

Multiple, derivationally-derived resumptive clitics in Atchan A- and A'-movement

Accounts of cliticization-related phenomena are highly diverse. For classic clitic-doubling phenomena, Big DP analyses (Torrego 1995; Uriagereka 1995, 2005; Belletti 1999; Cecchetto 2000; Nevins 2011; a.m.o.) exist alongside post-syntactic m-merger accounts (Harizanov 2014, Kramer 2014) and long head movement accounts (Roberts 2010). In this abstract, I investigate how these theories of cliticization fare in capturing resumptive cliticization, i.e., when a moving element is resumed by a lower clitic. This question is especially timely in light of Hewett's (2023) conjecture that all resumptive cliticization **cross-linguistically** results from a Big DP structure. On such an analysis, the resumptive clitic is generated inside a Big DP structure alongside the moving element; the moving element then subextracts, stranding the clitic.

In this abstract, I show that **not all** resumptive cliticization has a Big DP analysis, drawing on evidence from multi-step movement chains in Atchan (Kwa, Côte d'Ivoire, SVO; the reported data comes from primary elicitation with 3 Atchan speakers). Crucially, when A-movement (raising) precedes A'-movement (focus fronting), the single movement chain can give rise to **multiple** resumptive clitics, one per clause/intermediate copy. Since on a Big DP analysis, clitics come into being as syntactically distinguished items, it is only possible to derive one (resumptive) clitic per movement chain. This limitation renders the Big DP analysis unsuitable to capture this data, challenging its cross-linguistic coverage (cf. Paparounas & Salzmann 2023 on limits of Big DP analyses in clitic doubling phenomena). Instead, I suggest that the resumptive clitics observed in these data are created derivationally.

Relevant A- and A'-processes in Atchan. We focus on raising (A) and focus fronting (A').

Raising is exemplified with the raising-to-subject verb *nẽ* 'be likely':

- (1) *mɔja_i é-nẽ* [(**sálé*) *t_i a* *ɓá*]
M. PROG-be.likely COMP ASP come
'Moya is likely to come.'

The subject here raises from the lower clause into the higher one. Evidence that this is indeed raising comes from ① the small size of the complement (a complementizer is ungrammatical, (1)), ② the inability to license subjects in-situ (2a), and ③ the lack of animacy restrictions (2b):

- (2) a. **é-nẽ* [*mɔja* (a) *ɓá*] b. *mãngó_i é-nẽ* [*t_i a* *lɔ*]
PROG-be.likely M. ASP come mango PROG-be.likely ASP spoil
Intended: 'Moya wants to come.' 'The mango is likely to spoil.'

Focus fronting involves dislocation to before *nõ* FOC. This is an A'-movement process, which allows for long-distance extraction (3a) and exhibits island-sensitivity (3b).

- (3) a. *mɔja_i nõ mẽ mú* [*sálé t_i a* *ɓá*]
M. FOC 1SG think COMP ASP come
'It's Moya who I think is coming.'
b. **mɔja_i nõ mẽ m^hidja* [*lɔ ka k^hé t_i a* *ɓa*]
M. FOC 1SG laugh DEF time REL ASP come.PFV
Intended: 'It's Moya who I laughed when she came.'

Note that resumption in the cases discussed below does not repair island violations (Jarvis 2025).

Pronominal resumption. Both A- and A'-movement chains in Atchan exhibit obligatory resumption in subject position of **pronouns** with **resumptive clitics**. As seen in (1) and (3a), lexical DPs that undergo A- and A'-movement are not resumed (note that [a] here is a realization of Asp, not a true resumptive pronoun). In contrast, when pronouns raise (4a) or focus-front (4b) from subject position, they are resumed:

- (4) a. *ǎ_i=* *nẽ* [{ *ǎ_i=* / **t_i a* } *ɓá*]
3SG_{CL}.PROG be.likely 3SG_{CL} ASP come
'She is likely to come.'

