Ways of delimiting events in morphology and syntax: reduplication in Mandarin and cognate object / light verb constructions in Italian

Chiara Melloni (University of Verona)*

In this talk, I deal with a class of phenomena in the verbal domain which share interpretive, structural and/or formal resemblance across typologically distant languages, i.e. Mandarin Chinese and Italian, and domains of grammar, i.e. morphology and syntax.

Specifically, I start with the phenomenon of verb reduplication in Mandarin Chinese, as e.g. 看(一)看 kàn (一 yi) kan ‘have a look’ and 介绍介绍 jièshào-jièshào ‘introduce/present a little’ (e.g. Chao 1968, Li & Thompson 1981, Tsao 2004). While reduplication is usually understood as a morphological phenomenon, I will here provide a syntactic analysis of reduplicated verbs within the constructionist framework put forth by Ramchand (2008), which is based on a syntactic decomposition of the event structure (see Basciano, Arcodia & Melloni 2014). The reduplicant is analysed as the bounded (temporal) path of the base verb, which originates in a dedicated position in the complex structure of vP (complement of procP).

Furthermore, I discuss interpretive and structural commonalities between verb reduplication and other types of event-delimiting constructions:

a. light verb constructions, i.e. the Italian ones with –ata nouns (e.g. fare una nuotata ‘take a swim’), which resemble reduplication in interpretive and structural properties (see Mirto 2011);

b. cognate object constructions, e.g. It. sorridere un sorriso triste ‘smile a sad smile’, which are also formally close to reduplication due the corradical nature of verb and (cognate) noun (see Pereltsvaig 1999; Masini & Melloni, forthcoming; Hong 1999, who considers the V−yi V pattern of reduplication as an instance of a cognate object construction).

*The present research is based on ongoing research projects with Bianca Basciano (University of Ca’ Foscari Venice) and Francesca Masini (University of Bologna).

References