Constructions of uncontrolled state or event

The increase in productivity of a new argument structure in Old Spanish

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Spanish and other Romance languages inherited from Latin the seeds of a new construction that is common to the syntax of some verbs belonging to the field of emotions, feelings, pain or modality. The semantic values of this construction are strange to prototypical transitivity and are coupled with a marked argument structure, compared with the more common transitive sentence.

In the early centuries of the history of Spanish only a few verbs were integrated in the new scheme, which could receive an experience, modal or quantitative meaning, depending on an analogical association with certain frequent verbs. As the construction gained productivity, the importance of these few specific verbs as models for the newly integrated ones was reduced and the construction as a whole was understood in a more general sense of uncontrolled state or event.

This paper provides a history of the construction in its different stages and tries to uncover the mechanism and factors that favored the increase in its productivity over the centuries. It also attempts to understand these facts from a typological standpoint, as an effect of some kind of a transitivity split that took place in Old Spanish, which gave rise to a type of marked construction, associated to some specific verbs.

Keywords: constructions, productivity, analogy, transitivity, split alignment

1. Arguments, constructions, and non-canonical arguments

According to well-known approaches to the concept of construction as an association of structure and meaning (Goldberg 1995, Croft 2007), the speakers of a language have a knowledge of its grammar that allows them to link specific syntactic structures with certain meanings, thus considering the construction as a symbolic

unit, similar in many respects to other expressions or words in their language. An immediate consequence of these proposals is that the boundary between syntax and lexicon is reduced to a gradual transition and that speakers store certain abstract units of a constructive nature in their mental dictionary.

This view is usually combined with the assumption that constructions should be placed at a privileged level in syntactic analysis, so that other units of grammar, such as subject or object, play a secondary role in the syntactic parsing and can only be properly understood when they are defined in relation to the construction they belong to. This involves a relative rather than a universal view of the more nuclear arguments of the sentence.

One of the verbal arguments that is present in the vast majority of Spanish sentences is the subject. For linguists educated in the Western tradition, the notion of subject is, in principle, clear and uncontroversial. In accordance with this tradition, also present in the primary school, every sentence has its subject, which agrees with the verb. The few sentences that do not have this verbal argument are called impersonal.

Most are familiar, however, with the notion that subject is described from a descriptive and normative perspective in which one feels the influence of the Greco-Latin grammatical tradition and, in general, the descriptive studies on Indo-European languages, which, after all, share many grammatical features and follow similar diachronic trends.

The notion of grammatical subject is, however, a rather complex and controversial one and is better defined and understood from a specific typological perspective, since it only becomes valid and meaningful within the family of nominative-accusative languages. However, even within the languages of this group, it seems reasonable to place the definition of subject or object in a perspective that is relative to the construction in which they appear. In this regard, we can say that the concepts of subject and object are usually defined in relation to the transitive construction, which is the most common and widespread type of two-argument sentence in the Indo-European languages.

The well-known prototypical view of transitivity (Hopper & Thompson 1980) allows us to approach a semantic characterization of the transitive sentence that assumes an essential link between this construction and a specific type of agentive and temporary bound action (Elvira 2009: 104–107). In this situation, the proximity to the prototype may be either larger or smaller depending on the type of action or process involved, and this may affect the grammatical structure of the sentence. The degree and frequency with which various languages accommodate their two-argument sentence to the transitive prototype also differs and this may help to explain many of the differences in their syntactic behavior when expressing peripheral or marginal events in relation to the more typical transitive situation.

It is precisely in these marginal situations where peculiar syntactic behaviors may arise.

The notion of non-canonical case has recently been used to refer to specific uses of those verbal arguments showing morphological or syntactic behavior that differs from what is usually expected for these arguments (Aikhenvald, Dixon, & Onishi, eds. 2001). The most frequently mentioned one is the non-canoncial subject, which can be found in many present-day Germanic and Romance languages. These subjects are not expressed in Nominative (or equivalent syntactic coding) and show a specific syntactic behavior that changes from language to language within a list of features that may be present in every given language (verbal agreement, c-command, etc.).[1] In short, these subjects do not usually pass all the subjecthood tests (Fernández Soriano 1999).

However, people that frequently talk about non-canonical subjects and their properties do not usually seem to be aware that other arguments different from the subject may also exhibit some features of a non-canonical argument. In fact, we can also refer to this notion when talking about grammatical sentences where the second non-personal argument does not receive the usual case for objects or displays a syntactic behavior that differs from what is usually expected from such an argument. In an Accusative/Nominative language like Old and Modern Spanish, the term non-canonical object can thus refer to any Non-Accusative Direct Objects. In this context, the terms Nominative and Accusative are not restricted to the morphological domain and are also intended to refer to any grammatical device that can be seen as an alternative to morphological case.

Spanish has some specific constructions whose first and second arguments show features of syntactic behavior that could also be viewed as non-canonical.

(1)   a.   *A mi padre le   gusta el   vino*
            to my father he.DAT likes the wine.
            "My father likes wine"
      b.   *A mi padre le   preocupa tu   salud*
            to my father he.DAT worries   your health
            "My father is worried about your health"

The first argument of these constructions, *a mi padre* 'to my father', has typically been defined as indirect object and the coreferential pronoun *le* 'to him' is usually viewed as a dative. However, the notion of indirect object is controversial, as it makes reference to very different sentence functions. Indeed, the term indirect also applies to the second argument of three-argument transitive constructions,

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1. The term "quirky case" is more common in the generative framework to refer to very similar facts.

such as those that include the verb *dar* 'to give'. The same occurs with the dative term itself, which dates back to a former *dativus dandi* 'dative of giving'. This specific subtype of Latin dative was used to refer to the third argument, usually personal, of verbs of transfer or giving. But the Latin dative was also found with other two-argument verbs, such as *placet* 'to like' or *licet* 'to be allowed', which normally made reference to stative situations of experience or modality.

