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Nominal–Predicate Sentences of Rhetorical Nature[*]

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　名詞述語文のうちトートロジー，オクシモロン，メタファーをと
りあげて，これらの修辞的な文が適切に解釈されるしくみを考察す
る．言語の意味を言語理解との関連で扱い，文脈中における言語理解
の過程を具体的に分析し，特に述語名詞の表す内容(「意味」)に焦点
をあてて修辞的な名詞述語文と通常の名詞述語文との共通点および
相違点の解明を図る．

　述語名詞は，あるカテゴリーが種々の評価尺度に対応して持つ代
表的属性を文脈に依存して限定的に表し得るものであり，その内容は
共有知識により具体的に定められる．名詞の意味を，外延を定めるた
めの属性(内包: intension)に限らず種々の代表的属性をも含めてとら
える考え方に基づき，修辞的な名詞述語文の特徴を明らかにする．

1　Introduction

Among nominal-predicate sentences, sentences in which the subject is con-
nected with a nominal by a copula, some are considered to have rhetorical
nature. For example, sentences (1)a–(1)c are, if unconsciously, interpreted
beyond the so called literal meanings, hence their felicity.

(1)　a. A woman is a woman.

　　b. Such a woman is not a woman.

　　c. Juliet is the sun.

Apparently, sentence (1)a, a kind of *tautology*, is senseless, while (1)b, a
kind of *oxymoron*, is contradictory, and (1)c, a kind of *metaphor*, is nonsense
or improbable.

To the contrary, (2), when uttered to inform someone of Tom's occupation, requires no more than literal interpretation.

(2) Tom is a teacher.

As regards (1)a–(1)c, where do their proper meanings come from? Is there any crucial difference in the process of understanding between these rhetorical sentences and ordinary ones like (2)?

Grice(1975) argues that sentences like (1)a–(1)c are in fact lacking in proper meanings, but that the very fact that these kinds of sentences are uttered leads the hearer to guess the speaker's *implicature*, implicit meaning put in the utterance, and consequently they are properly interpreted. He, however, does not make clear how the implicatures are understood and what they are. Sperber(1975) and Sperber& Wilson(1986), in their analysis of metaphor and other rhetorical expressions, try to explain the hearer's process of understanding with the newly introduced concept of *relevance* and give a proper suggestion that rhetorical nature of an utterance is a matter of degree. But they go the same line as Grice in the point of reducing the whole meaning to implicature. And tautology and oxymoron are not referred to.

This paper discusses the above mentioned issue, taking *tautology* (here, sentences roughly in the form of 'X is X' such as (1)a), *oxymoron* (here, sentences roughly in the form of 'X is not X' such as (1)b), and *metaphor* (here, sentences roughly in the form of 'Y is X' such as (1)c) to examine. The approach taken here is characterized as follows: 1) to deal with the meaning of sentences with relation to human language understanding, 2) in this connection, to analyze the process in which sentences are understood, 3) to look into the difference and the similarity between the rhetorical sentences and ordinary ones, with a special focus on the meaning of the nominal predicate.

In section 2, we begin with the analysis of tautology, which provides the fundamental idea for the issue. It is preceded by some preliminaries on language understanding and knowledge. In section 3, oxymoron and metaphor are taken up in connection with tautology. In section 4, characteristics of the sentences in question are described in comparison with ordinary nominal-

predicate sentences. In section 5, summary and related issues are stated to conclude.

2   An Approach to Tautology

2.1   Preliminaries: Language Understanding and Knowledge

To start with, consider the following dialogue, which includes an example of *tautology*.

(3) John: Oh, it's heavy! Would you bring anyone powerful?
    Mike: Sure. Mary was around here. I'll bring her.
    John: No. Not a woman. It's SO heavy.
    Mike: Don't you know her power?
    John: Not actually. But anyway, <u>a woman is a woman</u>.
    Mike: Well · · ·, it might be true. / you'll see the answer.

In (3), where power is the topic, the underlined part is interpreted as follows: 'In general, a woman is weak in muscular power.(So is Mary.)'. How does this interpretation arise? Let us consider it with relation to language understanding.

