

## MODIFICATION OF STATE PREDICATES

**I. Overview.** State predicates are more limited than eventive predicates in the types of modifiers they take. Maienborn 2005 claims that they allow temporal but not event-locative or manner modification, and thus that we must posit special, restricted Kimian states, in addition to Davidsonian eventualities. Though Mittwoch 2005, Geuder 2006, and others have provided counterexamples, there is no overall theory of the apparent restrictions. This paper examines stative adjective modification to (i) give extensive data confirming systematic patterns of genuine manner/locative modification of states, and (ii) provide a principled account both for its relative rarity and for why it is better with adjectives than with verbs.

**II. Manner.** Manner modification of state predicates depends primarily on the latter's conceptual complexity (cf. Geuder 2006). While active predicates may involve agents, causation, change, results, etc., states do not, giving rise to contrasts like those in 1-2:

- (1) a. She fixed the car cleverly.                      (2) a. Karen applied the paint smoothly.  
    b. \*He was a cleverly eager assistant.            b. \*The wall was smoothly blue.

Among adjectival predicates, two further factors are involved. First, more multidimensional adjectives (e.g. *elegant, belligerent, funny, affectionate*) have more complex semantic structure than more unidimensional ones (like *blue, loud, hard*). The adjectives in *flexibly strong, colorfully striped, sinuously elegant, stiffly erect* modify in terms of “dimensions” in a narrow sense; *boyishly handsome, darkly beautiful, grossly funny* show that manner modification often targets differing aesthetic criteria; *politely insistent, nastily belligerent, sexlessly debonair, rudely dismissive* involve nuances of social interaction, and deny or stress a typical semantic feature of the state. Manner modification is allowed even with less complex predicates, as in *evenly blue* and *patchily opaque*, involving physical distribution. Second, the possibility of modification is affected by two properties relatively independent of a state predicate's specific semantic features: (a) whether the state can be overtly or covertly manifested (see 3), and (b) how a perceiver may be affected by it (see 4):

- (3) openly contemptuous, quietly demonstrative, brazenly ambitious, ostentatiously wealthy  
(4) pleasantly archaic, obnoxiously idiosyncratic, bleakly quiet, eerily reminiscent

Thus, the apparent restriction against manner modification with states is not absolute, but is a result of most states having relatively few modifiable dimensions. This account also explains why state verbs (e.g. *belong, fear, own*) rarely take manner modification, since they are almost all very one-dimensional, and/or difficult to manifest overtly.

**III. Locatives.** Locative expressions occur easily with state predicates, but Maienborn 2001 claims that these are not event-locatives, but framing topics, which can introduce topic times (as in 5a) or restrict domains e.g. of a sentence-topic (the subject in 5b):

- (5) a. Next to that wall, her eyes appear green.                      b. The children are talented in this town.

This may work for clause-initial locatives, but is more problematic postverbally. Framing topics are assumed to be high in a clause, but all standard tests (e.g. NPI behavior in 6a) show that they

are low; and many such locatives lack the discourse effect expected of framing topics (see 6b). So these locatives are better described simply as (non-topic) domain restrictors (see 7):

- (6) a. The children aren't especially talented in any town I've been to.  
b. Within the southern region, children are well-fed in towns with school subsidies.
- (7) a. This car is quiet in the suburbs, but noisy in the city.  
b. On this machine, the grooves are narrow on the lower level, so the larger balls can't go there.

In many cases locatives neither plausibly give topic times, nor restrict domains, nor predicate of sentence-topic subjects (see 8a-b). Also, treating them as framing topics cannot explain the unacceptability of simple sentences like 9a-b:

- (8) a. (Don't go in,) It's tense in the kitchen right now.  
b. All is quiet on the western front.
- (9) a. \*Karen is hot on the roof.  
b. \*Bill is confused in that tree.

Tellingly, cases like 9a-b get better if they are interpreted as stressing the **relevance** of the state holding (cf. Mittwoch 2005), e.g. causation:

- (10) a. She's really hot on the roof, so she's coming in.  
b. Fred got accidentally beamed into this forest, and boy, is he confused up in that tree!

Finally, treating postverbal locatives as framing topics cannot explain why 11a-b are fine, with a locative recoverable from the common ground, but not in neutral-context assertions of new information. All the cases above involve particular contexts, and so can be explained by positing 12.

- (11) a. (Of Bill, who's on a long backpacking trip in Europe:) How's he doing?  
Oh, he's been really sick in Paris for the past two weeks.  
b. (Of a goalkeeper, during a game:) Smith is relaxed out there in the goal.

- (12) State predicates may not be modified by locatives in "neutral assertion" (i.e. asserting that the state holds at a given location, without some other discourse function).

**IV. Conclusion.** State predicates **do** allow manner and locative modification in principle, subject only to semantic compatibility for manner, and 12 for locatives.

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