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Dislocation Types in Emilian

Giovanni Roversi

Dislocated structures in Emilian show a puzzling gradient patterns, where certain preposition can be deleted, certain others can but result in progressively less acceptable sentences, and certain others cannot. This paper explores 3 possible analyses of this phenomenon, based respectively on phonology, morphology and pragmatics. Not only language-internal phenomena are considered, but also sociolinguistic factors and the language contact situation between Emilian and Standard Italian. Despite not being completely unproblematic, the pragmatic hypothesis is shown to make the best predictions.

1. Introduction

Dislocated structures appear to occur in most documented languages in the world (Lambrecht 2001; Westbury 2016). This article explores the relation between two types of dislocation in Emilian (Gallo-Italic¹) and their counterparts in Standard Italian. Emilian is spoken in the western portion of the Emilia-Romagna region (namely Emilia) in Northern Italy, presented in figure 1. All Emilian data presented comes from the variety spoken in Correggio, and is derived from native speakers' intuition (including, but not exclusively, my own). This work assesses dislocation to the left periphery; however, dislocation to the right periphery exists as well.



Figure 1: A map showing the region of Emilia-Romagna (darkened), Correggio and some major cities.

An example of dislocation is shown by the Emilian sentence in (1b). In (1a) the direct object DP *la Luisa* 'Luisa' is in its standard position, after the verb. In (1b) the same constituent

¹For the phylogenetic classification of Emilian within Romance languages, cf. Pellegrini (1977); Loporcaro (2009); Simons & Fennig (2018).

is found at the left periphery of the sentence. The object is resumed in the main clause by a pronominal clitic (*l=*) bearing its case, person, number and (in this case) gender.

- (1) a. A= δ^2 vést [la Luisa] aiēr.
 1.SBJ=have.1SG seen the Luisa yesterday
 ‘I saw Luisa yesterday.’
- b. [La Luisa], a= $l=\delta$ vésta aiēr.
 The Luisa 1.SBJ=3SG.OBJ.F=have.1SG seen.F yesterday
 ‘(As for) Luisa, I saw her yesterday.’

There exists a distinction between two dislocation types, originally found in English by Ross (1967). This is most visible on prepositional arguments — therefore, most examples in this work will be of such nature. According to Cinque (1997), when a prepositional argument is dislocated, Hanging Topic Dislocation (henceforth HTD) is always prepositionless and is used for introducing new topics into the discourse. Clitic Left Dislocation (henceforth CILD), on the contrary, is marked by a preposition and restates familiar topics. The Italian examples in (2), adapted from and constructed on the basis of Cinque (1997), show this difference. In (2b) the presence of the preposition *a* ‘to’ makes the sentence pragmatically unviable; in (2a), on the contrary, the preposition is required. In Standard Italian, given topics can therefore be expressed by CILD, but not by HTD.

- (2) a. CILD; Given Topic Context — Speaker A: ‘My brother and I should start packing. We leave tomorrow for Tbilisi.’ — Speaker B:
 [(#A) tuo fratello], non gli hanno ancora dato il visto.
 To your brother, not 3SG.M.DAT have.3PL yet given the visa
 ‘(As for) your brother, they haven’t given him the visa yet.’
- b. HTD; Topic Shift Context — [Two brothers have planned a travel. The speaker is talking to one of them] ‘When did you say you were supposed to leave?’
 [(#A) tuo fratello], non gli hanno ancora dato il visto.

In Emilian, CILD appears to behave differently. In the following sentences, the first grammaticality judgement regards the Emilian sentence (as given), whereas the second one regards the equivalent sentence in Standard Italian (not given).

In all sentences the dislocated constituent is a given topic; these contexts should therefore license CILD. The (i) sentences in examples (3)–(5), where the dislocated constituents keep their preposition, are acceptable in all cases (as expected). In contrast, the (ii) sentences, where the prepositions are absent, are unacceptable in Italian³, whereas they show gradient acceptability in Emilian, from the most acceptable (3a-ii) to the least (5a-ii). The prepositionless constituents in (3a-ii), (4a-ii) and (5a-ii) are formally similar to Hanging Topics (HT), but they appear in a CILD context.

- (3) [Maria is speaker A’s wife] Speaker A: ‘Our house is so empty right now, but my wife says she’s got some furniture from some friends’ — Speaker B:
- a. Emilian:
- i. [A la Maria], a=g= δ dê la mē tēvla.
 To the Maria, 1.SBJ=3.DAT=have.1SG given the my table
 ‘(As for) Maria, I gave her my table.’

²Due to the vowel hiatus this is pronounced /a.ˈjɔ/. This allomorphy will not be noted in the transcription.

³This judgement will be discussed more in depth in section 2.2.

