

## Defending the Notion of Defocus in Cantonese

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### Abstract

This paper argues that the post-sentence-final-particle elements in right dislocation in Cantonese are defocus, an understudied notion in the ontology of information structure. This paper defends the notion of defocus by illustrating that defocus is substantially different from focus and topic and that the notion of defocus is by no means an idiosyncrasy in Cantonese but a cross-linguistic phenomenon.

### Keywords

right dislocation, defocus, information structure, Cantonese

### 1. Introduction

Word order in Chinese languages bears a close relation to information structure. While the canonical word order is SVO, variations such as OSV and SOV are also possible. The former is typically regarded as topic construction, where the object serves as a topic, whereas the object in the latter receives a contrastive or focus interpretation (cf. Huang, Li & Li 2009 and references therein). Objects may also be fronted to receive a focus interpretation in *lian... dou* construction in Mandarin (Shyu 1995, i.a.) or in ex-situ cleft construction involving *shi* ‘be’ (see Pan 2019 and references therein) or in *wh*-fronting as discussed in C. Cheung (2008, 2015). Generally, these non-canonical word orders involve dislocation or adjunction of some elements to the left periphery or pre-verbal position of the sentence. In some other cases, it is possible for some elements to appear in the sentence-final position (marked with underline below), following sentence-final particles (SFPs). The constructions in (1) are typically regarded as Right Dislocation (RD) in Cantonese (see L. Cheung 2009 and Lee 2017).

(1) a. RD of an auxiliary verb: S-V-O-SFP-AUX

keoi sak maai kaan daai uk laa1 wui  
3SG sure buy CL big house SFP will

‘S/he will surely buy a big house.

(Matthews & Yip 2011)

b. RD of an object: SV-SFP-O

keoi jau mou maai aa3 gaa ce  
 3SG have not.have buy SFP CL car

‘Has s/he bought the car?’

(Lee 2017)

c. RD of a prepositional phrase: S-V-O-SFP-PP

keoi heoi ngoigwok zou jingau aa3 tung Wong sinsaan  
 3SG go overseas do research SFP with Wong Mr.

‘S/he goes overseas to do research with Mr. Wong.’

(Lee 2017)

Similar to focus and topic constructions, RD does not affect the truth condition of the sentence, but it alters the information structure of the sentence. This paper argues that the post-SFP element in RD are neither a topic or a focus, but instead a *defocus* (or equivalently *antifocus*), an understudied notion in the ontology of information structure. This paper defends the notion of defocus by illustrating that (i) a defocus is substantially different from a focus and a topic (§2.) and; that (ii) the notion of defocus is by no means an idiosyncrasy in Cantonese but a cross-linguistic phenomenon (§3.). §4. concludes the paper with some remarks on right dislocation.

Note that the following discussion need not presume any particular syntactic analysis on RD; however, for the sake of discussion, I will talk in a way that the post-SFP elements are dislocated from its canonical position via some (rightward) movement operation. Yet, it is compatible with other derivational alternatives proposed in L. Cheung (2009) and Lee (2017), i.e. leftward movement analyses.

## 2. The notion of defocus

The notion of defocus is best understood as a pragmatic one with a syntactic reflex. Intuitively, as Takano (2014: 153) takes it, a defocus is interpreted as “less important information” compared to other elements in the clause. It can be regarded as the antithesis of focus. Molnárfi (2002: 1131–1132) points out that there is no *a priori* objection to such notion. In his terms, while a focus allows an element to get prosodic prominence and information-structural fore-grounding, a defocus “enable[s] a constituent to escape the focus domain and to realize its discourse linking.” More precisely, we can cash out this intuition in terms of two pragmatic notions, namely, “noteworthiness” and “discourse continuity”. The former notion, as I take it, signals the speaker’s communicative goal, i.e. what the speaker wants to say importantly. As for the latter, it concerns how the subsequent discourse is continued. Relevant here is whether the element can become/stay as the topic of what follows (see also Givón 1983: 7, for a more general usage).

