Non-truth-conditional intensification. The case of ‘good’

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We address the intensifying use of Catalan bon ‘good’, which emphasizes the property denoted by the modified N and thus yields intensification and potentially the expression of an emotive attitude (indicated with ‘!’ (1a)); it is unavailable in negative environments (1b).

(1) a. Hem tingut un bon ensurt!
   we had a good shock
   ‘≈ We had a big shock!’

b. (No) he menjat un bon tros de pa.
   NEG have.I eaten a good piece of bread
   ‘I have (not) eaten a good piece of bread.’

We treat INTENSIFYING GOOD as a more restrictive version of subjective good (2a), which yields intensification through a monotonic inference encoded as non-truth-conditional content. This amounts to the comment that any individuals in the extension of N that are ordered higher on the scale, also count as good Ns (inspired by Nouwen’s 2011 analysis of evaluative adverbs like amazingly), and we formalize this as in (2b).

(2) a. \[ [[\text{bon}_{int}]] = \lambda P_{ext} \lambda x : \forall y, z \in P \ [y > z \lor z > y]. (\text{good-as}(P))(x) \]

b. \[ \forall y[P(y) \land y > x \rightarrow (\text{good-as}(P))(y)] \]

Treating the monotonicity inference as non-truth-conditionally conveyed accounts for the positive polarity behavior of INTENSIFYING GOOD (recall (1b)): if the at-issue content is negated, then the non-truth-conditional meaning, which cannot be detached, yields a falsity. That is, if x is not a good piece of bread, then it does not follow that any larger piece will count as good. This, we put forth, is the reason why evaluativity-based intensifiers behave as positive polarity items. They share the expression of intensification as a secondary meaning, which yields falsity if the at-issue part is challenged by sentential operators.

References: • Nouwen, R. (2011). Degree modifiers and monotonicity. In Egré & Klinedinst (eds.):