snippets

Issue 10   **March 2005**

Contents

EDITORIAL STATEMENT

1. Purpose.

The aim of *Snippets* is to publish specific remarks that motivate research or that make theoretical points germane to current work. The ideal contribution is the ideal footnote: a side remark that taken on its own is not worth lengthy development but that needs to be said. One encounters many short comments of this kind in the literature of the seventies. We feel that there no longer is a forum for them. We want *Snippets* to help fill that gap.

2. Content.

We will publish notes that contribute to the study of syntax and semantics in generative grammar. The notes are to be brief, self-contained and explicit. They may do any of the following things:

> point out an empirical phenomenon that goes against accepted generalizations or that shows that some aspect of a theory is problematic;
> point out unnoticed minimal pairs that fall outside the scope of any existing theory;
> point out an empirical phenomenon that confirms the predictions of a theory in an area where the theory has not been tested;
> explicitly describe technical inconsistencies in a theory or in a set of frequently adopted assumptions;
> explicitly describe unnoticed assumptions that underlie a theory or assumptions that a theory needs to be supplemented with in order to make desired predictions;
> call attention to little-known or forgotten literature in which issues of immediate relevance are discussed.

We also encourage submissions that connect psycholinguistic data to theoretical issues. A proposal for a pilot experiment in language acquisition or language processing could make for an excellent snippet.

The earliest Linguistic Inquiry squibs exemplify the kind of note we would like to publish. Some of them posed unobserved puzzles. For instance, a squib by Postal and Ross in LI 1:1 ("A Problem of Adverb Preposing") noted that whether or not we can construe a sentence-initial temporal adverb with an embedded verb depends on the tense of the matrix verb. A squib by Perlmutter and Ross in LI 1:3 ("Relative Clauses with Split Antecedents"), challenging the prevailing analyses of coordination and extraposition, noted that conjoined clauses neither of which contain a plural noun phrase can appear next to an "extraposed" relative that can only describe groups. Other squibs drew attention to particular theoretical assumptions. For instance, a squib by Bresnan in LI 1:2 ("A Grammatical Fiction") outlined an alternative account of the derivation of sentences containing believe and force, and asked whether there were principled reasons for dismissing any of the underlying assumptions (among them that semantic interpretation is sensitive to details of a syntactic derivation). A squib by Zwicky in LI 1:2 ("Class Complements in Phonology") asked to what extent phonological rules refer to complements of classes. None of these squibs was more than a couple of paragraphs; all of them limited themselves to a precise question or observation.

3. Submission details.

Snippets is an electronic journal. We will solicit submissions twice a year: the submission deadlines are April 1 and October 1. The submissions that we accept will be posted on the journal website approximately 3 months after each deadline, and all accepted submissions will remain permanently on the website.

Snippets is intended as a service to the linguistics community. Consequently, authors are advised that, when they submit to *Snippets*, we understand them as allowing their submission to be reproduced if published. At the same time, the rights for the notes themselves will remain with the authors. As a result, citation of *Snippets* material will have to indicate the author's name and the specific source of the material.

We will accept electronic submissions at the address snippets@unimi.it. Electronic submissions may take the form of (a) the text of an e-mail message, or (b) an attached file. The attached file should be a simple text file, a Word file (Mac or Windows), or a Rich Text Format (RTF) file. All submissions must state the name and affiliation of the author(s), and a (postal or electronic) return address.

Submissions are to be a maximum of 500 words (including examples), with an additional half page allowed for diagrams, tables and references. Given that we envision the submissions themselves as footnotes, the submissions may not contain footnotes of their own. The ideal submission is one paragraph; a submission of five lines is perfectly acceptable. We will not consider abstracts.

4. Editorial policy.

Submissions will be reviewed by our editorial board, and review will be name-blind both ways. While we guarantee a response within 3 months of the submission deadline, we will only provide a yes/no response to the submitter. We will not request revisions (barring exceptional cases). We allow resubmission (once) of the same piece.

1.

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Negative concord in Serbo-Croat APs

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Sproat and Shih (1990) and Larson (2000), among others, propose analyses in which Adjective phrases (AP's) are derived as relative clauses. I will present data from Serbo-Croat (S-C) supporting this view.

S-C is a negative concord language. I will borrow the term n-words for the items showing negative concord from Laka (1990), and take the definition for n-words from Giannakidou (in press), that an expression is an n-word iff it can be used in structures containing sentential negation or another n-word yielding a reading equivalent to one of logical negation and if it can provide a negative fragment answer.

