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Aspects of (Un)boundedness in English
Koichi Nishida, Takeshi Shimada, Keiko Sugiyama, and Hideki Tanaka

In this joint research, we discuss (un)boundedness and its relation to a range of phenomena in English, such as referential properties of NPs, generic sentences, and the aspectual type of a situation described by a verb, or more broadly, by a sentence.

First, we introduce and develop Shi's (1990) (un)boundedness of NPs. There are two types of NPs classified according to whether or not they have upper boundary to the quantity they denote. NPs are marked with their upper boundary if they are numerically specified (*three cats*), or determined by a definite or an indefinite article.

Unbounded NPs include bare plurals (*letters*) and mass nouns (*milk*). These are 'mergeable' NPs in this way: x plus x is still x. Letters plus letters are still letters, and milk plus milk is still milk. But a letter plus a letter is not still a letter, but two letters, for *a letter* is a bounded NP. We point out that a mergeable NP is further marked by the fact that such an NP is made only from a nominal head. The (un)boundedness so defined has bearing on the (un)boundedness observed at the level of sentence, too.

Following Declerck (1986), generic sentences are understood to be sentences that typically describe general characteristics of the referents of subject NPs, and so they lack the number specification of the situations which they denote. Declerck (1986:167f.) notes that (1a) is acceptable on the generic reading, but (1b) is not.

    (1) a. Beavers build dams./b. Beavers are building a dam.

Progressives describe a situation as going on in a specific period of time; the number of that situation is specified as one, which militates against rendering (1b) generic.

Declerck (1986:171) further notes that kind-predicates in progressive form like the one in (2) allow the generic reading; the extinction of a kind will necessarily involve a repetition of the members' deaths, a situation which is unspecified for number.

    (2) Rhinoceroses are dying out.

Similar remarks apply to the sentences whose predicational scope is restricted by atemporal *when*-clauses. Declerck (1988:155) notes that an atemporal *when*-clause is acceptable if the subject NP of the main clause is unbounded in number, but it is only unnaturally used if the subject NP is bounded in number, which incurs the undesirable reading in which that sentence would describe a situation bounded in number.

    (3) {Cats/!Twelve cats} are beautiful when they have a white fur.

We now examine the relation between the (un)boundedness and the situation described by a verb, or a sentence. With Vendler (1967), we assume four types of verb: State, Activity, Accomplishment, and Achievement. Activities denote an aspectually homogeneous situation; if John is running for half an hour, he must be

running at each moment within that period. This feature is shared by States, which express no change. The time stretch involved in both types is inherently unbounded. This does not apply to the aspectual properties delineated by Accomplishments and Achievements, both of which involve the inception or the climax of an act.

Mourelatos (1981) argues that the situations described by States and Activities are understood in terms of uncountable nouns, but those described by Achievements and Accomplishments ("events" in Mourelatos' term) are understood in terms of countable nouns; each case of the events is individualized and can be counted. Like aspectual properties of verbs, the countability of nouns plays a key role in deciding whether or not the described situation is interpreted to be bounded, that is, to reach an aspectual terminal point. Thus, the event predications are equivalent to count nouns embedded in *there*-constructions, and so the following transcriptions hold:

(4) a. Versuvius erupted three times. <=> There were three eruptions of
       Versuvius.

    b. Mary capsized the boat. <=> There was a capsizing of the boat by
       May.   (Mourelatos (1981:204))

The nominalized forms in these cases are 'countable' in that they take an indefinite article or a cardinal numeral. Accomplishments and Achievements underlie these "count-quantified" transcriptions. Activities and States, however, are 'uncountable' and make "mass-quantified" transcriptions. Mourelatos (1981:208) notes that an Activity predication may be transcribed into an uncountable gerund, as in (5a) and a State predication may be transcribed into an uncountable derived noun, as in (5b).

(5) a. John pushed the cart for hours. <=> For hours there was {*a/*three/
       little/much} pushing of the cart by John.

    b. John hates liars. <=> There is {*a hating/hate} by John of liars.

These facts lead us to conclude that the temporal homogeneity meant by Activities or States parallels the designatum of an unbounded NP; both verbals and nominals do not specify the boundary to the situations they denote, and that the temporal change meant by Accomplishments and Achievements parallels the designatum of a bounded NP; both verbals and nominals specify the boundary to the situations they denote.

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