Delayed self-repairs as a structuring device for complex turns in conversation[*]

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Abstract

This paper looks into the interactional basis of the grammatical format of parentheticals. It will be argued that such a basis can be found in abandoned or broken off units of talk in conversation which are not immediately recycled (repaired) but whose activity status is attended to at some later point of the emerging talk. These abandoned/broken off units, then, are not erased or "overwritten" by the subsequent structure, but their projectional force remains valid and needs to be attended to by recipients. On the interactional plane, the paper focuses on those post-break-off structures which introduce subsidiary elements of talk (often materials qualifying or specifying the upcoming main point of the turn) and after which the speaker returns or attempts to return into the broken-off/abandoned structure.

1   Introduction

Conversation analysis and interactional linguistics share an interest in the temporal unfolding

of units of speech in time. Nonetheless, the temporality of speech is still little understood.

Psycholinguistic research, which is more advanced in this respect, provides evidence that our

memory for on-line syntactic processing is limited; far-reaching syntactic projections in time

tend to fail, both in production and reception (cf. Dijkstra & Kempen 1993, Townsend &

Bever 2001). The same cannot be said of our pragmatic memory; although possibly distorted,

pragmatic experiences can be kept in memory for a long time. We tend to remember *what*

somebody said (and above all, what s/he meant by it, i.e. what kind of action was performed),

but not *how* it was said. Our memory seems to disattend form, and it is for this reason that

Charles Hockett listed "rapid fading" among the "design features" of (spoken) language

(Hockett & Altmann 1968). But how long exactly can we store linguistic structures in

memory? One way of answering the question (chosen by psycholinguists) is to look at

complex syntax (center-embedding constructions or the like) and analyse at what point and

under what conditions speakers and hearers fail to process it adequately. Another way, chosen

in this paper, is to ask whether participants in an interactional encounter make use of the

formal structure of speech events in the more or less distant 'conversational past' for their

present formulations. It is beyond question from such a point of view that syntactic form *can*

remain relevant beyond the termination of a syntactic construction (i.e., after a syntactic

projection has been dealt with); it does so, for instance, in some so-called elliptical utterances

which can only be understood if they are processed against the background of a prior

syntactic construction. Often, but not always, it is the immediately preceding utterance which

provides the structure on which the 'elliptical' follow-up is modeled, be it produced by the

same or another speaker. However, speakers can also refer back to non-adjacent utterance

parts, as in the following example:[1]

(1) (('Big Brother'/German Reality TV show))

```
01    Sbr:      lebensmittel weg das is ne SÜNde.

                food          away that  is  a    sin.

                throwing food away is a sin

02  → Jrg:      also das mag=isch au nisch.

                well  that  don't  I   like  either

                well I don't like that either.

03    Sbr:      nee-

                no:

04    Jrg:      da werd=isch au fuchsteufelswild.

                there become I    also  really-mad

                it really drives me mad.

05    Adr:      die uta au nich.

                the   Uta   also not.

                Uta as well.
```

The syntactic structure of Jürgen's utterance in line 02 _das mag isch au nisch_ provides the

pattern on which Andrea builds her own utterance (line 05) _die uta_ ('ellipsis': _mag das) auch_

nich.[2] What mechanisms exactly of 'ellipsis' in German syntax are responsible for the fact

that it is possible to build one utterance on the pattern of another, and to hear them as being

related, is not an issue here but has been described in detail by syntacticians (cf. for German,

e.g., Klein 1993). But since Andrea's utterance is two turns away from Jürgen's original

utterance, there is evidence that coparticipants keep in mind syntactic patterns at least for a

short time.

Another syntactic format in which past syntactic events need to be kept in memory in order to process future ones are parentheticals in which the post-parenthetical continuation continues to pre-parenthetical beginning without retracting into it:

(2) ((job interview))

```
01   I:    <<acc> es Is natürlich immer SO;> (1.0)
                 it   is  of-course   always  like-that
                 of course it's always like that


02   →           .h als klEIne regioNALbank, (-)
                     as    small     regional-bank
                  for a small regional bank

03                auch w:enn denn ab und zU immer noch ma:l- (.)
                  even  though PART now and then always  once (in a) while

                  n=paar geGRÜNdet werden,
                  a couple  founded      are
                  even though now and then one is founded

04                hat man das schOn SCHWER;
                  has  one  it   PART  difficult
                  it is rather difficult

05                im  [europäischen WETTbewerb.
                  in-the European         competition
                  among the European competitors.

06   B:                [h:m,
```

The interviewer in this job interview self-interrupts in line 02 after the noun phrase *als kleine Regionalbank*; after a parenthetically inserted concessive clause in line 03, he continues the

interrupted clause with the finite verb due after the initial noun phrase (05). Again, both speaker and recipient need to build on the utterance in line 02 in order to process that in line 04, i.e. the former cannot be deleted immediately since the latter reuses it structurally. As in the case of 'ellipsis', the phenomenon provides evidence that language users keep formal aspects of utterances in memory for some time since they need them for the interpretation of future conversational events.

In this paper, I will deal with delayed self-repairs of which (2) is a special case in more detail. The question I want to ask is: when a speaker self-interrupts and thus produces a fragment of talk (i.e. an utterance that does not constitute a well-formed syntactic gestalt), under what conditions can recipients overwrite this fragment and when do they need to keep it in memory for further processing?

2   The phenomenon: delayed self-repairs

In conversational German (but presumably in other languages as well), a recurrent pattern is this: an emerging syntactic pattern is broken off by the speaker; he or she then starts a new turn constructional unit (TCU) which introduces a different line of thought, subtopic, or argument; after having finished this, the same speaker returns to the broken-off structure and recycles it syntactically and/or semantically.[3] In the course of this delayed repair, a complete (turn constructional) unit is produced. Extract (3) is an example in which the delayed repair of the fragment is easy to recognise on formal grounds:

(3) ((father M and daughter F, telephone conversation, father is caller))

```
01    M:     ja und (-) is MAMmi da?
              yes and       is mommy there
```

and (-) mommy is at home?

02   F: nein die is NICHT da;

no   she is   not   there

no she isn't;

03   M: bist du   kurz   nachHAUse gekommen?

did   you   briefly   home   come

so you briefly came home?

04   F: ja (.)

yes

→05   ich hab ihr jetzt grad=n=

I   have   her now   just= a:CLIT

I just left her a

06   =weil sie hatte gesagt ich soll mal hEimkommen oder,

because she had   said   I   shall PART come-home   TAG

because she said I should come home, right?

