

LEFT-DISLOCATION IN ITALIAN CONVERSATION

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1. THE SCOPE OF LEFT-DISLOCATION IN ITALIAN

In this chapter we will examine the conditions under which Italian speakers use, in spontaneous conversation, constructions such as those in (1) and (2) below:¹

- (1) (Un amico III:1)
a Roberto l'ho fatto aspetta' un'ora
to Roberto, him_i (I) made wait an hour
'Roberto_i, I made him_i wait for an hour.'
- (2) (Seminario sulla complementazione)
"Emme" ce l'avevo io
"em"_i it_i (I) had I
"Em"_i, I had it_i'

¹ All the examples of left-dislocations and any stretch of Italian conversation in this chapter are taken from transcripts of spontaneous conversation. Title, page of the transcript, and, sometimes, contextual information are presented within parentheses, next to the number of the example. Examples with no title are made up. The conventions used in transcribing the audiotapes are those of conversation analysis. We give here some of the conventions and refer the reader to the Appendix in Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) or to Schenkein (1978:xi-xvi) for a more detailed list. The double solidus (//) indicates the point at which the speaker's

We will refer to this kind of construction as "left-dislocation," borrowing the term from Ross (1967).² By "left-dislocation" (hereafter "LD") we mean a construction in which a constituent (e.g., a noun, a full pronoun, etc.) that appears before/to the left of its predicate has, within the same sentence, a (nonreflexive) coreferential pronoun [e.g., *l'* in examples (1) and (2)].

talk is overlapped by another participant's. Sometimes this convention is accompanied by a long single bracket at the point of overlap, with the talk of the intervening speaker placed beneath:

(Seminario sulla complementazione)
 G: *Si può dire // ma io non lo dire mai.*
 F: *Bruttino.*

Talk within parentheses indicates that we were not sure of the transcription. Empty parentheses indicate that no reasonable guess was possible:

(A tavola:2)
 G: *C'è un controllo odori che è durissimo eh,*
 S: *Eh?*
 G: *C'è un controllo odori di cucina. (Ndo) se fuma.*
 (Un amico II:1)
 Franco: *Si () dico "secondo me a te non ti va (. . .)"*

Material within double parentheses indicates information on voice quality or other characteristics of the speech used: ((WH)) means "whispered," ((LG)) means "laughter," etc.

The equals sign (=) indicates "latching," that is, no interval between the end of a speaker's talk and the beginning of the next speaker:

(A cena:1)
 Mother: *No.No. O in padella col pomodoro =*
 Father: *= No. Voi ce facevate le patate.*

Punctuation is not used in the traditional way. A period (.) marks a falling intonation; a comma (,) marks a slightly rising intonation; and a question mark (?) indicates a definite rising intonation. Boldfaced material indicates use of stress. Capital letters indicate very high volume.

Certain conventions have been used for the English translation of the Italian examples: In translating the examples interlinearly, a subscripted letter (*i*) is used to mark co-referentiality between different expressions (usually, between a noun or a full pronoun and a clitic pronoun). Full pronouns are glossed with capital letters (e.g., *lui* as 'HE,' *noi* as 'WE,' etc.); clitic pronouns are glossed with small letters (e.g., *gli* as 'to-him/to-her,' *li* as 'them,' etc.); subject-verb agreement is glossed with a pronoun within parentheses (e.g., *vuole* as '(he/she) wants,' *vedo* as '(I) see,' etc.). The apostrophe (') is used to mark the dropping of some segments or syllable either at the beginning or at the end of a word (e.g., *'na* for *una* 'a,' *'one* (fem.) 'one' (fem.), *co'* for *con* 'with'). For the infinitive forms of the verbs, which very often lack the final *-re*, we have adopted the convention of using the apostrophe only in those cases in which, as a result of the dropping, the word acquired a final stress (e.g., *parla'* [par'la] '(to talk' versus *esse* [esse] '(to) be').

² In so doing, however, we are not adopting the generative view that the constituents to the left of the predicate are moved from a more "basic" position. Any proposal concerning the actual formulation of the rule responsible for so-called left-dislocations in Italian is, in fact, outside the scope of this study. (Cinque, 1977, presents some arguments for adopting a "movement" analysis of left-dislocation in Italian.)

Notice that in (1) and (2), as well as in the majority of the examples in our corpus, despite the comma we may use in the English translation there is no noticeable intonational break between the left-dislocated constituent and the rest of the sentence.

Left-dislocations have a rather exotic status as linguistic objects. They are not found in traditional grammars of Italian. Indeed, they tend not to be used in formal Italian discourse, spoken or written. They are, rather, CONVERSATIONAL CONSTRUCTIONS: They emerge in the interactions of familiars and intimates. LDs are exotic for linguists not only in their context of use but in their construction as well. The notion of "dislocating" involves putting something out of its proper or natural place (Shorter Oxford English Dictionary). The use of this term in the description of this construction implies that the construction is somehow less proper or less natural, the norm being that the left-dislocated constituent typically belongs elsewhere in the construction.

The intention of this chapter is to turn the exotic into the familiar. LD is not a stranger to everyday talk; it appears repeatedly and without notice in informal conversational transactions. Furthermore, it carries out informational and interactional work that is integral to social life. In this sense, LDs are not less or more natural than some "unmarked" counterpart. They simply respond to certain communicative and social demands that their so-called counterparts do not.

How can we gain access to these demands? To be sure, the intuitions of native speakers produce useful insights. However, the complexity of the conversational context taxes the capacity of intuition and judgment alone. To capture the role of LD in conversation, we must turn to conversation itself. Turning to spontaneous talk, we are able to consider not only the conditions under which LDs are produced but also the character of the constructions themselves. In our discussion below, we consider FORMAL PROPERTIES OF NATURALLY OCCURRING LDs. The prosodic nature of LD, the range of constituent types that appear in the left-dislocated position, the type of pronoun that refers to the left-dislocated referent, and the frequency of LD relative to other topicalization construction ("Y-movement," see Section 2) are all described on the basis of recorded and transcribed conversational behavior.

It is by looking at actual conversation data, as shown in the following, that we are able to discover (a) informational similarities between LDs and Subjects; (b) an on-going "grammaticalization" process, that is, the rise of a new verb-agreement through the tendency to have a coreferential clitic pronoun with certain kinds of NPs; (c) differences between LDs and subjects at the discourse level; and (d) differences between subjects and LDs at the interactional level.

All the data used in this chapter are from five transcripts, representing approximately 2 hours of spontaneous conversation in informal situations (among friends, relatives, colleagues), recorded in Rome and transcribed according to the conventions of conversation analysis (see Footnote 1).

Coreferential Pronouns and Subject-Verb Agreement

In Italian, there are two types of definite personal pronouns: the so-called FULL (OR TONIC) PRONOUNS (e.g., *lui, lei, noi, me*, etc.³) and the so-called clitic pronouns (e.g., *lo, la, gli, ci, vi*, etc.). These two kinds of pronouns behave, in many respects, very differently. Generally, we can say that full pronouns, as opposed to clitic pronouns, behave more like full nouns. For instance, full pronouns can take prepositions (e.g., *a lui* 'to him,' *da lui* 'by, from him,' *per lui* 'for him,' etc.), carry primary (or contrastive) stress, and appear in different positions in the sentence. Clitic pronouns, instead, must occur in very fixed positions, do not carry primary stress, cannot be preceded by prepositions (sometimes they are marked for "case," e.g., *lo* 'him(acc.)' versus *gli*⁴ 'to him(dat.)'), and cannot be conjoined with full nouns or full pronouns.

In our data, we found only clitic pronouns used to refer to LD items. Since, in the dialect we are examining, subjects cannot be expressed by clitic pronouns (in other words, there are no subject clitic pronouns⁵ in the

³ In our data, as is probably typical of the informal register used in such conversations, the third-person full pronouns for inanimate definite referents are missing, and demonstrative pronouns are used instead (i.e., *questo* or *quello* instead of *esso*). Also notable is the absence of the subject full pronoun *egli* 'he,' normally found in formal (written and spoken) language. (For some interesting observations on the alternation between *egli* and *lui* through an analysis of written texts in both old and modern Italian, see Durante 1970).

⁴ In the conversations reported in this chapter, *gli* is sometimes realized as [ye] or [y] (before vowels) and transcribed in the text as *je* or *j*' (on the use of the apostrophe, see Footnote 1), and it can mean not only 'to him,' but also 'to her' and 'to them.'

⁵ There are, however, dialects that do have subject clitic pronouns, as is reported in Rohlf's (1968). Here are a few examples:

- | | | | |
|-------|--------------------------------|---------------|--|
| (i) | <i>icché tu fai?</i> | (Florentine) | (cf. Standard Italian * <i>Che tu fai?</i>) |
| | what you do | | |
| | 'what are you doing?' | | |
| (ii) | <i>u piöiv</i> | (Piedmontese) | (cf. Standard It. <i>piove</i>) |
| | it rain | | |
| | 'it rains.' | | |
| (iii) | <i>te, tu se' tutto grullo</i> | (Florentine) | |
| | YOU you are all nuts | | |
| | 'You are completely nuts.' | | |
| (iv) | <i>lù el dorma</i> | (Milanese) | |
| | HE he sleeps | | |
| | 'He sleeps.' | | |

Subject clitic forms are also found in the works of Old Italian writers, as is reported in Fornaciari (1881:56).

language), subjects never happen to be LD items. Although we might expect speakers to use, at least in this case, full (subject) pronouns, in fact, they do not (that is, we do not find constructions like *Mario_i(,) lui_i è uscito presto stamattina* 'Mario_i(,) he_i went out early this morning'.⁶)

This fact, that is, no left-dislocated subjects, contrasts with spoken English, in which a large number of LD items are subjects (cf. Keenan and Schieffelin 1976). To understand this "gap" in the data, we must turn to the role of subject-verb agreement in Italian. We will show that many of the features of clitic pronouns are shared by subject-verb agreement, and, hence, subjects, to some extent, always have a "coreferential pro-form" in the sentence, such pro-form being the subject-verb agreement.

SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT AND CLITIC PRONOUNS: SHARED PROPERTIES

Grammatical Information. Subject-verb agreement inflection conveys information about the subject, for example, person, number, and (sometimes) gender.

Consider the following verb paradigms:

- | | | |
|-----|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| (3) | <i>corr-o</i> | <i>corr-iamo</i> |
| | run (1st sing.) | run (1st plural) |
| | '(I) run.' | '(we) run.' |
| | <i>corr-i</i> | <i>corr-ete</i> |
| | run (2nd sing.) | run (2nd plural) |
| | '(you sg.) run.' | '(you pl.) run.' |
| | <i>corr-e</i> | <i>corr-ono</i> |
| | run (3rd sing.) | run (3rd plural) |
| | '(she/he/it) runs.' | '(they) run.' |
| (4) | <i>è stanc-o</i> | <i>sono stanch-i</i> |
| | is tired (masc. sing.) | (they) are tired (masc. plural) |
| | '(he) is tired.' | '(They masc.) are tired.' |
| | <i>è stanc-a</i> | <i>sono stanch-e</i> |
| | is tired (fem. sing.) | (they) are tired (fem. plural) |
| | '(she) is tired.' | '(they fem.) are tired.' |

⁶ The fact that we found no examples of such constructions does not necessarily mean that they are "impossible" or ungrammatical. However, it does say, at least, that such constructions, if used, would probably have quite different environments and/or functions from LDs. Cinque (1977) discusses some (potential) differences between sentences in which the left-dislocated noun has a co-referential full pronoun (e.g., *lui*), which he calls "hanging topics," and the constructions discussed in this paper as LD.

In (3) the suffix marks the person and the number (note that there are no identical forms). In (4) the auxiliary verb *essere* 'to be' marks the person, and the suffix on the adjective signals whether it is singular or plural and whether it is masculine or feminine. The same features are conveyed by clitic pronouns (with respect to their referents):

- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| (5) | <i>mi conosc-e</i>
me know-s
'(s-he) knows me.' | <i>ci conosc-e</i>
us know-s
'(s-he) knows us.' |
| | <i>ti conosc-e</i>
you (sing.) know-s
'(s-he) knows you.' | <i>vi conosc-e</i>
you (pl.) know-s
'(s-he) knows you (pl.).' |
| | <i>lo conosc-e</i>
him/it know-s
'(s-he) knows him/it.' | <i>li conosc-e</i>
them know-s
'(s-he) knows them (masc.).' |
| | <i>la conosc-e</i>
her/it know-s
'(s-he) knows her/it.' | <i>le conosc-e</i>
her/it know-s
'(s-he) knows them (fem.).' |

Referring Force. Verb forms like those illustrated in (3) and (4) may occur by themselves in actual conversation (as well as in written texts), expressing reference with objects identifiable from the spoken or physical context.⁷ Notice, in the following passage, how the only linguistic material that

⁷ We think that this kind of agreement, which we will show to be "pronominal agreement," must be distinguished from other kinds, like, for instance, the agreement of the past participle in the past tense (*passato prossimo*) with the direct object. This is illustrated in the following examples:

- | | | |
|------|---|---|
| (i) | <i>ho visto la ragazza</i>
(I) have seen the girl
'I have seen the girl.' | → <i>l' ho vist-a</i>
her (I) have seen-fem. sing.
'I have seen her.' |
| (ii) | <i>ho mangiato gli spaghetti</i>
(I) have eaten the spaghetti
'I have eaten the spaghetti (pl.).' | → <i>li ho mangiat-i</i>
them (masc.) (I) have eaten-masc. pl.
'I have eaten them.' |

This kind of agreement [illustrated in (i) and (ii)] cannot have a pronominal force, that is, cannot appear by itself. It must always co-occur with the DO; usually when the DO is a clitic pronoun, as shown above, but, for some speakers, as pointed out by Parisi (1975), sentences like (iii) are also possible:

- | | | |
|-------|--|---|
| (iii) | <i>ho lavat-e le camicie</i>
(I) have washed-fem. pl. the shirts
'I have washed the shirts.' | (instead of <i>ho lavato le camicie</i>) |
|-------|--|---|

clearly marks the switching of reference from the first person singular (the speaker) to the second person singular (the other character in the story) is represented by the subject-verb agreement (e.g., *arriv-o* '(I) arrive,' *sa-i* '(you) know,' *aspett-i* '(you) wait for,' etc.):

- (6) (Un amico, III:1); Franco is recalling his arrival in Torino and is telling Andrea how mad he got at Roberto for not being at home waiting for him).

Franco: *La prima cosa che faccio faccio "a Robe" ()*
the first thing that (I) do (I) say hey Roberto

una volta mi avresti trattato un po' meglio eh,"
once me (you) would have treated a bit better

gli ho detto no,
to-him (I) have said y'know

Andrea: *Perché?*
why

Franco: *Eh. Inzom- arrivo. Lo sai che arrivo.*
well. y'know- (I) arrive it (you) know that (I) arrive.

Eh. Eh. Almeno passa a casa aspetti che arrivo
Okay. At least (you) pass home (you) wait that (I) arrive

e poi m-me porti fuori no, no che arrivo a
and then me (you) take out okay, not that (I) arrive

casa non c'è nessuno. C'è tua madre . . .
home there's nobody there's your mother

'Franco: The first thing that I do I say "hey man, once you would have treated me a bit better, uhm" I told him, y'know.

Andrea: Why?

Franco: Well. I arrive, you know that I will arrive, okay. At least you (could) come home and wait until I arrive and then take me out, okay. (You don't do that when) I arrive there's nobody at home. There's your mother. . . .'

Such a "pronominal" function of subject-verb agreement is not restricted to first and second person. In (7), for instance, a speaker (i.e., Mother) introduces a referent (*Alberto. L'idraulico*, 'Alberto. The plumber'). Once recognition has been obtained by the other party (i.e., Son), Mother proceeds with the story, which also involves another person (*un operaio suo* 'one of his workers'). Afterward, verb agreement is used to refer to and to

differentiate between both referents together [*c'hanno aspirato* '(they) sucked for us'] and only one of them [*c'ha prestato un motorino* '(he) lent us a motor']:

- (7) [A cena: 14, the mother is telling her son about an accident that occurred on a summer vacation day (Ferragosto), when the water heater in the house broke and they were looking for a plumber].

Mother: *I giorni di Ferragosto che figurate non trovi*
 they days of Ferragosto that (you) imagine don't find

nessuno. Per fortuna abbiamo trovato Alberto.
 nobody Fortunately (we) have found Alberto.

L'idraulico (dell'acqua). Lo conosci no,
 The plumber of the water him (you) know don't

Son: [//*quel- () giovane che*
 (you) that- young who
Mh.
 (2.0)

Mother: *Quello è venuto. Insieme a un operaio suo.*
 that (one) is come together with a worker (of) his.

C'hanno- co' 'na pompa. C'hanno aspirato
 (They) have with a pump to-us (they) have sucked

co- a bocca eh,
 with- mouth y'know
 (1.5)

Mother: *Inzomma. C'ha prestato un motorino nu-o-vo.*
 In short. to-us (he) has lent a motor NEW

'Mother: In the days in the middle of the summer that you can
 imagine how difficult it is to find somebody. Fortunately
 we found Alberto. The plumber (of/for the water). You
 know him don't you? [// That young guy who-

Son: [//*Mh.*
 (2.0)

Mother: That one came, with an assistant. They did- with a pump.
 They sucked with their mouths you know.
 (1.5)

Mother: In short, He lent us a NEW motor.'

A similar function is performed by clitic pronouns, as can be inferred from examples (6) and (7) [e.g., in (6), *me porti fuori* '(you) take me out,' and in (7), *c'ha prestato* '(he) lent us']:

STATISTICAL EVIDENCE FOR A SIMILAR INFORMATIONAL ENVIRONMENT OF SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT AND CLITIC PRONOUNS.

Both subject-verb agreement and clitic pronouns are typically used to refer to items that have been previously identified and/or established as topic.⁸

This common characteristic of subject-verb agreement and clitic pronouns can be checked by looking at the immediate preceding discourse, as shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1
 INFORMATIONAL ENVIRONMENT OF SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT, CLITIC PRONOUN, FULL SUBJECT, AND LEFT-DISLOCATED NOUN AND PRONOUN REFERENTS

	Subject-verb agreement	Clitic pronouns	Subject full pronouns	Subject full nouns	Left-dislocated pronouns	Left-dislocated nouns
Total number	100	76	100	62	20	25
Number mentioned in immediately prior discourse	72	55	41	17	13	6
Percentage	72	72.4	41	27.4	65	24

This table indicates how often the referents are mentioned in immediately prior discourse (i.e., in the prior one or two clauses). As one can see, subject-verb agreement and clitic pronouns (with no co-occurring co-referential full nouns or pronouns) show striking similarity. Referents of subject-verb agreement are mentioned 72% of the time within the two immediately prior clauses, and referents of clitic pronouns are mentioned 72.4% of the time with respect to the same environment (i.e., two clauses back). These numbers contrast considerably with those of full nouns and full pronouns. Subject full pronouns are mentioned 41% of the time in the two prior clauses, and subject full nouns are mentioned only 27.4% of the time (we will return to these figures in a later discussion on givenness).

