ON-words: predicates or quantifiers?

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In contrast to APs and PPs only some nominals may appear in the so called predicative position (*John is* [AP *tall*][PP *in the room*]/[NP *a teacher*]). Furthermore, as observed by Doron (1983) quantifiers are generally banned from this position (**John is every member of the club*). There are exceptions though. Notably, *no*-NP ('n-words') may be predicative (*John is no friend of mine*). Partee (1987) proposed that quantifiers can appear in predicative position if reanalyzed as involving lowering of the standard generalized quantifier (e.g. *no friend of mine* → set of entities disjoint from the set of my friends: type shifting operator BE: $<<e,t>,t>\rightarrow<e,t>$). Consequently, the expression can appear as predicative NP.

The problem. Partee's proposal is too strong because some quantifiers cannot appear in predicate positions. Crucially, she overlooks that fact that quantifiers banned from the predicate position cannot have collective interpretation and opaque reading under intensional predicates. In contrast, n-words functioning as predicate nominals (3) can have collective interpretation (2) and opaque reading in the scope of an intensional verb (1). Moreover, quantifiers (in Generalized Quantifiers theory) have the same semantics as n-words – they both denote disjoint set operation – (in Czech *ani jeden student* in (3)) behave differently in the mentioned contexts (no collective reading, and transparent reading in intensional contexts, (1)). The difference between n-words and quantifiers cannot stem from semantics only.

The proposal. I argue that the data can be explained if we adopt the flexible Boolean semantics framework of Winter (2001):

1. N-words in the negative concord languages are restriction predicates ($<e,t>$) and their type does not change in predicate position. N-words in argument position are interpreted through choice functions (collective interpretation in (2)). So nwords are indefinites of special sort (for a closely related proposal see Penka (2007); Zeijlstra (2004); Błasczak (2001)).

2. As predicates, n-words

– can be interpreted in opaque contexts selecting for properties (see McNally & Geenhoven (2005))

– they can appear in the predicative nominal constructions (they are not quantifiers there)

– because they denote set of objects, they can be mapped to the atomic element representing the relevant group of objects and as such they can be arguments of collective predicates, as in (2) (see Winter (2002)).

To account for distinction between n-words and other quantifiers I use Winter's typology of rigid and flexible nominals based on the syntactic status of nominals (DPs/NPs). Under Winter's approach indefinites, including n-words, are flexible nominals and as such must be type-shifted into quantifiers in some syntactic constructions (exception constructions, further modification of n-words, …). In contrast, quantifiers of the 'not a single one' type are rigid nominals though and cannot be shifted into predicates.

(1) Petr nehledá žádné jednorožce/ani jednoho jednorožce.

'Petr is seeking no unicorn/not a single unicorn.'

(2) Žádní mí studenti nejsou dobrá parta.

'#No students of mine are good team.'

(3) Petr není žádný můj student/*ani jeden můj student.

'Petr is no students of mine/*not a single student of mine.'

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