

## Some “Non-intersective” Adjectives are Genuinely Noun-taking

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Some adjectives (e.g., *good*, *beautiful*) have an “intersective” as well as a “non-intersective” reading. We argue that suppletive comparative and superlative forms of some corresponding Serbo-Croatian (SC) adjectives favor a “blame-the-adjective” account of this fact, rather than a “blame-the-noun” account.

**What are “non-intersective” adjectives?** A standard diagnostic for identifying “intersective” adjectives (I-adjectives) is (1), which checks whether applying a predicate formed of an adjective-noun complex to an individual intuitively entails applying the adjective to that individual and applying the noun to that individual. *Italian* is an I-adjective (see (2a)), and *former* is a NI-adjective (i.e., “non-intersective” adjective, see (2b)). Some adjectives are ambiguous (see (3)). We can try to account for the distribution of NI-readings by blaming the adjective (e.g., Siegel 1976) or by blaming the noun (e.g., Larson 1998). Here we use formal tools in the style of Heim&Kratzer 1998 illustrate how these approaches work.

**Blame ADJ.** The extensions of *DA* and *Italian* are of type  $\langle e, t \rangle$ , and they combine by Predicate Modification yielding an I-reading (4a). The extension of *former* is of type  $\langle \langle s, \langle e, t \rangle \rangle, \langle e, t \rangle \rangle$ : it combines with the intension of *DA* by (Intensional) Functional Application yielding a NI-reading (4b). *Good* takes a degree argument (type  $d$ ) and is ambiguous: *good\*-d* is *Italian*-like (see (5)) and *good\*\*-d* is *former*-like (see (6)). Both *good\*-d* and *good\*\*-d* depend on a contextually supplied scale (Chierchia&McConnell-Ginet 2000; Larson 1983, 1998; Siegel 1976 a.o.). Thus, (3a) has in fact more than one I-reading: John can be morally good for a thief, or for a man ( $\text{GOOD}_{C1,w}$  vs.  $\text{GOOD}_{C2,w}$  in (5b)). *Good\*\*-d* is special in that its contextually supplied scale is semantically restricted by the noun.

**Blame NOUN.** *Good-d* is lexically unambiguous and *Italian*-like (see (7a)): it is like *good\*-d* in (5a), except that the domain is DUE (individuals or events). The noun takes an individual argument and an event argument (see (7b)) and *good-d* can, in principle, apply to the individual (yielding an I-reading; e.g., (8a)), or to the event (yielding a NI-reading; e.g., (8b)). Not all adjectives are like that: only individuals can be *Italian* (hence the non-ambiguity of (2a), with *Italian*) and only events can be “former” (hence the non-ambiguity of (2b), with *former*). That the NI-reading is an event reading is suggested by the behavior of adverbs that correspond to the adjectives that support NI-readings (see (9), which entails what the NI-reading of (3b) entails). These adverbs presumably take events as arguments (Davidson 1967).

**How do we choose?** A small class of SC adjectives have the following peculiar property (see (10)). They have suppletive comparative and superlative forms, and although they are ambiguous between an I- and a NI-reading when they appear alone, they lose the I-reading in comparative/superlative constructions (unlike adjectives which do not have suppletive forms, see (11)). This suggests that at least in SC suppletive forms the adjective must be blamed for the NI-reading. This, in turn, suggests (contra Larson) that we cannot completely do away with a *former*-like semantics for adjectives such as *good*. We propose, then, that English *good* (and SC *dobar*<sup>NONSUPPLETIVE</sup>, which doesn’t have a comparative or superlative variant) have the *Italian*-like semantics of *good\** and the *former*-like semantics of *good\*\**. An NI-reading of (3a) arises with *good\** if the contextually supplied scale happens to compare thieves according to their stealing skills (see (12):  $\text{GOOD}_{C3,w}$  yields a NI-reading for (3a) when the adjective is *good\**). Support for this analysis comes from (13), where *good* and *incredible* do seem to pass the test in (1) on their NI-reading. English *former* has only the semantics in (4b), and SC ‘better’ and ‘best’ (or their root *dobar*<sup>SUPPLETIVE</sup>) have only the *former*-like semantics of *good\*\** (and (14) is the only meaning of (10b)).

