**Nominal phrases in predicative position and degree modification in French and Greek: a syntax-semantics analysis**

*Degree modifiers* (DMs) are widely known as linguistic expressions that modify *gradable* items. Gradable items are-in their turn-known for mapping their arguments onto abstract representations of measurement, else called *degrees*, and associated with a *scale*, a set of degrees ordered with respect to some dimension (Seuren 1973, Bartsch and Vennemann 1973, Cresswell 1977, Hellan 1981, von Stechow 1984, Heim 1985, 2000, Bierwisch 1989, Klein (1991, 1999), Kennedy 1999, Kennedy and McNally 2005, *inter alia*).

The present paper focusses on a less documented case of degree modification that involves copula sentences with non-gradable nouns in predicate position in languages like French and Greek which end up expressing gradability (1-8). Apart from the absence of gradability on behalf of the noun involved, these constructions are interesting, in a cross-linguistic perspective, as the French construction involves the French DM *très* ("very") (Doetjes 2008) while the Greek construction involves a definite determiner in the genitive case in Greek.

Copula sentences as in (1-3) express a love relation between the subject and the denotation of the noun phrase and have been recently discussed by Vlachou (to appear) who argues that we deal with cases of weak definite constructions: both the French DM *très* as well as the Greek definite determiner express high degree and introduce the meaning of gradability on a scale of prototypicality of the loving relation between the subject and the noun denotation.

Data as in (4-8) show that the translation couple *DEF-genitive+NP/très+NP* in copula sentences in Greek and French, respectively, is productive (see Moustaki 1995 for Greek), and, interestingly, does not always involve a loving relation between the subject and the noun denotation. In this paper, we attempt at providing a typology of copula sentences of the type DEF-genitive+NP/très+NP in Greek and French (Mari & Martin 2008).

Copula sentences of the form *DEF-genitive+NP/très+NP* participate in three categories (Groups A, B and C below). Sentences of the Groups A and B (see data) involve the formation of complex predicates keeping the lexical semantics of the NP participating in the final semantic representation. The difference between the examples participating in Groups A and B is that in Group A the meaning is that "someone loves (doing) something" while in the examples of Group B the NP-genitive assigns a quality to the subject, i.e., the meaning is that "someone/something is a person/object of a given quality". Inserting a DM *poli* ("very") in examples of Group B is not always felicitous, perhaps an indication of weak compositionality. Sentences in Group C are non-compositional, being idiomatic cases that do not accept any modification.

In this paper, we will focus on the compositional types of constructions (Groups A and B). Starting from Greek, we will propose that that copula sentences with a genitive-NP that participate in Groups A and B involve an empty noun which takes as a modifier the genitive-NP. Their difference derives from the different semantic composition of this empty noun: In Group A structures it denotes a property, whereas in Group B constructions it denotes an entity. The genitive case of the NP is a kind of a regular adnominal genitive case. The empty noun and the genitive-NP constitute the predicative core of a small clause, which takes as a subject the DP-subject of the clause. We will then investigate the possibility of extending this analysis in the French cases, focusing on the status of the DM and the dependent NP.

**Data**

*Group A*

1. Georges est *très sport*.
   George is very sport
   "George is a sports lover."
2. a. O Jorghos ine (poli) ton spor.
   The George is very the-GEN spor
   "George is a sports lover."
3. a. Jean est *très salade*.
   John is very salad
   b. O Janis ine (poli) tis salatas.
   The John is very the-GEN salad
   "John is a salad lover."

*Group B*

4. a. Marie est très mode.
   Mary is very mode
   b. I Meri ine ( ??poli) tis modhas
   The Meri is very the-GEN mode
   "Mary is very modern."
5. a. Le joueur de cette équipe est très confiance.
   The player of this team is very confidence
   b. O pektis aftis tis omadhas ine (??poli) tis ebistosinis.
   The player this the team is very the-GEN confidence
   "We have confidence in this player."

*Group C*

6. To aftokinito ine tu kutju.
   The car is the-GEN box
   "The car is completely new (we just bought it)."
7. O Jorghos ine tu thanata.
   The George is the-GEN death
   "George is completely exhausted."
8. a. Georges est très docteur.
   George is very doctor
   b. O Jorghos ine tu jatru.
   The George is the-GEN doctor
   "George is completely insane."

**Selected references:**


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