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Klaus von Heusinger, Georg A. Kaiser & Elisabeth Stark (eds.)

Fachbereich Sprachwissenschaft
Universität Konstanz
Fach D 185
D-78457 Konstanz

Germany

Konstanz

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Fachbereich Sprachwissenschaft der Universität Konstanz
Sekretariat des Fachbereichs Sprachwissenschaft, Frau Gabriele Fahmy,
D 185, D-78457 Konstanz, Tel. 07531/ 88-2465

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Grice (1989:37f.) states that the assertion of (2a.) suggests that there is no reference to the house of the speaker, but rather to an unknown not prominent or specific house. Similarly, when someone utters (2b.) the addressee of the utterance will infer that Paul is not meeting his wife, sister, mother or another discourse-prominent woman. Since Grice (1975) it has generally been assumed that this conclusion is not based on a logical implication, but rather on a pragmatic inference, namely a conversational implicature which can be accounted for with reference to a so-called *cooperative principle* and some corresponding *maxims of conversation*. One of these maxims, namely the (first) maxim of quantity, postulates that a conversational contribution should be as informative as required. Thus, according to this maxim, it is possible to reconstruct that the aforementioned examples bear no reference to a specific or prominent discourse item. Otherwise the speaker would not have been as informative as required. To put it in another way, in order to guarantee the link to a specific discourse item, the speaker should have used a more informative utterance, e.g. *I went into my house* or *Paul is meeting his wife*. Thus, he should have used more informative grammatical or lexical devices like the possessive expressions *my house* and *his wife*. Since this is not the case, it is conversationally implicated that the reference to a particular house or woman is not meant.

An analogous explanation might also be sketched with regard to DOM in Spanish, for, as shown in (1), marked DOs seem to correlate with specific, i.e. more informative readings. Following this idea, I will depart from the hypothesis given below:

- (3) Morphologically marked and non-marked DOs in Spanish form a contrast set where the *a*-marked DO is more informative than the non-*a*-marked DO. Whenever a non-*a*-marked DO is uttered in a context in which also an *a*-marked DO is possible (grammatical), it can be inferred by (a generalized quantity) implicature that a possible, more informative alternative, e.g. the reference to a specific discourse item, is not meant.

The paper is organized as follows. In section 2, I will first give a brief overview of Grice's theory of conversational implicatures including some innovations related to the theory. In section 3, I will analyse the aforementioned hypothesis concerning the different interpretations of marked and non-marked DOs with regard to specificity, animacy, definiteness, telicity and other interfering phenomena.

2. Conversational implicatures

2.1. Grice's account of conversational implicatures

It is well known that the essential ideas of Grice's Theory of conversational implicature are based on some fundamental assumptions about the rational nature of human communication, as stated in the cooperative principle³ and the corresponding maxims of conversation.

³ "Make your conversational contribution as informative as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (Grice 1989:26f).

The maxim of quantity

1. Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange).
2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

The maxim of quality

1. Do not say what you believe is false.
2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

The maxim of relation

Be relevant.

The maxim of manner

Be perspicuous.⁴

(Grice 1989:26f.)

According to the cooperative principle and its maxims, Grice explains his notion of conversational implicature in terms of what he calls the “general pattern for the working out of a conversational implicature” (Grice 1989:31). With respect to the maxim of quantity, which will be central to the present paper, this pattern can be illustrated by the following example:

- (4) (a) The driver has drunk three beers. (p)
 (b) +> The driver has drunk only three beers and no more. (q)

By saying *the driver has drunk three beers* (p) the speaker is presumed to follow the maxims or at least the Cooperative Principle. If the proposition is not strengthened to *the driver has drunk only three beers and no more* (q), i.e. if the speaker thinks that the driver has drunk more than three beers, he would not have been as informative as is required – by the first maxim of quantity – and thereby not cooperative by asserting (4a.). As the hearer is able to detect the latter reasoning, it can be concluded that by uttering (4a.) the speaker implicates conversationally that the driver has drunk only three beers and no more.

The given example represents the case of what Grice calls *generalized implicatures* and Levinson labels *standard implicatures*, i.e. implicatures that arise by observing the conversational maxims. In the following, I will deal exclusively with this type of implicatures, thus I will not consider the kind of implicatures that arise by deliberately violating or flouting the maxims.

