**Connectives beyond connecting: converging evidence in the analysis of disjunction**

Connectives are those linguistic strategies used primarily to establish a specific semantic relation between two or more entities or states of affairs. Connectives play a crucial role in human reasoning and discourse, and have therefore received attention in a number of different research fields (e.g. logic, formal semantics, pragmatics). The aim of this paper is to integrate theoretical and empirical tools elaborated in neighboring (but only recently communicating) fields, such as linguistic typology and corpus-based discourse analysis, in order to understand the behavior of connectives in natural languages.

In particular, I will focus on connectives that do more than connecting, that is, connectives that bear additional functions beside the specific relation they encode. Examples (1a) and (1b) provide an instance of a conjunctive connective further encoding the non-exhaustivity of the set it creates: the use of –a in Chinese is indeed not compatible with exhaustive sets, as (1c) (Zhang 2008: 137).

(1) Mandarin Chinese

a. Shu-a, baozhi-a, bai-man-le zhengge shujia.
   book-and newspaper-and put-full-PF whole bookshelf
   ‘Books and newspapers (AMONG OTHER THINGS) occupied the whole bookshelf.’

b. Tamen tiao-a chang-a, huanqing shengli.
   they dance-and sing-and celebrate victory
   ‘They sang, danced (AMONG OTHER ACTIVITIES) to celebrate the victory.’

c. Yin-(*a) yang-(*a) duuli.
   yin-and yang-and opposite
   ‘Yin and yang are opposites.’

Example (2b) from Marathi shows the case of the disjunctive connective kî which, beside a relation of alternative, also encodes the request of a choice by the speaker, and could not be used in a declarative, non-interrogative context (as in (2a), where the disjunctive connective kîmwā has to be used.

(2) Marathi, Indo-Iranian, Indo-European, spoken in India (Pandharipande 1997: 162–163)

a. madhū āitSyā suśruesāthī suṭṭī gheiḷ kîmwā /*kī
   Madhu mother:GEN looking.after.for leave take:FUT:3sg OR
   tilā hospital:madhe tthewīl
   3SG.ACC hospital:in keep:FUT:3SG
   ‘Madhu will leave to take care of his mother or keep her in the hospital.’

b. to bādzārāṭī gelā kī*/kîmwā gharī gelā?
   3SG market:LOC go:PST:3SG.M OR home:LOC go:PST:3sg.M
   ‘Did he go to the market or did he go home?’

Except for some isolated remarks, no systematic research has been conducted on the role of non-connecting functions in the use and processing of connectives. Yet, as a number of studies show (Mauri & Giacalone Ramat 2015; Ariel & Mauri 2016; Mauri in press), such non-connecting functions are likely to i) influence the distribution and use of connectives in discourse, ii) influence the way connectives are processed, and iii) shed light on the diachronic changes that connectives undergo. Therefore, when analyzing connectives in natural languages, we simply cannot overlook this aspect.

I will first of all provide a classification of the non-connecting semantic dimensions that are relevant for connectives, distinguishing between speaker-oriented functions and reference-oriented functions. Speaker-oriented functions may refer to i) the speaker’s illocutionary aim in establishing the relation (e.g. interrogative vs. declarative, as in example (2)), ii) the speaker’s commitment
towards the relation itself (e.g. the degree to which the speaker is sure in establishing the relation, the likelihood that the speaker assigns to the actual occurrence of the relation), iii) the speaker’s attitude and commitment towards the linked elements (e.g. commitment towards the actual occurrence of each element). Reference-oriented functions are more objective and may refer to i) the set created through the relation (e.g. it can be a narrative frame, a class or a proper category, it can be open-ended or closed, non-exhaustive or exhaustive), ii) the status of the linked elements with respect to the set (e.g. they can be co-occurring members of the set, or exemplars of the category). I will argue that connectives may encode, together with one or more specific relations, also one or more speaker-oriented and reference-oriented functions.

Based on a typological survey on 130 languages, complemented by an in-depth, corpus-based study on English, I will then focus on the non-connecting functions of a basic (allegedly logical) connective type, namely disjunctive connectives. The examination of corpus data from English will provide converging evidence in support of the typological study, showing that non-connecting functions, even when not part of the encoded meaning, play an important role in explaining how connectives are used in discourse.

References

Mauri, Caterina (in press). ‘What do connectives and plurals have in common? The linguistic expression of ad hoc categories’. In Blochowiak, Joanna & Durrlemann-Tame, Stéphanie & Grisot, Cristina & Laenzlinger, Christopher (eds.). Formal models in the study of language. Berlin: Springer.