ESTABLISHING TOPIC IN CONVERSATION:

A CONTRASTIVE STUDY OF LEFT-DISLOCATION IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH

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1. Introduction

The syntactic construction referred in the literature as "left-dislocation" has received wide attention within the different linguistic theories. French grammars (Bally 1932) were the first to describe the construction and to coin the term, which was soon adopted by the generative model (Ross 1967). Since then, both formal and functional linguists have filled pages with their perspective on the matter, focusing, respectively and very grossly, on the syntactic properties of the construction and on its discourse pragmatic functions. However, and despite the differences in the theoretical backgrounds and foci of interest, there are at least two facts on which agreement is almost general: (a) left-dislocation is a topic-marking construction, i.e. it serves to mark the topic-comment relation in an overt or explicit matter, and (b) it is universal, in the sense that all languages seem to count on identical or equivalent forms of the construction, presumably with the same topic-marking function.

Studies on left-dislocation agree on the basic function of left-dislocation, as represented in (a). However, analyses vary depending on the notion of topic applied to the study. For that reason, functions of left-dislocation have been constantly reformulated and revised. Recent studies (Barnes 1985, Geluykens 1992, 1993) have explored the interactive dimensions of left-dislocation, thus assuming a conversational treatment of topic. This paper follows a similar theoretical line.

As regards the universality of left-dislocation, it is discussed in Dik (1978, 1989, 1997) and Gundel (1985, 1988), yet neither of them really go into the details of a comparative examination. Left-dislocation as a syntactic construction does *exist* in all the languages they study, but, is it formally and functionally identical in those languages? Do formal divergences bear functional divergences? And, if so, how much *weight* does left-dislocation have in the grammar of a given language?

In this paper I will address some of these questions. I will start by comparing examples of left-dislocations in spoken English and Spanish, and then will place the eventual formal and functional divergences within a set of pragmatic and syntactic devices used by both languages to convey certain meanings and fulfill certain functions. For this study, I have used a sample of Svartvik and Quirk's (1980) *Corpus of English Conversation,* and of F.Marcos Marín's (1992) *Corpus oral de referencia del español contemporáneo*. I have also consulted M.Esgueva y M.Cantarero's (1981) Corpus *El habla de la ciudad de Madrid.* Examples taken from other authors are quoted accordingly.

But before we actually present and compare the data, let us look at what is meant by "left-dislocation" and what it has to do with conversation.

2. Left-Dislocation, Topicalization and Right-Dislocation

The term "left-dislocation" refers to a construction characterized by the occurrence, to the immediate left of an already syntactically complete sentence, of a full lexical NP, PP, or pronoun, which is doubled or copied by a coreferential pronoun in the sentence (Barnes 1985:1). Examples of LDs in English are as follows:

(1)

Ingeborg, she's doing nineteenth century. (Lund 14 50 7550)

(2)

Old Sandy Patterson, ooh I want to see **him** now, I wonder if he's in today. (Lund 16 11 5105)

In examples (1) and (2), a full lexical NP occurs at the immediate left of the sentence, and is copied or doubled through an anaphoric pronoun in the sentence. Left-dislocated constituents can have different syntactic functions, such as subject (1) or direct object (2). Dik (1978, 1998) describes this type of construction as an extra-clausal constituent which "specifies an ensemble of entities with respect to which the following clause is going to present some relevant information" (Dik 1998:389). Our examples fit his definition and examples:

(3)

That guy, is **he** a friend of yours?

(4)

That trunk, put **it** in the car! (Dik 1997:389, ex. 23 and 24)

In each case, the dislocated NP presents the referent about which the speaker is going to say something, therefore "orienting the discourse topics in relation to which the content of the ensuing clause is to be interpreted" (ibid.). Acoording to Dik, the most important property of the left-dislocated constituent is that it stands outside the clause; this relative autonomy is visible in the independence of the detached constituent from the illocutionary force of the sentence (as in examples 3 and 4), the absolute form of the detached constituent (5) and, as added by Aijmer (1989), Ashby (1988) and Downing (1997), the presence of linguistic material between the dislocated constituent and the predication (6):

(5)

That man, we gave the book **to him** yesterday. (Dik 1997:391)

(6)

And **Cecily,** his new wife, or his second wife, **she** teaches, she's got one daughter. (Lund 11 13 6390)

The consideration of the grammatical distance between the dislocated constituent and the predication is a particularly useful criterion in Spanish, since it allows to identify subject dislocations, otherwise unnoticed because subject NPs are not copied anaphorically unless through verbal agreement:

(7)

El cordero ahora por la época que estamos, **está** pasando una temporada muy asequible. (Marcos Marin)

Similarly to left-dislocated constituents, many languages have at their disposal right-dislocated constituents. In this construction, a full lexical NP or PP occurs at the immediate right of the sentence, which contains a cataphorically co-referent pronoun:

(8)

Well, I think **they** very often are, **these Eastern Europeans.** (Lund 1411 2560)

To such a construction Dik assigns the pragmatic function Tail, "defined in general as characterizing constituents which present information meant to clarify or modify (some constituent cointained in) the unit to which they are adjoined" (Dik 1997:401). Right-dislocated constituents present stronger syntactic and pragmatic restrictions than left-dislocations. For instance, right-dislocated constituents never appear in absolute form (without case-marking) and present, in general, a much tighter syntactic and semantic link to the predication (Dik 1978, 1989, 1997; Lambrecht 1981, 1994). Pragmatically, right-dislocations present referents that are known to the hearer, and very often are the topic under discussion. They do not introduce new or inferrable topics.

