Thinking in the right direction

An ellipsis analysis of right-dislocation*

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We propose to analyze right-dislocation constructions in terms of clausal coordination, coupled with ellipsis. While neither rightward movement nor base-generation of backgrounded and afterthought phrases is descriptively accurate, we show that the facts follow straightforwardly on an analysis that takes the dislocated phrase to be the surface remnant of a second clause that is underlyingly parallel to the host clause and reduced by ellipsis at PF. Right-dislocated XPs are thus theoretically assimilated to sluiced *wh*-phrases, fragment answers, and other sentential fragments. We furthermore suggest that the two clauses in right-dislocation are syntactically related by an abstract coordinating head, making right-dislocation an instance of specifying coordination.

Keywords: right-dislocation, backgrounding, afterthoughts, ellipsis, movement, coordination, specification

1. Introduction

In this paper, we propose an ellipsis-based analysis of right-dislocation (RD) constructions. We will focus on instances of 'backgrounding', illustrated in (1), and of 'specificational afterthoughts', illustrated in (2):

(1) Joop heeft *ze* al gezien, *die nieuwe tablet-pc's*. (Dutch)
Joop has them already seen those new tablet-pc's
'Joop saw them already, those new tablet PCs.'

(2) Joop heeft *iets moois* gezien: *een tablet-pc van 10,1 inch*. (Dutch)
Joop has something beautiful seen: a tablet-pc of 10.1 inch
'Joop saw something beautiful: a 10.1 inch tablet PC.'

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Abstractly speaking, RD constructions of this type conform to the following general schema, where '*d*XP' designates the dislocated phrase, which is coreferent with a correlate (*ze* in (1), *iets moois* in (2)) in the host clause:

(3) $[_{CP} \ldots \text{correlate}_i \ldots]\ d\text{XP}_i$

In the backgrounding variety of RD, the right-peripheral *d*XP expresses discourse-old or otherwise salient information and is realized with low and level intonation, as indicated by a smaller font in (1). Where the *d*XP is used as a specificational afterthought, as in (2), it expresses discourse-new and/or focused information, and is consequently realized with an independent pitch accent.[1] Without intonational cues, sentences are potentially ambiguous between the two types.

Here, we will take backgrounding and specificational (or identifying) afterthoughts to be syntactically equivalent, differing only in information-structural status of the *d*XP. As we will see below, they seem to have all central syntactic properties in common. Consequently, in Section 2 we propose a partly unified analysis of RD,[2] according to which backgrounding and specificational afterthoughts are derived from an underlyingly biclausal structure and ellipsis in the second clause, indicated by strikethrough:[3]

(4) [Joop heeft *ze* al gezien] **:** [*die nieuwe tablet-pc's* ~~heeft Joop al *t* gezien~~]

As usual, ellipsis is optional; expectedly, a non-elliptical version of the repetition is grammatically well-formed while redundant, since it repeats given material:

(4') (#)Joop heeft ze al gezien; die nieuwe tablet-pc's heeft Joop al gezien.

This analysis, we claim, solves a hitherto unexplained paradox concerning RD: the *d*XP shows clause-internal as well as clause-external properties.[4] The external status of the *d*XP in sentences like (1) and (2) is more or less self-evident: the host clause is syntactically and prosodically complete, and the *d*XP is optional. Its clause-internal status requires further elaboration; this is the topic of Section 3, where we show how the analysis accounts for case and binding connectivity, among other things. Section 4 concludes the paper.

2. The ellipsis approach to RD: Outline of a theory

An obvious theoretical question raised by RD is how the *d*XP comes to assume its surface position — by movement or base-generation (see Zwart 2001 and Averintseva-Klisch 2009 for discussion). Building on ideas in de Vries (2007, 2009b, 2011a/b), we argue that in a way, both hypotheses are correct: the *d*XP is base-generated externally to the host clause, but as part of a second, parallel clause;

it undergoes leftward A-bar movement within that parallel clause, enabling it to 'survive' subsequent PF-deletion of the remainder of the clause.[5] The derivation of (4) is sketched in (5):

(5) [Joop heeft *ze* al gezien]:
(i) [Joop heeft *die nieuwe tablet-pc's* al gezien] → fronting
(ii) [*die nieuwe tablet-pc's* heeft Joop al *t* gezien] → PF-deletion
(iii) [*die nieuwe tablet-pc's* ~~heeft Joop al *t* gezien~~]

The effect of fronting prior to deletion is that the material that needs to be elided can be analyzed as a constituent (containing a trace). We will return to evidence for this movement below.

