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THE MOTIVATION FOR THE FIXED ORDER OF CLITICS
IN SERBO-CROATIAN

Because they are rich in inflectional morphology Serbo-Croatian and other Slavic languages allow great flexibility in their word order. As a consequence, their speakers may switch constituents within clauses more freely than it is possible to speakers of some other, less inflected languages, including English.

However, there are areas in Serbo-Croatian morphology where that is not the case and where a more rigid word order is required. This paper deals with an area demanding rigid word order; it examines the restrictions on the ordering of clitics.

Clitics, as we know, are small, unaccented forms which cannot stand by themselves but must lean to an adjacent, accented form. In phonological terms, a clitic forms an indissoluble unit with the word it leans onto, which some scholars name "the host word"[1]. Serbo-Croatian clitics usually follow the host word: they are enclitics rather than proclitics.

The Serbo-Croatian clitics include the following:

1. The interrogative *li*, used in yes–no questions. As a particle, *li* has no independent lexical content.

2. Auxiliary verbs participating in the formation of the analytical past tense (*sam, si, je, smo, ste, su*), the Future tense (*ću, ćeš, će, ćemo, ćete, ću*) and the Potentials (unstressed *bih, bi, bi, bismo, biste, bi*). In colloquial Serbo-Croatian the clitic *bi* is used for all persons, both in singular and in plural.

This group also includes the forms *sam* 'am', *si* (2nd pr. sg.) 'are', *je* 'is', *smo, ste, su* 'are', when these forms are not used as auxiliaries but as present tense. Verbal auxiliaries also have full accented forms which are not used

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[1] Zwicky 1977, p. 33.

as auxiliaries. When used, these accented forms introduce certain semantic nuances.

3. Pronominal clitics: the Dative, the Accusative and the Genitive forms. The pronominal clitics have stressed, non-clitic counterparts which most often are used contrastively. For example, the clitic form *ga* 'him' (3rd pr. sg. Acc.) has the strong form *njega* 'him'. The Accusative and the Genitive clitics are identical, as can be seen from the chart below:

	Dative		Accusative/Genitive	
	full:	encl.:	full:	encl.:
1 sg.	meni	mi	mene	me
2 sg.	tebi	ti	tebe	te
3 sg. masc. & neut.	njemu	mu	njega	ga
3 sg. fem.	njoj	joj	nju	je/ju[2]
1 pl.	nama	nam	nâs	nas
2 pl.	vama	vam	vâs	vas
3 pl.	njima	im	njih	ih

4. The reflexive pronoun *se* (Acc.), used for all persons, singular and plural.

There are several good articles which deal with the distribution of clitics in Sebo-Croatian (and Slovene): Wayles Browne (1968, 1974, 1975, 1986) as well as David Bennett (1986), to mention only a few.

Bennet (1986) and Browne (1986) are primarily concerned with differences in clitic ordering between Slovene and Serbo-Croatian. Browne (1968) writes placement rules for Serbo-Croatian clitics. Both authors are primarily interested in the position of clitics within a clause.

It is a well-observed fact that clitics tend to occur toward the beginning of a clause. This is understandable, since although these small, monosyllabic units are not stressed, they carry important semantic information. The clitics introduce semantic information essential for the processing of the mesage from the utterance in which they occur. Serbo-Croatian clitics do not start a clause but take a positon after some fully accented form.

If more than one clitic is present in a clause, the clitics form a cluster. Identical clitics cannot be repeated. Their sequence cannot be interrupted except by another clitic. The order within the cluster is fixed.

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[2]The clitic *ju* 'her' is always placed before the verb auxiliary *je* 'is' to avoid the repetition and ambiguity that the sequence *je je** may present. However, *ju* 'her' is not limited to this position and its distribution is geographical, more frequent in some areas of Serbo-Croatian and less in others.

Table 1   Order of Serbo-Croatian Clitics

1	2	3	4	5	6
particle *li*	verbal auxiliary (except *je*)	dative pronouns	accusative pronouns	reflexive pronoun *se*	copula past. aux. *je*

In Serbo-Croatian, the interrogative particle *li*, if it occurs in the clause, is positioned first, followed by the verbal clitic (excluding the copula *je* 'is'), the dative pronoun clitic, the accusative pronoun clitic, the reflexive pronoun *se* and the copula *je* 'is'. In some areas of Serbo-Croatian the sequence *se je* appears while in others *je* 'is' is usually omitted, whenever the reflexive pronoun *se* is present. There are certain differences in the fixed order of clitics between Serbo-Croatian and other Slavic languages; we shall return to this difference later on.

