

## Adjectives, prefixation and argument structure: symmetric and non-symmetric relations within the AP complex

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Research into the division of labor between functional and lexical layers within adjectival structures is complicated by the challenge of controlling the amount of syntactic material contained within a single 'adjective.' Standing questions persist, such as the appropriate syntactic treatment of positive degree and the potential syntactic expression of scalar properties. To illuminate the distinct role that lower syntactic projections, traditionally considered lexical, play in constructing adjectival structures, this presentation proposes an examination of the behavior of what may be the structurally smallest class of adjectives—those used as prefixal invariable modifiers.

- (1) a. pseudo-science
- b. macro-party
- c. homo-categorical

In this talk, I will first argue that in Spanish, as well as other Romance languages, there exists a productive set of prefixes which are the spell out of part of the adjectival functional sequence. These prefixes contrast in behavior both with prepositional prefixes (e.g., *pre-*), which are portions of prepositional structure, and quantifying prefixes (e.g., *bi-*), which are operators. Secondly, I will demonstrate that within this set of adjectival prefixes, two classes, parallel to relational and qualifying adjectives in the 'complete' adjectival structures, can be isolated. These classes exhibit differences in (i) the grammatical properties of the bases they are restricted to, (ii) the grammatical effects they have on the base, (iii) the possibility of receiving an argument-of-the-base interpretation, and (iv) their internal syntactic complexity. As in larger adjectival structures, some of these prefixes must be relational (e.g., *cyber-*), some must be qualifying (e.g., *hyper-*) and others, the most interesting ones, are ambiguous between a relational (2a) and a qualifying (2b) structure:

- (2) a.       micro-cirugía  
          micro-surgery 'surgery applied to very small entities'
- b.       micro-rrelato  
          micro-story 'very short story'

Structures like (2a) sharply contrast with superficially similar compounding structures, which reject an argument-like reading of the leftmost element and are differentiated by several other properties.

The discussion and analysis of the subclasses of adjectival prefixes will lead to the following claims: first, adjectives are always constructed over a non-relational core, which is not necessarily a noun even in the case of relational adjectives (as evidenced by deverbal relational adjectives). Second, becoming an adjective involves combining with a minimal structure that triggers association, in both syntax and semantics, with an external nominal constituent. However, at the low structural level, the relationship is symmetric, as it does not define which of the two elements acts as a predicate and which one acts as an argument. Third, the definition of the external constituent as the argument of the adjective, now interpreted as a predicate, depends on the introduction of additional syntactic structure at a structural level where the whole is defined as a qualifying adjective, not as a relational one. In presenting the analysis, I will emphasize the parallelisms with the internal decomposition of prepositional structures and highlight the similarities and differences between these subclasses and prepositional prefixes.