

## A CROSS-LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF DECLARATIVE PARENTHETICALS IN ENGLISH AND ALBANIAN

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**ABSTRACT:** This article investigates the structure and function of declarative parentheticals in English and Albanian and identifies the equivalences and correspondences of English parentheticals when translated into Albanian. In terms of categorization, we follow the methodology of Huddleston and Pullum (2002) who consider parentheticals to be part of a special group called “supplements”, distinct both from coordination and subordination. For the comparative study, the method of cross-linguistic analysis was chosen. Using examples of literary and non-literary texts extracted from the Albanian National Corpus, we give arguments why parentheticals are neither preposed complements nor subordinate clauses. As a contribution to the study languages, this article offers an analysis of 30,000 words, which proves that the grammatical structures of the study languages affect the translation of parentheticals and their position in the clause. Parallel corpus data suggest that Albanian is richer in the ways parentheticals are expressed: as inverted parenthetical, null-subject parenthetical, and parenthetical with pronominal clitic. The default type of parentheticals in Albanian is, unlike English, inverted parenthetical, [verb]+[subject]. Between supplementation and integration, the former is preferred, whereas the most preferred structure to substitute parentheticals with in translation is reported speech.

**KEYWORDS:** Supplements, Reported Speech, Comment Clauses, Reporting Verbs, Preposing, Translation

### 1. Introduction

In spite of the work that has been produced on supplements in the last century, ambiguities about the nature of parentheticals still abound. From the older works of Delorme and Dougherty (1972) to the studies of De Vries and Heringa (2011), supplements have long been a puzzle for linguists worldwide. Given their challenging nature, this paper attempts to provide a description of a specific group of supplements – declarative parentheticals – in both study languages, English and Albanian. Further, it identifies the equivalences and correspondences of English parentheticals when translated into Albanian. In literature there are different structures called and considered to be supplements: content clauses, main clauses, sentence adverbials, nominal appositions, supplementary relative clauses, comment clauses, reporting verbs, and question tags, to mention a few (Dehe, 2007). Parentheticals, in our terms, are considered only question tags, comment clauses, and reporting verbs. We will investigate only the last two, as question tags, being interrogative in form, fall outside the scope of this article

### 2. Method

The present research puts forward three main questions:

- What is the relation of parentheticals with subordination and preposing in terms of structure and function?
- What are the equivalences and correspondences of English parentheticals in Albanian?
- In what ways do grammatical structures of English and Albanian affect the translation of parentheticals and their position in the clause?

In order to answer the research questions, the data were collected using two different corpora. Firstly, the theoretical description of Albanian parentheticals was supported by examples taken from the Albanian National Corpus (<http://web-corpora.net/AlbanianCorpus/>). Sentences containing parentheticals were randomly selected from both literary and non-literary texts and are presented under Section 3 below.

Secondly, given that there are no parallel corpora available for Albanian and English, we created a parallel corpus by analyzing 53 occurrences of parentheticals in English in George Orwell’s novel, *The Animal Farm* and their translation into Albanian (*Ferma e kafshëve*, translated by Arben Kallamata, 2006). When analyzing the data, particular patterns emerged in translation, which are discussed under Section 4 below.

### 3. Literature review

According to Burton-Roberts (2005, p.1), a parenthetical is an expression that “while in some sense ‘hosted’ by another expression [...], makes no contribution to the structure of [the host]”.



Being separated from the main clause, according to Albanian linguists, both these structures belong to the group of supplements (sometimes called parentheses, appositions). However, we consider as parentheticals only the second group because the structure and meaning is different from the first group. This is evident from the following example taken from the Albanian National Corpus (the translation is ours):

- [4] Kurse, Petrit Selimi, zëvendësministër i Jashtëm, nuk i duket se ky proces është vonuar, siç e thotë Pacolli. (Zëri, 24.03.2013)  
 “But to Petrit Selimi, Deputy Foreign Minister, it does not seem that this process has been delayed, as Pacolli says.”

In [3a] above, the supplement refers to the main clause, whereas in [4] the main clause does not refer to the words of the referent in the supplement. In fact, it points out the contrary, “Pacolli says that this process has been delayed”.

