

## The study of Persian Clitic Left Dislocation construction in the Minimalist Program

Zeinab Homayouni<sup>1</sup>, Rezvan Motavallian<sup>2</sup>

Received: 02/10/2022

Accepted: 13/03/2023

### 1. Introduction

The present study investigates how the Persian Clitic Left Dislocation construction (CLLD) is derived within the framework of minimalist program. In CLLD an element of a sentence is located at the beginning of the clause instead of being in its canonical position and its main position in the sentence is necessarily occupied by a resumptive clitic. In studying such construction in different languages, researchers always try to answer the question whether the initial position is the result of movement or it is base-generated. Chomsky (1977) and Cinque (1990) are among the linguists who believe that initial position in CLLD is base-generated. On the other hand, Lopez (2009) and Dobrovie-Sorin (1990) try to show that this position is derived by movement. Lee (2016) believes that this disagreement is because of the hybrid characteristics of CLLD. As an example, sensitivity to strong islands shows that movement takes place in this construction; but insensitivity to weak islands or not showing weak cross over (WCO) effect can challenge the movement approach to CLLD. Rizzi (1997) believes that only constructions which derived by quantificational A'-movement show WCO effect; so Lee (2016) considers CLLD as the result of non-quantificational A'-movement; so insensitivity to weak islands can't challenge the movement idea of CLLD derivation. In this research we study the syntactic features of Persian CLLD to investigate whether the initial position of this structure is base-generated or it's the result of movement. And if it is the result of movement, what kind of movement is involved.

The nature of the clitic in CLLD is another issue of interest in the study of this construction. There are different approaches to this element. Chomsky (1977) believes that the clitic (like the initial element in CLLD) is base-generated at its surface position. This approach can't explain the reason of CLLD sensitivity to syntactic islands. Some linguists like Pesetsky (1998) consider the clitic as the lexicalized trace of the left dislocated element. This approach explicitly considers the syntactic islands effect as a phonetic phenomenon. Pointing out the disadvantages of these two approaches, Boeckx (2008) introduces 'Big DP' theory in which the clitic and its reference enter the structure as a big DP; then the

---

<sup>1</sup> PhD Candidate, Department of linguistics, Isfahan University, Isfahan, Iran; [z.homayouni@fhn.ui.ac.ir](mailto:z.homayouni@fhn.ui.ac.ir)

<sup>2</sup> Associate Professor, Department of linguistics, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran (corresponding author); [r.motavallian@fhn.ui.ac.ir](mailto:r.motavallian@fhn.ui.ac.ir)

reference moves to the left periphery and the clitic remains at its canonical position. Lee (2016) considers ‘Big DP’ as an *ad hoc* stipulation within the theoretical framework. So, following Escobar (1997), he shows that the A'-movement of a referential phrase through an A- position leads to spelling out a resumptive clitic. Escobar (1997) believes that overt movement of referential phrases through [Spec, AgrP] implies the presence of a clitic. The present study provides a novel analysis of the Persian CLLD construction by means of this final approach.

Some Linguists like Karimi (2005) and Ghomeshi (1997) consider Persian CLLD as the result of base generation. These studies don't explain the features of CLLD which are specific to A'-movement constructions. On the other hand, some researchers like Dabir Mghaddam (1990) and Tafakori Rezaei (2011) believe that the initial position of CLLD is the result of movement and the resumptive clitic is the lexicalized trace of dislocated element. Darzi and Marzban (2014) analyse this construction with ‘Big DP’ approach when it takes place from the subject of a clause. In addition to disadvantages of these approaches mentioned above, the study of all syntactic positions that may be affected by this process has been neglected in these studies. In present study we consider CLLD in all possible syntactic positions like subject (example 1), direct object (example 2) and indirect object (example 3) and try to analyse CLLD in all these positions uniformly.

1. Reza baradar-af amad  
R brother-his came  
'lit. As for reza, his brother came'
2. Reza ro Nima baradar-af ro did  
R ra N brother-his ra saw  
'lit. As for Reza, Nima saw his brother'
3. Reza ro Nima be-f Gaza dad  
R ra N to-him food gave  
'lit. As for Reza, Nima gave him food'

## 2. Materials and methods

This study is a descriptive-analytical type in which the standard Persian colloquial variety is investigated; because CLLD is a construction that usually occurs in spoken language (Dabir Moghddam, 1990). In addition to the data available in previous researches about CLLD, this research's data have been collected from the conversations and also from the text of some television programs and interviews. Also, according to the formalist theoretical framework used in this research, most of the data is based on the authors' intuition, and in order to ensure their acceptability, the judgment of other native Persian speakers was also asked.

## 3. Results and discussion

In this research we study the degree of syntactic connectivity of left dislocated element and the corresponding clause. We also study the sensitivity of this construction to strong and weak syntactic islands. The results of our study shows that from the reconstruction point of view, there is a strong syntactic connection between initial and resumptive element in CLLD. Also, this construction is sensitive to strong islands. So we conclude that Persian CLLD is the result of A'-movement of LDED element. However, the fact that Persian CLLD is not sensitive to weak islands or in other words, this construction does not show the WCO effect, shows that CLLD is the result of non-quantificational A'-movement.

In this research, in line with Escobar's (1997) opinion, the use of clitic is obligatory because the A'-movement of the left dislocated element is through an A-position on its way to the beginning of the clause. The clitic in this construction is added to the structure when the phi feature of left dislocated element is locally checked by Agr<sup>0</sup>.

We show that when LDed NP is a part of direct object or the complement of a PP, the element 'ra' follows it. This fact is another evidence for movement in CLLD, since moving through vP phase edge leads to spelling out of 'ra'.

#### **4. Conclusion**

We uniformly analysed Persian CLLD as a non-quantificational A'-movement when LDed NP is a part of the subject or a part of the direct object or complement of a PP as the indirect object. We showed that the clitic enters the construction during the syntactic derivation of CLLD and the use of it is obligatory because the A'-movement of its reference takes place through the A-position of [spec, AgrP]. The existence of AgrP in Persian DP structure has proven by researchers like Kahnemuyipour (2014); but the existence of AgrP in Persian Prepositional Phrase needs more study about this syntactic phrase in Persian.

**Keywords:** agreement phrase, A'-movement, Clitic Left Dislocation, syntactic connectivity, syntactic islands