From a semantic viewpoint, the uses of the dative also seem to be rather heterogeneous, including quite different semantic roles, such as the experiencer, recipient, affected, etc. According to Touratier (1996: 215), it is the meaning of the verb involved that gives the dative its possible values and meanings. In any case, the semantic roles assumed by the Latin dative share the fact that they refer to an argument of low agentivity in situations that are distant from the prototypical transitive action (Baños 2009: 194).

As a result, it is not surprising that some researchers have attempted to highlight the differences in syntactic behavior of the dative or indirect object, depending on the construction in which they appear. Thus, the first argument in (1) has been considered a typical case of a non-canonical subject (Campos 1999, Fernández Soriano 1999). Indeed, this argument shows some of the traits that help define the canonical subject in Spanish: it is usually located before the verb as an unmarked position, it has a thematic character and is preferably personal. Interestingly, throughout the centuries a combined use has developed with a coreferential pronoun that has ended up being mandatory. Sentence (1) clearly exemplifies this correference (*a mi padre* 'to my father' and *le* 'to him' refer to the same person), also known as clitic doubling, which is nowadays compulsory in all situations and contexts with stative verbs of experience or modality. By contrast, clitic doubling with other verbs of a more active or volitional character is absent or optional in many situations or contexts.

From a typological point of view, we know that the above-mentioned evolution finds its precedent in the development process of agreement morphemes. According to well-known descriptions of this change (Givón 1976, Siewierska 1999 2004), verbal agreement has its genesis in a process of reanalysis of constructions in which a former pronoun, which was used to refer anaphorically to a marked topic, becomes an element redundantly marking the discourse activation of the antecedent. We also know from typology that agreement is a property of the central arguments of the verb that arises first in subjects rather than in direct or indirect objects.

On the other hand, the second argument in these constructions is usually described as a subject because it agrees with the verb. However, it shows at least two features that are typical of objects. Firstly, it usually follows the verb. In fact, the first position for this argument is only acceptable in emphatic or contrastive contexts:

(2)   a.   *A Juan le gustan   las   aceitunas*
        to Juan he.DAT-like.PL the.PL olive.PL
        "John likes olives"
        = *Las aceitunas le gustan a Juan (y no las patatas fritas)*
        "John likes the olives (not the chips)"

On the other hand, the subject of these constructions can be used without a definite article:

(3)   *A Pedro le falta   dinero*
        to Pedro he.DAT-lacks.SG money.SG
        "Pedro lacks money"

The second argument of these constructions thus shows two of the traits we detect in the object. To a certain extent this argument may be seen as a kind of a half-object, which simultaneously shares some separate features of the subject and others of the object. According to this we have two non-canonical arguments, not a single one, and both are part of the same construction. This fact suggests that the definition of the term "non-canonical argument" must be related to the construction it belongs to.

A better understanding of the above situation may be achieved if we consider the idea that the two main syntactic arguments of the two-argument sentence are neither universal nor primitive syntactic categories. They should instead be viewed as construction-specific. The idea that grammatical relations such as "subject", "object", "dative", etc. should be regarded not as universal, not even as language-specific, but as construction-specific relations has already been defended by some scholars (Croft 2001: 170, 2007, Barðdal 2006).

According to this suggestion, we may think that the arguments found in the above constructions are both non-canonical and strange because they belong to a specific construction that is different from the one where normal subjects and normal objects are usually found and show their standard features. In other words, they are non-canonical arguments because they are in a different construction.

This construction has been deeply rooted in the Spanish syntax for centuries. It has two arguments: *Dat + Verb + Nom*. The first one usually has a personal character and is marked with a dative case or equivalent syntactic expression. The second argument is frequently non-personal and is marked with a nominative or equivalent syntactic means. It always agrees with the verb. It is worth remembering that this construction is present, with certain differences, in many other Romance languages (French, Italian, Romanian, etc.). This coincidence is not surprising, since Latin itself provided the precedent of these constructions for verbs of experience (Touratier 1996: 214). Similar argument structures have also been

described in some Germanic languages like German, Icelandic and Old English. The fact that many languages of the Indo-European family share this construction clearly suggests that these languages followed a similar diachronic or typological trend concerning the argument structure of certain specific verbs.

The structural configuration of these sentences is similar to that of the prototypical transitive sentence, but shows an inverted arrangement of the grammatical marking of arguments:

(4) Transitive construction:
     Juan [*rompió la   pelota*]]
     John   broke   the ball
     "John broke the ball"

(5) Stative construction:
     [*A Pedro* [*le gustan   los helados*]]
      to John   he.DAT-likes.PL ice cream
     "John likes ice cream"

From a structural viewpoint, the two structures display the same configuration. Both combine two units of the same syntactic hierarchy: a topical item and a complex predication. In the transitive setting, the subject occupies the topical position, outside the predication, is morphologically unmarked and agrees with the verb; this same external position is filled by the personal argument marked with a preposition in the stative structure and the internal argument agrees with the verb. Note that a dative clitic pronoun attached to the verb refers to the topical prepositional argument. Dative clitic doubling in stative constructions is compulsory in present-day Spanish but was optional in the Middle Ages.

The list of verbs or predicates that may be present in this construction is relatively short, at least when compared with the transitive structure. These predicates belong to one of the following areas (Vázquez Rozas 2006: 101, Real Academia Española 2010: 2687–2691):

Feeling, experience or interest (Psychological verbs):

Aburrir 'to bore', *agobiar* 'to smother', *agradar* 'to please', *apetecer* 'to fancy', *asombrar* 'to amaze', *asustar* 'to frighten', *cansar* 'to get tired', *complacer* 'to please', *contentar* 'to please', *desagradar* 'to displease', *disgustar* 'to upset', *divertir* 'to amuse', *doler* 'to hurt', *encantar* 'to love, to enjoy', *entusiasmar* 'to get excited', *escocer* 'to sting', *estimular* 'to stimulate', *extrañar* 'to find extrange', *gustar* 'to like', *herir* 'to hurt', *interesar* 'to interest', *irritar* 'to irritate', *molestar* 'to bother', *obsesionar* 'to obsess', *ofender* 'to offend', *preocupar* 'to worry', *pesar* 'to sadden', *sorprender* 'to surprise'…

<u>Lack or excess:</u>

Bastar 'to be enough', *faltar 'to lack'*, *sobrar* 'to have left'.

