

Semantic of left-dislocated Prepositional Phrases

Left-Dislocation of prepositional phrases is a phenomenon in German language denoting constructions in which a prepositional phrase is located in front of a sentence with verb second order. In most cases, the PP is resumed by the pronoun *da* ('there'), cf. (1):

- 1) a. Im Hof, da sammelt sich der Müll.
In.the yard *da* cumulates REFL the garbage.
'In the yard the garbage cumulates.'
- b. Am Montag, da ist er ins Kino gegangen.
on Monday *da* is he in.the cinema went
'On Monday he went to the movies.'
- c. Ohne ihr Notebook, da kann Maria nicht richtig arbeiten.
Without her notebook *da* can Maria not right work
'Without her notebook Maria cannot work well.'

Considering the relation between the left dislocated PP and the pronoun *da*, one could assume that in case of (1a) a local pronoun *da* occurs referring to the embedded argument, the internal region of the yard. Example (1b) could be explained analogously to (1a), but the pronoun *da* would be a temporal one. The question is, what about sentences like (1c)? Obviously, in this case, it is not clear, what *da* refers to because the PP is neither local nor temporal. There are two possible approaches to resolve this problem: Either one assumes a third meaning of *da* in addition to the local and the temporal reading, or one assumes a relation between *da* and the PP that captures all cases. I suggest the second one, and I propose, that *da* refers to a so called **topic situation** that is restricted by the PP.¹

The following three observations give evidence for this assumption:

I. *Da* can refer to complex PPs with semantically different but coherent parts

This point was discussed in detail in Fritzsche (2005). It addresses examples like the following:

- 2) a. Am Montag in der Uni, da habe ich Maria getroffen.
on Monday in the university *da* have I Maria met.
'On Monday at the university I have met Maria.'

II. Left-dislocation of PPs and their resumption by *da* is only possible for frame-setting modifiers that inherently restrict a topic situation (see Maienborn 2001)

Maienborn (2001) defines three kinds of locative modifiers, illustrated in (3).

- 3) In den Anden werden Schafe vom Pfarrer auf dem Marktplatz an den Ohren
In the Anden are sheep fromthe priest on the marketplace at the ears
gebrandmarkt.
branded (Maienborn 2001, ex. 16)

In (3) the PP *in den Anden* ('in the Anden') is a frame-setting modifier, *auf dem Marktplatz* ('at the marketplace') is an event-external-modifier and the PP *an den Ohren* ('at the ears') is

¹ The concept *topic situation* is introduced by Maienborn (2001) and based on Klein's (1994) notion of *topic time*.

an event-internal modifier. First of all, it can be shown, that PP left dislocation is impossible for event-internal modifiers.

- 4) a. Der Koch hat das Hähnchen in einer Ingwer-Marinade zubereitet.
the cook has the chicken in a ginger-marinade prepared
(Maienborn 2001, ex. 74a)
- b. *In einer Ingwer-Marinade, da hat der Koch das Hähnchen zubereitet.
- c. Der Koch hat das Hähnchen in der Küche zubereitet.
the cook has the chicken in the kitchen prepared
- d. In der Küche, da hat der Koch das Hähnchen zubereitet.

In sentence (4a) the PP constitutes an event-internal modifier. The PP does not describe the location of the whole event of preparing the chicken, but is understood as specifying the manner of cooking. In (4b), the left dislocated PP cannot be understood as a manner of cooking and so the sentence is ungrammatical since a cook cannot prepare chickens while being in a ginger marinade.

In (4c), by contrast, the PP *in der Küche* ('in the kitchen') is an event-external modifier. I presume, that in (4d), where the PP is left-dislocated, the PP can be understood as a frame-setting modifier. Since frame-setting modifiers restrict a topic situation, these observations give evidence for the assumption, that *da* refers to a topic situation.

III. Left-dislocation of PPs and their resumption by *da* is excluded for PPs that were used as coherence relations

Not only clauses, but also PPs can be used as coherence relations, see among others Schauer&Hahn (2001). Such PPs do not restrict a topic situation. Therefore, under my analysis, a resumption by *da* should not be possible. (5) shows the expected outcome.

- 5) a. Trotz des schlechten Wetters gehen wir schwimmen.
Despite the bad weather go we swim
'Despite the bad weather we go swimming.'
- a'. *Trotz des schlechten Wetters, da gehen wir schwimmen.

Conclusion

Starting from the findings that the traditional assumption of *da* being either locative or temporal does not hold for certain PPs, my hypothesis is that *da* refers to the topic situation that is restricted by the PP. This is supported by three observations: (a) *da* can refer to complex and semantically diverse but coherent PPs, (b) left-dislocated PPs can only be interpreted as frame-setting modifiers restricting a topic situation and (c) PPs acting as coherence relation do not restrict a topic situation and cannot be resumed by *da*.

References

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