Evaluation and consumption

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1 Introduction

Evaluative verbs (1) and habitual verbs (2) pattern similarly in a number of respects. Notably, they are both infelicitous with a singular indefinite object.

(1)   a.   John likes cookies.   b. # John likes a cookie.

(2)   a.   John eats cookies.   b. # John eats a cookie.

With both verb types, the singular indefinite receives an infelicitous specific reading. With the insertion of an adverbial as in (3a) and (4a), however, the singular indefinite does not receive a specific reading.

(3)   a.   John likes a cookie <u>after dinner</u>.
        b.   John likes a <u>good</u> cookie.
        c.   John likes a cookie <u>as much as the next person</u>.

(4)   a.   John eats a cookie <u>after dinner</u>.
        b. #John eats a <u>good</u> cookie.
        c. #John eats a cookie <u>as much as the next person</u>.

Evaluative verbs differ from habituals in allowing non-specific readings of singular indefinites with a wider range of modifiers, as demonstrated in (3b)-(3c). This paper provides an analysis for the specificity contrasts in (1)-(4), drawing on the analysis of habituals in Rimell (2004).[1] We posit that (1b) and (2b) are infelicitous due to the wide scope reading reading of the indefinite, and the structures in (3) and (4a) provide a restriction on situations which allows the indefinite to avoid a wide-scope reading. This restriction is not possible in (4b)-(4c) due to the nature of the complements allowed by habituals.

2 Domain restriction

Habituals (Rimell, 2004)

Rimell (2004) uses the contrast between sentences like (2b) and (4a) to argue that they involve different structures. This contrast can be seen again in her examples below.

(5)   a. #Mary drinks a beer.   (Rimell, 2004, p. 663)
        b. Mary usually drinks a beer when she's at Dempsey's Pub.   (ibid. p. 665)

Rimell posits that simple habituals like (5a) involve generalization due to a scopally inert affix of the matrix verb, which is a generalization operator ($\exists_{\text{sufficient}}$) over stages of individuals; the singular indefinite QRs and takes widest scope. This leads to a specific reading of the singular indefinite in (5a), which is infelicitous because one cannot drink a single beer multiple times.

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[1] For an expanded discussion of these and similar sentences, see Zaroukian and Beller (to appear).

Overtly quantified habituals like (5b) instead have a tripartite logical form as in (6). The indefinite maps to the nuclear scope and is quantified over by *usually*, allowing for a different beer in each situation in (5b) and avoiding an infelicitous specific reading.

(6)   USUALLY$_s$ [M at DP in s] $\exists x[\text{beer}(x)$ & M drinks x in $s]$
        Q *restrictor*   *nuclear scope*

When a quantifier has no overt restrictor, one can be supplied contextually, as in (7a). Similarly the presence of a restrictor licenses a covert quantifier, as in (7b).

(7)   a.   Mary often eats roast beef sandwiches.   (ibid. p. 663)
        b.   Mary eats green beans when she's hungry.   (ibid. p. 666)

Speakers can infer either a covert restrictor or a covert quantifier but they typically do not infer both when given only a nuclear scope. Thus (5a) does not have a tripartite structure and receives an infelicitous specific reading as described above.

Extension to evaluatives

Given the parallel between (1) and (2), it is tempting to extend Rimell's proposal so that it applies to the evaluative predicate *like* as well. While evaluative predicates are statives, not habituals, they seem to express a similar generalization. Evaluative predicates generalize over stages, situations, or eventualities in which the judge experiences and evaluates the object of evaluation. Just as with habituals, the quantification has less than universal force ($\exists_{\text{sufficient}}$, not $\forall$). It can be true that John likes cookies even if he is not positively disposed toward them at every moment. Conversely, for the sentence to be true there must be some sufficient number of moments in which he *is* so disposed.

Extending Rimell's analysis to evaluatives provides an explanation for the felicity of (3a): Its tripartite structure allows non-specific readings. A first approximation of the structures for (3a) and (4a) gives us the template structure in (8).

(8) GEN_s [s is after dinner] $\exists x[\text{cookie}(x)$ and J { likes / eats } x in $s]$

While this template is appropriate for (4a), it does not represent the most natural interpretation of (3a). When the temporal modifier targets *like*, we get a 'fickle' reading where John's general preferences fluctuate over the course of the day. The most natural interpretation of (3a) is rather one where John generally feels positively about *having* or *consuming* a cookie, and it is this *having* event that is modified by the adverbial.

3 *Like* is like *need*

Schwarz (2008) notes similar ambiguities in adverbial attachment with *need*-type Intentional Transitive Verbs (ITVs), and he uses these ambiguities to argue that *need*-type ITVs take a covert *HAVE*-clause complement. An example of these ambiguities can be seen in (9), which is ambiguous between (9a) and (9b). Other verbs, even other classes of ITVs, have only a single reading, as shown in (10).

