

Observations on the Appearance of Proclitic Forms in Late Medieval Spanish

One of the most striking syntactic differences between the grammars of Medieval and Modern Spanish is the distribution of unstressed object pronouns with respect to the verb. Governed by principles that are tied to specific syntactic criteria, in sentences with finite verbs, for example, object pronouns in the medieval system both precede and follow the verb (e.g. *Dígote* vs. *No te digo*) whereas they are uniformly preverbal in the modern language (cf. *Te digo* vs. *No te digo*). Since these forms, frequently referred to as clitic pronouns, are unstressed and must be attached phonologically to an adjacent stressed form, this change, which occurred in most Romance languages,¹ is directly related to a change in the nature of their phonologic attachment, namely the passage from Enclitic or leftward attachment to Proclitic or rightward attachment.

When did this change take place? Scholars who have considered the question generally place the origins of the change in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century (Ramsden; Granberg) but there are conflicting views as to when it was completed. Keniston would have us believe that the change came in the seventeenth century (or later) for he concludes that "the usage of the sixteenth century can best be explained by saying that the object pronouns are enclitic forms" (89). Lapesa observes that in sixteenth century texts "aparecen frecuentes ejemplos de proclisis" although he notes that "seguía en vigor la regla de que en principio de frase o después de pausa [los pronombre inacentuados] habían de ir tras el verbo" (407). Indeed, the general absence of sentence-initial clitics in Golden Age prose gives the impression that clitic position in "early Modern Spanish" was still determined by "medieval" principles. There is reason to believe, however, that the change to proclitic attachment (in all contexts) was complete in some speech communities by the mid-fifteenth century and thus should be properly placed within the medieval period. Before presenting

the evidence in support of this claim, a few words about the nature of clitic attachment are necessary.

Since unstressed pronominal forms must "lean" on an adjacent stressed form, it follows that in an enclitic system a pronoun must be preceded by an appropriate stressed element to which it can be adjoined phonologically.² Observe that this requirement accounts for the postverbal position of clitics in verb-initial medieval sentences (e.g. *Voyme*). When the first element in a sentence is a verb, an unstressed pronoun must appear to its right in order to have a host to the left. In contrast, proclitic pronouns lean to the right and therefore can appear in S[entence]-initial position in modern Spanish (when the verb is finite, e.g., *Me voy*).

As noted above, an enclitic pronoun must be preceded by an appropriate stressed element. When this is the case, postposition is not necessary and enclitic pronouns precede the verb. For example, in negative and interrogative sentences both negative adverbs and interrogative forms invariably serve as "host" to the enclitic pronoun, as illustrated in (1):

- (1) a. *ove famne e nom* diestes a comer. (*Diez Mandamientos*:83. Cited from Morel-Fatio 1887)
 b. *e tenebreció la noch e nos* plegó³ Pharaón en toda la noch. (*Fazienda de ultramar*:71. Cited from edition by Lazar; hereafter abbreviated as "Faz.")
 c. *¿Porquém* desfeches de mios fijos? (Faz:55)
 d. *¿Qué me* darás? (Faz:52)

In passing, it should be noted that the apocopated forms in (1a-c) provide evidence that preverbal clitics in this context were in fact enclitic.⁴ Enclitics are also uniformly preverbal in sentences in which a direct or indirect object (that is not coreferent to the pronoun in question) appears before the verb, as illustrated respectively by (2a-b) and (2c-d):

- (2) a. *Las pieles de los cabritos le* puso sobre las manos e sobre el cuello. (Faz:47)
 b. *Este nombre le* puso el rey Ninno que la pobló. (*Semeiança del mundo*:30. Cited from edition by Bull and Williams 1963)
 c. *A to linnaje la* daré. (Faz:81)
 d. *A ti adoro, a ti me* clamo. (*Anales Toledanos II*:402)

Summarizing briefly, we have seen several structures in which enclitics appear uniformly in preverbal position and in each case the verb is preceded by another element which serves as host to the clitic pronoun. Given that our present task is to identify early cases of modern pronominal usage, constructions like the ones in (1) and (2) are of no value to us since clitics are also preverbal in their modern counterparts.⁵

In order to find signs of proclitic forms in the written record, we must identify constructions in which (modern) preverbal clitics replace (medieval) postverbal clitics. We have already mentioned the case of verb-initial sentences but there are others because the presence of a possible host is a necessary but not sufficient condition for enclisis. That other structural

conditions have to obtain follows from the fact that there are some structures in which enclitic pronouns occur in postverbal position even when the verb is preceded by another element.⁶ Medieval examples of two relevant constructions are given in (3):

