

SOME STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SPANISH MODAL VERB PHRASE

Although a considerable number of studies concerning the morphology and syntax of the Spanish verb have been published in the recent past, dissatisfaction has often been expressed with their treatment of the verb phrase, especially those formed by combining an "auxiliary" and a nominal verb form. The principal deficiency in such studies appears to be the lack of clear *structural* criteria by which to identify the various types of verb phrases and to isolate them for further study. We do not intend to undertake here a study of all verbal periphrasis in Spanish. We propose, rather, to examine one variety, determining its major structural characteristics by a brief syntactic analysis.

In order to isolate the specific type of phrase we shall consider here, we may divide *ad hoc* auxiliary-plus-infinitive phrases in Spanish, including those in which the collocation is accidental, into four broad categories. The method by which those categories are determined will be demonstrated below.

TYPE. I. The action of the auxiliary and of the infinitive is performed by two different persons:

- a) 'mandé hacerlo'
- b) 'lo mandé hacer'
- c) 'lo oí hablar'

In examples (a) and (b), transforms of the type 'mandé que lo hiciera(n)' show the actor to be different in *mandar* from the actor(s)

referred to in *hacer*. In example (c), transforms of the type 'lo oí, él hablaba' or 'lo oí, él habló' demonstrate a similar difference in actor. Furthermore, the infinitive in (c) functions as the objective complement. Even though another structural transform, 'se oyó hablar' fits the same pattern as above, but shows the finite verb and the infinitive to have the same actor, the infinitive functions as objective complement and makes no separate classification necessary.

TYPE II. The auxiliary and infinitive are separated by a preposition or a subordinating element:

- a) 'voy a hacerlo'
- b) 'tengo que hacerlo'.

For economy of presentation, I intend to eliminate such constructions as *haber de*, *ir a* with infinitive, and *tener que* from the following discussion, since we will automatically exclude all forms involving intervening prepositional and relative elements.

TYPE III. The infinitive is the subject of the "apparent auxiliary":

- a) 'me gusta cantar'.

TYPE IV. The auxiliary and infinitive refer to actions performed by one and the same actor. No subordinating element separates them:

- a) 'puedo salir'.

It is this last type of construction (which we shall refer to as "class iv nexus") that we shall consider here.

Traditional grammar calls the class iv nexus "modal verb auxiliary plus infinitive". Nonetheless, it is open to question whether the terms "modal", "auxiliary", and "modal auxiliary plus infinitive" are truly descriptive of the construction. Consequently, we should doubt the assumption implied by this terminology that there exists a class of verbs which functions to express mood, making up for what Spanish can only partly accomplish by inflection.

In most traditional explanations the infinitive is considered to be the direct object of the auxiliary. In others, the auxiliary is considered to be somehow semantically "incomplete" and is made "complete" by the infinitive.

It is true, of course, that in utterances of the type *‘quiero el comerlo’ the nominalized phrase ‘el comerlo’ is indeed the direct object of *quiero*. In this case it is the speaker’s use of the definite article that indicates his intention to substantivize the infinitive and treat it as an object. But because it is not obligatory in Spanish that an article marks the substantive, a speaker may choose to omit the definite article, thus causing the substantivized infinitive to resemble more closely the infinitive of our Class IV nexus. For this reason, it is impossible to rely exclusively upon the appearance or non-appearance of the article to “prove” the object status of the infinitive in such phrases. This becomes even clearer when we attempt to construct a parallel with *puedo*. This leads to the possibility that, while certain of our “auxiliaries” may occur in absolute use with substantivized infinitive objects, others do not and that phrases such as ‘quiero comer’ and ‘puedo comer’ do not involve direct objects at all. To determine which “auxiliaries” may occur in absolute use with substantivized infinitive objects we may apply the following test:

Verb	Possible liaisons	Verb	Possible liaisons
quiero	comida ¹ comer	puedo	comer
prefiero	comida ₁ comer	suele	comer

