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Delayed self-repairs as a structuring device for complex turns in conversation

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This paper looks into the interactional basis of the grammatical format of parentheticals. It will be claimed that such a basis can be found in abandoned or broken off units of talk in conversation which are not immediately recycled (repaired) but whose activity status is attended to at some later point of the emerging talk. These abandoned/broken off units, then, are not erased or "overwritten" by the subsequent structure, but their projectional force remains valid and needs to be attended to by recipients. On the interactional plane, I will focus on those post-break-off structures which introduce subsidiary elements of talk (often materials qualifying or specifying the upcoming main point of the turn) and after which the speaker returns or attempts to return into the broken-off/abandoned structure.

It will be argued that this interactional format crucially depends on the strength of the projection in the broken-off or abandoned unit fragment. Arguably, this projectional force increases when it is supported by formal means – particularly by syntax. From here, so I will show, a process of grammaticalisation sets in which leads to the grammatical format of parentheticals.

1. Introduction

Conversation analysis and interactional linguistics share an interest in the temporal unfolding of units of speech in time. Nonetheless, the temporality of speech is still little understood. Psycholinguistic research, which is more advanced in this respect, provides evidence that our memory for on-line syntactic processing is limited; far-reaching syntactic projections in time tend to fail, both in production and reception (cf. Dijkgraaf & Kempen 1993; Townsend & Bever 2001). The same cannot be said of our pragmatic memory; although possibly distorted, pragmatic experiences can be kept in memory for a long time. We tend to remember what somebody said (and above all, what s/he meant by it, i.e. what kind of action was performed), but not how it was said. Our memory seems to disattend form, and it is for this reason that Charles Hockett listed "rapid fading" among the "design features" of (spoken) language (Hockett & Alt-
mann 1968). But how long exactly can we store linguistic structures in memory? One way of answering the question (chosen by psycholinguists) is to look at complex syntax (centre-embedding constructions or the like) and analyse at what point and under what conditions speakers and hearers fail to process it adequately. Another way, chosen in this paper, is to ask whether participants in an interactional encounter make use of the formal structure of speech events in the more or less distant 'conversational past' for their present formulations. It is beyond question from such a point of view that syntactic form can remain relevant beyond the termination of a syntactic construction (i.e., after a syntactic projection has been dealt with); it does so, for instance, in some so-called elliptical utterances which can only be understood if they are processed against the background of a prior syntactic construction. Often it is the immediately preceding utterance which provides the structure on which the 'elliptical' follow-up is modeled, be it produced by the same or another speaker. However, speakers can also refer back to non-adjacent utterance parts, as in the following example:

(1) ("Big Brother'/German Reality TV show))
01 Sbr: lebensmittel weg das ist ne Sünde.
throwing food away is a sin
02 + Jrg: auch das mag ich au nisch.
well that don't I like either
03 Sbr: nee-
no
04 Jrg: da werd-isch au fuchsteufelswild.
there become I also fox-devil-wild
05 Adr: die u ta au nisch.
the Uta also not
neither does Uta

The syntactic structure of Jürgen's utterance in line 2 das mag ich au nisch provides the pattern on which Andrea builds her own utterance (line 5) die u ta ("ellipsis: mag das) auch nicht. What mechanisms exactly of 'ellipsis' in German syntax are responsible for the fact that it is possible to build one utterance on the pattern of another, and to hear them as being related, is not an issue here and has been described in detail by syntacticians (cf. for German, e.g., Klein 1993). But since Andrea's utterance is two turns away from Jürgen's original utterance, there is evidence that coparticipants keep in mind syntactic patterns at least for a short time.

Another syntactic format in which past syntactic events need to be kept in memory in order to process future ones are parentheticals in which the post-parenthetical continuation continues the pre-parenthetical beginning without retracting to it:

(2) (job interview)
01 I: <<acc>> es ist natürlich immer SO:} (1.0)
it is of-course always like-that
02 als kleine regionalbank.
a small regional bank
03 auch wenn dann ab und zu immer noch
even though PRT now and then always once
04 mail: (.) n pass gen GRÜNdet werden,
(in a) while a couple founded are
even though now and then one is founded
05 hat man das schön schwer;
has one it PRT difficult
06 im [europäischen Wettbewerb.]
it is rather difficult
among the European competitors
07 [h:m,

The interviewer in this job interview self-interrupts in line 2 after the noun phrase als kleine Regionalbank; after a parenthetically inserted concessive clause in line 3, he continues the interrupted clause with the finite verb due after the initial noun phrase (4). Again, both speaker and recipient need to build on the utterance in line 2 in order to process that in line 4, i.e. the former cannot be deleted immediately since the latter reuses it structurally. As in the case of 'ellipsis', the phenomenon provides evidence that language users keep formal aspects of utterances in memory for some time since they need them for the interpretation of future conversational events.

In this paper, I will deal with delayed self-repairs of which (2) is a special case in more detail. The question I want to ask is: when a speaker self-interrupts and thus produces a fragment of talk (i.e. an utterance that does not constitute a well-formed syntactic gestalt), under what conditions can recipients overwrite this fragment and when do they need to keep it in memory for further processing?

