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Parentheticals are – presumably – clausal

The literature on parentheticals mostly focuses on their external syntax, i.e. the relation between the parenthetical and its anchor clause. The internal syntax of parentheticals, however, got much less attention, probably because of the superficial diversity of the categories they may appear in (CP, PP, AP, VP, NP). On the surface, (almost) every maximal projection can be a parenthetical. This paper is concerned with the internal syntax of parentheticals in German. I argue that, despite superficial appearance, parentheticals are clausal (i.e. CPs) throughout.

To derive the non-clausal appearance of parentheticals at the surface, I apply an approach to ellipsis that involves movement in the syntax plus deletion at the level of phonological form (PF): movement of material (the parenthetical) to SpecC (to the Vorfeld) plus deletion of the rest of the clause, as proposed for various other clausal constructions that, superficially, appear to be non-clausal, see example in (1).

- (1) a. Sie hat – wegen der Dringlichkeit – schon heute angerufen.
She has because.of the emergency – already today called
- b. Sie hat – [_{CP} sie wegen der Dringlichkeit schon heute angerufen
She has she because.of the emergency already today called
hat] – schon heute angerufen.
already today called
- c. [_{CP} [wegen der Dringlichkeit]₁ [sie t₁ schon heute angerufen hat]]
- d. [_{CP} [wegen der Dringlichkeit]₁ [~~sie t₁ schon heute angerufen hat~~]]

This approach assimilates parentheticals to other phenomena analysed as ellipsis, such as sluicing, fragment answers, split questions, amalgams, left and right dislocation.

References

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