

THE SYNTAX, PRAGMATICS, AND SOCIOLINGUISTICS OF LEFT- AND RIGHT-DISLOCATIONS IN FRENCH

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Aspects of the syntax, pragmatics and sociolinguistic distribution of left- and right-dislocations in a corpus of spoken French are treated. Most tokens of both types have clear pragmatic motivation, two functions being common to both, with other functions particular to one or another type. The social distribution of weakly motivated tokens does not support the view that, as French moves toward verb-initial typology, dislocated subjects are being grammaticalized as ordinary subjects.

1. Introduction

In this paper, I shall treat the phenomenon usually referred to as detachment or dislocation.¹ Dislocations apparently occur in many languages, and, indeed, may be universal (Dik (1978: 140)); but here I will focus exclusively on French. Examples of left- and right-dislocations (hereafter abbreviated as LD and RD) are given in discourses (1) through (4).²

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¹ This terminology suggests that a given sentence constituent, usually a NP, is extracted from its basic position and put either to the left or to the right of the main predication. In fact, there has been some controversy in the literature about whether dislocations involve a transformational process, whether they are constituents of a basic sentence type (Lambrecht (1981,1987)), or whether they are optional 'themes' and 'tails' which fall 'outside of the predication proper' (Dik (1978: 136)). I shall not discuss this issue further, but mention it as a preface to saying that in this paper the term dislocation does not necessarily imply any particular syntactic analysis. See Barnes (1985: 4–5) for a summary of the various syntactic analyses of dislocation that have been put forth in the literature.

² The examples cited throughout this paper have been taken from a corpus of French described later on. In the examples, dislocations are indicated by boldface. When the dislocation has an anaphor in the main predication (i.e. a co-referential clitic), this anaphoric relationship is indicated by underlining. Following conventional French orthography, in the transcriptions

- (1) Interviewer: Quelle est la chose la plus difficile à servir?
 Speaker 15: Ah, le découpage, le flambage, bien sûr.
 Interviewer: Vous faites ça souvent?
 Speaker 15: En ce moment, oui. Je fais en ce moment, parce que **Antonio**, il me l'apprend.
- (2) Interviewer: Nous avons passé quinze jours à l'hôtel, à Azay-le-Rideau.
 Speaker 27: Oui, le [name of hotel], c'est bien là. Il a beaucoup de tableaux à moi chez lui. Oui, il est gentil, **Monsieur [name of inn keeper]**.
- (3) Speaker 50: [expressing satisfaction at having passed her *baccalauréat* examination]:
Moi, je suis contente d'avoir passé tout ça, parce que, oh! **Le lycée** d'abord, j'en avais marre, ras le bol.
- (4) Speaker 38: [describing her contentment in having bought an apartment in Tours, her native city]:
 Mon mari a été gentil de rester dans la région, parce que il est pas Tourangeau, **lui**. Il est de l'Aude.

In (1), for example, instead of coding the NP *Antonio* as the grammatical subject, Speaker 15 puts this referent in a LD that is tied to the main predication by the subject clitic, *il*. Similarly, in discourse (2), Speaker 27, an artisan and painter, names the proprietor of a local hotel in a RD, earlier indicating the same referent by the subject clitic. Note that the dislocated element may be a NP, as in (1) and (2) or a free pronoun, as in (3) and (4). In either case, the dislocated element is linguistically coded in the main predication by a clitic pronoun of the same person and number as the referent named in the dislocation. A single discourse referent may even be coded three times: once by the clitic, once by a LD, and once by a RD, as in discourse (5). Multiple dislocations may also refer to different discourse referents, as in discourses (6) and (7).

- (5) Speaker 25: **Madame [name of referent]**, elle est née ici, **elle**.
 (6) Speaker 12: **Moi**, **le sport** qui me passionne, c'est le rugby.
 (7) Speaker 42: [describing the difficulty of the *Certificat d'Aptitude*

dislocations are set off by commas. This is not meant to suggest that there is necessarily a pause, an accent, or any other prosodic feature marking off the dislocation. See Lambrecht (1981: 16–21) for a discussion of the prosody of dislocations in French.

professionnelle (C.A.P.), a licence awarded to craftsmen who have passed a State examination in their trade]:
Alors je sais que **mon frère, son C.A.P., il l'a pas eu.**

In Ashby (1982), I reported that data from an extensive corpus of recorded interviews did not appear to support the claim of Harris (1978) that French is changing its basic sentence typology from SVO to VOS or VSO, as predicted by Vennemann's cyclic view of typological change (Vennemann (1974)). Harris (1978) had argued that, in French LDs are more 'marked' than RDs and that, from a diachronic perspective, the sentence type with RD is losing its 'pragmatic marking,' thereby leading to the grammaticalization of right-dislocated subjects as ordinary subjects. Were this to occur, and were the subject clitics reanalyzed as person-number prefixes bound to the verb, French would then become a verb-initial language. The data reported in my earlier paper showed that the speakers who might be expected to lead in Harris' putative change to verb-initial syntax (the younger speakers, for example) did not produce a remarkably larger number of RDs compared to LDs than did others. The younger speakers did use more dislocations of both types than did the older speakers.

Since my earlier paper, much work has been done on the syntax and pragmatics of French dislocations, especially by Lambrecht and by Barnes. Barnes (1985), building on Lambrecht's work (Lambrecht (1981,1987,forthcoming)) has provided the most thorough and convincing account to date of the pragmatics of left dislocations in French. As yet, she has not extended her analysis to RDs. It is the status of the *right*-dislocations, however, that is the key to Harris' hypothesis of typological change in French. Harris (1983) (a review of Lambrecht (1981)) and Harris (1985) reaffirm the belief that, even though RDs may still be subject to some pragmatic constraints in Modern French, they do portend a change to verb-initial typology in a longer, diachronic view. Be this as it may, Harris (1985: 10) is apparently correct in asserting that as yet 'no answer' has been provided to the question, 'What criteria determine the use of one or the other [type of dislocation]?'³

It is, in fact, the similarities and differences between RD and LD that I propose to examine here, basing my analysis on data taken from the same corpus of interviews used for Ashby (1982). These were recorded in 1976 in Touraine, whose capital, Tours, is about 225 kilometers southwest of Paris. The French of this area is relatively unmarked by regional traits, at least on

³ Cf. Harris (1983).

the level of syntax, and can probably be considered typical of northern, central French. All tokens containing left- and right-dislocations were extracted from recordings of two sub-samples of speakers,⁴ representing the social categories shown in the appendix. Within each group there are approximately the same number of women and men, and of speakers from two informally defined socio-economic groups. The 'upper' class includes speakers with a university education or the equivalent, who are in most cases professionals or high-ranking government officials or businessmen. The 'lower' class includes those who have less than a high school diploma and who are employed as blue-collar workers, low-level clerical workers, farmers, and artisans. The speakers fall into the age strata shown in the appendix.