⁸ Notice that, despite the naturally "unique" reference of first-person singular verb agreement, the speaker usually is not entitled to introduce himself into the story-conversation by simply using the subject verb agreement or the clitic pronoun. In most of the cases, a full pronoun (e.g., *io, me*) is needed, as many instances in our transcripts show.

2. CLITIC PRONOUNS AS AGREEMENT MARKERS

We have shown that sentence-initial subjects and left-dislocated constituents share several features. A major barrier, however, remains before the total collapsing (at least from a strictly grammatical point of view) of subjects and left-dislocated items: the obligatory nature of subject-verb agreement on the one hand and the supposedly "optional" nature of pronominalization on the other hand.

In this section, we will show that, at least for certain kinds of NPs, this barrier tends to disappear and the presence of a coreferential co-occurring clitic pronoun seems more "natural" than does its absence.

LD versus Topicalization.

In addition to LD, in which, as we saw above, a coreferential copy pronoun appears in the sentence, Ross (1967) mentions another rule that can move a constituent to the beginning of the sentence, namely, TOPICALIZATION [Postal (1971) calls it "Y(iddish)-Movement"]. This kind of movement rule does not leave any copy pronoun. Topicalization would produce sentences like *Giovanni(,) ho visto* 'Giovanni, (I) have seen' or *la camicia(,) ho comprato* 'the shirt, (I) bought.'

If Topicalization is, in fact, a real alternative to LD in the language, the "optional" nature of a co-occurring coreferential pronoun in sentences in which a non-subject constituent appears to the left of the predicate might be used against the idea of collapsing the distinction between clitic pronouns and subject-verb agreement. However, in our corpus we found that:

WHEN A DEFINITE (OR GENERIC) DIRECT OBJECT (DO) OR INDIRECT OBJECT (IO) FULL NOUN OR PRONOUN APPEARS TO THE LEFT OF ITS PREDICATE, IT ALWAYS CO-OCCURS WITH A COREFERENTIAL CLITIC PRONOUN.⁹

That is, we did not find any instance of "topicalized" definite DO or IO.¹⁰ We then looked at the co-occurrence of coreferential clitic pronouns with other types of NPs in order to see whether this is a characteristic of LDs only or whether it could be found with other constructions as well. The results are reported in the next section.

⁹ The only two cases of topicalized DOs (we found no cases of topicalized IOs) in our corpus are both indefinite. We also found two cases of topicalized (definite) obliques (cf. Footnote 10).

¹⁰ Our sample of oblique NPs found at the beginning of sentences is too small (N=4) to make any percentage really significant. We note, however, that they were all definite. Two of them were left-dislocated, and two were topicalized.

Co-occurrence of a Coreferential Clitic Pronoun with DOs and IOs

Out of three transcripts we examined, we found that:

1. Of the postverbal full pronouns (DO/IOs), 77% (10) co-occur with a coreferential clitic pronoun.
2. Of the postverbal definite (full) nouns, 20.6% (13) co-occur with a coreferential clitic pronoun.
3. Only 3% (1) of the indefinite postverbal (DO/IO) NPs co-occur with a coreferential clitic pronoun.

These results are summarized in Figure 1:

$\left[\begin{array}{c} \text{--- Verb} \\ + \text{Def} \\ + \text{Pro/Noun} \end{array} \right] > \left[\begin{array}{c} \text{Verb ---} \\ + \text{Def} \\ + \text{Pro} \end{array} \right] > \left[\begin{array}{c} \text{Verb ---} \\ + \text{Def} \\ + \text{Noun} \end{array} \right] > \left[\begin{array}{c} \text{Verb ---} \\ - \text{Def} \\ + \text{Noun} \end{array} \right]$
$100\% \qquad 77\% \qquad 20.6\% \qquad 3\%$
$(20/20 \text{ Pronouns}) \quad (10/13) \quad (13/63) \quad (1/37)$
$(22/22 \text{ Nouns})$

Figure 1 Hierarchy of types of NPs (DOs and IOs only) that tend to co-occur with a coreferential clitic pronoun. The symbol ">" means "more likely to co-occur with a coreferential clitic pronoun"; "--- Verb" means "before the verb," that is, NPs (either DOs or IOs) that appear in preverbal position, and "Verb ---" indicates NPs (DO/IO) that appear in postverbal position. "+ Def" means definite or generic. "+ Pro" means a full pronoun, for example, *lui, lei, noi*, etc., and "+ Noun" means full nouns, like *Roberto, la donna*, etc.

Figure 1 clearly shows that DEFINITENESS is a very important feature for having a coreferential clitic pronoun. It also shows that full pronouns tend almost always to co-occur with a coreferential clitic, no matter their position (i.e., either pre- or postverbally). Table 2 summarizes the results with respect to the distinction between full pronouns and full nouns:

TABLE 2
CO-OCCURRENCE OF COREFERENTIAL CLITIC PRONOUNS WITH
FULL PRONOUNS AND FULL NOUNS

	Full pronouns	Full (definite) nouns
Total number	33	85
Number coreferential clitic pronouns	29	35
Percentage	87.9	41.2

The higher co-occurrence of a coreferential clitic pronoun with a full pronoun can also be seen as a difference between the two grammatical roles of DO and IO. In fact, if we reexamine our figures with respect to this

distinction, we find that most of the full pronouns are IOs and most of the full nouns are DOs. This is illustrated in Table 3:

TABLE 3
CO-OCCURRENCE OF COREFERENTIAL
CLITIC PRONOUNS WITH IOs AND DOs

	IO	DO
Total	28	90
Number coreferential clitic pronouns	25	40
Percentage	89.3	44.4

In the next section, we will discuss these figures with respect to Givón's hypotheses (Givón 1976) on the rise of verbal agreement in the world's languages.

The Topic Hierarchies and the Rise of Verbal Agreement

Givón (1976) has argued that pronominal verb agreement arises from so-called "grammaticalization" or ("syntacticization") of LDs and RDs (he calls the latter "afterthoughts," following Hyman, 1975). The "over-use" of those two constructions would lead, eventually, from what Givón calls "topic agreement" to subject- or DO- or IO-agreement. Givón (1976) discusses several examples from languages in which present verbal agreement is derived from pronominal sources.

We want here to point out not only that our data seem to show that Italian (at least the dialect we are concerned with in this chapter) might be undergoing the kind of process that Givón describes but also that the direction of the "spreading" of *clitic pronouns toward agreement markers* follows a route also predicted by Givón (cf. also Moravcsik, 1971). There is a series of features that seem to be characteristic of TOPICAL ELEMENTS in the discourse; more simply, features of the kinds of referents that people tend to talk about. Givón presents them in a number of hierarchical relations,¹¹ here reproduced in (8):

- (8)
- a. human > nonhuman
 - b. definite > indefinite
 - c. more involved participant > less involved participant
 - d. Speaker > hearer > others

¹¹ A similar topic hierarchy has been proposed by Hawkinson and Hyman (1974) in discussing some subjectivization rules in Shona, a Bantu language. Kuno (1976) has also presented some evidence for similar hierarchical relations between different types of referents.

The hierarchical relation (8c) is also related to the following case hierarchy:

- (9) AGENT > DATIVE > ACCUSATIVE

These labels must be interpreted as "deep or abstract" (Fillmorean) kinds of cases.

The ">" symbol must be interpreted as "more topical than." In terms of diachronic change, the hierarchies would imply that certain kinds of referents should tend before others to trigger agreement. To a considerable extent, this is certainly true in our data. As we have shown, definite NPs always co-occur with a coreferential clitic pronoun when they are placed to the left of the predicate, and they also tend to have more often a coreferential clitic in postverbal position than indefinite NPs (cf. Figure 1). As a whole, full pronouns tend to have almost always a coreferential clitic pronoun, no matter what their position in the utterance (cf. Table 2). They are supposedly more "given" than are definite nouns (cf. also Table 1 on the immediate givenness of full pronoun subjects as opposed to nouns). All these data confirm Givón's prediction of definite nouns triggering agreement before indefinite nouns [see (8b)]. Table 3 provides some support for the precedence of dative over accusative [cf. (8c) and (9)], at least if we reinterpret them at the grammatical level as IO over DO. As shown in Table 4 (to follow), left-dislocated DOs tend to be human more often than do postverbal DOs. Some evidence, at least in terms of speaker versus others, can also be found for (8d). Out of the 20 left-dislocated full pronouns, 11 refer to the speaker (10 are first-person singular *me*, 1 is first-person plural *noi*), 3 to the hearer, and 6 to third-person referents. Out of the 10 right-dislocated pronouns (i.e., the postverbal ones), 5 were first-person (*me*), 2 were second-person (*te*), and 3 were third-person referents.

TABLE 4
PERCENTAGE OF ANIMATE-HUMAN REFERENTS (only nouns)
[All our animate referents are also human.]

	(V) DO	(V) IO	LD (DO Only)	LD (Total)	S (V)
Total number	100	3	20	25	62
Number animate referents	12	3	6	9	35
Percentage	12	3	6	36	56.4

The fact that coreferential clitic pronouns might start acting as agreement markers more than as independent pro-forms is also consistent with the fact that we did not find, in the majority of cases, any remarkable intonational break between the left-dislocated (or right-dislocated) constituent and the rest of the utterance. This might be a sign of the fact that they are not VERY marked constructions and that the language has a way of handling

them without relying on suprasegmental features like contrastive stress or pauses—by marking the verb by means of a coreferential pro-form (i.e., the clitic pronoun).

