Encoded discourse strategies: factivity in constructions with propositional verbs

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The Puzzle

- A well-documented (Jackendoff 1972, Ross 1973, Hooper 1975, Koev 2021) empirical contrast in (1):

(1) a. *Sam {denied/is happy} that Dean has left town.*   EMBEDDING

  b. **Dean has left town, Sam {denied/is happy}.*   SLIFT

- Hooper (1975): assertive predicates (*think*, *guess*, *explain*, *be afraid*, *hope, find out*, *know*, *realize*, *remember*) can occur in slifts, nonassertive predicates (*doubt*, *deny, regret*, *forget*, *be sorry*, *be interesting*) cannot.
- Assertive predicates 'imply that the speaker or subject of the sentence has an affirmative opinion regarding the truth value of the complement proposition' (Hooper, 1975, p. 95).
- Koev (2021): to occur in a slift the predicate should be upward-entailing.

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- Predicates that express a negative attitude toward the embedded proposition (*deny, doubt, pretend, wish*) and factive predicates that presuppose the truth of their complement (*be happy, regret, forget*) can appear in regular embeddings (1a) but not in slifts (1b).

The Proposal

- To occur in slifts an attitude predicate: a) must not be factive: it must not conventionally presuppose the truth of its propositional argument and assert the content of the attitude predication part; b) must not entail that the speaker does not believe the propositional argument to be true.

- Let's frame the discourse behavior of embeddings and slifts, as well as the discourse behavior of factive predicates, in terms of discourse updates: impositions (AnderBois et al. 2010) and proposals (Farkas and Bruce 2010).

- Let's show that the discourse strategy encoded in slifts is incompatible with the discourse strategy encoded in factive predicates and negative attitudes.

The Roadmap

- examine the discourse behavior facts for slifts and embeddings
- frame the discourse behavior facts in terms of updates
- examine the discourse behavior facts for factive predicates
- show that the factive and the slifting strategies clash
- show that negative attitudes are infelicitous in slifts
- draw some conclusions

Discourse behavior: slifts and embeddings

In slifts, the embedded proposition (*Dean has left town*) can answer a QUD, can be negated in the following discourse, while the attitude predication (*Sam said that Dean has left town*) cannot, it is discourse inert:

(1)   A: *Who has left town?*

       B: *Dean has left town, Sam said.*

(2)   A: *Who said that Dean has left town?*

       B: *#Dean has left town, Sam said.*

(3)   A: *Dean has left town, Sam said.*

       B: *No (Dean has not left town/#Sam did not say that).*

Discourse behavior: slifts and embeddings

In embeddings, both the embedded proposition (*Dean has left town*) and the attitude predication (*Sam said that Dean has left town*) can answer a QUD, can be negated in the following discourse:

(1) A: *Who has left town?*

     B: *Sam said that Dean has left town.*

(2) A: *Who said that Dean has left town?*

     B: *Sam said that Dean has left town.*

(3) A: *Sam said that Dean has left town.*

     B: *No (Dean has not left town/Sam did not say that).*

Update semantics: embeddings vs. slifts

Discourse updates:

imposition (AnderBois et al. 2010): an informative non-negotiable update of the common ground

proposal (Farkas and Bruce 2010): an informative negotiable update of the common ground

(a) a regular embedding update for
Sam said that Dean has left town

Dean has left town – a proposal
Sam said that Dean has left town – an imposition

OR

Sam said that Dean has left town – a proposal

(b) a corresponding slifting update for
Dean has left town, Sam said

Dean has left town – a proposal
Sam said that Dean has left town – an imposition

Discourse behavior: factive predicates

Factive predicates (Kiparsky and Kiparsky, 1970) presuppose the truth of their embedded proposition (*Dean has left town*), the embedded proposition does not engage with the discourse, while the attitude predication (*Sam is happy that Dean has left town*) can answer a QUD, can be negated in the following discourse:

(1)   A: *Who has left town?*

        B: *#Sam is happy that Dean has left town.*

(2)   A: *Who is happy that Dean has left town?*

        B: *Sam is happy that Dean has left town.*

(3)   A: *Sam is happy that Dean has left town.*

        B: *No (he isn't happy/#he has not left town).*

Update semantics: factive embeddings vs. slifts

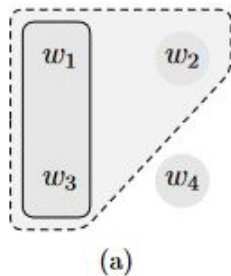Context Set: $\{w_1, w_2, w_3, w_4\}$
[[Bella is a vampire]] = $\{w_1, w_2, w_3\}$
[[Sam is happy that Bella is a vampire]] = $\{w_1, w_3\}$

