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Exploring Clitics in Pashto: Their Formation, Nature, and Morphology

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Abstract

Clitics have remained a mystery due to their varied forms and manifestations, cross-linguistically. Clitics in Pashto have remained an important area of research during the last fifty years. The goal of this paper was to look at Pashto clitics from a different perspective. This perspective consisted in questioning some of the basic ideas in vogue about clitics in Pashto. While earlier studies considered oblique clitics as either pronominal or agreement morphemes, this study showed that they are preverbs. The previous studies had various explanations for clitics formation in Pashto, this study tried to establish that pronominal clitics were a side-effect of the focus phenomenon in Pashto. Similarly, while earlier studies restricted clitics to some particular types of cases, this study showed that clitics in Pashto have the same form whatever structural case they bore. These proposals were able to explain the constructions that were so far considered as difficult.

Key Words: *Clitics, Pashto, Preverbs, Focus; Pronominal, Agreement Markers.*

Introduction

Over the years, clitics have remained an elusive topic due to their varied forms and functions, cross-linguistically. Same is the case with clitics in Pashto. They have been discussed for the last five decades but there is no consensus as to their formation, nature, and morphology; since, they are more varied in terms of structures and functions. Thus, the goal of this paper is to explore clitics in Pashto in terms of their formation, nature, and morphology. This exploration is both traditional and generative in nature. Traditional deals with establishing oblique pronominal clitics as preverbs while generative is concerned with the role of focus in clitic formation. The generative also deals with the morphological forms of clitics while having different structural cases. Based on the proposals presented in the paper, it is possible to explain adequately all the examples that could be considered problematic when seen in the context of the different theories so far presented about Pashto clitics.

On the whole, this paper encompasses the following assumptions: firstly, that the verbal clitics under the head oblique (objects of prepositions) (contra Tegey, 1977) are not pronominal clitics (see the paradigm below for the different types of clitics). Secondly, that the clitics under the heading direct clitics (contra Roberts, 2000) are pronominal clitics. Thirdly, that the pronominal clitics in Pashto have, in the majority of cases, no clitic doubling (contra Roberts, 2000). Fourthly, that they have the same morphological form for the nominative, accusative, and genitive cases. Fifth, that focus plays a substantial role in the phenomenon of Pashto clitics. Sixth, that the pronominal clitics do not have separate clitic phrases (contra earlier proposals).

Based on Tegey (1977), and Tegey and Robson (1996), 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*[1]

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).

Research Questions

This study revolves around the following research questions:

Q1. Are the clitics grouped under the heading 'oblique clitics' pronominal?
Q2. Is there any role of focus in the creation of pronominal clitics?
Q3. Do pronominal clitics in Pashto have the same morphological form irrespective of their case or otherwise?

Literature Review

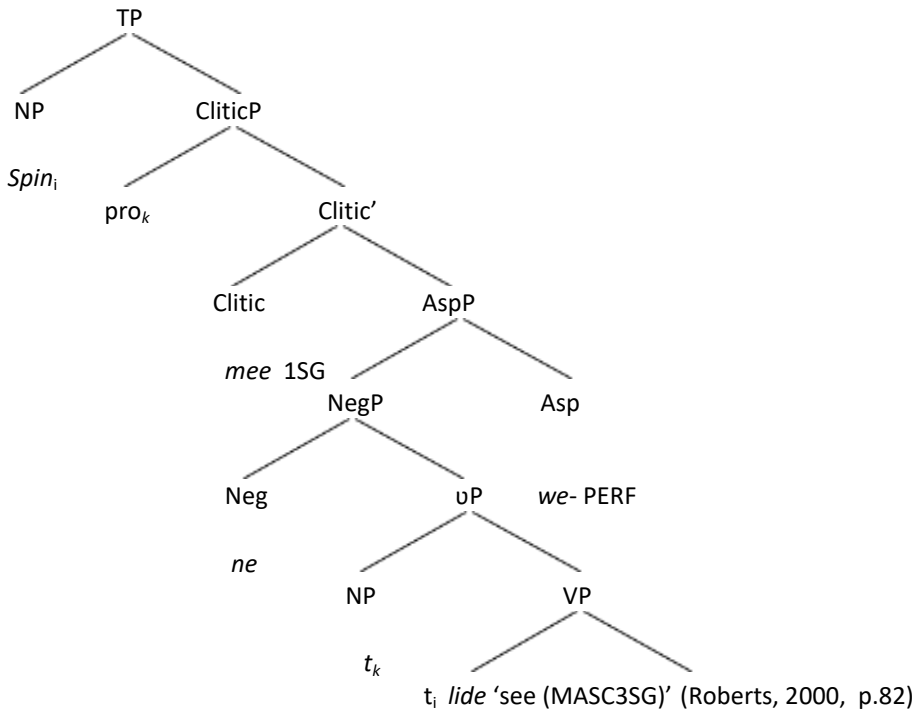
Clitics in Pashto have been a topic of discussion in the relevant literature for a long time. It was perhaps Tegey (1977) who presented a systematic and exclusive account of clitics in Pashto. He was of the opinion that clitics in Pashto are 2P clitics; that these clitics appear in a clause after the first stress-bearing item, be it a word or part of a phrase. Thus, in a way, the dependence of Pashto clitics on both Phonology and Syntax was assumed. Kaisse (1981, 1985) also tried to establish that clitics in Pashto is a syntactic phenomenon. Leeuw (1995, 1997) and Roberts (1997) presented phonological accounts of clitics in Pashto. Babrakzai (1999) proposed that pronominal 2P clitics are complementary to verb agreement morphology; thus, nominative arguments cannot be cliticized. Along with other things, this idea has been challenged where it is shown that even nominative case-bearing nominals can be cliticized.

