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The semantic contribution of A in Spanish: a signal-meaning hypothesis

This project builds on a previous Society-sponsored research. The analytical problem undertaken concerns the distribution of the form A in Spanish (traditionally known as prepositional-A and personal-A). This study relies on the explanation for its use in terms of a meaning hypothesis (Diver 2012; Huffman 1997): a single invariant semantic value functioning as a communicative tool that simply contributes to the communication of many different types of messages or message partials rather than encoded messages.

We will continue our qualitative analysis of attested examples by assessing signal-meaning relationships and various rationales from which predictions can be drawn (Otheguy 2018; Reid 1995, 2004). Currently, we are in the testing stage of a tentative meaning hypothesis for A as an explicit orientation towards a reference point/goal. To investigate how this hypothesized meaning impacts the distribution of A through large-scale quantitative predictions, we will test it in the Corpus de Referencia del Español Actual (CREA), an online collection of written texts and transcription of recorded speech that includes texts from most Spanish varieties.