

A Morphosyntactic Analysis of Clitics in Hausa

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Abstract

While extensive research has been conducted on clitics, there is a notable gap in studies specifically focusing on the Hausa language. Additionally, little to no work has been done exploring the interface between morphology and syntax of Hausa clitics. This study aims to investigate Hausa clitics by analyzing their morphological and syntactic features. It employs the Lexical-Functional Grammar (LFG) developed by Joan Bresnan and Ronald Kaplan in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The theory examines the morphological and syntactic properties, focusing on their functional structure and interaction with other elements, such as clitic + stem + clitic, as observed in proclitics and enclitics. Consequently, an endoclititic appears in the middle of a word or within a sentence segment (morpheme+clitic+morpheme) to extend the meaning of a given word. The findings of this research show how clitics function in the Hausa language. It also indicates that clitics can be found in certain segments of Hausa sentences. However, clitics cannot stand on their own unless they are defended by another word (host), which appears before or after their position in the sentence. There is need for further research to explore the positions of clitics in Hausa for students and learners of Hausa, through documentation of relevant research works on Hausa Morphosyntax.

Keywords: *Morphosyntax, Clitics, Hausa, Distributed Morphology.*

1. Introduction

Clitics are morphosyntactic elements that behave syntactically like words but are phonologically dependent on a host. However, clitics function as morphemes that are neither a word nor an affix, though they are familiar with each other in terms of their functions and positions in how they appear in a sentence or any other lexical item. Aronoff & Fudeman (2005: p.388) defined clitics as: *Morphemes that behave syntactically as words, but unlike words, cannot stand alone phonologically and must be incorporated into the prosodic structure of an adjacent word.* Haspelmath & Sims (2010: p.322) said, “*Clitic is a bound word-form, i.e., a word form that is prosodically dependent on a host*”. However, Bauer (2004: p.30-31) explained that, *A Clitic is an element that has some of the features of a word and some of an inflectional affix.*

Bauer (2004: p. 326-327) defined clitics in the English language as: *A Clitic is an obligatory bound morpheme which is intermediate between an affix and a word.* Haspelmath (2023: p.2) says that, *A clitic is a bound morpheme that is neither an affix nor a root.*

The morphosyntax of clitics in Hausa is a fascinating area that highlights the interaction between morphology (i.e., the structure of words and sentences). In Hausa, clitics are linguistic elements that function like words but behave like affixes as they cannot stand alone. They often attach to verbs or nouns and serve various grammatical roles.

2. Review of Related Literature

Some reviews have been conducted on clitics in the Hausa language by scholars in linguistics, as follows:

Jaggar (2001) investigates the morphological and syntactic properties of Hausa clitics, including their behavior in different grammatical contexts. For instance, *ma*, *wa*, *ga*, *don*, *daga*, etc. In this case, some morphemes in Hausa can be said to have appeared as a syntactic property, where such a morpheme can not depend on its own unless attached to another word or even to a root, and also for a new meaning.

Newman (2000) provides an overview of Hausa grammar, including a discussion of clitics and their functions. He also outlines key properties of words for identifying morphemes that function as clitics.

Similarly, Wolff (1993) examines the phonology of Hausa clitics, focusing on their prosodic properties and interactions with host words. In particular, there is a morpheme that can not depend on its own unless it is attached to another word (host) or a free morpheme. This morpheme can appear at the beginning or end of a host word. This means that the analysis or prosody of a word starts with the morphemes that come together to form it and determines its meanings in a given language.

Bature (1991) defined a clitic as a morpheme that can be applied to extend meaning in a language. The clitic ‘*wa*’ appears after a verb as ‘host’ in a sentence, though it can be changed as a process of theta-theory that refers to the object of a given sentence. Examples:

Audu yaa rubuta ***wa*** Binta wasika (*Audu wrote a letter to Binta*).

Audu yaa rubuta wasika ***ga*** Binta (*Audu wrote a letter for Binta*), etc.

Caron (1991) discusses the semantic and pragmatic functions of Hausa clitics, including their role in conveying focus, topic, and politeness. *ne* (msc. Sng./pl.) & *ce*

(fmn. Sng.), *dai*, *kam* etc. Accordingly, this research finds that some morphemes in Hausa are clitics, based on their morphological features and grammatical functions, with some clitics functioning as affixes or even as entire words. However, they can not give meaning alone. But we can only differentiate their functions by their appearance when they are attached to the root of some words.

Clitics' phonological dependence on hosts is debated, with some arguing they're phonologically reduced forms and others seeing them as independent units. Hausa-specific phonological analyses of clitics are scarce. Clitics are seen as affixes, particles, or a distinct category, with disagreements on their morphological classification. Clitics exhibit unique properties distinct from affixes and words. Few studies focus on the syntactic behavior of Hausa clitics, particularly their interaction with other elements. Clitics' position and movement in Hausa syntax are not well-agreed upon.

