

Predicate doubling in Spanish: On how discourse may mimic syntactic copying

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Predicate doubling in Spanish, e.g., (1), is typically taken to involve multiple copy spell-out (Vicente 2007, 2009). This line of analysis aims to account for two important properties of the construction: lexical identity between the predicates, e.g., (2), and island sensitivity, e.g., (3).

- (1) **Comprar, compré** un auto. (2) ***Vender, compré** un auto.
to.buy bought.1SG a car to.sell bought.1SG a car
'As for buying, I bought a car.' 'As for selling, I bought a car.'
- (3) ***Comprar**, conozco a una mujer [que **compró** un libro].
to.buy know.1SG DOM a woman that bought.3SG the book
'As for buying, I know a woman who bought the book.'

In this presentation, we argue against this predominant view. We maintain that the duplicates in the construction are not related through movement, but are independently generated. This allows to explain a number of properties exhibited by the phenomenon that are incompatible with a movement account, e.g., absence of c-command, e.g., (4), and lack of isomorphy between the predicates, e.g., (5).

- (4) [Con respecto a **comprar**], **compré** un auto.
with respect to to.buy bought.1SG a car
'As for buying, I bought a car.'
- (5) [**Hablar con Cosmo**], puedo [**hablar con ese idiota**]
to.talk with Cosmo can.1sg to.talk with that idiot
'As for talking to Cosmo, I can talk to that idiot.'

To account for lexical identity, sensitivity to islands and other properties, we propose to analyse the dislocated predicate as a base-generated *contrastive topic* (CT) in the sense of Büring (2003, 2016). That is, predicate doubling indicates a *strategy* by evoking a set of question meanings based on alternatives introduced by the CT and a focused constituent, e.g., (6). The role of the left-peripheral predicate is to make explicit the question under discussion answered by the sentence, e.g., the underlined sentence in (6b).

- (6) a. **Comprar**_{CT}, compré un auto_F.
to.buy bought.1SG a car
'As for buying, I bought a car.'
- b. [(6a)]^{CT} ≈ {What did I buy?, What did I sell?, What did I see?, ... }

Under this approach, lexical identity in predicate doubling constructions follows as a side-effect of a requirement on question-answer congruence. For instance, if the dislocated predicate indicates that the question under discussion is about selling something, the answer cannot be about buying something, e.g., (2).

As for island sensitivity, it can be accounted for straightforwardly under Büring's (2003) assumption that all nodes in a discourse-tree are phrase markers. Thus, the sentence in (3) is unacceptable because the question it is meant to answer is ungrammatical due to island restrictions, e.g., (7).

- (7) *¿Qué conozco a una mujer [que compró ~~qué~~]?
what know.1SG DOM a woman that bought.3SG what
Lit: 'What do I know a woman that bought?'

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