THE ROLE OF PARENTHESES IN TEXT COHESION

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Abstract

The present article attempts to analyze the role of parentheses in the text in order to demonstrate the real functions of these language units. Being analyzed within the sentence, they seem to be easily avoided, replaced without deteriorating the structure of the sentence. Only within the text boundaries parentheses act as important markers of the relations of motivations between parts of the text contributing to text cohesion. They can unite in one communication discourse closely and distantly located blocks of texts, creating an orderly structure of the text, systematizing the ideas in logical chains, introducing more clarity to the information intended by the writer.

Rezumat

În articol, se face o încercare de a cerceta cuvintele incidente englezeşti din perspectivă textuală. De obicei, în lingvistica engleză, cuvintele în cauză sunt concepute doar drept unităţi auxiliare ale propoziţiei. Luate însă din perspectiva textului, aceste unităţi se prezintă ca parametri ai coeziunii acestuia, deoarece motivează alte unităţi structurale ale textului, unindu-le într-un tot întreg logic şi contribuind astfel la transpunerea intenţiei autorului textului.

The theories of text analysis have produced a great number of interpretations and definitions as far as the text concerns, dealing with the definitions of the text, text integrity, text cohesion and coherence, etc. Still this issue is opened for discussions. This research makes an attempt to prove that parentheses have a linking function in the text, connecting close and far located parts of the text, contributing to text cohesion, acting as markers of relations of motivation that unite different parts of the text in one communication discourse. Parenthetical constructions are the very elements that help to create an orderly structure of the text, systematizing the ideas in logical chains, introducing more clarity to the information intended by the writer. The roles of parentheses have been studied and analyzed by many grammarians within the frame of the sentence, which unfortunately did not reveal the real functions of these language units in English.

Actually, the real role of parentheses can be determined only within the text boundaries. L. Hjelmslev confirmed that it is the text and not the sentence that can be considered the highest unit of the language, because initially the language exists in the form of texts, consequently, - it is a linguistically meaningful initial sign of a language, it is the direct basic datum for any linguistic analysis, while the other language units can be deduced from the text by means of linguistic analysis.[1]

The Russian linguists E. Kubreacova, L. Hjelmslev, L. Saharniy and A. Metzler are offering a battery of theories about the text, some of which seem to us relevant enough to the study of the role of parentheses in text cohesion. It is the text that carries the whole of the information intended by the author and not its components, which, however, are each scraps of the writer's intentions. A text is a unity of ideas each of them having its own place in the structure into which they fall. We can't get a preliminary glance over the picture intended unless we read cautiously all of the text and try to digest it cramp by cramp, piece by piece.[2]

But how can the reader attain a better understanding of the text? How is it possible to understand the real intentions of the author and not be misled by some dubious word or expression? One of the ways that is sure to provide with the most eloquent information about the author's position in the text is the study of the elements that carry "personality-marking" coloring of the writing, that is, the study of the role of *parentheses* in the text.

Parenthetical elements are first of all the bearers of the emotional side of the text. It is with their help that the author "imposes" his (her) perception of the information, his (her) feelings over the reader. The reader sees the things through the writer's eyes, he (she) is led by the writer into the chosen direction, that helps him (her) go through the same events with the characters, experience the same feelings. The reader may be well aware of this fact, thus having

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[1] Ельмслев, 1980, с. 284.

[2] Инфантова, 2001, с. 59.

the chance to compare them with his (her) own perceptions and in this way being able to draw his own conclusions.

