Erschienen in: *Language* ; 86 (2010), 2. - S. 450-452
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/lan.0.0209>

Adjectives and adverbs: Syntax, semantics, and discourse. Ed. by LOUISE McNALLY and CHRIS KENNEDY. (Oxford studies in theoretical linguistics.) Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. Pp. 376. ISBN 9780199211623. \$45.

Reviewed by REGINE ECKARDT, *University of Göttingen*

This volume consists of an introduction by the editors and eleven articles, each of which addresses some intriguing puzzle about the syntax, semantics, or pragmatics of adjectives and adverbs. The collection as a whole deepens the reader's understanding of why adjectives and adverbs pose a special challenge to linguistic analysis.

Typically, adverbs and adjectives occur in sentences as nonarguments. They appear to be less syntactically restricted than other parts of the clause (at least in languages like English). For instance, they can occur in various positions in sentences. Yet, if several adjectives/adverbs occur together in a sentence, their relative order to one another is usually restricted. This can be captured in different ways: a syntax-based analysis will assume a comparatively rigid syntactic structure within the adjectival/adverbial parts of the sentence, whereas a semantics-based approach will attempt to derive facts about word order from the ontological nature of modified arguments (Cinque 1999 and Ernst 2002 represent these two opposing camps). Semantics-based approaches lead to a deeper problem at the syntax-semantics interface. The way that adjectives and adverbs are interpreted can differ, and sometimes differs dramatically, depending on their position. Differences may have to do with the lexical content (e.g. *careful(ly)* as a manner vs. an evaluation by the speaker), the arguments of the predicate (e.g. resultative vs. manner readings of *elegantly*), restrictive vs. nonrestrictive modification by adjectives, commentary vs. at-issue interpretations, to name a few. Such facts can be relegated to syntax ('brute homonymy' approach), to semantics, or to pragmatics, but any analysis will have to address questions that do not normally arise in the linguistic description of core sentence structure. Finally, the content that adverbs and adjectives contribute to the overall message of the sentence can range at any level between truth-conditional

content and speaker attitude. Here, several articles explore formats like dialogue semantics, expressive content (Potts 2005) in contrast to focus semantic value (Rooth 1992), and common ground (Stalnaker 2002) to achieve a fuller analysis of commentary material in the sentence. The collection as a whole permits the reader to see how syntactic and semantic analyses of interrelated phenomena dovetail, or sometimes do not, allowing the reader to experience the challenges of the topic.

Two contributions explore the syntax of adjectives. PETER SVENONIUS, in 'The position of adjectives and other phrasal modifiers in the decomposition of DP', proposes a universal syntactic structure of DP, which, as far as adjective ordering is concerned, rests on the following classes: focused adjectives, idiomatic adjectives (= near compounding), count adjectives, and SORT adjectives (including gradable adjectives). Each of these can be multiply instantiated, and their relative order might in part be motivated semantically. RICHARD LARSON and HIROKO YAMAKIDO, in 'Ezafe and the deep position of nominal modifiers', propose that certain adjectives are in fact arguments of the determiner and receive abstract case. According to this view, the semantic combination of adjective and noun is steered by, somewhat surprisingly, the determiner in DP. The analysis is motivated by Modern Persian but extends to Modern Greek, Japanese, and English postposed adjectives like in *everything interesting*. The data in this article overlap with those discussed by Demonte and Morzycki, who both invoke different means to guide the semantic interpretation of postposed adjectives.

VIOLETA DEMONTE's 'Meaning-form correlations and adjective position in Spanish' offers an overview of position interpretation in Spanish. She distinguishes two semantic types (predicative/nonpredicative) of adjectives, which can be combined with a noun through three kinds of syntactic Merge operations. Taken together, these determine the readings for all adjective-noun combinations she observes in Spanish. Demonte's analysis rests on the assumption that semantics will be able to provide closely related but distinct predicative/nonpredicative readings for many adjectives.

ADAM ZACHARY WYNER, in 'Towards flexible types with constraints for manner and factive adverbs', spells out the details of a similar assumption for adverbials. He argues in favor of a flexible analysis for certain adverbs with regular meaning variation (*stupidly*, *quickly*). Interpretation in situ restricts the possible readings of adverbs at a given position, as the logical type will have to match the type of the adverb's argument that is provided by syntax.

