Veridicality and attitude predications   Daria Popova, Stanford University

Regular embeddings (1a) and parenthetical attitude predications (1b,c) pattern the same with respect to factive presuppositions, sequence of tense, scope ambiguities, clause types and speech acts (Ross, 1973), which strongly suggests that parenthetical attitude predications have the same semantics as regular embeddings, namely *attitude predicate(attitude holder,proposition)*. This intuition is further supported by the fact that both embeddings and parenthetical attitude predications carry evidential information (Simons, 2007).

(1)   a. Dean thinks that Sam is a werewolf.
       b. Sam, Dean thinks, is a werewolf.
       c. Sam is a werewolf, Dean thinks.

Recent corpus studies (de Marneffe et al., 2012) showed, however, that parenthetical attitude predications are more veridical (in the sense of (Giannakidou, 1999)) than regular embeddings. Indeed, the speaker can question the truth of the embedded proposition in the case of a regular embedding (2a), but not in the case of a parenthetical attitude predication (2b) (Asher, 2000).

(2)   a. Dean thinks that Sam is a werewolf, but I think Dean is wrong.
       b. #Sam, Dean thinks, is a werewolf, but I think Dean is wrong.

I argue that the observed differences in veridicality can be derived from the differences in the discourse behavior of regular embeddings and parenthetical attitude predications. Unlike regular embeddings, parenthetical attitude predications cannot directly engage the question under discussion (Simons et al., 2010) (3a,b) and cannot bear focus (4) or contrastive topic accents. Thus, parenthetical attitude predications are inert in terms of their discourse behavior.

(3)   (a) What did Max say?
       #Mary, Max said, is a linguist.
       (b) Mary, US papers reported, is running for political office.
       #Did they?

(4)   Who said Max is a linguist?
       #Max, MIKE$_{FOC}$ said, is a linguist.

Current proposal supports the idea in (Simons et al., 2010) that the discourse behavior can be construction-specific.

References

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