

Subject relative clauses without a complementizer in a Modern Greek dialect

Metin Bağrıaçık

This short note is written in gratitude for Liliane Haegeman’s immense contributions to syntactic theory and to the life of many young scholars, including me, in so many ways. I hope that these few pages are worthy of her and of her insights into the nature of many phenomena—among them subject contact relatives.¹

1 Introduction

Restrictive subject and object relative clauses (hereafter RCs) in Pharasiot Greek (hereafter PhG) are finite clauses that are, in the unmarked case, introduced by the complementizer *tu* ‘that’.² The head, external to the RC, can linearly precede (1a) and follow (1b) the RC (Bağrıaçık & Danckaert 2018).

- (1) a. *Ídha [an gorítsi [tu kathéti ačí monaxó ts]].*
saw.SG a girl that sit.3SG there on-her-own
b. *Ídha [[tu kathéti ačí monaxó ts] an gorítsi].*
saw.SG that sit.3SG there on-her-own a girl
'I saw a girl (who/that) was sitting there on her own.'

Andriotis (1948: 51) and Anastasiadis (1976: 248) claim that there exists a third, marked, option for forming restrictive relative clauses in PhG: “[RCs] in Pharasiot Greek, especially the restrictive ones, are occasionally introduced into

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² PhG is a Modern Greek dialect spoken today in Greece by about 25 people, who are (descendants of the) refugees relocated from Asia Minor after the Greek-Turkish population exchange of 1923.

the discourse without a [...] relative adverb [my translation]’ (Anastasiadis 1976: 248).³ These authors illustrate both subject and object RCs without *tu* ‘that’. In this note, I focus only on subject RCs. Object RCs without *tu* ‘that’ merit a proper study on their own. (2) is an example of *tu*-less subject RC provided by Andriotis (1948: 51).

- (2) Ídha [an gorítsi kathéti ačí monaxó ts].
 saw.SG a girl sit.3SG there on-her-own
 ‘I saw a girl (who/that) was sitting there on her own.’

The aim of this note is to assess whether or not structures as (2), which lack *tu* ‘that’, do indeed qualify as (some sort of) RCs. To this effect, I compare them to English subject RCs with the null variant of the relative pronoun or with no overt complementizer. I conclude that the existence of complementizerless subject RCs in PhG should be recognized, verifying the claim by Andriotis (1948) and Anastasiadis (1976).

In the next section, I briefly introduce English subject RCs that do not feature an overt relative pronoun or a complementizer, and further summarize two main analyses from a generative perspective.

2 Subject RCs without overt relativizers in English

In informal or colloquial speech, English allows subject RCs in which the relative pronoun or the complementizer can be omitted in certain syntactic environments. Such RCs are dubbed by Jespersen (1928: 143ff) ‘subject contact clauses’ and they are widely known as ‘subject contact relatives’ today (Doherty 1994, 2000, Henry 1995; hereafter SCRs). As opposed to regular subject RCs, the distribution of SCRs is reported to be limited: some of the typical contexts in which they are allowed are (i) existential copular sentences (3a), (ii) existential *have* sentences (3b), and complements of the predicates *know*, *meet* and *invent*, when these complements introduce a new referent into the discourse (3c) (Doherty 2000: 72, Henry 1995: 125).⁴

³ According to Anastasiadis (1976) *tu* is an indeclinable relative adverb, comparable to the Modern Greek complementizer *pu* ‘that’. In the rest of this note, I will refer to *tu* as a complementizer. See Bağrıaçık (2018) for discussion of the environments in which *tu* is used.

⁴Doherty (1994) argued that in order for a SCR to be licensed, “[the] noun phrase modified by [it] must be interpreted as non-referential.” See, however, Doherty (2000), where he no longer maintains this and leaves the question of the precise conditions for SCR-licensing open.

- (3) a. There's something keeps upsetting him.
 b. I have this friend lives in Dublin.
 c. I know a smart Greek owns maybe twenty restaurants.

SCRs are claimed to be excluded from other grammatical positions, such as subject position (4a) or the indirect object position (4b) (Doherty 2000: 72-73, Henry 1995: 125-126).⁵

- (4) a. *The man worked there was a friend of mine.
 b. *I gave a ticket to a man comes every day.

SCRs have hitherto received two main types of analysis in the generative literature. According to one, which is advanced by Doherty (1994, 2000), SCRs are a variant of true restrictive RCs. They differ from regular RCs in one major respect: whereas regular RCs are standardly assumed to involve a full CP, SCRs have a reduced internal structure; more specifically, they lack the CP layer. According to this account, the example (3a) has the (simplified) structure in (5).