2. The phenomenon: Delayed self-repairs

In conversational German (but presumably in other languages as well), a recurrent pattern is this: an emerging syntactic pattern is broken off by the speaker; he or she then starts a new turn constructional unit (TCU) which introduces a different line of thought, subtopic, or argument; having finished this unit, the same speaker returns to the broken-off structure and recycles it syntactically and/or semantically. In the course of this delayed repair, a complete (turn constructional) unit is produced. Ex-
tract (3) is an example in which the delayed repair of the fragment is easy to recognize on formal grounds:

(3) (father M and daughter F; telephone conversation, father is caller))

01 M: ja und (-) is MAMMI da?
   yes and - is mommy there
   and (-) mommy is at home?
02 F: nein die is NICHT da;
   no she is not there
   no she isn't
03 M: bist du kurz nachHUSE gekommen?
   did you briefly home
   come so you came home for a short while?
04 F: ja (-)
   yes
→ 05 ich hab ihr jetzt grad=n=
   I have her PRT just= a:CLIT
   I just left her a
06 =weil sie hatte gesagt ich soll mal
   because she had said I shall PRT
   hEimkommen oder, 
   come-home TAG
   because she said I should come home, right?
07 [(hoffentlich) is sie jetzt nich DAGewesen. =
   (hopefully) has she now not there-been
   (I hope) she hasn't been here (already)
08 M: ja SEHR schön
   yes very nice
→ 09 F: =jetzt hab ich ihr n= ZETtel
   now have I to-her a:CLIT =note
   hingeschrieben; 
   written
   I left her a note now
10 M: ja is auch RICHTig
   yes is PRT correct
   yes that's good

The father (M) has called his teenage daughter (F) when she has just come home from celebrating carnaval in the streets of a southwest German town but is going to leave again soon. After the father has mentioned the mother in line 1, and reformulated the daughter's previous statement (not shown in the extract) that she dropped in at home (line 3), the daughter starts a turn constructional unit in line 5 (jetzt hab ich ihr grad=n, 'I just left her (i.e., the mother) a...') which remains incomplete in many ways: syntactically, it lacks the obligatory non-finite form of the verb, as in this case a participle which can be predicted on the basis of the auxiliary hab(en), as well as, on a lower level of syntactic projection, the object noun due after the clitic indefinite article n (clitic form of ein 's'); prosodically, it is marked as incomplete by hovering intonation and the lack of a nuclear pitch movement, and semantically, it is hearably unfinished since we do not know what the daughter 'just did'. Note, however, that in all three domains - syntax, prosody and semantics - certain continuations can be projected:4 syntactically, a noun is predictable, which in turn will be followed by a right brace non-finite verb form;5 prosodically, a nuclear accent will follow, and semantically, '...left a note' is in the given context more or less predictable. Having thus abandoned a turn constructional unit at a point at which numerous projections are in play, the daughter starts a new unit which gives a well-prefaced account ('because, she said I should come home'). It is not entirely clear whether this utterance gives an account of why the daughter 'did come home briefly' or of why 'she just left her (... a note)' at this point. (We will return to this issue in Section 4 below.) In overlap with the father's enthusiastic but somewhat paternalizing agreement in line 8 (ja sehr schön) the daughter expresses her concern that the mother might have been home before in line 7; in that case, her note would have come too late to prove that she has complied with the mother's request. Only after that does she return to the broken-off TCU in line 5 and recycles most parts of it in what now becomes a well-formed syntactic, prosodic and semantic unit in line 9 (jetzt hab ich ihr n=Zettel hingeschrieben). Self-repair is delayed by one turn-constructional unit which intervenes between the reparandum and the repair itself.

The fragment and the recycled/completed version can easily be linked to each other on formal grounds, since the speaker re-uses the lexical materials of the former in the latter (with the exception of the particle grad, all words are repeated). The only difference is that within the same syntactic pattern, two constituents change places: while the personal pronoun ich 'I' was sentence-initial (i.e. in the pre-verbal position) in the first version, the adverb jetzt 'now' takes its place in the second version, moving the pronoun into post-verbal position (see figure below).

![Diagram](image)

We have therefore good structural grounds in order to identify the reparandum and the repair. But what is the semantic relationship between the two? As has been shown many times in conversation analysis (starting with Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks 1977), repair work does not necessarily imply correction of a mistake. In repair, some speaker retracts to a prior point in the utterance or sequence and 're-does' it. This also applies to the present case. Arguably, speaker F does not aim at correcting some faulty word or construction in this example; otherwise it would be hard to explain that she repeats the first part of the construction in an almost identical way. Rather, the format of a delayed self-repair in this cases relates to the linearisation problem in language: how to translate complex, hierarchically structured information into the linearity of speech.
The daughter can be heard to break off her first report on what she did on the grounds that this report came too early, i.e., at a point in which her recipient would have needed some subsidiary information in order to understand what she is about to say. More concrete: telling the father that 'she left a note' for her mother is no relevant news unless he knows that she had promised the mother to come home. So even when 'because she said I should come home' is understood as an account of why the daughter did come home, it is at the same time necessary to know about the mother's wish in order to understand why the daughter left her a note.