07   [(hoffentlich) is sie jetzt nich DAgewesen.=

(hopefully)   has she PART not   there-been

(I hope) she hasn't been here (already)

08   M: [ja SEHR schön

yes very nice

→09   F: =jetzt, hab ich ihr n=   ZETtel   hingeschrieben;

now   have I   to-her a:CLIT =note written

I left her a note now

```
10    M:    ja is  auch RICHtig

            yes is    PART  correct

            yes that was right
```

The father (M) has called his teenage daughter (F) when she has just come home from celebrating carneval in the streets of a southwest German town but is going to leave again soon. After the father has mentioned the mother in 01, and reformulated the daughter's previous statement (not shown in the extract) that she dropped in at home in 03, the daughter starts a turn constructional unit in 05 (*jetzt hab ich ihr grad=n,* 'I just left her (i.e., the mother) a...') which remains incomplete in many ways: syntactically, it lacks the obligatory non-finite form of the verb, in this case a participle which can be predicted on the basis of the auxiliary *hab(en)* as well as, on a lower level of syntactic structure/projection, the object noun due after the clitic indefinite article *n* (clitic form of *ein* 'a'); prosodically, it is marked as incomplete by hovering intonation and the lack of a nuclear pitch movement, and semantically, it is hearably unfinished since we do not know what the daughter 'just did'. Note, however, that in all three domains – syntax, prosody and semantics – certain continuations can be projected;[4] syntactically, a noun is predictable, which in turn will be followed by a right brace non-finite verb form;[5] prosodically, a nuclear accent will follow, and semantically, '...left a note' is in the given context more or less predictable. Having thus abandoned a turn constructional unit at a point at which numerous projections are in play, the daughter starts a new unit which gives a *weil*-prefaced account ('because, she said I should come home'). It is not entirely clear whether this utterance gives an account of why the daughter 'did come home briefly' or of why 'she just left her (... a note)' at this point. (We will return to this issue in section 4 below.) In overlap with the father's enthusiastic but somewhat paternalizing agreement in 08 (*ja sehr schön*) the daughter expresses her concern that the mother might have been home before in 07; in that case, her note would have come too late to prove that she has complied

with the mother's request. Only after that does she return to the broken-off TCU in line 05

and recycles most parts of it in what now becomes a well-formed syntactic, prosodic and

semantic unit in line 09 (*jetzt hab ich ihr n \ Zettel hingeschrieben*). Self-repair is <u>delayed</u> by

one turn-constructional unit which intervenes between the reparandum and the repair itself.

The fragment and the recycled/completed version can easily be linked to each other on

formal grounds, since the speaker re-uses the lexical materials of the former in the latter (with

the exception of the particle grad, all words are repeated). The only difference is that within

the same syntactic pattern, two constituents change places: while the personal pronoun ich

was sentence-initial (i.e. in the pre-verbal position) in the first version, the adverb jetzt takes

its place in the second version, moving the pronoun into post-verbal position:
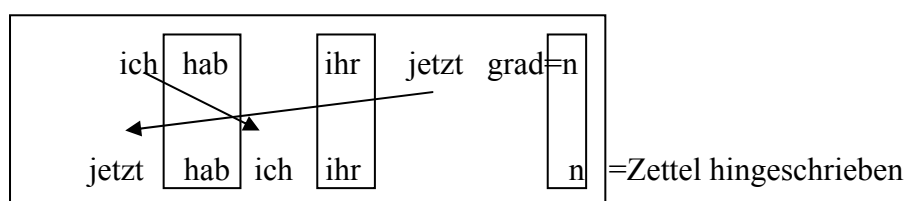
We therefore have good structural grounds in order to identify the reparandum and the

repair. But what is the semantic relationship between the two? As has been shown many times

in conversation analysis (starting with Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks 1977), repair work does

not necessarily imply correction of a mistake. In repair, some speaker retracts to a prior point

in the utterance or sequence and 're-does' it. This also applies to the present case. Arguably,

speaker F does not aim at correcting some faulty word or construction in this example;

otherwise it would be hard to explain that she repeats the first part of the construction in an

almost identical way. Rather, the format of a delayed self-repair in this cases relates to the

linearisation problem in language: how to translate complex, hierarchically structured

information into the linearity of speech. The daughter can be heard to break off her first report on what she did on the grounds that this report came too early, i.e. at a point in which her recipient would have needed some subsidiary information in order to understand what she is about to say. More concrete: telling the father that 'she left a note' for her mother is no relevant news unless he knows that she had promised the mother to come home inbetween. So even when 'because she said I should come home' is understood as an account of why the daughter did come home, it is at the same time necessary to know about the mother's wish in order to understand why the daughter left her a note.

One could argue (and it has been argued, cf. Zimmermann 1965, Givón 1988) that in spontaneous speech speakers are caught in a permanent cognitive conflict between, on the one hand, the tendency to formulate first what to them appears to be the most important information (which in the present case would for the daughter be the fact that she has just left a message for the mother), and, on the other hand, the necessity to establish common ground on which this information can be processed (understood and appreciated) by the recipient (in this case, the information that the mother had asked the daughter to come home briefly). According to this view, the break-off and delayed repair would reflect some kind of dilemma about what is the most urgent business to attend to at that moment of the conversation. The shift from a speaker-oriented to a hearer-oriented perspective would leave a trace in the speaker's speech production - the repair phenomenon - , but essentially take place in the speaker's mind. For the recipient, the resulting break-off would be irrelevant at best, at worst it would render the utterance messy, thereby impeding understanding. As a consequence, it would seem to be a reasonable strategy for the recipient to delete such broken-off materials from cache memory immediately. And indeed, it is possible in the present case to arrive at a well-formed sequence after such a deletion:

```
        M:     and (-) mommy is at home?
```

```
F:     no she isn't;

M:     so you briefly came home?

F:     yes (.)

       because she said I should come home right?

       [(I hope) she hasn't been (already)

M:     [ yes very good

F:     I left her a note

M:     yes that was right
```

In this paper, I will propose a different view. It starts from the linearity problem in language as well, but it looks at it, not in terms of the speaker's cognitive processing, but in terms of speaker-hearer interaction in the on-line production of conversational speech. More precisely, I will argue that it can be useful for the recipient not to delete structural fragments of memory immediately but to monitor the speaker's production with some time-depth; and that for the speaker, delayed self-repairs can be a technique for structuring complex turns.

3   On-line syntax and syntactic break-offs

In spontaneous speech, fragments of TCUs occur quite frequently. Roughly following Jasperson (2002) and Selting (2001), they can be classified (a) by the way in which the speaker continues after the broken-off/abandoned fragment, and (b) by the way in which the non-continuation of the emerging pattern is locally organised. Disregarding syntactically complete but otherwise incomplete utterances which are outside the scope of this paper, the first criterion gives a three-fold classification:

- the present speaker may repair the syntactic structure immediately after the break-off by retracting either to its beginning or to some suitable point in it;

- the present speaker may continue the broken off structure without retraction;

- or, if neither of these possibilities are chosen, the present speaker may quit the syntactic structure entirely.

The second criterion provides an additional two-fold classification between cut-offs, in which the non-continuation of an emergent structure is marked (in English as in German) by segmental phonetic means (particularly by glottalisation, Jasperson's "closure cut-off", according to the GAT system transcribed by ʾ in the following), by prosodic means (non-complete phrasing plus prosodic reset) and/or by the use of certain particles/repair markers, and abandonments in which no such cues occur. Schematically:

	CUT-OFF	ABANDONMENT
QUIT	√	√
RETRACT	√	√
CONTINUE	√	

Fig. (1): A simple model for dealing with fragments in conversation

(Continuations offer no choice between abandonment and cut-off since only a hearable break-off justifies speaking of a fragment.)