In the next section, we will examine in much greater depth the discourse context of LD and subject-verb constructions, both from an informational and from an interactional point of view. We will point out that, even if LD and subject constituents can be distinguished in terms of their informational properties, their main differences are captured by examining their use by the speaker in controlling the conversational interaction (e.g., seeking-holding the floor, selecting next speaker, etc.).

3. THE INFORMATIONAL LEVEL

Sections 1 and 2 have focused on similarities between subject-verb agreement on the one hand and clitic pronouns in left-dislocated constructions on the other. In this section, the focus is rather on the referents themselves. In particular, the focus is on the status of left-dislocated and full-subject referents as pieces of information within a discourse. We will demonstrate that left-dislocated and full-subject referents share strikingly similar informational environments and informational functions. In this sense, subject-verb agreement in full subject (SV) constructions and clitic pronouns in left-dislocated constructions mark the same type of referent.

The Informational Status of Full Subject and LD Referents

Both subject and left-dislocated constituents have been treated as sentence topics (cf. Chafe 1976, Edward Keenan 1976, Li and Thompson 1976). That is, though differing in their syntactic properties, both tend to express what the speaker is talking about. The property of topicality, in turn, has been linked with other informational features. In particular, topics of sentences are described as typically "old" information, information assumed by the speaker to be known to the addressee (Chafe 1976, Clark and Haviland 1977, Firbas 1966, Givón 1979, Halliday 1967, Li and Thompson 1976). The breadth of the term "old information" has been discussed by Chafe (1976), Clark and Clark (1977), and Bates and MacWhinney (in press), among others. Topics can be "old information" in the sense that the speaker assumes that the hearer can identify the referent expressed (i.e., definite information). On the other hand, topics can be "old information" in the sense that the speaker assumes that the referent is currently in the consciousness of the hearer (i.e., "given" information; see Chafe 1976).

We have investigated the informational status of full-subject and left-dislocated constituents with respect to all of these purported properties. In particular, we have examined the status of these entities as (a) definite

information; (b) given information; and (c) centers of attention. With respect to (c), we have examined not only the status of the constituent in the sentence but also the status of the constituent within the prior and subsequent discourse. That is, we have examined the place of full-subject and left-dislocated referents within the network of concerns entertained in the course of conversational interaction.

DEFINITENESS

Our results strongly support the notion that topic referents are definite information. One hundred percent of the left-dislocated and full-subject nouns and pronouns in our corpus are definite [a total of 45 LDs and 162 subjects (in preverbal position)]. With respect to left-dislocated nouns, this frequency contrasts sharply with postverbal nouns occupying similar syntactic roles. As noted within Section 2, most of the left-dislocated nouns functioned as DOs with respect to their predication. If we examine postverbal DO nouns, we find that only 54% (54) are definite. This difference in frequency suggests that items in left-dislocated positions have more in common with full subjects than with their postverbal syntactic counterparts.

GIVENNESS

In the assessment of givenness, the researcher assumes that the speaker has some basis for considering a particular item to be currently in the consciousness of the hearer. One basis would be that a speaker has JUST REFERRED TO some item in the prior discourse. In our analysis, we have used this basis as one means of determining candidates for givenness.¹²

¹² A second basis for givenness would be that a speaker has recently focused upon some item in the physical setting. In the analysis at hand, this selective device was inaccessible to the researchers. The interactions were not videotaped, and, thus, no record exists of eye gaze, pointing, body orientation, and so on. However, apart from references to speaker and addressee, only a small percentage of the referents under consideration [12% (3) of the left-dislocated full nouns] were locatable in the immediate environment.

With respect to speaker and addressee, the problem is rather complicated. The co-conversationalists in this study display that the mere presence of the speaker is not sufficient grounds for assuming givenness. If the speaker has NOT been attended to in recent discourse history, reference will most probably not be through use of subject-verb agreement only. Only 7.1% (8) of first-person referents expressed through subject-verb agreement were NOT located within the recent discourse history of the current utterance. Speakers refer to themselves through subject-verb agreement typically only when there has been some recent mention of themselves. On the other hand, the story differs when it comes to ADDRESSEE REFERENCE. The constraint that the referent (addressee) has to be recently selected for attention is not as strong. Speakers will often use subject-verb agreement to refer to the addressee, even when there has been no recent mention. Indeed, 41.2% (7) of the second-person subject-verb agreement referents were not located in the immediate discourse history (within two clauses back). This difference with speaker reference indicates that speakers may assume that the addressee has been attending to himself even if there has not been talk about himself. The speaker does not assume, however, that the addressee has been attending to the current speaker.

Tables 5 and 6 display the discourse histories of left-dislocated and subject referents. The appearance of the referents in the immediately prior clause, in the second clause back, and in clauses beyond the second clause back are documented:

TABLE 5
PRIOR MENTION OF FULL SUBJECT AND
LEFT-DISLOCATED NOUN REFERENTS

Noun type	Mentioned either one or two clauses back	Mentioned prior to two clauses back
LD (Total <i>N</i> = 25)	24% (<i>N</i> = 6)	52% (<i>N</i> = 13)
LD (DO only) (Total <i>N</i> = 20)	30% (<i>N</i> = 6)	50% (<i>N</i> = 10)
Postverbal DO (definite only) (Total <i>N</i> = 54)	18.5% (<i>N</i> = 10)	20.4% (<i>N</i> = 11)
Subject in SV constructions (Total <i>N</i> = 62)	27.4% (<i>N</i> = 17)	50% (<i>N</i> = 31)

TABLE 6
PRIOR MENTION OF FULL SUBJECT AND LEFT-DISLOCATED
PRONOUN REFERENTS

Pronoun type	Mentioned either one or two clauses back	Mentioned prior to two clauses back
LD (Total <i>N</i> = 20)	65% (<i>N</i> = 13)	30% (<i>N</i> = 6)
Subject in SV construction (Total <i>N</i> = 100)	41% (<i>N</i> = 41)	58% (<i>N</i> = 58)

Table 5 indicates that left-dislocated and subject nouns have remarkably similar informational histories. Their similarities set them apart from postverbal DOs on the one hand and reference through subject-verb agreement or clitic pronouns (see Table 1) on the other. For example, left-dislocated DO and preverbal subject noun referents tend to be mentioned somewhere in the prior discourse (total of 80% of LDs and 77.4% of the subjects in SV constructions); however, postverbal DO referents tend not to be mentioned in the prior discourse (total of 38.9%). Notice that we have confined our-

selves to the DEFINITE postverbal DOs. These figures would be even lower if we had considered the indefinite DOs as well.

With respect to the immediate discourse history, both left-dislocated and subject nominal referents tend NOT TO BE EXPRESSED. Adding together the figures for both one and two clauses back, we see that 24% of the left-dislocated and 27.4% of full-subject nominal referents were mentioned in the recent discourse history (that is, either one or two clauses back). As noted in Section 1, these figures are significantly lower than are those for referents expressed through agreement alone (72%) or clitic pronoun alone (72.4%). Furthermore, Table 5 displays that these figures are higher than those for postverbal DO referents (18.5%).

Table 1 and Table 6 indicate that left-dislocated and full pronoun subject referents tend to appear in the recent discourse history LESS OFTEN than clitic and subject-verb agreement referents. The difference, however, is more striking between full pronoun subjects and agreement referents (41% versus 72% appearing either one or two clauses back) than between left-dislocated and clitic pronoun referents (65% versus 72.4% appearing either one or two clauses back).

Summarizing the data examined in Tables 1, 5, and 6, we can order referent types in terms of their likelihood to appear in the recent discourse history of the current utterance:

MOST LIKELY	RECENTLY MENTIONED						LEAST LIKELY
	Subject- verb agreement	Clitic pronoun	LD pronoun	Full subject pronoun	Full subject Noun	LD Noun	

CENTER OF ATTENTION

The status of a topic as a center of attention is at once the most significant and the most difficult to assess of the topic properties. Center of attention can mean center of attention with respect to speaker, to hearer, or to both. It can mean center of attention with respect to prior, current, or immediately subsequent concerns. It can mean center of attention of a particular utterance (e.g., sentence topic) and center of attention of a particular discourse (e.g., discourse topic).

SUBSEQUENT DISCOURSE

Discussions of topic in topic-prominent languages (Li and Thompson 1976, Tsao 1977) indicate that, once introduced, topics often dominate subsequent discourse. Subsequent utterances (sentences) often predicate something of the previously expressed topic. To see if left-dislocated and subject referents share this property, we documented the extent to which

such referents appear in the subsequent talk. The results are presented in Table 7:

TABLE 7
SUBSEQUENT MENTION OF FULL SUBJECT AND LEFT-DISLOCATED REFERENTS

	Nouns			Pronouns		
	Subjects in SV constructions	LD	LD (DO only)	Postverbal DO (+definite)	Subjects in SV constructions	LD
Total number	62	25	20	54	100	20
Number of subsequent mentions	54	20	17	24	99	19
Percentage	87.1	80	70	44.4	99	95

Table 7 indicates that REFERENTS EXPRESSED IN FULL SUBJECT AND LD CONSTRUCTIONS OVERWHELMINGLY RECUR IN THE SUBSEQUENT DISCOURSE. That is, they continue to receive attention beyond the utterance in which they are expressed. This property again links LD referents closer to subject referents than to their postverbal counterparts. For example Table 7 indicates that 44.4% of postverbal DO referents versus 70% of the left-dislocated DO referents can be found in the subsequent discourse.