Against this background, defocus signals non-noteworthiness by marking an element that, from the perspective of the speaker, does not have any unexpected or interesting property. Meanwhile, the defocused element fails to become or maintain the topic of the discourse, i.e. the speaker prevents it from being the topic of the subsequent discourse.<sup>1</sup> As for focus, it is the mirror image of defocus: a focus marks noteworthiness and can potentially become the topic of the following discourse. For obvious reasons, topic contributes to discourse continuity (in particular, topic continuity), but it marks non-noteworthiness for its givenness. Their differences are represented in the following table.<sup>2</sup>

Table 1 Proposed differences between focus, defocus and topic

	+Discourse continuity	-Discourse continuity
+Noteworthiness	Focus	N/A
-Noteworthiness	Topic	Defocus

Like other related notions such as focus and topic, defocus has a syntactic incarnation. While some position in a sentence may be designated for focus (e.g. É Kiss 1995, i.a.), I argue that there is also a position is designated for defocus. Intuitively, an element in a sentence cannot be both focused and defocused. We then expect to see, if the notion of defocus is realized in natural languages, there is a designated position in a sentence which disallows for focused elements. §2.1. is designated to illustrate this point in Cantonese RD. We will see that the right-dislocated elements can never hold an element with focus interpretation.<sup>3</sup> §2.2. argues against the claim that topic is the complement of focus, mentioned in passing in Kallulli (2000: 224 fn.27). In particular, I suggest that while focus and defocus are complementary to each other, defocus is substantially different from topic in their distribution, in addition to the above pragmatic difference. §2.3. discusses the relation between the current proposal and the one in L. Cheung (2009).

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<sup>1</sup> One might question, then, why the speaker wants to introduce something that is not noteworthy and that s/he intends not to talk more about. One possibility could be for relevance reason, another could be for clarity, but the speaker at the same time prevents it from being the topic in subsequent discourse.

<sup>2</sup> The missing top right corner is indeed predicted, since it is difficult to imagine a noteworthy element that resists topic continuity. In other words, the speaker sounds incoherent if s/he recognizes its noteworthiness in the discourse, while being unwilling to continue to talk about it.

<sup>3</sup> We also expect to see the opposite, where a defocused element can never occupy a focus position. This is indeed the case in Bantu languages. Zeller (2008) argues that a subject marked by subject marker must leave the vP-domain, which is dedicated to the domain of focus. See §3.5.

## 2.1. Defocus is complementary to focus

A number of tests consistently show that focus interpretation cannot be forced on the right-dislocated element. The first test concerns *wh*-phrases in direct questions which arguably bear inherent (informational) focus (following Brody 1990). Consider (2):

- (2) *Wh*-phrases in direct questions  
 # keoi m        geidak        gaau    \_\_aa3    matje<sup>4</sup>  
 3SG NEG    remember        submit    SFP    what  
 ‘What did s/he forget to submit?’

The infelicity of (2) can be explained if the right-dislocated element is a defocus. Being both an (inherent) focus and a defocus in the sentence, *matje* ‘what’ in (2) is inconsistent in terms of information structure. An apparent counter-example, as critically pointed out by an anonymous reviewer, involves *dimgaai* ‘why’:

- (3) \_\_    nei        gamjat m        faanhok        ge2        dimgaai?  
           you        today    NEG    go.to.school    Q        why  
 ‘Why don’t you go to school today?’

While (3) is, in contrast to (2), felicitous, the presence of the question particle *ge2* is crucial to its felicity, as shown in (4). Additionally, *dimgaai* in (3) does not seem to contribute to the interrogative meaning, as its absence does not deprive the sentence of the explanation-seeking meaning, as in (5).

- (4) # \_\_nei        gamjat m        faanhok        aa3        dimgaai?  
           you        today    NEG    go.to.school    SFP        why  
 ‘Why don’t you go to school today?’  
 (5) nei        gamjat m        faanhok        ge2?  
       you        today    NEG    go.to.school    Q  
 ‘Why don’t you go to school today?’

