

2 THE PUZZLE IN PIECES

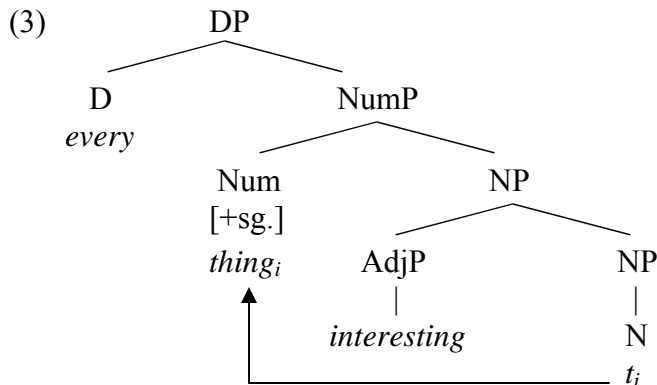
2.1 Adjective Positions

Kishimoto (2000) observes that when attributive adjectives modify certain indefinite pronouns such as ‘something,’ ‘everything,’ ‘someplace,’ etc., the adjective must surface post-nominally, despite that this position is banned for regular nouns.¹ The contrast is given again in (2):

- (2) a. everything interesting vs. a'. *every book interesting
 b. something delicious vs. b'. *some desert delicious
 c. someplace cold vs. c'. *some drink cold

(Kishimoto 2000: 558)

To account for this behaviour, Kishimoto argues that the *light* noun of indefinite pronouns is raised to a NumberPhrase bearing a [+singular] weak N-feature, on parallel to Roberts' (1998) analysis of V-to-T raising of the light verbs ‘have’ and ‘be.’ This raising lands the noun above the projection of attributive adjectives, and adjacent to the determiner, as in (3):



(Kishimoto 2000: 560)

Although I do not agree with Kishimoto's specific motivations for movement, if the N-raising analysis were correct, we could imagine other reasons to force movement. Two possible options come to mind: semantic type-mismatch, or syntactic feature agreement/valuation (in the sense of Pesetsky&Torrego 2004a,b). Taking the syntax

¹ It is possible for some *light* nouns to occur in the regular A>DP order, as in (i):

- (i) a. some warm thing (# to drink).
 b. something warm to drink.

As we see from the awkwardness of the parenthesized complement in (ia) vs. (ib), we appear to be dealing with two different nouns: ‘thing’ in (ia) designates the set of individuals that are specifically inanimate objects, to the exclusion of liquids that one could drink. The variety of ‘thing’ in (ib), on the other hand, is truly bleached in terms of semantic features, specified only as [-animate], thus drinkable matter included. This issue comes up again further on. Kishimoto remarks on this, as well as argues convincingly that the D and N components of these indefinite pronouns are syntactically two un-incorporated heads despite that at PF they have merged closer.

first, if ‘thing’ is lexically unvalued for many of the usual nominal features, as we suspect, then it is plausible that N must raise to D to value these features against those of D. If this were a type-mismatch, ‘thing’ would have to be of type <<et>> in order to combine with the universal quantifier. This would suggest ‘thing’ is in some way actually adverbial, which may be an interesting direction to proceed. I hesitate from doing so just yet, however, for there are significant challenges for the N-raising account.

It has been well noted in the literature that certain types of adjectives are ambiguous, and whether the adjective surfaces pre- or post-nominally affects the availability of interpretation, possibly the most famous examples being those from Bolinger (1967):

- (4) a. the *visible* stars (include Capella, Betelgeuse, and Sirius)
 the stars *visible*
 b. the *navigable* rivers (include the Nile and the Amazon)
 the rivers *navigable*
 c. the *responsible* individuals (were contacted)
 the individuals *responsible*
 d. the *stolen* jewels (were on the table)
 the jewels *stolen*

On one interpretation, these adjectives attribute an inherent property to the noun they modify; on the other, the same property is understood as temporary or episodic. Bolinger’s observation was that while the A>DP order is ambiguous between these two readings, the DP>A order can only be read as the temporary/episodic one.

