

'Good' as an evaluative intensifier

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(joint work with Elena Castroviejo)

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Goals of this talk

- 1 Discuss the intensifying interpretation of *good* (BON_{int}) in Catalan.

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- 2 Propose an analysis that ...
 - ⊙ ... relates goodness to intensification.
 - ⊙ ... preserves (some of) the properties of plain evaluative *good*.
 - ⊙ ... predicts when BON_{int} will arise.

What is a 'good' breakfast?

- (1) a. la importància d'**un bon esmorzar** CATALAN
 the importance of a good breakfast
 'the importance of a good breakfast'
- b. Com fer **un bon esmorzar**?
 how do a good breakfast
 'How to prepare a good breakfast?'
- (2) Conoce las bondades de realizar **un buen desayuno**. SPANISH
 know the goodnesses of carrying.out a good breakfast
 'Get to know what is good about having a good breakfast.'

What is a 'good' breakfast?



What is a 'good' breakfast?

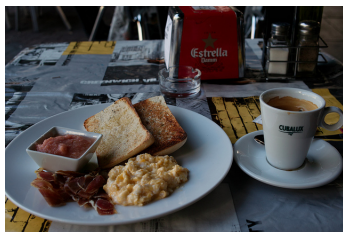


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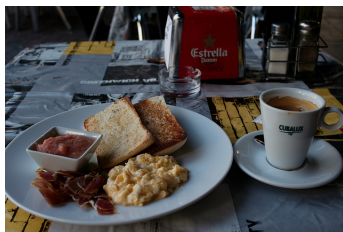
→ tasty, healthy, ...

What is a 'good' breakfast?



(Catalan)

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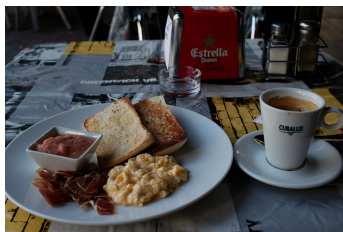


(Catalan)



(German)

What is a 'good' breakfast?



(Catalan)



(German)

→ These are the ones we are interested in.

Our key examples

- (3) una bona dosi ≈ a big dose
a good dose
- (4) un bon ensurt ≈ a big shock
a good shock
- (5) un bon esmorzar ≈ a big breakfast
a good breakfast

(Catalan)

Questions to be addressed

- 1 What is the **distribution** of intensifying *good* (BON_{int})?
 - ⊙ What are the diagnostics that tease apart plain evaluative and intensifying *good*?
 - ⊙ What are the characteristics of Ns that are modified by BON_{int} ?

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- 1 What is the **distribution** of intensifying *good* (BON_{int})?
 - ⊙ What are the diagnostics that tease apart plain evaluative and intensifying *good*?
 - ⊙ What are the characteristics of Ns that are modified by BON_{int} ?
- 2 What is the relationship between **intensification** and the restricted distribution of BON_{int} ?
 - ⊙ How does goodness bring about intensification?
 - ⊙ When is intensification available? When is it not? Why?

Roadmap

① Introduction

② Data

Distribution

A typology

③ Analysis

Subjective, evaluative 'good'

Dimensions and monotonicity

④ Conclusions

The data

- What are the diagnostics that tease apart purely evaluative and intensifying *good*?
- What are the properties of the Ns modified by BON_{int} ?

Distribution

- ⊙ INTENSIFYING GOOD (BON_{int}) does not arise under negation
 → “Positive polarity behavior” (cf., e.g., Hernanz 1999, for Spanish)

- (6)
- a. (#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.’
- b. (#No) he tingut un bon ensurt.
 NEG have.I had a good shock
 ‘I have (#not) had a good shock.’

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- ⊙ Claiming that it is a PPI (in syntactic and/or semantic terms), however, does not account for the following observations:
 - Other entailment-canceling contexts are ok.
 - Depending on the discourse, negation can be ok as well.

Distribution

⊙ BON_{int} is not gradable.

