[Review]

*Adjectives and Adverbs: Syntax, Semantics and Discourse*


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1. Introduction

This book is a collection of papers presented at a workshop on adjectives and adverbs held in 2005 at Universitat Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona. Eleven papers presented there are included in this volume, and are devoted to a wide range of aspects of adjectives and adverbs, varying from syntax-semantic interface to discoursal issues. Due to the nature of the book, the topics covered are not necessarily exhaustive with respect to current syntactic, semantic and discoursal research on adjectives and adverbs, lacking discussions on topics such as the syntax and/or semantics of comparative constructions, the principles behind adverb-ordering, and the categorial properties of adverbs as opposed to those of adjectives, just to name a few. Nevertheless, the papers address current issues concerning adjectives and adverbs, and provide most relevant and up-to-date research findings. The first four papers deal with issues related to the syntax-semantic interface, exploring adjective- and adverb-ordering. Rather than adopting cartographic approaches such as Cinque (1994), the papers take different approaches such as drawing on independently motivated findings of DP-internal structure, adopting minimalist syntactic operations, and utilizing a newly developed compositional theoretical framework. The subsequent four papers discuss issues on lexical-semantics of adjectives and adverbs. They raise questions such as what prototypical properties adjectives and adverbs have, and how
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distinct adjectives and adverbs are from other categories, in terms of gradability and degree modification. Although such issues are not new in the typological literature, they have not been given much attention in formal semantics. The last three papers are concerned with how the syntax and semantics of adjectives and adverbs interact with discourse. They show how the behavior and interpretation of particular types of adjectives and adverbs can be best accounted for by drawing from various models of discourse and pragmatic principles, which is still a new area of research. Take, for example, modal adverbs. Due to the evaluative nature of modal adverbs, the relation between the interlocutor and discourse context needs to be taken into account, in order to properly analyze their properties and behavior. The three papers here contribute much to our understanding of the interaction between the discourse context and the lexical-semantic properties of adjectives and adverbs. The present review is structured as follows. Section 2 will summarize each paper. Section 3 will provide some remarks on a syntax-semantics issue concerning types of adjectives and adjective-ordering within DP. Finally, Section 4 concludes this review.

2. A Short Summary of Each Paper

The first paper by Peter Svenonius entitled “The position of adjectives and other phrasal modifiers in the decomposition of DP” provides an account of crosslinguistic adjective ordering within DP. Although he adopts Cinque’s (1994) type of approach, namely, considering different functional projections for relevant types of adjectives, he is against a highly-articulated functional structure, in which there is almost a fixed position for each adjective type. Instead, his proposal involves functional heads such as $n$, $sort$, Unit, $K_i(nd)$, which are independently motivated to account for the DP-internal word-order variation of such elements as demonstratives, articles, numerals, classifiers, and plural markers. The proposed DP-internal functional heads allow for at least four different positions for adjectives: (i) focused adjectives under $K_i(nd)P$, (ii) dimension (or count) adjectives under $sortP$, (iii) non-gradable color/origin/material adjectives under $nP$, and (iv) idiomatic adjectives under $NP$. In this way, Svenonius shows that various restrictions on adjective ordering are rooted in the above DP-internal structure, and moreover, the word-order variation of DP-internal elements is derived by phrasal and/or head movement. I will return to this issue in the next section.

The second paper by Richard Larson and Hiroko Yamakido, “Ezafe
the deep position of nominal modifiers,” proposes an analysis of a morphological marker called Ezafe, found in Modern Persian and Indo-Iranian languages, by reviving an old idea in generative grammar that modifiers within DP are arguments of the D head. They show that Ezafe behaves very much like English of: it appears when the head N is followed by a [+N] element, and further, it licenses Case. Adjectives are specified as [+N], which accounts for the fact that Ezafe appears when the head N is followed by an adjective. Further, multiple adjectives can be supported each by Ezafe within a single DP; those adjectives are licensed by the DP-shell structure, in which D leaves a copy as it raises. They also argue that the same analysis can be applied to determiner spreading in Modern Greek. Interestingly, adjectives that are supported by both Ezafe and Greek D-spreading are restrictive and intersective adjectives. In fact, this correlates with a Romance phenomenon, in which postnominal adjectives are typically restrictive and intersective.