[1] This table is primarily given due to its comprehensiveness; however, it does not mean that I agree to the clitics grouping into direct and oblique groups, as will become clear in the paragraphs that follow.

Roberts (2000) has written on clitics and agreement in Pashto. He claims that his study is syntactic in nature. The unique thing about Roberts' treatment of Pashto clitics is he has studied the clitics within the minimalist program. He claims that Pashto 2P clitics are agreement markers/ morphemes. Hence, each clitic heads an agreement projection. He believes that these clitics are base-generated in some higher clausal position. The 2P status is due to the EPP movement of a nominal to Spec TP. He tries to explain his point with the help of the following example:

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, p.81)
(Note, the authors do not follow the Leipzig glossing rules in this example and its derivation, and we are reproducing them as they are.)



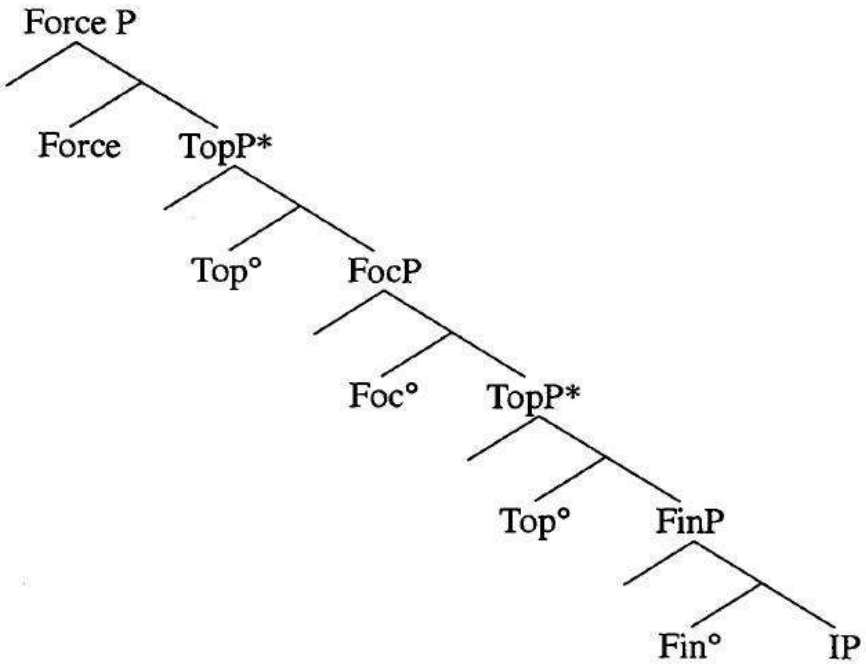
(Roberts, 2000, p.82)

As can be seen in the structure above, there is a clitic that is base-generated high-up in the clause. The clitic heads the phrase cliticP. The NP spin moves to Spec TP due to EPP, resulting in 2P clitic effect. As far as those clauses are concerned where pro-drop occurs, since in such clauses no movement is involved, therefore, prosodic inversion is applied as a 'last resort'. Ascandar (2007) has tried to explain 2P Pashto clitics in the light of a domain-based HPSG approach.