Verbs such as *querer*, *odiar*, *deber* etc., possess this ambivalent characteristic, while others, such as *poder*, *soler*, *osar*, etc., do not. Consequently, we might classify our “auxiliaries” as belonging to a Group I (used with or without a substantivized object) or to a Group II (used only without a substantivized object). Another test frame which demonstrates these same valence characteristics is the following, in which the native informant is asked to “edit” a list of phrases, adding any forms he feels to be necessary to make the phrase “sound normal”. Three representative examples of these phrases from a recent questionnaire follow. The percentage figures represent the number of native speakers favoring each category:

A. ‘¿Qué podemos, descansar o trabajar?’.

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. As is | 0% |
| 2. Add <i>hacer</i> after <i>poder</i> | 96% |
| 3. Add infinitive other than <i>hacer</i> | 4% |

B. '¿Qué queremos [más], descansar o trabajar?'

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. As is | 16% |
| 2. Add <i>hacer</i> after <i>querer</i> | 80% |
| 3. Add infinitive other than <i>hacer</i> | 4% |

C. '¿Qué odiamos [más], descansar o trabajar?'

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. As is | 60% |
| 2. Add <i>hacer</i> after <i>odiar</i> | 32% |
| 3. Add infinitive other than <i>hacer</i> | 4% |
| 4. Reject phrase as "unnatural" | 1% |

The statistics indicate that *poder* is considered a Group II form and *odiar* a Group I form by a majority of the person queried. *Querer* is a Group II form for a majority of the informant, but a significant number accept it as Group I.

We may go one step further and illustrate how in phrases of the type 'Debo el completarlo tan pronto a la colaboración de mis amigos' we have a single finite verb (*debo*) used with a direct object (*completarlo*) marked by the article, whereas in 'puedo comerlo' we have a bifurcate verbal unit ('puedo comer') used with a direct object (*lo*) as follows:

Verbal core	Object (substantive class)
debo	completarlo
puedo comer	lo
quiero comer	lo

Thus, we are not bound to the concept of the infinitive as the "direct object of the auxiliary" at all. Simply because a verb like *querer* is generally used transitively is no reason to hold that a following infinitive is necessarily like any other object of *querer*. Indeed, transitivity is at best a question of occurrence. In Spanish, there are no necessarily transitive verbs, simply transitive expressions and constructions. We might say a verb is used transitively when it is accompanied by an object and intransitively when it is not. The briefest historical glance at transitivity establishes precedents for

saying that an infinitive following a transitively-used finite or non-finite "auxiliary" is not necessarily its object.

First, by way of example, let us take a simple verb, say, *leer*:

- a) 'Jaime no duerme, lee'.
- b) 'Jaime no duerme, lee *Don Quixote*'.

Both examples are legitimate Spanish constructions. In (a) the verb *leer* is used intransitively. In (b), however, it is used transitively. To state, then, that *leer* is a transitive or intransitive verb would simply not be descriptive.

On the other hand, there are verbs which are more or less restricted to transitive or intransitive use in the spoken or written Spanish of any given period. An attestation from present-day Spanish would show, for example, that a verb such as *desorillar* does not occur in an intransitive construction.

- c) '¿Qué hacía Juana? Desorillaba'.
- d) '¿Qué hacía Juana? Desorillaba un tejido'.

Of these two examples, (c) is simply not recognized, while (d) is a representative use of the verb *desorillar*. A verb like *caber*, on the other hand, never occurs in transitive constructions. It is therefore impossible to state that simply because *poder* is often used intransitively or *querer* transitively they *must* be used in the one or the other way within the nexus.

Arguments centered around the "semantic incompleteness" of some verbs mentioned earlier maintain that verbs such as *hacerse* and *parecer* have little meaning in an utterance except to link subjects with subjective complements. They extend this concept to the so-called "modal" verbs, maintaining that a verb such as *soler* is not used alone in a utterance since it functions to express aspect in another verbal process. This argument cannot be sustained, however, in the case of most "modal" verbs, such as *poder*, *deber*, etc. We must assume, then, that the idea of "incompleteness" is clearly perceptible in only a few verbs and does not by any means apply to the total list of what have been called "auxiliaries" of the class IV nexus. We may even ask if it is not true that, in the broad sense, every element of every utterance has as its function the introduction, modification, or subordination of the various elements which surround it. In any case,

the determination of such verb classes is much too subjective to be sufficiently universal.

