Some "Non-Intersective" Adjectives are Genuinely Noun-Taking

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1. The Problem and the Main Claim

A standard diagnostic for identifying "intersective" adjectives (I-adjectives) is (1), which checks whether applying a predicate formed of an adjective-noun complex to an individual intuitively entails applying the adjectival predicate to that individual and applying the nominal predicate to that individual.

(1) 'x is [Adj N]' ==> 'x is Adj' and 'x is N'

Italian is an I-adjective according to this test (see (2a)), and *former* is a NI-adjective (i.e., "non-intersective" adjective, see (2b)).

(2) a. John is an Italian D(istrict) A(ttorney). ==> John is Italian and John is a DA.
b. John is a former DA. =/=> John is a DA.

Some adjectives are ambiguous: they have an I-reading as well as a NI-reading.[1]

(3) a. John is a good thief.
I-reading: Cannot be true when John is evil.
NI-reading: May be true when John is evil as long as his stealing is good.
b. Mary is an amazing dancer.
I-reading: Cannot be true when Mary is dull.
NI-reading: May be true when Mary is dull as long as her dancing is amazing.

As the above examples and the additional examples below show, there are in fact two kinds of NI-adjectives: NI_1-adjectives – those that entail 'x is N' but fail to entail 'x is Adj', and NI_2-adjectives – those that fail to entail 'x is N'.[2]

[1] In fact, for many speakers even *Italian* may be ambiguous.

[2] This typology doesn't capture more subtle distinctions within the "non-intersective" class. For a more fine-grained classification, see Partee (in press) and references cited there.

(4) a. John is a good tennis player (NI_1) =/=> John is good.
(though: ==> John's tennis playing is good.)
==> John is a tennis player.
b. John is an alleged murderer (NI_2) =/=> John is a murderer.

It is not clear whether there are any NI_1-adjectives that entail 'x's N-ing is Adj' but fail to entail 'x is N'.

(5) a. John is a good dancer. ==> John is a dancer.
b. John is a lousy dancer. =?=> John is a dancer.

The traditional account of "non-intersective" modification (e.g., Siegel 1976) assumes that NI-adjectives take the noun-denotation as their argument. The I/NI distinction is taken to be largely lexical: some adjectival predicates take nominal predicates as arguments, some "intersect" with them (and some do both). Larson (1983, 1999) proposes a theory of NI-adjectives that challenges the traditional account. All adjectives, in that theory, are predicates of events or individuals. Nominal predicates take individual arguments as well as event arguments. The I/NI distinction is pragmatic: some adjectives are felicitously predicated of individuals but not events; others are felicitously predicated of events but not individuals (and some are felicitously predicated of both).

We argue against Larson's approach and in favor of the traditional approach. As we show, only the latter approach provides, without giving up any of its basic tenets, an account for the lack of ambiguity of unambiguous suppletive comparative and superlative forms of NI_1-adjectives. While the positive (i.e., non-comparative) form of the Serbo-Croatian *dobar* ('good'), as in (6a), is ambiguous between an I- and a NI-reading, its suppletive comparative and superlative forms, as in (6b), have only a NI-reading.[3]

(6) a. On je dobar lopov
He is good thief
'He is a good thief'
b. On je bolji/najbolji lopov
He is better/best thief
'He is a better/the best thief'

In what follows we use a formalism in the spirit of Heim and Kratzer (1998). This is perhaps a bit unfair to Larson, as he doesn't assume this formalism (at least not all aspects of it). But it would be very hard to compare the theories under discussion without using more or less the same formal mechanism. We hope our choice does not result in a misrepresentation of Larson's theory.

[3] Many English speakers also find *He is a good thief* ambiguous, but *He is a better/the best thief* unambiguous. At this point we are not sure if the contrast in English is as strong as the one in (6).

2. The Traditional View: Blame-Adj (e.g., Siegel 1976)

2.1 The Strong Version of Blame-Adj

According to this view, the existence of NI-adjectives is allowed by the assumption that some adjectival predicates take noun-denotations as their arguments. More concretely, there are two distinct processes for deriving the meaning of an Adj-N complex: Predicate Modification, PM, and Functional Application or Intensional Functional Application, IFA (W is the domain of possible world-time pairs, and D is the domain of individuals).