Similarly, Quirk et al. (1985) include both structures [3a] and [3b] into one group, which they call “comment clauses”. According to them, comment clauses are syntactically defective because they lack obligatory complementation. Semantically, they can express tentative meanings, speaker’s certainty, emotional attitude, etc.

#### 4. Parentheticals, reported speech, and preposing

Parentheticals are often referred to as comment clauses in the form of a main clause. Structurally, Quirk et al (1985) include within the comment clauses the reporting verbs as well. In fact, one of the main purposes of parentheticals is to report something. Example [5] below can be paraphrased as indirect speech as in [6] or as direct speech as in [7]:

**Table 1. Transformation of parenthetical into reported speech**

Parenthetical	[5] S’jam mirë, <i>mendoj</i> <sup>3</sup> . Not.am well, thought:3SG “I’m not well, <i>he thought.</i> ”
Indirect reported speech	[6] <i>Mendoj se s’është mirë.</i> Thought:3SG that not.is well “He thought that he is not well”
Direct reported speech	[7] <i>Mendoj: S’jam mirë.</i> Thought:3SG: Not.am well “He thought: I’m not well.”

Structurally, parentheticals differ from indirect speech because they lack the subordinator. The subordinator marks the reported speech as subordinate clause, and the reporting frame is superordinate to the reporting speech. In direct speech interpretation, this distinction is not so clear (Huddleston and Pullum, 2002). Besides the intonation, the structure is identical and resembles also to preposing, an information-packaging construction used to present the informational content differently without changing truth conditions or the illocutionary meaning:

- [8] a. Librin e tij ai ia dhuron kujt të dojë. [preposed direct object]  
 “His book he gives to whomever he wants.”  
 b. Ai ia dhuron librin e tij kujt të dojë. [basic construction]  
 “He gives his book to whomever he wants.”

The only syntactic difference between the basic construction and the preposed one is the linear order of constituents (Huddleston and Pullum, 2002). However, parentheticals must be distinguished

<sup>3</sup> Extracted from ANC: Ismail Kadare, “Gjenerali i Ushtrisë së Vdekur”

from preposed complements because they differ both in meaning and form. The pair of examples under [9a] and [9b] illustrate the contrast between a preposed complement and its basic construction, whereas [10a] and [10b] illustrate the contrast between a parenthetical and its basic construction.

[9a]	[preposed complement]	=	[9b]	[basic construction]
	Këtë ajo e dinte.			Ajo e dinte këtë.
	“This she knew”			“She knew this.”
[10a]	[parenthetical]	≠	[10b]	[basic construction]
	Shumë pak, mendoj unë.			Unë mendoj shumë pak.
	“very little, I think”			“I think very little”

If we put the parenthetical from [10a] into context, which is the following passage extracted from “Zëri” via Albanian National Corpus, it is clear that the main clause “shumë pak” (Eng. very few/little) is not a preposed complement of “mendoj unë”. In fact, it is anaphorically related to the preceding sentence, i.e. the number of Albanians.

- [11] Sa i përket kësaj, shtrohet pyetja sa shqiptarë njohim në parlamente të kantoneve? Shumë pak, *mendoj unë*.  
 “Regarding this, the question is how many Albanians do we know in the cantonal parliaments?  
 Very few, *I think*.”

Similarly, Quirk et al (1972) propose an alternative analysis, in which the reporting frame elements are better considered a subordinate clause instead of a preposed direct object. One argument that deduces the possibility of it being a direct object is that it can be placed in the middle of the direct speech. The proposed analysis of the above-mentioned authors is that the reporting frame constitutes “a dependent comment clause”. Heringa (2011) supports the idea of Raabe (1979) that appositive content represents a comment of the speaker, that is, it is always speaker-oriented. When the parenthetical is a comment of the appositive message, it cannot be transformed into direct speech<sup>4</sup>.

- [12] a. The agency interviewed Chuck, a psychopath, Sheila believes, just after his release from prison.  
 b. ≠ Sheila believes that the agency interviewed Chuck just after his release from prison.  
 c. Sheila believes that the agency interviewed Chuck, a psychopath, just after his release from prison.  
 d. ≠ Sheila believes that Chuck is a confirmed psychopath and that the agency interviewed Chuck just after his release from prison.

