THE PREDICTABILITY OF PREDICATIVITY

Elizabeth Coppock (Stanford University and Cycorp, Inc.)
ecoppock@cyc.com | ecoppock@gmail.com

THE PREDICTIONABILITY PRINCIPLE

An adjective is syntactically predicative if and only if it is semantically predicative.

SYNTACTIC PREDICATIVITY (WORKING DEFINITION)

An adjective is syntactically predicative if it can appear as the complement of a copular verb such as be, e.g.

Smith is a remarkable violinist.

SMETANIC PREDICATIVITY

An adjective is semantically predicative if it (i) is of type <e,t> (post-context) and (ii) combines intersectively with the noun it modifies.

METHODS

TESTS RELATED TO SEMANTIC PREDICATIVITY

Substitution Test (Siegel 1976)

Diagnoses: pre-context intersectivity

Dictionary of absolute adjectives: PASS

Examples of suppliant and singers are co-extensional.

Substitution test: PASS

Examples of Olga a married dancer.

Examples of Olga is a married singer.

Exem. varietate: Olga is a beautiful dancer.

Examples of father, beautiful (dancer).

Psychological experience: Tendency: happy, (coincidence)

Examples of psychological experience:彀

Predicative-qualifying: mere (child), common (soldier)

Examples of predicative-qualifying: mere (child), common (soldier).

Degree specifying: near perfect, total.

Examples of degree specifying: near perfect, total.

Selection: tall, long, great.

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Normative: marine system

Examples of normative: marine system.

REFERENCES


ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to my PhD advisors Cheryl Maye and Amy Macaulay for their guidance, support, and encouragement. I also wish to thank Anna Wray for helpful comments on an earlier draft. This work was supported by the Australian Research Council’s Discovery Projects funding scheme (DP1092926).

FURTHER SUPPORT

GRADABLE ADJECTIVES: SEEMANTICALLY PREDICATIVE?

A tail midget is not tall; a good thief is probably not a good man.

But comparison class can be given by context:

Whether or not an adjective is syntactically predicative can be predicted based on its meaning; no arbitrary exceptions.

The learner need not memorize arbitrary exceptions; the obviously fake gun

Is this gun real or fake?

If so, fake is not semantically predicative.

Smith is a remarkable violinist.

Goldberg’s (1975:152) analysis of positive-form gradable adjectives:

A tall midget is not tall; a good thief is probably not a good man.

Every adjective is not syntactically predicative.

Implications of no arbitrary exceptions

(i) The learner need not memorize arbitrary exceptions;

(ii) The grammar need not be set up in such a way as to accommodate them.

Alternative suggestion

The explanation-seeking learner (Coppock 2009).

The child uses positive and negative evidence to determine whether or not an adjective is syntactically predicative.

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THE ONLY IF PART

If an adjective is not syntactically predicative then it is not semantically predicative.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

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Implications of no arbitrary exceptions

(i) The learner need not memorize arbitrary exceptions;

(ii) The grammar need not be set up in such a way as to accommodate them.

Alternative suggestion

The explanation-seeking learner (Coppock 2009).

The child uses positive and negative evidence to determine whether or not an adjective is syntactically predicative.

THE IF PART

Every syntactically predicative adjective is semantically predicative.