As language understanding has a close relation to knowledge, let us stop to think about the latter for a moment. Researches on knowledge representation in mind have been conducted in such fields as cognitive psychology and artificial intelligence. An effective theory on memory is *schema theory*. Let us overview it and a related notion *frame*, according to Greene(1990).

Schema theory suggests that human memory consists of *schema*s, each of which holds the knowledge concerning a certain object or thing, to help our understanding of things, words and sentences through inference. And for the representation of *schema*, *frame* is proposed by Minsky,M.

An example of a *frame* is shown in Fig.1: a frame is corresponding to a schema. In Fig.1, various kinds of knowledge about the category 'DOG' is represented in an integrated fashion. A frame has some *slots* (boxes led by 'ISA', 'HAS', 'TYPE', etc.), which in turn have their *values* (compulsory,

DOG
ISA — [animal] compulsory

HAS — [4 legs] default

TYPE — [   ] arbitrary: spitz,...
       SIZE — [   ] arbitrary: big, small, very small,...
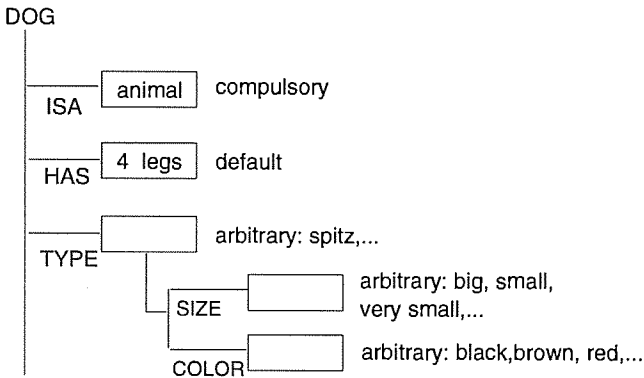   COLOR — [   ] arbitrary: black,brown, red,...

Fig.1: Frame Knowledge of Category 'DOG': cited from Greene(1990)

default or arbitrary). What is characteristic of a frame is the *default value*: it well explains such empirical facts as that hearing a story of a dog without any particular information on legs, the hearer assumes a four-leg dog.

Then, what part of the *frame knowledge* in Fig.1 could/should be regarded as the meaning of the word 'dog'? Traditionally, the meaning of a word used to be regarded as the necessary and sufficient condition (i.e. intension) which would determine the *extension* (the set of those elements which are true of the word). Against this tradition, Putnam(1975) regarded as part of the meaning of a word, in addition, the set of representative attributes which the extension of the word bears, calling it *stereotype*. Taking 'water' as an example, he dealt with its *stereotype* — colorless, transparent, tasteless, thirst-quenching, etc. — as an important part of the meaning of the word. The essential point of Putnam's claim is that he took into consideration such knowledge which is needed for a proper understanding or use of it in a community [1].

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[1]Putnam(1975) describes *stereotype* as follows: 'In ordinary parlance a 'stereotype' is a conventional(frequently malicious) idea (which may be inaccurate) of what an *X* looks like or acts like or is.' (p.249)

From the perspective of language understanding, Putnam's claim on the meaning of a word is considered to be properer than the traditional one. In Putnam's idea, roughly speaking, most part of (if not the whole part of) frame knowledge as shown in Fig.1 is included in the meaning of a word. Thus, in the following discussion as regards language understanding, we take the *frame model* [2].

Now let us consider (3). The knowledge which the speaker John would have about categories 'WOMAN' and 'MAN', is modeled in Fig.2: it is based on the *frame model*, where schematic knowledge of a category is represented within a *frame* (the boxed area).
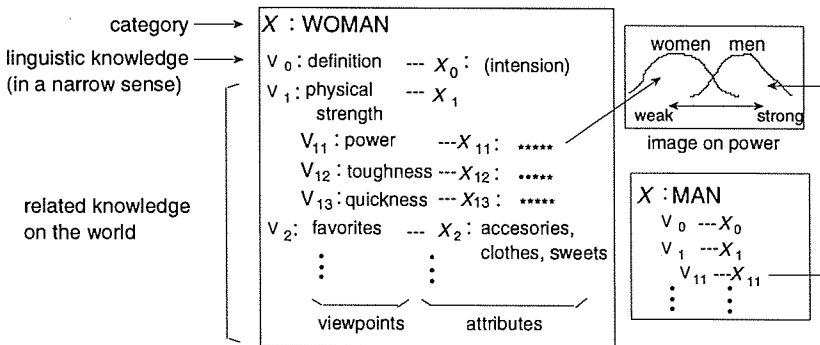

