

Adverbial Objects in Latin and Ancient Greek

While transitive predicates are commonly characterized as taking two direct arguments, that is both a subject and a direct object, intransitive predicates are defined as taking only a subject argument. In this paper we discuss data from Latin and Ancient Greek that at first sight seem to advocate against this distinction in transitivity formulated above.

In both Latin and Greek neuter forms of pronouns and degree adjectives constitute a separate class of elements which seem to escape all constraints on direct objects. First of all they can function as an accusative direct object with intransitive verbs that normally take an oblique (prepositional and/or ablative case) marked complement. Compare (1a) with (1b).

- (1) a. laetor (de) bonis rebus
 be.pleased.1SG (about) good.ABL things.ABL
 ‘I am pleased about good things.’
 b. laetor utrumque
 be.pleased.1SG both.NEUT.ACC
 ‘I am pleased about both things.’

Secondly, transitive verbs normally can only take one accusative marked direct object as is shown by the ungrammaticality of (2a). In order to express the two direct arguments in (2a) we have to use a periphrastic subjunctive construction as in (2b). This, however, does not hold for the class of neuter forms of pronouns and degree adjectives which can indeed be used as a second accusative marked object with transitive verbs, cf. (2c).

- (2) a. *rogo te pecuniam
 ask.1SG you.ACC money.ACC
 ‘I ask you (for) money.’
 b. rogo te ut pecuniam des
 ask.1SG you.ACC in.order.that money.ACC give.SBJUNC.2SG
 ‘I ask you to give money.’
 c. rogo te multa
 ask.1SG you.ACC many.NEUT.PL.ACC
 ‘I ask you much.’

Finally, this set of elements constitute the only possible set of accusative objects with so-called gerund forms, inflected nominalized infinitives. In this paper we argue that this different behaviour exposed by neuter forms of pronouns and degree adjectives can be explained on the basis of a different semantic type that these elements have with respect to normal direct objects. We claim that these neuter elements are so-called predicate modifiers of type $\langle\langle e, t \rangle, \langle e, t \rangle\rangle$ instead of direct semantic arguments of the predicate of type e or $\langle\langle e, t \rangle, t\rangle$. Evidence for this claim comes from the fact that in both Latin and Greek these neuter forms of pronouns and degree adjectives stand at the beginning of a grammaticalization path which leads them to become real adverbs. An example is the accusative neuter singular of the adjective *tantus* ‘so large, of such a size’ which became the adverb *tantum* meaning ‘only’.