In [12a] the speaker attributes the message that Chuck is a psychopath to Sheila, whereas in [12c] that message is attributed to the speaker. The relation between the reporting frame and the direct reported speech, on the other hand, is that of dependency. The latter functions as a dependent clause of the main clause. It is expressed through grammatical means that mark dependency: subordinators, conjunctions, and intonation (Agalliu and Demiraj, 2002). The reporting frame is not marked by period, dash, or quotes, because the conjunctions make the reported speech part of the clause. The clause ends in question mark only when the matrix clause is a question. Another construction which ends in a question mark is when the whole sentence poses a question. Although “wonder” usually takes an interrogative content clause as complement, in [13] below, when functioning as part of the parenthetical, “wonder” can take an interrogative main clause as complement. If we reverse the order of the clauses in [14], we have an incorrect sentence:

- [13] Will he tell them, *I wonder*?  
 [14] \*I wonder will he tell them?

This occurs because the person uttering is wondering, not inquiring. These examples prove that parentheticals are not subordinate clauses. They are not syntactically related to the main clause.

<sup>4</sup> Examples are taken from Heringa (2011, p. 65)

Compared to the indirect reported speech, the embedded and non-embedded reported speech are not so clearly marked syntactically. Except for the punctuation, the form of the underlined reported speech is the same (Huddleston and Pullum, 2002, p. 1026):

- [15] a. She replied, “I live alone.” [Embedded]  
 b. “I live alone,” she replied. [Non-embedded]

In [14a] the reporting frame is superordinate to the reporting speech. Huddleston and Pullum (2002, p. 1026) argue in favor of this by the impossibility to subordinate the non-embedded construction:

- [16] a. I was taken aback when she replied, “I live alone”.  
 b. \*I was taken aback when “I live alone,” she replied.

In the embedded construction, the reporting frame does not constitute a syntactic constituent. “She” functions as subject whereas the reported speech functions as complement to the reporting verb “replied”. According to them, the reported speech, although a complement, is not a content clause or any other subordinate clause for that matter, as Quirk et al points out. It is called a “direct speech complement” which usually has the form of a main clause but can also have the form of a text.

### 5. Albanian translations of English parentheticals

Parentheticals are of special interest in translation because the internal structure of parentheticals in the study languages differ, as does their distribution. The collected data consists of more than 30,000 words, of which 53 sentences containing English declarative parentheticals are analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively when translated into Albanian. The basic internal structure of English parentheticals is [subject]+[verb]. Of all the parentheticals in our corpus, 71.70% were proper parentheticals in the source language, whereas the remaining 28.30% were inverted parentheticals<sup>5</sup> (See Table 2 below).

**Table 2. Albanian translations of English parentheticals**

Parentheticals in the source language (English)		Translation of parentheticals in the target language (Albanian)	
English parentheticals	Proper parentheticals (71.70%)	Reported speech	24.53%
		Inverted parenthetical	22.64%
		Supplementary adjunct	15.09%
		Null-subject parenthetical	5.66%
		Parenthetical with pronominal clitic	1.89%
		Non-finite clause	1.89%
	Inverted parentheticals (28.30%)	Inverted parentheticals	28.30%

Interestingly, only inverted parentheticals were translated identically in the target language. Consider the following pair of examples:

- [17] He fought bravely at the Battle of the Cowshed, *said somebody*.  
 Ai luftoi si trimat në Betejën e Stallave, *u hodh dikush*.

