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# The influence of the focus structure on the placement of pronominal clitics in Asturian<sup>1</sup>

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## INTRODUCTION

**T**HIS PAPER is organized as follows: the ensuing section provides a general account of the historical and linguistic background of Asturian. Section 2 introduces the grammatical operation commonly referred to as ‘clitic placement’ and includes a comparative analysis of the proclisis / enclisis alternation in Standard Spanish, Central Asturian and a variety that will be referred to hereafter as ‘Vaqueiru’<sup>2</sup>. Section 3 offers a review of the different approaches that have been used until now to explain its variation. Sections 4 and 5 explore the issue from

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<sup>1</sup> Financial support for this research has been provided by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness (MINECO), (FFI2011-53788-C3-1-P).

<sup>2</sup> For the sake of clarity, I have decided to use the term ‘Vaqueiru’. Although I am aware of the differences existing between the speech forms of the numerous communities to which the ethnic group, Vaqueiros de Alzada, located within the municipalities of Allande, Cudillero, Salas, Tineo and Valdés, belongs, I have decided to use the term Vaqueiru for the sake of clarity. The name Vaqueiru “cowherd” (or ‘Vaqueiro’ in Standard Spanish) is a descriptive term derived from the Spanish word for “cow”, namely ‘vaca’, which is used to refer to these people’s main activity, which has always involved cattle breeding in these rough, isolated mountain villages.

a different perspective, this time provided by the Role and Reference Grammar Framework. This will reveal the importance that their distinct syntactic and pragmatic structures have regarding the positioning of clitics. Finally, the concluding section includes a discussion of the results and summarizes the most relevant findings obtained in this research.

### HISTORICAL AND LINGUISTIC BACKGROUND

Historically, the geographical area known as the Principality of Asturias (D'Andrés Díaz, 2007; García Arias, 2003; González Quevedo, 2001; Rees, 1998; Viejo Fernández, 2004 & 2005) was one of the few regions on the Iberian Peninsula that never became part of Islamic Spain. As a result, Asturias contains the unbroken linguistic descendants of early Latin dialects formed when the region was romanized during the first centuries of the modern period. Asturian, a Romance language belonging to the Western Iberian group, developed out of the break-up of unified Latin in the early Middle Ages and from Vulgar Latin with contributions from the pre-Roman languages spoken in this region, and the languages of the Celts, Visigoths and Suevi. This also helps us to understand the miscellaneous nature of the Ibero-Romance dialects that developed and spread throughout this region until, unfortunately, owing to the rapid replacement of Asturias by Castilian as a *lingua franca*, the rapid decline of the use of Asturian during the 20<sup>th</sup> century led to few areas where its associated dialectal forms were spoken.

Nowadays, Asturian is spoken in Asturias by about 100,000 mother tongue speakers and has a grammar, a dictionary and an orthography regulated by the Academy of the Asturian Language (2000, 2001 & 2005). Despite the fact that it is not an official language, it is protected under an autonomous statute legislation and is taught as an optional language in schools. Likewise, although there is no official linguistic standard for Asturian, a plethora of isolated rural varieties exist. These

are spread throughout the region and even differ from each other in the communities in which they are spoken. These varieties have been traditionally classified as three predominant variants, namely Western Asturian, Central Asturian and Eastern Asturian, and, for historical and demographic reasons, Central Asturian is traditionally regarded as the normative variety.

In this presentation<sup>3</sup> I will focus on the Western Asturian variety spoken by the ancestral ethnic group, the ‘Vaqueiros de Alzada’<sup>4</sup>, in two neighbouring villages, namely Masenga and Sellón, belonging to the Municipality of Villayón. With their huts made of ancient stone and thatch, these villages, known traditionally as ‘Brañas’, are set high up in pastures where these cowherds have tended their herds of distinctive red Asturian cows each spring, summer and autumn from time immemorial.

Owing to the isolated geographical and cultural situation of these villages (their speakers were even discriminated against by the ‘xaldus’ valley dwellers), this characteristic form of speech may have preserved one of the earliest forms of Asturian ever known, with hardly any in-

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<sup>3</sup> All the examples used in this paper come from two primary sources, namely from published studies and from my relatives, native speakers of the Vaqueiru dialect. I wish to express my gratitude to them for kindly sharing their knowledge of these languages with me. Needless to say, all errors remain my sole responsibility. I am also very grateful to Inaciu Galán y González for helping me with the Central Asturian examples. The examples provided by my Vaqueiru consultants have been mainly taken from naturally occurring, spontaneous speech (most of them overheard). Others have been constructed and checked with a representative sample of about 28 native speakers aged over 70. Finally, other examples have been elicited through questionnaires. Regarding the spelling system used for the examples in the two varieties of Asturian used in this paper, I follow the standard orthography regulated by the Academia de la Llingua Asturiana since 1981, with the modifications necessary to transcribe the distinctive phonemes of the Vaqueiru dialect.

<sup>4</sup> This ethnic group is dispersed in the mountainous areas in western Asturias and, depending on their contact with Standard Spanish and other varieties of Asturian, their form of speech may show variability.

fluence from Standard Spanish until recent times and could, therefore, be considered an extremely conservative variety of Asturian.

#### CLITIC PLACEMENT IN VAQUEIRU

One of the properties distinguishing Western Iberian Romance languages (i.e. Asturian, Galician and European Portuguese) from the other members of this language family concerns the position of clitics in matrix contexts, which sometimes appear enclitic to the verb (e.g. in declarative sentences and polar questions) and sometimes as proclitic (e.g. in negative sentences, in content questions, and, among others, in the presence of a fronted focused element):

1. Vendíemos-*cyi*                    la vaca al        tóu vecín                    Vaqu  
    sell.PAST.IPL:S-3SG:IO the cow to+the your neighbour  
    ‘We sold the cow to your neighbour’.
2. Nu(n)-(c)*yi*    vendíemos        la vaca al        tóu vecín                    Vaqu  
    not+3SG:IO    sell.PAST.IPL:S the cow to+the your neighbour  
    ‘We didn’t sell the cow to your neighbour’.

Although the Vaqueiru variety stands out especially for its trademark pronunciation, morphology and vocabulary, it also presents this syntactic alternation (as well as other very distinctive syntactic properties regarding clitic doubling and differential object marking). Nevertheless, unlike other Western Iberian Romance languages, this variety not only shows the predominant position of enclisis over proclisis in matrix contexts, but also in embedded contexts. The resulting post- and preverbal clitic alternations are, as we will see, closely related to the distinctive syntactic and pragmatic properties displayed by this variety.

The ensuing section includes a comparative analysis of Standard (European) Modern Spanish (SS), Central Asturian (CAst) and Vaqueiru (Vaqu) in terms of the positioning of clitics, firstly in matrix contexts,

and secondly, in embedded contexts. It is worth noting that these two Asturian varieties show a different degree of contact with Standard Modern Spanish and, therefore, the fact that the influence of the latter is noted very differently in each allows us to observe traces of the evolutionary development that this grammatical domain—namely the pattern of clitic placement—has undergone in the history of the Spanish language.

### *Affirmative declarative sentences*

A very important distinction between Western Iberian languages and Spanish lies in the different positioning of clitics in affirmative declarative sentences:

- |    |    |                       |                |                                      |                    |      |
|----|----|-----------------------|----------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------|------|
| 3. | a) | <i>Lo</i>             | <i>ví</i>      | <i>ayer</i>                          | <i>en el prado</i> | SS   |
|    |    | 3SG:DO                | see.PAST.1SG:S | yesterday                            | in the meadow      |      |
|    | b) | <i>Ví-lu</i>          |                | <i>ayeri</i>                         | <i>nel prau</i>    | CAst |
|    |    | see.PAST.1SG:S-3SG:DO |                | yesterday                            | in+the meadow      |      |
|    | c) | <i>Ví-lu</i>          |                | <i>anuéite</i>                       | <i>nel prau</i>    | Vaqu |
|    |    | see.PAST.1SG:S-3SG:DO |                | yesterday                            | in+the meadow      |      |
|    |    |                       |                | 'I saw him yesterday in the meadow'. |                    |      |

Unlike Standard Spanish, which is always proclitic in declarative sentences, the two Asturian varieties exhibit enclisis, as illustrated by the postverbal position of the clitic *lu* “him” in these examples of affirmative declarative sentences.