The Genitive pronoun clitics are not given separate treatment here for the following reasons:

First, the Accusative and the Genitive forms of pronoun clitics, except for the third person feminine *ona* 'she', are identical.

Secondly, while reflexive verbs such as *bojati se* 'to fear, to be afraid of', *stideti se* 'to feel shame, to be shy', take the Genitive as their object, the need to place both the Genitive and the Accusative clitic in the same clitic sequence is extremely rare. When the need arises, a native speaker either names the Accusative object overtly or uses the stressed full form of the Accusative pronoun. Discussing such possibilities, Browne (1975) concludes that "for practical purposes, then, we can say that there is only one position, which can be filled either by the Accusative or by the Genitive"[3].

Tables like the one presented above predict correctly where Serbo-Croatian clitics will be placed with respect to one another if more than one clitic occurs in the same clause. Tables do not, however, provide an explanation as to why clitics are distributed in a certain order.

The present article is concerned with the particular distribution of clitics, i.e. their fixed order within the clitic sequence. In what follows, we suggest the motivation for the particular ordering within the clitic sequence. The motivation, as we shall see, is both linguistic and extra-linguistic.

I suggest that the avoidance of complexity in the inferential process is the motivating force behind both the placement of clitics within a clause and the fixed order of clitics within the clitic sequence. The ordering of clitics, I believe, arises out of two considerations, which are independent of one another:

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[3] Browne 1975, p. 131.

1. All the clitics (auxiliary verbs, pronoun clitics and the particle *li*) are small, monosyllabic segments of morphology and thus all temporally brief. This raises the problem of retention in the process of inferring messages. They are therefore positioned at the point of maximum prominence, at the beginning of a clause, where the speaker/hearer's attention is the highest.

2. The principle of minimum effort which manifests itself in humans influences the fixed ordering of clitics. Namely, humans do not like to make needless efforts but rather prefer to ease their tasks, in this case the task of processing messages, by inferential complexity. Clitics are an example par excellence of the manifestation of this principle.

When the case forms of nouns and full forms of verbs are used in place of clitics they occupy more than one slot within a clause and therefore need not be adjacent to one another. These full forms contain both lexical and grammatical information and they are usually processed with ease. However, the inferential process increases in complexity whenever pronouns are involved and even more so if those pronouns happen to be clitics. When clitics which consist of only one syllable and contain only minimal lexical content, in addition to their inflectional endings are used, the burden on memory becomes considerable. The inferential process further increases in difficulty with the number of participant roles involved in a message, the more difficult the inferential processing of the message becomes.

Certainly clitics present a problem in processing and speakers of Serbo-Croatian have developed strategies which reinforce grammatical signals through a fixed word order. They have established a routine, in this case a routine word order in which the clitics are spoken or written every time they occur. This enables speakers of Serbo-Croatian to develop inferential expertise; they need not process messages differently in any given case. The need to avoid inferential complexity is the real force behind the fixed order of clitics.

In connection with this, a question immediately arises as to the rationale for the particular order of clitics. Why do the clitics occur in the order they do? Why do the verbal clitics precede pronoun clitics? Why does the interrogative particle come first, etc.?

Before we answer these questions and outline the analysis which provides an explanation for this particular clitic distribuion, let us look at individual clitics occupying slots marked on Table I as 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6, and examine what kind of information they provide.

The particle *li* in Serbo-Croatian marks yes–no questions (and, only occasionally, other types of clauses). Positioned at the front of a clause, *li* immediately alerts the hearer/reader that the message to be inferred will be a question rather than a statement or a command. The information provided by the particle *li* always concerns the clause as a whole. Since the interpre-

tation of the entire clause depends on it, initial positioning within the clitic sequence (and secon position in a clause, after either the particle *da* or the finite verb) is essential. The same strategy is widely employed in other languages: question words are usually positioned at the beginning of utterances.

The remaining clitics, auxiliaries, pronouns and the reflexive *se* provide different kinds of information which do not concern the clause as a whole. The verbal clitics (the auxiliaries), provide information concerning the number and person of the sentence subject; Dative and Accusative pronoun clitics provide information about what is traditionally called Indirect and Direct objects[4].

