

INTRODUCTION  
SEMANTICS: LEXICON, GRAMMAR AND USE

**Roberta Pires de Oliveira & Apóstolo T. Nicolacópulos\***

Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina

The papers which together compose this issue of *Ilha do Desterro* provide, precisely because they come from different theoretical perspectives and take into consideration distinct objects of study, an up-to-date, widespread, and, at the same time, profound survey of what is going on in contemporary semantic research. This issue reflects, then, the heterogeneity of the state of the art in semantics: a plurality due not only to different theoretical approaches, combining various dimensions which crisscross each other – non-psychological formal computational approaches, psychologically-motivated formal approaches (computational and non-computational), highly computational functional psychologically-oriented approaches –, but also due to different objects of study, which interact in several ways as well. There is hardly any lexicon semantics which does not take into account grammatical facts and use; the study of grammatical relations depends on our understanding of the lexicon and of its use. Some dimensions of heterogeneity are revealed in this issue as the unity of semantics as the study of meaning in natural language is endorsed. The papers are organized beginning

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with the lexical dimension, moving through syntactic-semantic issues, and closing with grammatical semantics.

In this vivid example of the “interdisciplinary” character of research work in contemporary semantics, “A Realidade da Incorporação dos Anglicismos no Português do Brasil Vista no Contexto das Atuais Contendas Sobre o Tema”, Neves mobilizes concepts and issues from different sources. It is a corpora-based analysis of lexical frequencies of foreign words in Brazilian Portuguese, with special attention to English loans. This analysis constitutes a scientific reply to contemporary issues in language politics in Brazil, since it argues not only against the recent proposal by Aldo Rebelo of implementing a federal law prohibiting the use of English words in Brazilian Portuguese, but also against the common-sense ideology which supports such a proposal. According to this common sense view on language, Brazilian Portuguese is being degenerated by the extreme abundance of English words; it is losing its identity, it is being invaded and running the risk of fading away (in this ideology language is a metonymy of the nation). One of the arguments Neves puts forth is that a detailed semantic analysis of the borrowed terms and their correlates in the target language refute the claim that these terms are taking the place of the target language words. Her analysis makes it clear that the borrowed words are not synonymous with the target language words; rather they open up a new perspective; they introduce a new meaning. Contrary to the common-sense ideology, they enrich the language. Consider, for instance, the introduction of the term *deletar* from *delete* in English in the context of informatics. *Deletar* is a neologism; the Brazilian Portuguese translation for *delete* is *apagar*. However, in informatics, *deletar* and *apagar* do not mean the same: *deletar* is a deletion that it is possible to recover, whereas *apagar* is not recoverable.

In “Polissemia Sistemática em Substantivos Deverbais”, Basílio adopts the perspective of Cognitive Linguistics, a theoretical approach which strongly criticizes the formal view on natural language semantics,<sup>1</sup> and which has recently stimulated the study of polysemy, in particular with respect to its relation to metaphor and metonymy.<sup>2</sup> The pa-

per is mainly concerned with explaining the systematic polysemy that results from the lexical operation of forming substantives from verbs. This operation of deverbalization leads inevitably to a multiplicity of possible interpretations, all systematically related. Deverbalization may be due to grammatical or denotational reasons. For instance, the verb *declarar* may produce the substantive *declaração* as the name of the action, the grammatical use, or as the name of a certain entity in the world, as in *declaração de imposto de renda*. This is the first layer of polysemy. But, each of these branches, the grammatical and the denotational one, opens up other meaning branchings, increasing polysemy. Consider the use of *declaração* in sentences (1) and (2):

(1) Declarações não me importam, o que interessa é a ação.

Declarations do not matter, what matters is action.

(2) Ontem o presidente fez uma declaração e participou de uma solenidade

Yesterday the president made a declaration and participated in a ceremony.

According to Basílio, in both sentences we have examples of the grammatical function of deverbalization, but in sentence (1) *declaração* focuses metonymically on the type of event, as seen from its products, as an abstract entity resulting from the concrete act of declaring, whereas in (2) *declaração* refers to a specific occurrence of the act of declaration. Though not predictable, polysemy is very systematic because there is always a link with the source verb. This is what characterizes systematic polysemy.