In the third paper, “Meaning-form correlations and adjective position in Spanish,” Violeta Demonte examines different interpretations of Spanish adjectives in terms of their lexical-semantic properties and configurations. More specifically, she argues that there are three DP-internal syntactic positions for adjectives, namely, the prenominal, postnominal and prenominal focus positions, which correlate with the interpretation of a given adjective. Note that those positions are generated by different syntactic operations. Prenominal adjectives undergo a non-predicative interpretation, denoting functions from properties to properties. This interpretation is derived when adjectives Pair-Merge with or adjoin to nP, which is immediately above NP. Postnominal adjectives receive a predicative interpretation, denoting properties of individuals. These adjectives Set-Merge (more precisely, external-Merge) with NP, and the N head moves to n in such languages as Spanish, resulting in the N-A order. The prenominal adjectives that undergo a predicative interpretation are raised to a focus position above nP; this operation is called internal Merge, the other type of Set-Merge.

The fourth paper by Marcin Morzycki entitled “Nonrestrictive modifiers in non-parenthetical positions” deals with the non-restrictive interpretation of English adverbs. Very much like DP-internal adjectives in English, which can receive a non-restrictive interpretation in the prenominal position only (e.g. every unsuitable word versus *every word unsuitable), adverbs in English are non-restrictive exclusively in the preverbal position (the Titanic’s rapidly sinking versus the Titanic’s sinking rapidly). In order to account for the asymmetry in word order, Morzycki proposes that, following a multi-
dimensional semantic theory, descriptive (or truth-conditional) meaning and expressive meaning (or conventional implicature) are computed compositionally, and different compositional rules assemble respective meanings. Furthermore, he proposes a precedence-sensitive semantic compositional rule, which requires an expressive modifier to be on a left branch.

The fifth paper by Jenny Doetjes, “Adjectives and degree modification,” investigates how adjectives and gradability are related, examining the distribution of various types of degree modifiers. There are two opposing views in the literature with respect to the relationship between the two: (i) gradability as a distinct property of adjectives and (ii) gradability as a crosscategorial property. Doetjes takes the latter view, showing that degree modifiers distribute on a continuum consisting of the following categories: Category I (gradable adjectives)—Category IIa (gradable nominal predicates)—Category IIb (gradable verbs)—Category III (eventive verbs, eventive adjectives, comparatives)—Category VI (mass nouns)—Category V (plural nouns). In addition, the distribution of types of degree modifiers is such that one type can range over adjacent categories. Then, she explores why gradable adjectives stand at one extreme end of the continuum, namely, Category I, and why one type of degree modifiers can co-occur only with Category I lexical items. Arguing against the view that adjectives have a unique property such as a degree variable, Doetjes shows that certain scales (open scales and relative standards) are restricted to adjectives, while some other scales (closed scales) are associated with both adjectives and other categories in the continuum.