Right-dislocation has not been studied as thoroughly as left-dislocation, and some of its discourse functions still require a closer examination. Compared to left-dislocation, it is a rare construction, at least if we look at Spanish, French or English. But in Italian the situation is completely reversed, displaying frequent instances of right-dislocation even in written modes of the language.

In English and Spanish, right-dislocation seems to be related to the interpersonal function (Halliday 1976) or to the expression of attitudinal meaning (Francis 1986), i.e. the speaker's attitude with respect to the predication. At times, the attitudinal meaning is similar to hedging or mitigation, in the sense that the speaker tries to mitigate the content of the predication, or its evaluative consequences. For instance, in (8) the speakers have been talking about the unpredictable behaviour of teachers from Eastern European countries. With the utterance in (8), the speaker acknowledges the evaluation made by the previous speaker's utterances, while at the same time smoothes the content of the statement and gives it an affective tone.

Recently, I heard an interesting example of right-dislocation in Spanish when King Juan Carlos' grandson, Felipe Juan Froilán de todos los Santos, was born. In one of his first appearances on television, the baby's father, D.Jaime de Marichalar, was asked: "¿Y a quién se parece?" ("Who does he take after?"), and he gave the following answer, that spread from mouth to mouth and immediately became common knowledge and thus the "topic" of many conversations:

(9)

Se parece mucho a su madre, **el pobre**.

Very likely, the speaker's intention was to add "el pobre" ("the poor thing") as an affectionate, even empathic comment to be adjoined to the predication. However, the NP "el pobre", because added to the predication, is read as related to its content, therefore creating a literal interpretation. Even if much of the speaker's attitudinal meaning is transmitted through the expression "el pobre", it is important to note how right-dislocation mitigates the content of the predication and allows the empathic, affectionate tone. Compare, for instance, with the canonical word order version:

(10)

El pobre se parece mucho a su madre.

As opposed to the right-dislocated version, the canonical would not sound embarrassing but intolerable, almost cruel.

Finally, another construction which is normally discussed in the literature is Topicalization. This refers to the fronting of a constituent -NP, PP, pronoun- but without anaphoric copying:

(11)
previous utterance: [who's that]

     BANKS this is. (Lund 14 35 5340)

(12)
previous utterance: ¿tiene alguna posición...?

     NINGUNA posición tengo. (Marcos Marín)

As opposed to left-dislocation, the topicalized constituent is part of the clause; therefore the fronted constituent is syntactically integrated. Also, the function normally identified for topicalization is to mark Focus, as in (11) and (12). Topicalization in these cases is uttered with a characteristic focal intonation contour (Silva-Corvalán 1984).

3. The role of Left-Dislocation in Spoken Interaction

The pragmatic descriptions of left-dislocation agree in considering the construction a way of "overtly marking the articulation of a sentence into two parts, the first referring to what the sentence is about (topic), and the second expressing what the sentence has to say about that referent (comment)" (Barnes 1985:9). Thus, while the elements of ordinary sentences (without detachment) may be described in terms of the topic-comment relation, "it is only in left-detachment and similar constructions that this distinction is overtly signalled" (ibid.).
Therefore, and in spite of the differences in the notion of topic which could result from Barnes' quote, we could say that the appearance of left-detachment revolves around this question: when would a speaker mark the topic?

The articulation of the utterance in two clear parts seems to be a basic function of left-detachment constructions (Aijmer 1989, Ashby 1988, Lambrecht 1981, 1994, Barnes 1985), and is related to the unplanned, on-going character of naturally-occurring conversation and also, to different extents, to various unplanned oral genres. While writing provides more time for planning and is characterized by syntactic integration, i.e. the relation between the different parts is expressed through grammatical relations, in spoken interaction the speaker strives to achieve a certain cognitive effect without too much processing effort. Left-dislocation responds to a strategy of easing syntactic processing: it organizes the message into shorter chunks, and introduces flexibility with regard to the order in which things can be said. It has been noted (Ajmer 1989) that left-dislocated constituents often appear with long post-modifications. Length, syntactic complexity and grammatical distance obviously make discourse processing slower and more difficult to process. The articulation of the utterance into separate, syntactically less-integrated chunks tries to remedy this trouble, and gives saliency to the NP, otherwise unnoticed, as in (13):

(13)
     Y esta comprensión .../cualquiera de nosotros/ cuando analizamos nuestra vida/
     podemos verla con gran optimismo y con gran euforia. (Marcos Marín).

The second obvious reason for a speaker to mark the topic is when s/he wants to change it. Left-dislocation has been related to discontinuities in discourse (Givón 1983). If topic continuity is marked by default, normally through anaphora or verbal agreement, then the speaker will have to signal when that topic is no longer going to be maintained (Goutsos 1998).