In this paper, I will compare the LDs and RDs that emerged from this corpus according to their syntactic properties, the discourse status of their referents and their apparent pragmatic functions. I will then try to determine whether these data show any evidence of the grammaticalization of the RDs predicted by Harris.

2. Syntax of left- and right-dislocations

The corpus yielded a total of 862 tokens containing LDs and 226 tokens containing RDs, as shown in table 1. Fifty-five percent of the LDs involved pronouns and 44 percent a full NP; whereas for RDs, 70 percent involved pronouns and only 30 percent full NPs. Eleven tokens involved left-dislocated infinitives or embedded clauses, but a single infinitival RD was found. Table 2 shows the count of LDs and RDs in the corpus according to the syntactic function of the dislocation. An overwhelming majority of both LDs and RDs involved the grammatical subject; but non-subject nouns and pronouns can also be dislocated.

It has often been stated in the literature that an important syntactic difference between LDs and RDs is that the former do not necessarily show case marking, but that the latter necessarily do.⁵ Of course, this can only be seen in the use of a preposition before dislocated indirect objects, possessives,

⁴ As shown in the appendix, recordings of 25 speakers were used for the study of LD. Because these speakers produced only 79 RDs, it was necessary to include also the right-dislocations produced by the additional speakers shown in the appendix.

⁵ See Lambrecht (1981:67–72) and Barnes (1985:21–24) for a discussion of the differences between left-dislocations with and without the case marking. See Dik (1978: 136) for a discussion of syntactic marking in left-dislocations.

Table 1

Observed and relative frequencies of left- and right-dislocations involving pronouns, nouns, and clauses.

		Left-dislocations	Right-dislocations
Pronouns:	no. of tokens:	470	158
	percent:	55%	70%
Nouns:	no. of tokens:	381	67
	percent:	44%	30%
Clauses:	no. of tokens:	11	1
	percent	1%	1%
Total:		862 tokens 25 speakers	226 tokens 58 speakers

Table 2

Observed and relative frequencies of left- and right-dislocations in pronouns and nouns, by syntactic function.

Syntactic function of dislocation	Left-dislocations		Right-dislocations	
	Pronouns	Nouns	Pronouns	Nouns
Anaphoric				
subject	400 (85%)	281 (73%)	150 (95%)	53 (79%)
direct object	22 (5%)	32 (8%)	6 (4%)	10 (15%)
indirect object	9 (2%)	5 (1%)	1 (0.5%)	0
oblique	2 (0.5%)	12 (3%)	0	3 (4%)
possessive	4 (1.5%)	3 (1%)	1 (0.5%)	1 (1.5%)
Non-anaphoric	33 (7%)	48 (13%)	0	0

and obliques, since subjects and direct objects are not marked for case in French. An example of a LD that occurs without potential case marking is given in discourse (8). Its left dislocated prepositional counterpart would be as in (8').⁶ The canonical equivalent of (8), without the dislocation, is given in (8'').

⁶ It is, however, not certain that the equivalent LDs with and without the preposition are in fact 'counterparts'. According to Lambrecht (1981: 69–72), left-dislocated prepositional phrases are more contrastive than corresponding left-dislocated NPs. Cf. Barnes (1985: 21–24).

- (8) Speaker 94: [describing holiday celebrations during her childhood]:
 Ça avait une grande importance, parce que d'abord
 euh **les enfants**, on leur donnait très peu.
 (8') ...**aux enfants**, on leur donnait très peu.
 (8'') ...on donnait très peu **aux enfants**.

Discourses (9) and (10) show that the syntactic relationship between the right-dislocated element and the main predication may indeed be explicitly marked by a preposition within the dislocation.

- (9) Speaker 104: [trying to recall the name of an elderly cooper]:
 Je me rappelle plus de son nom, **à cet animal-là**.
 (10) Speaker 25: [pointing to some old farming tools belonging to
 Speaker 100, to whom he speaks]:
 Faut pas les ficher en l'air, parce que il va arriver un
 jour où on en trouvera plus, **de ces vieux instruments-**
là.

In discourse (11), however, there is no preposition in the RD to mark its syntactic link with the main predication:

- (11) Speaker 56: [describing the preparation of a rack of lamb]:
 C'est-à-dire que pour deux personnes, il faut acheter
 cinq kilos d'agn-, de mouton, d'agneau. Et le reste,
 c'est du déchet. On peut pas s'en servir, **le reste**.

Had the dislocation not taken place, the preposition would have been required, as in (11'). It could also have appeared in the dislocation, as suggested in (11''):

- (11') ...On peut pas se servir du reste.
 (11'') ...On peut pas s'en servir, **du reste**.

Similarly, in (12), no preposition is evident in the right dislocation:

- (12) Speaker 100: Ça nous est égal, **nous**.

A preposition never precedes an object clitic, of course; but there is a preposition in the underlying structure of (12), as can be demonstrated by the

substitution of an NP for the pronoun, as in (12'). This preposition may also surface in the dislocation, as illustrated in (12'').

- (12') C'est égal à mes amis.
 (12'') Ça nous est égal, **à nous**.

In fact, of the 5 tokens that occur in my corpus in which the RD could have begun in a preposition, the preposition is present in only 2. This finding is surprising only because others have maintained that case marking must be explicit whenever possible in RDs, but not in LDs. Lambrecht (1981: 78–79), for example, says, 'An important difference between topics and antitopics [his terms for LDs and RDs, respectively], is that the latter are marked for their case roles with respect to the verb...Antitopics (RDs) are syntactically determined by the argument structure of the verb in a way topics (LDs) are not'.⁷ Clearly, my data show that left- and right-dislocations are not as distinct, in this respect at least, as has been assumed.⁸

On the other hand, an important syntactic difference between LDs and RDs concerns the grammatical coding of anaphor. While most LDs are tied to the main predication by a coreferential clitic, a relatively small number lack this explicit anaphor (7% of LDs involving pronouns and 13% involving noun phrases, as shown in table 2).⁹ Barnes (1983, 1985: 100), following Chafe (1976: 50), labels at least some of these non-anaphoric LDs 'Chinese-style topics', because they seem to be akin to the topic + comment structure of that language. Consider discourse (13), for example.