The sixth paper by Christopher Kennedy and Beth Levin, “Measure of change: The adjectival core of degree achievements,” accounts for variable telicity in degree achievement verbs such as cool, dry and darken. These verbs exhibit variable telicity independently of their arguments. For example, with the degree achievement verb cool, the sentences, the soup cooled in 10 minutes (teleic) and the soup cooled for 10 minutes (atelic), are both acceptable. Kennedy and Levin propose that variable telicity stems from the adjectival core of degree achievement verbs, whose function is to measure the amount that an object changes along a scale as a result of participating in an event. Under their analysis, degree achievement verbs always permit atelic interpretations, in that they allow “comparative” truth conditions where a given affected argument undergoes some non-zero/minimum increase in the measured property in the course of an event. On the other hand, telic interpretation obtains when a degree achievement verb contains the gradable adjectival part that uses a scale with a maximum element.
The seventh paper by Christopher Piñón entitled “Aspectual composition with degrees” provides an account of aspectual composition in incremental theme verbs such as *eat, write and read*. Earlier studies have not fully specified how the telicity of *eat an apple* and the atelicity of *eat apples* follow from the properties of the verb *eat* and its object NP. Piñón proposes an analysis in which the description of an incremental theme is tightly integrated into the gradable properties of an incremental theme verb. More specifically, the basic gradable properties of incremental theme verbs are measure functions called “incremental degree functions.” What is measured by such degree functions is the degree, to which an incremental theme of type *O* is affected, where *O*, mnemonic for “object” or “ordinary individual,” is just a one-place predicate of individuals. Further, Piñón explores how the proposed analysis for incremental theme verbs can be extended to degree achievement verbs. He argues that compared with incremental theme verbs, degree achievement verbs have an additional argument called an extent argument, which is equivalent to a “degree of change” argument in Kennedy and Levin’s (2002) analysis.

In the eighth paper, “Manner modification of state verbs,” Graham Katz discusses an issue concerning the manner modification of state verbs. In general, manner adverbs and state verbs are incompatible, e.g., *John resembled Sue slowly*. In terms of syntax, the incompatibility is due to the lack of an event projection in state verbs, which licenses manner adverbs. However, there are cases where manner adverbs and state verbs can co-occur, e.g., *Peter knew French well*. Katz argues that such exceptions are of three types. First, many combinations of manner adverbs and state verbs are idiomatic in nature. That is, examples such as *love deeply* and *know well* exhibit conventional lexical selection, hence collocations. Second, in some other cases, manner adverbs acquire a degree modifier reading. More specifically, in the example, *know French well*, the state verb *know* indicates gradability and is associated with an open scale, and the manner adverb *well* indicates that the standard of comparison is shifted up the scale by a degree that is above the contextually specified standard associated with the verb in question. Finally, there are cases where state verbs can be associated with event-related modification readings. Take, for example, *Peter loves Mary passionately*. Drawing on Chierchia’s (1995) analysis of generic predicates such as *love* and *know*, Katz argues that the state verb *love* is associated with a set of relevant events, which is bound by the quasi-universal generic (Gen) operator, and that those events of Peter’s loving Mary are interpreted as being passionate.
Adam Zachary Wyner’s contribution entitled “Towards flexible types with constraints for manner and factive adverbs” concerns the distribution of factive adverbs (e.g. *stupidly*) and manner adverbs (e.g. *passionately*), and attempts to account for their distribution by a theory that accommodates facts both at the sentence and discourse levels. First, Wyner compares and contrasts two approaches to the distribution of factive and manner adverbs: (i) a fixed types analysis and (ii) a flexible types analysis. The fixed types analysis assumes that syntax and semantics of factive adverbs and manner adverbs are considered to be closely correlated and fixed. That is, factive adverbs modify sentences in syntax and propositions in semantics, while manner adverbs modify VPs in syntax and predicates in semantics. Under this analysis, variation in word order should be accounted for by movement. On the other hand, the flexible types analysis postulates that one syntactic and semantic type has a range of derived forms, which allows for a freer distribution of adverbs. Despite the risk of overgeneration, Wyner argues that the flexible types approach is more desirable since it can even account for some facts that have been marginalized in the literature. Furthermore, Wyner shows that DRT (Discourse Representation Theory) combined with the flexible types analysis can account for the distribution and interpretation of factive and manner adverbs, and their corresponding adjectives in a parallel fashion.