“Lexical Facets and Metonymy” by Cruse explicitly proposes an account of the problem of polysemy by comparing two different models: the metonymic approach, exemplified by Nunberg (1995), and the lexical facets approach proposed by Cruse (see Cruse, 2000 and Croft

& Cruse, 2004, among others). The paper centers around the question of how we best explain the fact that lexical items like *book* appear to behave independently in some contexts, such as when *book* is used to express *text* or *tome* unambiguously, but jointly in others, as in (3) below:

(3) This book is very interesting, but it is awfully heavy to carry around.

*To be interesting* is a property of the text, while *to be heavy* is a property of the tome. Though Nunberg does not explicitly discuss the case of *book*, Cruse (in this publication) shows that it should be considered a case of what Nunberg calls *dense metonymy*<sup>3</sup>. Dense metonymy names the phenomenon that happens when a word has two distinct uses to refer to things of sorts A, and B (in the case of *book*, texts and tomes), but there are often predicate transfers from properties of sort A to B and vice-versa. Predicate transfer is exemplified in (3). Cruse shows that Nunberg's dense metonymy model does not account for several cases which are easily explained by the facets framework, the basic idea of which is that *book* is a unified concept and facets are context dependent construals. In other words, the lexical facets approach understands that there are global concepts which fuse the facets into a single gestalt.

A transition from lexical to grammatical semantics is presented in "Interpretation as Conflict Resolution" by de Swart and Zwarts, which is a programmatic paper in the sense that it introduces Optimality Theory in several levels of analysis, although the paper is focused on issues of semantic optimality. The main hypothesis is that Optimality Theory, a linguistic theory that arose out of connectionism, provides a framework to solve conflicts of interpretation "in a systematic way by means of constraint-ranking" (Prince & Smolensky, 1993, apud de Swart and Zwarts, this volume). The paper illustrates the approach with examples from anaphora resolution, polysemy of the spatial preposition *round*, negative concord, and acquisition of indefinites. In semantics,

optimality is hearer-oriented and explains the resolution of the optimal meaning by applying a set of constraints, which should be independently motivated and ranked in a particular order. Consider the polysemy of *round*. The question is: How do we choose one meaning of *round* out of its several possibilities? How do we know whether we are talking about a full, complete, circular movement or about some other perhaps non-complete or non-circular movement as in (4)? But notice the use of *around* in sentence (3) as well:

(4) Maria runs round the door.

The answer is pretty functional in nature, though the framework of the paper is rather formal: Interpreters measure the meaning alternatives taking into account some “ranked” constraints. In the authors’ description, interpreters choose the strongest possible interpretation that best fits the context. The strongest interpretation of *round* is a fully circular path, as in *Mary runs round the block*. The complete interpretation is excluded as the interpretation for (4) because it is in conflict with the lexical semantics of *door*, which does not admit that we go all the way around it. The complete circular path does not fit the context. Thus, we choose the second alternative in the rank. If it is good, we stop the interpretation; if not, we move on to the next alternative.

Menuzzi’s “Non-conflicting Violations of Grammatical Constraints? Logophoric Reflexives, Peculiar Passives, and Gricean Implicatures” is a rather theoretical discussion within the framework of Optimality Theory, concerned with the relation between the concepts of well-formedness, a syntactic notion, and full-acceptability, that is, an interpretative concept. This issue is of great relevance, since it deals with the question of the relation between syntax and semantics in a broad sense (pragmatics). An approach that equates well-formedness and full-acceptability jeopardizes the autonomy of syntax. Logophoric reflexives are the empirical object under discussion in this paper; peculiar passives are taken as a parallel case, the analysis of which, as proposed by Ariel (1990), may clarify the issue of how to

explain logophoric reflexives, and other cases of marked uses of reflexives. The problem is: How do we explain that in (5) both *himself* (the reflexive), and *him* can be used, but only *himself* is a marked use?

(5) Max<sub>i</sub> boasted that the queen invited Luise and {himself<sub>i</sub> / him<sub>i</sub>} for a drink.

Menuzzi's criticism of Reinhart and Reuland's (1993) explanation for logophoric reflexives opens up the way for him to present his proposal for markedness: Marked sentences such as the use of logophoric reflexive in (5) violate a grammatical constraint (condition A reformulated); thus, they are ill-formed. What explains the acceptability of sentence (5) is conversational implicatures, pragmatic constraints on possible meanings for one and the same grammatical expression. A grammatical violation is a violation of the Maxim of Manner (Grice's framework, 1975), which must be justified if the speaker is conveying something different from reflexivity, thus Menuzzi adheres to the Maxim of Relevance. The conclusion is that the concept of well-formedness is not to be confused with the concept of full-acceptability; the use of the reflexive in sentence (5) though not grammatical is acceptable because interpretation is reached by the interaction of conversational implicatures.