- ii. [**La Maria**], a=g=ò dê la mē tēvla.
- b. Italian:
- i. [**A Maria**], (le) ho dato la mia tavola.
To Maria 3SG.DAT.F have.1SG given the my table
- ii. # [**Maria**], (le) ho dato la mia tavola.
- (4) Speaker A: ‘Do we have any wine? Could you go and pick up a bottle?’ — Speaker B:
- a. Emilian:
- i. [**Ed vèin**], a=n=g⁴=n=è mia dimòndi in cà.
Of wine, EXPL=NEG=LOC=PART=is.3SG NEG much in house
‘(As for) wine, there isn’t a lot of it in the house.’
- ii. ?[**Vèin**], a=n=g=n=è mia dimòndi in cà.
- b. Italian:
- i. [**Di vino**], non ce n=è molto in casa.
Of wine, NEG LOC PART=is much in house
- ii. # [**Vino**], non ce n’è molto in casa.
- (5) Speaker A: ‘And in the cupboard, what did you find there?’ — Speaker B:
- a. Emilian:
- i. [**In l’ armâri**], a=g=ēra (dèinter) tót un lavōr ed parpàji.
In the cupboard, EXPL=LOC=was.3SG inside all a thing of moths
‘(As for) the cupboard, there were a whole lot of moths in there.’
- ii. ??[**L’armâri**], a=g=ēra (?dèinter) tót un lavōr ed parpàji.
- b. Italian:
- i. [**Nell’ armadio**], c=erano (dentro) tantissime falene.
In.the cupboard LOC=were.3PL inside many moths
- ii. # [**L’armadio**], c=erano dentro tantissime falene.

Three hypotheses are formulated to explain this pattern and the nature of these structures: (i) one based on phonology; (ii) one assuming null-exponent case marking; (iii) one related to the information structural roles of the two dislocation types. On the basis of diagnostics developed by Cinque (1997), López (2016) and Poletto & Bocci (2016) I will conclude that hypothesis (iii) produces the most correct predictions.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Two types of dislocation

In section 1 a difference between two dislocation constructions was introduced. Example (2) is repeated here as (6). The two dislocation types differ both in morphosyntactic aspects (presence vs absence of a preposition) and in pragmatic ones (different discourse contexts license different constructions).

⁴The 3rd person dative clitic and the locative clitic are expressed by a common exponent in all northern Italian varieties (Benincà et al. 2016).

- (6) a. CILD; Given Topic Context — Speaker A: ‘My brother and I should start packing. We leave tomorrow for Tbilisi.’ — Speaker B:
 [(#A) **tuo fratello**], non gli hanno ancora dato il visto.
 To your brother, not 3SG.M.DAT have.3PL yet given the visa
 ‘(As for) your brother, they haven’t given him the visa yet.’
- b. HT; Topic Shift Context — [Two brothers have planned a travel. The speaker is talking to one of them] ‘When did you say you were supposed to leave?’
 [#(A) **tuo fratello**], non gli hanno ancora dato il visto.

The presence or absence of a preposition is only one of the criteria that can tease these two constructions apart. The main criteria used in the literature are summed up in Table 1, based on analyses collected from Cinque (1997), López (2016) and Poletto & Bocci (2016). The terminology I use is Cinque’s (1997); however, the reader should be aware that the terminological variation is abundant. The rest of this section presents examples illustrating criteria (i) to (vi).

Table 1: Differences between the two dislocation constructions

Hangin Topic	Clitic Left Dislocation
(i) ‘Unlinked’ to the main clause	‘Linked’ to the main clause
(ii) Caseless/prepositionless	Case marked/preposition marked
(iii) Escapes syntactic islands	Blocked by syntactic islands
(iv) Can be resumed by clitics and epithets	Can only be resumed by clitics
(v) Only one per sentence	Can be iterated
(vi) Introduces new/shifting topics	Restates familiar topic

(i) Link to the main clause: The Greek sentences in (7) are from Anagnostopoulou (1997:155; my brackets, boldtype and paraphrases). In (7a), the dislocated constituent is in its original accusative case; the quantifier *kathenas* ‘everyone’ binds the possessive *tu* ‘his’. Due to this binding relation, *his* is interpreted as referring to *everyone*. In (7b), on the contrary, the dislocated DP is in nominative case. Here, the quantifier in the main clause does not bind the possessive. This creates thus two different interpretations, which I wrote as paraphrases of the original translations for the sake of clearness.

