German right dislocation and afterthought in discourse

Maria Averintseva-Klisch
Univ. Tübingen

I show that German right dislocation subsumes two distinct constructions, which I label right dislocation proper and afterthought. These differ in a number of prosodic, syntactic and semantic characteristics and also have different discourse-functional properties. Right dislocation marks a discourse referent as especially salient on the current stage of the discourse. This requires the fulfillment of certain anaphoric constraints on the following discourse. Afterthought is a local reference clarification strategy and has no impact on the global discourse structure.

1. Introduction

German right dislocation is a construction which consists of an NP at the end of the clause and a coreferent proform inside the clause, as in (1). It is generally assumed that right dislocation is a strategy of spoken German, which enables the speaker to resolve a (pro)nominal reference that might be unclear to the hearer (Aitmann 1981; Auer 1991; Selling 1994; Ullmann 1993, 1997; Zifonun/Hoffmann/Stecker 1997):

(1) a. Ich mag *sie* nicht, (ich meine) *die Serena*,
    I like her, not, (I mean) the Serena,

b. Und dann passierte *das Unglück*, (ich meine) *dieser*
   And then happened the unfortunate-thing, (I mean) this
   schreckliche Autounfall,
   terrible car-accident

Resolution of an unclear reference is in fact the function of the right-peripheral NP in (1). There are, however, cases, where it is not plausible to assume that right dislocation

---

2. This paper is based on research conducted as part of my doctoral thesis, which was till March 2006 financially supported by the DFG within the graduate school Economy and Complexity in Language (Humboldt University Berlin / Potsdam University). I would like to thank my supervisor Claudia Maiensorn (Univ. Tübingen) for her constant support and guidance, the audience of the workshop Constraints in Discourse for very stimulating feedback, and Manfred Consten (Univ. Jena) and Barbara Schückele (FU Berlin) for helpful comments.
has the function of resolving a vague reference, because the reference is unambiguously clear, like in (2):

(2) a. "Der Taifun!" rief Lukas dem Kapitän zu. "Da ist er!". ("The typhoon!" called Lukas the captain to. "There is it!")
Ja, da war er, der Taifun.
Yes, there was it, the typhoon.

[Ende, M.: Jim Knopf und die Wilde 13]

b. (Den Tag, den vergess' ich nicht, der war viel zu schön.) der Tag was much too wonderful the day

[Altmann (1981:129)]

Instead, as I show in the following, the right dislocation in (2) has the function of marking the discourse referent (in the standard dynamic semantics sense, e.g., Karttunen 1976) that is going to be especially salient for the following discourse segment. In (2a), what follows is a description of the typhoon (terrible wind, dark waves, and so on). In (2b) one expects the speaker to supply more information about the unforgettable day. In the following, I will argue that reference clarification and salience marking are not two different functions of one construction, but that there are actually two different constructions that have been subsumed under the label of German right dislocation. I name the salience-marking construction like in (2) right dislocation proper (in the following: right dislocation, RD) and the reference-clarifying one like in (1) afterthought (AT). I will show that these constructions differ not only with respect to their discourse functions, but also in their prosodic, syntactic and semantic features.

The paper is organized as follows: in section 2 the prosodic, syntactic and semantic differences between RD and AT are briefly introduced. I show that RD is prosodically and syntactically part of its host sentence, whereas AT is an 'orphans' that gets integrated into its host sentence only at the level of the discourse. In section 3 I address the integration of AT in terms of SDRT (Asher/Lascarides 2003) and introduce discourse

2. By discourse segment I understand intuitively a relatively small, thematically contiguous part of a discourse; roughly, a discourse segment is minimally an utterance, or, as is more often the case, several interrelated utterances. In written discourse, a discourse segment corresponds rather often to a paragraph, cf. Goutos (1997).

3. I use the term afterthought for this construction for two reasons: firstly, as it is traditionally used in the literature exactly to denote the reference-clarifying NP additions to the right of the clause (cf. e.g., Ward/Barner 1996: 470, Fretheim 1995: 31). Secondly, by using this term I assume that reference-clarifying additions are actually a subtype of the rather heterogeneous group of syntactically free additions coming after the sentence and supplying additional information about some referent in the sentence (in this broader sense the term afterthought is used e.g. in Cummins/Kempson/Osvald 2002: 20).

4. Altmann (1981) observes two prosodic patterns for what he calls German right dislocation, the integrated and the non-integrated one. However, as he does not differentiate between RD and AT, he does not explain his observation. Fretheim (1995) takes the prosodic criterion to be crucial for the distinction between RD and AT in Norwegian: he shows that prosodically integrated structures are RDs, and prosodically non-integrated ones ATs.
b. Ich mag ihn nicht, den Peter / *der Peter / diesen I like him\textsubscript{m} not the Peter\textsubscript{m} / *the Peter\textsubscript{nom} / [this\textsubscript{impossible} Volltrottel / *dieser unmögliche Volltrottel].\textsuperscript{5} RD
impossible idiot\textsubscript{m} / *this impossible idiot\textsubscript{nom}

(5) a. Und dann passierte das Unglück, (Ich meine) And then happened [the unfortunate-thing]\textsubscript{neutr} (I mean) dieser schreckliche Autounfall,\textsuperscript{[this terrible car-accident]}\textsubscript{mark} AT
b. Ich habe ihn\textsubscript{m} vorhin gesehen, das Kleine\textsubscript{1} von der I have him\textsubscript{m} before seen, the little-one\textsubscript{neutr} of the Nachbarn.\textsuperscript{AT neighbours}

Secondly, optional additions like *ich meine (I mean) or also (*that is) are possible in the case of AT (6a), where some of them serve to enhance the reference clarifying function (cf. Altmann 1981). On the other hand, additions are bad with RD (6b).

(6) a. (Anna und Brigitte kommen morgen.) Ich mag sie\textsubscript{1} nicht, (Anna and Brigitte are coming tomorrow.) I like her\textsubscript{1} / them\textsubscript{p}, not, ich meine / also / tatsächlich, die Brigitte, I mean / that\textsubscript{s} / really the Brigitte
b. ("Der Taifun" rief Lukas dem Kapitän zu. "Da ist er!") Ja, da ("The typhoon" Lukas called to the captain. "Here it comes!") Yes, there was, *ich meine / *also / tatsächlich der Taifun, RD was it, *I mean / that\textsubscript{s} / really the typhoon

Thirdly, AT is not restricted to the position at the right periphery, but can occupy a variable position in its host sentence, cf. (7): the afterthought *I mean Peter can come at the very end of the sentence (7a), immediately after the coreferent pronoun (7b) or between the temporal adverbial yesterday and the adverbial with effort (7c). RD, on the contrary, is only possible at the right periphery, so that (8a), but not (8b) is well-formed.\textsuperscript{6}

\textsuperscript{5} The relative weight of the NP seems to play a role, improving the cases without congruence with AT. Still, even heavy NPs like the second variant this impossible idiot in (4b) do not allow incongruence with RD.

\textsuperscript{6} Here, and in the following, I use the prosodic structure as a diagnostics to distinguish between RD and AT. This means that for cases marked as RD I assume prosodic integration. So, (8b) is bad with the RD prosody, while it is well-formed when the NP builds a prosodic unit of its own as an AT construction.

(7) a. Ich habe ihn, gestern nur mit Mühe wiedergekannt, | ich have him yesterday only with effort recognized, | I meine den Peter\textsubscript{p}, mean the Peter
b. Ich habe ihn, | ich meine den Peter\textsubscript{p}, | gestern nur mit I have him, | I mean the Peter, yesterday only with Mühe wiedergekannt. RD
meine den Peter\textsubscript{p}, | Mühe wiedergekannt. effort recognized
c. Ich habe ihn, gestern, | ich meine den Peter\textsubscript{p}, | nur mit I have him yesterday, | I mean the Peter, only with Mühe wiedergekannt. RD
mich ich habe den Peter\textsubscript{p}, | Mühe wiedergekannt. effort recognized
mein der Peter. (I hardly recognized him yesterday, Peter.)

(8) a. Ich kann ihn, nicht leiden, den Peter. | ich kann ihn, nicht leiden. I can him not suffer, the Peter
b. *Ich kann ihn, den Peter, nicht leiden. I can the Peter not suffer
(I don't like him at all, Peter)

Fourthly, subordinate clauses are not allowed between the clause-internal pronoun and the NP in the RD (9a), cf. Altmann (1981), while they are not at all problematic for AT (10):

(9) ("Der Taifun" rief Lukas dem Kapitän zu. "Da ist er!") ("The typhoon" Lukas called to the captain. "Here it comes!")
Ja, da war er\textsubscript{p}, den sie alle befürchtet haben, der Taifun,\textsuperscript{7} RD
Yes, there was it\textsubscript{p}, whom they all were afraid-of, the typhoon

(10) Ich mag die Frau\textsubscript{1} nicht, die gestern hier war, | ich meine I like the woman\textsubscript{1}, not, who yesterday here was, (I mean)
die Anna,\textsuperscript{8} die Anna, AT

Summarizing the findings in (3)–(10), one can see that there is ample evidence that RD belongs prosodically and syntactically in a much more straightforward way to its host sentence. Prosodically, RD is a part of its host sentence's tone contour. Considered syntactically, RD is much more restricted in allowing insertions between

\textsuperscript{7} The utterance is well-formed, if the subordinate clause does not intervene between the proform and the NP.

\textsuperscript{8} Ja, da war er\textsubscript{p}, der Taifun, den sie alle befürchtet haben. Yes, there was it\textsubscript{p}, the typhoon, whom they all were afraid-of
the host sentence and the RD-NP than is AT: RD does not allow subordinate clause insertion (9)-(10) nor optional additions of any kind (6). Besides, RD occupies a fixed position in the host sentence (at its right periphery). Moreover, as shown in (4), the right-peripheral NP has to agree morphologically with the clause-internal pro-form, which also suggests that NP is part of the clause, because morphological agreement is not expected to function across sentence boundaries. That leads to the assumption that RD is, syntactically seen, part of its host sentence, presumably the right adjunct to the IP. An ultimate syntactic analysis of the right dislocation would, however, exceed the limits of this paper.

AT, on the contrary, can vary its position in its host sentence (see (7)). Furthermore, AT does not strictly require morphological agreement between the NP and the clause-internal pronoun, and it allows various insertions between the host sentence and AT-NP, e.g., additions like I mean etc. or subordinate clauses. All in all, AT appears to be syntactically fairly free. The prosodic and syntactic independence of AT leads to its analysis as an orphan (in terms of Haegeman 1991, Schaer 2003). An orphan is a phrase that is syntactically autonomous and gets integrated into its host sentence only at the level of discourse via some discourse relation.  

RD and AT differ also semantically in a crucial way. RD is much more restricted than AT as far as the semantic status of the NP is concerned. The RD-NP can only refer to a definite specific individual (11a), whereas neither indefinite specific NPs (11b) nor any kind of quantificational NPs (11c) are possible:

11. a. Da kommt er, schon wieder, der Peter, / der blonde Mann, / There comes he, already again, the Peter, / the blond man, / dieser blonde Mann, / that blond man,
   b. Da kommt er, schon wieder, "so ein Typ, aus dem / There comes he, already again, such a guy from the / Tanzklubs, / dancing-class,
   c. Alle blonden Frauen sind für ihn wunderschön. Peter liebt sie, / All blond women are for him beautiful. Peter loves them, / *alle blonden Frauen, / *all blond women, / alle blonden Frauen, / all blond women, / Peter loves them, / *alle blonden Frauen, / *all blond women, / all blond women,

The requirement of specific individual reference for the RD-NP might be the reason why operator binding like in (a) is only marginally available for RD, even if considered syntactically anything would prevent it: seine Frau (his wife) here does not refer to a specific individual but to an ordered set (of women in relation to men), and this is against the restrictions on the RD-NP:

12. a. ?Jeder Mann, liebt sie, seine Frau. / Every man, loves her, his, wife
   b. ?Jeder Mann, liebt sie, seine Frau. / Every man, loves her, his, wife

Note that (11b) and (11c) would be well-formed as ATs, cf. (a) and (b):

13. a. Da kommt er schon wieder, ich meine so ein Typ aus dem / There comes he already again, I mean so a guy from the / Tanzklubs, / dancing-class,
   b. Peter liebt sie, ich meine alle blonden Frauen. / Peter loves them, I mean all blond women

14. The discourse in (11c) would be perfectly well-formed without right dislocation, cf. (a):

15. a. Alle blonden Frauen sind für ihn wunderschön. Peter liebt alle blonden / All blond women are for him beautiful. Peter loves all blond women
   b. Alle blonden Frauen sind für ihn wunderschön. Peter liebt alle blonden / All blond women are for him beautiful. Peter loves all blond women

Grosz/Ziv (1994) state that in English, right dislocation cannot be used to refer to entities that were mentioned in the sentence immediately preceding the one with the right dislocation (Grosz/Ziv (1994: 190); see, however, objections in Ward/Birner (1996)). In German this is possible, cf. (b), so that this cannot be the cause of the ill-formedness of (11c):

16. a. Verena ist für ihn die schönste. Peter liebt sie, die Verena. / Verena is for him the prettiest. Peter loves her, the Verena
   b. Verena ist für ihn die schönste. Peter liebt sie, die Verena. / Verena is for him the prettiest. Peter loves her, the Verena

---

8. The inability to insert a clause between the clause-internal coreferent proform and the NP has been analysed in the generative framework as the 'right root constraint' (Ross 1967) or 'upward boundedness' (cf. e.g., Müller 1995). That means that the NP is analysed as being moved out of its host sentence, where a 'pronoun copy' (Altmann 1981) is left. Analysed like this, (9) gives strong evidence that right dislocation is syntactically part of its host sentence.

9. As Consten (2004: 90) notes, gender congruence of anaphora and its antecedent in general is easily violated, but only across sentence boundaries. Sentence-internally, gender agreement is expected.

10. I assume with Müller (1995) that the standard position for right adjunction is the IP adjunction.

11. This proposal has consequences for locating AT with respect to its host sentence. Obviously, it cannot be a right peripheral construction in the proper sense of the word, as the right periphery is a sentence-bound concept, and AT is not a part of its host sentence. Actually, in spoken and even in written language, AT often comes explicitly after a sentence boundary, marked e.g. by an intervention of another speaker, or, in the case of written language, graphically with an appropriate punctuation mark, e.g., a full stop in (a):

(a) (Der Koch war schon an Bord, der Matrose ebenfalls.) Er aß die Fliegen. (The cook was already on board, and the sailor too.) He ate the flies. Der Koch, nicht der Matrose. The cook, not the sailor.

[from: Yann, Martel: Schiffbruch mit Tiger. 364; I owe this example to Konstantin Marx].
Besides, it is required that the referent of the RD-NP is discourse-old (in terms of Prince 1992), so that (12) with a discourse-new referent is bad. Discourse-old is understood here to include situationally evoked information (in terms of Prince 1981), as in (13):\^{15}

(12) A: Und wie geht die Festvorbereitung? (And how goes the preparations for the party?)
B: Ich weiß nicht was ich noch versuchen soll. Ich kann einfach keine Jazzband für den Abend aufstellen. (I don't know what I should try next: I haven't been able to get a jazz band for the evening.)
A: #Du könntest ihm, fragen, diesen Chorleiter. Bestimmt kennt er jemanden. (You could ask him, that choirmaster. Certainly knows somebody.)
A: You could him, ask, that choirmaster, Certainly knows er jemanden.
B: somebody

(13) Der, spinnt doch, der Typ, / dieser Schröder. (The guy, is crazy sure, the guy, / that Schröder.)
He, is-crazy sure, the guy, / that Schröder,
(context: A and B are talking about linguistics. A sees a newspaper B has on his table with a picture of the German federal chancellor on the front page, points to it and comments on it)

AT, on the contrary, allows nearly all kinds of NPs, definite and indefinite, specific and non-specific, as well as quantificational ones (14):

(14) a. Sie, kommt heute zum Abendessen, ich meine Paula, / eine Frau, aus meinem Tanzkurs. (She, comes today to dinner, I mean Paula, / a woman from my dancing-class)

b. Hast Du ein, | ich meine ein Euro-Stück? (Have you one, | I mean a euro piece)

(c) Sie, sind Fleischfresser, | ich meine alle Löwen. (They, are carnivorous | I mean all lions)

Also discourse-new information is possible with AT, so that (15), contrary to (12), is well-formed:

(15) A: How are the festival preparations coming along? B: I don't know what I should try next: I haven't been able to get a jazz band for the evening.

The only condition for an AT-NP is that its reference should be clear enough to enable the AT to fulfill its function of reference repair, i.e., the referent should be easily identifiable by the particular NP expression. So, NPs with a vague or too general reference are dispreferred (cf. 16).

(16) Ich habe Äpfel und Pfirsich gekauft. (I've bought apples and plums.)
Die, schmecken aber leider nicht, | (ich meine) die Äpfel, / They, taste but unfortunately not, (I mean) the apples, /
#die Pflaumen, / #dieses Kernobst, the fruits, / those pipfruits,\^{16}

A brief summary of prosodic, syntactic and semantic properties of RD and AT so far: RD is prosodically and syntactically part of its host sentence. Its discourse function is to mark a discourse-old referent having a definite specific individual reference as being especially salient for the following discourse. In section 4 I will focus on the discourse function of the RD.

AT, on the contrary, is a prosodically and syntactically independent unit, i.e., an orphan. Its discourse function is to repair an unclear pronominal reference. Being an orphan, AT only gets integrated into its host sentence at the level of discourse (cf. Shaer/Frey 2004). In the following section 1 will develop a discourse relation Afterthought that attaches AT to its host sentence.

3. The discourse relation Afterthought

I argue that there is a special discourse relation for attaching AT to its host sentence, which I call Afterthought. The following analysis is done in terms of Segmented Discourse Representation Theory (SDRT), Asher/Lascarides (2003). For SDRT, a crucial assumption is that contents of utterances building up a discourse are related to each other via discourse relations. Asher/Lascarides (2003) propose a number of such discourse relations, e.g., Narration, a coordinating discourse relation that combines two utterances whose eventualities occur in the sequence in which they are described, as in Max came in. He sat down. Discourse relations can be coordinating, as in the case of

\^{16} The latter remains a bad repair even if one assumes that the information that apples are pip fruit and plums are not is known to the hearer. Still, such repair requires too much effort from the recipient and is for this reason dispreferred.
Narration, where two eventualities described are at the same level of detail, or subordinating, when the second constituent provides more details about the eventuality of the first one without bringing the flow of narration any further. An example of subordinating discourse relation is Elaboration as in Max had a great meal. He ate salmon, where the second utterance provides more details about the eventuality of the first utterance (cf. Asher and Lascarides (2003), ch. 4.). Discourse relations hold between informational units, most often contents of utterances, but also contents of bigger chunks of discourse might participate in a discourse relation.17

In the following I argue that AT requires a special discourse relation Afterthought that attaches AT to its host sentence. As shown above, AT repairs an insufficient (pro) nominal reference. In other words, it provides a characteristic of a discourse referent, which helps to identify the referent in question in the discourse model, as in (17):

(17) a. Er hat angerufen, (Ich meine) Dein Chef! Er klappt! Hört, has phoned, (I mean) your boss! It works-out (context: A to B just after having laid down the receiver)
   b. A: (Serena und Teresa kommen auch mit.) B: Ich mag sie nicht, (I mean) Serena, (she) and Teresa are coming too.) B: I like her, them, not, (I mean) Serena.

In most cases, anaphoric pronouns like er (‘he’) or sie (‘her’) in (17) are used when the resolution of the anaphor is unproblematic. In some cases, however, as in (17), there is either none immediately apparent (17a) or more than one equally plausible candidate antecedent for the anaphoric expression (17b). That is why the speaker decides to resolve the unclarity explicitly by supplying what he believes to be an unambiguous identification for the referent, e.g., the mentioning of the unique relation to the hearer (17a) or of the proper name of the referent (17b). Reflecting this function of the right-peripheral NPs in (17), the discourse relation Afterthought is informally described in (18):

(18) Afterthought holds whenever the second constituent provides additional information about some discourse referent in the first constituent, in such a way that the information helps to identify this discourse referent.

17. A well-known example from Asher/Lascarides (2003) is (a), where utterances 2–5, as a whole, elaborate on the utterance 1, giving details of the great evening (the inner relations between the utterances 2–5 are neglected for the moment).

(a) 1. John had a great evening last night. Elaboration (a, β), where α: 1; β: 2–5
   2. He had a great meal.
   3. He ate salmon.
   4. He devoured lots of cheese.
   5. He then won a dancing competition.

Important is, that AT cannot be subsumed under any other discourse relation; at the first glance, Elaboration might seem suitable here. However, Afterthought differs crucially from Elaboration in its impact on the truth conditions of the whole sentence: AT first makes the establishing of the truth conditions for an utterance possible; due to the reference unclarity, it is not possible before the adding of the AT takes place.18

To be able to define the properties of Afterthought, it is necessary to find out whether it is a subordinating or coordinating relation. This can be tested with the help of the tests for subordination and coordination, proposed by Asher and Vieu (2005) (cf. also Vieu/Pévrot 2004). These tests prove that Afterthought is a subordinating relation.19

The second important point is that Afterthought, unlike Elaboration, is a cognitive-level discourse relation20 in the terms of Asher / Lascarides (2003), which means that not only the contents of the clauses that are related are important, but also the

18. Asher and Lascarides (2003) define that "R is a distinct discourse relation only if there is evidence that it affects the truth conditions of the elements it connects, and these effects cannot be explained by other means" (Asher/Lascarides 2003: 145). That leads to the assumption of the Afterthought as a separate discourse relation.

19. To illustrate the claim exemplarily for one of the tests: 1. Attachment Test: given are two constituents, a and β, a relation R (a, β), and a possible extension with a constituent γ; the nature of R is to be tested. If it is possible to attach γ to a, then R is subordinating; if attachment is possible only to β, then R is coordinating. (cf. Asher/Vieu 2005: 600)

20. Asher and Lascarides (2003) distinguish between content-level discourse relations and cognitive-level discourse relations. For the former, it is only the content of the utterances building up a discourse that matters, as e.g., with Narration or Elaboration. For the latter not only the content of the utterances, but also the intentions of the speaker and the hearer are important for defining their semantics. So, e.g., for a discourse in (a) it is assumed that the discourse relation NEF (Not Enough Information) connects two utterances, and the semantics of this relation is defined in the following way: NEF holds if the speaker of 2 has an intention of making clear with his utterance that he does not know the answer to 1, and thus cannot help the speaker of 1 to achieve his speech act related goal (SA RG); in the case of (a) the goal being to learn who is coming to the party:

(a) 1: Who is coming to the party? 2: I don’t know.

Nearly all discourse relations for dialogue are cognitive-level.
intentions of the participants. Crucial for producing an afterthought is the intention of the speaker to repair a reference he believes to be unclear for the hearer.\(^{23}\)

With all this in mind, (18) can be made more precise in (19):

(19) Afterthought (a,b) is a cognitive-level, subordinating discourse relation, which holds whenever the speaker of a and b supplies b with the speech act related goal\(^{22}\) of clearing the reference of a discourse referent x that has been introduced in a by establishing a relation x=z, where z is a discourse referent introduced in b, and the reference of x in the discourse representation is assumed to be unambiguous.\(^{23}\)

[a: the host sentence; b: the afterthought; x, z: discourse referents]

That means that AT refers back to an element of its host sentence, whose reference it resolves. Note that the reference resolution is purely local, in that it does not affect the structure of the discourse as a whole. For example, in (20) the discourse segment is about a certain play with an actress playing the role of a nun, and the AT occurs in the utterance claiming that the actress was much more beautiful than the actual nun. The theme of the discourse segment is the play, and the AT I mean the nun does not change this; it does not affect the global structure of the discourse segment:

(20) (…) und das ist es auch; […] was das Stück will, was man um so deutlicher sieht, als die Bethmann wirklich eine sehr hübsche Frau ist oder doch zum wenigsten viel hübscher.

(…) und das ist auch […] what is the point of the play, and one sees it even clearer, because the Bethmann is really beautiful, or at least much more beautiful.

als sie wirklich war ich meine die Nonne, (was aber nichts schadet […] than she, really was, I mean the nun, (but it is not so bad […] [Newspaper Corpus of Bonn BEK: 2014916]

\(22\) In some cases, the hearer might make his inability to establish the reference explicit, and thus directly trigger the intention of the speaker (see also footnote 11).

\(23\) Speech act related goal (SARG) is a goal that is either conventionally associated with a particular type of utterance (that is e.g., the case with AT, where an extrawenental NP is required) or is recoverable from the discourse context. E.g., the SARG of a question is to learn the answer to this question (cf. Asher/Lascarides (2003: ch. 7)).

\(24\) According to the analysis presented here, corrections like (a) are a subtype of ATs (cf. ‘alien-initiated repair’ in the terms of Uehmann 1993):

(a) (A. Ann went to London. B: No, she didn’t. I just met her.) A: I meant Ann Smith.

Besides, it is possible that Afterthought is also used to attack other kinds of optional additions, as certain kinds of appositions or non-restrictive relative clauses. However, this issue needs further investigation.

4. The discourse function of right dislocation

It has been stated above that the function of RD is to mark the discourse referent that is going to be especially salient for the following discourse. In the following, I call this referent discourse topic referent. I assume that for any given coherent discourse segment there exists such a discourse topic referent with which this discourse segment is concerned.

Using the term discourse topic referent I assume the local concept of the discourse topic.\(^{24}\) The notion of discourse topic referent corresponds to the entity-based approach to discourse topic, which is advocated for in Oberlander (2004).\(^{25}\) According to Oberlander, the only sort of discourse topic needed in addition to discourse relations for establishing coherence is an entity the discourse segment is about.\(^{26}\) The concept of an entity the discourse segment is about matches the intuitive understanding one has about discourse. When questioned about the subject of the discourse (in the pretheoretical sense), e.g., “What were you talking / reading etc. about?”, spontaneous answers refer to entities (or, more precisely, to nominal discourse referents). So, some of the possible answers could be “We were talking about Woody Allen’s last movie / Anna’s wedding / my new colleague / our holiday plans / German right dislocation etc.”

\(24\) In choosing this concept of discourse topic, I do not attempt a theoretical solution to the problem of the status of discourse topic, which has been extensively discussed in literature. See e.g., Keenan & Schiffrin (1976), Brown & Yule (1983/2004), Gourret (1997) and, more recently, Büring (2003), Asher (2004), Kehler (2004), Oberlander (2004), Stede (2004) and Zeevat (2004), to name a few, for the questions of what a discourse topic is (some answers are: a proposition, a question the discourse answers, an entity etc.) and whether modeling of the discourse needs this concept in the first place.

\(25\) The existence of some kind of entity that is most salient at a given stage of the discourse and that is relevant for establishing coherence seems to be the common point of the papers in the recent issue of Theoretical Linguistics dedicated to discourse topics (cf. “recurring sentence topic” in Oberlander (2004), “local topics within discourse segments” in Kehler (2004), “protagonist” in Zeevat (2004) and “Discourse topic 1” in Stede (2004)).

\(26\) That corresponds at the level of the discourse to the notion of atoness proposed by Reinhart (1981) at the sentence level for sentence topics.
In line with this intuitive understanding of the discourse topic, RD serves to mark some discourse referent as the discourse topic referent for the following discourse segment. Take, for example, (21) as an illustration:

(21) (Und als der König seine Frau verloren hatte, bedauerte ihn die Duitrite: "Ach ja, für Ihnen ist es doch nicht so leicht [...]"
And when the king lost his wife, Duitrite pitied him: "Dear me, I should say, for you things aren't that easy either [...]"
Sie war ein Original, die Madame Duitrite,
She was an original, Madame Duitrite,
(Sie verstand nie, warum man über ihre Aussprüche lachte.)
(She never understood why everybody always laughed at her remarks. She was genuine and lived unconsciously, as all unique people do. She never came across as being artificial.)

[Fischer-Fabian, S., Berlin-Evergreen, Berlin: Noma, 125]

Segment (21) is about a certain Madame Duitrite. Madame Duitrite is available (and most salient) as the referent for the pronoun sie ("she") in the second sentence of (21) containing a RD. What RD does here is to mark that the following is about Madame Duitrite. Madame Duitrite is thus explicitly set as the discourse topic referent for the (sub)segment following the right dislocation.77 Importantlly, in (21) no topic shift takes place, as Madame Duitrite is also the discourse topic of the preceding (sub)segment.

Here it is instructive to have a look at the left peripheral constructions in German and to compare their discourse functions to that of RD. Frey (2004) shows that a left-peripheral construction called hanging topic is used in a similar way to mark the discourse topic referent for the following segment. That is why in the following I briefly introduce two German left-peripheral constructions, hanging topic and left dislocation, and show how they relate to RD.

77. The difference between using a RD or a sentence without RD like (a) in the same context is that although Madame Duitrite is in both cases the discourse topic referent, RD marks this fact explicitly, whereas in (a) this remains implicit:

(a) Madame Duitrite war ein Original. Madame Duitrite was an original. (Sie verstand nie, warum man über ihre Aussprüche lachte.) (She never understood why everybody always laughed at her remarks.)
the case of hanging topic the discourse topic referent in question is bound to change from the preceding segment, while RD does not have this additional requirement, as one can see in (21), where the discourse topic referent does not change. Secondly, the following segment includes the host sentence in the case of HT, and excludes it in the case of RD.

It is important that although there are formal similarities between left and right dislocation in German – both are prosodically and syntactically integrated into their host sentence, while HT is not, functionally it is HT that RD corresponds to. Evidence for this claim comes from the option of interchanging the constructions in the same context: RD can be replaced by HT, but not by LD. as in (24):

(24) (Und als der König seine Frau verloren hatte, bedauerte ihn die Duttire: "Ach ja, für Ihnen ist es noch so leicht [...].")

Sie war ein Original, die Madame Duttire,

RD she was an original the Madame Duttire,

(Sie verstand nie, warum man über ihre Aussprüche lachte. Sie war eben echt und lebte, wie alle wirklich originalen Menschen, aus dem Unbewussten. Kein falscher Ton kam deshalb bei ihr auf.)

And when the king lost his wife, Dutitre pitied him: "Dear me, for you, things really aren't that easy either [...]". She was unique, not Madame Dutitre. She never understood why everybody always laughed at her remarks. She was genuine and lived unconsciously, as all unique people do. She never came across as being artificial.

a. Madame Dutitre, sie war ein Original.

Madame Dutitre, she was an original

HT

b. Die Madame Dutitre, sie war ein Original.

the Madame Dutitre, she was an original

LD

As shown above, RD in (24) marks the referent of the NP in question as the discourse topic referent for the following segment. A hanging topic NP refers to the discourse topic referent for the following segment too, and that is why (24a) is equally possible here. Left dislocation (24b), however, is not suitable here: it can only locally mark the sentence topic, and that does not capture the suggestion that the whole segment, and not only this one sentence, is "about" Madame Dutitre.

To sum up: in spite of their formal similarities, left and right dislocation differ in a crucial way as far as their discourse function is concerned. LD is a local (i.e., sentence-internal) aboutness marker, whereas RD is a global one, in that it marks the discourse topic referent for the following discourse segment. In this sense RD parallels HT: both mark the discourse topic referent for the following segment. However, there is one important difference between RD and HT: RD does not issue any conditions with respect to the discourse topic referent in the preceding segment, while HT requires a change of the discourse topic referent.

In the next section I will discuss in more detail what consequences the marking of a discourse topic referent by RD has for the structure of the following discourse.

4.2 Right dislocation and the "foreground" vs. "background" distinction

In order to understand the role of RD in the discourse some preliminaries are required: the distinction between foreground and background in a discourse segment, and the discourse relation Background (cf. Asher/Lascarides 2003, Vieu/Prévot 2004) that accounts for this distinction. I will now briefly introduce these. Background (in terms of SDRT) is a discourse relation that is responsible for subdividing a discourse into the foreground (main story line) and background (less

31. The difference between (24a) and (24b) is whether the author wishes to mark a change of discourse topic or not. It depends on whether Madame Dutitre is understood to be the discourse topic referent for the preceding segment. The preceding segment goes as follows:

(a) Und als der König seine Frau verloren hatte, die Volke so beliebte Königin Luise, bedauerte ihn die Duttire: "Ach ja, für Ihnen ist es noch so leicht, wer nimmt heute schon seinen Witwer mit sieben kleine Kinder?"

And when the king lost his wife, the very popular queen Louise, Dutitre pitied him: "Dear me, for you, really, things aren't that easy either, who would nowadays be willing to marry an old widower with seven little children?"

It is likely to consider Madame Dutitre as the discourse topic referent of the preceding segment; that would explain the choice of the RD. However, if the discourse segment is about the king, then the hanging topic construction in (24b) would be preferred.

32. Altmann (1981b) states that certain kinds of HT may be best "paraphrased" as right dislocation; in this case the right dislocation also has the function that is otherwise ascribed to HT, i.e., "continuation of a previously introduced theme", and not "disambiguation of a pronominal reference" that is according to Altmann (1981) typical for right dislocation. However, Altmann does not pursue this idea, and even generally considers HT (introducing a NP with a clear reference) and right dislocation (disambiguating an unclear reference) as being functionally complementary (Altmann 1981: 107).
important information about the state of affairs relating to the time interval of the main story line (cf. Asher/Lascarides (2003: 460) for the exact definition). An example of Background is (25):

(25) 1. A burglar broke into Mary’s apartment.
2. Mary was asleep.
3. He stole the silver.

[Asher and Lascarides (2003: 160)]

In (25), the information of utterance 2, that Mary was sleeping, serves as a background for the main story line (a burglary in Mary’s apartment). It is important that Background, being a subordinating relation (cf. Vieu/Prérot 2004) ensures that the discourse referents in the foreground are always available for anaphoric reference. It has been claimed above that RD influences the structure of the following discourse segment. This happens in the following way: RD assists the division of a discourse segment into a main story line and background. More specifically, this means that, firstly, the sentence with the RD always belongs to the main story line; secondly, the RD signals that this main story line is not exhausted, but is going to be resumed in the following. This is expected, as RD marks the discourse topic referent for the following segment. What follows, is that the utterances between the RD and the resuming of the main story line are understood as supplying background information, and thus coherence is maintained (see also Averintseva-Klisch 2007).

Evidence for this claim comes from some peculiarities concerning anaphoric resumption, as in (26):

(26) 1. Hast Du schon das Neueste von Melanie gehört?
   Have you already the newest about Melanie heard
2. Lisa, hat gestern Geburtstag gefeiert und ein paar Leute
   Lisa, has yesterday birthday celebrated and a couple people
   invited
3. Sie war auch eingeladen, die Melanie.
   She was also invited the Melanie.

What is important here is that for the anaphor sie (‘she’) in 6 (and 7) the reference to Melanie is not only possible, but even preferred to the reference to Lisa, although the NP Lisa is in linear terms nearer and thus (being also morphosyntactically suitable) should be preferred. This follows, however, from the structure of the discourse segment. The discourse structure inferred here is illustrated in (27). The main story line is about Melanie (and her bad manners at the party), and the utterances about Lisa are interpreted as the background of the main story line:

---

33. The distinction of foreground vs. background corresponds roughly to the distinction between main structure and side structure in the discourse made by von Stutterheim/Klein (2002). According to von Stutterheim & Klein, the main structure is built of partial answers to the Quas standoff, a mostly implicit question the discourse as a whole is answering; in other words, it is the main story line of a discourse (segment). Side structures include sentences that supply information that is not immediately relevant as a partial answer to the Quas standoff. One function that Background might have is to attach a special subtype of side structure. This is the function of Background that is relevant for this paper. Background also has other functions so an important function of Background is to attach presuppositions (cf. Asher / Lascarides 2003: 239).
The anaphoric resumption occurs only at the foreground level, and the pronoun in 6 resumes the current discourse topic referent, which has been explicitly marked with a RD in 3, i.e., Melanie.

There are two constraints on Background in the SDRT analysis: firstly, the background utterance must denote a state. Secondly, the background state and the foreground event or state must overlap. Clause 5 fulfills both of these constraints. It refers to a (not explicitly specified) property of Lisa, which is a state and overlaps with the time interval of the main story line, the main story line being Melanie exhibiting bad manners at Lisa's birthday party. Nevertheless, one might argue that there is a problem with clause 4. It describes the cooking of a delicious meal that (as we infer from our knowledge of the world) was before the party, and which is not a state but an activity. However, the tense form used here, past perfect, denotes not the action of cooking a delicious meal itself but its resultant state, i.e., the result of Lisa's activities which contributed to a wonderful party. This resultant state overlaps with the time of the main story line. Thus, both constraints on Background are fulfilled.

To sum up: RD interplays in a special way with the foreground-background-subdivision of a discourse segment. The RD itself and sentences resuming the discourse topic referent belong to the foreground, which enables the discourse topic referent to remain available for anaphoric resumption throughout the background part. The function of RD is thus twofold: from the point of view of production, RD assists in subdividing the discourse segment into a main story line and background. From the recipient's point of view, RD helps to keep the track of the main story line and to resolve anaphors in a way compatible with the intentions of the author.

5. Summary and conclusions

In this paper, I considered the construction traditionally called German right dislocation. I argued that there are actually two different constructions, right dislocation proper and afterthought, which are both subsumed under this label. Evidence for the distinction between right dislocation and afterthought comes from prosody, syntax and semantics, as well as from the discourse functions they have.

Right dislocation is prosodically and syntactically seen as part of its host sentence, i.e., a right IP adjunct (presumably as a result of a movement). Its function in discourse is to mark some discourse-old referent as the discourse topic referent for the following discourse segment (in the sense of the referent the following segment is about). This leads to the preference for definite specific NPs referring to individuals for RD, RD marking of the discourse topic referent has consequences for anaphoric resumption in the following segment and for the structure of the following segment as a whole. In other words, RD is a 'forward-looking' discourse device, issuing certain constraints on the subsequent discourse segment.

References

