D.E.L.T.A., Vol. 10, Nº Especial, 1994 (277 - 293)

SPANISH PREFERRED ARGUMENT STRUCTURE ACROSS TIME AND SPACE

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ABSTRACT: Este estudo discute se uma estrutura gramatical e pragmaticamente motivada, conhecida como Preferred Argument Structure (PAS) já estava presente em espanhol antigo. O corpus de Espanhol Antigo, consistindo de documentos literários dos séculos XII e XIV, foi analisado conforme os mesmos procedimentos adotados em um estudo de Espanhol falado Moderno, confirmando a hipótese inicial de que não ocorreram mudanças relevantes nessa estrutura discursiva específica.

0. Introduction *

This article aims at validating the hypothesis that the Preferred Argument Structure (PAS) found in Modern spoken Spanish (cf. Ashby & Bentivoglio 1993, Bentivoglio 1992) also existed in Middle Age Spanish, so that it would be possible to affirm that no relevant changes occurred in the language as for this particular discourse structure.

PAS, conceived by Du Bois 1985 and 1987 as a statistical tendency, has already been attested in many languages pertaining to different families and now spoken in different places of the world, from the Mayan languages studied by Du Bois 1987 and England 1986, among others, to languages spoken in Australia (Durie 1987). Three Romance languages (Brazilian Portuguese, French and Spanish)[1] have been studied extensively and all three have proved to conform to PAS, thus partially confirming Du Bois suggestions that PAS may exist in all languages.

PAS encompasses three dimensions: syntax, pragmatics and semantics. In the syntactic dimension, full NPs of all languages tend to appear in the core roles of **O** and **S** (Dixon 1979) but not in the **A** role. In the pragmatic dimension, new information coded in full NPs tends to appear in the **O** and **S** roles, but not in the **A** role.[2] In the semantic dimension, full NPs, whose referents are inanimate, tend to fulfill the syntactic roles of **O** and **S** and to code new participants.

Until the present moment, as far as I know, PAS has been only attested in varieties of modern languages, but no diachronic studies have appeared yet. It is my intention to accomplish a PAS analysis, identical to that already realized on Modern Spanish (MS), on Old Spanish (OS), in order to compare the results for these different stages of the language and determine whether or not changes have occurred across time and space, from texts written in Old Castile in the XII and XIV centuries to South-American Spanish spoken in Venezuela at the end of this century. The results of the present research should open the way to similar studies in the other languages for which PAS has already been attested and for which documents of previous linguistic stages are available.

Du Bois sustains that, within an adequate theory on the relation between grammar and discourse, it must be postulated that grammaticalization processes in all languages are due to the influence of discourse phenomena, external to the linguistic systems, as well as to the influence of the language as a grammatical system. Du Bois' proposal allows considering linguistic studies within a unitary frame according to which external and internal forces interacting in the grammatical systems of languages can be better understood and explained.

In the first part of this article I will explain the methodology adopted for the present study; in the second, the result of the anlysis will be presented; in the third section, I will compare the results obtained in the two samples of Old and Modern Spanish, respectively; and in the last part, some conclusions will be presented.

1. Methodology

The analysis was conducted on excerpts from the following Castilian texts, which appeared between the XII and the XIV centuries: i) the anonymous epic *Poema de mio Cid*, dated c. 1140; ii) *El conde Lucanor*, a collection of tales written about 1324 by Don Juan Manuel, a Castilian prince. Both texts will be referred to as Old Spanish.

The excerpts were selected according to the parameters of Ashby & Bentivoglio 1993, whose results on Modern Venezuelan Spanish will be used for comparative purposes:

a) only narrative segments, written in 3rd person, were included, omitting parts written in 1st or 2nd person and, consequently, all

forms of dialogue;[3]

b) the segments were chosen at random, from the beginning of *Poema de mio Cid* and from example XXVIII (in the edition I used) to example XLV of *El conde Lucanor;*

c) in each text the first three hundred (300) main clauses, as well as all embedded and combined clauses included with them, were selected and coded;

d) the analysis excluded main clauses containing cognitive verbs with sentential complements, all clauses with metereological and time verbs, and relative clauses.[4]

