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**Empathetic Attitude Reports**

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Aim of the talk

Novel syntactic and semantic analysis of what I call *empathetic attitude reports*, attitude reports with a DP and CP complement such as:

(1) a. I *believe* you that you will come back.

b. I *trust* you that you will keep the secret.

c. I *hear* you that you cannot move.

d. I *understand* you that you are not in the mood.

The proposed analysis:

- Attitude verbsin the construction in (1) denote two-place relation between an individual a and an individual b

- The function of the *that*-clause is that of specifying the respect in which a enters the attitude (of belief, trust, perception, understanding) to b.

- Syntactically, empathetic attitude reports are double-object constructions, with the object DP and the *that*-clause in (1a-d) forming a small clause.

(2) a. I believe [SCyou [that S]]

b. I believe you qua someone that said that S.

c. I believe you, in a situation in which you said that S (and that represents nothing else

about you).

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**2. The ‘propositional view’ of empathetic attitude reports**

Empathetic attitude reports are on a par semantically with attitude reports with response-stance verbs (Cattell 1978).

They describe two propositional attitudes at once: one involving the subject referent and one (of saying) involving the object referent.

(3) a. John confirmed that it will rain

b. John said that it will rain (e1) & it was said that it will rain (e2)

(& e1 is in response to e2)

For (1a):

(4) a. I believe that you will come back & you said that you will come back

(and my belief is formed in response to your utterance).

b. believe(e, sc, ac, [that you will come back]) iff ∃e’(believe(e, sc, [that you will come

back]) & say(e’, ac, [that you will come back]) & cause(e, e’))

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**3. Syntactic implausibility of the propositional view**

[1] Obligatoriness of DP argument

Some attitude verbs in empathetic attitude reports may not take a clausal complements without the object NP., e.g. German *vertrauen* ‘trust’:

(5) \* Ich vertraue (ok dir), dass du das machst.

‘I trust that (you) you will do that’.

[2] Optionality of clausal complement

All verbs in empathetic attitude reports can occur without the *that*-clause (*I believe / trust / hear / understand you*).

However, the clausal complement in empathetic attitude reports cannot generally be viewed as an adjunct. The clausal complement may sometimes be replaced by a light DP.

German *glauben*:

(6) a. Ich glaube dir, dass S.

‘I believe you that S ‘

b. Ich glaube es dir.

I believe it you.

c. Ich glaube dir das.

I believe you that.

d. \* Ich glaube dir die Proposition / die Behauptung dass S.

I believe you the proposition / the claim that S

(7) a. Ich vertraue dir (dative), dass du kommst.

I trust you that you will come

b. \* Ich vertraue es dir.

I trust it you

c. \* Ich vertraue dir das.

I trust you that.

(8) a. I hoere dich (accusative), dass du nicht kommen kannst.

I hear you that you cannot come

b. \* Ich hoere es dich.

I hear it / that you you

c. \* Ich hoere dich das.

I hear you that.

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**4. Semantic problems for the propositional view**

[1] Divergence in force

(1) a. I believe you that you will come back.

In (1a), the content involved in the belief need not be the same as that of the addressee’s speech act. On the reading of (1a) on which the addresses made a promise, it is not the promise that is the target of the speaker’s belief, but rather that the addressee will come back as a fulfillment of her promise, that is, the fulfilment of the promise or its sincerity.

[2] Role of sincerity condition

DP1 *believes* *that* S may be true without DP1 *believes* DP2 *that* S being true:

E.g. situation in which the speaker thinks the addressee intends to lie about returning, but would in the end come back anyway:

(1) a. I believe you that you will come back. (false)

a’. I believe that you will come back. (true)

The speaker’s belief in (1a), but not in (1a’), needs to be strictly based on the speaker’s trust in the sincerity of the addressee’s speech act.

Same contrast (1c) and (1’c):

(1) c. I understand you that you are not in the mood.

c’. I understand that you are not in the mood.

Unlike for (1c’), (1c) requires empathy with the addressee as the grounds for the speaker’s understanding. The grasping of a proposition (perhaps on the basis of other evidence) won’t be enough.

[3] Role of empathy

DP1 *believes* DP2 *that* S may be true without DP1 *believes that* S being true.

