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Periphrastic Aspect in Spanish  
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**PERIPHRASTIC ASPECT IN SPANISH**

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## 0. INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

The aim of this paper is to describe semantically and syntactically part of the aspectual verbal periphrases in Spanish within the framework of Functional Grammar.

In order to give a satisfactory description, first of all a reduction of the material is needed. From the group of aspectual verbal periphrases I have chosen the ones that express one and the same class of Aspect, viz. Phasal Aspect. From this class, I have selected three constructions which appeared to be the only ones that are not only structurally similar, but also interesting to be compared: *ir a* ("to go to"), *ponerse a* ("to put oneself to") and *acabar de* ("to finish") with the infinitive, which express Prospective, Ingressive and Immediate Perfect Aspect respectively.

There is a high degree of similarity between these periphrases, in the first place because they are constructed in the same way, and secondly because the auxiliarized (or: grammaticalized) verbs of these three constructions are used as full predicates in other contexts. Instead of *ponerse a* plus infinitive, I might have chosen some other periphrases with the same aspectual function, such as *romper a* plus infinitive ("to burst into"), *echarse a* plus infinitive ("to throw oneself to") etc. I preferred *ponerse* for being semantically the most neutral variant and - as such - the one that is most similar to *ir* and *acabar*.

Furthermore, it is interesting to compare precisely these three constructions, *ir a*, *ponerse a* and *acabar de* with the infinitive, because they express three different Phasal Aspect distinctions.

Since there is neither general agreement on the nature of the verbal periphrasis, nor a generally accepted definition of Aspect, I dedicate the first chapter of this paper to the clarification of both concepts.

Starting from a tripartite definition of verbal Aspect, I will tackle the Phasal Aspect distinctions, their expression in Spanish and some restrictions imposed on their use in the Semantic Analysis in the first part of the second chapter. In this context, I will also deal with the Perfect as one of the marginal elements of the Phasal system. This general survey of Phasal Aspect (2.1.) will be followed by a detailed examination of the functions of the three periphrases in this context (2.2.).

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The extent to which the three finite verbs in the periphrases are grammaticalized will be assessed in the Syntactic Analysis in the third chapter, by comparing them to *haber* ("to have"), an auxiliary *par excellence* because it has no lexical meaning at all (3.1.).

On the basis of the results of this comparative analysis, I will determine the function which has to be attributed to each of the three verbs within the functional system of the predicate (3.2.).

In the final chapter, I will summarize the results of this study as well as the problems that remain to be investigated.

## 1. PRELIMINARY DEFINITIONS

### 1.1. Verbal periphrases

Verbal periphrases are analytic verbal constructions formed by means of an auxiliarized finite verb and a main verb in a non-finite form.

Let us first consider the auxiliarized finite form. In periphrastic constructions the finite verb functions as a modifying element of the main verb. It can be the copula *estar*<sup>2</sup>, or another verb which, here, has lost part of or even all of its lexical meaning. Nevertheless, as we will see further on, its original meaning is somehow related to the way in which it modifies the main verb. This is also true for the copula *estar*, which, though being generally considered as a grammatical item without any meaning whatsoever, has preserved the locative character of its Latin base and serves as a locative metaphor in periphrastic constructions (cf. Comrie 1976:102 and Lehmann 1982:32)<sup>3</sup>.

With respect to their meaning, verbal periphrases differ from other analytic verbal constructions. Whereas the meaning of the latter is the sum of the meanings of their constituents, the periphrases form a new unity with a new meaning.

With this criterion in mind, I do not consider constructions with *empezar*, *comenzar* (both: "to begin") etc. to be periphrases, because they owe their inchoative character to the meaning of the finite verb and not

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<sup>2</sup> There are two copulas in Spanish, the difference between which can be roughly described as a difference between *essence* and *accidence*. The copula used with essential predicates is *ser*, the one which is used with accidental predicates is *estar*. The latter is also used in locative predicates. Its Latin base is *stare* ("to stand").

<sup>3</sup> Cf. chapter 2.2. of this paper.

to the new resultant meaning of the verbal phrase (cf. Gili y Gaya 1961:109).

A test that allows us to distinguish real periphrases from other analytic constructions is to leave out the non-finite form. Whereas periphrases will lose their sense and turn out to be ungrammatical, the latter constructions will not change their meaning at all and remain perfectly acceptable, as can be seen in the following example:

- (1) a. - ¿Estudias?  
- \*Sí, me pongo ahora.  
"- Are you studying?  
- Yes, I put myself now."
- b. - ¿Estudias?  
- Sí, empiezo ahora.  
"- Are you studying?"  
- Yes, I am beginning now."

However, quite a few grammarians (Hamplova 1968, Dietrich 1973) include expressions with verbs meaning "to begin" or "to end" and the like in their theory of the verbal periphrases. They do so because these verbs are *verba adiecta*, i.e. verbs that occur only with implicit or explicit reference to another verb (cf. Dietrich 1973:52). In fact, the *verba adiecta* differ from full predicates insofar as they do not have any argument structure of their own. In predications with such verbs the argument structure is determined by the non-finite verb. Consider the following examples:

- (2) Empezaba a oscurecer cuando Otelo comenzó a mover las orejas.  
(Hamplova 1968:212)  
"It began to darken, when Otelo began to move his ears."
- (3) (...) el capital norteamericano principió a llegar en la última década del siglo pasado a El Salvador. (ibid.)  
"(...) the Northamerican capital began to arrive at El Salvador in the last decade of the past century."

The verbs *empezar*, *comenzar* and *principiar* all mean "to begin" and are completely interchangeable. In (2) *empezar* accompanies a verb without arguments and *comenzar* is combined with a bivalent verb, the arguments

of which have the semantic functions of Agent and Goal. The two arguments of the non-finite verb accompanied by *principiar* ("to begin") in (3) have the functions of Processed and Direction. The diversity of predicate structures in which these verbs occur shows that, indeed, they do not have an argument structure of their own, or, in other words, they are not entirely independent predicates.

The absence of a specific structure of arguments is the one and only feature these verbs have in common with auxiliaries. Nevertheless it is because of this feature that they cannot be considered as being full predicates. I will, thus, call them *semiauxiliaries*, i.e. "verbs which display some but not all of the properties of the auxiliary class" (Crystal 1985:28). This definition does neither determine the number nor the sort of the auxiliary features of a semiauxiliary. As we will see later on, there are other semiauxiliaries in Spanish whose structure is entirely different from the one of *empezar* and its synonyms. "Semiauxiliary" is nothing but a formal and, as such, provisional characterization, which I use here because I do not have a more appropriate concept at my disposal.

After having dealt with the finite verb, I now turn to the second, the non-finite, component of the periphrasis. The non-finite form of the main verb can be an infinitive, a gerund and - according to the majority of grammarians - a participle<sup>4</sup>. It is doubtful, however, whether the participle can really fulfil this function, since syntactically the participle behaves more like an adjective than like a verb: with the exception of its occurrence in combination with the auxiliary *haber* (the so-called "compound tenses") it is inflected for number and gender and, unlike the other non-finite forms of the verb, it does not allow enclitic pronouns. As a matter of fact, in participle constructions, the participle can be substituted by an adjective without any consecutive change in the grammatical structure of the construction, as can be observed in:

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<sup>4</sup> In present day Spanish there is no such thing as a present participle. The participle referred to in the text is the past participle.

- (4) a. Déjeme usted, Llagustera; *ando muy preocupado* estos días.  
(Alonso 1954:263)  
walk.PRES.1st.SG very worry.PART.MASC.SG  
"Leave me alone, Llagustera; I am feeling very worried these days."  
b. Déjeme usted, Llagustera; *ando muy intranquilo* estos días.  
walk.PRES.1st.SG very uneasy.MASC.SG  
"Leave me alone, Llagustera; I am feeling very uneasy these days."

In (5) the auxiliary *quedarse* appears in a coordinated construction of a participle and an adjective, which clearly shows that they are equivalent.

- (5) Ena *se quedó conmovida y tan contenta* cuando encontró en el paquete que le di la graciosa fruslería. (Laforet 1945:70)  
become.PAST.PF.3rd.SG move.PART.FEM.SG and so happy.FEM.SG  
"Ena was moved and very happy when she found the beautiful trinket in the package I had given to her."<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, participle constructions with *tener* ("to have, possess") such as

- (6) Le dije que *tuviera barrida la casa* antes de la una. (Fente 1983:44)  
have.PAST.3rd.SG sweep.PART.FEM.SG the.FEM.SG house.FEM.SG  
"I told him/her that he/she must have swept the house clean before one o'clock."

seem to justify the inclusion of participle constructions among the verbal periphrases, since "tuviera barrida" ("possess swept clean") substitutes the Perfect construction "haya barrido" ("have swept clean"). In constructions of this kind the verb *tener* has a twofold function: it establishes a relation of, let us say, some commitment between the first argument of the verb *barrer* ("to sweep clean") and "la casa" ("the house") as well as a copulative relation between "la casa" and the non-verbal predicate "barrida" ("swept clean"). The meaning of 'being somehow committed to' is derived from the

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<sup>5</sup> On the adjectivelike character of the participle see further Alonso (1954:239f) and Combé (1976).



original possessive meaning of *tener*<sup>6</sup>. The loss of meaning together with the expansion of its function to the field of grammar means that the verb *tener* in constructions like (6) is grammaticalized.

The fact that, nevertheless, they cannot be regarded as verbal periphrases, is due to the adjectival character of the participle. I will return to this problem in paragraph 2.1.2. of this paper.

## 1.2. Aspects

The periphrases to be dealt with in this paper serve for the expression of different Aspect distinctions of the Action or the Process designated by the verb. As opposed to Tenses, Aspects do not establish a temporal relation between the moment at which a State of Affairs (SoA) takes place and another instance of time (the moment of speaking or the reference point)<sup>7</sup>, in other words it does not have a deictic function (cf. Comrie 1976:1f) but "aspects are different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation" (ibid.:3).