The total number of main and non-main clauses analyzed in the two texts are displayed in Table 1:

Table 1: Distribution of main and non-main clauses in the Old Spanish corpus

	Main	Non-main	Total
Poema de mio Cid	300	91	391
El conde Lucanor	300	379	679
Total	600	470	1.070

The coding criteria adopted for the present article were intentionally kept identical to those utilized by Ashby & Bentivoglio 1993, with the specific purpose of comparing the results of both research projects. The only difference relates to the quantity of main clauses analyzed: six hundred for Old Spanish and one thousand and two hundred for Modern Spanish.[5]

It seems unnecessary to comment that, although the criteria for data selection code were the same in both samples, these are qualitatively different: the Old Spanish sample is written and of a literary kind,[6] whereas the Modern Spanish sample is the semiformal speech of twelve Venezuelan speakers.[7]

2. The analysis

In the corpus all forms of NPs fulfilling one of the core roles were coded according to a set of linguistic variables which are described in (i-vi) and illustrated in the examples (1) and (2). It is worth recalling here that the already classical mention of syntactic roles, used by Dixon 1979

and other linguists (among them, Du Bois & Thompson 1991) has been extended, after Ashby & Bentivoglio 1993 and forthcoming, in the sense that **S**, the only argument of one-argument verbs, has been split into two roles: **X**, the argument of copulative verbs *ser* and *estar*; and **S**, for all remaining cases of one-argument verbs. The coded data were tabulated and analyzed with the help of Goldvarb 2.0., the computer software for Macintosh by Rand & Sankoff 1990.

The linguistic variables are the following:

i) **Syntactic role**: **A**, the more agentive argument of a two-argument verb, e.g. *aquel mancebo* on line 16 of (2); **S**, the only argument of one-argument verb, e.g. *mio Çid* on line 10 of (1) as well as the only argument of the existential verb *haber*, e.g. *un moro honrado* on line 1 of (2);[8] **X**, the argument of a copulative verb, as shown on line 3 of (2) by *mas Ø non era tan rico*; and **O**, the less agentive argument of a a two-argument verb, e.g. *la cabeça* on line 3 of (1).

ii) **Form**: zero (**Ø**), e.g. *Ø tornava* on line 2 of (1); a pronoun (**P**), e.g. *era él en gran cuidado* on line 8 of (2); and a full noun (**N**), *las riendas*, on line 18 of (1).

iii) **Generalizability**: NPs were coded according to whether they are generalizing, e.g. *tantos fechos* on line 5 of (2), or particularizing, e.g. *mio Çid* on line 10 of (1).[9]

iv) **Animacy**: this semantic variables has two variants: animate, which includes humans, and inanimate. Examples of the first variant are *un moro honrado* on line 1 of (2) and *la corneja diestra* on line 21 of (1); *la cabeça* on line 3 of (1) is an example of the inanimate variant.

v) **Identifiability**:[10] NPs were coded as identifiable or non-identifiable according to what the speaker assumes about the ability of the hearer to recognize the entity encoded by a NP. All zeroes, personal and demonstrative pronouns and full NPs preceded by a definite modifier are identifiable, e.g. *la cabeça* on line 3 of (1) and *aquel mancebo* on line 16 of (2). All full NPs, bare or preceded by an indefinite modifier, were considered non-identifiable, e.g. *puertas abiertas* on line 7 of (1) and *otro moro* on line 11 of (2).

vi) **Activation state**:[11] the two variants of this variable are: non-new and new, according to whether or not the entity under

analysis has been previously mentioned or is situationally present. According to this, *mio Çid* on line 13 of (1) is coded as non-new, because it is the seventh mention of this participant (1. *Ø llorando*, 2. *Ø tornava*, 3. *Ø estávalos*, 4. *Ø Vio*, 5. *Ø suspiró*, 6. *Ø avié*), whereas *otro moro más honrado* on line 11 of (2) is coded as new, since it represents the first mention of this participant in the text.[12]

All cases were also coded according to the text to which they belong, so that it would be easy to retrieve any of them and the results could be analyzed separately, if necessary.

