Clitic Dislocation: evidence for a low Topic position[*]

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1.   Introduction

This last decade, several analyses of, especially Romance, Clitic Left Dislocation and Clitic Right Dislocation have been defended. Dislocation structures are used to mark the position of the topic in a sentence. Loosely defined, topics are the elements sentences are about (Reinhart, 1982). As such, dislocations are a syntactic means to express a pragmatic function. In this paper, on the basis of binding data and on the basis of L1 acquisition data, we defend one of the analyses for clitic left and right dislocation, the one put forward among others by Cecchetto (1999), Villalba (1999) and Belletti (2001, 2005), according to which a clitic right-dislocated constituent moves to a TopicP in the left periphery of the vP, while a left-dislocated constituent moves to a higher TopicP, in the left periphery of the clause.

The paper is organized as follows. In §2, we present four analyses of Clitic Dislocation that have been put forward this last decade. In §3, we defend one of these analyses, the one first proposed by Cecchetto (1999), arguing against Samek-Lodovici (2006). In §4, we present data from L1 acquisition that support this analysis. In §5, we argue that these data support the low Topic position. Finally, in §6, we summarize the results.

2.   Analyses of dislocation

We start by presenting four different analyses of left and right dislocation that have been proposed this last decade.

2.1   Analysis A: the adjunction analysis (e.g. De Cat 2002, forthcoming)

According to the adjunction hypothesis, Clitic Left Dislocation involves adjunction of the dislocated constituent to the left of XP, whereas Clitic Right Dislocation involves adjunction to the right of the same or another XP. De Cat (forthcoming), for instance, argues for the analysis in (1):

(1)   Dislocated elements are adjoined by first-merge to Discourse Projections, which are finite root(-like) sentences. (De Cat, forthcoming)

Since in the current generative literature there seems to be a ban on right-adjunctions because of antisymmetric constraints on phrase structure (Kayne 1994), we will not take the adjunction analysis into consideration.

2.2   Analysis B: the complement analysis (Kayne 1994)

Since, in Kayne's Antisymmetry theory, right-adjunction is not allowed, Kayne (1994) proposes that dislocated object constituents are merged in complement position, unifying clitic right dislocation (2) and clitic doubling of the sort familiar from Spanish (Jaeggli 1982), as exemplified in (3). In both cases there is a complement doubled by a clitic:

(2)   *Je l'   ai   vu, Jean.*
        I   him have seen Jean
        'I have seen Jean.'
(3)   *Lo vi   a   Juan.*
        him I-saw Case-marker Juan
        'I saw Juan.'

Kayne proposes that whereas clitic left dislocation of an object involves movement in Syntax of the complement to a left peripheral position at the edge of the clause, as in the Italian example (4), this movement takes places covertly, i.e. at LF, in the case of clitic right dislocation in (5):

(4)   *[A suo fratello]$_i$, glielo dico t$_i$ subito.*
        to his brother   him-it I-say immediately
        'I say it immediately to his brother.'
(5)   *Glielo dico   subito,   a suo fratello.*
        him-it I-say immediately to his brother
        'I say it immediately to his brother.'

As for the dislocation intonation associated with right-dislocation, Kayne proposes that this could be expressed by having an optional feature present in the "overt syntax" that would feed both LF (triggering CLLD movement) and PF (triggering a certain intonation contour).

We discard Kayne's analysis B, because it is theoretically not attractive. Although left-dislocated constituents are topics in Syntax, under his analysis right-dislocated constituents are not.

2.3   Analysis C: the low Topic analysis (Cecchetto 1999, Villalba 1999, Belletti 2001, 2005)

In Cecchetto's (1999) analysis of clitic right dislocation, a Big DP is merged in argument position:

(6)   BigDP

     Double   Clitic

The Big DP moves as an entire category to the specifier position of a functional projection external to the VP, such as Agr_oP. From this position the clitic can move to its final landing site.