Fig.2: Knowledge Representation of Categories 'WOMAN' and 'MAN'

The way of knowledge representation in Fig.2, as a variant of a frame model, bears two major characteristics. First, two kinds of knowledge — linguistic knowledge in a narrow sense (the 'meaning' of the word in the traditional approach) and related knowledge — are represented in a frame together. Taking the category 'WOMAN' as an example, the former is the intension of the word 'woman', namely the condition to determine its extension. In plain

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[2] The frame model is not perfect, as Lakoff(1987) points out, but it will do for our present discussion.

words, it is the knowledge responsible for judging whether a given object is a woman or not. On the other hand, related knowledge is an integration of generalized knowledge of women, which has been formed by learning[3]. It consists of various kinds of knowledge, regardless of truthfulness or precision, including visual and audio data, fuzzy information, and even a kind of illusion or prejudice. It constructs an overall idea of what a woman is like. According to Putnam(1975)'s word, related knowledge as we call it is the knowledge about stereotype. It should be noted that members of a community share with one another this related knowledge, part of which is called common sense or social belief.

Second, the whole knowledge of a category, the content of a frame, is represented as pairs of *viewpoints* and the corresponding *attributes* in a hierarchical way[4]. *Viewpoint* here stands for an aspect from which to grasp a category: we human beings see a physical object from different viewpoints to grasp the whole image of it, which seems to apply to abstract things. The distinction between V_0 (for definition) and $V_i (i = 1,...)$ (for stereotype) is important. For 'WOMAN', X_0 (i.e. intension) is the biological features [5]. *Attribute*, on the other hand, is the information of the category corresponding to a viewpoint. To say metaphorically, it is the image (namely, how the object looks) from the viewpoint. In some cases, attributes of different categories corresponding to a certain viewpoint together with make a total image: in Fig.2, those of categories 'WOMAN' and 'MAN' corresponding to the viewpoint 'power' do.

In addition to the structure of knowledge assumed above, we should think of the dynamic change of states of knowledge from a cognitive aspect. In a discourse, knowledge seems to be activated part by part according to the context,

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[3] Here, 'learning' is used in a wider sense. It includes knowledge acquisition through experiences on the whole, not limited to that by reading or by being taught.

[4] *Viewpoint* and *attribute* here basically correspond to *slot* and *value* in Minsky's model (in Fig.1) respectively.

[5] Yamanashi(1995) calls V_0 and $V_i (i = 1,...)$ 'central viewpoint' and 'prototypical viewpoint' respectively. Furthermore, in my idea, even in such categories as 'CUP', which seems to have no strict definition, some viewpoints have greater priority than others: this difference in priority is considered to contribute to the ordinary/rhetorical nature of a nominal predicate, as shown later.

judging from that we have only part of our knowledge in our consciousness at one moment. Therefore, it could be said that language understanding on a certain point of time is dependent on how knowledge is activated on the speaker's and the hearer's sides.

With these preliminaries, we will proceed to examine tautology 'X is X'.

2.2   Analysis

Let us now return to example (3) in page 77 and analyze the underlined part.

The dialogue proceeds in the following way. When Mary is mentioned by Mike in the context where power is the topic, the image of 'WOMAN' (the upper category of Mary) with reference to power is activated in John's mind. Accordingly, the relative weakness of a woman shown in Fig.2 comes into him, and he declines Mike's offer (in line 3). In response to Mike's implicit claim for Mary's power (in line 4), John again declines it uttering the underlined part (in line 5). Mike agrees or disagrees with him (in line 6).

