

# Spanish Deadjectival Verbs: Argument Structure and Lexical Derivation

Lucia Donatelli, Georgetown University

**Introduction:** Spanish deadjectival verbs have been compared to adjectival resultative secondary predicates found in other languages both for their argument structure and result interpretation. Of interest in such comparison is the fact that Spanish disallows the latter construction syntactically, though alternative constructions exist that allow equivalent semantic interpretations. The current proposal focuses on Spanish deadjectival verbs in light of these investigations and argues the following: 1. that Spanish deadjectival verbs share the same underlying structure as adjectival resultative secondary predicates found in such languages as English; 2. that there exists a difference in interpretation of the result state implied by the two constructions; and 3. that this difference arises as a result of morphological conflation and the interpretation of PATH as BECOME.

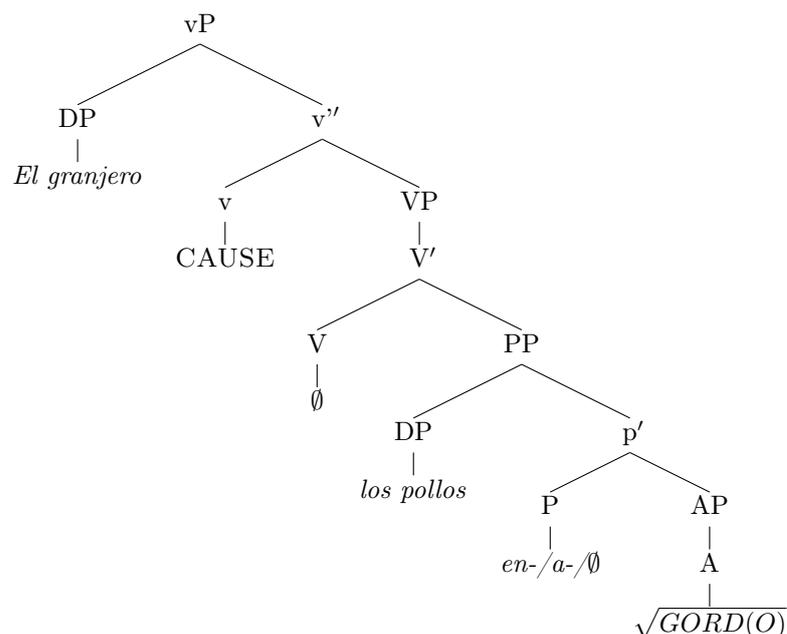
**Background:** Spanish deadjectival verbs are formed on an adjectival base, attributing the verb's internal argument with the state denoted by the adjective. Deadjectival verbs exhibit both causative (1a) and inchoative (1b) structures:

- 1 a) *El granjero engordó (a) los pollos.*  
'The farmer fattened the chickens.'
- b) *El granjero engordó durante el invierno.*  
'The farmer got fat(ter) during winter.'

Both structures are argued to designate a change of state, i.e. a transition of the entity affected by the event from one state to another specific state, its semantic characteristics being intimately related to the property of the adjectival base (Honrubia 2011).

**Current Study:** Causative and inchoative forms of deadjectival verbs derive from a verbal root linked to which an invisible CAUSE or INCHOATIVE suffix is respectively attached. In this way, the structures are subtly but not substantially different: the external argument of causative forms is triggered by the cause suffix, resulting in structure 2; no such triggering occurs with the inchoative suffix, resulting in a structure where *el granjero* occupies the place of *los pollos*.

2



The verb in question selects for a PP complement with a specific PATH denotation (discussed below). The DP internal argument generates in Spec PP, and the AP generates as a complement of the preposition. The adjectival root conflates with the prepositional head; such derivation must be invisible to the syntax. Movement of the conflated A-P compound is triggered by the need for the null verb to have a phonological matrix and receive Full Interpretation at PF.

In line with Honrubia (2011), four possible argument structures are noted to exist for Spanish deadjectival verbs. All can be understood as aspectual variations of the same attributive structure that affects either the subject or the direct object. The structures include: a. *X BE Adj.*; b. *X BEHAVE as Adj.*; c. *X BECOME Adj.*; and d. *X CAUSE [Y to BECOME Adj.]*. The result interpretation implied by the verb is a product of conflation in the sense of Baker (2003), by which the verb's argument structure is dependent upon the semantic contributions of both the conflated adjective and preposition during the morphological derivation.

Contra Molina et al. (1999), I would like to suggest that the result interpretation for Spanish deadjectival verbs is not equivalent to the result interpretation for adjectival resultative secondary predicates found in other languages. This observation is supported by corpus data from Wechsler (2012), who finds a correlation between the use of maximal endpoint adjectives and the absence of 'make' as an overt causative in resultative secondary predicate constructions in English, suggesting a unique causal relation implied by the construction and the adjectives they allow.

I instead suggest that the aspectual variation noted in Spanish deadjectival verbs results from the A-P compound, and more specifically a PATH implicated by P. Following Jackendoff (1983) and Pantcheva (2011), the preposition involved in Spanish deadjectival verb constructions indicates a type of PATH, whose GOAL or LOCATION resides in the adjective, now understood as denoting PLACE. Aspectual variation must thus reside in the different type of PATH implied, which most basically may be understood as 'become A-er' and suggests movement along a property scale.

**Conclusion and Future Directions** The current study demonstrates that conflation is necessary in lexical derivation for Spanish deadjectival verbs to acquire the interpretation of 'become A-er' rather than 'become maximally A,' as opposed to the latter interpretation found in adjectival resultative secondary predicates found in other languages.

Work remains to be done on the specific contributions of the preposition and the adjective via conflation and verb derivation to further specify the nature of PATH implied by P as well as restrictions on A related to maximal endpoints (Wechsler 2012); whether observations on total-partial and relative deadjectival verbs in English as noted by Kearns (2005) hold for Spanish; and finally how A may best be understood as PLACE.

## References

- [1] Baker, Mark. 2003. *Lexical categories. Verbs, nouns, and adjectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [2] Beck, S., and Snyder, W. (2001). The Resultative Parameter and Restitutive. *Audiatur vox sapientiae: A festschrift for Arnim von Stechow*, 52, 48.
- [3] Harris, James W. 1991. "The form classes of Spanish substantives." *Yearbook of Morphology 1991*. Springer Netherlands. 65-88.
- [4] Honrubia, J. L. C. 2011. Spanish deadjectival verbs. *Spanish Word Formation and Lexical Creation*, 1, 65.
- [5] Jackendoff, R. 1983. *Semantics and cognition (Vol. 8)*. MIT press.
- [6] Kearns, K. 2007. Telic senses of deadjectival verbs. *Lingua*, 117(1), 26-66.
- [7] Gumiel Molina, S., Nieto Herranz, I., and Pérez Jiménez, I. 1999. Some remarks on de-adjectival verbs and resultative secondary predicates. *Catalan working papers in linguistics*, 7, 107-124.
- [8] Pantcheva, M. 2011. *Decomposing path. The nanosyntax of directional expressions*. University of Tromsø dissertation.
- [9] Wechsler, S. 2012. Resultatives and the problem of exceptions. *LEE, I. Issues in English*.