PROMINENCE WITHIN UTTERANCE

One measure of the prominence of a referent might be the status of the clauses containing that referent. We compared referent types with respect to whether they appeared in main or in subordinate clauses. The results of this comparison are presented in Table 8:

TABLE 8
PERCENTAGE OF LD AND FULL SUBJECT REFERENTS IN MAIN CLAUSES

	Nouns			Pronouns		
	Subjects in SV constructions	LD	LD (DO only)	Postverbal DO (+definite)	Subjects in SV constructions	LD
Total number	62	25	20	54	100	20
Number of referents in main clause	45	20	16	22	68	17
Percentage	72.5	80	80	40.7	68	85

We can see from Table 8 that both LD and full subject referents typically appear in the prominent portions of utterances, that is, in main clauses. Again, this property separates LD referents from postverbal referents occupying the same grammatical role. Table 8 shows that left-dislocated DO nouns appear in a main clause twice as frequently as do postverbal DO nouns.

PRIOR DISCOURSE

In some sense, we have already considered the role of LD and subject referents in prior discourse. We have already provided considerable support for the fact that both types of referent tend not to be mentioned in the immediately prior discourse but tend to be mentioned more remotely in the discourse history. Why, then, do we consider this context again?

A reconsideration is called for because frequencies of prior mention do not tell the whole story. We would not consider a biography to be adequate if it only specified if and when a particular individual existed. We expect a biography to relate something of the significance of the individual with respect to the concerns of his times. Similarly, the history of a referent needs to address the relation of that referent to the concerns expressed in the discourse up to that point.

The question of the relation of a referent to prior discourse can be adequately answered only if the ORGANIZATION OF DISCOURSE itself is considered. The informational structure of a discourse consists of one or more global concerns or themes. These concerns provide a basis for talk, a point of departure. Referents expressed in the course of a text are linked to these themes. Following Fillmore (1975) and Goffman (1974), we may consider these themes as "frames," perspectives that link referents to one another in a semantically coherent way.

When we speak of the relation of referents to one another, the frame is an important variable. Most critically, we need to know if referents are members of same or different frames. This information is not provided in assessments of givenness. An item, for example, may be new to a discourse but either a member or a nonmember of a particular frame. An item that is a new member has not itself been a center of attention but is part of a set of concerns that is currently a center of attention. An item that is a new nonmember has not been a center of attention, nor does it participate in a larger, on-going center of attention.

If we examine the referents of nouns in full subject and LD roles that have not been mentioned (either one or two clauses back), we find that the vast majority are linked to an on-going frame of reference (theme). Out of a sample of 20 noun subjects (SV), 12 (60%) are new with respect to the local discourse history. Ten of these referents are, nonetheless, linked to a

semantic frame that is a center of attention in the prior clauses. In other words, the majority of these items share with items in the immediately prior discourse membership in the same semantic frame (see also Sacks 1972). Similarly, of the 25 left-dislocated nouns in our corpus, 19 (76%) are new with respect to the two prior clauses. Of these, 16 (84.2%) are linked to the semantic frame addressed in the two prior clauses. In other words, rarely is a full subject or LD referent not relevant to on-going concerns.

Having established this, let us turn now to the ways in which subject and LD referents may be linked to current frames. Basically, there are two major ways in which referents are tied to the prior discourse: (1) through REPETITION OF A PREVIOUSLY EXPRESSED REFERENT, and (2) through INTRA-FRAME REFERENT SHIFT.

1. REPETITION. With respect to (1), there are two types of repetition found in the data: (a) REPETITION OF A PRIOR TOPIC; and (b) REPETITION OF A PRIOR NONTOPIC. "Topic" here refers to a referent expressed as subject, left-dislocated, right-dislocated, or fronted constituent. If a subject or LD constituent repeats a prior topic, we refer to this move as TOPIC CONTINUITY and represent it as T → T. An example of topic continuity is provided in the following:

(10) (Un amico III: 1)

↳ Andrea: *E lui c'era, Roberto?*
and HE_i there was, Roberto;

↳ Franco: *Sì. Chiaro. Ma Roberto è arrivato dopo.*
Yes. Of course, But Roberto has arrived later.

Andrea: And he was there, Roberto?

Franco: Yes. Of course. But Roberto arrived later.

In (10), *Roberto* is the subject of two adjacent utterances. If a subject or LD constituent repeats a nontopic, we refer to this move as a NONTOPIC-TO-TOPIC SHIFT and represent it as NT → T. Examples of nontopic-to-topic shift can be found in (12)–(14):

(12) (A cena: 9, Father is talking about fixing up a place and the sharing of the expenses)

Father: *Bisogna vedere se in questo preventivo è:- è compresa*
(it) needs (to) see if in this estimate is included

NT
↳ *la messa in opera delle mattonelle. Le mattonelle ve*
the setting-up of the tiles. the tiles, you

↳ *le comprate voi. Ve le pagate voi.*
them, buy YOU. you them pay YOU.

Father: We must see whether in this estimate they included the setting-up of the tiles. (I think that) the tiles, you have to buy them, . You have to pay for them.

(13) (Un amico III: 13, Franco is discussing with Andrea the fact that their friend Roberto is into playing bowling.)

Franco: =*ma-ma intanto quello po(tresti) pure esse*
but but on the one hand that could even be
bravissimo ma se' sempre- è sempre 'na gran
very good but (you) are always (he) is always a big
pippa. È quello il punto io ho voluto // vede' com' è
Klutz (it) is that the point I wanted (to) see how is
NT
↳ *la questione. Tu te compri la palla no, // prima*
the question YOU you buy the ball okay, first
una serie di giustificazioni per di' // una serie di
a series of justifications to say a series of
↳ *giustificazioni a me pe' fatte capi' che la palla*
justifications to ME to let-you understand that the ball,
gliel' avevano quasi regalata. Poi l'hanno
to-him it, (they) almost gave. Then it (they) have
pagata.
paid.

Franco: =but-but you could even be very good at it but instead you are always- he is always a real Klutz. This is the point. I wanted// to see how the situation is. You buy yourself the bowling ball okay, // at first a whole series of justifications just to say- a whole number with me to let me know that the ball, they practically gave it, to him as a present. Then instead they paid for it.

(14) (Un amico III: 1, Franco is reporting a phone call with Roberto.)

Franco: *Allora m'ha fatto "ah. Va be' così." Dice.*
Then me (he) has said "ah. okay like that" (he) says.

"Allora e:: che-che-che hai fatto?"
"Then and: what-what-what have (you) done?"

M'ha fatto. No, "Ho parlato" dico "un po'
me (he) has said. y'know, "(I talked)" (I) say "a little

NT
↳ *co' tuo padre." Perché poi chiaramente il padre*
with your father." Because then of course the father
ha detto "ah vengo subito (ah come?)"
has said "ah (I) come immediately (what?)"

dall'ufficio no, Allora è venuto e m'è
from the office y'know, Then (he) came and me (I)

toccato aspettarlo.
had to wait for him.

Franco: So he said "It's okay like that." He says "Well what-what-what have you been doing?" He said to me. Y'know. I said "I talked a little bit with your father." Because in the meanwhile the father of course (when he heard that I was there) said "I'll come home right away" from his office, y'know, So he came and I had to wait for him.

In (12) and (13), we find two examples of LDs (*Le mattonelle, ve le, comprate voi* 'the tiles you buy them' and *la palla, gliel, avevano quasi regalata* 'the ball they almost gave it to him as a present') and, in (14), an example of subject noun (*Ho parlato (. . .) co' tuo padre (. . .) il padre ha detto (. . .)* 'I talked (. . .) with your father (. . .) his father said (. . .)').

2. INTRAFRAME REFERENT SHIFT. As previously noted, new referents may be linked to larger themes or frames in a number of ways. We find in our data that new referents (subject/LD items) are tied to referents in the immediately previous discourse in two ways: (a) ITEM-TO-FRAME SHIFT ($T_i \rightarrow \text{Frame}_i$ or $\text{Frame}_i \rightarrow T_i$); and (b) SHIFT AMONG ITEMS IN A FRAME ($T_i^a \rightarrow T_i^{a+1}$).

In the first case (a), the left-dislocated or subject constituent expresses a general concept that previous referents were part of ($T_i \rightarrow \text{Frame}_i$) or expresses a member of a general concept referred to in the immediately prior discourse ($\text{Frame}_i \rightarrow T_i$). For example, in (15) (to follow), the left-dislocated item *le piante* 'plants' is a generic term covering the previous item 'ste piante 'these plants.' In (16), the subject constituent *la vita sua* 'his life' refers to a global theme in which immediately previous referents participated:

- (15) (Un amico III: 17, Franco is talking about Roberto's friends, and in particular of one of them, who is into cultivating orchids.)

Franco: *quello li è il figlio- c'ha un sacco di soldi*
that one there is the son (of)- (he) has lots of money

a () no, *lavora per far soldi. No,*
y'know, (he) works to make money. Y'know,

T_i
 \rightarrow *oltre al fatto che gli piacciono 'ste piante*
besides to the fact that to-him please these plants

Frame
no, questo è uno molto sensibile sai, le piante
y'know, this one is one very sensitive y'know, plants,

le conosce molto bene (è) molto bravo
them_i (he) knows very well (is) very good

Franco: That one is the son—he's got a lot of money y'know. He works to make money, y'know. In addition to the fact that he likes these plants y'know. This one is a very sensitive (person) y'know. Plants, he knows them very well, he's very good.

