PARENTHETICALS

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A parenthetical (P) is an expression of which it can be argued that, while in some sense 'hosted' by another expression (H), P makes no contribution to the structure of H.

So understood, the term covers a disparate and problematic range of phenomena. Espinal 1991 and Peterson 1998 offer comprehensive surveys. The problem is whether parentheticals should—and can—be treated in syntax or instead be regarded as a performance (utterance, discourse) phenomenon. The phenomenon exposes unease about whether or where to draw a competence-performance, syntax-discourse, distinction. This conceptual issue is bound up with analytical and technical issues: treating parentheticals syntactically calls for special levels of syntactic representation, special assumptions and/or categories. Reluctance to extend syntax in these ways has led many more recently to propose that the relation between P and H is not syntactic.

Parentheticals range from manifestly non-syntactic phenomena to what are often regarded as central syntactic constructions. What all Ps have in common, observationally, is that they are marked off from their hosts by some form of punctuation in writing or special intonation contour in speech. At the clearly non-syntactic extreme, consider the P (italicised) in

(1) The main point—*why not have a seat?*—is outlined in the middle paragraph. Here the **utterance** of P has been interpolated during the **utterance** of H. There is no syntactic—or even discourse—relation between the two. Although clearly a non-syntactic utterance phenomenon, (1) illustrates what some would argue is true of Ps in general. And even this extreme example exposes a tension in syntactic theory. On the linear axis, P is **contained** by H in (1) and, as the reader may check, the position of P within H is quite severely constrained. The relevance of this is that, in syntactic theory, linear order is generally held to be a function of hierarchical syntactic structure: order is determined by, and within, constituent domains (an assumption most explicitly developed in Kayne's 1994 Linear Correspondence Axiom). So, if one expression is contained by another expression on the linear axis, it should be contained by that

expression on the hierarchical axis. In other words, it should be a syntactic constituent of that other expression. Although this consideration would never be held to apply in (1)—where the linear axis simply is wholly determined by the temporal dimension of the utterance (the performance)—it provides the rationale for some analysts' assumption that some parenthetical phenomena must fall within the domain of syntax.

Vocatives fit the above definition.

(2) If Mary had tutored him, *John*, Bill would have passed.

Notice that it does not seem appropriate to say that John is among the people **mentioned** by someone uttering (2). By contrast, the referents of genuine constituents with syntactic functions in (2)—Mary, Bill—clearly are mentioned. Furthermore, as noted by McCawley 1988:763, the non-constituent status of vocatives is indicated by their not participating in VP ellipsis:

(3) A: Didn't you claim, John, that Bill would pass?

B: I didn't.

= I didn't claim that Bill would pass.

≠ *I didn't claim, John, that Bill would pass.

Consider now:

(4) a. Yes, I do.   (4) b. No, I didn't.

With these, it is not even clear which is host (H) and which parenthetical (P). *Yes* and *I do*, have no syntactic function with respect to each other. They merely reformulate and thus reduplicate each other. Burton-Roberts (1975, 1999) suggests that reduplicative reformulation is characteristic of appositive parentheticals:

(5) a. The whole family - *John, Mary and the kids* - just disappeared.

(5) b. They disposed of—*fired or killed*—everyone they thought obstructive.

(5) c. It was dawn, *about quarter to six*, when they arrived.

Analysing these Ps as reduced subordinate (relative) clauses might be thought to bring them within the syntax of (5a-c). However, that analysis is implausible here: none is appropriately introduced by *who is* or *which is*. Furthermore, appositive relatives arguably present us with the very problems posed by parentheticals in general (see below). Instead, appositives are generally held to be co-referential with, and have the same syntactic function as, the elements (underlined in (5a-c)) they are in apposition to. Burton-Roberts claims that, on those terms, apposition cannot be a syntactic

construction. If *the whole family* and *John, Mary and the kids* in (5a) are each subjects, it is difficult to see how *John, Mary and the kids* fits into the structure of (5a), given that a clause can only have one subject. The understood subjecthood of the apposed NPs cannot be captured by analysing them as co-ordinated, since only non-coreferential terms can be acceptably co-ordinated.

Peterson (1998:233) suggests that the phenomenon known as Right-Node-Raising (RNR)—which has always defied coherent syntactic analysis—in fact consists in parenthetical (and elliptical) interpolation:

(6) Amanda is—*and Joanna used to be*—my best friend.

Since Peterson's general claim is that parentheticals fall outside the 'boundaries of syntax', this would explain (but not solve) the analytical problems posed by the assumption that RNR is a syntactic construction. Note that the parenthetical here is not even a single complete expression. This applies to other parentheticals cited by Peterson:

(7) a. It will stop raining, *I expect*, before Sunday.

   b. The train arrived—*on time for a change*.

Haegemann (1988) contrasts the adjunct *while*-clauses in (7a-b):

(7) a. John$_{(i)}$ always works better while his$_{(i)}$/*John$_{(i)}$'s children are asleep.

   b. John$_{(i)}$ studies mathematics, while his$_{(i)}$/John$_{(i)}$'s wife studies physics.

