

Left Detachment in a verb-final language: the interactional perspective

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Abstract

The study examines Left Detached (LD) structures (Left Dislocation and Hanging Topics) in a corpus of natural interaction in Anal Naga (anm; Trans-Himalayan, India) in the multimodal interactional framework. Instead of following the pre-empirical assumption that LD-structures form a syntactic construction, the study demonstrates that they are instantiations of a broader phenomenon of “detached NPs”. These are NPs that initiate a syntactic structure and terminate the Intonation Unit. The study argues that detached NPs perform a separate interactional task while the continuation is not yet planned, as is evidenced by prosody, gaze, and co-gesture. There are two frequent scenarios where detached NPs occur: (1) turn-taking, where they serve as the locus of securing the floor or for a recipient search, and (2) alignment of joint attention on a new referent or maintenance of attention on an active referent. LD-structures do not form a separate group within detached NPs with respect to their function, usage, and frequency, but merely represent examples where a detached NP is followed by relevant material. However, the decision to produce this continuation and its structural planning take place after the detached NP has been produced, and as such do not affect the analysis of its function. The apparent topical effects associated with LD require no concept of topicality but are epiphenomenal of the general factors of attention and relevance. They are observed only in static retrospective examination but are unneeded for the analysis and irrelevant for the dynamic planning and processing of interactional discourse.

Keywords: Left Dislocation; Hanging Topic; Topicality; Information Structure; Trans-Himalayan; Tibeto-Burman.

1. Introduction

1.1. Left Detachment

Left Dislocation/Detachment (LD) is a family of structures attested across numerous unrelated languages and often assumed to be universal (Maslova & Bernini 2006). LD-structures consist of an extra-clausal, typically nominal constituent (NP), that is separated prosodically and/or syntactically from the immediately following clause. The clause is interpreted as “about” the referent of this NP or within a frame that it defines. Consequently, LD structures form a typical example of a topicalising structure. In classic examples of LD, the detached NP constituent is co-referential with a resumptive pronoun in the main clause, as is illustrated in (1) from German.

(1) German (deu; Indo-European, Germanic; Jacobs 2001: 642)

Peter, ich habe ihn heute nicht getroffen.

Peter 1SG PFV.1SG he.ACC today NEG meet:PST.PTCP

‘**Peter**, I have not met **him** today.’

In another common LD-structure, dubbed Hanging Topic (HT), there is no resumptive NP in the clause, that would be coreferential with the detached constituent. This structure typically introduces a frame for the interpretation of the proposition, as is the case in (2) from Russian.

(2) Russian (rus; Indo-European, Slavic; Maslova & Bernini 2006: 74)

Sobak-a – vseгда pol-y grjazn-ye

dog-NOM.SG always floor-PL dirty-PL

‘**The/a dog**, the floors are always dirty.’

An additional LD-structure that exhibits closely related formal and functional properties is occasionally called a “Subject Marking”-construction (SM) (Netz & Kuzar 2007), shown in English (3). In this case the initial NP is introduced separately and occupies its own Intonation Unit, but the speaker continues elaborating the syntactic structure so that the NP becomes its subject.

(3) English (Netz & Kuzar 2007: 308)

Dad_i, you know, $\emptyset_i$ has done some of it.

LD-structures play an important role in the study of Information Structure. They are commonly analysed as an expression of the topic of the subsequent proposition, so that the main clause is interpreted as being *about* the referent of the extra-clausal NP (Lambrecht 1994: 188; Gregory & Michaelis 2001 among many others). In this view, the structure provides evidence for the cognitive limitations of information processing: according to the ‘Principle of Separation of Reference and Role’ (PSRR) (Lambrecht 1994: 185), both an activation of a referent and assigning the topical role to this referent in a proposition incur cognitive effort. As a result, the two processes are preferably separated and performed in different, consecutive syntactic units. The detached NP is used for the activation of a referent or for its announcement (Erteschik-Shir 1997: 53). This move allows for the usage of this referent as the topic of the proposition, communicated by the subsequent clause structured as about this referent (Prince 1998; Kuzar & Netz 2010). This view also lead to the analysis of topics as performing a separate attention-aligning speech act (Endriss 2009). LD-structures are also observed to have recurrent discourse-structuring effects, such as listing, contrasting and sequence opening (Netz & Kuzar 2007), as well as specific pragmatic properties related to the discourse status of the referent (Birner & Ward 1998; Gregory & Michaelis 2001), but at least in some views these are derived from the topic-announcing function (Kerr 2014).

Against this Information Structural approach to LD, interactional analyses propose a different view, arguing that the primary functions of the construction lie in the interaction-managing domain. For example, Duranti & Ochs (1979) demonstrate that LDs in Italian are primarily used to gain access to and maintain the floor. Pekarek-Doehler et al. (2015) analyse LD-structures in French as interactional resources for managing specific goals, such as turn- and sequence-organisation, assessment and listing. Moreover, taking the online syntax perspective, the LD-structure often *emerges* from the incremental construction of the turn, where the talk after the detached NP is improvised only after this NP has been delivered (Sornicola 1981: 136; Pekarek-Doehler et al. 2015: Ch. 7). This view was partly foreshadowed already in Geluykens’ (1992) work, who regarded LD in English as a conventionalisation of the bifold process of a reference negotiation and an assertion.

However, an interactional perspective on the temporally unfolding structure of an NP followed by a clause can also dispense with the conventionalisation scenario. It can be the case that structures traditionally regarded as LD-sentence types are fully compositional, non-conventionalised discourse collocations of an NP and a subsequent clause. If there is no evidence for a conventionalisation of the overall structure from the point of view of its frequency, production, or function, it should rather be regarded as an occasional collocation of the two more basic structures. In this case, each part contributes its usual function and the co-occurrence of the two is neither pre-planned, nor conventionalised, nor does it have a consistent function. In such a case, speakers do not *use* this structure for achieving a certain discourse goal, but the apparent structure and its interpretive effects are epiphenomenal of the combination of the used parts and their functions.

This is indeed what was claimed for LD-style structures in spontaneous Hebrew (Ozerov 2025). The initial detached NP in this analysis either provides a planned local contribution, such as an update (cf. Ono & Thompson 1994; Helasvuo 2019; Tao 2020), or is driven by interactional factors, such as online utterance modification and discourse linkage. Numerous factors, and in particular disfluencies, turn transitions and syntactic modifications suggest that upon the delivery of the NP, the continuation of the utterance is not yet planned. Made-up examples in (4) (adapted from Ozerov 2025, modified), demonstrate how continuations can range between a complete abandonment of the structure in (a), an interrupted resumption in (b), through LD (c) and HT (d), to a smooth clause continuation in (g).

- (4) a. **Jane**/She, oh, what is that thing over there?
 b. **Jane**, I went to visit Jack, wanted to check out his new office. He started a new job last week. So turns out **she** is his boss.
 c. **Jane**, **she** was here yesterday.
 d. **Jane**, Jack is quite depressed about his new job... He doesn't really like **her**, you know. I mean, as his boss.
 e. **She**, **she** was here yesterday.
 f. **She**, I saw **her** yesterday.
 g. **Jane**, was here yesterday.

