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Parenthesis: Fundamental features, meanings, discourse functions and ellipsis

Abstract: The contribution focuses on spoken language and, initially, reviews fundamental features of parenthesis. Secondly, it deals with the meanings and discourse functions of parenthetical sequences. Thirdly, it analyses parenthesis in the light of current characterisations of ellipsis. Most linguists agree that parenthesis is a communicative strategy whose motivation is connected with an additional piece of information. The introduction of an additional piece of information causes a disruption. By providing information in a position maximally convenient for the speaker but at the cost of processability for the hearer, parenthesis violates the maxim of manner and hence the cooperative principle. A lot of different meanings and discourse functions of parenthetical sequences have been hypothesised. The contribution proposes a distinction between, on the one hand, parentheticals expressing a proposition and a speech act that are separate and outside of the host's speech act and, on the other hand, parentheticals expressing a proposition that acts on the host's proposition and within the host's speech act. The analysis of parenthetical incompleteness phenomena shows that there are at least three types of parenthetical ellipsis, one of which challenges the common understanding of ellipsis.

Keywords: communicative strategy, constructional pattern, cooperative principle, discourse marker, ellipsis, hypotaxis, parataxis, parenthesis, parenthetical sequence

1 Introduction

Recently, parenthesis and especially parenthetical verbs have seen a considerable surge of interest, and a number of specific volumes have been published on the subject (see Dehé and Kavalova 2007a; Schneider 2007a; Corminboeuf, Heyna and Avanzi 2010; Glikman and Avanzi 2012). Although there is a minimal common understanding of parenthesis, and most linguists would agree with descriptions such as “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

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the structure of H” (Burton-Roberts 2006: 179) or “Parentheticals are expressions of varying length, complexity, function and syntactic category, which are interpolated into the current string of the utterance” (Dehé 2009: 307), parenthesis remains a problematic notion (see Dehé and Kavalova 2007b: 1–4; Kaltenböck 2007: 25–27; Schneider 2007a: 19–35).

The objectives of the present contribution are threefold. First of all, it reviews fundamental features of parenthesis and delimits it from related phenomena. Secondly, it discusses its meanings and discourse functions. Thirdly, it contrasts parenthesis with ellipsis. The contribution is structured as follows: Sections 2 and 3 discuss fundamental features of parenthesis and the delimitation from related phenomena, section 4 deals with the meanings and discourse functions of parenthetical sequences, section 5 analyses parenthetical sequences in the light of current characterisations of ellipsis and the last section contains a short conclusion.

Although parenthesis also occurs in written language, the present contribution focuses on spoken language. The products of spoken language behaviour are utterances. In most utterances, constructional patterns or constructions such as phrases, clauses or sentences can be identified. In the present contribution, the primary analytic unit will be the utterance, which will occasionally be assigned to one or more constructional patterns.

When I use the word *parenthesis* I refer to a particular type of language behaviour or to a communicative strategy, whereas with *parenthetical sequence* or briefly *parenthetical* I refer to the concrete language item produced, in which a constructional pattern may be identified.

2 Fundamental features of parenthesis

In the great majority of cases, parentheticals do not result from performance failures or slips of the tongue. They might not constitute a communicative strategy planned long ahead, but when performed they certainly are intentional. In the classical Greek and Latin literary and non-literary language, parenthesis represented a common stylistic technique (see Hofmann 1926: 114–119; Schwyzler 1939: 14–19). Parenthesis was frequently employed in Greek and Latin as a figure of thought and has thus been thoroughly described in the works of classical rhetoric (see Lausberg 1960: 427f.).

Most people would agree that parenthesis is a communicative strategy whose motivation is connected with an additional piece of information¹. Basically, the speaker says something and, while doing so, adds a different piece of information. By *saying* I actually mean *uttering*, that is, I am not referring to things merely implied by the speaker's utterance. I will characterise this additional piece of information in more detail in section 4. Ultimately, parenthesis represents a solution to or, more precisely, a compromise concerning a fundamental limitation imposed on human language by the way it is commonly transmitted: With some noteworthy exceptions, linguistic items cannot occur simultaneously. One of the design features of language is to be constrained to linearity or sequentiality. Parenthesis provides a way to partially overcome this limitation. It is an imperfect solution, especially in terms of the cooperative principle: Though parenthesis may provide a piece of information at the point maximally convenient for the speaker, it violates the maxim of manner. Due to our experience with human language in general and our native language in particular, we all have internalised typical prosodic, syntactic and semantic patterns. We are, for example, accustomed to a set of intonational patterns and to particular word order patterns. In the following French example, the interviewer asks for a clarification and interrupts her question with a side note:

- (1a) French (*Corpus de référence du français parlé*, text BOR-PRI003)
 L2 est-ce que c'est ça correspond je me trompe peut-être à D.J.
 is.it that it.is this corresponds I me.ACC mislead maybe to D.J.
 ou D.J. [...]
 or D.J.
 'Does this correspond *maybe I am wrong* to D.J. or D.J.?'

