

On the relevance of parentheticals

Diane Blakemore

Centre for Research in Linguistics, European Studies Research Institute, University of Salford

Potts (2008) has argued that appositions are amongst a range of phenomena which do not contribute to the truth conditional content of the utterances that contain them but which ‘contextualize the main clause’s contribution to the discourse’. In this paper, I argue that the idea that utterances may include constituents which contribute to their interpretation by altering the context for their interpretation applies to a range of parenthetical phenomena. Using my work on *and*-parentheticals and *that-is* parentheticals, I argue that there are different ways in which parentheticals may play a role in the pragmatic interpretation of their hosts. While some parentheticals affect the interpretation of their hosts at the level of implicit content, others may affect the interpretation of their explicit content. In particular, there are some parentheticals – e.g. *that is*-parentheticals and some *and*-parentheticals which play a role in the identification of the truth conditional content of their hosts. While this suggests that not all parentheticals are completely sealed off from the truth conditional content of their hosts at the level of pragmatic interpretation, it does not mean that the content of a *that is* or *and*-parenthetical is *part* of the content of the host. In this sense, it is compositionally independent, as Potts’ (2005) analysis would predict. The point is that the relevance of these parentheticals lies in the information they communicate *about* the truth conditional content of its host, or, in other words, in what I have called their ‘meta-conceptual’ role.