<u>Modality:</u>

Convenir 'to be good for someone'.

<u>Some other verbal phrases:</u>

dar asco 'to disgust', *dar **igual*** 'not to make any difference', *dar miedo* 'to scare', *venir bien* 'to be good to somebody, to come in handy', etc.

Some of the verbs that are used in this construction may also be used in the transitive construction (*abrumar* 'to overwhelm', *aburrir* 'to bore', *admirar* 'to admire', *afectar* 'to affect', *afligir* 'to grieve', *divertir* 'to amuse', *emocionar* 'to move, to touch', *entretener* 'to amuse, to entertain', *entristecer* 'to sadden', *entusiasmar* 'to excite', *escandalizar* 'to scandalize', *espantar* 'to scare away', *estorbar* 'to bother', *fastidiar* 'to annoy', *favorecer* 'to favour', *halagar* 'to flatter', *impresionar* 'to impress', *incomodar* 'to inconvenience', *inquietar* 'to unsettle', *interesar* 'to interest', *intrigar* 'to intrigue', *irritar* 'to irritate', *maravillar* 'to amaze', *molestar* 'to bother', *obsesionar* 'to obsess', *ofender* 'to offend', *pasmar* 'to astonish', *perjudicar* 'to be bad for', *preocupar* 'to worry', *reconfortar* 'to comfort', *satisfacer* 'to satisfy', *seducir* 'to seduce', *sorprender* 'to surprise', *tranquilizar* 'to calm down.', etc.). According to Vázquez Rozas (2006: 104), the use of these verbs in the transitive construction is associated with highly transitive clauses, whereas their presence in the other construction corresponds to clauses of low transitivity, in the sense of Hopper & Thompson (1980).

The trait common to all these predicates is that they refer to a non-agentive situation, state or event that affects an agent that has no control over it. The dative that is present in these constructions does not always play the same semantic role. It sometimes refers to the experiencer of the feeling or sensation. However, with verbs of lack or modality its semantic value is different, probably that of locative or theme.

We can then talk about a pairing of form and meaning in a sense used by some scholars when they assume that some constructions can be seen as symbolic entities. The construction we are considering is indeed quite consistent from a semantic standpoint, as regards both the type of predicates that may be present in it and the kind of situation it usually refers to. In present tenses it has a stative meaning. This stative meaning makes the construction similar to attributive predicative sentences:

(6) *A mi padre le gusta   la música*
    to my father he.DAT-likes the music
    "my father likes music"
    = *Mi padre es amante de la música* "My father loves music"

(7)   *A mi amigo le falta   coraje*
      to my friend he.DAT-lacks courage
      "My friend lacks courage"
      = *Mi amigo es un cobarde* "My friend is a coward"

In past tenses the stative meaning may turn into a dynamic value, in situations that are not under the control of a personal argument.

(8)   *A Pedro le molestó   tu   actitud*
      to Pedro he.DAT-bothered your attitude
      "Peter was upset with your attitude"
      = *Tu actitud hizo daño a Pedro* "Your attitude bothered Peter"

That means that the constructions we are considering seem to show a strong and consistent association with meaning. We can provisionally accept the notion defended by some scholars like Goldberg (1995) or Croft (2007) that the lexicon of human languages may include not only simple words and lexicalized sentences, but also some other abstract and schematic patterns that are associated with some kind of abstract and general meaning. For the purposes of our present discussion we may assume that the *Dat. + Verb + Nom.* pattern is associated in Spanish with an uncontrolled state or event. This association of schematic form and general meaning has today a symbolic character:

Dat. + Verb + Nom. (*Form*)

Uncontrolled state or event (*Meaning*)

When we talk about a construction, we refer to a schematic pattern of a syntactic character. This pattern is essentially regular and may be accepted by new verbs. It means that the construction we are examining must be to some extent productive, either in the past or in present times.

2.   The spread of the new construction in the Middle Ages

The number of verbs that may be used according to the new pattern has constantly grown since the early Middle Ages. More technically, we may say that the productivity of the new construction has increased. The term *productivity* is fairly polysemous and may be used in many different senses (Barðdal 2008: 10–19) that to some extent are related to each other. The most frequent uses of this term make reference to the notion of creativity, which is considered the most identifiable trait of human languages. In a more specific sense, the notion of productivity

is understood as extensibility; in other words, it refers to the capacity of a given grammatical pattern to absorb new elements.

According to recent research on this subject (Barðdal 2008: 30, Bybee 2010: 67), the factors that can trigger productivity are basically two. The first one is type frequency, i.e. the amount of items that are included in a specific grammatical pattern. Those patterns that show a high type frequency tend to be considered by the speakers as the normal or default grammatical option for a specific communicative need. The standard transitive sentence is one of these options. It may include a high number of semantically different verbs in Spanish (and also in other Romance languages) and is then close to being the most widespread and less marked two-argument option in the grammar of this language. In the domain of morphology, the conjugation of verbs in -*ar* is by far the most crowded inflectional model for Spanish verbs and also the favorite destination for verbal loans and new formations.

But high type frequency is not the only requisite for a grammatical pattern to be productive. Sometimes it is enough that this pattern is consistent from a semantic or any other different standpoint, i.e. that the belonging of every item to a specific model can be explained or predicted on the basis of some linguistic criteria.