Now, if we were to modify an indefinite pronoun with these adjectives, the N-raising account predicts that both readings should be available, since the positional cues for interpretation have been neutralized (that is, the listener has no way of knowing whether the adjective is underlyingly pre- or post-nominal, thus both structures are available). We can test this with the following scenario:

Scenario: *June has been claiming that she has two super-powers: she can see through any material (like superman), and she can also see invisible things, like ghosts, imaginary friends, etc. We decide to test her on these claims – we ask her to look into a room and list all the things she can see. The room of course has in it some items that are in plain view, some that are hidden within or behind other objects, and some that are invisible. We run this mini-experiment with June, and give her the results, stating as in (5):*

- (5) Well, you saw everything visible.

Those I asked judged unanimously that (5) can only mean June has no super-powers – ‘everything visible’ being interpreted unambiguously episodic. The N-raising prediction is therefore not borne-out.²

² I tried examples with other adjective-noun pairs with the same result. I discovered only afterwards that Larson&Maršič (2004) had already published a reply to Kishimoto making this point, and similarly with several other phenomena that serve to distinguish pre- from post-nominal modification. I refer the reader to that article for a much elaborated argument against N-raising of *light* nouns.

Larson&Maršič (2004) make this same observation with regards to the predictions of an N-raising account. They suggest a possible way to view the lack of ambiguity that might save the N-raising account, however. Basically, if we assume that the adjectives in (4) are ambiguous pre-nominally because the adjective can modify either the NP, yielding the inherent reading, or the DP, yielding the episodic one, but that *light* nouns cannot support NP-modification, then the challenge raised by (5) is explained-away. The two modifier domains they propose are as in (6):

- (6) a. [_{DP} D α [_{NP} β N] α] (α = DP modifier; β = NP modifier)
 (Larson&Maršič (2004: 280))

Larson&Maršič explain that some of the issues they discussed disfavouring an N-raising analysis are not so easily overcome, however. I move onward, presently, but will return to some of the ideas in this section shortly.

2.2 Bare-DP Modifiers

Let us take another brief look at *light* nouns in the use as bare-DP adverbials; a few more examples:

- (7) a. I want to learn to dance ... *that way/the way Karen Cain does.*
 ... **(in) that manner/that fashion.*
 ... **(like) they do in The Company.*
 b. Agnes stayed in Albuquerque... *every summer/the night before her art show.*
 ... **(on/over) that occasion/that interval.*
 ... **(longer) than anyone else in her family.*
 c. Jill said Igor was headed... *that direction/the way you just came from.*
 ... **(on) this course/that bearing.*
 ... **(down) the path of least resistance.*

The interesting quirk here, is that the DPs in (6) function as adverbial modifiers but seem to lack any preposition or other syntactic indicator/licensor of adjunct status. Those DPs whose NPs are not *light* are blocked from surfacing without some preposition or comparative morpheme (in the case of ‘longer’).

Previous accounts have posited a null preposition which assigns these DPs case, but only if they match the preposition in bearing some feature, such as [+LOC], which only *light* nouns do (Bresnan&Grimshaw 1978, a.o.). Others (Larson 1985) have attributed *light* nouns with a special lexical feature allows them to assign themselves Case. If these accounts are correct, then the bare-DP adverbial puzzle is largely uninteresting – they also have nothing to say on the intuitive *lightness*, or bleached semantics of these nouns; quite the opposite, those authors assign these nouns an *extra* feature. I proceed to a last aspect of the puzzle, before making my own attempt at a semantics for *light* nouns that explains their peculiar behaviours.

2.3 Presupposition Blues

The last of the *light* noun quirks we discuss here, involves their awkwardness in DPs without any kind of modification. I give some examples, as well as repeat those from (1), in (8):

- (8)
- a. Your aunt Noreen always says my name wrong like that; did you notice *the accent/#the way*?
 - b. There's someone at work who's just so annoying, (I won't say he or she since you might guess), but I really just hate **the one/?the person/the guy*.
 - c. Can you give me *something* for my cough? But not Neocitron, I can't stand **the thing/the stuff*.
 - d. My cat, Metronome, had her kittens out behind the smelly compost – I can't figure out why, *#the place/the spot* has nothing going for it; not at all the kind of setting *I* would want to have kittens in.

As mentioned briefly in the introduction, these unmodified DPs can appear in a predicative position, though this construction even turns-out to be rather restrictive (possibly patterning with the relative length or heaviness of the subject predicated of 'the way'):

- (9)
- a. That's *the way*!³
 - b. Labov carried-out his 'fourth floor' study in an innovative manner; quick and anonymous was *?the way*.
 - c. June's grandmother made cookies like the pilgrims did – with lots of butter, sugar, and eggs is *?*the way*.

