

The Status of Empty Heads in Free Relatives in LSA

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□ ABSTRACT □

This paper examines the structure of free relative clauses in Lattakian Syrian Arabic, in particular the status of the head. It will be shown that the structure of headless relatives is similar to that of headed relatives in this language in that the head is present syntactically in both (but phonologically empty in the former and overt in the latter). The empty head is identified with *pro* that carries the same features as the complementizer and the resumptive inside the FRC.

Keywords: free relative clauses, head, *pro*, movement

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حالة الاسم الموصوف المستتر في جملة الصلة في اللهجة اللاذقية

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□ ملخص □

تعالج هذه المقالة بنية جملة الصلة التي تحوي اسما موصوفا مستترا في اللهجة اللاذقية، ستعالج حالة الاسم الموصوف بالتحديد. سيظهر التحليل أن بنية جملة الصلة التي تحوي اسما موصوفا مستترا تشبه بنية جملة الصلة التي تحوي اسما موصوفا ظاهرا في هذه اللهجة من حيث أن الاسم الموصوف موجد نحويا في كليهما ولكنه ظاهر في الأول و مستتر في الأخير. الاسم الموصوف المستتر يحمل نفس خصائص المكمل و الضمير العائد في جملة الصلة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: جملة صلة التي تحوي اسما موصوفا مستتر، الاسم الموصوف، الضمير المستتر، الحركة

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Introduction

In this article, I examine the structure of headless relatives (also called free relative clauses FRCs) in Lattakian Syrian Arabic (LSA). In particular, focus will be on the status of the head position. Different from headless relatives in many languages, headless relatives in LSA display no overt *wh*-word. It will be shown that the structure of headless relatives is similar to that of headed relatives in this language in that the head is present syntactically in both (but phonologically empty in the former and overt in the latter). The empty head is identified with *pro* that carries the same features as the complementizer and the resumptive inside the FRC. This account of free relatives avoids the problems posed by some other accounts.

This article is organized as follows. The importance of this study, and the method used are presented in section 2 and 3 respectively. Section 4 summarizes the different proposals that tackled the structure of FRCs. Section 5 introduces data from LSA which is analyzed later in section 6. Section 7 provides evidence for the proposed analysis. Criticism of another candidate analysis follows in section in 8. The concluding remarks are in section 9.

1. Importance of the study

FRCs as in (1) have received considerable attention in the literature. Unlike other types of RCs, this type of RCs displays no overt antecedent:

1. I believe *what you say*.

When analyzing the structure of FRCs, linguists addressed different issues related to the following questions:

- i) Is there a head at all?
- ii) If there is a head, what is the nature of the head?
- iii) Is the head base-generated or derived from some other position inside the RC?

This paper investigates the structure of FRCs never investigated before in this dialect. It homes in on answering the questions stated above from a minimalist perspective.

2. Method of research

Since there is no descriptive and analytic evidence for the structure of this type of RCs, this paper is an attempt to describe and analyze the structure of FRCs.

3. Present analyses of free relatives

A number of proposals have been advanced to analyze the structure of FRCs; they basically revolve around two main accounts: the first is the Head Account; the second is the Complementizer Account.

Advocates of these proposals had to account for a set of phenomena:

- i. The matching effects (categorical selection and case marking): These have played a principal role in accounting for the facts on FRCs. The matching effects have been taken to be a salient property of FRCs. The *wh*-word/phrase must satisfy the requirements of both the FRC and the matrix clause. That is, the category of the head should be appropriate for both the matrix and embedded clauses, and there should not be mismatch in the case of the crucial element in both the matrix and embedded clauses.

This is particularly true in the analyses which consider the *wh*-word a shared constituent to both the matrix and embedded clauses.

