snippets

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Two coordinating particles are better than one: free choice items in Romanian

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There has been a significant surge in cross-linguistic analyses of the internal composition of quantifier words and coordination constructions recently (e.g., Szabolcsi 2018; Szabolcsi, Whang, and Zu 2014; Mitrović and Sauerland 2014, 2016; Mitrović Forthcoming). Most cases investigated follow one of two possible morphological patterns: (i) disjunction+wh-word items (DiWhIs) or (ii) conjunction+wh-word items (CoWhIs).

In this snippet we bring to light another pattern: (iii) disjunction+conjunction+wh-word items (DiCoWhIs). Romanian has a productive series of such items, though its use seems subject to dialectal variation. *Ori* and *şi* can occur as free morphemes and represent the default disjunctive and conjunctive items respectively in Romanian. *Ori* can productively combine on its own with a wh-word, giving rise to universal free choice items (FCIs) such as *ori-cine* (Disj-who) 'anyone' (e.g., Farkas 2013). *Şi* cannot, on its own, morphologically combine with a wh-word, or any other particle (**şi-cine*). This gives rise to the following question: what is the contribution of *şi* in DiCoWhIs?

The interpretation of DiCoWhIs is the same as that of FCIs, like the Romanian DiWhI *oricine* and English *whoever* (1a), namely free choice in combination with indifference on the part of the speaker. Unlike FCIs, DiCoWhIs are restricted to unconditional constructions (1a) versus (1b), where they require the conditional mood (1c). FCIs show no such restrictions.

(1) a. Ori-cine/orişi-cine m-ar căuta azi, nu sunt disponibilă.
Di-who/DiCo-who me-COND.3SG look.for today NEG am available
'Whoever looks for me today, I'm not available.'

b. La ora asta aş mânca ori-ce/*orişi-ce.
At hour this COND.1SG eat Di-what/DiCo-what
'Right now, I would eat anything.'

c. Ori-ce/*orişi-ce va găti Ion, mama va fi încântată.
Di-what/DiCo-what will cook Ion mother will be pleased
'Whatever Ion will cook, mother will be pleased.'

Based on these data we conclude that the *şi* morpheme is not vacuous, or else the DiWh and DiCoWh items should fully align in their distribution. This morpheme seems to be responsible for (i) the restriction to unconditionals, and (ii) the conditional mood requirement. These properties are not expected under the two main approaches to unconditionals. One approach is due to Szabolcsi (2019), who argues that unconditionals in Hungarian are an instance of universal FC constructions, thereby predicting that any element which can occur in an unconditional should also be able occur in a FC construction (like English *wh+ever* can). The data in (1) show that her account cannot

extend to Romanian. The other approach, put forth by Rawlins (2008, 2013) and Hirsch (2016), is tailored to English and derives unconditionals from questions, thereby making no predictions about the distributional overlap between unconditionals and FC constructions. Neither account can explain the mood requirement since in principle any modal(izing) operator could trigger the FC flavor that both approaches take to be at the heart of unconditionals. DiCoWhIs are, to our knowledge, the first elements restricted to unconditionals, thereby challenging existing generalizations regarding the overlap between items that can occur in unconditionals and other FC constructions.

More generally, the investigation of this previously unobserved combination of coordinating particles can contribute to a better understanding of the morpho-semantics of quantificational paradigms cross-linguistically. Currently, there are at least two reasons why DiCoWhIs present difficulties for existing theories. On the one hand, current theories provide mechanisms to interpret DiWhIs and CoWhIs, but no compositional procedure for how to interpret the co-occurrence of both of these particles at the word-internal level. On the other hand, while we know that these particles can affect the behavior of the *wh*-items they combine with (e.g., with respect to quantificational force, polarity restrictions, and interacting with modality), none of the work on this topic discusses particles restricting the distribution of their host with respect to mood. Could this be a result of the co-occurrence of two particles rather than solely due to *şi*?

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