As illustrated in (1), n-words which give universally quantified fragment negation can be used in S-C **only** if the finite verb in the clause is negated (a requirement of the negative concord).

(1) a. Niko   nikoga   nikad   nigde   *(ne)   zove.
      NEG.who NEG.who.ACC   NEG.when NEG.where not   invite
      No one invites anyone anywhere ever.
    b. A: Ko vidi Jovana?   B: Niko.
        Who does see Jovan?   No one.
        A: Kad Jovan dolazi?   B: Nikad.
        When does Jovan come?   Never.

The n-word 'nimalo' *not at all* (lit. not-even-little) is another negative universal quantifier, and modifies mass nouns, (bare) plurals and adjectives.

(2) a. Jovan   *(ne)   pokazuje   nimalo   milosti.
      Jovan   not   shows   not-at-all   mercy.GEN
      Jovan doesn't show any mercy.
    b. Jovan   *(ne)   izgleda nimalo   naivan / naivno.
      Jovan   not   looks   not-at-all   naive.MASC / naive.NEUTR
      Jovan doesn't seem to be naive at all.
    c. A: Koliko rakije ima Jovan?   B: Nimalo.
        How much brandy has Jovan?   No (brandy) at all.

Interestingly, however, 'nimalo' *can* appear in sentences that have no negated verb, on condition that it modifies an adjective. The same n-word yields ungrammaticality when it modifies a property realized by a mass or plural noun as shown in (3).

(3) a. Jovan je dobio nimalo naivno pitanje o rekurziji.
    Jovan AUX gotten not-at-all naive question about recursion
    Jovan got the not-naive-at-all question about recursion.

b. Nimalo naivno pitanje o rekurziji je sasvim zbunilo Jovana.
    not-at-all naive question about recursion AUX completely confused Jovan
    The not-naive-at-all question about recursion totally confused Jovan.

This is expected if AP's are derived as relative clauses (potentially reduced and/or preposed, depending on one's favorite analysis) in which the n-word is in a proper environment with a negated verb. On this view, the facts involving noun modification in (2) are unsurprising: while the sentences with 'nimalo' in AP's in (3) can be rephrased as in (4), no such rephrasing is possible for the examples in (2).

(4) a. Jovan je dobio pitanje o rekurziji, koje nije nimalo naivno.
    Jovan AUX gotten question$_i$ about recursion which$_i$ not is not-at-all naive
    Jovan got the question about recursion, which isn't naive at all.

b. Pitanje o rekurziji, koje nije nimalo naivno,
    question$_i$ about recursion which$_i$ not is not-at-all naive
    je sasvim zbunilo Jovana.
    AUX completely confused Jovan
    The question about recursion, which isn't naive at all, totally confused Jovan.

Notice that in participial reduced relatives as well, n-words can appear without the overt presence of negation:

(5) a. To su bile ničim izazvane sankcije.
    that AUX been nothing.INST provoked sanctions.
    Those were fully unprovoked sanctions. (lit. by nothing provoked)

cf. b. Sankcije *(ni-)su bile ničim izazvane.
    sanctions NEG-AUX been nothing.INST provoked.
    The sanctions were not provoked by anything.

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2.

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Who knows the only reading of only ?

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Adjectival "*only*" has been claimed to resemble superlatives in several respects. Here I present a previously unnoted similarity supporting Heim's (1999) superlative movement analysis.

Bhatt (2002) notes that, when modifying a relative head, "*only*" shares its interpretations with superlatives:

(1) the longest book John said Tolstoy had written

   a. *High* reading: the longest book of the books about which John said Tolstoy wrote them
   b. *Low* reading: John said X is the longest book Tolstoy wrote.

(2) the only book John said Tolstoy had written

   a. *High* reading: X is the only book about which John said Tolstoy had written X
   b. *Low* reading: X is the only book Tolstoy wrote (according to John)

Moreover, superlatives and adjectival "*only*" behave alike with respect to NPI licensing.

Superlatives are also known to allow three readings: absolute, comparative, and, in intensional contexts, intermediate (Szabolcsi, 1986; Heim, 1994, 1999; Farkas and Kiss, 2000; Sharvit and Stateva, 2002).

(3) John climbed the highest mountain.

   a. absolute reading: John climbed the Everest
   b. comparative reading: John climbed a higher mountain than anybody else in the context

(4) John needs to climb the highest mountain

   intermediate reading: John needs to climb a 3500m mountain, Mary needs to climb a 3000m mountain, and Bill needs to climb a 2000m mountain. Therefore, John's needs are the most demanding regardless of what size mountain the other people will ultimately climb. For example, a world where John climbs a 3500m mountain, and Bill and Mary climb a 5000m mountain is a world compatible with John's needs.

