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Structural Case on Pronominal Clitics in Pashto

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Abstract

The goal of this paper was to analyze the assignment of structural Case to Pashto pronominal clitics. Pashto pronominal clitics are unique in the sense that though they may occupy different argumental positions they have the same morphological form. This is in contrast to the majority of clitics bearing world languages, where clitics are characterized by morphological cases; though, these languages belong to diverse families. Consequently, a question arises: Do pronominal clitics in Pashto have structural Case or not? The paper tried to answer the question and the answer was in affirmative. It proposed that the same mechanism for structural Case assignment was at work for clitics as was the case with the regular nouns/ pronouns. The fact that pronominal clitics had the same morphological forms, though they had different structural Cases, was because of the overriding effect of focus on such pronominals.

Key Words: *Clitics, Structural Case, Pashto, Pronominal, Case Assignment.*

Introduction

Pashto clitics, though often a hard nut to crack, have always been of interest for grammarians. Many efforts, in describing the nature of Pashto clitics, have been made during the last fifty odd years; however, so far, no grammarian has come up with a solution that is all encompassing and comprehensive. Among Pashto clitics, some are dependent on their hosts for their existence, others occupy verbal and adverbial positions, and there are still others, which occupy argumental positions.

These argumental clitics (called pronominal clitics), according to Vergnaud Case filter (1977, 2008) need structural Case (as per generative tradition, generally, a capital 'C' is used in the spelling of 'Case', when structural Case is meant.). However, a confusion is created by the fact that pronominal clitics in majority of languages which make use of clitics are characterized by morphological cases vis-à-vis their positions inside a clause; however, Pashto pronominal clitics do not show any variation in their morphological forms though they may occupy different slots inside a clause.

This paper is an attempt to show/prove that pronominal clitics in Pashto do carry structural Case and the morphological form of a pronominal clitic in Pashto has more to do with the influence of focus; rather, than the structural Case of the concerned pronoun. For structural Case assignment, unlike the phonological accounts, this paper proposes that structural Case to clitics is assigned as a result of an agree relation in terms of phi-features between a functional head and the relevant nominal.

Objectives of the Study

To achieve the goal of this study, the study has the following objectives.

a) To give a thumb nail sketch of the efforts that were made to describe clitics in Pashto;
b) To show that Pashto argumental pronominal clitics have the same morphological form though they may occupy different argumental positions; and,
c) To practically analyze and show how structural case is assigned to pronominal clitics in different constructions while occupying different positions.

