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Exemplifications, Selections and Argumentations

The Use of Example Markers
in English and German



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EDITION

1 Introduction

It seems to be the case that the frequency with which a linguistic expression is used is inversely proportional to the number of linguistic analyses of this expression. Indeed, there are virtually no systematic linguistic studies of the use of these ubiquitous example markers in German and English.

This lack of relevant linguistics studies¹ explains the fact that the distinctions drawn in standard grammars and teaching materials tend to remain rather vague and general, if not imprecise. Thus in various grammars a distinction is drawn between *restatement* (**in other words, or rather, that is (to say), namely**) and *exemplification* (**for example, for instance**)², while in other grammars these two procedures are dealt with together (cf. Cowan 2008).³ Cowan gives the following explanation: “Discourse connectors of *exemplification* and *restatement* signal that information following in some way clarifies the information that preceded [...]. The most common connectors of exemplification are **for example** and **for instance**. **Namely** and **that is** can introduce examples if these are followed by an expression such as **and so on**.” (p. 618). It is of course not wrong to say that example markers in many cases such as in (1), where the example marker is used in an *enumerative apposition*⁴, do involve the use of an ‘exemplifying restatement’⁵:

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- 1 A typical example of such a study is that of Hyland 2007, 278ff., who lists the following “exemplification markers” without distinguishing between them: **such as, for example, e.g., an example of, like** or **for instance**. For Hyland these markers “work in three main ways: 1 by offering an instance of a general category; 2 by providing a parallel or similar case; 3 by giving a precept or a rule” (279). For case 2 he provides the following example among others: “A tradition may *be reflective and designed*, **like** the deliberations of the Supreme Court, or *unreflective and spontaneous*, **like** sports fans rooting for their teams” (279) – an example which is obviously a specification; this also applies to the example he gives for case 3: “[...] *putting images in the context of a story vastly improves recognition*, as does depicting objects as parts of larger scenes (**e.g.**, a tulip in a vase will not be taken for a fork).” (280)
- 2 Cf. Quirk 1985: 1315: “the second appositive exemplifies the reference of the more general term in the first appositive”. Cf. Downing/Locke 2006 who provide a circular definition for example markers: “the second clause develops the content of the first by means of an example” (282). Note that they deal with *exemplification* as well as *restating* (i.e. reformulation) and *upgrading* (with connectives like **indeed** and **actually**) under the overall heading of *clarification*.
- 3 Cf. Cowan, Ron, 2008, *The Teacher’s Grammar of English: A Course Book and Reference Guide*, Cambridge Univ. Press, 622.
- 4 We adopt this term from Mathesius 1975, 91ff.

- (1) Only traditional pets are allowed in the hold, **for example** cats, dogs, rabbits and small rodents **such as** guinea pigs and hamsters.
(www.finnair.com – 12 NOV 2011)

But how then can we explain cases like the following?

- (2) Shall we go to the Lincoln Memorial? Then, **for example**, we can go to the White House. (Cf. Webber et al. 2003, 567)
- (3) You shouldn't trust John because, **for example**, he never returns what he borrows. (Ibid.)

As we can see, neither of these two cases, which we have taken from Webber et al.'s 2003 innovative study, involves exemplification in any form. In fact, Webber et al.'s 2003⁶ study – which is in the field of computational linguistics – deals with examples like (1), which form the basis of the traditional explanatory paradigm, only marginally: **for example** relates “a general concept or a set [...] to a specific instance” (ibid. 568/9). Their main focus is, however, the analysis of **for example** uses immediately after another ‘discourse connective’ and above all the formal description of two relations, i.e. in (2) the combination of the relations AFTER⁷ and EXEMPLIFY expressed by **then** and **for example** or in (3) the relations EXPLANATION (**because**) and EXEMPLIFY. The basic assumption is that the example marker “appears to be parasitic on the relation associated with a structural connective or discourse adverbial to their left” (ibid., 566). In both cases, **for example** marks the sentence on its right as one instance of a set of possible consecutive or subsequent events (**then**) or explanations (**because**).

This analysis of **for example** as a ‘parasitic apposition’ has not received much attention in linguistic and grammatical research proper, a surprising fact, given that it met with considerable positive response in computer linguistics, where the issue of adequate formal representation is central.⁸ Our intention in

5 More substantial studies on the use of example markers in other languages also tend to restrict themselves to this model of exemplifying or specificational restatement; cf. for example concerning Italian Manzotti 1985.

6 Cf. Webber et al., 2003, who have further critically developed Mann and Thomson's Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST) (cf. Mann/Thompson 1988).

7 In the following we will capitalise the relations which are used in the sense of Webber et al. 2003 and Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST).