2.2 Scalar implicatures and informativeness

Implicatures as the one given in (4) are referred to more precisely as *scalar quantity implicatures* or just *scalar implicatures*. Thanks to the work of Gazdar (1979), Horn (1973, 1984, 1989), Hirschberg (1991) and Levinson (1983, 2000), among others, these implicatures seem to be the best-studied type of implicatures. Further examples of scalar implicatures are given in (5):

⁴ The maxim of relation has the following sub-maxims: “1. Avoid obscurity of expression; 2. Avoid ambiguity; 3. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity); 4. Be orderly.”

- (5) (a) *Some* linguists are fools. +> not all linguists are fools
 (b) You can have coffee *or* ice cream. +> not both
 (c) *Possibly* there is life on mars. +> not certainly

The utterance (5a.) conversationally implicates that *not all* linguists are fools. Similarly the utterance (5b.) implicates that not both, coffee *and* ice can be chosen. In (5c.) it is inferred that it is *not certainly* the case that there is life on mars. It must be emphasized that although these inferences are indeed very generalized and routinised, they cannot be taken as logical implications. This can be illustrated by the cancellability of the inferred contents as shown with regard to the utterance (5a.):

- (6) (a) Some linguists are fools, if not all.
 (b) #All linguists are fools and maybe some not.

We can suspend or even deny with any sense of contradiction the default inference by uttering (6a.). Note that this is not the case with logical pairs as shown in (6b.). Since cancellability is one of the most important properties of implicatures, differentiating them from logical inferences, the test in (6a.) clearly shows that we are not dealing with logical (monotonic) relations but rather with implicatures, i.e. (nonmonotonic) pragmatic relationships.⁵

However, what all these implicatures have in common is that each utterance triggering the mentioned implicatures is based on a so-called *Horn scale* or entailment scale, which consists of a set of linguistic alternates or contrastive expressions of the same grammatical category. Usually, these expressions are arranged in a linear order by degree of *informativeness* or *semantic strength*. As shown in (7), such a scale will have the general form of an ordered set (indicated by angled brackets) of linguistic expressions or scalar predicates where the leftmost items are informationally richer than the rightwards ones, i.e. x_1 is more informative than x_2 , x_2 more informative than x_3 and so forth (Levinson 2000:79ff.).

- (7) $\langle x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n \rangle$

Most scales of this type are due to semantic implication, but not all of them. Some scales as for instance $\langle \textit{demand}, \textit{suggest} \rangle$ are not based on proper semantic implication, but on illocutionary commitment,⁶ i.e. the illocution of a demand commits the speaker to the illocution of a suggestion.⁷ Consequently, I will use the notion of informativeness as a sort of cover term for semantic as well as for pragmatic strength. To put it another way, the notion of informativeness can be rendered more precise in terms of semantic (truth) conditions and pragmatic conditions. The more informative an expression or utterance is with respect to an alternative one, the more semantic or pragmatic conditions must be fulfilled.⁸

⁵ See Becker (1997), Horn (1989) or Levinson (2000:67f.) for discussion.

⁶ For the notion of illocutionary commitments see Searle & Vanderveken (1985:23-25). Note that Searle & Vanderveken do not relate to this notion in terms of scales.

⁷ Notice that illocutionary commitments usually are not discussed within the framework of generalized conversational implicature. Following Harnish (1976/1991) and Hirschberg (1991) Levinson (2000:98ff.) discusses some other types of non-entailment scales, as, for instance, putative scales ($\langle \textit{succeed}, \textit{try} \rangle$) or scales involving co-hyponyms ($\langle \textit{white}, \textit{red}, \textit{blue}, \dots \rangle$). For a critique of the notion of scales applied to quantity implicatures see Primus (1997:264ff.).

⁸ This loose definition of informativeness is roughly in accordance with the one used by Levinson (2000:115), which is based on the conception of Bar-Hillel & Carnap (1952) and which is formulated as follows: “*p* is more informative than *q* if the set of states of affairs that *q* rules out is a proper subset of the set that *p* rules out.”

