

Difficult labelling Extracategorial lexicalization in Spanish

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The processes of lexicalization and creation of idioms may sometimes lead to the fusion of two (or more) independent units into a new lexical item. It is frequently the case that such a new item is recognized as a member of a well-known syntactic category; e.g. a noun (Eng. *hand in the cap* > *handicap*) or an adverb (Sp. *en cima* > *encima*).

However, lexicalization does not always produce units that are easily identifiable on the closed list of syntactic categories of a given language. We can sometimes find examples of lexicalization and univerbation of syntagmatic sequences which do not have a well-defined grammatical status and lead to lexical units, which in turn lack a clear grammatical identity. Even so, these sequences may perform a significant and useful role in everyday use and grammar.

This research attempts to outline the main features of this kind of particular extracategorial lexicalization, through a comparative survey of the historical development and the syntactic behaviour of three Spanish syntagmatic sequences that underwent lexicalization.

We shall first address the lexicalization of *a ver*. This expression has long been used for years in colloquial Spanish. Its origin can be traced back to some specific types of periphrastic constructions with verbs of movement (*ir/venir... a ver*), where the preposition *a* was initially required by the preceding verb. As a result of its lexicalization, the new fixed sequence ended up functioning as a verb that introduces some specific type of indirect questions and may be followed by the indirect conjunction *si*, 'whether'. Some speakers fail to perceive the right etymological analysis of this construction and produce the wrong univerbal transcription *haber (si)*. However, it is not really a verb: in other contexts, it continues to be used as a periphrastic construction.

A second case can be found in the history of the negative expression *qué va*. This idiom originated more than a century ago in the turn *qué va a ser*, through lexical confluence of exclamatory *qué* and the periphrastic sequence *va a ser*. *Qué va* is nowadays used as an emphatic negation in colloquial Spanish speech. Nonetheless, it is not an adverb: it always needs the presence of a real negation and shows a more restricted syntactic distribution.

The third case to be analysed will be *con que*. This sequence included originally a relative pronoun, which referred to the whole information expressed in the previous sentence, which played as an antecedent. After the lexicalization process, it became a sort of illative conjunction that has reached a frequent use in present day Spanish. Still, it is not really a conjunction: the role it plays is much closer to discursive markers than to connective items.

This study compares all these three syntactic changes and looks for similarities and differences between them, in the light of a theory of lexicalization as a possible source of grammatical expressions.

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