

Title: *Je* Behavior in Serbo-Croatian: Syntactic and Phonological Considerations

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There are several issues surrounding the idiosyncratic behavior of the 3rd person singular verbal auxiliary clitic *je* in Serbo-Croatian. I will consider some of the syntactic theories that have been put forth in recent years to account for its position within the clitic cluster, which differs from that of the other auxiliary clitics. However, certain other behaviors point to more phonological processes at work, such as the possibility of deletion of auxiliary *je* in the presence of like-sounding clitics: obligatory when followed by the reflexive particle *se*, and optional when following pronominal clitics *me* and *te*. Also yet unexplained is its effect on adjacent clitics, namely the feminine singular accusative or genitive pronominal clitic *je*, which alternates with *ju* in such contexts. A purely phonological approach such as in Witcombe (2009), however, captures only the surface features without satisfactory explanation of precisely why *je* would behave differently. The optionality of *je* deletion in the modern language suggests that some syntactic elements are in a state of transition, a theory which is supported by documentation of the historical migration of other clitic elements within a cluster (Wahl, 1994). In addition, *je* seems to be gaining the ability to host other clitics, a characteristic shared only with prosodic words. These idiosyncrasies, in addition to the fact that *je* even differs morphologically from the other auxiliary clitics, cumulatively point to the possibility that 3 sg *je* is not only inherently different from the other members of its paradigm, but may be moving toward a more tonic, that is, non-clitic, form.

#### References:

- Wahl, K. 1994. "Clitic Cluster Reordering in Serbo-Croatian." Unpublished paper presented at American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages, San Diego, CA, December 27-30, 1994.
- Witcombe, Melissa. 2009. "Verbal Auxiliary *je* Idiosyncrasies in Serbo-Croatian." Unpublished paper presented at Midwest Slavic Conference, Columbus, OH, April 16-18, 2009.