While Comrie treats any information on this internal structure as Aspect, in FG only its grammatical expression is regarded as Aspect, while its lexical expression, classified according to the characteristics of possible SoA's, is called *mode of action* ("Aktionsart") (cf. Dik 1989).

Aspect can be subdivided into three subcategories, viz. Perfective/Imperfective, Phasal and Quantificational Aspect, each of which consists of a certain number of alternatives in the way of viewing the internal<sup>8</sup> temporal structure of a SoA from a given viewpoint.

What is most commonly regarded as a matter of Aspect in Spanish, is the dichotomy of *definido* versus *imperfecto* in the Past Tense, which

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<sup>6</sup> For a detailed analysis of the various shades of meaning of verbs like *tener*, *traer* ("to bring") and *llevar* ("to carry") in participle constructions see Roca Pons (1958:119ff).

<sup>7</sup> For practical reasons I start from the assumption that verbal Aspects and Tenses occur in a Present Tense context, since in this case the moment of speaking coincides with the reference point. On applying the analysis in this paper to Past Tense contexts, the term "moment of speaking" has to be replaced by "reference point".

<sup>8</sup> As a matter of fact, not all aspectual distinctions describe the temporal structure that is internal to the SoA; Prospective and Perfect Aspect are clearly no means of viewing the SoA from within (cf. 2.1.). It is doubtful whether Aspect is in fact an appropriate concept for a unified account of all of the three subcategories mentioned here (cf. Dik 1985:11). Nevertheless, I do use this concept because, so far, I have not found a suitable alternative.

express Perfective and Imperfective Aspect, respectively. This is the only aspectual distinction which is integrated systematically in the conjugation of the Spanish verb and, as such, the only class of Aspect that - in the Past Tense - cannot go without being specified. The difference between the Perfective Aspect (*definido*) and the Imperfective Aspect (*imperfecto*) is that the Perfective Aspect presents the SoA in its totality or, in other words, "all parts of the situation are presented as a single whole" (Comrie 1976:18), while the Imperfective Aspect describes the SoA such as it presents itself at a given reference point, its beginning and its end being irrelevant. Roughly, one might say that the *definido* indicates the reference points from which the SoA's described in the *imperfecto* are being viewed, or, in other words, the *imperfecto* is used to describe the "background" on which the SoA's described in the *definido* take place. Consider the following example:

- (7) (...) yo me *acerqué* y le *dije* que qué le *pasaba*, a lo primero pensando que *se mareaba* o algo ...  
(Martín Gaité 1978:258)  
approach.DEFINIDO ask.DEFINIDO go.on.IMPERFECTO  
be.sick.IMPERFECTO  
"(...) I went up to him and I asked him what was going on at first thinking he was sick or something ..."

The other two classes of Aspect, Phasal Aspect and Quantificational Aspect, do not necessarily have to be specified. Phasal Aspect describes the grade of realization of some SoA at a given moment (cf. Dietrich 1973:114) and Quantificational Aspect distinctions express the relative frequency with which some SoA occurs (cf. Dik 1985:9). As Phasal Aspect is going to be dealt with in detail in the following chapter, I confine myself here to a description of the most relevant Quantificational Aspect distinctions in Spanish.

In Spanish, a SoA can be explicitly characterized with grammatical means for being a. semelfactive, b. repetitive, c. iterative/continuous. In the examples, the grammatical means to be used for this purpose are a. the coordinated periphrasis (8), b. *volver a* ("to return to") plus infinitive (9), c. *estar* (copula/accidental<sup>9</sup>) plus gerund (10 and 11).

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<sup>9</sup> For further explanation see page 2, note 2.

- (8) *Agarró y dio su examen.* (Kany 1951:199)  
seize.PAST.3rd.SG and take.PAST.3rd.SG  
"He took his exam for once and for all."
- (9) *La música de Román, que nunca más he vuelto a oír.*  
(Laforet 1945:41)  
return.PRES.PERF.1st.SG to hear.INF  
"The music of Román, which I have never heard again."
- (10) (...) *siempre te estás echando, eres una pesada.*  
(Martín Gaité 1978:149)  
REFL be(*estar*).2nd.SG lay.GERUND  
"(...) you always lay down, you are such a bore."
- (11) (...) *la última vez que fui a Barcelona te estuvo vigilando para que no me pudieras ni dar un abrazo.* (ibid.:143)  
be(*estar*).3rd.SG watch.GERUND  
"(...) last time I was at Barcelona he kept watching you so that you could not even give me a hug."

(10) is an example with Telic mode of action, i.e. it is the expression of a SoA that, on its own account, leads up to a well-defined terminal point (cf. Comrie 1976:45). In the present case the SoA has ended when the woman in question is lying. In order to lay down once more, she has to get up first. That is to say that, logically, this SoA cannot be Continuous; the only way of 'continuing' it, is repeating it. On the other hand, in (11) the SoA is Atelic; it does not lead up to any terminal point, but it can go on endlessly and can be stopped at any moment. When SoA's of that kind are described, *estar* plus gerund expresses Continuous Aspect, while it expresses Iterative Aspect with Telic SoA's. These examples indicate that the difference between Iterative and Continuous Aspect is not based on an aspectual distinction but is rather a matter of mode of action. As, moreover, they have the same grammatical form in Spanish, I prefer to deal with Continuous and Iterative Aspect as variants of only one Aspect.

The tripartition of the Aspects is necessary, as there are no direct relations between the three classes, such as postulated by Comrie<sup>10</sup>, for

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<sup>10</sup> According to Comrie (1976) any class of verbal Aspect, except the Perfect, can be subsumed under one basic distinction between Perfective and Imperfective Aspect. In his definition Perfective Aspect "involves lack of explicit reference to the internal temporal constituency of a situation" (Comrie 1976:21), whereas every "explicit reference to the

instance; however, the elements of the three classes cannot be combined unrestrictedly, as will be seen in the analysis of the periphrases with *ir a*, *ponerse a* and *acabar de*. Another relation between the three classes is to be found in the fact that some forms are used to express more than one type of Aspect. As we already have seen in (10) and (11), *estar* plus gerund can express one of the Quantificational distinctions; moreover, it serves to express Progressive Aspect. Another example is the inchoative use of the *definido* with stative verbs such as *conocer* ("to be acquainted with") and *saber* ("to know"):

- (12) A la primera conversación que tuve con ella *supe* que nunca íbamos a entendernos. (Laforet 1945:59)  
know.PAST.PF.1st.SG  
"At the first conversation I had with her I learned that we were never going to understand each other."

This shows that, though there are many grammatical forms that have one function only, it cannot be said that, generally, there is a one-to-one relationship between form and function. Hence, in the following description of the three periphrases, all aspectual functions they can possibly fulfil will be dealt with.

## 2. SEMANTIC ANALYSIS

### 2.1. Phasal Aspect

In this paragraph I will outline the main categories of Phasal Aspect in Spanish. This will be followed by a description of the most important restrictions on Phasal Aspect distinctions. None of the restrictions operate on constructions with *ir a* and on Perfect constructions, because these do not only express Aspect, but they also have a temporal meaning. Although the functions of the Perfect do not belong to the subject of this paper, I will tackle them here in order to give a more complete idea of the

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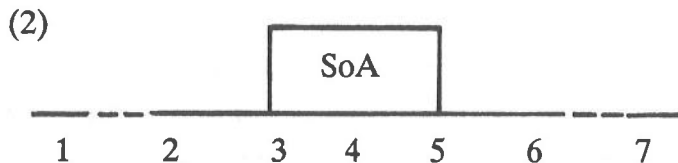
internal constituency of a situation" (ibid.:24) is Imperfective. According to this definition, an utterance such as (11) would be Imperfective (Continuous Aspect) and Perfective (*definido*) at the same time. Comrie does not think that constructions like these are counter-examples to his theory because, apparently, he underestimates their frequency: "in practice, such forms do occur, *albeit rarely* (the italics are mine, H.O.), as in *toda la tarde estuvieron entrando visitas*." (ibid.:22).

structure of Spanish Phasal Aspect distinctions.

Dik (1985) presents seven Phasal Aspect distinctions as the most relevant:

- (1) 1. Prospective Aspect
2. Immediate Prospective Aspect
3. Ingressive Aspect
4. Progressive Aspect
5. Egressive Aspect
6. Immediate Perfect Aspect
7. Perfect Aspect

and represents them as follows:



(Dik 1985:9)

As the scheme suggests, we can distinguish between external Phasal Aspect distinctions, i.e. 1, 2, 6 and 7, and internal Phasal Aspect distinctions, 3 - 5. To elucidate the meaning of the seven aspectual distinctions, I will give one example for each of them. In this context it might be useful to remember the incongruence of form and function which I have already mentioned in the first chapter: from the examples given below it does neither follow that the forms used here are the only ways to express the aspectual distinction in question, nor that these forms can only be used to express the respective Aspect distinctions.

- |     |  |                          |
|-----|--|--------------------------|
| (3) | 1. Juan va a limpiar la casa.<br>"John is going to clean the house."     | <i>ir a + infinitive</i> |
|     | 2. Juan está por limpiar la casa.<br>"John is about to clean the house." | <i>estar por + inf.</i>  |
|     | 3. Juan se pone a limpiar la casa.<br>"John begins to clean the house."  | <i>ponerse a + inf.</i>  |
|     | 4. Juan está limpiando la casa.<br>"John is cleaning the house."         | <i>estar + gerund</i>    |

- |   |                           |
|---|---------------------------|
| 5. (Juan deja de limpiar la casa.)<br>"John stops cleaning the house."  | ( <i>dejar de</i> + inf.) |
| 6. Juan acaba de limpiar la casa.<br>"John has just cleaned the house." | <i>acabar de</i> + inf.   |
| 7. Juan ha limpiado la casa.<br>"John has cleaned the house."           | <i>haber</i> + participle |

The examples in (3) show that not all of the Phasal Aspect distinctions can be expressed by means of periphrastic constructions. The construction 5. *dejar de* ("to stop") plus infinitive, suggested by Cartagena (1976:35) for this function, is not a periphrasis, because the finite verb *dejar* does not lose any of its lexical meaning at all. The meaning of this combination is just the sum of the meanings of both the finite and the non-finite verb. 5. is a lexical expression of the egressive meaning, and, as such, it does not fit in the grammatical system of Aspect presented here.