The type of clausal ellipsis postulated here is familiar from contemporary analyses of sluicing (Lasnik 2001; Merchant 2001), fragment answers (Merchant 2004; Temmerman to appear), split questions (Arregi 2010), etc. Consequently, we assume it to be subject to the same constraints on identification, enforcing 'parallelism' of the two clauses. Essentially, this follows from the theory of e-GIVENness, which, roughly speaking, requires mutual entailment between ellipsis site and antecedent. For reasons of space we cannot discuss the formal details of this mechanism here, but see Merchant (2001, to appear b) and Ott & de Vries (2012) for discussion and further references.

A further question that can be asked is how the two clauses are connected. We suggest that they are conjoined by means of specifying coordination. As has been argued by Kraak & Klooster (1968), Koster (2000), de Vries (2009a), and others, structural coordination is used not only for semantically symmetrical and non-coreferential relationships, it can also express semantic specification or identification. Thus, Koster defines a so-called 'colon phrase' [$_{:\text{P}}$ *spec* [**:** *compl*]], similar to a regular coordination phrase [$_{\text{CoP}}$ *spec* [Co *compl*]], but with the abstract colon as a coordinator. In some cases, including (5), the colon can be paraphrased as 'namely'. As we see it, structural coordination ('parallel structure') expresses a cohesion relation between clauses or phrases that are equipotent with respect to the grammatical context (in this case, the two underlying sentences surfacing in cases like (4')), but not necessarily with respect to each other. The semantic relationship between the parts depends primarily on the choice of coordinator.

As the specifics of the theoretical background assumptions are not essential for the general idea, the remainder of the paper is dedicated to empirical evidence for a biclausal analysis of RD in combination with sluicing-type ellipsis. For reasons of expository clarity, we keep representations as simple as possible.

3. Deriving the properties of RD

In this section, we discuss three central empirical properties of RD, which we show follow directly from our analysis.

3.1 Connectivity

Let us start by showing that the ellipsis approach to RD outlined above correctly predicts two core syntactic properties of RD: case matching and reconstruction.

First, the *d*XP and its correlate obligatorily agree in morphological case; this can be shown in German and Icelandic, for instance:

(6) Ich habe *ihm* geholfen, *dem*/**der* *Peter*. (German)
I have him:DAT helped the:DAT/NOM Peter
'I helped Peter.'

(7) Ég þekki *hana* ekkert, *dóttur* *hans*. (Icelandic; Thráinsson 2009)
I know her:ACC not daughter:ACC his
'I don't know his daughter at all.'

If indeed *d*XP in (6) and (7) is the (indirect resp. direct) object in an elliptical clause, the observed dative or accusative morphology is the expected pattern, as opposed to a potential default nominative. Case matching in RD is thus a direct consequence of clausal parallelism required for ellipsis (cf. Chung in press).[6] Parallelism also explains straightforwardly why *PRO* cannot act as an anchor for a *d*XP, as observed by Truckenbrodt (2012). Witness the following case, where the *d*XP corresponds to the silent subject of the infinitival clause:

(8) Peter hat angeordnet, *PRO* die Straße zu fegen (**die* *Arbeiter*). (German)
Peter has ordered the street to sweep the:NOM workers
intended: 'Peter ordered the workers to sweep the street.'

(Note that unlike English *to order*/Dutch *bevelen*, but like Dutch *verordonneren*, German *anordnen* does not allow an indirect object; consequently, the *d*XP can only be construed as being associated with *PRO*.) As argued by Truckenbrodt, (8) is an instance of parallelism failure: for the second clause to be underlyingly parallel to the first, it must contain an embedded control clause.[7] Being non-finite, however, such a parallel clause necessarily fails to license an overt subject, making RD impossible:

(9) *[$_{CP2}$ *die Arbeiter* ~~hat Peter angeordnet, *t* die Straße zu fegen~~]

Second, the *d*XP or subconstituents thereof can be bound by material in the host clause. In (10), the *d*XP is an anaphor; in (11), it contains a bound pronoun. In

either case, the *d*XP appears to be accessible to c-command from within the host clause, enabling binding, as if it occupied the position of the correlate. The same is shown by (12), in which binding of a name inside the *d*XP by a host-clause-internal pronoun induces a Condition C violation, i.e. *ze* 'she' cannot be interpreted as coreferent with *Mieke*.

