

Right Dislocation as Fronting plus Deletion: Evidence from Italian

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The Problem

• In biclausal analyses of Right Dislocation (RD), the right-dislocated element δ is part of a separate clause in a coordination relationship with the clause containing the antecedent α (a pronominal element), but subject to ellipsis (de Vries 2013, Truckenbrodt 2013, Ott & de Vries 2012, 2016 for Germanic; Fernández-Sánchez 2017 for Catalan; Alzayid 2020 for Arabic; Sun 2021 for Italian; see also Ott 2017 for a biclausal analysis of both left and right dislocation). It is often assumed that an abstract colon head : $^\circ$ (Koster 2000) introduces the coordination relationship between the two clauses (for space reasons, the details of this biclausal structure may be omitted in some of the examples):

(1) [_{CP} ... α ...] [_{: $^\circ$} [_{CP} ... δ ...]]

• Two main views on the structure of the elided clause exist. According to one view (Ott & de Vries 2012, 2016; Alzayid 2020, Sun 2021), δ is fronted before deletion in the second clause, so that (2) has the underlying structure in (3):

(2) Gianni I_i ha letto, [il libro]_i.
John cl has read the book
'John has read the book.'

(3) [_{CP} Gianni I_i ha letto]_i [_{: $^\circ$} [_{CP} [il libro]_i Gianni ha letto t_i]].
John cl has read the book John has read

• According to the other view (Truckenbrodt, 2013; Fernández-Sánchez, 2017, Ott 2017), δ is in situ in the elided clause:

(4) [_{CP} Gianni I_i ha letto]_i [_{: $^\circ$} [_{CP} Gianni ha letto [il libro]_i]]].
John cl has read John has read the book

• I will provide two pieces of empirical evidence in favour of a fronting-and-deletion analysis of the elided clause.

Extraction of dislocates out of islands

• The main evidence in favour of an fronting-and-deletion analysis comes from the observation that the dislocated element δ must be adjacent to the antecedent clause α . In de Vries (2013) and Ott & de Vries (2016), this observation, looking at data from Germanic, is explained in terms of locality.

• If we look at Italian, (5) is ungrammatical because the right-dislocated element *questo lavoro* is extracted out of a relative clause, violating Subadjacency. The underlying illicit operation is shown in (6). On the other hand, (7) is grammatical because Subadjacency is not violated, as the dislocated element does not cross an island boundary. The underlying elided clause is shown in (8).

(5) *Ho presentato una persona [che può terminar-lo]_i a MARIA, [questo lavoro]_i.
have.ISG introduced a person who can finish-cl to Mary this job
Intended: 'I introduced to Mary a person who can finish this job.'

(6) [[questo lavoro]_i ho ~~presentato~~ [_{DP} una persona [che può terminare t_i]] a MARIA]
this job have.ISG introduced a person who can finish to Mary

(7) Ho presentato una persona [che può terminar-lo]_i, [questo lavoro]_i, a MARIA.
have.ISG introduced a person who can finish-cl this job to Mary

(8) [... [che può terminar-lo]_i [[questo lavoro]_i può terminare t_i] ...]
who can finish-cl this job can finish

• Thus, under this type of analysis, adjacency of the dislocated element is explained by resorting to independently motivated principles.

Locality without movement?

• On the other hand, Fernández-Sánchez (2017:153) derives the restrictions on the position of right-dislocated elements by proposing the Minimal Coordination Hypothesis (MCH):

(9) *Minimal Coordination Hypothesis:*

The highest level at which coordination can take place in right dislocations is the lowest finite CP containing κ in CP_A¹.

• The MCH can capture the contrast between (5) and (7) without resorting to movement. Moreover, it captures the fact that if the antecedent clause is non-finite, the right-dislocated element needs not be immediately adjacent to that clause (i.e., the elided clause may be in coordination with the lower, non-finite embedded clause, or with the higher finite clause), as (10a), adapted from Samek-Lodovici (2015), shows (with (10b) showing the underlying – simplified – biclausal structure).