- (7)
- a. #un molt bon nombre / maldecap / esmorzar
 a very good number worry breakfast
 - b. #un millor nombre / maldecap / esmorzar
 a better number worry breakfast
 - c. #un més bon nombre / maldecap / esmorzar
 a more good number worry breakfast

Good and bad

⊙ BON_{int} is not the antonym of *mal* 'bad'.

- (8) a. una bona dosi ≈ a big dose
 a good dose
- b. #una mala dosi
 a bad dose
- (9) a. un bon tros ≈ a big piece
 a good piece
- b. #un mal tros
 a bad piece

Properties of N

- ⊙ Not every N gives rise to the intensified meaning.

- (10)
- a. una bona alçada
a good height
'≈ a big/large height'
 - b. una bona salut
a good health
'≠ a big/large health'

A typology for bon

① BON + N \leadsto plain evaluative *good*

(11) un bon actor, un bon cotxe
a good actor a good car

② BON + N \leadsto intensifying *good* (BON_{int})

(12) una bona dosi, un bon maldecap
a good dose a good worry

③ BON + N \leadsto both possible

(13) un bon esmorzar
a good breakfast

A typology for *bon_{int}*

→ Exclusively *BON_{int}* (with the approx. meaning of 'big')

① **Measure Ns**: functional Ns heading partitive structures

(14) un bon nombre, una bona quantitat, un bon grapat
a good number a good quantity a good handful

② **Uni-dimensional degree nominalizations**

(15) una bona alçada, una bona amplada
a good height a good width

A typology for *bon_{int}*

→ Exclusively *BON_{int}* (with the approx. meaning of 'big')

3 Negative Ns

(16) un bon maldecap, un bon ensurt, un bon cop
a good worry a good shock a good blow

4 Evaluative 'gradable' Ns

(17) un bon idiota
a good idiot

A typology for *bon_{int}*

→ Both plain evaluative and intensifying

⑤ Ns for which it can be accommodated that **large sizes are good**

(18) un bon esmorzar, un bon pernil, un bon massatge
a good breakfast a good ham a good massage

Analysis

- One lexical entry for both plain evaluative and intensifying BON
- Restricted distribution has to do with:
 - ⊗ monotonicity entailments
 - ⊗ dimension manipulation

What is the descriptive meaning of 'good'?

Hare (1952), cited in Umbach (2015):

- ⊙ There is no good property shared by all good things.
 - a good car, a good picture, a good meal
- ⊙ *Strictu sensu* there is **no denotational** meaning in *good*.
 - **Commending** function of *good*.

Umbach (2015):

*"[. . .] there are **criteria**, relative to comparison class, speaker community, time, etc., establishing a standard for something to be called good."*

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- ⊙ Criteria relate to factual properties, so *good* has a **highly contextual** quasi-denotational meaning.
- ⊙ Saying “M is a good car” to somebody who has not seen M will create some expectations based on a standard.

- (19) a good car
- speed
 - outer and inner appearance
 - robustness
 - safety
 - ...

BON is non-intersective

- ⊙ BON_{int} is not intersective: **obligatorily in prenominal position**

- (20)
- | | | |
|----|------------------|-------------------|
| a. | una bona dosi | ≈ a big dose |
| | a good dose | |
| b. | un bon ensurt | ≈ a big shock |
| | a good shock | |
| c. | un bon esmorzar | ≈ a big breakfast |
| | a good breakfast | |

- ⊕ Plain evaluative BON behaves the same in this respect; cf. Demonte (1982, 1999), for Spanish:

- (21)
- | | | |
|----|----------------|-------------------------|
| a. | un buen amigo | ≈ a great friend |
| | a good friend | |
| b. | un amigo bueno | ≈ a kind-hearted friend |

Subjective adjectives

- ⊙ The meaning of non-intersective adjectives is **relative to the N they modify** (Siegel 1976).
- ⊙ **Subjective** adjectives like *skillful* do not validate the inference in (22) (Kamp and Partee 1995, 138).

- (22) a. Mary is a skillful surgeon.
 b. Mary is a violinist.
 ∴ Mary is a skillful violinist.