- (13) Interviewer: Il y a beaucoup de Français qui visitent les Etats-Unis maintenant.
 Speaker 35: **Le Français, L'Amérique**, c'est, c'est le paradis, c'est le pays attirant, c'est, c'est, c'est le pays idéal, quoi.

⁷ Cf. Dik (1978: 154), 'We noted that in many languages the Theme [LD] must or at least can be produced in absolute form [without syntactic marking]. The different relation between the Predication and the Tail [RD] is signalled by the fact that in these same languages the Tail cannot be so produced'.

⁸ Cf. also Larsson (1979: 57), Dik (1978: 154).

⁹ Barnes (1985: 98) reports a similar ratio of LDs that lack a clitic anaphor. Most scholars who have noted this phenomenon believe that it does represent a sub-type of left-dislocation (e.g., Larsson (1979: 44–45), Barnes (1985: 98–109), Lambrecht (1987)). Calvé (1983), however, excludes this type from his analysis of dislocations.

In (13) *le Français* is a left-dislocated NP, as is *l'Amérique*. But while the latter is formally related to the main predication by the anaphoric clitic *c'*, no such anaphor ties *le Français* to the main predication. Another example of a non-anaphoric LD, this time with a pronoun, is given in (14):

- (14) Speaker 26: [having been asked whether she had found it difficult to have had her father as her English teacher]:
C'est-à-dire que Papa, c'est un bon professeur; j'aimais bien ce qu'il faisait, oui. Non. J'ai une amie, ça lui posait des problèmes d'avoir sa mère comme professeur. Mais **moi**, ça y était.

In (13) and (14) the use of the non-anaphoric LDs seems to correspond to Chafe's characterization of Chinese topics, i.e., 'the establishment of a spatial, temporal, or personal frame or domain for an assertion which follows' (Chafe (1976: 55)).

There is, then, a basic syntactic difference between left- and right-dislocations, in that RDs are more tightly bound to the main predication than LDs. Unlike LDs, right-dislocations are always keyed to a clitic anaphor in the main predication, and they are always potentially (albeit not always actually) marked for case.

3. Discourse status

I now turn to an analysis of the discourse status of the referents of left- and right-dislocations. Givón (1983) proposes a scalar coding of 'topic accessibility', one suggested to have cross-linguistic and possibly universal relevance. According to this hypothesis, RDs serve to code 'more continuous' and 'more accessible topics' than do LDs. To measure 'topic accessibility', Givón proposes a calculation of 'referential distance', or 'look-back'; that is, 'the gap between the previous occurrence in the discourse of a referent/topic and its current occurrence in a clause, where it is marked by a particular grammatical coding device. The gap is thus expressed in terms of number of clauses to the left' (Givón (1983: 13)). To test Givón's hypothesis that RDs are more continuous and accessible than LDs, I applied his look-back test to the dislocated noun phrases in my corpus. As Givón's theory correctly predicted, the left-dislocated nouns had a higher average look-back quotient (13.7 clauses) than the right-dislocated nouns (6.9 clauses).

It was evident in the data, however, that this simple calculation of referential continuity was skewed by the fact, well-documented by Barnes (1985), that LDs in French frequently code *new* discourse referents. New referents would, of course, be assigned the maximum 'look-back' score of 20. When it became apparent that the RDs in the corpus also sometimes coded new discourse referents, I decided to calculate the informational or 'activation' status (Lambrecht (forthcoming)) of the referents of left- and right- NP dislocations, according to the typology suggested by Barnes (1985).¹⁰ These calculations are given in tables 3a and 3b. In the interest of brevity, I will forgo illustrating the various types of LD represented in table 3a; Barnes (1985) provides numerous examples. In my data, roughly one-half of left-dislocated noun phrases referred to new (but inferrable) discourse referents, as is shown in table 3a.¹¹

Table 3b gives the count of right-dislocated NPs in the corpus in each of the possible referent statuses suggested by Barnes (1985). As with LD, right-dislocations most often code what Barnes terms 'evoked' referents. This category includes tokens that are 'strictly given', that is, those where an anaphoric pronoun apparently would have sufficed to identify the referent.¹² This type is illustrated in discourse (15):

(15) Speaker 102: [The overall discourse topic is the high cost of medical school in France; Speaker 102 cites the experience of a colleague's son]:

Parce que je sais que son fils avait plusieurs années qu'il, qu'il travaille tout en continuant ses études.

Speaker 2: Ça, c'est dur aussi.

Speaker 102: Il euh, ça fait au moins trois ans qu'il, qu'il est à l'hôpital de Château-Renault. Il est en dernière année, **son fils**.

Speaker 2: Ah mais, oui, c'est en dernière année.

¹⁰ Lambrecht (forthcoming) proposes a slightly different typology, based on that of Chafe (1976) and Prince (1981).

¹¹ In Barnes' corpus this ratio was lower: approximately 34% of left-dislocations were found to code 'new' referents of the 'inferred' or 'unused' type (Barnes (1985: 63)).

¹² Lambrecht (1987: 5) (pace Chafe (1976: 30) defines a given (i.e. strictly given) referent as 'one that is assumed by the speaker to be present in the consciousness of the addressee at the time of the utterance'.