(10) Jan$_i$ zag *iemand* in de spiegel: *zichzelf*$_i$. (Dutch)
Jan saw someone in the mirror himself
'Jan$_i$ saw someone in the mirror: himself$_i$.'

(11) *Die* liebt doch jeder Lehrer$_i$, *seine*$_i$ *Schüler*. (German)
them loves PRT every teacher his students
'I'm sure every teacher$_i$ loves them, his$_i$ students.'

(12) *Ze$_i$ heeft *hem* gisteren nog gezien, *Miekes*$_i$ *vriendje*. (Dutch)
she has him yesterday still seen Mieke's boyfriend
'[*]She$_i$ did see him yesterday, Mieke$_i$'s boyfriend.'

Such 'connectivity (or reconstruction) effects' are problematic for a simple base-generation analysis of RD, which does not explain how the *d*XP would inherit grammatical properties (case, hierarchical position) from its correlate.

An alternative analysis in terms of rightward movement faces rather serious challenges as well. The most glaring problem is that the host clause by itself is syntactically complete: if the *d*XP moves from within the host clause, why would there be a correlate surfacing in its putative trace position? In fact, the correct generalization is that a *d*XP in RD *must* occur with a correlate in the host clause whenever it is an obligatorily realized argument, whereas the correlate is optional otherwise:

(13) Ik heb *('*m*) gezien, *die man*. (Dutch)
I have him seen that man
'I saw *(him), that man.'

(14) Ik heb (*toen*) een man gezien, *gisteren*.
I have then a man seen yesterday
'I (then) saw a man, yesterday.'

This is unexpected from the point of view of a movement analysis: since movement never disrupts thematic relations — and note that we just saw that the *d*XP reconstructs — it would be mysterious why a correlate must be 'left behind' in the host clause just in case the *d*XP is theta-marked.[8] By contrast, when the host clause and the *d*XP are analyzed as independent clauses, it is immediately obvious why the correlate is obligatory in (13) but not in (14): each clause must by itself be syntactically complete, obviating the need for an overt correlate when the *d*XP is an adjunct.

Furthermore, the possibility of connectivity itself is an automatic consequence of ellipsis and the prerequisite syntactic/semantic parallelism of the two clauses. On the biclausal analysis, the *d*XP can be a dependent of some relevant binder in the second, elliptical clause. This is shown in (15), which corresponds to (10):

(15) [Jan zag *iemand* in de spiegel]: [*Zichzelf*$_i$ ~~zag Jan$_t$ *t* in de spiegel~~]

Note that there is no actual reconstruction between the two clauses, only run-of-the-mill reconstruction of A-bar movement within the second clause. Thus, the anaphor *zichzelf* is interpreted at the trace position, which is c-commanded by the subject antecedent *Jan*; the same logic derives the facts in (11) and (12). This reasoning is directly parallel to that in Merchant (2004), where it is shown that fragment answers behave analogously:

(16) A: Wie heeft Jan$_i$ in de spiegel gezien? –B: Zichzelf$_i$. (Dutch)
who has Jan in the mirror seen himself
'A: Who did Jan see in the mirror? – B: Himself.'

If Merchant's and our analysis are correct, the fragment response in (16) has the exact same underlying structure as the *d*XP in (10), namely that shown in (15).

3.2 Scope

As demonstrated at length in Ott & de Vries (2012), the analysis makes a variety of further welcome predictions. Here, we would like to mention two of these. First, Zwart (2001, 2011:79) observes that right-dislocated elements take wide scope over the host clause:

(17) Jan heeft twee keer het eerste kievitsei gevonden. (Dutch)
Jan has twice the first plover's egg found
'Jan twice found the first plover's egg.' (*twice* > *first*, #*first* > *twice*)

(18) Jan heeft het twee keer gevonden, het eerste kievitsei.
Jan has it twice found the first plover's egg
'Jan found the first plover's egg twice.' (*first* > *twice*, #*twice* > *first*)

On the most natural reading of (17), *het eerste kievitsei* is interpreted nonspecifically, i.e. within the scope of *twee keer*: it was the case twice (say, in two subsequent years) that Jan found the first plover's egg. RD in (18) gives rise to a (pragmatically deviant) reading according to which a specific first plover's egg was found twice by Jan. This *prima facie* unexpected wide-scope behavior of the *d*XP is expected on the ellipsis analysis: in (19), which according to our analysis is equivalent to the underlying structure of the *d*XP in (18), *het eerste kievitsei* likewise takes wide scope.

