Romanian Clitics: Siding with the Serbo-Croatian or the French?
Andreea S. Calude

Abstract:
This article discusses Romanian clitics, a topic previously studied by Farkas, Kazazis, Monachesi and Steriade, among others. I show that Romanian clitics share surprisingly many more features with Serbo-Croatian – a Slavic language, than with French, a Romance language like Romanian itself. This unexpected result raises questions well above and beyond the topic of clitics alone. Why should a Romance language “behave” linguistically closer to a Slavic than to a Romance language? What are the properties shared by Romanian and Serbo-Croatian clitics and how do they differ from French?

Part 1: Introduction
Romanian is a Romance language according to classic linguistic typologies. Geographically it finds itself surrounded by Slavic languages. However strong, the influence of Romance languages is most likely not the sole force acting on Romanian. Culturally, Slavic currents are definitely present. The question which arises is whether they are also present in the linguistics of the language. It is suspected that Romanian shares lexical and morphological properties with other Romance languages, and syntactic ones with Slavic languages. The aim of this essay is to investigate to what extend Romanian pronominal clitics are similar to Romance languages ones and in what way (if any) they resemble Slavic language clitics.

Part 2: Kinds of Pronominal Clitics
Pronominal clitics may vary in form, depending on the kind of language we use. Do Romanian pronominal clitic forms present the same features as those of Romance languages, or do they resemble Slavic language typologies more closely? It may be expected that Romanian might not exhibit an exact copy of either Romance or Slavic languages, but it is interesting to observe whether it shares features from both language types, or whether it leans
towards one side more than the other. For this purpose I will examine pronominal clitic forms from French and Serbo-Croatian.

**Section 1: A note about French pronominals**

Here are some examples of pronominal clitics in French:

1.1 (Gruneberg and Lacroix, 1987)

\[
\text{Je peux vous proposer l'hôtel du Parc.}
\]

[1stSgNom can 2ndPlDat proposeINF DefArt'hotel of.the Parc]

I can suggest Hotel Parc to you.

This example shows the forms used for 1st person singular in the nominative case and 2nd person plural in the dative case. The next example illustrates more nominative and accusative forms.

1.2

\[
\text{Il me présente à Marie.}
\]

[3rdSgMascNom 1stSgAcc introduces toPREP Marie]

He introduces me to Marie.

The French pronominal clitic forms are marked for person, number and case. As example 1.1 shows, the pronominal appears after the modal, if there is one present, and before the main verb of the sentence. There is only one form for each given possibility, namely, what we refer to as a “full” form. French does not present shortened or abbreviated forms (we will refer to these kinds of forms as “non-full” forms). Full forms have stress and a similar distribution to that of a noun phrase. All possible French pronominal clitic forms are summarized in the table below, in Figure 1 (Gruneberg and Lacroix, 1987).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE</th>
<th>CASE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PERSON</td>
<td>NUMBER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Sing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pl.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Sing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pl.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>Sing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pl.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pl.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\[1\] All examples are my own, unless otherwise indicated.
Accusative and dative pronominals are separated in two different groups: those which have a different form for dative constructions (third person forms), and those which have the same forms for both cases (first person forms). For example, if one wanted to say that someone gives him a book, the dative form “lui” is used, as illustrated below:

1.3 
Simone lui donne le livre.  
[Simone 3rdMascSgDat gives def.art book]  
Simone gives him the book.

However, for “Simone sees him”, the accusative form is used.

1.4 
Simone le vois.  
[Simone 3rdSgMascAcc sees]  
Simone sees him.

In contrast, for the second person plural, one and the same form appears in both cases:

1.5 
Simone vous donne le livre.  
[Simone 2ndPlDat gives defArt book]  
Simone gives you the book.

1.6 
Simone vous vois.  
[Simone 2ndPlAcc see]  
Simone sees you.

The table shows two different pronominals for the first and second person singular forms, “me/moi, te/toi”. The first form is used when the clitic occurs before the verb and the second if the clitic follows it. The latter form is often used in imperative constructions, as the example below shows:

1.7 
(a) Écoutes-moi!  
(b) *Écoutes-me!  
[listen-1stSgAccForm2]  
[listen-1stSgAccForm1]  
Listen to me!

The first form from the table cannot be used, as sentence (b) demonstrates, because the pronominal follows the verb. Instead, the second form gives a grammatical sentence, as in (a). However, in the example below, it is the first form that works within the given sentence, since the clitic comes before the verb.

