

Harvard University Department of Linguistics
Department Talks

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Resumptive pronouns, epithets & the interpretation of chains

A longstanding question in the literature on resumption is whether resumptive structures involve movement or not. The literature can be seen as dividing on lines relating to this issue. The classic view (going back to Sells 1984, for more recent proposals see Aoun, Choueiri, & Hornstein 2001, Rouveret 2002, Adger & Ramchand 2005, Guilliot 2006, Guilliot & Malkawi 2006, 2009, 2011 a.o.) is that resumptive structures do not involve movement. Over the years, however, arguments have been put forth for a movement analysis of resumption (going back to Demirdache 1991, 1997, Rouveret 1994, for more recent proposals see Aoun, Choueiri, & Hornstein 2001, Boeckx 2001, Demirdache & Percus 2008, 2011, Sechel 2012 a.o.).

This talk provides novel arguments for a movement analysis by showing how once we adopt an independently motivated view of traces —as copies with descriptive content—and, crucially, an operation for converting copy traces into definite descriptions (*Trace Conversion*, Fox 2002), we nicely explain two striking differences between epithets and pronouns used resumptively. First, while resumptive *epithets* show *all* reconstruction diagnostics for movement including *syntactic* reconstruction (Condition C and cyclicity effects), resumptive clitics *only* show *semantic* reconstruction diagnostics (reconstruction for scope and binding). Second, there are puzzling restrictions on the linking of epithets to WH/QP antecedents. In particular, resumptive epithets support bound functional readings, but not bound variable readings unless the WH/QP binds a ‘closer’ pronoun. There are no such restrictions with pronouns.