In clitic left dislocation, the double moves to a Topic position in the periphery of the clause:

(7)   *A Gianni, gli ho   gia   dato il libro.*
       To Gianni him I-have already given the book
       'I have already given the book to Gianni.'
(8) $[_{TopicP}$A Gianni$_i$ $[_{IP}$*pro* gli$_j$ ho gia dato il libro$_k$ $[_{AgroP}[_{BigDP}$ t$_i$ t$_j]_l$ $[_{VP}$ t$_k$ t$_l$]]]]

In clitic right dislocation the double moves to a low Topic position that is immediately above Agr_oP:

(9)   *Lo odia   Maria, Gianni.*
       him hates Maria Gianni
       'It is Maria who hates Gianni.'
(10) $[_{IP}$ *pro* lo$_j$ odia $[_{FocusP}$ Maria$_k$ $[_{TopicP}$Gianni$_i$ $[_{AgroP}$ $[_{BigDP}$ t$_i$ t$_j]_l$ $[_{VP}$ t$_k$ … t$_l$]]]]]

For clitic right dislocation Cecchetto assumes that the Topic Phrase to the left of Agr_oP is immediately dominated by a Focus Phrase that hosts the element that bears main prominent stress. In (10) this is the subject and in (12) the indirect object:

(11)   *Piero lo dà   a Gianni, il   libro.*
       Piero it gives to Gianni, the book
       'Piero gives the book to Gianni.'

(12)   [$_{IP}$ Piero$_m$ lo$_l$ dà [$_{FocusP}$[a Gianni]$_i$ [$_{TopicP}$[il libro]$_k$[$_{AgroP}$[$_{BigDP}$t$_k$ t$_l$]$_j$ [$_{VP}$ t$_m$ .. t$_j$ t$_i$]]]]]

2.4   Analysis D: the left periphery of the clause analysis (Cardinaletti 2002, Frascarelli 2004, Samek-Lodovici 2006)

According to the left periphery of the clause analysis, both left- and right-dislocated items first move leftward to or are merged in the specifier of a TopicP in the left periphery of the clause. In the case of left dislocation, the dislocated constituent stays in the left peripheral topic position, as in (14), which is the same analysis of left dislocation as the one adopted by approach C, see (8):

(13)   *Gianni, l'   ho   visto.*
       Gianni   him I-have seen
       'I have seen Gianni.'

(14)   [$_{TopP}$ Gianni$_i$ [$_{IP}$ *pro* l'ho visto t$_i$]]

Right dislocation results from further raising of the remnant IP to the specifier of a phrase dominating the TopicP:

(15)   *l'   ho   visto, Gianni.*
       him   I-have seen Gianni
       'I have seen Gianni.'

(16)   [$_{XP}$ [$_{IP}$ *pro* l'ho visto t$_i$]$_k$ [$_{TopP}$ Gianni$_i$ t$_k$]]

In the literature, several arguments have been advanced in favour or against approaches C and D, one of which we will discuss in the next section.

3.   An empirical argument in favour of the low Topic analysis

We have discarded the adjunction analysis, analysis A, because it does not respect Antisymmetry and also analysis B, Kayne's complement analysis, because right dislocations are only topics at LF. In this section, we compare the predictive power of analyses C and D. Analysis C is called a clause-internal analysis of right-dislocation in the literature (see Cardinaletti 2002 and Samek-Lodovici 2006). Clause-internal analyses maintain that right-dislocated constituents remain c-commanded by I°. In analysis C, Cecchetto's analysis, the right-dislocated item raises to a topic position above VP but lower than I°. Analysis D is called a clause-external analysis of right-dislocation, because the

dislocated item is moved to a position outside the IP and therefore is not c-commanded by I°.

Samek-Lodovici (2006) advances three arguments against clause-internal analyses such as C, one of which we will present here, and which we will reject, and which we will use instead as an argument in favour of clause internal analyses such as C.[1]