Left-dislocation -a NP detached from the predication it follows- is a perfect candidate to fulfill this general function, and appears when "the speaker feels the need for some more powerful device than the unmarked subject-predicate construction to indicate what s/he wants to talk about" (Givón 1979:153). Compare the use of anaphora and the appearance of a left-dislocation in (14):

(14)

       S1: **[Thorpe]** is a very good lecturer/have you ever heard him?
       S2: No, I haven't.
       S1: **He'**s a brilliant lecturer
       S2: Only heard **him** introduce.
       S1:Because **he's** so much/he's not a relaxed lecturer/**he's** a driving lecturer/you know/whereas some of them here/[...] are too relaxed. [...]
       S2: (giggles-laughs-giggles)
       S1: One we lost/**Mr.Carter/ he went** to Turkey/
       S2: [m]
       S1: he was the most darling man you could come across.
       (Lund 16 80 7460)

The example above shows a typical discourse context of appearance for left-dislocated constituents. While the use of anaphora marks topic continuity, left-dislocation marks that the speaker is shifting to a new topic or to a derived sub-topic. The pragmatic studies on left-dislocation normally agree in assigning the construction functions under the umbrella of discourse discontinuities, such as foregrounding (Keenan and Schieffelin 1976), topic-shift (Ochs and Duranti 1979, Barnes 1985), topic introduction (Geluykens 1992, 1993), introduction of subordinate topics related to a discourse topic already under discussion (Barnes 1985, Downing 1997) and comparative contexts, which can be considered a sub-function of topic shift (Barnes 1985). An example of the latter, very frequent in Spanish, would be (15):

(15)

       Bueno pero el tubo fluorescente porque no...no está bien la reacción si no está bien el tubo. **El tubo fluorescente le** dáis y en seguida se enciende. **Pero la bombilla no**, le das y se enciende poco a poco hasta que va cogiendo. (Marcos Marín)

       Finally, left-dislocation has been related to turn-taking strategies. Left-dislocation often, although not always, occurs at the initiation of the turn, marking the beginning of the next speaker's intervention. Left-dislocation often marks the speaker's self-selection intervention, as in (16), and that is why it has been seen as a strategy to compete for the floor (Ochs and Duranti 1979, Geluykens 1992). Note how the speaker in (16) marks her turn by incorporating the referent mentioned in the immediately previous move, leaving no pause between interventions:

(16)

       S1: Y aquí por ejemplo la cama.
       S2: **La cama yo la** pondría aquí. (Marcos Marín)

       To sum up, left-dislocation is a syntactic construction whereby a NP, PP or a pronoun is separated from the predication it accompanies, while at the same time the NP, PP or pronoun is recovered semantically and syntactically in the predication through an anaphoric pronoun.
Since left-dislocation "specifies an ensemble of entities with respect to which the following clause is going to present some relevant information" (Dik 1997:389), its pragmatic functions are related to the marking of topic; however, the construction also bears functions which have to do with other planes of discourse. For instance, it responds to the speaker's on-line organization of utterance-production, where the speaker might give priority to the marking of saliency and the simplification of discourse processing. In addition to that, left-dislocation plays a role in the change of turns in dialogues and multi-party conversations signalling speakers' intentions to gain the floor.

From what has been said so far, there seems to be quite a clear picture of what left-dislocation looks like, and what it does in conversation. Now let's turn to look at some data and see some formal and functional differences between left-dislocated constituents in English and Spanish.

4. Formal divergences in left-dislocated constituents in English and Spanish

The examination of the data taken from the corpora of spoken English and Spanish reveal that left-dislocation is not formally and functionally identical in the two languages. The most obvious difference is the higher frequency of left-dislocations in spoken Spanish, both in informal and formal registers of the language. Also, Spanish seems to display different varieties and formal possibilities of left-dislocated constituents, which do not appear or have not been found in English. In this section, I will first present those types of left-dislocations which are found in Spanish and do not have clear equivalences in English. In the second part of this section, I will propose a possible explanation for such divergencies.

4.1. Varieties of left-dislocations in spoken Spanish

Left-dislocation displays a considerable range of formal variations in spoken Spanish. Some of the most evident and frequent varieties, which are not found in English, are: (a) pronominal detachment, (b) non-anaphoric left-dislocations, and (c) multiple dislocations. The literal translations in brackets point out the ungrammaticality or oddness of such combinations in English.

Pronominal detachment is probably the most frequent type of left-dislocation in Spanish, as is the case in spoken French (Barnes 1985). In this type, the constituent which appears at the immediate left of the predication, separated from it, is not a full lexical NP but a pronoun. The typical pattern of this type has the personal pronoun "yo" but other personal pronouns and also demostratives can be dislocated:

(17)

> **Yo** lo que no aguanto es un cine que esté lleno. (Esgueva y Cantarero p.357)
> [**I /what I can't stand** is a crowded cinema].

(18)

> **Ella** no es que se dedique estrictamente o mayoritariamente a la literatura de mujeres. (Marcos Marín)
> [**She/** it is not that **she** works only or mostly on women literature.]