Theoretical Framework

The paper has two important aspects. In the first part, it explores Pashto clitics traditionally. This involves postulating the proposal that oblique clitics are preverbs. Preverbs have been explored traditionally in the light of the literature available on preverbs in German and other languages. The other part of the paper

generatively explores the role of focus in clitics creation in Pashto. In this respect, the pioneering work has been done by Rizzi (199, 2003). This was later on added to by Karimi (2003, 2005), Rezai et al. (2012), and many others. Rizzi (1997) presents a detailed structure for the complementizer section of a clause. In fact, he divides that portion of a clause into three phrases, namely, Topic phrase, Focus phrase, and Force phrase. Thus, he provides for the topicalized or focused movement of the nominals towards the left-periphery of a clause. His detailed tree for topicalized or focused movement is given below:



Rizzi (1997, p. 297)

Analysis/ Discussion

Pashto Pronominal Clitics and the Idea of Oblique Pronominal Clitics as Preverbs

Pashto pronominal clitics have some unique features of their own. Based on the studies conducted so far, they can roughly be divided into two groups – one corresponding to the second position in the clause and the other relating to its proximity to the verb. As compared to Pashto, the majority of languages use only one of these options, such as verbal clitics (Romance languages) or 2P clitics (Serbo-Croatian). The features of Pashto clitics are much impoverished as compared to that of Indo-European languages (Roberts, 2000). Case is an important feature that distinguishes Pashto clitics from other languages: "As different as Serbo-Croatian and Romance languages are, they nevertheless have in common the ordering of clitics according to their case, and also their differentiating the clitic forms themselves by case. Pashto falls outside this class of languages"(Robberts, 2000, p. 65).

So far, two contrasting views have been held related to the Pashto so-called pronominal clitics – that they are pronominal (Tegey, 1977) and that they are agreement morphemes (Roberts, 2000). If on the one hand, I do not agree with the latter approach, on the other I do not agree completely with the former approach either as the elements that Tegey mentions as pronominal clitics do not seem pronominal to me. Rather, I believe that the elements given under direct/possessive morphological form are pronominal

in nature while the elements that are given under the heading oblique are not pronominal. They are not agreement markers as well. At the most, I consider them as preverbs.

A few words about the idea that the pronominal clitics bundled under the oblique form are not clitics but preverbs are in order. In fact, like (Roberts, 2000), I was also of the opinion that they are agreement morphemes. However, while analyzing the embedded verb *rawrum* in the sentence, *zə bazar tha zum avo pen ba rawrum*, I realized that there is more than meets the eye. In the verb the suffix *um* shows first person singular agreement and which in this case is clearly the subject of the matrix clause. But what about the prefix *ra*, as the root of the verb is *wrum* and not *rawrum*? Semantically, the verb *wrum* means to take away while *rawrum* means 'going to and bring something back'. Moreover, there are many other verbs, such as, *thləl* 'to go', *bewəl* 'to take', *poraywathəl* 'to cross something', *wakhistəl/ akhistəl* 'to take', *prekhodəl* 'to leave', *pachedəl* 'to get up', *nanawathəl* 'to enter', *kawəl* 'to do/ to give', *wrəl* 'to take/ carry', *laygəl* 'to send', etc., which take the same prefixes of *ra*, *dar*, *wər*. The dominant aspect of all these verbs when prefixed with these morphemes has been that they give us information about the direction or position. For instance, look at the verb *wrəl*. When it is prefixed by *ra*, it points in the direction of the speaker, when prefixed by *dar* it points in the direction of the 2nd person pronoun, and when prefixed by *wər* it points in the direction of the third person. The apparent possibility could be its prepositional nature; however, we could not group them with prepositions, as in almost all cases prepositions are related to nouns or pronouns, while a preposition affixed to a verb would be a rare phenomenon. Therefore, we drop the idea that they are prepositions. Another possibility is that of preverbs. Britannica Online Encyclopedia says about preverbs in Caucasian languages:

"There is a developed system of preverbs, elements preceding the verb stem and attached to it, with local meaning indicating location of the action in space, as well as its direction (especially in Mingrelian and Laz). Simple preverbs are combined into complex ones. The preverbs are also used to mark the aspect (nature of the action indicated by the verb, with reference to its beginning)."

Though the proposed preverbs in Pashto do not possess all the above-mentioned characteristics, which is also the case with preverbs in other languages such as Hungarian and German etc., still preverbs in Pashto definitely possess the characteristics of indicating the location of action in space and its direction, therefore, it is concluded that they are preverbs in Pashto.

