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of the small-scale society of Alto Perené**

**Arawaks of Peru**

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# Parentheticals in the context of interactional patterns of the small-scale society of Alto Perené Arawaks of Peru<sup>1</sup>

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

By definition, parentheticals are ‘comment clauses’ which function as ‘content disjuncts that express the speakers’ comments on the content of the matrix clause, or style disjuncts that convey the speakers’ views on the way they are speaking’ (Quirk et al. 1985: 1112). In syntactic terms, prototypical parentheticals ‘may occur initially, finally, or medially, and thus generally have a separate tone unit’ (Quirk et al. 1985: 1112). In the last decade parenthetical phenomena have become the focus of attention, exemplified by a large body of publications (Dehé & Kavalova 2007; Blakemore 2006; Kaltenböck, Heine & Kuteva 2011) but research results remain limited due to their narrow Eurocentric scope.

This study diverges from previous research in that it concentrates on the uses of parentheticals in the context of discursive patterns of a small-scale Amazonian society, while drawing on the comprehensive multi-genre documentary corpus of video and audio recordings, collected during the 2009-2013 fieldwork in Chanchamayo Province, Junín, Peru. I argue that parentheticals are key to the organization of antagonistic discourse among Alto Perené Arawaks. Antagonistic discourse is understood as intentionally ‘uncooperative’ interaction, in the sense of Dressler & Barbaresi (1994:12-13). In particular, the attested small subset of argumentative parentheticals is shown to accommodate speakers’ communicative needs of expressing commitment to the articulated truth claims, on the one hand, and provide a means for the engagement of ‘uncooperative’ addressees, on the other. Drawing on Grenoble (2004), I illustrate my argument with the examples of the uses and pragmatic functions of both speaker-oriented parentheticals, namely *nokantzi* ‘I say’ and *koñaro* ‘clearly’, and addressee-oriented parentheticals, such as *piñakiro* ‘you’ve seen it’ and *tema ari* ‘isn’t it so?’.

The paper is organized as follows: the language and its ecologies are briefly characterized in §2; a discussion of the structural characteristics of Alto Perené parentheticals is provided in §3; pragmatic functions of the subset of inherently

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argumentative parentheticals are outlined and illustrated in §§4-5, respectively, followed by the concluding remarks in §6.

## 2. THE LANGUAGE AND ITS ECOLOGIES

The Alto Perené (Northern Kampa, Arawak) language is characterized by a high degree of polysynthesis and richness of nominal and verbal morphology. It is mainly suffixing and head-marking, with the nominative-accusative system of grammatical alignment. The basic constituent order is VO and VS. It is an intonation language with a variety of specific intonational contour types (e.g., a calling pattern, question pattern, enumeration pattern, etc.). Although the category of evidentiality is not grammaticalized, the language employs a variety of evidentiality strategies, such as lexical verbs and modal morphemes, which convey a range of information-source meanings.

Language speakers live in 36 hamlet communities in the Upper Perené valley of Chanchamayo province, Junín, Peru. The language is on a downward trajectory due to the long-standing contact with the Spanish-speaking settler society and concomitant shift to Spanish. The number of speakers who continue to use the language as the daily medium of communication does not exceed 300 people, the youngest of those being in their 40s. The native population are largely engaged in commercial agriculture, growing cash crops of coffee, cacao and citrus fruit.

Native speakers associate affect states, temper (anger, fury) with predatory inclinations and proclivity for sorcery. Direct confrontation in public disputes is carefully avoided out of fear of accusations of witchcraft (cf. Aikhenvald 2004: 358). Information circulates freely, with the expectation that interlocutors' stances are expressed accurately and precisely, and the source of the reported knowledge is indicated (cf. Michael 2008), i.e. whether it is witnessed, inferred, or based on hearsay evidence. Self-quoting and citing direct speech of others is common (cf. Michael 2012). Speaker subjectivity, often contrasted with 'the other' perspective, is conveyed via the 'assertion-making' linguistic means (cf. Nuckolls 2012: 237), especially in confrontational social exchanges, when the social goals of both parties are in conflict, and the asymmetry in the pursuit of interlocutors' goals involves significant 'social and economic investment' (Sarangi & Slembrouck 1992:136).

## 3. STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PARENTHETICALS

Alto Perené parentheticals are comprised of two classes, one being composed of the 'relatively freely constructed utterances in discourse', which constitutes an open class, and another of the 'relatively fixed constructions in grammar' (Du Bois 1985: 346), which is a closed subset of circa ten members. The members of the closed class, characterized by the high token frequency in discourse, function as partially schematic complexes with a conventionalized pragmatic meaning. The

speaker-oriented parentheticals from the closed subset are positionally unrestrained, while the addressee-oriented units tend to follow the anchor clause.