The following examples illustrate some of these possibilities:

(i) quit/abandon

(4) ((bulimia therapy session; Swabian dialect))

```
01    A:    s=isch aber SO:, (2.0)
```

```
          it is       however so
          but it is like this
→02       dass i des IT unbedingt so- (1.0)
          that i that not necessarily so
          that I always like
03        gefÜhl setz i man(ch)mo GLEICH mit eme GRUND zum esse; (2.0)
          feelings   do   I  sometimes   equate   with a     reason for eating
          I sometimes equate feelings with a reason for eating
```

The abandoned TCU is syntactically, prosodically and semantically incomplete, although hovering intonation markes the point of abandonment. Neither the proposition (or any other which is compatible with this TCU fragment) follows, nor is the syntactic construction taken up immediately or later in the conversation. The break-off itself is not marked locally by glottal constriction on the last segment.

(ii) cut-off/retraction

(5) ((Big Brother - reality TV show))

```
01     Sbr: sladdi und thomas     warn     auf de:rˀ
            (name)   and  (name)   were      on    the
            Sladdi and Thomas were  on   theːˀ

02                                warn     nominiert. ne,
                                  were      nominated.  see?
                                  were       nominated. you see?
```

The break-off of the emerging syntactic pattern is marked by elongation and glottal constriction on *der*. The speaker then retracts to the left sentence brace constituent (the finite verb *war(e)n* 'were', marked by the box) and brings the TCU to completion, replacing *auf der...* by *nominiert*.

(iii) cut-off /continuation

(6) ((job interview))

```
01   I:    <<acc>ich weiß jetzt    zwar=im=moment NICH ob   sie'> (1.0)
                 I    know    right-now  PART in-the moment not   whether  you
             right now I don't know whether you' (1.0)
02            sich (.) in ROStock, oder in schweRIN,
              yourself       in Rostock,     or    in Schwerin,
              applied in Rostock, or in Schwerin,
03            oder in HAMburg beworben haben, (.)
              or     in  Hamburg  applied   have
              or in Hamburg
```

In this example, the speaker cuts off the syllable *sie* by glottal constriction, but continues to produce the projected TCU nonetheless, without retraction.

The model of Fig. (1) cannot deal with delayed repairs as in extract (3), however, in which the options 'quit' and 'retract' are combined, nor with parenthetical insertions as in extract (2), in which the option 'abandon' is combined with 'continue'. In order to capture such cases, a temporal dimension has to be included. *Immediate* recycling of a broken-off structure (the option 'retract immediately') overwrites (deletes) the reparandum, such that the fragment can be disregarded for further on-line processing of the meaning of the emerging utterance by the recipient.[6] But this possibility of instant erasure is not available for cut-offs and

abandonments which are <u>not</u> immediately followed by a repair of the fragment, but may be dealt with through *delayed* recycling (ex. (3)) or a *delayed* continuation (ex. (2)). The recipient has to keep these fragments in mind since they may foreshadow what the speaker is about to say at a later point. This is obvious for 'smooth' post-parenthetical continuations as in (2), but it also holds for recyclings as in (3). Here, the repetition of the materials preceding the insertion may help a 'forgetful' recipient to retract to the precise syntactic position in which the emerging syntactic construction begins; however, there is no way for the recipient to predict whether the speaker will choose the option of 'retraction' or that of 'continuation'. In addition, as will be argued below, the fragment plays an important role for indicating that a complex subject matter (often in an extended turn) is under production and is therefore highly functional in foreshadowing some non-next utterance.

From the point of view of the on-line processing then, a more adequate model is that of Fig. (2) – next page - which summarises the recipient's options for recognising and dealing with repair.
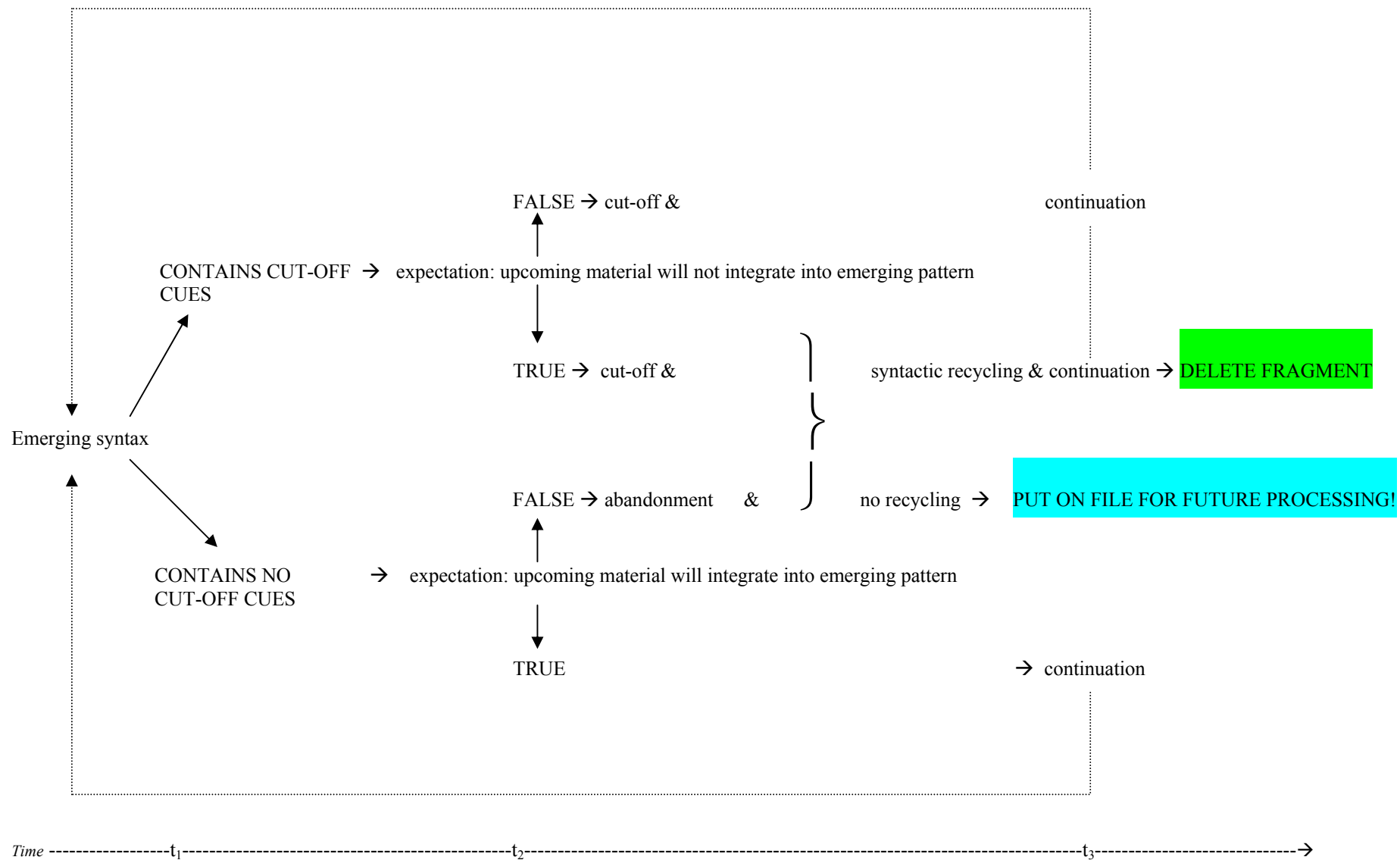
FALSE → cut-off &   continuation

CONTAINS CUT-OFF →   expectation: upcoming material will not integrate into emerging pattern
CUES

TRUE → cut-off &   syntactic recycling & continuation → DELETE FRAGMENT

Emerging syntax

FALSE → abandonment   &   no recycling → PUT ON FILE FOR FUTURE PROCESSING!

