Parentheticals associate with their hosts pragmatically, not syntactically: Evidence from \( as \)-parentheticals

**SUMMARY:** I argue that the principles operative in the semantic composition of a parenthetical \( P \) with its host \( H \) are pragmatic in nature, and do not require a syntactic analysis in which the \( P \) is syntactically integrated into its \( H \). This result supports “unintegrated” approaches to \( Ps \)’ syntax, (Haegeman 2009; Ott 2016). The empirical basis for these claims comes from the interpretation of \( as \)-parentheticals (\( asPs \)) in English (building on work by Potts, 2002; 2005).

**BACKGROUND:** The interpretation of a \( P \) appears to be determined by a form of composition with the \( H \) in which the \( P \) appears. To illustrate, consider (1), in which as you know is the \( asP \). I argue against (ii), the integrated aspect of Potts’s proposal (while maintaining much of the rest of his analysis), by pointing out that, in fact, the \( asP \) (in (2a)) can associate with either CP1 or CP2 when occupying any of the three positions (in (2b)). The reason Potts found that the \( asP \) could not refer to CP2 in positions \( i \) and \( j \) is that he did not consider the effect of Maximize Presupposition! (\( MP! \); attributed to Heim, 1991, in e.g. Schlenker, 2012). \( MP! \) requires that a sentence overtly realize the presuppositions motivated in a given context. Thus, if a given contrast can be overtly presupposed, it must be. I note that when \( MP! \) is satisfied in (2) through the addition of yourselves in (2a′) (presupposing a contrast between the speaker and the subject of the \( H \)), the \( asP \) can associate with CP2 in either position \( i \) or position \( j \). As was mentioned above, the \( asP \) can be a sister to CP2 in neither position \( i \), nor (Potts argues) in position \( j \). Assuming this, we cannot maintain an analysis within which association with CP2 is permitted under syntactic sisterhood between \( asP \) and CP.

To explain these facts (and others explained below), I reject the hypothesis that \( asP \)-association depends on syntactic composition with the \( H \). Instead, \( asP \)-association takes place through pragmatic principles.

**EMPIRICAL CONTRIBUTIONS:** I argue against (ii), the integrated aspect of Potts’s proposal (while maintaining much of the rest of his analysis), by pointing out that, in fact, the \( asP \) (in (2a)) can associate with either CP1 or CP2 when occupying any of the three positions (in (2b)). The reason Potts found that the \( asP \) could not refer to CP2 in positions \( i \) and \( j \) is that he did not consider the effect of Maximize Presupposition! (\( MP! \); attributed to Heim, 1991, in e.g. Schlenker, 2012). \( MP! \) requires that a sentence overtly realize the presuppositions motivated in a given context. Thus, if a given contrast can be overtly presupposed, it must be. I note that when \( MP! \) is satisfied in (2) through the addition of yourselves in (2a′) (presupposing a contrast between the speaker and the subject of the \( H \)), the \( asP \) can associate with CP2 in either position \( i \) or position \( j \). As was mentioned above, the \( asP \) can be a sister to CP2 in neither position \( i \), nor (Potts argues) in position \( j \). Assuming this, we cannot maintain an analysis within which association with CP2 is permitted under syntactic sisterhood between \( asP \) and CP.

To explain these facts (and others explained below), I reject the hypothesis that \( asP \)-association depends on syntactic composition with the \( H \). Instead, \( asP \)-association takes place through pragmatic principles.

Note that such a pragmatic process is necessitated for examples like (3) and (4), in which, clearly, the \( asP \) is not syntactically integrated with (let alone a sister of) its associate.