1.8 
Marie me prendre demain.  
[Marie 1stSgAcc take tomorrow]  
Marie will take you tomorrow.

Historically, the third person pronominals may been demonstratives and this could be one explanation why they behave differently form the rest of the pronominals (Uriagereka, 1995).
Having already said that French does not have any non-full forms, it is important to mention that there are some forms which greatly resemble the concept of a non-full form. Example 1.9 demonstrates this:

1.9 (Sportiche, draft yet to appear)

Jean l’a peinte.

[John 3rdSgFemAcc ’beAUX painted]

John painted it.

First thing to notice is that the pronominal is positioned before the auxiliary in French. In this example the form of the auxiliary “to be” starts with a vowel (in fact it is represented by a single vowel sound) and thus forces the clitic pronominal preceding it to drop its vowel. Could this be a non-full clitic or does this phenomenon happen elsewhere in the language? Indeed, this is not the only case where a vowel is dropped. The following example contains the conjunction “que” (that) which loses its vowel too, in order to accommodate French phonology.

1.10

Qu’est-ce que tu fais maintenant?

[What’is-this that 2ndSgNom doing now]

What are you doing now?

The conjunction is forced to drop the last vowel, because the form of the verb “to be” starts with a vowel. It is impossible to pronounce two vowels consecutively without a pause. French phonology avoids this by dropping the last vowel of the first word in the sequence. Hence, this “vowel-dropping rule” is not specific to clitic pronouns, but applies across the entire linguistics field in French. Due to this fact, the shortened clitic versions mentioned in example 1.9 are not considered to be non-full forms. They are full clitic pronominals, on which the “vowel-dropping rule” was applied at a later stage.

Section 2: A note about Serbo-Croatian pronominals

This is the Serbo-Croatian version of examples 1.1 and 1.2:

2.13

Mogu da vam prepŏrucim Hotel Parc.

[can.1stSgNom to 2ndSgDatNon-full suggest Hotel Parc]

I can suggest Hotel Parc to you.

On me predstavlja Mariji.

[3rdSgMascNomFull 1stSgAccNon-full introduce Maria.Dat]

He introduces me to Marie.

At first glance, it may seem that French and Serbo-Croatian have similar pronominal constructions. However, this is not the case. One difference is that the pronominal occurs before the modal, if there is one present. In contrast to French, Serbo-Croatian pronominal clitics are more complex and present a larger number of forms. Apart from the full forms, which are marked for person, number and case, just as in French, Serbo-Croatian has non-full forms. These forms are unstressed and their distribution does not resemble that of noun phrases. In fact, Serbo-Croatian is not the only Slavic language to have such forms, Czech also

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3 This example, as well as examples 2.2 up to 2.6 and 2.9 were provided by a native Serbo-Croatian speaker.
has them (Toman, 1986). All non-full forms are enclitic in Serbo-Croatian (Browne, 1974). It is interesting to note that all nominative clitics are full forms. All the other cases (accusative, dative and genitive) present both types. The table below summarizes the Serbo-Croatian pronominal forms (Browne, 1974).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERSON</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>NOMINATIVE TYPE</th>
<th>ACCUSATIVE TYPE</th>
<th>DATIVE TYPE</th>
<th>GENITIVE TYPE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>FULL</td>
<td>NON-FULL</td>
<td>FULL</td>
<td>NON-FULL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Sing.</td>
<td></td>
<td>ja</td>
<td>mene</td>
<td>meni</td>
<td>mi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pl.</td>
<td></td>
<td>mî</td>
<td>nás</td>
<td>nama</td>
<td>nam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Sing.</td>
<td></td>
<td>ti</td>
<td>tebe</td>
<td>tebi</td>
<td>ti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pl.</td>
<td></td>
<td>vi</td>
<td>vâs</td>
<td>vama</td>
<td>vam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>Sing.</td>
<td>Masc./Neut.</td>
<td>on/ono</td>
<td>njega</td>
<td>njemu</td>
<td>mu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pl.</td>
<td>Masc./Neut.</td>
<td>oni/ona</td>
<td>njih</td>
<td>njima</td>
<td>im</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sing.</td>
<td>Fem.</td>
<td>ona</td>
<td>nju</td>
<td>njoj</td>
<td>joj</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pl.</td>
<td>Fem.</td>
<td>one</td>
<td>njih</td>
<td>njima</td>
<td>im</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2

Another contrast to the French data is that Serbo-Croatian dative and accusative pronominals are all different – for all persons, 3rd as well as 1st and 2nd. The distinction is reflected in both their full and non-full forms.

