

Daniel Jacob
Universität Freiburg im Breisgau
daniel.jacob@romanistik.uni-freiburg.de

Syntax between compositionality and syntagmatic arbitrariness: cases of mismatch between the formal and the semantic topology of syntactic phrases

Frege's principle of compositionality is an assumption about the isomorphism between the syntagmatic structure of the syntax of an utterance, and the syntagmatic structure of the semantic content underlying the syntactic structure, i.e. a match between syntax and semantic structure. Postulating such a principle means claiming "motivation" for syntax (Saussure himself showed that syntagmaticity is opposed to his principle of arbitrariness) and denying autonomy of syntax (the syntactic structure of a phrase being in principle motivated by the semantic structure).

Parting from such a principle, we can observe certain cases of mismatch in which the semantic structure of a phrase is not directly deducible from (or even is contradictory to) the compositional rules of semantic interpretation of the complex syntactic expressions. Those situations are to be seen as cases of arbitrariness in syntax. Here, we need to distinguish between cases of constructional opacity (as suggested e.g. in Construction Grammar), and cases in which the deviation of the semantic structure from the generally assumed principles of isomorphism can be described in a systematic way. Examples to be treated include double negation, reflexivity without reflexive meaning, adjectival and adverbial scope (traditionally referred to as *enallagé*), morphological marking in complex phrases (e.g. coll. Spanish *se loS digo* "I tell IT to THEM"), etc.