The text is regarded as a succession of different speech acts connected by relations of motivation between its fragments, which are nothing else but speech acts. If talking about the relations of motivation between the elements within the structure of the text, undoubtedly, the use of parenthetical constructions can become helpful in detecting and decoding these relations. Parentheses are the markers of the conclusions one can make after a critical evaluation of the information, after understanding the logical connections between the parts of the text. In order to get a better idea about the roles of parenthesis in the text it is worth mentioning the notion of the "text block", used by A. Metzler, who asserts: "The text block is a communication fragment, within which some components create the necessary conditions for the existence of others, coming forward as motivational factors for them."[3] Examining the parenthetical constructions within the boundaries of the four types of text blocks makes it easy to notice their functions of *formal markers* of these relations between sentences; between close and distantly located paragraphs, contributing to text cohesion. The four levels of "text blocks" seem to be a favorable framework for the analyses of the roles of parentheses in text cohesion.

The examples of parentheses analyzed proved that these language units are active elements that help to establish relations of motivation between different parts of the text, in such a way creating text blocks that are united by one theme. Let's consider the cohesive functions of parentheses in a text block of the first level and namely, within one sentence. For example:

> "All Forsytes, *as is generally admitted*, have shells, like that extremely useful little animal which is made into Turkish delight; *in other words*, they are never seen, or if seen would not be recognized, without habitats, composed of circumstance, property, acquaintances, and wives, which seem to move along with them in their passage through a world composed of thousands of other Forsytes with their habitats" (J. Galsworthy, *The Forsyte Saga*).

In this paragraph the writer uses two parenthetical elements which, undoubtedly, have specific roles in the reader's perception of the text. The first parenthesis "*as is generally admitted*", qualifies the author as a reliable witness and connoisseur of the hidden sides of the Forsytean life. The sender of the message seems to know everything about the Forsytes, beginning with their prim appearance and ending with the secret desires of their greedy hearts. The author knows them so well, that it seems to him that everyone should know such details. The parenthesis, *as is generally admitted*, does not admit even a shadow of uncertainty about this fact. Of course, the author implies a shadow of irony here; making inkling that the Forsytes considered themselves to be the center of the Universe and everything referring to them had to be general knowledge. What follows is in full contradiction with the irony of the writer: "all Forsytes…. have shells, like that extremely useful little animal which is made into Turkish delight". This statement is in full contradiction with the parenthesis mentioned above. Each word in this statement is ironical, first of all J. Galsworthy compares a Forsyte to *a* "little animal", secondly the author employs the hyperbole "extremely useful", which adds to the bulk of irony, completing the description with the metaphor "made into Turkish delight" which is highly ironical. No Forsyte could even admit anyone thinking them to be "little animals made into Turkish delight". The writer still mocks at them using this simile. He does not leave any choice to the reader, introducing in the middle of such an ironical description the parenthesis, *as is generally admitted*. First of all it serves as a bearer of relations of motivation within this sentence, helping the reader to get the impression the writer intended to produce and the impression the Forsytes wanted to create. The reader is not conscious of the fact how much he is influenced by the writer, thus following the route chosen by the author. And this is achieved by the use of the parenthesis, *as is generally admitted*.

The use of the second parenthesis "in other words" in the same sentence fulfills the explanatory function, helping to introduce the second part of the sentence, which contains details about the idea formulated in the first part of the utterance, which is very significant to

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[3]Мецлер, 1984, с. 48-53.

the whole novel, defining the notion of the Forsytes. Both these parentheses help to create a serious, stern atmosphere and an important characteristic for the Forsyte family.

So, we can conclude that, the author tended to hide his irony behind these two parentheses, which at first sight seem to make the whole message serious and important, being in harmony and in the manner of the Forsytes, giving to the whole sentence a special coloring but the real intention of the author is evident.

The next example from the same novel, "The Man of Property" after J. Galsworthy, is an interesting illustration of a case when a parenthesis not only serves as a marker of relations of motivation between parts of the sentence, but helps to create a gradation in the description of one of the main characters of the novel - Irene Forsyte:

> "Irene came out at once, and stepped in - he afterward described it at Timothy's -"as light as-er-Taglioni, no fuss about it, no wanting this or wanting that"; *and above all*, Swithin dwelt on this, staring at Mrs. Septimus in a way that disconcerted her a good deal, "no silly nervousness!" (J. Galsworthy, *The Forsyte Saga*).