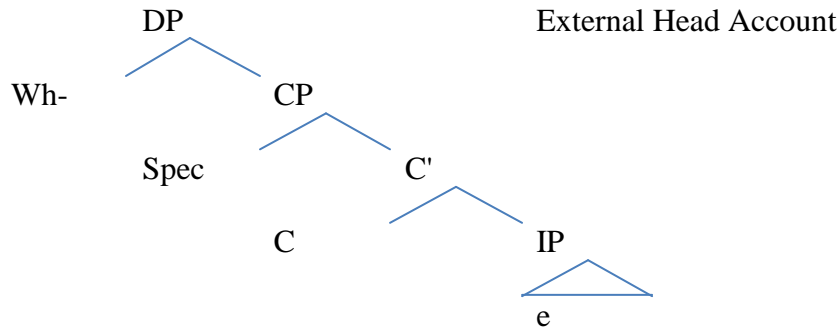
- ii. Reconstruction effects: The *wh*-word/phrase reconstructs into the site inside the RC, this would account for variable binding. Reconstruction effects are taken to be a diagnostic for movement.

Below is a summary of the major assumptions of each of the accounts (for a detailed review of these positions, see (Van Riemsdijk, 2006)).

3.1. The Head Account

The wh-word occupies the head position; the position is normally filled with the head in headed relatives. The wh-word can either be based-generated or moved to this position. The first is the view held by (Bresnan and Grimshaw, 1978) and more recently (Citko, 2002) among others. FRCs has the structure in (2).

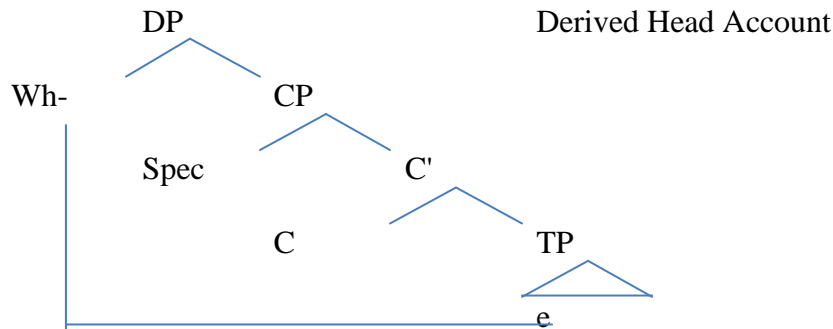
2.



Proponents of this approach had to account for the dependency between the wh-word and the gap. Bresnan and Grimshaw, for instance, described the dependency in terms of the Controlled Pro Deletion. The gap is filled with a resumptive that gets deleted later under identity with the head.

The second view was held by (Hirschbuler, 1976) among others. The wh-word is derived from a position within the RC to the head position as the tree diagram (3) shows.

3.



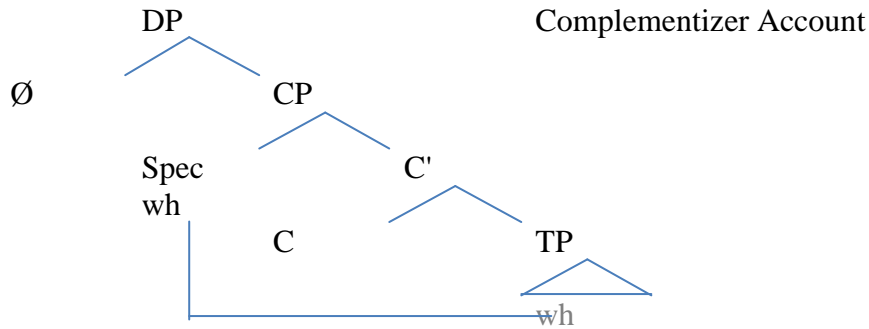
(Iatridou, Anagnostopoulou, and Izvorski, 2002) provided evidence for the matching effects in such a construction by claiming that after moving outside FRC, the wh-word projects, thus, it meets the category and case requirements of both the matrix and embedded verbs.

The proposed analyses for both types of the Head Account, however, were criticized for being untraditional, unprecedented as (Gračanin-Yuksek, 2008) put it.