None of the English proper parentheticals, on the other hand, were translated identically in the target language. In fact, around 30% of proper English parentheticals were also inverted when translated

<sup>5</sup> Inverted parentheticals are parentheticals whose internal structure consist of [verb]+[subject]

in Albanian. This data suggests that, unlike English, the basic parenthetical in Albanian is [verb]+[subject]. We found no instances of Albanian parentheticals of the type [subject]+[verb] in our corpus. This English structure was either translated as inverted parenthetical (cf. [18]), null-subject parenthetical (cf. [19]), parenthetical with pronominal clitic (cf. [20]), main clause in reported speech (cf. [21]), or supplementary adjunct (cf. [22]). For illustration, below is listed how the most frequent English parenthetical found in our corpus, *He said*, is translated in Albanian:

- [18] Inverted parenthetical [verb]+[subject]  
 a. Comrades, *he said*, here is a point that must be settled.  
 b. Shokë, *tha ai*. Këtu ka diçka që duhet ta vendosim së bashku.
- [19] Null-subject parenthetical  
 a. He would end his remarks, *he said*, by emphasising once again the friendly feelings.  
 b. Do ta mbyll fjalën time, *tha*, duke theksuar edhe njëherë ndjenjat e miqësisë së mirë.
- [20] Parenthetical with pronominal clitic  
 a. Mollie, *she said*, I have something very serious to say to you.  
 b. Moli, *i tha*, kam diçka tepër të rëndësishme për të biseduar me ty.
- [21] Reported speech  
 a. In a moment, *he said*, he would ask the present company to drink a toast.  
 b. Ai tha se do t'i kërkonte të pranishmëve të ngrinin një dolli.
- [21] Supplementary adjunct  
 a. He had, *he said*, been present during Boxer's last hours.  
 b. Siç tha, ai kishte qenë vetë i pranishëm në çastet e fundit të Bokserit.

Albanian, being a null-subject language, does not need the beginning of the clause to be filled by the subject. As seen from the corpus examples, in 40% of the cases, English parentheticals are translated using other types of supplements or are even integrated into the main clause, that is, they are used in their non-parenthetical use. Between supplementation and integration, the former construction is preferred, whereas the most preferred structure to substitute parentheticals with is reported speech. This is not a surprise given that English parentheticals, as Dehe (2007, p. 1) points out, “often convey the attitude of the speaker towards the content of the utterance, and/or the degree of speaker endorsement”. This attitude of the speaker can easily be expressed using the reported speech. However, as our theoretical analysis proves, the syntactic structure of these incomplete main clauses in their parenthetical and non-parenthetical use differs significantly. Although the translator has chosen to express the speaker’s attitude and endorsement via non-parenthetical constructions, this choice was not always a stylistic one. In some cases, if the structure of the parenthetical had not changed, the sentence in Albanian would have been ungrammatical. In [22], for example, retaining the original structure would lead to ungrammaticality because, as mentioned earlier, Albanian does not allow parentheticals to be positioned between the auxiliary verb and the rest of the predicate:

- [23] \*Ai kishte, *ai tha*, qenë vetë i pranishëm në çastet e fundit të Bokserit.”  
 “He had, *he said*, been present during Boxer's last hours.”

Our corpus suggests that other structures are preferred to parentheticals especially when the same referent of the matrix clause is subject of the parenthetical in the source language. In such cases the matrix clause is either transformed into direct speech as in [24] or imbedded and used as a reporting frame in the matrix clause as in [25].

- [24] He did not believe, *he said*, that any of the old suspicions still lingered.  
 “Nuk besoj”, *tha ai*, “se ende mund të vazhdojnë dyshimet e dikurshme”.
- [25] He too, *he said*, was happy that the period of misunderstanding was at an end.  
 Tha se ishte i lumtur që periudhës së keqkuptimeve i kishte ardhur fundi.

### 5.1. Position of parentheticals in English and Albanian

With regard to the position, parentheticals can either interrupt the anchor or follow it. The first is known as interpolation, the second as appendage. Based on our data, Albanian parentheticals are typically found: after a clause (cf. [26]) between coordination of clauses (cf. [27]), and between a verb and its complement (cf. [28]):

- [26] After a clause  
Ndoshta e kanë vra apo helmue, *mendoj*<sup>6</sup>.  
“Maybe he was killed or poisoned, *he thought*.”
- [27] Between coordination of clauses  
Asnjë përfitim afatgjatë, *mendoj*, dhe sigurisht asnjë nder.<sup>7</sup>  
“No long-term benefit, I think, and certainly no favor.”
- [28] Between a verb and its complement  
Kadareja ka bërë, *mendoja*, xhestin më të guximshëm, gati një çmenduri.<sup>8</sup>  
“Kadare has made, I thought, the boldest gesture, almost a madness.”

