Perfect plurality without pluractionality

There has been a proliferation of studies attributing pluractional operators to plural event readings of a variety of structures that have previously been treated in a non-pluractional manner, such as imperfectives, progressives and habituals (Bertinetto and Lenci 2012). The pluractional label, however, has been used in a non-systematic manner across the literature, generating conflicting conceptions of what exactly pluractionality is and how it figures into the larger picture of event plurality. This includes inconsistent references to its aspectual nature, whether lexical or grammatical, or perhaps both. The focus of this talk is the present perfect in Brazilian Portuguese, which has also recently been receiving the pluractional treatment (Cabredo-Hofherr et al. 2010) for examples such as (1). Previous non-formal treatments have associated this structure with universal readings within the universal-existential opposition (Squartini and Bertinetto 2000, Pancheva 2003), without further detail.

(1) Maria tem ido à praia.
Maria has gone to the beach (repeatedly).

Following Součková (2011), we assume here that pluractionality is a narrower phenomenon than the current literature on tense-aspect structures would let on. Součková claims that pluractionality is that which is expressed directly on the verb and usually expresses the involvement of multiple participants. Moreover, she claims that structures with temporal meanings should be analyzed as aspectual in nature. The present paper suggests an exercise in accounting for plurality without appealing to pluractionality. The purpose of this exercise is two-fold: i) to test whether the meaning of pluractionality is an adequate fit for the meaning expressed by the present perfect in BP; and ii) to consider a theoretical avenue that does not focus on pluractionality, but may in fact provide a more adequate representation of the meaning of the structure in question, if we assume general event and verb plurality.

For (i), we part from the definition of temporal pluractionality as presented in Laca (2004, 2006), a derivation of Lasersohn's basic event-based definition of pluractionality (1995), in (2) below.

(2) $V\text{–}PA(X) \Leftrightarrow \forall e, e' \in X[V(e) \,\&\, \neg\tau(e) \circ \tau(e')] \,\&\, card(x) \geq n$

We consider how the elements of this definition describe the behavior of the present perfect in BP. We find that the definition does not hold up to the meaning of the present perfect in different contexts, especially when considering plural arguments. See (3) and (4).

(3) João tem lavado os carros.
João has washed the cars.
(4) Os meninos têm lavado os carros.
The boys have washed the cars.

Plural arguments in this context show that none of the conditions proposed in the definition of pluractionality can be maintained for the present perfect. Given the insight provided by plurals, we return to the foundations of approaches to plurals, particularly considering Schein (1993), recasting the issue of plurality without reference to pluractionality, while maintaining intuitions captured by event-based semantics. We then provide a new temporal-aspectual definition for the present perfect in BP wherein the plurality of events expressed can be derived from the present tense of the auxiliary.

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