Expressives and identity conditions[*]

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1 Introduction

We present diverse evidence that *expressive content* behaves differently from descriptive content in constructions that demand matching between elements. The data yield insights into the theory of expressives, and they can also be useful to researchers working on ellipsis, binding, correlatives, and a host of other phenomena.

2 Evidence for integration

We begin by anticipating an objection. The data discussed below might lead one to conclude that the expressives in question are not morphologically or syntactically integrated into the descriptive clause structure. If we could simply factor them out, along with pauses, yelps, and the like, then the puzzle would be largely solved. However, all the evidence known to us points to the conclusion that these expressives are morphosyntactically integrated. We review some of the evidence here, and we refer to Potts 2005 for more extended arguments.

We rely heavily on prenominal expressive adjectives, as they have a wide distribution and are common in speech and text. We know of three arguments for adopting a familiar syntax for them.

First, expressive adjectives are strictly prenominal, which places them in a syntactic class with *former* and *main*.

(1)　a.　the main road
　　　b. *This road is main.

(2)   a. the damn dog
        b. *The dog is damn
(3)   a. the bloody television
        b. #The television is bloody.   (literal reading only)

Second, in languages with case-marking on prenominal adjectives, the expressives obligatorily receive the usual case morphology:

(4)   Du hast kein   verdammtes Wort gesagt.   (German)
      you have no.ACC word.ACC   word said
      'You didn't say a damn word.'

Third, we see restrictions on the distribution of expressives in the prenominal space. The generalization is that there is a strong preference for placing them as close to the determiner as possible.

(5)   a. I accidentally ate one of those fucking sour red candies.
        b.?? I accidentally ate one of those sour red fucking candies.

This pattern admits of some exceptions (particularly if one reads the prenominal modifiers with a list-like intonation) but the contrasts are strong enough to indicate a syntactic restriction on expressive adjectives.

    Epithets also figure in what follows. The case for integration here is easily made. Aoun and Choueiri (2000) and Aoun et al. (2001) report that Lebanese Arabic epithets trigger special morphological effects. Lasnik (1989) and Büring (2005:123) observe that the English versions are subject to some version of Principle C of the binding theory, indicating that they are roughly akin to definite descriptions for the purposes of syntactic coindexation. And it is common for epithets to have the same basic phrase structure as definite descriptions (perhaps with some variation in determiner choice).

    Japanese honorifics and antihonorifics are another primary source of evidence for us. Such morphemes often effect nominalization and other systematic changes in form (Harada 1976; Boeckx and Niinuma 2004). There seems to be no hope of factoring them out of Japanese clause structure.

3   Balanced constructions

We begin with three apparently related English constructions:

(6)   Water or no water — I'm not hiking in this heat.   (NP *or no* NP construction)
(7)   Sue is as crazy as crazy can be.   (*as* AP *as* AP *can be* construction)
(8)   I'll talk with the president, and the president alone.   (*X and X alone* construction)

The NP *or no* NP construction is the focus of Pullum and Rawlins (2005). They provide a variety of corpus examples to support a strong (though not absolute) identity requirement on the two NPs, as we see in (9)–(10).

(9)   a. * Water or no H_2O — I'm not hiking in this heat.
      b.   Cold water or no cold water — I'm not hiking in this heat.
      c. * Water or no cold water — I'm not hiking in this heat.
(10) a.   The show will go on, war with Iraq or no war with Iraq.

(Pullum and Rawlins 2005).

      b.?? The show will go on, war with Iraq or no war.

However, Pullum and Rawlins (2005) observe that expressives are invisible for the purposes of meeting this identity requirement:

(11) a.   Water or no fucking water — I'm not hiking in this heat.
      b.   file server or no damn file server   (Pullum and Rawlins 2005)
      c.   I'm not hiking in this heat — fucking water or no water!
      d.   Wound or no bloody wound — you have to wait to see a doctor like everyone else.

The adjective *bloody* has both expressive and descriptive readings. In (11d), though, it is unambiguously expressive, and thus there is no entailment that the wound in question involves blood.

