

A Note on Parenthetical Tags

Shigeki Seki

0. This paper is concerned with grammatical differences of sentences which contain parenthetical tags like those in (1)-(2).

- (1) a. When will he leave for America, do you think?
b. Is John happy, do you suppose?
c. Why did Max refuse to come, do you imagine?
d. How did Mary solve the problem, do you think?
e. What kind of things triggered it, do you think?

(The English Journal 1976. 11: 19)

- f. How successful is that analogy, do you think?
g. Was John here at that time, do you think?

(ibid. 1981. 3: 60)

(Emonds (1976: 44))

- (2) a. *When will he leave for America, do you claim?
b. *Is John happy, do you assert?
c. *Did you win the prize, is it true?
d. *Where is she going, are you sure?

In view of the sentences like those in (2), Knowles (1980) proposes the following constraint on sentences with parenthetical tags (henceforth, PTs). This constraint is called The Interrogative Main Clause Constraint, which concerns the absence of tags with main propositions that are questions (P. 385). But if we consider the fact that sentences like those in (1) are grammatical, it is clear that Knowles' constraint is incorrect.

In the following, I will examine properties of the sentences in (1) and (2) and propose a semantic constraint which can capture the grammatical differences between the two types.

1. In view of the sentences (1) and (2), I propose the following semantic constraint as a first approximation:

(3) Semantic Constraint on PTs

Sentences with PTs are grammatical if and only if PTs are modality expressions.¹

Here the notion of modality is based on the following definition in Nakau (1981: 242). According to Nakau (1981), the semantic content of a sentence as an utterance consists of proposition (propositional contents) and modality: the proposition is the statement of objective situations; the modality is speaker's (hearer's) mental attitude in instantaneous present toward the situations, including propositional contents. The notion that is important here is the hearer's (addressee's) mental attitude in instantaneous present.

Let us now see how the differences of the sentences between (1) and (2) can be explained by the semantic constraint (3).

First, consider the grammatical sentences in (1) again. These sentences show the addressee's mental attitude in instantaneous present, in other words, these sentences express the addressee's modality, inducing no violation of the constraint (3). This point can be made clear if we compare these sentences with the following sentences.

(4) Did John pass the exam, $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{a. *did you think?} \\ \text{b. *does Mary think?} \end{array} \right.$

In (4a), the mental attitude of the addressee is not that of instantaneous present, in (4b), even if the mental attitude is in instantaneous present, it is not that of the addressee's but that of the third party's. The PTs in these sentences are not modality expressions by definition and correctly excluded by the semantic constraint (3).

Next, consider the following sentences.

- (5)=(2) a. *Did you win the prize, is it true?
 b. *When will he leave for America, do you claim?
 c. *Is John happy, do you assert?

The PT in (5a) does not show the addressee's mental attitude in instantaneous present but an objectivized mental attitude. This can be made clear by comparing this sentence with the following sentences.

- (6) a. I'm sure that John will marry Mary, { a. won't he?
 b. *aren't I?
 b. It is true that John will marry Mary,
 { a. isn't it?
 b. *won't he?

In general, the tag question conforms to the subject and predicate of a proposition (=an asserted propositional content) (cf. Nakau (1980)) and in (6b) it conforms to the proposition in the main sentence. Thus, I find it reasonable to consider it is true as part of the proposition in (6b), and (5a), which includes this as a PT, is excluded by the constraint. The sentence (6a) shows that I'm sure expresses the speaker's modality and cannot be the object of question. And unlike verbs that convey mental attitude, strong assertive verbs such as

claim, assert (cf. Hooper (1975)) are verbs that report speech, they are therefore irrelevant to the notion of modality and sentences like (5b-c) which include them are also excluded by the semantic constraint (3).

There are two other facts which seem to provide evidence for the constraint (3). One is that contrastive stress falls not on modality expressions but on propositional elements; contrastive stress generally falls on the assertion focus of a sentence and the part which is asserted necessarily belongs to the propositional content of a sentence (cf. Nakau (1980: 172)). For example:

(7) They began arguing LOUDLY.