Also, it seems very difficult to keep from adding a silent 'to do it' after the DPs in (9), creating modified structures like those required in other positions. For considerations of space and uncertainty, I leave this matter for future research and focus on the constructions in (8).

One direction to approach this puzzle from, is to attempt to describe what 'the way' could mean on its own. We know the denotation for the definite determiner,

$[[\mathbf{the}]] = \lambda f : f \in D_{\langle \text{et} \rangle}$ and there is exactly one x such that $f(x) = 1$. the unique y such that $f(y) = 1$.

(Heim&Kratzer 1998: 75)

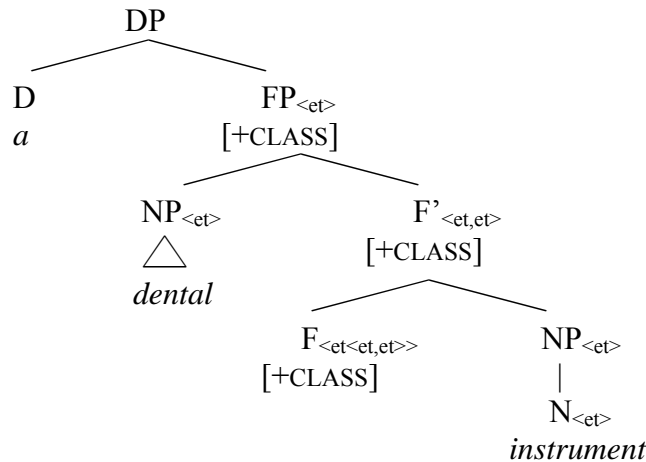
and we can take a shot at one for 'way,'

³ Again, 'thing,' and 'place' have a homophonous, semantically-fuller, counterpart – when 'thing' and 'place' are used predicatively, like 'way' in (9), it does not seem possible to force the *light* interpretation; 'that's the place!' seems to only indicate a building/closed structure, (something with walls, on my intuition, which includes narrow alleys as well) but crucially not, say, behind the compost outside, or any other general location (so contrasting with 'place' in 'someplace'). I focus on 'way' in this section because, although seems to have a full-lexical version meaning 'path' or 'route,' unlike the others I find it is interpreted more saliently as a *light* noun even in contexts when this is malformed.

complement to a definite (and indefinite, though I did not discuss it here) article, nor can it be defined as a simple property of individuals (section 2.3). Given these quirks, I propose to return to the idea I shrugged off initially in section 2.1, that these nouns actually have an adverbial-like function. Let us end in an exploration of the consequences and benefits of such an approach.

As we discussed with regards to adjective ordering, we can motivate the raising of *light* nouns out of their base-positions if we posit a type-mismatch with the modifiers combining with them.⁴ Perhaps instead of focusing on what these words lack, we should view them for the features they are, similar to number and gender features: ‘way’ is the spell-out of a feature [+manner], ‘thing’ of [-animate] (or [+inanimate]), ‘place’ of [+location], etc. What I have in mind is along the lines of Morzycki (2005), who argues for heads bearing semantic features common to several adjectives or adverbs, that “introduce” these elements into the derivation, adding also that feature to their meaning. An example of this idea is in (12):

(12) *a dental instrument*



$[[[+CLASS]]]$ = $\lambda P_{\langle et \rangle} \lambda A_{\langle et \rangle} \lambda x_e . \exists k_e : x \text{ realizes } k [A(k) \wedge P(x)]$
(Morzycki 2005: 58,91)

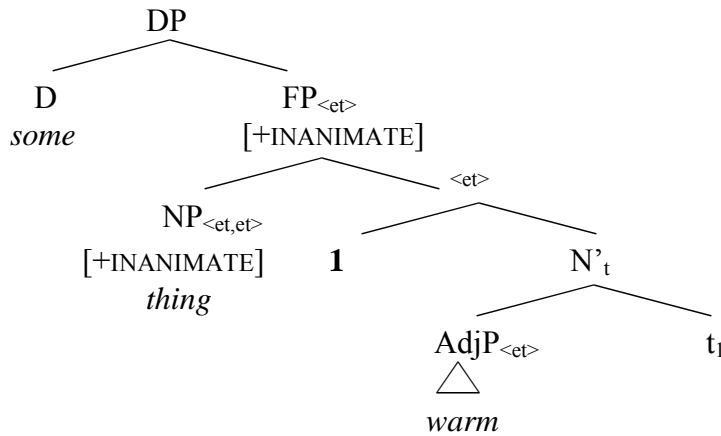
Morzycki also offers the following requirement on modifier features:

(13) Every modifier feature contributes a presupposition.