One could argue (and it has been argued, C.F. Zimmermann 1965; Givon 1988) that in spontaneous speech speakers are caught in a permanent cognitive conflict between, on the one hand, the tendency to formulate first what to them appears to be the most important information (which in the present case would for the daughter be the fact that she has just left a message for the mother), and, on the other hand, the necessity to establish common ground on which this information can be processed (understood and appreciated) by the recipient (in this case, the information that the mother had asked the daughter to come home briefly). According to this view, the break-off and delayed repair would reflect some kind of dilemma about what is the most urgent business to attend to at that moment in the conversation. The shift from a speaker-oriented to a hearer-oriented perspective would leave a trace in the speaker's speech production—the repair phenomenon—but essentially take place in the speaker's mind. For the recipient, the resulting break-off would be irrelevant at best, at worst it would render the utterance messy, thereby impeding understanding. As a consequence, it would seem to be a reasonable strategy for the recipient to delete such broken-off materials from cache memory immediately. And indeed, it is possible in the present case to arrive at a well-formed sequence after such a deletion:

M: and (-) mommy is at home?
F: no she isn't
M: so you briefly came home?
F: yes (...) because she said I should come home right?
    (I hope she hasn't been (already)
M: I yes very good
F: I left her a note
M: yes that was right

In this paper, I will propose a different view. It starts from the linearity problem in language as well, but it looks at it, not in terms of the speaker's cognitive processing, but in terms of speaker-hearer interaction in the on-line production of conversational speech. More precisely, I will argue that it can be useful for the recipient not to delete structural fragments from memory immediately but to monitor the speaker's production with some time-depth; and that for the speaker, delayed self-repairs can be a technique for structuring complex turns.

3. On-line syntax and syntactic break-offs

In spontaneous speech, fragments of TCUs occur quite frequently. Roughly following Jasperson (2002) and Selting (2001), they can be classified (a) by the way in which the speaker continues after the broken-off/abandoned fragment, and (b) by the way in which the non-continuation of the emerging pattern is locally organised. Disregarding syntactically complete but otherwise incomplete utterances which are outside the scope of this paper, the first criterion gives a three-fold classification:

- the present speaker may repair the syntactic structure immediately after the break-off by retracting either to its beginning or to some suitable point in it;
- the present speaker may continue the broken off structure without retraction;
- or, if neither of these possibilities are chosen, the present speaker may quit the syntactic structure entirely.

The second criterion provides an additional two-fold classification between cut-offs, in which the non-continuation of an emergent structure is marked (in English as in German) by segmental phonetic means (particularly by glottalisation, Jasperson's "closure cut-off", according to the GAT system transcribed by ' in the following), by prosodic means (non-complete phrasing plus prosodic reset) and/or by the use of certain particles/repair markers, and abandonments in which no such cues occur. Schematically:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cut-off</th>
<th>Abandonment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quit</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retract</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. A simple model for dealing with fragments in conversation

(Continuations offer no choice between abandonment and cut-off since only a hearable break-off justifies speaking of a fragment.)

The following examples illustrate some of these possibilities:

(i) quit/abandon

(4) ((bulimia therapy session; Swabian dialect))

01 A: s=isch aber S0: (2.0)
  it is however so
  but it is this
  
→ 02 dass i des IT unbedingt so- (1.0)
  that i that not necessarily so
  that I always like
03 gefahln setz i man(ch)mo GLEICH mit e me
  feelings do I sometimes equate with a
The model of Figure 1 can neither deal with delayed repairs as in extract (3), however, in which the options 'quit' and 'retract' are combined, nor with parenthetical insertions as in extract (2), in which the option 'abandon' is combined with 'continue'. In order to capture such cases, a temporal dimension has to be included. Immediate recycling of a broken-off structure (the option 'retract immediately') overwrites (deletes) the reparandum, such that the fragment can be disregarded for further on-line processing of the meaning of the emerging utterance by the recipient. But this possibility of instant erasure is not available for cut-offs and abandonments which are not immediately followed by a repair of the fragment, but may be dealt with through delayed recycling (ex. (3)) or a delayed continuation (ex. (2)). The recipient has to keep these fragments in mind since they may foreshadow what the speaker is about to say at a later point. This is obvious for 'smooth' post-parenthetical continuations as in (2), but it also holds for recycling as in (3). Here, the repetition of the materials preceding the insertion may help a 'forgetful' recipient to retract to the precise syntactic position in which the emerging syntactic construction begins; however, there is no way for the recipient to predict whether the speaker will choose the option of 'retraction' or that of 'continuation'. In addition, as will be argued below, the fragment plays an important role for indicating that a complex subject matter (often in an extended turn) is under production and is therefore highly functional in foreshadowing some non-next utterance.

From the point of view of the on-line processing then, a more adequate model is that of Figure 2 which summarises the recipient's options for recognising and dealing with repair.

4. The directionality of delayed self-repairs

At this point, a basic distinction needs to be introduced. The format of delayed self-repairs can be retrospectively oriented; in this case, the materials inserted after the break-off and before the repair in some way or other elaborate or correct materials produced before the fragment. Or it can be prospectively oriented; in this case, the materials inserted after the break-off lay the ground for, contextualise, frame etc. what is going to come after the repair.

The retrospective type is exemplified by the following extracts:

In this example, the speaker cuts off the syllable sie by glottal constriction, but continues to produce the projected TCU nonetheless, without retraction.
Figure 2. A revised model for dealing with fragments in conversation

```
FALSE → cut-off &
CONTAINS CUT-OFF → expectation: upcoming material will not integrate into emerging pattern
CUES

TRUE → cut-off &
syntactic recycling & continuation → DELETE FRAGMENT

FALSE → abandonment &
CONTAINS NO → expectation: upcoming material will integrate into emerging pattern
CUT-OFF CUES

TRUE

→ continuation
```

(8) (Job interview, interviewer: I talk about the fusion of his own bank with another one which in his opinion was a friendly take-over in order to avoid an unfiltered one, the old state of affairs was not as positive as it may have looked like, oddly)

(7) (I: weil ich auch MEIST den VORZUG habe)
5. Types and functions of prospectively oriented delayed self-repairs

In Section 2 I have argued that delayed self-repairs are a strategy to handle the linearisation problem in language: how to translate complex information into the linearity of speaking. This tentatively formulated functional description of delayed repairs now needs further discussion.