Because of her experience with French, the hearer, after hearing *est-ce que c'est ça correspond*, anticipates a continuation of the utterance with *à* and so forth, but not with *peut-être*. Since the parenthesis contradicts some or all of our internalised patterns it constitutes an unforeseen disruption. In short, parenthesis, on the one hand, enables the speaker to overstep the confines of linearity; on the other hand, it makes processing more cumbersome for the hearer. Although never totally predictable, the disruption might be more or less probable in certain positions of the utterance, that is, there might be *parenthesis-relevance places*.

¹ A parenthetical adds "another conceptual 'dimension' by turning a one-venue utterance into a two-venue utterance" (Kaltenböck, Heine and Kuteva 2011: 853).

The thematic deviation entails, of course, some kind of semantic discontinuity. In fact, if the meaning of the parenthetical sequence were expressible within the semantic structure of the host utterance, there would not be any need for an interpolated sequence. Semantic discontinuity, at least in the eyes of the speaker, is the *raison d'être* of parenthesis. A consequence of the thematic deviation is that parenthetical sequences are produced under time pressure and with limited memory and articulatory resources, i.e., the space they can occupy is restricted. After all, the interlocutor is waiting for the main or initial speech act to be resumed. This simple fact may partly explain the tendency of parenthetical sequences to be shorter than their hosts and to admit incompleteness phenomena.

The speaker has to cope with two pieces of information, one of which, at least initially, is deemed more relevant or more significant than the other one. This corresponds to the expectation of the interlocutor. Hence, we can distinguish between a main piece of information and an additional one. Usually, the speaker starts with a piece of information and later comes up with a second one (see Hoffmann 1998: 314). Therefore, we could also speak of an initial piece of information and a subsequent one. This does not mean that the initial piece of information, from a general viewpoint, has a greater relevance or significance than the other one. It might even be the case that the speaker herself, during or after the speech act, changes opinion or perspective. But, due to the limitation of language mentioned previously, at the start of the utterance, the speaker has to choose, which is why at this stage there is only one piece of information present or active.

Although many utterances of verbal exchanges are no full-fledged sentences, most people would agree that parenthesis is a strategy concerning mainly the utterance level. It is, so to speak, a solution to the problem posed by two different pieces of information within a single utterance. Note, however, that the same phenomenon can be observed on the level of verbal exchange, as an interruption in cohesion and thematic coherence. In everyday speech, we would call this digression, excursus or even divagation. As in the case of parenthesis, a digression can be marked in some way, e.g., by formulaic expressions such as Engl. *by the way* or Fr. *à propos*. And as is the case with parenthesis, speaker and hearer expect from a digression to end as soon as possible so that the part of the utterance containing the main information can be resumed. We can draw a parallel with foot notes in a text: They are writer-friendly but reader-unfriendly.

The disruption, which I consider to be a fundamental feature of parenthesis, can be created by various linguistic means. Typically, a prosodic disruption goes along with a syntactic disruption, which is why most parenthetical sequences are prosodically and syntactically unintegrated. It is possible, however, to achieve a disruption only by prosodic means: an utterance-medial adverb, for instance, can be detached from the host merely by a parenthetical intonation (see, e.g.,

Rossi 1999: 97). Likewise, it is possible to produce a syntactic disruption without necessarily resorting to prosody. Dehé (2007: 270–274) explicitly mentions prosodically integrated parentheticals in English and, as shown by Gachet and Avanzi (2010) and Avanzi (2012a), French parentheticals are not always prosodically detached from the rest of the utterance. Although several parentheticals do not have an overt link to their host, absence of linking is not an essential requisite: Non-restrictive or appositive relative clauses, *and*-parentheticals (see Kavalova 2007) and *as*-parentheticals (see Potts 2002) contain overt links. Summing up, an item may be parenthetical on prosodic grounds, on syntactic grounds or both.

Parenthetical sequences may display the constructional pattern of sentences, but we know, especially from phonological approaches, that parentheticals may display almost any constructional pattern (see Cruttenden 1997: 71; Morel and Danon-Boileau 1998: 60; Simon 2004: 189). Similarly, Espinal (1991: 727ff.) affirms that parentheticals are not characterised by a particular construction; they may be sentences, clauses, phrases or single words (see also Kaltenböck 2007: 29–31).

What is the speaker's motivation for interrupting an utterance with an additional utterance that demands more processing effort from the addressee? Why does the speaker not choose to have two separate utterances? Morel and Danon-Boileau (1998: 60–62) argue that parenthesis is not a convenient device for the insertion of additional details or for the recovery of constituents which have not been placed in the right position. That is, parenthesis is not due to formulation efforts or performance failures. Parenthesis is a rather specialised device that enables speakers to comment on their discourse or to express their views and allows them to put forward some information or an argument without directly submitting it to the hearer's judgement. We find this idea also in Simon (2004: 232) and Potts (2005: 6f.). That is, the reason why certain meanings are expressed by parenthesis is (consciously or unconsciously) strategic. Parenthesis enables the speaker to put an item outside the ongoing speech act and, thus, to distance it from the focus of attention of the addressee.

