

Gradience in subcategorization? Locative phrases with Italian verbs of motion

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In this paper we will investigate one aspect of government, the relation between a (verbal) head and its dependent(s), with reference to the argument-adjunct status of the directional/locative phrase optionally co-occurring with verbs of motion in Italian, both bounded, i.e., directed motion – e.g., *andare* 'to go', *arrivare* 'to arrive', *venire* 'to come' – and unbounded, i.e., manner of motion – e.g., *nuotare* 'to swim', *galleggiare* 'to float', *rotolare* 'to roll', *correre* 'to run'.

More specifically, we will explore the *interplay of syntactic criteria* (e.g., obligatoriness, latency (Matthews 1981)/Definite Null Instantiation (Fillmore & Kay 1993 in Croft 2001: 276-277), different order constraints) *with semantic parameters* such as (i) the degree of lexicalization of the direction of movement in the verbal roots, (ii) the event structure template of predicates, (iii) the inherent and relational characteristics of the subject, (iv) the semantics of the preposition(s) and the characteristics of the filler of the location (Beavers et al. 2010, Iacobini forthc., int. al.).

We will also highlight the difficulties with widely accepted tests such as obligatoriness, as illustrated in (1)-(2), where the obligatoriness/optionality of the directional phrase appears to reflect the animacy of the subject, rather than stemming from the predicate:

- (1) a. *Mario è venuto da lì* b. *Mario è venuto*
Mario is come from there Mario is come
'Mario has come from there' 'Mario has come'
- (2) a. *il rumore è venuto da lì* b. * *il rumore è venuto*
the noise is come from there the noise is come
'The noise has come from there' '*The noise has come'

We will argue that a gradient view of the distinction (Langacker 1987, Croft 2001: 272-280) proves to be a useful tool for understanding and capturing the extent and the limits of the variation encountered in the argument/adjunct space in the domain of Italian motion verbs. Adopting a "usage-based" approach, we will also show that the co-occurrence statistics of verbs with directional/locative phrases (semi-automatically extracted from a large corpus of written Italian) provides an interesting distributional correlate of the proposed complement-adjunct continuum.

References

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