

## The compositionality of adjective noun constructions

Carolin Reinert

### Dissertation Abstract:

In my thesis, I investigate how adjectives in an adjective noun construction (such as "red ball", "small mouse", "skillful pianist") are to be analyzed semantically.

There are two major proposals discussed in the literature: (i) adjectives denote functions from properties to properties, i.e. predicate modifiers, or (ii) adjectives denote properties, i.e. predicates. In the scope of these analyses, the semantic theories offered so far either decide for a single type variant (e.g. Montague's (1970) generalizing to the worst case) or opt for a mixed analysis (e.g. Siegel's (1976) Doublet Theory or Kamp's (1975) Two Theories). However, the current state of theory remains unsatisfying, as neither type of analysis is able to capture the full phenomenon without major concessions in terms of, e.g., undesirable complexity.

Looking at this unsettled debate with a step taken back, it shows that one variety of adjectival modification had not been given full consideration yet: non-local modification. Despite being syntactically located in an adjective noun construction, the adjective, for instance acting as a sentence adverb, takes material outside its syntactic domain in its semantic scope. These non-local readings can neither be captured by the predicate modifier nor by the predicate approach and instead call for more radical measures (see, e.g., Schwarz 2006, Morzycki 2014, and Gehrke&McNally 2015)

In my thesis, I argue that adopting this distinction between local and non-local interpretations of adnominal adjectives reopens the path for a predicate, lowest type analysis. According to this analysis, in the end all "real" (that is, local) adjectives will express some sort of property and combining them with the noun will eventually be a case of conjunction. While some of the local adjectives (such as "red") show a straightforward intersective behaviour, others (such as "small" or "skillful") will first have to be "made" expressing a property, and this needs to be done before they combine with the noun.

Investigating to which extend and by which means this can be accomplished is the main task carried out in my thesis. I propose that the job of "completing" the adjective is taken over by two contextual parameters, a comparison class and a comparison property. While the former has traditionally been assumed for gradable adjectives, the latter is a new addition. I argue for the need of both of these parameters and investigate how they find expression in the semantic analysis of adjectives such as "small" or "skillful". As a result, I propose the adjective classes of „plain-intersectives“, „for-intersectives“ and „as-intersectives“.

In addition to this, I revisit the notion of non-locality and suggest that it needs to be refined.