### *Content questions*

Regarding the formation of content questions, this is a context that always triggers proclisis:

- |    |    |                 |                 |                      |    |
|----|----|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|----|
| 4. | a) | <i>¿Cómo se</i> | <i>hacen</i>    | <i>las tortitas?</i> | SS |
|    |    | how PASS        | make.PRES.3PL:S | the pancakes         |    |

- |    |                          |      |                 |            |          |
|----|--------------------------|------|-----------------|------------|----------|
| b) | ¿Cómo <i>se</i>          | faen | los             | frixuelos? | CAst     |
|    | how                      | PASS | make.PRES.3PL:S | the        | pancakes |
| c) | ¿Cómu <i>se</i>          | fain | los             | feixuelos? | Vaqu     |
|    | how                      | PASS | make.PRES.3PL:S | the        | pancakes |
|    | 'How are pancakes made?' |      |                 |            |          |

As we can see in these examples, the clitic *se* appears in a preverbal position in the three varieties.

### *Polar questions*

By contrast, with regard to the formation of polar questions, Standard Spanish differs from the two Asturian varieties since, while in the former there is proclisis, the latter two favour enclisis:

- |    |    |                                     |                   |        |    |     |         |      |
|----|----|-------------------------------------|-------------------|--------|----|-----|---------|------|
| 5. | a) | ¿ <i>Tē</i>                         | gustó             | ir     | a  | la  | fiesta? | SS   |
|    |    | 2SG:IO                              | please.PAST.3SG:S | go.INF | to | the | party   |      |
|    | b) | ¿Prestó- <i>ti</i>                  |                   | ir     | a  | la  | fiesta? | CAst |
|    |    | please.PAST.3SG:S-2SG:IO            |                   | go.INF | to | the | party   |      |
|    | c) | ¿Prestóu- <i>ti</i>                 |                   | ir     | a  | la  | fiesta? | Vaqu |
|    |    | please.PAST.3SG:S-2SG:IO            |                   | go.INF | to | the | party   |      |
|    |    | 'Did you enjoy going to the party?' |                   |        |    |     |         |      |

Just as in declarative sentences, the clitic *ti* “you” continues to appear in postverbal position in Asturian, in contrast to the preverbal position of the clitic in the Standard Spanish example.

Despite this, what is very striking is that it is also possible to observe a change in the pattern of clitic placement in polar questions in Central Asturian when there is a focused preverbal element such as the emphatic adverb *ya* “already” in a fronted position. Regarding Vaqueiru, it is not possible to observe a change since this variety does not admit the presence of *ya* “already” in a fronted position:

6. a) ¿Ya *lo* encontraste? SS  
 already 3SG:DO find.PAST.2SG:S
- b) ¿Ya *lo* atopástei? CAst  
 already 3SG:DO find.PAST.2SG:S
- c) ¿Atupástei- *lu* ya ho? Vaqu  
 find.PAST.2SG:S-3SG:DO already man  
 ‘Did you find it already?’

Furthermore, as expected, the three varieties display proclisis when the polar interrogative sentence is negative:

7. a) ¿No *se* hartó (el ternero) todavía? SS  
 not REFL state.PAST.3SG:S (the calf) yet
- b) ¿Nun *se* fartó (el xatu) entavía? CAst  
 not REFL state.PAST.3SG:S (the calf) yet
- c) ¿Nun *se* fartóu (el xatu) únda? Vaqu  
 not REFL state.PAST.3SG:S (the calf) yet  
 ‘Didn’t it (=the calf) quench its hunger yet?’

Thus, with the exception of negative polar questions, Vaqueiru only allows for enclisis in polar questions.

### *Exclamative sentences*

As in affirmative declarative sentences, the formation of exclamative sentences triggers proclisis in Standard Spanish, unlike the two Asturian varieties, which exhibit enclisis:

8. a) ¡*Lo* mató con una navaja! SS  
 3SG:DO kill.PAST.3SG:S with a pocket.knife

<sup>5</sup> The interjection *ho* (< *home* ‘man’) is very commonly used at the end of many sentences, especially interrogatives, particularly to address a person, for example: *¿Au véis ho?* ‘Where are you going, man?’.

- b) ¡Mató-*lu* cuna navaya! CAst  
 kill.PAST.3SG:S-3SG:DO with+a pocket.knife
- c) ¡Matóu-*lu* cuna navaya! Vaqu  
 kill.PAST.3SG:S-3SG:DO with+a pocket.knife  
 ‘He killed him with a pocket knife!’

Nevertheless, as in polar questions, when there is a focused element preceding the verbal form, Central Asturian displays proclisis rather than enclisis:

9. a) ¡Dios *lo* quiera! SS  
 God 3SG:DO want.SUB.3SG:S
- b) ¡Dios *lo* quiera! CAst  
 God 3SG:DO want.SUB.3SG:S
- c) ¡Quiera-*lu* Dios ya la Virxen! Vaqu  
 want.SUB.3SG:S-3SG:DO God and the Virgin  
 ‘God willing!’

As we can see in (9c), in Vaqueiru, the placement of the emphatic element in a preverbal position is avoided in favour of an enclisis pattern. According to my native consultants, the only focal elements to sound natural in the preverbal position in exclamative sentences are the exclamative pronouns and the adverbs of affirmation or negation:

10. a) ¡Dónde *lo* escondieron, Virgen Santa! SS  
 where 3SG:DO hide.PAST.3PL:S Virgin Holy
- b) ¡Ú *lo* escondieron, Virxe Santa! CAst  
 where 3SG:DO hide.PAST.3PL:S Virgin Holy
- c) ¡Áu *lu* escundieron, Virxen Santa! Vaqu  
 where 3SG:DO hide.PAST.3PL:S Virgin Holy  
 ‘Where did they hide it, Holy Virgin!’

*Imperative*

Enclisis is the only possible pattern that can be used in the imperative form in the three varieties:

- |     |    |                        |        |      |
|-----|----|------------------------|--------|------|
| ii. | a) | Levánta- <i>te</i>     | pronto | SS   |
|     |    | wake.up.IMP.2SG:S-REFL | early  |      |
|     | b) | Llevánta- <i>ti</i>    | ceo    | CAst |
|     |    | wake.up.IMP.2SG:S-REFL | early  |      |
|     | c) | L.levánta- <i>ti</i>   | ceu    | Vaqu |
|     |    | wake.up.IMP.2SG:S-REFL | early  |      |
|     |    | ‘Wake up early’.       |        |      |

*Polarity items*

The reverse situation is found when a sentence starts with an adverb of affirmation or negation, since these elements trigger proclisis in the three varieties:

- |     |    |                             |           |           |                 |      |
|-----|----|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------------|------|
| 12. | a) | Sí                          | <i>me</i> | <i>lo</i> | dijiste         | SS   |
|     |    | definitely                  | 1SG:OI    | 3SG:DO    | tell.PAST.2SG:S |      |
|     | b) | Sí                          | <i>me</i> | <i>lo</i> | dixísti         | CAst |
|     |    | definitely                  | 1SG:OI    | 3SG:DO    | tell.PAST.2SG:S |      |
|     | c) | Sí                          | <i>me</i> | <i>lu</i> | dixísti         | Vaqu |
|     |    | definitely                  | 1SG:OI    | 3SG:DO    | tell.PAST.2SG:S |      |
|     |    | ‘You did tell me about it’. |           |           |                 |      |
| 13. | a) | Todavía                     | no        | <i>lo</i> | hiciste         | SS   |
|     |    | yet                         | not       | 3SG:DO    | do.PAST.2SG:S   |      |
|     | b) | Entavía                     | nun       | <i>lo</i> | fixísti         | CAst |
|     |    | yet                         | not       | 3SG:DO    | do.PAST.2SG:S   |      |
|     | c) | Únda                        | nun       | <i>lu</i> | fixísti         | Vaqu |
|     |    | yet                         | not       | 3SG:DO    | do.PAST.2SG:S   |      |
|     |    | ‘You didn’t do it yet’.     |           |           |                 |      |

Positive and negative polarity markers behave similarly since they both force the clitic pronoun to surface to the left of the finite verb in the three varieties<sup>6</sup>.