(19)

> **Eso** tendrá que determinarlo la justicia. (Marcos Marín)
> [**That**/justice will have to determine]

In the examples above, despite the grammatical distance between the pronoun and the verb of the predication, there remains a syntactic link between the two parts of the utterance. However, some dislocations in Spanish present no agreement between the dislocated pronoun and the verb in the predication. This is similar to what traditional grammars described as anacoluthon:

(20)

> **yo** muchas veces **la gente** me ha comentado. (Marcos Marín)
> [*__I many times people__ have told me][I have often been told][many people have told me]

The dislocated pronoun appears in absolute form (without case marking) as some kind of "utterance-initial topic" (Morris 1998), which has not been selected by the verb inside the predication. Barnes (1985) defines this type of dislocation as "non-anaphoric", since the dislocated constituent is not

recovered, syntactically or semantically, through an anaphoric pronoun. The interesting aspect of this variety in languages like Spanish or French is that it represents a less grammaticalized version of the canonical, syntactized left-dislocation. Cadiot (1992) and Gundel (1988) describe similar cases and define them as "pure topics", i.e. constructions where the pragmatic marking of the topic-comment relation overrides the coding of grammatical relations.

In spoken Spanish, non-anaphoric left-dislocation is not exclusive of pronouns but, as in French, can also be found with NPs:

(21)
S1:   El edredón sí, que sean los dos iguales en la misma habitación, pero la manta, o sea, es una cosa que no se ve.
S2:   Claro, **las colchas** es distinto. (Marcos Marín)
        [*Of course, **the bedspreads** is different.]

Barnes (1985) suggests that non-anaphoric dislocations are due to the unplanned, spontaneous nature of the language where they appear. Also, often the NPs which appear as non-anaphoric dislocations represent discourse topics rather than entities, as in (21), where the speaker's utterance does not present an attribute of the referent, meaning that "bedspreads are different", but rather, that "(aesthetic) arrangement with bedspreads is different". I would suggest that non-anaphoric dislocations create a pragmatic rather than a syntactic link because the NP in those cases is better understood as a discourse topic than as a referent.

Another type which is only found in spoken Spanish is multiple dislocation. In this type, two constituents appear at the left of the predication. This type has also been noted in French (Cadiot 1992, Barnes 1985), where the LD may consist of the combination of two NPs or a NP and a pronoun. In Spanish, the most frequent pattern of multiple dislocation is the combination of a pronoun -"yo" or "eso"- with a NP or a cleft, as in (22). But multiple dislocation offers other combinations, such as (23):

(22)
        Yo lo que acaba de decir Armando estoy completamente de acuerdo. (Marcos Marín)
        [**I/ what Armando has just said/** agree completely] [I agree completeley with what Armando has just said]
(23)
        La mujer el tema de la discriminación, lo emplea para salvaguardar algunas faltas que pueda tener. (Marcos Marín)
        [***Women discrimination issues**, they use them in order to cover some of their faults]

Pronominal detachment, non-anaphoric and multiple dislocations are types of dislocations which account for large groups in spoken Spanish, while they do not appear in English. Why does Spanish display more and more varied types of dislocations? What constructions would be equivalent in English in similar contexts?

4.2. The Pragmatic mode vs. the syntactic mode in English and Spanish

The formal divergences in the typology of lef-dislocations found in English and Spanish can be explained under the light of Givón's (1979) distinction between the pragmatic and the syntactic mode. Some of the features associated with the pragmatic mode are the use of left-dislocation constructions, loose coordination and less embedding, and a more abundant use of topic-comment structures. By contrast, the syntactic mode gives preference to subject-predicate constructions, tight subordination and embedding, and morphosyntactic marking. The pragmatic mode is typically associated with earlier stages of language acquisition, and to spoken, unplanned, informal registers

of language. The features associated to the pragmatic and syntactic mode can be illustrated in the following diagramme (Givón 1979:104):

Pragmatic mode	Syntactic mode
topic-comment structures	subject-predicate structures
loose conjunction	tight subordination
slow rate of delivery	fast rate of delivery
word order governed by one single principle: given info first, new info follows	word order marks semantic case functions of topicality relationships
prominent intonation-stress marks the focus of new information; topic intonation is less prominent	very much the same, by with a lowe degree of functional load, if not completely absent

The difference between the two modes is scalar, since speakers of a given language, English or Spanish for instance, will commonly use both the pragmatic and grammatical modes in conversation. However, the distinction can also be applied across languages, in the sense that one mode might be more dominant or specific of a given language with respect to another. Although in strict typologic terms, Spanish and English are both subject-predicate languages, there might be slight differences between the two. For instance, the different frequency and variety of left-dislocations in English and Spanish suggests that spoken Spanish gives preference to topic-comment structures, therefore to the pragmatic mode, in contexts where English will choose syntactically oriented constructions.

Pronominal and non-anaphoric detachments in Spanish can be seen as examples of pragmatic coding. For instance, spoken Spanish seems to give preference to topic structures in cases such as those in (24). While those dislocations cannot be expressed in English, (25) shows some examples from the corpus which might serve as equivalences of what would appear in English in similar contexts.