- (5) There's [_{DP} [_{NP} something [_{TP} e keeps upsetting him]]].

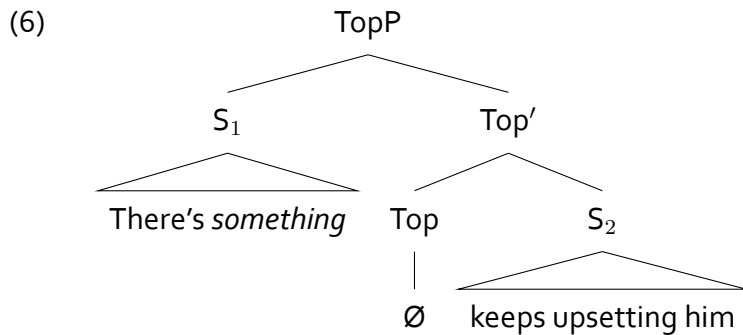
The reader is referred to Doherty (1994, 2000: 81-87) for the details of his analysis, which are immaterial for the current note. The important point is that this approach claims that an SCR is a genuine subordinate clause.

According to a second line of analysis, SCRs involve a topic-comment structure (Henry 1995: 131-135, den Dikken 2005). As a corollary of this, what superficially is a matrix clause hosting the SCR is analyzed as a topic clause, whose function is to identify one of its subconstituents, the head nominal in particular, as a focus.⁶ In turn, what is taken to be a subordinate clause in Doherty's (1994, 2000) analysis is identified by Henry (1995) and den Dikken (2005) as a root clause which serves as the comment of the above-mentioned topic, and which provides information about the focal element. This account assigns to (3a) the structure in (6) (cf. den Dikken 2005: 698). S₁ in (6) is the topic clause harboring the focus expression, *something*, and S₂ is the root clause making a comment on the focus expression in S₁.⁷

⁵Certain English dialects, however, do allow SCRs in these positions; see Doherty (2000: 87-89) on these varieties. See also Henry (1995: 125-126) for the distribution of SCRs in Belfast English.

⁶Note, however, that in den Dikken's (2005) analysis, this focus is not represented as occupying a syntactic position.

⁷Note, however, that according to den Dikken (2005: 700), not every SCR can be analyzed



Syntactically, den Dikken (2005: 698, fn. 6) compares S_1 to hanging topics, whose function is also to introduce (the referent of) a nominal into the discourse (7). Hanging topics are not syntactically integrated in the root clause which provides the comment. Observe that the matrix in the comment clause can be omitted (compare (7a) with (7b), cf. Henry 1995: 132, Haegeman 2015), rendering hanging topic constructions structurally akin to SCRs.

- (7) a. As for syntax, I found it too difficult.
 b. As for syntax, \emptyset found it too difficult.

The reader is referred to Henry (1995: 131-135) and den Dikken (2005) for further details of this line of analysis. The relevant point to retain is that the modifying clause (S_2) does not form a constituent with the nominal head (or the 'focus expression', according to den Dikken 2005), to the exclusion of the material which occurs linearly to the left of the nominal expression, as shown in (6).

Recently, Haegeman (2015; see also Haegeman et al. 2015) has evaluated the topic-comment representation of SCRs. By adducing a number of observations on their internal and external syntax, she concludes that a topic-comment analysis of SCRs cannot be maintained. In what follows, I will list two of her observations on the internal syntax of SCRs, which are relevant for the initial analysis of *tu*-less subject RCs in PhG.

First, Haegeman (2015) observes that, were a SCR to instantiate a topic-comment structure in which (S_2) and the nominal head (focus) do not form a constituent (6), then the head and the modifying clause would not be expected to enter in a coordinate relation with a regular RC. However, she shows that this prediction is not borne out: examples such as (8) are judged grammatical. This provides evidence for Doherty's (1994, 2000) analysis that the nominal head and

this way.

the RC form one structural unit.

- (8) I have [one colleague runs a sushi shop] and [another one who has a burger restaurant].

(Haegeman 2015: 140, her (16a))

Second, she observes that, according to the configuration in (6), any constituent contained within S_1 is not expected to c-command (any material contained in) S_2 ; however, this is not necessarily the case. In (9), for instance, the pronoun *his*, contained within the SCR, receives a bound-variable reading, which is possible only if it is in the c-commanding domain of the quantified subject, *every student*, in S_1 .