Taking this range of examples seriously suggests that classic LD-structures in (c) and (d) are merely occasional collocations of detached NPs followed by a clause. The

resumptive pronoun in (c) does not differ from anaphoric pronouns appearing later in discourse in (b) and (d). Moreover, examples (e)–(f) indicate that referent activation is orthogonal to detachment. Selecting (c) for the study of LD and (d) as a HT-sentence type, but ignoring the other examples driven by the same discourse processes, is a biased research procedure based on the pre-empirical assumption that LD-structures form a sentence type. All the structures in (a)–(g) are compositional constructs of the separate contributions of the initial NP and the follow-up discourse. The apparent topicality effects of aboutness or frame-setting in (c) and (d) can thus be re-analysed as occasional and epiphenomenal of the general relevance (Grice 1975; Sperber & Wilson 1996) between the initial referent and the consecutive material.

Hence, study of natural interaction suggests that one should explore the entire set of initially detached NPs, and only as a follow up step to explore whether LD form a separate set, whose function or distribution frequency could not be accounted for compositionally. If such functions or distributions are not observed, the ensuing analysis suggests that topicality effects in LD are not a primitive notion of communication and cognition, but are derivative of more basic cognitive and discourse factors present across all detached NPs. The analysis of these factors offers both a richer and more parsimonious model of information structuring (Ozerov 2021a).

Taking into account the syntactic profile of the analysed language complicates the matters even further. The studies surveyed above deal with languages characterised by the SVO structure of the main clause, while English and German also exhibit a rich usage of pronominal reference. The situation is more problematic for verb-final languages with little explicit expression of accessible referents (“radical pro-drop”), such as Japanese and Korean. The criterion of an extra-clausal NP constituent becomes elusive, as a prosodically detached NP will always precede the verb and thus can be regarded as extra-clausal, with a zero-reference in the verbal clause. The primary functional counterparts of LD-structures in this case are argued to be Hanging Topics and dedicated particles typically regarded as “Contrastive Topic markers” (CT), such as Japanese *-wa* and Korean *-nun* (Maslova & Bernini 2006). Importantly, the analysis of the two particles along the lines of contrastive topicality has been questioned in studies of spontaneous interaction (Kim 2015; Tanaka 2015; Morita & Kim 2022). Both phenomena are illustrated jointly in (5) for Korean, where the “CT”-marked constituent is also a detached NP with no grammatical role in the subsequent clause, and as such forms an HT structure.

(5) Korean (kor; Koreanic; Kim 2015: 99)

yenkuk yensup-un, han twu-tal yensup ha-ko
 play practice-CT, about two-month practice do-and

‘As for the practice for [my] play, [I] practice about two months and...’

Nonetheless, examples of proper LD-structures with co-referential resumptive constituents are attested also in this kind of languages (Matsumoto 1998: 432; Yamaizumi 2011), albeit appear to be less frequent.

(6) Japanese (jpn; Japonic; Yamaizumi 2011: 79)

Sakihodo = no mittu = no zyôken, kore = wa tane = ni atama = ni

former = GEN three = GEN condition this = CT always = DAT head = DAT

oi-te kentô-si-te ik-i-mas-u

put-NF consider-do-NF go-LINK-PLT-NPST

‘The former three conditions, these [we] will always bear in mind and take into consideration.’

In addition, Matsumoto (2003: 80) discusses “lead NPs” in spontaneous Japanese, which are parallel to the notion of detached NP exemplified in (4). “Lead NPs” are prosodically detached nominal constituents, which merely activate or maintain the activation of a referent in the discourse. It is only the continuation that reveals whether they evolve into arguments of a clause, Hanging Topics, or remain “stray”.

Following the same idea, this study explores detached NPs in another verb-final language, examining the totality of NPs produced as prosodically separate constituents in yet underspecified syntactic structures. It explores the interactional factors linked to the formation of detached NPs and the array of their continuations. Finally, it explores whether LD-structures deserve the analysis of a special sentence type, or whether they are merely occasional by-products of detached NPs followed by a subsequent clause in the dynamically evolving interaction. The rest of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 provides the background on the Anal Naga language, the data and the methodology for the study. Section 3 describes the surprisingly rare occurrence of updating detached NPs in Anal Naga. Section 4 discusses the prosodic evidence for the separate role of the detached NP, planned separately from and prior to the upcoming talk. This observation applies irrespective of the fact whether and how the talk is continued after the detached NP, with LD-type structures showing no

peculiarities in function or distribution frequency. This already suggests that their view as an activation or announcement of the topic for the immediately following proposition cannot be upheld. Section 5 explores the motivations for the detachment of the NP. It demonstrates that a substantial share of the cases is unrelated to topicality and referent activation, but is a result of interactional turn-management. Section 6 analyses the multimodal cues accompanying the production of detached NP and shows that these perform local discourse tasks of attention alignment. Section 7 concludes the paper, accounting for detached NPs through general interactional processes and attention. It finally discusses how effects associated with topicality are epiphenomenal products of these factors, suggesting that topicality as a linguistic, pragmatic, or cognitive concept is not needed for their analysis, glosses over the actual processes, and is irrelevant for interlocutors in natural interaction.

2. Language background, data and methodology

Anal Naga is a Trans-Himalayan (also known as Sino-Tibetan) language of the North-Western group (called ‘Old Kuki’ in previous literature) of the South-Central (formerly: “Kuki-Chin-Mizo”) branch. It is spoken by a community of 20,000 people in Chandel District of the Indian state of Manipur, near the India-Myanmar border. The community forms part of the ethnopolitical union of Naga tribes (hence ‘Anal Naga’). Typically for the languages of the area, the morphemes in Anal Naga are predominantly monosyllabic. Vowels have a binary distinction of vowel length (short and long) and tone (high and falling-low). The noun can be accompanied by possessive prefixes, demonstratives, case-marking, pragmatic particles and postpositions. The structure of the verb is highly complex, with different paradigms for transitive and intransitive verbs, two root forms (glossed V_1 and V_2), hierarchical person indexation, complex TAM-marking, numerous categories marked by verbal affixes, and limited noun incorporation. There are a few strategies of verbal nominalisation, that derive syntactic nouns from stems or from conjugated verbs.

The syntax is strictly verb-final in planned speech. Rarely, NPs occur post-verbally in spontaneous language. The expression of contextually recoverable referents is optional and the order of the preverbal constituents is pragmatically driven. The grammatical alignment on nouns is ergative-absolutive: the marking of the only argument of intransitive verbs is similar to the marking of the argument

expressing a Patient-referent with transitive verbs (-to ABSOLUTE); the marking of the Agent-argument is = *tũ* (ERGATIVE). The case marking is optional (differential), and the same arguments can also be expressed by NPs unmarked for case. Examples (7) and (8) illustrate the structure of intransitive and transitive sentences with overt absolutive marking.

(7) anm_20160917_LamphouPasna_Thotson_teashop 40”

tʃap^he-to a-húŋ-tʃà

buffalo-ABS CIS-ascend.PERM-PFV

‘The buffaloes have come home.’

(8) anm_20160917_LamphouPasna_Thotson_teashop 31”

ná-na-sa-sa-to ʃaktiman-e tùm-k^hé-k^hú

INCL-NMLZ.P-build₂-all-ABS truck-DEM2 time-one-again

ná-kàm-pè:pàŋ-ni = te

INCL.P-close₁-BEN-precisely-3.COND = CNTR

‘If the Shaktiman truck closes for us again what we have built.’