The new Spanish stative construction has its origins in Latin:

(9) *cur aliena.*   *placet   tibi,*
    why other.NOM.PL.NEUT like.3.SG you.DAT

    quae   *tua*   *non   placet,*
    that. NOM.SG.FEM yours.NOM.SG.FEM do not like.3.SG

    uxor?
    wife
    "Why do you like someone else's wife, when you don't like your own?"
    (Mart. *Epig.* III, 70)

Most of the Latin verbs that were used in these constructions were also possible in impersonal sentences, without nominative subject. A classification of the verbs used in these constructions has been put forth by Wackernagel (1920: 20.1; see also Bauer 2000: 110–111). Apart from verbs referring to meteorological phenomena, which have a semantic conditioning for their syntax, impersonal sentences were used by two main groups of verbs: **(a)** verbs conveying emotions and feelings, and physical or mental state or experience (*lubet* 'to like', *miseret* 'to pity', *paenitet* 'to repent', *placet* 'to please', *piget* 'to regret', *pudet* 'to shame'); **(b)** verbs expressing necessity or possibility (*decet* 'to be proper', *licet* 'to be allowed', *convenit* 'to be advisable', …).

It is worth mentioning that the grammatical coding of the arguments of these Latin verbs was not homogeneous. Some of them combined with an accusative (*me delectat* 'I am pleased', *me decet* 'it is proper') to refer to the personal argument, but the group of verbs that governed a dative was more common, more homogeneous, and also included more verbs (*mihi licet* 'I am allowed', *mihi dolet* 'I am in pain'). On the other hand, the source of the feeling or necessity was sometimes expressed by a genitive, not a nominative, the result being a sentence with no expression for the grammatical subject. These sentences can be considered impersonal from a structural point of view, since none of the verbal arguments plays the role of a syntactic subject and has a morphological or syntactic marking that is typical of a subject (nominative case, initial position, verbal agreement, etc.).

Impersonal sentences were possible in all ancient Indo-European languages, but their distribution, number and frequency vary from language to language. They were relatively scarce in Sanskrit and Greek, whereas they are well-represented in Latin, Germanic or Slavic (Bauer 2000:96). The impersonal variant of these sentences continued to be used in Old Spanish (Elvira 2009:110) by a small number of verbs. I am specifically referring to the Old Spanish modal verbs *convenir* 'to be advisable' and *conplir* 'must', the verbs of experience *plazer* 'to please', *pesar* 'to be sorry', and *sobrar* 'to be left', as well as the verbal phrase *venir en miente* 'to recall, to come to mind'. Only three of them (*plazer*, *convenir*, and *sobrar*) inherited its syntactic pattern directly from Latin.[2] The other impersonal verbs also have a Latin origin but nearly all of them were previously used in other syntactic patterns, predominantly transitive structures (see below) and were gradually attracted to the new argument structure.

The first personal argument could be expressed through a dative pronoun *le* (pl. *les*) or a prepositional phrase with *a* 'to'. Sometimes both could be present simultaneously in the same sentence. The grammatical coding of the second argument showed a certain degree of variation. The use of the preposition *de* was very frequent. This preposition was increasingly used in Late Latin to replace the genitive, after the extinction of Latin cases.

The precedent of the use of the genitive to express the source of the feeling or necessity can be found in some Latin impersonal verbs that did not survive in Romance languages (*pudet* 'to be ashamed', *miseret* 'to pity', *piget* 'to be annoyed', *taedet* 'to be tired of', *paenitet* 'to regret', Bauer 2000:113). Before their disappearance, the use of the genitive was spread to other verbs that continued to exist in Romance times.

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2. The verb *doler* 'to hurt' was also used in this construction as a result of a Latin inheritance, but its frequency was rather irrelevant during the Middle Ages, when it was preferably used as a reflexive verb.

For example, the Latin verb *placere* didn't take the genitive to express the source of a feeling, whereas its Spanish successor *plazer* used the preposition *de* to express the origin of the pleasant feeling:

(10) *pues que a el   plogo **de fazer**   la   promission*
      after that to him liked of making the prohibition
      "since he liked very much to forbid this"
      (Alfonso X, *Primera Partida*, fol. 55r, CORDE)

The same verbal argument with the preposition *de* was also taken as a complement by others verbs of necessity and modal advisability (*convenir* 'to be advisable', *conplir* 'to be convenient', etc.), whose Latin ancestors (*convenire*, *complire*) did not normally use the genitive.

The preposition in the second argument was sometimes selected on account of semantic factors. With the preposition *por* we can notice a causal meaning:

(11) *e … plogole.   mucho   **por ello***
      and liked-he.DAT very much for it
      "and… he liked it very much because of it"
      (Alfonso X, *General Estoria*-IV, 286r, CORDE)

The preposition *con* usually added an instrumental nuance:

(12) *A Alcibiades plogole.   mucho **con   aquellas nueuas***
      to Alcibiades liked-he.DAT much   with that   news
      "Alcibiades was very pleased with that news"
      (Alfonso X, *General Estoria*-IV, CORDE)

Sometimes the source of the feeling was expressed through a subordinate sentence of tense:

(13) ***Quando sabíen   esto**, pesoles   de coraçón*
      when   they.knew this sorried-they.DAT of heart
      "When they learned about it, they were really sorry"
      (*Cid*, 2821, CORDE)

A subordinate sentence of cause was also possible:

(14) *Al conde   mucho plogo **porque tanto   tardava***
      to the count much   liked because so much lasted
      "the count liked it very much because he was very late"
      (*Fernán González*, p. 361, CORDE)

Some of the behavioral traits that make the indirect object a non-canonical subject are already present in our texts, but not systematically. Note that the preposed

indirect object is located in the initial position as if it were a personal subject, but it does not lead to clitic doubling, which is compulsory in Modern Spanish (see also sentence 10). On the other hand, examples (11) and (12) above show that clitic doubling is by then possible in Old Spanish.

There is some typological evidence that impersonal constructions with object experiencers may be an important source for the rise of split intransitive languages. This is probably due to the fact that these impersonal constructions refer to states and situations that are far from the best characterized transitive situation. According to cognitive grammar, the concept from human experience underlying transitive encoding is that of causation (cf. Delancey 1987:60, Goldberg 1995:118). Hence the properties of the grammatical items referring to direct causation (control, volition and responsibility of the agent; perceptible change of physical state in the patient, and so on) match perfectly with the content expressed by the prototypical transitive clauses.

