

(Lack of) Nominal Modification: What ‘slim’ nominals might tell us about modifiers
Tommaso Mattiuzzi – GK Colloquium 14/12/2021

Abstract.

The main aim of this talk is to show how some of the theoretical issues that arise in developing my research project connect to the broader issue of how to capture the structural status of nominal modifiers.

Across languages, ‘locative’ nouns (and other ‘special’ lexical classes of nominals) have been noticed to show peculiar grammatical behavior, whereby the exceptional lack of a functional item like a preposition/case marker or a determiner (‘Bareness’) correlates with restrictions on pluralization and nominal modification (Haspelmath 2019; Matushansky 2019; Stolz, Lestrade, and Stolz 2014, etc.).

The hypothesis at the heart of my project is that this pattern has a structural basis, and that ‘locative’ nouns are able to lexicalize reduced, or ‘slim’ nominal structures through phrasal Spell Out (Starke 2009; 2018; Caha 2009; 2018, etc.). The main claim is that this idea is able to provide a uniform account of the general pattern, while at the same time aiming at a restrictive theory of the relationship between ‘locative’ and ‘regular’ occurrences of the relevant nominals.

In this talk, I discuss some of the questions this approach has to answer, focusing on the structural status of nominal modifiers. I argue that the issue is problematic for Nanosyntax more in general, and present two tentative hypotheses, showing how they might integrate with the approach I am pursuing in my project.

References

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