *se*). Slovenian has reflexives before the other pronouns, but BCS has first pronouns and then *se*. We might wonder about the historical origin of this difference. In fact, Czech and Slovak agree with Slovenian on this point, because they put reflexives before other pronouns, as can be seen

from the tables in Franks & King (2000). So we might conclude that the order “pronoun-reflexive” in BCS is an innovation, the result of a historical change. In fact, several centuries ago in BCS reflexives also apparently came before the other pronouns, however descriptions of old manuscripts do not pay much attention to the placement and order of clitics. (Thus there is only one brief mention of reflexives coming after other pronouns, and of future auxiliaries following all pronouns, even in the preface to the new, very full collection of 14th-16th century texts Kapetanović, Malić & Štrkalj Despot 2010, page XLVI.)

IV. I would now like to mention East Slavic languages. Modern Russian, Belarusian, and Ukrainian do not have auxiliary clitics and pronoun clitics. They have only a few particle clitics (*že, li, by*). But earlier forms of East Slavic had systems of pronoun and auxiliary clitics that resemble South and West Slavic. Here is a table based on Old Novgorod Russian, as seen in the birchbark documents (*gramoty na berěste, berest-janye gramoty*).

Enclitics in Old (Novgorod) Russian (11th-13th centuries)

že particle	li particle	(bo) particle (in other dialects, not in Novgorod)	ti em- phatic particle	by condi- tional marker	mi, ti, ny, vy, na (dual), va (dual) 1st/2nd person dative pronouns; si reflexive dative	mja, tja, ny, vy, na (du.), va (du.) 1st/2nd person accusa- tive pronouns; sja reflexive accusa- tive; i, ju, je m., f., n. singular accusa- tive, jě, ja m./f., n. plural ac- cusative	jesmь, jesi, jesmь, jeste, jesvě (du.), je- sta (du.) 1st/2nd person 'to be'; jestь, sutь, jesta 3rd per- son 'to be'
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

This table is from the new book by A. A. Zaliznjak, *Drevnerusskie ènklitiki*. We can draw several conclusions from it. First, Old Russian had clitics for 1st and 2nd person dative pronouns (and distinguished them from full forms: clitic *mi*, full *тънѣ*) but it did not have clitics for 3rd person dative pronouns. West and South Slavic created new clitic forms so that they would have a complete paradigm. They, for instance, took masculine/neuter singular dative *jemu* and made a pair of clitic and full forms: clitic *mu*, full *jemu*. But Old Russian did not do this. Instead, it lost the clitics more and more. In modern East Slavic languages there are no clitic pronouns and no clitic verbs, only full forms.

Second, according to Zaliznjak's information, Old Russian did not put the reflexives before the other pronouns and did not put them after



the other pronouns. It had reflexive dative in the same place as other datives, and reflexive accusative in the same place as other accusatives. Actually, I wonder about the accusatives. In BCS there are examples that show clearly that *se* comes after an accusative. This situation does not arise frequently, but we see it when there is a reflexive verb and then an infinitive, and the infinitive has an accusative object:

- (14) a. usuđujem se ‘I dare’  
 b. čitati ga ‘to read it’  
 c. Usuđujem ga se čitati  
 I-dare it Refl. to read  
 ‘I dare to read it.’

Perhaps there were examples like this in Old Novgorod birchbark *gramoty*, though Zaliznjak was not looking for them explicitly.

V. In all the languages that we have discussed, the dative pronouns come before the accusative or genitive-accusative pronouns. The very useful book Franks & King (2000) gives descriptions of clitic placement and ordering in most of the Slavic languages, and attempts to make generalizations that would be valid for all of Slavic. The authors say: “A quick survey of these templates reveals a number of cross-Slavic regularities. For example, dative clitics always precede accusative ones... Reflexive clitics appear either to the immediate left of all other pronominal clitics...or to the immediate right... Auxiliary clitics precede pronominal ones...with the exception of certain 3rd person auxiliaries [and the Slovenian future auxiliary *bom*, *boš*, W.B.] which appear last in the cluster...” (Franks & King 2000, 206). They thus claim that clitic ordering, although it is different in different Slavic languages, depends only on the case (dative, accusative, or genitive) of pronoun clitics, and on the person (and number) of verb clitics. Slavic thus seems to be unlike the Romance languages, in which the person of pronoun clitics influences their placement. In French, for instance, a 3rd person accusative pronoun clitic *le* comes after a 1st or 2nd person dative pronoun clitic *me* or *te*, as in (15), but it comes before a 3rd person dative pronoun clitic *lui*, as in (16).