The opposite is true with these impersonal sentences. From a gradual point of view we may say that they show a low degree of transitivity, since they test negative in most of the parameters that help measure transitivity (Hopper & Thompson 1980, Malchukov 2006). They show low transitivity in relation to the traits that define the personal argument, which always has low volition and agentivity or none at all. They also test negative in relation to the parameters related to the verb, since the few Old Spanish stative verbs that appeared in these sentences never referred to actions, were atelic and had a non-punctual character, except for aspectual changes induced by the passage to past tense. The second argument of these old constructions also shows reduced transitivity, since it never undergoes change of state. Only in those cases of higher object individuation could we consider that transitivity is somewhat higher, according to these same scales.

Impersonal constructions were not the only way to express stative situations with two arguments. Similarly, Old Spanish verbs that appeared in impersonal constructions could also be used in constructions with subject argument expressing the source of the feeling or experience:

(15) ni te ***ploguieron   las cosas*** *que son offrecidas*
nor you.DAT-like.PL the things that are offered

segun   la ley
according to the law

"and you didn't either like the things that are offered according to law"
(Anonymous, *El Nuevo Testamento según el manuscrito escurialense I-j-6*, 3, CORDE)

This construction is a sequel to the Latin Dative-Nominative construction (see (9) above). It is as old as the impersonal construction itself and its origins date back to Early Latin or even to Proto-Indo-European stages, since other languages from other Indo-European languages use similar structures in present or past times. This same pattern underwent increasing growth in Late Latin and Old Spanish. The new verbs that gradually joined the pattern in Old Spanish can be classified into three groups:

1. The first group includes some transitive verbs that changed their argument structure. Some of them had been used as transitive in Latin. That was the case of *atañer* 'to be concerned', *abastar* 'to be enough', or *conplir* 'to be due', which used to be transitive in Latin. *Atañer* comes from lat. *attingere* 'to touch'; in Old and present-day Spanish it means 'to concern, to have to do with'

> (16) *deue   ser fecho conplazer de aquellos aquien*
> it must be made to please of those   to-whom
>
> **_atañe_**   *el pro   o   el b daño*
> concerns the benefits or the damages
>
> *de aquellos logares*
> of those   places
> "it must be pleased by those whom concern the benefits and damages of those places"
> (*Siete Partidas*, *Corpus de Madison*, DAVIES)

Abastar comes from Vulg. Lat. **bastāre* and this in turn derives from Greek βαστάζειν 'to take, to bear'. In Spanish it has a stative meaning 'to be enough':

> (17) *Aquel hombre … le dixo   que … la cabanya suya*
> that   man…   he.DAT-said that   the cabine   his
>
> *le **bastaua***
> he.DAT-was enough
> "that man said that his cabin was enough for him"
> (F. de Heredia, *Traducción de Vidas paralelas de Plutarco*, I, CORDE)

2. An important group of verbs that joined the new pattern had a denominative character. *Faltar* 'to lack' < *falta* 'lack, shortage' was already used in the Middle Ages; some other verbs like *interesar* 'to interest' < *interés* 'interest', *entusiasmar* 'to get excited' < *entusiasmo* 'enthusiasm', *obsesionar* 'to obsess' < *obsesión* 'obsession', etc., were introduced later. All were lexical creations of Spanish, not from Latin, and were used in the stative construction from the very beginning.

Gustar 'to like' is the most frequent verb in that construction in present day Spanish. It comes from *gusto* 'pleasure' (< Lat. *gustus*), not the other way round. But it began to be used as a transitive verb before the 15th century:

(18) e   quiero le fazer   **gustar** el   mal sabor
and I want he.DAT-make taste   the bad flavor

del   tuerto
of.the mistake
"…and I want to make him taste the flavour of his mistake"
(Bonium, *Bocados de Oro*, DAVIES)

By the end of the 15th century it joined the new construction:

(19) le **gusta**   sólo el agua pura
he.DAT-likes only water   pure
"…he only likes pure water"
(Covarrubias, *Suplemento al Tesoro de la lengua española castellana*, CORDE)

3. Some of the new verbs were Latinisms. Lexical renewal through Latin literary or scholarly terms has been very frequent in Spanish since the 15th century. Despite their scholarly origin, some of these Latin words have always been frequently used in everyday oral speech. Among them we can find some verbs (like *competer* 'to do one's duty', *concernir* 'to concern', *divertir* 'to amuse', *incumbir* 'to be incumbent', *preocupar* 'to worry', or *sorprender* 'to surprise') that adapted their argument structure to the new stative pattern (Corominas-Pascual 1994: s. v. PEDIR):

(20) e   lo uno e   lo otro **me compete**
and the one and the other I.DAT-concerns
"…and both things are of my concern…"
(1535, G. Fernández de Oviedo, *Historia general y natural de las Indias*)

According to the preceding data, we have reasons to argue that the syntactic pattern *Dat + Verb + Nom* can reasonably be considered a productive construction. We have found a three-way approach to these constructions: old transitive verbs, denominative verbs and Latinisms. The kind of productivity shown by this construction may not be fully understood as due to type frequency, since the number of verbs that adopted its argument structure is not very high (about 30). In contrast, type-frequency productivity made the transitive construction grow for centuries. On the contrary, the stative construction never showed a very high type frequency, but its growth may have been possible because of its semantic consistency, which is a factor that may also increase and have an influence on productivity. Whatever the factor may have been, the growth of the construction is an undeniable fact.