One of Samek-Lodovici's arguments against clause-internal analyses such as C comes from binding. Samek-Lodovici notes that there is a difference in acceptability between sentences (17) and (18). Although Samek-Lodovici bases his argument on Italian, his mother tongue, it should be noted that the argument can also be extended to other languages, such as English, French, Dutch or Spanish, in which the same differences seem to obtain:
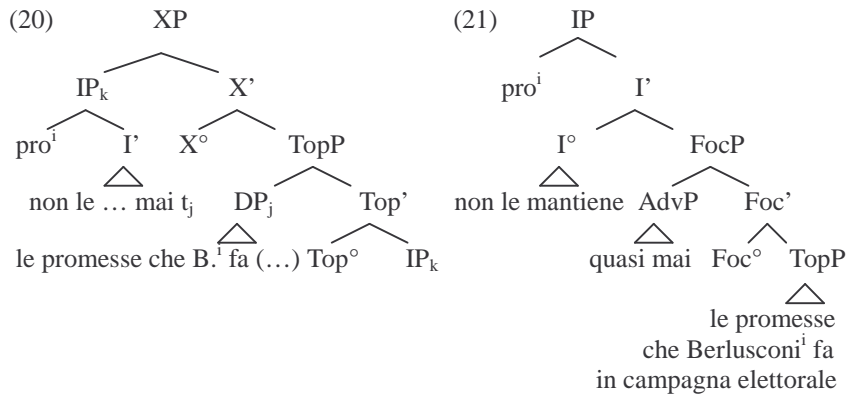
(17)   *pro$_i$ non le   mantiene quasi MAI, le promesse che Berlusconi$_i$ fa*
       (he) not them keeps   almost never, the promises that Berlusconi makes
       in campagna elettorale.
       in campaign electoral
       'Berlusconi almost NEVER keeps the promises that he makes during the electoral campaign.'

(18)   **pro$_i$ non le   mantiene quasi MAI, le promesse che Berlusconi$_i$ sarà*
       (he) not them keeps   almost never, the promises that Berlusconi will-be
       onesto.
       honest
       'Berlusconi almost NEVER keeps the promises that he will be honest.'

In (17) the *that*-clause following *le promesse* is a relative clause, whereas in (18) the *that*-clause following *le promesse* is a complement. Samek-Lodovici follows Lebeaux (1990), who argues that complement clauses have to reconstruct at LF in their original position, whereas adjunct clauses can be inserted late in the derivation, i.e. after the object's dislocation, and do not have to reconstruct. In (18), the dislocated object has to reconstruct at LF in its VP-internal object position together with its complement, the *that*-clause, which results in a principle C violation, because the referential expression *Berlusconi* is c-commanded by a coreferential *pro*. Notice that both the external clause analysis, analysis D, and the internal clause analysis C can account for the unacceptability of (18), because in both cases the *that*-clause is dominated by IP:

(19)   *[$_{IP}$ *pro$_i$* non le mantiene quasi MAI le promesse che Berlusconi$_i$ sarà onesto]

But sentence (17) permits to make a distinction between clause-external and clause-internal analyses, according to Samek-Lodivici. In (17) the relative clause is an adjunct and as such can be inserted late in the derivation, i.e. after the

object's dislocation. Since the late-inserted *that*-clause does not reconstruct with the object *le promesse* in the VP-internal object position, in a clause-external analysis *pro* does not c-command the referential expression in the relative clause, so that there is no principle C violation. Recall that in the clause external analysis IP is in the specifier of XP, see (20). Since IP is in the specifier of XP, *pro* does not c-command the TopicP below XP. In a clause-internal analysis, the right-dislocated constituent is c-commanded by the specifier of IP, which would lead in (17) to a principle C violation, see (21). So, according to analysis D, (17) is grammatical because *pro* does not bind the referential expression *Berlusconi*, whereas according to analysis C (17) should be ungrammatical, because *pro* binds *Berlusconi*.[2]

(20)   XP

IP$_k$ X'

pro^i I'   X°   TopP

non le … mai t$_j$ DP$_j$ Top'

le promesse che B.^{i} fa (…) Top°   IP$_k$

(21)   IP

pro^i I'

I°   FocP

non le mantiene   AdvP   Foc'

quasi mai   Foc°   TopP

le promesse
che Berlusconi^i fa
in campagna elettorale

However, Samek-Lodovici's argument against C, and in favour of D, is not valid, as we will show now.

Samek-Lodovici observes himself that native speakers of Italian only accept (17) if the adverb *mai* is stressed. This means that the sentence is not totally acceptable, even though in analysis D *pro* does not c-command the referential expression *Berlusconi*. In Samek-Lodovici's view, (17) could be compared to (22) and (23), in which the pronoun does not c-command the referential expression, and which contrast with (24), in which the pronoun c-commands the referential expression:

(22)   His$_i$ mother loves John$_i$.
(23)   Near him$_i$, John$_i$ saw a snake.
(24)   *He$_i$ loves John$_i$.

