A Constructional Account of Right Dislocation in English

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Outside the Clause: Form and function of Extra-clausal constituents
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English typically employs two types of dislocation construction, Left Dislocation (LD) as in (1a) and Right Dislocation (RD) as in (1b) (see Huddleston and Pullum 2002, Ziv 1994, among others):

(1) a. Her parents, they seem pretty uncaring.
   b. They seem pretty uncaring, her parents.

Both LD and RD dislocate an NP to the left or right of the clause, with an anaphorically linked pronoun.
Left Dislocation

Various grammatical functions of the LD-ed expression

(2)  a. But his mother, I really admire her.
    b. My sister, someone threw a rock at her at the beach.
    c. The people next door, the police have just arrested their son on a drugs charge.
    d. The other one, they don’t think she will survive.
LD’s pragmatic/syntactic functions

- marking an entity as already evoked in the discourse to facilitate the retrieval of the discourse referents (Ziv 1994)
  
  (3) Jerry, he’s been working here for years.

- simplification of processing: helps to prevent a discourse-new element from appearing in the subject position, which favors discourse-old elements (Huddleston and Pullum 2002):
  
  (4) My sister and her husband were having a terrible fight, and she started to scream. The landlady, she went up, and she told them she was going to call the police.

- amnestying island constraints (LDs constitute instances of topicalizations with resumptive pronouns, Prince 1984)
  
      b. My copy of the book, I don’t know who has it.
Similar to LD, the pronoun in the RD construction can have a wide range of functions (see Huddleston and Pullum 2002 among others):

(6) a. I really like him, your dad.
   b. I have never spoken to her before, the Vice Chancellor.
   c. What is his name, your son?
   d. There is no doubt that they are unusually bright, your kids.
RD’s main discourse functions

- anti-topic: the RDed NP is a lexical topic NP which is positioned at the end of the clause containing the information about the topic referent (Lambrecht 1981)

- Main function of RD is to recover entities which are either ‘situationally evoked’ or ‘textually evoked’ so that the topic is understood correctly and is being referred to exactly (Prince 1984, Ziv 1994).

  (7) a. He is a nice guy, your brother.
      b. It is ridiculously heavy, my science book.

- The RDed NP thus refers to a discourse old but not recently mentioned entity, making itself ‘discourse salient’ (Huddleston and Pullum 2002, Ziv 1994).
Extraposition clauses have an unbroken intonation, while the RD is set apart prosodically from the rest of the clause (Leonarduzzi and Herment 2013, Michaelis and Lambrecht 2006):

(8) a. It is important to meet the people.
    b. It is interesting, what you are saying.

The pronoun in Extraposition is nonreferential, but the pronoun in RDs is referential and can be replaced by this/that:

(9) a. It/*That is important to meet the people.
     It/This is a little bit different, [the fact that there are two co-hosts]. (COCA 1998 NEWS)
RDs vs. Afterthoughts (Ziv and Grosz 1994)

- RDs have one single intonation contour with no pause, but afterthoughts have a distinct pause.
- RDs require coreferentiality between the pronoun and the RDed expression, but afterthoughts may contain a correction of the reference:

(10) I met John yesterday, Bill, I mean.
Main goals of this talk

- To investigate authentic uses of RDs from the corpus data.
- To examine syntactic as well as pragmatic/semantic properties of RDs.
- To provide a constraint-based analysis with the perspective of Construction Grammar.
Corpora used: available from http://corpus.byu.edu

- COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English) 450 million words from 1990 to 2012, with contemporary American English data from a variety of registers including written and spoken
- COHA (Corpus of Historical American English: 400 million words of text of American English from 1810 to 2009.
- BYU-BNC: 100 million word British National Corpus
- Time Magazine Corpus of American: 100 million words
Main search methods:

- simple string search: where ‘x’ means from zero to nine
  (11) $[pp^*] \times [d^*] \times [nn^*]$  
- RD examples are manually identified
Grammatical Functions of NP1 in corpora data

NP1’s grammatical functions can vary: it can function as subject, direct object, prepositional object, or predicative complement:

(12) a. **He** was a mystery, Ralph. (COCA 2012 FIC)
b. ... I wanted to comfort **him**, the poor man. (COCA 2001 MAG)
c. No one has to take responsibilities on this job except for **me**, the structural engineer. (COCA 1992 FIC)
d. ... I guessed his name before I took in his long body and knew it was **him**, the golden boy. (COCA 2006 FIC)