(8) *UNFORTUNATELY, the dodo is extinct. (ibid., P. 172)

While the manner adverb loudly, which is an element of a propositional content, can receive contrastive stress, the sentence adverb unfortunately, which is a modality expression (speaker's evaluative judgement in this case), cannot.² Likewise, the PTs in the following sentences cannot receive contrastive stress.

(9) a. Is John happy, do you think?

b. *Is John happy, do you THINK?

c. When will he leave for America, do you imagine?

d. *When will he leave for America, do you IMAGINE?

There is another fact that, unlike propositional elements, modality expressions cannot be the focus of interrogative sentences. Consider the following sentences which contain alternative questions (cf. Nakau (1980: 172)).

- (10) *Did they leave early {fortunately} or {unfortunately?}
 {wisely} {unwisely?}
- (11) Did they leave {slowly} or {quickly?}
 {voluntarily} {reluctantly?}

As we see, manner adverbs, which constitute propositional contents, can be question focus, but sentence adverbs, which are modality expressions (speaker's evaluative judgement in this case), cannot. In the case of PTs, we get the same results as in (10).

- (12) a. *Is John happy, do you think or does she think?
 b. *Will Mary leave for Italy, do you think or does he think?

The results of these sentences show the differences between expressions with propositional contents and modality expressions: the former can be question focus and can receive contrastive stress but the latter cannot. And these facts provide some additional evidence for the semantic constraint (3).

2. Next let us consider sentences that contain be sure, which is a strong assertive predicate (cf. Hooper (1975)). There is good reason to believe that, unlike other strong assertive verbs, be sure may be exceptionally express addressee's modality. For example, consider the following discourse cited from Hooper (1975: 98)):

- (13) Are you sure you don't want to have the artichokes tonight?

- (14) a. No, I'm not sure.
 b. Yes, I'm sure.
- (15) a. No, I don't.
 b. Yes, I do.

Hooper assumes that the interrogative sentence (13) is ambiguous in that both (14) and (15) are appropriate answers. Given this assumption, we can provide the following explanation. (15 a-b) are the possible answers to (13) when are you sure expresses the addressee's modality. The reason is that we cannot ask the truth of the addressee's mental attitude which is in instantaneous present. On the other hand, when the addressee's mental attitude is the one in durative present, the speaker can ask the truth of it, since in that case are you sure can constitute a propositional content (cf. Nakau (1979: 240)). Thus, (14 a-b) are possible answers to (13) in this case.

But it should be noted that Hooper's assumption cannot be accepted as it is; according to a native informant, (14) and (15) are not equally possible answers to (13).³ Since are you sure is usually construed as do you really think, (14) is the preferable answer to the question (13). In terms of markedness, the reading of modality may be marked in (13) and the reading of proposition, that is, the addressee's mental attitude in durative present, is unmarked.⁴ The relevant difference may be traced to the fact that be sure falls into strong assertive verbs or predicates like be true. Some evidence for this assumption will be provided below.

To clarify the relevant point, compare the following discourse based on Bolinger (1977: 37)):

- (16) a. Do you suppose he is coming?
 = b. Is he coming, do you suppose?
- (17) a. Yes, he is.
 b. No, he isn't.
- (18) a. *Yes, I do.
 b. *No, I don't.

The main sentence in (16a) which contains a weak assertive verb suppose shows uniquely the addressee's modality and does not constitute the object of question. The speaker is concerned with the truth of the proposition in the complement sentence and (16 a-b) are substantially equal in meaning with the following interrogative sentence (cf. *ibid.*, P. 37)).

- (19) Is he coming?

The assumption that the reading of modality is marked in the case of be sure is supported by the following sentences.

- (20) a. *Where is she going, are you sure?
 b. *Will he pass the exam, are you sure?