Since the participle is not a verbal form (cf. 1.1.), the construction with *haber* and the participle in 7. is not a verbal periphrasis either; but, as opposed to the *verba adiecta* constructions discussed above, it is a grammatical expression of Phasal Aspect.

The formal expression of the Progressive Aspect<sup>11</sup> differs from that of the other Phasal Aspect distinctions insofar as the form of the main verb is not the infinitive but the gerund. From this as well as from the use of the gerund in Quantificational Aspect it could be inferred that the gerund in itself has Progressive or Continuous meaning. In accordance with Criado de Val (1958) and Gili y Gaya (1961) Coseriu (1976:126) defines the gerund as being "eine in ihrem Ablauf betrachtete Handlung, eine Handlung, die zum Teil schon verwirklicht und zum Teil noch zu verwirklichen ist." Against this definition one could object that the periphrasis *salir* ("to go out") with the gerund such as it appears in (4) and (5) is a counter-argument.

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<sup>11</sup> Apart from *estar* plus gerund, Progressive periphrases are formed with the following finite verbs: *ir* ("to go"), *venir* ("to come"), *andar* ("to walk"). The meanings of these constructions differ from the gerund construction with *estar* insofar as they give some extra aspectual information. *Ir* plus gerund expresses that the SoA is developing gradually, *venir* plus gerund stresses the fact that the SoA has begun before the moment of speaking and the *andar* construction means that the SoA is developing slowly, with irregular interruptions. These three are all considerably less frequent than *estar* plus gerund.

- (4) Los niños que jugaban en el parque, *salieron corriendo* al acercarse el guardia (...). (Fente 1983:35)  
go.out.PAST.PF.they run.GERUND  
"The children that were playing in the park, suddenly began to run away when the guard went up to them."
- (5) Si te acercas demasiado, las palomas *saldrán volando*. (ibid.:36)  
go.out.FUT.3rd.PL fly.GERUND  
If you get too near them, the pigeons will suddenly start flying away.

But since this Ingressive verbal phrase can almost only be used with the verbs *correr* ("to run") and *volar* ("to fly") (cf. ibid.: 35), I doubt that these constructions really are verbal periphrases. I prefer to treat *salir corriendo* and *salir volando* (and perhaps one or two more expressions with *salir* plus gerund) as lexicalized constructions, i.e. as verbal idioms.

It follows that, indeed, the Progressive meaning of Progressive Aspect is partially or entirely due to the fact that it is constructed with the gerund.

### 2.1.1. Two restrictions

Generally, Phasal Aspect is subject to two restrictions. The first only concerns Ingressive and Progressive Aspect, which cannot be combined with momentaneous SoA's. This is a universally semantic restriction, because momentaneous SoA's do not have any duration and, thus, cannot have an Ingressive, Progressive or Egressive Phase. Consider the following two examples inspired by Comrie (1976):

- (6) a. Pedro tose.  
"Peter coughs."  
b. Pedro se pone a toser.  
"Peter starts coughing."  
c. Pedro está tosiendo.  
"Peter is coughing."

- (7) a. Pedro tose una vez sólo.  
"Peter coughs only once."  
b. \*Pedro se pone a toser una vez sólo.  
"Peter starts coughing only once."  
c. \*Pedro está tosiendo una vez sólo.  
"Peter is coughing only once."

The fact that (6) b. and c. are grammatical, unlike (7) b. and c., is due to the Iterative interpretation which is automatically attributed to *toser* so that the utterance makes sense.

The second restriction concerns all Phasal Aspect distinctions. It is their incompatibility with inherently stative SoA's, i.e. SoA's which are non-Controlled and non-Dynamic, and which, apart from not involving any change, somehow even exclude change. Parallel to the difference between the two copulae *ser* and *estar* the difference between inherent and non-inherent states can be described in terms of *essence* and *accidence*. An inherent state is a SoA that forms an essential part of the characteristics of an entity, and, as such, is not likely to change or might even said to be unchangeable, whereas non-inherent states are accidental and allow for a change any moment. Essentially stative SoA's have neither a beginning nor an end, all phases of an inherent State are identical; in other words, it does not have phases at all (cf. Comrie 1976:49). This is why (8) b. - e. are ungrammatical.

- (8) a. Ella vale más que su marido. (Moliner 1982:II,1435)  
"She is worth more than her husband."  
b. \*Ella está por valer más que su marido.  
"She is about to be worth more than her husband."  
c. \*Ella se pone a valer más que su marido.  
"She starts being worth more than her husband."  
d. \*Ella está valiendo más que su marido.  
"She is being worth more than her husband."  
e. \*Ella acaba de valer más que su marido.  
"She has just been worth more than her husband."

However, when we use with (8) the forms corresponding to the two extreme positions on scale (2), we see that this restriction is no longer valid:



- (8) f. Ella va a valer más que su marido.  
"She is going to be worth more than her husband."
- g. Ella (siempre) ha valido más que su marido.  
"She has (always) been worth more than her husband."

As will be shown in the next paragraphs, the grammaticality of (8) f. can be explained through the fact that here *ir* plus infinitive does not have Prospective meaning but has the value of Future Tense. (8) g. is grammatical, because the Perfect fulfils a temporal function in this sentence. Since the functions of *ir a* are going to be analyzed in detail later on, I will confine myself here to a short examination of the Spanish Perfect.

#### 2.1.2. The Perfect: Aspect and Tense

Originally, the Spanish Perfect was formed by means of *haber*, which then had possessive meaning, plus an inflected participle, and it was used for the expression of the present result of a previous action. Nowadays, *haber* has entirely lost its lexical meaning and in combination with *haber* the participle is no more inflected. The meaning of the construction has changed, too: it rarely has aspectual meaning, and most of the times it signifies Tense.

In present day usage, the Perfect frequently occurs with temporal adverbs with Past reference, which, if it had Perfect Aspect meaning, would be inappropriate, since in this case the result and not the "action" would be of interest. The explicit temporal references used with the Perfect generally must refer to a period in time which at the moment of speaking has not yet entirely ended, such as *esta mañana* ("this morning") *este año* ("this year") etc. Gili y Gaya (1961:159), however, gives an example with reference to a much more remote past:

- (9) Mi padre ha muerto hace tres años.  
"My father has died three years ago."

By using the Perfect the speaker relates the SoA to the present and by doing so the utterance acquires an emotional undertone<sup>12</sup>.

Moreover, the fact that, in some parts of Spain and particularly in Spanish America, the Perfect is systematically substituted by the *definido* preterite (cf. Kany 1951:161) indicates that the Perfect Aspect is widely reinterpreted as a Past Tense. Thus, apart from its aspectual uses, it is correct to call it "*pretérito perfecto*", which is generally done in grammars of Spanish, and I agree with the following temporal characterization of the Spanish Perfect:

"The 'Perfect' is in fact a Past Tense used with certain restrictions:

- (i) The Past Event has current relevance or
- (ii) The Past Event took place with immediate anteriority or
- (iii) The Past Event took place within a stretch of time, overtly mentioned in the sentence, in which the moment of speaking is also located."

(Hengeveld 1986:409)

One of the relatively few examples of the Perfect in its aspectual function in modern use is the following:

- (10) Vais con Juana donde ella os lleve y *hemos terminado de hablar*.  
(Martín Gaité 1978:150)

finish.PRES.PERF.1st.PL to speak.INF

"You go with Juana wherever she takes you and we have finished the discussion."

As will be seen later on, the gradual loss of aspectual meaning is not restricted to constructions of *haber* with a participle, but is a typical feature of the forms at the margins of the Phasal system, especially of the first and the last phase. What is so specific about *haber* constructions is that this development has reached quite an advanced stage here, which is above all due to the complete desemantization of *haber*. While most of the finite

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<sup>12</sup> As Rohrer (1977:120f) indicates, constructions like (9) are only acceptable if the temporal adverb follows the verb. Referring to Flydal (1943) he points out that in periphrastic verbal constructions and in compound tenses the preceding adverb refers to the finite verb while the adverb that follows the construction refers to the non-finite form or to the participle. Circumventing the incompatibility of the Perfect with lexical reference to the remote past, the emotional shade of meaning of the recent past can be combined with the indication of the factual distant past.

verbs in the periphrases, through the meanings that they possess as independent predicates, give a metaphorical indication (cf. 2.2.) with respect to the relation between the moment of speaking and the SoA described, *haber*, being totally void of meaning, does not have any of this semantic value left.

The relationship between the entire loss of meaning and the loss of aspectual value becomes evident, when we compare *haber* plus participle to *tener* with the inflected participle. The latter is used frequently with transitive verbs to substitute the Perfect in its aspectual function. Since *tener* has kept the possessive meaning, which *haber* has lost, the relation between the moment in which the SoA occurs and the moment of speaking appears to be more intimate, since the entity involved in the SoA still has this SoA within reach, so to say. Quoting Seifert (1930), Roca Pons (1958:124) explains the expression "tenía pensado" ("he/she possessed thought") as 'having thought and kept in one's mind' and, quoting Thielmann (1885), he attributes 'mental possession' to *tener pensado* ("possess thought") and *tener decidido* ("possess decided"). The idea of possession in *tener* thus reestablishes the Perfect Aspect function, which *haber* has almost lost more or less synchronically with its definite loss of this very meaning.

### 2.1.3. Summary

From what I have described in these paragraphs, it is to be concluded that, though Spanish has a great variety of means for the expression of Phasal Aspect, the grammatical Phasal system is incomplete, since it does not possess an expression of Egressive Aspect and, though there is a Perfect Aspect, it is increasingly lost in its present grammatical form, but it is being replaced by expressions with *tener* (or other verbs with a similar meaning) plus an inflected participle.

## 2.2. The use of *ir a*, *ponerse a* and *acabar de* related to Phasal Aspect

With respect to their aspectual meanings, the three periphrases express phases which are external in relation to the SoA itself (cf. the schematic representation under 2.1.).