- (15) Il me le donne. ‘He gives it to me.’  
 (16) Il le lui donne. ‘He gives it to him (or to her).’

However, when one takes additional Slavic languages into account, one finds that the conclusions of Franks and King have exceptions. The person of pronouns **can** play a role in clitic ordering. I have been looking at two Slavic languages spoken by very small groups of people.

VI. One is Burgenland Croatian (or *gradišćanski hrvatski*, Browne 2010). This is the language used by a few tens of thousands of Croatians living in Burgenland, the easternmost province of Austria, and in nearby parts of Hungary and Slovakia. The group has been there for approximately 500 years (though their region was in Hungary until post-World-War-I border shifts). Their speech is mostly based on the Čakavski dialect of Croatian (though Kajkavski and Štokavski are also present). In the late 20th century they have standardized their language more and more, and it is used on the radio and TV, in publishing, and to some extent in education.

Burgenland Croatian is an exception to the generalization about reflexive clitics, because 1st and 2nd person accusative and genitive clitics precede the reflexive, whereas 3rd person accusative/genitive clitics mostly follow the reflexive. We find *Boju me se*. ‘They fear me.’ and *Boju te se*. ‘They fear you.’ but *Boju se ga*. ‘They fear him.’ (although *Boju ga se*. is also possible).

How did Burgenland Croatian develop this order that differs from modern BCS and, apparently, from older BCS? It has been in close contact with standard German, local German dialects, and Hungarian for 500 years, so we might want to explain the new order as a result of contact. However, Hungarian does not have pronoun clitics, does not have reflexive clitics, and does not have different word orders for 3rd person pronouns as compared with 1st and 2nd person pronouns. So it is difficult to see how Hungarian could have influenced Burgenland Croatian in this way.

Standard German also does not have pronoun clitics and does not have different word orders for 3rd person pronouns as compared with 1st and 2nd person pronouns (Browne 2010).

The German dialects in eastern Austria and in Hungary belong to the East Central Bavarian group. Bavarian in fact has nominative, dative, and accusative clitic pronouns distinguished from full form pronouns, and I have some partial information about them (Weiss 1998):

clitic	e	ma	da	--	--	me	de	'n
full form	i	mia	dia	eam	iar	mi	di	ean
	1st sing. nominative	1st sing. dative	2nd sing. dative	3rd sing. masc/neut dative	3rd sing. fem. dative	1st sing. accusative	2nd sing. accusative	3rd sing. masc. accusative
standard German	ich	mir	dir	ihm	ihr	mich	dich	ihn
	'I'	'to me'	'to you'	'to him/it'	'to her'	'me'	'you'	'him'

According to Weiss, these clitics must come in a fixed order: dative-accusative, or nominative-dative-accusative.

(17) a. i hob da 'n geem.

I have you-dat him-acc given

,I have given him to you, ich habe dir ihn gegeben'

b. \*i hob 'n da geem.

acc dat

(18) a. das 'a ma 'n geem hod

that he me-dat him-acc given has

,that he has given it to me, daß er mir ihn gegeben hat'

b. \*das a 'n ma geem hod

nom acc dat

So there are similarities between the Bavarian German dialect sys-

tem of clitics and the Burgenland Croatian system of clitics, and we can imagine that one system might influence the other. However there is a characteristic of German reflexive pronouns that 1) makes this influence less likely, and 2) prevents German dialect researchers from asking relevant questions. Namely, in standard German the 1st and 2nd person reflexive pronouns always have the same form as the 1st and 2nd person non-reflexive pronouns:

reflexive	mir	dir	mich	dich	uns	euch
	1st sing. dative	2nd sing. dative	1st sing. accusative	2nd sing. accusative	1st pl. dative/ accusative	2nd pl. dative/ accusative
	‘to myself’	‘to yourself’	‘myself’	‘yourself’	‘to our- selves’, ‘ourselves’	‘to your- selves’, ‘your- selves’
non- reflexive	mir	dir	mich	dich	uns	euch
	1st sing. dative	2nd sing. dative	1st sing. accusative	2nd sing. accusative	1st pl. dative/ accusative	2nd pl. dative/ accusative
	‘to me’	‘to you’	‘me’	‘you’	‘to us’, ‘us’	‘to you’, ‘you’

And the reflexive pronouns in Standard German apparently always go in the same position in the sentence as the non-reflexive pronouns would go. This fact leads German dialect researchers not even to mention the behavior of the reflexive pronouns separately from the behavior of the non-reflexive pronouns. On the other hand, the Slavic reflexive pronoun is *se* for all persons, and it goes in a different position in the clitic group as compared with all the non-reflexive pronouns. So, I argue, German reflexives could influence Burgenland Croatian reflexives only if the German reflexives were in some way different from the non-reflexive pronouns.

