

Parentheticals and the inherent dialogicity of utterances

The term ‘parenthetical’ is applied to phenomena ranging from words over phrases to clauses and sentences, (1), which share but one common feature – being used ‘parenthetically’:

- (1) a. \$1 000 000 — это, **конечно**, не подарок. (NKRJa, 10-5-2007)
- b. В школьные годы - **в классе пятом-шестом** - недолго занимался гимнастикой [...]. (Izvestija, 1-22-2008)
- c. **Я, если хочешь знать**, в [...] театральное поступала. (NKRJa, 2-17-2008)
- d. Выставка "Из России" - **так и хочется добавить "с любовью"** - все-таки открылась [...]. (Vesti, 1-22-2008)

It is not even quite clear what it means for an expression to be used parenthetically, since parentheticality is not a feature inherent to specific expressions. Even though some expressions are primarily used as parentheticals, (2), mostly one and the same expression can both be used parenthetically and integrated into the sentences structure, (3), (4):

- (2) a. Психолог же зачастую, **во-первых**, должен работать с неотобранным материалом, **во-вторых**, он ограничен [...] нормами морали [...].(NKRJa, 2-10-08)
- b. Чего мы от него, **собственно говоря**, добиваемся? (NKRJa, 2-10-08)
- (3) a. **И, признаюсь**, спросив себя так, я не нашёл что ответить. (NKRJa, 2-18-2008)
- b. **И признаюсь, что** даже короткие минуты [...] (NKRJa, 3-30-2008)
- (4) a. Но подтверждение – **или опровержение** – этому можно добыть с помощью дистанционных методов. (Nezavisimaja gazeta, 1-23-2008)
- b. Но подтверждение **или опровержение** этому [...]. (modified by the author)

Syntactically, it needs to be clarified how parentheticals are to be integrated into the sentence structure. Semantically, the question arises as to what kind of information is provided by them, and what the difference to the integrated use consists in. Facing these problems, Schwyzer (1939) proposes to regard parentheticals as one exponent of a more general linguistic phenomenon – without, however, pointing out what this might consist in.

Regarding parentheticals as one complex sign composed of parenthetical, current utterance and non-actual utterances, the present paper proposes a semiotic approach based on Bachtins (2000) and Vološinovs (1993) conception of utterances as being inherently dialogical, and on Peirces conception of the indexical sign. Within an utterance, indices serve a double function: external indices establish a relation to the proposition’s situational object(s), internal indices establish an internal structure reflecting the structure of the situational object(s). The internal structure being disrupted by a parenthetical, an abductive reasoning process searches for an hypothesis accounting for that deviation. This explanatory hypothesis consists in regarding the parenthetical as external index taking the rest of the utterance as object. The connection between both is established by the third relation constituting a sign in the Peircean sense: the interpretant, i.e. the effect in an interpreting mind. An indexical relation not only relates parenthetical and utterance, but also refers to former and future utterances to which the current utterance reacts.

A semiotic analysis of parentheticals has several advantages: It provides a unified framework to account for the peculiarities of parentheticals and allows to classify parentheticals according to features characteristic of indices. Moreover, it allows to integrate former approaches which at first sight appear rather diverse (e.g. Hinrichs 1983, 1986; Grenoble 2004; Asher 2000). Finally, the general linguistic phenomenon Schwyzer (1939) alludes to can be taken be the inherent dialogicity of linguistic signs and utterances.

References

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