Consider the following extract from a bulimia group therapy session:

(9) ((M talks about her feelings of guilt when she eats 'heavy' food; TW = therapist))

01 TW: DAS müssen sie AUSHalten können; hm? that should you stand can:INF TAG that you should be able to stand, huh?
02 dass andre DENkn, (-) that others think
03 M: Ja yes
04 TW: [sie] sind gierig. you are greedy
05 M: .h vor allem weil ICH (0.5) above all since
06 also (1.0) ich denk ja geNAuso über weil I think PRT the same way about andere; (0.5) others
07 well (1.0) after all I think the same way about others
08 aso ich hab ma mit einer you see I have once with one(FEM) zuSAmphen gewöhnt, = together-lived
09 well I once lived together with a woman
10 und .h die hab ich EH nich so leidn and her have I PRT not so well stand kön'n un sie mich AUCH nich. can:INF and she me either not
11 and I couldn’t really stand her and neither could she me
12 und dann hab ich IMmer so .h (0.5) and then have I always like and then I always like
13 und (-) DIE: is schon wesentlich DIcker als and she is PRT really bigger than ich; = I and she really is a lot bigger than I am
14 and then have I ECHT immer gedacht - (0.5) and then have I really always thought and believe me I always thought
15 ich hab so alles des (-) AUF se I have like everything that on her projiziert projected
16 I projected like all that on her
17 und wenn sie viel geGEsn hat, and when she a-lot eaten had, and when she was eating a lot...
In this example, the speaker is about to make a point which is relevant in the framework of the therapeutic session— in the present case, the major point of her contribution is already stated in the very beginning of her turn in line 6 (‘after all I think the same way about others’). This turns out to be the preface for a story which M starts in line 7 (‘I once lived together with a woman...‘). She now faces the problem of having to show that the story is relevant to her point, and thus to the therapeutic session in general, while, at the same time, producing a convincing and (perhaps) entertaining narrative which needs some kind of elaboration. How can she do both things at the same time despite the fact that language requires a linearisation of information? The answer is: by doing one thing while the other is hearably ‘under work’. In the extract, the link between the preface and the story is established by the fragment und dann hab ich immer so... ‘and then I always did like...’ (first arrow, line 9), foreshadowing the punchline of the story. Although it is not possible at this stage to guess precisely what M is about to say, the syntactic format in which this turn component is started projects some kind of formulation of a mental or real-world action by the teller: the first person pronoun ich combines with the auxiliary haben ‘to have’ which is used to form the perfect tense of transitive verbs that mostly require an agent. This unit is broken off in favour of more details about the protagonist and her obesity (line 10). After that, the fragment is recycled for the first time: it is now made to include an infinite verb form of the verbum sententiud und dann hab ich echt immer gedacht ‘and believe me I always thought’, line 11. But this is not a syntactically complete unit yet; rather, a complement phrase (expressing M’s thoughts) is projected. Once more, the speaker interrupts herself now in order to first provide the therapeutically relevant term (projiziert ‘projected’) and then narrates details about the way in which the protagonist consumed cream and the teller’s emotional response to it (lines 14–15). Only then, and after the initial fragment has been recycled another time (hab ich gedacht), does the speaker describe her thoughts (and feelings) about the protagonist and complete the syntactic construction, establishing in this way the link to her story preface in line 6, i.e. her own feelings of guilt when eating ‘heavy food’ being identical to what she thinks about others.

It is clear that in a case such as this, the materials inserted between the fragment and its recycled version do not elaborate or correct some utterance preceding the fragment, i.e. they are not retrospectively oriented. Instead, they prepare (frame) the central point of M’s turn in the therapeutic context (lines 16–18), i.e. they are prospectively oriented.

This example also gives us a better idea about the functions of delayed self-repairs. By using the format, the speaker is able to prove to her recipients that she is approaching her main point. At the same time, she is able to prepare this point by numerous details which authenticise the story and justify her behaviour. The recipient needs to keep both the semantic and syntactic projection of the fragment and the materials inserted between the break-off and the recycling in mind: taken together, they put him/her on the right track in the interpretation of what the speaker is about to say. In somewhat more general terms, I want to suggest that by the format of a (prospectively oriented) delayed recycling, a speaker can achieve a particular kind of coherence in a larger turn in which a complex matter is to be formulated. This coherence is hierarchically structured. The fragment is semantically superordinated to the utterances inserted after the break-off. Since the hierarchically superior information is projected to come, the recipient knows more or less precisely what she or he must wait for and attend to.

Here is another example from the bulimia group therapy session:

(10) (In the following sequence, P mentions as an example M’s problems of seeing the therapist ‘as a man’ rather than a therapist in order to prove her statement made before the extract begins that each participant’s problems are different.)