(23) $[[\text{skillful N}]] \subseteq [[\text{N}]]$

- (24) Mary is skillful **as a surgeon**.

A non-intersective predicate modifier

- ⊙ BON_{int} cannot appear in predicative position
(unlike plain evaluative $BO(N)$)

(25) #L' esmorzar és bo.
the breakfast is good

→ This can only be the plain evaluative BON .

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- ⊙ BON_{int} behaves like a **predicate modifier**.

A possible analysis: Subjective 'good' + an ordering

- ⊙ We start out from the denotation of a prototypical subjective A, (26).

$$(26) \quad \llbracket \text{skillful} \rrbracket = \lambda P_{\langle e,t \rangle} \lambda x_e \lambda w_s. \mathbf{skillful-as}(P)(x)(w) \quad (\text{Morzycki 2016})$$

$$(27) \quad \llbracket \text{BON}_{int} \rrbracket = \lambda P_{\langle e,t \rangle} \lambda x_e. (\mathbf{good-as}(P))(x)$$

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→ This denotation “alone” does not yield intensification, (28).

→ It cannot yield the ambiguity of (29).

- (28) a. un bon amic
a good friend \Rightarrow good as a friend
- b. un bon ensurt
a good shock \Rightarrow good as a shock?

- (29) un bon esmorzar
a good breakfast

Subjective 'good' + an ordering

→ One way to go is to propose two separate lexical entries, one for evaluative *bon*, (27), and one for BON_{int} , (30) (to be revised):

- (30) a. $[[BON_{int}]] =$
 $\lambda P_{\langle e,t \rangle} \lambda x_e : \forall y, z \in P[y \geq z \vee z \geq y]. (\mathbf{good-as}(P))(x)$
 b. $\forall P, x, y [(\mathbf{good-as}(P))(x) \wedge P(y) \wedge y \geq x \rightarrow$
 $(\mathbf{good-as}(P))(y)]$

whereby BON_{int} :

- ⊙ selects **Ns whose extension is ordered**.
- ⊙ asserts that x is among the good instances of P .
- ⊙ includes a **monotonicity entailment** that ensures that any higher values are also good (cf. Nouwen 2005, for the semantics of evaluative adverbs such as *surprisingly*).

Subjective 'good' + an ordering

Consequences:

- ⊙ BON_{int} is not the antonym of *mal* 'bad'.
- ⊙ The intensifying effects are only predicted to arise when the N's extension is ordered.
 - ⇒ This naturally happens when its sole **criterion of evaluation** is size (they are uni-dimensional in terms of goodness).
- ⊙ Intensification is triggered without positing that Ns include a degree argument. Selecting the good instances in the denotation of N allows the intensification interpretation (along with the monotonicity entailment).

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An empirical generalization

Whenever the N's extension is ordered (on a uni-dimensional scale), BON_{int} obtains, along with the restricted distribution.

Taking a different road: The intuitive idea

- ⊙ BON_{int} is not a different lexical entry. Rather, it is a reading that arises **under particular conditions**:
 - ⊕ it holds that the bigger the **size** of the objects in the extension of N, the better the property ascription, OR
 - ⊕ we can accommodate that this is the case.

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 - ⊕ we can accommodate that this is the case.
 - This happens when the extension of N is ordered along a **uni-dimensional scale**.
- ⊙ The **PPI** behavior is an **illusion**:
 - ⊕ BON under negation yields the inference of more than one dimension and, thus, the plain evaluative reading arises.

How does intensification come about?

- ① **First** step: a restriction on N , which goes beyond an ordering:

$$(31) \quad \forall x, y \in N [x \geq y \rightarrow (\mathbf{good-as}(N))(x) \geq (\mathbf{good-as}(N))(y)]$$

- ⊕ This includes all N s whose ordered domain is inherent and not arbitrary.
- ⊕ This condition rules out N s whose objects can be ordered according to various criteria.
- ⊕ Note that this does not involve reaching extreme degrees, because x and y are always within the domain of what constitutes N .