### *Topicalization*

The following example includes a case of topicalization. The three varieties may place topicalized elements-constituents that are part of the background or presupposition-in different syntactic positions, especially in sentence-initial and sentence-final positions. However, as we can see, the positioning of a topical element does not affect the placement of bound forms in the two Asturian varieties, since, as in unmarked declarative sentences, both continue to exhibit enclisis:

- |     |    |   |      |
|-----|----|---|------|
| 14. | a) | El tractor, <i>se lo</i> compró en Tineo        | SS   |
|     |    | the tractor REFL 3SG:DO buy.PAST.3SG:S in Tineo |      |
|     | b) | El tractor, compró- <i>y- lu</i> en Tinéu       | CAst |
|     |    | the tractor buy.PAST.3SG:S-REFL-3SG:DO in Tineo |      |
|     | c) | El tractor, compró(u)-(c) <i>i- lu</i> en Tinéu | Vaqu |
|     |    | the tractor buy.PAST.3SG:S-REFL-3SG:DO in Tineo |      |
|     |    | ‘The tractor, he bought it in Tineo’.           |      |

These examples show that the constituent *el tractor* “the tractor”, which corresponds to information that is familiar to the hearer or something that the hearer can accept as background information, does not appear to affect the positioning of clitics in Asturian, since enclisis occurs in the two Asturian dialects.

---

<sup>6</sup> The fact that proclisis is the only grammatical option with preverbal negation is also illustrated by examples (7) and (34).

### *Focalization*

All languages have some kind of grammatical device for marking new information, mainly through the use of either structural devices in the form of special focusing devices involving marked word order arrangements, or prosodic means whereby the focal element receives special prominence when pronounced, or even some combination of these two strategies. The three varieties appear to place a similar degree of stress on the pronunciation of a constituent with focal properties, although Vaqueiru stands out owing to the fact that there is an interesting restriction on the position of the prominent constituent, with a bearing on the placement of its clitics: this variety does not allow the placement of a contrastive focus in a clause-initial position, which blocks proclisis with enclisis remaining as a consequence.

Until now, the two Asturian varieties have hardly shown any difference regarding the position of their clitics (see examples (6) and (9)). Nevertheless, in a context involving focalization –for example when a constituent representing information that is asserted about the topic is fronted–, it is possible to observe a very interesting contrast between the Vaqueiru dialect, on the one hand, and Standard Spanish and Central Asturian, on the other:

15. a) A MÍ me lo dijo SS  
       to 1SG:IO 1SG:IO 3SG:DO say.PAST.3SG:S
- b) A MÍN me lo díxo CAst  
       to 1SG:IO 1SG:IO 3SG:DO say.PAST.3SG:S
- c) Díxu- me-lu A MÍN Vaqu  
       say.PAST.3SG:S-1SG:IO-3SG:DO to 1SG:IO  
       ‘He said it TO ME’.

As we can see above, in both Standard Spanish and Central Asturian, clitics appear to be influenced by the presence of a clause-initial focalized

constituent and, consequently, display proclisis. Unlike in the former example regarding topicalization, Vaqueiru now assigns a different position to the focalized element in comparison with Standard Spanish and Central Asturian. In Vaqueiru, the element with contrastive focal properties-in this case *A MÍN* “TO ME” - must always occupy the clause-final position, resulting in a different positioning of the clitics exhibited by this variety in this context.

### *Adverb fronting*

Some adverbs can also sometimes be fronted, becoming the informational focus of a sentence. These focused elements tend to appear fronted in a clause-initial position in Standard Spanish and Central Asturian, but not in Vaqueiru:

- |     |    |                        |           |                                      |              |      |
|-----|----|------------------------|-----------|--------------------------------------|--------------|------|
| 16. | a) | Abajo                  | <i>lo</i> | tienes                               |              | SS   |
|     |    | down.there             | 3SG:DO    | have.PRES.2SG:S                      |              |      |
|     | b) | Abaxo                  | <i>lo</i> | tienes                               |              | CAst |
|     |    | down.there             | 3SG:DO    | have.PRES.2SG:S                      |              |      |
|     | c) | Tienes- <i>lu</i>      |           | abaxo                                |              | Vaqu |
|     |    | have.PRES.2SG:S-3SG:DO |           | down.there                           |              |      |
|     |    |                        |           | ‘Down there you’ve got it’.          |              |      |
| 17. | a) | Ayer                   | <i>lo</i> | ví                                   | en la fiesta | SS   |
|     |    | yesterday              | 3SG:DO    | see.PAST.1SG:S                       | at the party |      |
|     | b) | Ayeri                  | <i>lu</i> | ví                                   | na fiesta    | CAst |
|     |    | yesterday              | 3SG:DO    | see.PAST.1SG:S                       | at+the party |      |
|     | c) | <i>Ví-lu</i>           |           | na fiesta                            | anuéite      | Vaqu |
|     |    | see.PAST.1SG:S-3SG:DO  |           | at+the party                         | last.night   |      |
|     |    |                        |           | ‘Last night I saw him at the party’. |              |      |
| 18. | a) | Así                    | <i>lo</i> | hice                                 |              | SS   |
|     |    | this.way               | 3SG:DO    | do.PAST.1SG:S                        |              |      |

- b) Asina *lo* *fixi* CAsT  
 this.way 3SG:DO do.PAST.1SG:S
- c) Fíxi-*lu* *asina* Vaqu  
 do.PAST.1SG:S-3SG:DO this.way  
 ‘This way I did it’.
19. a) Siempre *lo* *encontramos* *en el prado* SS  
 always 3SG:DO find.PRES.1PL:S in the field
- b) Siempre *lu* *atopamos* *en prau* CAsT  
 always 3SG:DO find.PRES.1PL:S in+the field
- c) Atupámus-*lu* *nu prau* *sempre* Vaqu  
 find.PRES.1PL:S-3SG:DO in+the field always  
 ‘We always find him in the field’.
20. a) Por completo *los* *rompió* *todos* SS  
 completely 3PL:DO break.PAST.3SG:S all
- b) Dafechu *los* *rompió* *toos* CAsT  
 completely 3PL:DO break.PAST.3SG:S all
- c) Rumpíu- *lus* *to(ud)us* *dafeitu* Vaqu  
 break.PAST.3SG:S-3PL:DO all completely  
 ‘Completely he broke them all’.
21. a) Quizás *lo* *vea* *mañana* SS  
 perhaps 3SG:DO see.SUB.1SG:S tomorrow
- b) Quiciabes *lu* *vea* *mañana* CAsT  
 perhaps 3SG:DO see.SUB.1SG:S tomorrow
- c) Sei-[que<sup>7</sup> *vóu* (a) *ve(r)- lu* Vaqu  
 know.PRES.1SG:S-that go.PRES.1SG:S to see.INF-3SG:DO  
 mañana]  
 tomorrow  
 ‘Perhaps I see him tomorrow’.

<sup>7</sup> Although the word *quiciás* ‘perhaps’ exists in this Vaqueiru example, according to my consultants, it sounds more natural to use the expression *seique* of which the closest equivalent in English would be ‘I think that...’.

The sentences given above constitute instances of fronting including different types of adverb, namely: place (16), time (17), manner (18), frequency (19), degree (20), and probability (21). As we can see, regardless of the type of adverb, Vaqueiru differs once again from Standard Spanish and Central Asturian in the placement of the focalized element. This cannot occur in a clause-initial position in Vaqueiru, giving rise to enclisis rather than proclisis.

### *Quantifier fronting*

The presence of a fronted quantifier triggers proclisis in Standard Spanish and Central Asturian, but enclisis remains in Vaqueiru:

22. a) Mucho *lo* quiero SS  
 very.much 3SG:DO love.PRES.1SG:S
- b) Abondo *lu* quiero CAst  
 very.much 3SG:DO love.PRES.1SG:S
- c) Quier(u)-*lu* abondo Vaqu  
 love.PRES.1SG:S-3SG:DO very.much  
 'I love him very much'.

### *Subjunctive mood*

With regard to the desiderative expression *ojalá* meaning "I wish", which requires the use of the subjunctive mood in Spanish, it is not possible to analyze the behaviour displayed by the clitics since, according to my consultants, although it is also possible to use the same expression *ójala*, it sounds rather stilted in Vaqueiru.

23. a) ¡Ojalá *lo* viera en la fiesta! SS  
 I.wish 3SG:DO see.SUB.1SG:S in the party
- b) ¡Oxalá *lu* viera na fiesta! CAst  
 I.wish 3SG:DO see.SUB.3SG:S at+the party

- c) ¡Quiera Dios [que viera-*lu* na fiesta]! Vaqu  
 want.SUB.3SG:S God that see.SUB.1SG:S-3SG:DO at+the party  
 'I wish I saw him at the party'.

Both Standard Spanish and Central Asturian place the desiderative expression, *ojalá* and *oxalá* at the beginning of the clause and this affects the positioning of the clitics, which display proclisis.