Additionally, since preverbs are not nominal in nature; therefore, there is no likelihood that these clitics do carry any type of case. Hence, they are caseless.

The Role of Focus in Pronominal Clitics Creation

Now, we discuss the pronominal clitics which Tegey and Robson (1996) places under the heading direct/possessive clitics. The use of these clitics is ubiquitous in Pashto and they can be found in various Pashto constructions. My contention about these clitics is that they are the after-effect of focus phenomenon. If something is focused, in syntactic terms, then it has its effect on the other pronoun/ pronouns in the sentence. The pronoun in response becomes weak and gets the clitic form. This is a sort of foregrounding and back grounding relation as is used in Stylistics and Rhetoric. In Syntax, focus is used in terms of the new information. Focus itself can be of two types- information focus and contrastive focus. In information focus, we only have new information, while in contrastive focus, along with new information, we also have a contrast with the given information of a hearer and it corrects his or her earlier presupposition (Vallduvi & Engdahl 1996; Kiss 1998). Also, there are many gray areas in the idea of focus itself, as for instance, Rizzi (1997, 2003), Kiss (1998), Hageman and Gueron (1999), etc. believe that

focus is unique, meaning that there can be only one focus phrase per sentence, while others Karimi (2003, 2005), Rezai at el (2012), etc. believe that there can be more than one focus per sentence. With this background about focus, I will try to make my point clear with the following examples and discussion:

2. Son: *Ma pen math kro.*
I.ACC pen.NOM break do.PST
'I broke a pen'.

3. Son: *Pen may math kro.*
pen.NOM I.ACC break do.PST
'I broke a pen'.

In example no. 2, we have normal Pashto word order i.e. subject-object-verb. Such sentence can be uttered in response to a question like:

4. Father: *Tha tsə math krəl?*
you what break do.PST
'What did you break?'

However, if looked at example no. 3, in it we do not have the canonical word order of subject-object-verb; rather, we have the word order object-subject-verb. Why is this changed word order from the canonical one? The obvious answer is focus. Object in e.g. no. 3 has been focused. Such answers are uttered in response to questions like below:

5. Father: *tsə day math krəl?*
what 2SG break do.PST
'What did you break?'

What examples no. 3 and 5 convey is that the question asks for new information, having more emphasis/ focus on the object broken, while the doer of the action is already understood between the speakers, i.e. it is old information. In the answer again the emphasis/ focus is on new information 'pen' rather than the old information *tha* 'you'. Thus, in the question and answer in (5) and (3), the new information *tsə* 'what' and *pen* 'pen' has been focused. As an effect/ side-effect of this focus phenomenon, the pronouns *tha* 'you' and *ma* 'me' in (5) and (3) have been degraded in their status to the pronominal clitics *day* 'you' and *may* 'I', respectively.

Is there any parallel or precedence in grammar for such a treatment of clitics? In this respect, the answer can be given in the affirmative. Already, we have the example of active voice and passive voice. When we want to give importance to the doer or actor or agent we use active voice, and whenever we want to relegate the actor/ doer/ agent to the background and give more emphasis to the receiver then we use the passive voice. If the use of active and passive voice for such purposes is possible, then similarly it is possible for native speakers of Pashto to use this technique of clitics use.

Clitics in the Nominative, Accusative, and Genitive Case Have the Same Morphological Form

Pronominal clitics in Pashto whether they bear nominative, accusative, or genitive case have the same morphological form. To show this, I will give different examples having clitics possessing different structural cases:

6. *Hagha may/mo/day/mo/ye/ye melma kro.*
   he.ABS I/we/you/you/he/they.ERG guest do.PST
   'I/we/you/you/he/they made him a guest.'

7. *Hagha may/mo/day/mo/ye/ye wahi.*
   he.NOM I/we/you/you/he/they.ACC beat.PRS
   'He beats me/us/you/you/him/them.'

8. *Pen may/mo/day/mo/ye/ye*[2] *math kro.*
   Pen.ABS I/we/you/you/he/they.GEN break do.PST
   'I/we/you/you/he/they broke my/our/your/your/his/their pen.'

In example (6), the clitic pronouns have the ergative case, in example (7), all the clitic pronouns have the accusative case, while in example (8), all the clitic pronouns have genitive case. Thus, these examples substantiate the contention that pronominal clitics in Pashto have the same morphological form for all types of structural cases.