- (3) a. *E por que amaua mucho el uino llamauan lo los joglares por escarnio por Tiberio Nero, "biberio mero."* (*Estoria de España*: 72. Menéndez Pidal 1906)
 b. *e todas las cabdales de Jherusalem quemólas en fuego.* (Faz:161)

The construction in (3a) involves a main clause preceded by a subordinate clause that modifies the sentence as a whole and not a particular constituent of it (e.g., the subject or a preverbal object). In (3b) a lexical element in S-initial position is duplicated by the following clitic pronoun. It bears repeating that in the earliest texts object pronouns in these constructions appear without exception after the verb. It seems fair to assume, then, that preverbal clitics in these environments can be taken as indications of the advent of proclitic attachment.

We are now ready to briefly consider the chronology of this change. The earliest clear signs of modern usage occur in the construction illustrated in (3a), i.e., in sentences involving a main clause preceded by a subordinate clause. Consider two examples drawn from early fourteenth-century texts:

- (4) a. *E quando llegaron a su señor, los vio luego, les preguntó, e les dixo: "Amigos, ¿venídesme con pas?"* (*Libro del Zifar*:108. Ed. by González Muela 1982)
 b. *Sennor infante, quando uos fablé desuso enel estado delos ofiçiales, vos di a entender quelos oficiales non avian aseer del estado delos nobles defensores.* (LLE:397. Ed. by Blecua 1981)

It should be noted that example (4b) occurs in don Juan Manuel's *Libro de los estados*, which unfortunately (like all his books) survives only in fifteenth-century copies. It is interesting, nonetheless, because the clitic involved is the second person *vos*, and if the reading is not original it still dates from the fifteenth century.

By the early fifteenth century similar cases are more frequent in Castilian texts. Consider the following two from González de Clavijo's *Embajada a Tamorlán* (1406–12) and the *Corbacho* (1438):

- (5) a. *quando auian de pasar algund yermo de alli les auian de faser leuar vianda e çeuada e agua asu costa dellos avn queles pesaua.* (Tam:138.23–25)
 b. *Enpero, la Pobresa emaginó en sy: "Esta villana está gruesa como toro. Sy la yo dexo porfiar guardándome de sus maneras, la faré fuertemente sudar;* (*Corbacho*:265. Ed. González Muela 1984)

Although most writers carefully avoid preverbal clitics in this context, from the 1450s on even the most literate figures have left evidence that modern forms were spreading. For illustration consider the examples of

(6), whose authors include Isabel I, the conservative grammarian Nebrija and Fernando de Rojas:

- (6) a. *y luego como supe su venida lo embié a notificar al dicho señor mi hermano.* (1469, Isabel I, *Carta*)
 b. *si con tu favor logro vencer a los enemigos de la lengua latina, a los cuales declaro la guerra con este libro, te ofreceré agradecido las décimas del botín.* (Nebrija: Dedicatoria al cardenal Mendoza de la 1ª ed. de las *Introducciones*, 1481)
 c. *Agora toque en mi honrra, agora dañe mi fama, agora lastime mi cuerpo, avnque sea romper mis carnes para sacar mi dolorido corazón, te doy mi fe ser segura e, si siento aliuio, bien galardonada.* (Fernando de Rojas, *Celestina* vol. 2:56.26. Cejador y Frauca 1972)

The earliest cases involving pronoun duplication (see example 3b) occur in informal texts written between c. 1412 and 1481 by three Andalusians: Doña Leonor López de Córdoba (b. 1362–3),⁷ Pero Tafur, who was born between 1405–10 (probably in Seville), and Diego de Almela (b. Murcia, 1426?).⁸ Consider the following:

- (7) a. *e a los Abades les pesó.* (Leonor:22)
 b. *a mi medió mi Padre veinte mill doblas en Casamiento.* (Leonor:17)
 c. *a estos se les da a tal preçio.* (Taf:208.26)
 d. *esta la puebla una grant çibat.* (Taf:26–27)
 e. *A este rey Carlos le tomó a çeçilla el rey don Pedro III de Aragon.* (Diego de Almela, *Cartas*:34)

By the end of the same century, cases appear in polished literary texts and even conservative medical treatises:

- (8) a. *Al hombre le nasce la barba despues de xxiii años* (*Fasciculus medicinae*:fol. LIX, 1495)
 b. *Esto trabajé yo; a vosotros se os deue essotro.* (*Cel* vol.2:99.13)

Evidence like the preceding suggests strongly that by the fifteenth century the pronominal syntax of medieval speakers and writers was well on its way to being “modern.” This apparent fact might be more widely recognized had scholars previously documented cases of S-initial clitics in texts prior to the sixteenth century, but such is not the case. Let us now turn to this issue.

