Adjectival Manner Modification and Event Pluractionality in English

This paper focuses on the semantic analysis of a class of adjectives like *skilful*, *good*, *careful*, *active*, etc. applied to animate individuals in constructions of the following type:

(1) a. John is a skilful tuba player.
   b. John is an active human rights defender.

In early semantic analyses of adjectives (cf. Siegel 1976), these adjectives are a subset of adjectival non-intersective intensional modifiers, attested as such in the first instance on the basis of the fact that they give rise to substitution failures with co-extensional terms (Parsons 1968). The properties that distinguish *skilful*-class adjectives within the class of adjectival intensional modifiers are their ability to be used in predicative position and their compatibility with *as*-phrases, e.g. being a skilful tuba player would normally mean that one is skilful *as* a tuba player.

However, it has been argued in the literature that the lack of substitutivity cannot be used as an unequivocal diagnostic for intensionality. Alternatively, it has been suggested to analyze *skilful*-class adjectives in terms of manner modification of eventualities that are in the scope of a generic quantifier (Larson (1998), Asher (in press), Alexejenko (in press)). The main evidence for such analysis is the fact that these adjectives (called *manner adjectives*, or MAs, henceforth) allow for paraphrases with the corresponding manner adverbial counterparts that modify the verbal predicate denoting the relevant eventuality - a fact that remains unexplained on the intensionality theory. Accordingly, examples in (2) present possible paraphrases for sentences in (1):

(2) a. John skilfully plays the tuba.
   b. John actively defends human rights.

This analysis implies that nouns like *tuba player* or *human rights defender* in constructions exemplified in (1) denote eventualities that are bound by a generic quantifier. The semantic representation of such sentences looks as in (3):

(3) a. John is a skilful tuba player.
   b. Gen e [**tuba_player**(*john*) & **relevant_eventuality**(e,*john*)][**skilful**(e)]

The representation in (3b) formalizes what can be called *occupational* reading of (3a), i.e. the reading on which John *is* a tuba player (professionally). The relevant eventuality is left unspecified in order to account for the fact that it can vary depending on the context, although the default value is most probably provided by the meaning of the modified noun and would be **play_tuba** in this case (cf. Beesley 1982 on this issue).

Assuming that the manner modificational approach to MAs is on the right track, in this paper I aim to account for apparent restrictions that MAs seem to impose on the type of eventuality they can take as argument. They easily take **activities**, such as *play the tuba* and *defend human rights* that are underlying eventualities of nouns in the examples above. By contrast, MAs appear not to be able to modify nouns with underlying **achievements** and **accomplishments**, as demonstrated in (4) and (5):

(4) a. *This guy is the skilful inventor of generative grammar.
   b. *Columbus is the skilful discoverer of America.
(5) a. *Peter is a good painter of a landscape.
   b. *John is a good designer of a theatre.

However, if an achievement or an accomplishment is shifted to an atelic interpretation on the VP-level by means of a bare plural direct object, the resulting eventuality becomes an appropriate argument for MA-modification:

(6)   a.   Philip Gai acquired the reputation of a skilful inventor of new cruelties.
         b.   Abbe Paramelle was a skilful discoverer of hidden springs.
(7)   a.   Peter is a good painter of landscapes.
         b.   John is a good designer of theatres.

The contrasts in (4-7) suggest that the relevant factor, which restricts the applicability of MAs, is **atelicity** of the underlying eventuality. However, agent nominalizations with underlying **states** seem to contradict this assumption since they are bad candidates for MA-modification, although states are atelic:

(8)   a.   # John is a good owner of a Cadillac.
         b.   # John is a skilful lover of Mozart.

Sentences in (8) are infelicitous on the plain stative reading of *owner* and *lover*. They become interpretable only when these nouns undergo coercion to an "event-related" reading (Katz 2008), i.e. when the underlying state is coerced to activities that are associated with this state, e.g. *skilful lover* in (8b) would denote someone who loves Mozart and therefore skilfully performs his works.

      Yet I suggest that infelicity of sentences in (8) does not arise because MAs cannot modify nouns with underlying states in general, but is rather due to the fact that statives are not **agentive**, while manner adjectives in (8) involve ascription of a property to the agent (cf. Mittwoch 2005 for a similar suggestion). Other MAs, whose meanings do not imply properties of the agent, can easily modify nominalizations based on states:

(9)   a.   John is a lawful owner of this Cadillac.   [owns lawfully]
         b.   John is a hopeless lover of chocolate.   [loves hopelessly]
         c.   John is a loud / deep sleeper.   [sleeps loudly / deeply]

The key question is now why atelicity should be relevant for adjectival manner modification considered here. I argue that the relation between adjectival manner modification and atelicity can be established via the notion of **event pluractionality**, which has been suggested to be the source of atelicity (cf. van Geenhoven 2004). According to the analysis in (3), MAs modify events that are under the scope of a generic quantifier. Genericity in the domain of events can be achieved either as plurality of events (**frequentive** pluractionality in van Geenhoven's terms) or as inherent unboundedness of i-level predicates in the spirit of Chierchia 1995 (Geenhoven's **continuitive** pluractionality). The former mechanism accounts for the data with activities in (1) and s-level states in (9c), as well as for the contrasts with achievements and accomplishments in (4-7). The latter mechanism takes place with i-level states in (9a-b). In both cases, event genericity results in atelicity of the underlying eventuality.

References

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