CONTAINS NO   →   expectation: upcoming material will integrate into emerging pattern
CUT-OFF CUES

TRUE   → continuation

Time ------------------t₁--t₂--t₃--------------------------→

Fig. (2)

4   The directionality of delayed self-repairs

At this point, a basic distinction needs to be introduced. The format of delayed self-repairs can be retrospectively oriented; in this case, the materials inserted after the break-off and before the repair in some way or other elaborate or correct materials produced *before* the fragment. Or it can be prospectively oriented; in this case, the materials inserted after the break-off lay the ground for, contextualise, frame etc. what is going to come *after*.

The retrospective type is exemplified by the following extracts:

(7) ((bulimia therapy group session))

```
01    M:    weil .h ich ess auch MEIStens SO viel
            because  I    eat   PART mostly    so  much
            because .h mostly I eat so much

02          bis=es    mir   rIchtig  WEHtut. (0.5)
            until it  to-me really   hurts.
            until it really hurts.

→03         ich kann da    SELten
            I    can   there   rarely
            I can rarely

04          Oder bis  des gAnze zEUg das   ich mir   gekAUft hab WEG is.
            or       until  that whole  stuff which I   for-me bought   have gone  is.
            or until the whole stuff which I bought is gone.

→05         .h und ich kann da    sElten vorher AUFhörn.=
               and  I   can   there  rarely   before  stop.
```
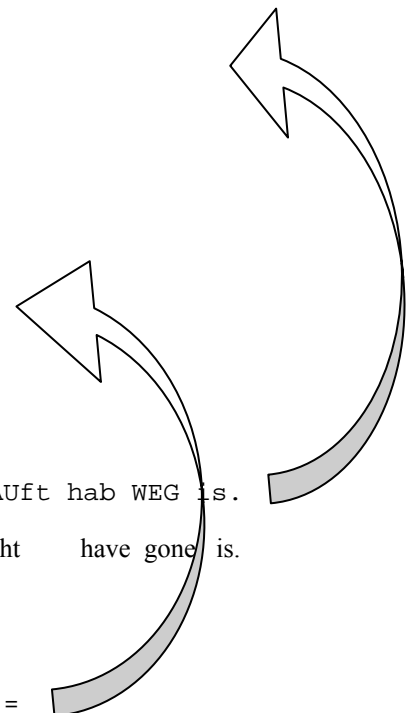
and I can rarely stop before that

(8)   ((job interview, interviewer I talks about the fusion of his own bank

       with another one which in his opinion was a friendly take-over in

       order to avoid an unfriendly one. The old state of affairs was not as

       positive as it may have looked like, since:))

01   I: <<f>das birgt immer die geFAHR?> (-) .hh e:hm (.)
                 this   includes always the   danger?
                 this ((i.e., being independent)) always includes the risk uhm

02   <<rall> dass IRgendwann mal-> (-)
                    that   at-somewhen time
                    that at some point

03   größere pakete   AUFgekauft werden, (.)
           larger   packages ((of shares)) bought-up   get
           somebody will buy larger packages ((of shares))

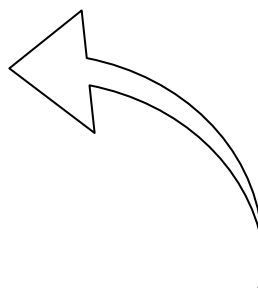04   [und ZACK? (.)
            and   bang!

05   B: [h:m,

06   I: schon sind wir <<rall>in irgendeiner;>(-) v verSICherungshand?
           already are   we   in   some   in insurance's hand
           we are in some in insurance's hand

07   (.)oder in irgendeiner (.) .h AUSländischen bank, (.)
              or   in   some   foreign bank('s)
              or in some foreign bank('s)

08   <<f> HAND?> (.)
                 hand

```
09          oder wieauchIMmer, (.)

            or      whatever


→10         DAS is (.) .h

            this   is


11          <<acc,mp> oder auslandsBANKhand,> (.)

                       or   foreign bank's hand


→12         DAS=is=eh (.) geFÄHRlich.

            this is   uhm       dangerous
```
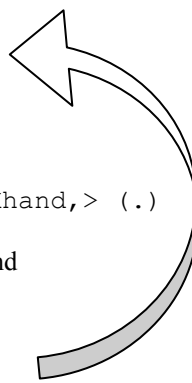
As the double arrows on the right side indicate, we are actually dealing with two delayed

repair processes here which are intertwined. Only the second reparandum shows a

breakoff/abandonment. The first repair has as its reparandum the TCUs *bis es mir richtig weh*

tut 'until it really hurts' in extract (6), line 02, and *in irgendeiner ausländischen Bank Hand*

'or in some foreign bank's hand' in extract (7), line 07/08. Repair is semantically motivated in

the first example (the reparandum is refined by the addition of a second possibility: *oder bis*

des ganze zeug das ich mir gekauft hab weg is 'or until the whole stuff which I bought is

gone'). It is due to a syntactic problem in the genitive construction[7] *in irgendeiner*

ausländischen bank hand 'in some foreign bank hand' in the second example (which is

corrected into the compound *auslandsbankhand*). Both repairs are delayed until well into the

next TCU (*ich kann da selten \ vorher aufhörn* 'I can rarely \ stop before that', line 03/04, and

das is \ gefährlich 'this is \ dangerous', line 10/12). This second TCU is interrupted in order to

produce the delayed repair of the first TCU at a point where its misplacement is hearable.

After the repair of the first reparandum, the speaker returns to the broken-off second TCU and

brings it to completion as well.

More interesting, perhaps, are forward oriented (prospective) delayed repairs as in ex (3), to which we now turn.

5   Types and functions of prospectively oriented delayed self-repairs

In section 2 I have argued that delayed self-repairs are a strategy to handle the linearisation problem in language: how to translate complex information into the linearity of speaking. This tentatively formulated functional description of delayed repairs now needs further discussion.

