

Meta-pragmatic appositions in German talk-in-interaction

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In talk-in-interaction the need of referring to persons, objects, spaces etc. is ubiquitous. In principle, the establishment of mutual accessible referents or joint referents – as Sinha (2004) puts it – can be seen as a kind of ‘linchpin’ of the joint attentional frame (Tomasello 2003:21–22) of the interlocutors (e.g. Clark/Marshall 1981). In a manner of speaking, joint referents can be said to be prerequisite to any act of predication. But additionally referring expressions commonly contain some kind of ‘predication’ to the ‘referred-to’ on their own. “[T]he same referent could [always] have been indicated in some other way – the speaker could have chosen another linguistic symbol to indicate a different aspect of [...] [an] entity” (Tomasello 2003:28). Thus, we might say that there is no ‘neutral’ way of referring (cf. already Frege 1892). In German conversational speech this notably becomes evident in the case of so called ‘loose appositions’ like *das hAtte [Adelheid]_x- [meine SCHWESter]_y ma erzählt*; (*this [NAME]_x | [my sister]_y once told me*). In constructions like this two (or even more) referring expressions – syntactically conjoined but prosodically disjoined – are used to refer to the ‘same’ entity with the result of indicating a kind of BE-relation between them (i.e.: x BE y ; e.g. Acuña Fariña 2006:10–14), which is grounded in the different perspectives linked to the different expressions (cf. Lanwer in prep.). Hence, in the use of appositional constructions there frequently are miscellaneous dimensions of stance taking involved – especially epistemic stances (cf. Du Bois 2007) applying to, for example, a lack of common ground (cf. Imo/Lanwer 2016). In the course of this argumentation, loose appositions in German talk-in-interaction can potentially be seen as some sort of meta-pragmatic device. In my talk I will elucidate this assumption from the point of view of interactional construction grammar (e.g. Deppermann 2011; Imo 2015).

References

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