### *Subordination*

Further distinctions between Vaqueiru and Standard Spanish and Central Asturian appear to occur in embedded contexts since, although the introduction of a subordinate connector has traditionally been believed to be an important trigger of proclisis in Asturian (as well as in the other Western Iberian languages), in Vaqueiru the inclusion of a complementizer does not affect the pattern of clitic placement:

24. a) Estoy seguro de [que *lo* llevaba él] SS  
 be.PRES.1SG:S certain of that 3SG:DO carry.PAST.3SG:S 3SG:S
- b) Toi seguru [que *lo* llevaba él] CAst  
 be.PRES.1SG:S certain that 3SG:DO carry.PAST.3SG:S 3SG:S
- c) Sei-[que l.llevaba-*lu* él] Vaqu  
 know.PRES.1SG:S-that carry.PAST.3SG:S-3SG:DO 3SG:S  
 'I'm sure he was carrying it with him'. /'He was certainly carrying it with him'.
25. a) Me parece [que Manolín *lo* cogió ayer] SS  
 it.seems.to.me that Manolín 3SG:DO take.PAST.3SG:S yesterday
- b) Paez-me [que Manolín *lo* garró ayeri] CAst  
 it.seems.to.me that Manolín 3SG:DO take.PAST.3SG:S yesterday
- c) Pare-me [que Manolín garró-*lu* anuéite] Vaqu  
 it.seems.to.me that Manolín take.PAST.3SG:S-3SG:DO yesterday  
 'I think that Manolín took it yesterday'.

The literature on clitic placement in Asturian also provides us with some examples of nominal and adverbial subordination<sup>8</sup> where both proclisis and enclisis are available:

26. a) Ónde dixo Xulia [que comprára-*lo*? CAst  
 where say.PAST.3SG:S Xulia that buy.SUB.3SG:S-3SG:DO
- b) Ónde dixo Xulia [que *lo* comprara]? CAst  
 where say.PAST.3SG:S Xulia that 3SG:DO buy.SUB.3SG:S  
 ‘Where did Xulia say that she had bought it?’.  
 (FERNÁNDEZ RUBIERA, 2013: 80-81)
27. a) María vienó cenar [porque *y lo* dixo Xuan] CAst  
 Maria come.PAST.3SG:S dinner because-3SG:IO 3SG:DO say.PAST.3SG:S Xuan
- b) María vienó cenar [porque díxo-*lo* Xuan] CAst  
 Maria come.PAST.3SG:S dinner because say.PAST.3SG:S-3SG:DO Xuan  
 ‘María came for dinner because Xuan invited her’.  
 (LORENCES<sup>9</sup>, 2010, pág. 95)
28. a) Agora doi-me cuenta (de) [que *lo* fixi mal] CAst  
 now I.realize of that 3SG:DO do.PAST.1SG:S wrongly
- b) Agora doi-me cuenta (de) [que fíxi-*lo* mal] CAst  
 now I.realize of that do.PAST.1SG:S-3SG:DO wrongly  
 ‘Now I realize that I did it wrongly’.  
 (D’ANDRÉS DÍAZ, 1993, pág. 27)
29. a) Traí-me-lu [que cósu-*lu*  
 bring.IMP.2SG:S-1SG:IO-3SG:DO that sew.PRES.1SG:S-3SG:DO  
 yóu] WAst  
 1SG:S

<sup>8</sup> Cano González (2009, pág. 128) also cites an example where adjectival subordination displays enclisis in the Western Asturian variety spoken in Somiedo:

E. g. Ai un castiešu, que chamámus-*še* (e)l Castiešu WAst  
 there.is a castle which call.PRES.1PL:S-3SG:DO The Castle  
 ‘There is a castle which we call The Castle’.

<sup>9</sup> Although it is not explicitly said in her paper, these examples seem to come from Central Asturian.

- b) Traí-me-lu [que *lu* cosu  
bring.IMP.2SG:S-1SG:IO-3SG:DO that 3SG:DO sew.PRES.1SG:S  
yóu] WAst  
1SG:S  
'Bring it to me that I will sew it'.

(CANO GONZÁLEZ, 2009, pág. 128)

This variation, which allows both enclisis and proclisis in finite embedded contexts in Asturian, has often been explained by means of the notion of 'conviction' (Viejo Fernández, 2008; Fernández Rubiera, 2009, 2010 & 2013)<sup>10</sup>, pointing to the fact that the enclisis option appears to be related to the fact that the speaker feels convinced that the assertion is true, whereas proclisis is linked to the fact that the speaker is not sure of the information s/he is putting forward:

30. a) Digo [qu(e)'ayúda- *me* (\*pero nun toi seguru)] CAst  
say.PRES.1SG:S that help.PRES.3SG:S-1SG:IO  
b) Digo [que *me* ayuda (pero nun toi seguru)] CAst  
say.PRES.1SG:S that 1SG:IO help.PRES.3SG:S  
'I say that s/he helps me'.

(VIEJO FERNÁNDEZ, 2008, FERNÁNDEZ-RUBIERA, 2009)

Although I do not question the validity of the 'conviction' interpretation, I must admit that I have not been able to find similar evidence for this variation in Vaqueiru, as my consultants maintain that enclisis was the default clitic pattern in embedded contexts in traditional Vaqueiru. Taking this into account, it seems reasonable to assume that this variation may be linked to different degrees of influence from Standard Spanish and the fact that the change from enclisis to proclisis was slow

<sup>10</sup> D'Andrés Díaz (1993), however, considers these examples showing enclisis in embedded contexts to be ungrammatical and argues that they could be due to a case of hypercorrection whereby some speakers want to differentiate themselves from Spanish speakers.

and gradual<sup>11</sup>. By contrast, Vaqueiru shows a preference for enclisis over proclisis in embedded contexts, as in the following instances of nominal subordination (31, 32), adjectival subordination (33) and adverbial subordination (34):

31. a) Creo [que lo hiciste mal] SS  
 think.PRES.1SG:S that 3SG:DO do.PAST.2SG:S wrongly
- b) Creo [que lo fixísti mal] CAst  
 think.PRES.1SG:S that 3SG:DO do.PAST.2SG:S wrongly
- c) Creu [que fixísti- lu mal] Vaqu  
 think.PRES.1SG:S that do.PAST.2SG:S-3SG:DO wrongly  
 'I think you did it wrongly'.
32. a) Oí [que lo compró en la feria] SS  
 hear.PAST.1SG:S that 3SG:DO buy.PAST.3SG:S at the cattle.show
- b) Oí [que lo compró na feria] CAst  
 hear.PAST.1SG:S that 3SG:DO buy.PAST.3SG:S at+the cattle.show
- c) Güí [que cumpróu- lu na feria] Vaqu  
 hear.PAST.1SG:S that buy.PAST.3SG:S-3SG:DO at+the cattle.show  
 'I heard that he bought it at the cattle show'.
33. a) El libro [que te dio el maestru] está  
 the book that 2SG:IO give.PAST.3SG:S the teacher be.PRES.3SG:S  
 en la mesa SS  
 on the table
- b) El llibru [que te dio (e)l maestru] ta  
 the book that 2SG:IO give.PAST.3SG:S the teacher be.PRES.3SG:S  
 na mesa CAst  
 on+the table

<sup>11</sup> Fernández Rubiera (2010, pág. 85) also appears to make this assumption when he links the use of the term 'conservative' to the variety of Asturian studied by him in his analysis of clitic placement owing to the fact that it makes a wider use of enclisis in embedded contexts than do other varieties of Asturian.

- c) El l.libru [que díu- *ti* (e)l'maestru] tá  
 the book that give.PAST.3SG:S-2SG:IO the teacher be.PRES.3SG:S  
 na mesa Vaqu  
 on+the table  
 'The book that the teacher gave you is on the table'.
34. a) No te lo dejo [porque  
 not 2SG:IO 3SG:DO lend.PRES.1SG:S because  
*me* hace falta] SS  
 1SG:IO be.necessary.PRES.3SG:S
- b) Nun te lo dexo [porque  
 not 2SG:IO 3SG:DO lend.PRES.1SG:S because  
*me* fai falta] CAst  
 1SG:IO be.necessary.PRES.3SG:S
- c) Nun te lu deixu [purquei  
 not 2SG:IO 3SG:DO lend.PRES.1SG:S because  
 fai- *me* falta] Vaqu  
 be.necessary.PRES.3SG:S-1SG:IO  
 'I can't lend it to you because I need it'.