(7) PM
For any $w \in W$, if $[\![\alpha]\!]^w$ and $[\![\beta]\!]^w$ are of type <e,t>, then:
$[\![[\alpha\ \beta]]\!]^w = [\lambda x \in D\ .\ [\![\alpha]\!]^w(x) = \text{True and } [\![\beta]\!]^w(x) = \text{True}]$

(8) IFA
For any $w \in W$, if $[\lambda w' \in W\ .\ [\![\beta]\!]^{w'}]$ is in the domain of $[\![\alpha]\!]^w$, then:
$[\![[\alpha\ \beta]]\!]^w = [\![\alpha]\!]^w([\lambda w' \in W\ .\ [\![\beta]\!]^{w'}])$

Disregarding a gradable construal of *Italian* (which may result in an ambiguity; see Footnote 1), the extensions of the noun *DA* and the adjective *Italian* are of type <e,t>, and they combine by PM yielding an I-reading.

(9) a. $[\![\textit{Italian}]\!]^w = [\lambda x \in D.$ x is Italian in w]
b. $[\![\textit{DA}]\!]^w = [\lambda x \in D.$ x is a DA in w]
c. $[\![$ *John is an* $[[_{\text{Adj}}$ *Italian*$]$ $[_{\text{N}}$ *DA*$]]$ $]\!]^w = [\lambda x \in D.\ [\![\textit{Italian}]\!]^w(x) = \text{True and } [\![\textit{DA}]\!]^w(x) = \text{True}](\text{John}) = \text{True}$ iff John is Italian in w and John is a DA in w.

NI-adjectives, on the other hand, combine with nouns by IFA. For example, the extension of *former* is of type <<s,<e,t>>, <e,t>>: it combines with the intension of *DA* by IFA yielding a NI-reading ($D_{<s,<e,t>>}$ is the domain of properties).

(10) a. $[\![\textit{former}]\!]^{<u,i>} = [\lambda P \in D_{<s,<e,t>>}\ .\ \lambda x \in D$: there is a time interval i' whose left edge precedes the left edge of i and for all i"$\subseteq$i', P(<u,i">)(x)=False . there is a time interval i" such that: (a) the right edge of t" precedes the left edge of some i' whose left edge precedes the left edge of i and for all i'"$\subseteq$i', P(<u,i'">)(x) = False; and (b) P(<u,i">)(x) = True]
b. When defined, $[\![$ *John is a* $[[_{\text{Adj}}$ *former*$]$ $[_{\text{N}}$ *DA*$]]$ $]\!]^{<u,i>} = [\![\textit{former}]\!]^{<u,i>}([\lambda w' \in W.\ [\![\textit{DA}]\!]^{w'}])(\text{John}) = \text{True}$ iff there is a time interval i" such that: (a) i" ends before the beginning of some i' such that i' begins before i and for all i'"$\subseteq$i', John is not a DA in <u,i'">; and (b) John is a DA in <u,i">.

Ambiguous adjectives such as *good* are typically gradable and are treated as follows. *Good* takes a degree argument (type d) and is ambiguous: *good*-d* is *Italian*-like (see (11)); *good**-d* is *former*-like (see (12)). Both come with a scalar presupposition.

(11) a. $[\![good^*\text{-}d_2]\!]^{w,C}$ = [λx∈D: context C supplies an assignment, g_C, and a scale of "goodness", $GOOD_{C,w}$. the ranking of x on $GOOD_{C,w}$ is at least $g_C(2)$].
(When free, $[\![d_2]\!]^{w,C}$ = Standard($GOOD_{C,w}$).)

b. $GOOD_{C1,w}$ – a scale that ranks men according to their "goodness" in w.
$GOOD_{C2,w}$ – a scale that ranks thieves according to their "goodness" in w.