The sources for the growth of the new construction are summarized in Table 1:

Table 1. Possible sources for new verbs in the construction of uncontrolled state or event

Old transitive	*Conplir, pesar, sobrar, (a)bastar…*
Denominative	*Entusiasmar, espantar, faltar, gustar, impresionar, interesar, obsesionar…*
Literary Latinisms	*Admirar, competir, concernir, divertir, incumbir, preocupar, satisfacer, seducir, sorprender…*

3.   Quantitative data from Old Spanish

As we have already shown, the argument structure of *plazer* and *convenir* under-went a moderate but steady growth since it began to spread in the Middle Ages to a very short number of verbs (*agradar* 'to like', (a)*tañer* 'to be concerned', (a)*bastar* 'to be enough', *conplir* 'to be due', *pesar* 'to be sorry', *faltar* 'to lack', or *sobrar* 'to be left, etc.). The quantitative analysis of data may provide revealing facts concern-ing the increase in productivity of the new patterns during the first stages of the process. The token frequency numbers are shown in Table 2, which is based upon the data obtained from the CORDE:

Table 2. Token frequency of stative verbs in Old Spanish

	13th Cent.	14th Cent.	15th Cent.
(A)bastar	1	5	135
Conplir	48	115	262
Convenir	145	79	713
Faltar	-	1	111
Pesar	45	57	283
Plazer	102	453	1346
Sobrar	1	1	30
Agradar	1	3	479

A quick look at these figures may lead one to mistakenly think that all these verbs increased their frequency over the centuries in Old Spanish texts. This is not nec-essarily true, since the number of texts included in the digital corpus increases as the centuries advance. However, the relative amounts within each century are much more interesting. According to Table 2 and Figure 1, the oldest verbs in this construction, *plazer* 'to like' and *convenir* 'to be good/advisable', were also the most frequent ones in this construction in the earliest times of Old Spanish.
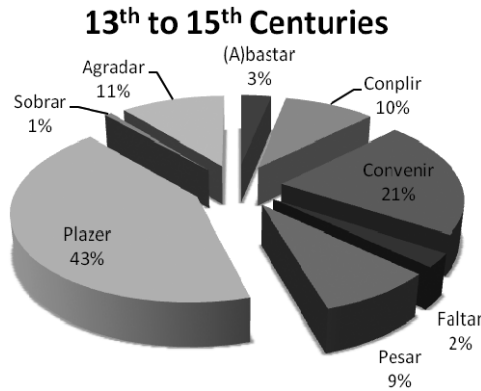
13th to 15th Centuries

Figure 1. Relative token frequency of stative verbs in Old Spanish

A closer look at Figure 1 allows us to detect three semantic cores linking the verbs that were used in the new construction. First, the meaning of experience of *plazer* might have prompted the attraction of the denominative transitive verb *agradar* 'to please' to this new argument structure. Likewise, the old transitive verb *pesar* 'to weigh' shifted to a new stative meaning of experience 'to be sorry', which displaced it to the opposite semantic side of *plazer*. Secondly, a similar attraction from the verb *convenir* 'to be good for someone' may have caused the shift of the former transitive verb *conplir* 'to obey, to fulfill' to a new stative modal meaning 'to be due'. We still find a third group of semantically linked verbs: *Sobrar* 'to be left' was the semantic opposite of *faltar* 'to lack', and the meaning of *abastar* 'to be enough' was intermediate between that of the other verbs. Thus, these three verbs shared a common meaning of quantitative assessment that probably helped their progressive connection and the mutual reinforcement of their frequency. As a result of this process, a limited set of meaning associations gained ground, focusing on three core stative notions: experience, modality and quantity (see Figure 2):
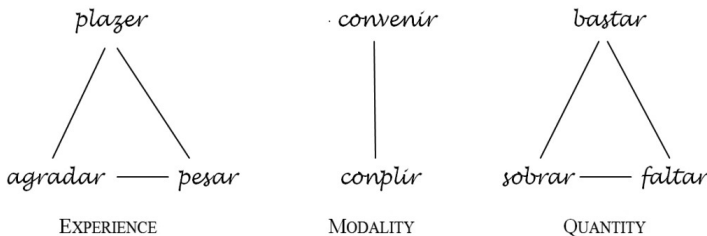

EXPERIENCE   MODALITY   QUANTITY

Figure 2. Associative semantic links among stative verbs in the Middle Ages

These associations were initially based on synonimity relations or some other contrast or opposition relation within the same semantic domain. Thus, the verb *plazer*

was simultaneously linked to its synonymous *agradar* and to its antonymous *pesar*. Similarly, *bastar*, *sobrar*, and *faltar* refer to certain positions along the continuum of quantity. Finally, *convenir* and *conplir* refer respectively to what is beneficial and what is advisable, and these are parallel positive notions within the realm of the assessment of facts and situations. It seems likely that closeness or contrast within the same semantic domain favored the association of syntactic behavior of these verbs.

These associative groups were initially restricted to a small number of verbs. In each of these three groups we can find a verb of Latin origin which was the focus of attraction to other verbs, often favored by frequency, any kind of semantic relation, or both factors simultaneously. These centers of association were relatively isolated from each other. Indeed, the data from medieval language provide no evidence about any other meaning association different from the three mentioned above.

Despite their mutual isolation, modality, experience and quantity share as a common abstract feature that they are states with no temporal duration that can affect an individual with no ability to control that situation. The presence of a dative in all these constructions confirms the suggestion that this association is related to the idea of uncontrolled situation. Therefore, it is perfectly conceivable that the speakers of the time were able to perceive the features common to all such terms, and were able to place the construction where they appeared in relation to a more abstract feature of uncontrolled state.
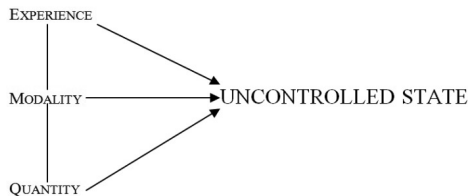