What has gone unnoted in the literature is that there is a class of English speakers for whom "*only*" allows similar readings.

(5) John read the only book.

  absolute reading: John read the only book relevant in the context

In particular, these speakers accept the comparative reading in (6), where John is the only relevant person to read a book.

(6) comparative reading: John read two books, Bill read a newspaper, and Mary read a magazine.

Formally, adjectival "*only*" takes a singleton set and returns the same set. There is no obvious way to derive the comparative reading of (5) simply by modifying the restrictor of "*only*" (in the way that we might for the comparative reading of (3), by restricting the restrictor of "*est*" to mountains climbed). For instance, modifying the restrictor of "*only*" to books read by someone, we would merely obtain a reading on which John read the only book that got read. On the movement analysis, however, (5) can have the LF in (7), and (7) conveys that John is the only person who read a book, as desired.

(7) John only . x [x read ~~the~~ book]
     ==> Only John read a book

Moreover, some informants accepted the intermediate reading of (8) in the context in (9), which can also be explained by moving *only* between *John* and *need*.

(8) John needs to read the only book.

(9) John needs to read two books.
    Mary needs to write a paper.
    Fred needs to wash dishes.

These data support the movement analysis of Heim (1999), but remain unexplained under the analyses of Farkas and Kiss (2000) and Sharvit and Stateva (2002).

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3.

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Painting the wall red for a few hours: a reply to Glasbey (2003)

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While McGinnis (2002) argues that idioms are aspectually compositional, Glasbey (2003) contends that this conclusion is undermined by idioms like "paint the town red" ("have an extravagantly good time in town"). As Glasbey points out, this idiom can be aspectually classed as an atelic activity, as in "We painted the town red for hours", while the telic "We painted the town red in an hour" is bizarre. By contrast, common non-idiomatic uses of "paint" in this syntactic context yield telic accomplishments, as in the felicitous "We painted the shed green in a few hours"; thus, the atelic "We painted the shed green for a few hours" is odd.

While Glasbey's examples are intriguing, the aspectual difference between idiomatic and non-idiomatic readings is accidental and pragmatic, not a difference in principle. To obtain a felicitous atelic reading of "paint X red", the "painting" in question must be regarded as an activity with no salient endpoint. This is unusual in ordinary life, but it is easy to construct scenarios that make the reading felicitous. For example, in an experiment testing psychological effects of painting with different colours, a subject might report, "After I painted the wall red for a few minutes, I felt happy." A more ordinary scenario might involve workers painting a large stage set: "We painted the set red for a couple of hours, but then the director realized it looked boring." Clearly, the syntactic context licenses both telic and atelic readings for "paint X red". Both (literal) readings involve applying red paint to an object. In the atelic reading, this event is ongoing, while in the telic reading it is implicitly measured out by the object (Tenny 1987, 1994; see also Dowty 1990, Verkuyl 1993), such that at the endpoint, the object can be described as red.

While pragmatics can play a significant role in constraining the interpretation of an aspectually ambiguous verb phrase, it is important to recall that some syntactic structures are unambiguous: for example, verbs with a mass-noun object (such as "eat tapioca") do not allow a telic reading under any pragmatic circumstances. Despite Glasbey's ingenious examples, there is still no evidence that an idiomatic phrase can have an aspectual interpretation that is incompatible with its syntactic structure.

On the other hand, it is clear that idioms can be more aspectually constrained than their literal counterparts. For example, "paint the town red" seems to be only atelic. This might be because "the town" is a non-referential object; note that giving

a specific town improves the telic reading: "Okotoks? Why, we painted that cute little town red in about an hour." However, the conclusion does not follow in general: "kick the bucket" has both a non-referential object and a telic reading (Marantz 1997). A possible account is that the telic and atelic readings involve distinct syntactic aspectual heads, and that atelic aspect is part of the idiom "paint the town red"; in that case, the "Okotoks" example is a creative extension (Egan 2004) with different syntactic properties.

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4.