Like any other non-progressive Phasal periphrasis, these three are

constructed with an infinitive. Unlike the gerund, the infinitive is a non-finite verbal form without any aspectual load<sup>13</sup> (cf. Coseriu 1976:126s).

The Phasal development of a SoA is reflected in a metaphorical way by the use of the verbs of movement *ir* ("to go") and *ponerse* ("to put oneself"), in accordance with the metaphor *Time is Space*, which is common to so many languages that it might even be considered to be universal (cf. Claudi/Heine 1985:47).

This metaphor is the reason why, especially in Spanish America, the expression of Immediate Perfect Aspect *acabar de* ("to finish to") is occasionally replaced by the apparent gallicism *venir de* ("to come from"). *Venir* is used by analogy to the other verbs of movement in these periphrases, in order to complete the metaphorical image created by *ir a*, *ponerse a*, *estar por* ("to be located about") and *estar* ("to be located").

Likewise, the spatial metaphor offers a possible explanation for the fact that, in the Middle Ages, a directional preposition began to be inserted between the finite form of *ir* and the infinitive, which thus far had been the only components of this Periphrasis. (Yllera 1979:144f). From the metaphorical point of view, the reason for the use of *a* with this construction is obvious, for it serves to complete the directional metaphor<sup>14</sup>.

### 2.2.1. *Ir a*: Prospective Aspect and Future Tense

Before describing the meanings of the periphrases with *ir a*, I would like to draw the reader's attention to one general restriction: any use of *ir* in periphrases is restricted to the non-compound conjugation of this verb. In compound forms *ir* automatically acquires its full predicate verb function, which can be observed in the following example:

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<sup>13</sup> Criado de Val (1958:117) is wrong in saying that: "El infinitivo (...) abre una perspectiva inicial, orientada hacia la realización en tiempo indeterminado;" (The infinitive (...) opens an initial perspective which is directed towards the realization in indefinite time;), because the use of the infinitive with *acabar de* in order to express Immediate Perfect Aspect would be illogical in this definition.

<sup>14</sup> Next to this, of course the tendency towards structural analogy with the other Phasal periphrases, which are younger than the *ir* construction and have never occurred without a preposition, might be another reason for this development.

- (11) (...) y naturalmente *he ido* a visitar a una pobre señora a quien conocí en mejores tiempos. (Laforet 1945:65)  
go.PRES.PERF.1st.SG to visit.INF  
"(...) and of course I went to see a poor lady whom I had met in better times."

Of the two meanings of *ir a* that are relevant in the context of this paper<sup>15</sup>, I will first deal with its Prospective aspectual meaning which is exemplified in

- (12) - (...) le irían de fenómeno unas mechas; ya lo vería.  
- ¿Usted cree?  
- Claro, como se las voy a poner ahora mismo.  
(Martín Gaité 1978:153f)  
"- (...) streaks would suit you marvellously; you'd see.  
- Do you think so?  
- Of course, because I'm going to set them NOW."

and in the following admonition addressed to a child:

- (13) ¡Cuidado, que te vas a caer! (Porque veo que te estás balanceando de manera peligrosísima en el bordillo.)  
"Look out, you are going to fall! (Because I see that you are balancing very dangerously on the kerb.)"

The Prospective Aspect serves to describe a future SoA which can be foreseen at the moment of speaking. Dik (1985) describes the difference between Future Tense and Prospective Aspect by using the SoA "John is

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<sup>15</sup> The use of *ir a* plus infinitive is very frequent in two meanings that, in present day Spanish, on the first sight do not seem to have anything to do either with Aspect or with Tense. Firstly, the periphrasis is used to substitute the imperative, especially in the first person of the plural, where it has almost entirely replaced the synthetic imperative form of the verb (Fente 1983:16). For a pragmatically based analysis of the replacement of the imperative by Future Tense see Haverkate (1979).

Secondly, it has still another pragmatic function in interrogative or exclamatory clauses such as

*¡Cómo lo voy a saber!* (Martín Gaité 1978:157)

how it.OBJ go.1st.SG.PRES to know.INF

"How am I to know it!"

Together with the interrogative pronoun and the intonation it serves to answer negatively to the preceding question of the hearer and at the same time to make him look silly for having asked such a thing.

a rich man" as an example:

a. Future ("John will be a rich man", H.O.):

It is stated at ms (the moment of speaking, H.O.) that  
- the SoA 'John is a rich man' will obtain after ms.

b. Prospective ("John is going to be a rich man", H.O.)

It is stated at ms that

- John is such at ms that

- the SoA 'John is a rich man' will obtain after ms.

(Dik 1985:10)

Comrie (1976) illustrates this distinction as follows:

"It is important to appreciate the difference between (...) expressions of prospective meaning and expressions of straight future time reference, e.g. between *Bill is going to throw himself off the cliff* and *Bill will throw himself off the cliff*. If we imagine a situation where someone says one of these two sentences, and then Bill is in fact prevented from throwing himself off the cliff, then if the speaker said *Bill will throw himself off the cliff*, he was wrong, his prediction was not borne out. If, however, he said *Bill is going to throw himself off the cliff*, then he was not necessarily wrong, since all he was alluding to was Bill's intention to throw himself off the cliff, i.e. to the already present seeds of some future situation, which future situation might well be prevented from coming about." (Comrie 1976:64f).

From this illustration we can infer that the possible present state from which future SoA's can be deduced cannot be an inherent state, because inherent states are in no way specific for what is the case at a given moment (cf. 2.1.1.). Consider the following example:

(14) *Mañana elegiremos un alcalde nuevo. Va a hallar las calles vacías.*  
(Rohrer 1977:118)

elect.FUT.1st.PL ... go.PRES.3rd.SG to find.INF

Tomorrow we will elect a new mayor. He will find the streets empty.

A paraphrase of this sentence on the basis of Dik's definition of Prospective Aspect would be somewhat strange:

- (14) a. - al momento de hablar el alcalde está tal que  
- encontrará las calles vacías después  
"- at the moment of speaking the mayor is such that  
- he will find the streets empty later"

If in fact the mayor himself (whose identity is supposed to be unknown at the moment of speaking) is the reason for the foreseen lack of enthusiasm of the people, this must be due to some characteristics of that man, and not - as (14) a. would suggest - to some accidental state. If we compare this sentence to Comrie's example, we find that it is quite improbable or even impossible that any "intervening factors" can bring about any change in the mayor's characteristics before the next day, in such a way that, if - contrary to expectation - the mayor is received with enthusiasm, the speaker's prediction was simply wrong. This shows that inherent or essential states cannot serve as a basis for Prospective Aspect, and hence that in (14) *ir a* plus infinitive expresses future time reference.

Often *ir a* can be interpreted both ways, either as a Future Tense or as a Prospective Aspect:

- (15) Me voy a marchar muy pronto de esta casa, hija.  
(Laforet 1945:77)

"I will leave this house very soon, my dear."

or:

"I am going to leave this house very soon, my dear."

In (14) and (15) the periphrasis could be substituted by the synthetic Future, which would be impossible in (12) and (13). There are, however, doubts as to the interchangeability of the synthetic and the analytic Future. Rohrer (1977:116) reduces the use of the periphrasis to the "futur proche" without giving any argument in favour of his opinion, while Yllera (1979:170) observes that *ir a* plus infinitive 'indicates frequently near future or future in general'. I will come back to this problem in 3.2.1.

*Ir a*, thus, has two grammatical functions, whose meanings are very similar, but which, at the same time, are very distinct because they belong to different categories (Aspect and Tense).

The historical development of *ir a* can help us to find the cause of the polysemy of this periphrasis. According to Yllera (1979:171) *ir a* + infinitive is testified in the 13th century indicating the preparation of or disposition for an action as well as an action that is to follow next. In the 14th century it expresses an imminent action that is often frustrated, and

its function as an indicator of the near future it is documented in the second half of the 15th century.

Since, up to now, *ir a* has been widening its field of application, it is not impossible that it keeps widening it, perhaps even until it will have entirely replaced the synthetic Future. The tendency of aspectual forms to be reinterpreted as temporal ones, which was already observed in the analysis of the Perfect, is not restricted to the Spanish language, but "(takes) place in comparatively uniform ways in the history of quite different types of languages" (Dik 1985:22)<sup>16</sup>. Whereas the Spanish Perfect is almost nothing but *pretérito perfecto*, *ir a* still has two adjoining functions at the same time, and for the present there is no indication whatsoever that it might lose its function of Prospective Aspect.

### 2.2.2. *Ponerse a*: Ingressive Aspect

The periphrasis *ponerse a* plus infinitive has only one meaning which is easy to describe: it indicates a fixed point on the Phasal Aspect scale of a given SoA, viz. its beginning. *Ponerse a* shares this aspectual meaning with so many other periphrases that it is almost impossible to name all of them. In my opinion, the ones that are most frequently used are the following: *echar(se) a* ("to throw (oneself) on"), *romper a* ("to burst into"), *meterse a* ("to get into"), *pasar a* ("to proceed to"). Apart from expressing Aspect, the Ingressive periphrases add various shades of meaning to the verbal complex, indicating that the SoA in question is unexpected, unduly or intentionally brought about etc. In her diachronic analysis of the Spanish periphrases Alicia Yllera finds that:

"En el caso de las perífrasis ingresivas ha habido una constante tendencia de emplear nuevas formas y sustituir perífrasis que el uso había desgastado y privado de su fuerza intensiva." (Yllera 1979:179)

("In the case of the Ingressive periphrases there has been a constant tendency to use new forms and replace periphrases which had been worn out and deprived of their intensive force by frequent use.")

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<sup>16</sup> There are different theories concerning the causes of this development. Two possible explanations are presented in Dik (1985:21ff).



She goes on saying that this very wear and tear is not to be observed in the corresponding lexical forms *empezar* and *comenzar* (both: "to begin").

The wear of the periphrases is the inevitable consequence of the process of grammaticalization, which always involves loss of lexical meaning. The lexemes *empezar* and *comenzar* are not subject to this wear, because they are not grammaticalized and, thus, are not desemantized.

