

Pseudo incorporation in Romance at the syntax-semantics interface

The term semantic pseudo incorporation (PI) has been proposed in the recent literature to account for the fact that certain types of nominal expressions (not only nouns) form a semantic but not a syntactic unit with the V they occur with, and function as predicate modifiers (Dayal 2003, 2011) (see (1)). It contrasts with the canonical operation of functional application $F(x)$, which applies straightforwardly to verbal structures where x is an internal syntactic argument that furthermore saturates an argument position of the predicate. Specifically, functional application seems to be inadequate for accounting for the composition of meaning of those nominal expressions in (2) – (4) that do not saturate the verbal predicate.

In this paper I will focus on two topics: (i) what sort of syntactic restrictions apply to nominal expressions that participate in pseudo incorporation, and (ii) what is the correspondence between ‘fake’ arguments and event modifiers. I will basically analyze data from Spanish, both Castilian and Mexican Spanish (Dobrovie-Sorin et al. 2006, Espinal & McNally 2011, Navarro & Espinal 2012).

The hypothesis that will be argued for is that morphosyntactic defectiveness of nouns and clitics (but not semantic proto-typicality of predicates) is a necessary condition in Romance in order to identify formally those nominal expressions that are to be interpreted not as arguments but as predicate modifiers. I will argue that defective nominal expressions and clitics are not syntactic adjuncts (Espinal & Navarro 2011): the former are syntactic arguments, whereas the affix clitic *le* is a head of a defective functional projection. Semantically, these nominal expressions show the properties of being scopally inert and discourse opaque. Because of this, it will be argued that they contribute to the compositional meaning of the clause not by argument saturation but by modification.

The postulated defectiveness is based on the fact that bare nominals (see (2)) are unmarked for number, definiteness and specificity, weak definites (see (3)) are DPs unmarked for definiteness, and the Mexican clitic affix *le* (see (4)) is not only unmarked for person, number, gender and case, but it is also the head of a defective High Applicative projection (Cuervo 2003) that takes only a complement, identified with the whole VP (i.e., it does not relate the event denoted by the VP with an individual as in regular High Applicatives; Pylkkänen 2002). Being morphosyntactically defective implies that these expressions have neither a referential interpretation nor an argument status from a semantic point of view, but still impose some semantic restrictions on the set of predicates they combine with: bare nominals denote properties of kinds (not of individual objects) that modify event arguments of a restricted class of HAVE-predicates (5) (Espinal 2010, Espinal & McNally 2011); and clitic *le* encodes an intensive property that classifies eventualities as actions (6) (Navarro & Espinal 2012). In this talk I will further extend this approach to weak definites which will be argued to also denote properties of kinds (not kind entities, contra Aguilar & Zwarts 2011) that modify event arguments of a restricted class of predicates. I will base this argumentation on significant crosslinguistic variation on the presence of what I will take to be an expletive Determiner (see (7)), on similarities between weak definites and bare nominals based on adjectival modification (see (8)), and on relevant semantic differences with so-called definite generics/kinds.

- (1) Inc-V: $\lambda P\lambda y\lambda e[P-V(e) \ \& \ Ag(e) = y]$ (Dayal 2011)
- (2) a. Necesitar *notario*.
need notary
'To need a notary.'
b. Tener *calefacción*.
have heating
'To have a heating system.'
c. Llevar *reloj de cuarzo*.
wear watch of quartz
'To wear a quartz watch.'
- (3) a. Mirarse *al espejo*.
look.REFL at.the mirror
'To look at oneself in the mirror.'
b. Pasarse *el peine*.
run.REFL the comb
'To run a comb (through one's hair).'
c. Lavar *los platos*.
wash the dishes
'To wash the dishes.'
- (4) a. Correr*le*.
run.le
'To perform running.'
b. Mover*le*.
move.le
'To perform moving.'
c. Limpiar*le*.
clean.le
'To perform cleaning.'
- (5) V_{HAVE} + N: $\lambda e[V(e) \ \& \ N(\theta(e))]$ (Espinal & McNally 2011)
- (6) *le*: $\lambda P\lambda e [P(e) \ \& \ Action(e)]$ (Navarro & Espinal 2012)
- (7) Ir a *la escuela* (Spa.) vs. Anar a *escola* (Cat.)
go to the school vs. go to school
'To go to school.' vs. 'To go to school.'
- (8) a. Lola is in [#]the *new* hospital. vs. Lola is in the *medical* hospital. (Aguilar & Zwarts 2011)
b. Té parella [#]*malalta*. vs. Té parella *formal*. (Espinal 2010)
has partner sick vs. has partner formal

Selected references

- Aguilar Guevara, A. & J. Zwarts. 2011. Weak definites and reference to kinds. In *Proceedings of SALT 20*, 179-196.
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- Espinal, M.T. & L. McNally. 2011. Bare nominals and incorporating verbs in Spanish and Catalan. *Journal of Linguistics* 47, 87-128.
- Navarro, Í. & M.T. Espinal. 2012. *Le*-predicates and event modification in Mexican Spanish. *Lingua* 122, 409-431.