

Complex adpositions in Romance Languages

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In this talk, we describe the systems of complex adpositions in modern Romance languages. One obvious question with respect to complex adpositions is that of their status: are they simply a morphosyntactically complex variant of simple adpositions? How do we define them? There have been a few studies on complex adpositions in individual Romance languages (for instance Spanish, Cifuentes Honrubia 2003, or Portuguese, Pinto de Lima 2014), and a few papers on complex adpositions in Romance languages in general (for instance Fagard & Mardale 2007), there is still much to say. With a corpus-based analysis focusing on three Romance languages, French, Portuguese and Romanian, we show that some features of complex adpositions are common to most if not all varieties, while some seem to be specificities of one or more Romance language(s). One case in point is the way such constructions can be tested (see Adler 2001, 2008), for instance with possessives – a test which does not seem to affect French and Portuguese (Catalan, etc.) CAs in the same way. The clear contrast which appears in French between non-lexicalized constructions and CAs on account of their intolerance to the possessive (*à la place de Jean* → *à sa place* ‘in John’s seat’ ; *au lieu de Jean* → **à son lieu* ‘in John’s stead’) is not found in Portuguese, as in this language CAs do not exhibit this particularity, or at least to a lesser extent (*por causa do João* / *por sua causa* ‘because of John/of him’, *em seu lugar* ‘in his stead’, etc.). We go on to formulate a hypothesis as to the development of CAs in various Romance languages, suggesting it may not have been parallel.

References

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