The Syntax of Nonsubordination:
Parentheses, Appositions and Grafts

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Summary

Nonsubordination is parataxis in the broad sense; it includes parenthesis, apposition, coordination, juxtaposition, hedging, etc. These phenomena constitute a neglected and problematic area of the language system. Therefore, this research aims at systematically mapping out and theoretically grounding the different aspects of nonsubordination. The present models of grammar are not fit for this task: as a consequence of the strict hierarchical design only subordination can be represented well. Presupposing that nonsubordination requires a place within syntax, we claim that a syntactic hierarchy-breaking mechanism is needed. We propose that this mechanism can be formally defined as a (second) structure building operation parenthetical Merge, with which so-called parallel structures can be created. For simple coordination this gives interesting results, and we expect it to do so for the other types of parataxis as well. Two other relatively new – and we think important – developments will be incorporated into this research, namely the techniques of specifying coordination and grafting, inspired by Jan Koster and Henk van Riemsdijk, respectively. Grafting involves the amalgamation of parallel structures, which may well be the explanation for different kinds of entangled sentences. Specifying coordination amounts to the idea that the conjuncts in a coordination may refer to the same referent; this sheds new light on appositions and other phenomena.

There are three sub-projects. The first focuses on the development of the new theory, and on the empirical application within the realm of parentheses and related constructions. The second sub-project contributes to the theory of specifying coordination (both syntactically and semantically), and applies it to appositions. The third sub-project aims at the technique of grafting and investigates if it casts new light on backward conjunction reduction and other forms of sentence amalgamation.