Documented cases of clitic pronouns in absolute sentence-initial position constitute the strongest evidence that one can muster to substantiate the passage from enclisis to proclisis. Beginning with the seventeenth century, Lesman (106) only notes a single example —*¿Me conocéis?*— dating from 1679.⁹ Likewise, Keniston (1937:95) notes only one “sure case:” *Te quexas porque gozauas la cosa que en el mundo más amauas* (1508–1512).¹⁰ Surely, if these results are an indication of speech habits, Correas, writing in 1626, would not have stated so indignantly that “no se puede

dezir . . . lo que dicen algunos inadvertidos o no Castellanos, comenzando por estos encliticos la rrazon: *te vas? voime, se va*, que es intolerable, sino como es el uso propio: *vaste? voime, vase, vanse*; quede esto advertido para todos" (189). Later on, ignoring completely the complexities of medieval usage, Correas succinctly prescribes what he believes to be *uso proprio*: "La rregla es, que si el verbo comienza la habla, los pronombres se le posponen; si se pone despues de otras palavras, ellos se le anteponen" (288). The attitude that these comments reveal explains to a great extent the lack of modern forms in the literary texts consulted in the aforementioned studies and strongly calls for a recognition of different levels of speech and, in turn, styles of writing. As we will shortly see, the testimony of less inhibited (or more daring) writers shows that in popular speech modern forms occurred some 240 years before the former example went to print and at least 70 years before the latter.

Only the existence of a conscious rule can explain the complete lack of forms in this context in the well-known literary works of the second half of the century.¹¹ In contrast, during the first half of the century when humanistic ideals still held sway and before the spirit of conformity had tightened its grip on Golden Age Spain, some writers still felt free enough to punctuate dramatic scenes with bits and pieces of "up-to-date" dialogue.

For example, in *Lisando y Roselia* (1542) the young noble awaits his servant, Oligides, who has made away to arrange a meeting with Roselia. Upon his return, their excited conversation includes the following: Olig: "Te verá y hablará." Lis: "Aguarda, no te des tanta priesa. Me verá y hablará." A few years earlier, Francisco Delicado proves himself to be a grammatical as well as a sexual libertine. His avant-garde novel, *La Loçana andaluza* (1528) contains numerous "intolerable" forms (e.g., *Me recomiendo, caballero; ¿Os contento donde os llego? Y vos beso y abracijo*, etc.).

Turning the clock back to the fifteenth century, the only scholar to have studied the matter recently is Ramsden, but he "noted no example of anteposition where the union with the preceding element is completely paratactic" (179). The fact is, however, that there is uncontrovertible documentation of modern usage going back to 1438. Examples are given below in reverse chronological order:

(9) *Sentence initial clitics*

- 1487 . **Nos** es fecha relacion que ella & los monesterios de la tercera regla...
(Document signed by Fernando and Ysabel. Cited from Menéndez Pidal, #363).
- 1466 . **Vos** fago saber que abiendo singular deseo de pacificar estos mis reinos...
(Letter from Alfonso XI to the Concejo de Murcia. Cited from Torres Fontes 1946:504)
- 1457 . Y si tanto Vra. alta. de mi mal grande ha, mándeme comprar lo mio y de mis parientes y criados y poner los dineros en Aragon; **vos** saldrá más

- varato que gastar sueldo contro mi. (Alonso Fajardo, letter to Enrique IV. Escorial [ms. &-11-7, fols. 140r-140v])
- 1448 . Vos oviemos mandado que posiessedes baçines en cada una de vuestras iglesias para la demandaa de la fabrica e obra de nuestra iglesia cathedral. (1448, Burgos, *Recogida de limosna*, ed. L. Serrano, *Cartulario . . . de Covarrubias*, 327; cited from González Ollé 1980:413)
- 1438 . E el otro dize luego: “¿Qué has, amiga?” Ella responde: “Non nada.” “Pues, dime, señora, ¿por qué lloras, que goze yo de ty?” Responde: “Non, por nada.” “Pues, qué cosa es ésta? ¿Asy gozés de mi!” “Vos digo que non nada.” “Dime, pese a tal, señora, ¿qué cosa es, o quién te enojó, o por qué son estos lloros? ¿Dimelo, pese a tal, señora!” Responde ella: “Lloro mi ventura.” (Corbacho:192)
- 1438 . Desde que vido que non podia por aquellas maneras su voluntad conplir, tentóla de sacaliña por ver sy la venceria, e non la pudo sobrar. Dixo: “Le yo daré a esta villana los tornos e le faré desmemoriar.” Vido que a mal nin a byen non la podía de tierra arrancar; tomó tanta malencónía que cuydava reventar. (Cor:264)