Two further objections remain to the traditional concept of the nexus. The one is to the term "modal" and the other to the term "auxiliary", neither of which appears to be truly descriptive of the finite member of the class IV nexus. First, we may consider "modal". From the total list of finite verbs functioning in the class IV nexus¹, more verbs occur in that position than those few which are generally conceded to demonstrate mood. Of those verbs traditionally considered to be "modal auxiliaries" some show aspectual (*soled*) or even tem-

¹The following list of primaries, culled from a corpus covering eight centuries of Spanish literature, is taken from David M. Feldman, *The Historical Syntax of "Modal" Verb Phrases in Spanish*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, 1961.

The list does not attempt to be complete, merely representative of the corpus used.

aceptar	consentir	esperar	merecer	recelar
acertar	considerar	estimar	mostrar	recordar
acordar	creer	estudiar	necesitar	rehusar
acostumbrar	cuidar	evitar	negar	resolver
adoptar	cumplir	exagerar	ofrecer	resultar
afectar	curar	excusar	olvidar	retardar
afirmar	deber	exir	omitir	saber
aguardar	decidir	experimentar	osar	salir
alcanzar	declinar	figurar	otorgar	semblar
amar	deliberar	fincar	parecer	semejar
ambicionar	deñar	fingir	pasar	sentir
amenazar	descuidar	gozar	pensar	servirse
anhelar	descender	gradar	poder	simular
ansiar	desdeñar	guidar	porfiar	solter
aparentar	desear	holgar	preferir	solicitar
aprender	desesperar	idear	presumir	suceder
apurar	determinar	imaginar	pretender	sufrir
asegurar	dificultar	intentar	pretextar	suponer
atender	dignar	ir	prevenir	suspender
atreverse	disonar	jurar	probar	tardar
atinar	disponer	juzgar	procurar	temer
buscar	dudar	levantarse	proferir	tentar
celebrar	empezar	lisonjear[se]	prometer	testificar
cesar	ensayar	lograr	proponer	tornar
codiciar	entender	llegar	protestar	trabajar
comenzar	entrar	llorar	proyectar	trameser
conocer	escoger	manifestar	pugnar	usar
conseguir	esforzar	meditar	querer	venir

poral (*querer* in the *Cid* on various occasions) functions either in addition to, or in place of, the modal function.

The origin of the term "modal" with regard to this construction stems from the fact that in Indo-European, the ancestor language of Latin, Greek, and the other "parents" of modern European tongues, mood was expressed by inflection. In addition to indicative and subjunctive, which Spanish still expresses morphologically, Indo-European could express moods such as possibility, order, and desire by inflection. In Avestan, for example, *baraé-šā* means 'you would be able to carry'. Sanskrit *vāráyati* has the meaning of 'he has it covered' while Vedic *stavāni* means 'I want to praise'². Spanish must express these moods by means of verbal periphrasis. For this reason, all Spanish constructions with pattern semantically like that of Indo-European inflectional modality have come to be called "modal" constructions.

But where do we consider "modality" to end? To what extent can we call 'suele llover en enero' a "modal" type of phrase and still be descriptive? Entwistle³ and Gonda⁴ agree that in Greek and Sanskrit, both Indo-European languages, any verbal category of mood has as its prime function the expression of the speaker's conception of the relation of a verbal process to reality. Thus, the principal distinction is between that which the speaker puts forth as fact (true or not) and what he does not regard as factual. Perhaps because this is the main distinction it has retained its inflectional form even in modern Spanish. The speaker's factual statements are put forth in the indicative, whereas those processes which are contingencies are put forth in the subjunctive. The less obvious modal functions, such as those performed by verbal periphrasis in Spanish.