From the hierarchy given in the scale and the maxim of quantity it can be drawn that, as Levinson (2000:79) puts it, the “assertion of a lower ranking (rightwards) alternate implicates that the speaker is not in a position to assert a higher ranking one – for if the speaker was in that position, he or she should [by the first maxim of quantity] have asserted the stronger sentence.” Some examples of Horn scales are given below:

- (8) < *all, most, many, some* >
 < *none, not all* >
 < *A and B, A or B* >
 < *n, ..., 5, 4, 3, 2, 1* >
 < *must, should, may* >
 < *always, often, sometimes* >
 < *demand, suggest* >

With regard to the quantifier set *all* is more informative than *most*, *most* more informative than *many* and so forth. Note that negation generally inverts the scale. Thus there is also a scale <*none, not all*>. With respect to the connective set *and-or*, it can be derived that a conjunction with *and* is always more informative than a conjunction with *or*. Therefore (5b.) is pragmatically strengthened to *you can have either coffee or ice-cream, but not both*. The other scales can be treated in a similar way.⁹

2.3 Scalar implicatures as qq-implicatures

In the theory of generalized conversational implicature several efforts have been made to elaborate the Gricean ideas by reducing the conversational maxims to some fundamental principles that govern utterance interpretation (see Horn 1984 or Levinson 1983, 2000). Crucially, the suggested approaches require the combination of some conversational maxims,¹⁰

as provided by Primus’s (1997) interactional analysis. According to Primus, the working out of an implicature does not depend on single conversational maxims but rather on the interaction of some maxims, whereby the first maxim of quantity plays a crucial role. Her approach assumes three modalities of the first maxim of quantity which, depending on the interaction with certain other maxims, systematically yield different types of implicatures, namely *qq-implicatures* (quantity and quality), *qr-implicatures* (quantity and relation) and *qp-implicatures* (quantity and politeness).

I will exclusively deal with qq-implicatures, for the other types of quantity-based implicatures do not seem to play a significant role in the alternation of DOs in Spanish. A definition of qq-implicatures is given in (9).

⁹ See Levinson (2000:79ff.) for a detailed illustration of different scales and scalar implicatures.

¹⁰ Horn (1984:11ff.) assumes two general principles, a so-called Q-Principle which is hearer-based and relies on the first maxim of quantity and the maxim of relation (“Make your contribution sufficient, say as much as you can”) and a speaker-based R-Principle which relies on the second maxim of quantity, the maxim of relation, and the maxim of manner (“Make your contribution necessary”). Atlas & Levinson (1981) and Levinson (1983, 2000) make a similar proposal. Levinson (2000) differentiates between a Q-Principle based on the first maxim of quantity, an I-Principle based on the second maxim of quantity, and a M-Principle based on the first and fourth maxims of manner.

- (9) Quantity and quality based implicatures (qq-implicatures)
 The assertion of an utterance *A* instead of any other assertion $B_1, \dots B_n$ is motivated only by the first maxim of quantity and by the maxims of quality. This motivation is due to the fact that the speaker does not know whether $B_1, \dots B_n$ apply or knows that $B_1, \dots B_n$ do not apply (Primus 1997:275, my translation).

The notion of qq-implicatures provides an important specification of scalar implicatures, for scalar implicatures, categorically do not only depend on the first maxim of quantity, as suggested by Horn (1984) or Levinson (2000). They also do rely on the sub-maxims of quality,¹¹ which can be proved with respect to the examples given in the last section. It seems to be the case that the choice of a weaker alternate, like e.g. *some linguists are fools* instead of the stronger *all linguists are fools*, is motivated by the fact that the speaker either knows that the stronger alternative does not hold (first maxim of quality), or simply does not know if the stronger alternate is the case (second maxim of quality). Unlike other types of quantity implicatures, qq-implicatures characteristically yield implicatures in which a stronger alternate is negated.¹²

3. Differential Object Marking and Informativeness

3.1 Specificity

According to the initial hypothesis in (3) morphologically marked and non-marked DOs in Spanish form a contrast set where the *a*-marked DO is more informative than the non-*a*-marked DO. Given the theoretical specification in the last section, this hypothesis can be rendered more precise. First, it seems adequate to substitute the term of contrast set by the concept of a Horn scale. For direct objects in Spanish, this scale can be conceived of as follows:

- (10) <*a* DO, DO>

A central notion on which the hypothesis and the aforementioned scale are based on is the concept of informativeness. As already mentioned in section 2.2, I will use informativeness as a cover term for semantic and pragmatic strength. In the case of DO this can be put generally in the following way: The more referentially, aspectually, logically or otherwise restricted the conditions imposed by the DO in question are, the more informative the utterance in which that DO is embedded. With respect to the notion of specificity,¹³ we will thus say that an utterance which makes reference to a specific discourse item – as in the example of *busco a una secretaria* ('I am looking for a certain secretary') – is more informative than an utterance which lacks this restricted referential condition – like in the case of *busco una secretaria* ('I am looking for a secretary').¹⁴

¹¹ The dependency of the first maxim of quantity on the maxim of quality is also assumed by Harnish (1976, 1991), Krifka (1995) or Matsumoto (1995).

¹² Note that Primus's (1997:274f.) account of quantity-based implicatures does not depend on Horn scales since these scales are seen as an after-effect derived from the general fact that quantity implicatures must not contradict the conventional meaning of the assertion which trigger them.

¹³ Specificity is used here in a very general sense without distinguishing between the different types of specificity discussed in the literature, i. e. *scopal specificity*, *epistemic specificity*, etc. See von Heusinger (2002:14f.) for a detailed overview.

¹⁴ Note, however, that, according to Leonetti (2003:75), *a*-marked DOs may admit both, strong and weak interpretations in most cases, i.e. specific and non-specific readings. If this is true, *a*-marked DOs should be considered to be semantically

A further term that might be specified more precisely with respect to the initial hypothesis (3) is the notion of implicature. We can conceive of the inferences triggered by non-*a*-marked DOs as qq-implicatures, at least as far as specificity is concerned. Recall that the crucial motivation for this type of implicature is that the speaker does not know if a potential, more informative alternative is true or that he knows that the stronger alternative is simply wrong. The latter seems to be the case when someone utters *busco una secretaria* ('I am looking for a secretary') instead of *busco a una secretaria*. According to the issues discussed in this section, we can slightly modify the suggested hypothesis as in (11).

- (11) Morphologically marked and non-marked DOs in Spanish form a Horn scale where the *a*-marked DO is more informative than the non-*a*-marked DO (<*a* DO, DO>). Whenever a non-*a*-marked DO is uttered in a context in which also an *a*-marked DO is possible (grammatical), it can be inferred by a qq-implicature that a possible, more informative alternative, e.g. the reference to a specific discourse item, is not meant.

3.2 Animacy

Although the preceding section is primarily concerned with the category of specificity, there is no doubt that the distribution of DOM in Spanish is not generally determined by specificity, but rather by animacy, or at least by a mixed scale of these features (see e.g. von Heusinger & Kaiser 2003, Leonetti 2003, Torrego Salcedo 1999). Unlike specificity, animacy seems to be a necessary condition for DOM.

- (12)(a) Veo (a) un niño.
 see.present-1.sg (to) a child
 'I see a child.'
- (b) Veo (*a) una farola que está rota.
 see.present-1.sg (to) a street lamp which be.present-3.sg. broken
 'I see a street lamp which is broken.'

As shown by the latter examples, DOM is only acceptable with animated NPs, whereas it is clearly ungrammatical with non-animated ones, whether they are specific or not – at least in standard Spanish.¹⁵ Given the assumption that an individuated object entity is generally more marked and prominent than a non-individuated one (see e.g. Aissen 2003:436ff.), an animate DO can be conceived of as being more informative than a non-animate one. Thus, the suggested Horn scale and the implicit informativity relation, namely that DOM always correlates with the more informative DO is basically confirmed within the domain of animacy. The reference to the notion of implicature, however, is questionable within this domain. Unlike specificity, animacy essentially is a lexical property (see von Heusinger & Kaiser 2003:43ff.). Thus, in general, there is no need to refer to implicatures, since the lexical content of an NP is bound to either an animated or a non-animated interpretation. Consequently, we hardly find minimal pairs in which the only discriminatory device is the *a*-

ambiguous. Consequently, the assumption postulated here, namely that constructions with *a*-marked DOs are more informative transitive clauses that entail constructions with non-*a*-marked DOs would be problematic.