However, if *pro* in (17) does not c-command the referential expression, we would expect (17) to be as grammatical as (25), in which the pronoun *his* does not c-command the referential expression *Berlusconi* either. But (17) is far less acceptable than (25), which suggests that in (25) the pronoun does not c-command the referential expression, just as in (22) and (23), but that in (17) it does, just as in (24), hence its ungrammaticality with unstressed *mai* (26). This also suggests that the fact that (17) with a strong stress on the adverb (27) is not totally unacceptable is due to something else, maybe a discourse effect:

(25)   *I suoi$_i$ elettori non le prendono sul serio, le promesse che Berlusconi$_i$ fa in campagna elettorale.*
'His electors do not take seriously the promises that Berlusconi makes during the electoral campaign.'

(26)   **pro$_i$ non le mantiene quasi mai, le promesse che Berlusconi$_i$ fa in campagna elettorale.*

(27)   *??pro$_i$ non le mantiene quasi MAI, le promesse che Berlusconi$_i$ fa in campagna elettorale.*

Since analysis C, the clause-internal analysis, correctly predicts that (17) is less acceptable than (25), because in this analysis the pronoun c-commands the referential expression in (17) but not in (25), which leads to a difference in acceptability, this constitutes an argument against analysis D, and in favour of analysis C.

In the next section we will present our second argument in favour of analysis C, which comes from cross-linguistic L1 acquisition data.

4.   Evidence from acquisition data

In this paper, we adopt a structure building approach (Guilfoyle & Noonan 1992) to language acquisition. In this approach, it is assumed that children acquiring their mother tongue start by acquiring lexical categories while functional categories are acquired later. This acquisition starts from the lowest elements in the structure. Functional elements come in one by one, the higher projections like 'C' coming in last. Platzack (2000) has claimed that acquiring the CP domain is especially difficult for children because it expresses the interface between syntax and pragmatics. Interface positions would be hard to acquire because the child has to be aware of the interaction between two modules of the grammatical system. Purely syntactic projections would be easier to acquire. As dislocations are used to express the pragmatic function of topic, they are typical examples of interface phenomena.

When starting from an analysis of dislocation as proposed by Cecchetto (1999), this leads to the following prediction for the acquisition of dislocations by monolingual children. If there are two topic positions, a lower topic position for right dislocations and a higher one for left dislocations, then we should expect children to acquire right dislocations before left dislocations, since they acquire lower positions before higher ones.

In order to test this prediction, we studied the data of 3 monolingual children acquiring French, Dutch and English (see table 1).

Table 1: data of the children studied

Monolingual children (CHILDES)		
Language	Name child	Age
French	Philippe	2;1-3;5
English	Trevor	2;0-3;10
Dutch	Laura	2;1-3;4

For the analysis of the child data, we distinguished three age-based stages: 2;0-2;6, 2;6-3;0, 3;0-3;6. From the child data, we extracted all the utterances that would allow dislocation for pragmatic reasons. Elements that were considered as candidates for dislocation were

- definite lexical NPs (considering definiteness as a sign of 'givenness')
- third person personal pronouns
- first and second person personal pronouns in contexts of topic shift or contrast.

For the early data, we included constructions that were no full-fledged dislocations because one or more elements (often the verb) were lacking. We termed them 'proto-dislocations'. An example of such a 'proto-dislocation is given in (28): [3]

(28)   *malade Anouk*   ANO 2;4
         ill   Anouk
         'Anouk is ill'

4.1 Parental input

We looked at the presence of dislocations in the parental input to the monolingual children studied in order to check if this child directed speech offers the same figures as adult-to-adult speech. Figure 1 shows the constructions used by the adults in utterances where dislocations are possible according to the criteria formulated in §4. The figure shows clearly that the input differs strongly depending on the language spoken:
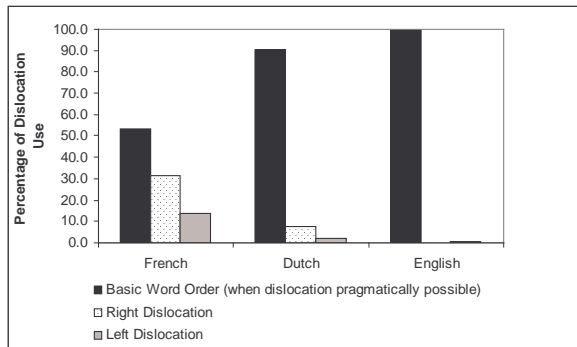
Figure 1. Use of topic constructions in child directed speech