The parenthesis **"**and above all**"** in this block of text bears a lot of meanings. At first sight one might think it is the continuation of Swithin's words, who is admiring Irene's qualities presented in the form of gradation, reaching the climax with the help of the words "no silly nervousness!" It is interesting to note that the parenthesis **"**and above all**"** is not uttered by Swithin. The author uses it so deliberately that the reader takes it for Swithin's words. Here is the trick - the parenthesis is used here on behalf of the author himself, expressing *his* vision of the facts, which introduces a double emphasis to the following word combination. Besides, the parenthesis "and above all" is used to connect the first segment of the sentence with the last one - "no silly nervousness". Without this parenthesis the reader can remain confused because of the peculiar position of the last element at the end of the sentence, which seems to be remote and detached from the main body of this sentence and from the statement in general. The sentence "… no wanting this or wanting that" uttered by Swithin, does not seem to be connected to the final words: "no silly nervousness", which even seem to lack logical succession. It is the parenthesis "and above all" which creates a linkage between the first part of the sentence and the final words. So parentheses can unite parts of a sentence organizing such blocks of texts, producing its cohesion.

The following example shows the explanatory function of the parenthetical constructions, which at the same time contribute to the logical organization of the sentence:

> "All the officers saluted her when the regiment marched by the balcony on which this brave woman stood and waved them a cheer as they passed; and *I daresay* it was not from want of courage, but from a sense of female delicacy and propriety, that she refrained from leading the gallant - personally into action" (M. Hastings, *The Right Mix*).

It is not occasional that the author uses the parenthesis "I daresay" in this context. It is evident that these are the writer's direct words and not his ideas reflected through his characters' speech. Still the author doesn't want to impose his views on the reader and instead of affirming that it was because of her delicacy and propriety that the woman behaved like that; he offers the reader the possibility of thinking and drawing out his(her) own conclusions. In such a way the parenthetical element, "I daresay", makes the statement not so categorical, giving flexibility to the reader.

The second level of "text blocks" is marked by the relations of motivation between the sentences of the same fragment of a micro text, which are in contact with each other and which all together express one monolithic complex idea. The relations of modal character that unify the structure of this "text block" are mostly determined by a hypothetical character[4] and represent a gradation from some reliable, well-known information to the probable one, to some sort of conclusions.

> "Five o'clock brought three of the brothers, Jolyon and James and Swithin: Nicholas was at Yarmouth, and Roger had a bad attack of gout. Mrs. Hayman had been by herself earlier in the day, and, after

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[4]Мецлер, 1984, с. 48-53.

seeing Ann, had gone away, leaving a message for Timothy - which was kept from him - that she ought to have been told sooner. *In fact*, there was a feeling amongst them all that they ought to have been told sooner, as though they had missed something: and James said: 'I knew how it'd be; I told you she wouldn't last through the summer." (J. Galsworthy, *The Forsyte Saga*)

The parenthetical element "in fact" has the concluding function in the context. The Forsytes are depressed and at the same time perplexed. It is hard to believe they are predisposed to death like all the others. They have never been like "the others" and they would never have thought that death would have something to do with them. It was unbelievable, one of the segments of their chain was gone and it meant the others would follow the first one. There was no more safety about the clan, and now when a member of their family died, there was a feeling about them that something was missing. The use of the parenthesis "in fact" emphasizes the fact that the reason of these people's worry is not the loss of a close person, but the realization of the fact that "the important ones" had to be informed sooner, which once again emphasizes their true nature of egocentric people.

"Oh! It was Jody Jessup, the little fifth – grader. It was strange seeing her here in the store during a school day, but then, Tom wasn't usually in the store during the school day either. *In any case*, he was happy to see her bright smile again (Frank E. Peretti, *Piercing the Darkness*).

