

Syntagmatic analogy: From coherence function to mechanism of change

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Our usage case-study on binominal quantifiers in Spanish illustrates the role of *syntagmatic* analogy in textual coherence (synchrony) and in constructional change (diachrony).

Quantifying nouns (QN) display a quantifying potential next to the original lexical meaning, as they designate containers (*brazada* ‘armful’), configurations (*racimo* ‘bunch’) or collective entities (*tropel* ‘mob, heap’). When followed by a PP indicating the mass, the QNs can be considered **binominal quantifiers** (*un montón_{N1} de gente_{N2}* ‘a heap of people’).

Syntagmatic analogy involves mutual accommodation (1) between the QN and the N2 and (2) between the binominal phrase and the wider discourse context. Synchronically, the QN functions as a coherence device: in line with its source semantics, it imposes a specific conceptual image on the N2 it quantifies (Verveckken 2012); e.g., *un alud de gente* ‘an avalanche of people’ profiles the N2 *gente* as a dynamic entity arriving suddenly and at once, while *un tropel de gente* ‘a mob...’ evokes some hierarchy and *una pila de gente* ‘a heap (lit. pile)...’ profiles a static ordered set. Minimally, N2 has to be compatible with the conceptual image the QN evokes (Bosque 2007), through its lexical meaning or via discourse integration; e.g., (the scenery evoked in the wider context of (1) enables the N2 *páginas web* to accommodate to the frame of *aluvión de*).

- (1) Tras arrasar en Estados Unidos, la medicina alternativa extiende sus tentáculos en España. (...) Al otro lado del Atlántico, el boom es de tal calibre que en algunas zonas del país cerca del 50% de los pacientes recurre a estas prácticas. (...) Como era de esperar, Internet también refleja este interés social, con un verdadero **aluvión de** páginas web sobre muchas de las medicinas alternativas. ‘After crushing in the U.S.A., alternative medicine extends its tentacles in Spain. (...) At the other side of the Atlantic, the boom is of such caliber that in some zones of the country, nearly 50% of the patients turn to those practices. (...) As was to be expected, the Internet also reflects this social interest, with an authentic flood of web pages on many of the alternative medicines.’

Collocational preferences characterize not only QNs (e.g. *pila de* only admits N2s denoting people or time indications), but also N2s (e.g. *críticas* is usually quantified by *alud de* ‘avalanche of’, *aluvión de* ‘flood of’ or some other natural phenomenon such as *lluvia de* ‘rain of’, while *cosas* ‘things’ mainly combines with *montón de* ‘heap of’). Diachronically, syntagmatic analogy is reflected in the conceptually driven expansion – towards new QNs and towards new N2s per QN – operating via semantic clusters (cf. Bybee & Eddington 2006) which can be related to the source semantics of the QNs.

This two-way syntagmatic analogy recalls the semiotic notion of *isotopy*, reflecting the speaker’s search for maximally coherent discourse. The relevance of syntagmatic associations becomes most evident at the semantics-pragmatics-morphosyntax interface: the morphosyntactic variation in the co-selection patterns of the N1-determiner, the premodifying adjective and verb agreement appear to be primarily semantically and/or discourse-pragmatically motivated.

The analysis is corpus-based: for ten QNs exhaustive extractions were made from the synchronic and diachronic online corpora *CREA* and *CORDE*.

Keywords: *syntagmatic analogy, binominal quantifiers, coherence, constructional change, isotopy*

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