8 Cf. especially Forbes-Riley et al. 2005; it is only in Danlos 2009, 15ff. that the parasitic hypothesis is replaced by the idea that **for example** functions as a ‘modifier’ (i.e. as a *focus particle*) of the connective on its left (cf. (3)) “You shouldn't trust John *because*, **for example**, he never returns what he borrows”) in the same way as **only** modifies the connective on its right in for example “Fred is in a bad mood **only** *when* it is sunny.” The fact that this equating of **for example** with **only** is unsustainable can be easily

this paper is to show that the parasitic analysis cannot explain all the uses of example markers as well as to show that the relations postulated are not subtle enough. Due to the fact that Webber et al. 2003 restrict their analyses to uses like (2) and (3), other possible positions like (3)‘ for example are not considered:

- (3)‘ You shouldn’t trust John because, he never returns what he borrows, **for example**.

In addition, the variety of uses before, in and after noun phrases (NPs) or prepositional phrases (PPs) are not taken into account:⁹

- (4) What are the monthly costs when I buy **for example** an apartment for € 246,500?
(www.experts123.com)
- (5) How to add a digital camera driver (**for example**) to Acer Aspire.
(laptopreviewspot.com – 6 Mar 2011)
- (6) Contrast that **for example** with the technology sector where most companies don’t care much about where a person went to college.
(www.quantnet.com – 6 Jun 2010)
- (7) Workmen in the 1870’s found the skeleton of an old lady sitting in a chair bricked up behind a wall, **for example**.
(www.darby.scrapblog.com/viewer/viewer.aspx?sbId=2830141)
- (8) You’ll need to do this when working with, **for example**, text files.
(www.homeandlearn.co.uk/php/php7p4.html)

Further fundamental problems arise from the fact that Webber et al. 2003 (as linguistic and grammatical research also fail to do) do not clearly distinguish descriptive contexts like (9) from argumentative contexts such as (10) and (11):

- (9) You shouldn’t trust John because, **for example**, he never returns what he borrows.
- (10) John just broke his arm. So, **for example**, he can’t cycle to work now.
- (11) You shouldn’t trust John. **For example**, he never returns what he borrows.¹⁰

shown if we use the example marker in the second example: “Fred is in a bad mood *when*, **for example**, it is sunny”. If we delete here the ‘modifier’ **for example**, the truth conditions are not modified: <Fred is in a bad mood when it is sunny, but it is not excluded that he might be in a bad mood in other instances>. Obviously, this is not equivalent to the variant with **only**, which states explicitly that ‘Fred is in a bad mood’ is true *if and only if* ‘it is sunny’ is true.

- 9 This could be explained by the fact that Webber et al. are investigating the interaction of two relational markers. However, they postulate that their analysis, which they develop on the basis of constructions such as **after/because (of)**, **for example** (i.e. relation marker + example marker), also applies to example markers used on their own (cf. Webber et al. 2003, 568ff.).
- 10 See Webber et al. 2003, esp. 567ff. We will discuss this issue in section 0, p. 96ff.

Since clarification of this issue presupposes a precise analysis of uses in NPs or PPs as well as the explanatory-specifying uses in enumerative appositions¹¹ such as in (1), we will deal with these first. This is also necessary for the reason that particularly in linguistic research a range of relevant phenomena has not been seen.

A final word about terminology. In the following we refer to the adverbials **for example** and **for instance** (and *zum Beispiel* und *beispielsweise* in German) as *example markers*. If other ‘example markers’ such as **to give an example, by way of example** etc. are meant, then this follows from the context or it will be explicitly noted. If example markers are grammaticalised in a particular syntactical position as connectors, such as **for example** or **for instance**, we refer to them as *example connectors*.

11 In the following we will speak of ‘in’ enumerative appositions, although example markers are usually positioned ‘before’ them. We do this because we assume that anteposed example markers are also elements of their host phrases.

2 The types of use of example markers – general overview

The small number of examples given above show that the example markers are subject to virtually no position restrictions. This may be illustrated by the following example, which indicates the most important possible positions:

- (1) (**For example**) The band Boyce Avenue (**for example**) has (**for example**) played shows (**for example**) with (**for example**) Secondhand Serenade (**for example**) in important venues, such as (FOR EXAMPLE) the Hammersmith Apollo.