3.2. The Complementizer Account

The opposite view, held by (Groos and van Riemsdijk, 1981) and later adopted by others such as (Gračanin-Yuksek, 2008) argues that the relative pronoun occupies the same position reserved for it in headed RCs; within CP as (4) shows:

4.



This proposal was criticized for being unprincipled. This is in addition to the fact that the nature of the head¹ is not made explicit. In fact, some linguists such as (Van Riemsdijk, 2006) assume that many FRs are ambiguous. He contended that semantics should play a substantial role in determining the nature of the head.

4. Free relatives in LSA

In what follows, I give a theory-neutral presentation of the data of FRCs in LSA.

The relativized positions can be one of the following:

5. Subject position:

yalli 'akal l-baskōti hōn
that ate the-biscuit here

Whoever ate the biscuit is here.

6. Object position:

qābalt yalli ba`arf-o
met-I that know-him

I met whoever I know

7. Object of preposition:

Wseqi-t b-yalli kazzab `layyi
trusted-I in-that lied on me

I trusted whoever lied to me

There do not seem to be adverbial FRCs, hence the ungrammaticality of the following sentences:

8. *yalli ijī-t, huwi raḥ
that came-I, he went

I came, he went

9. *yalli ḥalli-ti-ya fī-a
that solved-you-it in-it

that you solved it

¹ The argument about whether the head is an NP or a DP is ignored in this paper. See (Chomsky, 1965), (Abney, 1987), and (Raii, 2001) among others for a discussion about the status of nominal expressions.

In order to turn the sentences above grammatical, an adverbial should appear in the head position:

10. waqet yalli ijī-t, huwi raḥ
time that came-I, he went
The time when I came, he left

11. t-tariqa yalli ḥalli-ti-ya fi-a
the-way that solved-you-it in-it
The way that you solved it

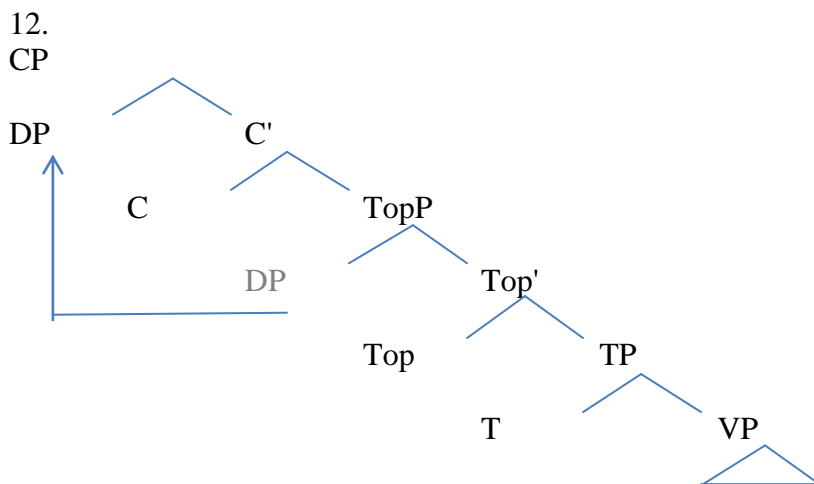
The above data reveal the following facts:

- i. FRCs in LSA do not have a head nor a relative pronoun. *Yalli*, which is a complementizer (see Shaheen, 2013) for a discussion on why *yalli* is a complementizer) is the only form which seems to introduce all types of FRCs.
- ii. There is a resumptive pronoun inside the FRC.
- iii. FRCs usually behave as arguments.

In light of the data above, an analysis of FRCs is posited.

5. Analysis

The structure of FRCs is presumed to be the same as the structure of headed RCs. In her analysis of headed RCs in LSA, (Shaheen, 2013) assumes that headed RCs are based on a Clitic Dislocated CLLD structure, and that there is movement of a relative operator from Spec TopP to Spec CP. Complementizer *yalli* is generated in the head C position, and a null operator (rather than a *pro*) checks the definiteness and ϕ features of *yalli*. The operator can be related not only to an argument position but also to an adjunct position. There will be a *pro* somewhere coindexed with the empty operator in Spec TopP. *Pro* is licensed by a base-generated clitic. Headed RCs in LSA has the structure in (12).