Table 3a

Informational status of referents of left-dislocated noun phrases.^a

	Evoked			New		N.d. ^b	Total
	Strictly given	Textually given	Sit. given ^c	Inferred	Brand new		
Subject NP: <i>ce/ça</i> anaphor	28 (18%)	67 (42%)	0	64 (40%)	0	11	170
Subject NP: <i>il(s)/elle(s)</i> anaphor	8 (7%)	27 (24%)	0	76 (69%)	0	0	111
Non-subject NP, object clitic anaphor	4 (8%)	23 (45%)	1 (2%)	23 (45%)	0	1	52
NP with no clitic anaphor	4 (8%)	24 (50%)	0	20 (42%)	0	0	48
Total	44 (12%)	141 (38%)	1 (3%)	183 (50%)	0	12	381
Total evoked vs. new		186 (50%)		183 (50%)			

^a 381 tokens; 25 speakers.^b N.d. = not a discourse referent^c Sit. given = situationally given

In (15), the immediate discourse topic is the son of a co-worker of Speaker 102. After the initial introduction of this referent into the discourse via the NP, *son fils*, Speaker 102 continues to refer to him with a series of simple anaphoric pronouns. Rather than continuing this coding strategy, Speaker 102 instead switches to a RD in his last sentence given in discourse (15).

Evoked referents may also be 'textually given'. That is, they may have been mentioned earlier in the discourse, but are not the immediate discourse topic. In this case, an anaphoric pronoun alone is insufficient, and a RD may be used to bring these referents back into the immediate focus of the discourse. An illustration is given in discourse (16):

- (16) Speaker 6: [The overall discourse topic is the charm of Touraine]:
Il y a la Loire et ses châteaux. Ça c'est...Quand on
parle de la Touraine, on pense immédiatement aux

Table 3b
Informational status of referents of right-dislocated noun phrases.^a

	Evoked			New		N.d. ^b	Total
	Strictly given	Textually given	Sit. given ^c	Inferred	Brand new		
Subject NP: <i>ce/ça</i> anaphor	5 (33%)	7 (47%)	2 (13%)	1 (7%)	0	0	15
Subject NP: <i>il(s)/elle(s)</i> anaphor	11 (29%)	12 (32%)	5 (13%)	9 (24%)	0	0	38
Non-subject NP, object clitic anaphor	8 (57%)	4 (29%)	0	2 (14%)	0	0	14
NP with no clitic anaphor	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	24 (36%)	23 (34%)	7 (10%)	12 (18%)	0	0	67
Total evoked vs. new		54 (81%)		13 (19%)			

^a 67 tokens; 31 speakers.

^b N.d. = not a discourse referent

^c Sit. given = situationally given

châteaux. Et puis, la situation quand-même, les rivières-là. La Loire est belle. Vous avez visité la Vallée de la Loire?

Interviewer: Oui, pas mal.

Speaker 6: Elle est belle, **la Loire**, hein?

Here the most immediately accessible referent preceding the RD is not the Loire river itself, but the Loire *valley*, with all that that referent implies. In her last sentence, by using a RD Speaker 6 comes back to the river itself, a referent previously mentioned in the discourse.

Referents named in RDs may also be 'situationally evoked', the third category of evoked referents given in table 3b. An example is given in discourse (17):

- (17) Speaker 25: [Standing in front of the house of Speakers 100 and 101, preparing to take his leave]:
 Au revoir Madame [name of Speaker 101]. A un de ces jours!
- Speaker 100: Je sais pas quand, je sais pas quand.
- Speaker 25: Bien, maintenant vous allez être plus libre.
- Speaker 100: Oh, il y a encore un petit quelque chose; c'est pas...
- Speaker 25: [interrupting Speaker 100, addressing Speaker 101]:
Il est joli, **ce dahlia jaune**.
- Speaker 101: Ben, vous voyez, Monsieur [name of Speaker 25], j'y ai mis de l'eau tout l'été; je me suis dit, 'Il va jamais fleurir.'

Here, the dahlia plant, suddenly noticed by Speaker 25, has not been mentioned in the previous discourse. Nevertheless, it cannot be considered a completely new referent, because it is physically present in the discourse setting. A gesture on the part of Speaker 25, together with the deictic particle in the RD, suffice to identify the referent. Right dislocations are much more frequently used to refer to situationally evoked referents than are LDs; in fact, my corpus contains a single example of a LD coding a situationally evoked referent.

While some 81% of right-dislocated noun phrases code *evoked* referents of one of the three types just mentioned, 19% of right-dislocated noun phrases code referents that are *new* to the discourse. Consider discourse (18), for example:

- (18) Speaker 21: [describing the liberation of Azay-le-Rideau near the end of World War II]: C'était libéré par le maquis ici. C'est le maquis qui a fait la libération du coin. Déjà, un petit peu, l'armée américaine était au nord de la Loire, jusqu'auprès de Tours; oui, au nord de la Loire. Elle était pas au sud. Et puis, ils étaient méchants, **les Allemands**. A la fin, quand ils ont vu que la situation était perdue, vous savez? Oh! Alors pour un oui, pour un non, on fusillait beaucoup ici.

In discussing the liberation, Speaker 21 first focuses on the maquis and the American army. Then, using a RD, he introduces a referent that has not been previously evoked in the discourse, the Germans. Now, of course Speaker 21

presupposes that I know something about World War II, specifically that the Germans were the adversary, so that this referent, though not evoked textually or situationally, is 'inferentially accessible' (pace Lambrecht (forthcoming)).

It is generally acknowledged that neither left- nor right- dislocations can be used with referents that are 'brand-new' (Prince (1981)) or 'unidentifiable' (Chafe (1976)). That is, there must be a 'semantic link' (Barnes (1985: 74)) between the proposition containing the dislocation and the preceding discourse. This is reflected by the fact that dislocations may not be used for referents that are semantically indefinite or unspecific (Lambrecht (1981: 61–62; 84–85), Barnes (1985: 92–94)). Consequently, dislocations are almost always formally definite, unless they express a generic NP. My data confirm this constraint on LDs, but a single example of a RD with a formally indefinite, but specific noun phrase does occur in the corpus. This example is given in discourse (19):

- (19) Speaker 19: [describing the festivities at a recent *comice agricole*]:
 On vendait des, des tickets pour une, un panier, on l'appelle. On fait, on fait un panier, puis on met beaucoup de choses dans le panier et on vend des tickets à un franc. Et puis on tire un numéro à la fin et celui qu'a le même numéro gagne le panier. Il a gagné ça, **un copain d'à côté**. Il a gagné vingt-cinq mille balles, hein?

