

## Clitics or Resumptives in Latakian Syrian Arabic Restrictive Relative Clauses

Dr. Buthaina Shaheen\*

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### Abstract:

There is no consensus as to the nature of the overt element that appears at the site in the complement clause where the head of a restrictive relative clause is interpreted. Some argue that it is a clitic, while others argue that it is a resumptive. This paper tackles the relationship between clitics and resumption and the relevance of this to restrictive relative clause constructions in Latakian Syrian Arabic. Some pieces of evidence are advanced to show that the clitic is not strictly the resumptive, and that it is *pro* which is the resumptive.

**Keywords:** clitics, resumptive, Restrictive Relative Clauses, Latakian Syrian Arabic

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\* Assistant prof., Department of English, Tishreen University, Latakia, Syria.

## الضمير المتصل أم الضمير العائد في جملة الصلة في لهجة اللاذقية

د. بثينة شاهين\*

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### الملخص:

لا يوجد اجماع حول طبيعة العنصر الذي يظهر في موقع الجملة المكمل حيث يتم تفسير الاسم الموصوف بالموصول. يقدم البعض جدلاً بأن العنصر هو ضمير متصل بينما يقدم البعض الآخر جدلاً بأنه ضمير عائد. تعالج هذه المقالة العلاقة بين الضمير المتصل والضمير العائد، وعلاقة هذا بجملة الصلة في لهجة اللاذقية. سيتم تقديم بعض الأدلة التي تظهر أن الضمير المتصل ليس ضميراً عائداً وأن هناك ضميراً مستتراً بمثابة الضمير العائد.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الضمير المستتر، الضمير العائد، جملة الصلة، لهجة اللاذقية

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\*أستاذ مساعد، قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، جامعة تشرين، اللاذقية.

## 1. Introduction

The overt element that appears at the site in the complement clause where the head of a restrictive relative clause (henceforth, RRC) is interpreted (as in 1) is referred to as a clitic.

1. l-ktāb      [yalli sme`-t    `ann-o]  
               the-book [that    heard-I about-it]  
               The book that I heard about

However, many studies refer to such forms as resumptive pronouns. There is no consensus as to the nature of the overt element. The distinction between clitics and resumptives is not dealt with sufficiently in the literature; sometimes the two terms are mistakenly used interchangeably.

This paper homes in on revealing the exact nature of this element. The importance of investigating this phenomenon stems from the fact that it provides a clear definition of the two terms, and it makes clear that there is a difference between them.

The present study also provides an analysis for the structure of resumptives and a different one for the structure of clitics. It first discusses various proposals for the derivation of clitics and then considers how clitics are related to resumption.

The structure of RRCs serves as a good context for studying this phenomenon simply because inside RRCs there is a gap which is normally filled with a resumptive (together with a clitic in certain contexts).

It should be noted here that the choice of LSA (a colloquial dialect of Arabic spoken in Latakia<sup>1</sup>) was not random as it involves both clitics and resumptives. This dialect serves as a good example of the phenomenon.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 introduces clitics and discusses the different views for the derivation of clitics. Section 3 introduces resumptives. The conclusion is in section 4.

## 2. Clitics

A number of different proposals have been made in previous studies for the derivation of clitics (see Gerlach and Grijzenhout, 2000 and Spencer, 1991 for a review of these approaches), one of which is the movement approach in which clitics are elements that start out in an argument position and are moved and combined with an associated head. For example, Kayne (1975), in his discussion of French, suggests that a clitic occupies the position after the verb and then it is incorporated with the verb. He supported his argument by assuming that when the clitic occupies the NP position, it fulfils the subcategorization

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<sup>1</sup> The researcher is a native speaker of this variety.

requirement of the verb. However, languages in which there is clitic doubling, where ‘the pronominal clitic appears alongside the co-indexed NP’ (Borer, 1986: 4) cast doubt on this proposal. Example (2) from Lebanese Arabic shows that the clitic *-o* is generated to the left of the preposition *ma`* [with]; it cannot have originated in an argument position as the argument position is already occupied by the argument *Karim*.