(10) a. Ha promesso [_{CP} di aiutar-li]_i MARCO, [i ragazzi]_i.
has promised of help-cl Mark the boys
b. [Ha promesso di aiutar-li MARCO]_i, [ha promesso di aiutare [i ragazzi]_i MAREO]_i.
has promised of help-cl Mark has promised of help the boys Mark

• There are, however, cases in which adjacency between the antecedent clause and the elided clause is crucially required even if the former is non-finite:

(11) a. Considero l' idea [_{CP} di aiutar-li]_i, [i ragazzi]_i, un' ottima IDEA.
consider.ISG the idea of help-cl the boys a great idea
'I consider the idea of helping the boys a great idea.'
b. *Considero l' idea [_{CP} di aiutar-li]_i un' ottima IDEA, [i ragazzi]_i.
consider.ISG the idea of help-cl a great idea the boys

• Under a biclausal analysis where the dislocated element remains in situ in the elided clause, the ungrammaticality of (11b) is not predicted, as the sentence would have the structure in (12), obeying the Minimal Coordination Hypothesis. On the other hand, a fronting-and-deletion analysis makes the correct prediction, since the underlying fronting in (13) would escape a complex NP island.

(12) *[Considero l' idea [_{CP} di aiutar-li]_i un' ottima IDEA],
consider.ISG the idea of help-cl a great idea
[eonsidero l' idea di aiutare [i ragazzi]_i un' ottima idea].
consider.ISG the idea of help-cl the boys a great idea

(13) [[i ragazzi]_i eonsidero l' idea di aiutare t_i un' ottima idea].
the boys consider.ISG the idea of help-cl a great idea

¹ κ is the pronominal antecedent; CP_A is the clause containing the antecedent.

NPIs and n-words in RD

• A second argument comes from n-words (Laka, 1990) in right-dislocated predicates. Catalan allows them (Villalba, 2000; Feldhausen, 2008), while Italian does not (Samek-Lodovici, 2015):

(14) La Maria no ho ÈS, (de) responsable de ningú. (Catalan)
the Mary NEG cl is (of) responsible of nobody
'Mary is not responsible for anyone.'

(15) *Maria non lo È, responsabile di nessuno. (Italian)
Mary NEG cl is responsible of nobody
Intended: 'Mary is not responsible for anyone.'

• I will show how this contrast can be accounted for in a fronting-and-deletion analysis, but not in an analysis where the dislocated element is in situ in the elided clause.

Semantic equivalence of the two clauses

• We start with the plausible assumption that the two clauses in the biclausal structure must be semantically equivalent.
• If the right-dislocated predicate containing a n-word is fronted in Italian, a double negation (DN) reading arises:

(16) Responsabile di nessuno, Maria non È. (Italian)
Responsible of nobody Mary NEG is
'Mary is not responsible for no one.' (= Mary is responsible for at least someone)

• If we take (16) to be the overt counterpart of the second clause of the biclausal structure underlying (15), prior to ellipsis, we can conclude that (15) is ungrammatical because the first clause has a single negation (SN) reading, while the second one has a DN reading, violating the semantic equivalence requirement:

(17) *Maria non lo è, [[responsabile di nessuno]_i Maria non è t_i].
Mary NEG cl is responsible of nobody Mary NEG is
SN DN

• On the other hand, some varieties of Catalan behave like Strict Negative Concord languages (Zejlstra, 2004), to the effect that a pre-negation n-word does not give rise to a double negation reading (see also Vallduví, 1992).

• Assuming that predicates may undergo fronting in Catalan, (18) – which is the overt counterpart of the underlying elided clause in (14) – receives a SN reading.

(18) Responsable de NINGÚ no és la Maria. (Catalan)
responsible of nobody NEG is the Mary
'Mary is not responsible for anyone.'

(19) La Maria no ho ÈS, [(de) responsable de ningú]_i no és t_i la Maria].
the Mary NEG cl is (of) responsible of nobody NEG is the Mary
SN SN

• The contrast between the structure in (17) and that in (19) is predicted by the fronting-and-deletion analysis argued for here, on the assumption that semantic equivalence between the two clauses must hold – a condition that Italian violates when a n-word is contained in a right-dislocated predicate².

• An in-situ analysis would predict that in the elided clause, a single negation reading would arise in both languages, since in Italian the predicate containing the n-word would be c-commanded by the negative marker. Therefore, the semantic equivalence condition would be wrongly predicted to be obeyed.

• To conclude, while the in-situ analysis of right-dislocated elements in the elided clause may account for the adjacency effects (and their optional violation in non-finite antecedent clauses), it cannot account for the cases in which adjacency is required even if the antecedent clause is non-finite; furthermore, it cannot straightforwardly account for the differences between Italian and Catalan in n-word licensing. A fronting-and-deletion analysis, instead, can successfully account for these observations on the basis of independently motivated principles.

Selected references

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