- (16) (Un amico III: 7, Andrea and Franco are talking about their friend Roberto's life style, his job, and whether he is going to get a university degree. Andrea says that he asked Roberto how many exams he had taken.)

Andrea: (*be'*) *forse li farà a febbraio* =
(well) maybe them (he) will take in February

Franco: = *be' comunque il fatto che t'ha risposto "zero"*
well anyhow the fact that to-you (he) said "zero"

e non t'ha risposto "no. Cinque" come aveva fatto
and not answered "No. Five" as (he) did

prima (PAUSE) è indicativo no,
before is indicative isn't it,

?:()

Andrea: *Cioè quanti ne ha fatti, cinque* =
In short how many has (he) taken, five

Frame Franco: = ((high volume)) *La vita sua si va a inserire bene in*
the life his goes well in

quella che fanno quelli capisci?
that that do those (guys) (you) see?

Andrea: (Certo)
Sure

Andrea: (Well) maybe he will take them in February =

Franco: = Well. Anyhow. The fact that he has answered "none" and not "five" as he did before (Pause) is indicative isn't it?

Andrea: So how many has he taken, five? =

Franco: = His life fits very well with the life of those other guys you see?

Andrea: (Sure)

In the second case (b) ($T_i^a \rightarrow T_i^{a+1}$), the discourse moves from one item to another item relevant to a global theme under discussion. For example, (17)

introduces one of a set of items that make noise in the night. The talk had been centered on a barking dog and, then, on thunder. The speaker uses an LD to introduce a further item *tua madre che russa* 'your mother that snores':

- (17) (A cena: 4, At the dinner table, Father, Mother, and Son are talking about the noises they all heard the night before.)

Father: *Io c'è una cosa de bello che (0.5) prima*
I there's one thing good that before
 $T_1 \rightarrow$ *d'addormentarme me dà fastidio tutto. Tua madre*
falling asleep me bothers everything. Your mother,
che russa non me ne parla' perché passano due ore
that snores don't me of it, talk because pass two hours
prima che m'addormento. Però una volta che me so'
before that (I) fall asleep. But once that (I) have
addormentato, Perché me pijo tutte le sere la pillola=
fallen asleep, because (I) take all nights the pill

Father: (As for) me there's one great thing. (0.5) Before falling asleep everything bothers me. Your mother, who snores, don't even mention it. Because it takes me two hours to fall asleep. But once that I have fallen asleep, Because I take a (sleeping) pill every night-

Similarly in (18) (to follow), the speaker has been talking about the family of a mutual friend (Roberto). The previous discourse centered around Roberto and his father (*il padre*). The speaker uses a subject (SV) construction to introduce the mother of the family (*la madre*):

- (18) (Un amico III: 5, Franco reports a talk he had with Roberto, in which he, Franco, tried to convince him, Roberto, to be more open with his father.)

Franco: *Secondo me se vuoi 'n consiglio perché*
According to ME if (you) want an advice because
è inutile che tu stai così co' tuo padre
(it) is useless that YOU stay like that with your
inzomma è una cazz(h)ata
father y'know is a stupid thing (Pause)

Franco: *La madre è sbottata. Davanti a me.*
the mother exploded In front of ME

Andrea: Ah sì?
Oh yeah?

Franco: I think if you want an advice it does not make any sense that you keep this relationship with your father. That is, it's a stupid thing.

(Pause)

Franco: His mother exploded. In front of me.

Andrea: Oh yeah?

After having considered the different ways in which referents are tied to prior discourse concerns, let us examine the FREQUENCY with which each discourse tie appears in the data. A comparison of LD and subject constituents discourse links is presented in Table 9. Not only the presence of specific discourse ties but also the relative absence of discourse ties (inter-frame shift) is noted.

The first thing to notice from this table is the remarkable similarity in frequency of discourse tie types for subject-verb (SV) and LD construction. Repetition and intraframe linkage are relied upon in roughly the same proportions. Even the proportions of frame-item subtypes are extremely close. In this sense, SV and LD constructions share similar discourse biographies.

However, although the similarities are striking, there is one important difference in the frequency of discourse ties for subject and LD. Notice that there is one type of discourse tie that has NO tokens for LD constituents, namely, that of topic continuity ($T \rightarrow T$). Left-dislocations do not appear to repeat an item that has already assumed the status of topic in the local discourse history. On the other hand, 30% of the subject constituents in the sample repeat prior topics.

What does this imply? The significance of this difference is that LD appears to be reserved exclusively for TOPIC SHIFTING FUNCTIONS. Overwhelmingly, the shift of topic remains within the discourse frame of concerns currently attended to (88%). Either a minor sentence argument appearing in the prior

TABLE 9
DISCOURSE TIES

	Subject-Verb (20)	LD (25)
I. REPETITION: ^a		
$T \rightarrow T$	40% (8)	36% (9)
$NT \rightarrow T$	30% (6)	0% (0)
$T_1 \rightarrow T_1$	10% (2)	36% (9)
II. INTRAFRAME SHIFT:	50% (10)	52% (13)
$T \rightarrow \text{Frame}_i/\text{Frame}_i \rightarrow T_i$	20% (4)	20% (5)
$T_1 \rightarrow T_1^{n+1}$	30% (6)	32% (8)
III. INTERFRAME SHIFT:		
$T_1 \rightarrow T_1^{n+1}$	10% (2)	12% (3)

^a Repetition covers referents expressed within 5 clauses back.

discourse shifts its status to major argument (the LD item) or thematically relevant referents are introduced or reintroduced into the discourse as LD constituents. Subject constituents can do this work, but they maintain sentence topic continuity as well. That is, they are not restricted to topic-shifting, whereas LD is.

4. INTERACTIONAL LEVEL

Margins and Starting Points

The organization and use of word order among the world's languages has been a major concern in linguistics and psychology in the past decade. The two fields draw heavily from one another in addressing this phenomenon. Psychology turns to linguistics for universal (or near universal) word order patterns (synchronic and diachronic); linguistics turns to psychology for possible cognitive and perceptual underpinnings of these patterns.

The interaction between the two fields is evident in pragmatic studies of word-order phenomena. Attempts to assess the importance of context on word order are, by and large, attempts to assess the importance of speakers' and listeners' attention to and knowledge of the propositional context of sentences or utterances. Context is a three-way relation connecting knowledge of the "world," speaker, and listener. Hence, a pragmatic account of word order typically addresses the role of old and new information, theme and rheme, topic and comment, and so on. As discussed in Section 3, in such an account the initial, subject position of the sentence is frequently seen as a locus for information that is known to or salient to speaker, listener, or both. Taking this perspective ourselves, we would say that LDs bring non-subject constituents to the initial "starting point" (MacWhinney, 1977) position to make them topics of the constructions in which they participate.

It is curious that the SOCIOLOGICAL CONTEXT of verbal exchanges has been disregarded as a potential constraint on word order. The status of a speech situation as a type of social interaction is largely ignored. Utterances (sentences) are treated as information units but not conventional, social moves. The use of language to express propositions is acknowledged, but the use of language to exert power and control in a social encounter is never integrated into explanations of word-order phenomena.

In the present section, we propose that the nature and organization of social interaction does influence the organization of word order, that word order satisfies both INFORMATIONAL and INTERACTIONAL functions.

Our concern will be primarily with the relation between conversational interaction and word order, the most prevailing context in which language is employed. In this context, utterances may or may not have propositional content, but they are always either part of or are entire conversational

turns (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974). Similarly, in this context, the starting point or margin of a sentence (Longacre 1972; MacWhinney 1977) is a potential or actual starting point of a turn at talk.

Left-Dislocation and Turn Management

When an interlocutor has a turn at talk, he/she is also occupying the floor, in terms of the interaction as a whole. Attempts to take a turn are part of floor-seeking behavior. Seeking, occupying, and holding on to the floor are all means of controlling the direction of talk and the social situation at hand. Seeking the floor, for example, may be part of an attempt to limit the talk of a conversational partner. Holding the floor may be a means of increasing one's own influence and/or preventing another from participating, and so on.

Left-dislocation, like a variety of other constructions, is frequently used to carry out such interactional work. However, one function in particular—that of floor-seeking—distinguishes LDs from full-subject constructions.

FLOOR-SEEKING FUNCTION

One way to demonstrate that LD is widely used to bid for the floor is to show that they appear often in turn-initial position. Table 10 contrasts left-dislocation with subject constructions with respect to this position.

Table 10 indicates that, indeed, turn-initial position is a highly characteristic location for left-dislocation; furthermore, this frequency is not shared with subject constructions. For both pronominal and nominal constituents, left-dislocated constructions appear more than twice as frequently in turn-initial position as subject constructions do.

The frequent appearance of LDs in turn-initial position implies only that it very often is a bid or part of a bid to take up the floor. It, in itself, does not imply that the speaker's conversational partner is also bidding for the floor. A turn may follow a pause or another speaker's utterance. If a speaker uses an LD following a significant pause at a clause boundary, we would not say that there was competitive bidding for the floor. A necessary, but by no means sufficient, condition for alternative bids to occur is that a turn terminate (be bounded by) the turn of a conversational partner. One

TABLE 10
FREQUENCY OF NPs IN TURN-INITIAL POSITION

	Full noun		Full pronoun	
	LD	S (V)	LD	S (V)
Total number	25	62	20	100
Number in turn-initial position	14	13	10	23
Percentage	56 %	20 %	50 %	23 %

of the first considerations, then, is to assess the frequency with which left-dislocations are bounded by prior utterances versus by prior pauses. Table 11 illustrates these figures.