- (7) a. [**Tin mitera tu**], *kathenas tin agapai*. (CILD)
 the.ACC mother his everyone her loves
 ‘His mother, everybody loves (her).’ (i.e. everybody loves his/her own mother)
- b. [**I mitera tu**], *kathenas tin agapai*. (HTD)
 the.NOM mother his everyone her loves
 ‘His mother, everybody loves (her).’ (i.e. everybody loves the same man’s mother)

(ii) Presence/absence of preposition/case marking: This criterion only applies when the dislocated constituent originates as a prepositional argument. Example (6a) must contain a preposition, whereas (6b) cannot. In (7) one can observe the same phenomenon, this time with case

marking instead of prepositions. Since the function of the two is comparable, I lumped both phenomena under the same criterion.

(iii) Syntactic islands: CILD is sensitive to syntactic islands, whereas HTD is not.⁵ In the Emilian sentences (8), the complex NP ‘that story/rumour that they stole Piero’s car’ constitutes an island. When the constituent *Piero* is a HT, as in (8b), the sentence is grammatical. However, it is not possible to take *Piero* out of the complex NP together with its preposition *a*: (8a), containing CILD, is sharply ungrammatical.

- (8) a. * [A **Piero**], ê=t sintī [cla fôla [ch
To Piero have.2SG=2SG.SBJ heard that story that
i=g=ân ciavê la macchina?]] (CILD)
3PL.SBJ=3.DAT=have.3PL stolen the car
‘(As for) Piero, have you heard that rumour that someone stole his car?’
- b. [**Piero**], ê=t sintī [cla fôla [ch i=g=ân ciavê la macchina]]? (HTD)

(iv) Epithets: Epithets can be defined as DPs with anaphoric reference and a non-literal, ‘emotional’ connotation (Patel-Grosz 2015:1). Consider the following Spanish sentences (slightly adapted from López 2009:220; my brackets, boldtypes and indices). In (9a), the dislocated constituent is case marked and cannot be interpreted as having the same reference as the epithet. In (9b), on the contrary, the dislocated constituent is not case marked, and is resumed by the epithet.

- (9) a. [**Al arbitro**]_i, [el muy tonto]_j dice que el jugador no lo_i vio.
ACC.the referee the very silly says that the player NEG him saw
‘The referee_i, that idiot_j says that the player didn’t see (him_i).’ (CILD)
- b. [**El arbitro**]_i, [el muy tonto]_i dice que el jugador no lo_i vio.
the referee the very silly says that the player NEG him saw
‘The referee_i, that idiot_i, says that the player didn’t see him_i.’ (HTD)

(v) Multiple topics: Cinque (1997) claims that only one HT per sentence is possible, whereas multiple CILDs are allowed. This can be exemplified by the Italian sentences in (10), adapted from French from Delais-Roussarie et al. (2004:505; originals in (12)). In (11) I constructed Emilian counterparts (the arguments were changed in order to make them feel more natural for my native speaker consultants, but the argument is still valid), and they follow the same pattern: (11a) sounds rather deviant, whereas (11b) is grammatical with two CILDs or with one HT and one CILD.

⁵Sensitivity to islands is often used as a diagnostic for detecting the presence of syntactic movement. From this perspective, an example like (8) would imply that CILD-dislocated constituents are generated in their base position and then moved to the periphery, whereas HTs are generated in the periphery to begin with. For such a proposal, cf. López (2016).

(10) Italian:

- a. * [Maria]_{HT}, [questo crimine]_{HT}, penso che non glie ne
 Maria this crime think.1SG that NEG 3SG.DAT PART
 parlerò.
 speak.FUT.1SG
 ‘(To) Maria, (about) this crime, I think I won’t tell her about it.’
- b. [A Maria]_{CILD}, [di questo crimine]_{CILD}, penso che non glie ne parlerò.

(11) Emilian:

- a. ?? [Tō fjōl]_{HT}, [vèin]_{HT}, a=n=g=n=ò mia dê
 Your son wine 1.SBJ=NEG=3.DAT=PART=have.1SG NEG given
 dimòndi.
 much
 ‘(To) your son, (of) wine, I didn’t give him a lot of it.’
- b. [(A) tō fjōl]_{HT/CILD}, [ed vèin]_{CILD}, a=n=g=n=ò mia dê dimòndi.

This constraint does not appear to be pan-Romance: in French, in fact, it does not apply. Example (12) shows that both dislocation types can be iterated (Delais-Roussarie et al. 2004:505).

(12) French:

- a. [Marie]_{HT}, [ce crime]_{HT}, je crois que je ne lui en
 Marie this crime 1SG.SBJ think that 1SG.SBJ NEG 3SG.DAT PART
 parlerai pas.
 speak.FUT.1SG NEG
- b. [A Marie]_{CILD}, [de ce crime]_{CILD}, je crois que je ne lui en parlerai pas.
 ‘(To) Marie, (of) this crime, I think I won’t tell her about it.’

(vi) **Context type:** Dislocated constituents are often topics (but not always, cf. Poletto & Bocci 2016 about focus fronting). Most literature about dislocation in Romance adopts Reinhart’s (1981:57) definition of topic as ‘the expression whose referent the sentence is about’.⁶ As introduced in section 1, the two dislocation types have different information structural functions. HTD is used to introduce *shifting topics*: ‘a newly-introduced, newly-changed or newly-returned [to] topic’ (Givón 1983:9).⁷ In contrast, CILD is used to restate *familiar topics*, which are given and accessible (Chafe 1987; Pesetsky 1987).

In (13), the dislocated constituent’s referent (the cats) has been mentioned in the discourse; in fact, it has already been the topic of two sentences. Confirming Cinque’s (1997) claims, only CILD is allowed in this context. In (14), on the contrary, the cats are part of the speakers’ Common Ground (for a definition, cf. Krifka 2008; Rochemont 2016), but have not been mentioned in the discourse. In this context, only HTD is pragmatically viable.

⁶Lambrecht (1994:118) adopts this definition as well: ‘[t]he topic of a sentence is the thing which the proposition expressed by the sentence is ABOUT’ (emphasis in original).

⁷Once again, there is terminological variation. Frascarelli & Hinterhölzl (2007) and Poletto & Bocci (2016) use the term ‘aboutness topics’ for what I have called here shifting topics. López (2016) calls the whole concept ‘topic promotion’.

- (13) Given Topic Context — Speaker A: ‘You haven’t seen my [cats]_{FOC}, have you? I haven’t seen [them]_{TOP} since yesterday. I wonder where [they]_{TOP} are.’ — Speaker B:
- a. Ascolta⁸, [**dei tuoi gatti**], ne ho visto uno da me in giardino.
Listen.IMP of.the your cats PART have.1SG seen one at me in garden
(CILD)
‘You know, as for your cats, I saw one of them in my garden.’
- b. # Ascolta, [**i tuoi gatti**], ne ho visto uno da me in giardino. (HTD)
- (14) Shifting Topic Context — [The speaker knows that the interlocutor usually keeps her cats inside, and wants to warn her that one had gone out of the house]
- a. # Ascolta, [**dei tuoi gatti**], ne ho visto uno da me in giardino. (CILD)
- b. Ascolta, [**i tuoi gatti**], ne ho visto uno da me in giardino. (HTD)

This distinction does not seem to be made in French (a language where criterion (v) does not apply either). According to De Cat (2007) and López (2016), CILD is used extremely rarely in spoken French, and its pragmatic functions are subsumed by HTD, which can thereby restate given topics. Delais-Roussarie et al. (2004) claim also about spoken French that CILD exists, but that it does not differ phonetically or interpretatively from HTD. This distribution fact will be important as a term of comparison for my analysis of Emilian dislocations (cf. section 3.3.3.).

2.2. Gradient data

In the early days, generative approaches abstracted grammaticality to a categorical distinction: there are sentences that are grammatical, and sentences that are not. An exception to this is Ross (1972, 1973a,b), who defined the notion of ‘squish’; moreover, Lakoff (1973) used six different levels of grammaticality. Most native speakers of any language do in fact feel that some (presumably ungrammatical) sentences are ‘better’ than others. Where to draw the line between the two categories is a theoretical problem, and theories of grammar should be able to account for this type of data. Featherston (2005:1548) goes as far as to claim that ‘the standard assumptions about grammaticality [...] are actually blocking progress in syntax’.

Fanselow et al. (2006) problematises how gradient data is to be handled in linguistics. Cornips (2006) argues that in language contact situations or bidialectal/diglossic ones, precise grammaticality and/or acceptability judgements are hard — or even impossible — to obtain from elicitation. This is due to the local variety ‘competing’ with the standard one, creating thus an ‘intermediate speech repertoire’ (Auer, 2000, cited in Cornips 2006). Often, all forms of a given structure heard in the community, whether they are part of the local dialect, of the standard language or of any intermediate variety, will be judged as acceptable. An attempt at controlling these factors can be found at Cornips & Poletto (2005).⁹ Vogel’s (2006) proposal accounts for gradient data through an expanded version of Optimality Theory. On the other hand, Erteschik-Shir’s (2006) proposals gives information structure a more important role regarding acceptability judgements, and argues that syntax cannot account for it alone.

⁸This imperative is a semantically empty discourse particle or ‘interactional cue’ (Bazzanella 1990).

⁹They cite the case of Northern Italian areas (Veneto) where a prestige regional dialect has emerged, making the influence by standard Italian less strong. This is not the case in Emilia-Romagna.

The present work is full of, and in fact based on gradient data. However, the importance of contexts for the acceptability judgements cannot be underestimated. Benincà (2001) presents contextless Standard Italian sentences with structures similar to the ones showed here as grammatical. As shown in examples (13)-(14), HTD are pragmatically deviant when the context is a CILD licensing one. Benincà's claim that 'HT is limited to the colloquial style' (Benincà 2001:44) is confirmed by a corpus study which deems the use of HT as 'sub-standard Italian' (Friulla 2015:63-64). However, Italian does not appear to show the same gradient pattern as Emilian.

3. The three hypotheses

3.1. A phonological approach

The Emilian sentences in (3a), (4a) and (5a) are repeated here as (15), (16) and (17). For reasons of space, the Italian equivalent sentences are not repeated; however, to keep the comparison visible between the two varieties, the Italian acceptability judgements are reported. For every couple of judgements, the first one applies to Emilian, and the second one to Italian. For example, sentence (15b) is acceptable in Emilian, but not in Italian.

By looking at these sentences, a pattern emerges. The most acceptable sentence is the one where the preposition *a* is deleted. At the other end of the spectrum one finds *in*. A phonological rule explaining this phenomenon can be stated as such: an unstressed vowel in word-initial position (or at the beginning of an intonational unit) can be deleted. If this is the case, (15b), (16b) and (17b) show CILD, and not HTD: the prepositions are there, but they are phonologically deleted.

- (15) [Maria is speaker A's wife] Speaker A: 'Our house is so empty right now, but my wife says she's got some furniture from some friends.'
- a. Speaker B: \checkmark/\checkmark [**A la Maria**], a=g=ò dê la mē tēvla.
'(As for) Maria, I gave her my table'
- b. Speaker B: $\checkmark/\#$ [**La Maria**], a=g=ò dê la mē tēvla.
- (16) Speaker A: 'Do we have any wine? Can you go to the cellar and pick up a bottle?'
- a. Speaker B: \checkmark/\checkmark [**Ed vèin**], a=n=g=n=è mia dimòndi in cà.
'(As for) wine, there isn't a lot of it in the house.'
- b. Speaker B: $?/\#$ [**Vèin**], a=n=g=n=è mia dimòndi in cà.
- (17) Speaker A: 'And in the cupboard, what did you find there?'
- a. Speaker B: \checkmark/\checkmark [**In l' armâri**], a=g=ēra (dèinter) tót un lavōr ed parpàji.
'(As for) the cupboard, there were a whole lot of moths in there.'
- b. Speaker B: $?/\#$ [**L' armâri**], a=g=ēra (?/#dèinter) tót un lavōr ed parpàji.

According to this rule, PPs whose preposition begins with a consonant, such as *cun* 'with', cannot be turned into prepositionless HTs such as in (15b), (16b) and (17b). This prediction cannot be confirmed; in fact, (18b) is perfectly grammatical in Emilian.

- (18) a. [Cun al curtêl], a=g=ò tajê al sigòli.
 With the knife, 1.SBJ=LOC¹⁰=have.1SG cut the onions
 ‘With the knife, I cut the onions with it.’
 b. ✓[Al curtêl], a=g=ò tajê al sigòli

There is one more counter-argument to this hypothesis. The phonological approach would allow (15a), (16a) and (17a) to surface as in (15a'), (16a') and (17a'), where the symbol \emptyset stands for a deleted vowel (respectively /a/, /e/ and /i/). Amongst these three, only (15a') is the same as (15b) above. Example (16a') is phonotactically viable whereas (17a') is not; both are unattested.¹¹ In order to generate (16b, 17b), an additional rule of cluster simplification would have to be posited. Moreover, in (19) the deletion of the first vowel would produce an onset /na:/, which is phonotactically unproblematic; however, in this sentence the preposition cannot be deleted in any context.

- (15a') \emptyset la Maria, a=g=ò dê la mē tēvla.
 ‘(As for) Maria, I gave her my table.’
 (16a') \emptyset d vèin, a=n=g=n=è mia dimòndi in cà.
 ‘(As for) wine, there isn’t a lot of it in the house.’
 (17a') \emptyset n l’ armâri, a=g=ēra (dèinter) tót un lavōr ed parpàji.
 ‘(As for) the cupboard, there was a whole lot of moths there.’
 (19) [***(In) África**], a=g=è sèimper stê dal guêri.
 In Africa EXPL=LOC=is.3SG always been PART.ART wars
 ‘In Africa, there have always been wars.’

In other words, the only sentence this vowel deletion hypothesis explains is (15b). Examples (16b) and (17b) may be explained by an additional rule. However, the grammaticality of (18b) and the ungrammaticality of (19) are a clear counter-argument to the hypothesis.

3.2. A morphological approach

Another possible explanation of (15b), (16b) and (17b) is to assume that the prepositions are present, but they are silent. If this is the case, these sentences would be instances of CILD (matching thus the stated contexts).

Positing \emptyset -allomorph is not uncommon for case inflections; on the other hand, claims of \emptyset -prepositions are rarer. The exact nature of these elements in Romance is debated: while they traditionally have been considered prepositions, analyses that treat them as case markers have been put forward (Elliott 1986 for French; Rizzi 1988 for Italian). In a typologically broader

¹⁰The locative clitic *g*, corresponding to Italian *ci*, can also have instrumental value. I found no evidence that there are two distinct clitics g_{LOC} and g_{INSTR} .

¹¹Emilian varieties are somewhat known for having a quite liberal phonotactics, allowing for consonant clusters atypical for Romance languages (Loporcaro 1998), such as /dvin'te:r/ ‘to become’, /'tjir/ ‘to hold’, /'pkoun/ ‘morsel’, /stma'teina/ ‘this morning’, /'ftj:n/ ‘little old man’ etc. However, none of these is [nasal stop]+[liquid], as in (17a').

perspective, Spencer (2009:199) claims that how to distinguish adpositions from case markers is an ‘open question’. Another comparison of the two can be found in Blake (2001: chapter 1.2.5).

The similar acceptability of (15a/b) in Emilian can be accounted for if the feature [DAT] can be expressed as $\{a, \emptyset\}$. The case marker a can also introduce locative constituents, as shown in (20b). Rizzi (1988) claims for Italian that, while a_{DAT} is a case marker, a_{LOC} — or, more generally, $a_{\text{NON-DAT}}$ — is a preposition. In Emilian, a can be deleted also when introducing locatives; this casts doubts on whether this distinction exists in this language. If these two functions of a are not distinguished in Emilian, (20) would be supporting the morphological hypothesis presented here; however, further study is needed to confirm this. In addition, the Italian preposition *di* ‘of’, corresponding to Emilian *ed* (cf. (16)) has also been analysed as a genitive case marker (Garzonio & Rossi 2016, following Cinque 2010).

- (20) a. [A **Pêrma**], a=g=sûn stê l’ êter dé.
 To Parma, 1.SBJ=LOC=am been the other day
 ‘Parma, I’ve been there some days ago.’
 b. \checkmark [**Pêrma**], a=g=sûn stê l’ êter dé.

At this point, the present hypothesis explains the similar acceptability of (15a/b), but it fails to explain the gradience. I propose that the sentences examined so far can be placed along the hierarchy in (21). Semantically empty markers licensed by verbs, such as a , can be deleted without consequences (cf. (15b), (20b)).¹² The deletion of the case marker results in less acceptable sentences when the case is licensed by what I subsume under the description ‘phrase-internal elements’: a quantifier (*dimòndi* ‘much’ in (16b)), or an adverb (*dèinter* ‘inside’ in (17b)). At the ends of the hierarchy one finds semantic case markers such as *in* (locative). The instrumental preposition *cun* is deletable without problems (cf. (18)); this makes it align with the syntactically selected case markers. This can be explained if this constituent is not an adjunct, but an argument introduced by a low applicative head (Pykkänen 2008).

	Syntactically selected case:	<	Case selected by phrase-internal elements:	<	Semantic case:
(21)	(15b) \checkmark (a) la Maria (20b) \checkmark (a) Pêrma		(16b) ?(ed) vèin, [...] dimòndi (17b) ?(in) l’armâri, [...] dèinter		(19) *(in) Âfrica

So far, there seem to be no strong arguments against this hypothesis. However, three main questions remain open. For the first, postulating null morphemes is something that should be done with carefulness. A claim such as ‘there is something there, but it is invisible’ should have strong evidence. This hypothesis only rests on the assumption that what looks like prepositions actually is inflectional case marking, something there is no scholar agreement on.

For the second, the optionality of these null morphemes is puzzling: it is unclear whether there exist criteria that make speakers choose full morphemes vs. null ones, or if the variation is actually free. Finally, it is unclear why the null allomorphes are only available in dislocated contexts. The fact that these contexts can show unusual phenomena or behaviours is, however, not unheard of: Berretta (1989) found differential object marking in dislocated contexts in Romance languages where no differential object marking was supposed to exist, such as standard

¹²It is unclear whether a_{LOC} has more or less semantic content than a_{DAT} , and whether they are distinct at all (cf. above).

Italian and Northern Italian varieties. These three counterarguments make the morphological approach seem less viable.

3.3. A pragmatic approach

The two hypotheses outlined so far predict that the dislocated constituents in (15b), (16b) and (17b) show CILD. The approach presented in this section assumes, on the contrary, that the two dislocation types have different distribution in Italian and Emilian; in other words, the two languages divide the information structural functions of the two structures in two different ways. The prediction is that (15b), (16b) and (17b) in fact display HTD, in the same environments where Italian needs CILD.

In Table 1 (section 2) I summed up six criteria distinguishing HTD from CILD. Some of these can be used to test which of the two dislocation types the sentences in question display. The ones which are more apt to use as diagnostics are criteria (iii) islands, (iv) epithets and (vi) context types.

3.3.1. Islands

Only HTD is permitted in sentences with syntactic islands, both in Emilian and in Italian (cf. (8)). I constructed examples where structures similar to (15b), (16b) and (17b), where the dislocated constituents are encapsulated into the complex NP ‘a rumour that ...’, which constitutes an island.¹³ If (15b''), (16b'') and (17b'') sentences contained CILD with a dropped preposition, they would be ungrammatical. The judgements show that they are in fact acceptable. This supports the idea that (15b), (16b) and (17b) show in fact HTD, despite the context.

(15b'') Given Topic Context — Speaker A: ‘I saw Maria some days ago, she seemed quite down. Did she tell you anything? Has something happened to her?’ — Speaker B:
 [La Maria], a=ò sintī [na fôla [che Primo al=g=à
 The Maria 1.SBJ=have.1SG heard a story that Primo 3SG.M.SBJ=3.DAT=has
 dê un sciâf]].
 given a slap
 ‘(As for) Maria, I’ve heard a rumour that Primo slapped her.’

(16b'') Given Topic Context — Speaker A: ‘I went to the city fair yesterday. There I met Lini, the wine maker. Have you tasted it, his wine? It’s very good.’ — Speaker B:
 [Vèin], a=ò sintī [na fôla [che t=n=ê mia bvū
 Wine 1.SBJ=have.1SG heard a story that 2SG.SBJ=PART=have.2SG NEG drunk
 pôc]].
 little
 ‘(Regarding) wine, I’ve heard a rumour that you didn’t drink so little.’

¹³To have as natural examples as possible proved important in the elicitation process. Therefore, (15b''), (16b'') and (17b'') are not exactly the same as (15b), (16b) and (17b).

(17b'') Given Topic Context — Speaker A: ‘I spent all morning cleaning the cupboard, the old one. You have no idea of what I found in it.’ — Speaker B:

[**L' armâri**], a=ò sintī [na fôla [che a=g=ēra (dèinter) tót
 The cupboard 1.SBJ=have.1SG heard a story that EXPL=LOC=was inside all
 un lavōr ed parpàji]].
 a thing of moths
 ‘(In) the cupboard, I’ve heard a rumour that there was a whole lot of moths.’

3.3.2. Epithets

Similarly to what is shown in section 3.3.1, I constructed sentences similar to (15b), (16b) and (17b) in CILD-allowing contexts, where the dislocated constituents are resumed by various epithets.¹⁴ Once again, if (22)-(24) contained CILD with a dropped preposition, they would be ungrammatical (due to the epithet resumption); this would show that (15b), (16b) and (17b) contain CILD. However, sentences (22)-(24) are grammatical. This is another argument for (15b), (16b) and (17b) showing HTD.

(22) Given Topic Context — Speaker A: ‘You know Maria? She’s always begging for furniture, her son is moving apparently. I mean, I understand her situation, but it’s so annoying.’ — Speaker B:

[**La Maria**], a=ò dê la mē tēvla a cla puvrâsa.
 The Maria, 1.SBJ=have.1SG given the my table to that old.hag
 ‘(As for) Maria, I gave my table to that old hag.’

(23) Given Topic Context — Speaker A: ‘Poor Antonio, with those sons he’s got. Have you seen how they ended up?’ — Speaker B:

[**I fjō ed Antonio**], a=ò vést ūn ed qui delinquèint c
 The sons of Antonio 1.SBJ=have.1SG seen one of those punks that
 al=fumēva lè da la scōla.
 3SG.M.SBJ=smoked there at the school
 ‘(As for) the sons of Antonio, I’ve seen one of those punks smoking by the school.’

(24) Given Topic Context — Speaker A: ‘And in the old cupboard, what did you find there?’ — Speaker B:

[**L' armâri**], a=g=ēra (dèinter) tót un lavōr ed parpàji in cal şavàj
 The cupboard EXPL=LOC=was inside all a thing of moths in that old.junk
 lè.
 there
 ‘(As for) the cupboard, there was a whole lot of moths in that old piece of junk.’