The reflexive pronoun also provides information about case roles. When the reflexive pronoun *se* (Acc.) is used as a true reflexive, it signals that the referent of the subject is playing two roles simultaneously, that of the agent and that of the patient, to the exclusion of any other participant.

    4. Perem (1st pr. sg.) se (Acc.).
      'I am washing myself.'
    5. Perem (1st pr. sg.) ga (3rd pr. sg. masc. Acc.).
      'I am washing him.'

In 4, we have only one participant, playing a double role, that of agent and that of patient. In 5, however, in addition to the agent I (1st pr. sing.) there is another participant in the event, signalled by *ga* 'him' (3rd pr. sing. masc. Acc.), playing the role of patient. In both 4 and 5 above, the agent I is signalled redundantly by the verbal ending in *perem* (lst pr. sing. pres.) 'I wash/am washing'.

In other instances the role of the reflexive *se* is not so transparent. In the so-called pseudo-reflexive, or any other term that might be used instead, *se* is found in instances in which (1) the verb is used passively or (2) the verb has an inanimate subject.

    6. Govori se da je Nikola Tesla bio čudan čovek.
      'It is said/They say that Nikola Tesla was a strange man.'
    7. Vrata se otvoriše.
      'The door opened (by itself).'

In 6, the subject is not overtly expressed, and all that is said is that there is someone there, unidentified or perhaps whose identity is irrelevant, who is performing what is denoted by the verb. In 7, the subject *vrata* 'the door' is an inanimate entity.

Browne (1975) calls such *se* (used with certain verbs and in certain constructions) a particle because this *se* does not have the corresponding full form *sebe*. For example, in 6 above 'govori se' can never be **govori sebe*. For him, as well as for some other scholars, such *se* has a de-agentivizing function.

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[4]The traditional terms used here, subject, direct object, indirect object, etc. are not theoretical categories in the grammatical analysis on which this paper is based. They are introduced for the benefit of the reader familiar with these terms.
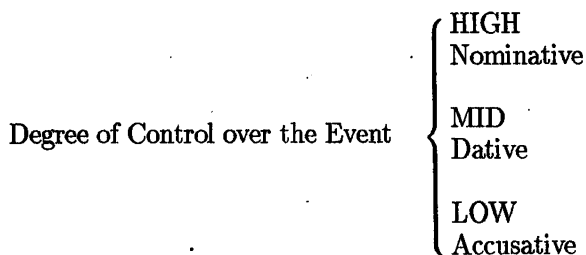
We cannot go into detail about all the different uses of non-reflexive *se*. We may agree, however, that in all the instances in which *se* does occur, it provides some information about the subject of the sentence.

All the auxiliary and pronoun clitic provide information about case roles. The present article is concerned primarily with these clitics. It represents a semantic analysis of case forms based on the Form-Content Analysis (Diver 1975, Zubin 1978, Huffman 1983, Gorup 1987, etc.).

According to this analysis, the Serbo-Croatian case forms provide information concerning the extent to which different participants control an event or are involved in bringing about an event. A participant can be entirely in control of an event and we can assign to it the role of causer or agent — the traditional subject. On the other hand, a participant may have no control and we can then refer to it as patient. Between these two diametrically opposed roles, participants can play many different roles, so much so that any attempt to classify them will not result in an exhaustive classification. This is because case roles are inferred not only from grammatical meaning signalled by case endings, but also from lexical meaning and from other information available to the hearer/reader.

The Serbo-Croatian cases, Nominative, Instrumental, Dative and Accusative, stand in semantic opposition to one another. They are organized in a semantic system which gives information concerning the extent to which the participant referred to by a noun or a pronoun, in association with cases, is in control of the event denoted by the verb.