(3) Speaker A: I’m late!
   Speaker B: \textbf{As I predicted.}
   (=B predicted A would be late)

(4) a. I hate tea, but love coffee. In addition, I loathe energy drinks, \textbf{as should all be obvious by the end of my visit.}
   (=That I hate tea, that I love coffee, and that I loathe energy drinks will all be obvious…)
   b. Caesar crossed the Rubicon in September 49 BC. He proceeded to wage a civil war, and declared himself dictator in 45 BC, \textbf{as is quite well documented.}
   (=That Caesar crossed the Rubicon in 49 BC, waged a civil war, and declared himself dictator in 45 BC are all well-documented)

In (3), the \( asP \) stands on its own, and associates with material supplied by another speaker. In (4), the \( asP \)

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1 I address semantic integration only here, having nothing novel to say about how syntactically unintegrated \( Ps \) are linearized with their hosts. On this issue I follow McInerney (2019) in assuming that an unintegrated \( P \) can be linearized by being shuffled freely between the phonological phrases of its host.
associates with more than just the \( H \) in which it appears; it also associates with the *preceding* sentence in the discourse. (3) and (4) show that an *asP* can associate with linguistic material with which that *asP* has no syntactic relation (a preceding sentence in (4) and another speaker’s utterance in (3)). Thus, there must be a mechanism by which the meaning of the gap in the *asP* can be supplied pragmatically. (In this way, the interpretation of *asPs* has parallels with the interpretation of *only*, which, according to Rooth (1985; 1992), combines crucially with a variable whose value is supplied pragmatically.)

**PROPOSAL & ADVANTAGES:** Fortunately, the mechanisms for such pragmatic association exist independently: pronouns can be interpreted across discourse. I propose to account for the interpretation of *asPs* using the principles of inter-sentential anaphora resolution by reanalyzing Potts’s null operator as a null pronoun of type \( \langle \text{st} \rangle \). We can then understand the association of *asPs* as depending on the value pragmatically assigned to this pronoun. So, the syntax and semantics of an *asP* like (1) is \[ \text{asP} \ \text{⟨st⟩} \text{C} [\text{TP you know t₀ }]}, \] where \( \emptyset \) is a null pronoun, the antecedent of which is constrained by the following principle:

(5) The antecedent of \( \emptyset \) is a constituent of type \( \langle \text{st} \rangle \) containing a Nuclear Pitch Accent (NPA)

Note that the requirement that the associate of \( \emptyset \) contain an NPA resembles a similar requirement with *only*, whose associate must also contain an NPA. This definition accounts for the possible interpretations in (2) because both CP₁ and CP₂ share an NPA on *blast*. (As I discussed above, the apparent restrictions observed by Potts (2002) can be explained by *MP!*.) This approach also explains the possible associations in (6), where the *asP* can associate with CP₁ in all three of \( i, j, \) and \( k \), but can associate with CP₂ in only position \( j \). This is because CP₁ contains an NPA on *known* no matter which position the *asP* appears in, but CP₂ contains an NPA only when the *asP* appears in position \( j \), forcing the \( H \) to form two distinct Intonational Phrases, each with its own NPA.

(6) a. \[ \text{asP as they announced} \]

b. \[ \text{asP that space has four dimensions} \text{ as widely known} \]

(adapted from Potts, 2002b:644ex48)

**COMPARISON TO OVERT PRONOUNS:** A prediction of my approach is that, in principle, some overt pronoun could associate with its antecedent in the same way as the null pronoun hypothesized in *asPs*. We find just such a pronoun in *this* when it appears in a CP argument position. If we replace the *asP* in (2a’) and (6a) with the Full-clausal *P you know this (yourself)*, we find that the overt pronoun *this* has the same distribution as the hypothesized null pronoun in the respective *asPs*. I.e. in (2b) it can refer to either CP₁ or CP₂ in all three positions (given that *MP!* is properly satisfied), and in (6b) it can refer to CP₁ in all three positions, but to CP₂ in only position \( j \). This parallel constitutes strong evidence that the same principles are at work in the interpretation of both constructions, i.e. full clausal *Ps* containing the overt pronoun *this*, and *as*-parentheticals containing a gap (a null pronoun according to my analysis).

**ADVANTAGES:** This approach has a number of advantages. First, it has increased empirical coverage (see (2) and (3)/(4)). Second, it is compatible with unintegrated approaches to *Ps*’ syntax, allowing a straightforward account of *Ps*’ invisibility to c-command (as extensively documented by de Vries, 2007). Third, Potts shows that if an *asP* is syntactically integrated, then it must adjoin to either CP or v(*P*); my approach eliminates this (unexplained) atypical disjunction. Fourth, my approach naturally captures the parallel pointed out above with the overt pronoun *this* when it appears in a full-clausal *P*.