**Further issues.** Larson notes that the intuitive meaning of (3a) (on its NI-reading) doesn’t involve checking whether John is a thief in alternative world-time pairs. We agree with Larson’s observation, but not with his suggestion that this fact renders a *former*-like semantics of *good* unjustified: the semantics of *good\*\** in (6) is justified on the basis of (10) (and doesn’t check membership in ‘N’ in alternative world-time pairs). As for the case of *former-N*, *alleged-N*, and *imaginary-N*, we argue that their intuitive meanings do indeed justify a semantics that requires that their actual extensions contain individuals who are in ‘N’ in alternative world-time pairs. We conclude by addressing: (A) the problem of predicting the disappearance of the I-reading, rather than the NI-reading, in SC suppletive forms; and (B) the problem of couching our analysis in an adequate morphological framework.

- (1) 'x is [A N]' ==> 'x is A' and 'x is N'
- (2) a. John is an Italian D(istrict) A(ttorney). ==> John is Italian and John is a DA.  
 b. John is a former DA. ==> John is former. (==> John is a DA.)
- (3) a. John is a good thief. I-reading: False when John is not a good individual.  
NI-reading: Might be true when John is evil, as long as his stealing skills are good.  
 b. Mary is an amazing dancer. I-reading: False when Mary is not an amazing individual.  
NI-reading: Might be true when Mary herself is dull, as long as her dancing is amazing.
- (4) a.  $\llbracket \text{Italian} \rrbracket^w = [\lambda x \in D. x \text{ is Italian in } w]$  (D is the domain of individuals; w is a world-time pair)  
 $\llbracket \text{DA} \rrbracket^w = [\lambda x \in D. x \text{ is a DA in } w]$   
 $\llbracket \text{John is an } [[_A \text{Italian}] [_N \text{DA}]] \rrbracket^w = [\lambda x \in D. \llbracket \text{Italian} \rrbracket^w(x) = 1 \ \& \ \llbracket \text{DA} \rrbracket^w(x) = 1](\text{John})$   
 b.  $\llbracket \text{former} \rrbracket^w = [\lambda P \in D_{\langle s, \langle e, t \rangle \rangle}. \lambda x \in D. \text{ there is a past } w' \in W \text{ (past relative to } w) \text{ such that } P(w')(x) = 1]$   
(W is the domain of world-time pairs;  $D_{\langle s, \langle e, t \rangle \rangle}$  is the domain of properties)  
 $\llbracket \text{John is a } [[_A \text{former}] [_N \text{DA}]] \rrbracket^w = \llbracket \text{former} \rrbracket^w(\lambda w' \in W. \llbracket \text{DA} \rrbracket^{w'})(\text{John}) = [\lambda x \in D. \text{ there is a past } w' \in W \text{ (past relative to } w) \text{ such that } \llbracket \text{DA} \rrbracket^{w'}(x) = 1](\text{John})$
- (5) a.  $\llbracket \text{good}^*-d_2 \rrbracket^{w,C} = [\lambda x \in D: \text{context } C \text{ supplies an assignment, } g_C, \text{ and a scale of moral "goodness", } \text{GOOD}_{C,w}. x \text{'s ranking on } \text{GOOD}_{C,w} \text{ is at least } g_C(2)].$  (When free,  $\llbracket d_2 \rrbracket^{w,C} = \text{Standard}(\text{GOOD}_{C,w})$ ).  
 b.  $\text{GOOD}_{C1,w}$  – A scale that ranks men according to moral "goodness" in w.  
 $\text{GOOD}_{C2,w}$  – A scale that ranks thieves according to moral "goodness" in w.