In “Lexical semantics and pragmatics of evaluative adverbs,” Olivier Bonami and Danièle Godard investigate lexical semantic and pragmatic properties of evaluative adverbs in French such as *malheureusement* ‘unfortunately’ and *bizarrement* ‘strangely,’ and argue that their peculiar properties stem from their pragmatic status, rather than their semantics. First, they show that evaluatives are predicates of propositions, not those of facts. Further, the content of an evaluative adverb does not constitute the main content of the sentence, but it conveys a commitment of the speaker. For example, in the sentence *Paul n’est pas malheureusement venu* ‘Paul did not unfortunately come,’ its unacceptability can be accounted for by positing the commitment of the speaker, called the ancillary commitment. That is, while the main assertion of the speaker is ¬come(p), the ancillary commitment is come(p) → unfortunate(come(p)). It is quite odd for the speaker to simultaneously commit to these two propositions. Bonami and Godard further show how evaluative adverbs work in dialogues. When the speaker utters an evaluative proposition (*eval p*), s/he does not put it on the question-under-discussion list, which leaves the *eval p* to be neither accepted nor rejected.
In the final paper, “Discourse adjectives,” Gina Taranto attempts to provide an analysis of a class of adjectives such as apparent, evident, clear and obvious, which are called discourse adjectives. She argues that the sentence containing the discourse adjective clear, It is clear that Briscoe is a detective, is not an informative sentence, in that it does not express any new information as to whether or not Briscoe is a detective. Rather, the sentence in question provides information about the discourse itself. That is to say, the function of the adjective clear in the sentence is to allow speakers to synchronize their common ground. Focusing on the discourse adjective clear, she proposes an analysis of its function. There are three points to be noted about the analysis. First, concerning factivity, the participants of a given discourse are licensed to treat a certain proposition as if it were a fact, which gives the adjective in question a factive flavor. Second, vagueness is incorporated into the analysis by the notion “degree.” More specifically, a delineation function is adopted, which takes the situation and the adjective meaning, and returns a vague standard for the adjective in the given situation. Third, by the Collaborative Principle proposed by Walker (1992), Taranto allows for the possibility that a speaker’s utterance may have a substantive effect on the representation of the addressee’s commitment set that includes the worlds for which the addressee’s public beliefs are true.

3. Remarks on Subclasses of Adjectives and Adjective-Ordering within DP

This section provides some remarks on one of the syntax-semantic interface issues, which is discussed in the syntax-semantics papers in this volume, namely, the correlation between types of adjectives and DP-internal word order.

Based on the observations of DP-internal elements, Svenonius proposes their hierarchy as follows:

(1) Dem(onstrative) > Art(icle) > Num(eral) > Unit > Ki(nd) > SORT
> n > N

He further proposes that in the above hierarchy, adjectives occupy positions, as in (2):

(2) a. Focused adjectives are above Ki, e.g. a SQUARE big table
(cf. a big square table/*a square big table)

b. Idiomatic adjectives merge below n: nP is the level of lexical idiosyncracy.

c. Dimension adjectives such as big, tiny, and long merge above the head that creates countable entities out of masses,
namely, the SORT head (cf. *big liquid, *tiny salt, *long mustard). In addition, sortP modification is crucially subsective. In contrast, nP modification is intersective (see (2d) below).

d. Color, origin and material adjectives modify nP, which are essentially intersective. These adjectives are non-gradable, but can become gradable by being combined with a Degree head.

The DP-internal structure and adjective-ordering are summarized in (3). Note that various language/construction-particular orders are derived by phrasal and/or head movement.

(3)

As summarized in (2), subsective and intersective adjectives are considered to be under sortP and nP, respectively. A question arises as to what position(s) other non-intersective adjectives occupy, which is an unexplored issue in the syntax-semantics papers in this volume.