... help to express the speaker's visualization of the relation of the subject to a specified process as far as the subject's qualifications or disposition with regard to the process are concerned⁵.

This is hardly applicable to *sober*, for example. To complicate matters further, "auxiliaries" themselves can occur in any mood and can also be used alone.

²Meillet, A., *Introduction à l'étude comparative des langues Indo-européennes*, Paris, 1915, p. 227.

³Entwistle, J., 1953, p. 218.

⁴Gonda, J., *The Character of the Indo-European Moods*, Wiesbaden, 1956, p. 6.

⁵*Ibid.*

Since it is even possible to combine a form of an "auxiliaria" and a real mood: Lat. *volo facias*; so the absolute equalization of the moods and these auxiliaries seems to resolve itself into a confusion between linguistics and psychology⁶.

Of course, one can always resort to a general definition of mood, such as the one proposed by the dictionary of the Spanish Academy: "Cada una de las distintas maneras generales de manifestarse la significación del verbo"⁷. In that case, almost anything that is not immediately identifiable as temporal is possibly modal. Even if this be true, it is not useful structurally, and because of such terminological vagaries we prefer to omit the term "modal" from the remainder of our discussion.

Roca Pons has set up a kind of intermediate system, in which he considers as auxiliaries of mood verbs expressing necessity, possibility, probability, volition, desire, and order, since these verbs indicate the mood in which the action is contemplated⁸. In this way he postulates a "compromise" system in which he neither names a list of specifically "modal" verbs nor relies exclusively upon a syntactic criterion to isolate them. Three important problems arise from such a compromise. First, the list of verbs which correspond to his areas of meaning pattern (1) with a directly following infinitive; (2) with an infinitive introduced by a preposition; and (3) with an infinitive introduced by *que*. Second, it is only by strained analogy that one is able to fit verbs such as *odiar*, *preferir*, and *pensar* into his list, although those verbs do fit the class IV nexus as structurally identified. Third, as in the foregoing statements, there is a possibility of confusion between modality and aspect as functions of specific verbs.

We therefore suggest that it is possible to state at best that certain verb phrases tend to express not only a specific verbal process, but also certain ideas such as de ire, possibility, and the like, expressed in certain ancient languages by inflection. Perhaps the construction can be described, i.e. labeled, only by some arbitrary cover-term, in which case "modal" would be as satisfactory as some other. However, we shall propose what may be a more fittingly descriptive term below.

We also raised an objection above to the term "auxiliary". Roca has rightly said that:

⁶*Op. cit.*, p. 7.

⁷Academia Española, *Diccionario*, Madrid, 1947, p. 856.

⁸Roca Pons, J., *Estudios sobre perifrasis verbales en español*, Madrid, 1958, p. 58.

El proceso seguido por un verbo hasta llegar a ser un verdadero auxiliar es un caso de gramaticalización. Sin embargo, no siempre se llega a una pérdida completa de sentido concreto⁹.

The grammaticalization of a verb is, then, a continuous historical process. On the one hand, a verb such as *haber*, as the auxiliary used in the formation of the future tense, has become completely grammaticalized. On the other, a verb such as *querer* retains much the same meaning in a nexus as it does in absolute use. *Hallarse* is perhaps somewhere in the middle of the process of grammaticalization, having somewhat independent meaning in absolute use, but approaching the idea of *estar* when used in periphrasis. Graphically, it is possible to represent the process of grammaticalization as follows:

STAGE I	STAGE II	STAGE III
Total independence	Independence in absolute use but partial grammaticalization in periphrasis	Total grammaticalization
<i>pensar</i>	<i>hallarse</i>	<i>haber</i> (in future tense)
	→	
	direction of grammaticalization	

Any given auxiliary of the class IV nexus will be found at one or another of the various intermediate stages along the continuum between semantic independence and total grammaticalization. If an attempt were to be made to determine where all our present-day nexuses would probably appear on the continuum, however, they would probably be represented at a point midway between Stage II and Stage III.

