The combination of pronominal clitics in Romance often triggers the appearance of unexpected (opaque) form, which always coincide with clitics that exist independently in the language. In this article, which analyzes opaque forms in Italian, Spanish, and, especially, Catalan, it is proposed that pronominal clitics constitute hierarchical structures of monovalent morphological features. This hierarchy reflects markedness relations. Most opaque forms are obtained through morphological rules that delink or insert morphological features, thus rendering the target structure identical to the structure of another clitic. Morphological rules take place within the Morphology Component, between S-structure and PF (cf. Halle 1990, 1991). Phonological information, not present in the syntax, is introduced by spell-out rules very late in the Morphology Component and provides the input to PF. Clitic order is determined through mapping to a template. Some other opaque forms arise at that point.

1. Introduction

Pronominal clitics have been the subject of much work in generative linguistics, especially with respect to their syntactic properties and, less often, their phonological properties. This article focuses on one aspect of pronominal clitics that has never received a systematic treatment. The phenomenon I am referring to is the appearance of opaque forms that often arise in clitic combinations. By "opaque forms" I mean outputs of clitic combinations that do not coincide with the output forms of those clitics in isolation. In Section 1.2 it will be shown that, although the existence of this phenomenon has been noted in the literature on clitics, only ad hoc solutions to it have been proposed. In this article, several opaque clitic combinations coming from varieties of Spanish, Italian, and, especially, Catalan will be discussed. It will be argued that the data presented provide a useful insight into the internal feature structure of pronominal clitics, and a proposal regarding this internal structure will be made, together with an analysis of the different types of opaque forms.

This article deals with a fairly limited set of data, which is meant to illustrate the phenomenon treated here. It should be taken into account, however, that there is a lot of dialectal variation among the Romance
languages with respect to the output forms of pronominal clitics, both in isolation and in combinations. None of the cases I have examined so far challenges the account proposed here.

### 1.1. Opaque Forms

One of the most well-known cases of opaque clitic combinations is the spurious *se* of Spanish, which appears instead of the usual third person dative clitic form *le*(s) when it combines with a third person accusative clitic. This is shown in (1c). (1a) and (1b) illustrate the use of the two clitics in isolation.¹ Pronominal clitics always appear in boldface in the examples. In the examples of combinations, I include in parentheses the non-existent transparent output form.

(1) a. El premio, **lo** dieron a Pedro ayer.

*the price 3rd-acc gave(3rd-pl) to Pedro yesterday*

b. A Pedro, **le** dieron el premio ayer.

*to Pedro 3rd-dat gave(3rd-pl) the price yesterday*

c. A Pedro, el premio, **se lo** dieron ayer.

*to Pedro the price, se 3rd-acc gave(3rd-pl) yesterday*  
(*le lo/*lo le*)

‘they gave the price to Pedro yesterday’

As can be seen in (1b), the form of the clitic corresponding to a third person singular indirect object is *le* in isolation. However, in (1c) the surface form corresponding to this clitic is not *le* but *se*. We thus expect the output sequence *le lo* but find *se lo* instead.

A similar phenomenon can be found in Standard Italian with the combination of an impersonal clitic *si* with a third person reflexive clitic *si*. The examples in (2) are taken from Saccon (1988). (2a) and (2b) show that the form of the two clitics is *si* in isolation and also that the two instances

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1 In most of the examples that will appear in this article I use the Clitic Left Dislocation construction in order to provide an explicit antecedent for the clitics. Even though in the Clitic Left Dislocation construction the left dislocated constituent constitutes always new information, for convenience of exposition the English translation does not reflect this aspect.

Example (1a) sounds slightly forced in most dialects of Spanish because it is very common to double the indirect object with a clitic in this language.