The earliest cases noted (1438 *Corbacho*) have in common with the examples from early sixteenth-century novels that they occur in direct style dialogue and the person speaking is in an agitated emotional state. The first one cited is spoken by a tearful, exasperated woman (*sañuda e yrada!*) in a tense confrontation with her husband, *un colérico*. The latter one, part of the dialogue that punctuates the furious battle between *la Pobreza* and *la Fortuna*, keenly illustrates Martínez de Toledo's linguistic creativity. Not only does it begin with a proclitic pronoun; it also involves interpolation (of the subject) in a main clause.¹² The other examples cited above occur in letters and notarial prose.

The present study has not found any earlier evidence in Castilian, but the Aragonese translation of *Tucidides*, made between 1384-96 and attributed to Juan Fernández de Heredia, includes three examples:¹³

- (10) a. ¡A todos los senyores que somos sobre aquesti stol dando consello! **Me** parece bueno que, antes que los athenienos sapian novellas de nuestra venida, vayamos lo plus tost que podremos... (90)
- b. et, en caso que no nos quieran huirla, . . . nos moveremos contra ellos seyendo fornidos de todas cosas. Et **me** pienso que,... (62)
- c. Et **me** maravillo que aquesta cosa pueda alguno contradir. (92)

There are only two other earlier cases cited in the literature (Ramsden 102, 178). The first is a line from the thirteenth-century *Calila e Dimna: Di tú: ¿me viste fazer esto que dizes?* (Allen 1906:4.526-7).¹⁴ This example is highly suspect, however, for there is reason to believe that it is the product of erroneous editing rather than a reflection of thirteenth-century speech. If one considers the context in which it appears, and keeps in mind the fact that in the medieval system clitics appeared perverbally after emphatic perverbal subjects,¹⁵ it seems that the correct reading is as follows:

Di: ¿Tú me viste fazer esto que dizes?¹⁶ It should be pointed out that, as in modern Spanish, questions in Old Spanish normally show subject-verb inversion¹⁷ but in this case the question is accusatory. It is posed in exasperation by an innocent woman directly to the dishonest servant (*un açorero*) who has claimed falsely that he saw her in bed with the *portero*. Thus, the context strongly suggests that the perverbal subject is emphatic, which in turn explains the perverbal position of the clitic.

The second case cited by Ramsden occurs in two lines from the *Auto de los reyes magos* (31 and 58) that read: *iré, lo aoraré*. Ramsden correctly points out that *aoraré* cannot be interpreted as an infinitive,¹⁸ in which case the word order would be normal. Thus, if the preceding interpretation of the example from *Calila* is correct, these lines from the *Auto* remain as the only examples in Spanish between c. 1200 and 1438. A gap of 238 years (more or less) calls for an explanation and underscores the uncertainty of these examples as indicative of autochthonous usage. Ramsden attributes the preverbal position of *lo* "to the influence of the strong personal pronoun which was frequently used in an exaltative sense instead of the weak pronoun to refer, as here, to God or Christ" (102).¹⁹ But there is another explanation that accords with and lends confirmation to two theories relating to the period and the authorship of the text in question. First, Wright argues that the art of vernacular writing was being introduced into Spain during this period and claims that "The method of transcription suggests that the author knows of contemporary practice north of the Pyrenees, and is attempting to apply it to Spanish" (219). Second, it has been argued more than once that the author was *gascón o catalán* (Lapesa 143; Deyermond 364-65). This probability (as Wright acknowledges) explains where the author would have acquired his new skill before his move to Toledo and also accounts for the progressive syntax that appears to stand alone alongside other Spanish texts for more than two hundred years.²⁰

In conclusion, we have seen new evidence that shows that the modern proclitic system emerged in the language of some Spanish speakers at least one hundred years earlier than is commonly believed and some forty years earlier in Aragonese. These findings raise interesting questions about the geographic spread of this change during the medieval period as well as important differences between popular and educated speech during the sixteenth century. First, it should be pointed out that a majority of the modern forms documented in the fifteenth century occur in texts that were written by Andalusians. This suggests that future research should perhaps explore the possibility that this change, which is clearly documented to the east, may have soon after appeared in the south of the peninsula, later in New Castile, and finally in Old Castile. Such a scenario is not improbable, given the traditional linguistic split between Toledo and Burgos. A second avenue of research should pursue the possibility suggested above that the long-lasting tendency to avoid the use of S-initial clitics during the Golden

Age was the result of a conscious effort on the part of educated speakers and writers who, aware of their position in a severely stratified social structure, were keen to reject a feature that typified the speech of *rústicos* and of the *vulgo*.

