Bare nouns in any kind of place: approaching Italian bare PPs with corpus data

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My research project investigates the grammar of bare 'locative' nouns, i.e. singular common nouns exceptionally appearing without a determiner in PPs, arguing that their crosslinguistically regular grammatical behavior can be reduced to more general properties of nominal structure and how these nouns lexicalize it under Phrasal Lexicalization (Starke, 2009, and ff.). In this talk, I present work in progress in the collection of corpus data on bare PPs in Italian. This aims at shedding new light on properties that are not typically recognized in the literature (Carlson et al., 2006; De Swart, 2015; De Swart and Zwarts, 2009; Stvan, 1998, 2009; Williams, 2019, a.o.) and can further support the morphosyntactic approach to the grammar of 'locative' nouns I am pursuing. Specifically, I will discuss preliminary evidence for three main claims: 1) there are distinct subclasses of items within the set of bare 'locative' nominals with partially different syntactic behavior; 2) nouns in bare PPs are not necessarily 'weakly rerefential' (Aguilar-Guevara et al., 2014), and can receive 'strong' definite readings as well; 3) despite this range of possible interpretations, the only modifiers regularly appearing in the construction are kind-level ones, pointing to the conclusion that the observed restrictions on nominal modification are not predicted by the lexical semantics of the noun alone, being rather structural in nature. The main aim of the talk is to present the ongoing corpus-based data collection I am conducting on the iTenTen20 corpus (Jakubíček et al., 2013) to find further support for the claims in 1)-3). I will discuss issues connected to the choice of the corpus, the selection of nouns to be tested, the quantity and quality of available data, and the annotation for syntactic and semantic properties. The main aim is to gather feedback on the steps taken so far and the reasoning behind them, with a focus on open questions concerning the best way to operationalize and statistically test my hypotheses.

References

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