

Ontological puzzles of non-intersective adjectives and *as* phrases

Introduction: Quality adjectives are a subclass of non-intersective modifiers that describe the ‘way’ an individual holds and/or performs an identity or role, as shown in (1) (Sandoval to appear).

(1) Eloise is a {responsible driver | skillful singer | strict teacher | careful surgeon}.

A Larsonian analysis would paraphrase these NPs as VPs (2a) and represent them with a generic quantifier over Davidsonian events (2b)—e.g. *responsible* modifies typical driving events *e* by *x*.

(2) a. Eloise {drives carefully | sings skillfully | teaches strictly | performs surgery carefully}.
b. $\llbracket \textit{responsible driver} \rrbracket = \lambda x . \text{GEN}^C e[\textit{drive}(x)(e)] [\textit{responsible}(e)]$

Another paraphrase proposed by Siegel (1976) uses *as* phrases (asPs):

(3) Eloise is {responsible | skillful | strict | careful} as a {driver | singer | teacher | surgeon}.

AsPs have been represented with situations (Moltmann 2003), individual aspects (Asher 2011), and role variables (Zobel 2018). I build upon this research by examining the link between asPs and quality adjectives. Following Siegel’s paraphrase, I posit that the non-intersective effect of quality adjectives stems from an unpronounced asP. I represent this asP using Kratzerian situations in line with Moltmann (2003), but I incorporate grammatical parallels with eventive VPs using a generic quantifier that situates the nominal in the restrictor and the adjective in the nuclear scope

Events cannot represent quality adjectives: With Maienborn (2021) I argue *driver* and *drives* are not semantically equivalent. *Driver* cannot merely be represented with driving events, as it involves more than just driving. Of the two, only *responsible driver* can refer to someone who registers their license on time or changes their oil regularly (4a), as can its asP paraphrase (4b):

(4) a. Eloise registered her license early. She’s such a responsible driver.
b. Eloise registered her license early. She’s so responsible as a driver.
c. Eloise registered her license early. #She drives so responsibly!

NP and VP parallels: At the same time, nominals restrict quality adjectives just as habitual verbs restrict manner adverbials. While *dancer* entails an individual dances professionally or regularly, under quality modification (or its asP paraphrase) this entailment is lost (5a), (5b), especially if the modifier is negative (5c), (5d). *Dancer* merely contextualizes Eloise’s beauty or elegance.

(5) a. Eloise is a ??({beautiful | elegant}) dancer. It’s a shame she doesn’t dance more.
b. Eloise is {beautiful | elegant} as a dancer. It’s a shame she doesn’t dance more.
c. Bruce is a ??({awkward | clumsy}) dancer. No wonder he doesn’t dance often.
d. Bruce is {awkward | clumsy} as a dancer. No wonder he doesn’t dance often.

The same effect is seen with the VP analogues of these phrases—*dances* restricts the adverbial:

(6) a. Eloise dances ??({beautifully | elegantly}). It’s a shame she doesn’t dance more.
b. Bruce dances ??({awkwardly | clumsily}). No wonder he doesn’t dance often.

Quality adjectives and their adverbial counterparts also facilitate a natural interpretation of transitive predicates without a second argument. Many relational nouns sound most natural with both of their arguments pronounced. In a null context, *brother* is odd without an overt relation named. However, quality adjectives allow for a sortal interpretation of *brother*, as do their asP paraphrases:

(7) a. Clark is a ??({kind | caring}) brother. b. Clark is {kind | caring} as a brother.

This effect is again seen in the verbal domain: some habitual two-place predicates sound odd out of the blue without a pronounced second argument, but manner adverbials improves their reading:

(8) Clark kisses ??({passionately | sloppily}).

Analysis: Like Moltmann (2003) in her analysis of asPs, I use Kratzerian situations as a framework. Nominal and adjectival predicates apply to an individual and a situation variable, which represents a part of a world at a time. Driver situations encompass license registration alongside driving events.

- (9) a. $\llbracket \text{driver} \rrbracket = \lambda x \lambda s . \mathbf{driver}(x)(s)$ b. $\llbracket \text{responsible} \rrbracket = \lambda x \lambda s . \mathbf{responsible}(x)(s)$

To account for the parallels between quality adjectives and their VP analogues, I analyze asPs that follow quality adjectives using a dyadic generic quantifier with a distinct restrictor and nuclear scope. In the restrictor, the nominal applies to a minimal situation s and an individual x . In the nuclear scope, a second minimal situation variable s' is existentially introduced, extending s to which the adjective applies. Typically, for minimal situations s in which x is a dancer, there is a minimal situation s' in which x is beautiful, and s extends to s' .