(19) Het eerste kievitsei heeft Jan twee keer gevonden. (*first* > *twice*, *#twice* > *first*)

While this fact could be accounted for on a base-generation analysis of RD provided that the attachment site is high enough, i.e. that the *d*XP adjoins to the (main) clause, such an approach necessarily fails to account for the connectivity effects documented in the preceding section. By contrast, the ellipsis analysis, according to which the *d*XP in (18) is underlyingly equivalent to (19), correctly predicts both kinds of facts.

3.3 Preposition stranding

Recall that our analysis includes the auxiliary hypothesis that the *d*XP leftward-moves prior to deletion, thereby enabling constituent ellipsis. This makes a prediction concerning preposition stranding, which we will now show to be borne out.

In his discussion of sluicing, Merchant (2001) arrives at the following generalization:

(20) *P-stranding Generalization* (Merchant 2001)
A language *L* will allow preposition stranding under sluicing if and only if *L* allows preposition stranding under regular *wh*-movement.

The following sluicing examples illustrate:[9]

(21) Sie hat mit jemandem geredet, aber ich weiß nicht *(mit) wem. (German)
she has with someone spoken but I know not with who
'She talked to somebody, but I don't know [to] who.'

(22) Per har snakket med noen, men jeg vet ikke (??med) hvem.(Norwegian)
Per has talked with someone but I know not with who
'Per talked to someone, but I don't know [to] who.'

Merchant's reasoning is as follows. Norwegian, being a P-stranding language, allows for the preposition to be stranded inside the ellipsis domain when the sluiced *wh*-phrase undergoes leftward operator movement. By contrast, German, which generally bans P-stranding, necessarily sluices it along with the *wh*-phrase.

Similarly, if the *d*XP is topicalized within the second clause in a RD construction, preposition stranding should be possible if and only if the language generally allows for P-stranding under A-bar movement. This prediction is borne out. Consider first the non-P-stranding languages German and Dutch:

(23) Ich habe den ganzen Tag *auf ihn* gewartet, **(auf) den Peter*. (German)
I have the whole day for him waited for the Peter
'I waited for him all day long, [for] Peter.'

(24) Joop wilde niet met 'm praten, *(met) Piet. (Dutch)
Joop wanted not with him talk with Piet
'Joop didn't want to talk with him, [with] Piet.'

As expected, the prepositions must be retained. By contrast, in P-stranding languages they are preferably dropped:

(25) Jón talaði við hana, (??við) gömul konuna. (Icelandic)
Jón talked to her to old lady:DEF
'Jón talked to her, [to] the old lady'

(26) Jeg krangler ofte med ho, (??med) søstera mi. (Norwegian)
I quarrel often with her with sister my
'I often quarrel with her, [with] my sister.'

These facts corroborate our assumption that the *d*XP undergoes leftward A-bar movement prior to PF-deletion of the remainder of the clause. In Icelandic and Norwegian, this leftward movement results in preposition stranding and, consequently, deletion of the preposition, as shown in (27). By contrast, German and Dutch require pied-piping of the preposition, which is consequently retained (28).

(27) $[_{CP2}$ gömul konuna [~~talaði Jón við *t*~~]] (= (25))

(28) $[_{CP2}$ auf den Peter [~~habe ich *t* gewartet~~]] (= (23))

There is thus substantial evidence for the underlying biclausal nature of RD constructions, as well as for leftward movement of the *d*XP prior to deletion.[10] This, in turn, strongly suggests that the theoretical assimilation of *d*XP to other types of sentence fragments proposed here (see the references in Section 2) is on the right track. Note that this assimilation entails a reduction of RD to basic operations: A-bar movement and deletion at PF. Neither these ingredients of our analysis nor specifying coordination by means of a 'colon phrase' is specific to RD; hence, the analysis successfully eliminates constructional residue from the theory of UG. Moreover, it eliminates a potential case of rightward movement or right-adjunction, theoretical notions that have been argued to be suspicious and obsolete in general (see Kayne 2011 for recent discussion).

