

The Syntax and Pragmatics of Dislocation: A Non-templatic Approach

Dennis Ott, University of Ottawa

Research question. Dislocation constructions as shown in (1) for French have been documented in a wide range of different languages, where they display remarkably uniform properties.

- (1) a. Ça n'a pas de gout, ce poulet. b. À Pierre, je *lui* donnerai un livre.

Dislocations raise questions at interface of syntax and pragmatics: What accounts for the positioning of the underlined dislocated phrases (dXPs) at the outer left or right periphery? And what determines their asymmetric information-structural properties, such that *left*-peripheral dXPs (1b) are contrastive, whereas *right*-peripheral ones (1a) cannot be interpreted in this way?

Context. The predominant *cartographic* approach to clause structure holds that the peripheries are organized according to fixed phrase-structural templates (Rizzi 1997; Cinque & Rizzi 2009). The fact that left-dislocation targets a position to the left of *wh*-movement (2a) is taken to show that it targets a Top(ic)P above Foc(us)P (2b); analogous cascades are claimed to exist above VP (3), to account for right-dislocation as in (1b) (e.g., Belletti 2005).

- (2) a. Cela, pourquoi *ça* te gêne? b. [_{TopP} cela Top [_{FocP} pourquoi Foc [_{TP} *ça* te gêne]]]

- (3) [_{TP} *ça* n'a pas [_{FocP} de gout Foc [_{TopP} ce poulet Top [_{VP} ...]]]]

Its descriptive merits notwithstanding, the approach falls short of *explaining* the properties of dXPs, both syntactic and information-structural. Both types of properties are merely *restated* in terms of the phrase-structural template, whose properties have no independent justification.

Proposal. We follow Ott (2015) and Ott & De Vries (2016) in analyzing dXPs as elliptical sentence fragments that *reformulate* their host clause. This is shown below for (1a) and (1b).

- (4) a. [*ça* n'a pas de gout] [ce poulet n'a pas de gout] = (1a)

- b. [je donnerai un livre à Pierre] [*je lui* donnerai un livre] = (1b)

Once dislocated elements are analyzed as sentence fragments in this way, their information-structural properties can be shown to derive from independent pragmatic principles. Following Roberts (1996/2012), discourse is structured by explicit or implicit *Questions Under Discussion* (QUDs) that the interlocutors agree to resolve. Against this backdrop, consider right-peripheral dXPs, which are either given and backgrounded (1a), or new and (non-contrastively) focused (5).

- (5) J'ai rencontré *un vieil ami à moi*, un certain Mr James McGrath.

In (5), use of the indefinite leads the hearer to accommodate the QUD Which old friend did you meet?, which is answered by the focal dXP. In (1b), where the dXP is prosodically non-prominent, it responds to the QUD What has no taste?, which anticipates potential unclarity about the referent of *ça*. The right-peripheral positioning of these dXPs thus follows from the way they are used: as responses to QUDs raised by the preceding host sentence.

By contrast, *left*-peripheral dXPs as in (1b) are *contrastive topics*, which perform the function of indicating that the speaker is addressing a *subquestion* of the QUD (Büring 2003). The dXP *à Pierre* in (1b) thus indicates that the speaker is addressing the question What will you give to Pierre?, which is answered by the following clause. A natural follow-up to (1b) is (6), where the dXP triggers accommodation of a further, distinct subquestion of the overall QUD.

- (6) À Marie, (→ What will you give to Marie?) je *lui* offrirai des fleurs.

Conclusions. Once dXPs are analyzed as extra-clausal elliptical expressions, their linear positioning relative to the host clause follows from the ways in which they relate to QUDs in discourse. dXPs that serve as indicators of subquestions necessarily appear on the left, whereas clarificatory supplements must follow the host. This way of analyzing the syntactic and pragmatic properties of dXPs obviates the need for stipulative phrase-structural template.

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References

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