Literature Review

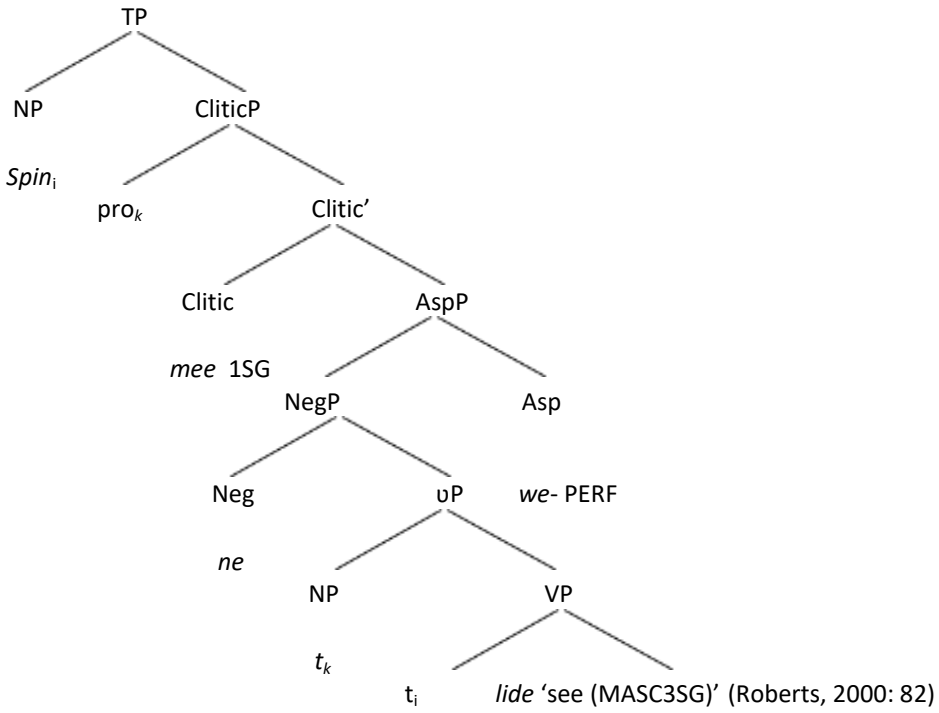
Among Pashto grammarians, Tegey (1977) is the first one, who has systematically dealt with clitics in Pashto. He proposed that many of the Pashto clitics are 2P clitics. He also has the generalization to his credit that the 2P clitics in Pashto appear after the first stress-bearing phrasal constituent in a clause, irrespective of whether the stress bearing item is a word or a part of a phrase. Thus, it was assumed that the placement of 2P clitics is dependent on both phonology and syntax. Kaisse (1981, 1985: 132-143) also believes, like Tegey (1977), that clitic placement is syntactic, though he could not rid himself of the influence of phonology. Later on, two phonological approaches (Leeuw, 1995, 1997; Roberts, 1997) were offered for 2P Pashto clitics placement, but both of them are outside our sphere, as we are interested in the syntactic aspect of Pashto clitics. Babrakzai (1999) observed that Pashto pronominal 2P clitics are in complementary distribution with verbal agreement morphology. That is only accusative arguments can be cliticised, but not the nominative ones. In addition, recently, Dost (2007) has offered a domain based HPSG approach to explaining 2P clitics, which is again outside the scope of this paper, as we are studying it from a minimalist perspective.

For our purposes, the most important study of Pashto clitics is that of Roberts (2000), as he studies Pashto 2P clitics from a purely syntactic point of view, or at least he claims so. In addition, he studies it within the minimalist framework. Based on his studies he has drawn the conclusion that 2P Pashto clitics are agreement morphemes. He believes that each clitic heads an agreement projection. A null pronominal argument is licensed as the specifier of this projection. The 2P clitics are base-generated in a high clausal position. The 2P position is achieved as a result of an NP movement, by virtue of the EPP requirement that the [spec TP] be filled at spell-out. In order to explain his point he makes a derivation for the embedded clause of the following sentence:

1. *tor mee we lid-e* [CP *magar* [TP *spin mee we ne lid-e*]]
   Tor 1SG PERF see-MASC3SG but Spin 1SG PERF NEG see-MASC3SG

'I saw Tor, but didn't see Spin' (Tegey, 1977: 127) (reproduced in Roberts, 2000: 81)

(Note, the authors do not follow the Leipzig glossing rules in this example and its derivation, neither I agree to their spellings of the Pashto words; as such I am quoting the example and its derivation as is given in the original text/ source.)



(Roberts, 2000: 82)

In the structure, given above, the pronominal clitic *mee* serves as the head of Clitic P and is base generated. The 2P effect is obtained by the movement of the NP *Spin* to [Spec TP], through the EPP, at spell-out. In pro-drop clauses, there is no moment and the 2P effect is achieved through the application of Prosodic Inversion as a 'last resort'.

This, so far, two contrasting views have been held, relating to the so-called Pashto pronominal clitics – that they are pronominal (Tegey, 1977) and that they are agreement morphemes (Roberts, 2000). This study, though, concerned with structural case assignment, in a way, substantiates the first view: pronominal clitics have nominal nature.

Research Question

Do pronominal clitics in Pashto have structural Case or not?