Figure 3. Abstract association among types of verbs

Due to this reinterpretation, the construction underwent significant developments in the centuries after the Middle Ages. In fact, a few of these innovations took place during the 15th century. The main one is the introduction of new verbs into the new scheme, which refer to stative or durative situations that usually affect a personal subject (*molestar* 'to bother', *estorbar* 'to obstruct, to hinder'). However, many other verbs that incorporate new shades of meaning were also admitted in this construction. We refer to verbs of dynamic value, which now includes a nuance of change in physical or psychological condition triggered by a cause external to a subject that cannot control these changes (*entristecer* 'to sadden', *inquietar* 'to unsettle', *fastidiar* 'to annoy', *incomodar* 'to bother', *sorprender* 'to surprise', *irritar*

'to irritate', *pasmar* 'to astonish', *tranquilizar* 'to calm down', etc.). Many of them had been used as transitive in the past and started to emerge in the new construction from the late Middle Ages on. Here is a chronological summary of the facts, also with data from the CORDE:

Table 3. Increase in the type frequency of the new construction after the late Middle Ages

|	NEW VERBS	DATE		NEW VERBS	DATE
16th Cent.	*incumbir* 'to be incumbent on'	1516	17th Cent.	*irritar* 'to irritate'	1604
	entristecer 'to sadden'	1521		*Gustar* 'to like'	1611
	seducir 'to seduce'	1535		*interesar* 'to interest'	1611
	estorbar 'to bother'	1536		*molestar* 'to bother'	1614
	estimular 'to stimulate'	1537		*afectar* 'to affect'	1648
	aflligir 'to grieve'	1540		*abrumar* 'to overwhelm'	1653
	entretener 'to entertain'	1550	18th Cent.	*pasmar* 'to astonish'	1670
	satisfacer 'to satisfy'	1555		*incomodar* 'to bother'	1726
	inquietar 'to unsettle'	1560		*sorprender* 'to surprise'	1736
	divertir 'to amuse'	1561		*entusiasmar* 'to love'	1788
	favorecer 'to favour'	1569	19th Cent.	*preocupar* 'to worry'	1841
	estremecer 'to shudder'	1578		*aburrir* 'to bore'	1843
	complacer 'to please'	1589		*tranquilizar* 'to calm down'	1847
	fastidiar 'to annoy'	1598		*intrigar* 'to intrigue'	1880

As advanced in Table 1, these verbs can be classified into three groups in relation to their origin:

a. Old transitive: *aburrir, entristecer, entretener, estremecer, estorbar, favorecer, inquietar, molestar, tranquilizar.*

a. Latinisms: *incumbir.* Most of them could also be used as transitive: *afectar, afligir, complacer, divertir, incomodar, irritar, preocupar, seducir, satisfacer, sorprender,*

c. Denominal verbs: *abrumar* (from *broma* 'joke'), *entusiasmar* (from *entusiasmo* 'enthusiasm'), *fastidiar* (from *fastidio* 'nuisance'), *gustar* (from *gusto* 'taste'), *interesar* (from *interés* 'interest'), *intrigar* (from *intriga* 'intrigue'), *pasmar* (from *pasmo* 'spasm').

In these post-medieval centuries the associative relation among the verbs that joined the construction became more balanced. No longer did any of the verbs included in Table 3 seem to be the leading attractor to its argument structure, just like *plazer* or *convenir* had been two centuries before. A significant consequence of this is the decline of the verb *plazer* 'to like', which used to be the most powerful model of analogical attraction in medieval times. By the early 17th century, it was replaced by the verb *gustar*, which had a denominative origin (it was formed from the denominative noun *gusto* 'pleasure') and had been previously used in transitive sentences.

As the number of verbs that joined this construction grew, the central role of the specific meaning of some verbs seems to have lost its earlier relevance. Notions

such as experience, modality, or quantity were no longer essential to determine the link of a verb to the new construction and a more general semantic characterization of the construction as uncontrolled state or event gradually gained ground. Under this new interpretation, the new construction continued to expand in the following centuries:
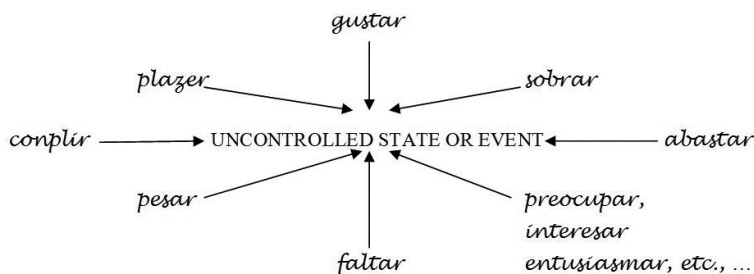
Figure 4. Associative semantic links among stative verbs in present day Spanish construction

The uncontrolled state or event construction has not grown significantly after the 19th century, but the reasons for this slowdown of growth are independent of the construction itself. Broadly speaking, the vocabulary of Spanish as the official standard language of Spain was established as such during the 19th century (except for possible innovations in science or colloquial language). However, it is not true that the construction is currently losing productivity, since all the verbs that have joined it over the last centuries continue to be used with full vitality to this very day.

According to the data examined, the early stages of development of a construction seem to be based on the use of certain verbs that define some semantically well-defined areas of attraction to new verbs. Initially, these semantic areas are relatively isolated from each other. Over time, however, speakers tended to group these nuclei in more general schemes, defined on the basis of broader and more abstract features. The first effect of this broadening of the associative level is an immediate increase in the productivity of the construction. Other studies on other languages, such as Israel (1996) about the *way*-construction in English, seem to confirm this view.

Data on syntax acquisition also show a very suggestive parallel with diachronic evolution. Tomasello (2003, 2006) hypothesizes that children do not operate initially with abstract linguistic rules, but operate instead on the basis of concrete, item-based constructions. According to this view, many of young children's early multi-word productions are not structured by abstract rules but rather by linguistic schemas of a much more concrete nature. These schemas become abstract gradually, and, at least from some theoretical perspectives, never become totally abstract

and meaningless "rules" even in adulthood. Tomasello speaks about "verb-island constructions" in early acquisition. In these initial stages, constructions are centered around single verbs which later group together to form a more general construction with a more abstract or general meaning.