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NOTES

1. The exceptions are Galegan and certain dialects in the Northwest of the Iberian peninsula. Since the principles that determined pronoun position in the medieval system still obtain in these languages, atonic pronouns are postverbal in some constructions (e.g., Galegan: *dixome moitas cousas, fixérono ben, Falóunos cando baixóu do tren*; Leonese: *¿Veslo?, quisolo ella, dióvoslo él*; Asturian: *¿Vaste pa Urieu?, duelme un pie, apetezme comer*).

2. The discussion here assumed the validity of the theory of enclisis originally proposed in the nineteenth century by Thurneysen and Meyer-Lübke. For discussion and bibliography see Granberg (1988).

3. Read "no se llegó."

4. Note that the final vowels of the clitic pronouns have been apocopated. This shows that the forms they are part of have undergone the well-known apocopation rule of medieval Spanish. If they were leaning proclitically on the following verb, this rule could not have applied. Thus, the application of the rule provides evidence that these pronouns lean enclitically on the preceding word.

5. It should be noted, however, that in the modern language a proclitic pronoun "leans" to the right and thus depends phonologically on the following verb rather than the preceding element.

6. Not all studies take this fact into consideration. Rivero (1986:784), for example, assumes a general process of enclisis stating that "non-tonic singular pronouns become enclitic on the preceding word, and apocopate through a general rule of final vowel deletion." She goes on to claim that "the category of the preceding element is irrelevant; the apocopated clitic leans on any immediately adjacent element" (emphasis added).

7. It should be kept in mind that this text is preserved in four ms. copies, the earliest dating from the eighteenth century. The examples are included here, however, since all four sources agree on these readings. There is a third example in addition to the ones cited: *y a mi y a mi marido me acojió allí en vnas Casas* (20). In contrast three examples have medieval word order: *y a mi Marido quedaronte muchos* (17); *y a mi Marido en especial ponianlo en el Algive dela hambre* (19); *y a El plugole mucho* (22).

8. When Almela was fourteen he went to Burgos where he remained for sixteen years as a member of Alfonso de Cartagena's household while the latter served as Bishop. He eventually returned to live near the frontier region of Murcia (1464) but the letter quoted here was written much later, in 1481. Although the syntax of Almela's language is medieval on the whole, in addition to the example of modern syntax given here, there are also cases in coordinated structures that suggest modern placement, e.g., *perdieron los moros todas las çibades villas e castillos que tenian tomados en la isla de çeçilla e las cobraron los cristianos* (*Cartas*:5).

9. *La Verdad en el potro* by Francisco Santos (b. Madrid, 1639). The novel was published in 1686.

10. *Questión de amor de dos enamorados*, written at Naples.

11. They are absent from the *Quixote* (1605) and the "realistic" *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554). Even Romero de Cepeda, the author of the second-rate *Rosián de Castilla* (1586) avoids them.

12. There is some confusion in the literature on pronoun placement in the direct style. Rivero (792) assumes enclisis in the last case cited and accounts for the perverbal position of the clitic by claiming that "In direct speech . . . the verb of saying can be followed by a

sentence with an initial clitic, and counts as the first element." Ramsden also claims that preverbal pronouns are "occasionally found [. . .] in direct speech after the verb *dezir*" (178). However, there is no evidence from any thirteenth- or fourteenth-century text to support such a claim and it is argued in Granberg (59-65) that in the medieval system the union between the *verbum dicendi* and quoted speech of the direct style is completely paratactic.

13. "Me pareçe..." is repeated two more times (127; 140).

14. It occurs in the *enxemplo* "Los papagayos acusadores." The recent edition by Cacho Blecua and Lacarra (1984:200) gives the same reading.

15. This point is discussed at length in Granberg (195-227).

16. Gessner (35) suggests the same reading but does not mention the relevance of the preceding subject.

17. E.g., *¿Qué vees tú? (Calila e Dimna, Cacho Blecua and Lacarra 1984:225)*. Note, however, that there are other examples of questions with preverbal subjects in the same text, e.g., *¿Aquí tú as testigos? (Calila 1984:172)*.

18. Line 58 rhymes with line 59, *Io otrosi rogar lo é* (and line 31 rhymes with *i pregaré i rogaré*).

19. R. refers to his own article in *BHS* 38 (1961):45-7.

20. Citing its literary debt to the tradition of French narrative poetry, Deyermond (365) cautions against using the *Auto* as a basis for evidence "para una temprana tradición dramática en Castilla." The same caution seems relevant to linguistic matters.

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