Now, let us have a close look at the underlined part, 'a woman is a woman': what does each nominal 'a woman' express? The first one, the subject, refers to an arbitrary element of the extension of category 'WOMAN', which is to be predicated. While the second one, the nominal predicate, represents a certain attribute of category 'WOMAN', in the analysis here. Indeed the predicate nominal in itself could represent the whole set of attributes or an arbitrary part of it, but taking the speaker's state of mind at the time of utterance into consideration, it seems to cover only the activated part, the part related to power. Consequently, by uttering the sentence 'a woman is a woman', the speaker is referring to the generalized image of women with reference to power, namely, the relative weakness of a woman[6]. Furthermore, the speaker, applying the generalized idea of the category to Mary, infers and implicitly claims *Mary's* weakness in particular.

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[6]The utterance presupposes that category 'WOMAN' bears a certain characteristic attribute with reference to power. Otherwise, the predicate nominal would represent a null content, which doesn't make sense.

Then, how can the hearer Mike understand what's said properly? First of all, we can assume that the hearer shares, somewhat loosely, the knowledge shown in Fig.2 with the speaker. (In fact, as has been stated in 2.1, community members share with one another a variety of knowledge.) Second, needless to say, the speaker and the hearer share the context. Under these conditions, the underlined sentence being uttered, the hearer evokes from his own knowledge the image of a woman with reference to power, in accordance with the context. What's evoked in the hearer's mind can be identified with that in the speaker's mind, because they share the knowledge. Therefore, the hearer interprets the utterance as referring to the relative weakness of a woman. Furthermore, based on the fact that utterance was made in reference to Mary, the hearer should understand that *Mary's* weakness in particular has been inferred and claimed.

2.3   Other examples

Now let us think about some varieties of tautology, making reference to Fig.2. Suppose that 'a man is a man' is uttered when John's power is in question. In this case, contrary to 'a woman is a woman' in (3), the utterance would have such a meaning as 'In general, a man is strong in muscular power. (So is John.)'. Suppose then that 'a woman is a woman' is uttered when Mary's taste in accessories is in question. This time, unlike that in (3), the utterance would have such a meaning as 'In general, a woman has a taste in accessories'. These examples indicate that 'X_2' in 'X_1 is X_2' represents the stereotypical attribute(s) of the category concerned in a given situation.

Now see the following example.

(4) I promised my friend that I would say nothing of the matter, and
<u>a promise is a promise.</u>

                                                (C.Doyle, *The crooked man*: Sekiguchi(1962))

In (4), the underlined part is interpreted as follows, with little support by the context: 'A promise should be kept, once it is made'. What accounts for this? It is analyzed this way: category 'PROMISE' (or the word 'promise')

has in itself a very limited number of attribute(s), so that alternatives of what could be represented by the predicate nominal are inevitably limited. To put it another way, the relative independence on the context seen in (4) is due to the limited attributes of the nominal. Nominals such as 'rule' or 'obligation', and modified nominals such as 'what's over' or 'cheap article' are considered to work in the same way.

2.4 The Essence

Now let us summarize what's been found so far.

From the analysis, it could be claimed that in 'X_1 is X_2', 'X_2' is not restricted to representing the intension of the word, which is linguistically determined in a narrow sense, but is free to represent various kinds of attributes of the category concerned, which is given by related knowledge as is shown in Fig.2, and that the actual content represented is specified by the context and knowledge in a dynamic way. In short, in the whole set of attributes of the category concerned (therefore, of the predicate nominal), which is semantically supposed, it is only a certain *subset* of it that is actually represented in a discourse. This is, as will be shown, the essential point to explain the felicity of utterances in question, common to the three types.

According to Grice(1975), 'X_2' in 'X_1 is X_2' represents nothing but the intension of the word, which is linguistically determined. Therefore the utterance becomes inevitably meaningless. Our approach makes contrast with Grice's: 'X_1 is X_2' makes sense due to the meaningfulness of X_2, — before, or simultaneously with, or without the hearer's getting concious of its rhetorical nature.

3 Oxymoron and Metaphor in Connection with Tautology

On the basis of the above mentioned idea on tautology, we now have a look at oxymoron and metaphor.