¹⁵ Note that, unlike in standard Spanish, in Spanish of Río de la Plata, DOM seems to be controlled by specificity and definiteness (see von Heusinger & Kaiser 2003:42ff).

marker. Nevertheless, in some cases in which animacy is communicated metonymically, we do find such minimal pairs. Consider the following examples taken from Torrego Salcedo (1999:1799):

- (13)(a) Estudia el pueblo de Numancia.
investigate.present-3.sg the village of Numancia
'(s)he investigates the village of Numancia.'
- (b) Estudia al pueblo de Numancia.
investigate.present-3.sg to the village of Numancia
'(s)he investigates to the population of Numancia.'

Whilst the utterance in (13a.) without DOM makes reference to the *city* of Numancia, the alternative one in (13b.) refers to the city of Numancia in terms of its *population* (see Torrego Salcedo 1999:1799), which is a more informative reference. Given this contrast, it can be assumed that from an utterance like (13a.), it is inferred by a qq-implicature that the reference to the population of Numancia is not meant. Therefore, the notion of implicature is not completely irrelevant to the contrast of animated and non-animated DOs, but it is reduced to rather marginal cases like those in (13).¹⁶

3.3 Definiteness

Definiteness is another well-known property which is sensitive to DOM, at least in combination with animacy. Whereas the *a*-marking of animate indefinite DOs depends on whether the NP in question is specific or not, animate definite NPs must be *a*-marked.

- (14)(a) Trajeron (a) un policía
bring.past-3.pl (to) a policeman
'They brought a policeman'
- (b) Trajeron *el/al policía
bring.past-3.pl the policeman
'They brought the policeman'

As shown in the latter example (14b.), the combination of a definite determiner and an animate non-*a*-marked DO is ungrammatical. Although, generally speaking, there might be a link between specificity and definiteness, definiteness independently triggers the presence of *a*-marked DOs. Consider the examples in (15):

¹⁶ Note that the relevance of animacy is by far more complex than it is suggested here, particularly if the interaction of animacy and specificity is taken into consideration. As Leonetti (2003:72ff.), among others, has shown, the restriction of animacy is so dominant that animate NPs not only rule out non-animated NPs but also non-specific ones. As in the example given below in which *alguien* ('someone') and *nadie* ('anyone') exclude the reference to specific discourse items, there are many cases of *a*-marked DOs which have a non-specific reading.

- | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|----|----------|---|-----------------------------------|-------------|----|--------|
| (i) Está buscando | a | alguien. | / | No está | buscando | a | nadie. |
| (S)he is looking for | to | someone' | / | (S)he is not | looking for | to | anyone |
| '(S)he is looking for someone' | | | / | (S)he is not looking for someone' | | | |

For a discussion of the interaction of animacy, specificity and other related categories see Aissen (2003), von Heusinger & Kaiser (2003) and Leonetti (2003).

- (15) Besó *(a) todo el mundo.
 kiss.past-3.sg (to) whole the world
 ‘(S)he kissed *(to) everybody.’ (Torrego Salcedo 1999:1796)

Even though *todo el mundo* (‘everybody’) is a strong determiner that cannot be interpreted as specific, the presence of the *a*-marker is necessary. Whatever the relation of specificity and definiteness might be, the data suggests that DOM once again correlates with the referentially more informative NPs, namely the definite ones. However, as already observed in the category of animacy, there is no need to refer to implicatures in order to explain the interpretation of DOM with regard to definiteness. Since non-*a*-marked (animate) definite DOs are clearly ruled out, we do not obtain any grammatical alternatives on which a qq-implicature or any other type of quantity implicature could be based.

Up to this point the sketched analysis based on the notion of informativeness might seem to be a mere reformulation of the traditional approach, according to which DOM is sensitive to the universal animacy and definiteness scales, i.e. triggered by high-ranking values of these scales like [+animate] [+definite] [+specific] which are generally interpreted as (semantically) marked values for direct objects (see e.g. Aissen 2003). However, one of the main advantages of the present analysis is that it can be applied to other phenomena related to DOM that go beyond the individuating properties of the object NP.