With regard to the position, both English and Albanian prefer interpolation (84.90% and 58.06%, respectively) rather than appendage (15.10% and 41.94%, respectively). Table 3 below illustrates the position of English and Albanian parentheticals in our corpus. The number of Albanian parentheticals (31 in total) is lower than English (53 in total) because the remaining 22 occurrences of English parentheticals were not translated as parentheticals at all in Albanian; therefore, they are not included herein.

**Table 3. Position of English and Albanian parentheticals**

Study language	No. of interpolations and appendages	%	Total
English	45 interpolations	84.90	53 English parentheticals
	8 appendages	15.10	
Albanian	18 interpolations	58.06	31 Albanian parentheticals
	13 appendages	41.94	

One pattern that kept repeating when analyzing the position of English parentheticals in our corpus was that in 20% of cases the translator chose to change the original position of English parenthetical from interpolation (middle of the clause) to appendage (end of the clause). This happened when the parenthetical was followed by a main clause (cf. [29]). The only time when the original position of interpolation was retained was when the parenthetical was followed by a subordinate clause, in which case starting a new sentence after the parenthetical would be ungrammatical (cf. [30]).

- [29] Comrade, *said Snowball*, those ribbons that you are so devoted to are the badge of slavery.  
Shoqe, *tha Snoubolli*. Këto kordele që ti i ke kaq për zemër janë simbol i skllavërisë.
- [30] Now, comrades, *cried Snowball*, throwing down the paint-brush, to the hay field!  
Dhe tani, shokë, *tha Snoubolli* duke e flakur tutje furçën e bojës, Drejt livadhit!

<sup>6</sup> Example taken from ANC: Ibrahim Berisha, “Gruaja e vetmisë”, 1998.

<sup>7</sup> Example taken from ANC: Ilir Ikonimi, Faik Konica. Jeta në Uashington, 2011.

<sup>8</sup> Example taken from ANC: Maks Velo, Kohë antishenjë, 1990–1999

## 5.2. Voice of parentheticals in English and Albanian

In English, parentheticals were found both in active and passive voice, although the active was significantly more frequent (92.45%). There were no passive parentheticals in Albanian. All passive parentheticals of the source language were translated as passive reported speech (cf. [31]).

[31] Every night, *it was said*, he came creeping in under cover of darkness and performed all kinds of mischief.

Thuhej se ai vinte çdo natë, nën perden e errësirës dhe kryente lloj-lloj aktesh sabotimi.

## 6. Conclusions

Parentheticals constitute a special group of supplements, which structurally resemble to main clauses in that they have a subject and a predicate of their own but their structure is incomplete due to the lack of verb complements. Parentheticals differ from both indirect speech and preposing. Both these differences, as the study suggests, concern the fact that parentheticals are not syntactically related to the main clause.

This article proves that despite the similar characteristics, there are differences in the internal structure of these constructions in the study languages, which are then reflected in translation. These differences occur due to the different grammatical structures that English and Albanian have. English, being a language with stricter word order expresses parentheticals using the same structure of [subject]+[verb]. Albanian, on the other hand, can form parentheticals using different structures, such as: (1) inverted parentheticals, (2) null-subject parentheticals (where the verb ending carries the grammatical properties of number and person), and (3) parentheticals with pronominal clitic, although based on the corpus data the latter type is less frequent.

In spite of the range of Albanian parentheticals, almost half of the English parentheticals are translated using other types of supplements or are even integrated into the main clause. In order to convey the meaning of English parentheticals, one of the following structures is preferred: reported speech, supplementary adjuncts, and non-finite clauses.

When it comes to position, interpolation is the preferred position in both English and Albanian. The distribution, however, differs significantly. Albanian uses parentheticals as appendages almost three times more than English does.

This paper gives an insight on the structure and function of parentheticals in the study languages by discussing the identities, similarities, and differences thereof. However, since this paper describes only parentheticals translated from English into Albanian, it should be taken into account the impact that English as a source language could have had in the target language.

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