3. Theoretical Framework

This article aims to adopt Lexical-Functional Grammar (LFG), which was developed by Joan Bresnan and Ronald Kaplan in the late 1970s and early 1980s to analyze data from a given language. The theory also explores the internal structure of words and how morphemes combine to form words that combine in sequence to form a meaningful sentence in a given language. Accordingly, the theory provides a solid foundation for the research on clitics in the Hausa language. This means that LFG captures the clitics' morphological and syntactic properties, focusing on their functional structure and interaction with other elements, including the behavior of clitics. So, it helps to investigate how clitics interact with their hosts, how they are morphologically and syntactically integrated, and what their semantic contributions are in a language.

4. Types of Clitics in Hausa

Clitics are phonologically dependent on a host, often forming a single phonological unit. Clitics typically cannot bear stress or have reduced stress patterns. Clitics attach to a host, often with a fixed position relative to the host. Clitics often have restricted mobility, appearing in specific positions relative to their host. Clitics lack syntactic independence, often unable to stand alone or move freely. Additional diagnostics: Clitics may have a reduced phonological form compared to their full form counterparts. Clitics may contribute special meaning when combined with their host. When analyzing Hausa forms, apply these diagnostics to determine clitic-hood: Examine phonological dependence and stress patterns. Check host attachment and position.

Assess mobility and syntactic independence. Look for reduced forms and special meanings.

Scholars categorize clitics into different classes, depending on their features and functions in words or sentences. They are also classified according to a word (host), in different languages.

Subject Pronouns

These clitics indicate the subject of the verb and can appear as enclitics attached to the verb. For example, the subject pronoun **ni** may cliticize to the noun or possessive, resulting in a form like **na**.

Examples: Uwani (proper noun)

Na'Allah (proper noun)

nawa (possessive) etc.

Object Pronouns

A pronoun here refers to a clitic as an object in the Hausa sentence. Similar to subject clitics, object clitics attach to verbs and denote the object of an action. For instance, **ka** (you) can become **ka** (yours) when attached to a noun. Examples:

Malam ya aike **ka** = Malam has sent **you**

Madam ta kira **ka** = Madam called **you**

Audu ya aure **ta** = Audu married **her**, etc.

Possessive Clitics

These clitics indicate possession and are attached to nouns. An example in Hausa is the clitic **na**, which indicates possession (my). Examples:

littafina (my book)

Gidana (my house), etc.

Verbal Clitics

These are clitics (morphemes) that can be attached to another word to extend meaning. They are also monosyllabic verbs. Examples:

Jagaba = the frontier

Bisalla = proper noun

Sagudu = warrior

Sa'ido = watching, etc.

The above examples show that, the morpheme which attach to the host word is proclitic, though it is a monosyllabic word that functions as a verb separately. i.e. *ja*,

bi, *sa*, etc. However, many languages express a progressive or continuous aspect using affixal morphology. Inflectional future tense and conditional mood (corresponding roughly to English *will/would*) are found in other languages as auxiliaries and properties of clitics:

- i. Clitics are generally unstressed. Even in languages that lack a category of word stress, we find that clitics are elements that cannot be focused or emphasized by being given special emphatic accent.
- ii. Clitics require a host to attach to. Either the clitic attaches to the right of a host (enclitic) or to the left (proclitic).
- iii. Clitics attach promiscuously; that is, they do not select words of a particular class.
- iv. Clitics often have different syntax from fully-fledged words. In some cases, this means that the position of the clitics is determined by entirely separate principles from the syntax of the rest of the language (special clitics, for instance 2P clitics). In other cases, the basic position of the clitics is the same as that of a full-form word with similar function (simple clitics), but in practice there may be restrictions that apply specifically to clitics because of their need to attach to a host in a particular direction.

5. Findings

The morphosyntax of Hausa clitics examines the distributions and attachment patterns of word properties. However, it indicates that there are host and morpheme positions (i.e., *proclitics* & *enclitics*). For instance;

Host selection: Refers to the process by which a clitic chooses the word or phrase it attaches to. In Hausa, for example, pronominal clitics typically attach to verbs or prepositions.

Attachment: Refers to the way a clitic attaches to its host, e.g., phonologically as a single unit or syntactically as a separate element. Hausa clitics often attach phonologically to their hosts.

Syntactic position: Refers to the position of the clitic relative to its host or other elements in the sentence. Hausa clitics usually appear as suffixes or enclitics.

