

Another look at a case in point
A discourse-based analysis of object clitic doubling in Spanish

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In this paper diachronic and synchronic data will be taken into account to provide a functional, usage-based analysis of the genesis and spread of the Spanish construction in (1)-(3), where direct and indirect objects are represented by a (pro)nominal object and a bound pronoun next to the verb:

- (1) Dámosvos en don *a vos* treinta marcos (PMC: 196)
- (2) *A mí sí me* gusta la cocina mucho (Madrid: 382, 31)
- (3) Me fui al baño para acompañarla *a la Dilia* (Glenda: 147, 8)

This object clitic doubling has been convincingly analysed by a number of researchers (cf., among others, Bossong 1980; García-Miguel 1991; Enrique-Arias 1997; Franco 2000) as an agreement phenomenon, and therefore it is seen as a working example of grammaticalization.

As for the origin of the construction, it has been claimed that Spanish data supports Givón's (1976, 2001) proposal that grammatical agreement arises from the so-called topic-shift construction (cf. Silva-Corvalán 1984). However, the distribution and characteristics of the pattern as registered in a corpus of old Spanish texts pose some problems to this claim. On the one hand, in order to analyze an erstwhile anaphoric element as an agreement marker, the topic-shift construction ought to be common enough to attain non-marked status. Nevertheless, topicalized objects in old Spanish are very infrequent compared to postverbal ones (cf. data from Rini 1991; Company Company 2006). On the other hand, if the spread of object agreement goes from topicalized objects to non-topicalized ones, it would be likely to find a relatively high percentage of object agreement with topicalized objects before postverbal-object agreement is attested. But this is not the case, as in 13th century texts the rate of agreement is similarly scant for topicalized and non-topicalized objects.

Relying on historical and contemporary data (these from the conversational corpus *Val.Es.Co* and from the *Base de Datos Sintácticos*: <http://www.bds.usc.es/>), we will put forward an alternative proposal which pays more attention to frequency effects, seeking a better understanding of the genesis of the construction as well as its historical spread and present usage. Particularly, our analysis takes into account the often neglected high proportion of clitic-only objects in discourse. Besides, we will see that first and second person objects are coded by clitics in the vast majority of cases. And it is precisely with first and second person objects that object agreement is more consolidated – it is nearly categorical in such cases. The origin of the agreement pattern in this context can be interpreted as the consequence of the entrenchment of a very frequent construction. From this context, the construction could spread to other objects following semantic and pragmatic analogies. At the end, the analysis is not only an alternative to Givón's hypothesis about the genesis of grammatical agreement, but an argument in favour of an emergentist view of grammar (Hopper 1998) according to which grammatical phenomena are the result of fixing recurrent discourse patterns.

References

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