The study is based on seventy minutes of multimedia recordings of Anal Naga speakers in their natural everyday settings. The interactions take place as co-villagers sit on the porch of one’s home or during food preparation. The examined recordings were collected in six sessions in different locations with the total of twenty-six core participants, using Zoom Q8 camcorder paired with a SSH-6 stereo shotgun microphone. The studied collection belongs to a larger corpus of natural interaction in Anal Naga, collected, transcribed and translated by native speakers in 2016 with the financial support of ELDP (SG0428) (Ozerov 2018). The corpus is archived by ELAR and the multimedia files are available online along with their transcription in the ELAN formats (Wittenburg et al. 2006). Each example is referenced by the recording title and its time stamp.

Apparent examples of LD structures are attested across the analysed corpus: (9) shows a LD with a resumptive demonstrative, and (10) is an example of a location-specifying HT (with no explicit locative marking) followed by an LD structure, where the resumptive expression of the P-referent is coreferential with the extra-clausal detached NP.

(9) anm_20160808_group_Thangwar ling 4'45"

va-said = *so* , *lé-há* *va-kà-vál* .

3-side(Eng) = ADD DIST-to 3-shoot₂-PFV

'And **that side**, he has shot it **over there**.'

(10) anm_20161210_phiran_khullen_gathering_outside_1 7'29"

aŋ *amá-sá:l-e* = *na?* *mú.la-to* , *bol-k^hé:*

PN 3-area-DEM2 = AGR.SEEK **pine.firewood**-ABS **stem-one**

p^hùl-lé:ló-hín-nú = *na* = *e* .

cut₁-IDEO.OPENLY-PL\1-NFUT = AGR.SEEK = DEM2

'Ang, **that area**, eh? **Pine firewood** – we cut **one stem**.'

It could be tempting to regard (9)–(10) as instances of LD-structures, collect similar examples, explore their usage contexts and analyse recurrent interpretive effects produced by them as the function of the construction. For instance, in all these examples the initial NP introduces a referent, so that the subsequent sentence contributes information as “about it” or as restricted to the frame set by this referent. Hence, this analysis could contribute to cross-linguistic studies of topicalisation, corroborating further the assumed universality of topicality as a linguistic and cognitive category.

However, this procedure would be biased by the assumption that (9)–(10) represent indeed basic constructions/sentence types, to which speakers resort for achieving a certain effect and due to specific pragmatic conditions. It would distort the actual structuring process of a dynamically unfolding utterance, where speakers have no “bird’s-eye view” of the upcoming structure (Hopper 2011). They first use a NP separated into its own Intonation Unit (IU), and then face a variety of potential continuation trajectories. As shown below, there is substantial evidence that the detached NPs perform a local interactional task, while the continuation has not been planned yet. Hence, for the examination of these apparent cases of LD, one must explore the entirety of detached NPs. It is only in the next step that the study should analyse whether the compositional account of detached NPs and their continuation also successfully addresses the LD-structures. Only if the distribution, frequency or function of LD are unpredictable from the compositional account, should we postulate a separate dedicated structure of this kind for their analysis (Goldberg 2006: 5). Following the methodology implemented for the study of LD-structures in Modern Hebrew (Ozerov 2025), detached NPs are defined for the purpose of this study as follows.

DETACHED NP – a NP that occupies a separate IU or is spread across more than one IU with no other constituents occurring in these IUs. It neither complements nor is predicted by the already unfolding syntactic structure; alternatively, it occurs as the last constituent of an IU, initiating a new syntactic structure.

This is a working definition that singles out utterances whose dynamic structuring is initiated by naming a NP and immediately finishing the IU. It includes bare NPs, NPs marked by “pragmatic particles” (such as “contrastive-topical” = *te*, or additive = *so* in (9)), and NPs with differential case markers of direct cases *-to* and *-tũ*. It does not include NPs with postpositions. The inclusion of NPs that terminate an IU initiating a new syntactic structure mostly addresses examples where the NP starts a new content clause, such as *And then I thought this woman*,.... Vocatives were excluded from the data. Follow up studies can expand the analysis for other constituent types in the same dynamic interactional perspective on syntax.

Based on this definition, the data was manually collected from the selected recordings resulting in 214 tokens of detached NPs. Since the analysis relies on multimodal aspects of interaction, thirteen examples have been excluded because the speakers’ were outside of the filmed frame. The remaining 201 were coded for a range of formal, pragmatic and interactional factors:

- the final contour of the IU
- the form of the NP (noun, pronoun, demonstrative markers, pragmatic particles, case-markers)
- interlocutors’ response (backchannelling and gazing, subject to the limitations of the recording equipment)
- disfluency markers
- recycling
- referential status (discourse new, re-activated, contextually given, situationally given (exophoric), inferable, referent elaboration)
- syntactic continuation (regular syntax, LD, HT, syntactic repair, abandoned)
- turn-taking (NP used for turn-taking, NP in the unit that follows turn-taking, turn-maintaining for NPs occurring after > 1s pause within the speech of the same speaker)
- multimodal aspects whose onset and endpoint align with the NP-production (gaze shift, co-gesture, co-action)

Out of the 201 examples of detached NPs, 32% ($n = 65$) represent (or, in the dynamic view of syntax, rather evolve into) LD-structures, while the other detached NPs are incorporated into regular constructions (36%, $n = 73$), or are either abandoned or are followed by repair that modifies the initial formulation attempt (32%, $n = 63$). Based on these data, the study explores the usage of detached NPs, subsequently situating the formation and usage of LD-examples in the overall findings.

The following sections present the findings of the study, describing the most salient contexts where detached NPs are used and the interactional tasks performed through detached NPs, cross-relating these findings with the apparent LD-type structures in (9)–(10). However, a word of caution is due with respect to the interpretation of these findings. It should be kept in mind that the identified contextual factors have not been examined independently, in their entirety for other syntactic configurations which could equally (or more prominently) characterise them, compared to detached NPs. Hence, it would be erroneous to regard a context in which a large group of detached NPs is attested as stipulating for this specific configuration. A broader study of the relevant conditions can potentially reveal a more general characterisation for the morphosyntax of structures that this context triggers, with detached NPs being merely a particular case thereof. For instance, it can be seen that a prominent group of detached NPs appears in the context of turn-taking. However, we have not examined the entirety of structures used for turn-taking. A follow up broader study on this issue can reveal, that the majority of turn-taking units are in fact either full clauses or cut-off chunks. In such a case, detached NPs would be merely a particular case of the latter.

3. What detached NPs are mostly not – updating NPs

It can be helpful to outline first what detached NPs in Anal Naga are (mostly) not, as in this aspect they differ from findings stemming from a few different languages addressed in previous research. In the study of “unattached NPs”, Ono and Thompson (1994) draw a distinction between “referential” and “predicating”: the former negotiate referents that must be tracked in the ensuing discourse (“topical”); the latter provide new information about a previous referent or situation assessing, characterising, classifying or labelling it (“focus”). In their American English data, the prevalent share of NPs (80%) is predicating. In Finnish these were also found to

constitute the largest group, albeit to a smaller degree (59%) (Helasvuo 2019). Parallel findings are also reported for Modern Hebrew (44%) (Ozerov 2025). As opposed to these findings, such usage of detached NPs, illustrated in (11), is very infrequent in the examined Anal Naga data. Instead, NPs providing the sole update of the utterance tend to be accompanied by a copula.