I suggest instead that *dimgaai* in (3) (i.e. in the presence of *ge2*) does not contribute to the interrogative meaning as it does in (4) (i.e. in the absence of *ge2*). In other words, *dimgaai* in (3) is semantically vacuous. As such, it follows that *dimgaai* in (3) does not bear any inherent

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<sup>4</sup> An underline here indicates the canonical position of the right-dislocated elements.

focus and hence its felicity as a right-dislocated element.<sup>5</sup> A precise analysis on *dimgaai* is beyond the scope of this paper, but it is reminiscent of quantifier concord in natural languages, where *dimgaai* and *ge2* may form an interrogative concord, i.e., two apparently interrogative elements contribute the same interrogative meaning (for discussion of different types of concords, see Zeijlstra 2004, Kratzer 2005, Yip 2019, i.a.).

Another test involves question-answer pair (Q-A pair) test. As is generally assumed, answers bear informational focus. Accordingly, in response to the question ‘what did he forget to submit,’ (6) is infelicitous because the right-dislocated element is intended to be the answer to the question. Note that the sentence is fine if it is not used as an answer.

- (6) Question-answer pair (in response to ‘what did s/he forget to submit?’)  
# keoi m        geidak            gaau    \_\_ aa3 faan boumeng biu  
3SG NEG    remember        submit    SFP CL    application form  
‘S/he forgot to submit the application form.’

The information-structural inconsistency can also be observed if we assign stress on the right-dislocated element, italicized in (7). The sentence is degraded because of the stress. Without stress, the sentence is well-formed.

- (7) Stress  
# keoi m        geidak            gaau    \_\_ aa3 *faan boumeng biu*  
3SG NEG    remember        submit    SFP CL    application form  
‘S/he forgot to submit the application form.’

Similar patterns are found in other focus constructions. In (8), ‘Hong Kong’ is intended to be contrasted with ‘Macau’ in terms of the places that the speaker has been to. Right-dislocation of these elements results in infelicity.

- (8) Contrastive focus  
# ngo heoi-gwo \_\_ aa3 Hoenggong daan mou    heoi-gwo \_\_ aa3 Oumum  
1SG go-EXP        SFP Hong.Kong but    not.have go-EXP        SFP Macau  
‘I have been to Hong Kong but have not been to Macau.’

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<sup>5</sup> An immediate follow-up question is: what does it mean to defocus a semantically vacuous item in a sentence? One possibility is that post-posing a *wh*-expression may render a question less forceful, offering some sort of softening effect, comparable to the observation that questions, instead of imperatives, may be deployed to soften the effect of an imperative force.

Similarly, in *lin...dou* construction (comparable to *lian...dou* construction in Mandarin), the element marked by *lin* ‘even’ cannot be right-dislocated. It should be noted that while *lin bouzi* ‘even newspaper’ can be separated from *dou*, since (9a) is a possible position for *lin bouzi* ‘even newspaper’ (cf. Shyu 1995). The infelicity of (9) follows from the proposed analysis that a focus element cannot occupy a defocus position.

(9) ‘even’-focus

# a.     ngo      b.          dou      m      wui      tai      gaa3      lin bouzi  
           1SG                    DOU    NEG    will    read    SFP    even newspaper  
 ‘I will not even read newspaper.’

## 2.2. Defocus ≠ Topic

An alternative to a defocus approach is that the right-dislocated element is indeed a (sentence-final) topic, which by nature disallows focus interpretation in most cases. To illustrate this possibility, consider (10) and (11). (10a) and (11a) exemplify the so-called left-dislocated topic and hanging topic, both of which can also appear sentence-finally in the (b) sentences.

(10) Left-dislocated topic

(a. go bun syu) ngo sanzou taai-saai     laa1 (b. go bun syu)  
       that CL book 1SG early read-finish SFP that CL book  
 ‘I have finished reading that book long ago.’

(11) Aboutness topic

(a. go coeng fo) houzoi siufongjyun lai-dak zou zaa3 (b. go coeng fo)  
       that CL fire fortunately fireman come early SFP that CL fire  
 ‘As for that fire, fortunately, the firemen came early.’

However, the superficial equivalence breaks down when we have a closer look on the distribution of a topic. First, while a topic is compatible with topic markers *le1* (Matthews & Yip 2011), the right-dislocated element is not, as shown in (12).

(12) Topic marker

(a. go bun syu le1) ngo sanzou taai-saai laa1 (b. \*go bun syu le1)  
       that CL book TM 1SG early read-finish SFP that CL book TM  
 ‘That book, I have finished reading long ago.’

