# Vafsi oblique pronouns: stress-related placement patterns

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Vafsi, a Northwestern Iranian language spoken by approximately 20.000 people, distinguishes between direct and oblique case person markers (PM) (cf. Stilo (2010)). While the PMs representing the direct case (set 1) are suffixal to the verb, the oblique PMs (set 2) are usually enclitic. However, Stilo also assumes that the oblique PMs can be affixal as well as they have a different form in some contexts. In this paper we show that the oblique person markers can be solely interpreted as clitics and that the difference in realisation can be attributed to the clitic's exposure to phonological constraints: stress and intonational phrase boundaries.
Table 1 gives a (simplified) overview over the respective forms of the two sets of PMs in Vafsi.

| | **direct** *(set 1)* | **oblique** *(set 2)* | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | *clitics* | *affixes* |
| 1SG | -om(e) | =om | -im- |
| 2SG | -i | =i | -i- |
| 3SG | -e / ∅ | =es | -is- |
| 1PL | -am(e) | =owan | -iwan- |
| 2PL | -a | =ian | -ian- |
| 3PL | -end(e) | =esan | -isan- |

Table 1: Oblique and direct case person markers in Vafsi

The direct case PMs are always suffixed to the verb. The verbal complex (VC) also hosts a number of different particles (for example negation, duration and punctual markers, and preverbs) which precede the verb itself. The clitic PMs usually appear directly preceding the VC and must never occur directly following the verb. Depending on whether the host ends in a consonant or a vowel, the clitic adjusts its form and either retains its vowel (following a consonant, (1a)) or deletes the vowel (following another vowel (1b)).

(1) a. tæmen ketab**=es** há-baxša
I.OBL book=3SG PVB-gave.away
'He gave a book away to me' Stilo (2010: 253)

b. kellæ dokán-i**=s** há-da o merde-y
key shop-OM=3SG PVB-gave to man-OM
'He gave the man the key to the shop.' Stilo (2010: 257)

The clitic is not limited to the preverbal position. Besides further positions in the clause (not discussed here for reasons of space), the clitic can also appear *within* the VC in *VC-initial* sentences. However, this position (and the clitic's 'form') is constrained by the co-occurence of other VC-related particles. Consider the following example of the 1Sg PM clitic in combination with the punctual marker *bǽ* (*b-* before vowels) in a sentence with a non-initial VC ((2a)) and a sentence-initial VC ((2b)).

(2) a. an=**om** bǽ-diæ
that=1SG PU-saw
'I saw that'

b. b-**ím**-diæ
PU-1SG-saw
'I saw' (Stilo 2010:247)

Another stressed particle preceding the verb, which shows the same pattern with respect to the clitic (and cannot co-occur with the punctual marker) is the negative marker *nǽ* . In contrast, if the clitic co-occurs with the unstressed duration marker *ær*, the pattern changes ((3)).

(3) a. an=**om** ær-góæ
that=1SG DUR-want
'I want that'

b. **ìm**-ær-góæ
1SG-DUR-want
'I want' (Stilo 2010:247)

Examples like (2b) and (3b) led to Stilo's conclusion that the clitic has an affixal counterpart. Note, however, that these combinations are the only ones where the clitic appears as an affix. In all other combinations (VC-external and VC-internal), the clitic retains its original form ((4)).

(4) hár**=om**=da yey leyle-y
PVB=1SG=gave one boy-OM
'I gave (it) to some boy.'

An alternative explanation that goes without this bi-categorical analysis is the assumption that the clitic is sensitive to prosodic constraints in the sense that it has a 'stressed' form (*im*) and an 'unstressed' form (*om*). It was shown for Pashto (Bögel 2015), another Iranian language, that clitics which are stranded in a sentence-initial position immediately preceding the VC seek prosodic repairment via prosodic inversion (Halpern 1995). During this process, the Pashto clitics reacted to stress patterns given in the verb and were placed after the first stressed syllable. The pattern found for Pashto can be extended to the present data on Vafsi: If the clitic is stranded in the sentence-intial position it is placed after the first stressed element of the followeing VC. In (2b), this is the punctual marker *bǽ*, which is shortened to *b-* preceding vowel-intial material. The stress is then assigned to the clitic which assumes its 'stressed' form *im*.

In (4), on the other hand, the clitic is also placed after the first stressed element, but retains its original 'unstressed' form as the preverb and the clitic do not merge. In (3b), finally, stress is on the main verb, so the clitic should be placed following the whole verbal complex. However, as noted above, the clitic is banned from that position. It thus remains in its original position as first item in an intonational phrase, again assuming its 'stressed' form to compensate for the missing prosodic host on its left.

It can thus be assumed that the PM clitics originate in the position preceding the verbal complex which usually provides them with a prosodic host to their left in c-structure and p-structure. However, in sentences where the clitic is the sole element preceding the verbal complex, Vafsi seeks to repair this prosodic violation by a) prosodic inversion or b) adaption of the clitic to a 'stressed' form, both assumed to take place in p-structure. These patterns can be captured in an elegant and straightforward way in the approach to the syntax-prosody interface proposed in Bögel (2015).

**References:**


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