snippets

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Decomposing scalar approximatives in Greek

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Greek has several *less precise scalar approximator* constructions (see Sauerland and Stateva 2007 for the term). Focusing on (1) and (2), I argue that the meaning of these constructions is built in the syntax. (1) and (2) are found in informal registers and involve determiners otherwise used as negative polarity items (Stavrou and Terzi 2008; Giannakidou 2012) (*kan*-Ds). *Kan*-Ds are not licensed by negation in these contexts (3). In (1), *ka-mia* combines with singular feminine nouns derived from numerals ending in *-aria/-osti* that are followed by NP_{Plural}. In (2), singular *kan*-Ds combine with expressions of time or amount with which they agree in gender, yielding the interpretation of 'around one'. *Kan* is not obligatory in (1).

(1) Agorasa ka-mia ikos-aria/ ekato-sti vivlia
bought.1SG KAN-one.FEM twenty-FEM/ hundred-FEM books
'I bought approximately 20/100 books.'

(2) Thelo kan-ena mina/ ka-mia ora/ kan-ena kilo mila
want.1SG KAN-one.MASC month.MASC/ KAN-one.FEM hour.FEM/ KAN-one.NEUT kilo.NEUT apples
'I need about a month/about an hour/about one kilo of apples.'

(3) * (Den) ida ka-mia gineka
(neg) saw.1SG KAN-one.FEM woman
'I didn't see any woman.'

Stavrou and Terzi (2008) analyze the numerical nouns in (1) as classifiers. I propose instead that such nouns are derived syntactically, as in (4).

(4) $[_{Quantity1P}$ ka-mia $[_{Q}]$ $[_{Div1P}$ $[_{nP1}$ aria] $[_{Quantity2P}$ eikos- $[_{Div2P}$ Number $[_{nP2}$ vivli-a]]]]]

-aria/-osti realize a fixed gender/number n_1 (Kramer 2015), which has quantity semantics, following Kayne (2010). n_1 takes a $Quantity_2P$ as its complement. Numerals in $Quantity_2$ (Borer 2005) incorporate into *-aria/-osti*. Numerals obligatorily trigger plural on Greek nouns, hence 'books' bears plural (number in Div appearing on n due to Div-n fusion in Greek).

I furthermore propose that *kan*-Ds are complex: they contain *ka(n)*, which combines with forms of the numeral 'one', cf. Martí (2015) on Spanish *alg-un*. According to Barouni (2018), *ka(n)* on its own is a minimizer and marks its associate as the endpoint of a scale. Numeral 'one' is in $Quantity_1P$, (Borer 2005), agreeing in gender with n_1, and *ka(n)* is a Q modifier attaching to the numeral. In (1), the scale is determined by the approximate interpretation of round numerals (Krifka 2007). Note that no D head is contained in the lower extended projection, hence the numerical noun does not have independent reference.

Support for this analysis comes from the observation that the numerical noun can be modified by adjectives (5), and that only nouns that can independently co-occur with numerals are licit (6).

(5) Diavasa ka-mia dekaria kenuria vivlia
read.1SG KAN-one ten new books
'I read approximately ten new books.'

(6) a. * deka arheresies
ten caucus.PL
'ten caucuses'

b. * ka-mia dekaria arheresies
KAN-one ten caucus.PL
'about ten caucuses'

As Stavrou and Terzi (2008) note, in (1) the verb may agree with either the numerical noun as singular or the n_2 as plural (7). Nevertheless, the *kan*-D always agrees with the numerical noun and not n_2, and the numerical noun surfaces with nominal/accusative case, depending on its grammatical function. This suggests that *Agree* can either see the highest Q or bypass it and see the head closest to T (cf. Klockmann 2017).

(7) Mia dekaria atoma espefsan/espefse
one ten persons came.3PL/came.1SG
'About ten people came.'

I propose a version of (4) is proposed for (2). *Ka*(*n*) is required here as Greek 'one' hasn't yet fully grammaticalized to an approximative marker (cf. Plank 2002 on Bavarian). Temporal/amount nouns, having fixed gender/number, also realize a fused n_1/Div_1; amount Ns may take a Div_2P as their complement; 'one' in $Quantity_1$ determines the endpoint of the scale.

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