Second, although resumptive pronouns are allowed in topic construction, it is disallowed in RD.

(13) Resumptive pronouns<sup>6</sup>

- (a. Aaming<sub>i</sub>) ngo hai m wui bong keoi<sub>i</sub> gaa3 (b. \*Aaming<sub>i</sub>)  
Aaming 1SG COP NEG will help 3SG SFP Aaming  
'Aaming, I will not help him.'

More importantly, topic and defocus do not range over the same set of elements. Elements that serve as defocus are not necessarily able to serve as topic. Earlier examples in (1a) and (1c) show that auxiliary verbs and prepositional phrases can be right-dislocated. If they were topics, we expect to see that these elements can be topicalized. However, this is not the case:

(14) Auxiliary verbs in topic construction<sup>7</sup>

- \*wui keoi sak \_\_\_ maai kaan daai uk laa1  
will 3SG surely buy CL big house SFP  
Intended: 'S/he will surely buy a big house.'

(15) Prepositional phrase in topic construction

- \*tung Wong sinsaan keoi \_\_\_ heoi ngoigwok zou jingau aa3  
with Wong Mr. 3SG go overseas do research SFP  
Intended: 'S/he goes overseas to do research with Mr. Wong.'

On the other hand, some elements can serve as topic but not defocus. We have seen in (2) that *wh*-phrases cannot be defocused because of their inherent focus interpretation. However, *wh*-phrases can be topicalized (Wu 1999):

(16) Wh-phrases in topic constructions

- bin joeng je nei sik zou gaa3  
which CL stuff 2SG know do SFP  
'Which thing do you know how to do?'

Wu (1999) suggests that a topic is semantically compatible with a *wh*-phrase because a topicalized *wh*-phrase presupposes a set of possible answers. In this regard, if defocus were taken as a sentence-final topic, the infelicity of (2) is surprising. (16) also suggests that a

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<sup>6</sup> A reviewer points out that (13b) may be acceptable. This is only the case when there is a pause between the SFP and the right-dislocated element. In such case, I consider it as an afterthought instead of an instance of RD. For discussion on the distinction, see Wei & Li (2018).

<sup>7</sup> If the auxiliary verb *wui* is doubled, i.e., pronouncing *wui* a second time in its canonical position, (14) is well-formed (a.k.a. verb topicalization, see Cheng & Vicente 2013). But such doubling is not required in defocus construction.

focused element is compatible with topichood, in contrast to the incompatibility between focus and defocus. Note that Reinhart (1982) points out that the new/old information distinction does not necessarily correspond focus/topic distinction. Compatibility among focus and topic is thus unsurprising.

Summing up, this section contrasted the notion of defocus with focus and topic and presented a number of diagnostic tests to delimit the understudied notion of defocus. It is argued that defocus is the antithesis of focus and that a defocus is different from a topic.

### 2.3. A note on two types of Right Dislocation

Before we leave for cross-linguistic investigation of the notion of defocus, it is noteworthy that there appear to be two types of Right Dislocation in Cantonese, from a syntactic perspective. The RD examples so far discussed fall into those examined in Lee (2017). He argues that it is  $\beta$  that undergoes movement from within  $\alpha$ P, schematically represented in (17).<sup>8</sup>

(17) Lee's Defocus Construction

[ $\alpha$ P ... < $\beta$ > ... ] SFP  $\beta$                       where  $\beta$  forms a constituent and corresponds to the *defocus*

Another type is discussed at length in L. Cheung (2009), where he argues that it is  $\alpha$  that undergoes movement from  $\beta$ P, schematically represented in (18):<sup>9</sup>

(18) Cheung's Dislocation Focus Construction (DFC)

$\alpha$  SFP [ $\beta$ P ... < $\alpha$ > ... ]                      where  $\alpha$  forms a constituent and corresponds to the *focus*

An example of DFC is given below:

(19) loeng go zungtau laa3 keoi zau-zo     \_\_\_ (adapted from L. Cheung 2009)  
 two CL hour SFP s/he leave-PERF  
 'S/he has left for two hours.'