Scope: Refers to the domain over which the clitic has semantic effect. In Hausa, aspectual clitics often have scope over the entire verb phrase.

Movement: Refers to whether the clitic moves from its base position to another position in the sentence. Some Hausa clitics exhibit movement, while others are base-generated.

Phonological dependence: Refers to the clitic's reliance on its host for stress or other phonological properties. Hausa clitics are often phonologically dependent on their hosts. For a genuine morphosyntactic analysis, these properties would be examined in the context of Hausa language data, revealing patterns and interactions that inform our understanding of Hausa clitics.

Examples of Clitics in Hausa words:

- i. Verbal Clitics = **Maje**, **maja**, **masha** (adjectives) etc.
- ii. Possessive Clitics = **naka** (yours), **namu** (ours), **nasu** (theirs), **nata** (her), etc.
- iii. Pronoun Clitics = **Na'**Allah, **Tasallah**, **Uwani** Abarshi, Barmani (proper nouns), etc.
- iv. Tense/Aspect = **za** mu (we'll), **yana** (he's), **tana** (she's), **kuna** (you're), **sunu**, etc.
- v. Demonstrative Clitics = **wannan** (this), **wancan** (that), **wadannan** (these), etc.

Examples of Clitics in Hausa sentences are as follows:

- i. Audu ya aika **wa** Binta wasika [Audu sent a letter **to** Binta]
Audu 3SG.M send DAT Binta a letter
- ii. Wasika ta aiku **ga** Binta [The letter **was** sent **to** Binta]
Wasika 3SG.F send DAT Binta a letter
- iii. Audu ya aika wasika **don** Binta [Audu sent a letter **for** Binta]
Audu 3SG.M send DAT Binta a letter
- iv. Audu ya aika mata **ta** wasika [Audu sent a letter to her]
Audu 3SG.M send DAT Binta a letter
- v. Wasika ta aiku **ga** Binta **daga** Audu [A letter was sent to Binta]
A Letter 3SG.F send DAT Binta a letter

The above illustrations show that clitic distribution is constrained by language-specific morphosyntactic rules of a given language. In the case of the Hausa language, a clitic serves as a morpheme that can be used to form another word by abiding by the rules governing the word formation process.

Morphosyntactically, Hausa clitics serve as morphemes that help to display the meaning of a given sentence by inserting such morphemes (clitics) in different positions, depending on the grammatical rules that govern the language in communicative acts. Clitics can also function depending on dialect, context, and the language's grammatical structure. For instance, according to Yalwa (2016), clitics can

be found in the Kano Dialect, as in pronouns; ‘*mas*’ or ‘*mar*’ from ‘*masa*’, ‘*dakas*’ or ‘*dakar*’ from “‘*dake shi*’, ‘*kwanas*’ from ‘*kwanar*’ of Standard Hausa, where the last vowel has been deleted for a phonological process that occurred at the last syllable of a given word.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study on the morphosyntactic analysis of clitics in the Hausa language reveals that clitics are an integral part of Hausa grammar, exhibiting unique properties and behaviors. The analysis shows that Hausa clitics can be classified into different types, including pronominal and aspectual clitics, which attach to various hosts such as verbs, nouns, and particles. The study highlights the importance of understanding clitics in Hausa syntax and their role in shaping the language's structure and meaning. The findings contribute to the documentation and analysis of Hausa grammar, providing insights for language teaching, learning, and computational applications. They provide insights into the language's grammatical structure and its unique properties, showing the fluidity between morphology and syntax. This research also discussed other morphemes that serve in Hausa sentence phrases, where the meaning of a given sentence can be understood by extensions of meaning between. The study also demonstrates that Hausa clitics are a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, exhibiting a range of phonological, morphological, and syntactic properties. The examples and analysis above show that all the morphemes put in bol in the words and sentences are clitics in Hausa.

Researchers and students of language and linguistics should focus on clitic research, especially in the Hausa language, where books and articles are scarce and published in the internal branches of linguistics. However, it will be a great job when teachers of language and linguistics in our schools and other research institutions encourage their students and mentees to conduct research about clitics by teaching them some topics under clitics.

Research centers should organize some workshops and seminars for paper presentations on clitics, so as to display more knowledge on clitics, which can bring about other trends to analyze more data under clitics.

All the research works under clitics should be compiled and documented for further reading and research in the future from both students or reseachers and their teachers for the importance of knowledge, especially in the area of language and linguistics.

It should also be observed how morphemes interact between words and sentences in a language where some of them appear as clitics, which can be of any type, where only research can determine their positions.

Areas needing further investigation are: clitic-host relationships and phonological interactions; clitic movement and syntactic position in Hausa; typology of Hausa clitics and their semantic effects.

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