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Semantic Interpretation of Free Adjunct Constructions*

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0. Semantic interpretation of free adjuncts may sometimes be ambiguous or even be vague. But intuitively clear-cut distinction can be made between the (a) sentences and the (b) sentences of the following:

(1) a. Wearing that new outfit, Bill would fool everyone.
    b. Being a master of disguise, Bill would fool everyone.
(2) a. Standing on a chair, John can touch the ceiling.
    b. Having unusually long arms, John can touch the ceiling.
(3) a. In first gear, the truck might reach the top of that hill.
    b. Weighing only a few tons, the truck might reach the top of that hill.

Stump (1985) calls the free adjuncts of the (b) type **strong** in the sense that they entail their actual truth. The free adjuncts of the (a) type are **weak**, because they do not necessarily entail their actual truth. In fact, the former describe the cause or reason of the main clauses, while the latter function as conditionals.[1] (1a) and (1b), for example, will be paraphrased as (1'a) and (1'b), respectively:

(1') a. If he wore that new outfit, Bill would fool everyone.
     b. Since he is a master of disguise, Bill would fool everyone.

With respect to the frequency adverb in the main sentence, weak adjuncts show different behavior from strong ones:

(4) a. Lying on the beach, John sometimes smokes a pipe.
b. Being a sailor, John sometimes smokes a pipe.

(5) a. Carrying a load of over 1500 lbs., our truck often makes the bridge shake.
b. Weighing four tons, our truck often makes the bridge shake.

(6) a. Figuring her taxes, Jane always uses a calculator.
b. A major stockholder of Texas Instruments, Jane always uses a calculator.

Weak adjuncts restrict the range in which the main sentences hold, just like the when-adverbials. We interpret (5a) as (5'a):

(5') a. When it carries a load of over 1500 lbs., our truck often makes the bridge shake.

Strong adjuncts do not have the restricting effect. And they are, again, interpreted as describing cause or reason. The reading of (5b), for example, is as follows:

(5') b. Because it weighs four tons, our truck often makes the bridge shake.

Thus, (5b) implies (5") whereas (5a) does not necessarily imply (5"):

(5") Our truck often makes the bridge shake.

Since the contrast between strong and weak adjuncts is intuitively well established, there must be certain semantic concept underlying our intuition which specifies what adjuncts are strong and what are weak. Stump's proposal to that effect is introduced in the next section. I will also discuss some problematic examples and argue that Stump has taken a wrong way to deal with these examples. A new analysis, which is based on the notion of **proposition** in the sense of Iwabe (1985), will be proposed in section 2.

1. By what criterion are strong adjuncts distinguished from weak adjuncts? Stump claims that Carlson's distinction between **individual**- and **stage**-level predicates corresponds to the distinction between strong and weak adjuncts. Individual-level predicates express inherent, essential properties while stage-level predicates express temporary, accidental properties. Compared to the familiar concept **stative**, individual predicates constitute a smaller set. Every individual predicate falls under the stative, but part of the stative predicates belong to stage predicates:

(7)

STAGE	
walk to the store	NONSTATIVE
carry a load of over 10 lbs.	NONSTATIVE
drive this sort of car	NONSTATIVE
lie on the beach	STATIVE
sit in the garden	STATIVE
sick in bed	STATIVE
asleep	STATIVE
INDIVIDUAL	STATIVE
have a wooden leg	STATIVE
be a master of disguise	STATIVE
be a sailor	STATIVE
intelligent	STATIVE
American	STATIVE

The individual/stage distinction was introduced by Carlson to account for the ambiguity of bare plural NPs:

(8) a. Dogs chewed up that newspaper.
b. Dogs are intelligent.

The underlined NP in (8a) reads as existential while that in

(8b) has universal reading. Note that chew up that newspaper is a stage predicate and (be) intelligent is an individual predicate. The bare-plural NP refers to the kind 'dog' and (8b) is a statement about dogs as a whole. In (8a), the NP dogs also refers to the kind, but only part of the members are present at that stage. Stages are spatially and temporally bounded manifestations of individuals. Hence, existential reading is given to (8a). A reasonable explanation, I think.