Adjectives undergo either intersective or non-intersective interpretations. Adjectives such as good as in John is a good lawyer can undergo an intersective interpretation: ‘John is a lawyer, and John is a good human being.’ The intersective interpretation of good in this example obtains when the individual denoted by John is a member of the intersection of the set denoted by lawyer and the set denoted by good for a human being, where the restriction of “a human being” is contextually supplied. Non-
intersective adjectives are of three types: subsective, adverbial and privative adjectives. The adjective *good* in *John is a good lawyer* mentioned above is in fact ambiguous between intersective and subsective interpretations, in that it can also be interpreted as ‘John is good as a lawyer.’ Two other subclasses of non-intersective adjectives are adverbial (e.g. *the former president* ‘the person who was formerly a president’) and privative (e.g. *a fake pistol* ‘something that fails to be a pistol’), of which the latter will not be discussed in this review for lack of space. Provided that the intersective-subsective divide among adjectives is relevant to the DP-internal word order, I will argue that there should be another position for non-intersective, adverbial adjectives. I do not, however, concur with the cartographic type of approach to adjective-ordering, but I support the independently motivated analysis by Svenonius, which can nicely account for both the rigidity and the flexibility of DP-internal adjective-ordering in English. That is, rigidity stems from the strict order of SORTP, *n*P and NP modifiers and the avoidance of iteration within a layer when possible, and flexibility is rooted in the compatibility of a large class of adjectives with more than one functional option. Concerning flexibility, Svenonius claims that a SORTP modifier, e.g. *big*, can merge either above or below, if some other adjective, e.g. *expensive*, has already attached to SORTP. Note that Truswell (2009) has shown from his corpus-based study that adjectives of the same type can alternate in order, but those of different types cannot (see fn. 2 for details), which supports Svenonius’ proposed analysis of adjective-ordering.

Now, there are cases where non-intersective adjectives seem to appear lower than intersective adjectives (*n*P modifiers), contra Svenonius. Consider (4) taken from Larson (2000):

(4)  
  a. Olga is a *beautiful* dancer.  [intersective/non-intersective]  
  b. Olga is a *blond beautiful* dancer.  [intersective/non-intersective]  
  c. Olga is a *beautiful blond* dancer.  [intersective]

As shown in (4a), the adjective *beautiful* is ambiguous between intersective (i.e., ‘Mary is a dancer, and Mary is beautiful’) and non-intersective (either ‘Mary dances beautifully (adverbial),’ or ‘Mary is beautiful as a dancer (subsective)’). (4b) shows that when *beautiful* appears below the intersective, color adjective *blond*, it is still ambiguous between intersective and non-intersective. Interesting enough, however, as (4c) indicates, *beautiful*
is unambiguously intersective when it is above *blond*. ¹ Although there are several possible and plausible analyses for the facts in (4), let me pursue one of them in accordance with Svenonius’ proposed analysis, following suggestions from an anonymous reviewer.

Suppose that in (4b), the color adjective *blond*, which is considered to be base-generated within *nP*, is raised to a focus position above Ki. Then, *beautiful* can be either a SORTP modifier, or a *nP* modifier, inducing subsective and intersective interpretations, respectively. A question arises why non-intersective interpretations are missing in (4c). If *blond* is in its original position within *nP*, *beautiful* can be a SORTP modifier and should be able to undergo a subsective interpretation, but this interpretation does not obtain. The same anonymous reviewer has suggested that it is the adverbial interpretation that has disappeared, and that the subsective interpretation (i.e. “Mary is a beautiful blond woman for a dancer”) is still available, but is odd and, thus, difficult to obtain since being a dancer is not directly related to having blond hair in the normal context. If this is the case, the next question is why the adverbial interpretation that has disappeared, and that the subsective interpretation (i.e. “Mary is a beautiful blond woman for a dancer”) is still available, but is odd and, thus, difficult to obtain since being a dancer is not directly related to having blond hair in the normal context. If this is the case, the next question is why the adverbial interpretation that has disappeared, and that the subsective interpretation (i.e. “Mary is a beautiful blond woman for a dancer”) is still available, but is odd and, thus, difficult to obtain since being a dancer is not directly related to having blond hair in the normal context. 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Partee (2001) shows that intersective, subsective, and privative adjectives can participate in the NP-split phenomenon in Polish, while non-subsective,

¹ Note that Larson uses the examples in (4) to support his proposal that non-intersective adjectives are NP modifiers, while intersective adjectives are D-modifiers. Recall from the summary of Larson and Yamakido’s paper that it is only intersective adjectives that can participate in Ezafe and Greek D-spreading.

