

snippets

Issue 6

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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.

The best examples of what we have in mind are the earliest *Linguistic Inquiry* squibs. Some of these 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 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 groups. Other squibs drew attention to particular theoretical assumptions. For instance, a squib 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.

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;
- propose an idea for a pilot experiment in language acquisition or language processing that directly bears on theoretical issues;
- call attention to little-known or forgotten literature in which issues of immediate relevance are discussed.

3. Submission details.

We will solicit submissions issue by issue. A new submission deadline will be announced for each issue, and the submissions that we receive we will consider only for that issue. The submissions that we accept will be printed in the upcoming issue; none will be scheduled for a later issue.

It is important to us that readers will be able to copy the newsletter and freely distribute its content. 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.

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.**

We will accept electronic submissions at the address

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and paper submissions at the address

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We strongly encourage electronic submissions. 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.

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 submission, **we will only provide a yes/no response to the submitter**. We will not request revisions (barring exceptional cases). Space constraints mean that we may reject a large proportion of submissions, but with this in mind we allow resubmission (once) of the same piece.

5. Distribution.

Our initial plan is to publish 2 or 3 times a year, with a maximum of 10 pages for each edition. Our goal in publishing the newsletter is to provide a service to the linguistics community, and *Snippets* will therefore be **free of charge**. There will be a limited number of copies, which we will send to institutions on request. Individuals who wish to take advantage of the newsletter should therefore ask their institutions to request a copy, and make their own copy of the institution's version. Individuals who are not affiliated with an institution and do not have access to the web version of the newsletter can request copies by writing to us at the postal address above. Further questions should be addressed to snippets@unimi.it.

1.

Daniel Büring - UCLA

2 x Singular ≠ Plural

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It is commonly assumed that coordinated singular NPs have the same distribution as proper plural NPs, as illustrated by the following examples from German and English: Coordinated singular NPs, just like plural NPs, and unlike singular proper and singular collective nouns, trigger plural agreement, can occur with inherently collective predicates, and can antecede inherently plural anaphora:

- | | | | |
|--------|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| (1) a. | {
die Kommissare
Schimansky und Tanner
*Schimansky
*Die Streife
} | nahmen
took-PLURAL | die Verfolgung auf.
the pursuit on |
| b. | {
The detectives
Schimansky and Tanner
*Schimansky
*The patrol
} | were in pursuit. | |
| (2) a. | {
die Kommissare
Schimansky und Tanner
*Schimansky
*Die Streife
} | wurde(n) getrennt.
was/were separated | |
| b. | {
The detectives
Schimansky and Tanner
*Schimansky
*The patrol
} | were/*was separated. | |
| (3) a. | {
die Kommissare
Schimansky und Tanner
*Schimansky
*Die Streife
} | kannte(n) einander.
knew each other | |
| b. | {
The detectives
Schimansky and Tanner
*Schimansky
*The patrol
} | knew each other. | |

Many current theories thus agree that coordinated singular NPs and inherent plural NPs are of the same syntactic category and denote semantic objects of the same type.

It is therefore genuinely unexpected and, within the realm of such theories inexplicable, to find a construction in which one, but not the other, can occur. This, however, is the case in the *one of*, German *einer von*, construction. The complement of *one of* can be a plural NP, but not two coordinated singular NPs (it also can't be a singular NP, collective or not):

- | | | | |
|--------|----------------------|--|---|
| (4) a. | Einer von
One of | {
uns
den Kommissaren
} | fing den Bösewicht.
caught the villain |
| b. | One of | {
us
the detectives
} | caught the villain. |
| (5) a. | *Einer von
One of | {
dir und mir
Schimansky und Tanner
} | hat die Currywurst gegessen.
has the curry-sausage eaten |
| b. | *One of | {
you and me
Schimansky and Tanner
} | ate the curry spiced sausage. |

Two coordinated plural NPs in this position seem to be better. While I am not sure about the proper interpretation of the conjoined NPs, the disjoint NPs sound perfect:

- (6) a. Einer von den Kommissaren oder /[?]und den Streifenpolizisten bestellte ein Bier.
 b. One of the detectives or /[?]and the street cops ordered a beer.

The existence of this contrast appears to pose a genuine challenge to the idea that coordinated singular NPs are in all relevant respects identical to plural NPs. It also raises the question what about the *one of* construction sets it apart from contexts like (1)-(3), and whether there are other constructions where the coordinated singular/plural distinction yields grammaticality differences.

2.

Daniel Currie Hall - University of Toronto
A subject must scope

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Wurmbrand (1998) proposes that the semantic contrast between subject-directed (henceforth simply **directed**) and non-subject-directed (**non-directed**) deontic modals, illustrated in (1), derives from the scope-taking position of the subject.