2.  $\dot{h}ki-t \quad ma\dot{s}-o_i \quad la \text{ Karim}_i$   
 talked-I with-him to Karim  
 I talked to Karim (Borer, 1986: 4)

Another approach to clitics is the base-generation approach in which clitics originate in the position where they surface combined with a head like an affix. Aoun (1999), in his discussion of clitic-doubled arguments in Lebanese Arabic, proposes that clitics are not generated by movement, rather they are directly attached to the head they are selected by – be it a verb, a noun or a preposition. The clitic occupies a non-argument position and is co-indexed with a null *pro* which occupies the argument position. Aoun’s argument for a base-generation approach is supported with three arguments:

- i) Cliticization in Arabic is local; the clitic is immediately attached to its head. This is unlike some languages which have clitic-climbing where ‘clitic pronouns which are objects to a verb in an infinitival subordinate clause ‘climb’ out of their own clause and appear in the matrix clause’ (Spencer, 1991: 357). An example of clitic climbing is the following from French:

3. Marie le fait lire `a Paul. ‘Marie is making Paul read it.’ [*le* argument of *lire*] (Miller and Sag, 1997: 36)

- ii) The clitic may co-occur with an overt non-doubled argument:

4.  $\int\dot{a}ft \quad [_{QP} [_{Spec} I-wleed] \quad [_{Q'} [k\dot{a}ll-un]]$   
 saw.1S                  the-boys          all-them  
 I saw all the boys

*I-wleed* [the boys] which is in argument position enters a Spec-Head relation with the quantifier *k\dot{a}ll-un* [all]. That explains why the clitic *-un* co-occurs with *I-wleed* [the boys]. If the clitic *-un* was in an argument position, that would result in a violation of the Theta Criterion as the structure would result in having two arguments sharing the same thematic role.

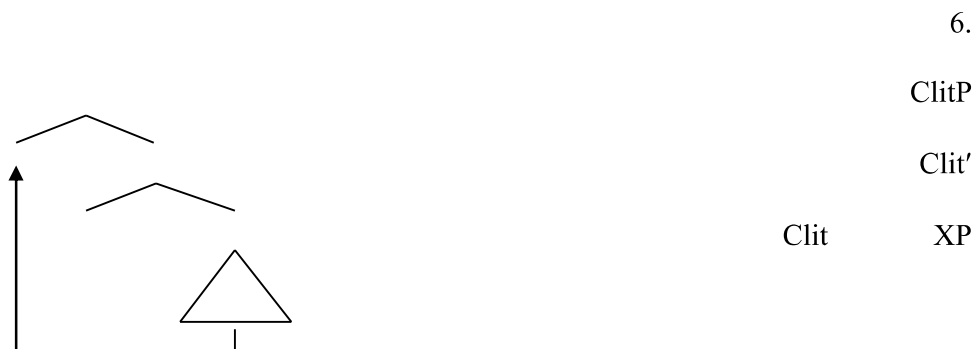
iii) There can be two clitics referring to one argument.

5. [əft-un            [QP[kəll-un]]  
     saw.1S-them    all-them  
     I saw them all of them

In (5), there is a single argument and there are two clitics *-un*. These two clitics cannot both come from the same argument position. This suggests that the clitic element is not moved but rather it is base-generated in its superficial position.

There is yet another approach where clitic constructions involve base-generation of the clitic which is the head of its projection, and movement of an XP element to Spec clitic. Sportiche (1998) proposed such an approach for French and Romance languages. This approach has the purpose of ‘reconciling the two dominant approaches on this topic’, discussed above. He argues that proponents of movement analyses ‘can explain the condition of locality holding between the clitic and XP\*’ (246), whereas those who advocate base-generation can account for ‘the lack of complementarity between clitic and full XP\* (clitic doubling construction)’ (246). This is the reason why he wanted to combine these properties (base generation and movement) in his analysis.

For Sportiche, clitics are the realization of certain functional heads above VP which require movement of some element to their Spec position. The derivations of clitics are of the following form where XP is either another Clitic Phrase or VP:



The problem with this analysis is the following:

- It makes the structure more complex; each clitic is a head of a projection. An analysis in which they are considered affixes seems simpler. There are simpler proposals<sup>1</sup>, such as those in Aoun (1999) and Borer (1986) mentioned above.

<sup>1</sup> Miller and Sag's (1997) assumes that clitics are pronominal affixes in French. Their proposal 'challenges grammatical architectures that seek to explain the behaviour of clitics in terms of functional projections, head movement...' (573).