One of the diagnostics of the stage/individual distinction is whether a predicate occurs in the perception-verb complement or not[2]:

(9) a. I saw John lying on the beach.
b. *I saw John being a sailor.

As far as the examples in section 0 are concerned, strong and weak adjuncts neatly correspond to individual and stage predicates, respectively. But when examples like the following are laid on the table of consideration, it seems difficult to maintain the one-to-one correspondence established:

(10) a. Being asleep, Rover might not seem so ferocious.
b. Asleep, Rover might not seem so ferocious.
(11) a. Being clean-shaven, Harold would look like something like my brother.
b. Clean-shaven, Harold would look like something like my brother.

The adjuncts in the (a) sentences are strong, as opposed to those of the (b) sentences, and are interpreted as describing cause or reason. Stump forces the individual/stage distinction on these examples. Because the only difference is the presence of be, Stump argues that certain kind of be converts stage predicates into individual predicates. It is true that copulative be cannot occur in the perception-verb complement or the existential there-construction:

(12) a. *I saw Rover being asleep.
b. I saw Rover asleep.

(13) a. *There are men being alone.
b. There are men alone.

But is it all right, giving credit to these tests, to regard being asleep as an individual predicate? I do not think so. Our intuition will never admit sentence (14) as describing his essential, permanent property[3]:

(14) He is asleep now.

The predicate asleep describes only a temporary state, whether it accompanies be or not. I assume that copulative be does not convert the category of predicates. Being asleep must be a stage predicate. In fact, the bare plural dogs has the existential reading:

(15) Dogs are asleep in that room.

If be asleep were an individual predicate, intuitively plausible explanation for this reading would be lost. Stump has changed the natural individual/stage distinction into a very abstract, counter-intuitive, arbitrary concept, in order only to preserve the correspondence to the strong/weak distinction. We do not want to deprive the concept of its substantial significance. We must conclude that the individual/stage distinction does not correspond to the strong/weak distinction of adjuncts. What is the real criterion that governs the strong/weak distinction, or for that matter, what condition is imposed on the predicates which occur in the perception-verb complement and the existential there-construction? Before discussing this, another pair of examples, to which Stump paid no attention, are in order:

(16) a. Having written an excellent dissertation last year, you will be employed by a famous university.
b. Writing an excellent dissertation, you will be employed by a famous university.

As is clear from the example, a perfective adjunct is strong, even if it contains a stage predicate and its nonperfective counterpart is weak. Does having convert stage predicates into individual predicates? Of course, I do not think so. For the purpose of summing up, let us schematize the descriptive generalization about the strong/weak distinction[4]:

(17)

a. STRONG	b. WEAK
(i) individual predicate	(i) stage predicate
OR	AND
(ii) with AUX (be, have)	(ii) without AUX

2. Interestingly enough, the specifications of strong adjuncts in (17a) hold in the case of the predicates that appear in the cognitive-verb (e.g. seem, believe) complements:

(18) a. I believe Mary honest.
b. I believe Mary to be honest.
c. She believes the revolution to be getting close enough to start taking it seriously.[5]
d. I believe John to have passed the examination.

(19) a. *I believe John to go.
b. *I believe Fido asleep.
c. *She believes the revolution getting close enough to start taking it seriously.

Sentence (18a) satisfies (17ai); and (18b,c,d) satisfy (17aii), and (18b) also satisfies (17ai). All of these are acceptable. The sentences in (19) do not satisfy either of the conditions in (17a): the complement predicates are those of the stage level and with no AUX. They are all

unacceptable.

Perception-verb complements make a complementary distribution, because it follows the conditions in (17b):

(20) a. I saw Mary kiss Bill.
b. I saw the thief going away.
c. I saw Rover asleep.
d. I saw him overwhelmed by their kindness.

(21) a. *We saw John look pretty well.
b. *I saw John honest.
c. *I saw Rover being asleep.
d. *I saw Mary having left.