- (9) Every student_{*i*} is looking for a teacher speaks his_{*i*} language.

(Haegeman 2015: 141, her (17a))

The availability of the bound-variable reading of the pronoun in (9) provides additional support for the RC analysis of SCRs, because this approach correctly predicts that the RC is within the c-command domain of the matrix subject.

Based on the above observations (among several others), Haegeman (2015) concludes that a topic-comment analysis of SCRs in English is not tenable, and that her observations offer support for any argument which recognizes SCRs as (some type of) RC.

In the next section, I return to PhG subject RCs without a complementizer.

3 Are there SRCs in PhG?

Unlike English, PhG is a consistent null-subject language (10): there are no expletives in existential clauses with a postverbal subject for instance (10a); similarly, weather verbs never have overt subjects (10b). As expected, referential pronominal subjects can also be omitted (10c).

- (10) a. Ísanti dhíu néčis sin stráta.
were.3PL two women on-the road
'There were two women on the road.'
- b. (*Ató) vrešízi.
It rain.3SG
'It is raining.'
- c. (Até) kathéti ačí.
She sit.3SG there
'She is sitting there.'

Given that pronominal subjects can freely be omitted (10c), it is at first blush difficult to conclude whether (2) is a genuine RC, as Anastasiadis (1976) suggests, or whether it involves two independent sentences with null subjects, as in (11).

- (11) Ø ídha an gorítsi. Ø kathéti ačí monaxó ts.
 saw.1SG a girl sit.3SG there on-her-own
 'I saw a girl. She is sitting there alone.' (cf. (2))

Informants agree with Anastasiadis (1976) and accept (2) with a RC reading: they state that there is no intonation break between *gorítsi* 'girl' and *kathéti* '(she) is sitting', contrary to the case in (11).⁸ Furthermore, for these informants, (12a) and (12b) are associated with distinct readings: (12a), where two sentences are simply placed side by side, means there were two, and only two, women in the car and they were both wearing necklaces. On the other hand, (12b), under a RC reading, is reported to imply the existence of other women in the car as well, who were, however, not wearing necklaces.

- (12) a. So tomoíli ísanti mo dhíu néčis. Forénkanti kerdanníxi.
 in-the car were.3PL only two women wore.3PL necklace.
 'In the car, there were only two women. They were wearing necklaces.'
- b. So tomoíli ísanti mo dhíu néčis forénkanti kerdanníxi.
 in-the car were.3PL only two women wore.3PL necklace.
 'In the car, there were only two women who were wearing necklaces.'

Structurally, the reading in (12a) suggests that the only focalized constituent c-commanded by the focus sensitive exhaustivity operator *mo* 'only' is the DP *dhíu néčis* 'two women'; the second sentence *forénkanti kerdanníxi* 'they were wearing necklaces', however, is not in the c-commanding domain of *mo* 'only' as operator-focus dependencies do not cross sentence boundaries. As a result, in the first sentence, the number of the women that were in the car is strictly defined as "2". The second sentence then merely provides additional information on the only two women that were in the car. The reading in (12b), on the other hand, suggests that the constituent *forénkanti kerdanníxi* 'were wearing necklaces' functions as a restrictor of the set of referents for the DP *dhíu néčis* 'two

⁸ See further Andriotis (1948: 51) and Anastasiadis (1976: 248), who do not put any punctuation mark (comma, period etc.) between the head noun and the associated modifying clause in examples of SCRs, which would possibly mark an intonation break.

women'; in turn, the string *dhíu néčis forénkanti kerdanníxi* 'two women (who) were wearing necklaces' is c-commanded by *mo* 'only' as one single constituent. Due to the existence of the restricting clause, the sentence receives a reading in which the number of women that were at the same time both in the car and wearing necklaces was only "2". This implies that other women might have also been in the car, who were not wearing necklaces. Based on the evidence (12b) provides, we may preliminarily conclude that *tu*-less restrictive subject RCs exist in PhG, as Anastasiadis (1976) suggests.⁹

The omission of *tu* 'that' in subject RCs is not entirely free, however. The environments which can harbor *tu*-less subject RCs are near-identical to those in which English SCR are tolerated: *tu* 'that' omission is most naturally tolerated in complements of the predicate *thoró* 'see', when this predicate introduces a new referent into the discourse (2), in copular existential sentences (12b), and in *have* existential sentences (13a). Preliminary judgments suggest that, in these cases, *tu* 'that' can be deleted as long as the antecedent is indefinite, cf. (13a) with (13b):¹⁰

- (13) a. Éxu [a jos (tu) kamnóni sa Ádhana].
 have.1SG a son that work.3SG in-the Adana
 'I have a son who works in Adana.'
 b. Dáma mu íxa [to jo mu *(tu) kamnóni sa Ádhana].
 with me had.1SG the son my that work.3SG in-the Adana
 'With me, I had my son who works in Adana.'