The NP1 antecedent can be repeated or even split:

(13) a. They take **it**, they accept **it**, this un-American status. (COCA 2004 SPOK)
b. ... **she** laughed, and **he** laughed with her, these two, these motherless children. (COCA 2011 FIC)
NP1 can also appear in an embedded clause or a specifier of NP:

(14) a. It was the same air they had breathed, those great newspapermen. (COHA 1944 FIC)
    b. What’s his name, your friend? (COCA 2011 FIC)

NP1 can be even an indefinite pronoun, functioning as the subject or direct object (see Ott and de Vries 2013 for German):

(15) a. He says the police had misread something else, [those online searches]. (COCA 2010 SPOK)
    b. If you’re reactive, you might wake up and find something has been lost, [that flavor]. (COCA 2006 NEWS)
Syntactic Types of NP2

- NP2 is typically a definite NP, implying that it is given information.
  (16) ...as if she wanted to protect her daughter even from him, \[\text{NP}[\text{the father}]\]. (COCA 2003 FIC)

- NP2 can be a complex noun phrase:
  (17) a. I think they recognized him, too, \[\text{NP}[\text{this priest who fits his village like a glove}]\]. (COCA 2013 FIC)
  b. ...she gazed at him with love, \[\text{NP}[\text{her brother who had gone to war}]\]. (COCA 1999 FIC)

- Free relative clauses can also function as NP2 (cf. Leonarduzzi and Herment 2013):
  (18) a. We were talking about it, \[\text{NP}[^{\text{what she was doing wrong}}]\]. (COCA 1992 MAG)
  b. His elbow was red, with a skin bubble on it, \[\text{NP}[^{\text{where he’d burned himself}}]\]. (COCA 2012 FIC)
Clause-final Position

Note that the RD expression may appear in the clause-final position (see Ott and de Vries 2013 for German data):

(19) a. Would it work, **this arrangement**, if she accepted it? (COHA 1934 FIC)

   b. It wrapped around her snugly, **that cockpit**, as if the jet was custom made for her. (COHA 2004 FIC)

   c. I’m not gonna accuse **him** of perjury, **David**, because the case hasn’t been tried yet. (COCA 1998 SPOK)

   d. There was little in that room to suggest who **he** was, **this stableman**, except … (COHA 2005 FIC)
The RD expression is typically taken to clarify and reintroduce the evoked (discourse-old) entity to make it discourse-salient. Corpus data also support this:

(20) a. He would catch the next train to Dachenko and be back in time for lunch with Oleg and Grandma Shurin. And she’d be sorry, his mother. (COCA 2002 FIC)

b. There was a wild pear tree by the cracking stony gate. I remember that. She pruned it carefully, that wild tree. (COCA 1997 FIC)

In (20b), the RD helps it clear that the pronoun it refers to not the phrase the gate but pear tree. That is, the RDed NP2 provides the necessary clarification.
Emotional Contents

Mayol (2007) suggests that RDs are used to convey some ‘emotional content’ having to do with the expression of contrast or emphasis. That is, the RD helps to make explicit the speaker’s opinion on the entity NP1 refers to:

(21) a. You’re talking about his inspirational politics? I’m talking about him, the human being. (contrast) (COCA 2010 FIC)

b. Poor Robert! What a sad falling off. And so, creature of habit that I was, I wanted to comfort him, the poor man. (emphasis) (COCA 2001 MAG)
Discourse Distance of NP2

- Ziv and Grosz (1994) claim that the entity NP2 refers to cannot occur in the previous sentence:
  
  (22) A: Did you see Jack yesterday?  
  B: #Yes. He is going to Europe, Jack.

- However, the distance is not a crucial factor.
  
  (23) ... the gallery’s idea to have them serve the usual stale canapes and the usual cheap white wine, not the painter’s idea; maybe the bar owner was impressed by that or just the look of him, the painter. (COCA 2004 FIC)

- The level of processing difficulty: The RD can be of help to pinpointing what NP1 refers to, when it is vague or ambiguous.
English Copular Constructions

There are three types of copular constructions in English (see Higgins 1979, Mikkelsen 2011, among others):

(24) **Predicational:**
   a. John is a student.
   b. *A student is John.

