

Once a fugitive, always a fugitive: Constraints on noun phrase evaluation times

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1. Overview

- Working from Enç’s (1981, 1985, 1986, 1987) claim that noun phrases (NPs) are temporally independent from the tense of main predicate, I propose restrictions on the available interpretation times for both temporally independent and temporally dependent NPs:
 - Temporally independent NPs are subject to a variation of the Upper Limit Constraint and can only be interpreted at times that are “familiar” to the utterance.
 - Nouns which denote stages rather than individuals can never be temporally independent.
 - All temporally dependent NPs can be evaluated either at the utterance time or at the time of the main predicate of their clause

2. Introduction

- Enç (1981, 1985, 1986, 1987) claims that NPs can be evaluated at times other than those designated by the sentential tense, expressed morphologically on the verb
 - (1) The president was a fool.
 - subject can refer to either a past or a present president.
 - (2) Every member of our investment club will buy a house.
 - subject can refer to past, present, or future members
- Others (e.g. Nordlinger and Sadler 2004, Tonhauser 2002, 2005, 2007, 2008) show that there are languages with temporal morphology on NPs, supporting Enç’s original claim.
- In English, a language without such morphology, there are no overt markers to restrict the times at which NPs can be evaluated.
- However, it is not the case that any NP can be interpreted at any time.
- §3-5 will briefly outline previous work regarding the distinctions between temporally dependent NPs and temporally independent NPs. §6 and §7 will outline new restrictions for the evaluation times of both types of NP.

3. Context-supplied times

- While many restrictions can apply to the interpretation of NPs, all of them can be overridden by context-supplied times.
 - Contexts can supply times explicitly through modifiers like adjectives or relative clauses, or implicitly through contextual knowledge.
 - (1) The president was a fool.
 - Out of the blue:
subject can refer to either a past or a present president
 - (1a) The current president was a fool.
 - Modified:
subject can only refer to a present president
 - (1b) The president who was in office at the time of the Vietnam War was a fool.
 - (1c) I'll never understand why people trusted Taft. The president was a fool.
 - Context supplies a president
 - (1d) My grandfather always complains about how the government was run when he was a kid. The president was a fool.
 - Context supplies time of evaluation
- This method can even salvage sentences that are otherwise temporally impossible
 - (3) #Every married bachelor is happy.
 - Out of the blue: impossible
 - (3a) In a group of five college friend, four were bachelors and one was a bachelorette. After a while, three of them got married. Every married bachelor is happy.
- To avoid these confounds, the remainder of this talk will focus on out of the blue sentences

4. Intersecting predicates

- **Intersective Predicate Generalization** (Keshet 2008, Musan 1997):
Two predicates composed via Predicate Modification may not be evaluated at different times or worlds from one another.
- When a sentence is broken down into compositional parts, nodes of the same type can be combined via predicate modification

- For instance, an adjective and a noun are both of type $\langle e,t \rangle$ and thus combine by predicate modification. By the IPG, they cannot be evaluated at different times
 - (3) #Every married bachelor is happy.
- Relative clauses are also of type $\langle e,t \rangle$:
 - (4) The bachelor who I met last week was happy.
- IPG offers a formal explanation for all explicit context-supplied times
- A possible explanation for implicit context-supplied times:
 - Contexts provide silent modifiers
 - These modifiers are still affected by the IPG
 - (1d') My grandfather always complains about how the government was run when he was a kid. The president [*who was in office when he was a kid*] was a fool.

5. Determiner phrases and information status

- Musan (1995, 1997, 1999) outlines other ways to trigger temporal dependence

5.1 Weak cardinal DPs

- Determiners can be classified as *weak* or *strong* (Milsark 1974):
 - **Weak:** a, some, many, several, two, three,...
 - **Strong:** the, this, these, that, those, both, each, every, most, all,...
- Determiner phrases can be separated into *cardinal* or *partitive*:
 - **Cardinal:** the determiner characterizes the cardinality of individuals that satisfy the noun
 - **Partitive:** the determiner picks out a (sub)set of individuals that satisfy the noun
 - (5) *Few ghosts swam in the ocean.*¹
 - cardinal reading: A small number of ghosts swam in the ocean.
 - partitive reading: Few of the ghosts swam in the ocean.

(Musan 1999:629)
- Musan (1999) asserts that *weak DPs with a cardinal reading* are obligatorily temporally dependent and are evaluated at the same time as the main predicate of their clause

¹ Musan notes that in ambiguous cases partitive readings generally have stress on the determiner while cardinal cases tend to put stress on the noun (1999: 629).