By way of comparison we may glance briefly at the most familiar case of grammaticalization in Spanish: the future tense. Meyer-Lübke¹⁰,

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰Meyer-Lübke, W., *Grammaire*

des langues romanes, Paris, 1900, vol. II, p. 152.

Thielmann¹¹, and Cornu¹², agree that of the various periphrastic forms which supplanted the unused Latin future tense in the Romance languages, the form typified by 'cantare habeo' is not only the oldest, but also the most widely used in the modern Romance tongues. A form with inverted word-order, 'habeo cantare', is considered to be more recent¹³, but still relatively ancient¹⁴. Both forms are amply attested in early Spanish texts and Meyer-Lübke has even noted fourth century Latin attestations¹⁵. Elcock has suggested that the inhabitants of the Iberian peninsula came to use the 'cantare habeo' and 'habeo cantare' forms indifferently¹⁶. Both constructions are in evidence as late as the twelfth century *Poema del Cid*, although there the 'cantare habeo' form is more usual.

'El Campeador a los que han lidiar tan bien los castigó'

(*Cid*, 3523).

'Pedir vos a poco por dexar so aver en salvo' (*Cid*, 123).

From the second example we see that when *habeo* followed the infinitive a pronoun could intervene between the two parts of the periphrasis. In Spanish, the forms of *habeo* eventually came to be agglutinated as flexions but in Portuguese the periphrasis has survived as such to this day, as in *dar-me-á*.

The development represented by Old Spanish 'los que han lidiar' and modern Spanish 'los que lidiarán' is a process of grammaticalization.

Perhaps the verb phrases we are examining are starting out along the same path toward grammaticalization. This suggestion is based on the idea that such grammaticalization of formerly independent units may underlie the entire system of verbal periphrasis in Spanish: "El fin del cambio semántico es el comienzo de la gramaticalización"¹⁷.

Examples such as the "perfect tenses" (the analytic periphrasis of the Latin absolute past) show a sort of intermediate state of grammaticalization significant for our discussion in the sense that the

¹¹Thielmann, P., 1881, pp. 48-49; 157-202.

¹²Cornu, J., 1888, pp. 225-227.

¹³Meyer-Lübke, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

¹⁴Vestiges of the original future remained in Dalmatia, however. Cf. Tagliavini, C., *Le origini delle lingue neolatine*, Bologna, 1959, p. 350.

¹⁵Meyer-Lübke, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 152.

¹⁶Elcock, W., *The Romance Languages*, London and New York, 1960, p. 160ff.

¹⁷Vossler, K., *La filosofía del lenguaje*, Madrid, 1941, p. 88.

“auxiliary” has lost its original semantic force and assumed a different one within the new construction. To underline the notion of an acquired state, Latin made use of a paraphrase formed with *habeo* and a past participle in the accusative form. One finds phrases of the type ‘*habeo cultellum comparatum*’ in Plautine times which give the idea of the possession (in the present) of something in a state of “having been acted upon”. In the same period there were also phrases of the type ‘in ea provincia pecunias magnas collocatas habent’ in which the subject of the verb is also the actor responsible when the construction is found to include intellectual terms such as ‘*cognitum habeo*’, etc., which could not lend themselves easily to the idea of possession¹⁸.

What seems to have happened is that at some point in the history of the Romance languages a “point of no return” was passed, beyond which the idea of actual possession had lost its vital force. The specific date is difficult to determine since French and Italian, in which the past participle agrees with the direct object, may for that reason be thought of as retaining the idea of possession to a greater degree than Spanish, which has removed *haber* from use as a verb of possession. Bourciez suggests that

... le changement de conception a peut-être commence a se faire sentir dès le premier siècle de l'ère chrétienne; il était à coup sûr devenu déjà assez ordinaire dans la langue parlée vers la fin de l'Empire, et on le retrouvera partout¹⁹.