Research Hypotheses

Overall, this paper revolves around the following hypotheses:

- Clitics in Pashto have the same morphological form for nominative, accusative and genitive Cases.
- Pashto pronominal clitics do carry structural Case and that phi –features agreement between a pronoun in Pashto and a relevant functional category (T or υ, etc.) results in assigning structural Case to the pronoun/clitic.
- Focus plays a pivotal role in the phenomenon of Pashto clitics; pronominal clitics do not have separate clitic phrase (contra earlier proposals).

Methodology/Framework

Since, it is an exploratory study and belongs to the arena of Theoretical Syntax, therefore, this study does not involve questioners or statistical analysis. The research in Theoretical Syntax has two strains: first, it tries to fill the gaps in the adopted framework; second, it tries to fill the gaps in theories/knowledge about different Syntactic phenomena. The current study adopts the framework of Principles and Parameters and the Minimalist Program (Chomsky 1986, 1991, 1993, 1995, 2000). In the adopted framework the idea of agreement between a functional head and a nominal as responsible for the checking the structural case of that nominal is able to explain the facts of case assignment in Pashto clitics. Hence, the framework remains intact. For the phenomenon of clitics in Pashto, a recourse is made to the earlier studies on Pashto clitics. For Pashto pronominal clitics the gap is that in other languages pronominal clitics occupying different argumental positions have different morphological manifestations of cases. However, Pashto is different, as in Pashto, pronominal clitics occupying different argumental positions have the same morphological form. Hence, the question arises: do they carry structural case? This study takes the concerned examples and tries to show that they do carry structural case and also demonstrates how those cases are assigned by making use of the generative machinery, especially its idea of case checking between a functional head and a nominal. Thus, through the derivations of various constructions, it is shown that clitics occupying different argument positions may not have different morphological case forms, they do carry structural case.

Analysis/Discussion

Clitics in Pashto

Pashto clitics, so far, have been grouped into three categories: pronominal, adverbial and modal.

Pronominal

Person/ Number	Direct/Possessive	Oblique (Obj. of Preposition)
1S (I, my, me)	*may*	*ra*
2S (you, your, you)	*day*	*dər*
3S (he/she, his/her, him/her)	*ye*	*wər*
1P (we, our, us)	*mo*	*ra*
2P (you, your, you)	*mo*	*dər*
3P (they, their, them)	*ye*	*wər*

Modal

ba future, 'will', 'might', 'must', 'should', 'may'
dee 'should', 'had better', 'let'

Adverbial

kho 'indeed', 'really', 'of course'
no 'then' (Tegey, 1977, p.81).

(Note: This table is primarily based on (Tegey & Robson, 1996). It is given due to its comprehensiveness; however, it does not mean that we agree to the clitics grouping into direct and oblique groups. Since the

topic deals with structural Case assignment in Pashto; therefore, the study is restricted to describing and analyzing pronominal clitics).

Case Assignment in the Present Tense Sentences having Clitics

In the present tense sentences with clitics, the same mechanism for Case assignment exists as is the case with the present tense sentences with the normal pronouns. The only difference is when an element is fronted for focus, the strong pronoun along with its Case adopts the clitics form. To show this process in detail, let us take a Pashto clitic clause and examine the assignment of Case in it:

2. *Hagha* *may* *wahi.*
   he.NOM I.ACC beat.PRS
   'He beats me.'

In the above example, the verb *wahəl* (in its base form having [V, uD, uD] features) merges with the 1st person singular pronoun having [D, uCase] features, to form the VP. The small υ, having uninterpretable [uInfl, uφ] features, where Infl stands for inflection and φ stands for phi-features (which are in most cases the features of person, number and gender) merges with the VP, through Hierarchy of Projection Principle to form υ'. An agree relation establishes between υ, acting as a probe, and the object DP 1SGM, acting as a goal, for assigning Case to the object DP. The following bracketed paradigm presents this situation.
[υ {P: ?; N;?; G:?; }] [1SGM {P:1; N:SG; G:M; CASE:?}]

Because of the agree relation, the [uφ] of υ are valued as 1st person singular male, while accusative Case is assigned to the DP. The 1SGM because of the accusative Case gets the phonetic form as *ma*. If looked at the Figure below, this agree relation fulfills one of the most important conditions for establishing an agree relation, namely, c-command: the probe searches and finds the goal DP in the VP, which is c-commanded by υ. It is pertinent to mention here that the agreement between υ and the object DP, like English, is covert/invisible in the present tense Pashto constructions. Therefore, we do not have phonetic/pronounced manifestation for this particular agreement.