According to Kavalova (2007: 167, 168), however, parenthesis is a convenient device for the introduction of additional information. The speaker evaluates the hearer's contextual knowledge and processing abilities and chooses her communicative style accordingly. She aims at presenting the utterance in such a way that references can be established as early as possible, thus enabling the hearer to construct anticipatory hypotheses about the overall meaning of the utterance. By inserting additional information exactly at the point in the utterance where it is most useful, the speaker achieves optimal relevance at a minimal cost of processing. This means that the semantic contribution of parentheticals offsets the increased processing costs they entail. In the terms of the cooperative principle, we could say that parentheticals satisfy the maxim of relevance by providing

information in the maximally relevant place, but violate the maxim of manner by inserting information in an unanticipated place.

3 Delimitation from related phenomena

In example (1a), the parenthetical utterance *je me trompe peut-être*, a fully developed sentence from a structural viewpoint, is semantically, syntactically and maybe also prosodically detached from the host. We are faced with two separate utterances and speech acts. However, the parenthetical and the host are not unrelated. The sequence *je me trompe peut-être* provides additional information for the main utterance and contributes to its interpretation. So it entertains a loose semantic relation with the host, which is why the host and the parenthetical could also be associated paratactically:

- (1b) Est-ce que c'est ça correspond à D.J. ou D.J.? Je me trompe
 is.it that it.is this corresponds to D.J. or D.J.? I me.ACC mislead
 peut-être.
 maybe
 'Does this correspond to D.J. or D.J.? Maybe I am wrong.'

Clearly, the host and the parenthetical pertain to the same turn and to the same verbal exchange. The interpolated utterance plays a role in the host utterance.

But what should we say about the following two examples, the first one taken from Burton-Roberts (2006: 180) and the second one from the British part of the *International corpus of English*?

- (2) English (invented example)
 The main point – *why not have a seat?* – is outlined in the middle paragraph.
- (3) English (*International corpus of English*, British subcorpus, text s2a-047, # 119)
 And what we found <,> was uhm *could you turn the slide projector off please*
 uhm very substantial mortality differences within this population

The speakers, talking to their respective audiences, interrupt their presentation and address specific persons asking them to take a seat or to turn the slide projector off. The interrupting utterances are addressed to interlocutors that are distinct

from the initial ones. In (2) and (3), differently from example (1a), there is no semantic relation at all between the host and the interpolated utterance. There is nothing else than spatial and temporal contiguity and the general setting that hold together the host and the interpolated utterance. Even if the host and the interrupting utterance are part of the same turn they are not part of the same verbal exchange. We are confronted with a speech situation in which by coincidence two exchanges are intertwined. If we want to maintain the idea that parenthesis is a communicative strategy in which two utterances pertaining to the same turn and the same exchange are intertwined we have to exclude interpolated utterances due to the accidental interruption of an utterance in order to engage in another exchange, e.g., greeting a friend walking on the other side of the street².

As I will suggest in the next section, at least those parentheticals that I provisionally call *side notes* are speech acts. The speech-act status and the mutual position of the utterances allow us to distinguish between three constructions: paratactic construction, parenthetical construction and hypotactic construction. The scheme in (4) provides an overview. On the left side, we find the concrete pieces of spoken language (CS = clausal sequence, PS = parenthetical sequence, U = utterance) and their meaning types (P = proposition, SA = speech act), on the right side we find the associated constructions:

(4) Spoken language	Constructions
Verbal exchange	Text
↕	↕
(——)U SA (——)U SA	Paratactic construction
↕	↕
(——(——)PS SA——)U SA	Parenthetical construction
↕	↕
(——(——)CS P——)U SA	Hypotactic construction
↕	↕
(——)U SA	Simple sentence

Different and more elaborate schemes of sentence and/or clause linking have been proposed. Some are dedicated to sentence and/or clause combining in general, but do not include parenthesis (see Lehmann 1988: 189; Matthiessen 2002: 273), some focus on hypotaxis (see Bossong 1979: 40) and therefore exclude parenthe-

² I owe the initial idea for this distinction to my colleague Utz Maas.

sis, some focus only on parenthesis (see Hoffmann 1998: 318). None of them deals specifically with spoken language.

At the upper end of the scheme, we find the verbal exchange or the text, where two utterances and two speech acts are related merely by semantic cohesion. In a paratactic construction, the two utterances and speech acts are still independent from another, but one of them may be subject to ellipsis (see Matthiessen 2002: 273). In a parenthetical construction, we have a parenthetical sequence within an utterance: both of them are speech acts. In a hypotactic construction, a clausal sequence occurs within an utterance. The clausal sequence is merely a proposition, not a speech act. The difference between paratactic constructions and parenthetical constructions mainly lies in the mutual position of the involved sequences, as already noted by Bloomfield (1935: 186), whereas the difference between parenthetical constructions and hypotactic constructions lies in the illocutionary status of the involved sequences.

