1. Introduction

It has been suggested (Carlson, 1977; Diesing, 1988; Kratzer, 1988) that predicates can be divided into two major semantic classes: Stage-Level and Individual-Level predicates. Stage-Level predicates are those denoting a transitory property of the subject, while Individual-Level predicates denote a permanent property of the subject. The aim of this paper is to bring additional evidence and independent support for the relevance of the distinction between the two classes of predicates. On the basis of data drawn from various constructions, it is shown that this distinction is syntactically pertinent. The constructions which are reported on involve predicate clefting as it is manifested in Haitian (Lefebvre, 1989), verb doubling constructions (Lefebvre and Ritter, 1989) and Stylistic Inversion in French.

2. Predicate clefting

Predicate clefting is a device used for focusing on a verbal predicate as illustrated in (1).

(1) Se kouri Jan kouri
    That-is run John run
    'It is run (not walk) that John did'

A minimal hypothesis would be that predicate clefting operates freely. This prediction, however, is not borne out by the data. The sentence in (2), which has the same structure as the sentence in (1), is not grammatical.

(2) * Se sanble Jan sanble ak papa -l
    That-is resemble John resemble with father his

In Lefebvre (1989), it is shown that there is a verb class constraint on predicate clefting: While Stage-Level predicates participate in the construction, as is illustrated by the sentences in (3), Individual-Level predicates don’t, as is shown by the ungrammaticality of the sentences in (4).

(3) a. Se domi Jan domi (pandan inèdtan)
    That-is sleep John sleep (for an-hour)
    'It is sleep (not sit) that John did (for an hour)

b. Se manje Jan manje pen
    That-is eat John eat bread
    'It is eat (not bake) bread that John did'

c. Se fè Jan fè tab
    That-is make John make table
    'It is make (not paint) tables that John did'
d. Se achte Jan achte filè a
That-is buy John buy flower DET
'It is buy (not steal) a flower that John did'

c. Se gade Jan gade television an
That-is watch John watch television DET
'It is watch (not fix) television that John did'

f. Se tande Jan tande volè a
That-is hear John hear thief DET
'It is hear (not see) the thief that John did'

(4) a. * Se intèlijan Jan intèlijan
That-is intelligent John intelligent

b. * Se konnè Jan konnè lang sa a
That-is know John know language DEM DET

c. * Se renmen Jan renmen pizza a
That-is love John love pizza DET

d. * Se rayi Jan rayi pròfèsè li a
That-is hate John hate professor his DET

On the one hand, it has been proposed (Lumsden and Lefebvre, 1989) that predicate clefting involves focus on the event of a clause rather than mere clefting of a verb. On the other hand, Kratzer (1988:2) has argued that Stage-Level predicates are ‘Davidsonian’ in that they have an extra argument position for events or spatiotemporal location. Individual-Level predicates lack this position. Under the assumption that these two proposals are correct, it follows that only verbs which have a Davidsonian event position will participate in the predicate cleft construction. Hence, Stage-Level predicates participate in the construction (cf. (3)), while Individual-Level predicates don’t (cf.(4)).

3. Verb doubling in Haitian

Verb doubling is found in temporal subordinate clauses in Haitian. In (5), the first occurrence of the verb has more or less the same meaning as a temporal adverbial such as 'when' in English.

(5) vini li vini (an), m pati
come he come DET I left

'At the moment he arrived, I left'

This construction is accounted for in the following way in Lefebvre and Ritter (1989). The doubled verb is base-generated in head of IP. This accounts for the fact that the clause containing the doubled verb cannot contain a tense marker (nor any other particle related to INFL). The tense encoded by the doubled verb is a variable, linked by an operator which is base generated at D-Structure in Spec of IP. This operator is coindexed with the Tense node of the main clause. The link between the main clause and the adverbial clause is effected through movement of the operator from the position Spec of IP to the position Spec of DP. Given that Spec of IP is filled by an operator, the subject of the adverbial clause has to remain in its basic position within the VP.
The analysis predicts that if there exists a class of verbs whose subjects must appear obligatorily in Spec of IP at S-Structure, this class of verbs will not participate in this type of verb doubling construction. Diesing and Kratzer have argued that while the subject of a Stage-Level predicate may occur either in Spec of VP or in Spec of IP at S-Structure, the subject of an Individual-Level predicate must appear in Spec of IP at S-Structure. The analysis of the verb doubling construction proposed above predicts that only Stage-Level predicates will participate in the construction since only the latter allow their subjects to remain in Spec of VP. This prediction is borne out by the data. As is shown in (7), Individual-Level predicates are excluded from the temporal verb doubling construction.