The meaning of the Nominative case indicates that its referent exercises the highest degree of control over the event. The meaning of the Dative case indicates a control greater than that of the Accusative but lesser than the Nominative. This grammatical system also has an additional member, the Instrumental case, but since Instrumental pronouns do not have clitics but only full stressed forms, we are not considering the Instrumental here. For convenience we shall call this system the System of Degree of Control over the Event. It can be represented as follows:

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\text{Degree of Control over the Event} \begin{cases} \text{HIGH} \\ \text{Nominative} \\ \\ \text{MID} \\ \text{Dative} \\ \\ \text{LOW} \\ \text{Accusative} \end{cases}
$$

When a speaker of Serbo-Croatian wants to communicate a message involving more than one participant role, he has at his disposal meanings which can convey information about what each participant is doing in the

event, that is, information about to what extent each participant is involved in the bringing about of the event. This information is conveyed differently in different languages. What is, in Serbo-Croatian, signalled by case morphology, in English is often signalled by word order.

In "John sent Mary a gift" the system of Control indicates that the referents of *John, Mary* and *gift* exercise different control over the activity of sending, in decreasing amount. *John,* occupying first position, does the actual sending; he is the agent. *Mary,* occupying the second position, motivates John to do it, and the *gift,* in the third place, has no control over its sending at all.

In Serbo-Croatian, when nouns and the full accented forms of pronouns are used to convey case roles, they can occupy more than one position within a clause. The sentence above might read "Ivan je poslao Mariji poklon", "Mariji je Ivan poslao poklon", or "Ivan je poslao poklon Mariji", etc. As in English, *Ivan,* signalled by the meaning 'High participant' (the Nominative), is infferred as an agent, *Mariji,* signalled by the 'MID participant' (the Dative), is inferred as the beneficiary or motivator and *poklon* (gift), signalled by 'LOW participant' (the Accusative), is inferred as an entity that has no control over the event of sending. Unlike English, these meanings are signalled not by word order but by the case morphology.

However, when the short, unstressed forms of the pronouns and auxiliary clitics are used, their fixed order reflects the semantic opposition of control over an event, signalled by case morphology. The order, verbal clitics — 1, Dative pronoun clitic — 2 and Accusative pronoun clitic — 3, reinforces the grammatical signal of control, ranging from HIGH to LOW.

The information about the 'HIGH participant' (the traditional subject), conveyed by the verbal clitics, comes first. The pronoun clitics, the MID participant (the Dative), and the LOW participant (the Accusative) which follow, always occur in this order. This Dative/Accusative order is very important. Like most languages, Serbo-Croatian has built more redundancy into signalling the HIGH participant (the subject) than into signalling mid and low participants. Information about the MID and LOW participants (Direct and Indirect objects) is often minimal. Yet, that information is essential if a hearer/reader is to infer the case roles correctly.

This brings us to the position of the reflexive pronoun *se* in the clitic sequence. It is here that Serbo-Croatian differs from other Slavic languages which have clitics. In Serbo-Croatian, the reflexive pronoun *se* follows the pronoun clitics, i. e. it occupies the fifth slot within the clitic sequence. In Slovene, Czech and Polish, the reflexive pronoun precedes the pronoun clitics. In other words, in these languages, the reflexive pronoun is grouped together with the verbal auxiliary which also gives information about the high participant (the subject). Unlike these languages, Serbo-Croatian places clitics first in the order in which they signal participant roles (high, mid and

low) and only at the end of the clitic sequence, provides commentary on the high participant by introducing reflexive *se*. The meaning of the reflexive pronoun *se* suggests that the high participant slot is occupied by an entity that lacks agency. Serbo-Croatian chooses to separate these two types of information while the other Slavic languges group them together.

The position of the copula *je* 'is' reflects still another principle manifested by humans, the egocentricity of the human user of language. By definition, there can be only one speaker (1st person singular) and one hearer (second person singular). The third person can be anyone or anything, for that matter. When signalling information about the HIGH participant with clitic morphology, the speaker of Serbo-Croatian uses *sam* 'am' (1st pr. sg.) for the speaker, *si* 'are' (2nd pr. sg.) for the addressee, and in the slot reserved for the high participant, uses the $\emptyset$ signal standing for the third person singular. This signal is however reinforced by the introduction of copula *je* at the end of clitic sequence after all other information about the participant roles has already been introdused.

We can see the principle of egocentricity often manifested in languages. For example, Serbo-Croatian (and other Slavic languages) do not invest equally in signalling the first and the second person singular versus the third person singular. The third person singular often has a $\emptyset$ ending in the present tense or the aorist.