c. Whenever defined, [[*John is a* [[$_{Adj}$ *good*-d*$_2$] [$_N$ *thief*]]]]^{w,C} = [λx∈D. $[\![good^*\text{-}d_2]\!]^{w,C}$(x) = True and $[\![thief]\!]^{w,C}$(x) = True](John)

(12) a. $[\![good^{**}\text{-}d_2]\!]^{w,C}$ = [λP∈$D_{<s,<e,t>>}$. λx∈D: context C supplies an assignment, g_C, and a scale, $S_{P,w}$, that ranks individuals by their P-skills in w . the ranking of x in w on $S_{P,w}$ is at least $g_C(2)$]

b. Whenever defined, [[*John is a* [[$_{Adj}$ *good**-d*$_2$] [$_N$ *thief*]]]]^{w,C} = $[\![good^{**}\text{-}d_2]\!]^{w,C}$([λw'∈W. $[\![thief]\!]^{w',C}$])(John) = True iff John's ranking in w on $S_{[\lambda w'.\lambda y.\ y \text{ is a thief in } w'],w}$ is at least $g_C(2)$.

Both *good** and *good*** depend on a contextually supplied scale (see Siegel 1976; Larson 1983, 1998; Chierchia & McConnell-Ginet 2000 and references cited there). Thus, *John is a good thief* has in fact more than one I-reading: John can be good-as-a-person for a thief or for a man (or even for a DA, if the context permits it). *Good*** is special in that its contextually supplied scale is also semantically restricted by its nominal argument.

2.2 The Weak Version of Blame-Adj

It is worth considering a weaker version of Blame-Adj, according to which only NI_2-adjectives take noun-denotations as their arguments; NI_1-adjectives are essentially "intersective". Consider the slightly revised semantics of *good** in (13): nothing prevents it from being interpreted relative to a scale that ranks thieves according to their stealing skills – $GOOD_{C3,w}$ (see Kennedy 1999 for a general discussion of the nature of scales).

(13) a. $[\![good^*\text{-}d_2]\!]^{w,C}$ = [λx∈D: C supplies an assignment, g_C, and a scale, $GOOD_{C,w}$. the ranking of x on $GOOD_{C,w}$ is at least $g_C(2)$].

b. $GOOD_{C1,w}$ (as in (11b)).
$GOOD_{C2,w}$ (as in (11b)).
$GOOD_{C3,w}$ = $S_{[\lambda w'.\lambda y.\ y \text{ is a thief in } w'],w}$ (as in (12b)).

But this means that at least for English, we do not have to assume *good*** at all! NI_1-adjectives, which are scalar, can be accounted for using an "intersective" semantics (i.e., PM). This option is not available to NI_2-adjectives, because they are not scalar.

This version of Blame-Adj accounts for the fact that sometimes NI_1-adjectives do indeed support "intersective" meanings. Sometimes (see (14)), *x is NI$_1$-Adj*, where the adjective is evaluated relative to a scale such as $GOOD_{C3,w}$ in (13), is well-formed.

(14) a. Did you hear that John mugged an old lady last night? Boy! He was really good!

b. I saw Mary dance last night at the theater. Let me tell you: that dull wallflower was amazing!

An alternative explanation, one that says that *was amazing* can be an elided form of *was an amazing dancer*, is problematic. Within such a theory, we would expect the ill-formed *He is former* to be a well-formed elided form of *He is a former DA*.

3. Blame-N (e.g., Larson 1998)

3.1 The Strong Version of Blame-N

According to this view (which is based on insights from Davidson 1967), the existence of I-adjectives and NI-adjectives follows from the assumption that adjectival predicates apply to individuals or events. Nouns take an event argument and an individual argument, as illustrated in (15) (D_v is the domain of events).

(15) $[\![\textit{thief}]\!] = [\lambda e \in D_v . \lambda x \in D . e \text{ is an event of } x \text{ being a thief}]$

All adjectives are lexically unambiguous and *Italian*-like. For example, *good-d* is *Italian*-like (see (16)): it is like *good*-d* in (11a), except that its domain is $D \cup D_v$.