- (1) a. Students must submit their application forms by next week. (directed)
b. The application forms must arrive by next week. (non-directed)

In (1a), *must* indicates obligation on the part of the students; in (1b), the modal is still deontic, but the obligation is not assigned to its syntactic subject. According to Wurmbrand (1998: 275), “if the subject is interpreted in the surface position [SpecIP] (in terms of scope), we get the directed root interpretation. If the subject is interpreted in its base position, it is in the scope of the modal verb and we get the non-directed root interpretation.” The relevant structures are in (2).

- (2) a. Directed: SUBJECT > MODAL b. Non-directed: MODAL > SUBJECT



The predicted correlation between scope and directedness is found in sentences like (3).

- (3) Most of the students must pass the exam...
a. ... in order to pass the course. (directed)
b. ... or else the instructor will be disciplined. (non-directed)

(3a) can be paraphrased as ‘For most *s*, *s* a student, *s* is obliged to pass the exam.’ The subject takes wide scope and bears the obligation indicated by the modal. (3b) means ‘It is required that for most *s*, *s* a student, *s* passes the exam.’ The subject

takes narrow scope, and the modal is non-directed.

However, counterexamples to Wurmbrand's prediction exist:

- (4)
- a. *Most of the students must pass the exam* because their parents are major donors to the university, but there are a few whom the instructor may safely flunk.
 - b. On the journey from Radom to Bialystok, *three rivers must be crossed*, namely the Vistula, the Bug, and the Narew.
 - c. *One squib in this issue can exceed the length limit* because its author has special permission.
 - d. [...] the judge has no choice, *A singer must die* for the lie in his voice. (Cohen 1974)

In (4a), *most of the students* refers to a specific set; however, the deontic *must* is non-directed: 'For most *s*, *s* a student, it is required (of the instructor) that *s* pass the exam'. In (4b), the three rivers can be listed, and in (4c), there is one specific squib whose author has permission to be verbose; in these examples, the inanimate subjects preclude directed readings. Finally, there is a reading of (4d) in which *a singer* is specific, but the obligation belongs to the judge. These data indicate that subjects must be able to take scope independently of whatever structural configuration encodes the difference between directed and non-directed modality.

Works cited

- Cohen, L. (1974) "A Singer Must Die", in *New Skin for the Old Ceremony*. Audio recording. Sony Music Canada CK 80207. (Lyrics available online at <http://www.leonardcohen.com/lyrics/asinger.html>).
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3.

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Secondary predication in control sentences

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Depictives are standardly assumed to be part of the verbal phrase, as right-adjunction to V' node or something similar (Larson 1989, Jackendoff 1990, Rapoport 1993, Baylin 2001). The following Slovenian data suggests that such an analysis cannot be maintained.

As seen in (1), depictives can modify the subject. They always agree with their host. There is no restriction on the grammatical case of the host or the adjective.

- (1) Vid_i je sklenil kupčijo pijan_i.
Vid-NOM AUX made a deal-ACC drunk-NOM
"Vid made a deal drunk"

Depictives also occur in control sentences. They still show agreement with their host argument. In (2), the depictive cannot be associated with the matrix predicate because of its meaning. In (3), although meaning allows it, the depictive cannot be associated with the matrix predicate.

- (2) Vid_i je sklenil Petri zapustiti hišo mrtev_i.
Vid-NOM AUX decided Petra-DAT bequeath-INF house-ACC dead-NOM
"Vid decided to leave the house to Petra after he dies."
- (3) Vid_i ji je sklenil zadevo razložiti trezen_i.
Vid-NOM her-DAT AUX decided matter-ACC explain-INF sober-NOM
"Vid decided to present the matter to her when he is sober"
*✓present sober/ *decide sober*

The depictive can thus only be interpreted as referring to the infinitival but not to the matrix clause. Only if the depictive comes before the infinitival verb, as in (4), can the matrix predicate be understood as having occurred while Vid was sober.

- (4) Vid_i ji je trezen_i sklenil azložiti zadevo.
Vid-NOM her-DAT AUX sober-NOM decided explain-INF matter-ACC
*✓decide sober/ ?present sober (*with neutral intonation)*
-

A right-adjunction analysis predicts the availability of the reading where the depictive is associated with the matrix predicate, but this prediction is not borne out. This is corroborated by (5), which is bad because the depictive cannot be associated with the matrix clause, while an association with the embedded infinitival is infelicitous simply because of its duplicate meaning.

