

***Modal and temporal issues of
dispositional evaluative adjectival copular
clauses in Spanish***

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Work in collaboration with Tim Stowell



UCLA



Modal and temporal issues of *dispositional evaluative adjectival copular clauses* in Spanish

In this talk I will present work carried out with Tim Stowell on temporal and modal issues of copular clauses headed by dispositional evaluative adjectives. As discussed in Stowell 1991, Arche 2006, Martin 2011, Fabregas et al 2013, Arche & Stowell 2019, Arche et al 2021, a.o., these adjectives present straddling properties between dispositions and events. Illustrative examples are *John was smart to sell his shares last year*, *John is cruel to scold little children*. Drawing from data from Spanish, where tense and aspect are overt in the inflection of the copula, I will discuss the following facts: the adjective expresses the evaluation of a judge at the time of the attitude holder while the tense and aspect overt in the copula seem interpreted in the infinitival clause; temporal and aspectual interpretation of the event expressed in the infinitive are determined by the tense and aspectual value (perfective, imperfective) expressed in the copula; the copula choice seems mostly restricted to *ser* in Spanish, which we argue can be accounted for by the predication as individual-level between the infinitive and adjective.

Modal and temporal issues of dispositional evaluative adjectival copular clauses in Spanish

Issues about

1. Dispositional evaluative adjectives and their syntactic paradigms
2. The net of temporal relations established in copular clauses
3. The modal character of dispositions and actuality entailments
4. Their Individual/Stage – Level properties; relative/absolute interpretation

Dispositional Evaluative Adjectives

- Attribute properties to the mind, character, or behavior of an individual *and to the actions that they perform.*
- Alternate between dispositional/ habitual and episodic interpretations

Wilkinson 1970, 1976
Stowell 1991
Barker 2002
Bennis 2004
Arche 2006, 2010
Landau 2009
Martin 2011
Fábregas et al 2013
Stowell & Arche 2019
a.o.

Examples

(1)

- a. smart, intelligent, clever, brilliant, wise, witty, shrewd, prudent
- b. stupid, dumb, idiotic, foolish, crazy, insane, imprudent
- c. brave, courageous, strong (of character),
- d. cowardly, timid, weak (of character),
- e. kind, nice, polite, friendly, generous, helpful, considerate
- f. cruel, mean, rude, impolite, unfriendly, selfish, unhelpful, inconsiderate

Examples

- g. skillful, professional, artistic, erudite, intellectual, careful
- h. awkward, clumsy, amateurish, unprofessional, careless, crude, ignorant
- i. admirable, adorable, dependable; reassuring, amusing, pleasing, pleasant
- j. despicable, laughable, pitiful; infuriating, frustrating; maddening, irritating
- k. good, great, correct, wonderful, sensible, normal,
- l. bad, terrible, wrong, awful, weird, strange, wild, pathetic, ridiculous

Syntactic paradigms

- | | | | |
|-----|-----|---|---------------|
| (2) | a. | Max is stupid/arrogant/brave. | dispositional |
| | a'. | Max was stupid/arrogant/brave last night. | episodic |
| | b. | Kissing hornets is stupid/brave. | dispositional |
| | b'. | Kissing that hornet was stupid/brave. | episodic |
| | c. | It was stupid to kiss the hornet. | episodic |
| | c'. | It is stupid to kiss hornets. | dispositional |
| | d. | Max was stupid to kiss the hornets. | episodic |
| | d'. | Max is stupid to kiss hornets. | dispositional |

Syntactic paradigms

- | | | |
|-----|--|---------------|
| e. | Kissing the hornet was stupid of Max. | episodic |
| e'. | Kissing hornets is stupid of Max. | dispositional |
| f. | It was stupid of Max to kiss the hornet. | episodic |
| f'. | It is stupid of Max to kiss hornets. | dispositional |
| g. | Max stupidly kissed the hornet. | episodic |
| g'. | Max stupidly kisses hornets. | Dispositional |
| h. | Max is cruel to make fun of his sister. | Dispositional |

Syntactic paradigms

- (3) a. John was cruel to hit the dog.
b. *John was ugly to grow a beard.
- (4) a. To hit the dog was cruel of John.
b. *To grow a beard was ugly of John.
- (5) a. It was cruel of John to hit the dog.
b. *It was ugly of John to grow a beard.

related
constructions

Dispositional and episodic

Relative vs absolute dispositions (Martin 2011)

(6) Feynman is/was smart.