Generally, RD in both cases privilege the pre-SFP element(s) in terms of noteworthiness, i.e. they are either focused (=  $\alpha$  in (18)), or not defocused (=  $\alpha$ P in (17)). Despite the similarity in the final output, it is not easy to unify them. Notice that  $\alpha$ P in (17) can be a discontinuous

<sup>8</sup> The original proposal involves leftward movement followed by remnant movement, simplified as rightward movement here.

<sup>9</sup> Indeed, in Cheung's analysis, what is 'right-dislocated' is indeed the remnant of a focus movement. So precisely, DFC does not involve *right* dislocation at all.



string, as in (1a), L. Chueng's analysis would predict every element in  $\alpha$ P except  $\beta$  is fronted independently. There are two potential worries. First, it is unclear how the targeted word order can be guaranteed. Second, multiple movements presume that every element receives a focus reading, which is not the case. Focus can be smaller than the whole  $\alpha$ P in (17). For Lee's analysis, the same argument applies in opposite direction. Since  $\beta$ P in (18) can be a discontinuous string, Lee's analysis suffers from the similar worries. I therefore suggest that the two types of RD have a different derivational history. This in turn lends further support to the distinction between focus and defocus, which are associated with different syntactic operations in the grammar.

### 3. Defocus as a cross-linguistic notion

The notion of defocus is, compared to focus and topic, less familiar in the literature. It is however attested in many typologically-unrelated languages. This section presents evidence that supports the notion of defocus in languages other than Cantonese.

#### 3.1. Japanese

A recent proposal on Japanese RD by Takano (2014) adopts the idea of defocus, which is realized as a syntactic feature [-Focus], a counterpart of [+Focus]. Any element that bears the [-Focus] feature is realized with reduced pitch and interpreted as 'less important information.' His proposal captures the early observation by Kuno (1978: 69–71) on Japanese RD. For example, right-dislocated elements (marked with underline) cannot be a *wh*-phrase, serve as an answer or bear contrastive focus, as illustrated in (20), (21) and (22), respectively. Similar to what we have seen in §2., the infelicity of these sentences can be straightforwardly accounted for if the right-dislocated element in these sentences is a defocus.

(20) Wh-phrases

# \_\_ Hirushoku-o tabe-mashi-ta ka doko-de  
lunch-ACC eat-HON-PST Q where-LOC

'Where did (you) have lunch?'

(21) Q-A pair (in response to the question 'which book do you think is interesting?')

# \_\_ omoshirokat-ta, kono hon-ga  
interesting-PST this book-NOM

'This book is interesting.'

(22) Contrastive focus

# \_\_ genki-desu ga, Taroo-wa, \_\_ byooki-desu Hanako-wa  
healthy-HON but Taroo-TOP sick-HON Hanako-NOM

'Taroo is healthy, but Hanoko is sick.'

### 3.2. Spanish and Italian

A slightly different implementation of defocus is suggested in Zubizarreta (1998). She suggests that a defocalized element undergoes what she calls ‘prosodically-motivated movement’ (p-movement), which is *not* feature-driven. The defocalized element is leftward-moved to ensure the focus is in the final position (to receive prosodic prominence). For example, in Spanish, both sentences in (23) are well-formed, however, only (23a) can be used to answer the question ‘What did Ana hide under the bed?’ It is proposed that (23a) is derived from (23b) via p-movement, where the defocalized PP is fronted to the position before the object. The p-movement ensures that the focus of the sentence (i.e. the object which serves as the answer) is in the final position.

- (23) a. Ana(S) escondió(V) debajo de la cama(PP) {la muñeca}(O)  
 Ana hid under the bed the doll  
 b. Ana(S) escondió(V) la muñeca(O) debajo de la cama(PP)  
 Ana hid the doll under the bed  
 ‘Ana hid the doll under the bed.’ (Spanish, Zubizarreta 1998: 130)

To confirm the moved element is indeed defocus, Zubizarreta provides diagnostic tests similar to those in §2. For example, in (24b) the *wh*-phrase (i.e. the PP) cannot undergo p-movement in Spanish. Results from other tests like Q-A pair and stress are also consistent with the claim that p-moved elements are defocus, resisting any kind of focus interpretation (see Zubizarreta 1998: 129–130). Italian reveals similar pattern as well.

