

Meaning and derivational morphology in the grammar of property concepts

Thomas Grano (Invited Speaker)

Indiana University

tgrano@indiana.edu

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Two semantically relevant and cross-linguistically pervasive oppositions in the grammar of property concept lexemes are: positive vs. comparative forms (e.g., English *happy* vs. *happier*) and adjectival vs. nominal forms (e.g., English *happy* vs. *happiness*). In this talk, I review cross-linguistic data bearing on the morphosyntactic derivational relationships between the two forms involved in each opposition, and explore their consequences for points of variation and uniformity in the compositional semantics of the sentences in which these forms participate.

In the first part of the talk, I focus on the positive/comparative opposition. I review arguments from Grano (2012) and Grano & Davis (2018) regarding Mandarin Chinese and Arabic, respectively, indicating that despite surface appearances, comparative forms are systematically derived from positive forms, rather than vice versa, and rather than both forms being derived independently from a common root. This suggests a point of cross-linguistic uniformity in compositional semantics, whereby comparative meaning is systematically built on positive-form meaning.

In the second part of the talk, I focus on the adjectival/nominal opposition. Here, the situation is different: we find (a) nominal forms derived from adjectival forms (e.g., English Adj. *happy* → N. *happiness*; Mandarin Adj. *gao* 'tall' → N. *gaodu* 'height'); (b) adjectival forms derived from nominal forms (e.g., English N. *joy* → Adj. *joyful*); and (c) in Arabic, adjectival and nominal forms each independently derived from a common trilateral root (e.g., Adj. *Hakiim* 'wise' and N. *Hikma* 'wisdom' from the root √Hkm). Adopting the hypothesis that adjectival property concept words are individual-characterizing whereas nominal property concept words are (typically) substance-denoting (Francez & Koontz-Garboden 2017), I explore various ways of modeling their semantic relationship so as to achieve transparency with their observed morphosyntactic derivational relationships, with an eye toward predicting truth-conditional equivalence between sentences like *John is happy* and their possessive counterparts *John has happiness*. The investigation draws on relevant prior work on cross-categorial gradability, including Moltmann (2009); Menon & Pancheva (2014); Baglini (2015); Francez & Koontz-Garboden (2015, 2017); Wellwood (2015), and Hanink et al. (2019).

References: Francez, I. & A. Koontz-Garboden (2017). *Semantics and Morphosyntactic Variation*. OUP. Grano, T. (2012). Mandarin *hen* and universal markedness in gradable adjectives. *NLLT* 30, 513–565. Grano, T. & S. Davis (2018). Universal markedness in gradable adjectives revisited. *NLLT* 36, 131–147. Hanink, E., A. Koontz-Garboden & E. Makasso. (2019). Property concepts in Basaa and the ontology of gradability across category. *Proceedings of SALT 29*. Menon, M. & R. Pancheva (2014). The grammatical life of property concept roots in Malayalam. *Proceedings of SuB 18*, 289–302.