Taking into account the more regular behaviour of clitics in embedded contexts in Vaqueiru, I am inclined to think that enclisis and proclisis arise uniformly in both matrix and embedded contexts and that the alternation is mainly governed by the presence of an element with focal properties in preverbal position. Thus, as we can see from the examples given above, unlike Standard Spanish and Central Asturian, the presence of nominal and adverbial subordinators, such as *que* "that" and *purquéi* "because", does not trigger proclisis in Vaqueiru by itself. Consequently, for proclisis to occur in embedded contexts, there must be another element expressing focal information before the verb:

35. Pare-me [que nun *me* manquéi] Vaqu  
 it.seems.to.me that not REFL hurt.PAST.1SG:S  
 'It seems like I didn't hurt myself'.

36. Nun séi [quién *lu* fixu] Vaqu  
 not know.PRES.1SG:S who 3SG:DO do.PAST.3SG:S  
 'I don't know who did it'.

In fact, as far as Central Asturian is concerned, Fernández Rubiera (2013, pág. 59) suggests the same clitic placement alternations in both matrix and embedded contexts. These are also attributed to the presence of a different type of left-peripheral (i.e. topical *vs.* focal) material in the preverbal position of the embedded clause:

37. a) Repíto-te [que yo dexé-*lo*  
 repeat.PRES.1SG:S-2SG:IO that 1SG:S leave.PAST.1SG:S-3SG:DO  
 aquel diecisiete de mayu] CAst  
 that seventeenth of May  
 'I repeat to you that I left it that May seventeenth'.
- b) Repíto-te [que YO *lo* dexé  
 repeat.PRES.1SG:S-2SG:IO that 1SG:S 3SG:DO leave.PAST.1SG:S  
 aquel diecisiete de mayu] CAst  
 that seventeenth of May  
 'I repeat to you that it was I that left it that May seventeenth'.

The difference between (37a) and (37b) lies in the different pragmatic characteristics of the preverbal constituent in the linked clause. While, in the former, the subject presents topical properties and gives rise to enclisis, in the latter the subject is focused, giving rise to proclisis. This leads to the argument that the element representing the presupposed information triggers a postverbal clitic pattern, whereas the constituent making an assertion about the topic entails a preverbal clitic pattern. Nevertheless, owing to the characteristic restriction regarding the focus structure (i.e. the distribution of information in the sentence) presented by Vaqueiru, forcing the focal constituent to clause-final position, it is not possible to confirm this distinction with elements other than interrogative and exclamative pronouns or positive and negative polarity markers.

*Non-finite forms*

Finally, these are some sentences containing non-finite forms of verbs, which are exclusively enclitic in the three varieties<sup>12</sup>:

- |     |    |                            |                       |      |
|-----|----|----------------------------|-----------------------|------|
| 38. | a) | Quiero                     | comprar- <i>lo</i>    | SS   |
|     |    | want.PRES.1SG:S            | buy.INF-3SG:DO        |      |
|     | b) | Quiero                     | compra(r)- <i>lo</i>  | CAst |
|     |    | want.PRES.1SG:S            | buy.INF-3SG:DO        |      |
|     | c) | Quier(u)                   | cumpra(r)- <i>lu</i>  | Vaqu |
|     |    | want.PRES.1SG:S            | buy.INF-3SG:DO        |      |
|     |    | 'I want to buy it'.        |                       |      |
| 39. | a) | Se quedó                   | recogiendo- <i>la</i> | SS   |
|     |    | REFL stay.PAST.3SG:S       | glean.GER-3SG:DO      |      |
|     | b) | Quedó-se                   | pañando- <i>la</i>    | CAst |
|     |    | stay.PAST.3SG:S-REFL       | glean.GER-3SG:DO      |      |
|     | c) | Quedóu-se                  | pañandu- <i>la</i>    | Vaqu |
|     |    | stay.PAST.3SG:S-REFL       | glean.GER-3SG:DO      |      |
|     |    | 'She stayed gathering it'. |                       |      |

*Summary*

Since the behaviour of clitics in a large number of different grammatical constructions has been analyzed in these three varieties of Spanish, it seems necessary to include a summary of the comparison between Standard Spanish, Central Asturian and Vaqueiru in terms of the clitic placement displayed by them in both matrix and embedded contexts:

<sup>12</sup> Some authors (González López, 2008, págs. 25 & 270; Lorenzo, 1994, pág. 101) cite examples of sentences showing proclisis with non-finite verbal forms:

E. g.: 1) Ye una pena nun *lo* tener cerca  
2) Preguntó ónde *lo* facer

Nevertheless, according to my native consultants, these do not sound natural in Vaqueiru.

VARIETY	PROCLISIS	ENCLISIS
Standard European Spanish	Context: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Affirmative declarative sentences</i></li> <li>• <b>Content questions</b></li> <li>• <i>Polar questions</i></li> <li>• <b>Polarity items</b></li> <li>• <i>Exclamative</i></li> <li>• <i>Topicalization</i></li> <li>• <i>Focalization</i></li> <li>• <i>Adverb fronting</i></li> <li>• <i>Quantifier fronting</i></li> <li>• <i>Subjunctive</i></li> <li>• <i>Subordination</i></li> </ul>	Context: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Non-finite forms</b></li> <li>• <b>Imperative</b></li> </ul>
Central Asturian	Context: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Content questions</b></li> <li>• <b>Polarity items</b></li> <li>• <i>Exclamative (with pronoun)</i></li> <li>• <i>Focalization</i></li> <li>• <i>Adverb fronting</i></li> <li>• <i>Quantifier fronting</i></li> <li>• <i>Subjunctive</i></li> <li>• <i>Nominal subordination</i></li> <li>• <i>Adverbial subordination</i></li> <li>• <i>Adjectival subordination</i></li> </ul>	Context: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Affirmative declarative sentences</i></li> <li>• <i>Polar questions</i></li> <li>• <i>Exclamative (with no pronoun)</i></li> <li>• <i>Topicalization</i></li> <li>• <i>Nominal subordination</i></li> <li>• <b>Non-finite forms</b></li> <li>• <b>Imperative</b></li> </ul>
Vaqueiru	Context: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Content questions</b></li> <li>• <b>Polarity items</b></li> <li>• <i>Exclamative (with pronoun)</i></li> </ul>	Context: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Affirmative declarative sentences</i></li> <li>• <i>Polar questions</i></li> <li>• <i>Exclamative (with no pronoun)</i></li> <li>• <i>Adverb fronting</i></li> <li>• <i>Quantifier fronting</i></li> <li>• <i>Topicalization</i></li> <li>• <i>Focalization</i></li> <li>• <i>Subjunctive</i></li> <li>• <i>Subordination</i></li> <li>• <b>Non-finite forms</b></li> <li>• <b>Imperative</b></li> </ul>

TABLE I: Comparison of clitic placement

For the sake of clarity, I have chosen to take Standard Spanish as the reference point in the comparative analysis provided in Table 1 so that I can then compare the results obtained in the two varieties of Asturian with those in Standard Spanish. I have, therefore, highlighted the contexts where there is a deviation from Standard Spanish in terms of the placement of clitics in italics and marked the contexts that show a coincidence in the three varieties in bold. Except for five contexts - namely those concerning affirmative declarative sentences - the formation of polar questions and exclamatives (with no initial focus), topicalization and nominal subordination with an evidential [+conviction] interpretation, clitic placement behaves in Central Asturian in the same way as Standard Spanish. By contrast, Vaqueiru exhibits a considerable divergence from Standard Spanish regarding the placement of its clitics, only showing coincidence in five instances out of a total of thirteen. These include the only three contexts where Vaqueiru displays proclisis, namely the formation of content questions, the formation of exclamative sentences with a clause-initial exclamative pronoun and the fronting of positive and negative items such as *nun* or *si*, as well as the formation of imperatives and the use of non-finite verbal forms, which always require postverbal clitic placement in all three varieties.