Serbo-Croatian could translate the French example 1.9 in two ways:

2.2
(a) John ga je naslikao.
[John 3rdSgMascAccNon-full AUX painted] John painted it.

(b) John je naslikao njega.
[John AUX painted 3rdSgMascAccFull] John painted it.

First, notice that the non-full pronominal is placed before the auxiliary (as in French), if there is one present, or after the main verb, in the case of a full pronominal. In a later example we will see that this is not the only possibility (see example 2.4 (b)). Secondly, Serbo-Croatian has free order and consequently, the pronominal may precede (as in (a)) or follow (sentence (b))

4 The dative singular feminine forms are different from the genitive ones. This is the only difference between genitive and dative forms.
the verb. The only condition imposed is that after the verb, the clitic appears in its full form. Non-full clitics are placed before the verb. In fact, both sentences (c) and (d) in example 2.3 demonstrate that no other possibilities are grammatical – i.e., interchanging the full and non-full forms is not allowed.

2.3
(c)*John je naslikao ga.
[John AUX painted 3rd SgMasAccNon-full]

(d)*John njega je naslikoa.
[John 3rdSgMasAccFull AUX painted]

Accusative, dative and genitive pronominals have full forms which are all distinct from their non-full counterparts. The genitive and dative clitics form a special group because they have the same distribution of forms, except for the third person singular feminine. The dative has “joj” or “njoj” and the genitive “je” or “nje”. The example below shows this:

2.4
(a) Nema je.
[have.not(IDIOM) 3rdSgFemGenNon-full]
She isn’t here.

(b)Ja sam joj dala knjigu.
[1stSgNomFull beAUX 3rdSgFemNon-full gave book]
I gave her the book.

First thing to note is that the non-full form appears after the auxiliary in Serbo-Croatian (see sentence (b)). Hence, examples 2.2 (a) and 2.4 (b) show that in Serbo-Croatian the non-full forms can appear before and after the auxiliary. This poses the question whether the same happens with modal verbs. However, due to the incomplete data available, this question is left for investigation in later research. Sentence (a) uses the genitive non-full form, whereas, sentence (b) has the dative one. According to Browne (1974), full forms are always used after a preposition. The next example illustrates this fact:

2.5
Ona je ispod mene.
[1stSgNom is underneathPREP 2stSgAccFull]
She is underneath me.

The presence of the preposition “ispod” (underneath) forces the clitic pronominal to appear in its full form “mene” (me). Further evidence is provided by example 2.6 which shows that using the non-full form produces ungrammaticality:

2.6
*Ona je ispod me.
[1stSgNom is underneathPREP 2stSgAccNon-full]

Furthermore, full clitic forms are used when there is no room for enclitics. The following example illustrates this:

2.7 (Browne, 1974)
Njoj, dao je knjigu
[to3rdSgFemDat gave 3rdSgMasNom a.book]
He gave her a book.
The word order places the pronominal first in the sentence, therefore not allowing it to be an enclitic, since it does not follow anything. Hence a full form of the clitic is used.

The semantic purpose of using full forms in Serbo-Croatian is that of contrast. Such a form will be used in order to emphasize the meaning expressed by the clitic.

2.8 (Browne, 1974)
Da kam knjigu tebi.
[conj 1stSgNom.give book.the 2ndSgDat] Should I give YOU the book?

In the example above, the clitic form representing 2nd person singular, in the dative case is emphasized. The meaning of the sentence concentrates on whom the book should be given to, rather than the actual giving of the book.

Section 3: Romanian

Below is an account of how examples 1.1 and 1.2 would be expressed in Romanian:

3.1
Eu vă pot sugera Hotel Parc.
[1stSgNom 2ndPlDatAccFullNon-accented can suggest Hotel Parc]
I can suggest Hotel Parc to you.

El mă prezintă Mariei.
[3rdSgMascNom 1stSgAccFullNon-accented introduces Marie.to]
He introduces me to Marie.

