

Pseudo-right dislocation, the bare-topic construction, and hanging topic constructions



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Abstract

This paper first argues that Japanese right dislocation, where a constituent appears in the post-verbal position, is derived in two ways, depending on whether the dislocated constituent is accompanied with Case-markers/postpositions or not. In particular, it is argued that while right dislocation involves clausal ellipsis when the dislocated element is accompanied with Case-markers/postpositions, it is derived from what is called the bare-topic construction when the dislocated element is not accompanied with Case-markers/postpositions. Then, it is illustrated that the bare-topic construction, where the topic element is base-generated in the sentence-initial position without any Case-marker, postposition, or the topic-marker *-wa*, has close similarities with Hanging Topic constructions found in Romance and other languages. Claiming that the bare-topic construction should be equated with Hanging Topic constructions, this paper argues that an investigation of the properties of Japanese right dislocation makes it possible to contribute to a deeper understanding of the nature of the bare-topic construction, which in turn opens a novel way of comparing Japanese with other languages in terms of the syntax of topics. © 2013 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

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1. Introduction

Although Japanese is a strict head-final SOV language, various kinds of constituents may appear in the post-verbal position. Some concrete examples of this construction, called right dislocation, are given in (1).¹

- (1) a. Taroo-ga Δ katta-yo, **ano hon-o**
Taroo-Nom bought-Prt that book-Acc
'(lit.) Taroo bought Δ, **that book**'
- b. Taroo-ga Δ inu-o hirotta-yo, **ano kooen-de**
Taroo-Nom dog-Acc picked.up-Prt that park-in
'(lit.) Taroo picked up a dog Δ, **in that park**'

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¹ Right dislocated constituents are given in boldface, and the symbol Δ indicates the gap corresponding to them. The particle *-yo* (glossed as Prt) is attached to the verb to make the sentence more colloquial, as right dislocation is more natural in colloquial speech. Although various constituents, including clausal arguments, adverbials, and prenominal modifiers can appear in the post-verbal position, I focus on the cases where NPs and PPs are right dislocated, since pseudo-right dislocation (which is introduced below in the text) is possible only with them. I also focus on the cases where only one constituent is right dislocated (for multiple right dislocation, see [Abe, 1999](#); [Takita, 2012](#)).

- c. Taroo-ga Δ okane-o nusunda-yo, **ano saihu-kara**
 Taroo-Nom money-Acc stole-Prt that wallet-from
 '(lit.) Taroo stole money Δ, **from that wallet**'

Dislocated phrases can be Case-marked NPs as in (1a) or PPs as in (1b–c).

There is a version of right dislocation where dislocated phrases lack their Case-markers/postpositions, as in (2).²

- (2) a. Taroo-ga Δ katta-yo, **ano hon-Ø**
 Taroo-Nom bought-Prt that book
 '(lit.) Taroo bought Δ, **that book**'
 b. Taroo-ga Δ inu-o hirotta-yo, **ano kooen-Ø**
 Taroo-Nom dog-Acc picked.up-Prt that park
 '(lit.) Taroo picked up a dog Δ, **that park**'
 c. Taroo-ga Δ okane-o nusunda-yo, **ano saihu-Ø**
 Taroo-Nom money-Acc stole-Prt that wallet
 '(lit.) Taroo stole money Δ, **that wallet**'

I call this version of right dislocation *pseudo*-right dislocation (PRD), as opposed to the *standard* right dislocation (SRD) in (1), where dislocated elements are Case-/postposition-marked. In the previous literature, PRD has rarely been studied in detail, and if at all, it has been taken for granted that PRD is merely a sub-case of SRD (see, for instance, Endo, 1996; Fukutomi, 2007). The only exception I am aware of is Tanaka and Kizu (2006, 2007, henceforth T&K), who focus on right dislocations with Case-marked and Case-less NPs such as (1a) and (2a).³

This paper has the following goals: First, building on the data by T&K, I provide a novel set of observations regarding PRD, comparing it with SRD. Then, I propose an account of the properties of PRD, claiming that it is derived from the bare-topic construction discussed by Taguchi (2009) (see also Endo, 2007). Second, I illustrate that the bare-topic construction can be equated with Hanging Topic constructions found in various Romance and other languages (see, among many others, Cinque, 1977, 1983, 1990; Vat, 1981; Grohmann, 2000a,b; Frey, 2004; Benincà and Poletto, 2004; Shaer and Frey, 2004; Belletti, 2008:Ch.11; Krapova and Cinque, 2008 and the papers in Anagnostopoulou et al., 1997). Bringing these goals together, I argue that an investigation of the properties of PRD makes it possible to contribute to a deeper understanding of the nature of the bare-topic construction, which in turn opens a novel way of comparing Japanese with other languages in terms of the syntax of topics.

This paper is organized as follows: Section 2 provides a set of data regarding PRD, and Section 3 proposes an account of the properties of PRD. In Section 4 I illustrate that the bare-topic construction patterns with Hanging Topic constructions, and discuss implications for the syntax of topics. Section 5 concludes this paper.

2. Observations

This section provides a set of data concerning PRD, comparing it with SRD. Although it is shown that there are some similarities between SRD and PRD in Section 2.1, we see that they behave differently in a significant way in Section 2.2.

2.1. Similarities between SRD and PRD

It has been observed at least since Kuno (1978) and Inoue (1978) that SRD is insensitive to Ross' (1967) Right-Roof Constraint, which prohibits rightward movement from crossing a clausal boundary. That is, right dislocated phrases can participate in long-distance dependencies, as shown in (3). The fact that the examples in (3) are still grammatical even if the Case-makers/postpositions of the dislocated phrases are dropped indicates that PRD is also insensitive to the constraint, on a par with SRD.

- (3) a. Hanako-ga [Taroo-ga Δ katta to] itteita-yo, **ano hon-{o/Ø}**
 Hanako-Nom Taroo-Nom bought C said-Prt that book-Acc
 '(lit.) Hanako said [that Taroo bought Δ], **that book**'

² It seems that some Case-markers/postpositions are easier to be dropped than others (see Endo, 1996; Fukutomi, 2007). In particular, dropping Case-markers is easier than dropping postpositions. Furthermore, some speakers seem to find that (2c) is degraded compared to (2b). I take this as an indication of certain differences among postpositions. Hence, the examples presented in the rest of this paper are basically modeled on (2a–b).

³ To be more precise, they also examine the behaviors of Case-marked and Case-less NPs in cleft and relative clauses, and argue that the three constructions behave in the same way.

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