Non-restrictive modification by evaluative predicates

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Non-restrictive modification

A modifier M is non-restrictive if it is irrelevant for the denotation or reference of the modified phrase,
e.g. \([ [ M \ H ] ] = [ [ H ] ]\)
cf. workshop “Semantic and Pragmatic Properties of (Non)Restrictivity”
(www.ims.uni-stuttgart.de/~arndt/restrictivity.html)

Non-restrictive modification

- relative clauses, appositions, attributive adjectives, …
- definite NPs (cf. Fabricius-Hansen 2009), indefinite NPs, ….

Empirical vs. evaluative predicates (1)

Non-restrictive modification by empirical predicates:

(2) a. weiße Schimmel  
'white whitehorses'

b. gesundheitsschädliche Dioxine  
'noxious dioxines'

c. heißer Kaffee  
'hot coffee'

Empirical vs. evaluative predicates (2)

Non-restrictive modification by evaluative predicates:

(3) a. schöne Blumen  
'beautiful flowers'

b. unschuldige Zivilisten  
'innocent civilians'

c. blöde Beamte  
'stupid officers'

d. dreckige Gauner  
'dirty crooks'

Observation (German): Most non-restrictively modified indefinites contain evaluative adjectives
(cf. Castroviejo & Schwager 2008 for Catalan, Demonte 2008 for Spanish)
Non-restrictive modification and focus

(4)(a) *In dem Film geht es um DRECKIGE Gauner.*
'The movie is about dirty crooks (not about clean ones).'

(4)(b) *In dem Film geht es um dreckige GAUNER.*
'The movie is about dirty crooks (not about dirty citizens).'

(4)(c) *In dem Film geht es um [dreckige GAUNER].*
'The movie is about dirty crooks (not about citizens).'

→ Non-restrictively used adjectives must not be narrowly focussed, (1a), and not be backgrounded, (1b)

No correspondence between non-restrictive adjectives and background:
Focus => restrictiveness (Riester 2012)
Background /==> non-restrictiveness

→ evidence for CI interpretation

The idea of faultless disagreement

(5) Ann: *Licorice is tasty.*
Ben: *No, it isn’t. It tastes terrible.*

Intuition: Ann and Ben may both be right → "faultless disagreement"

Contextualist accounts (Stephenson 2007):
Evaluative predicates include a hidden *experiencer variable*, e.g., *Licorice is tasty* [to me].

The truth of evaluative propositions depends on a *judge*, e.g., *Licorice is tasty* judged by Anne
Faultless disagreement is a misconception

Faultless disagreement presupposes a bird's eye point of view. From the point of view of the discourse participants, disagreement is never faultless (Stojanovic 2007, Umbach in prep.)

- either there is genuine disagreement
- or the dissent is relativized (experencer, finden, ...)

(6) Ann: Licorice is tasty.
Ben: No, it isn't. It tastes terrible.

a. Ann: It is tasty. And it's not just that I find it tasty; it's tasty tout court.
(b) Ann: OK. To my taste, Licorice is tasty; that's all I'm saying.
(c) Ann: OK. Ich finde Lakritze lecker. (cf. Saebó 2009)
   'I think licorice is tasty.'

Which propositions are subjective? and why?

Use German finden ('think/consider') as a testbed:
A proposition \( \phi \) is subjective iff \( \text{Ich finde } \phi \) is grammatical.

Consider gradable predicates:

(7) a. \( \text{Ich finde Lakritze lecker / das Bild schön.} \)
   'I find licorice tasty / the painting beautiful.'

b. \( \text{Ich finde die Wohnung groß.} \)
   'I find the appartment big.'

d. \( \text{Ich finde die Skulptur schöner als das Bild.} \)
   'I find the sculpture more beautiful than the painting.'

e. *\( \text{Ich finde Sue schwanger.} \)
   'I find Sue pregnant.'

f. *\( \text{Ich finde Rauchen gesundheitsschädlich.} \)
   'I find smoking harmful to health.'

c. *\( \text{Ich finde Sue größer als Sven.} \)
   'I find Sue taller than Sven.'

Empirical / subjective propositions – universal / private judgments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>universal judgment</th>
<th>empirical propositions (empirically testable)</th>
<th>subjective propositions (ascribed by the speaker)</th>
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<td>Licorice contains sugar.</td>
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<td>(intended to enter the CG)</td>
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<td>'I think licorice is tasty / ...'</td>
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Subjective cut-off points

Subjective propositions include

- positive / (comparative) form of evaluative adjectives (lecker, schön)
- positive form of dimensional adjectives (groß)

Subjective propositions are about cut-off points:

\[ \to \text{for dimensional adjectives: meta-linguistic interpretation (Barker 2002)} \]

\[ \to \text{for evaluative adjectives: descriptive and metalinguistic interpretation cannot be distinguished, because the scale is not proportional (cf. also Sassoon 2011)} \]

(8) \[ [\text{pos}] = \lambda x. f(x) \geq \text{standard}(f)(\text{norm}(c))(C) \] empirical propositions

\[ [\text{pos}] = \lambda x. f(x) \geq \text{standard}(f)(\text{ag}(c))(C) \] subjective propositions

where \( f \) is an adjective denotation, \( c \) is a context, \( C \) is a comparison class.
**Metalinguistic interpretation of degree assertions (Barker 2002)**

Feynman is tall.

(i) descriptive interpretation: inform the hearer about Feynman's height.

“What is Feynman's height?”

→ Feynman's height exceeds the tall-standard

(ii) metalinguistic interpretation: inform the hearer about the standard of tallness in the context.

“Who counts as tall in this context?”

→ the tall-standard is below Feynman's height

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**Private judgments need not be shared**

Farkas & Bruce (2010):
An individual discourse commitment of a discourse participant X is a set of propositions DCX – propositions that are public commitments of X but are not in the common ground.

universal judgments (empirical as well as subjective ones) are intended to enter the common ground

→ universal judgments containing subjective propositions come with a normative intention

private judgments are intended to be individual discourse commitments only

→ private judgments allow to express dissent without disagreement

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**Evaluative predicates in attributive position**

(9) *In Anna Garten stehen schöne Blumen*

‘There are beautiful flowers in Ann’s garden.’

**?? Why are evaluative predicates more susceptible for non-restrictive interpretation than regular ones?**

- Restrictive modification must be able to carry a focus, and trigger alternatives; must come with a well-defined complement requires commonly accepted cut-off point

- If there is no commonly accepted cut-off point, the modifying predicate is considered as a comment by the speaker, "non-restrictive"

- Evaluative predicates are more susceptible for non-restrictive interpretation because they often cannot be used restrictively.
Adapting the semantics/pragmatics of evaluative predicates in predicative position to attributive position

confirms: Non-restrictive evaluative predicates are CIs

moreover: CIs are individual discourse commitments (Farkas & Bruce 2010)

explains: Evaluative predicates are susceptible to non-restrictive interpretation because they frequently lack a commonly agreed upon denotation

Why can beautiful flowers not be used restrictively to mean something like "the flowers that I think are beautiful" (as opposed to the ones I don’t think are beautiful)?

> because you would need to know what I think in order to pick the intended ones.

References


Sassoon, Galit (2011) Be positive! Norm-related implications and beyond, Proceedings of Sinn und Bedeutung 15, Universität des Saarlandes, Saarbrücken, Germany.


