

## On a special interpretation of evaluative adjectives/adverbs of disposition and luck

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**D- & L-class predicates:** This paper presents a novel analysis of a special interpretation of the two classes of adjectives/adverbs: (i) the D(isposition)-class, which includes *kind(ly)*, *polite(ly)*, and *wise(ly)*, and (ii) the L(uck)-class, which includes *(un)luck(ily)* and *(un)fortunate(ly)*. A D-class predicate may be used to characterize an entity (as in: *Kelly was polite*) or an eventuality/action (as in: *Pat declined our request politely*); an L-class predicate, on the other hand, may be used to characterize an entity (as in: *Sam was lucky*) or a proposition (as in: *{Luckyly/it was lucky that} it rained*). Additionally, D-class predicates have a “special” use whereby they participate in the three constructions illustrated in (1), whose semantics has been a matter of debate (Jackendoff 1972, Barker 2002, Ernst 2002, Oshima 2009, Liu 2012, Kubota 2015). Note that (1a–c) are synonymous, except that Edy’s offering Meg a ride is “at-issue” (proffered) in (1a), but is {as a rule/invariably} “not-at-issue” (non-proffered) in {(1b)/(1c)} (Karttunen 2014 *et al.*).

- (1) a. **Politely**, Edy offered Meg a ride. [the Agent-oriented adverb (AOAdv) construction]
- b. Edy was **polite** to offer Meg a ride. [the “Adj + to Inf” construction]
- c. It was **polite** of Edy to offer Meg a ride. [the “Adj + of NP” construction]

L-class predicates exhibit a parallel use, but do not participate in the “Adj + of NP” construction. **The embeddability puzzle:** A particularly intriguing issue about the special interpretation of D- and L-class predicates is the observation due to Wilkinson (1970), such that the “Adj + to Inf” construction (on its more common interpretation where the preadjacent-proposition is not at-issue) and the “Adj + of NP” construction resist embedding under an operator with a prioritizing (deontic) modal meaning. (The AOAdv construction does not exhibit this property, which we take to be a consequence of the fact that in this construction the relevant semantic component is not at-issue.)

- (2) John should [be nice (#to buy every child a gift)]; I wanted [Clare to be lucky (#to get that job)]; #Mike wanted [it to be kind of Nancy to offer him a ride]; Pat asked [that Linda be polite (#to write letters of appreciation to her supporters)].

This phenomenon remains unexplained under the classical analysis along the lines of Stowell (1991), which takes (1a–c) to mean “Edy was (at least temporarily) polite and (in consequence) he offered Meg a ride” or “Edy offered Meg a ride because he was (at least temporarily) polite”.

**The “hidden conditional” analysis:** Motivated by the embeddability puzzle, Oshima (2009) proposes (i) that a D/L-class predicate on its special interpretation ascribes a (transitory) property to an entity and (ii) that the “constructional meanings” of the three constructions involve an implicit modal/conditional component. To (1b,c), for example, a meaning along the lines of (3) is assigned.

- (3) **proffered:** ‘If Edy offered Meg a ride, then he must have been (transitorily) polite.’  
**non-proffered (conventionally implicated):** ‘Edy offered Meg a ride.’

Martin (2015), however, points out that this analysis is problematic in supporting certain intuitively invalid inferences, such as the one from in (4) (Ernst’s 2002 analysis, which shares some features with Oshima’s, suffers from the same problem).

- (4) **premises:** (i) There is a man-eating monster X, who only eats people who are (at least transitorily) smart; (ii) X ate Pat.  
**conclusion:** Pat was smart to be eaten by X. / It was smart of Pat to be eaten by X.

Martin puts forth an amended analysis, where *Dan was stupid to leave* would translate into (5).

