Dislocation Types in Emilian

**The main topic:** this work explores the relation between two dislocation types in Emilian (Gallo-Italic) and Standard Italian: Hanging Topics (HT) and Clitic Left Dislocation (CILD). Dislocated constituents in Emilian show a gradient acceptability pattern, and the two dislocation types seem to have different morphosyntactic and pragmatic properties from Italian: in Emilian, prepositions may be absent (with different grades of acceptability) in the same contexts where Italian requires them.

**Theoretical background:** Romance languages (e.g. Italian, Spanish) differentiate between HT and CILD (Cinque 1997). Their information-structural role are different: HTs normally introduce new topics into the discourse; CILD restate familiar topics. Moreover, when prepositional arguments are dislocated, HTs will appear without their preposition, while CILD will maintain it.

**The puzzle:** in contexts where Italian requires CILD, as in (1)-(3), in Emilian some prepositions can be deleted without affecting acceptability, as in (1); others can be deleted with slightly lower acceptability as in (2); a third class, as in (3), cannot be.

(1) (CILD Context – Speaker A: My wife [Maria] says she’s got some new furniture.)

Speaker B: [(A) la Maria], a= g= ò dê la mē tôvēla
To the Maria, I= her= have.1SG given the my table
‘(As for) Maria, I gave her my table’

(2) (CILD Context – Speaker A: Do we have any wine? Can you go down and pick up a bottle?)

Speaker B: [?(Ed) vèin], a= n= g= n= è mia dimondi in cà
Of wine NEG=LOC=PART= is.3SG NEG much in house
‘(As for) wine, there isn’t a lot of it in the house’

(3) (CILD Context – Speaker A: And in the cupboard, what did you find there?)

Speaker B: [??(In) l’ armâri], a= g= èra (dēinter) de tôt
In the cupboard, EXPL=LOC= was.3SG (inside) of all
‘(As for) the cupboard, there was a whole lot of stuff in there’

**The hypotheses:** to explain this phenomenon I explore three hypotheses: (i) a phonological one, based on a rule deleting intonational unit-initial vowels, like the a in (1); (ii) a morphological one, assuming optional ∅-exponent preposition/case-marking for different classes of prepositions; (iii) a pragmatic one, assuming that the two dislocation types in Emilian have a different pragmatic distribution, the difference(s) between them being much less sharp. Hypotheses (i, ii) predict the dislocated constituents in (1)-(3) to be instances of CILD; hypothesis (iii) predicts them to be HTs.

**The methodology:** data were collected on the basis of own intuition and elicitation from older native speakers, all completely bilingual with Italian (their bilingualism provided problems in the elicitation process). All sentences were presented in HT- and CILD-licensing contexts, and the only acceptability differences depended not on the context, but on which preposition was being deleted.

**The findings:** hypothesis (i) could not explain why prepositions such as cun ‘with’ could be deleted, but not ed ‘of’ or in ‘in’, as in (2)-(3). Hypotheses (ii, iii) proved to be most consistent with the data. Hypothesis (iii) draws interesting parallels to Colloquial French, where HT subsumes CILD’s pragmatic functions (De Cat 2007). Other prototypical properties of CILD were tested for, such as sensibility to islands; these tests showed that (1)-(3) are better analysed as containing HTs. Hypothesis (iii) does however not explain why certain prepositions are more acceptable to delete than other ones. Hypothesis (ii) explains the gradient pattern better than (iii) and opens for more research on morphosyntactic micro-variation in Northern Italy, but has less solid base assumptions. Moreover, the methodological challenges caused by the coexistence of standard and local varieties give interesting inputs to the theoretical problematisation of ‘acceptability’ and ‘grammaticality’.

**Conclusion:** I compared dislocated structures in Emilian and Italian, as these show morphosyntactic and pragmatic differences, and I probed three hypotheses to explain this. The most viable one was the pragmatic one: Emilian does not seem to have a sharp distinction between HT and CILD.