The process of grammaticalization of the Ingressive periphrases is counter-productive: a periphrasis is created to give 'intensive force' to the Ingressive expression, but such a periphrasis, just because of being a periphrasis, is doomed to lose this force. This explains why these periphrases become obsolete before they are completely desemantized. As a matter of fact none of the Ingressive periphrases has lost its proper meaning to such an extent as for instance *ir a* when used with an infinitive.

*Echar(se) a* and *romper a* emphasize 'the sudden beginning of the act, with a possible shade of surprise' (Fente 1983:51). The use of both expressions is subject to very strict selection restrictions, a fact that indicates a relatively low degree of grammaticalization.

*Meterse a* means 'to undertake something one is not capable of doing or is not sure to be able to bring to a good end' (ibid.). *Pasar a* adds even more meaning to the verbal expression since 'the verb *pasar* never loses its original meaning of transition from one state to another' (ibid.:22); therefore, one can doubt if constructions with this verb are really periphrases.

*Ponerse a* plus infinitive is the periphrasis with the largest extent of desemantization and, thus, grammaticalization. In its periphrastic use the finite verb has lost its original meaning of movement. But, in addition to its aspectual meaning it expresses 'wilfulness and participation of the Agent in the action' (ibid.). Therefore, the variants a. and b. of the following example are not synonymous:

- (16) a. Se eternizaba al teléfono, *se ponía a* darme consejos de todas clases. (Martín Gaité 1978:55)  
REFL put.PAST.3rd.SG to  
"She was interminable at the telephone, she (wilfully) started to give me all kinds of advice."
- b. Se eternizaba al teléfono, *empezaba a* darme consejos de todas clases.  
begin.PAST.3rd.SG  
"She was interminable at the telephone, she started to give me all kinds of advice."

This residue of proper meaning is the reason why *ponerse* generally can only be combined with verbs that designate an Action. The selection restrictions of *ponerse* will be dealt with in paragraph 3.1.2.<sup>17</sup>

### 2.2.3. *Acabar de*: Immediate Perfect Aspect

The periphrasis with *acabar de* in is similar to the variant of the lexical verb *acabar* that is also constructed with the preposition *de* and an infinitive. If we compare (17) and (18)

(17) Ya he acabado el cuadro.

"I have already finished the painting."

(18) Juan acabó de escribir una carta a su amiga en París.

"John finished writing a letter to his friend in Paris."

we find that in (17) *acabar* is a transitive verb with two arguments, which have the semantic functions of Agent and Goal. "Juan" in (18), on the other hand, can be interpreted as the first argument of *escribir* ("to write") or perhaps as the first argument of both *escribir* and *acabar*, whereas "la carta" and "a su amiga" without doubt are arguments of *escribir*. That is to say that in infinitive constructions in which *acabar* has its lexical meaning ("to finish/to stop"), *acabar* is not the verb that determines the argument structure of the predication. Just like *empezar* ("to begin") and its synonyms (cf. 1.1.), *acabar* is a *verbum adiectum*, a finite verb whose argument structure entirely depends on the argument structure of the non-finite verb it accompanies. Since the behaviour of *acabar* in the periphrasis is more similar to that of the *verbum adiectum* variant than to that of the independent transitive verb, I will take the former as a starting point for the description of *acabar de* in the periphrasis.

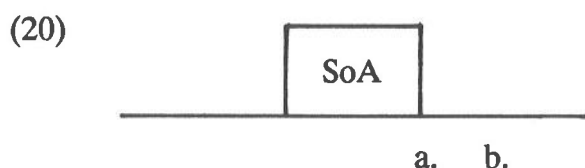
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<sup>17</sup> Though it might seem inconsistent within the structure of this paper, I chose not to deal with the selection restrictions of any of the finite verbs in periphrases in this chapter. Instead, this item will be discussed in the paragraphs on grammaticalization (3.1.). This arrangement has been chosen in order to avoid unnecessary repetition, since selection restrictions are crucial to the assessment of the extent to which the verbs are grammaticalized.

*Acabar de* plus infinitive is the only Phasal periphrasis that does not participate in the spatial metaphor. Nevertheless it also owes its origin to a figurative language use, which, however, is rather a displacement of meaning than a metaphor. In the periphrastic construction *acabar* expresses Immediate Perfect Aspect, i.e. stage 6 in the Phasal Aspect Scale, whereas its lexical meaning corresponds to stage 5, which is Egressive Aspect. Let us compare the meanings of *acabar de*, e.g. in

- (19) a. Acabábamos de comer, es decir que estábamos comiendo el último bocado.  
"We were finishing the meal, that's to say we were busy eating the last mouthful."
- b. Acabábamos de comer, es decir que habíamos comido hacía muy poco.  
"We had just finished the meal, that's to say we had eaten very shortly before."

In b., the speaker exaggerates the real situation as it were: instead of stating explicitly that the SoA has already ended, he says that - literally speaking - it is just coming to an end. By means of this exaggeration the intimate temporal relation between the moment of speaking and the SoA referred to is emphasized. Schematically represented, the relation between the two meanings is as follows:



It is precisely this close relation that is essential to the truly aspectual character of the periphrasis. Therefore, it is generally not possible to combine temporal adverbs that refer to a moment other than the moment of speaking or - in the Past - the reference point with this particular periphrasis.

- (21) Ahora mismo acaba de ponerme lindamente en la puerta.  
(Rohrer 1977:119)  
"Just now he has thrown me blandly out of his house."

- (22) \*Ayer acaba de llegar. (ibid.)  
"Yesterday he has just arrived."

There are, however, examples in which *acabar de* as a finite verb in the periphrasis (in the following: VfPer) occurs together with adverbials with clearly Past reference:

- (23) (...) un pueblo grande, llamado Yonville - l'Abbaye, cuyo médico (...) acababa de marcharse la semana anterior (ibid.:120)  
"(...) a big village, called Yonville - l'Abbaye, the medical doctor of which had just left a week before"
- (24) En efecto, monsieur Bovary padre acababa de fallecer la antevíspera repentinamente, de un ataque de apoplejía.  
(ibid.)  
"Indeed, monsieur Bovary father had just died all of a sudden the evening before of an apoplectic stroke."<sup>18</sup>

Rohrer concludes from these that *acabar de* might be developing from an expression of Immediate Perfect Aspect towards a Past Tense marker (ibid.). Yet it should be kept in mind that the examples quoted above are quite marginal; hence, it might be doubted whether they can really be taken as indications of a tendency.

Since the VfPer and the *verbum adiectum* designate two adjoining Phasal Aspect distinctions and their meanings thus are very similar, many expressions with *acabar de* are ambiguous, as we already have seen in (19). The following example, though, has only one possible interpretation:

- (25) Ayer por la noche, finalmente, *acabó* de nevar.  
finish.PAST.PF.3rd.SG  
"Yesterday evening it finally stopped snowing."

In this sentence *acabar* is a *verbum adiectum*, which could be easily replaced by *terminar* ("to finish"). The interpretation of the predicate as a periphrasis is blocked because the use of the periphrasis with *acabar* is

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<sup>18</sup> Here, the use of the Immediate Perfect is comparable to that of the Perfect in example (9) in chapter 2.1.2. of this paper. By using this Aspect the speaker emphasizes his emotional involvement with the SoA he describes. See 2.1.2., note 12.

restricted to the Imperfective Aspect. What is described in Immediate Perfect Aspect, in itself, must be background information within the discourse, because the SoA designated by the predicate does not coincide with the reference point itself, but is immediately anterior to it. Hence, the periphrasis with *acabar de* is to be found mostly in a main clause, whereas the reference point is introduced in a Perfective Aspect predicate in a subordinate temporal clause, such as in:

- (26) *Acababa de ducharme cuando sonó el teléfono.*  
finish.PAST.IMPF.1st.SG ... ring.PAST.PF.3rd.SG  
"I had just had a shower when the telephone rang."

Apart from this confinement to the Imperfective Aspect, *acabar de* in its aspectual function cannot be combined with negation. When used with negation in a predication describing a non-momentaneous SoA *acabar* generally becomes a *verbum adiectum*; this is the case in the following example.

- (27) *Todavía no acababa de duchar cuando sonó el teléfono.*  
(Cartagena 1976:36)  
"I had not yet finished showering myself when the telephone rang."

This incompatibility can be explained if we consider the difference between Perfect and Immediate Perfect Aspect in terms of markedness. Both are Perfect, but with respect to the feature of immediateness the Immediate Perfect is marked while the Perfect is unmarked. Being the unmarked, or neutral, member of the opposition, the Perfect has a more general meaning than the Immediate Perfect. Thus it can substitute the Immediate Perfect, while the Immediate Perfect can only be used if the feature of immediateness is of any relevance. It is logical that the immediateness with which a SoA has not occurred is by no means relevant.

In certain contexts *no acabar de* plus infinitive is used periphrastically but has a meaning that is quite different from Immediate Perfect Aspect. In these expressions its meaning is similar to that of the periphrasis *llegar a* ("to arrive at") plus infinitive, which can be roughly translated as "to succeed in".

- (28) *Esas ideas tuyas no acaban de convencerme.* (Fente 1983:25)  
"These ideas of yours don't succeed in convincing me."

Together with *llegar a*, *venir a* ("to come to"), *acabar por* ("to end at") (or *acabar* plus gerund), *no acabar de* forms the group that Rohrer (1977:129) calls "Kategorien der Situierung" and Fente (1983:52) considers to be 'terminative periphrases'. I think that these periphrases, rather than expressing the final phase of a SoA, indicate 'the step towards, and frequently, the arrival at a new situation' (Roca Pons 1958:70). Furthermore, one might doubt whether these verbs really have purely aspectual value. What *acabar* designates in (28) is more similar to Modality than to Aspect; this becomes evident in (28) a.-c. where *acabar* is substituted by the verbs *empezar* ("to begin"), *terminar* ("to finish") and *poder* ("can") respectively:

- (28) a. Esas ideas tuyas no empiezan a convencerme.  
"These ideas of yours don't begin to convince me."  
b. Esas ideas tuyas no terminan de convencerme.  
"These ideas of yours don't finish convincing me."  
c. Esas ideas tuyas no pueden convencerme.  
"These ideas of yours cannot convince me."