Consider the following extract from a bulimia group therapy session:

(9) ((M talks about her feelings of guilt when she eats 'heavy' food; TW = therapist))

```
01    TW:   DAS müsstn sie AUShaltn könn;=hm?
            that   should    you  stand      can-INF TAG
            that you should be able to stand, huh?

02          dass andre DENkn, (-)
            that  others  think

03    M:    j[a]
            yes

04    TW:    [si]e sind gierig.
              you    are    greedy

05    M:    .h vor allem weil ICH' (0.5)
               above all     since   I

06          also (1.0) ich denk ja   geNAUso    über andere; (0.5)
            well            I    think PART the-same-way about  others
            well  (1.0) after all I think the same way about others
```

07   aso   ich hab ma mit einer   zuSAMMgewohnt,=

             you see I   have once with one(FEM) together-lived

             well I once lived together with a woman

08   und .h die hab ich EH nich so leidn könn un sie mich AUCH nich,

             and   her have I   PART not   so-well stand can(INF) and she   me   either not

             and I couldn't really stand her and neither could she me

→09   und dann hab ich IMmer so .h (0.5)

             and then have I   always like

             and then I always XX-ed like

10   und (-) DIE: is schon wesentlich DICker als ich;=

             and   she   is   PART really   bigger   than   I

             and she really is a lot bigger than I am

→11   und dann hab ich ECHT   immer gedacht- (0.5)

             and then have I   really   always   thought

             and believe me I always thought

12   ich hab so   alles   des (-) AUF se projeziert

             I   have like   everything   that   on her projected

             I projected like all that on her

13   und wenn se viel geGESsn hat,

             and   when she a-lot   eaten   had,

             and when she was eating a lot

14   =die hat sich .h SAHne n ganzn becher SAHne mit Apfelschnittchen

             she put herself   cream a   whole cup-of   cream   with slices-of-apple

             she put cream a whole cup of cream she ate with slices of apple in it

           drin gegessn.=

             in-it eaten

15   =und das war für mich ECHT der ABscheu.

```
             and    that was  to   me     really   the   disgust.
             and to me this was really disgusting.
```

→16   `<<fast>n  hab ich gedacht>`

```
             then have  I     thought
             then I thought
```

17   `.h des is ja wohl (1.0) des is FURCHTbar; (1.0)`

```
             this  is  PART PART (1.0)  that  is   appalling
             isn't that                 that is really appalling
```

18   `wie KAMmer denn  sowas   ESsn un auch noch mit gUtm geWISsn.`

```
             how  can-one  Q-PART such-a-thing eat    and PART even   with a-good  conscience
             how can you eat anything like that and without even feeling guilty
```

In this example, the speaker is about to make a point which is relevant in the framework of the therapeutic session - in the present case, the major point of her contribution is already stated in the very beginning of her turn in line 06 ('after all I think the same way about others'). This turns out to be the preface for a story which M starts in line 07 ('I once lived together with a woman...'). She now faces the problem of having to show that the story is relevant to her point, and thus to the therapeutic session in general, while, at the same time, producing a convincing and (perhaps) entertaining narrative which needs some kind of elaboration. How can she do both things at the same time despite the fact that language requires a linearisation of information? The answer is: by doing one thing while the other is hearably 'under work'. In the extract, the link between the preface and the story is established by the fragment *und dann hab ich immer so...* 'and then I always XX-ed like...' (first arrow, line 09), foreshadowing the punchline of the story. Although it is not possible at this stage to guess precisely what M is about to say, the syntactic format in which this turn component is started projects some kind of formulation of a mental or real-world action by the teller: the

first person pronoun *ich* combines with the auxiliary *haben* 'to have' which is used to form the perfect tense of transitive verbs that mostly require an agent. This unit is broken off in favour of more details about the antagonist and her obesity (line 10). After that, the fragment is recycled for the first time: it is now made to include an infinite verb form of the verbum sentiendi *und dann hab ich echt immer <u>gedacht</u>* 'and believe me I always thought', line 11). But this is not a syntactically complete unit yet; rather, a complement phrase (expressing M's thoughts) is projected. Once more, the speaker interrupts herself now in order to first provide the therapeutically relevant term (*projeziert* 'projected') and then narrative details about the way in which the antagonist consumed cream and the teller's emotional response to it (lines 14-15). Only then, and after the initial fragment has been recycled another time (*und dann hab ich mir gedacht*), does the speaker describe her thoughts (and feelings) about the antagonist and complete the syntactic construction, establishing in this way the link to her story preface in line 06, i.e. her own feelings of guilt when eating 'heavy food' being identical to what she thinks about others.

It is clear that in a case such as this, the materials inserted between the fragment and its recycled version do not elaborate or correct some utterance preceding the fragment, i.e. they are not retrospectively oriented. Instead, they prepare (frame) the central point of M's turn in the therapeutic context (lines 16-18), i.e. they are prospectively oriented.

This example also gives us a better idea about the functions of delayed self-repairs. By using the format, the speaker is able to prove to her recipients that she is approaching her main point. At the same time, she is able to prepare this point by numerous details which authentisise the story and justify her behaviour. The recipient needs to keep both the semantic and syntactic projection of the fragment and the materials inserted between the break-off and the recycling in mind: taken together, they put him/her on the right track in the interpretation of what the speaker is about to say. In somewhat more general terms, I want to suggest that by

the format of a (prospectively oriented) delayed recycling, a speaker can achieve a particular kind of coherence in a larger turn in which a complex matter is to be formulated. This coherence is hierarchically structured. The fragment is semantically superordinated to the utterances inserted after the break-off. Since the hierarchically superior information is projected to come, the recipient knows more or less precisely what she or he must wait for and attend to.

Here is another example from the bulimia group therapy session:

(10) ((In the following sequence, P mentions as an example M's problems of seeing the therapist 'as a man' rather than a therapist in order to prove her statement made before the extract begins that each participant's problems are different.))

```
01    P:    vielleicht ganz konKRET,
            perhaps      quite   concretely
            to be quite specific perhaps

02          .h der Herr (NAME) als Mann,
            the   mister (NAME)   as   (a) man
            Mister X ((the therapist's name)) as a man

03          ich hab ihn irgenwie NIE å(0.5) als MANN (-) als ProBLEM
            I    have  him somehow   never a        as  (a) man   (-) as (a) problem
            as a man I never ((saw)) him as a problem

            empfunden oder .hh (-) sȯ; (0.5)
            perceived    or           so;

04          die Trennung MANN MENSCH, .hh (-)
            the   division    man   human-being,
            the division between the man and the person

→05         irgendwie des hab ich (-) VORher̊ (-)
```

```
                somehow       that have I          before
```

somehow I x-ed this earlier

```
06        des=s=so=     n problEm;
```

this is a kind of a   problem

this is one of those problems

```
07        des  hab ich Auch WIEdererkannt bei mir.
```

that   have   I   also   recognised   with me

which I recognised in me as well

```
→08       .h das hab ich aber  VORher schon (-) .h ver⌐
```

that have I   however before   already   over

but that I somehow over-

```
→09       GLAUB   hab ich (0.5)
```

believe-I have I

I think I

```
10        oder so BILD   ich mirs    ein,
```

or   so imagine I   to-me-it   VERB-PREFIX

or I imagine it to be like that

```
11        (-) n stückweit (-) WETTgemacht;
```

 a degree-to   compensated

compensated for it to a certain degree

Once more, a fragmentary TCU (line 05: *des hab ich vorher...*) projects a syntactic (a participle) as well as a semantic continuation (in the present context, where the speaker wants to argue that M's problems of separating the man from the therapist are an issue she herself was never particularly suffering from, one might for instance expect a continuation like 'I had