(25) **Equative:**
   a. John is the very student.
   b. The very student is John.

(26) **Specificational:** NP1 offers a variable while NP2 specifies its value.
   a. Something I read is a book.
   b. The winner of the game is John.
The semantic relation between the two NPs is traditionally taken to be anaphoric (Quirk et al. 1995).

We suggest that the relation is a ‘copular-relation’ which can be interpreted as equative, predicational, and specificational, respectively.

(27) **Equateve: the most standard uses**
   a. You love him, Ralph. (COCA 2012 FIC)
   b. Go with him, Raven. (COCA 2011 FIC)

(28) **Predicational: not common but can be found**
   a. He must appear to them as what he had been since they saw him last, a soldier. (COCA 1992 FIC)
   b. And I don’t know why but Bill felt the need to wrestle him to the ground, a total stranger. (COCA 2005 SPOK)
Specificational Relations

- NP2 specifies the meaning of NP1, and it thus can be also realized with indefinite article.

\[(29)\] **Specificational:**

a. We’re trying to do something new here, **some groundbreaking stuff.** (COCA 2000 FIC)

b. I nodded, and felt there must be **something between us, a secret.** (COCA 2002 FIC)
More on the Specificational uses: Data repeated

- complex NP2:
  
  (30) a. I think they recognized him, too, [this priest who fits his village like a glove].
  b. ...she gazed at him with love, [her brother who had gone to war].

- Free relative clause NP2
  
  (31) a. We were talking about it, what she was doing wrong.
  b. His elbow was red, with a skin bubble on it, where he’d burned himself.

- Emotional NP2
  
  (32) a. I’m talking about him, the human being.
  b. I wanted to comfort him, the poor man.
A Variant of RDs

- NP2 is followed by a copular verb:
  (33) a. ...death was more real to a person after he turned forty. Any forty-year-old would confirm this. It was more present, death was. (COCA 2006 FIC)
  b. He held his position for a moment, testing the wind. It was in his face, praise be. (COCA 1991 MAG)

- Other auxiliary verbs can also follow the NP2 (cf. Durham 2011):
  (34) a. Yes, he gave me money, Tusker did. (COCA 2012 FIC)
  b. They’ll say, people will. (COCA 1994 FIC)
  c. he can actually assume the loan, the husband can.
Unlike standard RDs, this kind of variant applied only when NP1 is a subject (Durham 2011):

(35) a. Mary wanted to go with him, *John did.
    b. Mary will meet him in the meeting, *John will.

The verb following NP2 must match with the matrix verb in tense and modality:

(36) Yes, he gave me money, Tusker did/*will/*can.
In capturing the properties of RDs we have observed, we adopt the framework of Construction Grammar (CG) whose main features can be summarized as follows (see, among others, Goldberg 2006):

- All levels of description (including morpheme, word, phrase, and clause) are understood to involve pairings of form with semantic or discourse functions.
- Constructions vary in size and complexity and form and function are specified if not readily transparent.
- Language-specific generalizations across constructions are captured via inheritance networks, reflecting commonalities or differences among constructions.
Key Assumptions

- There is a specific head-dislocated construction including LD as well as RD constructions.
- Pronominal elements optionally put a parameter in the STORE value.
- This parameter is coindexed with the left-dislocated phrase.
Dislocation constructions

(37) Inheritance hierarchy for the family of dislocation constructions:

```
phrase
├── HEADEDNESS
│   ├── hd-comp-cxt
│   └── hd-mod-cxt
├── CLAUSALITY
│   └── info-cl
│       ├── ... core-cl
│       └── hd-dislocation
└── extra-cxt
    └── afterthought-cxt
```
Pronominals

- pronominal elements optionally put a parameter in the STORE value

(38) \( \text{pronoun} \rightarrow \left[ \text{STORE (i)} \right] \)

- this parameter is coindexed with the left-dislocated phrase.
Head-Dislocated Constructions

- English employs head-dislocated constructions including LD as well as RDs
  
  (39) Head-Dislocation Construction
  \[
  \begin{array}{c}
  \text{hd-dis-cxt} \& \text{hd-mod-cxt} \& \text{top-cxt} \\
  \text{SYN} \mid S \\
  \text{STORE} \{ \} \\
  \end{array}
  \rightarrow S \left[ \begin{array}{c}
  \ldots \\
  \text{STORE} \{ i \}, \ldots \\
  \end{array} \right] , \text{NP}_j
  \]