3.4 Telicity

One of these phenomena is telicity, i.e. the aspectual or, more generally, the event-structural property which denotes that an event is bounded, as it is the case with predicates like *drown* or *eat an apple*.¹⁷ According to Torrego Salcedo (1999:1786f), telicity functions as a further restriction of DOM in Spanish for *a*-marked DOs are obligatory with telic verbs as, for instance, *insultar* (‘insult’):

- (16) Marta insultó *(a) un compañero
 Marta insult.past-3.sg (to) a colleague
 ‘Marta insulted a colleague’

Moreover, DOM may trigger aspectual alternations with activity verbs such as *besar* (‘kiss’) or stative verbs like *conocer* (‘know’) which are compatible with *a*-marked and non-*a*-marked DOs (see 17a.). Torrego Salcedo (1999:1789) states that DOM enforces a telic reading. Consider the following examples:

¹⁷ For a detailed notion of telicity see e.g. Dowty (1979:133ff.) or Krifka (1989, 1998:197f.).

- (17)(a) *Besaron* (a) un niño.
 kiss.past-3.pl to a child
 ‘They kissed a child.’
- (b) *Besaron* a un niño en un segundo
 kiss.past-3.pl to a child in one second
 ‘They kissed a child in one second.’
- (c) **Besaron* un niño en un segundo
 kiss.past-3.pl a child (in one second)
 ‘They kissed a child (in one second).’ (Torrego Salcedo 1999:1789)

As shown in (17b.), *besar* can be combined with the measure adverbial *en un segundo*. On the other hand, this combination is ruled out with non-*a*-marked DOs as shown in (17c.) – at least according to Torrego Salcedo's evaluation.¹⁸ Apparently, these aspectual alternations seem to be in line with our argumentation.

Firstly, it can be argued that a telic event requires more truth conditions than an atelic event: Atelic predicates like *besar un niño* (‘to kiss a child’) or *eat apples* denote events with a simple aspectual structure. They have the property that, whenever the respective kissing- and eating-situations are true at a given time interval, they are then true at any part of that time interval. This does not hold for telic predicates like, for instance, *besar a un niño* (‘to kiss a child’) or *eat an apple* since the latter events denote bounded situations which refer to complex structured kissing- and eating-events respectively. Crucially, the latter events involve a natural or intended endpoint of the described situations. Thus, there is no real subinterval at which neither the kissing of a child nor the eating of an apple is true. This condition is not fulfilled until the very end of the events described, i.e. after the child in question has been kissed and the apple is eaten up (see Krifka 1989:236ff., 1998:197ff., among others). Due to these restricted aspectual conditions telic events can be considered as more informative than atelic events.

Secondly, it is confirmed that DOM systematically correlates with telic predications, i.e. the more informative reading. Furthermore implicature seem to play a certain role at the aspectual level: It can be assumed that in utterances such as *besaron un niño* (‘they kissed a child’) the aspectual meaning is strengthened to an atelic interpretation by virtue of a qq-implicature, since a potential more informative alternative, namely the telic alternative *besaron a un niño*, has not been uttered.

3.5 Verbal meaning shift

Another interesting phenomenon of DOM discussed by Leonetti (2003:80f) following Fauconnier (1984) is concerned with alternations, in which the verb undergoes a semantic shift of its lexical meaning. An example is given in (18):

¹⁸ For a different analysis and evaluation of these examples see Delbecque (2002:95-97).

- (18)(a) Estaba dibujando a una niña
 be.past-3.sg drawing to a girl
 ‘(S)he was portraying a girl’
- (b) Estaba dibujando una niña.
 be.past-3.sg drawing a girl
 ‘(S)he was drawing a girl’ (Leonetti 2003:80)

Whilst the alternative with DOM (18a.) makes reference to a *portraying*-event, the alternative with the non-*a*-marked DO (18b.) makes reference to a *drawing*-event. Since portraying is a specific form of drawing, it can be concluded that portraying-events entail drawing-events. Obviously, this entailment relation is unidirectional, i.e. every portraying-event is a drawing-event but not vice-versa. Moreover, it can be observed once more that DOM correlates with the stronger, more informative reading of the predication. Finally, the interpretative effect of the DO-alternation can partly be accounted for on the basis of a Gricean reasoning. Similarly as shown with regard to specificity and telicity, an utterance with a non-*a*-marked DO like (18a.) is strengthened by a qq-implicature to the weaker lexical reading of the predication, namely a drawing- and not a portraying-event. If the speaker of (18a.) thinks that the referent of the subject was in fact portraying a girl, he would not have been as informative as required and thereby not cooperative by asserting (18a.).