- It is tied closely to Romance languages where clitics are associated with verbs. His idea is that above VP there are a number of clitic projections. In Arabic, clitics are not particularly associated with verbs; they occur with verbs, nouns and prepositions.
- He is assuming an early version of minimalism in which the crucial relation is one between a head and Spec. Minimalism has assumed that the crucial relation is c-command between a head and something it c-commands (see Radford, 2009: Chapter 7).
- He is focusing on languages which have clitic climbing<sup>1</sup>. This is not true for Arabic where the clitic is local.

Therefore, clitics are going to be considered affixes in the subsequent discussion.

The above discussion casts light on clitics, but does not answer the question whether these elements function as resumptives. If the clitic starts out in an argument position, it is the resumptive. If it starts out attached to the head with a *pro* in the argument position, then the *pro* is the real resumptive unless there is movement, in which case there is a copy in the argument position and strictly speaking there is no resumptive element.

### 3. Resumption

McCloskey (2006: 95) defines a resumptive pronoun<sup>2</sup> as ‘a pronominal element which is obligatorily bound and which appears in a position in which, under other circumstances, a gap would appear. The binder of the pronoun is the same, apparently, as the element which binds the gap in the corresponding filler-gap construction’. In his discussion of Irish (1990), he argues that the RP is bound by a null base-generated operator in Spec CP, so he proposes the following structure for resumptives in RRCs:

7. [DP NP<sub>i</sub> [CP OP<sub>i</sub> C [IP ... pro<sub>i</sub>]]]

However, in his (2006) study, he presents a different approach, namely, that there is movement with resumptive pronouns in some languages, e.g. Swedish, Vata and Gbadi. For McCloskey ‘[O]ne cannot maintain that the presence of a gap indicates that movement has applied and that the presence of a pronoun indicates that movement has not applied.’ (109). Under this analysis, the pronoun is the result of ‘spelling-out’ a trace. By this he means that the moved element leaves behind a copy which is later partially deleted and the residue modified. To provide evidence for this position, he draws inter alia on the work of

<sup>1</sup> There are analyses of clitic climbing in romance which does not involve movement ( see Miller and Sag (1997))

<sup>2</sup> Some analyses of resumption were dealt with from the promotion theory perspective, e.g. Boeckx’s (2003) claims a movement approach. This approach entails that an NP is moved in examples with a resumptive pronoun leaving the latter ‘stranded’ (hence adopting Kayne’s, (1994)). However, a DP is moved in examples with a gap. De Vries (2002) is another example, however, these proposals will not be discussed here.

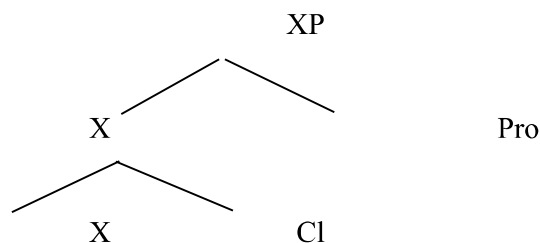
Aoun et al (2001). Aoun et al (2001: 392) distinguish between true and apparent resumptives:

- 8 a. Apparent resumption: lexical  $Dp_i$  ... [ $_{DP}$  lexical  $Dp_i$  [ $_D$  weak pronoun]]
- b. True resumption: lexical  $Dp_i$  ... [ $_D$  weak pronoun] $_i$

When the resumptive is separated from its antecedent by an island, there is apparent resumption: a resumptive occupies the head D position and Spec DP undergoes movement, whereas when there is no island separating them there is true resumption and no movement.

In this work, I follow Aoun's (1999) line of argument in assuming that i) clitics are not generated by movement, ii) the clitic is not the resumptive, it is the little *pro* that is functioning as a resumptive; iii) little *pro* is in the argument position, and it is licensed by the clitic.

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#### 4. Conclusion

The term *clitic* will be referred to as the resumptive clitic. However, one should bear in mind that the clitic is not strictly the resumptive, and that it is *pro* which is the resumptive.

No study has been conducted on this particular phenomenon in this variety of Arabic. The discussion outlined above could serve as the basis for more research on the syntax of this dialect. It can also be used as a ground for revisiting some of the analyses provided for Syrian dialects and some Arabic dialects, specifically those where there is an overlap in the use of the two terms.

Researchers interested in the syntax of Arabic can make use of this study for comparative purposes. Other researchers interested in the field of second language acquisition can explore how LSA learners may acquire other languages with different structures such as English; a language which does not have clitics nor resumptives.

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