Good examples: predicates of personal taste and of subjective evaluation.

The a- and b-examples can both be true:

(9) a. I believe you that the coffee is tasteless. (the addresse having COVID 19)

b. I do not believe that the coffee is tasteless.

(10) a. I believe you that the problem is hard.

b. I do not believe that the problem is hard.

The truth of (9a) and (10a) may be based on the speaker putting herself in the addressee’s shoes (empathy or simulation, cf. Moltmann 2010), without actually sharing the addressee’s experience or evaluation.

[4] No past tense effect (Pesetsky p.c.)

(11) a. I believed you that you will come back.

b. I believed that you will come back.

(11a) compatible with speaker still believing that addressee comes back, (11b) implicates that this is not so.

Overall conclusion:

Empathetic attitude reports are primarily about the subject referent’s attitude (of trust, understanding, …) toward the object referent ( in the relevant situation).

They are only derivatively about the sharing of a propositional content.

*A that-*clause *that* S has the function of giving the content of a speech act that specifies the respect in which the subject referent enters the relevant *attitudinal relation* towards the object referent.

Attitudinal relation:

- belief or trust with respect to an act of saying with content S

- understanding or hearing with respect to an act of saying with content S.

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**5. Small-clause analysis of empathetic attitude reports**

**5.1. Typical small clauses**

(12) a. Mary saw John angry.

b. ‘Mary saw John with respect to being angry’,

c. see(Mary, John qua λx[angry(x)])

Novel suggestion for the semantics of small clauses

*Angry* in (12) specifies a respect in which Mary perceives John:

Non-resultative small clauses to be interpreted as *situated objects* or *qua-objects* in roughly the sense of Fine (1982).

John qua being angry:

John as someone being angry

Alternatively:

John in a situation in which only his anger matters.

Applies both to small-clause predicates having argument-like status and having adjunct-like status:

(13) a. John ate the meat raw.

b. eat(John, the meat qua λx[raw(x)])

**5.2. Small clauses in empathetic attitude reports**

Small-clause analysis of double-object constructions (Kayne 1984, Harley 2002):

(14) I gave [SCJohn a book]

Empathetic attitude verbs as double-object verbs:

(15) I believe [SCyou that you will come back]

The *that*-clause specifies the content of a speech act that gives the respect in which the speaker believes (1a) or hears (1c) the addressee:

(15) a. I believe you with respect to your promise that you will come back’.

b. I hear you with respect to your saying that you cannot move.

The role of *light verbs* in small clauses

Harley (2002), Harley/Jung (2015):

Small clauses of the sort [DP1 DP2/CP] (double object constructions) involve a light verb:

(16) a. John gave Mary a book.

b. John gave [PhaveMary[Psay’[Psayhave] [the book]]]

Grimshaw (2015): *say* is a light verb

Semantics of the light verb *say*

describes a locutionary act (Austin 1962), which is generally part of an illocutionary act

In empathetic attitude reports, locutionary act may be part of an illocutionary act (claim, promise) relevant in the context.

Small clauses with the light verb *say*:

(17) I believe [PsayP[DP you] [Psay’[Psay say] that you will come back]]]

Empathetic attitude verbs take qua-objects or situated individuals as argument.

(1a): the addressee qua promising that she will return

(1c): the addressee qua saying that she cannot move

Logical form of (1a):

(18) a. believe(sc, ac qua [λx[fc(say)(x, [*that you will return*]))]]))

b. Speaker in c believes the addressee qua someone performing a relevant illocutionary

act by saying that she will return.

sc: speaker in context c, ac :the addressee in context c

fc : the illocutionary force relevant in context c

Does (18a) suffice for a formal semantic analysis?

The truth conditions of empathetic attitude reports hinge on the lexical meaning of two-place attitudinal relations between two agents and general conditions on qua objects, such as:

(19) a. Condition on the existence of qua objects

For a property P, an object d, ‘d qua P’ exists iff d is P.

b. Derive conditions such as

If believe(d, d’ qua λx [fa,c(say)(x, [*that* S])]), then d believes that S based on

emphasizing with d’, and d believes the sincerity condition of the illocutionary act

defined by fc(say), [*that* S] is fulfilled.

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