

¿Subir o no subir?
A look at clitic climbing in Spanish
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In Spanish, pronominal clitics have two primary syntactic options when they occur in periphrasis containing an infinitive (as illustrated in [1] below) or a present participle. Enclitics are located in what could be considered the ‘home’ position attached to the end of the non-finite verb while proclitics occur in phrase-initial position before the finite verb. When a pronominal clitic is in proclitic position, it is said to have ‘climbed’ to this position.

- [1] *quiero comprarlo* (enclitic- “unclimbed”)
I want to buy it
lo quiero comprar (proclitic- “climbed”)
it I want to buy

On the surface, clitic climbing appears to be optional and to occur in free variation. Several quantitative studies have been attempted to explain this variation (Davies 1995, Gabor 2002, Myhill 1988, Salazar 2003). There is agreement among these studies that animate clitics and multiple clitics are more likely to climb. These studies also indicate that certain finite verbs or preceding material trigger clitic climbing. None of these studies, however, has included statistical analysis to determine the relative significance of these factors, nor has there been a study comparing dialects in detail.

To fill this gap, this study compares clitic climbing in the Spanish dialects of Madrid, Spain and Bogotá, Colombia through an exhaustive study of the *Habla Culta* corpora of these two cities. The data extracted from these corpora were analyzed using variable rule analysis. The tokens were then coded based on linguistic factors that have been shown to affect the variation of clitic climbing in previous research as well as several novel factors. We used GoldVarb to determine which of these factors (dis)avored clitic climbing and the relative affect of each factor on the variation.

Our initial hypothesis was that, with this analysis, we would provide statistical evidence to support the findings of the previous research done on clitic climbing. We expected that in the two dialects, the linguistic factors previously shown to lead to clitic climbing would statistically favor the phenomenon. The results of the analysis showed that the overall rate of clitic climbing differed between dialects. In the Madrid data, 82.4% of clitics were in the proclitic position, versus 68.5% in the Bogotá data. The statistical analysis showed not only that additional features than those discussed in previous studies were shown to favor clitic climbing, but also that different linguistic factors (dis)avored clitic climbing in each dialect. For example, the most significant factor group in the Bogotá data was finite verb tense. This factor group was not even shown to be significant in the Madrid data. The dialects share three significant factor groups, animacy referenced by the clitic, type of non-finite verb (participle vs. infinitive), and polarity. However, the groups are ranked differently in each dialect. These differences run counter to the idea that syntactic differences are not likely to obtain across dialects of a language (Davies 1995). This insight shows that results obtained by looking at “Spanish” as an undifferentiated whole are not reliable in regards to clitic climbing.