"Semântica e Representações do Sentido" by Ilari and Basso is an introduction to what the study of meaning is, since it presents not only basic concepts manipulated by semanticists in general (*predicate*, *scope*, *compositionality*, among others), but also deals with two *uses* of *geralmente*. It uses the tools of formal methodology without, however, ascribing to other methodologies their necessary place in science. The paper belongs to the domain of grammatical semantics, since it aims at explaining the two uses of the adverb *geralmente* as distinct semantic operations, considering the following sentence:

(6) O associado do sindicato é geralmente um antigo funcionário.

The member of the Union is generally a former clerk.

This use of the adverb *geralmente* is of interest because it quantifies over persons, thus it seems to be some sort of nominal quantification. This is the reason why sentence (6) may be paraphrased as *Most members of the Union are former clerks*. This use contrasts with a frequency use of the quantifier adverb as in:

(7) João geralmente viaja de ônibus para São Paulo.

João generally travels by bus to São Paulo.

Are we confronted with two uses of *geralmente*? The answer is no. The authors believe the solution is to be found in the framework of dynamic semantics such as those of Kamp (1985) and of Heim (1982), as introduced in Chierchia (2003)<sup>4</sup>. There is a consensus in the recent literature on generic sentences<sup>5</sup> that Heim's view on indefinites should be adopted, and that though there are two types of generic sentences, generic and habitual, exemplified respectively in (6) and (7), they should be treated the same way: They are quantified sentences, and the differences are due to the entity which the scope of quantification encompasses.

In "Licensing by Modification" Dayals adopts this view on generic sentences as common ground and investigates cases where modifiers do not have their "normal" semantic contribution, i.e. functions from sets to sets denoted by the noun, but where they seem to license structures that would otherwise be unacceptable. The famous example is the contrast between (8.a) and (8.b) as shown below:

- (8) a. \* Any student signed the petition.  
 b. Any student who went to the meeting signed the petition.

Following Legrand's suggestion (apud Dayal 1998), this phenomenon is called, 'subtriggering', and it appears to be cross-linguistic<sup>6</sup>. The author attempts at an explanation for it, and besides the *any* sentences she is mostly concerned with the contrast in the acceptability of bare plurals in Italian:

- (9) a. \*Leo odia gatti.  
 Leo hates cats.
- b. Leo odia gatti di grandi dimensioni.  
 Leo hates cats of large size.

Her main hypothesis is that modifiers introduce a situation variable which may be bound by the quantifier. What explains licensing in (8.b) and (9.b) is an interaction of the meanings of individual expressions given that the phrasal modifier introduces an independent place-time variable. This hypothesis not only explains the bare plural behavior in Italian but also, if right, is an argument against Chierchia's (1995, 2003) and Longobardi's (1994, 2000) proposal of treating bare plurals as NPs with a null determiner.

On the one hand, this issue, with its heterogeneity of subjects and theoretical approaches, reflects the state of the art of contemporary semantics, the variety of ways of doing semantics nowadays. On the other hand, each of the papers contributes individually to the development of the area in which it is inserted. Thus the reader may enjoy both the horizontal panorama of the field and the vertical insight of each paper.



## Notes

- \* We would particularly like to thank Alyson E. R. Steele G. Weickert for revising the texts in this issue of *Ilha do Desterro*.
- 1 See, for instance, Lakoff and Johnson's (2002) recent criticism of objectivism.
  - 2 In the framework of Cognitive Linguistics, metaphor and metonymy are cognitive devices, not to be confused with rhetoric figures. For a clarification of these concepts see Bittencourt's review in this issue and references therein.
  - 3 The (meta) word metonymy in Nunberg's model does not have the same meaning as metonymy in the cognitive approach.
  - 4 See Gonçalves in this issue for a review of Chierchia's (2003) *Semântica*.
  - 5 See, for instance, Krifka et al. (1995).
  - 6 The same phenomenon appears in Brazilian Portuguese. See Pires de Oliveira (2003).

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