

On Structural Features of Minimizers as Scalar Items (Work in Progress)

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Through searches in different corpora and my intuition as a native speaker of Spanish, I have come to observe that the quantifiers usually associated to minimizers like a red cent or sleep a wink in English and *ni una pizca* or *ni una gota* in Spanish can be exchanged for strong and weak quantifiers such as every, numerals, and quantificational determiners like another; similar behavior has been found to occur in Spanish with *cada* or *ni un (NP) más* (not one NP more) replacing the canonical existential quantifier *un/una*. This sort of behavior gives account of certain characteristics of minimizers as scalar items that go beyond propositional implicatures.

My approach towards minimizers intends to borrow the concept of context sensitivity proposed by Kennedy and McNally (1999, 2005) in their account of certain adjectives being modified by different adverbials (e.g.: completely as an appropriate collocate of covered, but not of fat). That is, modifiable adjectives hold a context-insensitive standard of comparison, while such standard is context-sensitive in unmodifiable adjectives. The former group of adjectives forms closed scales while the latter forms open scales. I propose that all minimizers function as lower-bounding elements of the scales they make part of, and thus they can only form closed scales. Such feature is prominent in modification by another, which establish a lower bound in higher positions (1), and by strong quantifiers, which work as upper-bounding markers (2).

1. (a) Mrs. Van Daan was far too nervous to sleep *another wink*. (iWeb Corpus)

(b) porque persisten las fuertes marejadas, no le cabe *ni una gota más* al túnel de la 5ta. Avenida. (NOW Corpus)

[since heavy swells persist, the 5ta. Avenida tunnel has no room for a single drop more (of water)]

2. (a) [...] but I was using up *every drop* of energy I had to keep up a brave front. (COCA)

(b) *Cada pizca* de estrategia se aprovecha, nada queda fuera. (NOW Corpus)

[Each bit of strategy has to be used, nothing will be left out]

This account of minimizer offers a desirable unified analysis of different scalar predicates that goes beyond the undefined hierarchies of entailments pervasive in the research of linguistic scalarity.

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