TABLE 11
FREQUENCY OF TURN-INITIAL LEFT-DISLOCATIONS
BOUNDED BY OTHER SPEAKERS' TURNS

	LD noun	LD pronoun
Total number	14	10
Number bounded by other speaker's turn	13	7
Percentage	85.1	70

Table 11 demonstrates that the majority of turn-initial left-dislocations border other turns rather than pauses.

Once again, we cannot be certain that these data display that left-dislocation is part of some competitive move to take over the floor. A better indication would be the relative number of turn-initial left-dislocations that OVERLAP other speakers' turns. Table 12 indicates these figures.

TABLE 12
FREQUENCY OF TURN-INITIAL LEFT-DISLOCATIONS
THAT OVERLAP WITH OTHER TURNS

	LD noun	LD pronoun
Total number	14	10
Number of overlaps	6	7
Percentage	42.9	70

→ These frequencies indicate that very often left-dislocations not only border prior turns, but they are also expressed concurrently with another turn. For left-dislocated nouns, roughly 40% of turn-initial utterances overlap other utterances. For pronouns, the percentage is even greater (70%). Notice that, for left-dislocated pronouns, every instance in which a turn-initial utterance bordered a prior utterance, it overlapped that utterance.

→ LD → These last two tables demonstrate that, minimally, left-dislocations delimit the utterances of conversational partners. Furthermore, they suggest that such delimitation may not be "invited" by the conversational partner. This suggestion is supported by an additional count taken of locations of overlap with respect to prior utterances. An overlap that occurs at the closing

portion of the prior speaker's prediction (toward end of clause) is more likely to have been invited by the current speaker than an overlap that appears earlier in the current speaker's turn. Twelve out of the 13 (92.3%) overlaps appear outside the closing portion of the prior utterance. That is, the majority appear to be interruptions that cut off the turn of a conversational partner.

We have, then, evidence that left-dislocation may be used not only to gain access to the speaking floor but also to block or to reduce the access of others participating in the social interaction. That is, left-dislocation may sometimes be a competitive move.

It is difficult to specify what factors encourage competition for the floor. In some cases, it may be the speech event itself. For example, several of our left-dislocations appear in the course of decision making, where interlocutors often disagree with one another's judgments or wish to foreground their own assessment. Additionally, competition for the floor appears greater with an increase in the numbers of conversational participants. Impressionistically, left-dislocations appear to be more frequent in our data wherever more than two interlocutors are engaging in talk. An advanced seminar in which 10 people participated is laced with left-dislocations. An example of rather elaborate competition for the floor taken from this situation is provided in the following. In this example, members of the seminar are discussing whether or not the verb *fuggire* and then *rifuggire* can take a sentence complement. Speaker V introduces the verb *rifuggire*. Once introduced, Speakers L, R, and F attempt to gain access to the floor through repetition of this lexical item.

(19) (Seminario sulla complementazione)

A: (...) "*Fuggire da: l far qualcosa*" non mi sembra-
"escape from doing something" NEG to-me seems

non mi [// sembra [// un buon italiano.
NEG to-me [seems [a good Italian

F: [No.

V: [(Ce l'avresti con)
(you) would have it with

"rifuggir-//re"

"rifug | gire (= re-escape)"

L: Rifuggir-//e

R: [(//)

F: [Ri-ri-

rifuggire già-// ce l'abbiamo.

rifuggire, alr | eady it, (we) have

A: Allora niente "fuggire"

Then nothing "fuggire"

- A: (...) "Fuggire dal far qualcosa" it doesn't seem // to me// good Italian.
 F: No.
 V: (You could do it (= complementation) with) "rifuggi//re"
 L: rifuggi//re
 R: (//)
 F: "Ri-ri-rifuggire, we already have it.
 A: Then "fuggire" should be left out.

WARRANTS FOR THE FLOOR

At this point, we might ask why LDs are effective as floor-seekers. To understand their effectiveness, we need to consider again the informational content of left-dislocated constituents and its relation to the informational content of utterances in the immediately prior discourse.

Jefferson (1978) has pointed that utterances that appear (to a listener) to be "off the point" are interrupted more often than are utterances that are perceived as relevant to the topical talk at hand. In other words, utterances that are not clearly tied to the current theme have a lower life expectancy than those that address current concerns. Another way of stating this is to say that successful turns at talk are usually "warranted" by some dimension of the topical talk at hand. The turn is legitimized in this sense.

LDs are effective means of seeking and of occupying the floor because they nearly always relate to some general concern under consideration. The left-dislocated referent itself may have appeared in the prior talk and, hence, constitute an explicit legitimizer of subsequent talk [cf. the use of *rifuggire* in example (19) above]. Or, the left-dislocated referent is semantically linked to general concerns at hand (cf. Section 3). Typically, the referent is a member of a conceptual domain under consideration [e.g., *tua madre che russa* in (17) is one of the many things that bother the father at night, and it does not left him fall asleep; *la stanza* in (20) is one of the things that need to be cleaned, etc.]:

(20) (Draft: 1)

- C: *cioè c'hai chi ti fa le pulizie in zomma* //e: [rt and No]
 that is (you) got who to-you does the cleaning in sho
 A: *devo- cioè per vestiti e cose varie devo andare*
 (I) must that is for clothes and things various (I) must go
 (alla) *lavanderia*
 (to) (the) laundry

- C: *Ho capito ho capito.*
 (I) have understood (I) have understood
 → A: *Per la stanza me la pulisco da solo*
 (as) For the room_i me it_i (I) clean myself
 C: that is you got somebody that cleans up for you // and
 A: No I must- I mean for clothes and various things I must go to the laundromat
 C: I see I see
 A: As for the room_i I must clean it_i up myself.

Recall that the latter environment (member of a set) is the most characteristic one for LDs in our corpus. LDs tend to draw attention to other instances of some general issue. They tend not to be "on-topic" in the sense that the center of attention of the prior turn is sustained in the current turn. As noted, left-dislocated referents appear in the prior predicate if they are to appear at all in the immediately prior context. (Recall that subject referents, in contrast, if they appeared at all, tended to function as subjects of immediately prior utterances). LDs tend to shift attention away from some immediate point of reference (immediately prior subject) to a different point of reference. In this sense, these constructions run the danger of being cut off. If Jefferson's observations are correct, topic shifting must be handled quite carefully if it is to be successful.

LDs may be successful topic-shifters in part because, while shifting focus of attention, they nonetheless are semantically relevant to the prior focus of attention. Indeed, part of the beauty of LDs is that they maintain a subject as well as a focus of attention, and the referent of that subject is often part of the immediate situation or immediate discourse history [48% (12) of subjects in full noun LDs and 37.5% (6) in full pronoun LDs].

Hence, LDs are in two ways warranted by prior consideration, through the left-dislocated referent and through the subject referent. In this sense, a left-dislocated construction is an effective means for changing the direction of talk.

Word Order and Turn Margins

We have demonstrated that there are interactional motives for placing non-subject constituents in utterance(sentence)-initial position. Such constituents may take precedence over subject constituents where the referent is warranted (legitimized) by current concerns under consideration, where the speaker is making a bid for the floor or wishes to hold the floor, and where there is competition for the floor. The referent establishes the speaker's right to talk at that point in conversational time.

The status of an NP as warranted may supercede other reasons for placing an NP in utterance-initial position. Inherent semantic properties of a referent, such as being human or animate or concrete, may assume a secondary role in assessing what will be the initial locus of attention where another type of referent is more clearly warranted by current concerns. The topic-worthiness of an NP is determined not only by inherent properties of a referent but also by its significance and relevance to the situation at hand.

5. LD AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO PASSIVE: A MULTILEVEL EXPLANATION

One striking characteristic of our data is the almost total absence of passive constructions (we found only one instance of passive out of roughly 100 pages of transcripts). This fact contrasts with the common use of passives in formal (written¹³) language.

We find numerous cases of passives in newspaper articles and scientific literature. For instance, 6 examples of passive constructions were found in only one page of a linguistics article ("Con," by Castelfranchi, Parisi, and Crisari, 1974).

At the same time, compared to passives, LDs are extremely rare in formal (written) discourse. Out of several newspaper articles that we examined, we found only one instance of LD:

(21) (From *Il Messaggero*, Oct. 1976)

Verso Milano va il furgone del Credito Varesino incaricato
toward Milan goes the van of the (bank) in charge
della consegna dei valori. Il percorso lo fa cinque volte
of the delivery of the values. the route, it, (it) does five times
la settimana.
the week

'Toward Milan goes the van of the Credito Varesino in charge of the delivery of the values. The route, it does it, five times a week.'