01 P: vielleicht ganz konkrete, perhaps quite concretely
to be quite specific perhaps
02 .h der Herr (NAME) als Mann, .h der Herr (NAME) als Mann,
the mister (NAME) as (a) man
03 Mister X ((the therapist’s name)) als ein Mann, Mister X ((the therapist’s name)) als ein Mann
ich hab ihn eigentlich NIE a (0,5) als
I have him somehow never a
have him somehow never a
als
as
MANN (-) als Problem empfunden
(a) man as (a) problem perceived
(a) man as (a) problem perceived
oder .hh (-) so; (0.5)
or so
as a man I never ((saw)) him as a problem

04
die Trennung MANN MENSCH, .hh (-) the division man human-being
the division between the man and the person

→ 05
irgendwie des hab ich (-) VOHRher (-) somehow that have I before
somehow I had this earlier

06
dessss so n problem
this is a kind of a problem
this is one of those problems

07
des hab ich auch Wiedererkannt bei mir. that have I also recognised with me
which I recognised in me as well

→ 08
.h das hab ich aber VOHRher that have I however before
schon (-) .h ver already over
but that I somehow over-

→ 09
GLAUB hab ich (0.5) believe-I have I
I think

10
oder so BILD ich mirsch ein, or so imagine I to-me-it VERB-PREFIX
or I imagine it to be like that

→ 11
(-) n stückweit (-) WETTgemacht; a degree-to compensated
compensated for it to a certain degree

Once more, a fragmentary TCU (line 5: des hab ich vorher...) projects a syntactic (a participle) as well as a semantic continuation (in the present context, where the speaker wants to argue that M's problems of separating the man from the therapist are an issue she herself was never particularly suffering from, one might for instance expect a continuation like 'I had already ... dealt with that before'). This utterance remains fragmentary (first arrow, line 5). The speaker now inserts some materials which provide a relevant background for the statement-in-progress, i.e. that the problem itself was not unknown to her. After that, the utterance fragment is hearbly recycled in line 8 (a repetition of the first fragment to which the verb prefix ver- is added; a fittiing verb would be ver-arbeiten 'overcome, 'digest') but broken off again (second arrow). A repair follows almost immediately (after glaub) in which this prefix and thereby the projected verb is overwitten and the fragment recycled from the position after the prenominal noun phrase das onwards. After a parenthetical (see below, Section 7) utterance with modalising function in line 10, the fragment of 8 is finally brought to completion in line 11, using a different verb than the one projected by the prefix ver-, namely wettmachen.

The TCU 'I ... compensated for it to a certain degree' contains the main contribution to the ongoing verbal struggle between P and M. The argument is that M's problem, the attraction she feels towards the therapist as a man, is not P's problem any longer, and that therefore it needs not concern her. Between the first fragment and the repairing completion (das hab ich vorher schon n Stück weit wettgemacht), P inserts a topically subordinated but nonetheless important information which lends credibility to her statement (lines 6–7). Again, the speaker hears and undertakes to make a point which contributes to the ongoing interaction, while, almost at the same time, inserting subsidiary materials. In this sense, example (9) resembles the previous example (8) in functional terms.

But (9) is also well-suited to make an additional point. In written German the complex concessive information structure which is conveyed in this turn in lines 5–11 through the delayed repair format could have been rendered differently, i.e. by a hypotactic obwohl-construction such as

obwohl ich dieses Problem bei mir auch wiedererkannt habe, hatte ich das vermutlich vorher schon ein Stück weit wettgemacht.

'although I know this problem myself, I presume that I had come to grips with it before a certain degree.'

This concessive construction expresses the same kind of hierarchical structure as does P through the format of the delayed repair, but by means of grammatical hypotaxis. In both versions (written and spoken), a subsidiary information ('the problem is known to P') is introduced which highlights the relevance of the main point ('P has come to grips with the problem'). However, the delayed repair pattern establishes this hierarchical relationship in a much looser way. The speaker does not encode explicitly one particular semantic relationship (concesivity), and she can do without the embeddings formally marked by hypotaxis as they would be unavoidable in written language. The delayed repair format therefore is a non-grammaticalised way of doing hierarchically structured linearisation in spoken language. Considering that linearisation is the essence of syntax, we may speak of a non-grammaticalised syn-taxis typical of oral communication.

So far I have discussed examples in which the broken-off TCU was eventually followed by some kind of syntactic repair in which the structure of the fragment was re-used. This is not always the case. The relationship between the fragment and its delayed repair may be of a purely semantic kind, i.e. the fragment may project both syntactically and semantically, but the speaker may pick up and tie back to the semantic projection in his or her delayed repair only. Consider the following example:
(11) (Another quarrel between P and M; before the extract starts, P has attacked M by reproaching her of not accepting the group's arguments. P defends herself)

01 P: also ich=es is=ja NICHT so dass ich des well I= it is=PRT not so that I that einfach .h NICHT Annahme und WEGschiebe; simply not accept and push-away well I after all it is not the case that I reject that (what the others say) and push it away

02 aber ich MUSS des doch (1.5) but I must that PRT but after all I have to

03 JA:, ich muss des doch auch verDAUN well, I must that PRT also digest könnt; can well I have to be able to digest it

04 M: JA: =aber ich hab immer n Eindruck yes; =but I have always an impression dass du des NICHT that you that not sure but my impression always is that you don't .h also (-)

05 well auf ALles was mer SAGT kommt to everything what one says comes irgendwie ne prompte erWiderung von dir. somehow a prompt reply from you you have a reply ready for everything that is said

06 nd DANN (.) Dann denk ich ja oh (-) nd then then think I yes uhm and then then I think well

07 eigentlich m lässt du GAR nix auf actually let you quite nothing on dich einwirken. you act actually you don't let anything act on you

After M has reproached P of not accepting any critique of her, P counters 'I have to be able to digest it'. Now M starts a turn which hearably uses an opposition format (yes—but), i.e. it projects disagreement (first arrow, line 4). However, the utterance is broken off before the finite verb has been produced. After the break-off, M inserts evidence for her previous reproach that P does not let the group criticise her: she always has an answer ready (line 6). Then the repair of the fragment follows, but the fragment's syntactic format is not taken up and recycled: 'actually you don't let anything act on you' is only semantically a paraphrase of the projected negation of '4 (you don't \ digest it'), and can therefore be heard as another version of the fragment produced earlier, but its syntactic form bears no relationship to it.