As illustrated by the examples above, Standard Spanish, Central Asturian and Vaqueiru differ crucially in terms of clitic placement. Thus, on the one hand, in Vaqueiru, enclisis and proclisis are in complementary distribution in both matrix and embedded contexts, with proclisis occurring after a displaced interrogative/exclamative pronoun or a positive/negative polarity marker and enclisis elsewhere, so that postverbal clitic placement appears to be the norm. Standard Spanish, on the other hand, is a proclitic language that never allows enclisis with finite verbs. Central Asturian, on the other hand, does not present such a high rate of enclisis as Vaqueiru, but allows for it in more contexts than Standard Spanish. Thus, regarding this important grammatical difference, it seems

plausible to classify these three varieties in a cline with Vaqueiru at one end, Standard Spanish at the other, and Central Asturian at some point in between. The fact that there are more contexts showing proclisis in Central Asturian than in Vaqueiru and that it is possible to find contexts like nominal subordination, which shows alternance between proclisis and enclisis, can be explained by arguing that Central Asturian has been more strongly influenced by Standard Spanish, a language that makes a wider use of proclisis in finite forms. By contrast, Vaqueiru has had very little contact with Standard Spanish until recent times and its clitics show a grammatical behaviour that appears to have been present in earlier stages of Spanish, but has been lost in more modern times.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

Clitic alternations such as those illustrated in (1-2) have been a topic of interesting debate over the past 30 years (Sánchez Vicente & Rubiera Tuya, 1985; Lorenzo, 1994 & 1995; González i Planas, 2007; Viejo Fernández, 2008; Fernández Rubiera, 2009, 2010 & 2013, among others). Until now, literature dealing with the issue of clitic placement in Asturian and other Western Iberian languages has attributed the proclisis / enclisis alternation to two different kinds of cause, phonological or syntactic. These two distinct positions will be reviewed briefly next.

It has been traditionally argued that the Old Romance clitics obeyed a Romance version of the Wackernagel law (Wackernagel 1892) called the Tobler-Mussafia law (Tobler 1875; Mussafia 1888), which claims the existence of a constraint preventing those unstressed words from appearing in a sentence-initial position, due to their status as phonologically enclitic elements. Likewise, this law was often thought to explain why Old Romance clitics followed the verb in matrix, but never in embedded, sentences. Following this law, a number of scholars (Rivero, 1986; Campos, 1989, Barbosa, 1995, 2000) working on Old Spanish

and Western Iberian languages, have argued that these alternations in terms of clitic placement patterns are sensitive to a phonological filter by which the clitic requires a phonological host to its left.

In contrast to the phonological approach, there is another group of proposals (Raposo & Uriagereka, 2005) attributing the proclisis / enclisis alternation to the result of several syntactic operations that take place regardless of the phonological status of the clitics. In broad terms, this approach claims that enclisis occurs in the absence of an adjacent element either in [Spec, FP] or C° to which the clitic(s) fuse.

Although both assumptions appear to hold for all Western Iberian Romance languages, including Asturian, some isolated examples of subordination where both proclisis and enclisis are available, have often served to call the validity of these two approaches into question:

40. a) Digo                    [qu(e)'ayúda-                    *me*]                    CAst  
       say.PRES.1SG:S    that    help.PRES.3SG:S-1SG:IO
- b) Digo                    [que    *me*    ayuda]                    CAst  
       say.PRES.1SG:S    that    1SG:IO    help.PRES.3SG:S  
       'I say that s/he helps me'.

(VIEJO FERNÁNDEZ, 2008)

Firstly, the first example would violate the Tobler-Mussafia law<sup>13</sup>, since the verb is not now the first element in the clause, which should show preference for proclisis over enclisis. Furthermore, on the one hand, the fact that both options are correct, with the complementizer functioning as a phonological host for the enclitic together with which it forms the Intonational Phrase, in (40b), but not in (40a) where the complementizer creates its own Intonational Phrase, appears to be in

<sup>13</sup> It is evident that, in their further evolution, modern Central and Eastern Iberian languages, like Spanish and Catalan respectively, have come into conflict with the Tobler-Mussafia law in affirmative declarative sentences since they place the unstressed clitics in sentence-initial position.

conflict with the predictions proposed by the phonological approach. On the other hand, according to the syntactic approach, enclisis in (40a) would be unacceptable owing to the presence of the complementizer (an intermediate element in  $C^{\circ}$ ).

Later, despite acknowledging the role played by verb finiteness and the pragmatic features of the preverbal element in the alternation between enclisis and proclisis in Romance languages, Shlonsky (2004) regards the obligation that the verb has all its inflectional features checked under the cliticization site as the determining factor for enclisis. Thus, enclisis, which he considers the default situation, arises once the verb has checked all its inflectional features under the cliticization site and subsequently attaches to the clitic, whereas proclisis is seen as a last-resort mechanism that arises whenever enclisis is blocked by language-specific rules.

Finally, in a further development of the syntactic approach, Fernández Rubiera (2010 & 2013), assumes that Western Iberian displays proclisis by default and claims that enclisis arises in both matrix and embedded contexts if there is no  $A'$ -movement (e.g. Focus, negative markers, etc.) or if there is no closer head to  $Fin^{\circ}$  than the verb in  $T^{\flat}$ . He also attributes the variation between preverbal and postverbal clitic positioning in embedded contexts to an alternative semantic interpretation of the predicate and to differences in the complementizer system of the language.

The results obtained from the comparison of the clitic placement alternations in the former section confirm that the presence of enclisis in embedded contexts in Vaqueiru systematically violates the Tobler-Mussafia law and that - leaving the examples showing postverbal clitics in embedded contexts to one side - neither Central Asturian nor Vaqueiru present any evidence to contradict the proposals made by traditional phonological and syntactic approaches that have so far been used to

explain this alternation. This exception could be explained, however, by arguing that complementizers behave, not only like topical elements because they create their own Intonational Phrase, thereby not acting as phonological hosts, but also fail to target the FP projection. This makes them, unlike other elements such as negative markers or focalized constituents, unsuitable elements for the clitics to fuse to.

Nevertheless, despite the validity of these two approaches, my proposed analysis of the workings of the enclisis / proclisis alternation in the Vaqueiru dialect is more in line with Rizzi (1997 & 2004)'s distinction between topical and focal constituents and Fernández Rubiera's edge condition of Finiteness<sup>o</sup>, the fulfillment of which precludes enclisis<sup>14</sup>. My analysis follows the Role and Reference Grammar framework, a moderate functional model whose emphasis on the interplay between semantics, syntax and discourse-pragmatics highlights the influence, not only of phonological and syntactic features, but also of the intrinsic pragmatic properties of the language on the choice of the clitic placement pattern. As will be discussed below, owing to the intrinsic syntactic and pragmatic properties exhibited by Vaqueiru, its system of clitic placement is predominantly biased towards the use of enclisis and is far more uniform than in other varieties of Spanish. This would allow us to account for the enclisis / proclisis alternation in a more straightforward and clearer way.

#### THE ROLE AND REFERENCE GRAMMAR FRAMEWORK

Unlike the formal paradigm, the Role and Reference Grammar (henceforth RRG) framework (Foley & Van Valin, 1984; Van Valin & LaPolla, 1997; Van Valin, 2005) conceives of language as a system of

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<sup>14</sup> I only disagree with his approach in two subtle details, however: the syntactic status granted to clitics, which I analyze as pronominal arguments rather than just agreement affixes, and the choice of the default clitic placement pattern, which I assume is enclisis rather than proclisis.

communicative social action so that it is fully committed to the communicative-and-cognitive perspective (Van Valin & LaPolla, 1997, pág. 11). The semantic and communicative functions therefore play such a remarkable role that they should be taken into account in order to explain the morpho-syntactic structures and the grammatical rules of a language; consequently, grammar is, to a large extent, determined by semantics and pragmatics. This theory corroborates the idea that function conditions form rather than vice versa. Nevertheless, an interesting feature in this approach is that, despite giving priority to function over form, it seeks the interaction between the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic components in its study of the process of communication.

Consequently, an important issue is the characterization of the information structure of sentences. The approach taken by the RRG framework builds upon Lambrecht's theory of information. Lambrecht (1994) distinguishes two main categories, namely presupposition, what a speaker assumes a hearer already knows, and assertion, what the hearer is expected to know as a result of hearing the sentence uttered. This distinction underlies the concepts of 'topic', what the proposition is about, and 'focus', what is said about the topic, used in RRG. These two discourse-pragmatic functions represent the two primary information statuses that referring expressions may have in an utterance. The focus domain can either be broad or narrow. In turn, there are two types of broad focus, namely 'sentence focus' and 'predicate focus', depending on whether the focalized element constitutes the whole sentence or just the verb phrase:

41. A: ¿Qué pasóu? Vaqu  
 what happen.PAST.3SG:S  
 'What happened?'  
 B: RUMPÍU-*SE-ME* LA FOUCINA Vaqu  
 break.PAST.3SG:S-ERG-1SG:IO the sickle  
 'THE SICKLE BROKE'.