(28) c. is the variant whose meaning is most similar to that of (28). On the other hand, the fact that the lexical meanings of all of the finite verbs in these periphrases is *the arrival at some point in time or space* suggests that Phasal Aspect will be a relevant parameter in the assessment of the precise meaning of these periphrases. Here, I will not further pursue this matter.

#### 2.2.4. Summary

*Ir a*, *ponerse a* and *acabar de* designate Prospective, Ingressive and Immediate Perfect Aspect respectively; *ir a*, moreover, expresses Future Tense.

The function of the finite verbs in the Phasal periphrases is related in a metaphorical or figurative way to the meaning they have when serving as full predicates.

*Ir a*, *ponerse a* and *acabar de* differ in the degree to which they are desemanticized.

### 3. SYNTACTIC ANALYSIS

#### 3.1. The grammaticalization of the finite verb in the Phasal periphrases with the infinitive

As already has been observed in the previous chapter, grammaticalization is a historical phenomenon, which takes place at any moment in the development of a language<sup>19</sup>. Being a historical process, grammaticalization is not a sudden mutation of a lexical item into a grammatical item, but "grammaticalization is a process of gradual change and its products have different degrees of grammaticality." (Lehmann 1982:13).

In the beginning, a lexeme is not grammaticalized in all of its uses, but it retains, next to its grammaticalized form, its former status, so the lexical and the grammaticalized form coexist. This stage in the grammaticalization process is called *functional split* (Heine/Reh 1982:48). When the original lexical meaning of the word has been lost, the second stage of grammaticalization, *functional shift*, has been reached. With regard to this stage we can say that the function of the linguistic unit has shifted from lexis to grammar (ibid.).

An example of a functional shift in the present context is the development of *haber*, *Ir*, *ponerse* and *acabar*, however, have not gone past the stage of functional split.

Another way of looking at grammaticalization is to regard it as a functional expansion, i.e. the expansion of the function of a linguistic unit from the lexical field to the field of grammar. Functional expansion or grammaticalization of lexemes always entails partial or entire loss of meaning, i.e. *desemanticization*.

A very useful instrument of measuring the degree to which a lexeme is grammaticalized is presented by Lehmann (1982). He starts from the assumption that there are three factors that determine the autonomy of a linguistic sign, viz. its proper *weight*, its *cohesion* with other signs and its *variability* (mobility or shiftability) with respect to other signs (Lehmann 1982:121), each of which he focalizes from a paradigmatic as well as a syntagmatic point of view. This procedure yields the following six parameters:

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<sup>19</sup> An example of grammaticalization in progress in present day English is the development of adverbs like *terribly* from meaningful lexemes to pure intensifiers.

(1)

	<i>paradigmatic</i>	<i>syntagmatic</i>
<i>weight</i>	<i>integrity</i>	<i>scope</i>
<i>cohesion</i>	<i>paradigmaticity</i>	<i>bondedness</i>
<i>variability</i>	<i>paradigmatic variability</i>	<i>syntagmatic variability</i>

Though perhaps only application of these concepts will really clarify what is meant by them, I will try to give some short explanation beforehand.

*Integrity* is semantic and phonological intactness. Loss of semantic integrity is desemanticization and loss of phonological integrity is erosion (called "phonological attrition" by Lehmann).

In order to measure the *paradigmaticity* of an element the relative openness or closedness as well as the formal and functional homogeneity of the paradigm are relevant. When the size of a paradigm decreases, its homogeneity is very likely to increase; both tendencies indicate the increase of paradigmaticity of the linguistic sign.

*Paradigmatic variability* is the relative freedom with which the speaker chooses an element. The use of a lexical item is facultative, while a grammatical item can be obligatory. The potential obligatoriness of an element is indicated by the total absence of selection restrictions.

The *scope* of a linguistic element is the extent to which it affects its context.

The *bondedness* of a linguistic sign is "the intimacy with which it is connected with other signs to which it bears a syntagmatic relation" (ibid.:147). Examples of such a relation can be that of the predicate and its arguments or that of the main verb and the auxiliary.

*Syntagmatic variability* is the relative freedom of the speaker to determine the position of a linguistic element in its context.

Grammaticalization thus means: decrease of integrity and scope, increase of paradigmaticity and bondedness, decrease of paradigmatic and syntagmatic variability.

If, applying these criteria, we compare the VfPer's with their respective non-grammaticalized variants<sup>20</sup>, we arrive at the following provisional results:

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<sup>20</sup> Since the auxiliarization of the copula *estar* in the periphrases *estar por* plus infinitive and *estar* plus gerund cannot be compared to that of a lexical element, the copula is not included in the comparative analysis (cf. Dik 1985:4)



(2) Grammaticalization of the VfPer's (provisional)

Paradigmatic parameters

Integrity

The VfPer's have lost their original meanings to different extents.

Paradigmaticity

The size of the paradigm of the VfPer's is smaller than that of the corresponding full predicates<sup>21</sup>, though they do not form an entirely closed category.

There is a certain formal homogeneity in the paradigm, which in itself distinguishes it from a lexical paradigm: all Phasal Aspect VfPer's are combined with a preposition and an infinitive (cf. 2.2. note 14); the prepositions used here are all monosyllabic.

Paradigmatic variability

The VfPer's vary with respect to their loss of selection restrictions. However, the entire category of Phasal Aspect is not obligatory; in other words, it is possible to do without expressing this category<sup>22</sup>.

Syntagmatic parameters

Scope

The scope of the VfPer is the predicate. With respect to the predicate, the individual VfPer's have distinct functions. On the other hand, the scope of an independent predicate is the entire predication. The full predicate forms the nucleus of the predication.

Bondedness

The degree of bondedness to the main verb of the VfPer's exceeds that of a lexical verb to its arguments. On the other hand, the VfPer's are not entirely inseparable from the infinitive they belong to, because it is possible, though generally considered 'strange', to insert an adverb between the two elements.

Syntagmatic variability

The VfPer's always precede the non-finite form of the main verb, while independent verbs do not have any fixed position in relation to their arguments.

In order to show the relative degree of grammaticalization of the VfPer's, I am going to add a short description of the grammaticalization of *haber*, a completely auxiliarized verb.

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<sup>21</sup> María Moliner's *Diccionario de uso del español* (1982) presents a list of approximately 110 movement verbs. Though, due to the abundance of synonyms of *ponerse a*, it is difficult to determine the exact number of movement verbs that function as VfPer's in Phasal constructions, it certainly will not be larger than about 20% of those 110 movement verbs.

<sup>22</sup> The situation is slightly different in the case of *ir a*, since it does not only express Aspect but also Tense. In spite of the fact that Tense is an obligatory category, *ir a* still has some paradigmatic variability, because the analytic Future can be replaced by the synthetic Future. *Ir* as VfPer, therefore, is not an indispensable element of Spanish grammar.

(3) Grammaticalization of *haber*

Paradigmatic parameters

Integrity

*Haber* does not have any lexical meaning of its own.

Paradigmaticity

The paradigm of the auxiliaries is very small. If one excludes the auxiliarized copulae as well as all other more or less auxiliarized verbs (such as the VfPer's), the paradigm consists of one element only, and that is *haber*.

Paradigmatic variability

It is impossible to replace *haber* by another verb. There are no selection restrictions to limit the use of *haber*.

Syntagmatic parameters

Scope

The scope of *haber* is the predicate. It functions as an auxiliary element in the expression of predicate operators.

Bondedness

*Haber* cannot be separated from the participle.

Syntagmatic variability

*Haber* always precedes the participle.

By comparing (2) and (3), we can conclude that the finite verbs in the periphrases as a whole are less grammaticalized than the auxiliary *haber*.

The results presented here are provisional because of the differences between the VfPer's with respect to their integrity and the paradigmatic variability. Hence, before arriving at any definite conclusion as to the degree of grammaticality<sup>23</sup> of the finite verb with infinitive-periphrases, it is necessary to consider each verb separately.

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<sup>23</sup> Following Lehmann, I use the term "grammaticality" here in the sense of "relative degree of grammaticalization which an element has reached", and not in the sense of "well-formedness" (cf. Lehmann 1982:9).

### 3.1.1. *Ir a*

In its periphrastic uses *ir a* has completely lost its meaning of "to move to some place".

The referent of the first argument of the movement verb *ir* has to be a *movable entity*. This selection restriction does not apply in the periphrases with *ir*:

- (4) a. \*La catedral va a Irún.  
      "The cathedral goes to Irún."  
      b. La catedral va a desintegrarse.  
      "The cathedral is going to fall into ruins."

The second argument of the lexical verb *ir* must refer to a *place*. In the example given above it is obvious that also this restriction is lost in the periphrasis.

Consequently, *ir* as a VfPer neither preserves its original meaning nor does it have any selection restrictions.

The complete loss of selection restrictions has consequences for the syntagmatic weight, i.e. the scope, of *ir*. When *ir* is used as an independent predicate, its first argument has the semantic function of Agent (Ag) or of Processed (Proc), and the function of the second argument is that of Direction (Dir)<sup>24</sup>. However, in

- (5) Me voy a quedar en casa todo el día.  
      "I will stay at home all day."

the argument structure is different. The first argument, which is the Subject of the clause, has the semantic function of Positioner (Pos), *quedarse* ("to stay") cannot be an argument of *ir* because it does not have a semantic function to be expected with *ir*, and the semantic function of "en casa" ("at home") is that of Location (Loc). The entity that is the referent of the Subject and "en casa" are arguments of the non-finite verb and not of *ir*. Furthermore, the entire expression "quedar.REFL (yo) en casa" ("stay (I) at home") cannot be an argument of *ir* because, like *quedarse*, it does not have one of the semantic functions to be expected with *ir* and - which is

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<sup>24</sup> Although the semantic function of Dir is usually assigned to satellites, the direction is an indispensable argument of the predicate in the predication with *ir*, because the SoA is incomplete when it is left out (cf. Dik 1981:47).

even more decisive - it cannot be pronominalized. We can, thus, conclude from this example that, in periphrastic constructions with *ir* plus infinitive, the non-finite verb imposes its own argument structure.

