
Two dimensions in states of physical disturbance

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Deverbal adjectives of change of state (CoS) verbs in English such as those in (1) describe a “disturbance” in an affected object (the “host”) (Karmo 1977). I argue that these adjectives describe an undesirable affectedness in the host, the degree of which relates to two dimensions: the physical extent of the disturbance, and the physical extent to which the host is affected.

(1) The tank is **cracked**./ The sink is **scratched** and **dented**. (COCA[†])

“Disturbance” adjectives share a root form with a noun, and where the adjective applies, an existential sentence with a corresponding noun heading the pivot is also true (2).

(2) X is dented/cracked/... \models There is a dent/crack/... in X.

Adverbs of negative affect e.g. *badly*, *severely* etc. modify disturbance adjectives as degree modifiers, with no antonymous use of *well* (3a). This contrasts with evaluative *badly* (3b), which allows antonymous *well*, reflecting the “undesirability” of disturbances.

(3) a. a badly/#well bent/creased/cracked/scratched/dented X
b. a badly/well written/painted/designed X

A badly dented or scratched X may show many scratches or dents, or only a few, perhaps even only one scratch or dent, but of a serious nature, e.g. very long or very deep. Both cases may hold simultaneously, but the two interpretations can be independent. That is, disturbance adjectives are multi-dimensional (Sassoon 2011, Kennedy 2013, Solt 2018) in that affectedness may be evaluated as the extent of the disturbance, or as the extent to which the host is affected.

References: • Kennedy, C. (2013): Two sources of subjectivity. *Inquiry* 56, 258–277.
• Sassoon, G. (2011): Adjectival versus nominal categorization processes: the rule versus similarity hypothesis. *Belgian Journal of Linguistics* 25,104–147. • Solt, S. (2018): Multidimensionality, subjectivity and scales: experimental evidence. In: *The semantics of gradability, vagueness, and scale structure*, 59–91.