- (5) #??Vid_i se ga je odločil napiti pijan;
Vid REFL it AUX decided get-drunkINF drunk
"Vid decided to get drunk when he is drunk"

It is worth noting that this phenomenon raises the puzzle – familiar from the literature on Icelandic control subjects (Sigurdhsson 1991) – of how the depictive adjective receives case. Specifically, how can the depictive adjective get nominative case if it is actually in agreement with the subject of the embedded infinitival clause, with a PRO in Spec TP? PRO does not have NOM case, rather it has a null-case feature checked by the defective T⁰. It seems reasonable that the depictive cannot get null case, but it is unclear how it gets NOM. We refer the reader to Hornstein 2001 for a promising approach to control structures that might address this problem.

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Hornstein, N. (2001) *Move! A minimalist theory of Construal*, Blackwell, Oxford.
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4.

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The present tense is vacuous

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This note seeks to argue that the English present tense is itself semantically vacuous and its interpretive effect is characterized entirely by pragmatic competition with other English tense morphemes, notably the past tense.

Assume for the following that I didn't eat on any Tuesday of this month so far, and I've committed not to eat on any Tuesday of this month still coming up. Consider the sentences in (1) in this scenario (Magda Scheiner first pointed out such sentences to me).

- (1) a. Every Tuesday this month, I fast.
b. Every Tuesday this month, I fasted.

The choice between (1a) and (1b) would be determined by the utterance time: Assume that the 26th is the last Tuesday of this month. From the 1st until and including the 26th, I would use the present tense (1a). From the 27th until the last day of the month, I would use the past tense (1b). How can we account for this distribution?

Consider first the meaning of present and past tense in (2) which Abusch (1997) proposes.

- (2) PRESENT(t): presupposes that t isn't before time of utterance
PAST(t): presupposes that t is before the time of utterance

There are two ways (2) could be applied in (1): Since the sentences in (1) involve quantification over subintervals (the Tuesdays) of a bigger interval (this month), we could apply the tense to either the subintervals or the containing interval. Neither way, however, will yield the correct result.

The latter possibility incorrectly predicts that the past tense (1b) should never be possible, and (1a) should always be used because "this month" contains the utterance time.

The former possibility, application to the subinterval, yields the correct result for (1b): (1b) presupposes that every Tuesday of this month is before the utterance time. However for (1a), application to the subinterval of the present tense predicts the presupposition that no Tuesday of this month be before the utterance time.

This incorrectly predicts that (1a) could only be used until the first Tuesday of this month.

To get the correct result, I propose the (non-)meaning of the present tense in (3), while adopting Abusch's proposal for PAST. Assuming (3), (1a) is predicted to not carry any inherent presupposition about the utterance time.

- (3) PRESENT(t): no presupposition

So far, the new account doesn't seem to predict the presupposition observed above, that (1a) cannot be used after the 26th. However, this follows from Heim's (1991) proposal that a discourse maxim "maximize presupposition" creates scalar implicatures amongst presuppositions. More precisely, I assume the formulation in (4) (cf. Ippolito 2001).

- (4) Implicated presupposition: If a scalar alternative Y of X has more or stronger inherent presuppositions than X, X presupposes that the inherent presuppositions of Y aren't satisfied.

For the case at hand, assume that <PRESENT, PAST> is a scale. Because (1b) is a scalar alternative of (1a) with more inherent presuppositions, (1a) is predicted to have the implicated presupposition that the inherent presupposition of (1b) be false. This precisely predicts that complementarity we observed above.

It's worth noting that analogous reasoning shows the feature plural in (5a) and the features masculine and 3rd person in (5b) to be semantically vacuous.

- (5) a. For each paper, all errors are blamed on its authors (vs. author).
 b. Every one of us should admit his (vs. her/my) errors.

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- Abusch, D. (1997) "Sequence of Tense and Temporal De Re," *Linguistics and Philosophy* 20, 1-50.
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Why is (4b) bad compared to (3b)? (The judgments are robust if subtle.) I suggest that it is bad because "for students" forces us to construe "when" as non-temporal "when," but at the same time only temporal uses of "when" involve extraction. Potential support for the latter idea comes from the contrast many speakers find between the sentences in (5).

- (5) a. Alice arrived when Beatrice left at midnight.
- b. *When did Beatrice leave at midnight?

It is interesting to note in this connection that "when"-clauses do not admit long-distance readings when preposed (Sabine Iatridou, p.c.): in (6), Alice's arrival must coincide with Beatrice's telling, and (7) is incompatible with the scenario above. Still assuming that long-distance readings arise from extraction of "when," we might conclude that temporal "when"-clauses are forbidden from preposing. It remains to be explained why.

- (6) When Beatrice told Charlie that he should leave, Alice arrived.
- (7) * When we decided (last month) (that) rates would be cheaper -
 that is, on weekends – customers make more calls.

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