(16) $[\![\textit{good-d}_2]\!]^C = [\lambda x \in D \cup D_v$: C supplies an assignment, g_C, and a scale, $GOOD_C$. the ranking of x on $GOOD_C$ is at least $g_C(2)]$.

Good can, in principle, combine with *thief* at a level where the event argument of *thief* is free (by applying PM to two <e,t>-expressions, see (17a)), or a level where the individual argument of *thief* is free (by applying PM to two <v,t>-expressions, see (17b)).[4]

(17) a. $[\![[1\ [_{Adj}\ \textit{good-d}_2\textit{-pro}_1]]\ [4\ [_N\ \textit{thief-e}_3\textit{-pro}_4]]\ ]\!]^C = [\lambda x \in D.\ [\![\textit{good-d}_2]\!]^C(x)=\text{True}$ and $[\![\textit{thief}]\!]^C(g_C(3))(x)=\text{True}]$

b. $[\![[1\ [_{Adj}\ \textit{good-d}_2\textit{-e}_1]]\ [3\ [_N\ \textit{thief-e}_3\textit{-pro}_4]]\ ]\!]^C = [\lambda e \in D_v.\ [\![\textit{good-d}_2]\!]^C(e)=\text{True}$ and $[\![\textit{thief}]\!]^C(e)(g_C(4))=\text{True}]$

The generic operator *GEN* (type <<v,t>,<<v,t>,t>>) may be inserted in various syntactic positions. Movement operations may also take place. Thus, the I-reading of *John is a good thief* is the result of *GEN* binding only the event argument of *thief* ((18a)). and its NI-reading is the result of *GEN* binding the event arguments of *thief* and *good* ((18b)). In (18a), *GEN* is restricted only by the pronoun *C*; in (18b), it is also restricted by *thief*.

(18) a. $[\textit{John}\ [[1\ [_{Adj}\ \textit{good-d}_2\textit{-pro}_1]]\ [1\ [\textit{GEN-C}\ [3\ [_N\ \textit{thief-e}_3\textit{-pro}_1]]]]]]$
"John is a good individual (at least to the degree set as the standard) and generally, a relevant John-event is an event of John being a thief."

b. $[\textit{John}\ [4\ [[\textit{GEN}\ [\textit{C}\ [3\ [_N\ \textit{thief-e}_3\textit{-pro}_4]]]]]\ [1\ [_{Adj}\ \textit{good-d}_2\textit{-e}_1]]]]]$

[4] $[\![i\ \alpha]\!]^C = [\lambda x$: α is in the domain of $[\![\ ]\!]^{C[i \to x]}$. $[\![\alpha]\!]^{C[i \to x]}]$ (Heim and Kratzer 1998).

"Generally, a relevant event of John being a thief is a good event (at least to the degree set as the standard)."

Although all adjectives may, in principle, appear in either one of these LF-templates, some adjectives are pragmatically compatible with only one of them. For example, only individuals can be Italian (hence the non-ambiguity of *John is an Italian DA*, which has only an I-reading) and only events can be "former" (hence the non-ambiguity of *John is a former DA*, which has only a NI_2-reading).

(19) a. John is an Italian DA.
[*John* [[1 [$_{Adj}$ *Italian-pro*$_1$]] [1 [*GEN-C* [3 [$_N$ *DA-e*$_3$-*pro*$_1$]]]]]]
"John is an Italian individual and generally, a relevant John-event is an event of John being a DA."

b. John is a former DA.
[*John* [4 [[*GEN* [*C* [3 [$_N$ *DA-e*$_3$-*pro*$_4$]]]] [1 [$_{Adj}$ *former-e*$_1$]]]]]
"Generally, a relevant event of John being a DA is a past event."

That the NI_1-reading is an event reading is suggested by the behavior of event-adverbs that correspond to NI_1-adjectives (Davidson 1967). For example, *Mary dances amazingly* entails what the NI-reading of (3b) entails, namely, that Mary's dancing is amazing).

