

Modifying role nouns

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The paper elaborates on the restricted modifiability of role nouns involved in bare predication and provides a new integrated account for these restrictions based on previous accounts.

Bare Predication. Predicate nouns in German, as well as in other languages, may occur bare or with an indefinite article (1) vs. (2). This alternation is possible in predicational sentences, in which the copula verb combines with its complement, the non-referential predicate NP, to form a complex predicate. The predicate noun occurring bare is a so-called “**role noun**”. Such nouns refer to well-established aspects of individuals such as professions like *Managerin* ‘manager’, functions like *Minister* ‘minister’, religious denominations like *Katholik* ‘Catholic’, cf. de Swart et al. (2007), Roy (2013), a.o. Nouns that have been called “**class nouns**” require an article: Such nouns denote inherent properties like *Genie* ‘genius’, evaluative properties like *Feigling* ‘coward’ and subsets of humans like *Frau* ‘woman’. If role nouns are combined with an article they are interpreted as class nouns (2b).

- (1) *Lea ist Managerin.* [profession]
Lea is manager.F
‘Lea is a manager.’
- (2) a. *Lea ist ein Genie.* [property] b. *Lea ist eine Managerin.* [property]
Lea is a genius.M Lea is a manager.F
‘Lea is a genius.’ ‘Lea is a manager.’

Modifiability. Bare NPs differ from indefinite NPs not only in more restricted institutionalized meaning. They are also restricted in modifiability: While NPs with the indefinite article (INPs) allow for the full range of adjectival modification, bare NPs (BNPs) can combine only with a subset of adjectives. Data from the literature (Zamparelli 2008, Geist 2014) and from my corpus study (Cosmas, IDS) reveal the following pattern:

- (3) *Udo ist *dreißigjähriger/*guter/^{OK}langjähriger /^{OK}studierter* *Lehrer.*
Udo is thirty-year-old/good/ longtime / educated.M.SG teacher
- (4) *Udo ist ein ^{OK}dreißigjähriger/^{OK}guter /^{OK}langjähriger/ ^{OK}studierter* *Lehrer.*
Udo is a thirty-year-old /good/longtime/educated.M.SG teacher
‘Udo is a thirty-year-old/good/longtime/educated teacher.’

The relational adjective *studiert* contributes to the formation of a well-established subtype of teachers. The target of relational adjectives is not determined at the semantic level, where only the grammatically introduced referents are accessible, but must be inferred at the level of conceptual structure. The unification of the meaning of such adjectives with the meaning of the modified noun can be accounted for in the framework of frames (Anderson & Löbner 2018) and will not be elaborated in this paper, which will focus on modification at the semantic level: the object-level and the event-level. As (3) shows, adjectives operating at the level of objects such as *dreißigjährig* do not occur with BNPs. Event-level adjectives evaluating working in the profession such as *gut* are also excluded. However, other event-level adjectives such as *langjährig*, specifying the duration of working in the profession, are allowed. Such restrictions on modification of BNPs have not been studied before. The **goal** of

this paper is to account for the restricted modifiability of BNPs at the object and event-level. To do so, some previous accounts of bare predication will be evaluated and modified.

Analysis. (I) Previous accounts: De Swart et al. (2007) assume that the head noun of INPs refers to **kinds**, while the head noun of BNPs refers to the so-called **capacities** or **roles**. Kinds form natural classes; kind membership is based on inherent properties. Capacities are culturally defined since they are established by virtue of a cultural decision (Le Bruyn 2010). In the analysis of de Swart et al. the Carlsonian realization operator R is applied to INPs to derive a set of objects from kinds and to BNPs to derive a set of objects from capacities.

- (5) *ein Lehrer*_{kind}: $\lambda o [R_k(o, \text{teacher}_k)]$ (6) \emptyset *Lehrer*_{capacity}: $\lambda o [R_c(o, \text{teacher}_c)]$

In this analysis, INPs as well as BNPs are treated as predicates of objects. Thus, modification with adjectives such as *dreißigjährig*, which are typically analyzed as predicates of objects (Kamp & Partee 1995; Partee 2010), should be possible with both, contrary to fact. **(ii) Object-level adjectives.** To account for the exclusion of object-level adjectives wit BNPs I modify the analysis of de Swart et al. and assume that the capacity is not mapped to a predicate over objects but to a predicate over well-established aspects of individuals. Thus, bare predication amounts to predication over social aspects. A crucial argument in favor of treating bare predication as predication over aspects comes from the construction in (7), where the social aspect of the individual, his/her profession, is explicitly used as the subject of predication. Native speakers who accept construction (7) use a BNP in the predicate position and to not accept an INP. I assume that bare predication in (8) is a diathetic alternant of the less preferred (7) (cf. Geist 2019).

- (7) (?) *Leas Beruf ist Lehrerin / *eine Lehrerin.*
 Lea's profession is teacher.F a teacher.F
 'Lea's profession is to teach.'
- (8) *Lea ist Lehrerin (von Beruf).*
 Lea is teacher.F (by profession)
 'Lea is a teacher by profession.'

It can be assumed that in (8), the non-overt operator corresponding to the expression *von Beruf* or its full form *von seinem_i Beruf her* is involved. This expression, which can also remain covert, singles out the professional aspect a of the value assigned by g to the individual i and identifies a with a particular capacity c .

- (9) $\llbracket \text{von ihrem}_i \text{ Beruf her} \rrbracket^g = \lambda c \exists a [\text{aspect_of}(a)(g(i)) \ \& \ \text{profession}(a) \ \& \ a = c]$

This expression singles out an aspect of Lea, which is her profession, and identifies this profession with the capacity c . The advantage of treating bare predication as mediated by an operator mapping individuals to their aspects is that the sentence with a bare predicate is still a statement about the total individual but predication in the VP concerns only its part, i.e., the professional aspect of the individual. Under this analysis, the exclusion of object-level adjectives as modifiers of BNPs receives a straightforward explanation: BNPs provide no object-level variable as a target for them.

(iii) Event-level adjectives. To capture the event-level modification of BNPs I propose that capacities are related to event kinds (rather than to particular event tokens, contra e.g. Zamparelli 2008). The event kind must be well established: It comprises events that constitute stereotypical institutionalized activities while practicing the profession. I call the well-established event kind *capacity event kind* (e_c) and assume that in the representation of BNPs the capacity c is related to the capacity event kind e_c by the predicate I , cf.

(10) *Lehrer*_{capacity}: teacher_c & I(e_c, teacher_c)

In this representation, the variable e_c , if lambda-abstracted, can serve as a target for event-level modifiers such as *langjährig*. However, not all event-level modifiers can combine with BNPs: some manner and degree modifiers such as *gut* and *schnell* are excluded:

(21) **Olga ist gute Lehrerin / schnelle Tänzerin.*
Olga is good teacher.F fast dancer.F
'Olga is a good teacher / fast dancer.'

The exclusion of such adjectives can be captured by the extra-linguistic constraint:

Well-Establishedness Constraint

The combination of event-related manner modifiers with capacity-denoting nouns is possible if the adjective-noun combination denotes a socially well-established event-subkind.

This constraint excludes combinations such as *gute Lehrerin* or *schnelle Tänzerin* but licenses combinations such as *freiwilliger Helfer* 'voluntary helper'. The question to answer is why manner modifiers are subject to this constraint, while other event-level modifiers are not.

To conclude, the adjectival modification of BNPs succeeds if the target of modification is a capacity or the event kind stereotypically associated with this capacity. Manner modifiers must in addition meet a well-establishedness condition for event subkinds.

References

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