(1)[13] *Poema de mio Cid*, cantar primero (*Poema de mio Cid* 1960:104).

1		De los sos ojos tan fuertemientre llorando,
2	**A-Ø**	*Ø tornava*
3	**O-N**	*la cabeça*
4	**A-Ø**	i Ø estávalos catando.
5	**O-P**	-los
6	**A-Ø**	Ø Vio
7	**O-N**	*puertas abiertas*[14] e uços sin cañados,
8		alcándaras vázias sin pielles e sin mantos
9		e sin falcones e sin adtores mudados.
10	**S-N**	Sospiró *mio Çid*,
11	**A-Ø**	ca mucho Ø avié
12	**O-N**	grandes cuidados.
13	**S-N**	Fabló mio Çid bien e tan mesurado:
14		["grado a tí, señor padre, que estás en alto!
15		"Esto me an buolto mios enemigos malos."
16		Allí Ø pienssan de aguijar,]
17	**A-Ø**	allí Ø sueltan
18	**O-N**	*las riendas*.
19		A la exida de Bivar,
20	**A-Ø**	Ø ovieron
21	**O-N**	*la corneja diestra*,
22		e entrando a Burgos
23	**A-Ø**	Ø oviéronla
24	**O-P**	-la siniestra.

(2) Enxiemplo XLV "De lo que aconteció a un mancebo el día en que se casó" (Don Juan Manuel 1972: 129-30).
[Señor conde Lucanor –dijo Patronio–, si él fuere tal como fue un fijo de un home bueno que era moro consejadle que case con ella; mas si non fuere tal, non se lo consejades.
Y el conde le rogó que le dijese cómo fuera aquello.
Patronio le dijo]

1	S-N	que en una villa había *un moro honrado* que había un
2		fijo el mejor mancebo que en el mundo podria ser,
3	X-Ø	mas *Ø non era* tan rico
4	A-Ø	que Ø pudiese cumplir
5	O-N	*tantos fechos* ni tan grandes
6		[como el su corazón le daba a entender]
7	S-Ø	Ø debía cumplir,
8	X-P	y por esto *era él* en gran cuidado,
9	S-N	porque había la voluntad
10	S-N	y non había el poder.
11	S-N	Y en aquella villa mesma había *otro moro muy más*
12		*honrado* y muy más rico que su padre,
13	A-Ø	y Ø había
14	O-N	una fija, y non más,
15	X-Ø	y Ø era muy contraria de aquel mancebo,
16	A-N	que cuanto *aquel mancebo* había de buenas maneras
17	A-P	tanto las había ella de malas y revesadas;
18		[y por ende home del mundo non quería casar con aquel diablo].
19	S-N	Y *aquel tan buen mancebo* vino un día a su padre

3. The results of the analysis

3.1. The grammatical dimension of PAS

Table 2a shows the distribution of NPs, lexical and non-lexical, in the core roles (**A, X, S, O**) of Old Spanish. Table 2b presents the results of the Old Spanish analysis and those of Modern Spanish (as reported by Ashby & Bentivoglio 1993), so that a comparison can be established.

Table 2a: Distribution of NPs according to grammatical role and form in Old Spanish

		FNP	Ø + P	Total	%
A	n	94	395	489	31
	%	19	81		
X	n	33	53	86	6
	%	38	62		
S	n	184	310	494	32
	%	37	63		
O	n	274	215	489	31
	%	56	44		
Total	n	585	973	1,558	
	%	38	62		

$\chi^2 = 141.3$ 3 d.f. $p < .0001$

Tables 2a reveals that the non-lexical form (Ø+P) predominates in the **A, X** and **S** roles (81%, 62% and 63%, respectively), whereas **O** contains more full NPs (56%) than non-lexical forms in both texts. The χ^2 test shows that the distribution of NPs forms across roles is not random.