- (10) $\llbracket \text{as} \rrbracket = \lambda P_{\langle e, st \rangle} \lambda Q_{\langle e, st \rangle} \lambda x . \text{GEN}_s [P(x)(s)] [\exists s' [Q(x)(s') \wedge s \leq s']]$

I assume quality adjectives have an operator AS with the same semantics as *as* in (10). For *clumsy dancer*, *dancer* in the restrictor merely establishes the situations that are extended to situations of x being clumsy. It does not entail that there are typical dancer situations of x . I also assume quantifiers presuppose that their restrictors are not empty (see, e.g., Heim & Kratzer (1998)). Thus, (11) still must apply to an individual that is a part of at least one situation of being a dancer.

- (11) $\llbracket \text{clumsy AS dancer} \rrbracket = \lambda x . \text{GEN}_s [\mathbf{dancer}(x)(s)] [\exists s' [\mathbf{clumsy}(x)(s') \wedge s \leq s']]$

A relational noun like *brother* requires less contextual support to leave its second argument unexpressed when it is in the restrictor of a quantifier. This can already be seen in characterizing sentences such as (13) (Carlson 1995). AS parallels this structure: in the restrictor of GEN, situations of x being a brother only restrict the conditions for situations in which x is good, as shown in (12). Less context is required to accommodate the unpronounced second argument.

- (12) $\llbracket \text{kind AS brother} \rrbracket = \lambda x . \text{GEN}_s \exists y [\mathbf{brother}(y)(x)(s)] [\exists s' [\mathbf{kind}(x)(s') \wedge s \leq s']]$

- (13) $\llbracket \text{A brother shares his toys} \rrbracket = \text{GEN}_y \text{GEN}_s [\exists x : \mathbf{brother}(x)(y)(s)] [\mathbf{shares.his.toys}(y)(s)]$

Taking stock: With Maienborn (2021), I argue that events alone cannot fully represent the nuanced dimensions of a nominal that a quality adjective can modify. At the same time, Larson's analysis does encapsulate deep grammatical connections between the NP and the VP. Quality modifiers are restricted by their head nouns, just as habitual VPs are restricted by adverbials. I use a dyadic quantifier to represent this connection. Though I use situations, this structure could be implemented into a trope-based framework, as Maienborn (2021) proposes for non-intersective modification or a role-based framework, as Zobel (2018) proposes for asPs. A final issue arising from this discussion is how this representation of asPs in quality adjective paraphrases extends to other uses of asPs, such as *on strike as a judge* (Landman 1989). Though the semantics provided for *as* in (10) could potentially be generalized, I observe semantic differences between quality adjective asPs and other asPs. Only the former asPs can be targeted with property expressions *how* and *way*, as in (14a). Capacity asPs require more lexically specific phrases (e.g. *through which job* for (14b)).

- (14) a. {How | in what way} is Eloise kind? As a teacher.
b. {How | in what way} is Eloise on strike? #As a teacher.

Furthermore, quality adjective asPs do not entail the predicate alone—Eloise may be unkind in other ways that lower her average kindness below the contextual standard.

- (15) a. Eloise is on strike as a teacher \rightarrow Eloise is on strike.
b. Eloise is kind as a teacher $\not\rightarrow$ Eloise is kind (overall).

Thus while my analysis of asPs encapsulates grammatical properties of quality modifiers, it also poses further questions about how other asPs can be represented.

References

- Asher, N. 2011. *Lexical meaning in context: a web of words*.
- Carlson, G. N. 1995. Truth conditions of generic sentences: Two contrasting views. *The Generic Book*.
- Heim, I. & A. Kratzer. 1998. *Semantics in Generative Grammar*.
- Landman, F. 1989. Groups, II. *Linguistics and Philosophy*.
- Larson, R. 1998. Events and modification in nominals. *Proceedings of Semantics and Linguistic Theory (SALT) 12*.
- Maienborn, C. 2021. Revisiting olga, the beautiful dancer: An intersective a-analysis. *Semantics and Linguistic Theory*.
- Moltmann, F. 2003. *Individual and Whole: Modifiers of part structures*. Ms., University of Stirling.
- Sandoval, S. To appear. Responsible drivers and good passengers: the influence of subsection modification on nouns.
- Siegel, M. A. 1976. *Capturing the Adjective*. Diss., University of Massachusetts Amherst.
- Zobel, S. 2018. The sensitivity of natural language to the distinction between class nouns and role nouns. *Proceedings of Proceedings of Semantics and Linguistic Theory (SALT) 27*.