- (24) a. Quién(S) compró(V) un libro(O) para quién(PP) ?  
 who bought a book from whom  
 b. \*Quién(S) compró(V) para quién(PP) un libro(O) ?  
 who bought from whom a book  
 ‘Who bought a book from whom?’ (Spanish, Zubizarreta 1998: 131)

### 3.3. West Germanic

Defocus is also observed in West Germanic languages. Molnárfi (2002) suggests that scrambling in Dutch and German marks defocus. In response to ‘what did you sell yesterday,’ only (25a) is a felicitous answer to the question, while scrambling ‘the book’ makes (25b) an infelicitous one.

- (25) a. Ik heb gisteren het boek verkocht  
1SG have yesterday the book sold  
'I sold the book.'
- b. # Ik heb [het boek]<sub>i</sub> gisteren t<sub>i</sub> verkocht (Dutch, Molnárfi 2002: 1122)

Similarly, the scrambled elements, because of their defocus nature, cannot be stressed. In (26), it is infelicitous to stress the scrambled DP 'the girl'.

- (26) #dass ich [das mädchen]<sub>i</sub> gestern t<sub>i</sub> geküsst habe  
that 1SG the girl yesterday kiss have  
'...that I kissed the girl yesterday.' (German, Molnárfi 2002: 1115)

### 3.4. Albanian and Greek

In Albanian and Greek, Kallulli (2000) argues that object clitic doubling marks the object as defocus. In (27) and (28), since the objects are *wh*-phrases (i.e. 'who'), clitic doubling is disallowed.

- (27) Kë (\*e) pe?  
who.ACC it/him/her.CL saw-you  
'Who did you see?' (Albanian, Kallulli 2000: 220)
- (28) Pjon (\*ton) idhes?  
who.ACC him.CL saw-you  
'Who did you see?' (Greek, Kallulli 2000: 220)

In the same vein, contrastive focus disallows clitic doubling. In (29), "cook the beans" contrasts with "eat the figs" in terms of what Anna did. As a result, the presence of the object clitic *i* results in unacceptability.

- (29) An-a nuk (\*i) zjeu fasule-t, por (\*i) hëngri fiq-të  
Anna not them.CL cooked the.beans but them.CL ate the.figs  
'Anna didn't [cook the beans]; she [ate the figs].' (Albanian, Kallulli 2000: 221)

### 3.5. Bantu languages

Finally, data from Bantu languages also support the presence of defocus. Zeller (2008) argues that the subject marker (SM) is indeed a defocus marker. *Wh*-phrases and the exhaustive

focus particle *bonyine* ‘only’ are both incompatible with the subject marker, illustrated in (30) and (31). The (a) sentences are well-formed because of the absence of subject marker, whereas the (b) sentences, with the presence of subject markers, are unacceptable.

(30) Informational focus test: *Wh*-phrase

- a. Ku-fik-e                      bani?                      *Without subject marker*  
 EXPL-arrive-PST    who  
 ‘Who arrived?’                      (Zulu, Zeller 2008: 241)
- b. \*Ubani            u-fik-il-e?  
 who            SM-arrive-DIS-PST  
 Intended: ‘Who arrived?’                      (Zulu, Zeller 2008: 241)

(31) Exhaustive focus test: ‘only’

- a. H-a-gii-ye                      abáana bonyine.                      *Without subject marker*  
 EXPL-PST-go-ASP    child    only  
 ‘Only the children left.’                      (Kinyarwanda, Zeller 2008: 239)
- b. \*Abáana            bonyine                      b-a-gii-ye                      *With subject marker*  
 child            only                      SM-PST-go-ASP  
 Intended: ‘Only the children left.’                      (Kinyarwanda, Zeller 2008: 240)

### 3.6. Section summary

This section presented cross-linguistic data showing that defocus is attested in natural languages with the aid of various tests. It is clear that defocus is not a language-specific notion in Cantonese. A reasonable concern, raised by an anonymous review, is that the observation that the above tests are failed in different languages could be due to some independent factor, without resorting to the notion of defocus. To the extent that the notion of defocus is pragmatically different from topic and focus (discussed in §2.), the notion of defocus captures a generalization concerning the distribution of elements with particular informational status, in a way similar to focus and topic. It is thus not surprising that the syntactic device that marks defocus vary from language to language (so are focus-marking devices). Table 2 summarizes the syntactic devices of marking defocus in different languages.