The parenthesis "in any case" indicates the concluding idea that no matter what the reason for Jody's presence in the store was, Tom was happy to see her there. The paragraph begins with the citation of the fact that the girl in the store is Jody, then the author speculates on the reasons that brought her there, and then as a conclusion the character emphasizes that the only thing that matters is her bright smile. The parenthetical element, "in any case", here consolidates the structure of the text fragment and contributes to a better understanding of the scale of priorities in Tom's life.

"*Perhaps* the love is occasionally on the man's side, *perhaps* on the lady's. *Perhaps* some infatuated swain has ere this mistaken insensibility for modesty, dullness for maiden-reserve, mere vacuity for sweet bashfulness, and a goose, in a word, for a swan. *Perhaps* some beloved female subscriber has arrayed in ass in the splendor and glory of her imagination; admired his dullness as manly simplicity; worshipped his selfishness as manly superiority (…). I think I have seen such comedies of errors going on in the world. But this is certain that Amelia believed her lover to be one of the most gallant and brilliant men in the empire: and it is possible Lieutenant Osborne thought so too." (Frank E. Peretti, *Piercing the Darkness*)

The frequent repetition of the parenthesis "perhaps" is very significant in this text block, as it gradually prepares the reader for the last sentence which is inferred from the rest of the paragraph, bringing the reader to the main idea of the passage. The tension increases beginning with the first sentence of the fragment until it reaches the culminating point in the last sentence. Amelia's erroneous vision has no boundaries. It cannot be called even a comedy of errors, the author mentions, it is something grotesque, beyond human understanding, it is more than silly. The author leads the reader to the climax with the help of the parenthesis "perhaps", keeping in focus the most important information.

So, the parentheses used in the "text blocks" of the second level determine the relations of motivation between the units belonging to one paragraph, creating one unified logically arranged sequence of ideas.

Let's consider some examples of parentheses that unite different paragraphs in one discourse, marking the relations of motivation between two or more paragraphs which are situated in close contact with one another, forming "text blocks" of the third level. For example:

"Santinelli didn't need the answer he didn't get. He just replaced his reading glasses and went to the next sheet of paper. "Now for the complications - the real complications. *First of all*, the most obvious: Sally Beth Roe is alive…somewhere. She is living, breathing, walking about, and I'm sure totally cognizant of that there was a ruthless attempt on her life. If she doesn't know who was responsible, I'm sure she has a very good idea. And how am I so sure? Let me tell you the next complication. According to a reliable source who shall remain nameless, Alicia Von Bauer was wearing a ring when she committed - excuse me, tried to commit - the murder. At our request, the medical examiner

checked the body for that ring, and found that it had been removed from the third finger of the right hand with the help of cooking oil (…)

And then there is the matter of the ten thousand dollars. That is also gone, without a trace. Von Bauer may have placed it in a secret account somewhere, but that is unlikely, knowing the delicate nature of his mission." (Frank E. Peretti, *Piercing the Darkness*)

The arguments brought by the character are well systematized due to the formal introduction of the first parenthesis "first of all". This element creates the relations of motivation between the paragraph it belongs to and the next two paragraphs, thus connecting them within a text block. Although the parenthetical construction is used only in the first paragraph, it makes a logical association between the phrase "Let me tell you the next complication", its possible substitute "second", and consequently between "and then" and "third", even if some of them are omitted. It is evident that the dominant position in the motivational relations between the paragraphs belongs to the first one due to its parenthetical marker "first of all". It puts the beginning of an enumeration which follows. The following example represents the relations of motivation between the two succeeding paragraphs, both of them being marked.

"*And first*, in the security bred of many harmless marriages, it had been forgotten that Love is no hot-house flower, but a wild plant, born of a wet night, born of an hour of sunshine; sprung from wild seed, blown along the road by a wild wind. A wild plant that, when it blooms by chance within the hedge of our gardens, we call a flower; and when it blooms outside we call a weed, whose scent and color are always wild!