4. Conclusion

We have argued in this paper that specificational right-dislocation should be analyzed in terms of clausal ellipsis, on a par with sluicing, fragment answers, split questions, etc. The analysis obviates the need for rightward movement or

right-adjunction. Most importantly, however, it correctly captures seemingly contradictory properties of right-peripheral *d*XPs: a *d*XP is *external* to the host clause *qua* constituent of a separate clause; at the same time, a*d*XP exhibits clause-*internal* properties, owing to the fact that the separate elliptical clause is underlyingly parallel to the host clause, as required for clausal ellipsis to apply felicitously.

Notes

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1. On prosodic and information-structural properties of RD, set aside here, see Altmann (1981), Averintseva-Klisch (2009), de Vries (2011a), and Truckenbrodt (2012).

2. Crucially, we need to set aside here an apparently related construction type, namely predicative (or attributive) afterthoughts; see de Vries (2011b) and Ott & De Vries (2012) for some pertinent discussion.

3. For closely related proposals, see Kayne (1994:78) on English, Endo (1996) and Tanaka (2001) on Japanese, and Park & Kim (2009) on Korean.

4. The same apparent paradox arises in Contrastive Left-dislocation, which is consequently analyzed along similar lines in Ott (2012a).

5. This deletion is often taken to target IP (e.g., by Lasnik 2001 and Merchant 2001), however we side with Thoms (2010) and Ott (2012b) in that we take the elided domain to be the derived complement of the fronted operator XP (accounting for the obligatory absence of C-related material in sluicing contexts).

6. Facts of this ilk seem to require that the parallelism condition on ellipsis demand at least some morphosyntactic (rather than purely semantic) identity, as proposed (for independent reasons) by Merchant (to appear a) and Tanaka (2011), among others. We cannot enter into this discussion here for reasons of space, however note that the issue is not specific to our proposal: a sluiced *wh*-phrase likewise cannot have controlled *PRO* as its correlate, giving rise to the same parallelism failure.

7. Truckenbrodt proposes an analysis quite similar to the one advanced here, except that in his implementation the second clause is reduced by gapping rather than sluicing-type ellipsis. Ott & De Vries (2012) show that gapping is ill-suited to account for the properties of the *d*XP in RD, however.

8. This problem besets movement analyses of any kind, including an (as far as we know, hypothetical) approach in terms of 'copy spell-out', as proposed for left-dislocation in Grohmann (2003) (based on a suggestion in Cinque 1990). In this approach, correlates of dislocated XPs are pronounced traces. While such a treatment may have some intuitive plausibility with regard to

pronominal correlates, it is clearly not feasible in cases of full-XP correlates (the standard situation with afterthoughts, cf. (2)).

9. Dutch patterns with German, however judgments are somewhat less stable (see Merchant 2001:95; Kluck 2011), a fact that is presumably related to the absence of morphological case-marking in this language.

10. A reviewer wonders what triggers this movement, in particular in backgrounding, where the *d*XP — seemingly exceptionally for an ellipsis remnant — is given (not focused) material. We would like to submit, however, that this superficial impression is misleading: backgrounded *d*XPs *are* foci, but foci that are embedded within an overall backgrounded domain (= CP_2). Note that while the *d*XP in backgrounding is a discourse topic, it nevertheless provides new/additional information relative to the correlate in CP_1. Therefore, backgrounding on our analysis is no exception to the generalization that material that is retained in elliptical constructions is focused (cf. Molnár & Winkler 2010). Concerning the question of the trigger for leftward movement within CP_2, then, one could maintain that this movement is generally triggered by a [+focus]-feature on the fronted *d*XP (akin to Merchant's 2004 treatment of fragment answers). On the other hand, however, it is far from clear that Merge (including Internal Merge, i.e. movement) is generally feature-driven in this sense, or that assuming so provides a *bona fide* explanatory advantage. On the alternative view that Merge applies essentially freely (cf. e.g. Chomsky 2004), leftward movement in CP_2 is simply an option exploited by the grammar to comply with recoverability, rather than a featurally-induced obligation; see Ott (2012b) for some relevant discussion.

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