(11) anm_20161210_phiran_khullen_gathering_outside_1 9'20"

The speaker is observing a group of villagers, who unusually leave for the field on Sunday, which is the resting day of the community. Shifting the gaze to the people in front of her she utters:

ajð:há-kí núŋ = nê
 tomorrow-GEN work = AGR.SEEK
 'The work for tomorrow, eh?'

Such examples constitute only 6.5% of detached NPs in Anal Naga. Importantly, the studies of English and Finnish mentioned above employed a different definition, as "unattached/free NPs" are defined therein as NPs that do not form a part of a clause in the final syntactic outcome. Nonetheless, also after restricting the analysis to "unattached NPs" following Ono and Thompson's (1994) definition (namely, excluding cases where the NPs evolve into a full clause in the subsequent talk), the share of predicating NPs remains very low (10%). This rate echoes Tao's (1996: 84) findings for focal detached NPs in Mandarin (7%) and Matsumoto's (1998) analysis of Japanese (4.5%), where NP IUs were found to be primarily used for a variety of non-updating functions.

4. Detached NPs as separate discourse moves – prosodic evidence

Intonation Units (IUs) have been hypothesised to constitute information processing units in previous research (Chafe 1994; Pawley & Syder 2000), and neurolinguistic research reveals indeed the connection between prosodic chunking and information flow (Inbar et al. 2023). Within these working assumptions, the link between detached NPs and the separate status of their informational contribution is trivial, each detached NP examined here provides a separate unit of information. In the situation where such units would terminate with a continuing contour and would be smoothly followed by the

next unit, it could be possible to hypothesise that there is a close link between the two units in their planning, production, syntactic structure, and the overall discourse contribution.

The examined Anal Naga data demonstrates that the separation between the detached NP and the subsequent discourse goes beyond their mere partition into IUs, rendering the assumptions regarding their joint planning or a close structural or functional link between the two unfeasible. Most of the examples of detached NPs – 75% (n = 150) – are characterised by disfluent production of the overall sequence of NP + continuation. Disfluencies included in this study are final lengthening of the IU where the detached NP occurs, its prosodic cut off (typically, a very abrupt fall in Anal Naga), a pause above 0.1s (average 0.78s, median 0.66s), or a syntactic repair where the detached NP is replaced or repeated in the immediately following structure. Taking into account NPs with no continuation, the overall share of detached NPs separated prosodically from the subsequent content beyond the mere intonational phrasing is 83%. An example combining pausing and syntactic cut offs is illustrated in (12).

(12) anm_20160917_LamphouPasna_Thotson_teashop 4'33"–41"

Speakers discuss how difficult it is to raise cattle.¹

a. *turende*,

but

'However,

b. *i-ju-tça* *náni-hín-he* *na-dá-hín-he*,

NMLZ-raise₁-A.PERS INCL-PL-DEM1 INCL-self-PL-DEM1

➤ we people who raise cattle ourselves,

c. *atuŋ = be*, ...1.24s...

now = EMPH

now, ...1.24s...

d. *na-mí-hín* ...0.48s... *o:lu-lulu*,

INCL-eye

owl[Eng.]-like

¹ Final contours are marked as '.' for final terminating, ',' for continuing, '?' for the appealing rise-fall, '::' for hesitation lengthening, '--' for prosodic cut off (an abrupt fall to creaky voice). Pauses are marked as ...seconds... [] marks overlap. <<cue>speech> marks vocal cues co-occurring with speech. To facilitate the discussion of the examples, Intonation Units are numbered as (a), (b), (c) etc. Arrow bullet points mark the detached NP targeted in the discussion of the example.

e. < <laughing> o:l'u> va-dá-màŋ = mo < <laughing> amá-lulu,
owl[Eng.] 3-say-PROG = PROB 3-like
like an owl, it's called "an owl" I think, like that,

f. mǐ> i-tɕə:l = te i.tà.vá.
eye NMLZ-clear₁ = CNTR should.be
[our] eyes should be vigilant.'

Although the overall phenomenon could typically be regarded as disfluency, only 13% of the discussed cases are characterised by a disfluent production of the detached NP itself, namely by a final lengthening or a prosodic cut-off. In most cases (60.5%), the detached NP ends with a regular continuing contour (as it happens in (12)). It is only after the completion of the smooth NP production that the speaker enters the hesitation stage. Moreover, in the remaining 26.5% of cases, the NP forms a deliberately separate discourse move, with either a terminating or an appealing final contour. These facts suggest that the local goal of the speaker upon the delivery of

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the NP is restricted to centring attention at the referent and potentially requesting the interlocutor's acknowledgement of the referent's identification. It is only once this achievement is secured that the speaker moves to improvise the continuation with respect to the often vaguely conceived relevance of this referent. This process is illustrated in (13).

(13) anm_20160917_LamphouPasma_Thotson_teashop 11'24"–29"

Speakers discuss why children from the community do not succeed in school, unlike children from the dominant Manipuri community.

➤ A: *tuiçən = ne?*

tuition[Eng.] = AGR.SEEK

'Tuition, eh?'

B:

m̥

mhm

'mhm'

A: *tuiçən*

pākāl,

...0.6s... mí

i-he-va.

tuition[Eng.]

strength

people

NMLZ-be.expert₁-NFUT

'[with]³ strong tuition... people succeed'

The NP 'tuition' is deliberately introduced separately for its negotiation with the interlocutor in (13). The speaker first negotiates this notion, as well as elaborates on it with another detached NP 'tuition strength' in the subsequent clause. Remarkably, both of these concepts are entirely new in the discourse and constitute the main claim of the speaker while the rest of the clause (that others succeed in studies) is fully predictable contextually. As such, pragmatically, the tuition and its elaboration constitute prototypical examples of *focus* in the classical notions of Information Structure. Nonetheless, they are expressed by a structure associated with classic cases of topicality (Endriss 2009), namely detached NPs by the means of which the speaker obtains joint attention on the referent before proceeding to an assertion about this referent. This discrepancy between the contextually expected pragmatic status and the constituent behaviour within the observed information structuring process is important for the overall argument and will be discussed in the concluding Section 7. What is of interest here is that

³ Typologically unusually, instruments in Anal Naga are unmarked.

a detached NP most typically accomplishes a deliberately separate discourse task, and only following its smooth completion the speaker enters the hesitation phase, revealing that the continuation has not been planned yet. The task performed by the detached NP consists merely of naming the referent, and therefore can be regarded as accomplishing an attention centring move or a confirmation of joint attention on this referent (O'Madagain & Tomasello 2021). This attention-centring/maintaining account discussed here may appear to evoke the same idea as the topicalization analysis – the detached NP is used to achieve joint attention at a referent, while the continuation provides information to which this referent is relevant. However, the proposed analysis differs from the PSRR model in many crucial issues.

One central issue is the theoretical role of the sentence-level notion of topic, defined either as an aboutness-based or as a frame-setting concept. In the classic models of Information Structure, this is a basic factor of communication indispensable for sentence interpretation (Erteschik-Shir 2007) and matched to the notion of “cognitive index” required for the processing of linguistic information (Endriss 2009). This cognitive apparatus is assumed to have processing limitations, which result in a constraint, or at least strong disinclination for a simultaneous activation of a referent and its usage as a topic within the same clause. This problem is solved by resorting to LD-structures, considered to be dedicated sentence types which separate the topic activation process (detached NP) from the assignment of the proposition-level topical role to it (the following clause).