Parenthesis provides a way to partially overcome the limitation of linearity and presupposes, as outlined earlier, a disruption contradicting the hearer's anticipations. Up to now, our general assumption was that parenthesis constitutes the interruption of an ongoing utterance. In other words, the implicit idea was that a first disruption takes place at the point of transition from the host to the parenthetical and another one when the host is resumed. However, many authors have suggested that the notion of parenthesis be extended to sequences at the margin of the host utterance and that a single disruption, either between host and parenthetical or between parenthetical and host, be sufficient for parenthesis (see Kaltenböck 2010: 238; Avanzi 2012b: 181-214). Leaving aside questions of scope, it is true that the mitigation functions of the utterance-medial *credo* 'I believe' and the utterance-final *credo* in the following Italian examples are basically the same:

- (5a) Italian (Corpus of the *Lessico di frequenza dell'italiano parlato*, text MC9)
 A: senti ti devo lasciare perché ho un collegamento
 listen you.ACC.SG must leave because have a connection
 credo da Roma [...] *credo*
 believe from Rome
 'Listen, I must leave you because I have a connection *I believe* from Rome'
- (6) Italian (Corpus of the *Lessico di frequenza dell'italiano parlato*, text NB49)
 B: [...] noi partiamo intorno alle cinque *credo*
 we leave around at.the five believe
 'We leave at around five o'clock *I believe*'

So, there is some ground for assuming the existence of utterance-final and utterance-initial parentheticals. However, by accepting these sequences as parentheticals, we run into trouble.

To start with, how can we accommodate parentheticals at the margin of the host and the idea of the violation of the cooperative principle? It is true that utterance-final parentheticals involve the unforeseen continuation of an already completed host utterance. So, in a certain sense, they contradict the prosodic and syntactic anticipations of the interlocutor, even if they do not interrupt the host. But utterance-initial sequences, like non-finite clauses similar to the one in the following French example, have also been associated with parenthesis (see Kaltenböck 2007: 30):

- (7) French (*Corpus de référence du français parlé*, text QUI-PRI001)
- L1 *en parlant du Beaujolais* euh qu'est-ce qu'ils aiment les
 in speaking of.the Beaujolais uhm what.is.it that.they like the
 gens dans la fête du Beaujolais
 people in the celebration of.the Beaujolais
 'Speaking about the Beaujolais what do the people like about the Beau-
 jolais celebration?'

On the face of it, utterance-initial parentheticals do correspond even less to the outline of parenthesis presented in section 2, since they involve neither an interruption nor an unforeseen continuation of the host. Actually, the host does not at all contradict the anticipations of the hearer. The unforeseen disruption and violation of the cooperative principle concerns the parenthetical sequence. In (7), at the point of transition to the host, there is a patent syntactic severance after the word *Beaujolais*. Due to the presence of the hesitation marker *euh*, we can suppose that there is also a prosodic interruption.

The second problem is that, in both cases described above, the difference between parenthesis and parataxis becomes very subtle and, in some instances, even impossible to make. The only clues we have at our disposal for a distinction are prosodic and communicative incompleteness. Incomplete sequences at the margin of an utterance are parentheticals, complete and autonomous ones must be paratactic utterances. Consequently, we must consider the French exclamation *merde* 'shit' in the following example to be an instance of parataxis, rather than parenthesis³:

³ See also the discussion in Ziv (1985: 190).

- (8) French (*C-Oral-Rom Corpus*, text FR.FFAMDLO3)

*SYL: *merde* /\$ <on est tombé dans le truc> // \$
 shit one is fallen into the trap
 ‘Shit I fell into the trap’

Being a complete one-word exclamation, *merde* ‘shit’ must be regarded as a separate utterance. Incidentally, prosodic and communicative completeness are also the only clues enabling us to distinguish host and parenthetical in utterances like (7).

Thirdly, even linguists endorsing the notion of utterance-initial parentheticals are wary of accepting utterance-initial parentheticals with transitive verbs, as in the following French example:

- (9) French (*Corpus Beeching*, text 23)

B: Ah *je crois* à la longue échéance il faut faire attention.
 I believe in the long period it is necessary make attention
 ‘I believe in the long run you have to take care’

One of the reasons for this reluctance is syntax. In SVO languages, the noun phrase immediately to the right of a transitive verb is the object governed by it. Thus, due to word order patterns, initial *je crois* ‘I believe’ in (9) is said to be in a governing position, automatically excluding its parenthetical status. The problem posed by examples as (9) is difficult if not impossible to resolve. If we want to apply the criterion of prosodic and syntactic anticipations, we can say that word order is an aspect of the syntactic anticipations of the hearer. The question whether parenthetical or not can then be reformulated into the questions of whether, according to the internalised syntactic patterns of the average French hearer, *je crois* is complete or incomplete and whether a complement clause without complementiser is appropriate. There are three possible solutions to the problem. If *je crois* is incomplete and a complement clause without complementiser is acceptable, *je crois* is a governing transitive verb. If *je crois* is incomplete and a complement clause without complementiser contradicts the internalised patterns of the hearer, utterance-initial French *je crois* must be a parenthetical. Finally, if *je crois* is complete, then *je crois* must be an independent paratactic utterance followed by another independent utterance. See Gachet (this volume) for more discussion.