- (6) a.  $\llbracket \text{good}^{**}-d_2 \rrbracket^{w,C} = [\lambda P \in D_{\langle s, \langle e, t \rangle \rangle}. \lambda x \in D: C \text{ supplies an assignment, } g_C, \text{ and a scale, } S_{P,w}, \text{ that ranks individuals by the "goodness" of their } P\text{-skills in } w. x \text{'s ranking in } w \text{ on } S_{P,w} \text{ is at least } g(2)]$   
 b.  $\llbracket \text{John is a } [[_A \text{good}^{**}-d_2] [_N \text{thief}]] \rrbracket^{w,C}$  is defined only if C supplies a scale,  $S_{[\lambda w'. \lambda y. y \text{ is a thief in } w'] \triangleright w}$ , which ranks individuals according to their stealing skills in w.
- (7) a.  $\llbracket \text{good}-d_2 \rrbracket^{w,C} = [\lambda x \in D \cup E: C \text{ supplies an assignment, } g_C, \text{ and a scale, } \text{GOOD}_C. \text{ the ranking of } x \text{ on } \text{GOOD}_C \text{ is at least } g_C(2)].$   
 b.  $\llbracket \text{thief} \rrbracket^{w,C} = [\lambda e \in E. \lambda x \in D. e \text{ is an event of } x \text{ being a thief in } w]$
- (8) a.  $\llbracket [3 \ [ [1 \ [_A \text{good}-d_2\text{-pro}_1]] \ [4 \ [_N \text{thief}-e_3\text{-pro}_4]]] \rrbracket^{w,C} = [\lambda e \in E. \lambda x \in D. \llbracket \text{good}-d_2 \rrbracket^{w,C}(x) = 1 \ \& \ \llbracket \text{thief} \rrbracket^{w,C}(e)(x) = 1]$   
 b.  $\llbracket [4 \ [ [1 \ [_A \text{good}-d_2\text{-e}_1]] \ [3 \ [_N \text{thief}-e_3\text{-pro}_4]]] \rrbracket^{w,C} = [\lambda x \in D. \lambda e \in E. \llbracket \text{good}-d_2 \rrbracket^{w,C}(e) = 1 \ \& \ \llbracket \text{thief} \rrbracket^{w,C}(e)(x) = 1]$
- (9) Mary dances amazingly. ==> Mary's dancing is amazing.
- (10) a. On je dobar lopov.  
*He is good thief*  
 'He is a good thief.' (I; NI)  
 b. On je bolji/najbolji lopov.  
*He is better/best thief*  
 'He is a better/the best thief.' (\*I; NI)
- (11) a. Petar je inteligentan teniser.  
*Peter is intelligent tennis player*  
 'Peter is an intelligent tennis player' (I; NI)  
 b. Petar je inteligentniji teniser.  
*Peter is more-intelligent tennis player*  
 'Peter is a more intelligent tennis player' (I; NI)  
 c. Petar je najinteligentniji teniser.  
*Peter is most-intelligent tennis player*  
 'Peter is the most intelligent tennis player' (I; NI)
- (12)  $\text{GOOD}_{C3,w}$  – A scale that ranks thieves according to their "goodness" at stealing in w.
- (13) a. Did you hear about the robbery last night? Boy! Those thieves were really good!  
 b. I saw Mary dance last night at the theater. Let me tell you: she was incredible.
- (14) When defined,  $\llbracket \text{on je najbolji lopov} \rrbracket^{w,C} (= \llbracket \text{he is the most } [2 \ [_A \text{dobar}^{\text{SUPLETIVE}}-d_2] [_N \text{thief}]] \rrbracket^{w,C}) = 1$  iff the ranking of  $\llbracket \text{he} \rrbracket^{w,C}$  on  $S_{[\lambda w'. \lambda y. y \text{ is a thief in } w'] \triangleright w}$  is the highest among the relevant people in w.

Selected references: Chierchia, G. & McConnell-Ginet, S., 2000, *Meaning and Grammar*, MIT Press; Davidson, D., 1967, 'The logical form of action sentences', in *The Logic of Decision and Action*, University of Pittsburgh Press; Heim, I. & Kratzer, A., 1998, *Semantics in Generative Grammar*, Blackwell Publishers; Larson, R. 1983, *Restrictive Modification*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin; Larson, R. 1998, 'Events and modification in nominals', *Proceedings of SALT 8*; Siegel, E., 1976, *Capturing the Adjective*, Ph.D. dissertation, UMass Amherst.