(7) a. *renmen | Jan | renmen | pizza | a ...
    love  | John  | love  | pizza | DET

    b. *konne | Jan | konne | lang | sa | a ...
    know  | John | know  | language | DEM | DET

    c. *intelligent | Jan | intelligent | Jean | intelligent

4. Stylistic Inversion in French and the Stage/Individual Level predicate distinction

In this section I look at the relevance of the distinction between Stage-Level and Individual-Level predicates for the study of Stylistic Inversion in French. The (b) and (c) sentences of (8)-(12) are all cases of Stylistic Inversion. While (8b) and (8c) are grammatical, the (b) and the (c) sentences of (9)-(12) are not 11.

(8) a. La robe que Marie a mise pour son mariage....
    b. La robe qu'a mise Marie pour son mariage....
    c. Je ne sais pas quelle robe a mise Marie pour son mariage

11 Note that out of twelve informants, eight agree with the judgements in (9)-(12).
(9) a. La langue que Marie connaît est une langue difficile
b. *La langue que connaît Marie est une langue difficile
c. *Je ne sais pas quelle langue connaît Marie

(10) a. L'homme que Marie aime est grand
b. *L'homme qu'aime Marie est grand
c. *Je ne sais pas quel homme aime Marie

(11) a. L'Iman que les musulmans adorent ....
 b. *L'Iman qu'adorent les musulmans ...
c. *Je ne sais pas quel Iman adorent les musulmans....

(12) a. Le professeur que Jean hait ....
b. *Le professeur que hait Jean...
c. *Je ne sais pas quel professeur hait Jean

While the predicate in (8) is a Stage-Level predicate, the predicates in (9)-(12) are all Individual-Level predicates. It thus appears from the distribution in (8)-(12) that the semantic distinction between Stage and Individual-Level predicates is relevant to Stylistic Inversion in French. Without proposing a full analysis of the facts involved, I would like to suggest that the above distribution provides a new way of looking at Stylistic Inversion in French.

Under the assumption that subjects of Stage-Level predicates, but not those of Individual-Level predicates, may remain in the Specifier of VP, as advocated by Diesing and Kratzer, we might consider that in Stylistic Inversion, the subject in fact remains in its basic position. Stylistic Inversion would then be produced only by leftward movement of the verb (independently motivated, e.g. Chomsky, 1981; Pollock, 1989, and related work), rather than by rightward movement of NP. Individual-Level predicates would be excluded from the construction, because their subjects must move to Spec of IP, and hence they must precede the main verb at S-Structure.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have introduced additional evidence and independent support for the relevance of the distinction between Stage-Level and Individual-Level predicates, showing that the distinction between the two classes of predicates is basic to the understanding of three different syntactic constructions. Furthermore, the constructions discussed in this paper provide additional evidence for the properties that have been suggested for these two classes of semantic predicates. The predicate cleft data support Kratzer's claim that while Stage-Level predicates have a Davidsonian event argument, Individual-Level predicates don't. The verb doubling construction in Haitian and Stylistic Inversion in French support the claim that while the subjects of Stage-Level predicates may remain in Spec of VP, the subjects of Individual-Level predicates must appear in Spec of IP at S-Structure. Finally, I suggested that the distinction between the two classes of semantic predicates may provide new insights for the analysis of constructions such as Stylistic Inversion in French.

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2 Anne-Marie DiSciullo pointed out to me that similar facts obtain for Italian.
References:

Diesing, M. 1988. "Bare Plural Subjects and the Stage/Individual Contrast" (ms.) University of Massachusetts, Amherst.
Kratzer, A. 1988. "Stage-Level and Individual-Level Predicates" (ms.) University of Massachusetts, Amherst.