As I have said before, in many contexts the discourse function of an initial transitive verb does not change with respect to a medial or final one (see Kaltenböck 2010). In other words, in (9) the speaker starts with *je crois*, but this is not her main communicative intention, the speaker does not want to talk about her beliefs. The default case is that the speaker establishes a sort of epistemic frame

within which her statement is to be evaluated. As in (7), the initial piece of information is not the main one.

As is well-known, the syntactic and semantic status of utterance-initial epistemic complement-taking predicates is the subject of a heated debate. Thompson and Mulac (1991a, 1991b) and even more radically Thompson (2002) defend the idea that the complement clause is central and that the utterance-initial predicate is a mere formulaic stance marker. They do not, though, detail whether these predicates are paratactic sequences or parentheticals. Newmeyer (2010) supports the view that the finite clausal complement (with or without complementiser) is subordinate to the complement-taking predicate. Boye and Harder (2007) and Schneider (2007: 191–197) underline that the status of the epistemic predicate is highly context-dependent, which is to say that the issue can only be resolved on a case-by-case basis. This is confirmed by Dehé and Wichmann's (2010) prosodic study on utterance-initial *I think (that)* and *I believe (that)*⁴.

4 Meanings and discourse functions

It seems that there is no theoretical limit regarding the contents of a parenthetical sequence. In fact, a lot of different meanings and different functions have been hypothesised (see Schneider 2007a, 2007b; Dehé 2009; Kaltenböck, Heine and Kuteva 2011: 864; Schneider 2011: 239–244): side notes that remediate inferences (see Berrendonner 2010: 11–14), side notes that inhibit reactions by the addressee (see Berrendonner 2010: 14–20), specification, exemplification, clarification, characterisation or delimitation of a referential unit introduced earlier (see Mazeland 2007), information structuring (see Taglicht 1984: 22–25; Brandt 1996; Ziv 2002; Kaltenböck 2010: 251), mitigation of speaker commitment (see Schneider 2007a), intensification or boosting of speaker commitment (see Kaltenböck 2010: 254–257), speech reporting (see Schneider 2007a: 132–134), evidential information (see Ifantidou 2001; Schneider 2007a: 125–130), illocutionary force indicating (see Schneider 2007a: 115–121; Schneider 2010), self-initiated repair (see Schneider 2007a: 113f.; Berrendonner 2010: 8–11; Schneider 2011: 243), resumption of a word or phrase used in a preceding utterance (see Schneider 2011: 244), focusing (see Schneider 2007a: 116–118), hesitation (see Schneider 2007a: 111, 118, 125), and the conative or phatic function (see Schneider 2007a: 109–111).

⁴ See also Diessel and Tomasello (2001) and Brandt, Lieven and Tomasello (2010) on the acquisition of English and German complement clauses.

Within this variety, there seems to be a divide, or possibly a continuum, between, on the one hand, meanings by which a speech act with its proposition is added to the host's speech act and proposition and, on the other hand, discourse functions by which a proposition acts on the host's proposition within a single ongoing speech act. In other words, I want to suggest that, e.g., the side note *Je me trompe peut-être* 'Maybe I am wrong' in (1a) introduces a new proposition within a new speech act, whereas, e.g., *credo* 'I believe' in (5a) is a functor or operator having some aspect of the speech act within its scope. The time-honoured distinction in French grammar and linguistics between *incidentes* and *incises* (see, e.g., Cornulier 1978) partly has its roots in the distinction between meanings and discourse functions. Interestingly, the discourse functions of parentheticals have attracted considerably more interest than their meanings. Kaltenböck, Heine and Kuteva (2011: 883) affirm that, since the second plane can be inserted spontaneously, it lends itself particularly well to situation-specific, meta-communicative information.

Discourse function is a very general concept. For the sake of the present contribution, I discuss only some exemplary functions and, therefore, I focus on two aspects of the speech act: the relation between the hearer and the utterance and the relation between the speaker and the utterance. In pragmatic literature, the parenthetical sequences concerning these two aspects are usually described as modal particles, pragmatic markers or discourse markers (see Brinton 1996; Aijmer 1997; Company Company 2006; Van Bogaert 2011).

Hearer-centred parentheticals concern the effectiveness of the utterance transmission, the receipt of the utterance, the comprehension of its contents, the hearer's knowledge about its contents and other information concerning the relation between the addressee and the utterance. Most, if not all of these aspects are covered by the notion of *phatics*. In Jakobson's terms (1981 [1960]: 24), phatic signals serve "to establish, to prolong, or to discontinue communication, to check whether the channel works [...], to attract the attention of the interlocutor or to confirm his continued attention". Hearer-centred parentheticals are directed towards the addressee and typically contain second person verbs. In the following examples from corpora of spoken language, we have a Spanish *sabes* 'you know', an Italian *senti* 'you listen' and a French *tu vois* 'you see':

- (10a) Spanish (*Corpus oral de referencia del español contemporáneo*, text CCON021B)
 <H1> [...] Y había cazuelas, ¿sabes? antes de estas de barro [...] and had saucepans know before of these of clay
 'And there were saucepans *you know* before these made of clay'

- (11) Italian (Corpus of the *Lessico di frequenza dell'italiano parlato*, text FB5)
 B: [...] non riesco a collaborare senti con gli insegnanti [...]
 not am.able to collaborate listen with the teachers
 'I am not able to collaborate *listen* with the teachers'
- (12a) French (*Corpus de référence du français parlé*, text PSO-PRO001)
 L1 [...] ils sont plus ou moins tu vois débiles [...]
 they are more or less you see weak
 'They are more or less *you see* weak'

They serve to assure that the addressee receives and understands the message, to check her knowledge and to include her as much as possible in the verbal interaction.