(7) Feynman was silly to park the car there.

Temporal interpretation

Copula tense and aspect interpreted in the infinitival clause.

- MODAL & complement infinitival clause
- EA expresses the evaluation of a judge at the time of the attitude holder

- (8)
- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| a. John is stupid. | disposition |
| b. John was stupid. | disposition/episodic |
| c. John was stupid to annoy the dean. | Episodic/habitual
habituality/dispositionality |

Temporal interpretation

(9) a. Juan es estúpido.

Juan is stupid.

b. Juan era estúpido.

Juan was.impfve stupid

c. Juan fue estúpido.

Juan was. pfve stupid

d. Juan es/era/fue estúpido al enojar al decano.

Juan is/was.ipfve/was.pfve stupid to annoy the dean

Temporal interpretation

(10) a. Juan es estúpido.

Juan is stupid.

b. Juan era estúpido.

Juan was.impfve stupid

c. Juan fue estúpido.

Juan was.pfve stupid

d. Juan es/era/fue estúpido al enojar al decano.

Juan is/was.ipfve/was.pfve stupid to annoy the dean

Temporal interpretation

(11)

- a. Franz es estúpido al enojar al decano(regularmente/?en este momento).
Franz is^{ser-pres} stupid to annoy the dean (regularly/at this moment)
'Franz is stupid to annoy the dean (regularly/be annoying the dean at this moment)'
'Franz annoys the dean on a regular basis/is annoying it at this moment and this is stupid'

Temporal interpretation

(12)

b. Franz era estúpido al enojar al decano (regularmente/?en ese momento).

Franz was^{ser}-impf stupid to annoy the dean (regularly/at that moment)

‘Franz was stupid to annoy the dean (regularly/be annoying the dean at this moment)’

‘Franz used to annoy the dean on a regular basis and that is/was stupid/ was annoying the dean at that moment and that was/is stupid’

Temporal interpretation

(13)

c. Franz estaba siendo estúpido al enojar al decano (anoche).
Franz was being^{ser} stupid to annoy the dean (last night)
'Franz was annoying the dean last night, which was/is stupid'

c' Franz estaba siendo alto.
Franz was being^{ser} tall

Temporal interpretation

(14) Franz fue estúpido al enojar al decano {en el 2000/anoche/regularmente}.

Franz was^{ser}-PERF stupid to annoy the dean {in the 2000/last night/regularly}

'Franz annoyed the dean {in the 2000/last night/regularly} and that is/was stupid'

(15) Juan fue a la iglesia regularmente durante treinta años.

Juan go.pfve to church regularly for thirty years

'Juan went to church regularly for thirty years'

Temporal interpretation

- (16) a. Franz es estúpido al haber enojado al decano (??en el 2000/ ?ayer/hoy).
Juan is^{ser}-pres stupid to have annoyed the dean (in 2000/yesterday/today)
'Franz is stupid to have annoyed the dean (in 2000/yesterday/today)'
'Franz has annoyed the dean and that is stupid'

Temporal interpretation

(17)

b. Franz ha sido estúpido al enojar al decano (??en el 2000/ ??ayer/hoy).

Franz has been stupid to annoy the dean (in 2000/yesterday/today)

c. Franz ha sido estúpido al haber enojado al decano (??en el 2000/ ??ayer/hoy).

Franz has been stupid to have annoyed the dean in 2000/yesterday/today)

'Franz has annoyed the dean and that has been stupid/is stupid'

Temporal interpretation

- (18) a. John was being stupid to annoy the dean.
b. John was stupid to be annoying the dean.
c. John was being stupid to be annoying the dean.

❖ Equivalences noted for modals and their complements
(Borgonovo & Cummins 2007)

(19) Pedro debió ganar la carrera.
 Pedro must.pfve win the race

(20) Pedro debe haber ganado la carrera
 Pedro must.pres have won the race

Temporal interpretation

- (21) a.Elle est idiote-PRST d'avoir invité-PERF son voisin.
She is stupid to have invited her neighbour.
b.Elle a été-PERF idiote d'inviter-PRST son voisin.
She has been stupid to invite her neighbour.
- (22) a.Elle est-PRST arrogante d'avoir répondu-PERF comme ça.
She is arrogant to have replied like that.
b.Elle a été-PERF arrogante de répondre-PRST comme ça.
She has been arrogant to reply like that.

Martin 2011

Evaluation interpretation

(23) a. Feynman was silly to park the car there.

- Relative dispositions (social psychologists, Doris 2002; Goldie 2004)

Vs

- Absolute dispositions

Martin 2011: dispositions come in two kinds

Evaluation interpretation

Our idea (Arche & Stowell 2019) :

- The “absolute sense” of the predicate (e.g., stupid) applies to the action itself
- The nominal becomes predicated of the property in so far as it is the agent of the action that is qualified by the adjective
 - relative
- (Wrinkle))Dispositions should primarily refer to *sentient referents*

Evaluation interpretation

(24) Franz fue estúpido al enojar al decano {en el 2000/anoche/regularmente}.

Franz was^{ser}-PERF stupid to annoy the dean {in the 2000/last night/regularly}

'Franz annoyed the dean {in the 2000/last night/regularly} and that is/was stupid'

(25) Annoying the dean is stupid.

(26) a. Enojar al decano es/*está estúpido.

annoy the dean is^{ser}/is^{estar} stupid

b. Juan es/???está estúpido al enojar al decano.

Juan is^{estar} /is^{estar} stupid to annoy the dean

INF – Adj
timeless-like fashion/ pure
Individual-Level/
“absolute”/predication
Arche & Stowell 2019

Evaluation interpretation

(27) a. El jamón está riquísimo.
Ham is^{estar} very good

Speaker: judge

b. El jamón es riquísimo.
Ham is^{ser} very good

Judge bound by GEN

- *Estar*: linked to a circumstance/situation
- *Ser*: bound by Gen
- Arche 2006;
- Escandell-Vidal 2018
- Predicates of personal taste
- Evidentiality

Dispositions and events

Arche et al 2021

Taxonomy of nominalizations derived from EAs in Spanish.

(28) Eventive interpretation only; refer to “EVENTS”

bobada ‘nonsense’, *cursilada* ‘tawdriness’, *fanfarronada* ‘boast’, *memez* ‘nonsense’, *sandez* ‘nonsense’, *tontada* ‘silliness’.

(29) Quality only **DISPOSITIONS**

amabilidad ‘kindness’, *arrogancia* ‘arrogance’, *astucia* ‘cunningness’, *audacia* ‘audacity’, *cautela* ‘caution’, *cobardía* ‘cowardice’, *cortesía* ‘courtesy’, *egoísmo* ‘selfishness’, *fidelidad* ‘faithfulness’, *generosidad* ‘generosity’, *honradez* ‘decency’, *humildad* ‘humbleness’, *modestia* ‘modesty’, *prudencia* ‘prudence’, *soberbia* ‘arrogance’, *valentía* ‘braveness’.

(30) Ambiguous **DISPOSITIONS AND “EVENTS”**

crueldad ‘cruelty’, *estupidez* ‘stupidity’, *grosería* ‘rudeness’, *imprudencia* ‘imprudence’, *indiscreción* ‘indiscretion’, *injusticia* ‘injustice’, *infidelidad* ‘unfaithfulness’, *insolencia* ‘insolence’, *necedad* ‘stupidity’, *ordinariez* ‘vulgarity’, *osadía* ‘daring’, *temeridad* ‘temerity’, *tontería* ‘silliness’, *vulgaridad* ‘vulgarity’.

Dispositions and events

Test for quality nominalizations. Flaux and Van de Velde (2000): viability of the noun with the so-called genitive of quality (13a) and as a complement of “give signs of”.

- (31) a. Juan es de una gran *bobada/ amabilidad/ imprudencia.
Juan is of a great nonsense/ kindness/ imprudence
- b. Juan dio muestras de *bobada/ amabilidad/ imprudencia.
Juan gave signs of nonsense/ kindness/ imprudence

Dispositions and events

Tests on nominal eventivity I: complement of action denoting verb + ability to pluralise

- (32) a. Juan llevó a cabo dos operaciones. Complex event N
Juan conducted two operations
- b. Juan llevó a cabo dos proyectos. Simple event N
Juan conducted two projects
- c. Juan {llevó a cabo/ cometió} {dos imprudencias / varias crueldades}. DEA-nom
Juan conducted/ carried out two imprudencies / several cruelties
- d. *Juan cometió dos generosidades/ varias amabilidades. Q-nom
Juan carried out two generosityes/ several kindnesses

Dispositions and events

Tests on nominal eventivity II: as argument of tener lugar 'take place'.

(33)

- | | |
|--|-----------------|
| a. Esta mañana han tenido lugar varias discusiones/ operaciones.
This morning have taken place several discussions/ operations | Complex event N |
| b. Esta mañana han tenido lugar varios accidentes/ conciertos.
this morning have taken place several accidents/ concerts | Simple event N |
| c. Esta mañana han tenido lugar varias imprudencias/ injusticias.
This morning have taken place several imprudencias/ injusticias | DEA-nom |
| e. *Esta mañana han tenido lugar varias generosidades/ amabilidades.
This morning have taken place several generosities/ kindnesses | Q-nom |

Dispositions and events

Tests on nominal eventivity III: As complements of perception verbs.

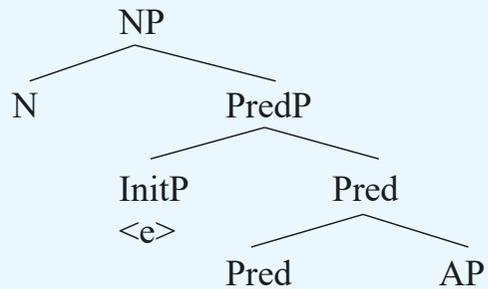
(34)

- a. He presenciado las discusiones/ operaciones del jefe. Complex event N
I.have witnessed the discussions/ operations by.the boss
- b. He presenciado varios terremotos/ varias tormentas. Simple event N
I have witnessed several earthquakes/ several storms
- c. He presenciado las imprudencias/ injusticias del presidente. DEA-nom
I.have witnessed the imprudencies/ injusticies of.the presidente.
- d. He presenciado la generosidad/ amabilidad del presidente. Q-nom
I.have witnessed the generosity/ kindness of.the president

Dispositions and events

Arche et al 2021

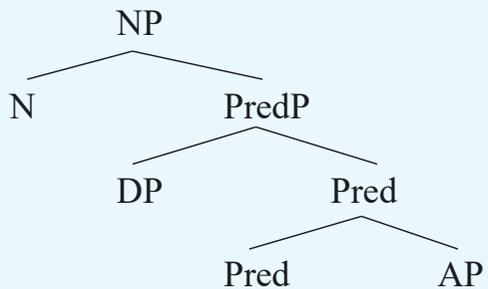
(35)



DEA-nominalization

DEA event reading

(36)



Q-nominalization

DEA quality reading

Stowell 1991

Adj predicated of an event

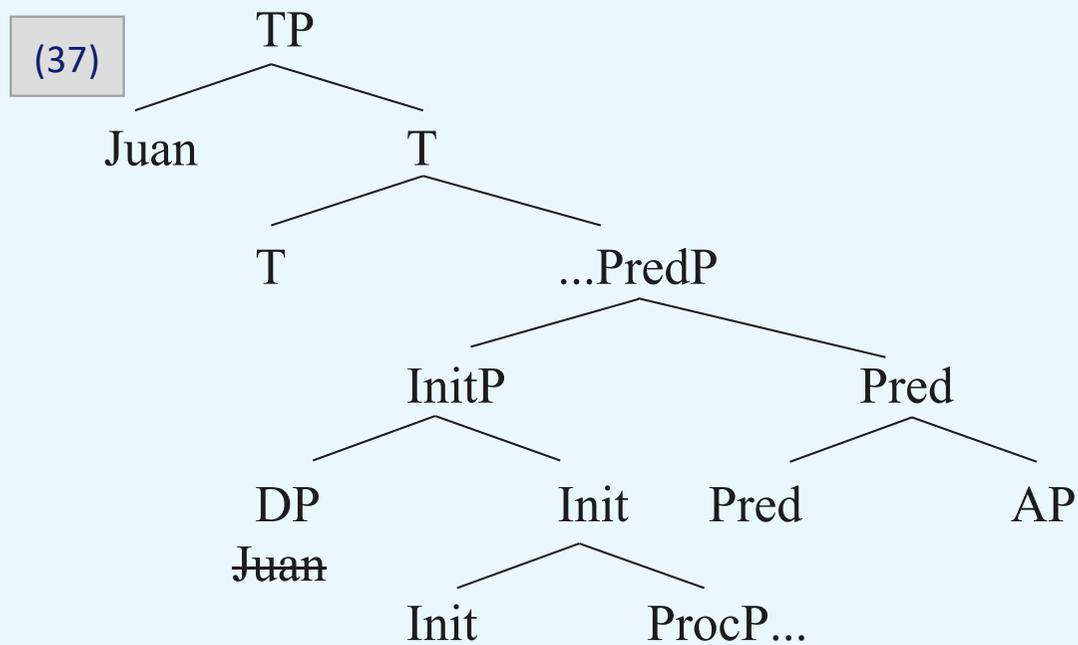
Kissing hornets is silly

Adj predicated of an individual

John is silly

Dispositions and events

Arche et al 2021

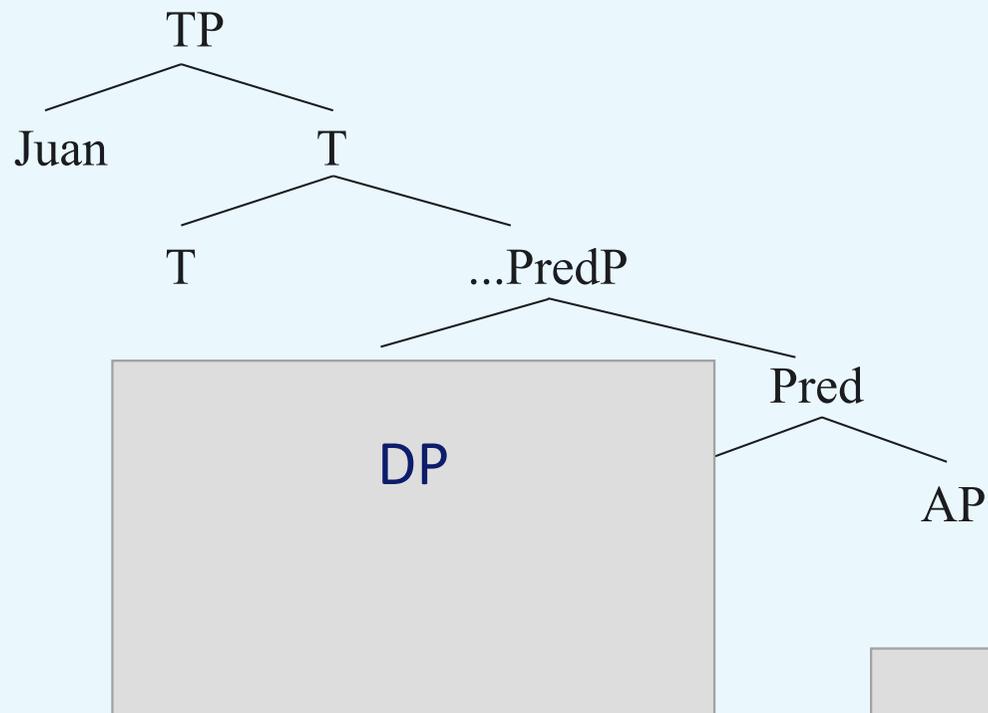


John was smart to park here.

Dispositions and events

(38)

Arche et al 2021



John was smart

Conclusions

- DEA participate in syntactic paradigms that bring up
 - the frontiers between characterizing and episodic predicates (traditional issue).
 - IL/SL alternation
 - Absolute/relative interpretation
- MJA: dispositional vs episodic interpretations may have the root in different syntactic structure
 - Evidence from nominalizations
- Tense analysis left for further research;
 - sketched proposal: the topic time is associated with the event represented in the infinitival clause ordered by the only full tense in the clause expressed in the copula

Thank you