These sentences show that when are you sure occurs as a parenthetical tag, the PT does not express uniquely the addressee's modality. If we assume that the reading of modality in this case is marked and its opposite, the reading of proposition, is unmarked with respect to the relevant PT, the ungrammaticalness can be explained uniformly by the semantic constraint (3) with some additional proviso: the semantic constraint (3) holds in the case of the unmarked reading of modality.

The peculiarity of be sure is also made clear if we consider the following sentences.

(21) = (5) a. *Did you win the prize, is it true?

b. *When will he leave for America, do you claim?

As we have seen above (cf. (5)-(6)), the PTs in question unambiguously constitute propositional contents and violate the semantic constraint (3), inducing ungrammatical sentences. What is important here is that (20) and (21) must be distinguished, though the two share a common property in that they contain strong assertive verbs: the PTs in (21) inherently constitute propositional contents; the reading of be sure as a modality element is marked and the reading of a propositional element is unmarked; be sure may be on the borderline between modality and proposition, leaning toward the latter division.

3. To summarize, I proposed the semantic constraint (3) to explain the grammatical differences among sentences with parenthetical tags. It has been shown that this constraint is essentially correct. I also introduced the notion of markedness to explain the ambivalent character of be sure. The relation of the semantic constraint (3) and the notion of markedness is this: the semantic constraint (3) holds in the case of the unmarked reading of modality.

NOTES

¹ A verb say which is classified as a strong assertive verb in Hooper (1975) has a peculiar property in that it can occur in PTs. For example, the following sentence which contain an echo question may be acceptable.

- i) Did John marry last month, did you say?

There is another example.

- ii) How much did you say it cost?

Quirk et al. (1972) observe that this wh-echo question is formed from a usual wh-questions, How much did it cost? by supplying did you say immediately after the Q-element. And wh-echo questions like this have a characteristic intonation contour, that is, a rising intonation with the nucleus on the Q-word itself (P. 408). We should note that sentences with PTs which we are concerned with in this paper are different from the sentences like (ii) in their semantic property and intonation contours.

² For semantic and syntactic differences between sentence adverbs and manner adverbs, see Jackendoff (1972), Quirk et al. (1972), and Nakau (1980).

³ I owe this judgement to Steve Leary.

⁴ Here we understand the notion of markedness which is relevant here in the following sense: if one reading of a PT is more restricted than the other, it is marked. The relevance of the notion of markedness was originally suggested to me by Yukio Hirose.

⁵ PTs can occur not only sentence-finally but also sentence-internally. For example:

- i) Is John, do you think, leaving for America?
 ii) Will Mr. Smith, do you imagine, marry again?
 iii) What was the biggest turning point, do you think,
 in your life? (The English Journal 1979. 9: 81)
 iv) Was John here, do you think, at that time?

(Emonds (1976: 44))

PTs like these seem to have the same properties as the ones treated in this paper. It is clear that these PTs also conform to the semantic constraint (3). Consider the following sentences.

- v) *Is John, do you claim, leaving for America?
- vi) *Will Mr. Smith, does Mary think, marry again?
- vii) *What was the biggest turning point, are you imagining, in your life?
- viii) *Was John, is it true, able to be in time for the meeting?
- ix) *Will Mr. Smith, are you sure, marry again?

These parenthetical clauses do not express the addressee's mental attitude in instantaneous present, namely, modality by definition, these sentences are therefore excluded by the constraint (3).

The following parenthetical clauses are apparently similar to the parenthetical tags treated in this paper.

- x) Who do you think John killed?
- xi) Who do you suppose won the prize?

The important difference between the two types consists in absence or presence of a pause before and after the parenthetical elements in the utterance of the relevant sentences. In other words, whether a parenthetical clause forms an independent intonation phrase or not is crucial. As might be expected, the PTs in the following sentences do form independent intonation phrases.

- xii) Is John, do you think, leaving for America?
- xiii) Will Mr. Smith, do you suppose, marry again?

On the other hand, the parenthetical clauses like those in (x)

have no independent intonation contours and the complex sentence as a whole has a single intonation contour. Following Erteschik (1973), I consider that these sentences are formed by extracting wh-elements from embedded sentences.

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