

Intraclausal complexity in Spanish: The case of depictive constructions

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Depictive secondary predicates involved constructions where two events are coded as simultaneously happening, as in the following Spanish examples:

- (1) a. *Herminia llegó **contenta** a la escuela.*
‘Herminia arrived to the school happy’.
b. *Tolomeo trabajó todo el día **cantando**.*
‘Tolomeo worked all day singing’.

In (1a) it is reported that Herminia arrived to the school and that, at the same time, she was happy when that happened. In the same fashion, in (1b) the speaker says that Tolomeo worked all day, and that when he did so, he was singing. In this way, these examples imply semantically complex constructions, where the adjective and the gerund in bold letters function as subsidiary predicates in respect to the finite verb, a fact that is captured in the linguistic tradition under the label of secondary predication. Despite the recognition of this predicative identity, in the Hispanic Linguistic bibliography secondary predicates are considered as a kind of adjunct modifiers inside simple clauses (Demonte and Masullo 1999; Palacar and Alarcón 2007, among many others). That is, in syntactic terms they are not treated as predicates. This mismatch between their syntactic and semantic identity is understood if one follows the traditional idea that syntactic complexity only exists between or among clauses, but not inside clauses, because they are considered the basic or smallest grammatical units that express a complete thought. In this sense, the syntactic status of secondary predicates as a kind of adjunct is a consequence of the lack of a theoretical and conceptual frame that allows to treat them syntactically as predicates, and the clauses where they appear as complex structures.

This situation is perfectly solved by RRG (Van Valin 2005), a theoretical model that starts from the idea of the *layered structure of the clause* (LSC) inside which to more basic syntactic units are recognized: The *nucleus* and the *core*. The first one is the primary constituent of the clause and it contains the predicate (usually a verb); the core subsumes the nucleus and its arguments; the core plus the non-arguments (the periphery) forms the clause.

In correspondence with the LSC, RRG posits that each one of these basic units can form complex linkages, so two or more nuclei can constitute one complex nucleus, and two or more cores can be united to give rise to a complex single core, just the same way as two or more clauses form a complex sentence. In RRG the nature of the units involved in a complex relation is called *junction* (nuclear junction, core junction and clausal junction).

Additionally, RRG considers that there are three types of linkages or nexus: coordination, subordination and a third type that is usually not recognized in traditional, structural and generative grammars: cosubordination. On the one hand, following the traditional characterizations, coordination can be defined as a relation between two (or more) independent and free units (-dependency, - integrated), while subordination is a linkage that implies that one unit, the subordinate one, syntactically depends on the other, the matrix, and that it is embedded or integrated inside this last one (+dependency, + integrated). On the other hand, cosubordination is a mixed relation where there is no

integration of one unit to the other, but where one unit clearly depends on the other (+dependency, -integrated); typically the dependent predicate is non-finite and obligatorily share one argument with the main verb.

In this paper, I want to use these RRG conceptual and analytic tools to properly describe the Spanish depictive construction exemplified in (1). I argue that the secondary predicate is not syntactically an adjunct but a predicate, and that the constructions where they appear are complex constructions, much in the same way, as it has been proposed for the same type of constructions (depictive and resultative) in English and other languages (Van Valin and LaPolla 1997; Van Valin 2005). I also argue that the constructions in (1) have the cosubordinate nexus type. Nevertheless, I will show that, in a different way to what has been proposed for English, the Spanish adjectival construction illustrated in (1a) implies a core level juncture and not a nuclear juncture, as it is also the case of the example in (1b) with a gerund as the secondary predicate.

In this way, the main contributions of this work are, firstly, to prove the validity of the RRG tools for describing a phenomenon that has not yet receive an accurate description in the current Hispanic Linguistic bibliography; and secondly, to show that similar constructions (the adjectival ones) in different languages (Spanish and English) can imply a distinct level of juncture (core vs nuclear).

References

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