In conclusion, case roles become increasingly difficult to infer when clitics are used, because they lack lexical information; yet, the correct identification of the participant roles is indispensable if we want to come to the right understanding of the message. Serbo-Croatian clitics are ordered in sequences of two, three and infrequently four. This fixed clitic ordering eases the inferential process by providing the hearer with a familiar order every time, thus avoiding inferential complexity.

The ordering of clitics reflects two principles according to which participants are ranked:

(a) The first principle ranks the participants according to the degree to which they control an event, from HIGH to LOW. The first position is reserved for the clitic or clitics providing information about the high participant, the second position for the clitic which gives information on the mid participant and the third position form the clitic which gives information about the low participant. This coincides with another fact of human behavior: humans value more highly entities which are more active than entities which are less active.

(b) The second principle ranks participants according to degree of distance between the self and the others. The position of the copula, as opposed to the first and the second person singular *sam* 'I am' and *si* 'you are', reflects the egocentricity of the human user of language. Being egocentric,

humans rank entities as speaker, addressee and anyone else, in that order. The speaker is always self-centered and views everything in relation to him or her. By introducing the copula *je* at the end of the clitic sequence Serbo-Croatian reinforces the 0 signal for the third person which is used in the slot appropriate for the high participant, if the high participant happens to be neither the speaker nor the addressee.

The ordering of clitics in Serbo-Croatian can be understood in terms of these two principles. Other Slavic languages that have clitics adhere to the same principles, but differ slightly in how they apply the first principle.

An explanation for the order of clitics must go beyond syntactic analysis. The analyses that treat case roles as subject, indirect object and direct object or even those which provide a more elaborate classification treating case roles as causer, agent, beneficiary, motivator, interesting party, patient, etc. do not help us understand why the verbal and pronoun clitics occur in the particular order they do.

The order seen in Table 1 is due both to the grammatical meanings of the cases and to the characteristics of the human user of language. The order of clitics is rooted in semantic oppositions existing in the language, and cannot be viewed as random. When considering the semantic structure of languages we also have to take into consideration the human factor, i. e. what properties the users of language have, what is easy and what is difficult for them, in order to understand why particular languages are what they are.

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Р е з и м е

Радмила Горуп

УЗРОЦИ НЕПРОМЕНЉИВОСТИ РЕДОСЛЕДА КЛИТИКА У СРПСКОХРВАТСКОМ

При образовању клитичког низа српскохрватске клитике се распоређују по одређеном редоследу за који се зна какав је, али не и зашто је такав. Овај рад нуди одговор на ово досад занемаривано питање.

Треба, пре свега, имати у виду да се клитике, као комуникативни сигнали недовољно упечатљивог изговорног волумена, смештају тамо где су најмањи изгледи да ће њихова сигнална функција промаћи пажњи примаоца реченичне поруке — та пажња је, по природи ствари, најмање посустала онда кад реченица почиње. Строгим утврђивањем поретка по којем се клитике постројавају у низ удовољено је, у ствари, познатој људској тежњи ка „рашчитавању" реченичне поруке са што мање напора. Што се тиче избора места које ће та и та конкретна клитика заузети у низу, он је усклађен са једним од универзалних принципа људског доживљавања света и себе у њему. Језици, наиме, на различите начине потврђују исто: да је за људе, при саопштавању о догађајима, изузетно важно експлицирање хијерархије која, међу учесницима догађаја, постоји у односу на њихову делотворну улогу у њему — вршилац радње је хијерархијски изнад њеног објекта, онај коме се тај објекат намењује, односно уручује, такође изнад објекта, али испод вршиоца. Редослед по којем се распоређују клитичке форме српскохрватских заменица у суштини верно одсликава примену таквог принципа хијерархизовања. Водећи рачуна не само о том принципу већ и о свему ономе што је њиме имплицирано, аутор посебно осветљава однос рефлексивног *се* према осталим заменичким енклитикама. С друге стране, разлике у смештању клитичких облика помоћног глагола *јесам* у односу на заменичке (*је* иза / остали глаголски облици испред заменичких клитика) аутор сагледава као потврду деловања принципа људске егоцентричности: облик *је* је, за разлику од осталих форми помоћног глагола, изразито често саставни део предиката реченице под чијим се субјектом не подразумева људски створ, па је очигледно због тога одстрањен из иницијалне реченичне позиције (која је маркирана као елитно „људска") и постављен у најмање „људску" — финалну.