On the basis of the total loss of weight and semantic restrictions, *ir* can be considered as a real auxiliary.

The only restriction on the use of this auxiliary is its limitation to the non-compound conjugation. But this is not a matter of completeness or incompleteness of grammaticalization. The limitation to the non-compound conjugation goes for any Spanish auxiliary, thus neither *haber* nor the VfPer *acabar* appear in their compound forms. In English, too, the use of the Present Perfect forms of the auxiliaries *have* and *go* does not make any sense, as can be seen in the following examples:

(6) \*The cathedral has gone to fall into ruins.

(7) \*I have had seen her.

As far as the temporal interpretation of *ir a* plus infinitive and *haber* plus participle is concerned, a careful consideration of the Tense system, such as to be found in Vet (1987), shows that there is no need - and, thus, no room - for compound conjugation of auxiliaries. Within the logic of Aspect, however, I have not yet found an explanation of this phenomenon.

In any case, it is obvious that the limitation to its non-compound conjugation is not a restriction that specifically goes with *ir*. Consequently, one may say that *ir* fulfils its grammatical function without any restriction whatsoever.

### 3.1.2. *Ponerse a*

*Ponerse*, except for the intentional shade of meaning mentioned above, does not preserve any of its original meaning of "to place oneself"<sup>25</sup> in the periphrasis.

*Ponerse* has not lost all of its selection restrictions. The referent of the first argument of the lexical verb *ponerse* must be an *animate entity*, the second argument must be a *place*. Because of the intentional shade of

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<sup>25</sup> As a main verb *ponerse* is a predicate that is derived from the non-reflexive *poner* by means of valency reduction (cf. Dik 1983). Here we start from the derived form because it is only this form that can be grammaticalized.

meaning of *ponerse* in the periphrasis, it can only be combined with a verbal predicate that designates a controlled SoA. Furthermore, as we have seen in paragraph 2.1.1. on the restrictions on Phasal Aspect, the SoA designated by the predicate may neither be momentaneous nor inherently stative. It must be, thus, a *non-momentaneous action*.

The referent of the first argument of a verb that expresses such an action, is bound to be an *animate entity*. The semantic function of this argument is that of Ag. Since the selection restrictions and the semantic function of this argument depend on the combining main verb as well as on *ponerse*, this argument can be considered as being the mutual argument of both verbs.

In the following examples

(8) \*Ayer por la noche, se me puso a doler la barriga.  
"Yesterday evening my belly (wilfully) started aching.

(9) \*Me puse a aburrirme.  
"I (wilfully) began to be bored."

the non-finite verb does not designate an *action*, hence both are ungrammatical. On the other hand (10) and (11) are grammatical:

(10) Se puso a llover.  
"It (wilfully) started to rain."

(11) El coche se puso otra vez a hacer ese ruido extraño.  
"Once again the car (wilfully) started to make that strange noise."

It must be noted that "el coche" ("the car") in (11) is not a living being, from which it follows that "hacer (...) ruido" ("make (...) noise") is not an *action*; neither is "llover" ("rain") an *action*: there is even no potential referent to take the first argument position. These and other similar uses of *ponerse* require a specific strategy of codification and interpretation: the participant of the communication act knows that the referent of the first argument of *ponerse* normally must be a living being that controls an action. When *ponerse* is used without this condition being fulfilled, the hearer interprets the utterance as if it were fulfilled (cf. Dik 1978:44f). This is to say that in the case of (10) one imagines an entity that makes rain and in (11) the car is personalized. With such a metaphorical use of

the periphrasis the speaker expresses the extent to which the SoA he describes affects him (cf. Fente 1983:50).

But the possibilities of the metaphorical use of language are limited: whereas there is no problem with speakers of Spanish to imagine an entity that is responsible for the weather<sup>26</sup> and to personify a car, apparently the personification of "la barriga" ("the belly") is unacceptable.

With the exception of the first argument, *ponerse* as a VfPer has lost its original argument structure, because it cannot have a second argument. When it functions as a full predicate, its second argument has the semantic function of Loc; such an argument is not to be found in

(12) En el camino, Roca iba tan contento que se puso a cantar himnos religiosos. (Hamplova 1968:214)

"On the way, Roca felt so happy that he started to sing religious hymns."

Here, "Roca" is the referent of the mutual argument, which is the first argument of the non-finite verb "cantar" ("sing") as well as of the finite verb *ponerse*; the second argument, "himnos religiosos" ("religious hymns") with the function of Goal (Go), is an argument of "cantar" only. The fact that "cantar (Roca) himnos religiosos" cannot be an argument of the finite verb can be proved through the impossibility of pronominalizing this expression.

This is to say that, apart from the first argument, the argument structure exclusively depends on the main verb in a predication containing *ponerse* plus infinitive.

It is evident, thus, that, in periphrases, *ponerse* is not an independent predicate, but it is not an auxiliary either. Like the *verba adiecta* it occupies an intermediate position, viz. of a semiauxiliary.

### 3.1.3. *Acabar de*

Unlike the full predicate and the *verbum adiectum* variants, the VfPer *acabar de* does not have any meaning beyond its aspectual meaning.

The transitive verb *acabar* has the following selection restrictions: the first argument must be an *animate entity* and the second argument an *entity*

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<sup>26</sup> It is even quite common to say "quiere llover" ("it wants to rain"), personifying even more unequivocally the meteorological situation.

that can be implemented or consumed, such as *pintura* ("painting"), *libro* ("book"), *cena* ("dinner") etc. The *verbum adiectum* imposes only one restriction on the non-finite verb which it accompanies: this verb may not designate a *momentaneous action or process*. Example (13) shows that the restriction concerning the duration of the SoA is no longer valid if *acabar de* is used as a finite verb in a periphrasis:

- (13) Acabo de encontrar tu carta en la escalera.  
"I have just found your letter on the stairs."

As we have seen in paragraph 2.1.1., all forms of Phasal Aspect are subject to certain restrictions, which, consequently, restrict the Phasal Aspect use of *acabar de*: it cannot be used with predicates that designate inherent states. Thus, the selection restriction on the possible verbal predicates to be combined with this VfPer is the following: the predicate may not designate an *inherent state*. The combination of the Immediate Perfect Aspect with a non-dynamic, non-controlled and (semi)permanent SoA in (14) is, thus, unacceptable.

- (14) \*Juan acaba de saber mucho de matemáticas.  
"John has just known a lot about mathematics."

Moreover, the use of this VfPer is very limited: it is incompatible with the Perfective Aspect and Negation, as we have seen in paragraph 2.2.3. of this paper.

Since the *verbum adiectum* variant of *acabar* does not have any influence whatsoever on the argument structure of the predicate (cf. 2.2.3.), it is logical that the VfPer does not have such an influence either.

From these facts we can conclude that the role *acabar de* plays in the periphrasis is similar to that of *ir*: it is an auxiliary.

#### 3.1.4. Summary

In the scheme under (16) I will demonstrate the mutual similarities and differences between *ponerse*, *acabar*, *ir* and *haber*.

The parameters which will serve as the means of comparison are the two aspects in which the three VfPer's differ from each other: the degree of integrity and paradigmatic variability. Furthermore, the values for bondedness, which are the same for all of the VfPer's, but which are

different for *haber*, will be shown in the scheme.

The existence of some residues of independent meaning indicates the relative integrity of the verb concerned. The existence of selection restrictions indicates that the verb has a relative paradigmatic variability and cannot become obligatory. The possibility of inserting one or two elements between the finite verb and the form it depends on, indicates that the bondedness is not absolute, which impedes a possible development towards "univerbation", i.e. fusion of the finite verb with the main element (cf. Lehmann 1982:151).

(15) Grammaticalization of the VfPer's (definitive)

	<i>ponerse</i>	<i>acabar</i>	<i>ir</i>	<i>haber</i>
<u>integrity</u> residues of independent meaning	+	-	-	-
<u>paradigm. var.</u> selection restrictions	+	+	-	-
<u>bondedness</u> possibility to insert word	+	+	+	-

From this scheme we can infer that *ir* is grammaticalized almost as strongly as *haber*. The difference between the two auxiliaries as regards bondedness is only relevant in view of historical developments and has no repercussions on the way they function in present day Spanish. In this respect there is not any difference between them.

The difference between *ir* and *haber* on the one hand and *acabar* on the other lies in the fact that the former are used to express both Tense and Aspect, whereas the latter can express Aspect only, and, consequently, is subject to the restrictions imposed on Phasal Aspect. What *haber*, *ir* and *acabar* have in common is the absolute absence of weight.

A very different case is that of the semiauxiliary *ponerse*, which, having remnants of lexical meaning, is weakly grammaticalized in comparison to the others.



### 3.2. The role of the three verbs in the functional organization of the predicate

In his analysis of the auxiliarization of English modals Goossens (1985) develops the following "grammaticalization scale within FG":

- (16) full predicate < predicate formation < predicate operators  
(Goossens 1985:12)

According to his analysis, an independent verbal predicate is a verb with both lexical meaning and argument structure of its own.

Predicate formation occupies an intermediate position, which Goossens assigns to modal verbs whenever "a combining predicate imposes its argument structure on the whole predication" (ibid.:40). This solution is a provisional one, since "the exact status of predicate formation within FG has by no means been completely explored" (ibid.). For the moment, I do not see any feasible alternative and will adopt, therefore, this concept.

In order to be treated as an element that expresses a predicate operator, a verb, in addition to not having an argument structure of its own, must have a specific grammatical function (cf. ibid.), in the present case that of Phasal Aspect.

Starting from Goossens' results, I consider *ir a* and *acabar de* to be auxiliaries that express predicate operators, and *ponerse* to be an element in predicate formation, though the latter does have a grammatical function. However, it seems to me that the decisive factor is the relative independence of this verb as far as lexical meaning, selection restrictions and argument structure are concerned.