Anal Naga data demonstrates that the detached NP and the subsequent material do not form a unified structure and are not planned together. In other words, this is not a dedicated sentence type to which speakers purposefully resort and which has a consistent function, but a collocation of two separate moves: the initial move of naming a referent, and a structurally detached and disjointly planned follow up talk. Moreover, the relevance of the activated referent can last indeterminately into the following discourse without applying to the immediately following clause. This is illustrated in (14), where the speaker introduces a referent using a detached NP in (a) and an additional referent with a detached NP after a long pause in (b).

(14) *anm_20161210_phiran_khullen_gathering_outside_1 5'05"*

The speaker starts telling how he and his friends were attacked by wild bees.
'There was a beehive hanging like that.'

- a. *ka-p- -- ka-pá-Moni pa-- pastor-he = tũ;*
 1-un-- 1-uncle-PN pa-- pastor-DEM1 = ERG
 ‘A: My unc- my uncle PN the pa- pastor’
- b. ...670... *va-ból-to, vâ:ka:l-lén i-t^hà-vá = tô?*
 3-trunk-ABS above-top NMLZ-built₁-COP = DM\AGR.SEEK
 ...670... ‘The tree trunk, it was built in the upper part, eh?’
- c. Others: [m̥]
 mhm
- d. A: *[so]ral-t^hŋ-lén-lu.e i-t^hà-vá = ve.*
 tree.type-tree-top-kind NMLZ-build₁-COP = DIRC
 ‘It was built on the top of a Sorál tree,
- e. ...2050... *va-t^hŋ-nól-má-vá*
 3-see₂-AUG-NEG-N.FUT
 ...2050... ‘he didn’t see it.’

After introducing the two new referents in (a) and (b), the speaker keeps talking about another previously introduced referent ‘beehive’ in the following two clauses in (b) and (c). He finally returns to the referent from (a) only in (e), after two clauses, two extremely long pauses, and turn-terminating final contour in (d).

Instead of demonstrating properties of topicality, detached NPs suggest that this concept is unnecessary for the analysis and is epiphenomenal of more basic and well-established cognitive and interactional processes. The detached NP aligns attention on a referent, with attention and its alignment being general cognitive factors (Siposova & Carpenter 2019; O’Madagain & Tomasello 2021). This analysis requires no further postulation of domain-specific Information Structural cognitive category for topicality as a “cognitive index” (Endriss 2009), let alone specific constraints on it. The referent at the centre of joint attention is later interpreted as relevant to the following discourse due to basic principles of pragmatics (Grice 1975; Sperber & Wilson 1996). This relevance can produce an epiphenomenal impression of aboutness or frame-setting in a static retrospective examination of the final discourse product. However, this retrospective perspective is neither available nor relevant for the

interlocutors, who move dynamically through the utterance as it unfolds in time. They can sufficiently orient themselves at the identification of the named referent at the first step, and its relevance at the next move – with both moves not being linked on structural and planning levels. Consequently, the proposed model derives the same effects associated with topicality (aboutness, frame-setting) from the broader, established factors of attention and relevance, without postulating additional cognitive or linguistic notions and without defining additional sentence types (cf. Tomlin 1997 for topicality; Hopper & Thompson 2008 for interactional reanalyses of binominal sentences as compositional products of separate discourse moves). Apparent topicality effects emerge in this account as epiphenomenal, unplanned, and imprecise by-products of consecutive, structurally unrelated, local interactional achievements. As (13) above demonstrates, such effects emerge due to the incremental utterance planning and production also in cases where the information conveyed by the detached NP does not pragmatically have the topical status, but constitutes the main updating contribution.

In addition, the data examined here suggests that the PSRR-model is problematic, as referent activation is orthogonal to the NP detachment and also does not appear to incur special processing challenges. Although 67% of detached NPs activates indeed a new or semi-active referent, this finding is not sufficient for an argument that the referent activation is the reason for the detachment. Since the expression of contextually predictable referents is optional in Anal Naga, non-active referents are expected to prevail in the overall count of NPs. Currently, no data of this kind is available for non-detached NPs. However, for one thing, the share of active referents among the detached NPs is very high (33%). For another thing, the share of inactive referents is nearly identical between detached NPs with and without disfluency. These observations suggests that referent introduction itself is not the cause for the disfluency between the NP and the subsequent discourse. Moreover, referent activation at the onset of an utterance typically does not result in its separation as is shown in (15). Such examples lie beyond the scope of this study and have not been collected systematically, but appear to be not exceptional.

- (15) *aro: va-tò:m-kà-hín-to a-húŋ-hòl-jè-nú*
 EXCL 3-bear-shoot₂-PL-ABS CIS-up.PERM-bring-3PL-NFUT
 ‘Oh, as they brought here **the bear that they shot.**’

Finally, sections 5 and 6 below show that the relation between activation, clause-level aboutness and detachment proposed in previous literature relies on premature cognitive models. It assumes an immediate link between the observed linguistic factors and cognitive aspects of information processing, as if syntactic or prosodic detachment provided direct evidence for the cognitive apparatus. As will be shown below, cues from turn-taking and multimodal aspects of detached NPs suggest linking detached structures to processes of intersubjective interaction management, and not to immediate cognitive factors.

Before proceeding to the examination of these processes, it remains to be shown that LD-structures do not have a special status among examples of disfluency. Indeed, the share of LD-structures is identical in the overall data and in the examples exhibiting disfluency – 38%. The numbers for detached NPs evolving into a regular clause are also nearly the same (36% vs. 37%). The rest of the examples result in structural repair or are abandoned. LD-structures do not demonstrate any salient frequency in the disfluency contexts and do not form an identifiable construction nor emerge as a strategy for solving the disfluency challenge.

Finally, the similar share of detached NPs evolving into clauses with a regular syntax suggests that clauses can similarly be a product of incremental, disjoint utterance structuring. Speakers first opt for an improvised, contextually most promising constituent without envisioning the continuation (Hopper 2011). It is only once this starting point has been chosen, that they take advantage of the continuation options it enables. The overall clause emerges in this process as increments built on top of one another, without being a product of an encompassing pre-planning (Thompson 2019).

5. Detached NPs and turn-management

Turn-taking was identified in the previous research as a salient environment for the occurrence of LD-structures. It was proposed to be the reason for the LD-usage in Italian (Duranti & Ochs 1979). In French, LD structures were similarly found to be used for gaining access to the floor (Pekarek-Doehler et al. 2015). However, in the study of detached NPs in Modern Hebrew, the findings suggested that it is not that LD structures are used for this purpose, but rather that turn-taking is often performed by clause chunks, with NPs being a common choice which allows broad continuation options. The continuation is further planned only once the turn is secured, potentially producing a two-step LD-like collocation (Ozerov 2025).

In Anal Naga data examined here, 55% of detached NPs occur in the context of turn-taking, either in the IU with which the speaker takes the turn or the immediately following one. Although it is impossible to assess this number with no exact data on the average of IUs per turn, it will not be inaccurate to state that IUs serving for turn-taking form overall a minor group within the overall discourse. Consequently, the detached NP structure appears to be overrepresented in this context.