Romanian clitic pronomininals are full and non-full, accentuated and unaccentuated. Similarly to Serbo-Croatian, nominative clitics only have full forms. The accentuated forms are different from both full and non-full forms. I have not been able to find any accounts of accentuated and unaccentuated forms for Serbo-Croatian. Example 3.1 shows that Romanian places pronomininals before modal verbs (in contrast to French data). The table below (Figure 3 (Avram, 1986)) summarizes the complete sets of forms found in Romanian.
The first thing to notice is that unlike French, accusative forms are all drastically different from dative ones. In fact, the next example shows that using an accusative form in a dative construction produces ungrammaticality.

3.2
(a) *Te dau cartea.
[2ndSgAccFullNon-accented give book.defart]
I give you the book.

(b) Îți dau cartea.
[2ndSgDatFullNon-accented give book.defart]
I give you the book.

Sentence 3.2 (a) is ungrammatical because an accusative pronominal was used in place of the required dative one. Sentence (b) shows the desired grammatical construction. Analogously, it can be shown that using a dative pronominal in an accusative position also produces ungrammaticality. Example 3.3 proves this:

3.3
(a)*Maria vine la ție.
[Maria comes toPREP 2ndSgDatFullAccented]
*Maria comes to you place.

(b)Maria vine la ție.
[Maria comes toPREP 2ndSgAccFullAccented]
Maria comes to your place.

Another contrast to French is that in Romanian there is no elision rule and therefore two consecutive vowels are supported by phonological rules:

3.4
Ne-am salutat ieri.
[1st PlAccNon-fullNon-accented-beAUX greeted yesterday]
We greeted each other.

Example 3.4 also shows that non-full pronominals are placed before the auxiliary. This is similar to French structures.

However, there are some parallels to Serbo-Croatian. Romanian also uses full pronominal forms after prepositions. The following examples demonstrate this:

3.5
Ea e sub mine.
[3rdSgFemNom is underneathPREP 1stSgAccAFull.Accented]  
She is underneath me.

3.6
A fost văzut de mine.
[beAUX bePAST seen byPREP 1stSgAccFullAccented]  
He/She was seen by me.

The prepositions “sub” (underneath) and “de” (by) forced the use of full pronominals. The use of the non-full forms produces ungrammaticality, as shown in example 3.7.

3.7
*A fost văzut de m.
[beAUX bePAST seen byPREP 1stSgAccNon-FullAccented]  
In fact, it seems that the only forms accepted after a preposition are full accented forms. If the preposition is preceded by a full form and this form is unaccented, then the sentence becomes ungrammatical, according to example 3.8:

3.8
*A fost văzut de mă.
[beAUX bePAST seen byPREP 1stSgAccNon-FullNon-accented]  
Serbo-Croatian forces full forms to appear where there is no room for enclitics. However, Romanian pronominal clitics may attach either enclitically, inclitically, or procliticly. Taking the 3rd person singular, feminine non-full form “î” we can form the following structures:

3.9 (Avram, 1986)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proclitic</th>
<th>Inclitic</th>
<th>Enclitic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i-duc</td>
<td>dă-i-o</td>
<td>nu-i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[3rdSgFemDat-bring]</td>
<td>[give-3rdSgFemDat-3rd SgFemAcc]</td>
<td>[negationParticle-3rdSgFemDat]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I bring her</td>
<td>give it to her</td>
<td>Don’t .... to her</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 This could be a consequence of the syntactic rules acting on noun phrases.
There are four exceptions to this. The forms: 1st Singular, Non-Full, accusative, 2nd Plural, Non-Full, accusative and dative and 3rd Plural, Non-Full, dative cannot attach to the end of any lexical items. They can be used procliticly and inelicitly, but not encliticly. Instead, the full form is used, where there is no room for enclitics.

3.10 (Avram, 1986)

Dîndu-vă ă o carte.
[giving-2ndPlDatFullNon-accented indefArticle book]  
Giving you a book.

The gap left by the enclitic is filled in by a full pronominal form. In this respect, Romanian behaves similarly to Serbo-Croatian (please see examples 2.5 and 2.6).

Romanian has free word order. In spite of this, it does not allow the clitic to move around in the sentence. The example below shows this:

3.11

(a) Îi dau cartea.
[3rdSgMascDatNon-fullNon-accented give book.defart]  
I give him the book.