6. A projection that fails

So far, I have tried to show that fragments of TCUs have the potential of solving the conflict between hierarchical complexity of information and the linearisation requirement of spoken language. The conversational format of delayed repairs can now be summarised as follows:

the delayed repair format

1st component: fragmentary TCU \rightarrow projects more to come
= semantically superordinate structure

2nd component: non-projected syntactic/semantic unit
= semantically subordinate structure

3rd component: repair/completion of fragment
= semantically superordinate structure in toto

The conditions under which this kind of processing is possible are:

1st condition: the fragment is not immediately followed by a repair (which overwrites the fragment)

2nd condition: the fragment is (in its context of occurrence) capable of projecting some continuation.

Evidence for the projective force of fragments can be taken from those cases in which the 3rd component of the format is absent. In the following case, the fragment forebodes a statement of intention or perhaps a suggestion. However, the speaker cannot actually produce this projected activity because the recipient's interfering activities remove the basis for it. The non-delivery of the projected continuation requires an account:

(12) (Telephone conversation between two lovers in the late afternoon. M has to meet some business partners after the phone call.)

01 P: .hhh und wann muss du DORT sein? ( ) and when must you there be

02 M: oh in=na halbn STUNDe <<creaky>> ETwa; > oh in a half hour roughly

03 P: halbe STUNDe;= half hour halb an hour

04 M: =<<cpp>hm, >
i wait there still for the call
I have to await their phone call
und dann fahr ich LOS.
and then drive I off
and then I'll drive off
<<breathy voice>> ahhm,>

(hnn also um: (-) m:
so a:t
so at
<<t> wann kannst du dich dann
when can you:nom you:akk then
wieder auf MICH kontentriern?>
again on me concentrates?
so when will you be able to concentrate on me again?

mm at around ten

(-) [HOFF=ich
I hope
hm um ZEHN;=
uhm at ten
uhm at ten

=ja.
yes

.I th also pass=auf;=
so pay-attention
now listen
ich moecht so bis um: (-) eh bis (-)
I want around until at uhm until
I want to until at around eh until ten
gehst Du dann GLEICH ins Bett?
go you then immediately to the bed
will you go to bed immediately then?

ich HOFFe;
I hope
I hope so

du HOFFST;=
you hope
you hope so

<<>ja.> (-)
yes

na dann kann ich nicht mal n WHISKI
well then can I not even a whiskey
trinken mit dir heute;
drink with you today
well then I won't even be able to drink a whiskey with you today

DOCH:
yes
yes you will
ja?
yes
i will?

mm, merk ich(s) TROTZdem;
mm realise I(it:clit) nevertheless
mm, I'll notice nonetheless

ja=
yes

hmhm,

<<> also; (-)
so
well then (-)

.hhhn dann denk ich so um ZEHN,
then think I around at ten
I'll think around ten

(-) ganz fest an DICH;
really strongly of you
of you very much

This extract is taken from the closing phase of the telephone conversation between M and F. In closing sections, arrangements for future meetings are regularly on the agenda. Time therefore is an important matter. In this context (and after a previous question regarding time in lines 1-3) F's fragment also um... ('well at...': line 8, first arrow) clearly projects a temporal expression, since the preposition um is typically used to formulate time. Instead of producing this temporal phrase fully, F self-interrupts and asks a question ('when will you be able to concentrate on me again?': line 9) which is subsequently answered by M (line 10) and the answer is modified by a stance phrase (line 11, HOFF=ich 'I hope'). On the basis of this information, F now recycles the fragment also um... and includes it into a more complex turn which she introduces by the pre-to-pre formula pass auf ('now listen', lines 14, 15). The following utterance (line 15, second arrow) starts as a delayed repair in line 8: the temporal phrase so um X Uhr ('at around X o'clock') is now integrated into a declarative sentence indicating F's wish or intention (ich moecht so um... 'at around... I want to...'). But once more the TCU remains unfinished: the semantically central part arguably is what F intends to do (moecht...) at what time (so um...), and both are left unspecified. In the projection space created by this second broken off TCU, F once more asks a preliminary question: is M going to go to bed after he has come back from the meeting with his business partners (line 16)? M answers positively through another stance phrase (hoff)
7. Delayed self-repairs and parenthesis

Quite a few instances of break-offs followed by delayed self-repairs span a small stretch of speech only. The delay is minor, i.e., the subordinated utterance short:

(13) (reality TV show)

((Andrea has just been at the hairdresser's. Sabrina talks to Andrea while combing her hair.))