- (5)  $\exists e_1[\text{leave}(e_1) \wedge \text{Agent}(\text{dan}, e_1) \wedge \Box_{\text{epistemic}}[\forall e_2[[\text{leave}(e_2) \wedge \text{Agent}(\text{dan}, e_2)] \rightarrow \exists s_1[\text{stupid} \wedge \text{Holder}(\text{dan}, s_1) \wedge \text{Manifest}(s_1, e_2)]]]]]$

**Proposal:** Martin’s (2015) account seems rather *ad hoc*, the postulation of **Manifest** (the relation whereby a state manifests itself through an action) in the logical form not being independently motivated. As a simpler alternative, we propose that the three constructions conventionally implicate that the content of their “prejacent” holds in all worlds delimited by an accessibility relation based on the similarity to the world of evaluation. That is, their meanings, like that of (6), involve metaphysical necessity.

- (6) (Of course Ken passed that math exam. Given that he has a Ph.D. in mathematics,) he **could** not have failed.

The meaning of (1b,c) (with a D-class predicate) can be approximated as in (7); **polite**<sub>evt</sub> represents a property of eventualities (which is an independently motivated component of the meaning of *politely* as a manner adverb) and *C* represents a contextually supplied comparison class.

- (7)  $\lambda w_1[\exists e_1[\text{offer-ride}(w_1, e_1, \text{edy}, \text{meg}) \wedge \forall w_2[\text{Similar}(w_1, w_2) \rightarrow \exists e_2[\text{polite}_{\text{evt}}(w_2, e_2, e_1, C_{\langle w, \langle v, t \rangle})]]]]]$

(7) states that Edy’s action of offering Meg a ride is to be characterized as polite in the actual world as well as in other neighboring worlds, to the effect that the action (or its counterparts) would still count as polite if it had been conducted in a somewhat different fashion. This nicely conforms to the intuition that Edy’s attitude, choice of words (e.g., “You want a ride?” vs. “Please let me give you a ride”), etc. in his act of making an offer do not matter for the truth/felicity of (1a–c).

When an L-class is involved, as in *Pat was lucky to leave early*, we suggest that the conventional implicature is such that it is a metaphysical necessity that the *proposition* denoted by the prejacent is to be characterized as lucky, etc. (Recall that an L-class differs from a D-class in lacking an independently motivated use on which it characterizes an eventuality/action.)

Under this proposal, the embeddability puzzle can be seen as a manifestation of a rather general phenomenon pertaining to metaphysical modals. (8)/(9) illustrate that metaphysical necessity statements with a D/L-class predicate resist embedding under a prioritizing modal operator (the embedded clause in (9) is a generic statement, whose semantics is commonly held to involve metaphysical modality; Carlson 2011 and references therein).

- (8) ??The president wanted Emma’s (act of) entertaining the minister [to be such that it could not be rude]; ??The director asked [that Frank’s (act of) transporting the explosive could not be careless].

- (9) ??The king asked that it be fortunate to serve the country as a soldier.

(10) with an embedded “Adj + *to* Inf” clause, on the other hand, illustrates that the acceptability of sentences with a form analogous to that of (2) improves with appropriate contextualization, to a degree comparable to that of (8)/(9).

- (10) (**intended:** ‘The king asked that the state of affairs be changed so that people would consider the young soldiers to be fortunate to serve the country.’)

??The king asked that the young soldiers be fortunate to serve the country.

**Selected Ref’s:** Carlson, G. (2011) Genericity. In: *Semantics: An international handbook of natural language meaning*, vol. 2. Mouton de Gruyter; Ernst, T. (2002) *The syntax of adjuncts*. CUP; Karttunen, L. et al. (2014) The chameleon-like nature of evaluative adjectives. In: *Empirical issues in syntax and semantics* 10; Kubota, A. (2015) Transforming manner adverbs into subject-oriented adverbs: Evidence from Japanese. *NLLT* 33; Liu, M. (2012) *Multidimensional semantics of evaluative adverbs*. Brill; Martin, F. (2015) Relative stupidity and past tenses. In: *Taming the TAME systems*. Brill; Oshima, D. (2009) Between being wise and acting wise: A hidden conditional in some constructions with propensity adjectives. *Journal of Linguistics* 45.