Table 2 Syntactic devices to mark defocus across languages

Language	Family	Device to mark defocus
Cantonese	Sino-Tibetan	Right dislocation
Japanese	Japonic	Right dislocation
Spanish & Italian	Romance	P-movement (Scrambling)
German & Dutch	Germanic	Scrambling
Albanian	Albanian	Clitic doubling
Greek	Hellenic	Clitic doubling
Zulu & Kinyarwanda	Niger-Congo	Morphological marker

#### 4. Concluding remarks

This paper suggested that RD in Cantonese marks defocus and defended the notion of defocus with cross-linguistic evidence. It should be noted, however, that although RD can mark defocus in Cantonese, it is not necessarily the case that *all* right-dislocated elements are interpreted as defocus. In Japanese, while Takano's (2014) proposal captures one function of RD, Takita (2014) argues that some RDs in Japanese are indeed *hanging topics*. Right-dislocated elements that lack Case-markers or postpositions are syntactically different from those with Case-markers or postpositions. He refers the former as Pseudo Right Dislocation (PRD), and the latter Standard Right Dislocation, SRD (the type of RD discussed in Takano 2014). In (32), an idiom chunk is right-dislocated. With the presence of Case-marker *o* in the right-dislocated element (i.e. SRD), the sentence is well-formed. However, its absence results in unacceptability (i.e. PRD). PRD is different from SRD in that no reconstruction is allowed in PRD and it patterns with hanging topic construction in Romance languages, which disallowed idiom chunks to be a hanging topic.

- (32) Minna-ga sono ziko-ni hiyasita-yo, kimo- $\{o/*\emptyset\}$   
 all-NOM that accident-DAT chilled-SFP liver-ACC  
 Intended: 'Everyone was frightened at the accident.' (Japanese, Takita 2014: 148)

On the other hand, Ko (2015) argues that right dislocated elements can be *specificational focus*, which bears great similarity to specificational copula constructions. In (33), scope property suggests that *twul-ta* should be regarded as specificational focus, because quantificational phrases, when received specificational focus, are interpreted as specific indefinite, instead of a quantificational element. Accordingly, *twul-ta* must take wide scope in (33). This explains why the wide scope reading of negation is disallowed.

- (33) Cheli-ka manna-ci an-ass-e twul-ta two > Neg, \*Neg > two  
 Cheli-NOM met-CI not-PST-Dec two-all  
 'Cheli met neither of them.' (Korean, Ko 2015: 22)

RDs in Japanese and Korean complicate the function of RD. RD in different languages serves different information-structural purposes.<sup>10</sup> In addition to the widely discussed syntactic

<sup>10</sup> A reviewer raises the issue of the multi-functionality of the rightmost position: if it is not exclusively for defocus, how can one differentiate, for example, defocus from hanging topics? It should be noted that multi-functionality is also observed in the leftmost position, which is the common position for topic and focus. The precise informational status depends on various linguistic diagnostic tests. Diagnostic tests for defocus include what is discussed in §2.1. and §2.2. For focus and topic, see Song (2017) for a recent overview, among many others.

derivation of RD, further investigation is desired on the informational status of the right-dislocated elements.

### Acknowledgements

I thank the audience at The 22<sup>nd</sup> International Conference on Yue Dialect (HKU, Dec 2017), The 7<sup>th</sup> USC-Yonsei University Joint Symposium (USC, Apr 2018) and a seminar arranged by Keiko Mochizuki at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (TUFS, May 2018), for helpful comments and discussions. Special thanks go to two anonymous reviewers and the editorial board for critical comments and suggestions. All remaining errors are mine.

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## 論粵語中的“非焦點”

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### 提要

本文提出粵語倒裝句中的後置成份屬於訊息結構研究中較少提及的“非焦點”。文章論證“非焦點”與“焦點”及“話題”有顯著分別，並引證“非焦點”並非粵語所獨有，而是一個跨語言的現象。

### 關鍵詞

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Received: April 30, 2019

Accepted: November 13, 2019