The token given in discourse (19) is somewhat problematic. Unlike the new, but inferable referent illustrated in discourse (18), in (19) the speaker has no reason to presuppose that the neighbor named in the dislocation is known to his interlocutor. It is possible, however, that *un copain d'à côté*, though formally indefinite, is semantically definite, being an ellipsis of something like *un de mes copains qui habitent à côté*. This example could thus be likened to those discussed by Barnes (1985: 94) where 'the definiteness of the group to which [the NP] belongs is sufficient to make the referent of the NP identifiable, or at least sufficiently identifiable to be acceptable as [a dislocation]'.

A final comparative measure of the discourse status of referents named in left- and right-dislocations is given in table 4. Barnes (1985: 32–35), arguing for a 'multi-layered' conception of topicality, has shown that LDs may name referents that are simultaneously sentence topics and discourse topics. To

Table 4
Topic status of referent of left- and right-dislocated NPs.

	Left-dislocations	Right-dislocations
Sentence topic only:	172 (45%)	5 (8%)
Discourse topic:	209 (55%)	62 (93%)
Total:	381 tokens	67 tokens
	25 speakers	31 speakers

qualify as a discourse topic the referent must be ‘referred to in succeeding sentences’. Some referents named in LDs are restricted to a single sentence, however; that is, they are sentence topics that do not become discourse topics. In my data, some 45% of left-dislocated nouns fail to become discourse topics; but in only 8% of right-dislocated noun phrases is the referent not promoted to the status of discourse topic.¹³ In discourses (17), (18), and (19), for example, the referents given in the RDs become discourse referents, in that they continue to be talked about in succeeding sentences. In contrast, consider discourse (20), for example:

- (20) Speaker 101: [The topic of discourse is Jacques Morin, the son of a neighbor of Speakers 100 and 101, who has been living in Canada for several years; the discourse participants are Speakers 25, 100, and 101; Speaker 101 addresses Speaker 100, her husband]:
Excuse-moi, c’est de Jean Morin que tu parles? De Jacques? Eh bien, je crois bien qu’ils sont restés par là, d’après ce qu’elle m’avait dit, **Madame Morin**. Je crois bien qu’ils vont revenir par ici.

In (20), the referent of the RD, Madame Morin (Jacques Morin’s mother), is not made a discourse topic by Speaker 101. Madame Morin is merely cited parenthetically as Speaker 101’s source of information about the discourse topic, Jacques Morin.

In sum, my data on the discourse status of referents of left- and right-dislocations seem to confirm Givón’s hypothesis that the referents of RDs are more continuous and accessible than those of LDs. A much lower ratio of

¹³ All of these are of the ‘parenthetical’ type mentioned by Barnes (1985: 33).

RDs than of LDs code new referents, and referents whose topicality is restricted to a single sentence.

4. Pragmatic functions of left- and of right-dislocations

I now turn to an assessment of the pragmatic functions that the left- and right-dislocations seem to fulfil in my corpus. Again, I will concentrate on the RDs, referring my readers to Barnes (1985) for a very thorough and convincing treatment of the pragmatics of LDs in French. My data confirm that LD is primarily a topic-shifting or topic-creating device. Table 5a shows the

Table 5a
Observed and relative frequencies of left-dislocated pronouns and nouns, by pragmatic function.

Pragmatic function	Pronouns		Nouns	
	No.	%	No.	%
Contrast	112	24%	79	21%
Topic shift	249	53%	279	73%
Turn taking	25	5%	0	—
Weak	84	18%	23	6%
Total	470		381	

Table 5b
Observed and relative frequencies of right-dislocated pronouns and nouns, by pragmatic function.

Pragmatic function	Pronouns		Nouns	
	No.	%	No.	%
Contrast	31	18	5	6
Topic shift	7	4	4	5
Filler	23	13	0	—
Clarification	8	5	23	29
Epithet	0	—	3	4
Turn closing	48	28	30	38
Weak	56	32	14	18
Total ^a	173		79	

^a Some tokens displayed two pragmatic functions (e.g. contrast and turn closing). Such tokens were coded twice; consequently the totals given in tables 5b and 6b are greater than the actual number of right dislocations occurring in the corpus.

patterning of LDs in my corpus across the major pragmatic functions given in Barnes (1985).

Table 5b shows the patterning of RDs in the corpus, according to various pragmatic functions. The tokens I have counted as contrastive in tables 5a and 5b all occur in clearly contrastive contexts.¹⁴ Consider discourses (21) and (22), for example:

- (21) Speaker 15: [describing how he once dropped a bowl of soup in the restaurant where he is employed as a waiter]:
Un jour, oui, j'arrive en salle, puis je suis tombé. Le potage par terre. Tout le monde a rigolé. Je rigolais pas, **moi**.
- (22) Speaker 64: [discussing her son's reluctance to attend school]:
Je me suis dit, «C'est que la maîtresse s'intéresse pas à lui.» Et elle a été malade, **cette maîtresse-là**, et c'est une autre, une jeune, qui l'a remplacée; et ça allait mieux.

In (21), Speaker 15 seems to choose a RD to introduce himself into the discourse, in order to contrast his own embarrassment to the laughter of others. Similarly, in discourse (22), Speaker 64's motivation for using the RD seems to be to contrast her son's former teacher (already a discourse topic) to the new teacher (introduced into the discourse by the cleft construction).

Right-dislocations also serve to mark topic shifts where no overt contrast is evident, as in discourse (23):

- (23) Speaker 25: [referring to an old clock tower that has recently been restored]:
L'Amérique était à peine découverte quand elle a été construite. Ça a été construit à peu près en même temps que l'Amérique se découvrait.
- Speaker 100: Oui, mais elle existait avant, hein? C'est toujours pareil.
- Interviewer: Elle existait avant, oui.

¹⁴ Barnes (1985: 16-24) discusses the fuzziness of the distinction between the contrastive and topic shifting functions of left-dislocations, arguing that the contrastive function may be a special case of topic shift. Lambrecht (1981: 69) argues that dislocations may be used for contrast, but that they are not emphatic.

- Speaker 100: Oui, mais je ne sais...Il était pas en Californie, **lui**? Où donc c'est qu'il est? Non, c'est au Canada qu'il est, **le fils à Madame Morin, le petit fils à Monsieur Monard dans le temps.**
- Speaker 25: Morin?
- Speaker 100: Non, c'est au Canada je crois qu'il est.
- Speaker 25: Celui qui avait la laiterie, qui tenait la laiterie, celui-là?
- Speaker 100: Oui.