- In this section, I will discuss what times are available to temporally independent NPs. (In the following section, I discuss the times available to temporally dependent NPs.)
- A temporally independent NP in an out of the blue sentence cannot be evaluated at *any* time
 - (1) The president was a fool.
 - subject can refer to past or present president, but not future
- Other areas of tense-study have suggested the need for an *upper limit constraint*, which allows only times *familiar* to an individual or situation to be accessible. Generally, this means times up to the present, as only the present and the past are truly known.
- I suggest that temporally independent NPs may only be interpreted at times *familiar to the utterance*.
 - This familiarity can be gained either from the utterance time or from the time of the main predicate.
 - Since the utterance is always uttered in the present, NPs can always be interpreted in the present or the past (as compared to the utterance time).
 - If the main predicate is evaluated in the future, the times familiar to the NP include future times *up to the time at which the predicate is evaluated*. NPs cannot be evaluated any further into the future than the predicate is.
 - (2) Every member of our investment club will buy a house.
 - subject can refer to past, present, or future members
 - not true of those who buy a house in the future *then* become members

Familiarity Constraint:

Temporally independent NPs must be evaluated at a time which is *familiar* to the utterance. Times are familiar to the utterance if they are equivalent to or prior to either the utterance time or the time at which the main predicate is evaluated.

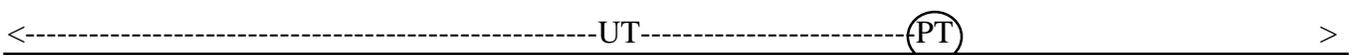
- **Predication time = past**



- **Predication time = present**



- **Predication time = future**



7. Temporally dependent NPs: stage nouns and their evaluation times

- Let us examine some more data:
 - (10) The fugitive is doing time.
 - (11) #The bachelor is kissing his wife.
 - The main sentential tense for both (10) and (11) is the present. According to the familiarity rule outlined above, the underlined NPs should be able to be interpreted at any time up to the present.
 - In (10), “the fugitive” could *in theory* be interpreted in either the past or the present, but, for the sentence to be logical, it must be interpreted in the past.
 - In (11), “the bachelor” should be able to receive a similar interpretation, where it could be evaluated at some time prior to the time of having/kissing his wife.
 - However, (11) does not have this interpretation, and is therefore impossible to utter logically. Somehow, “bachelor” can only be interpreted in the present
- I argue that *bachelor*-type nouns describe a *stage* (Carlson 1977a,b) of an individual, rather than an individual over its entire temporal extendedness
 - “Stages are temporal parts or slices of individuals” (Musan 1999:651).
- I argue that nouns are separated into two classes: those that define a stage and those that describe an individual
 - Stage nouns include: *child, bachelor, sophomore, ...*
 - Individual nouns include: *fugitive, president, astronaut, ...*
(all professions are individual nouns)
- The concept of stages being associated with temporal dependence is not new:
 - Musan claims that “being treated as hearer-established triggers quantification over individuals, while being treated as hearer-new triggers quantification over stages. Quantification over individuals triggers temporal independence. Quantification over stages triggers temporal dependence.” (1999: 656)
 - “...when the hearer is confronted with a noun phrase that introduces new discourse referents, she economically focuses only on the stages of the host-individuals that are at issue...Hence, noun phrases that introduce new discourse referents involve a restriction to stages...” (Musan 1999: 657)

- I propose that *bachelor*-type nouns bypass Musan’s step in which hearer-awareness is established³, and exclusively refer to stages, rather than individuals.
- Thus, all NPs which are in some way associated with stage-hood, whether intrinsically, or via a determiner or syntactic construction, are temporally dependent
- Musan (1999) and others claim that temporally dependent NPs are evaluated at the time of the main predicate
- I propose that they may be evaluated either at the utterance time or the predicate time:

	UT (PRES)	Sentential Tense
(12) #The <u>bachelor</u> is kissing his wife.	✓	✓
(13) The <u>bachelor</u> was getting married.	#	✓
(14) The <u>teenager</u> received a toy at his 1 st birthday party.	✓	#
(15) Some <u>infants</u> will die of old age.	✓	#
(16) #The honeymooner is a <u>bachelor</u> .	✓	✓
(17) Jane married the <u>bachelor</u> .	#	✓
(18) This fortune will be given to the <u>child</u> on his 30 th birthday.	✓	#
(19) Three students are in that room.	✓	✓
(20) Three students were in that room.	✓	✓
(21) # There are some of the prisoners free.	✓	✓
(22) There will be some of the prisoners free.	✓	#
(23) # There are many of the sleepers awake.	✓	✓
(24) There were many of the sleepers awake.	✓	#

Accessibility Constraint:

Temporally dependent NPs must be evaluated at a time which is already accessible to the clause, namely, the utterance time or the time at which the main predicate is evaluated.

- **Predication time = past**



- **Predication time = present**



³ Hearer-new vs. hearer-established are, however, still important distinctions for the data Musan covers, namely, NPs that are forced into temporal dependence via their determiner or a syntactic construction.

- **Predication time = future**

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UT

PT

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8. Conclusion

- Some NPs are temporally independent and some are temporally dependent
 - NPs are temporally dependent if they are interpreted as a stage, rather than an individual
 - Some determiners and syntactic constructions can require that an NP is new information to the hearer, which triggers interpretation as a stage
 - Some nouns always denote stages
- Temporally independent nouns are subject to a familiarity constraint and can only be evaluated at or before the utterance time or the predication time, whichever is later
- Temporally dependent nouns are subject to an accessibility constraint and must be evaluated at either the utterance time or the predication time

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