3.1   Stereotype and the Rhetorical Expressions

First, let us introduce a notion of *stereotype set*, based on that of *stereotype*. As has been stated in section 2.1, Putnam(1975) calls an integration of the representative attributes of a category *stereotype*. In this paper, the attribute in terms of a certain viewpoint — relative weakness of a woman with reference to power, for example — is called so. Furthermore, *stereotype* is also used for such an element which bears the stereotypical attribute. We now define *stereotype set* as follows:

(5) The stereotype set of a category X is the set of those elements of X which bears the representative attributes of X , in terms of the 'temporary viewpoint', defined as an integration of viewpoint(s) temporarily concerned (henceforth V_{temp}). And X_{temp} is the representative attribute corresponding to V_{temp}.

Tautology 'X is X' is to describe an arbitrary element of the extension [7] of the category concerned as an element of its *stereotype set*.

Next we introduce the notion of *oxymoron set* as follows:

(6) The oxymoron set of a category X is the set of those elements of X which does not bear the representative attributes of X , in terms of V_{temp}.

It is, accordingly, the compliment of the *stereotype set* as regards the category. Oxymoron is to refer to an element of *oxymoron set*. Consider the following dialogue, which includes a pair of oxymoron and tautology.

(7) John: Ah · · ·, I'm disgusted with Mary's rough speech.
     <u>Such a woman is not a woman!</u>

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[7]It can be considered that in tautology, the subject is the generic element of the category, while in oxymoron and metaphor, the subject is specific one. In such an example of tautology as 'Alain Delon is Alain Delon, however old he might become', we consider the subject 'Alain Delon', a specific person, to be the unique element of the category 'Alain Delon', thus the generic element of it.

Mike: <u>A woman is a woman</u>, however rough her speech is. Indeed, Mary is warm-hearted and, kind of delicate.

In (7), John suggests uttering an oxymoron that Mary cannot be regarded as a woman in terms of the way she speakes. Here, V_{temp} is 'speech'. The predicate nominal 'a woman' represents the stereotypical attribute of category 'WOMAN' in V_{temp}. In response to John, Mike claims that even such a woman who is not a stereotype in V_{temp} can bear the stereotypical attribute in another viewpoint: this time, the predicate nominal 'a woman' represents the attribute corresponding to the newly introduced viewpoint. The speaker is switching the viewpoint from 'speech' to more essential one along with the utterance.

In the same line, let us introduce the notion of *metaphor set* as follows.

(8) The **metaphor set** of a category X is the set of those elements out of X which bears the representative (or stereotypical) attributes of X (that is, X_{temp}) in terms of V_{temp}.

Thus, in our approach, the set of elements which bear the attribute X_{temp} consists of *stereotype set* and *metaphor set* exclusively. Metaphor[8] is to describe an element of *metaphor set*. Let us see just one example, which is same as (1)c.

(9) Juliet is the sun.

In (9), the predicate nominal 'the sun' is considered to represent such attributes as warmness, brightness or indispensableness, which are shared with Juliet. It is true that these attributes of Juliet are different from those of the sun in quality[9], but apart from the necessary adjustment, 'the sun' itself is

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[8] Here, we are just concerned with metaphor of copula sentences with a predicate nominal, and the main focus is put on its relationship with tautology and oxymoron. Investigation into a variety of metaphor is beyond the scope of this paper.

[9] For example, *warmness* as regards Juliet has nothing to do with temparature: it means the mental one or the impression drawn from her. Thus, to be precise, the similarity itself would be understood through a kind of calculation.

considered to represent the sun's attribute X_{temp}, an integration of the attributes corresponding to V_{temp}[10]. In short, in metaphor 'Y is X', a certain set of attributes of the category, i.e. X_{temp}, is represented by the predicate nominal, as in tautology.

3.2   Mutual Relationship

Through sections 2 and 3, the essential idea about tautology, oxymoron and metaphor has been stated, with special reference to what their predicate nominals represent.