The sentences in (20) are all acceptable. Their complement predicates are of the stage level and contain no AUX. On the other hand, the complements in (21a,b) contain individual predicates, and those in (21c,d) accompany AUX. They are all unacceptable.

As I proposed in Iwabe (1985), complements of the perceptual construction are nonpropositions, while those of the cognitive construction are (independent) propositions, the object of cognition.[6] If so, the specifications in (17a) and (17b) will be the definition of proposition and nonproposition, respectively.

The generalization made in Iwabe (1985) is the following:

(22) A complement which is instantaneously simultaneous with the main clause cannot express a proposition independent of the main proposition.

In (22), nonpropositions are defined by two factors: **instantaneousness** and **simultaneity**. Instantaneousness seems to be too restrictive a condition on predicates. It is because (22) was formulated only on the basis of bare-infinitival complements like (20a). I did not take into consideration adjectival and present- or past-participial complements. To cover every kind of examples in (20), we extend that condition up to stage (i.e. (17bi)). On the other hand, simultaneity is

equivalent to condition (17bii), since it is reasonable to assume that tense is involved in AUX and Auxless clauses do not refer to independent times.[7] Now, (17b) is the revised definition of nonpropositions. Since nonpropositions form the complementary set of propositions, (17a) is the definition of propositions.

Note that (17a) is made up of two disjunctive conditions (i.e. (i) **or** (ii)). In particular, semantic redundancy arises when both conditions are met. In fact, sentence (23) is doubly guaranteed by (17ai) and (17aii):

(23) John is honest.

Although the AUX be cannot be deleted in (23) owing to some principle excluding tenseless root sentences, such deletion is possible within the infinitival complements of cognitive verbs, the phenomenon of to be deletion. For example, (18a) is the deleted version of (18b). Kubota (1979) showed that to be is deletable when the predicate describes an inherent, unchangeable property of the subject, which corresponds to our (17ai). Kaga (1985) explicitly showed that to be deletion is AUX deletion. What has been proposed will be the following in our terms:

(24) To be deletion (AUX deletion) is possible only when the predicate following to be is an individual predicate.[8]

What is important is why the AUX to be is deletable when the predicate is an individual one. It is because of the redundancy. We have revealed the principle underlying to be deletion. Turning the point of view, the phenomenon of to be deletion confirms the definition of proposition in (17a), in particular, its disjunctive nature.

Incidentally, it seems that condition (17ai) is relaxed in the case of the to be deletion within the seem sentences:

(25) a. *John seemed sleeping.
b. ?He seems asleep.
c. Jack seems sick.

Although every sentence has a stage predicate, (25b) is not unacceptable, and (25c) is perfectly acceptable. Are these exceptions to (17a)? On the contrary, they indicate its essential correctness. The sentences in (25) are very close to (26) with respect to their surface configuration:

(26) a. John is sleeping.
b. He is asleep.
c. Jack is sick.

In (25), it seems that the verb seem plays some quasi-AUX function as if it were a weak variant of be. To the extent that seem plays the quasi-AUX role and satisfies (17aii), the predicate condition (17ai) is relaxed. Again, we have evidence of the disjunctive nature of (17a).

3. In this paper, we have argued that the distinction between strong and weak adjuncts exactly corresponds to the distinction between propositional and nonpropositional rather than the distinction between individual and stage. But the notion individual/stage is not useless. On the contrary, it plays a crucial role in defining proposition. Proposition is the composite concept that is defined by two concepts: individual/stage and the existence of AUX. The composite nature, or disjunctiveness, is exemplified by to be deletion.

Why is it that propositional adjuncts are strong and nonpropositional adjuncts are weak? A strong adjunct, which is used to state the cause or reason of the main proposition, entails its truth. In other words, it constitutes the object of cognition by itself. Hence strong adjuncts need to be independent propositions. To subordinate it to the main clause as a conditional, explicit subordinator if is indispensable:

(27) a. Being a bird, I would fly to you.
(=Because I am a bird, ...)
b. If I were a bird, I would fly to you.

