

A constructionist analysis of spatial reduplications in Sicilian

Sicilian possesses a kind of reduplications which is peculiar among most Romance languages and which does not seem to express, but marginally, any of the meanings commonly identified in the literature for these constructions (plurality, emphasis, intensification, reiteration, etc.) (cf. Sgarioto 2005, Amenta 2010). These reduplications involve nouns, either in the singular or in the plural form, and typically express a spatial relation between a Figure and a Ground (Talmy 2000).

- (1) U picciriddro ioca casa casa
'the child plays all over the house [lit. house-house]'
- (2) U cane camina muntagni-muntagni
'the dog walks in/through the mountains [lit. mountains-mountains]'
- (3) A cammisa è pittusa-pittusa
'the shirt is full of stains [lit. stains-stains]'

In (1) and (2) the reiterated noun (that we call the base noun, henceforth BN) denotes the Ground (the location) and the syntactically related noun (henceforth RN) denotes the Figure (the entity to be located), whereas this situation is reversed in (3).

Generally speaking, we consider reduplication as a particular subtype of compounding (cf. Bauer 2003). However, what we commonly call compounding can in fact be considered to correspond to a double phenomenon: to the outcome of the possibly universal cognitive ability to semantically connect two linguistic units by simply juxtaposing them (C_1), on the one side, and to the output of a set of morphological patterns that are codified in the grammar of individual language (C_2 , cf. Bauer 2009, Guevara & Scalise 2009), on the other. A similar distinction can be considered to hold between two kinds of reduplication (R_1 and R_2).

The theoretical framework in which our work is rooted is Construction Grammar (Goldberg 2006), and in particular in Costruction Morphology (Booij 2010), according to which constructions are hierarchically ordered form-meaning pairings, and no discrete distinction between syntactic and morphological constructions is established. Among other factors, constructions may emerge in languages from the grammaticalization / institutionalization of recurrent patterns acquiring specific, unpredictable, properties.

We will show that the Sicilian reduplications in question are a clear case of R_2 , and should therefore be considered to be constructed by morphology rather than by syntax. They can in fact be analysed as constructions $[YY]_\alpha$, which are enclosed into larger constructions involving a semantically related noun: $[X \mathfrak{R} [YY]_\alpha]$. In Figure 1 we propose a global representation for these structures, where the notation $X_F \text{ IN } Y_G$ indicates a spatial relation between a Figure and a Ground.

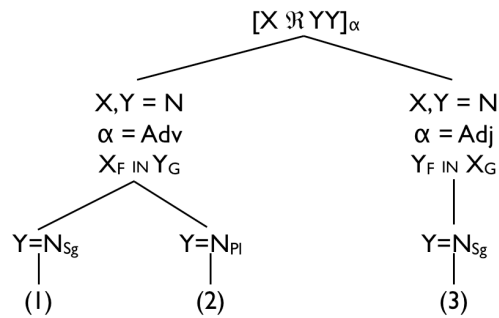


Figure 1

What Figure 1 shows is that three different kinds of phrasal constructions may correspond to the structure [X R [YY]_α]. Each of these structures displays specific semantic relations between the elements it is constituted of. In general, X corresponds to the subject of a VP if the reduplicated structure has the function of an adverb (as in (1) and (2) above) and to the head noun of a NP if it functions as an adjective (as in (3)). What is common to the whole construction [YY]_α is that the Figure is generally located in an undetermined position within the boundaries of the Ground, in a localization relation that may be either dynamic or static. Moreover, as the examples above show, the BN may be either singular or plural, depending on the fact that it expresses itself a (possibly metaphorical) single place or a location situated among several objects (like in *muntagni-muntagni*).

To conclude, the Sicilian R₂ considered here display the typical properties of derivational constructions: they have developed a range of specific meanings, their outputs correspond to typical lexical units (no insertion possible between the two BNs, a single primary stress, no recursivity), and they carry categorial information, changing a BN into an adverb or an adjective.

References

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