In tautology, the extension of the category X (written in italic to distinguish from the literal expression 'X') is identified with its *stereotype set*. That is, elements outside the *stereotype set* are neglected. In oxymoron, to the contrary, those elements are in focus to describe. In metaphor, such an element outside the extension of the category X but bearing the attribute of X is described. Fig.3 shows the sets concerning the three types of rhetoric in terms of a certain viewpoint V_{temp}.
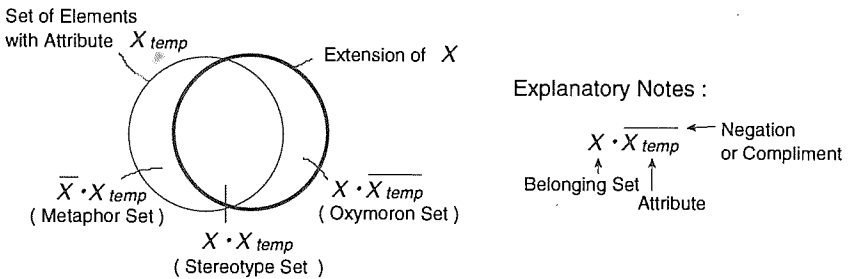

Fig.3: Sets in Relation to Tautology, Oxymoron and Metaphor

The following two factors together with account for the felicity of the rhetorical expressions in question — tautology, oxymoron and metaphor: 1) the

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[10]In (9), V_{temp} and X_{temp} are understood rather context-independently, as in (4).

variety of the context-dependent attribute X_{temp} and 2) the discrepancy between the extension of the category X and the set of those elements which bear X_{temp}. Common to these expressions, the predicate nominal represents X_{temp}.

4 Characteristics of the Rhetorical Use

Now we summarize the characteristics of the predicate nominal of rhetorical sentences as in (1)a – (1)c in comparison with that of ordinary ones as in (2). The similarity is described as follows: the predicate nominal represents a certain attribute(s) of the category concerned in terms of the temporary viewpoint. While the difference is described as follows:

(10) As for an ordinary sentence, the attribute represented, i.e. X_{temp}, is the intension of the category, i.e. X_0, which is linguistically determined and has priority over the other attributes.

On the other hand, as for a rhetorical sentence, X_{temp} varies among the attributes of the category. In most cases of tautology and in all cases of oxymoron and metaphor, X_{temp} is not the intension X_0 but a certain representative (or stereotypical) attribute(s), i.e. $X_i(i = 1...)$, given by related knowledge. As for such a tautology in which X_{temp} is X_0, it should be, unlike those of ordinary sentences, preceded by an oxymoron where X_{temp} is X_i (not X_0) and bears meaning owing to the speaker's illocutionary act of switching the viewpoints.

In a rhetorical sentence, the actual attribute represented is understood depending on the context and the shared knowledge, as has been indicated. That the rhetorical use of a nominal could seem somewhat strange is just because it is not the use in a default situation, i.e. the use in the highest priority. It should be noted that the attribute X_{temp} represented in the rhetorical use is none the less part of the meaning of the nominal, if we take such knowledge representation as in Fig.2. Therefore it would be inappropriate to reduce all the meanings of the rhetorical nominals (accordingly, of rhetorical sentences

in question) to *implicature*, as Grice(1975) does. Rhetorical nature of the predicate nominal would be due to the lower priority originally put on the currently represented attribute, among the whole attributes, and would be a matter of degree [11].

It may be worth pointing out, in passing, that the forms of *tautology*, *oxymoron* and *metaphor* work effectively to express the nuance of the utterance. The utterance of tautology with strong orientation to the stereotypical idea is well symbolized by the form of apparent self-evidence. As for that of oxymoron with emphasis on the exceptional element, by the form of apparent contradiction. And that of metaphor with creative association, by the form of apparent improbability. These forms, however, just play a role in symbolization: they never reflect the meanings of the sentences in a straightfoward way.

5   Concluding remarks

In this paper, the meanings of rhetorical sentences — tautology, oxymoron and metaphor in particular — and their mutual relationship have been studied in relation to human language understanding, with special focus on that of the predicate nominal. It is claimed that the predicate nominal represents the stereotypical attribute(s) of the category concerned context-dependently, and that there is a discrepancy between the extension of a category and the set of such elements as bearing its stereotypical attribute(s), due to which the sentence becomes meaningful and felicitous. The approach taken here owes a lot to the way of knowledge representation, which has been helpful enough for the present purpose but still remains to be elaborated for a further study [12].

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[11]This claim of gradience matches Sperber(1975)'s suggestion.

[12]In such an utterance as 'You are a lily in the valley', the knowledge of the nominal 'a lily in the valley' is considered to be dynamically created or guided out of rather static knowledge like that of 'a woman'.

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