3.2 The Weak Version of Blame-N

For the sake of completeness it is useful to consider a weaker version of Blame-N, according to which NI_2-adjectives are indeed predicates of events, but NI_1-adjectives may also be interpreted along the lines suggested by the weak version of Blame-Adj (as in 2.2). This would allow Blame-N to account for "intersective" meanings of NI_1-adjectives (e.g., *He was really good* and *That dull wallflower was amazing*; see (14)).

4. Assessing the Theories: Empirical Coverage

4.1 Coordination

Coordination of two adjectives is felicitous only when they are both I-adjectives or both NI-adjectives (see Vendler 1967, Larson 1998), subject to pragmatic plausibility.

(20) Donald Trump is an amazing and generous donor.
a. DT is a dull but generous person, amazing and cheap as a donor. (#)
b. DT is an amazing but cheap person, horrible and generous as a donor. (#)
c. DT is a donor, and an amazing and generous person. (OK)
d. Donald Trump's donating is amazing and generous. (OK)

(21) John is an amazing and generous dancer.
a. John is a dull but generous person, amazing and non-giving as a dancer. (#)
b. John is an amazing but cheap person, horrible and generous as a dancer. (#)
c. John is a dancer, and an amazing and generous person. (OK)
d. John's dancing is amazing and generous. (??)

Both *amazing* and *generous* have an I- and a NI_1-reading, but they can be coordinated only when they both function as I-adjectives or when they both function as NI-adjectives (as indicated by the felicity of (20c,d) and the infelicity of (20a,b)). However, it is probably hard to imagine a context where *generous* means "generous as a dancer, but possibly not generally so, as a person", but it is easy to imagine a context where *generous* means "generous as a donor, but possibly not generally so, as a person". This is why (21d) is not a natural reading of *John is an amazing and generous dancer*, but (20d) is a natural reading of *Donald Trump is an amazing and generous donor*.

The weak versions of Blame-Adj and Blame-N, which account for the facts in (14) by allowing NI_1-adjectives to be "intersective", still reject (21b,d) on pragmatic grounds, but admit (20a,b) and (21a). A general ban on reference to two scales of different kinds – in the same sentence – seems unjustified, given that (21c) is acceptable when *amazing* means "amazing-as-a-person for a man" and *generous* means "generous-as-a-person for a dancer". The following rule seems more adequate: reference to scales of the form $S_{P,w}$ (e.g., $GOOD_{C3,w}$ in (13b)) is allowed only when P is an argument of the adjectival predicate (as in (12)). This way, the strong versions of both Blame-N and Blame-Adj account for the coordination facts.[5] In section 5 we discuss an additional potential empirical justification for this rule.

From an empirical point of view, adopting this rule indeed helps account for the coordination facts, but it might also mean losing the account for "intersective" meanings of NI_1-adjectives of the sort illustrated in (14) in 2.2. The conceptual problem with such a rule is that it forces us to say that $GOOD_{C1,w}$ and $GOOD_{C2,w}$ in (13b) are qualitatively similar to each other in a manner that makes them different from, say, $S_{[\lambda w'.\lambda y.\ y \text{ is a person in } w'],w}$ – a scale which ranks individuals according to their person-skills (and which differs from $GOOD_{C3,w}$ in (13b) only in its P-value). In Kennedy's 1999 terminology, we would say that there is a dimensional parameter shared by $GOOD_{C1,w}$ and $GOOD_{C2,w}$, which they do not share with $S_{[\lambda w'.\lambda y.\ y \text{ is a person in } w'],w}$. This is far from clear. Alternatively, we might pursue a pragmatic account for coordination after all. Either way, this is a hard problem for the strong versions of both Blame-N and Blame-Adj.

4.2 Is an Adj-N a N?

It was noted in section 1 that it is not clear whether there are any NI-adjectives that entail 'x's N-ing is Adj' but fail to entail 'x is N'. Regarding "positive" gradable NI_1-adjectives such as *good*, it seems that 'x is N' is indeed always intuitively entailed, but when the adjective is "negative", as in (22), it is less clear whether 'x is N' is intuitively entailed.