Here, Speaker 101 (the wife of Speaker 100) has shown the discourse participants a photograph of an old clock tower that her son-in-law has helped to restore. The initial topic of discourse in (23) is thus the clock tower. Speaker 25's mention of America apparently triggers an association in Speaker 100's mind, leading him to change the topic of discourse to the son of a former neighbor who may have emigrated to California. This rather abrupt change in discourse topic is marked by two RDs.

In discourse (24), the pronominal RD accompanies what Lambrecht (1987: 226–231) describes as the presentational use of *avoir*. The dislocation seems to be used here in consort with *avoir* to introduce a new discourse topic.

- (24) Speaker 104: De quelle région vous êtes?
- Interviewer: Californie.
- Speaker 104: J'ai mon frère, **moi**, qui a été en Pennsylvanie, à State College.
- Interviewer: Ah oui?
- Speaker 104: Il vient d'ouvrir une pâtisserie là-bas avec des pâtis-siers.

Discourses (17), (18) and (19) also illustrate the potential of RDs to code topic shifts. In view of examples such as these, I cannot agree with Lambrecht (1981: 94) that a 'topic-shifting or topic-creating function is impossible with right dislocation'.¹⁵ Rather, it seems that this is a pragmatic function shared by left- and right-dislocations. It is true, however, that topic marking is a relatively minor function of RDs, but a major function of LDs.

Right-dislocations have sometimes been characterized as 'afterthoughts' (e.g. by Chafe (1976)), suggesting that the speaker perceives, once the

¹⁵ Cf. Lambrecht (1987: 17): 'For the more discontinuous strategies of topic switching and topic establishment, a T [i.e., left-dislocation] must be used'.

sentence is underway, that an anaphoric pronoun alone will not suffice to identify the referent. Lambrecht (1987: 234) disagrees with this characterization of RDs, because from the onset of the utterance, 'the speaker who uses [a right-dislocated] construction is fully aware that the mere mention of the pronoun is insufficient'. The term 'afterthought' may also suggest a prosodic hiatus between the main predication and the RD. Indeed, RDs in French are sometimes 'set off from the predication by means of a break in the intonation pattern' (Dik (1978: 153)), as in discourse (25):

- (25) Speaker 27: [pointing to the kiln in which he fires his pottery:
Il est assez vieux, hein? **Mon four.**

Usually, however, the RD is prosodically integrated with the rest of the sentence by means of the sort of flat intonation described by Larsson (1979: 17) and Lambrecht (1981: 85–86).

While the term 'afterthought' thus seems inappropriate, a major function of the RDs in my corpus does seem to be that of clarifying the identity of the referent about whom an assertion is being made. This function is termed 'clarification' in table 5b. Consider discourse (26):

- (26) Speaker 21: [describing a friend's new apartment]:
 Claire a trouvé un appartement. Justement, elle voulait, parce qu'elle travaille rue de Toulon. Elle a trouvé un appartement, une maison, où a vécu Gambetta. C'est très récent, quand même. Il est bien.
 Speaker 97: C'est certainement mieux que moderne, parce que...
 Speaker 21: C'est un appartement du dix-neuvième siècle. Il est rénové. Oh, elle n'est pas vieille, **la maison.**

Had Speaker 21 simply used the anaphoric pronoun, *elle*, there might have ensued some confusion, since the most recently given referent is not *la maison*, but Claire's apartment. Had Speaker 21 not decided to add the RD, the feminine pronoun, *elle*, might have been taken to refer to *Claire*, rather than to her apartment house – surely not the message Speaker 21 wishes to convey!

Of course when the RD contains a pronoun, the motivation for its use cannot be to clarify the referent, since no new referential information is normally added. An exception is seen in tokens where a right-dislocated *nous*

identifies the subject clitic *on* as having a first person plural referent, as in discourse (27):

- (27) Speaker 56: [describing the preparation of a rack of lamb]:
C'est-à-dire que pour deux personnes, il faut acheter cinq kilos d'agn-, de mouton, d'agneau. Et le reste, c'est du déchet. On peut pas s'en servir, le reste. On peut pas faire des côtes. Le reste, on peut, on le mange, **nous**. Ce sont les cuisiniers qui le mangent.

In (27) the speaker first uses a series of indefinite, non-referential *on*'s. When he then uses *on* as a first person plural, he is obliged to clarify this change in referential value, choosing to do so by adding the right-dislocated pronoun, *nous*. This meaning is further reinforced by the cleft construction in the last sentence.

Two examples of what I term (following Lambrecht (1981)) the 'epithet' function occur in discourse (28):

- (28) Speaker 33: Ah oui, le tonnelier! C'est le seul qui reste en Indre-et-Loire. Attention, c'est un cas!
Speaker 104: Je me rappelle plus de son nom, à **cet animal-là**. Quand je dis «animal,» c'est pas trop fort.
Speaker 33: Ah oui, attention-là. Merde...son nom. Le tonnelier, il habite La Riche, aussi.
Speaker 104: [addressing interviewer]: Ben, vous demanderez à Gauthier. Passez voir Gauthier.
Speaker 33: Comment il s'appelle, **le vieux merde**?

In (28) Speakers 33 and 104 are trying to recall the name of an elderly cooper, to whom they wish to direct me. As they fumble for his name, they succeed in telling me something of his character by means of two right-dislocated epithets, *cet animal-là* and *le vieux merde*. Lambrecht (1981: 88) considers this function of RDs in French to be 'stylistic'; but it seems to fit Dik's characterization of RDs as 'clarifying or modifying (some constituent contained in) the predication' (Dik (1978: 130)).

One of the most readily apparent of all the pragmatic functions of RDs seen in the corpus is the one I have termed 'filler' on table 5b. This function seems to pertain only to pronouns. Examples are given in discourses (29) and (30):

- (29) Speaker 59: [inviting interviewer to accompany him on a visit with other local officials]:
 Je vous présente comme un ami participant, tout ça, et puis, euh, vous participerez à la discussion; vous, vous verrez, euh, enfin, je sais pas, **moi**, si, si ce sont des choses qui vous intéressent.
- (30) Speaker 78: [in response to the Interviewer's request that she describe a typical holiday meal]:
 Euh, on débute un petit peu par, euh, comment je vais vous dire, **moi**, euh, la charcuterie, par exemple.