(24)
a. **Yo mucha gente** me ha comentado (Marcos Marín)
b. **Yo me han contratado** para custodiar el dinero (Marcos Marín)
c. **Yo me dijeron** que fuera (Marcos Marín)
d. **Yo me parece** bien (Marcos Marín)

(25)
a. **I am employed** as a mathematician (Lund 16 11 2 170)
b. **I was told** to wait till the end of the interview (Lund 16 11 2280)
c. **I found** that the construction was perfect (Lund 16 50 4860)

In spoken Spanish the personal pronoun can be dislocated in the absolute form -as a pure topic-, with no semantic or syntactic link with the predication that follows. In English, on the contrary, the pragmatic mode with pronouns is not frequent (in many instances also ungrammatical), using therefore the passive as an alternative. The equivalence seems to hold when the Agent is a participant other than the speaker, thus the speaker is semantically the patient ("me han contratado"/"I am

employed", "Me dijeron", "I was told") or Experiencer ("me parece bien"). Note that the Spanish dislocation with "parecer" used to express the speaker's opinion or evaluation of an event will be expressed in English via a subject-predicate construction with a verb of cognition or feeling such as "find".

The absence of pronominal detachment in English was first mentioned by Keenan & Schieffelin (1976), who noted that, if the main function of left-dislocation is to foreground referents in discourse, then the discourse participants themselves, i.e. pronouns, should be perfect candidates to fulfill this function. An explanation of this absence is given by Barnes (1985), who suggests that, in French, dislocated personal pronouns offset the unstressed nature of subject pronouns. Therefore in English, stress is probably foregrounding pronouns when desired by the speaker, o when there is a topic shift.

Returning to Barnes' suggestion for French, a similar claim can be made for Spanish. Subject pronouns are not unstressed as in French, but actually absent, since the subject is normally marked through verbal agreement. Therefore, left-dislocation offsets the absence of subject pronouns in contexts of topic shift. But another reason, in my opinion, has to do with the fact that, as in (25), English is using subject-predicate constructions -the syntactic mode- where Spanish favours the pragmatic mode. An interesting feature of Spanish dislocated pronouns, and which favours a pragmatic reading, is that they do not fit the definition of topic in terms of aboutness. In the examples seen in (24), the non-anaphoric pronoun "yo" does not really mark "what the predication is going to be about", but something closer to "the speaker's contribution to the current topic of conversation" (Barnes 1985). The dislocated pronoun is thus used interactively to present the speaker's subjectivity or point of view about a certain topic of discourse. Often, the personal pronoun is the element combining with a NP, and forming a "multiple dislocation", as in (22), by which the speaker "chooses a personal standpoint as a launch for the rest of the utterance" (Morris 1998).

Another example of the contrast between the pragmatic mode and the syntactic mode in English and Spanish can be seen in the different use of stress and cleft in the two languages. Compare the following examples of English and Spanish:
(26)

> I am employed as a mathematician#
> STATISTICS is what I should know#
> and I don't know anything about it# (Lund 16 2 170)
> PROGRAMMING COMPUTERS#
> that's what I do. (Lund 16 2 180)

The speaker in (26) organizes his intervention by combining the use of stress and syntactic arrangement in order to change the canonical word order. In particular, the speaker uses contrastive focus by stressing "STATISTICS" and "PROGRAMING COMPUTERS", which are the two entities in comparison. Focus (new information) comes first, while the cleft (the given information) is placed in the second part of the utterance. Now compare with (27):
(27)

> **El proyecto Genoma lo que intenta** es secuenciar todos los genes, es decir, del primero al último. [...] Pero bueno, ahora **los científicos, prácticamente, lo que nos están diciendo** es que allí hay algo que no se sabe bien qué es. (Marcos Marín)

As opposed to the English example, (27) shows how in Spanish there seems to be a tendency to place clefts at the beginning of the utterance, combined with a NP or a pronoun, thus forming a "multiple dislocation". This tendency responds to the principle "given information goes first", which is characteristic of the pragmatic mode. In the syntactic mode, by contrast, new information can be placed before given information through stress and syntactic rearrangement. In spoken Spanish, this principle explains why speakers seem to prefer (a) to (b) in example (22):

(22)
(a)   **Yo lo que acaba de decir Armando** estoy completamente de acuerdo. (Marcos Marín)
(b)   **Yo** estoy completamente de acuerdo **con lo que acaba de decir Armando**.

That is to say, the Spanish speaker will choose to place the given information first, thus the cleft clause will appear at the beginning of the predication. An interesting feature which results from this kind of arrangement is the loss of case marking of the thematized constituent (the preposition in the example above). Loss of morphosyntactic coding is, in Dik's (1978) description of Theme, as well as in Gundel (1988) and Lambrecht (1981), characteristic of contituents signalling the pragmatic function Topic. Again, Spanish is choosing the pragmatic mode where English will express a similar change in word order through a more syntacticized version of the construction, combined with the use of stress and intonation.

