

What you see is what you get:

On the uniformity of morpho-syntactic and morpho-phonological properties of pronouns

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On the standard view at least since Cardinaletti & Starke (1999), weak pronouns and clitics (usually morpho-phonologically reduced) are *structurally deficient* compared to the strong ones (i.e. they lack the referential index). This is argued to explain their different behavior: strong pronouns tend to refer only to animate referents, regardless of their topicality and givenness, and have strictly referential uses. By contrast, weak pronouns and clitics may refer to inanimate entities, require topical discourse antecedents and allow bound-variable readings. It is usually argued that the distinction between strong pronouns and clitics in Serbo-Croatian (SC) (e.g. *njega* vs. *ga* ‘him’ in (1)) follows this general pattern (Despić 2011, 2013, Puškar-Gallien 2022).

(1) Video *sam njega / ga.* ‘I saw him.’ *njega*: {+anim, +/- topical}
saw.PTCP AUX him.STRONG him.CL *ga*: {+/- anim, +topical}

However, strong pronouns in SC display clitic-like properties when focused (cf. Despić 2011, 2013, Puškar-Gallien 2022). E.g. if focused by the intensifier *sam* ‘self’, a strong pronoun can (seemingly) function as a bound variable, as in (2), and can refer back to a (topical) inanimate referent, as in (3) (examples adjusted from Despić 2013:68, 2011:247). These phenomena have motivated proposals in terms of mismatches between underlying syntactic/semantic structures (strong vs. clitic) and their morpho-phonological realizations (morpho-phonologically strong vs. reduced/clitic). For instance, Despić (2011, 2013) argues that strong pronouns in contexts like (2-3) are morpho-syntactically clitics (i.e. deficient relative to ‘genuine’ strong pronouns), but take the phonological form of strong pronouns at PF to satisfy phonological requirements of focus. Puškar-Gallien (2022) proposes that pronouns in contexts like (2-3) are functionally clitics, but are pronounced (in the same way) as strong ones as last resort (she assigns strong pronouns and clitics the same structure, but different timing of spell-out).

(2) Svaka kupola_i se sastoji od 3 dela koji (je)_i podržavaju / *nju_i / nju_i sam-u.
every dome REFL consists from 3 parts which her.CL support her.STRONG her.STRONG self-ACC.F
‘Every dome consists of 3 parts that support it / it itself.’

(3) Malo ko obilazi muzeje oko gradske crkve_i. Nju_i sam-u, opet, dnevno poseti oko 50 turista.
few who visits museums around city church her.STRONG self-ACC.F again daily visits around 50 tourists
‘A few people visit museums around the city church. (Yet as for the church itself), app. 50 tourists visit it a day.’

The analysis in terms of mismatches is clearly theoretically more costly and more demanding in terms of language acquisition and processing than an alternative account, which preserves the uniformity of the underlying structure and its surface realization. I argue for this alternative account, showing that it, at least when applied to SC, is not only theoretically simpler, but also empirically more adequate. I propose the following. (i) All morpho-phonologically strong pronouns in SC are morpho-syntactically more complex (‘stronger’) than clitics. (ii) Strong pronouns and clitics in SC differ in that the extended structure (DP, following Progovac 1998, i.a.) of strong pronouns includes a resource situation pronoun, s_r (as an argument of D° , following Buring 2004, Schwarz 2012), while clitics lack it. This is represented in (4).

(4) a. Strong pronouns: [DP [D' [D° [s_r] [nP ...]]] b. Clitics: [DP [D' D° [nP ...]]]

The proposed view is simpler because it avoids relying on mismatches or other undesired theoretical devices while at the same time accounting for the ‘unexpected’ empirical phenomena. Specifically, the distribution of strong pronouns and clitics follows from (a) the competition between these two types of pronouns, and (b) the semantic and syntactic effects of focus operators, e.g. the intensifier *sam* ‘self’ in the above examples. As for (a), strong pronouns are not ungrammatical in those contexts where clitics are available – they are ruled out exactly due to the availability, and better fit of clitics in the same context. Since these are contexts with topical antecedents, a clitic, i.e. a pronoun without an s_r is perfectly suitable, since it must be interpreted co-referentially with its antecedent. By contrast, the strong pronoun, with its own s_r ,

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is ambiguous, since its s_r can be co-referential with the antecedent, but also exophoric. When the context is such that a clitic is ungrammatical for independent reasons – with focused environments as one of the most typical cases (due to prosodic requirements) – the strong pronoun remains the only option. Furthermore, in the latter context, the exophoric reading of the strong pronoun is ruled out due to focus. In (2-3), the intensifier *sam* ‘self’ – like its counterparts in other languages (*selbst* in German, cf. Eckardt 2002, self-intensifiers in English, cf. Charnavel 2021) – undergoes the condition of referential identity. By scoping over DPs standing for strong pronouns, *sam* ‘self’ imposes the identity requirement on the resource situation in which the denoted entity should be interpreted: it must be interpreted in the *same* resource situation as its antecedent. This is why the possibility of referring exophorically is excluded in such a context – rather than due to a purported deficiency of a pronoun in the scope of *sam* (Despić 2011, 2013). Evidence for the proposed view comes from the fact that the intensifier *sam* makes possible covaluation of the strong pronoun with its antecedent in the seemingly local domain, as in (5). Namely, in accordance with the Condition B of both the canonical binding theory (Chomsky 1981, 1986) and the theory of reflexivity of R&R (1993), the pronominal *njega* ‘him’ cannot be used in the local domain of its antecedent (5a), unlike an anaphor/reflexive (5b), whose acceptability follows from the Condition A. Yet, when focused, the pronominal *njega* becomes acceptable, see (5c) and Arsenijević & Milosavljević (2022). It cannot be treated as an instance of binding, since focused constituents move at LF (as standardly assumed, cf. R&R 1993), escaping the local domain of their antecedent, thus violating a precondition for binding. Instead, when focused, *njega* in (5c) must be treated as (accidentally) coreferential with its antecedent (see Arsenijević & Milosavljević 2022 for additional arguments and tests).

(5)	Pera _i	je	udario	(a) *njega _i	(b) ✓sebe	(c) ✓njega _i	sam-og
	P.	AUX	hit	him.STRONG	REFL.STRONG.ACC	him.STRONG	self-ACC.M

Intended: ‘Pera hit himself.’

An additional argument for analyzing a pronoun in the scope of the intensifier *sam* ‘self’ as a strong pronoun and not a clitic comes from the acceptability of (5c) in the statue contexts (Jackendoff 1992), where *njega samog* refers to a proxy (a statue, monument, etc.) of the antecedent’s referent (I report an acceptability judgment experiment showing that *njega samog* is even more acceptable in the statue contexts than in the ‘regular’ ones). Such interpretations are cross-linguistically available only for expressions that carry the referential index, i.e. can denote entities (NPs/DPs, strong pronouns, self-reflexives, Safir 2004, Varaschin 2020, a.o.).

As for cases in which the strong pronoun (seemingly) functions as a bound variable ((2) above), I build on Sauerland (2008) to argue that in SC *focused* bound variable pronouns are not effectively *bound variable* pronouns, but rather *e-type* pronouns with a silent descriptive content co-valued with the descriptive content of their antecedent when it itself is focused (for the role of focus of the antecedent in licensing strong pronouns in SC, cf. also Jovović 2022). This renders strong pronouns different from clitics in such contexts.

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