Another discourse function concerns the relation between speaker and utterance. I will mention just two aspects of this relation. The scope of speaker commitment parentheticals, as Italian *credo* 'I believe' in (5a), is the responsibility or liability inherent in the utterance's speech act. The scope of the Spanish parenthetical *digamos* 'let's say' in the following example is the wording of the proposition (the locution or, in Hare's 1970 terms, the *phrastic*):

- (13) Spanish (*El habla urbana de Sevilla*, nivel culto, text C3H1.288)
 ¿Encuentras mucha inquietud, *digamos*, de tipo social, de tipo
 find much unrest say.IMP.1PL of type social of type
 humano?
 human
 'Do you find much unrest *let's say* in social matters, in human matters?'

Regarding the speech-act character of parentheticals, I suggest that side notes and similar parentheticals are autonomous speech acts (see Kügelgen 2003: 213). Döring (this volume) mentions the possibility for sentence adverbs and discourse particles to appear in parentheticals, which strongly suggests the presence of an illocution. The parenthetical sequence in (1a) contains the sentence adverb *peut-être* 'maybe'. Likewise, the following French parenthetical with *comme* 'as' contains the sentence adverb *sans doute* 'without doubt, doubtlessly':

- (14a) French (*Corpus de référence du français parlé*, text QUI-PRI002)
 L1: [...] on (n')avait pas le droit de - *comme ailleurs sans doute*
 one (not).had not the right of as elsewhere without doubt
en France euh d'accepter des bonbons des Allemands [...]
 in France uhm to.accept of.the candies from.the Germans

‘People didn’t have the right to *as doubtlessly elsewhere in France* to accept candies from Germans’

Non-restrictive or appositive relative clauses are usually interpreted as parentheticals (see Kaltenböck 2007: 29; Delais-Roussarie 2010: 38). The speech-act character of non-restrictive relatives has been underlined repeatedly (see Thorne 1972: 552f.; Cornilescu 1996: 215; Holler 2005: 59f.; Truckenbrodt, this volume). As observed by Holler (2005: 59), the insertion of German *vermutlich* ‘probably, presumably’ is unacceptable in restrictive relative clauses, but perfectly acceptable in non-restrictive relative clauses:

(15a) German (invented example)

*Derjenige Schüler, der *vermutlich* wieder verschlafen hat, kommt
that student who probably again overslept has comes
bestimmt in wenigen Minuten.
certainly in few minutes
‘That student who probably has overslept again will certainly arrive in a
few minutes.’

(15b) Klaus, der *vermutlich* wieder verschlafen hat, kommt bestimmt in
Klaus who probably again overslept has comes certainly in
wenigen Minuten.
few minutes
‘Klaus who probably has overslept again will certainly arrive in a few minutes.’

However, the hearer and speaker-centred parentheticals discussed above are more appropriately described as functors or operators within an ongoing speech act and not as separate speech acts. They are never cited as examples to support claims about the speech-act character of parentheticals (see, e.g., Kügelgen 2003: 213). In fact, it is difficult to find convincing arguments in favour of the speech-act character of these parentheticals, although they contain a predicate. In current pragmatic theory, the function of a discourse marker is incompatible with that of an autonomous speech act. In the case of a speaker-centred expression such as *credo* ‘I believe’ in (5a), already scholars such as Urmson (1952) and Benveniste (1966 [1958]) underlined that an utterance comprising such a parenthetical expresses a single speech act to which the parenthetical is merely attached. In (5a), for instance, the speaker states *Ho un collegamento da Roma* ‘I have a connection from Rome’ and modifies or mitigates her statement, viz., a part of the statement, with the parenthetical *credo* ‘I believe’. This is the reason why a

parenthetical such as *credo* ‘I believe’ is resistant to questioning and negation (see, e.g., Hooper 1975; Boye and Harder 2007: 578–580; Schneider 2007a: 44ff., 145–150). Reis (1995: 70) considers German parentheticals of a similar type to be prosodically integrated and argues against their speech-act character. The hearer and speaker-centred parentheticals discussed above are high-frequency expressions undergoing phonetic and syntactic reduction, semantic bleaching and other grammaticalisation (or pragmaticalisation) processes typical of discourse markers (see Brinton 1996; Aijmer 1997; Company Company 2006; Van Bogaert 2011). Other well-known examples of phonetic reduction are *ya know* or *y’know* in English, *tsé* ‘you know’ in Canadian French and *weisch* ‘you know’ in Southern German.

