

**Ad hoc categories and their linguistic construction.
Typology, diachrony and use**

Convenors:

Caterina Mauri (University of Pavia) – caterina.mauri@unipv.it

Andrea Sansò (Insubria University, Como) – andrea.sanso@uninsubria.it

A large bulk of psycholinguistic research (Barsalou 1983, Smith & Samuelson 1997, among many others) has shown that the traditional view of categories as fundamentally stable objects is untenable in various respects. Categories, instead, as Croft & Cruse (2004: 92) put it, “are inherently variable, and created on-line as and when needed”.

Languages have overt strategies that make the online construction of categories “visible” and explicitly allow the hearer to identify some relevant exemplars as the starting point for an abstraction process leading to the on-line construction of a contextually relevant category.

These strategies include things as diverse as:

- (i) so-called **list constructions or general extenders** (e.g. Engl. “central Iowa and stuff” as a strategy to construct on-line the ad-hoc category “RURAL AREAS OF THE USA”),
- (ii) **associative or simulative plural** constructions (cf. (1) see Moravcsik 2003), by which speakers may extend the reference of a given noun to include some individual or entities typically associated with the referent of that noun,
- (iii) **derivational collective morphology** (cf. (2)), which can be used productively to create new lexical labels for ad hoc categories,
- (iv) **nonce compounds** (cf. (3)), which can be created to refer to a specific, context-relevant category, for which no label is available in the language,
- (v) so-called **representative** (Haspelmath 2007) or **non-exhaustive connectives** (cf.(4)), i.e. connectives that specifically encode that the two (or more) items that they connect are just members of a category including other similar elements,
- (vi) **reduplication** (cf. (5)), which in some may be used with such a function, etc.
- (vii) **exemplifying constructions**, namely strategies indicating that a given phrase has to be interpreted as being merely a potential exemplar of a higher-level category (e.g. Engl. “Why don’t we meet at the pub tonight?” vs. “Why don’t we meet at **let’s say** the pub tonight?”, whereby the pub has to be taken as an instance of a place where one can have a beer)

- (1) Dogon – simulative plural marker *mbe* (Corbett 2000: 111)

<i>ibe</i>	<i>ya-ε-w</i>	<i>yo,</i>	<i>isu</i>	<i>mbe</i>	<i>nie</i>	<i>mbe</i>	<i>bawie</i>
market	go-AOR-2SG	if	fish	PL	oil	PL	buy.IMP.2SG

‘if you go to the market, buy fish, oil AND OTHER SUCH THINGS’

- (2) Italian – derivational suffix *-ame*

<i>dire</i>	<i>che</i>	<i>la</i>	<i>Boldrini</i>	<i>è</i>	<i>uguale al</i>
say.INF		COMPART.F	B.		be.PRS.3SG equal to+ART
<i>figlio di</i>	<i>Bossi</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>al</i>	<i>berluscon-ame</i>	<i>è</i>
son of	B.	or	to.ART	Berlusconi & co.	be.PRS.3SG
<i>una</i>	<i>violenza</i>	<i>ideologica,</i>			

INDEF.ART.F violence ideological

‘to say that Boldrini is the same as Bossi’s son or as ALL THOSE PERSONS HAVING TO DO WITH BERLUSCONI (INCLUDED BERLUSCONI HIMSELF) / BERLUSCONI & CO. is an ideological violence’

(3) "I doubt whether even the breathless, *gosh-gee-whiz-can-all-this-be-happening-to-me* TV-**celebrity-author** himself could cap this shlock classic with another."
(Pauline Kael, *The New Yorker*, 1970)

(4) Japanese – non-exhaustive connective *ya*
watashi no heya ni wa, konpyūtā ya sutereo ga
I DET room in TOP computer and stereo SBJ
oite arimasu
place-SUSP be-POL.NPST
‘In my room there is a computer, a stereo AND OTHER SIMILAR THINGS.’

(5) Turkish (Göksel and Kerslake 2005: 91-92)
Eve çat kapı bir alıcı geldi, odaları modaları dolaştı.
‘Today a potential buyer came without notification, and looked at the ROOMS, ETC.’

The on-line construction of categories is thus much more pervasive in grammar than one might assume, involving such diverse grammatical domains as number and plurality, lexical derivation, connectives and more transparent constructions such as general extenders. All these construction types share a common function but differ as to the way the category is abstracted away from the given exemplars.

This workshop aims to provide a unified approach to these constructions and to their common abstracting function, by gathering together studies that explicitly deal with the strategies that languages use to construct ad hoc categories on-line. We welcome cross-linguistic studies, taking into account more than one language, as well as studies dealing with the diachrony of these constructions and with their patterning in discourse and interaction, based on corpus data.

Possible phenomena to be investigated include:

- exemplifying constructions (meaning ‘for instance’, ‘such as’, etc.)
- general extenders (e.g. ‘or something’, ‘and stuff’, etc.)
- connectives and their exemplifying functions
- associative and similitive plurals
- nonce compounds
- reduplication leading to a ‘X and so on’ reading
- collectives and their relation to the construction of categories
- derivational strategies leading to contextually dependent categories or sets
- ...

Possible topics include:

- cross-linguistic studies on constructions used to build ad hoc categories
- diachronic studies
- corpus-based research on the referential continuity of the exemplars and the category
- analyses of the discourse relevance and discourse phenomenology of ad hoc categories
- the cooperation of speaker and hearer in the construction of ad hoc categories in interaction
- psycholinguistic evidence for how these constructions are processed and the ad hoc categories construed
- semantics and pragmatics of exemplification

References

- Barsalou, L. W. (1983) "Ad hoc categories" *Memory and Cognition* 11/3, 211-227.
- Corbett, G. (2000) *Number*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Croft, W. & A. D. Cruse. 2004. *Cognitive Linguistics*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Haspelmath M. (2007). Coordination. In: T. Shopen (ed.), *Language typology and syntactic description*, vol. II: *Complex constructions*, 1-51, Cambridge: CUP.
- Moravcsik, E. (2003). "A semantic analysis of associative plurals", *Studies in Language* 27/3: 469-503.
- Smith, L. B. & L. K. Samuelson. 1997. Perceiving and remembering: category stability, variability and development. In: K. Lamberts & D. Shanks (eds.). *Knowledge, concepts and categories*, 161-95. Hove: Psychology Press.