- Right-Dislocation Construction: a subtype of the \textit{hd-mod}, \textit{top-cxt} and \textit{hd-dis-cxt} inheriting its constructional properties
  
  (40) Right Dislocation Construction
  \[
  \begin{array}{c}
  \text{right-dis-cxt} \\
  \text{SYN} \mid S \\
  \end{array}
  \rightarrow S, \text{NP}_j \left[ \begin{array}{c}
  \text{SEM} \mid \text{PRED copular-rel}(i,j) \\
  \text{PRAG discourse-salient}(j) \\
  \end{array} \right]
  \]
The argumental NP2 doesn’t satisfy selectional needs of the host-clause head:

(41) a. Mary saw *(him), John.
    b. Mary is looking for *(him), John

The right-dislocated phrase cannot undergo another syntactic operation (see de Vries 2013, Ott and de Vries 2013):

(42) a. They recognized him, this priest.
    b. *Who did they recognize him?
    c. *He, this priest, was recognized by them.

In (42b), the NP2 this priest cannot be wh-questioned or passivized as in (42c), indicating that NP1 and NP2 is not a constituent.
Discourse Salient

The recovered NP2 must be ‘fully’ informative or discourse-salient (Ziv 1994, Mayol 2007)

Pronouns and proper nouns are minimally informative

(43) a. *The picture is beautiful, it.
    b. *John is here, John.

The referent occurring in the immediately preceding linguistic context is infelicitous in RD.

(44) A: Did you see Jack yesterday?
    a. #Yes. He is going to Europe, Jack.
An exemplar structure

(45)

```
S[right-dis-cxt]
  STORE {}
```

```
S
  STORE {i}
```

```
NP
  IND i
```

```
NP
  STORE {i}
```

```
John
```

```
Mary
```

```
V
  likes
```

```
NP
  STORE {i}
```

```
him,i
```
Clause-boundedness

- If NP2 is right-adjointed to the host clause, it makes the RD acceptable.

(46) a. When she arrived cycling, that woman, Piet jumped up.

b. 

```
 S  \-----\   S  \-----\   S
   \-----/     \-----/     \-----/
   S  \-----\   NP  \-----\   S
   \-----/     \-----/     \-----/
     S  \-----\   that woman_i,  \-----\   Piet jumped up
     \-----/     \-----/
       \-----\   \-----/
         ...she_i,...,  that woman_i,
```

S

JB Kim (KHU)
The NP1 *she* is part of the *when*-clause, but the RD *that woman* combines with the matrix clause:

(47) a. *When she arrived cycling, Piet jumped up, that woman.*
    b. ...she,..., Piet jumped up,
Accounting for the clause-boundedness

- more on the clausal properties (data from Michaelis and Lambrecht 1994)

(48) a. It was amazing, the difference, in Germany.
    b. Since it was so amazing, that difference, he changed his mind.

- Violating the Complex Island Constraint

(49) a. The story that he told us, Bill, was very interesting.
    b. *The story that he told us was interesting, Bill.

- The constructional constraint specifies that the STORE value cannot be percolated up, passing an S node.
Accounting for the nonheaded properties of the STORE

- Relevant data

  (50) a. from the subject: He was a mystery, Ralph.
  b. from the specifier: What is his name, your son?

- The STORE value of a mother phrase is the sum of the STORE value in all the daughters.
A Variant of the RD Construction

- The RDed expression can be the subject plus the identical auxiliary (XARG: external argument, TAM: tense, aspect, and mood)
- An Extended Construction inheriting some properties from its supertype

\[ \text{Extended Right Dislocation Construction} \]

\[
\left[ \text{right-dis-cxt} \right] \rightarrow S \left[ \text{XARG} \right], S \left[ \text{TAM} \right], S \left[ \text{ELLIPSIS} + \right]
\]

- Implications: The LDed expression is an NP while the RDed can be either an NP or a clause in a limited environment with both the pronoun and the RDed being co-referential external arguments (cf. Ott and de Vries 2013).
Conclusion

- We see various uses of the construction from the corpus data.
- The RD construction displays quite complex syntactic and semantic/pragmatic properties.
- The regularities as well as idiosyncrasies of the construction can be expected once we suppose there is an independent RD construction linked to its constructional meaning.
Selected References


Selected References (Cont.)