It is true that the hearer-centred expression in (10a) apparently differs in sentence type from the host, but this impression is induced by the transcription standard of this particular Spanish corpus. In oral speech, due to phonetic reduction, the hearer and speaker-centred parentheticals discussed above usually are not intonationally characterised as autonomous questions, requests or statements. Hence, it is unclear to which illocution they should correspond. Although in some cases a sentence adverb can be added, the results are not the same as in (1a), (14a) and (15b). For instance, the Italian sentence adverb *forse* ‘maybe’ is possible after the parenthetical in (5a):

- (5b) Ti devo lasciare perché ho un collegamento *credo forse*
 you.ACC.SG must leave because have a connection believe maybe
 da Roma
 from Rome
 ‘Listen, I must leave you because I have a connection *I believe maybe* from Rome’

In this case, however, the sentence adverb behaves like the parenthetical, sharing the same intonation and having the same part of the host in its scope. In (12a), to give a French example, the insertion of the sentence adverb *peut-être* ‘maybe’ alters and upgrades the illocutionary status of the parenthetical:

- (12b) Ils sont plus ou moins *peut-être tu le vois* débiles.
 they are more or less maybe you it see weak
 ‘They are more or less *maybe you see it* weak’

Its intonation being characteristic of an autonomous utterance, it is not phonetically reduced. The need for a clitic object pronoun shows that there is no syntactic reduction. In other words, *peut-être tu le vois* is not a discourse marker anymore.

If the assumption regarding the absence of an illocution in the hearer and speaker-centred parentheticals discussed above is correct, in the scheme (4) in section 3, these particular parentheticals must be accommodated within the hypotactic construction. Just like clausal sequences, these parenthetical sequences are propositions without being speech acts.

5 Ellipsis

Besides the obvious differences, parenthesis and ellipsis share some aspects. In the first place, ellipsis, like parenthesis, is not a performance failure but an intentional communicative strategy. It also was a common stylistic technique in the classical Greek and Latin literary and non-literary language (see Hofmann 1926: 46–52, 167–172) and it has been described in the works of classical rhetoric (see Lausberg 1960: 269, 346f.). Secondly, as we will see below, the concept of ellipsis is as controversial as parenthesis. The lack of clarity has already been emphasised by Bühler (1934: 155), who remarked that ellipsis is a long-standing crux for language theorists.

Interestingly, whereas both parenthesis and ellipsis have received considerable attention, the relation between the two has been evidenced only lately (e.g., by Potts 2002; Kaltenböck, Heine and Kuteva 2011: 871f–874). Klein (1993) and Winkler (2006) do not mention parenthesis in connection with ellipsis.

We must separate plain or straightforward incompleteness from ellipsis. In the case of incompleteness, a piece of information is missing and cannot readily be reconstructed by the addressee. It is a performance phenomenon typical of verbal interaction which in exceptional circumstances can be employed intentionally as a rhetoric device.

As I explained in the introduction, in many utterances, constructional patterns or constructions such as phrases, clauses or sentences can be observed. However, especially in spoken language, there are numerous utterances that do not completely adhere to these patterns, in which case they are incomplete or elliptical. Every utterance is as explicit as required by the context of the verbal interaction. Information that is clear from the linguistic and extralinguistic context does not need to be expressed. This principle of language economy is especially active in spoken language. The expression of information obvious from the context would make an utterance redundant and inappropriate. Hence, from the point of view of verbal interaction, an utterance is complete as long as the addressee's comprehension is guaranteed.

In contemporary linguistics, ellipsis has been most extensively described from the perspective of formal syntax (e.g. by Johnson 2001; Merchant 2001; Lobeck 2006; Winkler 2006; Aelbrecht 2010). There, ellipsis is usually defined quite narrowly. The context admitted for the interpretation of the silent string is constituted by the same sentence or the sentences in the surroundings of the elliptical sequence. In other words, there has to be a linguistic antecedent⁵. For instance, Aelbrecht (2010: 11) states that “the ellipsis site has to be recoverable by means of a salient linguistic antecedent”. This is one of the reasons why ellipsis is frequently discussed in connection with structures, e.g., coordinated or similar structures, in which an antecedent can be identified unambiguously. In Winkler’s (2006: 109) overview of examples with *gapping*, *verb phrase ellipsis*, *pseudogapping*, *stripping*, *sluicing* and *noun phrase ellipsis*, the unexpressed strings can be recovered from the preceding clauses, mostly with their precise wording.

Klein (1993: 766–768) adopts a different position on explicitness and ellipsis. He distinguishes between ellipsis under partial contextual control and ellipsis under full contextual control⁶, the latter only applying to cases in which the context leaves no interpretative choice. For instance, the ellipses in adjacency pairs, e.g., in question-answer-pairs, are fully controlled by the context. To illustrate this distinction, he uses an example from Bühler (1934: 155–157). If a client in a Viennese café expresses an order like (16a), her utterance is incomplete with respect to the constructional patterns but otherwise unproblematic. The waiter will understand and complement the unexpressed elements, as in (16b) or (16c):

(16a) German (invented example)

__ einen schwarzen __
 a.ACC black.ACC
 ‘__ a black __’

(16b) *Bringen Sie mir einen schwarzen Kaffee.*

bring you me a.ACC black.ACC coffee
 ‘Bring me a black coffee’

(16c) *Ich möchte einen schwarzen Kaffee.*

I would.like a.ACC black.ACC coffee
 ‘I would like a black coffee’

⁵ Merchant (2004), however, takes into account non-linguistic antecedents.