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- ② **Second** step: BON_{int} licenses upward-directed inferences (monotonicity):

$$(32) \quad \forall P, x, y [(\mathbf{good-as}(P))(x) \wedge P(y) \wedge y \geq x \rightarrow (\mathbf{good-as}(P))(y)]$$

How does intensification come about?

(33) una bona dosi d'insulina
a good dose of insulin

- ⊙ What are the **criteria** to determine whether the objects in [[dosi d'insulina]] are good (or bad)?

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- ⊙ The only aspect in which they differ – and which can be identified as a criterion – is **size**.

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- ⊙ The only aspect in which they differ – and which can be identified as a criterion – is **size**.
- ⊙ Since the monotonicity of BON_{int} licenses **upward directed inferences**, $\text{BON}_{int} \approx$ 'big, large'.

How does intensification come about?

(34) un bon ensurt
a good shock

- ⊙ What are the **criteria** to determine whether the objects in [[shock]] are good (or bad)?

How does intensification come about?

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a good shock

- ⊙ What are the **criteria** to determine whether the objects in [[shock]] are good (or bad)?
- ⊙ In the absence of easily accessible criteria, **size** seems to be available.
- ⊙ Monotonicity does its job in licensing upward-directed inferences (intensification).

How does intensification come about?

(35) un bon esmorzar
a good breakfast

- ⊙ What are the **criteria** to determine whether the objects in [[breakfast]] are good (or bad)?
 - ⊕ taste
 - ⊕ variety
 - ⊕ health
 - ⊕ size, ...

How does intensification come about?

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- ⊙ What are the **criteria** to determine whether the objects in [[breakfast]] are good (or bad)?
 - ⊕ taste
 - ⊕ variety
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 - ⊕ size, ...
- ⊙ We can convey that the **only relevant criterion is size**, so the restriction in (36), holds.

(36) $\forall x, y \in N [x \geq y \rightarrow (\mathbf{good-as}(N))(x) \geq (\mathbf{good-as}(N))(y)]$

- ⊙ This is usually conveyed through a particular **prosody** and comes with a hidden request for mutual understanding.

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- ⊙ This is usually conveyed through a particular **prosody** and comes with a hidden request for mutual understanding.
- ⊙ Monotonicity does the rest.

How does intensification come about?

(37) a. #una bona flor b. #un bon cercle
 a good flower a good circle

- ⊙ What are the **criteria** to determine whether the objects in [[flower]] or [[circle]] are good (or bad)?

How does intensification come about?

(37) a. #una bona flor b. #un bon cercle
 a good flower a good circle

- ⊙ What are the **criteria** to determine whether the objects in [[flower]] or [[circle]] are good (or bad)?
- ⊙ Through the expression or assumption of a **function**, criteria can arise, and then (37) can be well-formed (Asher 2011).

(38) una bona flor per regalar
 a good flower for give
 'a good flower to give as a present'

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- ⊙ Even though we could conceive of an ordered domain for flowers or circles, **size is not key** to determining whether they are better instances of flowers or circles.

Why is bon_{int} bad under negation?

An important assumption:

- ⊙ We are going to treat (39-a) and (39-b) as the same phenomenon.

- (39)
- a. Aquest (#no) és un bon problema.
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 intended: 'This is (#not) a big problem.'
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 - (Unavailability of plain evaluative BON with negative Ns)
 - Entertainment of more than one dimension, which rules out BON_{int}

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- ⊙ Ill-formedness has to do with:
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 - Entertainment of more than one dimension, which rules out BON_{int}
- ⊙ This is **not** about **PPI-hood**.

Why is bon_{int} bad under negation?

- ⊙ Background: Sassoon (2013) on **multidimensional As**
 - ⊙ **Conjunctive** multidimensional A, e.g. *healthy* (40).
 - ⊙ **Disjunctive** multidimensional A, e.g. *sick* (41).