(a) a factive regular embedding update for
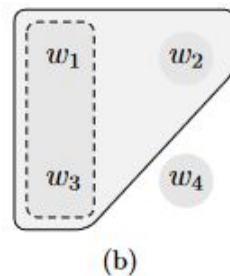*Sam is happy that Bella is a vampire*

Bella is a vampire – an imposition
Sam is happy that Bella is a vampire – a proposal

(b) a corresponding slifting update for
Bella is a vampire, Sam is happy

Bella is a vampire – a proposal
Sam is happy that Bella is a vampire – an imposition

(a)

(b)

Update semantics: semi-factive predicates in slifts

Semi-factives (Karttunen 1971) can engage the discourse with both, the content of the attitude predication (1) and with the content of the semantically embedded proposition (2):

(1)   A: *Who discovered that Dean has left town?*
         B: *Sam discovered that he's left town.*

(2)   A: *Who has left town?*
         B: *Sam discovered that Dean has left town.*
         B: *Dean has left town, Sam discovered.*

Since in the semi-factive strategy the attitude predication can be imposed and the embedded predication can be proposed, it is compatible with the slifting strategy:

(3) *He sounded,* **he realized**, *like the old magazine articles he'd started his career penciling up - genteel, bumptious, and with titles like " The Ideal Gimlet. "* (COCA)

Pragmatic infelicity of negative attitudes in slifts

Discourse updates:

imposition (AnderBois et al. 2010): an informative non-negotiable update of the common ground

proposal (Farkas and Bruce 2010): an informative negotiable update of the common ground

- a potential slifting update for
  Dean has left town, Sam denied

Dean has left town – a proposal
Sam denied that Dean has left town – an imposition

- Negative attitude predicates like *deny*, *doubt*, *pretend*, *wish* entail that the speaker does not believe the content of the semantically embedded proposition (*Dean has left town*) to be true.

- This pragmatically undermines the speaker's intention to propose the content of the semantically embedded proposition in the slifting construction.
- If the speaker chooses to use a construction with an imposed and a proposed part, he wants the proposed information to be added to the common ground and his default strategy is to provide the strongest reliable evidence via an imposition to make the associated proposal successful.

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- Assertive predicates 'imply that the speaker or subject of the sentence has an affirmative opinion regarding the truth value of the complement proposition' (Hooper, 1975, p. 95).
- Koev (2021): to occur in a slift the predicate should be upward-entailing.

Negative attitudes in slifts: monotonicity argument

UPWARD MONOTONICITY CONSTRAINT: A slifting sentence S,E can be felicitously uttered only if E expresses an upward-entailing operator (Koev 2021)

An operator O is UPWARD ENTAILING iff for any propositions p and q, if p entails q then O(p) entails O(q).

(1)   a. *Jeremy lied that he was born in Vancouver.*   (Koev 2021: ex. 39)

      b. *Jeremy lied that he was born in Canada.*

(2)   a. *#Paul had never known his mother, he lied*.   (Koev 2021: ex. 40)

      b. *#The CEO, his girlfriend lied, is a true gentleman*.

The upward monotonicity constraint comes for free from our analysis, since 3a is an assertion:

(3) *Helena owns a Porsche, Angelina believes.*

  a.   Helena owns a Porsche – a proposal
  b.   Angelina believes that Helena owns a Porsche – an imposition

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A problem for the upward monotonicity constraint:

(1)   *Matt doesn't like phonology, I don't think*.   (Koev 2021: ex. 42)

This is not a problem for our analysis:

(2) *Matt doesn't like phonology, I don't think*.

  a.   Matt doesn't like phonology – a proposal
  b.   I don't think that Matt likes phonology – an imposition – the same context update as
  c.   I think that Matt does not like phonology

Conclusions

- we examined the discourse behavior facts for slifts and embeddings
- we framed the discourse behavior facts in terms of updates, impositions and proposals
- and showed that the factive and the slifting strategies clash
- we also showed that negative attitude predicates are infelicitous in slifts

- Is the discourse status of the information determined solely by the conversational structure or is it conventionally specified for certain lexical items and constructions? (Simons et al., 2010)

- Slifts, embeddings, factive predicates, negative attitude predicates encode certain discourse strategies which determines how they interact with each other, the speakers' intentions and the context

References

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Thank you!

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