In (29) and (30), the right-dislocated pronouns seem to have no pragmatic motivation other than to reflect the speaker's hesitation in completing the sentence. This hesitation is also seen in the repetition of *si* and in the *euh*, *enfin* that precedes the phrase with the dislocation in (29) and in the multiple occurrences of *euh* in (30). The right-dislocated pronoun, added to incidental comments, such as *je sais pas* and *comment je vais vous dire*, may be part of a strategy for filling discourse space as the speaker formulates his thoughts. Left-dislocations do not seem to be used in this way.

Finally, a major pragmatic function of right-dislocations may be termed 'turn closing'. In fact, nearly one-third of all RDs occur at the very end of the speaker's turn in the conversation. Their function thus seems to be that of signaling to the interlocutor that discourse space is momentarily being ceded. Turn-closing RDs may thus occur at the end of direct questions posed to an interlocutor, as in (31) and (32):

- (31) Speaker 25: [referring to an old stairway, traces of which can be seen on the outside wall of Speaker 100's house]:
 Vos grands-parents, ils vous en ont parlé des fois, de l'escalier? Ils l'ont connu, **vos grands-parents?**
- Speaker 100: Ah mais...Moi, j'avais quatre ans quand il s'est effondré.
- (32) Speaker 26: [after describing the action of farmers who have dumped their crops in city streets in order to protest governmental policies pertaining to agriculture]:
 Mais, je vous dis, devant la surproduction, on est impuissant, n'est-ce pas?
- Interviewer: C'est triste.
- Speaker 26: Oui, ah oui, oui. Chez vous ça n'arrive pas, **ça?**
- Interviewer: Je ne crois pas.

Likewise, such RDs can close a response to a direct question, as in discourses (33) and (34):

- (33) Interviewer: Votre mari, est-il de la région?
 Speaker 78: Oui, il est de Loches, **mon mari**.
 (34) Interviewer: Vous êtes agriculteur?
 Speaker 28: Oui, je suis agriculteur, **moi**.

Turn-closing RDs are by no means restricted to the environment of interrogation, however. Consider discourse (15), reproduced here:

- (15) Speaker 102: [The overall discourse topic is the high cost of medical school in France; Speaker 102 cites the experience of a colleague's son]:
 Parce que je sais que son fils avait plusieurs années qu'il, qu'il travaille tout en continuant ses études.
 Speaker 2: Ça, c'est dur aussi.
 Speaker 102: Il euh, ça fait au moins trois ans qu'il, qu'il est à l'hôpital de Château-Renault. Il est en dernière année, **son fils**.
 Speaker 2: Ah mais, oui, c'est en dernière année.

In (15), the discourse referent (the medical student in question) has been clearly established. Speaker 102 could simply have continued to refer to him with the anaphoric pronoun. Instead, she uses a RD in her last sentence, apparently to signal the end of her turn in the discourse; but perhaps also to give added weight or substance to her message, a stylistic function.

In discourse (35), Speaker 25 uses a RD which is referentially unnecessary, but which is perhaps motivated by similar discourse and/or stylistic factors:

- (35) Speaker 101: [to Speaker 25]:
 Au revoir, Monsieur C. **Bien** des choses à votre dame.
 Speaker 25: Entendu, quand je la verrai. Elle est dans sa campagne, **ma femme**.
 Speaker 100: Bien, c'est bien.

We have seen thus far that most left- and right-dislocations are pragmatically marked; that is, their use seems to be motivated by specific discourse needs. I would agree with Harris (1985: 3), however, that 'the treatment of left-dislocated structures seems to be *very* much more straightforward than

that of right-dislocated structures...’, in the sense that RDs do seem to serve a wider array of pragmatic functions than LDs. My data confirm the conclusion of Barnes, Lambrecht and others that LD is essentially a mechanism for topicalizing and foregrounding the referent. We have seen that RDs in my corpus are also used for this purpose. But RDs seem to code other discourse functions that LDs do not. They are also used to clarify or to give additional information about the referent, to fill discourse space, and to close discourse.

5. Dislocations with weak pragmatic motivation

Tables 5a and 5b also include a number of tokens for which no apparent pragmatic motivation could be identified, and where the dislocation is referentially unnecessary. While no more than six percent of the NP LDs and 18% of pronoun LDs in my corpus seemed to lack an obvious pragmatic function, some 18% of RDs involving NPs and 32% of those involving pronouns seemed to be pragmatically unmotivated. These are labeled ‘weak’ pragmatic motivation on the tables. Examples are given in discourses (36) and (37):

- (36) Speaker 19: [referring to the slaughter houses where he butchers horses]:
Je peux tuer à Chinon encore. Chinon, c’est encore dans l’Indre-et-Loire; c’est à vingt kilomètres, **Chinon**. J’ai mon frère qui est boucher à Chinon, pareil que moi.
- (37) Speaker 18: Par ailleurs, j’ai été à la guerre de quarante, et je suis tombé malade, très fatigué, des histoires pulmonaires ...Alors, j’ai une pension de guerre à cent pourcent. C’est-à-dire que quand je prends, **moi**, des médicaments, ou une consultation, ou une hospitalisation qui concerne uniquement les poumons, je suis pris en charge totalement.

In (36), the town of Chinon has already been made the topic of discourse, and there appears to be no pragmatic reason for Speaker 19 to refer to this given referent by a right-dislocated noun phrase; the pronoun alone would have sufficed. Likewise, in (37), there is no clear reason for the dislocation. Of

course, the tokens counted as having 'weak' pragmatic motivation may have nevertheless been motivated by some feature that the observer is unable to recover from the tape recordings.¹⁶ Stylistic and prosodic factors may also pertain.¹⁷

One may ask whether the high ratio of weakly motivated RDs compared to weakly motivated LDs reflects the grammaticalization of the former. That is, does the relatively high ratio of such RDs support Harris' suggestion that the pragmatic constraints placed on RDs may be weakening, allowing for their eventual grammaticalization as ordinary subjects and objects, reflecting a diachronic trend in French toward verb-initial typology? Harris concedes that this stage in the evolution of French is 'as yet very hesitant' (Harris (1985: 7)).