In a sentence-focus construction like (41) the entire clause is focused, that is, it is within the focus domain, so that everything is asserted and there is no presupposition. These sentences may start a story or a conversation and respond to the question “What happened?”.

42. A: ¿*Qui-yí* pasóu a la foucina? Vaqu  
 what 3SG:IO happen.PAST.3SG:S to the sickle  
 ('How is the sickle?')
- B: La foucina, RUMPIÚ-*SE-ME* Vaqu  
 the sickle break.PAST.3SG:S-ERG-1SG:IO  
 'The sickle BROKE'.

In example (42) the subject is the topic and both the verb and the object are part of the focus, creating an example of predicate focus. In all languages, predicate focus is the default or unmarked type of focus, since the presupposition in these sentences is that the topical referent is familiar to the hearer and, then, an assertion is made about this topical referent.

By contrast, in narrow focus, only a single constituent is focalized. This type of focus is used to pick out a referent to the exclusion of others or to correct or contrast information. This selected constituent will be emphasized by means of a special intonation and/or by undergoing syntactic displacement leading to changes in the word order of the sentence:

43. A: *Güí* que rumpíu-*se-te* la gadaña Vaqu  
 hear.PAST.1SG:S that break.PAST.3SG:S-ERG-2SG:IO the scythe  
 'I heard that your scythe broke'.
- B<sub>1</sub>: Non, rumpíu-*se-me* LA FOUCINA Vaqu  
 No, break.PAST.3SG:S-ERG-1SG:IO the sickle  
 'No, THE SICKLE broke'.
- B<sub>2</sub>: \* Non, LA FOUCINA rumpíu- *se- me* Vaqu  
 No, the sickle break.PAST.3SG:S-ERG-1SG:IO  
 'No, THE SICKLE broke'.

The example given above represents an instance of narrow focus, since the focus domain is a single constituent and, therefore, all the information provided in the sentence is known to the hearer except for the last element, the focused constituent, which represents a contrast or the choice of a specific referent from a list of possible candidates. Despite the general belief that clefting is a robust feature of languages with both a rigid syntax and a rigid information structure, it is very striking that, although this dialect exhibits a high degree of syntactic and pragmatic rigidity, in which the focalized constituent in a sentence is restricted so that it occupies the clause-final position, it does not sound very natural and idiomatic to use a cleft construction (e.g. *!!!Nun, foi LA FOUCINA la que...* “No, it was the sickle that...”) to express an instance of marked focus where the focused element is moved to the front preceded by a conjugated form of a copula.

#### INFORMATION STRUCTURE

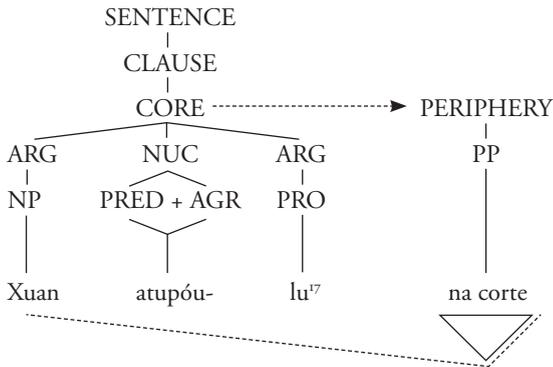
As discussed above, the dialect I have referred to as Vaqueiru exhibits a relatively fixed syntax in terms of word order and a rigid topic / focus structure. Unlike Central Asturian and Standard Spanish, it presents an important restriction with contrastive focus occupying a preverbal position. Vaqueiru indicates a marked focus, firstly, by assigning it to clause-final position and, secondly, by means of a special intonation whereby the focalized element receives prosodic prominence through a special focal accent.

RRG captures the restriction concerning the potential placement of focal elements through the notion of ‘potential focus domain’ (PFD)<sup>15</sup>. This concept refers to the entire syntactic domain in the sentence where the focus may fall in a given language, whereas another concept referred

<sup>15</sup> The PFD of an utterance will be represented in the figures by means of a broken line.

to as the ‘actual focus domain’ (AFD)<sup>16</sup> targets the part of the sentence that is actually in focus in a specific construction. The constraint on pre-verbal focal elements exhibited by Vaqueiru can be explained in terms of restrictions on the PFD in RRG. Unlike Standard Spanish, where the actual focus falls on the first constituent of the core, Vaqueiru places the focal constituents in clause-final position, with the exception of some inherently focal elements, such as interrogative and exclamative pronouns or positive and negative polarity items:

44. Xuan atopóu-*lu* NA CORTE Vaqu  
 Xuan find.PAST.3SG:S-3SG:DO in+the stable  
 ‘Xuan found him IN THE STABLE’.

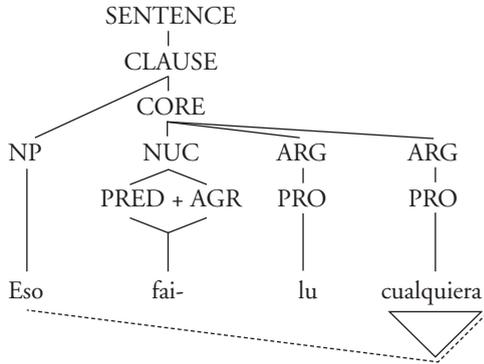


45. Exo fai-*lu* CUALQUIERA Vaqu  
 that make-PRES.3SG:S-3SG:DO anybody

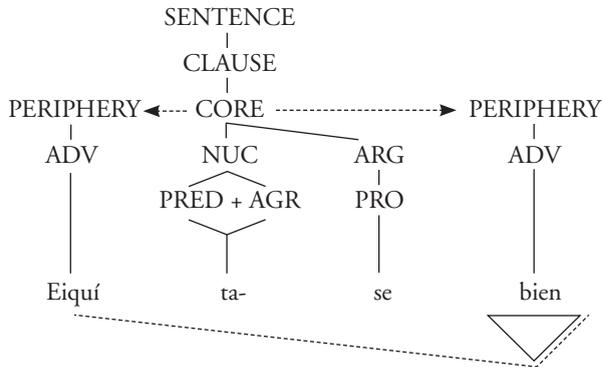
<sup>16</sup> The AFD of an utterance will be marked in the figures through a triangle made up of unbroken lines.

<sup>17</sup> I concur with Kayne (1975 & 1991) and Rizzi (1986) by analyzing clitics as the true arguments of the verb. I consider independent Referential Phrases as adjuncts occurring outside the core structure in a dislocated / topicalized position. Nevertheless, I assume that, in Modern Spanish, clitics share the properties of both pronominal affixes and agreement markers, which appears to imply that they may be gradually becoming agreement markers in many varieties of Spanish.

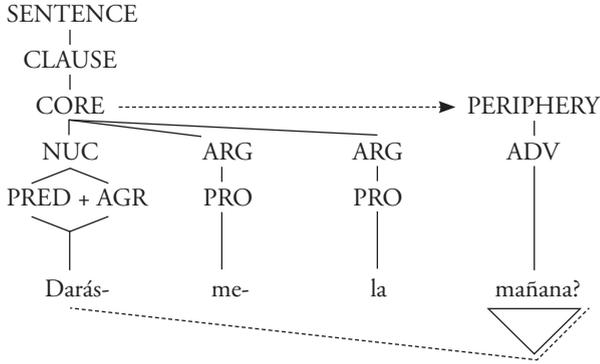
'ANYBODY can do it'.



46. Eiqué *ta-se* BIEN Vaqu  
 here be.PRES.3SG:S-IMPERS well  
 'One feels GOOD here'.

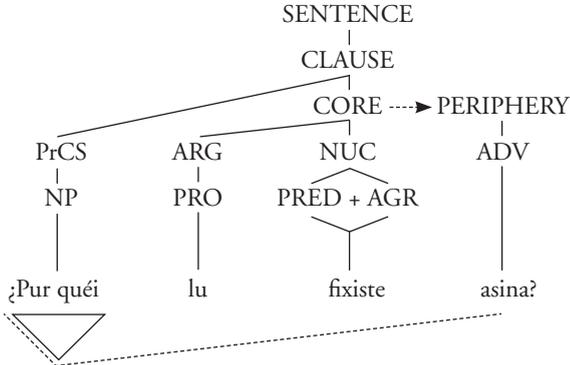


47. ¿Darás- *me-la* MAÑANA? Vaqu  
 give.FUT.2SG:S-1SG:IO-3SG:DO tomorrow  
 'Will you give it to me TOMORROW?'