Table 2b: Comparison of the distribution of full NPs across roles in Old and Modern Spanish

	Old Spanish		**Modern Spanish**	
	n	%	n	%
A	94	16	35	6
X	33	6	65	11
S	184	31	150	25
O	274	47	341	58
Total	585	100	591	100

It is worth observing in table 2b that in Old Spanish full NPs fulfilling **A** and **S** roles are more frequent than full NPs in Modern

Spanish. The contrary happens with **X** and **O** roles, where the presence of full NPs increases from 6% and 47% in Old Spanish to 11% and 58% in Modern Spanish. It may well be the case that this result could be due to the genre differences between the strictly narrative excerpts of Old Spanish *vs.* the less homogeneous Modern Spanish sample. The important fact, however, is that, in spite of these differences, all roles in Old Spanish show tendencies very similar to those observed in Modern Spanish, with the only exception of **X** that has less full NPs than **A** in Old Spanish.

The present analysis confirms that in Old Spanish, as in Modern Spanish and in other languages, what Du Bois 1987 calls the "Non-lexical **A** Constraint" was already at work, i. e., the avoidance of lexical As in discourse. It is also true that the percentage of As is much greater (16%) than that found in Sacapultec (5%), French (5%), Modern Spanish (6%), and Brazilian Portuguese (8%),[15] but –as I said before– the genre of Old Spanish texts is quite different from that of all other samples analyzed.

In fact, full NPs are used in the *Poema de mio Cid* to code participants who are present in previous stretches of the discourse, as, for example, both mentions of *mio Çid* on lines 10 and 13 of (1). It seems that, in this case and other analogous ones, the use of full NPs is required not by discourse constraints, as suggested by Du Bois, but rather by rhetorical necessities, especially in the text of *Mio Cid* which, as all epic poems, was recited by a minstrel (*juglar*) in front of a large audience.

Another constraint proposed by Du Bois (1987:819) is the One Lexical Argument Constraint (cf. footnote 2), according to which the presence of two full NPs fulfilling the roles of **A** and **O** in the same clause, as in (3a) and (3b), is not a very frequent possibility.

(3) a. *Poema de mio Cid* (1960:120)
A-N Ant el Campeador *doña Ximena*
O-N fincó *los inojos amos*.

b. *El conde Lucanor* (1972:114)
... un muy gran filósofo moraba en una villa del reino de Marruecos,
A-N y *aquel filósofo* había (= tenía)
O-N *una enfermedad*, ...

Tables 3 a reflects the distribution of the two arguments (**A** and **O**) of a multiargumental verb in the same clause and their form.

Table 3a: Distribution of **A** and **O** in the same clause according to their form (P, N) in Old Spanish

		O-N	**O-P**	**Total**	**%**
A-N	n	42	52	94	19
	%	45	55		
A-P[16]	n	232	163	395	81
	%	59	41		
Total	n	274	215	489	
	%	56	44		

Yates' corrected $\chi^2 = 5.530$ **1 d.f.** $p < .01$

In table 3a the probability given by the χ^2 test reaches .01, level considered significant in linguistic studies (cf. Silva-Corvalán 1979:52).

Table 3b shows that Old Spanish has a low incidence (9%) of **A-N** and **O-N** in the same clause, so that it can be affirmed that Old Spanish obeys to the One Lexical Argument Constraint, proposed by Du Bois 1987 (cf. footnote 2). This percentage, however, is much greater than the 2% obtained in the analysis of Modern Spanish, as can be seen in the second column of table 3b.

Table 3b: Comparison of the distribution of A and O in the same clause in Old and Modern Spanish

		Old Spanish	Modern Spanish
A-N/O-N	n	42/489	13/571
	%	9	2
A-N/O-P	n	52/489	22/571
	%	11	4
A-P/O-N	n	232/489	328/571
	%	47	57
A-P/O-P	n	163/489	208/571
	%	33	36

Summarizing the results of the analysis conducted on the roles and forms of NPs in Old Spanish, it is possible to conclude that, in both texts, pronouns and zeros (P) constitute the preferred form for role **A** -- thus comfirming Du Bois' Non-lexical A Constraint-- and that full NPs in the roles of **A** and **O** in the same clause are rare, thus confirming Du Bois' One Lexical Argument Constraint. In view of these findings, it can be said that Old Spanish, in its grammatical dimension, conforms to PAS, as proposed by Du Bois 1987. Moreover, the comparison of the results obtained for both kinds of Spanish (Old and Modern) show that, in spite of quantative differences, the tendencies are very similar in terms of the two constraints above mentioned.