Finally, the use of left-dislocation, topicalizing constructions in Spanish is related to how Spanish uses its rather flexible word order to rearrange the different arguments in the clause in order to give them different degrees of saliency. For instance, left-dislocation of the object often occurs when the Agent is unknown or the clause has an impersonal reading, as in (28):

(28)
    La relación hay que **construirla** día a día. [....] **Esos valores** hay que **alimentarlos**. (Marcos Marín)

The dislocated NP with "hay que" places the NP as topic, therefore placing the focus in the main verb ("construirla" and "alimentarlos"). Since the clause has an impersonal reading (no Agent known or interesting), the clause is presented having the Patient as topic (not grammatical subject, though) and the verb as Focus. Compare now with the English:

(29)
    You know, **literature should be** experienced, not studied. (Lund 16 27 2670)

When the Agent is unkown and the clause requires a generic reading, as in (29), English chooses the passive. The examples in (28) and (29) reveal the similarity of the two constructions, which serve a similar rearrangement: in English, the passive places the focus in the main verb, creating a similar effect to the Spanish dislocation in (28). Within this analysis, the main difference between the English and the Spanish is the pragmatic mode vs. the syntactic mode: English uses what Givón defines as "the marking of semantic case functions to express topicality relationships" (Givón 1979:104). In other words, the passive in English is the syntactic way of marking the topic when the subject is not semantically the Agent.

An extension of this situation is left-dislocation used in Spanish when the Agent is Focus. Then the Patient becomes topic (through left-dislocation) and therefore pushes the Agent to the post-verbal, phonologically salient, position:

(30)
a.   **Eso** tendrá que determinarlo LA JUSTICIA. (Marcos Marín)
b.   **Esa información** la tiene en Barcelona CONSTANTINO CABAÑAS. (Marcos Marín)
c.   **Las guerras** no las hace UNO, las hacen DOS.

The examples in (30) follow Givón's principle whereby, in the pragmatic mode, word order will place given information always first. At the same time, the evoked referent ("eso", "esa información") is semantically the patient, while the Agent contains the new information. In other words, left-dislocation of the object in Spanish is often triggered by a clause pattern where the semantic Patient becomes topic, and the semantic Agent conveys the Focus of new information.

Such a rearrangement will be achieved in English via different devices, such as stress, cleft, and passivization with a syntactically demoted Agent, such as the prepositional complement at the end of (31):

(31)

> I said look here, this English language paper#
> has been bedevilled long enough#
> by those literature wallahs (Lund 1 1 54 8440)

The examples seen so far reveal that English and Spanish are choosing similar strategies to rearrange word order, but the difference lies in the type of choices used by the two languages. While Spanish often chooses pragmatic ordering, using left-dislocation and topic-marking constructions, English uses stress and syntactic constructions, mostly passive and clefts, to rearrange the syntax and semantics of the clause. An interesting observation that follows from this analysis is that the passsive is a functional parallel of left-dislocation, although a more grammaticalized version of it. In a continuum, it could be signalled as follows:

syntactic mode   pragmatic mode

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passive   LD with anaphoric copy   non-anaphoric LD

In Spanish, passive, a curious example of such relationship is (32), a hybrid between the pragmatic mode -left-dislocation, expressed through anaphoric copying- and the syntactic mode -the passive, expressed through the passivizing auxiliary "tener". This mixed combination might also be an alternative to the canonical form of the passive, a clearly dispreferred construction in contemporary spoken Spanish (Hidalgo 1994):

(32)

> **Esta escena,** aunque parezca mentira, **la tienen prohibida** en Estados Unidos los empleados de muchas empresas. (Marcos Marín)

In English, such parallel can be seen in (33), where the speaker uses left-dislocation and then passive to introduce and maintain the topic:

(33)

> **Our maths chap**/Our junior maths chap up there/
> **he's** an Indian/
> **he's** only just been appointed this term. (Lund 16 51 4950)

5. Functional divergences of LDs in English and Spanish

5.1. Functions of LDs in English and Spanish: topic shift and topic incorporation

As was briefly presented in the introduction, the discourse-pragmatic functions of left-dislocation have been related to the signalling of discontinuities in discourse (Givón 1983). Earlier functional studies pointed out that left-dislocated constituents served to re-introduce a topic which had been dropped, abandoned or de-activated throughout the conversation (Givón 1983, Dik 1978, 1989). This function corresponded to a "Recurrent Topic" in Dik's subdivision of the topic functions. However, more recent studies (Aijmer 1989, Geluykens 1992) have questioned this analysis. Re-introduction of a previous topic is not a very frequent function in the organization of conversation in general, and does not account for most of the occurrences of LDs. LD, on the contrary, seems to serve the function of introducing new topics into conversation, introducing sub-topics or derived topics from a general topic of discoure -topic shift and topic shading, respectively (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973).