⁶ Klein (1993: 766–768) employs the terms “kontextabhängig” ‘context-dependent’ and “kontext-kontrolliert” ‘context-controlled’.

The selection of the verb has an aspect which is under full contextual control and another one which is under partial contextual control. Due to the accusative form of *einen schwarzen*, the verb type, i.e., a verb requiring a direct object, is fully controlled. Hence, the morphosyntactic context permits no alternatives. On the other hand, the lexical realisation of the verb, be it *bringen* ‘bring’, *mögen* ‘like’ or some other verb, and also its form, whether imperative or indicative, are under partial contextual control.

Confronting the parenthetical sequences reviewed in the present contribution with the characterisations of ellipsis above, we can identify four different behaviours. To start with, some parenthetical sequences do not display any incompleteness at all with respect to constructional patterns. The side note in (1a) is a complete sentence, the non-restrictive relative clause in (15b) is a complete dependent clause.

Secondly, the hearer and speaker-centred parentheticals in (5a) and in (10)–(13) are incomplete only if the autonomous, free-standing sentence is the constructional pattern to which to refer. Bearing in mind their frequency in oral speech and their function as discourse markers, we must seriously doubt that this pattern represents them appropriately. Moreover, if these parentheticals are considered in association with their hosts nothing is missing. One of the arguments required by the verb of the parenthetical is semantically represented by or can be recovered from the host (see Reis 1995: 29, 61; Hoffmann 1998: 318; Schneider 2007a: 76–78). The parenthetical ‘sees’ the host (see Marandin 1999: 36). Unlike the cases contemplated in Winkler’s (2006: 109) overview, the parenthetical sequence cannot be completed with the missing element, as we can see from (10b):

- (10a) Spanish (*Corpus oral de referencia del español contemporáneo*, text CCON021B)
 <H1> [...] Y había cazuelas, ¿sabes? antes de estas de barro [...]
 and had saucepans know before of these of clay
 ‘And there were saucepans *you know* before these made of clay’

- (10b) *Y había cazuelas, ¿sabes que había cazuelas antes de estas de barro? antes de estas de barro.

Hence, one can legitimately ask whether these parentheticals actually represent an instance of ellipsis.

Thirdly, some parenthetical sequences are incomplete, but there is no linguistic antecedent and the main features of the unexpressed elements are only under partial contextual control. The utterance-initial sequence in (7), provided

we accept it as parenthetical, exemplifies this case. We can, of course, imagine various full sentential correspondents to the sequence.

Finally, in the case of the parenthetical sequence in (14a), which is similar to the English *as*-parentheticals described by Potts (2002), it can be argued that, according to constructional patterns, there is a silent string, which is fully controlled by a linguistic antecedent in the host utterance:

(14a) French (*Corpus de référence du français parlé*, text QUI-PRI002)

L1: [...]on (n')avait pas le droit de – *comme ailleurs sans doute*
 one (not).had not the right of as elsewhere without doubt
en France euh d'accepter des bonbons des Allemands [...]
 in France hm to.accept of.the candies from.the Germans
 'People didn't have the right to *as doubtlessly elsewhere in France* to accept
 candies from Germans'

(14b) On n'avait pas le droit *comme on n'avait pas le droit ailleurs sans doute en France* d'accepter des bonbons des Allemands.

As in Winkler's (2006: 109) overview, the parenthetical sequence could be completed by repeating the linguistic antecedent in the host. The examples discussed here are far from exhaustive, but they suggest that the parenthetical sequences may exhibit, besides the ellipsis described in Winkler's (2006: 109) overview, at least two other types of ellipsis.

6 Conclusion

Which points may we retain from our review of the fundamental features of parenthesis? Most linguists agree that parenthesis is a communicative strategy whose motivation is connected with an additional piece of information. The introduction of an additional piece of information causes a disruption. I maintain that by providing information in a position maximally convenient for the speaker but at the cost of processability for the hearer, parenthesis violates the maxim of manner and hence the cooperative principle. There is also a general agreement that parentheticals are marked prosodically and/or syntactically and that, from a formal viewpoint, they take any kind of structure, from a single word to a full sentence. Regarding the delimitation of parenthesis from related phenomena such as parataxis, hypotaxis and interpolated utterances due to intertwined verbal exchanges, I indicated the possible options and some solutions. As we have seen,

a lot of different meanings and discourse functions of parenthetical sequences have been hypothesised. I propose a distinction between, on the one hand, parentheticals expressing a proposition and a speech act and, on the other hand, parentheticals expressing a proposition that acts on the host's proposition within a single ongoing speech act. There is indeed evidence suggesting that some parentheticals express an autonomous illocution, whereas others, that is, those often classified as discourse markers, do not. The analysis of parenthetical incompleteness phenomena shows that there are at least three types of parenthetical ellipsis, one of which challenges the common understanding of ellipsis.

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