

DEVELOPING MODIFIED PREDICATES SEMANTICS

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Consider the following sentence: ‘Jones buttered the toast’. It expresses an action which Jones does. If we want to specify exactly how Jones buttered the toast we can do this by adding adverbs and prepositional phrases, e.g. ‘Jones buttered the toast slowly, deliberately, in the kitchen, with a knife, at midnight.’ For a long time philosophers of language didn’t know how to analyze sentences with adverbs and prepositional phrases – for example, what is a relationship between “buttered the toast” and “buttered the toast slowly”? How this relation could be formally expressed? A traditional way of formal translation used by philosophers to analyze natural language sentences was useless because it contained no rules of adding adverbs and prepositional phrases to predicates and didn’t explain semantic relations between sentences without adverbs and prepositional phrases and sentences with such expressions. More than fifty years ago Donald Davidson (1967) proposed a way how to express these rules and semantic relations. According to his proposal, ‘Jones buttered a toast’ expresses toast-buttering-by-Jones event. Adverbs and prepositional phrases precise this event – it is the event which was done slowly, with a knife, in kitchen. Since then Davidson’s semantics, named ‘event semantics’, has become the main tool for analyzing such sentences. At the same time Romane Clark (1973) proposed an alternative analysis for sentences with adverbs and prepositional phrases. In his analysis he used no events and new symbols referring to them – instead he provided a rule how to modify old symbols used by philosophers to stand for predicates in a formal language. He noticed that if we add ‘in the kitchen’, ‘with a knife’ to ‘buttered’, we will increase the number of arguments of ‘buttered’. So he defined a rule how predicates should be modified. His analysis is known as ‘modified predicates semantics’.

In 2003 Zoltán Szabó used events semantics to analyze sentences with *as*-phrases, such as ‘Jones is brave *as a chess-player*’. Philosophers were trying to provide a semantics for such sentences since Aristotle put attention to them. Words ‘brave’ and ‘a chess-player’ do not refer to events but to states, and due to this Szabó extended Davidsonian analysis in order to analyze states. Additionally he added a relation between states. Intuitively Jones is not brave simpliciter, he is brave in a specific way, that is, as a chess-player. We could think about Jones in such a way that his being-brave state is a part of his being-a-chess-player state. Szabó’s proposal is rival to modified predicate analysis of *as*-phrases proposed by me. This research proposal will examine the consequences of enrichment the Davidsonian semantics with states and being-part relation between them. I will demonstrate that these consequences lead to challenges. For example, one of the consequences forces to accept a claim that two intuitively different states are one and the same state. Imagine that Jones is a criminal suspect and, as such, he refuses to make a statement. But his refusal to make a statement makes him suspect for the police. According to Szabó’s definitions, his state of being a suspect is a part of his state of refusing to make a statement. In a similar way, his state of refusing to make a statement is a part of being a suspect state. This means that his state of being a suspect and his state of refusing to make a statement is one and the same state, which is unintuitive. Another consequence forces to accept unwelcome entailments. Imagine that that Jones is a lumberman and as such is happy. However, as a lumberman he earns 10 thsd euro a year and is unhappy as earning so little (for example, he is convinced that lumberman job should be paid more). According to Szabó’s definitions Jones’ state of earning-10-thsd is a part of being-a-lumberman and because of that Jones should be unhappy as a lumberman. Such challenges could be a reason why my analysis should be preferred over event semantics.