3.2. The pragmatic dimensions of PAS

3.2.1. The Given A Constraint

It is now necessary to examine how both new and non-new information is linguistically coded in the 585 full NPs (FNPs) of the Old Spanish sample (cf. table 2a). From now on, only these FNPs will be considered for the analysis, as it is obvious that zeroes and most pronouns are not used to transmit new information at all.

The hypothesis is that speakers, in order to encode new participants in the discourse, do not use randomly any grammatical role (A, X, S, O), but give preference to roles O and S, and avoid A and X. To validate this hypothesis, I established the same dependent variable proposed by Ashby & Bentivoglio 1993, i. e. "Activation state", with its two variants (cf. section 1, vi); the independent variables were syntactic role, generalizability and animacy (i, iii, and iv, respectively, of section 1). The results obtained by means of Goldvarb 2.0 can be seen in table 4a and the comparison between the results of Old and Modern Spanish, in table 4b.

Table 4a: Syntactic roles, animacy and generalizability as a function of newness of participants in Old Spanish

Factor	Count	% New	Weight
Sytactic role			
O	169/274	62	.584
S	61/184	33	.474
X	10/33	300	.350
A	17/94	18	.361
Generalizability			
Generalizing	101/146	69	.668
Particularizing	156/439	36	.442
Animacy			
Inanimate	197/310	64	.649
Animate	60/275	22	.334

N = 585 Input .424

Table 4a shows that O tends to code information, whereas roles A and X are preferred for non-new information. This finding confirms the presence in Old Spanish of what Du Bois 1987 calls the Given A Constraint, which Ashby & Bentivoglio (1993:70), on the basis of their research, have extended so to encompass also X.

Table 4b: Comparison of the results, in terms of probabilities weight, in Old and Modern Spanish

	Old Spanish	Modern Spanish
Syntactic role		
O	.584	.558
S	.474	.506
X	.350	.372
A	.361	.197
Generalizability		
Generalizing	.668	.565
Particularizing	.442	.418
Animacy		
Inanimate	.649	.562
Animate	.334	.339

If we compare in table 4b the probability weights obtained (by means of Goldvarb 2.0) for the role in which new information tends to appear, we may observe that all of them show the same tendencies in both samples. **O** is the preferred syntactic role: .584 in Old Spanish and .558 in Modern Spanish, respectively; the status of **S** is unclear as its probability weights are slightly below (.474) the neutral point of .500 in Old Spanish and slightly over (.506) that same point in Modern Spanish, a difference which does not allow any inference; **X** behaves very similarly in both samples (.350 in OS and .372 in MS); **A** is the role which shows the greater difference: .361 in OS and .197 in MS, but this result obviously correlates with the greater percentage of full NPs fulfilling the A role in Old Spanish as compared to that found in Modern Spanish: 16% vs. 6%, respectively (cf. table 2b). The other two factor groups (Generalizability and Animacy) show some differences but the results go in the same directions: generalizing NPs and inanimate referents are more likely to carry new information than particularizing NPs and animate referents. It can then be affirmed that the same tendencies found to hold in Modern Spanish are also present in Old Spanish as for the three factor goups according to which the data were analyzed.

4. Conclusions

The analysis conducted on a sample of Middle Age Spanish must

be considered as a preliminary approach to the issue of the existence of PAS and its possible evolution in the history of Spanish, especially in view of the small sample utilized in the present research.

The results obtained validate, nevertheless, the general hypothesis set forth about all the dimensions of PAS in Old Spanish:

i) in the grammatical dimension, full NPs tend to fulfill **O** and **S** roles, avoiding **A**, according to Du Bois 1987 Non-lexical A Constraint; moreover, two full NPs are seldom found in the same clause, what ratifies the One Lexical Argument Constraint;
ii) in the pragmatic and semantic dimensions, full NPs carrying new information tend to fulfill the **O** role and to be generalizing and inanimate.