All these various syntactical positions of use can be grouped into three *types of use*, namely:

- exemplification (descriptive)
- selection (descriptive)
- argumentation

The exemplifying use is present in (2), the selective use in (3) and the argumentative one in (4):

- (2) Boyce Avenue has played shows with Secondhand Serenade in important venues, FOR EXAMPLE the Hammersmith Apollo.
- (3) a – Boyce Avenue has **for example** played shows with Secondhand Serenade in the Hammersmith Apollo.
b – Boyce Avenue has played shows with **for example** Secondhand Serenade in the Hammersmith Apollo.
- (4) a – **For example** Boyce Avenue has played with Secondhand Serenade in the Hammersmith Apollo.¹²
b – Boyce Avenue **for example** has played with Secondhand Serenade in the Hammersmith Apollo.

12 House's 2011 analysis, which makes sweeping generalisations concerning the use of example markers in English and German in scientific texts, only takes into account example markers in this pre-sentence position; she fails to see their function as argumentative connectors. Matters are made worse by the fact that her determination of the function of example markers remains extremely vague in many respects. Thus she says: "the two linking constructions [...] *for example* and *for instance*" are characterised as "prepositional phrases which, broadly speaking, function as specifiers to what has been verbalized before, and are rather typical of the genre popular science. They focus on what will follow in ensuing text segments, where information will be added, concretized, or explained via exemplification." (House 2011, 167)

We group exemplifications and selections together as *descriptive* uses, which can then be distinguished from *argumentative* uses. The exemplifying and argumentative uses are syntactically marked in that the exemplifying example markers are only used in appositions like in (2) and the argumentative example markers are only used in the pre-sentence position or immediately after the sentence subject as in (4).¹³ Example markers in selective uses – which are highlighted in bold in the examples above – refer to entire sentences as in (3)a or to phrases such as NPs or PPs as in (3)b. Equally, the example markers are used selectively in co-ordinate or subordinate structures such as (5) and (6) (cf. also (2) and (3)) immediately after a connector):

- (5) If he doesn't have enjoyment, he seeks ways to fill the void, and **then, for example**, he eats too much.
(www.aidlin.com/aidlin_press.html)
- (6) We retain this information **so that, for instance**, you can return to view prior messages you have sent or easily see your Contacts.
(www.zipwhip.com/html/privacy.html)

All these selective uses are *phrastic* in that they refer to a phrase, a clause or a sentence. The two descriptive uses – exemplification and selection – have one aspect in common therefore, that is they both operate on the level of the *sentence* and are thus to be understood as *complete* communicative units. The argumentative uses, in contrast, are *transphrastic*, since they refer to preceding sentences together with which they form a type of text or genre, namely *argumentation*. This can be demonstrated using the following argumentative example, (4):

- (4) a – Many Florida rock bands are known worldwide (p). **For example**_{ARG}, Boyce Avenue has played in the Hammersmith Apollo (q).
- b – Many Florida rock bands are known worldwide (p). Boyce Avenue, **for example**_{ARG}, has played in the Hammersmith Apollo (q).¹⁴

Both in the pre-sentence (4)a as well as in the focussing post-subject position (4)b, the example markers function as transphrastic links which establish a particular inferential relation between the two propositions p and q. In other words, the example markers function here as argumentative connectors which indicate that the subsequent proposition q is to be understood as an argument for the pre-

13 This can be a complex NP: “Walking is excellent exercise. For those who choose to walk outdoors, pedestrian safety measures are essential. *A walk in the rain*, **for example**, requires extra walking safety rules.” (www.ehow.com/how_2156533_be-safe-pedestrian-rain.html#ixzz23Ldv82Vh).

14 We refer to the first case as *pre-sentence* position and the second case as *post-subject* position.

viously asserted claim – here a generic thesis. At the same time, these example connectors indicate – like the other uses of the example markers – that the speaker could provide further examples on request.

Finally, since *exemplification*, *selection* and *argumentation* are distinct uses, they may be used together in a sentence:

- (7) Many Florida rock bands are known worldwide. **For instance**_{ARG}, Boyce Avenue has played **for example**_{SEL} with Secondhand Serenade in important venues – **FOR EXAMPLE**_{EXEMP} in the Hammersmith Apollo.

Since dealing with the transphrastic argumentative uses requires that we clarify the inner-sentence descriptive uses first, this necessarily results in the following structure for our analysis: (i) first of all we need to determine the common features of and in particular the differences between exemplifications and selections in phrases (section 2.1); (ii) this is followed by an analysis of the uses of example markers in sentences with adverbial and non-adverbial clauses as well as in comparisons (section 2.2 and 1.1). All these descriptive uses ‘construct’ states of affairs and thus ‘describe’ them. Since between the various states of affairs (or between the propositions which represent them) certain relations of inference exist or may exist, these can also be arranged as explicit arguments. In section 3 we look at the ways in which arguments are put forward as well as which arguments are put forward using the argumentative connectors **for example** and **for instance**.