Referential terms like *John* cannot be bound by (and hence co-indexed with) a c-commanding NP in an argument position. The *while*-clause in (7a) is clearly subordinate to (a constituent of) the first, so it is predictable that *his* cannot be replaced by *John's*. In (7b), by contrast, this is possible. Haegemann argues that the *while*-clause in (7b) is parenthetical and as such not a syntactic constituent of its 'host'. This is borne out by negative polarity data, assuming that negative polarity items such as *any* and *at all* must be c-commanded by negation:

(8) a. John doesn't work while (any of) his children are (at all) noisy.

   b. John doesn't work, while (*any of) his children are very(/*at all) busy.

Again, the impossibility of negative polarity items in the parenthetical *while*-clause in (8b) suggests that it is not syntactically contained by the other clause of (8b).

The parentheticals that have received most attention are appositive relative clauses (eg. Emonds 1979, McCawley 1982, Safir 1986, Fabb 1990, Espinal 1991,

Burton-Roberts 1998) and the above two arguments also apply to them, in contrast to restrictive relative clauses:

(9) a. John$_{(i)}$ gets on best with private firms who employ him$_{(i)}$/*John$_{(i)}$ often.

b. John$_{(i)}$ gets on best with private firms, who employ him$_{(i)}$/John$_{(i)}$ often.

(10) a. None of the authors who had any imagination remained.

b. None of the authors, who had (*any) imagination, remained.

Similarly, pronouns in restrictive—but not appositive—relative clauses can be bound by c-commanding quantifiers in main clauses:

(11) a. She gave every boy$_{(i)}$ who cleaned his$_{(i)}$ teeth well a new toothbrush.

b. *She gave every boy$_{(i)}$, who cleaned his$_{(i)}$ teeth well, a new toothbrush.

Again, the contrast in (11) suggests that the appositive clause lies outside the syntactic domain of the clause containing the quantifier.

Note also the following contrast in the acceptability of *therefore* in:

(11) a. John works best for private firms who (*therefore) employ him often.

b. John works best for private firms, who therefore employ him often.

Therefore establishes a discourse connection between independent clauses (Blakemore 1987) and thus cannot be used to connect two clauses one of which is a constituent of the other, as in (11a). Again, its acceptability in (11b) suggests that the appositive relative is independent (not a constituent) of its 'host' clause.

In addition, Fabb (1990:71) notes that constituents of fixed phrases such as *make headway* can be distributed on either side of the boundary of a restrictive relative clause but not of an appositive clause:

(12) a. The headway the students made last week was phenomenal.

b. *The headway, which the students made last week, was phenomenal.

Similarly with idioms:

(13) a. The cat that John let out of the bag today concerned your future.

b. *The cat, which John let out of the bag today, concerned your future.

The explanation seems to be that the integrity of fixed phrases and idioms is maintained only if their constituents 'co-occur'. This integrity is destroyed in (12b) and (13b), suggesting that—syntactically—they do not 'co-occur' in those examples.

Furthermore, the relative pronoun can take the form of a null operator in a restrictive relative but not in an appositive:

(14) a. The car I was saving up for has been sold to someone else.

b. *The car, I was saving up for, has been sold to some else.

If null operators must be 'strongly bound' by a c-commanding antecedent (Chomsky 1986: 84) then, as Fabb (1990:72) notes, the unacceptability of (14b) again suggests that its appositive clause is an independent clause, not c-commanded by *the car*.

The many further differences between restrictive and appositive relative clauses—including the fact that the (subordinating) complementiser *that* can introduce restrictives but not appositives—have been attributed to the parenthetical (and hence independent) character of the latter.

Several analysts have attempted to account for the relation between the parenthetical appositive clause and its host in syntactic terms, but (as mentioned) all such analyses involve special assumptions. In their different ways, they all constitute attempts to resolve the conflict between linearity and hierarchy mentioned at the outset, i.e. to reconcile the fact that the appositive is contained by the host on the linear axis with the fact that it is not contained by the host on the hierarchical axis. Notable is Emonds (1979), which treats both H and P as constituents of a special higher expression, E, thereby treating the parenthetical appositive as a syntactic constituent, but not of the host clause itself. Safir (1986) proposed that the relation between host clause and appositive should be—and can only be—captured at a special level of Logical Form ("LF-prime"). McCawley (1982) resolves the conflict between linearity and hierarchy by allowing for movement rules that don't alter constituency. Hierarchically, the appositive and its host are, independently of each other, dominated by a root S, and the appositive remains dominated by that root S even when moved to a linear position within the host. The host clause is thereby made discontinuous. The movement results in a tree with crossing branches; this is generally looked on with suspicion, see e.g. Espinal 1991. Espinal's own proposal involves an "innovation in phrase structure theory", whereby a structure can be a "constituent" of another without being dominated by any node in the latter. However, it is not clear that this innovation is necessary if, as Espinal suggests, the relevant phenomena (which she describes as "disjunct constituents") are "best analysed at a post-syntactic level of representation", and interpreted only "at the moment of utterance processing".

Whatever the syntactic status of parentheticals, appeal to semantics and/or pragmatics might help to explain their special features. Arnold (2004) suggested that, while appositive relatives are syntactically subordinate, they are independent semantically (and pragmatically?). See also Blakemore (to appear), Potts (2002) on *as*-parentheticals and, more generally, Potts (2005) for an account of parentheticals in terms of conventional implicature."

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