In English, there are virtually no dislocations (2 left dislocations in the files analyzed, no right dislocations). In Dutch, dislocations are rare but present. They are mostly right dislocations. In French, dislocations are frequent: in about 50% of the utterances where a dislocation could be used, a dislocation is indeed produced. The majority are right dislocations. This is in contrast to adult-to-adult interaction, where there is a majority of left dislocations (Blasco-Dulbecco 1999, Notley 2004). We will come back to this finding in the discussion section.

4.2 Dislocations in the child data

In this section, the findings for the monolingual children are given in tables 2 through 4 (data also presented by Notley et al, forthcoming). For each child, we give the absolute number of utterances where dislocation would be a possible option (indicated as 'disl possible') and of left and right dislocations and 'proto-dislocations', indicated in the tables as LD / RD and 'proto-LD' / 'proto-RD'. Each table is followed by some examples.

Table 2: Philippe

Philippe (French)	2;0-2;6	2;6-3;0	3;0-3;6
proto-LD	1	0	0
proto-RD	19	0	0
LD	2	7	25
RD	67	23	33
Disl possible	28	58	40

(29)   *dans le pantalon ton verre*   PHI 2;1.19
       'in the pants, your glass'
(30)   *la tour Montparnasse elle est pas belle*   PHI 3;0.20
       'the Montparnasse tower, it's not beautiful'

Table 3: Trevor

Trevor (English)	2;0-2;6	2;6-3;0	3;0-3;6
Proto-LD	0	0	0
Proto-RD	0	0	0
LD	1	0	1
RD	0	0	0
Disl possible	50	43	37

(31)   but the other guy who wears a black hat he's bad   TRE 3;3.4

Table 4: Laura

Laura (Dutch)	2;0-2;6	2;6-3;0	3;0-3;6
Proto-LD	0	0	0
Proto-RD	11	1	0
LD	0	0	1
RD	2	3	1
Disl poss	57	25	25

(32)   *nee, isse mij bauwe*   LAU 2;4
       'no, it is mine, the blue one'
(33)   *die ga oor opeets, dese*   LAU 3;2
       'that one goes ear eat, this one'

Summarizing, we see a growing amount of dislocations in Philippe's French, mostly right-dislocations but with a shift towards left-dislocations in the later files. In Trevor's English, we see virtually no dislocations at all (2 occurrences of LD in the files analyzed). In Laura's Dutch, we see more dislocations than expected, all to the right, except for one example of LD. The dislocations disappear after 3;6. All children start by using 'proto-dislocations' as in (34):

(34)   *confiture, ça?*   ANNE, 2;6
       '(is it) marmalade, that?'

We can conclude that the input plays a crucial role: English children get no positive evidence for the existence of dislocations in their L1 and do not produce them; French and Dutch children get positive evidence for both right and left dislocation (more for RD). They produce dislocation early (see also De Cat

2002, forthcoming) and start by using RD, at first in non-finite utterances. Philippe, who is a very fast learner, does produce 2 left dislocations in the early files, but they are largely outnumbered by right dislocations. The French and Dutch children use RD even more than in Child directed speech. This suggests that they then possess the lower TopicP – and a Focus Phrase on top of it to which e.g. *confiture* in (34) moves – but not yet the higher TopicP in the IP/CP domain (analysis C). The child directed speech in French and Dutch suggests that the parents adapt their language to this early stage in acquisition: they use more RD in their speech to the children than they do in adult interactions. The exception is English, in which language we see no right dislocation at all.

5.   Discussion

On theoretical grounds, we formulated the following prediction for the acquisition of dislocations by monolingual and bilingual children: if there is a higher and a lower Topic position for dislocated constituents, corresponding to left and right dislocation respectively, then we should expect children to acquire right dislocation before left dislocation.