(22) a. I am horrible liar. In fact, I cannot lie at all!
b. I am terrible singer. In fact, I cannot carry a tune to save my life!
c. I am the worst thief in the world. I cannot even steal a teaspoon!

[5] Crucially, we have to assume that PM is not cross-categorial (at least not for adjectives), so as not allow coordination of an I- and NI-adjective via type-shifting, within Blame-Adj.

What are the predictions? Blame-Adj, in its weak and strong versions, assigns to *I am a horrible liar* a semantics that entails "I have lying skills but they rank below the acceptable standard". If this is not a welcome prediction, it is as much a problem for Blame-Adj as it is for theories that predict that *John is tall* entails that John is tall to some degree (and thus may come out true when John is in fact quite short). In such theories, it is assumed (as we assume here) that a free degree argument of an adjective refers to the contextually determined standard.

The treatment of "negative" adjectives within Blame-N parallels the treatment given within Blame-Adj, leaving it to the context to decide when the relevant standard is met. Still, a problem concerning existence inferences may arise independently. The readings obtained for *John is a former DA* and *Bill is an alleged murderer* are "Generally, an event of John being a DA is a past event" and "Generally, an event of Bill being a murderer is an alleged event" respectively. Intuitively, the first sentence entails John's having been a DA, and the second sentence doesn't entail Bill's being a murderer, but the assumption that both are generic sentences predicts similar existence inferences. Either *GEN* is presupposed to have a non-empty restrictor (in the actual world), in which case we predict existence of murder events by Bill, counter-intuitively; or *GEN* has no such presupposition, in which case we do not predict existence of past DA-events of John, again counter-intuitively.

One solution we might consider is to allow other operators besides *GEN* (e.g., a default existential) to bind the event-argument of the nominal. This would yield (23) as an additional possible LF of *John is a former DA*. This LF entails John's having been a DA and the other, "generic", LF does not.

(23) [*John* [4 [[*SOME* [1 [$_{\text{Adj}}$ *former-*e_1]]] [3 [$_{\text{N}}$ *DA-*e_3*-pro*$_4$]]]]]

4.3 Interim Summary

Given the similar predictions of Blame-Adj and Blame-N regarding "intersective" NI_1-adjectives, coordination and "negative" gradable adjectives, it is hard to decide whether one theory has an empirical advantage. Conceptually, Blame-N does seem to have an advantage. The non-ambiguity of NI_2-adjectives such as *alleged* and *former*, and the non-ambiguity of I-adjectives such as *nude* and *three-eyed*, are claimed to follow from pragmatic considerations (whereas according to Blame-Adj, the $I/NI_1/NI_2$ distinction is essentially lexical; though pragmatics does play a role, see 4.1). One could still wonder what pragmatic principles dictate that only events can be "former". The contrast in (24) indeed shows that the LF in (25a) can never represent a felicitous interpretation of (24a), though (25b) represents a felicitous interpretation of (24b). But why? If there is no obvious answer, doesn't this suggest that the I/NI distinction is merely lexical after all?

(24) a. JFK is a former president. (but **JFK* is former)
b. JFK is a dead president. (and $^{\text{ok}}$*JFK is dead*)

(25) a. [*JFK* [[1 [$_{Adj}$ *former-pro*$_1$]] [1 [*GEN-C* [3 [$_N$ *president-e*$_3$-*pro*$_1$]]]]]]
==> JFK is a formerly-existing individual.
b. [*JFK* [[1 [$_{Adj}$ *dead-pro*$_1$]] [1 [*GEN-C* [3 [$_N$ *president-e*$_3$-*pro*$_1$]]]]]]
==> JFK is a dead individual.

If we disregard these questions, Blame-N indeed seems conceptually superior. However, this superiority is no longer obvious once we consider unambiguous gradable adjectives (independently of the questions raised by (24)-(25)). Section 5 discusses such adjectives.

5. Assessing the Theories: Unambiguous Gradable Adjectives

A small class of Serbo-Croatian gradable adjectives have the following peculiar property: they have suppletive comparative and superlative forms, which are unambiguous. For example, *dobar* ('good') has an I- and a NI-reading in non-comparative non-superlative constructions, but it loses its I-reading in comparative and superlative constructions (as shown in (26)). In this they sharply contrast with ambiguous adjectives that have regular comparative/superlative forms: those are also ambiguous (as shown in (27)).

