ON THE RISE AND FALL OF DECLARATIVES

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Synopsis. We develop a performative prefix analysis for rising declaratives. Previous observations are accounted for and some new data are explained. It is shown that our proposal fares better than previous ones.

Observations. Rising declaratives (R-declaratives) are spoken with a final rise (H*HH%, L*HH%, H*HL% or L*LH%) and share with polarity questions the property of being an elicitation for a yes/no response. There are several distributional differences between R-declaratives and polarity questions. Consider (1) – (3).

(1)　A: John has to pick up his sister from the aiport.
　　　B: John has a sister? / # Does John have a sister?

(2)　A: John can come too?
　　　B: That's right / That's what I said

(3)　A: Can John come too?
　　　B: # That's right / # That's what I said

The contrast in (1) shows that R-declaratives, but not polarity questions, can be used to signal that a presupposition is informative (cf. Stalnaker 2002). The contrast in (2) and (3) shows that an R-declarative makes available a proposition which can be picked up by the demonstrative *that*, while a polarity question does not.

A further difference is that a conjunction of R-declaratives can be followed by a single 'yes' or 'no' response, while a conjoined polarity question cannot.

(4)　A: You smoke? And you drink?
　　　B: Yes. (I smoke and I drink.) / No. (I smoke but I don't drink.)

(5)　A: Do you smoke and do you drink?
　　　B: # Yes / # No

To the best of our knowledge, the observations above are new.

It has been noted that R-declaratives are not felicitous in contexts where the speaker is supposed to remain "neutral". Also, unlike polarity questions, R-declaratives do not license NPIs (Gunlogson 2001, 2002).

(6)　On a visa application form
　　　(a)　Have you been convicted of a crime?
　　　(b)　# You have been convicted of a crime?

(7)　(a)　Did John lift a finger to help you?
　　　(b)　# John lifted a finger to help you?

Analysis. Every sentence is headed by a (silent) performative prefix Δ (cf. Recanati 1987, Truckenbrodt 2006). There are two components to the meaning of Δ: a source and a modality. Thus, it resembles an evidential marker (cf. Rooryck 2001 among others). For declaratives, the modality can be rendered by the attitude verb *say*. For declaratives spoken with a falling intonation (F-declaratives), the source is the speaker of the context. Thus, (8a) is analyzed as (8b).

(8)　(a)　John came
　　　(b)　$[_\Delta [_{Source}$ speaker$][_{Modality}$ say$]][_\phi$ John came$]$

For R-declaratives, the modality is also *say*. The source, however, is not the speaker of the context but a contextually-given individual distinct from the speaker. In ordinary cases, it will be the addressee. Thus, (9a) has the structure in (9b).

(9)　(a) John came?
　　　(b) $[_\Delta [_{Source}$ addressee$][_{Modality}$ say$]][_\phi$ John came$]$

The pragmatics of both F- and R-declaratives is the pragmatics of assertion: uttering $[\Delta \phi]$ is proposing to add $[\![\Delta \phi]\!]$ to the common ground (Stalnaker 1978). We assume that if x proposes to add 'x says p' to the common ground, the proposal is automatically accepted. On the other hand, if x proposes to add 'y says p' to the common ground, the proposal can only go through if y assents to it. This accounts for the fact that F-declaratives normally do not elicit a yes/no response, while R-declaratives do.

Deriving the data. The contrast in (7) follows straightforwardly: NPIs are not licensed in R-declaratives simply because these are declaratives in which NPIs do not occur in the scope of a downward-entailing operator. The bias of R-declaratives illustrated in (6) also finds an explanation. Given the maxim of Quality (Grice 1975), it follows from 'x says p' that 'x believes p'. Thus, if the proposal to add 'x says p' to the common ground is accepted, it is also accepted that x believes p. Suppose, then, that A utters [[$_\triangle$ addressee say] φ] and B is A's addressee. By hypothesis, A proposes to add 'B says φ' to the common ground. Assuming that A must have reasons to think that his proposal will be accepted, he must have reasons to think that B believes φ. Hence, an R-declarative [$\triangle$ φ] gives rise to the inference that the speaker believes that the addressee believes φ (cf. Gunlogson 2001, 2002) and thus the inappropriateness of (6b).

We can explain (5) as follows. Suppose 'yes' picks out a salient positive proposition and 'no' picks out a salient negative proposition. Assuming that a polarity question partitions logical space into four cells (Groenendijk and Stokhof 1984), 'yes' and 'no' will then be infelicitous because there are two salient positive propositions and two salient negative propositions. The conjunction of two R-declaratives in (4), on the other hand, denotes one proposition in our theory. Thus, 'yes' can affirm and 'no' can negate this single salient proposition. (2) and (3) are explained along similar lines.

The contrast in (1) is accounted for as follows. The polarity question is inappropriate because it is already clear that A believes John has a sister. The R-declarative, on the other hand, is a proposal to add 'A says that John has a sister' to the common ground. Given the maxim that a speaker should not assert what is presupposed (Stalnaker 1978), this proposal amounts to a proposal to make the proposition that John has a sister not be a presupposition.

Realization of $\triangle$ accross languages. It seems that $\triangle$ is always realized in some special way if the source is not the speaker. English chooses the final rise contour. In Vietnamese, the morpheme *a* is dedicated to this purpose.

(10) A: John phai di don chi no
            John must go pick up sister his

      B: John co chi a?
            John has sister

Vietnamese has another question particle, *khong*. We will show that *khong*-questions and *a*-questions in Vietnamese pattern with polarity questions and R-declaratives in English, respectively.

Comparisons with other analyses. Gunlogson (2001, 2002) basically assumes that an R-declarative adds the proposition that the addressee believes φ to the common ground and postulates that R-declaratives are inquisitive when φ is redundant with respect to the addressee's belief. This account runs into several difficulties. For example, it is not clear why a yes/no response is expected, and it does not explain why an R-declarative can be used to signal that a presupposition is informative. Safarova (2005) assumes that the rising contour has the same semantics as the modal *might* in Veltman (1996). However, it remains unclear how to account for the many differences between an R-declarative and a modal sentence.

Future work. The suggestive similarity between $\triangle$ and evidential markers is to be explored further, especially in connection with the fact that both seem to be root phenomena (Faller 2006).

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