Prosodic properties of parentheticals from the closed subset seem to correlate with the degree of their pragmaticalization (cf. Dehé & Wichmann 2010: 14). Adverbial forms and reporting verbs and which have partially lost their propositional content and are akin to formulaic expressions, tend to be unstressed and integrated into the prosodic unit of the anchor clause, exemplified by *koñaro* ‘clearly’ (which functions as a comment clause) and the self-reportive *nokantzi* ‘I say’. In contrast, those parentheticals, which have retained their semantic meaning, namely *piñakiro* ‘you’ve seen it’ and *tema ari* ‘isn’t is so?’ are set off by pauses and have a fall-rise intonational contour.

Crucially, parentheticals from both classes are not at variance with the rules of the language’s sentence grammar, i.e. they are not structurally reduced. In example (1), where the speaker Moises Santos Rojas reflects on the advent of *mavira*, the festive celebration of the season of scarcity, the verbs *okimitatya* ‘like’, for example’ and *ankantero* ‘we/one will say(s)’, ‘so to speak’ are regularly inflected.

(1) *o-pok-i*                                      *irori*                      *aparo-paye osarentsi*  
 3NMASC.S-come-REAL    3NMASC.FOC    one-PL                      year

*o-pok-i*    *o-kimi-t-aty-a*  
 3NMASC.S-come-REAL                      3NMASC.S-be.like-EP-PROG-REAL

*a-n-kant-e-ro*                                      *diciembre-ki*                      *aritaki*  
 1PL.A-IRR-say-IRR-3NMASC.O    December-LOC                      PP

*y-ant-ai-tz-i-ro-ri*    *mavira*  
 3MASC.S-make-IMP-EP-REAL-3NMASC-REL                                      HOLIDAY.NAME  
 ‘It comes every year, like, so to speak, in December, [then] *mavira* is celebrated.’<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>The abbreviations used in this paper are as follows: A-subject of transitive verb; ADV-adverbial; AFF-affect; APL-applicative; ASSERT-assertive; AUG-augmentative; CAUS-causative; COND-conditional; CONN-connective; DEM-demonstrative; DIM-diminutive; DIR-directional; DISTR-distributive; DUR-durative; EP-epenthetic; EXIST-existence; EXCL-exclamative; FOC-focus; GEN-generalized; ICPL-incomplete; IDEO-ideophone; IMP-impersonal subject; INT-intent; IRR-irrealis; LOC-locative; MASC-masculine; NEG-negative; NMASC-non-masculine; NMZ-nominalizer; O-object of transitive verb; PFV-perfective; PL-plural; POSS- possessive; PP-positive polarity; PRES-presential; PROG-progressive; Q-question; REAS-reason; REAL-realis; REL-relativizer; S-subject of intransitive verb; SG-singular; STAT-stative; TERM-terminative; VERB-verbalized; WH-content interrogative.



(4) [p-amin-i i-minka-t-a-ro apa irora  
 2S-look-IRR 3MASC.A-build-EP-REAL-3NMASC.O father DEM

inchamenta i-tov-ant-a-ro-ri]  
 platform 3MASC.A-fell-APL.INST-REAL-3NMASC.O-REL

[ari-kia-ro nosari no-minka-t-ak-a-ro  
 be.the case-ASSERT-ADV my.grandson 1SG.A-build-EP-PFV-REAL-  
 3NMASC.O

no-tov-ant-a-ro-ri]  
 1SG.A-fell-APL.INST-REAL-3NMASC.O-REL  
 ‘Look, Father built this platform to fell a tree.’ ‘Exactly so, my grandson, I  
 built it to fell a tree.’ (Ruth Quillatupa Lopez)