(26) a. On je dobar lopov
He is good thief
'He is a good thief.' (I; NI)
b. On je bolji/najbolji lopov
He is better/best thief
'He is a better/the best thief.' (*I; NI)

(27) a. Petar je inteligentan teniser
Peter is intelligent tennis player
'Peter is an intelligent tennis player.' (I;NI)
b. Petar je inteligentniji teniser
Peter is more-intelligent tennis player
'Peter is a more intelligent tennis player.' (I;NI)
c. Petar je najinteligentniji teniser
Peter is most-intelligent tennis player
'Peter is the most intelligent tennis player.' (I;NI)

A suppletive form of this kind is consistently unambiguous. To see this, consider coordination again. Given the observations discussed in 4.1, we expect the following: if *dobar* ('good') is coordinated with an adjective whose favored reading is an I-reading, or an adjective whose favored reading is a NI-reading, it will lose its ambiguity. We illustrate this using *plemenit* ('generous') and *brz* ('fast'). As noted in section 4.1, although it is possible for *generous* to have a NI-reading in principle (as in *Donald Trump is a generous donor*), it is hard to interpret it in this way in a sports context. On the other hand, it is easy and natural to interpret *fast* as a NI-adjective in such a context (and perhaps less natural to interpret it as an I-adjective). And indeed, the most salient

reading of (28a) is one where *dobar* and *plemenit* are construed as I-adjectives, while the most salient reading of (28b) is one where *dobar* and *brz* are construed as NI-adjectives.

(28) a. On je dobar i plemenit fudbaler
He is good and generous soccer player
'He is a good and generous soccer player.' (May be true when his soccer playing is not good, but cannot be true when he is a bad or ungenerous person.)
b. On je dobar i brz fudbaler
He is good and fast soccer player
'He is a good and fast soccer player.' (May be true when he is a bad or slow person, but cannot be true when his soccer playing is bad or slow.)

As expected given the observation about (26), the I-reading of *dobar* ('good') in the first conjunct of (29) is lost due to the presence of *bolji* ('better') in the second conjunct. The salient reading of (29) is: "They are both good at playing soccer but the second one is a bit better than the first one"; not: "They are both soccer players and good people, but the personality of the second one is better than that of the first one."

(29) On je dobar fudbaler ali ovaj je još bolji
He is good soccer player but this is even better
'He is a good soccer player but this one is even better.'

In view of this, and given that in Serbo-Croatian comparatives, too, can be coordinated, we expect that it will not be possible to coordinate *bolji* ('better') with a comparative form of an adjective like *plemenit* ('generous'), whose favored meaning (in a context where sports skills are relevant) is an I-meaning. On the other hand, it will be possible to coordinate it with a comparative form of *brz* ('fast'), whose favored meaning in a similar context is a NI-meaning. This seems to be correct. Consider (30).

(30) a. ??On je bolji i plemenitiji fudbaler
He is better and more generous soccer player
'He is a better and more generous soccer player.' (compared to someone else)
b. On je bolji i brži fudbaler
He is better and faster soccer player
'He is a better and faster soccer player.' (compared to someone else)

The oddity of (30a) is, in our opinion, the same kind of oddity as that of (31), where an I-adjective in its positive (i.e., non-comparative) form is coordinated with a NI-adjective.

(31) ??On je brz i plemenit fudbaler
He is fast and generous soccer player
'He is a fast and generous soccer player.'

An even more interesting case is provided by *zao* ('bad/evil') and its suppletive forms *gori* ('worse') and *najgori* ('worst'). The paradigm is similar to (26) in that the

comparative/superlative forms *gori/najgori* are strictly NI. But the positive form *zao*, unlike the ambiguous *dobar*, is a strictly I-adjective.