VII. Another “small” language is Vojvodina Rusinski, spoken by

several tens of thousands in Vojvodina, the multi-lingual northern province of Serbia. There are also a few Rusini in Croatia. The Rusinski settlers came from eastern Slovakia in the middle of the 1700s. Thanks to the favorable minority-language policy of former Yugoslavia, Rusinski was, and is still, used in education, in publishing, and on the radio and TV. This language is not quite the same as the Carpathian Rusyn that now exists in eastern Slovakia, western Ukraine, and parts of Poland and Hungary, because Vojvodina Rusinski has a higher proportion of West Slavic elements and a lower proportion of East Slavic elements as compared with Carpathian Rusyn.

(As an aside: work on the clitics in Carpathian Rusyn is a clear desideratum. Apparently Carpathian also has clitic groups and fixed order within them, but there is not very much information on this in the descriptions that we have.)

Vojvodina Rusinski is also an exception to the generalization by Franks and King, but in a different way, because one particular dative pronoun comes before all the other pronoun and reflexive clitics. Here is a table (Browne 2008) for the ordering within its clitic group:

## Rusinski

sg. сом, ши, —; pl. зме, сце, су	ци	ше	1sg ми, —, 3sgMN му, F ей; pl. нам, вам, им	1sg ме, 2sg це, 3sgMN го, FAcc ю, FGen ей; pl. нас, вас, их	е
би; sg. бим, биш, би; pl. бизме, бисце, би ог: sg. би сом, би ши, би; pl. би зме, би сце, би.					
present copula and Aux of past (but not 3sg); mark- er or Aux of condit.	2sg dative pronoun	reflexive	other dative pronouns	accusative and genitive pronouns	3sg present copula
1	2	3	4	5	6

We can write the ordering in a simpler way:

Auxs - 2sing. dative - reflexive - other datives - accusative/genitives - 3sg Aux.

(Notice that the letter *е* is pronounced *je*, so that Rusinski has exactly the same rule for placing *je* after all other clitics that we have seen in BCS, Slovenian, and Burgenland.)

Rusinski, over the past 250 years, has been in contact with BCS, Hungarian, and standard German. However, as we have seen, none of

these have such a special treatment of the 2nd person singular personal pronoun. We might think of the *etički dativ* (really: narrative dative) of BCS, in which the 2nd person singular could come before all other enclitics in an earlier form of the language (Maretić 1899, 437): “U pjesmama ipak riječca *ti* kad nije pravi dativ (mjesto *tebi*), već onako neki dopunjak, stoji ispred glagolskijeh enklitika: jedne *ti* smo sreće, pjes. I. 273, teško *ti* sam gladan. III. 40.” [In songs, nevertheless, the particle *ti*, when it is not a genuine dative (in place of *tebi*) but a sort of addendum, stands before the verbal enclitics: ‘one *ti* we-are fate’, we are of the same fate; ‘heavily *ti* I-am hungry’, I tell you I am very hungry.]

Rusinski definitely has a narrative dative (Ramač 2002, 341):

- (19) Та купел ци вон два... кнїжки.  
and bought you-Dat he two books

This could mean ‘And he bought two books for you’, but in the original example the books were for himself and the 2nd person pronoun means ‘I’m telling you the story’.

Thus we could conjecture that Rusinski shifted all its 2nd person singular dative forms into this special position of the narrative dative 2nd person singular. But notice that in Rusinski the position of *ци* is not before the verbal enclitics, but rather after them in column 2.

Rusinski has also been in contact with the Vojvodina German dialects (so-called Danube Swabian, spoken by hundreds of thousands of Vojvodina inhabitants until the voluntary or forced migrations at the end of World War II). These are known not to be pure Swabian, but a combination of several dialect areas in Germany. Investigations of Danube Swabian syntax, in particular of clitics, are even less well advanced than those of Bavarian. So the origin of the clitic-ordering phenomena in Rusinski cannot, for the moment, be plausibly attributed to contacts; it still remains a mystery.

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