01 Sbr: das ist so schön hier hinten,
ich is so beautiful here in-the-back
it is so nice in the back here
02 .h <gently> hier-
here
03 ((giggles))>
04 ((cheeping noise))
05 .h nee.
no
06 du hast echt nen schönen hinterkopf;
you have really a beautiful back-of-head
you really have a beautiful back of head

→ 07 hat er rischtisch schön so';
has he really beautifully like
he ((the hairdresser)) has really beautifully
08 .hhh musste ma gucken mal im
have-you PRT to-look PRT in-the
spiegel.
mirror
have a look in the mirror

Sabrina's insertion (line 8) between the fragment (7) and the delayed repair (9) suggests to Andrea to look into the mirror in order to support her (Sabrina's) evaluation that the hairdresser did his job really well. The insertion is clearly subordinated (and supportive) to the main point.

Insertions of this kind are frequently treated in the syntactic literature under the heading of parentheses or parentheticals. It may therefore be asked how the delayed repair format relates to this notion. There is some evidence that parenthesis is a concept that belongs to written language (cf. the metonymic use of the term for punctuation in English). In written language, parenthesis is marked by '( xx )' or ' - xx - ', and in its prototypical grammatical form characterised by the insertion of material into an unrelated syntactic frame which does not require the inserted materials. As a consequence deletion of the parenthetical materials will leave the structure of the surrounding sentence well-formed.

Prototypical parentheses can also be observed in spoken language (where prosodic phrasing takes over the role of punctuation marks). Extract (2) above is an example, which is repeated here for convenience:

(2) ((job interview))

01 l: <[acc] es Is natürlich immer so ;> (1.0)
it is of-course always like-that
of course it's always like that
02 .h als kElIne regionaLBank, (-)
as small regional-bank
for a small regional bank
03 auch wenn dann ab und zu immer
even though PRT now and then always
noch mal - ( ) n+paar geGRÜndet werden,
(1.0) once (in a) while a couple founded are
even though now and then one is founded
04 hat man das schön SCHWER;
has one it PRT difficult
it is rather difficult
05 im [europäischen WETTbewerb.
in-the European competition
among the European competitors
06 B: [him,

This structure bears an obvious resemblance to the delayed repair format: a 'fragment' (first arrow) is followed by a semantically and pragmatically subordinated TCU and
taken up in the following segment (second arrow). However, there are also important differences.

i. First of all, there is of course no repair involved; the pre-parenthetical utterance is abandoned and continued post-parenthetically.

ii. This means that the post-parenthetical segment resumes and continues the fragment without backtracking, i.e. no materials contained in the fragment are repeated and recycled. From a cognitive point of view, this makes it more difficult to identify the predecessor to which the continuation needs to be tied in order to result in a well-formed frame. While this is unproblematic for written language, research on parenthetical insertions in spoken language has shown that the longer the parenthesis, the more likely is a non-smooth continuation (recycling, backtracking; cf. Schönherr 1993; Stoltenburg 2002).

iii. The syntactic position in which the first utterance is broken off in the delayed repair format is usually close to the end of the clause (often before the right bracket, and always at a point where the nuclear pitch movement of the intonational phrase is imminent). It may occur within a phrase (as in (12), where the break-off is after so, an adverbial modifying the following participle hochgestuft). In contrast, parentheses usually occur early in the clause, often between the front-field and the left sentence brace (the finite verb lat in extract (13)). As shown by Stoltenburg (2002), there is a systematic correlation between smooth continuation vs recycling after the inserted materials on the one hand, and the syntactic position of the break-off on the other. This suggests that there are canonical syntactic environments for prototypical parentheses (parenthesis niche). In German, they exclude break-off within a phrase, and highly favour (if not require) placement before or immediately after the left sentence brace. The break-off in (12) occurs outside a parenthesis niche.

8. Conclusion

In order to come to an understanding of how grammar and interaction are linked in conversation, the temporal unfolding of language in time needs to be taken seriously. This requires a new way of looking at linguistic structure which I have called on-line analysis elsewhere (Auer 2000): a kind of analysis that emphasises the projection, emergence and termination of syntactic patterns in real time. Projection is intimately linked to hierarchy, for what makes a given stretch of talk (structurally or content-wise) predictable is, in all domains of linguistic structure, some kind of superordinate, not-yet-complete pattern the production of which is ‘under way’. In order to recognise projections, we rely on the hierarchical organisation of language. On-line analysis as a consequence cannot be based on a ‘flat’ conception of language (such as the naïve idea of language as a step-wise concatenation of elements into strings through strictly local transitions, e.g. from one word to the following). Rather, we need a rich hierarchy of dominance relationships (syntactic, semantic and prosodic) in order to account for projections. These hierarchical relationships reach out beyond the scope of the sentence, proposition, or intonational phrase.

In this paper, I have applied the on-line approach to a particular format, that of delayed repairs. There are various ways in which linguists have been dealing with the phenomenon of syntactic repair in conversation. The best-known of them is also the most questionable one: it assumes that repair work makes natural language unsuited for acquisition since it makes it impossible for children to extract the necessary information about well-formed structures of their mother tongue from their caregivers’ verbal input (see, e.g., Pinker 1994). In this approach, repair work is looked upon as the debris of language (production). An empirically more interesting approach holds against this position that the way in which repair phenomena are handled in natural conversation is highly structured and can be described in syntactic terms. This implies that doing repair in syntax requires syntactic knowledge, presumably of the same kind as in syntax elsewhere. Monitoring repair can therefore be quite useful for the language learner; in fact, some central features of the syntactic structure of a language can be extracted from the syntax of repair (cf. Levelt 1983; Uhmann 2001). One might add in support of this position that the prosodic make-up of repairs often makes it easy to disentangle the ‘good’ from the ‘bad’ structures and therefore guides the learner through the actual speech data, separating the ‘debris’ from the valuables.

