
Depictives in English: An LTAG approach

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In this poster, we explore different ways to account for the peculiarities of depictive secondary predication in English, which we think can be characterized as long-distance modification. The term `SECONDARY PREDICATE` refers to a typically sentence final, adjectival element that predicates one of the (main) verbal predicate's arguments, which we will refer to as the `TARGET` (see, e.g., Winkler 1997; Pylkkänen 2002; Müller 2002; Geuder 2004). A depictive and its target, typically the subject or direct object of a verbal phrase, do not form a contiguous constituent. Instead, the depictive attaches to the verbal domain that also embeds the target phrase. This sibling configuration, together with the constrained flexibility in choosing a target, obviously poses a challenge to the syntax-semantics interface. We tackle this challenge within the framework of Lexicalized Tree-Adjoining Grammar (LTAG, Joshi and Schabes 1997; Abeillé and Rambow 2000) employing the syntax-semantics interface of Kallmeyer and Osswald (2013) where syntactic nodes are enriched with interface features and the semantic representations consist of semantic frames. We compare three possible approaches and eventually favor a rather semantic approach that also allows for a more principled view in terms of the `ACTOR-UNDERGOER` distinction introduced in Van Valin (2005). Our analysis predicts that only the verbal arguments which are the respective lowest and highest entries in the `ACTOR-UNDERGOER` hierarchy can act as targets for a depictive.

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