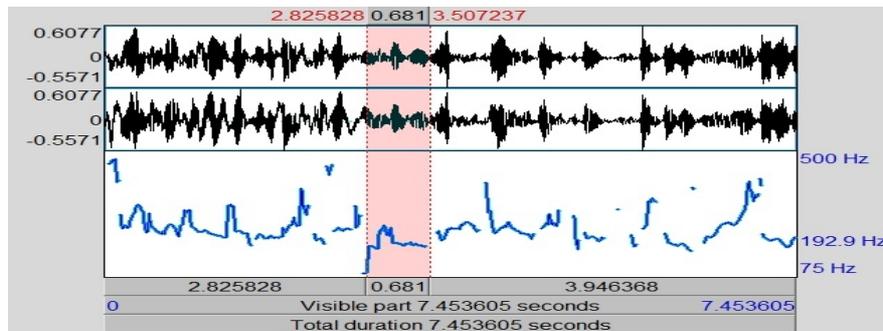
#### 4. SPEAKER-ORIENTED PARENTHETICALS

This section deals with two speaker-oriented argumentative parentheticals, *nokantzi* ‘I say’ and *koñaro* ‘clearly’. The self-reporting parenthetical *nokantzi* ‘I say’, formed from the verb root *kant* ‘say’, could be translated as the mental state predicate ‘I think’. The verb is inflected for the categories of person, expressed by the bound pronominal marker *no-* ‘1SG’ in subject function (and, optionally, by the 3 person pronominal marker in O function, *-ri* ‘masculine’ or *-ro* ‘non-masculine’, when making reference to the addressee), and the reality status, encoded by the suffix *-i*. The basic meaning of the parenthetical is ‘information source’, since the speaker is quoting herself. It functions as an assertion-making device, foregrounding speaker viewpoint. It is found most often in female speech. Being positionally flexible, it shows proclivity for prosodical integration. In (5), the repeatedly used *nokantziri* ‘I say’ projects a competing epistemic stance, expressing the female speaker’s confident assessment of the reliability of her statement, held contrary to her son’s view, a skeptical addressee who doubts the usefulness of ancestral heritage. In Figure 1, the first token of *nokantziri* is fully integrated, while the second token (indicated by the shaded vertical bar) is pronounced as a separate intonational unit, at a lower pitch, in comparison with the rest of the utterance. The second token begins at 2.825828 seconds.

- (5) *te pairani nokantziri paisato nokantziri*  
 NEG.REAL long.ago I.say ancient.NMASC I.say
- aapi-ni paisatzi-paye i-shiri-t-a-ri*  
 elder-CEASED.EXIST ancient-PL 3MASC.A-believe-EP-REAL-3MASC.O
- pava i-ñi-i-ri pava*  
 deity 3MASC.A-see-REAL-3MASC.O DEITY
- ‘No, in the past, I say, the ancient ones, I say, the elders, the ancients believed in Pava (solar deity), had it [in their lives].’ (Clelia Mishari)

**Figure 1.**

Prosodic non-integration of the second token of *nokantziri*



The basic function of *koñaro* ‘clearly’ (which is formed from the verb root *konia* ‘appear’, written in the community-approved orthography as <koña>, and the adverbializer *-ro*) is to indicate an information source. *Koñaro* ‘clearly’ refers to visions, either induced by hallucinogenic drugs or experienced in a normal awakened state, or seen in a dream, or on the television screen. It can also indicate knowledge obtained from traces of visual evidence, combined with inference. Its use betrays less certainty in the claim to truth on the speaker’s part, in comparison with the confidence of the speaker judgment expressed by *nokantzi* ‘I say’. The parenthetical is attested in situations of speaker-hearer antagonism, when it asserts speaker perspective opposing the hearer’s stance. Signaling less confidence in the accuracy of the described eventuality, the diminutive morpheme *-(j)ini* is used word-finally. The parenthetical typically follows the anchor clause, but it can precede it, as illustrated in (6), where the second token of *koñaroini* ‘clearly’ occurs clause-initially. In (6), the speaker Ines Pérez de Santos reflects on her sister’s untimely death, arguing her point contra her sister’s daughter’s stance. The women had disagreed on what treatment regimen would have been best for the deceased woman. Both tokens of *koñaroini* are prosodically integrated. Figure 2 illustrates the production of the second token, starting at 4.960486 seconds.

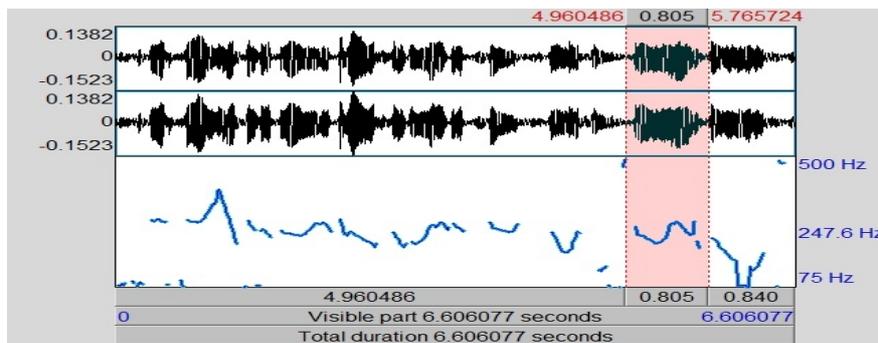
(6) *no-kant-tz-i*                      *o-kam-a-vai-ashi-t-ak-a*  
 1SG.S-say-EP-REAL    3NMASC.S-die-EP-DUR-MISTAKENLY-EP-PFV-REAL

*koñaro-ini*    *te*                      *o-mantsiy-a-t-an-ak-e*                      *katsini*  
 clearly-DIM    NEG.REAL    3NMASC.S-be.sick-REP-EP-DIR-PFV-IRR    properly

*koñaro-ini*                      *o-kam-an-ak-e*  
 clearly-DIM                      3NMASC.S-die-DIR-PFV-REAL  
 ‘I said, she died for no reason, clearly; she didn’t get sick per se, [but]  
 clearly, she died.’