² Another possible analysis of the facts in (4) is to argue that intersective *blond* and *beautiful* are both modifiers of *nP*, which is not completely ruled out under Svenonius analysis. In fact, Truswell (2009) shows in his corpus-based study that adjectives of the same type can alternate in word order, but adjectives of different types cannot:

(i) a. circular red patch red circular patch [intersective only]
   b. new big cuts big new cuts [subsective only]
   c. big circular lights ??circular big lights [intersective and subsectives]

If (ia) and (ib) are taken to show iteration within a single layer, then intersective *beautiful* and *blond* in (4b) and (4c) can be considered to be within *nP*. Regarding non-intersective *beautiful* in (4b), if *blond* focus-moves above Ki, and subsective and adverbial adjectives are structurally distinct, then subsective *beautiful* is in SORTP, and the adverbial one is somewhere lower than *nP*. **Regarding non-intersective, adverbial adjectives constitute an independent subclass of adjectives and their properties.** More specifically, I suggest that non-intersective, adverbial adjectives constitute an independent subclass of adjectives and merge lower than intersective adjectives. In what follows, I will provide some crosslinguistic evidence that supports the idea.
modal adjectives cannot (see also van Hoof (2005) for similar findings on German and Brabant Dutch Split-NP topicalization phenomena). For example, Polish adjectives such as ‘large,’ ‘poor (impoverished),’ ‘generous,’ ‘pretty,’ ‘healthy,’ ‘Chinese,’ ‘talkative,’ ‘skillful,’ ‘recent,’ ‘good,’ ‘typical,’ ‘counterfeit,’ ‘past,’ ‘spurious,’ ‘imaginary’ and ‘fictitious’ can split, but non-subsective/adverbial adjectives such as ‘alleged,’ ‘potential,’ ‘predicted’ and ‘disputed’ cannot. Note that the adjectives that split can be predicative, but those that do not split are non-predicative. Based on her findings, she argues that this divide among adjectives represents two subclasses of adjectives. Further, Alexiadou (2001) independently argues that non-predicative adjectives are related to adverbs, while predicative ones are not, and that the distinction in question is reflected in various language-particular phenomena.

Returning to (4c), if it is the adverbial interpretation of beautiful that is blocked by intersective blond, adverbial adjectives seem to merge lower than NP modifiers, as illustrated in (5):

(5) focused A > subsective A > intersective A > adverbial A/idiomatic A

A question naturally arises as to where such low adverbial adjectives merge in Svenonius’ proposed DP-internal structure. Further, it remains to be seen as to what functional head adverbial adjectives are related to, and how it can be independently motivated.

If the argument thus far is on the right track, semantic and syntactic properties of the subclasses of non-intersective adjectives await further elaboration and refinement.

4. Conclusion

In this review, after a brief introduction in Section 1, I provided a short summary of each paper in Section 2. Then, in Section 3, I made a few remarks on types of adjectives and DP-internal adjective-ordering. My ar-

3 An anonymous reviewer suggests that adjectives such as beautiful can undergo an adverbial interpretation only when they are immediately adjacent to the nominal head since such interpretation obtains through a bracketing (or restructuring) operation (Williams (2003)). In the case of a beautiful dancer, the bracketing operation derives the structure a [−er [beautiful dance]]. This operation cannot apply to (4c) because blond intervenes between beautiful and dancer. Although this may be a possibility, I am not sure at this point how this type of account would fare in the overall DP-internal syntax. I leave it open for future research.
argument that non-intersective, adverbial adjectives constitute an independent syntactic subclass may have implications for redefining the syntactic and semantic properties of non-intersective adjectives.

To conclude, as mentioned at the outset of this review, the present volume does not exhaustively cover the current research topics on adjectives and adverbs, due to its nature as a collection of conference papers. However, the papers represent the most up-to-date research on adjective and adverbs with respect to syntax, semantics and discourse. I would strongly recommend this book to anyone who is interested in knowing more about what is happening in the areas of research covered by the papers.

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