We observe similarly exceptional behavior in the construction *as* AP *as* AP *can be*, where AP is headed by a gradable adjective. The matching requirement is as strict as the one for NP *or no* NP, and expressives are once again possible even where they create an apparent imbalance:

(12) a.   I'm as sure as sure can be.
      b. * I'm as sure as certain can be.
      c. * I'm as sure as absolutely sure can be.
(13) a.   I'm as sure as fucking sure can be.
      b.   I'm as fucking sure as sure can be.

The facts are parallel for the *X and X alone* construction:

(14) a.   I'll talk with Kennedy, and Kennedy alone.
      b.   Sue is mad, and mad alone.
(15) a. * I'll talk with the president, and the chief executive alone.
      b. * I'll talk with the president, and the American president alone.
(16) a.   I'll talk with the president, and the goddamn president alone!
      b.   I'll talk with the goddam president, and the president alone!

We suspect that the above data point to a semantic account of the identity requirement in these constructions, as follows:

(17) In the construction NP *or no* NP (*as* AP *as* AP *can be, X and X alone*), the NPs (APs, *X*s) must have identical *descriptive* semantic content, and that content must be realized in the same way.

This generalization presupposes that descriptive and expressive content are separate dimensions of meaning (Potts 2005, 2006). If we make this division, then we expect to find phenomena that are sensitive to just one of the two dimensions, and this expectation seems to be borne out by these three constructions as well as those discussed below.

4   Japanese predicate clefts

We turn now to a doubling construction in Japanese, the *predicate cleft* (Nishiyama and Cho 1998), which seems to have a fairly direct analogue in Korean (Cho et al. 2004). The canonical form is as in (18). The construction is characterized by the doubled predicate, the nominalizer *koto*, and the contrastive marker *wa*. The meanings are closely related to those of English contrastive topics.

(18) yomu koto wa   yon-da.
      read   NOM PART read-PST
      'I read (but I didn't necessarily understand)'.

Example (19) shows that even slight changes to the form or sense of the verb result in ungrammaticality.

(19) * yomu koto wa   jukudoku si-ta.
      read   NOM PART peruse   do-PST
      'I read/perused (but I didn't necessarily understand)'.

However, honorifics and antihonorifics, which fall under the rubric of expressives (Potts and Kawahara 2004; Sells and Kim 2006) do not interfere with the identity requirement, as we see in (20). The secondary expressive meanings we provide are, by necessity (Potts 2006), very rough approximations to what can be communicated by particular utterances of these sentences.

(20) a. kyooju-wa   yomu koto wa o-yomi-ninat-ta.
      professor-TOP read   NOM PART HON-read-HON-PST
        i. 'The professor read (but he didn't necessarily understand).'
        ii. 'I hold the professor in high regard.'

    b. aitsu-wa   yomu koto wa yomi-yagat-ta.
      that.guy-TOP read   NOM PART read-ANTIHON-PST
        i. 'The guy read (but he didn't necessarily understand).'
        ii. 'It sucks that the guy read.'
        iii. 'I hold the guy in low regard.'

We suspect that something along the lines of (17) would be a promising first step toward understanding these facts.

5 Pluractional constructions

Pluractional constructions such *paper after paper* and *sea to sea* are discussed by Huddleston and Pullum (2002:§7.4.3), Stockall (2001), Roeper et al. (2002), and Beck and von Stechow (2006). There is a strict identity requirement on the phrases that flank the preposition:

(21) a. *Sheila sailed from pond to tiny lake.
    b. *Sheila graded paper after essay.

However, unlike the constructions discussed above, we can have an overt mismatch between the two arguments: the second can contain a descriptive modifier missing from the first. When it does, the modifier distributes over the meanings of both. Thus, all the seas are shining in (22a), and all the papers are poorly written in (22b).

(22) a. Chris sailed from sea to shining sea.
    b. Sam graded paper after poorly-written paper.

It is therefore unsurprising that we can have an expressive in the second phrase:

(23) a. Sam graded paper after fucking paper.
    b. Sue tutored student after goddam student.