If there is indeed an on-going weakening of the pragmatic markedness of RDs that reflects an incipient typological change in French, one would expect to find the grammaticalization of right-dislocated structures to correlate with the age of the speaker. That is, all other factors being equal, one would expect a higher ratio of weakly motivated RDs in the discourse of the younger speakers and a relatively lower ratio of such dislocations in the discourse of the older speakers. In fact, no such correlation appears in the Tourangeaux data, as can be seen in tables 6a and 6b. To verify that the raw percentages displayed in table 6b were not skewed by an uneven distribution of the various factors bearing on right-dislocation, the Sankoff Variable Rule Program (Varbrul 2S) was applied to the data on RDs (Pintzuk (1985)). The Varbrul probabilities are displayed in table 6b along with the count of tokens and percentages of pragmatically motivated and pragmatically weak RDs. It can be assumed that a probability above 0.50 favors the pragmatically motivated type, a probability below 0.50 favors the pragmatically weak type. The essential point is that, as with the raw percentages, the Varbrul probabilities pertaining to the pragmatically weak type do not systematically correlate with the age groups of speakers. In fact, the oldest age group has a higher probability of weakly motivated RDs than the youngest group, the opposite of what would be expected by Harris' hypothesis. The distribution of the weakly motivated RDs in the corpus population thus fails to suggest any linguistic change in 'apparent time' (Labov (1972)).

¹⁶ Barnes (1985: 49–58) shows that most of the weakly motivated LDs involve *c'est*, where the dislocation has become grammaticalized in many instances.

¹⁷ Lambrecht (1981: 87) discusses 'stylistic' use of right-dislocations; Calvé (1983) addresses the role of prosody.

Table 6a

Pragmatically motivated, vs. pragmatically weak left-dislocations, by age group.

	Pragmatically motivated LD		Pragmatically weak LD	
	No.	%	No.	%
14–21 years	498	90	58	10
51–64 years	246	83	49	17

Table 6b

Pragmatically motivated, vs. pragmatically weak right-dislocations, by age group.

	Pragmatically motivated RD			Pragmatically weak RD		
	No.	%	Varbrul probability	No.	%	Varbrul probability
14–21 years	31	72	0.49	12	28	0.51
23–35 years	23	68	0.47	11	32	0.53
36–50 years	65	75	0.57	22	25	0.43
51–64 years	29	71	0.45	12	29	0.55
65+ years	34	72	0.46	13	28	0.54

Barnes (1985: 114) believes that LD is not restricted to *français populaire*, but is rather a feature of ‘unplanned discourse’ (cf. Carroll (1984)). The distribution of pragmatically weak versus pragmatically motivated LDs among the two social classes represented in my corpus, given in table 7a, supports this assertion. In fact, the ‘upper’ class speakers used slightly more weakly motivated LDs than the ‘lower’ class speakers. On the other hand, the weakly motivated RDs were slightly more prevalent in the discourse of the ‘lower’ class, than in that of the ‘upper’ class speakers, as is shown in table 7b. Again, this differential distribution was confirmed by the Varbrul probabilities. It appears, then, that right-dislocation may be conditioned by stylistic factors to a greater extent than left dislocation.

6. Summary and conclusion

In this paper, I have compared elements of the syntax and pragmatics of left- and right-dislocations occurring in a corpus of Tourangeau French.

Table 7a

Pragmatically motivated, vs. pragmatically weak left-dislocations, by social class.

	Pragmatically motivated LD		Pragmatically weak LD	
	No.	%	No.	%
'Lower' class	386	89	49	11
'Upper' class	358	86	58	14

Table 7b

Pragmatically motivated, vs. pragmatically weak right-dislocations, by social class.

	Pragmatically motivated RD			Pragmatically weak RD		
	No.	%	Varbrul probability	No.	%	Varbrul probability
'Lower' class	109	70	0.48	46	30	0.52
'Upper' class	73	75	0.54	24	25	0.46

Right dislocations show a tighter syntactic bond to the main predication and code more continuous referents than do LDs. Both types are pragmatically marked structures, usually employed for specific discourse functions. The correlation between syntactic type (LD or RD) and discourse function is not entirely arbitrary. For example, turn taking is a process of gaining control of discourse space, of asserting oneself in discourse. Hence, this function must be coded at the beginning of the utterance (i.e. by a LD). Turn closing, on the other hand, signals to one's interlocutor that discourse space is being ceded, that the speaker has no more to say on the subject, at least momentarily. Turn closing thus comes naturally at the end of the utterance (in a RD). It is not surprising, then, that LDs and RDs in French have differential discourse functions. What is less evident is why two pragmatic functions (contrast and topic shift) are shared by both syntactic types.

A larger ratio of RDs than of LDs in the corpus lacks identifiable pragmatic motivation, but no meaningful correlation between these weakly motivated types and the age of the speakers was seen. While the potential for the grammaticalization of right-dislocations suggested by Harris (1978) is clear (and while it is perhaps even likely to occur sooner or later, given what is known about typological drift), no such process is evident in the corpus treated in this paper.

Appendix

Social categories of speakers (each speaker identified by an arbitrary number). Speakers identified in regular type used only for study of right-dislocation; those identified in boldface used also for study of left-dislocation.

Age		Upper class	Lower class
14–21 yrs	Males:	10 lycée student	12 agriculture
		56 business student	13 agriculture
		60 lycée student	15 apprentice waiter
		73 law student	
	Females:	30 medical student	35 sales clerk
		50 music student	42 library aide
		74 business student	79 photo technician
			80 hotel worker
			27 potter
			28 farmer
22–35	Males:	2 librarian	
		57 physician	
	Females:	20 lycée teacher	23 cleaning woman
		58 lycée teacher	64 bank clerk
36–50	Males:	25 pharmacist	19 butcher
		89 newspaper publisher	33 mason
			104 mason
			6 housewife
	Females:	55 librarian	9 receptionist
		90 housewife	
		17 architect	5 plumber
		47 land surveyor	26 farmer
		59 physician	
		4 administrator	78 hotel maid
51–64	Males:	61 professor	87 factory worker
		62 administrator	94 hotel maid
			21 farmer (ret.)
		18 physician (ret.)	43 auto mechanic (ret.)
	Females:	37 civil engineer (ret.)	100 farmer
			16 café owner (ret.)
		51 housewife	44 housewife
		66 lycée teacher (ret.)	
		97 housewife	101 farmer

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