I have sketched a third position which goes one step further and claims that repair in spoken syntax offers ways of putting complex and hierarchically structured information into sequentially/linearly ordered speech without using the hypotactical structures of written language. The format of delayed self-repair is a technique of dealing with the linearisation problem of language. It should not be looked upon as a remedial device correcting some deficiency in the way in which a speaker translates complex ideas into linear speech (which may or may not be the case), but rather as part of the solution to this problem.

In line with this interpretation, it can be noted that the delayed repair format often occurs in extended turns in which complex matters need to be talked about; and more often in speakers with some rhetorical skills than in linguistically unexperienced ones. (For instance, in job interviews it is more often used by the interviewers and by applicants for managerial posts (bank trainees) than in less verbose speakers for blue collar jobs; in therapeutic interviews it is more frequent than in reality TV – Big Brother – data.) Thus, the social and situational distribution of the uses of this repair format make clear that it is not typical of linguistically unskilled persons who do not know how to express themselves any better. In fact, the format is not ‘deficient’ in any way, but an efficient and non-imposing way of bringing across complex pieces of information with a high degree of hierarchical organisation.
Notes

1. This paper has profited from comments by many colleagues of which the two editors of this volume – Audu Hakunin and Magret Selting – deserve special mentioning for their extensive and careful feedback on the first version of the text. Karin Birkner and Goli Bauer pointed out some essential flaws in an earlier version which I have tried to eliminate. Needless to say that the now published version does not necessarily coincide with the point of view of any of the above-mentioned, and that responsibility for it remains entirely my own.

2. *Nicht* is a regional variant of *nicht* 'not', *au* a regional variant of *acht* 'also'.

3. Same-speaker self-repair in which the repair occurs in the same TCU as the reparationum has been extensively discussed in conversation analysis (cf. Schegloff 1982; Fox & Jasperson 1995; Fox, Hayashi, & Jasperson 1996 and many others). Equally, delayed other-repair (initiations) have received some attention (cf. Schegloff 1992, 1997). However, self-repair which is delayed by at least one TCU as in the format discussed here has not been discussed in the conversation analytic literature so far.


6. This is not to say that it may not have interactional meaning, particularly when produced in turn-competitive environments; cf. Goodwin (1979).

7. Left-branching embedded genitives such as *(des Minister)*’s ‘Lettich’sche’ are stylistically marked and subject to strong grammatical restrictions: indefinite feminine prepositioned genitives such as *(einer Bank)*’s ‘Hand*’s* have impossible presumably because of processing difficulties: the first NP cannot be parsed unequivocally as a genitive NP since it is also open to a dative reading. In the case at hand, the dative reading is even enforced by the preceding preposition *in* which requires a dative NP such that in on-line processing (in *(einer Bank)*’s ‘Hand*’s* has) is much more likely than *(in *(einer Bank)*’s ‘Hand)’s* but leaves the second noun ‘Hand’ unattached.

8. This is the reason why an equivalent hypotactic format is not always available, as, for instance, for example (1).

9. Spontaneity *kongenieren* instead of *kongenieren* in the original.

10. M’s in his reply that ‘he will notice nonetheless’ (despite being in bed sleeping!) tries to argue somewhat clumsily against this conclusion, redressing the safe-threat inherent in this declaration of F’s proposal. However, the lack of hesitation with which this counterstatement is produced may indicate that he was well anticipating the failure into which his answers to F’s preliminaries will lead her.


References


Pivot constructions in spoken German

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1. Anakolutha and pivots

By advocating a "Syntax-for-Conversation," Schegloff (1979) affirms the importance of repairs in oral communication. A pivot element may be seen as a special case of a preferred place for repairs: "If there is a convergence between the first element of a repair and some element of the ongoing turn-in-production, the shared element is often used as the place to initiate repair" (275). In the example that Schegloff quotes, this repair function is obvious, clearly marked by hesitation, repetition and pauses.

(1) M is looking at a picture of V and his family [Schegloff's (17), 276]

M: I saw it but I never looked yisdnknow et did-eh-deh-deh-
middle one looks // just like

Therefore, according to Schegloff, the phrase the middle one is a pivot element shared equally by the "ongoing turn-in-production" and by the repair sentence: "The phrase middle one is potentially syntactic with what precedes; it turns out to be the 'subject' of a new sentence" (Schegloff 1979:276). Schegloff analyzes another example in a similar manner:

(2) [Schegloff's (16), 276]

'nhh What about uh:: (0.8) Oh yih go f::: you- How many
days? you go five days a week. R1//ght?

You go is interpreted here as a pivot element: on the one hand, it belongs to the question how many days you go, and on the other hand, to the answer you go five days a week. The end of the projected question serves simultaneously as the beginning of the answer it elicits.

These examples evoke several unanswered questions. Could it not be the case that in (2) we are merely dealing with the syntactically regular sequence of a question and a self-attempted answer? After the actual break after what about, the speaker begins a question, albeit with a few problems: yih go [... ] how many days?, and he attempts a hypothetical reply to it: you go five days a week, right? In this case, we would
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