

Clitic doubling and scope in Rioplatense Spanish

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This paper investigates the semantic contribution of accusative clitic doubling (CD) in Rioplatense Spanish, a phenomenon in which a direct object appears twice in a sentence: once as a determiner or quantifier phrase (henceforth the *doublee*) and once as a clitic, as in (1). For Spanish, it has been argued that clitic doubling is licensed by specificity (Suñer 1988) or definiteness (Gutiérrez-Rexach 1999; Leonetti 2007). On these accounts, clitics are analyzed as plain pronouns bound by their doublees.

Based on data from Rioplatense Spanish, I argue that CD encodes neither specificity nor definiteness. Instead, in CD constructions, the clitic is non-pronominally linked to a definite, and therefore presupposed set of individuals. The fact that direct object CD is mostly optional suggests that the doublee quantifies over this presupposed set independently of the clitic. For CD to be licensed, the relevant presupposed set must be non-empty and atomic.

- (1) *Ayer (lo) ví a Gustavo.*
yesterday 3SG:DO saw ANIM Gustavo
'Yesterday, I saw Gustavo.'

Consider the contrast in (2) and (3). In (2), the weak, and hence not definite quantifier receives a relational interpretation: it quantifies over a contextually salient, definite set of individuals (Lau's colleagues), which it accesses independently of the optional clitic. CD is licensed here by the presupposed existence of the mentioned set. (3), with a cardinal quantifier, lacks such a definite, presupposed set of individuals. Clitic doubling is, therefore, not possible in this case (cf. Barwise and Cooper (1981); Keenan and Stavi (1986); Partee (1988) for *cardinal* and *proportional quantifiers*).

- (2) Context:
*Lau fue a una fiesta donde tenían que estar **sus colegas**.*
Lau went to a party where she expected to see her colleagues.

(Los) vio a varios. Adivinó a quién.
3PL saw ANIM several guess ANIM who
'She saw several (of them). Guess whom.'

- (3) Context:
Lau está buscando un peluquero y se metió en internet.
Lau is looking for a/any hairdresser and she checked online.

(#Los) vio a varios.
3PL saw ANIM several
'She saw several (of them).'

Following von Stechow (2002, 2019), for the purposes of this paper *specificity* is captured as "Scolemitized" function (Kratzer 1998) which links the referent of a specific indefinite to

another discourse participant (*the anchor*), familiar to the speaker and hearer. In Rioplatense Spanish, specificity does not license CD. So in (4), specific narrow scope definite (*su novia* ‘his girlfriend’) cannot be CDed. And vice versa, as shows example (5), non-specifics can be CDed. We can conclude, that CD in Rioplatense Spanish does not encode specificity.

- (4) *Cada hombre (#la) quiere a su novia.*
 every man 3SG loves ANIM his girlfriend
 ‘Every man loves his girlfriend.’
- (5) *Quiero conocerlo a alguno de tus hermanos.*
 want:1SG get.to.know:3SG ANIM of your brothers
No me importa cuál.
 NEG me matter which
 ‘I want to get to know one of your brothers. I don’t care which one.’

I propose that clitics in CD constructions function as "Skolemized" mappings over presupposed definite sets, distinct from the mappings associated with specificity (cf. von Heusinger (2002, 2019) for specificity). These sets are interpreted as wide-scope existentials and must be both contextually accessible and composed of atomic individuals.

The incompatibility of CD with cardinal quantifiers (as in (3)), along with related behavior involving generics, mass nouns, and weak definites (not discussed here for the reasons of space), further supports the hypothesis that CD requires presupposed, atomic sets. In addition, examples involving negative pronouns like *nadie* ‘nobody’, (??) and *ninguno* ‘none’, (7), shows that the relevant sets must also be non-empty.

- (6) *Lau no (#lo) vio a nadie.* (7) *Lau no lo vio a ninguno.*
 Lau no 3SG saw ANIM nobody Lau no 3SG saw ANIM none
 ‘Lau didn’t see anybody.’ ‘Lau didn’t see any (of them).’

Nadie can be conceived as existential negation over domain of human individuals often not anchored to a specific salient set. *Ninguno*, on the other hand, involves quantification over a contextually salient set of antecedents.

In summary, accusative clitic doubling in Rioplatense Spanish does not encode specificity or definiteness. Rather it links a referent of complex CD-expression to a presupposed, atomic, and non-empty set. This account refines our understanding of CD, linking it to broader issues in the semantics of reference, quantification, and discourse accessibility.

References:

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