We can say then, that left-dislocation contributes to the negotiation between speaker and hearer to the

introduction and establishing of topics throughout conversation. For instance, in (14), the speakers are talking about their work colleagues, and one of the speakers uses a left-dislocated NP to shift topic:

(14)

    S1: **[Thorpe]** is a very good lecturer/have you ever heard him?
    S2: No, I haven't.
    S1: **He'**s a brilliant lecturer
    S2: Only heard **him** introduce.
    S1:Because **he's** so much/he's not a relaxed lecturer/**he's** a driving lecturer/you know/whereas some of them here/[...] are too relaxed. [...]
    S2: (giggles-laughs-giggles)
    S1: One we lost/**Mr.Carter/ he went** to Turkey/
    S2: [m]
    S1: he was the most darling man you could come across.
    (Lund 16 80 7460)

Furthermore, as Geluykens points out, "topic introduction is a three-stage interactional process depending on the active collaboration between speaker and hearer" (1993:180), i.e. it is a strategy addressed by speakers to hearers in order to manage topic so that there is a negotiated equilibrium between topic continuation and change.
In (14) the new topic is accepted by S2, through a second stage of acknowledgment. After that, S1 can establish, and therefore develop the new topic of conversation. Geluykens (1993:189) presents the process as follows:

    Stage 1 (A): topic introduction (bare NP + predication)
    Stage 2 (B): acknowledgment signal
    Stage 3 (A): topic establishment (second mention of NP or new top)

It doesn't always happen that LDs introduce topics which manage to become topics of discourse. In (34), for instance, S2 tries to introduce a new topic of discourse, but S1 continues with the previous one, therefore not allowing the establishing of the new topic. After that, S1 abandons the new topic without having succeeded in shifting the direction of the conversation.
(34)

    S1: Va así [la cortina]. [...] Voy a subirla completamente para poder enrollarla.
    S2: **Oye y la revista esta,** ¿cada cuánto tiempo la sacáis?
    S1: Es trimestral.
    S2: ¿Trimestral?
    S1: Sujeta. Es que..ahora. Bueno, ¿qué te parece? ¿qué tal queda?
    S2: Muy bien. (Marcos Marín)

The interactional dimension of LD as a collaborative process of topic introduction is made clear by examples (14) and (34), where negotiation between speakers ultimately decides on the establishment or not of new topics into the conversation.
    The introduction of a new topic or of a new topic related or part of the general discourse topic is the clearest and most important function of LD in both English and Spanish. However, in Spanish there is a smaller but still important group of LDs which appear in radically different discourse contexts, and which would actually seem to mark topic continuation rather than shift. Examples of such dislocations are:
(16)

    S1: Aquí por ejemplo la cama.
    S2: **La cama** yo la pondría aquí. (Marcos Marín)

(35)

     S1: Y nada, no me ha puesto nada de trabajo, sólo una hoja de apuntes. Y eso.
     S2: **Y los apuntes** los tomáis en clase, o sea. (Marcos Marín)

(36)

     S1: Claro, tienes que tener primero el taco para ver de qué grosor tienes que hacer al agujero.
     S2: Bajo a comprarlo ahora.
     S3: **Y el agujero** lo tienes que hacer más estrecho que el taco. (Marcos Marín)

In this type, the dislocated NP contains a referent which has been mentioned in the immediately precedent utterance. The referent in the dislocation is therefore textually given or evoked (Prince 1981). Moreover, this type is often performed by two different speakers: one introduces the referent, and the second speaker picks it up and develops it. The utterance where the LD appears is therefore marked as a topic incorporation utterance, and often appears with the coordinate conjunction "and", which marks topic continuation rather than discontinuity (Goutsos 1998).
What is the function of this second, cohesive type of dislocation? How can left-dislocation perform these two functions, apparently in contradiction?

5.2. Topic management and Conversational Relevance

An explanation for the functional divergence seen above can be found in how left-dislocation contributes to create topic coherence interactively in two different ways. According to Grice (1975), speakers engaged in conversation are guided by the *Relevance Maxim*, whereby they will relate their contributions to what the other participants in conversation are saying. But, as noted by Tracy (1984), the relevance maxim can be understood in two ways. "The first definition, the local approach, suggests that a relevant remark is one that chains to something in the last sentence or two of a speaker's message. The second definition, the global approach, proposes that a relevant remark is one that responds to the main idea in a speaker's message" (Tracy 1984:447).
The function of LD as a topic introduction device responds to a strategy of contributing to the topic of conversation in the global sense of the relevance maxim. In (14), S1 shifts topic from the previous utterance, when she feels that the previous topic has come to a closure or has been dealt with enough. In (14), the speakers' perception of closure is expressed through their giggles and laughs. That point is felt by one of the speakers as appropriate to introduce a new topic; interestingly, she signals that the new topic meets the "relevance maxim", in the global sense, by starting with "One was lost", setting the new referent as connected to what has been talked about before. The firs part of the utterance serves the purpose of *framing* (Goutsos 1998) the new topic. However, in terms of it informational status or degree of familiarity (Prince 1981), the dislocated NP has not been mentioned before in previous segments of discourse or is predictable for the hearer. One could say that its function is, rather, prospective, because it gives the conversation a new direction, orienting it to the now presented topic, which is accepted by the hearer and can ben established in conversation.
The function by which LD incorporates a referent mentioned in the previous segment, on the contrary, seems to respond to the local approach of the relevance maxim. Left-dislocations which occur in this context incorporate the last part of the previous utterance, therefore promoting such information as topic of the next speaker's utterance. For instance, in examples (16), (35) and (36), which are reproduced here again for the reader's convenience, the speaker makes his contribution according to what the previous speaker has said, incorporating the last part of his utterance into his own, and taking it as his own launch or starting point:

(16)

     S1: Aquí por ejemplo la cama.
     S2: **La cama** yo la pondría aquí. (Marcos Marín)

(35)

      S1: Y nada, no me ha puesto nada de trabajo, sólo una hoja de apuntes. Y eso.