Comparing the results of the Old Spanish analysis with those obtained in a similar analysis of Modern Spanish, it is possible to affirm that the tendencies found in both samples, in spite of their qualitative differences, go in the same direction. It seems safe to conclude that PAS existed in Old Spanish with very much the same characteristics present in Modern Spanish. This finding inevitably leads to the necessity of investigating whether PAS also existed in Latin.

The present research, however, leaves unanswered the question about the possibility that genre differences, and not diachronic change, may be responsible for some characteristics of PAS not found in both samples. I hope that the desire of solving this problem as well as that of deepening this preliminary research will produce an inportant body of studies dedicated to the problem of PAS in Latin and in the Romance languages.

(Recebido em 16/06/94)

NOTES

* My interest in studying Old Spanish texts is due to the unforgetable and illuminating example of Fernando Tarallo who led me to the fascinating field of diachronic studies.
I thank William J. Ashby, Adriana Bolivar, Mercedes Sedano and two anonymous readers who carefully read the manuscript and contributed to it with many helpful suggestions. Needless to say, I alone am responsible for all remaining errors.

[1] Brazilian Portuguese has been analyzed by Dutra 1987; Modern French by Ashby forthcoming, Ashby & Bentivoglio 1993 and forthcoming, Lambrecht 1987 and 1988; Modern Spanish by Ashby & Bentivoglio 1993 and forthcoming, Bentivoglio 1992, and Bentivoglio & Ashby 1993.

[2] The two first dimensions, and its relative constraints, are depicted in the following table, adapted from Du Bois (1987:829):

Dimensions and constraints of PAS

	Grammar	Pragmatics
Quantity	One-lexical Argument Constraint	One New Argument Constraints
Role	Non-lexical A constraint	Given A Constraint

[3] The limitation to 3rd person narrative texts was due to the desire to analyze a lingusitic corpus as similar as possible to the texts of *The pear stories* (Chafe 1980), in which the original PAS analyses were conducted.

[4] These exclusions were based on the decisions made by Ashby & Bentivoglio 1993 for the analysis of their corpora.

[5] I intend to add to the present data six hundred main clauses extracted from XVI and XVIII century texts, in order to analyze a quantitatively comparable corpus for both modalities of Spanish.

[6] There exist important differences even between the two Old Spanish texts: the *Poema de mio Cid* is attributed to an anonymous author of the XII century; the version we know was copied more than one and a half century later (1307). *El conde Lucanor* was written in the XIV century by a single author, the Infante Don Manuel. The epic poem was in verse, *El conde Lucanor*, in prose.

[7] In the near future I also intend to analyze modern written texts, in order to determine more clearly whether the differences between Old and Modern Spanish are due to the literary genre and not only to possible diachronic changes.

[8] With the purpose of making easier the comparison with the data of Ashby & Bentivoglio 1993, the argument of existential *haber* was coded as S, even though in more recent studies (cf. Ashby & Bentivoglio forthcoming, and Bentivoglio & Ashby forthcoming) this argument was coded as R and treated separately from the S group.

[9] For more details on this variable, se Du Bois & Thompson 1991.

[10] For a full understanding of the identifiability variable, see Du Bois 1980, as well as Du Bois & Thompson 1991, and Bentivoglio and Ashby forthcoming.

[11] In coding the data for this variable, I followed Chafe 1987 and Du Bois & Thompson 1991.

[12] It seems unnecessary to recall that entities linguistically coded by zeroes and

personal or demonstrative pronouns are always non-new.

[13] Segments appearing between square brackets were not taken into account, hence not coded, due to some of the provisos established in the Methodology section.

[14] In cases as this whithin more than one NP representing the argument of the same verb (*Vio*), only the first NP (*puertas abiertas*) was coded.

[15] 15. The comparison of NPs fulfilling the roles of A, S (including X) and O, is shown in the following table, reproduced from Ashby & Bentivoglio (1993:66):

Distribution of lexical arguments (% only) among grammatical roles in Sacapultec, Brazilian Portuguese, Spanish, and French

	Sacapultec	Brazilian Portuguese	Spanish	French
	%	%	%	%
A	5.0	8.0	6.0	5.0
S+X	57.8	39.0	36.0	45.0
O	37.2	53.0	58.0	50.0

[16] A-P includes both pronouns and zeroes.

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