According to Meyer-Lübke, a subsequent period of disuse of *habeo* occurs in the sixth century²⁰. A regeneration and generalization of *habeo*, now more than ever devoid of overtones of possession, must have taken place before the beginning of the national Romance literatures in which the construction is very much in evidence.

In the Iberian peninsula, the problem of *teneo* as an auxiliary in place of *habeo* is more difficult to trace. The *tener* paraphrase in Spanish seems to be sporadic in the earlier works, such as the *Cid*, *Berceo*, and others, and restricted even there largely to transitive situations with expressed objects, although it enjoys greater vogue in the fourteenth century in works such as the *Libro de buen amor*. In

¹⁸Meyer-Lübke, W., *op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 332.

guistique romane, Paris, 1956, p. 117.

¹⁹Bourciez, E., *Eléments de lin-*

²⁰Meyer-Lübke, W., *op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 325.

Portuguese, *teneo* and *habeo* have existed side by side since earliest times²¹.

While our main consideration is not the *tener* vs. *haber* alternation, we can safely say that in the same construction *teneo* becomes grammaticalized as well as *habeo*. In this sense, if our definition of an auxiliary is that it is a grammaticalized or partially grammaticalized form, then we may question whether the class IV nexus consists of an "auxiliary" with infinitive at all.

Not all analyses have failed to recognize the possibility of treating the nexus as something other than an auxiliary-plus-object. In the past century, Meyer-Lübke stated that

... dans la combinaison d'un verbe avec un infinitif, celui-ci remplit d'ordinaire à l'origine le rôle de régime; aussi cette particularité soulève-t-elle en toute première ligne la question de savoir quelle est la limite entre les cas où l'on doit considérer la locution comme un verbe personnel composé de deux éléments et ceux où l'on doit y voir un verbe personnel simple avec un verbe comme régime direct²².

Lenz later added that

... el infinitivo se agrega a verbos gramaticalmente dominantes, que modifican el concepto del infinitivo desde el punto de vista del sujeto de la acción²³.

Beardsley, in 1921, also avoided the direct-object analysis and called attention instead to

... that perfect unity between the infinitive and finite verb that has caused this group to be called the modal auxiliaries²⁴.

Ten year later, the Spanish Academy held that

... hay verbos como *poder, deber, osar, soler* que forman

²¹Diez, F., *Grammatik der romanischen Sprachen*, Bonn, 1882 [rev. 1898], p. 273, vol. III.

²²Meyer-Lübke, W., *op. cit.*, vol. III, p. 349.

²³Lenz, R., *La oración y sus par-*

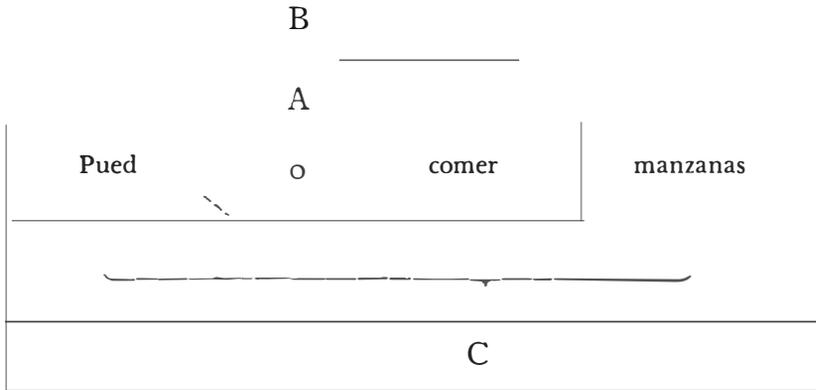
tes, 3rd ed., Madrid, 1935, ed. 1944, p. 386.

²⁴Beardsley, W., *Infinitive Constructions in Old Spanish*, New York, 1921, p. 13.

con el infinitivo una especie de conjugación perifrástica en la que es siempre idéntico el sujeto de los dos²⁵.

