

Modification vs. Quantification: Evidence for the distinction based on verb gradation

Verb gradation can be distinguished in at least two different subtypes: extent gradation and degree (or inherent) gradation (cf. Bolinger 1972). Extent gradation consists of the specification of the duration or the frequency of an event. Inherent gradation can better be termed degree gradation. Leaving the specification of duration aside, the difference between extent and degree gradation is that in the first case events are quantified, while in the second case a lexical (gradable) property of the verb is specified with respect to its degree. Bosque & Masullo (1998) present a finer distinction between types of verb gradation; they are speaking of e.g. *event quantification*, *durative quantification* and *inherent quantification* (= degree gradation). All subtypes of verb gradation are assumed to be quantificational. It seems that Bosque & Masullo arrive at this position because they focus exclusively on Spanish data. In Spanish *mucho* can be used as nominal quantifier, but also for all kinds of verb gradation. In (1a) *mucho* modifies the frequency of Juan's taking the train, while in (b) the quantity of snow that is fallen is specified. Despite the fact that quantity is modified, it is not quantification over the event. In the event quantificational interpretation *mucho* requires a domain of quantification (e.g. *last year*) that also can be implicit. In (b) *mucho* only specifies the quantity of snow fallen in a single event and does not require a domain of quantification.

- (1) (a) Juan va mucho en tren. (b) Nevó mucho.
'Juan takes the train a lot' 'It snowed a lot'

(Examples taken from Gallego & Irtzun 2010: 3)

While Bosque & Masullo are generally speaking of quantification, other authors distinguish between the different subtypes of verb gradation. For example de Swart (1993) assumes that frequency adverbs (like *often*) are quantifiers, while degree adverbs (as *very much*) are modifiers and therefore both are of different semantic type. Doetjes (1997) investigates the selectional restriction of quantifying and grading elements and assumes that French *beaucoup*, which is similar to Spanish *mucho*, is a degree quantifier that either selects for a scalar quantity position or an inherently scalar grading position. The presence of a grading position is dependent on lexical properties of the verbs, while a quantity position is linked to the event argument of a predication.

Languages like German, Dutch and Russian substantiate the assumption that extent and degree gradation have to be distinguished. In the mentioned languages different adverbs are used for extent and degree gradation, as the German data in (2) indicate. In German *viel* (*much*) is an event as well as a nominal quantifier, while *sehr* (*very*) is only used for degree gradation. In (2a) *viel* is used for a modification of the frequency or duration of the event, while in (b) *sehr* specifies the intensity of her admiration. Languages like French use the same adverb (*beaucoup*) the event quantificational as well as the degree gradation reading (cf. example 4), nevertheless both readings do not entail each other.

- (2) (a) Sie hat ihn viel bewundert (b) Sie hat ihn sehr bewundert
'She has admired him often' 'She has admired him very much'

If it is the case, as assumed by de Swart, that extent and degree gradation are of different semantic type, one would expect this difference to show up in one way or other. In the talk I will present evidence that indicates that adverbs used for extent gradation actually behave different from adverbs used for degree gradation. This different behavior shows up in languages like German and Russian, but as well in languages like French; therefore this is arguing for a clear cut distinction between both types of processes.

The evidence I will present is twofold. First I will show that extent and degree gradation applies to different layers of the clause. The analysis will be presented in the framework of Role & Reference Grammar (e.g. Van Valin 2005), but could easily be converted into other approaches like the one of Ernst (2002). In German adverbs are ordered from left to right,