⁴ I realize now that the type I suggested in 2.1 does not actually create a type-mismatch, as the *light* noun $\langle\langle et \rangle\langle et \rangle\rangle$ could now take the adjective of type $\langle et \rangle$ as argument, yielding another function of type $\langle et \rangle$, exactly as what results from movement of the noun. I assume, then, that the movement described in section 2.1 (modulo the *unmet* challenges raised by Larson&Maršič) is motivated by a noun’s requirement to have fully-valued phi-features, which these nouns do not. This might fit logically with Larson&Maršič’s proposal that light NPs are defective, or too light to host NP-modifiers, but by raising and leaving a trace of type-e the modifier is content? I will not speculate on this further, for I am at the moment not knowledgeable enough in the recent ideas regarding the semantics of phi-features to say anything insightful.

What seems to differ with *light* nouns versus a noun like ‘instrument’ in (12), is that the *light* noun itself is the modifier feature, despite that it is first projected in NP. Just like the [+CLASS] feature above, the light noun feature must be supported by another property which it takes as argument. Let us try an example with ‘someplace warm’ (assuming N-raising, despite section 2.1):

(14) *something warm*

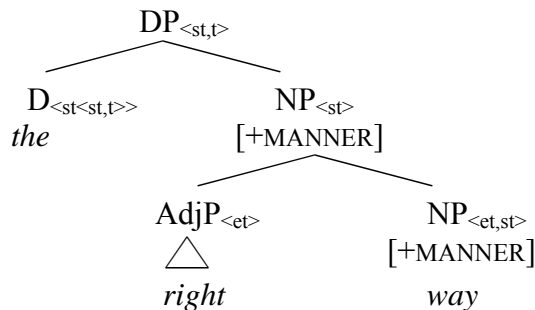


$[[[+INANIMATE]]]$ = $\lambda P_{\langle et \rangle} \lambda x_e . P(x) \wedge \exists y : y \text{ is inanimate} . y = x$.

(or otherwise, $\lambda P_{\langle et \rangle} \lambda x_e : x \text{ is inanimate} . P(x) = 1$. I am not sure if there is a difference)

Likewise, ‘place’ would look similar, adding [+LOCATION] as a presupposition, and ‘way,’ [+MANNER]. I do not, however, know how to go about writing an entry for [+MANNER] without making reference to eventuality arguments, given the difficulty alluded to in 2.3 of defining a manner as an individual otherwise. I give this in (15) then, assuming a theory that includes eventualities in semantic calculations (following Davidson (1967), Kratzer (1996), a.o.).

(15) *the right way*



$[[[+MANNER]]]$ = $\lambda P_{\langle et \rangle} \lambda e_s : P \text{ is a manner} . P(e) = 1$

This denotation is troublesome however, and I am unconfident that the operation of taking an adjective to a adverb in this way is licit. I leave this open for future research

once I understand the matter and the machinery more indepth. The basic idea is clear, I hope – that the function of *light* nouns is to add a feature, or function to a larger structure by way of triggering a presupposition. With much tweaking, my hope is that it should be possible for the bare-DP adverbial properties of *light* nouns to fall-out from this proposal. Already we can see some direction for solving the puzzles of adjective placement with indefinite pronouns, and the modification requirement, as stemming from the argument requirements of these nouns: light nouns are of a different type and nature than what we would expect if they were fuller lexical nouns. This lack of contentful phi-features etc., is a lexically encoded property of these nouns. Many questions remain.⁵

⁵ An interesting comparison could be made between the function of these nouns, and that of the relative-roots observed in Algonquian languages. Briefly, these constructions consist of a morphological marking on the verb indicating ‘a certain direction,’ ‘a certain length,’ ‘a certain location,’ ‘a certain manner,’ and appear to augment the verb’s argument valency to include a DP/NP specifying what the relative-root indicates. I leave this for future investigation.

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