And further - the facts and figures of their own lives being against the perception of this truth - it was not generally recognized by Forsytes that, where this wild plant springs, men and women are but moths around the pale, flame-like blossom." (J. Galsworthy, *The Forsyte Saga*)

The connection between the two paragraphs is evident as both of them touch upon the same theme - the theme of love. The difference is in the fact that in the first paragraph we have a most beautiful definition of love, while in the second one the attempt is made to understand the notion of the Forsytes. The two parentheses help to the production of both grammatical and logical linkage between the two paragraphs, uniting them in a text block of the third level.

"The power of a good idea is that it dispels common confusions. Bernake's global savings glut is just such a notion. It helps explain (a) the huge U.S. trade deficits; (b) the weakness of the current economic recovery, and (c) the difficulty of doing anything about(a) and (b). *As a rule*, saving is good." (M. Hastings, *The Right Mix*)

The author of the article tries to prove that although saving is good, the problem of today's global economy is that people in many countries are saving too much and spending too little. He explains his position, and still he tries to see both the sides, not to run to extremes. In this case the parenthesis, "as a rule", is very appropriate, as it stands for the intended "It usually is good, but there should be measure in everything". This parenthesis unites the two paragraphs which show the different sides of the problem and it creates a bridge between them, uniting them in a text block.

The roles of parentheses in text cohesion are noticed in text blocks of the fourth level, where parentheses mark the relations of motivation, which are neither inferred from the connection between composed sentences within a paragraph, nor from the connections between the paragraphs which create one whole, but which unite different parts of the text in a common theme. "(…) the parenthetical elements due to their ability to pragmatically adequately and spontaneously correlate some fact or the knowledge of this fact with the opening of the theme of the discourse and with the goals of both the sender and the receiver of the information, are able to mark not only the connections between the components of a compound sentence, but also the relations of motivation between distantly situated paragraphs[5]. These relations are based upon the background knowledge of the text. For example:

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[5]Мецлер, 1987, p. 128.

"Am I making this clear to you? *To put it simply*, I can't afford it, monetarily or reputationally" (Frank E. Peretti, *Piercing the Darkness*).

The lawyer Corrigan has a long talk with the two Christians, Mark and Tom. He can't take up their case and he explains the reasons. He has just established a new policy in his office not to defend Christians anymore as they usually cannot pay for his services and, besides, the Christians are not credible in the court as they believe in God and in absolutes which is inadmissible from the point of view of law. Mark tries to prove his position and tries to persuade Corrigan to take up his case, but the lawyer stands firmly his ground and he refuses. At the end he says it plainly: "*To put it simply*, I can't afford it, monetarily or reputationally." This conversation runs on along seven pages of text. The parenthetical construction "to put it simply" refers to all of it, thus introducing one whole theme of the fragment under consideration, bringing clearance to the issue in question.

"*Fortunately*, both sides still seem deeply committed to peace" *(Z. Hussain, Getting Back on Track).*

The Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, and Indian Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, pledged to explore "all possible options for a peaceful, negotiated settlement", including the disputed territory of Kashmir. The article shows that not everything is settled yet, there are still problems to be solved, but, he draws the conclusion that "Fortunately, both sides still seem committed to peace." The parenthesis, "fortunately", introduces the rest of the sentence, which has the concluding function in the whole article, showing the real attitude of the high representatives of both countries.

So, all these examples prove that parentheses are very productive language units playing an important role in text cohesion. They can unite in one logical structure parts of a sentence, sentences within one paragraph, closely and distantly located paragraphs, which can be united by one theme and one idea. They categorically can not change their location or be removed within a text frame. So parentheses can become important elements in literary text analysis, as indicators of relations of cause and effect, of relations of motivation between parts of the text, helping to decode the themes and ideas, and to characterize the main characters.

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