

COLLECTIVE READINGS ON SUBJECT ARGUMENTS

Introduction. The aim of this talk is to characterize two different mechanisms for generating collective readings for NPs in subject position; specifically, both different mechanisms reflect the distributional differences of definite NPs (DNPs) and quantificational NPs (QNPs) with regard to their (in)compatibility with collective predicates.

Analysis. Collective predicates fall into Vendler's aspectual distinction, i.e., states, activities, accomplishments and achievements. DNPs can always receive a collective interpretation regardless of the aspectual class, but Taub (1989) noted that QNPs cannot; they can only appear with activities and accomplishments (1). In the case of *all*, Brisson (1998, 2003) proposed that it signals the presence of a distributive operator *D* that takes a contextual variable (*Cov*) as its value. Assuming that activities and accomplishments have an *activity* component in their meaning that states and achievements lack, and assuming that this component is projected as a higher layer in the VP (whose head is DO (2)), the derivation of a collective or distributive reading depends on the layer in which *D* is inserted: if *D* is inserted in the lower VP, we obtain the distributive reading; if it is inserted in the DO, the interpretation will be collective. As states and achievements lack DO, *D* can only be inserted in the lower VP, so that no collective reading is possible.

Problems. There are two main objections to this proposal: (i) Brisson takes *all* not to be a QNP but an NP *modifier*, so that it cannot explain why there is a wide range of QNPs that show the same pattern as *all* in (1) (see (3)); (ii) the use of *D* with a contextual variable *Cov* overgenerates intermediate readings. That is because *all* introduces universal quantification over the members of the *Cov* that *D* takes as its value. This allows, at least, 5 *Covs* with 5 different readings (see (4)), where *Covs* D and E are excluded due to the maximality requirement of *all*, and A is ruled out by economy conditions (cf. Brisson 1998:165). Now, if we consider a sentence like (5) in a situation in which somebody put the bottles into boxes, we see that (5) cannot refer to the boxes, only to the bottles, so that it cannot mean that *every box of bottles is too heavy*; however, this is the intermediate reading that the system wrongly predicts, as in *Cov* C in (4).

Proposal: This paper presents a solution to the problem by distinguishing two different interpretation mechanisms for DNPs and QNPs: the former make use of *D* plus *Cov*, while the latter receive the classical Generalized Quantifier interpretation plus *D*, but without the contextual variable *Cov*; thus, we can extend the explanation to a wider variety of QNPs, and we determine a significant difference in the interpretation mechanisms of DNPs and QNPs, avoiding the problem of intermediate readings in Brisson's system.

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| (1) | STATE: | the students are a group | *all the students are a group |
| | ACTIVITY: | the students ate a pizza | all the students ate a pizza |
| | ACHIEVEMENT: | the senators passed the law | *all the senators passed the law |
| | ACCOMPLISHMENT: | the students built a raft | all the students built a raft |

- (2) $[_{VP2} ZP [_{V2'} DO [_{VP1} YP [_{V1'} V^o XP]]]]$

- (3) *All/some/few/many/no/most of/most/exactly four/between four and ten/more – less than four... → students are a good team.

- (4) If $U = \{a, b, c, d, e, f\}$, and $girls' = \{a, b, c, d\}$, $boys' = \{e, f\}$, then:
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| $all-the-girls'$ | $A = \{\{a, b, c, d, \{e, f\}\}\}$ | $\rightarrow$ collective |
| | $B = \{\{a\}, \{b\}, \{c\}, \{d\}, \{e, f\}\}$ | $\rightarrow$ distributive |
| | $C = \{\{a, b\}, \{c, d\}, \{e, f\}\}$ | $\rightarrow$ intermediate |
| | $D = \{\{a\}, \{b\}, \{c\}, \{d, e, f\}\}$ | $\rightarrow$ distributive non-maximal |
| | $E = \{\{a, b, c\}, \{d, e, f\}\}$ | $\rightarrow$ collective non-maximal |
- (5) *all the bottles are too heavy to carry*

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