

Right Dislocation as a Parenthetical Construction

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In Right Dislocation (RD), a constituent whose referent must be discourse-given appears to the right edge of a gapless clause that contains a co-referring pronominal antecedent (Fernández-Sánchez & Ott, 2020):

- (1) L_i' ho già LETTO, [questo libro].
cl have.1SG already read this book
'I've already read this book.'

Some of the most recent analyses of Right Dislocation (Ott & de Vries 2016 for Germanic, Fernández-Sánchez 2017 for Catalan, Alzayid 2020 for Arabic, Sun 2021 for Italian) support a biclausal structure, where the clause containing the pronominal antecedent (or antecedent clause) is separate from the right-dislocated element, which is the remnant of ellipsis in a clause (the elided clause) semantically equivalent to the antecedent clause. In these analyses, it is assumed that an abstract head (often the colon head “:°”, from Koster 2000) introduces a semantics of specification. This head takes the elided clause (CP2 in the structure below) containing the dislocated element δ as its complement, and the antecedent clause (CP1) containing the pronominal α as its specifier:

- (2) [:P [CP1 ... α ...] [:° [CP2 δ ...]]]

I argue that this analysis is too rigid. In particular, it predicts that the two clauses must be entirely separate, to the effect that no constituent belonging to the antecedent clause can appear to the right of the right-dislocated element (i.e., of the elided clause). However, despite RD generally appearing rightmost, other elements can appear to its right, at least in Italian. Giorgi (2015) provides a monoclausal analysis of RD that can account for these cases. My goal is to account for them under a biclausal analysis, on the assumption that biclausal analyses are more adequate than monoclausal ones (see Fernández-Sánchez & Ott 2020 for a discussion). When post-RD elements are stressed, it can be argued that they are in situ in the antecedent clause, as they bear that clause's main stress (indicated with small caps):

- (3) L' ho regalato, questo libro, a MARCO.
cl have.1SG donated this book to Mark
'I have given this book to Mark.'

When they are unstressed, however, the question arises of whether they undergo de-stressing in situ (or Marginalisation - see Antinucci & Cinque 1977, Cardinaletti 2002, and Samek-Lodovici 2015) or whether they are right-dislocated elements without a clitic (as in Samek-Lodovici 2015). A biclausal analysis of clitic-less right-dislocated elements is problematic, as no overt pronoun in the antecedent clause (see Cardinaletti 2002 for arguments against optional and null clitics), so it would be necessary so resort to a mixed analysis (biclausal if the dislocated element has an antecedent, monoclausal if it does not). Instead, I argue that unstressed post-RD elements can be analysed as being in situ in the antecedent clause. The (apparently syntactic) properties that they have in common with RD, such as the ban on NPIs (Samek-Lodovici 2015), may be explained

with non-syntactic constraints. Moreover, it must be noticed that Romance languages which do not display Marginalisation, such as Catalan and Sicilian (see Cruschina 2010), also do not allow for distressed elements to appear after RD (see Fernández-Sánchez 2017 for Catalan). Finally, once the abstract colon head has been eliminated from the theory of RD, I will argue that the right-dislocated constituent can be seen as parenthetical element with respect to the antecedent clause. Furthermore, partly following Ott (2017) and Onea & Ott (2022), I will analyse it as a fragment answer (Merchant 2004) to an implicit question that arises, and that requires an answer, as soon as the pronominal antecedent is introduced. This explains why the element that specifies the antecedent needs not be rightmost. The overall picture is a minimalistic theory of RD that dispenses with unnecessary tools (such as the abstract head, which is never overtly realised in Italian RD constructions) and only relies on independently motivated mechanisms such as parenthesis and ellipsis.

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