This kind of complementary distribution of passive versus LD made us think of a possible interchangeable role of these two constructions. In this

¹³ We will only talk here about formal WRITTEN Italian; we suspect, however, that similar characteristics can be found in formal SPOKEN Italian.

section, we investigate the extent to which LD and passive can perform the same grammatical and/or communicative function(s). We suggest several reasons why speakers prefer LD over passive in conversational interaction.¹⁴

Grammatical Properties

Passivization in Italian can apply (if at all) only to DOs (we are assuming here, as in other parts of the chapter, that there are such things as DOs in Italian). The rule works more or less as it does in English (*mutatis mutandis*): The would-be DO of the active sentence triggers subject-verb agreement, and it can occur in sentence-initial position. The would-be subject of the active sentence (if present) takes the preposition *da* 'by' and usually appears at the end of the sentence. An auxiliary verb appears (either *essere* 'be' or *venire* 'come'), and the predicate is changed into a past participle form. This is shown in the following examples (from "Con," cited previously):

(22) *Le cinque categorie sono esemplificate dalle seguenti frasi*
the five categories are exemplified by the following sentences

'The five categories are exemplified by the following sentences'

(23) *tutta la seconda struttura frasale deve venir ridotta a un*
all the second structure sentential must be reduced to a
nominale
nominal

'the whole second sentential structure must be reduced to a nominal'

Let us schematically summarize the effects of passivization on the (surface) structure of a sentence:

1. WORD ORDER: The DO of the active can appear at the beginning of the sentence.
2. REORIENTATION OF THE PREDICATE: By means of the auxiliary verb (e.g., *essere* 'be'), the predicate is reoriented toward an NP that is not the subject of the active voice. That is, it tells the hearer how to interpret the "new" subject of the sentence (or maybe how NOT to interpret it) by saying something like "the subject here is not the expected one."

¹⁴ We are assuming here that our "educated" speakers have the rule of passive in their competence but do not use it in spoken informal.

3. OPTIONAL APPEARANCE OF THE SUBJECT OF THE ACTIVE SENTENCE: The referent expressed by the subject of the corresponding active sentence can either not be expressed [cf. (23) above] or can be "moved" to the end of the sentence, being marked by the preposition *da* 'by' [cf. ex. (24) above].¹⁵

Similar effects can be obtained by LD:

1. By definition, in an LD a non-subject constituent (therefore also a DO, as was illustrated) is placed at the sentence-initial position.
2. The verb is "marked" by a pronoun-agreement (i.e., the clitic) that specifies (some of) the characteristics of the "dislocated" NP (i.e., whether it is a DO or an IO, e.g., *lo* 'him' versus *je, gli* 'to him').
3. The referent of the subject can be moved to the end of the sentence, as in (24) [cf. also examples (2) and (12)]:

(24) (Seminaro sulla complementazione)

V: *Ma. Non so. Io l'ho eliminato. Però. Non*
But NEG (I) know. I it have eliminated. But NEG

so. Ci sarebbe anche "struggersi". Non lo
(I) know, there would be also "consume oneself". NEG it

so. Ma mi sembra di no.
(I) know. But to-me seems of not.
(Pause)

V: "*Si strugge per diventare- per essere: "che ne*
(he) consumes himself to become- to be "what of it

so io [// "nominato"
know I "nominated"
→F: *Questo lo usi solo te.*
this_i it_i (you) use only YOU.

(LG)

V: Well. I don't know. I have eliminated it (from my corpus).
Even if- I don't know. There is also (the verb) "struggersi."
I don't know. But it doesn't seem right.
(Pause)

V: "*Si strugge per diventare- per essere: "what can I say? //*
"nominato"

F: This one_i, only you use it_i.)

¹⁵ On the "demotional" nature of passive in the world's languages, cf. Edward Keenan (1975). For an interesting study on one language, Dutch, see Kirsner (1976).

or it can be left unspecified by using a third-person plural verb agreement, as in (25):

(25) (Draft: 10)

B: *Ma l'assegnazione del contingente d'aviazione la*
but the assignment_i of the contingent of Air Force it_i

fanno a "NAME OF A PLACE" e- (. . .)
(they) do at "Name of a place" and- (. . .)

B: But the assignment of the Air Force Contingent_i they do it_i
at "Name of a place"

The only constraint on this last use is that the "unspecified" subject cannot normally be interpreted as the speaker or the hearer, whereas an agentless passive can still have that reading. Probably this means that, even if "unspecified," the third-person plural agreement still conveys the meaning of a "third referent" (i.e., not the speaker or the hearer).

GRAMMATICAL ADVANTAGES OF LD OVER PASSIVE

LD can apply to a wider range of cases than passive. As we have mentioned, passive can apply only to DOs. LD, on the other hand, can apply to almost any kind of grammatical relation-constituent, as far as that constituent can be cliticized. This means, for instance, that LD can be applied to IOs as well as to other prepositional objects, for example, genitives, as in (17); locative, as in (26); etc.:

(26) (Un amico III: 8)

Franco: *In quella banca tra l'altro il padre ce l'ha*
in that bank_i among the other the father there_i him

portato
has brought

Father: In that bank_i by the way the father got him (a job) there_i

Furthermore, notice that, in the dialect we are dealing with in this paper, human DOs are very often marked by the preposition *a*, which is also the usual marker for IOs. It seems reasonable to assume that in those cases in which a nonsubject NP appears before the verb and is marked by *a*, the coreferential clitic (at least for third-person referents for which the clitic pronoun form is different) marks the type of grammatical role that the NP has with respect to the predicate.

Informational and Interactional Properties

Previous investigations of topic have emphasized the relationship between subjects of sentences and topics of sentences. That is, sentence subjects are said to share generally many of the properties of topics (in addition to other syntactic properties). For example, typically, subject referents are referents that appear near or at the top of suggested topic hierarchies: Relative to other constituents, they have a greater tendency to be human, to be first-person or second-person, to be agents, and so on (cf. Givón 1976, Hawkinson and Hyman 1974, Edward Keenan 1976, Kuno 1976). Sentences that contain such subjects are produced and comprehended developmentally prior to sentences with other types of subjects (Bever 1970). Furthermore, in picture-matching tasks, adults are able to verify such sentences more quickly than sentences with other types of subjects (as discussed in Clark and Clark 1977, Gough 1965, 1966, Slobin 1966). Kuno (1976) claims that sentences with such subjects display a natural empathy or identification of the speaker with the subject referent. MacWhinney (1977) indicates that a sentence that expresses an agent in subject (initial) position reflects a simpler perspective than sentences in which the agent is expressed elsewhere. All in all, there is widespread support for the idea that sentences with subject referents high on the topic hierarchy are, under most conditions, cognitively preferable to sentences with subject referents that appear low on the hierarchy.

Passive sentences very often contain such dispreferred subject referents. As would-be DOs of an active construction, they are more likely to be inanimate and/or abstract (Givón 1975, James 1972, Singer 1976). Furthermore, as such, they can never be agents and, hence, appear low on the topic hierarchy. Kuno (1976) suggests that their dispreferred nature accounts for why they appear so infrequently in spoken discourse.

In all of these discussions, there is an assumption that, by-and-large, there is one and only one topic of a sentence and that topic tends to be expressed as the subject of the sentence. Where the speaker is pictured as wanting to topicalize a referent low on the topic hierarchy, he is seen as having to make that referent the subject (producing a passive construction). But, in so doing, he has produced an utterance that is communicatively distressful. Indeed, the topicalization of such a referent in itself appears to violate natural perspectives on situations and events. It is no wonder that we found only one passive construction in our entire corpus!

But should we conclude that referents that are inanimate, third-person, etc, rarely appear as centers of attention, as starting points and initial perspectives in spontaneous, informal conversation? The data in this chapter evidence that such a conclusion should not be drawn. A speaker who wishes to use a nonhuman, nonagent as a point of departure for the rest of his utterance is not restricted to using a passive construction. The language has

another option available. The referent may be expressed in sentence-initial position as a left-dislocated constituent.

LDs do not share many of the informationally distressful properties of passives. Although they may express an accusative (patient-affected object) referent in the initial, attention-locus of a sentence, that referent does not replace a referent with preferred topical properties as sentence subject. In passive sentences, the would-be subject of the active sentence is demoted to an oblique argument of the verb. In constructions with an LD, the subject remains as subject, co-occurring with the left-dislocated constituent. In this sense, LDs have two attention foci, two points of departure; that is, they have two topics. A speaker does not always have to CHOOSE between topic candidates; he may give both this status.

This is not to say that both the left-dislocated constituent and the subject constituent are topics of the same type. As discussed earlier, many left-dislocated constituents (e.g., left-dislocated DOs) gain their topic-worthiness because the context imbues them with a heightened importance. Subject referents, on the other hand, generally have inherent importance because of their semantic properties. If we consider the left-dislocated DOs (both nouns and full pronouns), 26.8% (6) were human. The subject referents co-occurring with these referents were human in 100% (23) of the cases.

Furthermore, in saying that LDs have more than one topic, we do not imply that each topic necessarily carries out the same range of pragmatic functions. Our observations indicated that the left-dislocated constituent performs interactional tasks that the co-occurring subject constituent does not. The speaker may use the left-dislocated constituent to gain access to the floor as well as to effect a topic shift (within a general discourse topic). At the same time, we suggest, the speaker wishes to maintain the perspective of the subject referent. Our examination of subjects co-occurring with left-dislocated DOs indicates that, not only are they human, they are also in the majority of cases [73.9% (17)], either as first or as second person (full pronouns or agreement). These co-occurring subjects contain highly salient, highly empathizable informational content.

LDs, then, have advantages over the passive in Italian on the grammatical, informational, and interactional level. Grammatically, as was pointed out, a wider range of non-subject constituents may appear in sentence-initial, topic position. Informationally, a referent low on the semantically based topic hierarchy may be placed in sentence-initial topic-position without replacing or usurping the status of a referent with highly topical semantic properties. Whereas the passive replaces one referent with another in this status, the LD allows both to co-occur. Thus, LDs may carry out interactional and larger topical tasks without disturbing preferred encoding strategies. The near-obligatory nature of the coreferential clitic when a DO

or an IO appears in preverbal position provides further support for the existence of two topics, two perspectives in left-dislocated constructions. Like subject-verb agreement, the coreferential clitic marks the left-dislocated constituent as a basic argument of the predicate by encoding its presence and grammatical status on the verb.

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