One salient usage of detached NPs found with turn-taking is linked to the securing of the primary recipient's attention through gaze alignment and occasionally prosody that takes place on the first constituent of the utterance. This is illustrated in (10) above, repeated here as (16). The utterance exhibits turn-taking accomplished simultaneously by a vocative, an attention requesting final contour (Ozerov 2021b), and gaze alignment.⁴

(16) anm_20161210_phiran_khullen_gathering_outside_1 7'29''

The speaker until this extract has been the leftmost old woman wearing a white shawl. Her primary recipient is the man next to her (the leftmost participant), who gazes at her, as does also the woman seated to the right of the speaker (Figure 1). At this point, the woman standing on the right interrupts the speaker, selecting the man as the primary recipient.



Figure 1.

an amá-sá:l-e = na?

PN 3-area-DEM2 = AGR.SEEK

(Figure 2)

mú.la-to,

pine.firewood-ABS

⁴ The figures accompanying the example are aligned with the transcription situated below the image. The first image above the transcription presents the state of the interaction on the onset of the example, before the first utterance. Thin arrows show gazing, with double arrows representing mutual gaze. Thick dashed arrows stand for pointing gestures and depict their trajectory.



Figure 2.

bol-k^hé: p^hùl-lé-ló-hín-ná = na = e .

stem-one cut₁-IDEO.OPENLY-PL\1-NFUT = AGR.SEEK = DEM2

‘Ang, **that area**, eh? **Pine firewood** – we cut **one stem**.’

Although example (16) appears to be a classic case of a Hanging Topic, this is not a coherent sentence type used for a particular topicality-related reason. The first constituent of the utterance, namely the NP is employed to interrupt and shift attention to the speaker, while displaying the relevance of the upcoming, yet unplanned talk. As can be seen in Figure 2, the mutual gaze is obtained precisely at the end of the detached NP.

This usage of detached NPs in the context of turn-taking appears to be an instantiation of their broader usage for securing, maintaining, or monitoring the recipients’ attention at the speaker displayed by gaze. The detached constituent also serves as the locus for gaze transition during a search for a new recipient (Goodwin 1980), as happens in (17).

(17) anm_20161210_phiran_khullen_gathering_outside_1 12’34”–37”

The speaker (the man on the left close to the camera) is telling how they were attacked by a male bear during a hunting trip, after shooting the female. The recipient is the man at the back (Figure 3).



Figure 3.

However, as the speaker finishes a stretch of IUs and is about to start the next utterance, the recipient is distracted by a group of women holding a baby next to them (Figure 4).



Figure 4.

➤ *sāram = tū:*, (Figure 5)

couple = ERG

‘The couple,



Figure 5.

va- a-inpá (Figure 6) *ka-:-nam-va-hin = lan = mo* *dâ-hîn-nú,*
 3- 3-husband 1-INV-attack-NFUT-PL = NMLZ.fact = PROB say-PL-NFUT
 ‘her- we thought that probably we were attacked by her husband’



Figure 6.

As on the onset of his utterance starting with ‘the couple’ the speaker stays with no recipient, this clause initial NP becomes the locus of search for a new addressee (Figure 5). He starts gazing at the woman in the right low corner of the image at the start of the next IU, but first false-starts (*va-* ‘her’) due to receiving no return gaze. Finally, he restarts as the gaze becomes reciprocal (Figure 6). Although it appears again as an example of HT (‘[Them being] a couple, we thought that it is the husband attacking us’), the detachment is driven by unplanned interactional factors and has no relation to a planned structuring of information and its mapping onto presumable categories of topic and focus. The speaker starts replanning the utterance only once he finds a new recipient. He can take advantage of the activated material relevant for his continuation, but the detached NP and the subsequent clause do not form a syntactic structure with a dedicated function. This is an epiphenomenal collocation emerging from responses to local discourse contingencies.

Similarly, to the case of disfluencies between the NP and the clause, LD-collocations in the context of turn-taking are not characterised by a deviant frequency of occurrence relative to the overall cases of detached NPs, nor do they have any compositionally unpredictable usages. LD and HT together form 28% of the cases, while detached NPs evolving into regular clauses represent 33% of examples in the environment of turn-taking.

Some utterance-initiating detached NPs employ given – recycled and resonating – material, echoing previously used structures. This is done for the purpose of foreshadowing the relationship of the upcoming talk to the preceding discourse, such as displaying a collaborative uptake of the interlocutor’s turn. For instance, in (18) the speaker is struggling to find an answer to the question that he has been asked. Filling the pause with the detached NP, fully repeated from the interlocutor’s question, serves to demonstrate his intent for a collaborative answer.

(18) *anm_20161013_Jm_Dutang_home3 9’23–9’27”*

Speaker A visits the village with a friend. Interlocutor B is their host and starts preparing the dinner for them. The speaker informs her that his friend has unusual food habits and names a few things that he does not consume.

B: *hal-dú = tê?*

chicken-egg = CNTR

‘What about eggs?’

- However, heavy starting points, namely NPs expressing brand new discourse referents, are particularly salient in the data and account for the 70% of the detached NPs found in the turn-taking context. This is shown in (19), where the speaker repeats the detached constituent in the subsequent clause.

Speaker A has not participated in the immediately previous talk and is situated at the edge of the interlocutors' formation. She initiates an entirely new discussion.

This is likely to be related to the verb-final syntax of the language and the common lack of expression of highly accessible referents. As a result of that, in the case the clause is OV, preverbal NPs expressing Patient-referents of low accessibility are common starting points. While it poses no problem by itself (see (15) above), as a starting point the P-argument is a likely locus of an interactionally driven or other kind of NP detachment. Interestingly though, heavy starting points result in an occasional strategy of turn-taking with a cataphoric or dummy pronouns, as the speaker plans their upcoming turn. The overall outcome is the mirror image of the classic LD, where the referent is first foreshadowed by a pronoun, with its subsequent resumption by a full NP. This is shown in (20), which is a direct response to the question in (19).

➤ **‘They’**

B: [(incomprehensible talk by B)]

A: *amá-hín-he* = *te*, ...0.3s... *lé* <pointing> *ŋamseɪ* = *te*,
 3-PL-DEM1 = CNTR over.there PN = CNTR
 ‘They, over there <pointing> Ngamsel’
sum.paŋa ka-jol-ti-ja-va dà-nú.
 fifty 1-sell₂-DISTR-ONLY-NFUT say-NFUT
 ‘He said he sells that for fifty.’

Remarkably, pronouns *amá* ‘3’ and *dá.mo* ‘something’ function as hesitation-fillers in turn-taking and constitute 13.5% of the detached NPs. The speaker takes the turn merely foreshadowing an upcoming referent, and only then proceeds to plan the utterance and choose the NP in the subsequent clause.

6. Multimodality, action, and detached NPs

As shown in Section 4, the very strong tendency of detached NPs for a substantial prosodic separation – beyond their mere production in a separate IUs – suggests their separate planning. This finding may appear to echo the cognitively oriented analyses of sentence topic and topical constraints, in particular the PSRR (“Do not activate a referent and talk about it in the same time”). However, as argued in Sections 4 and 5, the cognitive views of topicality are premature in deriving cognitive architecture directly from linguistic observations. Detached NPs do not represent sentence-level topics or their activation, as prosodic and syntactic factors discussed in Section 4 suggest that the NP and the subsequent talk are not planned together. As such, they do not form a construction aimed at solving sentence-level constraints, but a collocation of two different discourse moves. The relevance of the named referent lasts indeterminately into subsequent discourse and is not restricted to sentence-level topicality or framing. Consequently, its contribution should be evaluated both locally and globally with respect to the overall discourse. Moreover, it has been shown that detached NPs frequently activate no new referent, and new referents trigger no detachment. The presumable linking between syntactic-prosodic detachment and cognition is a speculative model of information processing based on intuitive assumptions about syntactic planning and examination of audio recordings. Indeed, prosodic data discussed in Section 4 exhibits substantial shares of prosodic detachment, hesitation, and pauses, linked in previous research directly to syntactic and semantic planning (Ferreira 2007). However, disfluencies can be and very commonly are triggered not by planning difficulties but by

interactional, turn-managing factors (Goodwin 1980), and Section 5 demonstrates this for Anal Naga detachments.