But expressives nonetheless distinguish themselves here. For descriptive modifiers, there is an asymmetry: if one appears in the first phrase, it must also appear in the second. Expressives do not display this asymmetry: they can appear in only the second phrase, as in (23), but they are free to appear only in the first as well:

(24) a. *Sam graded poorly-written paper after paper.
      b. "ill be in as long as college doesnt screw with me, like it is doing, fucking paper after paper."[7]

One might question whether the expressive modifies just the first nominal in (24b), or rather the entire pluractional construction. We not attempt to settle this question. The constrast with descriptive modifiers holds on either bracketing.

6 Hindi correlatives

Hindi correlatives involve a free-relative clause followed by a main clause that obligatorily contains a demonstrative that denotes the same entity as the free relative denotes:

(25) jo   CD sale-par hai   Aamir vo   CD khari:d-ega:.
      REL CD sale-on be.PRES Aamir that CD buy-FUT.MSG
      'Aamir will buy the CD that is on sale.'

In general, if both the relative operator and the demonstrative have complements, then those complements must match, as in (25). In (26), we attempt to vary the complements slightly, and the result is ungrammatical.

(26) *jis aadmii-se tum bahut pyaar-se baat kar rahe   the,   us Tiicar-ne   mujh-pe
      REL man-with you much love-with talk do PROG.PL be.PST.PL that teacher-ERG me-on
      muqadma Thonk rakhaa hai.
      court.case 'apply'-PFV   be.PRES.SG
      'The man that you were talking with so nicely, that teacher is suing me.'

But epithets are fine as the anaphoric device in the correlative:

(27) jis aadmii-se tum bahut pyaar-se baat kar rahe   the,   us haraamii-ne mujh-pe
      REL man-with you much love-with talk do PROG.PL be.PST.PL that bastard-ERG me-on
      muqadma Thonk rakhaa hai.
      court.case 'apply'-PFV   be.PRES.SG
      'The man that you were talking with so nicely, that bastard is suing me.'

Once again, we seem to be seeing a semantic identity requirement, where the relevant notion of identity is restricted to the descriptive content. We expect to find this pattern cross-linguistically in correlatives.

    We note one complication. Srivastav (1991:664) discusses examples like (28), in which the relative operator has no overt complement, but the demonstrative in the main clause does.

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[7] Found on the Net using the Google search engine, April 12, 2007.

(28) jo khaRii   hai vo laRkii lambii hai.
      REL standing is that girl   tall   is

Thus, it isn't quite true that the demonstrative cannot introduce descriptive content of its own. The matching requirement on descriptive content holds only for overt material, making pairs like (26) and (27) the most useful when highlighting the special properties of expressive content.

7   Ellipsis

Expressives provide important clues as to the nature of the identity requirements for VP ellipsis and related constructions. We observe first that expressive content can be 'factored out' of elided phrases:

(29) A: I saw your fucking dog in the park.
      B: No, you didn't — you couldn't have. The poor thing passed away last week.

The distressed speaker B doesn't adopt or endorse speaker A's negative characterization. There are two ellipsis sites in B's reply, though, both anaphoric to *see your fucking dog in the park*. We have the usual shift in the meaning of the indexicals (Fiengo and May 1994; Chung 2000), and we also find that *fucking* seems to have been removed. However, such removal is normally impossible for prenominal adjectives, as we see in (30).

(30) A: I saw a shaggy dog in the park.
      B: I did too. #{The one I saw/It} had no hair.

B's continuation would be fine if we could interpret the ellipsis as being of the form *a dog*, with the prenominal adjective factored out. But this is evidently impossible. Only expressives can be ignored in this way.

8   Conclusion

The above data uniformly indicate that expressives are different from descriptives when it comes to satisfying identity conditions in a variety of constructions across languages. We saw in section 2 that their special status cannot be attributed to a nonstandard syntax. We tentatively proposed that the relevant identity conditions concern only *descriptive* semantic content. This generalization presupposes that we can locate expressive content and descriptive content in separate dimensions of meaning.

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