North Hail Arabic (Saudi Arabia) has Topic particles in the C-domain.
- Some particles ϕ-agree with a Topic DP in situ.
- Other particles trigger movement of the Topic to the C-domain.
- Implications for agreement, locality, discourse function marking.

Mara Frascarelli & Roland Hinterhölzl (2007): Three kinds of Topic in the C-domain, in a universal hierarchy

Shift-topic (S-Top): Re-introduces a Topic.
Contrastive Topic (C-Top): Selects a Topic from a range of understood alternatives.
Familiar Topic (F-Top): A Topic familiar from the discourse, not shifted, not contrastive.

Evidence in F&H: Interpretation, co-occurrence, and intonation, mainly in Italian and German.

In North Hail Arabic there are C-particles encoding the Topic types.
S-Top particle: bint, mar Firas jaf ah (Topic externally merged with S-Top)
the-girl PRT Firas saw.3SM-3SF
‘As for the girl, Firas saw her.’
C-Top particle: tara ah jaf l-bint Firas (Agreement between the particle and the Topic object)
PRT-3SF saw.3SM-3SF the-girl.Firas
‘THE GIRL, Firas saw her.’
F-Top particle: uedh ah jaf l-bint Firas (Agreement between the particle and the Topic object)
PRT-3SF saw.3SM-3SF the-girl Firas
‘The girl, Firas saw her.’
F-Top particle: l-bint tigil jaf ah Firas (Movement of the Topic object to C-domain)
the-girl PRT saw.3SM-3SF Firas
‘The girl, Firas saw her.’

- All C-Topic and F-Topic heads are probes, either by virtue of wsp-features or an EPP-feature.
- The Topic head has a valued Topic feature. By virtue of Agree, a DP is marked as Topic either by valuing the ϕ-features of the relevant Topic head/particle or by movement to spec of Topic.
- Topics other than DPs can only be marked by movement to spec of the relevant Topic head.
- Some Topic particles have no wsp-features, only an EPP-feature, always triggering movement.
- Two F-topics can co-occur, combining agreement and movement, with interesting theoretical consequences.

The particles are evidence that the Arabic object clitics are not cliticized pronouns but agreement markers. The same clitics/markers show up on the verb and the particle in the same sentence. This analysis of object clitics was proposed already by Shlonsky (1997) for Arabic in general, but has remained controversial.

References: