

Susana S. Fernández & Johan Falk (eds.) (2014) *Temas de gramática española para estudiantes universitarios, Una aproximación cognitiva y funcional*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang. Pp. 317.

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As expressed by its title, the compilation in question is aimed at university students of Spanish Philology. Most of its chapters are dedicated to topics related to verbal syntax, but also the foundations of cognitive grammar as well as the Spanish prepositions are focused on. The book is especially targeted at Nordic students, for which it adopts a contrastive approach in some of its chapters.

The book provides interesting details and insights along the way. Instead of presenting overwhelmingly new research data, however, the book focuses on explaining some of the key questions of Spanish grammar in a way easily intelligible to the student. In my view, this goal is achieved successfully, and the book would serve well as study material on courses related to the covered topics. Although the approach followed in the book is cognitive, all the figures are easily intelligible to readers without previous familiarity with the conventions of this field of linguistics. The pedagogical aims of the book can also be seen in exercise boxes related to each topic, in which the reader is invited to reflect on a certain aspect of each topic in relation to their native language.

The book is written by several experts working at universities in the Nordic Countries, with long experience in teaching Spanish to non-native speakers. Although written by several authors, the end result is a coherent work, with no thematic overlapping.

Chapter 1, written by Teresa Cadierno and Johan Pedersen, is a general introduction to cognitive linguistics. In my opinion, this complex area is resumed in a clear and illustrative way. The chapter starts by presenting language as a cognitive phenomenon (pp. 15–17), discussing next the origin and tenets of cognitive linguistics (pp. 17–19). The following pages (pp. 19–31) offer the reader a concise and relevant account of the key concepts of this field of linguistics (categorization, iconicity, indexicality, nature of meaning). This is followed by a presentation of how language acquisition and learning are viewed by cognitive linguistics (pp.

31–34). On page 32, the authors also point out the role of *construction* as the basic unit of language.

In Chapter 2, Uwe Kjær Nissen deals with prepositional accusative objects and dative objects. The author looks at them from the functional perspective, with *agent* and *patient* as the key concepts. Morphologically similar forms with different functions may easily cause ambiguity among learners of Spanish. This is the case of preposition *a*, the different semantic roles of which the author discusses. On page 46, the author takes a look at the different parameters of use of preposition *a*, based on the patient roles the preposition may take, illustrating a gradual shift from more prototypical to less prototypical as the degree of humanity of the patient increases. The following pages (pp. 47–58) are dedicated to the different uses of the Spanish dative. Interestingly, in the case of Spanish, the traditional concept of *dative* seems to serve to distinguish – at least on the practical level – between these uses more accurately than the functional roles of e.g. *beneficiary* and *recipient*. For instance, although both the possessive dative (p. 53) and the ethic dative (p. 56) relate to the *experiencer* function, the semantic distinction between them is clear-cut. As a whole, the chapter provides insights into a topic every student of Spanish is bound to pay attention to.

Chapter 3, written by Triin Lõbus and Jukka Havu, provides a look at the different verbal periphrases of Spanish. The authors successfully treat lexical and grammatical aspect in connection with the key periphrastic structures of the language. The existence and frequent use of different verbal periphrases is characteristic of Spanish, and may also be a learning challenge, especially in the case of constructions with only slightly different or, in some cases, overlapping uses. This is obvious e.g. with <*ir / venir / andar* + gerund>, often without established construction-type equivalents in other languages. The authors offer pertinent accretions to the theoretical framework laid by García González (1992), for instance when pointing out that <*andar* + gerund> is often used to present the action as unimportant, unnecessary or inappropriate (p. 92).

In Chapter 4, Johan Falk takes a look at *ser* and *estar* ('to be') as copulative verbs. The presence of two *be* verbs in Spanish is a challenge for foreign learners. When the author points out that nouns corresponding to events take *ser* in locative settings (p. 106), it might be worth mentioning – for pedagogical reasons – that this also applies to location in time (e.g. *La reunión es a las dos* 'The meetings is at two o'clock'). The *para reflexionar* box, on page 105, resumes the key differences between Spanish

and other Romance languages regarding the equivalents of *ser* and *estar*. While what the author says about French, Portuguese and Catalan holds absolutely true and is useful background information, one might slightly disagree with him about Italian. Indeed, while *essere* can be used in all cases in Italian as the equivalent of *be*, *stare* has some uses very similar to those of *estar* in Ibero-Romance. According to the dictionary of Collins-Sansoni (1981: 2132–2133, s. v. *stare*), this verb expresses, among other things, location (*le montagne stanno a nord*), health and economic conditions, etc. (*sono stato male tutta la notte*), habitation (*stiamo al secondo piano*), and stay in a specific place (*stare al sole*).

Spanish is rich in passive constructions. In Chapter 5, Susana S. Fernández deals with the characteristics and uses of each of them. However, the reader would also have expected to see a mention of the non-reflexive use of the third-person plural with active predicates in this context (e.g. *Aquí venden coches* ‘They sell cars here’). The author successfully defines the key difference between the periphrastic passive (*ser* + aux.) and the reflexive passive (*se* + verb in 3<sup>rd</sup> p.): the former normally adopts the perspective of the patient while the latter focuses on the event itself. French has a periphrastic passive (*être* + aux.) as the first option (apart from *on* + 3<sup>rd</sup> p. sg.), while the French equivalent of the Spanish reflexive passive is of rather limited use. For this, students also familiar with French may tend to use the periphrastic passive excessively while writing Spanish. Therefore, it might be a good idea to mention this e.g. in one of the *para reflexionar* boxes.

Chapter 6 (Kåre Nilsson, Ingmar Söhrman, Santiago Villalobos and Johan Falk) is dedicated to copulative verbs expressing change. Again, this is potentially a difficult topic for a foreign learner, because unlike languages such as English, French or Swedish, which virtually use one single verb for this purpose (*become*, *devenir*, *bli*), Spanish uses several verbs. Overall, the chapter can be regarded as an excellent introduction to these questions.

Chapter 7, written by Ana Beatriz Chiquito, is about modality. The author focuses on three kinds of modality, epistemic, deontic and dynamic, and discusses how they manifest in Spanish. One interesting detail is that, unlike e.g. García González (1992), the author (pp. 187–189) classifies <*poder* + INF> as a verbal periphrasis, instead of treating it as a “normal” construction, consisting of an auxiliary combined with a verb in infinitive. On the other hand, the Chiquito’s interpretation is shared e.g. by Martínez Gómez (2004) and, recently, by *Nueva gramática de la lengua española*

(2010: 2141). After all, the criteria for a construction to be or not to be considered as a verbal periphrasis are somewhat vague and partially open to interpretations. Otherwise, the chapter is a concise and easily intelligible presentation of the key concepts of modality.

In Chapter 8, Jeroen Vandaele and Mieke Neyens examine the Spanish subjunctive. The chapter, of some 40 pages, provides illustrative examples of variation between the indicative and the subjunctive in cases where both are viable options (pp. 207 and 212). For foreign learners (except for native speakers of a Romance language), the subjunctive mode is a learning challenge because, in many languages, it often does not exist as a separate, morphologically marked category. For this, foreign learners tend to replace it with the indicative. The chapter is recommended reading for any student, because it may help them reach a deeper understanding of this complex topic.

In Chapter 9, Johan Falk discusses the Spanish adverbial gerund. On page 239, he points out the impossibility of using the gerund in Spanish to replace relative clauses (*\*un marino cantando* ‘a singing sailor’). Since many Spanish learners are also familiar with French, it might be a good idea to add here that the above use is, by contrast, completely grammatical in this language (*un marin chantant*). On the other hand, there is one famous exception to the ungrammaticality of the use of the gerund in these cases in Spanish: *el agua hirviendo* (‘boiling water’), which could be mentioned in the chapter as an interesting isolated case. All in all, the chapter is a concise and useful description of the Spanish adverbial gerund.

In Chapter 10, Erla Erlendsdóttir examines the principal simple prepositions of Spanish. This otherwise clear and illustrative presentation could be complemented by a few details. The first one is the use of preposition *de* to express what is called the *essive* case in some languages (e.g. Finnish), mainly corresponding to *som* in the Scandinavian languages (or, occasionally, to some other preposition), e.g. *estar de camarero* (Sw. ‘jobba *som* kypare’, Fi. ‘työskennellä tarjoilijana’), *de postre* (Sw. ‘till efterrätt’, Fi. ‘jälkiruoaksi’). In fact, *de joven* in example (82), p. 275, is used with the above meaning (Sw. ‘*som* ung’, Fi. ‘nuorena’), which is not limited to the age of a person. Secondly, when dealing with the temporal uses of preposition *a* (p. 280) the author could also mention its use in time expressions including adjective *siguiente* (‘following’) (*al día / año siguiente / a la semana siguiente* ‘on the following day’, ‘the following year’, ‘the following week’).

Finally, in Chapter 11, Alejandra Donoso deals with verbs of movement, focusing on differences in strategies between languages, e.g. Spanish and Swedish, in the construction of verbal expressions of movement. The author illustrates, based on the typology of Talmy (2000) how Spanish expresses motion with the main verb and Swedish (like other Germanic languages) with a satellite (e.g. a particle): *entrar – gå in*. By contrast, manner is expressed in Spanish in a gerund or an adjective, prepositional or adverbial clause and in Swedish in a main verb, but also in gerunds and adverbs: *el pájaro salió volando – fågeln flög ut*. The learners of Spanish become implicitly aware of these differences, but it is useful to have a look at them also explicitly at some point. Even though the structural differences in question are considerable, I believe the problems dealt with in the previous chapters are much more challenging for the learner.

After the text chapters, there is an index (pp. 311–317) of the key concepts treated in the book; this significantly helps the reader use the book as a reference.

To conclude, *Temas de gramática española para estudiantes universitarios* is a book that without doubt provides an interesting contribution to studies of Spanish at university. It will also allow for future periodic updating.

## References

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