This section discusses multimodal aspects of detached NPs, providing further evidence that detachment should not be linked to cognitive processes directly as is suggested by co-gesture and speaker's behaviour overlapping with the production of the detached NPs. It gives additional support to the argument that speakers do not engage solely in attempts of smoothly structuring coherent clauses for communicating propositions. Instead, or in addition to that, they produce deliberately separate attention-centering moves. Once the joint attention has been achieved, they build upon this temporary outcome to develop their message further. Speakers approach utterance formation as an incremental, step-by-step improvised task. Consider example (21).

(21) anm_20160918_LCharu_Rockson_chat 8'27"-31"

The participant on the left is telling another interlocutor (outside the frame) about the job of the person sitting next to the camera. Finally, the discussed person takes the floor with the following utterance, gazing at the interlocutor outside the frame.

ní = te, (Figure 7)

1 = CNTR



Figure 7.

amá (Figure 8, left)

3

mól-kí (Figure 8, centre)

hill-GEN

lain = he (Figure 8, right),

line [Eng.] = DEM1



Figure 8 (left, centre, right).

ní ka-pùr-vá.

1 1-carry-NFUT



Figure 9.

‘I, this [electricity] line in the hills, I am responsible.’

The speaker in (21) first takes the floor claiming his epistemic authority on the discussed issue through the detached first person pronoun, that foreshadows his own perspective on the matter. Jointly with that, he gazes at the interlocutor in front of him, who has inquired about the speaker’s job. Building upon the discussion in Section 5, this detachment has no other motivation but interaction structuring, namely the management of floor-control and epistemic authority.

In the next move, the speaker introduces the electricity line that connects hillside villages. This detached NP is produced as the speaker raises his eyes up looking into the sky (arrow) and produces a depicting gesture with a back-and-forth sweeping hand, while pointing above his head (dashed double arrow). Towards the end of the movement, he gazes at the recipient again (arrow). This prosodically separate naming of the electricity line, orchestrated with pointing, depicting, and gazing, achieves the local goal of aligning the joint interlocutors’ attention at it. Importantly, the next structure is produced with another, self-pointing gesture temporally coinciding with the first person pronoun. The typical restriction of a single gesture per clause (McNeill 1992; Goldin-Meadow 2014) supports further the argument that the detached NP performs a separately planned move relative to the subsequent clause. A direct mapping of this detachment onto a presumable cognitive constraint – postulated based on observations of the same syntactic and prosodic detachments – would be a premature analysis that is not based on known cognitive constraints and ignores the interactional and multimodal nature of reference management as a joint interactional achievement. A similar analysis applies to the detachment in (14) above, repeated here as (22), which additionally demonstrates how the establishment of joint attention can be a gradual interactional process (“referent calibration”, cf. Lerner et al. 2012; Shor 2019: Ch. 8.2.2).

(22) anm_20161210_phiran_khullen_gathering_outside_1 5'05"-5'07"

The speaker starts telling how he and his friends were attacked in the forest by wild bees (Figure 10).



Figure 10.

ka-p- -- (Figure 11, left)
1-un--

ka-pú-Monipa--, (Figure 11, centre) *pastor-he = tũ* ,
1-uncle-PN pa-- pastor-DEM1 = ERG



Figure 11 (left, centre, right).

(Figure 11, right) ...0.67...

'My unc- my uncle Moni the pa- pastor, ...0.67...'

The speaker in (22) is sitting in the default ("home")-position with his hands resting down, as he starts introducing the new referent, his uncle. As common in the community, he introduces the referent with a pointing gesture towards the person's house. Initially, he produces an approximate pointing with his right hand (Figure 11, left), but then restarts and performs a more precise finger pointing towards the direction behind his left shoulder accompanied by a head turn (Figure 11, centre), in an overlap with naming the referent and mentioning his social role. Towards the end of this move, he returns to home position (Figure 11, right), and lengthily pauses.

Hence, at this point he has accomplished a single move of a multimodal interactionally negotiated attention alignment on the referent. The subsequent talk has not been planned yet at this point, and as can be seen in the continuation of this example discussed in (14) evolves elsewhere, into describing a tree trunk next to which the uncle was standing and the beehive which was situated on top of it.

Again, although the data on non-detached NPs has not been systematically collected, finding examples of an introduction of a new referent as part of a smooth clause production in a single IU is unproblematic. Interlocutors face no challenge with activating the referent while simultaneously incorporating that information into a larger proposition. Consider (23) where the speaker similarly activates another villager as the Agent-referent, but does so in a single swoop with activating his dogs as the Patient-referent and incorporating both within a full sentence.

- (23) Interlocutors discuss hunting. The speaker tells that he is not a good hunter but good at setting traps. He proceeds to report on an incident in this regard, occurred as he had covered a small forest area with traps.

‘On Sunday, I set 40 traps there.’

niŋt^hoka.ni Samuel ví t^hù-nú.

Monday Samuel dog take.along-NFUT

‘On Monday, Samuel takes his dogs with him [to hunt there].’

Not only do the interlocutors successfully comprehend the reference while incorporating it into a larger proposition, but they also respond with no delay to the non-trivial conversational implicature of the utterance. As the speaker is still finishing the IU, the interlocutors engage in a joint laughter outburst, inferring that it is the hunting dogs that eventually got trapped. The detachment appears thus to be product of dynamic, multimodally regulated attention distribution as a local interactional achievement, and not a direct expression of cognitive processes.

At this stage, attention distribution can be hypothesised to correspond to locally envisioned discourse needs linked further to amounts of competing information in their regard. There is substantial amount of information that can potentially be communicated about salient referents. Before planning how to proceed about this information, the speaker resorts to centring attention on the referent as a local discourse achievement. On the contrary, transient referents introduced for a single relevant action as in (23) do not require opting for such a move.

The talk following this multimodal referent introduction is interpreted vaguely as being relevant to this referent – in aboutness or frame-setting terms – due to basic

Finally, introducing a new referent is not a necessary component of multimodally accomplished moves of interactional attention alignment. Detached NPs can be employed to maintain and monitor attention on an already active referent at the centre of joint attention, and as a time-gaining strategy foreshadowing the need for keeping the attention at the referent as the continuation is being planned. This is shown in (24).

Elderly speakers tell a younger person about the poison used in former times in bow and arrow hunting. The poison is the main topic of the discussion for substantial time at this point.

3 poison-DEM1\AGR.SEEK

mhm

3 poison-DEM1 tree COP

B: Mhm

A: This poison... ..0.3s... it is a tree.'

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information structural interpretations being their epiphenomenal effects irrelevant for the dynamic interpretation of referents and their discourse roles.