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After all, what doesn't because *select?*

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I. The Facts.
It has been noted that rhetorical wh-clauses (a.k.a. *rhetorical questions*) are interpreted very similarly to negative statements involving a negative quantifier (Saddock 1971, Han 2002):

(1) After all, what do they know
(2) After all, they know nothing

Interestingly, like their negative-statement counterpart in (2), rhetorical wh-clauses can be selected as the complement of *because*:

(3) Don't listen to them, because what do they know (Phil Collins lyric)
(4) Don't listen to them, because they know nothing

This is surprising because syntactically, a rhetorical wh-clause is generally considered a CP, but CP is not otherwise selected by *because*:

(5) … because [IP they know nothing]
(6) *… because [CP that they know nothing]

II. The Puzzle.
So we have a paradox: (7a) and (7b) indicate that *because* syntactically selects an IP and not CP (in this case both complements denote a proposition), while (8a) and (8b) indicate that *because* selects for a rhetorical CP, which is likely to denote a proposition like its negative-statement counterpart, and not an interrogative CP, which is commonly assumed to denote a set of propositions:

(7) a.   … because [IP they know nothing]
     b.   *… because [CP that they know nothing]

(8) a.   … because [CP what do they know]
     b.   *… because [CP what color is my hair]

A semantic account will not be able to rule in declarative IPs and still rule out *that*-clauses, while a syntactic account will not be able to rule in rhetorical wh-clauses and still rule out interrogative wh-clauses.

III. The Consequences.

Sawada and Larson (2004) demonstrate that causal adverbs such as *because* allow root-type phenomena (preposing and dislocation), while temporal adverbs such as *when* do not. They argue that this is because the complement of *because* is syntactically larger than the complement of *when*. While this accounts for the fact that *because* allows for rhetorical wh-clauses and *when* does not, it cannot predict that *because* disallows interrogative wh-clauses and declarative *that*-clauses.

Depending on whether the answer lies in the semantics or the syntax, this puzzle raises several questions:

(i)   It is likely that there is a semantic difference between the rhetorical wh-clause in (8a), which may denote a proposition, and the interrogative in (8b), which is assumed to denote a set of propositions. But is there also a semantic difference between the declarative IP in (7a) and the *that*-clause in (7b)?

(ii) Is there a syntactic property that unites the declarative IP in (7a) and the rhetorical CP in (8a) to the exclusion of the *that*-clause CP in (7b)? Could it be that there is a syntactic property that distinguishes 'sentence' level clauses from 'non-sentence' level clauses?

(iii) If there is such a syntactic property, how does this affect Adjunct Island effects that have been noted for causal adverbials (*because, since, although,* etc.)?

(iv) Could it simply be that the two forms of *because* are separate lexical items?

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5.

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The projection problem of nominal appositives

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Asher (2000) convincingly argues that the content of some nominal appositives (appositive content) projects out of intensional contexts such as conditionals. For example, (1a) does not entail (1b) because the appositive content in (1a) projects out of the antecedent of the conditional. The meaning of (1a) can be paraphrased as (1c). This result is also predicted by most theories of nominal appositives (e.g. Sells 1985, Chierchia & McConnell-Ginet 1990, Dever 2001, del Gobbo 2003, Potts 2003).

(1) a. If the party, an uninteresting social gathering, is over, then we should find somewhere else to get a drink.

   b. If the party is over and the party is an uninteresting social gathering, then we should find somewhere else to get a drink.

   c. The party is an uninteresting social gathering. If the party is over, then we should find somewhere else to get a drink.

Although the appositive content does project out in some cases, as in examples (1a) and (2a), example (2b) shows that it need not necessarily do so. (2b) can be paraphrased as (2c).

(2) a. If John, a famous professor, publishes a book, he will make a lot of money.

   b. If a professor, a famous one, publishes a book, he will make a lot of money.

   c. If a professor publishes a book and he is famous, he will make a lot of money.

The failure of the appositive content to project can also be observed in other types of intensional context, like (3a), (3b), and (3c). For the de-re reading of the main clauses in (3a), (3b), and (3c), the appositive content projects out, but the appositive content does not project out in the de-dicto reading of the main clauses in (3a), (3b), and (3c). Interestingly, when the main clause of (3c) is interpreted as de-dicto, the nominal appositive can also receive a generic interpretation -- the generic interpretation is not available for some people.

(3) a. Mary wants to marry an Italian, a rich one.

b. John believes that a professor, a quite famous one, published a new book.

c. A wolf, a ferocious animal, might come into your house.

On the other hand, the appositive content must project out if the nominal appositives in (3a) and (3b) are replaced by relative appositives, as in (4a) and (4b). These examples can only be construed with de-re readings. These facts raise a challenge to theories (e.g. Doron 1994 and del Gobbo 2003) which treat nominal appositives as reduced relative appositives.

(4) a. Mary wants to marry an Italian, who is a rich one.

b. John believes that a professor, who is a quite famous one, published a new book.

In sum, the failure (in some contexts) of the appositive content to project and the semantic difference between nominal and relative appositives show that the semantics of nominal appositives is in need of still further investigation.

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