already ... dealt with that before'). This utterance remains fragmentary (first arrow). The speaker now inserts some materials which provide a relevant background for the statement-in-progress, i.e. that the problem itself was not unknown to her. After that, the utterance fragment is hearably recycled in line 08 (a repetition of the first fragment to which the verb prefix *ver-* is added; a fitting verb would be *ver-arbeiten* 'overcome', 'digest') but broken off again (second arrow). A repair follows almost immediately (after the modal particle *glaub*) in which this prefix and thereby the projected verb is overwritten and the fragment recycled from the position after the pronominal noun phrase *das* onwards. After a parenthetical (see below, section 7) utterance with modalising function in line 10, the fragment of 08 is finally brought to completion in line 11, using a different verb than the one projected by the prefix *ver-* (*wettmachen*):

das | *hab ich* | *aber vorher schon ver'*

glaub | *hab ich* | *n stückweit wettgemacht*

The TCU 'I ... compensated for it to a certain degree' contains the main contribution to the on-going verbal struggle between P and M. The argument is that M's problem, the attraction she feels towards the therapeutist as a man, is not P's problem any longer, and that therefore it needs not concern her. Between the first fragment and the repairing completion (*das hab ich vorher schon n Stück weit wettgemacht*), P inserts a topically subordinated but nonetheless important information which lends credibility to her statement (06/07). Again, the speaker hearably undertakes to make a point which contributes to the ongoing interaction, while, almost at the same time, inserting subsidiary materials. In this sense, example (9) resembles the previous example (8) in functional terms.

But (9) is also well-suited to make an additional point. In written German the complex concessive information structure which is conveyed in this turn in lines 05-11 through the

delayed repair format could have been rendered differently, i.e. by a hypotactic *obwohl*-construction such as

> *obwohl ich dieses Problem bei mir auch wiedererkannt habe, hatte ich das vermutlich vorher schon ein Stück weit wettgemacht.*

> 'although I know this problem myself, I presume that I had come to grips with it before to a certain degree'.

This concessive construction expresses the same kind of hierarchical structure as does P through the format of the delayed repair, but by means of grammatical hypotaxis. In both versions (written and spoken), a subsidiary information ('the problem is known to P') is introduced which highlights the relevance of the main point ('P has come to grips with the problem'). However, the delayed repair pattern establishes this hierarchical relationship in a much looser way.[8] The speaker is does not encode explicitly one particular semantic relationship (concessivity), and she can do without the embeddings formally marked by hypotaxis as they would be unavoidable in written language. The delayed repair format therefore is a non-grammaticalised way of doing hierarchically structured linearisation in spoken language. Considering that linearisation is the essence of syntax, we may speak of a non-grammaticalised syn-taxis typical of oral communication.

So far I have discussed examples in which the broken-off TCU was eventually followed by some kind of syntactic repair in which the structure of the fragment was re-used. This is not always the case. The relationship between the fragment and its delayed repair may be of a purely semantic kind, i.e. the fragment may project both syntactically and semantically, but the speaker may pick up and tie back to the semantic projection in his or her delayed repair only. Consider the following example:

(11) ((another quarrel between P and M; before the extract starts, P has attacked M by reproaching her of not accepting the group`s arguments. P defends herself:))

```
01    P:    also ich=es=is=ja  NICH so dass ich des einfach .h
            well   I=  it=  is=PART not  so   that  I   that  simply
            well I after all it is not the case that I reject that ((what the others say)) and push it away

            NICH Annehme und WEGschiebe;
            not accept and push-away;


02          aber ich MUSS des doch (1.5)
            but   I    must  that PART
            but after all I have to


03          JA:, ich muss des doch auch verDAUN könn;
            well,  I    must  that PART also  digest    can;
            well I have to be able to digest it;


→04M:       JA;=aber ich hab immer n Eindruck dass du des NICH
            yes;= but   I   have  always an impression  that  you  that not
            sure but my impression always is that you don't


05          .h also (-)
            well


06          auf ALles was mer SAGT kommt irgndwie ne prompte erWIderung von dir.
            to  everything what one  says  comes  somehow   a   prompt    reply     from you.
            you have a reply ready for everything that is said.


→07         nd DANN (.) DANN denk ich  ja öh (-)
            nd  then        then  think  I    yes uhm
            and then then I think: well
```

```
→08           eigentlich'm lässt du GAR  nix   auf dich einwirken.

              actually          let    you quite nothing  on   you   act.

              actually you don't let anything act on you.
```

After M has reproached P of not accepting any critique of her, P counters 'I have to be able to digest it'. Now M starts a turn which hearably uses an opposition format (yes - but), i.e. it projects disagreement (first arrow, line 04). However, the utterance is broken off before the finite verb has been produced. After the break-off, M inserts evidence for her previous reproach that P does not let the group criticise her: she always has an answer ready (line 06). Then the repair of the fragment follows, but the fragment's syntactic format is not taken up and recycled: 'actually you don't let anything act on you' is only semantically a paraphrase of the projected negation of 04 ('you don't \ digest it'), and can therefore be heard as another version of the fragment produced earlier, but its syntactic form bears no relationship to it.

6   A projection that fails

So far, I have tried to show that fragments of TCUs have the potential of solving the conflict between hierarchical complexity of information and the linearisation requirement of spoken language. The conversational format of delayed repairs can now be summarised as follows:

the delayed repair format

1st component:	fragmentary TCU → projects more to come
	= semantically superordinate structure
2nd component:	non-projected syntactic/semantic unit
	= semantically subordinate structure

3rd component: repair/completion of fragment

= semantically superordinate structure in toto

The conditions under which this kind of processing is possible are:

1st condition: the fragment is not followed by a repair immediately (which overwrites the fragment)

2nd condition: the fragment is (in its context of occurrence) capable of projecting some continuation.

Evidence for the projective force of fragments can be taken from those cases in which the 3rd component of the format is absent. In the following case, the fragment foreshadows a statement of intention or perhaps a suggestion. However, the speaker cannot actually produce this projected activity because the recipient's intervening activities make remove the basis for it. The non-delivery of the projected continuation requires an account:

(12) ((telephone conversation in the late afternoon between two lovers. M has to meet some business partners after the phone call))

```
01    F:      .hhh und wann musst du DORT sein? (-)
                   and   when must   you there   be
                   and when do you have to be there?

02    M:      oh in=na halbn STUNde <<creaky> ETwa;>
                   oh  in  a   half    hour              roughly
                   oh in half an hour roughly

03    F:      halbe STUNde;=
                   half     hour
                   half an hour
```

```
04    M:    =<<PP>hm,>

05          i wart da   noch auf den (.) ANruf,
            I  wait there still   for the      call
            I have to await their phone call

06          und dann fahr ich LOS.
            and  then  drive I   off
            and then I'll drive off

07    F:    <<breathy voice>  ahn,>
                              uhm

→08         (0.5) .hhh also um:: (-) m:
                           so   a:t
                           so at

09          <<f> wann kannst du     dich  dann wieder auf MICH kontentriern?>
                 when can     you:NOM you:AKK then again    on   me   concentrate?⁹
                 so when will you be able to contentrate on me again?

10    M:    (-)m::: <<high pitch> so   um ZEH:N;>
                                  around at  ten
                mm                    at around ten

11          (-)  [HOFF=ich
                  hope  I
                  I hope

12    F:          [hm   um ZEHN;=
                  uhm  at  ten
                  uhm at ten;

13    M:    =ja.
            yes

14    F:    .th also pass=auf;=
```

```
                    so   pay-attention

                    now listen
```

```
→15                 ich möcht so    bis um: (-) eh bis (.)
                    I    want   around until  at        uhm until
                    I want to (-) at around around ten
```

```
16                  gehst Du dann GLEICH    ins bett?
                    go       you then   immediately   to-the bed
                    will you go to bed immediately then?
```

```
17      M:          ich HOFfe;
                    I   hope
                    I hope so;
```

```
18      F:          du HOFFST;=
                    you hope
                    you hope so
```

```
19      M:          =<<p>ja.> (-)
                         yes
```

```
20      F:          na dann kann ich nicht mal n WHISki trinken mit dir heute;
                    well then  can   I    not   even a whiskey drink    with you today
                    well then I won't even be able to drink a whiskey with you today;
```

```
21      M:          DOCH:
                    yes
                    yes you will
```

```
22      F:          ja?
                    yes
                    I will?
```

```
23      M:          mhm, merk  ich(s)     TROTZdem;
                            realise   I    (it: CLIT)  nevertheless
```

mhm, I'll notice nonetheless

```
25    F:    ja?=
            yes

26    M:    =mhm,

27    F:    <<p>also; (-)
                so
            well then (-)

28          .hhh dann denk ich so   um ZEHN,
            then  think  I    around at   ten
                 I'll think around ten;

29          (-) gAnz fest an DICH;
             really strongly of you
            of you very much
```

This extract is taken from the closing phase of the telephone conversation between M and F. In closing sections, arrangements for future meetings are regularly on the agenda. Time therefore is an important matter. In this context (and after a previous question regarding time in line 01-03) F's fragment *also um...* ('well at...', line 08, first arrow) clearly projects a temporal expression, since the preposition *um* is typically used to formulate time. Instead of producing this temporal phrase fully, F self-interrupts and asks a question ('when will you be able to concentrate on me again?', line 09) which is subsequently answered by M (line 10) and the answer is modifed by a stance phrase (line 11, 'I hope'). On the basis of this information, F now recycles the fragment *also um...* and includes it into a more complex turn which she introduces by the pre-to-pre formula *pass auf* ('now listen', line 14, 15). The following utterance (line 15, second arrow) starts as a delayed repair on line 08: the temporal phrase *so um X Uhr* ('at around X o'clock') is now integrated into a declarative sentence

indicating F's wish or intention (*ich möchte so um...* 'at around ten I want to...'). But once more the TCU remains unfinished: the semantically central part arguably is what F intends to do (*möchte...*) at what time (*so um...*), and both are left unspecified. In the projection space created by this second broken off TCU, F once more asks a preliminary question: is M going to go to bed after he has come back from the meeting with his business partners (line 16)? M answers positively through another stance phrase (*hoff ich* 'I hope', line 17) which is echoed by F (line 18) and reaffirmed by M (line 19). The following comment by F 'well then I can't even drink a whiskey with you today' (line 20, third arrow) marks the cancellation of a proposal or suggestion which F has been projecting for quite a while (since line 08): the suggestion which F has been trying to prepare by various preliminary activities, turns out to have been *ich möchte so um 10 mit Dir 'nen Whiskey trinken* 'at around 10 I want to have a whiskey with you'. (The couple has a ritual of having a drink individually at the same time of the day when they are separated, thinking of each other.) It can no longer be produced since M won't have the time for it. M's answers to her preliminary questions have made it impossible for her to continue with a full version of the broken-off TCU. Therefore, the fragments cannot be taken up and no delayed repair follows. Nonetheless, we (and M) learn through F's account in line 21 that such a projection was hearably in play.[10]

7 Delayed self-repairs and parenthesis

Quite a few instances of break-offs followed by delayed self-repairs span a small stretch of speech only. The delay is minor, i.e., the subordinated utterance short:

(13) (reality TV show)

((Andrea has just been at the hairdresser's. Sabrina talks to Andrea while combing her hair.))

```
01    Sbr: das is so schön   hier hinten,
           this is  so beautiful   here  in-the-back
           it is so nice in the back here,

02         .h <<gently> hier-
                    here

03         ((giggles))>

04         ((cheeping noise))

05         .h nee.
              no

06         du hast echt nen schönen hinterkopf;
           you have  really  a    beautiful  back-of-head
           you really have a beautiful back of head
```

→07
```
           hat=er rischtisch schön   so˙;
           has  he really         beautifully like
           he ((the hairdresser)) has really beautifully
```

08
```
           .hhh musste   ma  gucken mal im    spiegel.
                have-you  PART to-look PART in-the  mirror
                 have a look in the mirror.
```

→09
```
           hat er rischtisch so   schön    HOCHgestuft.
           has  he really       like beautifully      layered
           he really beautifully layered it.
```

Sabrina's insertion (line 08) between the fragment (07) and the delayed repair (09) suggests to Andrea to look into the mirror in order to support her (Sabrina's) evaluation that the hairdresser did his job really well. The insertion is clearly subordinated (and supportive) to the main point.

Insertions of this kind are frequently treated in the syntactic literature under the heading of parenthesis or parentheticals.[11] It may therefore be asked how the delayed repair format relates to this notion. There is some evidence[12] that parenthesis is a concept that belongs to written language (cf. the metonymic use of the term for punctuation in English). In written language, parenthesis is marked by '(xx)' or '- xx -', and in its prototypical grammatical form characterised by the insertion of material into an unrelated syntactic frame which does not require the inserted materials. As a consequence deletion of the parenthetical materials will leave the structure of the surrounding sentence well-formed.

Prototypical parentheses can also be observed in spoken language (where prosodic phrasing takes over the role of punctuation marks). Extract (2) above is an example, which is repeated here fore convenience

```
(2)  ((job interview))
01   I:    <<acc> es Is natürlich immer SO;> (1.0)
                 it   is   of-course    always   like-that
             of course it's always like that


→02             .h als klEIne regioNALbank, (-)
                    as    small      regional-bank
                 for a small regional bank


03              auch w:enn denn ab und zU immer noch ma:l- (.)
                even   though  PART now and then  always   once  (in a) while

                n=paar geGRÜNdet werden,
                a couple   founded        are
                even though now and then one is founded


04→             hat man das schOn SCHWER;
                has   one  it    PART    difficult
```

```
                        it is rather difficult

05                      im  [europäischen WETTbewerb.
                        in-the European         competition
                        among the European competitors.

06   B:                     [h:m,
```

This structure bears an obvious resemblance to the delayed repair format: a 'fragment' (first arrow) is followed by a semantically and pragmatically subordinated TCU and taken up in the following segment (second arrow). However, there are also important differences.

(i) First of all, there is of course no repair involved; the pre-parenthetical utterance is abondanoned and continued post-parenthetically.