My Proposals and the Explanation of Some So-far Considered Difficult Examples

The proposals above, not only adequately describe the use of pronominal clitics, but also frees the treatment of clitic from its dependence on phonetics and phonology (contra Tegey (1977); Kaisse (1981, 1985, pp. 132-143); Leeuw (1995, 1997, sec. 5.1); Roberts (1997, 2000); Babrakzai (1999)). In a way, this treatment is the syntactic equivalent of the idea floated by Tegey (1977), though with differences. Now, we take a few tricky or problematic examples from the earlier writers on Pashto clitics and see how my mechanism explains the use of clitics in them or fails to do so. (Note, that in these examples, I would maintain the writers' meanings, glossings, and their grammatical categorization, whether I agree with them or not, though I would change the subject language spellings whenever, I felt the need for, to maintain uniformity with the rest of the sections: thus examples 9 through 22 do not adhere to the Leipzig glossing rules as I am reproducing other writers material and they do not follow the Leipzig glossing rules):

9. [ConjP *pekol avo kotai*] *<u>may</u>*[3] *ághoste kho….*
   cap.NOM and jacket.NOM I.ACC wear.PST but
   'I would've worn the cap and jacket but….' (Kandahar)(Roberts, 2000, p. 76)

10. …[$_{CP}$ *magar* [$_{TP}$ *spin may wə nə lid-ə*]]
    but spin 1SG PERF NEG see-MASC3SG
    …., 'but didn't see Spin' (Tegey, 1977, p. 127).

11. *hágha jora che <u>ye</u> aghust-ay wa ganda wa.*

[2] The clitics here serve double functions, of the subject and the possessive clitic. The possessive clitics show genitive case. To show that it is the case, look at the following example:
Pen may day math kro.
Pen.ABS I.GEN you.ERG break do.PST
'You broke my pen.'
Here the clitic *may* possess the genitive case while the other clitic bear the ergative case.

[3] I have underlined the clitic pronouns, so as to make them easier for the readers to spot them, though it is not at all a convention. Infact, for clitics the symbol '=' is used, but as our clitics do not hinge on a host, so we do not use that symbol in the glossing.

DET suit COMP 3SG wear-part was dirty was
'the suit that he was wearing was dirty'

12. *hágha jora che aghust-ay ye wa ganda wa.*
DET suit COMP wear-part 3SG was dirty was
'the suit that he was wearing was dirty'.

13. **hágha jora che aghust-ay wa ye ganda wa*
DET suit COMP wear-part was 3SG dirty was
'the suit that he was wearing was dirty' (Jan Mohammad p.c.) (Roberts, 2000, p. 89).

14. *maaspekhin may khəza kitab lwəl-i*
afternoon 1SG wife(DIR) book(DIR) read-PRES3SG
'my wife is reading a book in the afternoon'

15. *maaspekhin may kitab khəza lwəl-i*
afternoon 1SG book(DIR) wife(DIR) read-PRES3SG
'the wife is reading my book in the afternoon' (Farroq Babrakzai, p.c.) (Roberts, 2000, p. 146).

16. *khəzay may day kitab lwest-ə*
wife(OBL) 1SG 2SG book(DIR) read(PAST)-MASC3SG
1. 'my wife was reading your book'
2. *'your wife was reading my book'.

17. *kitab may day khəzay lwest-ə*
book(DIR) 1SG 2SG wife(OBL) read(PAST)-MASC3SG
1. 'your wife was reading my book'
2. *'my wife was reading your book' (Roberts, 2000, p. 181)

18. *nə ba dey pezan-i*
NEG may 2SG know-PRES3SG
'May be he doesn't know you' (Tegey, 1977, p. 84).

19. *nə day pezan-i*
NEG 2SG know-PRES3SG
'He does not know you' (my own example).

20. a. *a-khistəlay may*
buy 1SG
'I was buying them'
b. *á may khistəlay*
PREFIX 1SG buy
'I was buying them'.

21. a. *a-ghuste may*
wear 1SG
'I was wearing it'
b. *á may ghustay*

PREFIX 1SG wear
'I was wearing it' (Tegey, 1977, p. 89).

22. [$_{PP}$ *ra ta*] [$_{PP}$ *tay*] [$_{AdvP}$ *ra*] *wə* *day* *shikawə*
me for from-it here PERF 2SG pick
'You picked it for me from it (and brought it) here' (Tegey, 1977, p. 119).

