

PREPOSITIONS “COM” AND “MAIS”: THEIR THEMATIC ROLES

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The article aims to offer an analysis for the thematic roles or semantic contribution provided by the preposition *com* ('with') in several contexts in Portuguese. The analysis can be extended for prepositional uses of the adverb *mais* as well as other prepositions with equivalent meaning in different languages. A close examination of sentences with DPs introduced by *com* suggests that they convey several thematic roles, as diverse as Agent, Instrument, Causer, Objective, Theme, Patient, Beneficiary, Possession, Mental State, Company and Time (cf. (1)-(11)). This situation creates two puzzles: (i) what is the semantic contribution made by *com*? How can it express so many different and even opposite notions? (ii) How to accommodate this with theories about Theta Criterion (in which a theta-role must be unequivocally assigned to one DP) and Theta Hierarchy (in which each theta-role must be associated with a unique syntactic position)? In some of the previous sentences, the same theta-role is assigned to different DPs in distinct syntactic positions (cf. (12)-(13)). The situation is particularly intriguing with reciprocal/symmetric verbs, where *com*-phrases apparently do not introduce adjuncts (not required by the verb), but arguments. In this paper, we discuss two proposals on thematic role attribution and thematic hierarchy: (i) Dowty (1991)'s proposal based on proto-roles (proto-agent and proto-patient); (ii) Cançado (2003, 2005)'s proposal based on decomposition of semantic properties. We also discuss Godoi (2008, 2009)'s and Wachowicz and Frutos (2009)'s analyses for the semantic and syntactic behavior of symmetric verbs. We show that neither Dowty (1991) nor Cançado (2003, 2005) can account for the semantic behavior of *com*-phrases, making wrong predictions about symmetric predicates. Dowty (1991)'s theory wrongly predicts that sentences in (14) should be ungrammatical and those in (15) grammatical. Cançado (2003, 2005)'s idea that all “*all argument that violates thematic hierarchy must appear in the sentence as an adjunct, marked by a preposition*” may accommodate (14)-(15), but it still does not offer a clear explanation for: (i) why *com* is able to assign so many thematic roles; (ii) why it can assign either agent or patient/theme even with the same verbal predicate. Based on those problems, we try to formulate a simpler analysis for the semantic contribution of *com/mais*. Our working hypothesis (based on GOMES 2017) is that prepositions like *com* do not express/assign different roles to its complements; they always convey the same semantic contribution, which can be characterized as the feature <participant of the event> (which could be integrated in Dowty's proposal as a Proto-Participant role, neutral between Proto-Agent and Proto-Patient). Different interpretations manifested by *com*-DPs result from the interaction of (i) this <participant > feature; (ii) the inherent semantic features of PP's complements; (iii) and the features of the predicate event to which the PP is connected, aided by conversational implicatures (GRICE, 1975). In sum, the polysemy associated with *com* is not due to semantics, but to pragmatic principles/conversational maxims. For instance, if an animate DP as *Maria* is introduced by *com* as a participant in an event with a verb compatible only with agent (cf. *sair* in (1a)), an implicature may produce the reading that *Maria's* participation in the event is similar to the agent. If an animate DP as *Pedro* is introduced in an event (as *assaltar*) that requires an agent and a patient and both of them are already expressed, as in (1b), the *com*-DP may be interpreted either as a co-agent or a co-patient: when the patient is non-animated as in (1b), the animate *com*-DP is interpreted as a co-agent; when both arguments are animate, both interpretations are available for the *com*-DP (cf. (16)), although agent reading is favored for some speakers. If a non-animate DP as *o carro* is introduced by *com* in an event that requires only human participants, an implicature will produce non-agent interpretations: instrument, if a human participant/agent is already expressed (cf. (2)); (ii) causer, if there is no human agent participant expressed in the sentence; and so on. The important point here is that those readings can be cancelled, which is incompatible with the notion of thematic/semantic role, but can be captured by Grice's notion of implicature. In (17), *Maria* can be seen as an agent or as a patient depending on whether the previous linguistic context either describes *Maria* as a somnambulist who engage in intercourse with her husband João or describes João as a criminal who invaded *Maria's* house. Similar remarks can be made about (18) with *conversar*. One should note that a patient thematic role is simply not assumed for verbs like *transar* or *conversar*.

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| (1) a. João saiu <i>com</i> <i>Maria</i> . | b. João assaltou o banco <i>com</i> <i>Pedro</i> . | (Agent) |
| (2) João abriu a porta <i>com</i> o pé-de-cabra. | b. Pedro saiu <i>com</i> o carro. | (Instrument) |
| (3) A porta se abriu <i>com</i> o vento. | b. A manteiga derreteu <i>com</i> o calor. | (Causer) |
| (4) João concorda <i>com</i> <i>Pedro</i> . | | (Objectivo/Object of reference) |
| (5) As mesas foram levadas <i>com</i> as cadeiras para a outra sala. | | (Theme) |

- (6) O padre casou João *com Maria*. (Patient)
- (7) João dividiu as joias/os presentes (generosamente) *com os amigos*. (Beneficiary)
- (8) João encontrou Pedro (ontem) *com as joias*. (Possession)
- (9) João deixou Pedro *com medo/vergonha*. (Mental state)
- (10) João está em casa *com Maria*. (Company)
- (11) João acordou/dormiu *com o raiar do dia*. (Time)
- (12) a. [agente João] tomou café da manhã com [agente a esposa].
b. João encontrou [tema a filha] ontem com [tema o namorado]
- (13) a. [agente João] transou com [agente a esposa].
b. [paciente João] casou com [paciente Maria].
- (14) a. Minhas filhas (fizeram comunhão, crisma e) casaram com [agent o padre Flávio].
b. Noivinhas, vocês se casaram com [agent o padre Fernando] com efeito civil?
c. Eu e meu noivo vamos casar com [agent um juiz de paz].
- (15) a. *[agent O padre Flávio] casou com [patient minhas filhas].
b. *[agent O padre Fernando] casou com [patient vocês] com efeito civil?
c. *[agent Um juiz de paz] vai casar com [patient meu noivo e eu].
- (16) João matou o vizinho (ontem) com [agent/patient a amante].
- (17) [agent João transou com [agent/patient Maria] (enquanto ela dormia).
- (18) João conversa com [patient a mãe] todos os dias (pois os médicos disseram a ele que pessoas em coma ouvem o que acontece em volta).

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