Although the described alternations are usually related to a rather small class of verbs like *dibujar* (‘draw’) o *describir* (‘describe’) it seems that there are quite more verbs that show similar meaning shifts and can therefore be analysed in a similar way. The following verbs with its English translations are taken from Delbecque (2002:93f.).

(19)	DO	<i>a</i> DO
<i>conocer</i>	identify, know	get acquainted with, enter in contact with
<i>encontrar</i>	find	encounter, meet
<i>mirar</i>	look at	have in focus
<i>querer</i>	want	love, have positive feelings toward
<i>superar</i>	outrank (a value)	win from, be better than, outclass

As the English translations of these meaning alternations suggest, the meaning of the constructions with DOM always seems to be informationally richer than that of the meaning of the constructions without DOM. Apparently, this is the case because the meaning alternations are based on a one-way-semantic entailment – or at least on an illocutionary commitment –, in which the more informative predications are associated with the alternates with DOM. An utterance like *quiero a una mujer con ojos azules* (‘I love a woman with blue eyes’), for instance, entails – or at least commits the speaker – to the alternative utterance *quiero una mujer con ojos azules* (‘I want a woman with blue eyes’).¹⁹

¹⁹ Notice, however, that not all meaning alternations can be explained in terms of proper entailment relations or illocutionary commitment, as one can prove with regard to a lot of other verbs mentioned by Delbecque (2002: 93f.) as, for instance,

3.6 Agentivity

A last interpretative effect to be discussed in this paper is the degree of agentivity that may vary according to the clausal framing of some verbs like *matar* ('kill') or *invitar* ('invite'). Consider the following examples provided by Torrego Salcedo (1999:1786):

- (20)(a) Han matado a un buscador de oro.
 kill.past-3.pl to a gold-digger
 'They have killed a gold-digger.'
- (b) Han matado un buscador de oro.
 kill past- 3.pl. a gold-digger
 'A gold-digger has been killed.'

According to Torrego Salcedo, (20a.) involves a *direct causation* of the event in which the gold-digger may have been killed by shooting him down. In contrast, (20b.) suggests an *indirect causation* of the event, for instance that the gold-digger was killed in an accident. With reference to this contrast Torrego Salcedo states that it is only in the construction with DOM (20a.) that the subject entity can be conceived of as a real agent. The subject entity of the alternate without DOM (20b.) is supposed to merely *cause* the death of the gold-digger and can therefore not be regarded an agent in a proper sense. With regard to a prototypical conception of thematic roles like Dowty (1991) or Primus (1999), it could also be concluded that the degree of *agentivity* in constructions of the first type is higher, i.e. closer to the prototype of an agent, than in the latter type. Thus, the observed alternations seem to raise a question of agentivity.

Given that a clause which entails a subject entity with a higher degree of agentivity requires more semantic truth conditions than one with a less agentive reading, the first one can be regarded as more informative than the latter one. Consequently, the alternations in the degree of agentivity can be taken as a further piece of evidence for the suggested hypothesis that DOM systematically correlates with the more informative reading, and that the interpretation of utterances with non-*a*-marked DOs can be accounted for with reference to qq-implicatures. However, it is important to emphasise that, unlike in the other examined cases, the distribution of DOM and the notion of informativeness do neither affect the interpretation of the DO itself, nor the verbal or aspectual meaning but rather the interpretation of the subject.

Similar interpretative effects as the one observed by Torrego Salcedo are also found in accusative-dative alternation pairs in German. Wegener (1985) gives the examples in (21) that have been evaluated by 38 informants.

afectar ('alter the structure of' vs. 'have to do with, have a connection with'), *atender* ('attend, treat' vs. 'be perceptive to, pay attention to') or *evocar* ('evoke' vs. 'remind of'). Delbecque proposes a construction grammar approach in order to explain the different meaning alternations. In a few words, her basic assumption is that the construction without DOM marks the force-dynamics between the subject entity and the object entity as an unidirectional relationship, whereas the construction with DOM marks this relation as a bidirectional one. Consequently, she assumes two different transitive frames: one with a single-role assignment (ACTOR-GOAL) and one with a double-role assignment (ACTOR-GOAL; CARRIER-ATTRIBUTOR), which are associated with constructions with non-*a*-marked and *a*-marked DOs respectively. However, given that bidirectional relationships and double role assignments can be regarded as more informative than unidirectional relationships and single-role assignments, it might well be that Delbecque's approach and the one sketched in this paper are compatible. The status of the relationship between subject and object (unidirectional vs. bidirectional force-dynamics) can probably be taken as a further central parameter of a principle of informativeness that may provide a unified account for the distribution and interpretation of DO-alternation.