(b) *Dau îi cartea.
[give 3rdSgMascDatFullNon-accented book.defart]
I give him the book.

(c) *Dau lui cartea.
[give 3rdSgMascDatFullNon-accented book.defart]  
I give him the book.

In 3.11 (b) the pronominal has moved to follow the verb. This produces ungrammaticality. Sentence (c) shows that even if the full clitic form is used, the sentence still remains ungrammatical. Unlike in Serbo-Croatian, changing the order of clitics is not supported in Romanian.

Now we turn our attention to the issue of semantics. The use of full forms is a way of emphasizing the meaning of the pronominal. Suddenly, the “person” expressed by the clitic becomes topical in the sentence. The example below illustrates the difference in meaning of two sentences which only differ in the form of the clitic used.

3.12

(a) Ne-au chemat.
[1stPlAccNon-FullNon-accented called]  
We were called.

(b) Pe noi ne-au chemat.
[onPREP 1stPlAccFullAccented 1stPlAccNon-FullNon-accented called]  
We were called.

Sentence 3.12 (a) suggests that someone called on us. It is important that we were called upon. Sentence 3.12 (b) however, stresses the fact that it was us that was called upon, as opposed to someone else being called. The act of calling is merely a part of the sentence and it is a given that the addressee already knows or expects that someone would be calling. It is who they are calling that matters most. This is once again similar to Serbo-Croatian (examples 2.8 and 2.9).
Part 3: Concluding remarks

As seen in Section 1, French has full pronominal clitics. They are always in this form, except for the case when phonological rules apply – however this is regarded as a separate process occurring independently from their structure as clitics. The dative and accusative forms are the same except for 1st and 2nd person singular. In turn, there are two different forms for each one of these persons: one used in the event that the clitic precedes the verb and the other when it follows it. French pronominals occur before the auxiliary and after the modal verb (if these are present in the sentence).

In contrast, Section 2 shows that Serbo-Croatian has entirely distinctive forms for accusative and dative case. Furthermore, it has full and non-full forms for all cases, excepting the nominative case. There are some restrictions on the usage of these forms. The full forms are always used when the clitics occur after prepositions or when there is no room for them. Non-full pronominal clitics are enclitics in Serbo-Croatian. If a sentence starts with a clitic, the full form has to be used, as the non-full form has nothing to attach to. Due to its free order, Serbo-Croatian allows pronominal clitics to appear before (non-full forms used) or after the verb (full form used in this case). They can occur before or after the auxiliary if there is one present and before the modal verb (it still remains to be investigated if they can ever appear after it). Semantically, full clitics are used as opposed to non-full forms, for contrastive purposes. A full pronominal will act as a kind of topicalization marker – attracting attention to itself, rather than other elements in the sentence.

Surprisingly, Romanian cliticization has more in common with Serbo-Croatian clitic structures, than with French ones. It does not have the same dative and accusative forms and furthermore, it does have full and non-full forms. Consecutive vowels are allowed by phonological rules. However, unlike both French and Serbo-Croatian, Romanian has another distinction: accented and non-accented forms. These are distinct from the other full and non-full forms, and are in fact a kind of subdivision of full forms. These latter forms are used before prepositions, just as in Serbo-Croatian. However, Romanian is different with respect to the fact that non-full forms are not only enclitic, but also inelitic and proclitic. In spite of this difference, there is a similarity regarding the rule of placing full forms where there is no room for non-full ones. Romanian has free order, but it does not allow the movement of pronominal clitics in various positions throughout the sentence (e.g., before or after the verb). Romanian pronominals occur before the auxiliary if there is one present (this is similar to French and different from Serbo-Croatian, which allows free movement around the auxiliary) and before the modal (in contrast to French, but similar to Serbo-Croatian). From the point of view of semantics, full clitics are also used for emphasis and contrast in Romanian, in the same way as they are in Serbo-Croatian.

This analysis shows that in spite of its usual classification, Romanian shares a surprisingly large number of similarities with Slavic linguistic patterns in regard to pronominal clitics. The result poses a number of interesting questions: How could we account for this conclusion? Why should Romanian share features with Slavic languages? Is Romanian really a Romance language, or should it be classified somewhere on a “neutral” ground between Slavic and Romance boundaries? Are there more syntactic, morphologic or phonologic elements that need to be investigated in the light of comparison between Slavic and Romance typologies?

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**Bibliography:**