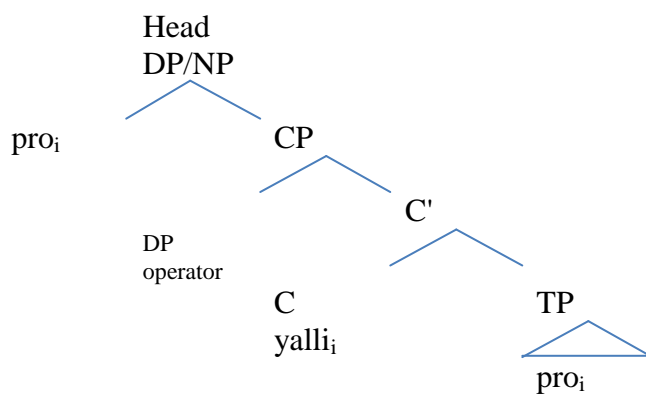
The structure of CP in FRCs is the same as that in headed RCs. The only difference between the two is that in the later the head is overt, while covert in the former. The covert head is occupied with a *pro*.

In languages with an overt relative pronoun such as English, there is a relation between the head and the relative pronoun. This relation is indicated by the co-indexation of the head

with the relative pronoun, and manifest by the fact that the nature of the head largely determines the choice of the relative pronoun.

The same relation holds when the head is not overt. The *pro* is coindexed with the operator which is in turn coindexed with *pro* inside the RC. Thus, FRCs in LSA have the following representation:

13.



The *pro* analysis is not a novel one. (Suñer, 1984) argues that in FRCs there is a missing head in FRCs and it is filled with *pro*. Suñer claims that i) the matching effects on the relative pronoun is mediated/licensed by *pro*; ii) *pro* can occur in governed positions. This proposal was criticized. (Van Riemsdijk, 2006) contends that in languages where there is a *wh*-word, matching is tightly linked to the morphological and phonological form of the *wh*-word, thus, mediation by agreement between *pro* and the *wh*-word is problematic. However, this does not hold for a language such as LSA which does not have any overt *wh*-word.

The *pro* analysis for Arabic FRCs was criticized. For example, in their analysis of FRCs in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), (Alqurashi and Borsley, 2012: 18) had a number of objections. They argue that:

First, it is not possible to have a *pro* in object position (unless the verb bears a clitic), but it is possible to have a *yalli* free relative in this position. This suggests that *pro* can be licensed by a modifying relative clause in addition to the other ways that it can be licensed. That is, it would be difficult to prevent this empty element appearing without a relative clause in this position.

Second, we cannot assume that this empty nominal selects for a clause because it is usually the relative clause that selects the nominal constituent they modify.

Third, MSA also has free relatives with *maa* ‘a relativizer for non-humans’ and *man* ‘a relativizer for humans’. It does not have ordinary relatives with *maa* and *man* which cannot

introduce clauses which modify nominal heads. The *pro* analysis would be possible only in the case of *?alladi* ‘who’, which would appear in ordinary RCs modifying a nominal constituent, but not in the case of *man* and *maa* free relatives. If this is right, it is not so easy to say that these free relatives are just ordinary relatives modifying an empty head because they would only be able to modify an empty head and it is not obvious how that could be ensured.

There are valid reasons to refute Alqurashi and Borsley’s objections:

First, there are cases where there is object *pro* with no clitic in MSA (14) and in LSA (15):

14. Yaqul-una l-kathiba wa hom ya`lamun (l-kathiba)

Say-they the-lies and they know (the-lies)

They tell lies although they know them

15. Min kitir ma shrib-t (mai), rah intaq

Much drank-I (water), will explode

Because I drank plenty of (water), I am about to explode.