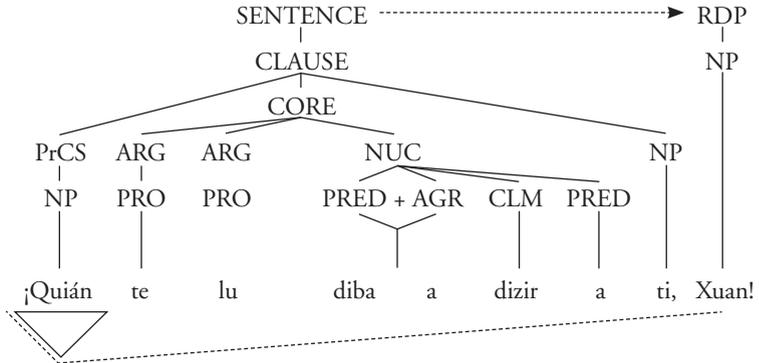
All these examples show enclisis as a consequence of having the focus in a postverbal position. However, in the few contexts in which this language allows the presence of a preverbal focused constituent (e.g. the formation of content questions or negative sentences), the clitic moves towards the focus, giving rise to proclisis:

48. ¿Pur quéi *lu* fixisti asina? Vaqu  
 why 3SG:DO do.PAST.2SG:S this.way  
 ‘Why did you do it this way?’

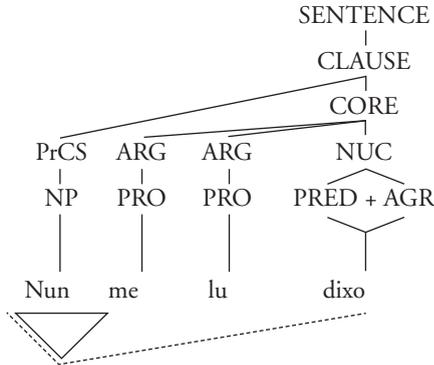


49. ¡Quián *te lu* diba a decir a tí, Xuan! Vaqu  
 who 2SG:IO 3SG:DO go.PAST.3SG:S to say.INF to 2SG:IO Xuan

‘How could you have guessed that?’ (lit. ‘Who was going to say that to you?’  
/ ‘Who would have happened to tell you about it!’)



50. Nun *me* *lu* dixu Vaqu  
 not 1SG:IO 3SG:DO say.PAST.3SG:S  
 ‘He didn’t say it to me’.



Although the default situation shows that the PFD of an utterance in Vaqueiru comprises everything from the predicate to the end of the clause (44 - 47), it can also be expanded in order to include a few inherently focalized elements in constructions such as content questions,

exclamative sentences with a pronoun, and declarative sentences including emphatic positive and negative polarity markers like *sí* and *nun* (48 - 50). All this evidence confirms that it is not merely the inclusion of a preverbal constituent, but rather the positioning of an element with focal properties in a preverbal position that alters the syntactic structure of the sentence<sup>18</sup>, thereby affecting the positioning of clitics, that is to say, triggering the change from enclisis to proclisis.

The different strategies used by different languages to encode focus structures, and in particular the degree to which the focus structure may influence the syntactic structure (especially word order), permit RRG to establish a typology of languages (Van Valin 2005, pág. 77), in which there are languages (e.g. Italian) where the flexibility of the word order adapts to the rigidity of focus structure and other languages where it is the focus structure that adapts to the rigidity of word order (e.g. English). Finally, there are also languages where both word order and focus structure are relatively flexible (e.g. Russian) and languages where both word order and focus structure are rigid, requiring a mutual influence between them to express marked focus types (e.g. French). Vaqueiru appears to be included in the last group, since although it is the syntax that normally adapts to the focus structure in terms of its positional constraint over the focus, the fact that some constructions may exceptionally include fronted emphasized elements forces the focus structure to violate the constraint. By contrast, in many varieties of Spanish, this focused constituent can very frequently undergo syntactic displacement operations leading to changes in the word order (e.g. fronting, clefting, etc.). Finally, the syntactic and pragmatic flexibility shown by Central Asturian appears to demonstrate a higher influence of Stan-

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<sup>18</sup> Compare (44) with (47-49).

ard Modern Spanish, which also accounts for its widespread growing preference for proclisis over enclisis, especially in embedded contexts.

Taking all the evidence provided by this study into account, it also seems reasonable to claim that the different positioning of clitics in the variety of Spanish, which I have called Vaqueiru, is linked to the interplay between its distinctive phonological, syntactic and pragmatic properties in terms of the clitic's need for a preceding element to lean on<sup>19</sup>. These properties would therefore include the attraction that an inherently focused preverbal element (e.g. interrogative and exclamative pronouns and positive and negative polarity markers) appears to exert over the clitic, the central role played by the verb, which functions as a reference point for the clitic placement system, and the special restriction imposed on the narrow focus of the sentence, which can only occur in a postverbal position.

#### CONCLUSION

The comparative analysis between the three varieties of Spanish provided in this paper shows that clitic placement in Vaqueiru agrees to some degree with that of Central Asturian (other Western Iberian languages and Old and Medieval Spanish), but is consistently different from that found in other Romance languages, such as Standard Spanish. It also highlights an important distinction between the flexibility of Standard Spanish, especially, and Central Asturian, and the rigidity of Vaqueiru in terms of their syntactic and pragmatic structure. Just like Italian or French, Vaqueiru does not allow preverbal elements inside the core to be focal, favouring a more clear-cut alternation between enclisis and proclisis, whose presence is almost reduced to a minimum,

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<sup>19</sup> In this respect, *Asturian clitics behave like clitics in Old and Medieval Romance languages* (Meyer-Lübke (1974); Rivero (1986), D'Andrés Díaz (1993 & 1997) among others).

since it only appears in contexts that present a preverbal narrow focus with intrinsic focal properties, such as content questions, exclamative sentences including an exclamative pronoun, and declarative sentences with a fronted positive or negative polarity marker.

Consequently, the interaction of all these features allows us to deduce that the triggering factor for the change from enclisis to proclisis in Asturian is the presence of a focal element in the preverbal position. By receiving special prosodic prominence, through a strong focal accent, and undergoing a syntactic displacement that takes it towards the left, this element becomes the focus of the sentence and, owing to its strong focal properties, it subsequently alters the Illocutionary Force of the sentence as well as its syntactic structure in terms of word order and the positioning of the clitics, which appear to be attracted towards the focalized element. By contrast, if the fronted element has topical rather than focal pragmatic properties, no change regarding the syntactic position of clitics arises.

Although I admit that the corpus is not large enough owing to the lack of elderly native speakers<sup>20</sup>, who tend to show more enclisis in their sentence structures, and the increasing contact with Standard Spanish speakers in recent decades - a fact that has greatly affected the speech of many speakers, especially those in middle age -, this article presents new data from an understudied dialect which, unlike Standard Spanish and

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<sup>20</sup> González López (2013) mentions other parameters in addition to age, such as gender, access to language classes in school, self-reported identity, and self-reported L1 and own language, as factors influencing the enclisis / proclisis alternation. My Vaqueiru native consultants form a homogenous group including elderly illiterate people of both genders who self-report as both Asturian and Spanish. Although they were born and grew up under Franco's dictatorship, which, in the words of the author, "tried to eradicate all forms of regionalisms, including linguistic varieties other than Castilian" (2013, pág. 84), they never received a formal education and so this situation did not affect their form of speech; rather, they learnt their first language - that is Vaqueiru - at home from their forebears through intergenerational transmission.

other varieties of Asturian, makes a wider use of enclisis even in finite embedded contexts.

In short, this paper should be seen as a contribution to the literature on the trigger for enclisis and proclisis alternations in Spanish (also Western Iberian and, by extension, Romance languages) thanks to the empirical evidence provided by this ancient form of speech, a form that has remained practically unaltered until recent times and therefore gives us a glimpse of what the clitic placement pattern was like in older forms of Romance languages<sup>21</sup>. The findings obtained in this paper allow us to claim that the evolutionary change in clitic placement from enclisis to proclisis is neither solely connected to the phrasal character of the clitic, nor purely conditioned by syntactic reasons, such as the positioning of constituents. Rather, the gradual decline of enclisis and the preference for proclisis in all contexts including finite verbal forms in present-day Spanish appears to be better explained by resorting to the interplay between the intrinsic syntactic and pragmatic properties of the language, which have evolved considerably from Old to Modern Spanish.

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<sup>21</sup> See Menéndez Pidal (1950 & 1954) for an analysis of clitics in Old Spanish.

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