Research on language acquisition also show that children construct more abstract linguistic constructions gradually, on the basis of linguistic experience in which frequency plays a key role. Every communicative act is largely based on the model that we or other speakers have created in other similar communicative situations. The memory of the precedents is always relevant to the speakers. This implies that a construction is best learned when it has been heard many times (Bybee 2010: 89). On the other hand, the more frequent a linguistic expression is, the more likely it is to be used again in the future. That is why we can say that linguistic communicative effectiveness greatly depends on the speaker's statistical ability to guess the most probable and predictable solution for every communicative need (Albright 2009, Bod 2006, 2009).

These findings are in line with the suggestion of Albright (2009) that the type frequency level may influence the kind of similarity between the analogous elements. When type frequency is low the elements tend to be similar in an unstructured manner, so that one element A is similar to B on the basis of one feature and B is similar to C according to (an)other feature(s). This is precisely what happened during the Middle Ages, when a few stative verbs with related meaning supported each other according to their different shades of meaning. On the contrary, when type frequency increased, the similarity requirement that allows productivity tended to be structured on a more homogeneous and abstract feature that affects all the verbs in the same way.

The importance of precedents in language production was highlighted by Hermann Paul in his well-known *Prinzipien der Sprachgeschichte*. According to his view, words and phrases are stored in the lexicon or may be produced through proportional analogy with existing words or phrases:

> Die Wörter und Wortgruppen, die wir in der Rede verwenden, erzeugen sich nur zum Teil durch blosse gedächtnismässige Reproduktion des früher Aufgenommenen. Ungefähr eben so viel Anteil daran hat eine kombinatorische Tätigkeit, welche auf der Existenz der Proportionengruppen basiert ist.
>
> Die Kombination besteht dabei gewissermassen in der Auflösung einer Proportionengleichung, indem nach dem Muster von schon geläufig gewordenen analogen Proportionen zu einem gleichfalls geläufigen Worte ein zweites Proportionsglied frei geschaffen wird. Diesen Vorgang nennen wir Analogiebildung (Paul 1886: 88–89)

"The mere reproduction by memory of what it has once mastered is only one factor in the words and groups of words that we employ in our speech. Another hardly less important factor is the combinatory activity based upon the existence of the proportion groups.

   The combination consists to some extent in the solution of an equation between proportions, by the process of freely creating, for a word already familiar, on the model of proportions likewise familiar, a second proportional member. This process we call formation by analogy"

This was the prevailing view in Western linguistics from the late 19th century on, but it has been largely replaced by rule-based approaches in structuralist and generative grammar. More recently, there have been some relevant attempts to revitalize the notion of analogy (Skousen 1989, Itkonen 2005, Wanner 2006), which are based on the idea that existing words and phrases may play an important role in speech production and comprehension. This idea, when combined with the concepts of frequency and association, may also lead to a better understanding of the appearance and development of productivity effects in grammar.[3]

5.   Final remarks

So far we have seen that in Spanish there is a specific two-argument construction, which shows some specific properties. This construction includes a dative (or indirect object) argument and a nominative argument (or syntactic subject), both of which show a morphological and syntactic behavior unusual for dative and nominative arguments in other constructions (specifically the transitive one). The fact that these non-canonical arguments are present at the same time and in the same construction is unlikely to be considered a coincidence. In fact, the specificity of their syntactic and morphological behavior may be due to their belonging to this specific construction. The kind of sentences we are dealing with can be considered a construction in the technical sense that they are systematically linked with a specific meaning: that of uncontrolled state or event. This meaning is present in every example of these constructions and in all tenses and modes.

   Our stative construction also shows permanent diachronic productivity, which confirms its construction-like status. The productivity of the construction has been influenced and reinforced by its semantic consistency rather than by its

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3. Some recent approaches to the phenomenon of productivity wrongly oppose productivity and analogy. That is the case of Barðdal (2008), who writes that "analogical formations are extensions based on only one model form" (p. 43–44), and also that "analogy is the other side of the productivity coin" (p. 44).

type frequency. Indeed, the number of verbs participating in the construction is not very considerable, but all of them have a similar meaning.

We have suggested that we are dealing with a case of argument split, which gives rise to a new structural argument pattern that is used to refer to those situations that are located in a low position in the transitivity scale. This proposal is typologically plausible. Split alignmet is shown by languages that do not follow a homogeneous argument pattern, but employ another syntactic or morphological behavior in certain marked situations. On the other hand, the term "split" is not restricted to two-argument sentences. Mono-argument sentences with intransitive verbs can also show a split. The suggestion made by Burzio (1986) that the internal argument of Italian unaccusative verbs becomes a subject marked nominative due to the inability of the verb to case-mark its argument is well known. Old Spanish provided considerable empirical support for this hypothesis. In Old Spanish texts, intransitive verbs may split into auxiliary choice and participial agreement (Elvira 2001).

Given that the group of verbs where these facts took place had a mono-argument or intransitive character, the use of the term split intransitivity has been spreading for years among researchers. This notion generally refers to the syntactic behavior of intransitive verbs that are distant from the agentive meaning. Yet, there is no reason to think that unaccusativity has to be restricted to the domain of intransitive verbs. Similar facts can be observed in the space of two-argument sentences.

We know that languages may differ as regards the level to which transitivity has spread (Malchukov 2005). English is a good example of highly spread transitivity. Other well-known languages such as German or Spanish show transitivity expanded to a lesser extent. In the transitivity hierarchy some verbs can be located in higher positions than others. Lower positions are usually filled by non-agentive or stative verbs. These are precisely the positions where argument split may occur.

Therefore, we can talk about a kind of a transitivity split in Old Spanish, due to a motivation similar to that which prompts the well-known split of intransitive verbs in many languages. This split led to the emergence of a specific kind of marked two-argument construction, associated with the meaning of uncontrolled state or event, which gained productivity over the centuries during the stages we have shown above.

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