Several articles discuss the links between aspect, degree, and time. In 'Measure of change: The adjectival core of degree achievements', CHRISTOPHER KENNEDY and BETH LEVIN propose to use complex scales on the basis of degree and time. This provides a treatment of verbs like *to cool* and *to darken* that are based on gradable adjectives. Taking the adjectival core seriously, the authors discuss differential degree (*cool 17 degrees*) and attribute the scale properties to the semantic content of the core adjective. Moreover, they explain variable aspectual properties that these verbs exhibit. 'Aspectual composition with degrees' by CHRISTOPHER PIÑÓN takes up the aspectual properties of degree achievements and proposes a detailed analysis of the alternation between telic (*the soup cooled in 10 minutes*) and atelic (*the soup cooled for 10 minutes*) uses of these verbs. He presents his version of a degree-based approach within the axiomatic formulation of a theory of Aktionsart by Krifka (1989). Piñón's analysis fills in concepts that have been claimed absent by critics of Krifka's approach, thus offering a richer new version of the theory.

GRAHAM KATZ, in 'Manner modification of state verbs', uses the notion of underlying degrees in order to argue against state arguments for stative verbs. Manner modifications like *know well* are proposed to be modifications of a degree argument of the verb. Other classes of modifications are shown to be collocational or about events that can indirectly be accessed by the verb.

JENNY DOETJES's 'Adjectives and degree modification' investigates the distribution of degree modifiers like *much*, *erg* (Dutch), and *sehr* (German) and tentatively proposes an implicational hierarchy for their distribution, relating them to the scale properties of various types of gradable words (adjectives, nouns, and verbs). Overall, the articles on adverbials and degree focus on the cases where verb-related scales are time-based or are derived from adjectival bases. What seems missing, however, is a formal treatment of gradable manner adverbials in parallel to adjectives, which would cover comparatives like *stroke softly/more softly than/most softly*.

A final set of articles addresses the commentary nature of certain adjectives and adverbs. In 'Nonrestrictive modifiers in non-parenthetical positions', MARCIN MORZYCKI proposes that non-restrictive adjectives are commentary. Refuting earlier focus-based treatments, he analyzes these adjectives at the expressive level (Potts 2005). Perhaps the most radical part of his proposal is the configurationality hypothesis (for English), according to which expressive predication is never available on right branches in syntax. Controversial as that may be, hypotheses of this kind could explain why some positions in English show semantic effects similar to focusing without being in focus positions proper (e.g. they do not attract accent, which would give rise to additional pragmatic focus effects, etc.). In 'Lexical semantics and pragmatics of evaluative adverbs', OLIVIER BONAMI and DANIELE GODARD argue carefully that opacity and scoping tests place adverbs like *unfortunately* between manner adverbs and propositional-attitude operators. The authors offer a dialogue-based analysis in HPSG from which they derive the scope effects, veridicality, and the fact that *unfortunately*, even though a propositional-attitude predicate, is not opaque. Finally, 'Discourse adjectives' by GINA TARANTO focuses on adjectives like *clear* in *it is clear that p*. She proposes a comparatively weak literal semantics in terms of speaker and hearer belief (Stalnaker 2002), according to which the speaker's evidence favors the expectation *that p* over beliefs to the contrary. This allows her to explain why *it is clear that p* can make an informative contribution (in spite of *p* being 'clear'), and why the construction is only pseudo-factive, as shown by the nonfactive negation *it is not clear that p* (from which *p* does not follow).

In sum, the articles in this book offer an excellent reflection of the current state of the field, even without aiming at comprehensive coverage. All of the authors take great care in laying out their data and applying to them a standard series of tests for grammaticality, distinctness of readings, coherency in discourse, and entailment, reflecting excellent standards of empirical argumentation. Another pleasant feature of the overall collection is that all of the authors develop their analyses against a range of background theories in (minimalist) syntax, (truth-conditional) semantics, and compatible pragmatic frameworks that, though all different in focus, could optimistically be viewed as belonging to one homogeneous paradigm. This allows the reader to contrast hypotheses of different chapters with each other. The differences that at times arise from such comparisons will arouse the reader's interest in the topic.

REFERENCES

- CINQUE, GUGLIELMO. 1999. *Adverbs and functional heads: A cross-linguistic perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- ERNST, THOMAS. 2002. *The syntax of adjuncts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- KRIFKA, MANFRED. 1989. Nominal reference, temporal constitution and quantification in event semantics. *Semantics and contextual expressions*, ed. by Renate Bartsch, Johann van Benthem, and Peter van Emde-Boas, 75–115. Dordrecht: Foris.
- POTTS, CHRISTOPHER. 2005. *The logic of conversational implicatures*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- ROOTH, MATS. 1992. A theory of focus interpretation. *Natural Language Semantics* 1.75–116.
- STALNAKER, ROBERT. 2002. Common ground. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 25.701–21.

Department of English Language and Literature
University of Göttingen
Käte-Hamburger-Weg 3
37073 Göttingen, Germany
[regine.eckardt@phil.uni-goettingen.de]