Second, as will be mentioned in section 4, *yalli* is the only form that introduces FRCs in LSA. This is unlike MSA, where there are forms other than *maa* ‘a relativizer for non-humans’ and *man* ‘a relativizer for humans’.

Third, it seems that *maa* and *man* FRCs in MSA are similar to English FRCs introduced with (whatever, whoever, ..) which do not seem to modify a null nominal head. This is unlike FRCs in LSA where the null *pro* can be easily recovered as will be shown in section 5.

Fourth, the *pro* and the overt NP seem to be in free distribution, hence no need for a mechanism that would ensure the that *pro* is null.

6. Evidence for the *pro* analysis

Evidence for this analysis comes from the following facts:

i. A preposition cannot be used directly before *yalli*. It is a property of prepositions that they attach to noun phrases (but not to verbs, adjectives, nor prepositions)

16. l-mara yalli hkai-t ma`-a

the-woman that talked-I to-her

The woman to whom I talked

17. *l-mara ma`-yalli hkai-t

the-woman to-that talked-I

The woman to whom I talked

ii. However, even when the preposition is attached to *yalli*, they do not form a constituent; rather they combine in the phonology. Prepositions are syntactically independent of their hosting words.

18. Itaq-ait b-yalli bheb-o kfir

met-I in-that I-know-him alot
I met who I like alot.

19. `tai-t la-yalli sa`ad-ni maşare
gave-I to-that helped-me money
I gave who helped me money.

This is similar to *she's* in *She's nice* or *she'll* in *she'll come soon*, which are single phonological units but not syntactic constituents. It is also like *to's* in *The woman she talked to's stupid*, where the auxiliary cliticizes to a preceding preposition.

iii. The prepositions here are selected by the matrix verb and not by some element in the RRC.

iv. The head can be recovered; it can be turned overt. The head can be placed between the preposition which is selected by the matrix verb and *yalli*:

20. ltaq-ait b-r-rjjaal yalli b`heb-o ktīr
met-I in-the-man that I-know-him a lot
I met the man who I like a lot.

21. `te la-rrijjal yalli sa`ad-ni maşare
give to-the man that helped-me money
I gave the man who helped me money.

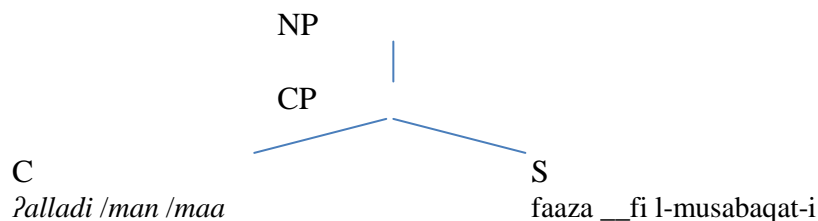
This is unlike English, for instance, where a head cannot be inserted in the head position; this would render the sentence ungrammatical:

22. *He ate the food what you bought him

7. Another approach

(Alqurashi and Borsley, 2012) proposed a different analysis for FRCs in Arabic. FRCs in Arabic are NPs which have only one daughter which is a clause as in 23.

23.



This analysis is unusual as it treats FRCs in Arabic as distinctive; NPs are CPs. Also unlike other types of phrases where the head projects; NP FRCs have no head N. This is rather uncommon.

8. Conclusion

The *pro* analysis proposed here has a number of advantages: i) it treats headless relatives in a similar way to headed relatives; a parsimonious account which offers a unified analysis for different types of RRCs is preferable to one which offers varied analyses; ii) this analysis avoids the problems related to case and selection. Assuming that the head is based-generated spares the analysis the problem of accounting for case assignment. It also avoids the problem of having the head doubly selected; iii) the phenomenon of reconstruction does not constitute a problem for the *pro* analysis; there are some arguments to the effect that reconstruction effects provide no clear evidence for or against movement (see Shaheen, 2013)).

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