- b. mĕ́i nĩ mĩ mú [sále { $\boxed{\tilde{a}_i=}$ / * t_i a } ǵá]
 3SG FOC 1SG think COMP 3SG_{CL} ASP come
 ‘It’s her who I think is coming.’

Note that $\tilde{a}=$ occurs both under resumption (boxed form in (4a)) and as an ordinary in-situ pronominal subject (initial form in (4a)). These forms are phonological and syntactic clitics (see Russell 2024, Jarvis 2025 for discussion). That $\tilde{a}=$ is a clitic (rather than agreement) is suggested by ① the fact that it cannot co-occur with non-topicalized lexical DP subjects (i.e., complementariness; cf. Bresnan & Mchombo 1987), and relatedly ② its pronoun-only specificity (cf. Nevins 2011 on the absence of pronoun-only agreement).

We observe the crucial resumptive cliticization in the boxed form in (4a). At this point, we can also form a generalization about the distribution of Atchan subject clitics like $\tilde{a}=$. I follow e.g. Baltin 1995 and assume that the raising subject passes through the lower subject position (which I will assume is Spec,AspP, since Atchan is tenseless). More broadly, then, observe that pronouns passing through or landing in Spec,AspP are always realized in that position as clitics.

With this background, we ask what treatments of (resumptive) cliticization can capture this data. Here, combining A- and A’-movement in a longer movement chain is especially revealing.

Combining A- and A’-movement. Our key data comes from configurations in which raising is followed by focus fronting. Crucially, our generalization that pronominal movement through Spec,AspP results in resumption is maintained. Raising-and-focus of pronouns results in **two** resumptive clitics (5a), while lexical DPs continues to give rise to no resumptive clitics (5b):

- (5) a. mĕ́i nĩ { $\boxed{\tilde{a}_i=}$ / * t_i é- } nĩ [{ $\boxed{\tilde{a}_i=}$ / * t_i a } ǵá]
 3SG FOC 3SG_{CL}.PROG PROG be.likely 3SG_{CL} ASP come
 ‘It’s her who is likely to come.’
 b. mɔja_i nĩ { t_i é- / * $\tilde{a}_i=$ } nĩ [{ t_i a / * $\tilde{a}_i=$ } ǵá]
 M. FOC PROG 3SG_{CL} be.likely ASP 3SG_{CL} come
 ‘It’s Moya who is likely to come.’

The fact that we observe multiple resumptive clitics in (5a) makes this data incompatible with a Big DP approach to (resumptive) clitics. On a Big DP approach, the (one) clitic is generated alongside the extracting element. Though generated together, the extracting element and clitic can go on to lead separate lives once the extracting element sub-extracts, surfacing in separate positions in the sentence. Crucially, however, since this approach only posits **one** syntactically-distinguished clitic element in the Big DP, we can only derive **one** clitic (resumptive or otherwise) in the structure. Such an account is thus patently unsuited to capture the occurrence of multiple resumptive clitics in a single movement chain, as observed in (5a). I thus reject the conjecture that all resumptive cliticization is derived from a Big DP structure.

Consequences for different (resumptive) cliticization accounts. Instead, this data speaks in favor of a view on which resumptive clitics can be derived derivationally: we must be able to derive one clitic per movement step passing through a Spec,AspP position. The most promising approach to capture this data is thus an account along the lines of Harizanov (2014); Kramer (2014) on which clitics are generated post-syntactically from movement copies occupying a particular structural position—for the Atchan data, we might say that any copy occupying Spec,AspP is converted into a (possibly resumptive) clitic. (See also van Urk (2018) on Dinka for a similarly-flavored account.) However, in Atchan not all movement to subject results in realization of an additional lower copy; in contrast, in Bulgarian/Amharic, high cliticization renders the high copy invisible for Chain Reduction [CR], prompting spellout of a lower copy as well. This may suggest a timing difference between CR and post-syntactic clitic formation across languages: in Atchan, CR precedes clitic formation, deriving resumptive cliticization without clitic doubling.