- (21)(a) Er trat *ihn* auf den Fuß.
 he.nom kick.past-3.sg him.acc. on the foot
 ‘He stepped on his foot.’
- (b) Er trat *ihm* auf den Fuß.
 he.nom kick.past-3.sg him.dat. on the foot
 ‘He stepped on his foot.’

According to the results of the evaluation, the stepping-event in the accusative construction (21a.) is read as a more intense and intended one as it is the case in the alternative dative construction. Wegener (1985:169) concludes that the difference between the two constructions lies in the degree of agentivity, i.e. the degree of responsibility attributed to the subject referent. Within the scope of these striking parallels between the Spanish and German alternations in object realisation, it is interesting to observe that in Spanish the more agentive reading correlates with the morphologically more marked category, namely *a*-marked DOs, whereas in German it is the less marked category, namely accusative, which is associated with the more informative reading.

4. Conclusion

The brief analysis of the data attempts to show that the distribution and interpretation of DOM is controlled by a number of constraints and interpretative effects which generally support the suggested hypothesis that DOM in Spanish is a question of informativeness. Even though the reference to implicatures does not always seem to be possible, the concept of qq-implicature helps to explain parts of the interpretation phenomena, namely the interpretation of non-*a*-marked DOs.²⁰ Considering some fundamental semantic and pragmatic domains like individuation (animacy, definiteness and specificity), lexical meaning, aspect (telicity) and role semantics (agentivity) it has been shown that *a*-marked DOs seem to correlate systematically with a stronger, more informative reading of a given utterance. In this sense, *a*-insertion iconically reflects the semantic markedness of a given transitive construction.

Moreover, the analysis shows that DOM is not a simple reflex of referential or individuating properties like animacy or specificity, as generally suggested (see e.g. Aissen 2003). Rather DOM seems to affect the whole clause, in which it is embedded.²¹ The prepositional *a*-marker may alter not only the semantics of the DO, for instance by instantiating a specific reading, but also the semantics of the subject by providing a higher degree of agentivity, the semantics of the predicate by coding a specific verbal meaning, or, finally, the semantics of the whole VP by providing a telic reading of the event described.

Notice that the discussed phenomena represent only a selection of many more constraints and interpretative effects associated with DOM, like e.g. clitic-doubling and left-dislocation (see e.g. Leonetti 2003:90f.), causativity (see Laca 2003:200f.), affectedness (see Naess 2004:1190ff., Torrego Salcedo 1999:1790f.), individualisation, or genericity (see e.g. Leonetti 2003:79ff.). Certainly all these phenomena do not coincide by accident. It might well be that at least some of them are related to topicality, as stated, e.g. by Laca (1995:85ff.) or Leonetti (2003:83ff.). Moreover, some of these phenomena may depend on others, e.g. telicity could

²⁰ Since implicatures might generally determine semantic change and grammaticalisation processes (see e.g. Rolf 1995) qq-implicatures might also play a role in a diachronical perspective of DOM. Probably, the emergence of *a*-marked DOs in Spanish has strengthened the interpretation of non-*a*-marked DOs to weak readings, i.e. existential readings.

²¹ See also Naess (2004) and Delbecque (2002) who share this view independently.

be understood as a side-effect that arises due to the referential prominence of the marked DO. However, given that neither the relevance of these dependencies nor the notion of topicality should be incompatible with the given analysis based on informativeness it might be very interesting to develop the presented approach in order to examine if it qualifies as a unified account of DOM. Of course, further research in this direction has to be based on a much more precise definition of the concept of informativeness, considering reliable criteria to test informativeness, as well as on a larger pool of data.

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