7. Conclusion

This study has examined Left Detached structures – classic Left Detachments/Dislocations and Hanging Topic constructions – in a multimodal perspective in a corpus of natural interaction in Anal Naga, a Trans-Himalayan (Tibeto-Burman) language of Manipur (India). At first sight, examining only the examples of LD-structures from the corpus, may appear to support the common assumption that these pre-clausal NPs have a topic-activating function. This would corroborate the presumable cognitive nature and discourse role of topicality, and its proposed architecture (Kuzar & Netz 2010).

However, such findings would be biased by the pre-empirical assumption that LD-structures form a sentence type with a dedicated function. Yet the apparent function of the structure can instead emerge compositionally from a collocation of two separate structures: (i) lexical NPs that most commonly activate a referent (Ariel 1990), and (ii) the following clause that communicates a proposition, as clauses typically do. Relevance relations naturally arising between two adjacent discourse units (Sperber & Wilson 1996) would lead to vague “aboutness” effects in a static examination of this collocation. Unless the structure exhibits functions or frequencies unpredictable by the compositional account, it should not be considered to form a construction (Goldberg 2006:5).

In addition to the compositionality problem, the definition of LD-structures cannot be upheld also from the interactional perspective. Interactional studies demonstrate that “[s]peakers do not possess bird’s eye view of an utterance, but rather move forward in time through it” (Hopper 2011: 23). Since a detached NP forms a separate prosodic phrase according to common definitions (Gregory & Michaelis 2001: 1667), it is likely to accomplish a local interactional task (Iwasaki 2009; Szczepek Reed 2012) whose continuation has not been planned yet at the stage of its production. The utterance may proceed not into a clause, but elsewhere, or not be continued at all. As a result, “taking temporality seriously” (Auer 2000), the study of LD-structures must form part of the study of detached NPs more broadly, namely all NPs that initiate a new syntactic structure and form a separate Intonation Unit. Detached NPs should also include pronouns and not only lexical NPs. If these indeed occur as detached NPs,

that will suggest that activation is orthogonal to detachment, and the link between the two relies on the unjustified restriction of the examined data to full NPs.

Finally, previous research of LD-structures in spoken language was based on audio recordings and did not take into account the multimodal cues inherent to interaction (Gregory & Michaelis 2001; Kerr 2014). Examination of the audio signal may suggest a close link between hesitation and cognitive processing of information. However, it has long been known that disfluencies and prosodic partitioning can be triggered by interactional factors, such as a failure to secure the recipient's gaze (Goodwin 1980).

With these considerations in mind, this study examined detached NPs and pronouns in seventy minutes of multimodal natural interaction in interlocutors' everyday settings. Detached NPs are defined here as NPs/pronouns that initiate a new syntactic structure and terminate the Intonation Unit. The study explored a range of interactional, pragmatic, prosodic, and syntactic factors, identifying contexts in which detached NPs tend to occur and the motivations for their formation. It then proceeded to examine whether cases where NPs evolve into LD-structures differ with respect to their frequency or usage. The findings demonstrate that detached NPs are employed to perform a local interactional task irrespective of their continuation and while the continuation has not been yet planned. In 83% of cases, they exhibit substantial detachment from the relevant continuation, such as a long pause and/or intervening structurally unrelated material, or no continuation at all. Importantly, only a fraction of these cases was characterised by a disfluency on the NP itself. In other words, the NP performed a planned local move, and only after its successful accomplishment the speaker entered the phase of planning the continuation. Within these examples, LD-structures do not form a salient or distinct group, as their frequency and functions are similar to other configurations. Consequently, it would be erroneous to regard the NP and its continuation as forming a single syntactic structure, let alone attributing this NP a function within the continuation (in particular, topicality in the subsequent clause).

The study of the interactional aspects of detached NPs revealed that over a half of the cases (55%) are found in the context of turn-taking and turn-maintenance (resuming one's talk after a pause > 1s). As in general only a minority of IUs are found turn-initially, the share of detached NP in this context is unexpected. Detached NPs are found to be used as the locus of negotiating the recipient's attention or a search for a new recipient, as can be seen from gaze alignment and prosodic cues. Detached NPs echoing other's talk are employed to display a collaborative continuation to

others' turn, as the content of the new turn is still being planned. Finally, multimodal aspects of referent introduction (co-gesture, gaze alignment, and co-action) indicate that these are multimodally accomplished interactional moves aimed at the local goal of achieving or maintaining joint attention at a referent (O'Madagain & Tomasello 2021). The precise role of this referent in the follow up discourse is not established yet, as is evidenced by local multimodal cues of gaze alignment and co-gesturing, and shifts in the subsequent talk. Finally, a third of detached NPs introduce no new referent, but refer to entities active in the discourse. Nonetheless, their detachment is driven by the same interactional factors of turn-management and attention-monitoring, suggesting that detachment as a syntactic configuration is orthogonal to referent activation. The turn-managing and the attention-aligning uses account for 87% of detached NPs and a similar share of LDs. The rest of examples do not cluster into a coherent group and are found in such cases as inter-turn hesitations.

Based on these findings, the apparent topicality effects associated with detached NPs re-appear as epiphenomenal of broad interactional and general cognitive processes. The detachment is driven by local factors related to well-known interactional and attentional phenomena, and requires no postulation of idiosyncratic constraints belonging to domain-specific cognitive machinery of Information Structural categories. The detached NP does not necessary activate a referent, but also in cases where it does, its role can be accounted for by the notion of attention. When the detached NP is continued by subsequent talk, it is interpreted as relevant to it due to basic principles of ostensive communication (Grice 1975; Sperber & Wilson 1996). A referent's relevance to follow up material can be vaguely characterised as "aboutness" or frame-setting but these coarse interpretive effects require no place of basic communicative or cognitive factors in information structure and processing. Hence, multimodal interactional analysis by general factors of an apparent topical construction allows to disentangle the actual factors that a play role in the dynamically unfolding discourse. These are phenomena of attention-alignment at referents, their relevance, as well securing the right to talk and recipients' attention on the speaker. It is these factors that interlocutors rely on for navigating through unfolding multimodal interaction. Retrospective static effects of topicality or aboutness are irrelevant for the structuring and processing of information in natural dynamic interaction, and cannot constitute realistic factors for the theory aimed at analysing the structure of language and communication (Ozerov 2021a).

Abbreviations

1 = 1 st person	DEM1 = demonstrative, speaker's domain	NF = non-finite
2 = 2 nd person		NFUT = non-future
3 = 3 rd person	DEM2 = demonstrative, addressee's domain	NMLZ = nominalization
A = agent	DIR = direct relativisation	NOM = nominative
ABS = absolutive	DIRC = directive speech act	NPST = non-past
ACC = accusative	DIST = distal demonstrative	P = patient
ADD = additive	DM = discourse marker	PTCP = participle
AGR.SEEK = agreement seeking	EMPH = emphatic	PERM = permanent goal
AUG = augmentative	ERG = ergative	PERS = personal
BEN = benefactory	EXCL = exclamative	PFV = perfective
CIS = cislocative	GEN = genitive	PL = plural
CNTR = contrastive	IDEO = ideophone	PLT = politeness
COND = conditional	INCL = inclusive we	PN = proper name
COP = copula	INV = inverse	PROB = probable assumption
CT = contrastive topic	LINK = linker	PROG = progressive
DAT = dative	N = neuter	PST = past
	NEG = negation	SG = singular

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