Despite this clear development in thinking about the nexus, previous analyses give us no single structural criterion by which to isolate a specifically "modal" type of verb phrase and identify its components. These previous analyses have depended upon criteria which we have criticized as being often affective and imprecise. Here we should like to propose the following analysis.

We intend to use, for our purpose, the technique of constituent analysis. By constituent analysis is meant the process by which an utterance is split up, in successive stages, from its largest units (called immediate constituents) to its smallest (called ultimate constituents). Using this immediate constituent analysis, we may isolate verb-plus-infinitive liaisons such as our nexus from verb-plus-infinitive liaisons of other types. Although this kind of analysis is done in terms of "levels" and "boxes", it does divide the utterances, it analyzes into units recognized by other grammatical terminology. A detailed immediate constituent diagram of the class IV nexus demonstrates the fusion of analysis and grammatical terminology.



We may call (a) the actor morpheme, (b) the simple predicate, and (c) the predication (in the sense of "utterance")²⁶.

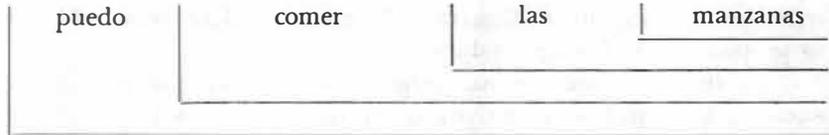
The significant feature is that only in the class IV analysis is

²⁵Academia Española, *Gramática de la lengua española*, Madrid, 1931, p. 408.

²⁶The term "verbal monad" has been suggested by Robert A. Hall, Jr.

feasible to put the finite verb and the infinitive in the same box to form the predicate with nothing else in that box but those elements.

Those grammarians who prefer the direct-object analysis which we have rejected justify their conclusions by an analysis represented by the following type:



In order to choose between them, we must determine which is closer to the facts of Spanish structure, revealing those facts by simple transforms. For clarity, we shall use transforms in which the object pronouns appear. If we accepted the analysis of 'comer las manzanas' as the direct object of *puedo*, the phrase 'puedo comer las manzanas' would yield the transform 'lo puedo'. 'Lo puedo', in turn, is parallel to both *'puedo manzanas' giving 'las puedo' and to 'comer manzanas' giving *comerlas*. The structural fact is, however, that we know that in Spanish we have the possibility of either 'puedo comerlas' or 'las puedo comer' as transforms of 'puedo comer las manzanas' with the object pronoun attached indifferently to either component of the nexus.

Thus, it is not the "impossibility" of the direct-object analysis that leads us to reject it, but rather that it does not provide for the voluntary proclisis or enclisis of object pronouns which is characteristic of the nexus. Speakers who feel restrictions on the use of *lo* have recourse to a variety of parallel transforms such as 'eso puedo' for 'lo puedo'. While it is true that a question involving a nexus, such as '¿Puedes venir con nosotros?', can elicit a response of the type 'No, eso no puedo' or 'Sí [no] puedo', the repetition of the verb *poder* in the answer appears to be more a case of language echo than of syntactic recognition²⁷. Thus, we have some structural evidence for taking the nexus 'puedo comer' as one constituent and '[las] manzanas' for the other in the phrase type 'puedo comer las manzanas'. We are then justified in treating all such nexuses consequently as endocentric, monadic units with relation to other constituents in the phrase.

²⁷Spitzer, L., "Du langage-écho en portugais", *Boletim de Filologia*, vol.

v, fasc. 1/2, 3/4, Lisbon, 1937-8.

To name the two elements contained within the nexus, we may use the terms "primary" and "secondary" which are based on the predominant order of the two elements in the standard Spanish utterance rather than on any recognition of a possible semantic importance of one over the other.

Formally defined, then, the nexus is a single verbal predication, of complex morphological structure, which may be employed as a unit, in a transitive or intransitive manner. The nexus itself is a center. It is employed syntactically as a single finite or non-finite verb of monadic structure which cannot be further divided without change or loss of meaning.

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