Weak adjuncts function as conditionals for the modal or as restrictive time-adverbials for the frequency adverbs. In more general terms, they are dependent on the main clauses. Since they are nonpropositional, they cannot constitute the object of cognition by themselves. A weak adjunct must be incorporated into the main proposition and make a single proposition as a whole. These are quite reasonable inferences. Thus, we have explained the relation between the distinctive concepts and the kinds of interpretation which Stump could not explain.

NOTES

* I am grateful to Nobuhiro Kaga. He gave me very insightful comments on Stump (1985) (personal communication). This paper is written along the line he suggested.

[1] Weak adjuncts are generally not read as conditionals without modals.

(i) Wearing that new outfit, Bill is fooling everyone.

Furthermore, sentence (ii) below "could be understood as a narrative sentence describing John's abilities on a particular occasion of standing on the chair" (Stump (1985: 55)).

(ii) Standing on the chair, John can see over the fence.

In this reading, we can add the adverb now to the adjunct, and the adjunct seems to refer to the time independent of that of the main clause. Perhaps, the AUX being is deleted (in this case, obligatorily, because of the doubl-ing constraint of Ross (1972)).

(iii) *Being standing on the chair now, Bill can see over the fence.

If this is the case, the adjunct in question will be a strong one. As I will see in section 1, the presence of AUX makes adjuncts strong. We may assume this holds even if the AUX is null in the surface (see note 7).

According to the context, strong adjuncts may not function as because-clauses.

(iv) Being a master of disguise, Bill would, nevertheless, never fool anyone.

A suitable paraphrase of (iv) is (v).

(v) Though he is a master of disguise, Bill would, nevertheless, never fool anyone.

Since both though and because entail the truth of the subordinate clauses, it is reasonable to assume that they belong to the same semantic category. I agree with Stump that this is a case of pragmatic distinction, but I will not pursue these issues here.

[2] I am sure that this is not a real diagnosis. Certain stage predicates (e.g. being asleep) cannot occur in this environment. The same is true of another test, the existential there-construction. See the discussion of being below.

[3] Kaga called my attention to this fact. Stump also notices the problem (p. 313). Then, he suggests another possibility of analysis: Being is an idiomatic expression which functions as a because-adverbial. As a piece of evidence, he cites the expressions being as, being that:

(i) a. You loiter heere too long, being you are to take souldiers up. (Shakespeare, Henry IV)

b. Being as you are a giant, you move naturally in seven league boots. (Visser (1972: 1218))

This move, however, cannot be sustained. Perfective adjuncts with stage predicates are strong without being. See below.

[4] I assume that the copulative be and the perfective have are AUXes. See Kaga (1985) for a comprehensive discussion on this matter.

[5] This sentence is a bit unnatural, but not unacceptable (Borkin (1984: 60)).

[6] One of the diagnostics of proposition is the modal adverb.

(i) I believe John certainly to be honest.

(ii) *I saw John certainly murder that woman.

For further discussion, see Iwabe (1985).

[7] It may be natural to take (17aii) as requiring the node AUX rather than surface realization of AUX elements. Specifically, if the node AUX which is null is present, the clause is propositional. In note 1, I pointed out that there is a semantic asymmetry between strong and weak adjuncts. Weak adjuncts are ambiguous between "strong" and "weak" readings, whereas strong adjuncts are unambiguously strong. We may assign two distinct structures for a weak adjunct. One is with the AUX node, which is actually a "strong" adjunct and has a strong reading. The other is without the AUX node, which is unambiguously weak. As a natural consequence, the former should be able to refer to an independent time. See the discussion of _being_ deletion in note 1. The argument above is only a speculation, but the asymmetry will be canceled along this line.

[8] Of course, this is only a necessary condition. There are certain matrix verbs that do not trigger _to be_ deletion (e.g. _know_, _confirm_). There are also certain individual predicates that do not permit _to be_ deletion (e.g. _Italian_. _a sailor_). See Borkin (1984), Nakamura (1977), Fukuda (1985). My proposal is only that stage predicates never allow _to be_ deletion. Cf. (18a) and (19c).

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