Constraints on syntax-prosody correspondence: The case of clausal and subclausal parentheticals in Turkish

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Abstract

This study investigates the syntax-prosody mapping of parentheticals. The results of a production experiment on Turkish demonstrate that the parentheticals bence 'for me' and yanılmıyorsam 'if I am not wrong' are parsed as identical to subclausal arguments, i.e. as phonological phrases when pre-nuclear and parts of phonological phrases when post-nuclear. These results are discussed with respect to a larger data set, in which the prosodic category types of phrasal and clausal parentheticals are compared. Taken together, the data show that parentheticals that are used to commit speech acts, regardless of whether they are clausal or not, are always parsed as intonational phrases, whereas, other parentheticals are parsed as phonological phrases. The paper concludes that illocutionary force projection is the only trigger for intonational phrase formation regardless of whether or not the input syntactic structure is parenthetical, clausal or subclausal.

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1. Introduction

Parenthetical insertions do not belong to the syntactic core of a clause, yet they are still perceived as a part of that clause. Even though they make no contribution to the structure of their host, most parentheticals contribute to its meaning by providing additional information about it (Burton-Roberts, 2006; Potts, 2005). (1) Lists some of the structures that are regarded as parentheticals (cf. de Vries, 2007; Kaltenböck, 2007; Dehé and Kavalova, 2007). Among the parentheticals listed below, interruptions and vocatives are exceptional in the sense that they do not provide information about the clause into which they interpolate (the host). In this sense, interruptions and vocatives are also pragmatically isolated from the discourse content of their host. While interruptions are usually root clauses, vocatives are subclausal syntactic structures (NPs or DPs) (Hill, 2013 and the references therein).[1]

(1)　Non-restrictive relative clauses, appositions, comment clauses, interruptions, tag questions, vocatives, dislocated phrases, epistemic adverbials, certain peripheral adverbial clauses, and-parentheticals.

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[1] Here, I choose not to use the notion 'semantic isolation' to make it clear that the isolation of interruptions and vocatives is not only in terms of the compositional semantics (as with the other parentheticals), but also on the discourse level.

Parenthetical insertions are often predicted to be prosodically isolated, yielding interruptions in the intonation pattern of their host (Downing, 1970; Nespor and Vogel, 1986; Bolinger, 1989; Truckenbrodt, 1995; Selkirk, 1981, 2005, 2009, 2011; Potts, 2003, 2005; D'Avis, 2005; Burton-Roberts, 2006; Astruc-Aguilera and Nolan, 2007 among others). These interruptions are marked by various cues such as changes in intensity, boundary tones, and the optional use of pauses that flank the parenthetical (cf. Dehé, 2007 and references therein). However, some studies such as Wichmann (2001), Peters (2006), Kaltenböck (2009), and also Dehé (2007, 2014) show that not all instances of parentheticals exhibit prosodic isolation. Depending on various factors, such as the length of the inserted item (e.g. Dehé, 2007, 2009; Kaltenböck, 2009) or the function of the parenthetical (Peters, 2006; Dehé, 2009; Dehé and Wichmann, 2010), some parentheticals may be parsed as prosodically integrated.

The goal of this study is to establish a better understanding of the factors that lead to a parenthetical's prosodic isolation or integration. To achieve this, an analysis is presented regarding the prosodic behaviour of two parentheticals of epistemic stance in Turkish (bence 'for me/I think' and yanılmıyorsam 'if I am not wrong'). A production experiment is conducted to investigate how these parentheticals are prosodically realized with respect to their position of interpolation. The results of this experiment are compared to the results of a consequent study (Güneş and Çöltekin, 2014), where different kinds of sentence medial parentheticals are examined. A comparison of prosodically integrated and isolated parentheticals is presented, showing that finite clausal parentheticals with illocutionary force are isolated, and phrasal parentheticals (and clausal parentheticals that lack illocutionary force) are integrated. This comparison is accompanied with a discussion of the faithfulness constraints of Match Theory (Selkirk, 2005, 2011). Additionally, the extent to which a parenthetical's pragmatic properties affect its prosodic properties is also discussed.

This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 provides a background on the syntax of parenthesis. Section 3 discusses the prosodic theories that aim to account for the prosodic properties of parentheticals by appealing to their syntax. Section 4 presents a background on the properties of prosodic constituents and boundary phenomena in Turkish. Section 5 presents stimuli and the methodology. There, the semantic and syntactic parenthetical behaviour of the target forms is discussed in detail. Section 6 presents the results. Section 7 discusses the conditions on the variable parsing of parentheticals, and section 8 concludes.

2. Syntactic integration of parentheticals

Dehé and Kavalova (2007) divides the syntactic approaches that attempt to account for the linear integration of parentheticals into two groups, orphanage approaches and syntactic integration approaches. Orphanage approaches assume that parentheticals are derived in complete isolation to their host (Haegeman, 1991; Espinal, 1991; Peterson, 1999), while syntactic integration approaches assume that a syntactic connection of some kind persists between parentheticals and their hosts (Ross, 1973; Emonds, 1973; Corver and Thiersch, 2002; D'Avis, 2005; Potts, 2005; de Vries, 2007).

In terms of mapping to prosody, Dehé (2009, 2014) states that the orphan approach is implausible because the output of the syntax is the input to prosody. ''If parenthetical and host are separate syntactic structures and linearization is a matter of one of the interface modules, in particular if this is the interpretational module, prosodic theory does not have access to both the host and the parenthetical in the same mapping process'' (Dehé, 2009:576). Because the integration analysis provides necessary tools to account for how parentheticals and their hosts are linearized, I follow Dehé (2009, 2014), and adopt an approach that favours the syntactic integration of parentheticals.

In terms of syntactic integration, due to their optionality and linear mobility, parentheticals are best analyzed as adjuncts to the host syntactic structure. However, due to their particular semantic interpretation (Potts, 2005), and syntactic 'invisibility' (de Vries, 2007), the adjunction of parentheticals must be 'special', i.e. dissimilar to regular 'central' adjunction.[2]

In sections 2.1 and 2.2, I review the types of special adjunction that have been posited in the literature.

2.1. Potts' COMMA feature

Potts (2005) argues that parentheticals are different from regular adjuncts because they bear a syntactic feature called COMMA (Potts, 2005:98). COMMA ''. . .is a signal to isolate the subtree it dominates intonationally, accounting for the 'commas' in print and the intonational boundary marks in speech.'' (Potts, 2005:98). This feature functions as a semantic type-shifter and turns at-issue content into conventional implicature content (CI). Here, the term 'at-issue' refers to the primary content

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[2] See Haegeman (1991) et seq.; Frey (2003), Pittner (2004), Steube (2006) among others for distinctions between central and peripheral parenthetical adjuncts.