(9)   John needed a cookie after dinner.

     a.   There was a time after dinner at which John needed a cookie
          John [needed [PRO HAVE a cookie] after dinner]   (high attachment)
     b.   John's need is to have a cookie after dinner
          John needed [[PRO HAVE a cookie] after dinner]   (low attachment)

(10)   John { ate / looked for } a cookie after dinner.
        only: There was a time after dinner at which John { ate / looked for } a cookie

Like exhibits similar attachment ambiguities, (11), which suggests that it also takes a *HAVE*-clause complement. This is supported by the *having/consuming* interpretation.

(11)   John liked a cookie after dinner.
     a.   There was a time after dinner at which John liked (to have) a cookie   (high)
     b.   What John liked was having a cookie after dinner   (low)

Now we have a complete explanation for (3a). The restrictor (*after dinner*) licenses a covert quantifier (GEN_s) whose tripartite structure allows a non-specific interpretation of the singular indefinite. When the restrictor acts on *having* instead of on *liking*, a 'fickle' reading is avoided, and the structure in (12) results.

(12) GEN_s [s is after dinner] $\exists x$[cookie(x) and J likes HAVE(x,J) in s]

4 Situation restricting adjectives, *good**

(3b)   John likes a good cookie.

(13)   John read a good ten books.

In the most natural interpretation of (3b) *good* is not a simple intersective adjective; it does not make a direct assertion about the kind of cookies that John likes. Rather, it appears to restrict the cookie-having *situations* for which the evaluation holds to those that exceed some threshold of *goodness*. We will write this adjective as *good**. It seems that *good** must be mapped, along with the nominal it modifies, to the restrictor of the tripartite structure. Note the similarity of the quantity modifying *good* in (13). This *good* conveys that the quantity in question meets a cardinality standard of sufficiency.

Good* is further distinguished from intersective *good* in its prosody. In (14), intersective *good* must be at least as prominent as the nominal it modifies, while *good** must be less prominent. Note that an unambiguously intersective adjective like *white* is infelicitous when less prominent than the nominal, as shown in (15).

(14)   a. I like a GOOD cookie.   (intersective)   b. I like a good COOKIE.   (*good**)

(15)   a. I like a WHITE shirt.   (intersective)   b. # I like a white SHIRT. (!*white**)

The unavailability of an analogous *white** follows from the *-variant's role as a situation modifier: situations can be 'good', but they cannot be 'white', shown in (16). Intersective adjectives do not modify situations directly – they modify the objects. A cookie can be 'good', just as a shirt can be 'white', shown in (17).

(16) GEN_s [s is a cookie-*HAVING* that exceeds a threshold for { goodness / whiteness }] [I like s]
        'I like a cookie-*HAVING* situation that is { good / # white }.'   (*good**, !*white**)

(17) GEN_s [∃ some cookie x in s and x is { good / white }] [I like HAVE(x,I) in s]
        'I like a cookie-*HAVING* situation if the cookie is { good / white }.' (intersective)

Ferreira (2005) treats the habitual operator as a covert definite determiner over pluralities of events. In this system, *good** would be a modifier of pluralities of events, just as the *good* of quantity in (13) modifies pluralities of objects. Ferreira's selective modification of pluralities of events translates in our current system to licensing a covert quantifier by providing an overt restrictor. *Good**, then, is a situation restrictor and as such introduces a tripartite structure which allows for a non-specific reading.

The set phrase *as much as the next person* in (18) is amenable to a similar analysis. It maps to the restrictor in a tripartite structure, (19), and evokes a average standard of acceptability.

(3c)   John likes cookies as much as the next person.

(18) GEN_s [s is a cookie-*HAVING* that meets a standard of acceptability] [J likes s]

This seems to be idiomatic and non-compositional, as suggested by the infelicity of paraphrases and similar expressions in (19).

(19)   #John likes a cookie { the same amount as / more than } the next person.

5 Conclusion

We have proposed that evaluatives, much like habituals, give rise to a tripartite structure when appropriately modified. We have accounted for their precise structure by positing that evaluatives allow a null *HAVE*-clause, similar to *need*-type ITVs. We have also argued for a the existence of a situation modifying adjective, *good**, which causes the entire object nominal to map to the restrictor rather than the nuclear scope (cf. Krifka et al., 1995).

Habituals are more limited than evaluatives in their licensing of felicitous tripartite structures. To understand why, note that the unacceptable habitual constructions are precisely the ones which require comparison to some standard, (4b)-(4c). Their unacceptability can be attributed to the fact that habituals like *eat* often do not have necessary standards against which to compare, so the situation modification readings required by the tripartite structure are not available.

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Rimell, L. (2004). Habitual sentences and generic quantification. In *WCCFL 23*, pp. 663–676.

Schwarz, F. (2008). On *needing* propositions and *looking for* properties. In *SALT 16*, pp. 259–276.

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