Now, let us take these examples one by one, and see how our proposal fares with them. In the first example, i.e. example no. 9, in the given clause, the clause itself part of a multi clausal construction, the conjoined object *pekol avo kotai* 'cap and jacket' in VP has been focused and fronted to spec FocP and the subject DP 1st person singular pronoun *ma,* in the spec TP, as a result, has adopted the clitic form *may*. The second example, i.e. example no.10, is also a part of a multi-clausal construction. Here the embedded complementizer clause has been given. In the embedded clause the object *spin* is focused and moves to the spec FocP. The subject DP 1st person singular pronoun *ma* in spec TP position feels the effect of this focus on the other DP and adopts the weak pronoun/clitic form *may*.

In examples, 11, 12, and 13, we have instances of complex DPs, where a DP *hagha jora* and a relative clause CP *che ye aghust-ay wa* make the complex DP. Here the focus on the DP of a copular clause *hagha jora ganda wa*, render the 3rd person singular pronoun *hagha* inside the relative clause weak and turn it into a clitic. The ungrammaticality of the 13, deals with the placement of the clitic belonging to the embedded clause in the main clause. It has nothing to do with the focus or the results of its effects.

In examples no. 14 and 15, the adverb *maaspekhin* 'afternoon' has been focused. As a result of this focus the pronouns in the genitive case in the subject position, get the clitic form *may*. It is to be noted that normally in Pashto genitive case clitics, the clitic in the genitive case follows the noun, however, here we have the clitics in the genitive case preceding the concerned noun. If we put the clitic, in these two examples, after the concerned noun, then fronted adverb becomes topicalized, instead of being focused. So this may be the language's internal mechanism to maintain the difference between focus and topic.

In examples 16 and 17, the nominal part in the possessive subjects has been focused, causing the pronouns part having genitive case in the same DPs to adopt clitic forms. In addition, about these examples, Robberts (2000) believes that there are two clitics, *may* and *day*. However, we believe that the second one i.e. *day* is not a clitic; rather, it is a possessive/ genitive marker. Because of the same phonetic sound, many non-native speakers are unable to differentiate between them.

In examples no. 18 and 19, the negative particle *nə* has been focused, causing the 2nd person singular pronoun in the accusative case to be cliticized as *day*. However, the writer has not shown what will be the case if we add a subject to this construction. In that case, it would become ungrammatical: **Saleem nə day pezani*. Only *Saleem day nə pezani*, is grammatical. The sentence *Saleem, nə day pezani*, would become grammatical if we consider *Saleem* as topicalized. All this is fairly suggestive and may mean that in case *Saleem* is a new information as well, then both *Saleem* and *nə* cannot be focused.

Examples no. 20 and 21, have been taken by Roberts (2000) from Tegey (1977) with the claim that they are imperfective, and the clitics can intervene between the prefix and the verb stem. However, if look at both the (b) examples with attention, it will soon become apparent that they are not imperfective; rather, they have a perfective aspect and that their translation should have been in the perfect, not in the continuous. To prove my point, interestingly, even in example no.1, Roberts (2000) himself uses the perfective aspect in the translation for the same verb and treats it as a verb having a perfective aspect.

Thus, from these examples, it is again established that the perfective prefix/marker is the target of focus and has been fronted as compared to the 1st person singular pronoun *ma* having accusative case and thus causing it to change into the 1st person singular pronominal clitic *may*. The same is the case with (22), where despite the presence of all the prepositions, the focus is on perfective prefix *wə*, and resultantly, the 2nd person singular pronoun *tha* has been changed into pronominal clitic *day*.

Conclusion

Thus, in this paper, an effort was made to explore clitics in Pashto, both from traditional and generative perspectives. To achieve that aim a few proposals were made. Some of the proposals were that the so-called pronominal clitics grouped under the heading 'oblique pronominal clitics' were not pronominal; rather, they were preverbs. It was proposed that clitics in Pashto were a result of the focus effect. Anything focused in a clause would render a pronoun in the clause as a clitic. Also, it was proposed that whatever structural case a pronominal carried, if a clitic was formed, then it invariably carried the same morphological form. The role of the focus in clitics formation, then meant that clitics had no separate head and projection. All these proposals when taken together were able to explain adequately clitics structure and formation in some of the so-fare considered difficult cases. At the same time, there were some aspects of clitics that were not considered, though equally important. These were case assignment and phonological aspect. The first was left out, as already it has been discussed in Masood (2021), and the second (phonological aspect) was not touched as the study in this paper was exclusively syntactic in nature.

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