(40) $\lambda x. \forall Q \in \text{DIM}(\mathbf{healthy}) : Q(x)$

(41) $\lambda x. \exists Q \in \text{DIM}(\mathbf{sick}) : Q(x)$

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- ⊙ Some ingredients of her proposal:

- ⊕ Dimension assignment function DIM
- ⊕ Contextual domain restriction to relevant respects (dimensions)
- ⊕ **When negated, conjunctive As become disjunctive (et vice versa)**

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- Sassoon (2013) on **good/bad**:

- ⊕ *Good* is a (borderline) **conjunctive** multidimensional A.
- ⊕ *Bad* is a **disjunctive** multidimensional A.

Why is bon_{int} bad under negation?

- ⊙ We will adapt this idea to our **subjective** *good* ...
- ⊙ ... with one *caveat*: we identify Sassoon's (2013) **dimensions** with Umbach's (2015) **criteria**.

$$(42) \quad \lambda P \lambda x. \forall Q \in \text{DIM}(\mathbf{good-as}(P)) : Q(x)$$

$$(43) \quad [[\text{good table}]]: \lambda x. \forall Q \in \text{DIM}(\mathbf{good-as}(\mathbf{table})) : Q(x)$$

- materials
- robustness
- looks, ...

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- ⊙ This is only possible with **conjunctive good**: we have to check all possible dimensions; when there is just one relevant one, we are done.
- ⊙ With **disjunctive bad** it is not possible, probably due to a **quantity implicature**:
 - ⊕ $\exists \text{DIM} \rightsquigarrow \neg \forall \text{DIM}$
 - ⊕ $\neg \forall \text{DIM} \rightsquigarrow \exists \text{DIM}' \neq \text{DIM}$

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 - ⊕ $\neg \forall \text{DIM} \rightsquigarrow \exists \text{DIM}' \neq \text{DIM}$
- More than 1 dimension leads to regular *good*.
- Conjunctive *good* under negation behaves like a disjunctive A.

Why can't bon_{int} be graded?

Does it follow from this analysis that BON_{int} cannot be graded, (44)?

- (44)
- a. #molt bona dosi
very good dose
 \leadsto infelicitous in any interpretation
 - b. molt bon esmorzar
very good breakfast
 \leadsto plain evaluative interpretation only

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\Rightarrow Our **hunch**: *grading good* involves evoking more than 1 dimension.

⊙ Consequences:

- ⊕ If N does not have more than 1 dimension (e.g. *dose*), grading yields ill-formedness.
- ⊕ If N has more than 1 dimension (e.g. *breakfast*), grading yields plain evaluative BON.

Summary

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- ⊙ Intensification effects arise when the N's extension is ordered and it holds that the bigger the size, the better the instantiation of the property denoted by N.
- ⊙ BON_{int} 's restricted distribution is caused by the entertainment of more than 1 dimension:
 - ⊕ When N has more than 1 dimension, the plain evaluative reading arises.
 - ⊕ When N has only 1 dimension, ill-formedness obtains.

Issues we have skipped

- ⊙ The arguments as to why BON_{int} should not be treated as a degree modifier of gradable Ns.
- ⊙ How this analysis extends to intensifying *well* in Catalan (BEN_{int}), which is quite straightforward 😊.

Prospects

- ⊙ Wrt absence of MAL_{int} : Similar effects with other **antonym pairs**

(45) Nouwen (2011)

- a. Jasper is unusually late. DEGREE
- b. Jasper is usually late. PROPOSITIONAL

[no sentence adverb *unusually*: general property of modal adverbs;
see already Bellert (1977)]

(46) Morzycki (2009)

- a. Floyd is a big idiot. SIZE and DEGREE
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- ⊙ **Do we need a different (or complementary) explanation for the absence of MAL_{int} ?**

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- ⊙ Find diagnostics that support the idea that negation and gradation on *good* yields the inference of **multi-dimensionality**.

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Prospects

- ⊙ Find diagnostics that support the idea that negation and gradation on *good* yields the inference of **multi-dimensionality**.
- ⊙ Further explore **context update** by evaluative adjectives more generally, in line with Umbach (2015) (and ref.s therein).
- ⊙ Take into account the role of **prosody** (and potential non-at-issue meanings conveyed) in ambiguous Ns.

'Good' as an evaluative intensifier

Gràcies! – Danke!

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