This prediction is borne out. All children do indeed produce right dislocations before left. This suggests that the analysis of Cecchetto (1999) and others is correct and that indeed there are two different Topic Phrases, one lower position which is the landing site for right dislocation (with the remainder of the clause moving to positions dominating the low Topic Phrase), one higher position that is the landing site for left dislocation. In the acquisition process, children follow a structure building route, acquiring lower functional projections before higher ones.[4] The behaviour of adults in this respect is interesting. In French and Dutch, where both right and left dislocations are possible, adults use more left dislocations when addressing each other. However, they use more right dislocations when speaking to their children. This could mean that intuitively they know that the right dislocations are accessible earlier and therefore syntactically easier for children to use.[5]

6.   Conclusion

In this paper, on the basis of data from Italian and from cross-linguistic L1 acquisition, we have defended the analysis of dislocation according to which a clitic right-dislocated constituent moves to a TopicP in the right periphery of the

vP, while a left-dislocated constituent moves to a higher TopicP in the left periphery of the clause.

The Italian (right-dislocation) data came from Samek-Lodovici (2006). Although Samek-Lodovici used them as an argument against the low Topic position, we have argued instead that they constitute an argument in favour of the low Topic position.

Adopting a structure building approach to language acquisition, we have argued furthermore that the fact that cross-linguistically children seem to acquire right-dislocations before left-dislocations supports the low Topic position for right-dislocations.

In this paper we have only provided two arguments in favour of the low Topic position. More research will be needed to find further support.

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[1] Samek-Lodovici's arguments also concern analysis B, Kayne's complement analysis, which is also a clause-internal analysis. Hence, all arguments in favour or against analysis C can be extended to analysis B. We have discarded analysis B, however, for other reasons (see §2.2).

[2] It is also possible to advance another explanation for the difference in grammaticality between (17) and (18), namely one that does not resort to reconstruction. In (18) the *that*-clause is a complement. The noun *promesse* is a nominalized verb, a complex event noun (Grimshaw 1990), which means that it has an empty subject, cf. (i) with (ii), in which there is an overt possessive pronoun *sue* 'his':

(i)   *pro_i non le mantiene quasi MAI, le PRO_i promesse che $Berlusconi_i$ sarà onesto.*

(ii)   *pro_i non le mantiene quasi MAI, le sue_i promesse che $Berlusconi_i$ sarà onesto.*

The comparison with (iii) suggests that the ungrammaticality of (18) is due to the binding of the referential expression *Berlusconi* by a c-commanding pronoun in the dislocated constituent, which results in a principle C violation, and not to the binding by a c-commanding pronoun which is the subject of IP. It is thus irrelevant whether the dislocated constituent including the *that*-clause reconstructs or not. In analyses C and D the ungrammaticality of (18) can be accounted for as in (i).

(iii)   *$Berlusconi_i$ non le mantiene quasi mai, le PRO_i/ sue_i promesse che pro_i sarà onesto.*

When the *that*-clause is a relative clause, *promesse* is a result noun and there is no such pronoun preceding the noun, cf. (iv). The only antecedent possible in (17) is *pro*, the subject of the sentence:

(iv)   *$Berlusconi_i$ non le mantiene quasi mai, le (*sue) promesse che pro_i fa in campagna elettorale.*

In analysis D, the IP is in the specifier of XP, so that *pro* in (17) does not c-command the referential DP *Berlusconi*, in analysis C, *pro* c-commands *Berlusconi*.

[3] Enoch Aboh (p.c.) suggested that it could be the case that certain types of verbs, i.e. stative verbs, could more easily trigger the appearance of these proto-dislocations. In the child data studied, we found no confirmation for this suggestion. All types or verbs can appear in these constructions.

[4] It should be noticed that the argument in favour of analysis C hinges on the Kaynian programme. Without a ban on right-adjunction, a structure building approach to acquisition could also handle the early preference for right- over left-dislocation, if it is assumed that right-adjuncts are attached to the minimal XP that contains the pronominal expression with which they are associated, whereas left-adjuncts adjoin to the entire clause (Delais-Roussarie, Doetjes & Sleeman 2004).

[5] It is not excluded that the interaction between adults and children also stimulates the use of right dislocations instead of left. Right dislocated topics are often used as a kind of pointers to objects present in the direct environment, as in (i). This could reinforce the use of the syntactically simpler right dislocation.

(i)   Alors, tu le prends, le petit nounours?
         'So, you take it, the small bear?'