(32) a. On je zao šahista
He is evil chess-player
'He is an evil chess-player.' (I; *NI)
b. On je gori/najgori šahista
He is worse/worst chess-player
'He is a worse/the worst chess-player.' (*I; NI)

The example in (32a) can only mean that the chess-player is an evil person. One could imagine a context where we would take his chess-playing to be "evil", though he himself might otherwise be a kind and good-hearted person. Still, such an interpretation is not available. On the other hand, (32b) can only mean that the chess-player's chess-playing skills are ranked lower than somebody else's. Interestingly, *zao* and *gori/najgori* are historically related, as indicated by the archaic idiomatic expression in (33), which is still used colloquially to refer to someone who is bad to some extreme degree.

(33) Od zla oca i gore majke
from evil father and worse mother
'Of bad father and even worse mother'

The idiomatic expression in (33) suggests that *zao* and *gori* once had a shared meaning, which is now lost.[6]

These facts cannot be accounted for by the weak version of either Blame-Adj (2.2) or Blame-N (3.2), because we do not expect, under those assumptions, suppletive forms to be semantically different from regular forms. On the other hand, the facts can be straightforwardly accounted for within the strong version of Blame-Adj (2.1), if we assume that the root of a suppletive form is an independent lexical item, with its own semantics (and we constrain reference to noun-induced scales, as discussed in 4.1). For example, the root of 'better'/'best' in Serbo-Croatian is a separate lexical item, with a strictly NI_1-meaning (analogous to that of *good*** in (12)). The interpretation of *on je bolji lopov* ('he is a better thief') is as follows (the type of *more* is <<d,<e,t>>, <e,t>>).

(34) When defined, $[\![\textit{he is more} [2 [[_{\text{Adj}} \textit{good}^{\text{SUP}}\text{-}d_2][_{\text{N}} \textit{thief}]]]]\!]^{w,C}$ = True iff $[\![\textit{he}]\!]^{w,C}$ is ranked higher on $S_{[\lambda w'.\lambda y\ .\ y \text{ is a thief in } w'],w}$ than some other relevant individual in C.

The only way to account for the suppletion facts within the strong version of Blame-N is by appealing to a lexical stipulation that says that the root of a suppletive form such as Serbo-Croatian 'better'/'best' cannot take an individual-argument at all; it can only take an event argument. This renders (35a) an ill-formed LF of 'he is a better

[6] Serbo-Croatian *loš*, which simply means 'bad', has a regular non-suppletive comparative and superlative forms *lošiji* and *najlošiji*.

thief' and (35b) a well-formed LF of 'he is a better thief' (the type of *more* is <<d,<e,t>>, <e,t>> in (35a) and <<d,<v,t>>, <v,t>> in (35b)).

(35) a. *[*he is more* [2 [[1 [$_{Adj}$ *good*^{SUP}-d_2-*pro*$_1$]] [1 [*GEN-C* [3 [$_N$ *thief*-e_3-*pro*$_1$]]]]]]]
b. [*he* [4 [[*GEN* [*C* [3 [$_N$ *thief*-e_3-*pro*$_4$]]]] [*more* [2 [1 [$_{Adj}$ *good*^{SUP}-d_2-e_1]]]]]]]

Even if we can say that (25a) is well-formed but pragmatically infelicitous LF of *JFK is a former president*, it is hard to imagine how we could say a similar thing about (35a). This means that accounting for the suppletion facts within Blame-N requires giving up its conceptual advantage. An even harder problem is posed by the behavior of the historically-related *zao* and *gori/najgori*, whose current non-ambiguity (and apparent non-relatedness) was illustrated in (32). The disambiguation of these items is puzzling and unexpected within Blame-N, but expected within Blame-Adj.

To conclude, it seems impossible to account for the suppletion facts within Blame-N without giving up the conceptual advantage of providing a pragmatic account for the I/NI$_1$/NI$_2$ distinction. On the other hand, the account Blame-Adj offers for the suppletion facts is consistent with its underlying assumptions, namely, that the I/NI$_1$/NI$_2$ distinction, though somewhat constrained by pragmatics, is essentially lexical, and often cannot be predicted from independent pragmatic principles.

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