**Figure 2**

Prosodic integration of the two tokens of *koñaroini* ‘clearly’ in example (5); the second token is marked by the shaded vertical bar



## 5. ADDRESSEE-ORIENTED PARENTHETICALS

This section discusses the uses of two addressee-oriented argumentative parentheticals, *piñakiro* ‘you’ve seen it’ and *tema ari* ‘isn’t it so?’. The parenthetical *piñakiro* ‘you’ve seen it’ is formed from the root of the visual perception verb *ni* ‘see’, represented by the grapheme <ñ> in the community-approved orthography. Its first syllable, *pi-* ‘2 person marker’ in A/S function, is habitually omitted. This verb of perception, which occurs in clausal function, is pervasive in contentious public arguments and familial disputes, in both male and female speech. Its use signals that the truth of the stated proposition is warranted by the shared experience of both the speaker and the addressee. The parenthetical basically alludes to the speaker-addressee sensory experience as information source. It is intended to highlight the tentativeness of the speaker stance and prompt a quick response from the hearer, ensuring his or her engagement in a conversation. The parenthetical tends to occur on the right edge of the anchor clause. In (7), the speaker Gaspar Camacho addresses his audience at the meeting of shamans and healers in March 2013, rebuking his interlocutors for the tendency



(8) *kantzimaitacha kant-ap-aincha-ri osheki*  
 CONJ be-DIR-STAT-REL a.lot

*o-kant-ashi-ye-t-a a-ña-vai-tz-i*  
 3NMASC.S-be-APL.INT-DISTR-EP-REAL 1PL.S-speak-DUR-EP-REAL

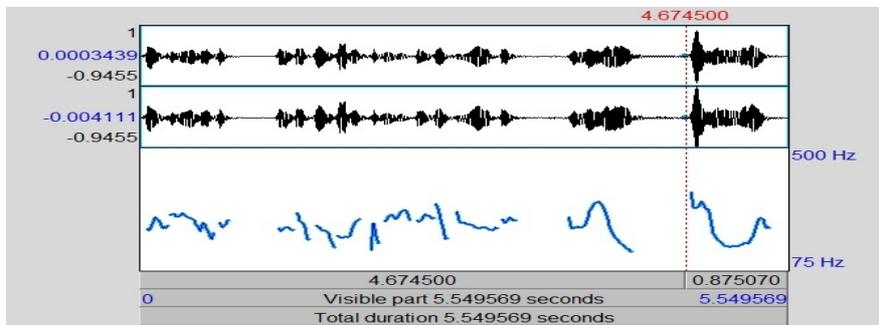
*tema ari*

isn't.it.so?

'Nevertheless, what is going on is that there are many differences in how we speak, isn't it so?'

Figure 4

Prosodic non-integration of the parenthetical *tema ari* 'isn't it so?'



## 6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study has shown that the central structural property of parentheticals is a lack of formal reduction, although *piñakiro* 'you've seen it' is losing its person index in subject function, consistently exhibiting reduction of form in casual speech. Prosodic independence is exhibited by the addressee-oriented parentheticals *piñakiro* 'you've seen it' and *tema ari* 'isn't it so?', whereas the speaker-oriented *nokantzi* 'I say' and *koñaro* 'clearly' tend to be prosodically integrated. The basic pragmatic function of the argumentative parentheticals is to affect the interlocutor's viewpoint by projecting a competing epistemic stance, performed within the conventions of the culturally acceptable model of argumentative discourse.

Being at the center of argumentative discourse, speaker viewpoint, contrasted with the perspectives of others, is prominently profiled by the 'assertion-making' (Nuckolls 2012: 237) speaker-oriented parentheticals, *nokantzi* 'I say' and *koñaro* 'clearly'. The use of the speaker-oriented argumentative parentheticals is grounded in the culture-specific concern with the source of reported knowledge. In view of the fact that speaker credibility is tendentially established either on the basis of personal experience or sensory evidence, combined with inference, the self-reporting *nokantzi* 'I say' functions as an epistemic verb predicate which

references speaker's personal experience, of high credibility, while *koñaro* 'clearly' underscores the socially recognized value of having personal sensory access to knowledge.

The truth value of speaker statements is sought to be validated by the addressee, whose engagement is prompted through the use of the addressee-oriented parentheticals *piñakiro* 'you've seen it' and *tema ari* 'isn't it so?' In addition, the parentheticals *piñakiro* 'you've seen it' and *tema ari* 'isn't it so?' appear to dampen the bluntness of the claims to truth, being used as a face-saving technique and enabling the addressee to offer a counterview without feeling threatened by speaker authority. The pervasive use of the addressee-oriented parentheticals in public disputes is likely rooted in the discursive strategy of avoiding head-on confrontations which might trigger suspicions of sorcery.

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