¹⁴Coming up with examples where ‘wine’ and ‘the cupboard’ were resumed by epithets resulted in extremely unnatural sentences, which my informants rejected anyway. I preferred to construct other sentences with comparable structure.

3.3.3. Context types

Criterion (vi) in Table 1 states that shifting topics are expressed as HTs, whereas given topics are expressed by means of CILD. Examples (15)-(17) are repeated here and expanded as (25)-(27).

Two contexts have been constructed for each sentence. In the first context, the dislocated constituent's referent has already been mentioned, being thus a given topic; this is supposed to license CILD. In the second context, the dislocated constituent's referent has not been mentioned earlier, and is therefore a shifting topic; this is supposed to license HTD. According to criterion (vi), the most acceptable examples should be the preposition marked ones in given topic contexts (i.e. prototypic CILD) and the prepositionless ones in shifting topic contexts (i.e. prototypic HTD).

However, this does not seem to be the case. All sentences do not appear to be more or less acceptable when the context is changed. In fact, the native speakers consultants did not seem to observe noticeable differences between these sentences themselves, and between them and their Italian equivalents.

- (25) a. Given Topic Context — Speaker A: 'Our house is so empty right now, but my wife says she's got some furniture from some friends' — Speaker B:
 ✓ [(A) **La Maria**], a=g=ò dê la mē tēvla.
 '(As for) Maria, I gave her my table.'
- b. Shifting Topic Context — A: 'I just came by train, I haven't been at home yet. I was in Parma buying furniture. The house looks so empty right now.' [Maria = A's wife]
 — Speaker B:
 ✓ [(A) **La Maria**], a=g=ò dê la mē tēvla.
- (26) a. Given Topic Context — Speaker A: 'Do we have wine?' — Speaker B:
 [?(Ed) **vèin**], a=n=g=n=è mia dimòndi in cà.
 '(As for) wine, there isn't a lot of it in the house.'
- b. Shifting Topic Context — 'Could you go to the store?'
 [?(Ed) **vèin**], a=n=g=n=è mia dimòndi in cà.
- (27) a. Given Topic Context — Speaker A: 'And in the cupboard, what did you find there?'
 — Speaker B:
 [?(In) **l'armâri**], a=g=ēra (?dèinter) tót un lavōr ed parpàji.
 '(As for) the cupboard, there was a whole lot of moths in there.'
- b. Shifting Topic Context — (Talking about the kitchen) 'I finished cleaning it this morning. I put away all of your stuff.'
 [?(In) **l'armâri**], a=g=ēra (?dèinter) tót un lavōr ed parpàji.

This pattern may be caused by the presence of an 'intermediate speech repertoire' (Cornips & Poletto 2005; Cornips 2006). It is reasonable to suspect that the mutual influence of Emilian and Italian on each other is confounding the data, making it impossible to discern which construction(s) belong to which variety, and whether there is an actual contextual difference in the use of the two constructions.

The situation presented here may be explained by considering two factors: (i) the speech community itself; (ii) how dislocation works in French. In section 2.1, I discussed how French

almost solely relies on HTD, which has ‘taken over’ CILD’s pragmatic functions. Emilian, on the other hand, seems to be fluctuating on a continuum between Standard Italian and French. The French situation might have been the case in Emilian, if it was spoken by an abstracted, strictly monolingual community which had no contact with Standard Italian. Given the nature of the language contact situation, it is not unreasonable to think that the two dislocation structures can ‘percolate’ from a variety to the other, thereby blurring the distinction. Despite correctly explaining several of the phenomena in consideration, the hypothesis outlined here does not predict the acceptability gradience.

4. Conclusion

Dislocated structures in Emilian show a puzzling gradient pattern: some prepositions can be deleted, some others may be (but result in progressively less acceptable sentences), some others cannot. Three hypotheses have been formulated in order to explain this.

The phonological approach was rejected due to the lack of explanatory power: it failed to predict actual grammatical sentences, and it predicted ungrammatical ones. The pragmatic approach showed the information structural distinction between HTD and CILD in Emilian is not so sharp, if it exists at all. This might be due to the strong intertwining of the local variety and the standard one. However, this approach cannot explain the acceptability gradience.

The morphological approach gave interesting results in explaining the gradience, and opens for more research. A full-fledged morphosyntactic analysis would be needed in order to confirm (or discard) the hypothesis. Moreover, it would be interesting to see if the hierarchy in (21) explains other grammatical phenomena as well.

Abbreviations

1/2/3 1 st /2 nd /3 rd person	LOC locative
ACC accusative	M masculine
ART article	NEG negation
DAT dative	NOM nominative
EXPL expletive	OBJ object
IMP imperative	PART partitive
INSTR instrumental	PL plural
F feminine	SBJ subject
FUT future	SG singular

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