At this stage, the little υ' has the uninterpretable feature [uD] which it inherits/gets from the VP and it needs checking. The nominal/DP (3rd person singular pronoun in this case) having [D, uCase, *ufocus] merges with the υ′ to get the subject or outer argument theta role; and, they form the little υP. As a result of this merge the uninterpretable [uD] feature of υ′ is checked/ deleted.

The [uInfl] of υ is still unchecked and it ultimately gets projection on υP. T, in this particular instance, an empty functional head which has strong [*uD] feature, interpretable tense feature 'present', uninterpretable φ-features, and uninterpretable [uclause type] feature, merges with the υP to form T'. This merge is very important as it results in many things. First, the uninterpretable [uInfl] of υ is valued as present. Second, an agree relation establishes between T and the subject DP 3rd person singular pronoun in terms of person, number and gender. Thus the [uφ] of T are valued as 3rd person singular male. In return, nominative Case is assigned to the DP in the specifier υP position. Because of the nominative Case, the DP 3rd person singular male pronoun gets the morphological form or the spell-out form as *hagha*. It is important to mention here that the visible agreement between T and the subject DP, like English, does not get phonetic realization on T; rather, it gets realization on the little υ or V. In this particular instance, the phonetic realization is on V. Therefore, the base form of the verb in VP *wahəl* becomes *wahi*.

The subject in spec υP moves to spec TP. The symbol < > used means that the element/ elements inside the symbol undergoes movement. This movement is because of the strong [*uD] feature of T, commonly referred to as the Extended Projection Principle (EPP). A functional category Foc having [focus] feature merges with the TP, resulting in Foc'. The subject DP in spec TP moves to spec FocP due to its strong [*ufocus] feature. Because of this movement the uninterpretable [*ufocus] is satisfied/ checked. In addition, due to the movement of the one pronoun, the other pronoun degrades in its status and adopts the weak pronoun or clitic form *may*. It is important to note that it is not one-to-one relation between the two pronouns, as focused movement of a verb, a part of a verb, an adjective, an adverb, a noun, etc. may also result in this degradation. May be future research find some features in the Foc and the relevant pronoun that cause this change to clitic.

As the [uclause type] feature of T is still unchecked, therefore, another functional category Force having [Decl] feature merges with FocP. Because of this merge the [uclause type] of T is checked/ valued as declarative. Figure 1 shows the whole derivation:

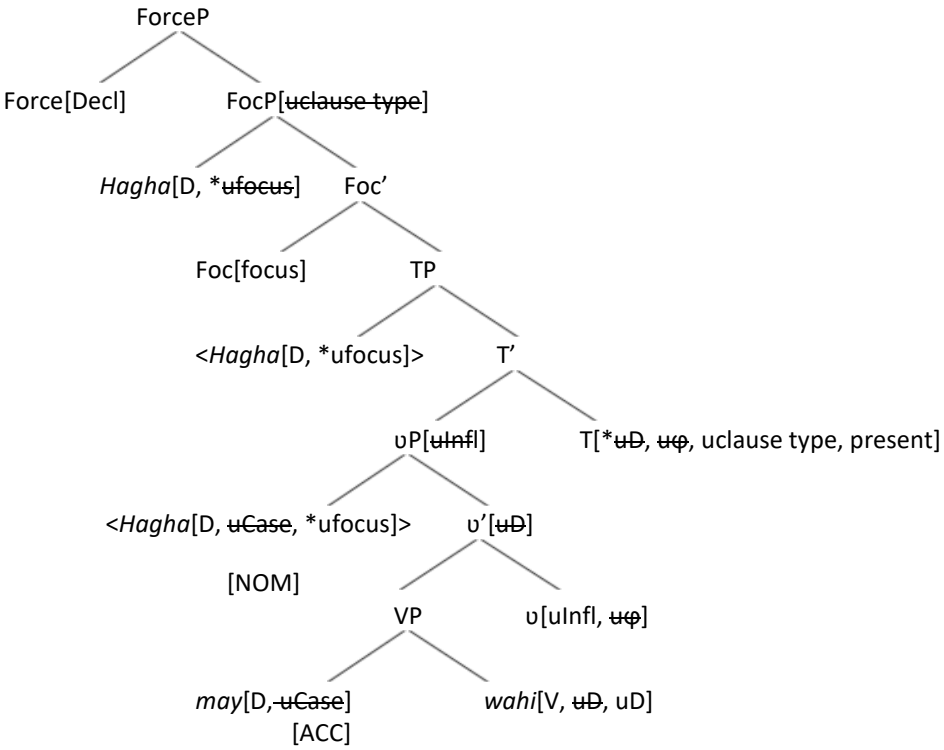


Figure 1. Hagha may wahi.

That focus is involved in making a normal pronoun a clitic pronoun is also borne out by the fact that a similar construction in Pashto exists, with the only difference that instead of a clitic pronoun we have a normal pronoun:

3. *Hagha* *ma* *wahi.*
   he.NOM I.ACC beat.PRS
   'He beats me.'

Case Assignment in the Past Tense Sentences having Clitics

Now we take a past tense imperfective sentence, having a clitic used inside it, and observe if the same mechanism for structural Case assignment and clitics is valid for it or not:

4. *Hagha* *day* *melma* *kɻə.*
   he.NOM you.ACC guest do.PST
   'You made him guest/ you hosted him.'

The derivation for the above example in the past tense involves a light verb Pashto construction. First of all, the nominal part *melma,* having [V, uD, uD], of the light verb complex (N+V) merges with the internal argument 3rd person singular pronoun [D, uCase, *ufocus] to form a VP and delete one [uD]. This is followed by the merge of the light verb ʊ *kɻəl* [uInfl], through Hierarchy of Projection Principle to form ʊ'. In normal circumstances, at this stage ʊ would have been required to assign Case to the internal argument; however, because of the peculiar nature of the Pashto past tense, ʊ is defective here in the Chomskian (2001) sense. It lacks [uφ] features; hence, unable to assign accusative Case to the internal argument. To satisfy the other [uD] of V which does have projection on ʊ', a nominal 1st person singular pronoun merges with the ʊ' to form ʊP. Because of this merge, the [uD] is checked/ deleted.

As we have proposed for other Pashto past tense constructions that the [uφ] of ʊ are withheld by the functional category Voice (Masood 2014); hence, a similar treatment is proposed for clitics containing past tense Pashto constructions. At this stage a functional category Voice (Kratzer, 1996; Collins, 2005; Roberts, 2010; Holmberg, 2007) merges with the ʊP to form Voice'. Again, the Hierarchy of Projection Principle facilitates the merge of ʊP and Voice.

An agree relation establishes between Voice and the external argument DP in terms of person, number, and gender φ-features. Because of the agreement, the phi-features of the Voice are valued as 2SGM, while accusative Case is assigned to the subject DP 2nd person singular pronoun. Due to the accusative Case, the 2nd person singular pronoun gets the morphological/ spell-out form *tha*. Thereafter, T which in this particular case is an empty functional head, bearing strong [*uD] feature, interpretable tense feature 'past', uninterpretable ϕ-features, and uninterpretable [uclause type] feature merges with the VoiceP, to form T'. This merge is very important as it results in many things.