(ii) This means that the post-parenthetical segment resumes and continues the fragment without backtracking, i.e. no materials contained in the fragment are repeated and recycled. From a cognitive point of view, this makes it more difficult to identify the predecessor to which the continuation needs to be tied in order to result in a well-formed frame. While this is unproblematic for written language, research on parenthetical insertions in spoken language has shown that the longer the parenthesis, the more likely is a non-smooth continuation (recycling, backtracking; cf. Schönherr 1993, Stoltenburg 2002).

 (iii) The syntactic position in which the first utterance is broken off in the delayed repair format is usually close to the end of the clause (often before the right bracket, and always at a point where the nuclear pitch movement of the intonational phrase is imminent). It may occur within a phrase (as in (12), where the break-off is after *so*, an adverbial modifying the following participle *hochgestuft*. In contrast, parentheses usually occur early in the clause, often between the front-field and the left sentence brace (the finite verb *hat* in extract (13)).

As shown by Stoltenburg (2002), there is a systematic correlation between smooth continuation vs recycling after the inserted materials on the one hand, and the syntactic position of the break-off on the other. This suggests, that there are canonical syntactic environments for prototypical parentheses (parenthesis niches). In German, they exclude break-off within a phrase, and highly favour (if not require) placement before or immediately after the left sentence brace. The break-off in (12) occurs outside a parenthesis niche.

8   Conclusion

In order to come to an understanding of how grammar and interaction are linked in conversation, the temporal unfolding of language in time needs to be taken seriously. This requires a new way of looking at linguistic structure which I have called on-line analysis elsewhere (Auer 2000): a kind of analysis that emphasises the projection, emergence and termination of syntactic patterns in real time. Projection is intimately linked to hierarchy, for what makes a given stretch of talk (structurally or content-wise) predictable is, in all domains of linguistic structure, some kind of superordinate, not-yet-complete pattern the production of which is 'under way'. In order to recognise projections, we rely on the hierarchical organisation of language. On-line analysis as a consequence cannot be based on a 'flat' conception language (such as the naive idea of language as a step-wise concatenation of elements into strings through strictly local transitions, e.g. from one word to the following). Rather, we need a rich hierarchy of dominance relationships (syntactic, semantic and prosodic) in order to account for projections. These hierarchical relationships reach out beyond the scope of the sentence, proposition, or intonational phrase.

In this paper, I have applied the on-line approach to a particular format, that of delayed repairs. There are various ways in which linguists have been dealing with the phenomenon of

syntactic repair in conversation. The best-known of them is also the most questionable one: it assumes that repair work makes natural language unsuited for acquisition since it makes it impossible for children to extract the necessary information about wellformed structures of their mother tongue from their caregivers' verbal input (see, e.g., Pinker 1994). In this approach, repair work is looked upon as the debris of language (production). An empirically more interesting approach holds against this position that the way in which repair phenomena are handled in natural conversation is highly structured and can be described in syntactic terms. This implies that doing repair in syntax requires syntactic knowledge, presumably of same kind as in syntax elsewhere. Monitoring repair can therefore be quite useful for language learner; in fact, some central features of the syntactic structure of a language can be extracted from the syntax of repair (cf. Levelt 1983, Uhmann 2001). One might add in support of this position that the prosodic make-up of repairs often makes it easy to disentangle the 'good' from the 'bad' structures and therefore guides the learner through the actual speech data, separating the 'debris' from the valuables.

I have sketched a third position which goes one step further and claims that repair in spoken syntax offers ways of putting complex and hierarchically structured information into sequentially/linearly ordered speech without using the hypotactical structures of written language. The format of delayed self-repair is a technique of dealing with the linearisation problem of language. It should not be looked upon as a remedial device correcting some deficiency in the way in which a speaker translates complex ideas into linear speech (which may or may not be the case), but rather as part of the solution to this problem.

In line with this interpretation, it can be noted that the delayed repair format often occurs in extended turns in which complex matters need to be talked about ; and more often in speakers with some rhetorical skills than in linguistically unexperienced ones. (For instance, in job interviews it is more used by the interviewers and by applicants for managerial posts

(bank trainees) than in less verbose speakers for blue collar jobs; in therapeutic interviews it is more frequent than in reality TV - Big Brother - data.) Thus, the social and situational distribution of the uses of this repair format make clear that it is not typical of linguistically unskilled persons who do not know to express themselves any better. In fact, the format is not 'deficient' in whatever way, but an efficient and non-imposing way of bringing across complex pieces of information with a high degree of hierarchical organisation.

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[*] This paper has profited from comments by many colleagues of which the two editors of this volume - Auli Hakulinen and Margret Selting - deserve special mentioning for their extensive and careful feedback on the first version of the text. Karin Birkner and Geli Bauer pointed out some essential flaws in an earlier version which I have tried to eliminate. Needless to say that the now published version does not necessarily coincide with the point of view of any of the above-mentioned, and that reponsibility for it remains entirely my own.

[1] All transcriptions follow GAT (cf. Selting et al. 1998).

[2] *Nisch* is a regional variant of *nich(t)* 'not', *au* a regional variant of *auch* 'also'.

[3] Self-turn same-speaker repair in which the repair occurs in the same TCU as the reparandum has been extensively discussed in conversation analysis (cf. Schegloff 1987, Fox & Jasperson 1995, Fox, Hayashi & Jasperson 1996 and many others). Equally, delayed other-repair (initiations) have been received some attention (cf. Schegloff 1992, 1997). However, self-repair which is delayed by at least one TCU as in the format discussed here has not been discussed in the conversation analytic literature so far.

[4] On projection in interactional linguistics see Auer (in press, with further references) as well as Ford & Thompson 1996.

[5] For a short summary of the fundamental clause structure patterns of German see for instance Auer 1996:62-3.

[6] This is not to say that it may not have interactional meaning, particularly when produced in turn-competitive environments; cf. Goodwin 1977.

[7] Left-branching embedded genitives such as *in* $(((Otto's)_{\text{NPgen}}\ Hand)_{\text{Npdat}}$ 'in Otto's hand' are only possible in German with the so-called Saxon genitive (with the affix {s}). Since the use of the latter is highly restricted, most embedded constructions of possession have to be right-branching: *die* (*Hand* (*des Präsidenten*)), or more colloquial: *die* (*Hand* (*von* (*dem Präsidenten*))). The speaker of extract (7) starts out with a left-branching construction in a case in which no Saxon genitive is possible.

[8] This is the reason why an equivalent hypotactic format is not always available, as, for instance, for example (1).

[9] Spoonerism (*konțentriern* instead of *konẓentriern*) in the original.

[10] M's in his reply that 'he will notice nonetheless' (despite being in bed sleeping?) tries to argue somewhat clumsily against this conclusion, redressing the safe-threat inherent in this declination of F's proposal. However, the lack of hesitation with which this counterargument is produced may indicate that he was well anticipating the failure into which his answers to F's preliminaries will lead her.

[11] Cf. Berrendonner 1993, Simon 2004, Schönherr 1993.

[12] Cf. Stoltenburg 2002.

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