      S2: **Y los apuntes** los tomáis en clase, o sea. (Marcos Marín)

(36)

      S1: Claro, tienes que tener primero el taco para ver de qué grosor tienes que hacer al agujero.

      S2: Bajo a comprarlo ahora.

      S3: **Y el agujero** lo tienes que hacer más estrecho que el taco. (Marcos Marín)

By incorporating the discourse segment of the previous utterance, the speaker tries to collaborate or contribute to coherence through a maximally cohesive utterance. Whereas in the topic introduction strategy, the speaker uses dislocation to shift the direction of conversation, the speakers in (16), (34) and (35) make a *collaborative move* (Burton 1981), which serves the purpose of sticking to the topic in the sense of construing the general topic at the local level.

Goutsos (1998) relates local and global cohesive devices with strategies of topic continuity and shift. In his description, utterances which stick to the previous utterances contribute to create topic continuity, while utterances which shift from the previous utterance create discontinuities in discourse. The two functions of left-dislocated constituents, as a topic introduction strategy and as topic promotion strategy, are both resolutions to the tension created as speakers strive to "stay on topic": one, by making topic progress on, and shift to new aspects which can relate to a general topic of conversation. The second, in contrast, stays on topic by collaborating with the previous speaker in its building itself as a topic.

The two approaches given by Tracy (1984) to the *Relevance Maxim* also help to explain why certain topics never make it very far in conversation. This is the case of (34), where one of the speakers introduces a new topic which is soon abandoned. Interestingly, the new topic is very far off the topic under discussion, and the speaker, who is at least partly aware of it, starts her intervention with the discourse marker "oye", which in this contetxt seems to signal precisely that the utterance that follows is not at all connected to anything that has been talked about before. In the end, and despite the speaker's warning and efforts to signal the introduction of a new topic, it never establishes as topic of the conversation, perhaps because it doesn't meet any of the senses of the *Relevance Maxim.*

6. Conclusions

The form and use of left-dislocations in English and Spanish is similar only in the prototypical form of the construction and in the main, general functions. A closer examination reveals that left-dislocated constituents play very different roles in the grammar of the two languages. The most obvious difference lies in the frequency and variety of left-dislocated constituents in the two languages. In English LD is found only in spoken language; also, it appears mostly in informal, colloquial registers and unplanned oral genres. In other words, the use of left-dislocation in English is somehow constrained to informal naturally-occurring conversation, and is associated to colloquial registers and is perhaps predominant among less educated speakers. In Spanish, on the contrary, the use of left-dislocation is pervasive of all oral genres, independently of the register and genre. Left-dislocations are frequent in naturally-occurring conversation, but are also found in rather formal genres, television, radio programmes, political speeches or academic lectures. For instance, note in (37) the use of left-dislocation in a politician's speech at Parliament:

(37)

      La reflexión sobre el fondo de la política parlamentaria de nuevo **la pongo**...o sobre la legitimidad democrática, **la pongo** en relación con lo que he dicho. (Marcos Marín)

Moreover, left-dislocation is not restricted to the spoken language. Althgough it is in the different oral genres where more left-dislocations, and more varied types, are found, examples can also be found in some written genres, such as the press:

(38)

> Se compara [la anorexia] con el tabaco o el alcohol. **El riesgo lo asume** la persona en el momento que hace dieta y elige unos alimentos en lugar de otros. (*El País*, 30-7-99)

The formal divergences between the use of lef-dislocated constituents in English and Spanish can be explained under the light of the distinction between the pragmatic mode and the syntactic mode. While Spanish uses word order flexibility to mark the topic-comment relation, English offsets its rigid word order with the use of stress and subject-predicate constructions.

But, in addition to the strictly grammatical differences between the two languages, left-dislocation is not an equivalent strategy used by speakers in spoken interaction. In English, left-dislocation is felt by speakers as a somehow disruptive construction, while it sounds a perfectly natural way of speaking for a Spanish audience. The reason of this different perception might lie in the fact that, in Spanish, dislocation is a device used also to create textual cohesion, and therefore is not always felt as disruptive. But there might also be cultural differences, at least with regard to certain features associated to conversational style. Conversation in Spanish is faster and leaves shorter pauses, or no pauses at all, between speakers; when a multi-party conversation progresses on in a lively manner, interruption is not perceived as offensive, and turns can shift quite rapidly. In such circumstances, speakers need to use more assertive strategies to intervene, and left-dislocation can be an effective strategy to compete for the floor.

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