Speaker judgments reveal that subject RCs without the complementizer *tu* 'that' are severely degraded when in subject or indirect object positions:

- (14) a. [An gorítsi *(tu) kathéti ačí monaxó ts] irévi xalxás.
 a girl that sit.3SG there on-her-own want.3SG bagel
 'A girl who is sitting there on her own wants a bagel.'

⁹ It should be noted that *tu* 'that' omission is allowed only when the RC is a postnominal one, cf. (2) with (i):

- (i) *Ídha [kathéti ačí monaxó ts an gorítsi].
 saw.SG sit.3SG there on-her-own a girl
 'I saw a girl (who/that) was sitting there on her own.'

¹⁰The examples cited in Andriotis (1948: 51) and Anastasiadis (1976: 248) also verify these generalizations.

- b. Pítaksa an xalxás s [an gorítsi *(tu) kathéti ačí monaxó ts].
 sent.1SG a bagel to a girl that sit.3SG there on-her-own
 'I sent a bagel to a girl who was sitting there on her own.'

When the distributional similarity between English SCRs and PhG RCs that allow complementizer omission is taken into consideration, we can tentatively conclude that a structure such as (2) can be referred to as a SCR.

There are three (additional) pieces of evidence that suggest that in PhG a SCR forms a constituent with its associated nominal 'head', which, in turn, suggest that SRCs are structurally embedded, rather than independent sentences.¹¹

First, a SRC can (marginally) occur as a left-peripheral topic, when the predicate of the matrix clause is *thoró* 'see':

- (15) ?[An av néka (tu) ifanéni an t eséna]_i, čo ídha ta_i so
 an other woman that weave.3SG like you not saw.1SG her in.the
 ómbri mu.
 life my
 'Another woman who weaves like you, I have not seen in my life.'

Second, similar to Haegeman's (2015) observation for English SCRs, a SCR in PhG can also be coordinated with a regular relative clause, as shown in (16).

- (16) Éxu [a jos (tu) kamnóni sa Ádhana] če [an góri tu
 have.1SG a son that work.3SG in-the Adana and a daughter that
 paredhóthin so Everéki].
 married.3SG in-the Everek
 'I have a son who works in Adana and a daughter who is married in Ev-erek.'

Finally, again similar to the case of English SCRs as observed by Haegeman (2015) (9), a quantificational element c-commanding the (head of) the SRC can bind a pronominal element inside the RC, giving rise to a distributive interpretation for the pronoun:

- (17) [Xer o mástrus]_i éši [a čiráxus (tu) katéši ti
 every the master have.3SG an apprentice that understand.3SG the

¹¹ The observations that follow also argue against a possible topic-comment analysis of SCRs in PhG. Nevertheless, as I have not investigated all the possible predictions of such an analysis in PhG, I do not want to make reference to it in the rest of this note.

gwósa tu_i].
 language his
 'Every master has an apprentice who understands his language.'

Under the reading in which (17) involves two independent sentences, the bound variable interpretation of the pronoun *tu* 'his' is no longer available, suggesting that the pronoun is not c-commanded by the quantified subject of the first sentence:

(18) [Xer o mástrus]_i éši a čiráxus. Katéši ti
 every the master have.3SG an apprentice understand.3SG the
 gwósa tu^{*i/j}.
 language his
 'Every master has an apprentice. He understands his language.'

4 Conclusions

In this brief note, I have provided a preliminary analysis of subject RCs in PhG which allow for complementizer deletion. Based on distributional evidence, I concluded that the PhG structures under discussion are very similar to English SCRs. In relation to the internal syntax of PhG complementizerless RCs, I concluded that the relevant structures form a constituent with their nominal head, much as is the case in canonical (head-external) RCs. The precise structure of complementizerless RCs in PhG, the exact nature of the environments they are tolerated in, and how they differ from RCs with an overt complementizer are issues that await further research.

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