First, the uninterpretable tense of ʊ is checked/ valued as 'past'. Second, an agree relation establishes between T, working as the probe, and the internal argument 3rd person singular pronoun in the VP, serving as the goal, in terms of phi-features of person, number and gender. Because of this agree, the φ-features of T are valued as 3SGM, while nominative Case is assigned to the DP 3rd person singular pronoun. Due to the nominative Case, the 3rd person singular pronoun gets the spell-out or the morphological form as *hagha*. Here we have a sort of opposite situation to the present tense. In the present tense, T values the external argument and ʊ values the internal argument: in the past tense, T values the internal argument and ʊ/Voice values the external argument. It is noteworthy that even in the past tense the agreement between T and the internal argument does not get visible on T itself; rather, the phi-features along with past tense get visible on V and ʊ, in this case. As a result, they get the phonetic realization as *melma kɻə*.

The external argument in spec ʊP moves to spec TP to check/delete the strong [*uD] feature of T, often referred to as the EPP feature. At this stage, a functional category Foc having [focus] feature, merges with the TP, to form Foc'. The object DP *hagha* in the VP moves to spec FocP due to its strong [*ufocus]

feature. Due to this movement the uninterpretable [*ufocus] is satisfied/ checked. In addition, because of the focus movement of the one pronoun, the other pronoun *tha* in spec TP degrades in its status and adopts the weak pronoun or clitic form *day*.

As the [uclause type] feature of T is still unchecked, therefore, another functional category Force having [Decl] features merges with FocP. Due to this merge, the [uclause type] of T which ultimately has projection on FocP is checked/ valued as declarative. Figure 2 below shows the whole derivation in detail:

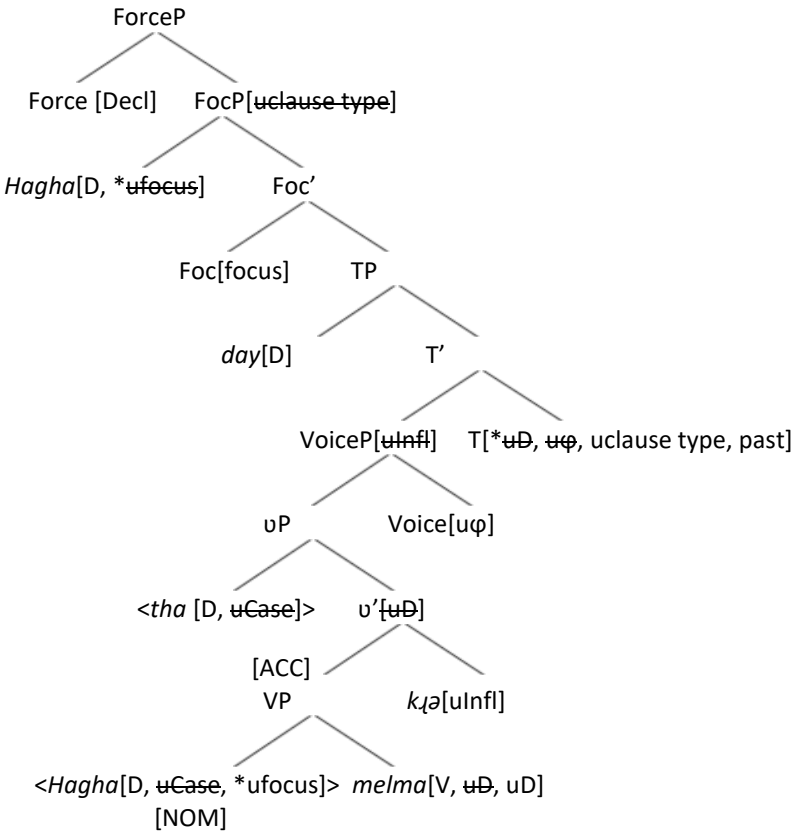


Figure 2. Hagha day melma kɻə

Case Assignment in the Future Tense Sentences Having Clitic

The same process for Case assignment and clitic formation exists in the future tense sentences, as is the case with the present and past tenses:

5. *Zə* *ba* *day* *melma* *kɻum.*
   I.NOM will you.ACC guest do.PRS/FUT
   'I will make you a guest/ I will entertain you.'

