PARATAXIS AND PARENTHETICALS

1. Introduction

Donald Davidson's (1984) paratactic analysis of indirect speech interprets the complementizer *that* as a demonstrative. Ernest Lepore and Barry Loewer (1989) extend this paratactic analysis of the complementizer to encompass embeddings under propositional attitude verbs like *believe*, *think*, etc.

A pragmatic consequence of the paratactic analysis is that illocutionary force attaches to the "higher" (embedding) sentence instead of the complement (embedded) sentence. (Strictly, the paratactic analysis entails that there is not a higher sentence and a complement in indirect speech and attitudinal embeddings, but only a first and second sentence constituting a paratactic pair.) If this were generally true, then the paratactic analysis would be a highly explanatory principle governing how illocutionary force is determined for these embeddings. However, it fails for *parentheticals*, embeddings in which the complement carries the illocutionary force of the utterance and the matrix (the material higher than the complement) merely "fine-tunes" this force. In parentheticals, the pragmatic role of the matrix is not predictable on the basis of syntax or even compositional semantics, since the meaning of the whole utterance is determined primarily by the meaning of the complement. That is, the propositional content of the utterance (i.e. Frege's *sense*, the aspect of meaning pertaining to Austin's notion of locutionary as opposed to illocutionary act) is determined by the complement, and is not the proposition that would be "calculated" compositionally on the basis of the sentence's embedding structure.

Parentheticals are also interesting because they establish that the syntactically arbitrary fact of *that*-omissibility is not pragmatically arbitrary at all. The pragmatic parameters controlling *that*-omission turn out to be describable in terms deriving from Davidson's paratactic analysis. Specifically, a pragmatic conception of demonstrativity (or better, of degrees of demonstrativity, since this pragmatic property is not all-or-nothing) explains the statistical probability of *that*-omission relative to discourse conditions. Moreover, the degree of demonstrativity is associated with other important features, e.g. whether the higher or lower sentence carries illocutionary force, whether the utterance is discourse-initiating, and related syntactic properties of the complement or the matrix that are keyed.
to discourse conditions but cannot be explained syntactically or semantically.

2. The Paratactic Analysis

Davidson's original presentation of the paratactic analysis concerned indirect quotation, but he already envisioned it applying to attitudinal embeddings as well (1984: 103). That is, he presented the analysis as a semantical theory of sentences of the form (1), but envisioned it applying also to sentences of the form (2).

\[
\begin{align*}
(1) & \quad \text{NP said } [_{\text{S}} [_{\text{COMP that}}] S] \\
(2) & \quad \text{NP } V_{\text{att}} [_{\text{S}} [_{\text{COMP that}}] S]
\end{align*}
\]

(The verb \(V_{\text{att}}\) of (2) is a propositional attitude verb, belonging to a well-delineated class of verbs including \textit{know}, \textit{believe}, \textit{expect}, \textit{guess}, \textit{hope}, \textit{suppose}, and many others.) Lepore and Loewer indicate how the analysis applies to (2), producing their extended paratactic analysis.

According to Davidson and to Lepore and Loewer, utterances of (1) or (2) are not monosentential, but are utterances of two syntactically independent sentences that jointly form the paratactic pair. The extended paratactic analysis entails that (1) and (2) misrepresent the syntax of the utterances, which are in fact just juxtapositions of sentences,

\[\text{[NP (said/} V_{\text{att}}) [_{\text{NP that}]}.\]

and \(S\) itself. According to this view, the connection between the two sentences of a paratactic pair is pragmatic, not syntactic: the complementizer \(\text{that}\) is interpreted as a discourse-demonstrative indicating the second member of the paratactic pair. The second utterance, of the "complement", is not itself an illocutionary act and thus has no force, but serves merely as a referent for the demonstrative-complementizer \(\text{that}\).

The first utterance, of the matrix, is an assertion and as such carries its own (assertive) illocutionary force. (Henceforth, references to \(\text{that}\) are to the complementizer.) Davidson writes,

[Sentences in indirect discourse] consist of an expression referring to a speaker, the two-place predicate 'said', and a demonstrative referring to an utterance. Period. What follows gives the content of the subject's saying, but has no logical or semantic connection with the original attribution of a saying. This last point is no doubt the novel one, and upon it everything depends: from a semantic point of view the content-sentence in indirect discourse is not contained in the sentence whose truth counts, i.e. the sentence that ends with 'that' (p. 106).