Commentary on Giada Palmieri: ‘Vagueness or ambiguity?’

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Workshop on Cross-Linguistic Semantics of Reciprocals

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Mixed readings

(1) Ka’ëškóne-ho é-axeén-ahtse-o’o
Child-pl.animate 3-scratch.animate-ahte-3pl.animate
‘Some children scratched themselves, some scratched each other.’

(2) Dětí se škrába-ly.
Children se scratch-pst.pl
‘Some children scratched themselves, some scratched each other.’
Mixed readings and non-mixed readings in Italian

- Lexical reflexive verbs (*shave, wash*)
  mixed readings ✓

- Non-lexical reflexive verbs (*criticize*)
  mixed readings ✗
Mixed readings and non-mixed readings in Italian

- Lexical reflexive verbs (*shave, wash*) (causative test, P-Co) mixed readings ✅
- Non-lexical reflexive verbs (*criticize*) (causative test, P-Co) mixed readings ❌
Mixed readings and non-mixed readings beyond Italian

- umýt, oholit – P-Co

(3) Žáci se oholili.
    pupils se shave-past.3pl
    ‘Some children shaved themselves, some shaved each other.’
    (Czech, my judgement)

Testing P-Co:

Bob is very vain: she always cares about being taken care of, well dressed and without a hair out of place. On Thursday he was by the beautician for manicure and he was shaved very nicely.

(4) Ve čtvrtek se Bob oholil.
Mixed readings and non-mixed readings beyond Italian

• kritizovat – P-Co

(5) Žáci se kritizovali.
   pupils se criticize-past.3pl
   ‘Some children criticized themselves, some criticized each other.’ (Czech, my judgement)

Testing P-Co:

Gianni is a hairdresser. He wants his customers to always be satisfied and he willingly accepts criticism and comments on his work so he can improve. Roberto, a customer, after getting a different cut than he wanted, began to criticize Gianni openly, attacking his way of working. Gianni was not offended at all! He accepted the criticisms, which he has considered constructive, and thanked Roberto.

(6) Gianni se kritizoval.
Up to 40% accept mixed construals with non-lexical reflexive verbs.

Little to no correlation between P-Co and mixed readings within verb groups.
Mixed readings and non-mixed readings in Italian

Findings reported in Giada’s talk

- Up to 40% accept mixed construals with non-lexical reflexive verbs
- Little to no correlation between P-Co and mixed readings within verb groups
- P-Co $\rightarrow$ mixed reading
Mixed readings and non-mixed readings in Italian

Findings reported in Giada’s talk

- Up to 40% accept mixed construals with non-lexical reflexive verbs
- Little to no correlation between P-Co and mixed readings within verb groups
- P-Co → mixed reading
- P-Co ↔ mixed reading, + noise
If mixed reading fully available even with non-lexical reflexive verbs, why does it appear less with *vote, admire* etc. than with *wash, dress* etc.?

*vote, admire* – social interaction verbs

*wash, dress* – end-result crucial

(7) My kids: We washed se!

(8) My kids: We admire se!

cf. the work in the Rational Speech Act Theory
Scontras & Goodman, Resolving uncertainty in plural predication. Cognition 2017
P-Co ↔ mixed reading, + noise

Giada’s findings

Hypothetical findings
Other tests to be used that would deliver more clear-cut results (zeugma test, causatives…)

Studying within-subject correlations

Adding baselines
only each-other readings
only reflexive readings

Other ideas?