

Beautiful dancer, just king and trained nurse:
A compositional approach to non-intersective readings of adnominal modifiers

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The talk presents a novel semantic account of the so-called “intersective/non-intersective” ambiguity of structures such as *beautiful dancer*. The proposal contrasts with Larson’s (1998) famous N-analysis in taking the adjective as the ambiguity trigger and in unmasking the bracketing paradox perception of the non-intersective reading as a grammatical illusion. The adjective has no compositional access to the verbal root’s event argument but is always linked to the referential argument of the noun. *-er* nominals are analyzed as a special kind of role noun (such as *king, guest, judge*). They introduce a social role *r* that manifests itself via the verbal root’s *e*-argument. (However, neither *r* nor *e* are compositionally active.) An evaluative adjective such as *beautiful* introduces an underspecified trope variable, which calls for a pragmatic specification of the adjectival predicate’s ultimate target. A general pragmatic parsimony condition ensures that referents introduced by linguistic material are chosen as best target candidates whenever possible. The *-er* nominal’s social role *r* is an ideal choice in this respect. The linking of the adjective to the verbal root’s *e*-argument is mediated via *r* and thus a secondary pragmatic effect. The proposal provides a unified analysis for modified *-er* nominals (*beautiful dancer*) and other instances of role- and event-related interpretations for adnominal modification such as, e.g., *just king* and *trained nurse*.