As Figure 3 shows, the derivation for the future tense monotransitive constructions making use of the light verb complex (N+V) is the same as that for the present tense until the point when the υP is formed.

However, then in the future tense, a modal clitic *ba* adjoins to the υP, resulting in an extended υP. The rest of the processes remain the same as is the case with the present tense.

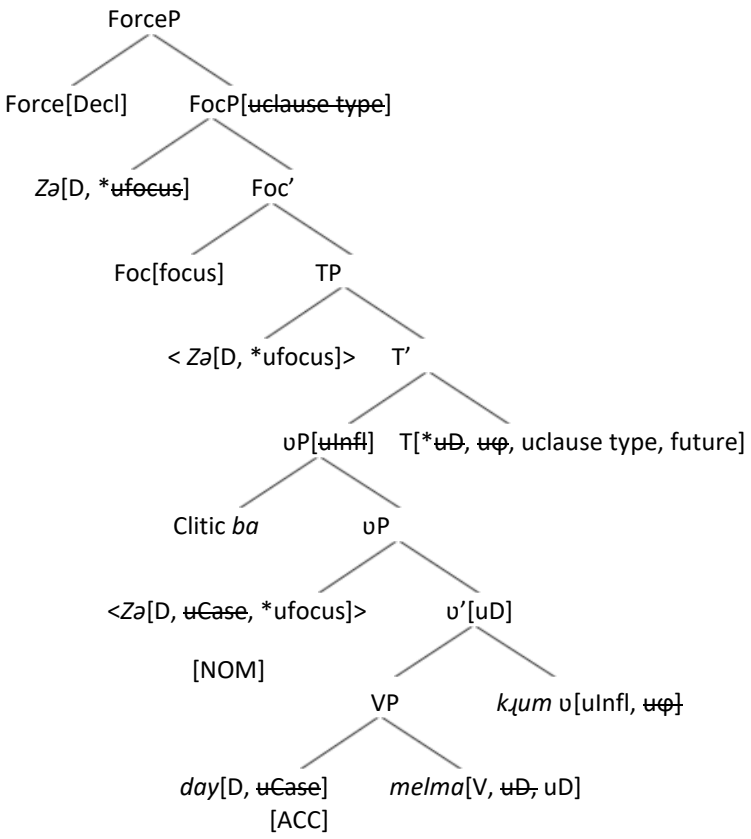


Figure 3. Zə ba day melma kɻum.

Conclusion

In this paper, an effort was made to establish that Pashto pronominal clitics do carry structural Case. This was significant in the context of the fact that although Pashto clitics occupy different argumental positions, they have the same morphological forms; in contrast to the majority of world clitic bearing languages, where clitics have morphological markings for structural Case. For structural Case assignment, it was proposed that an agree relation in terms of phi-features between a functional head and a nominal results in assigning structural Case to that nominal and the same rules for Case assignment are applicable to pronominal clitics as are for nouns and pronouns. This arrangement was able to explain the assignment of nominative and accusative structural Cases to their relevant nominals. For the same morphological forms of clitics, though carrying different structural Cases, it was proposed to be the effect of the phenomenon of focus: when an element is focused and it crosses a pronoun on its way, then that pronoun adopts a weak pronoun/ clitic form.

Thus, in addition to its main contribution, namely, to explain structural case assignment to pronominal clitics in Pashto, this study has significance in the context of the studies carried out on Pashto clitics, as reported in the literature review. Whereas, Roberts (2000) considered Pronominal clitics as agreement morphemes, and Tegey (1977) as pronominal, this study shows that they are pronominal as they carry

structural case. Also, this study introduces the role of focus in clitics formation in Pashto which is not the case with the earlier studies. Similarly, the earlier studies were in one way or another influenced by the role of phonology in production of clitics in Pashto, this study gives a completely syntactic account of clitics in Pashto.

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