#### 3.2.1. Predicate operators

Auxiliaries contribute to the linguistic expression of the predication and, in the case of *ir a* and *acabar de*, more specifically to the expression of the predicate. Dik (1989) distinguishes the following "Expression rules affecting the predicate"

- (a) Voice
- (b) Polarity
- (c) Tense Mood Aspect
- (d) Illocution
- (e) Agreement

Hengeveld (1988) suggests a subdivision of the operators to be expressed into predicate operators ( $\pi_1$ ), predication operators ( $\pi_2$ ), proposition operators ( $\pi_3$ ) and illocution operators ( $\pi_4$ ). In the present context only predicate and predication operators, which will be represented under (17), are relevant.

(17)

SEMANTIC DOMAIN	GRAMMATICAL CATEGORY
Predicate operators	
Internal temporal constituency Presence or absence of property or relation expressed by predicate	Imperfective/Perfective, Phasal Aspect Predicate Negation
Predication operators	
Time of occurrence Frequency of occurrence Actuality of occurrence	Tense Quantificational Aspect Objective Mood/Polarity

(Hengeveld 1988:6)

The difference between predicate operators and predication operators is "that predication operators are concerned with the *occurrence* or setting of a SoA rather than with its *properties*." (ibid.:7). The four types of operators differ with respect to their scope such that the scope of  $\pi_1$  is minimal, that of  $\pi_2$  is wider, then comes  $\pi_3$ , and  $\pi_4$  has the widest scope. The four operator types are related to each other in a hierarchical way according to the following rule:

- (18) Operators with higher scope may affect the expression of operators with lower scope.  
(ibid.:25)

Starting from this subcategorization of operators, we arrive at the following predicate and predication operators in Spanish:

$$(19) \quad \text{Predicate operators } (\pi_1)^{27}$$

$$(\text{neg}) \quad \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{imp} \\ \text{pf} \end{array} \right\} \quad \left( \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{prosp} \\ \text{imm prosp} \\ \text{progr} \\ \text{imm perf} \\ \text{perf} \end{array} \right\} \right)$$

$$(20) \quad \text{Predication operators } (\pi_2)$$

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{neg} \\ \text{pos} \end{array} \right\} \quad \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{fut} \\ \text{pres} \\ \text{pas} \end{array} \right\} \quad \left( \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{sem} \\ \text{rep} \\ \text{cont/iter} \end{array} \right\} \right)$$

Before the expression rules can apply, it is necessary that there be rules to impede the formation of ungrammatical underlying structures<sup>28</sup>. Since neither the precise nature of these rules nor their position in the system have been defined in FG so far, I will confine myself to mention the rules that I consider to be necessary for the grammatically acceptable use of the functions expressed by the periphrases with *ir a* and *acabar de*.

As we have seen in the previous paragraphs, the use of *ir* in periphrases - provided that it does not express Aspect, but Future Tense - is not subject to any restriction. Nevertheless, it is impossible to combine Prospective Aspect with periphrastic Future, because this would lead to a double appearance of *ir a* in one and the same construction, which is unacceptable in Spanish. Hence, the periphrastic Future is subject to condition (21) and the Prospective Aspect to condition (22) in order to block such a combination.

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<sup>27</sup> The abbreviations used here have the following meanings:

neg	-	Negative	sem	-	Semelfactive
pos	-	Positive	rep	-	Repetitive
impf	-	Imperfective	cont	-	Continuous
pf	-	Perfective	iter	-	Iterative
prosp	-	Prospective	fut	-	Future
imm prosp	-	Immediate Prospective	fut <sub>syn</sub>	-	synthetic Future
progr	-	Progressive	fut <sub>per</sub>	-	periphrastic Future
imm perf	-	Immediate Perfect	pres	-	Present
perf	-	Perfect	pas	-	Past

<sup>28</sup> Information concerning the supposed position of these rules was given to me by Kees Hengeveld in personal communication.

(21)  $\pi_1$  does not contain *prosp*

(22)  $\pi_2$  does not contain *fut*

For the use of *ir a* plus infinitive as an aspectual periphrasis another rule, which applies to all forms of Phasal Aspect, is needed. This rule has to prevent the combination of Phasal Aspect with an inherently stative SoA. The condition should be:

(23)  $\text{pred}_v$  does not designate an essentially stative SoA

For Immediate Perfect Aspect, in addition to rule (23), there are two other conditions necessary in order to prevent the formation of an ungrammatical underlying structure:

(24)  $\pi_1$  and  $\pi_2$  do not contain *neg*  
 $\pi_1$  does not contain *pf*

The expression rules according to which Tense and Aspect are inserted, are simple. The only problem in this case is the expression of the Future with *ir*, since it is not at all clear in which respect it differs from the analytic Future, if there is any difference at all. Since I do not know how to define the exact meaning of the periphrastic Future, I consider the latter as an optional variant of the synthetic Future.

Starting from this point of view, the expression rules for the three predicate operators must be as follows:

(25)  $\text{prosp pred}_v \rightarrow \text{ir}_v \text{ a pred}_{v \text{ inf}}$

(26)  $\text{fut pred}_v \rightarrow \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{fut}_{\text{synt}} \\ \text{fut}_{\text{per}} \end{array} \right\}$

$\text{fut}_{\text{per}} \rightarrow \text{pres ir}_v \text{ a pred}_{v \text{ inf}}$

(27)  $\text{imm perf pred}_v \rightarrow \text{acabar}_v \text{ de pred}_{v \text{ inf}}$

### 3.2.2. Predicate formation

Unlike the expression rules, which form the ‘finishing touch’ of the functional organization of the predicate, predicate formation is one of the basic operations within this system. Predicate formation is the transformation of basic predicate frames into derived predicate frames.

The predicate formation transformation that is triggered by *ponerse* works according to the following rule:

- (28) Input:         $\text{pred}_v(x_1) \dots (x_n)$   
Output:         $\text{poner}_{v\text{-se}} a \text{ pred}_{v\text{ inf}}(x_1) \dots (x_n)$   
Condition:      $\text{pred}_v$  designates a controlled, dynamic and non-momentaneous SoA  
Meaning:        $(x_1)$  intentionally starts to carry out  $\text{pred}_v$

The conditions make that the referent of the first argument must be an *animate entity* and that this argument will have the semantic function of Ag, such that all conditions mentioned in the description of *ponerse a*, will be fulfilled. When, after the insertion of terms, the assignation of syntactic and pragmatic functions and a few other operations, the predication is complete, the expression rules apply. In these expression rules predications containing *ponerse a* can be combined with e.g. Phasal Aspect, which will result in predications such as:

- (29) *Me estaba poniendo a cantar cuando entró Juan.*  
be.1st.PAST.IMPF put.GER.REFL to sing.INF  
I was (wilfully) beginning to sing when John entered.

Bearing in mind that *ponerse a* plus infinitive is the most neutral of all expressions of Ingressive Aspect (cf. 2.2.2.), we can conclude that the Ingressive Aspect as such is less grammaticalized in Spanish than the other Phasal Aspect distinctions, since the latter do not allow for combinations with each other.

When applying the results of Goossens to the type of verbs I called *verba adiecta*, one can also consider these as elements in predicate formation, though these, having a lexical meaning of their own, can be used as independent predicates. Predicate formation with e.g. *empezar* should, therefore work according to the following rule:

- (30) Input:  $\text{pred}_v(x_n)$   
Output:  $\text{empezar}_v$ , a  $\text{pred}_{v, \text{inf}}(x_n)$   
Condition:  $\text{pred}_v$  does not designate an essentially stative SoA  
Meaning:  $\text{pred}_v$  begins to be carried out

The number of arguments can be zero, as is the case with *llover*. If compared to the conditions in (28), the restrictions on possible combinations are minimal here, so that one might be inclined to believe that *empezar* were more grammaticalized than *ponerse*, although, as a matter of fact, it is not grammaticalized at all. But here, the small number of restrictions is not caused by the grammatical features of the verb, but it is the consequence of its lexical meaning. Verbs like *empezar* are nothing but a lexical means to express a sort of meaning that can be described in purely grammatical terms, i.e. Phasal Aspect. Hence, the only restriction they impose is that the category of grammatical meaning they express be applicable to the predicate in question.

For Dutch, the problem of verbs like *to begin* has also been dealt with by Dik (1972). He suggests to distinguish two predicates *beginnen* ("to begin") in order to analyse the differences between sentences like (31) a. and b., a. designating a controlled and b. a non-controlled SoA.

- (31) a. Jan begon naar de muziek te luisteren.  
"John began to listen to the music."  
b. Jan begon de muziek te horen.  
"John began to hear the music."  
(Dik 1972:174)

Dik argues that in sentences such as (31) a. John does not only control the action of listening but also the action of beginning to do so (ibid.:175). I think, however, that, though John actually has the choice whether to listen or not, he is unable to decide to listen and at the same time decide not to begin to listen. In other words, *beginnen* or *empezar* do not at all designate a controlled SoA but they are just a *passepartout* that serves to indicate some stage in the relative progress of some other SoA.

On the other hand, Dik indicates in his article that - at least in Dutch - there are a few *verba adiecta* that can only be used with controlled SoA's (ibid.:176). This might also be the case in Spanish, and so I would like to emphasize that the above structure only applies to *empezar* and other *verba adiecta* that do not have any meaning beyond the Phasal

Aspect meaning, whereas the problem of the Spanish *verba adiecta* as a whole needs a more careful consideration.

### 3.2.3. Summary

In these paragraphs I have pointed out the heterogeneous nature of the verbal periphrases expressing Phasal Aspect.

The strongly grammaticalized structures *ir a* plus infinitive and *acabar de* plus infinitive are to be considered as expressions of predicate operators, whereas the less grammaticalized *ponerse a* plus infinitive is to be accounted for through predicate formation rules.

It is also a predicate formation rule that triggers the insertion of *empezar* in the predicate. It is not certain, however, whether this applies to all of the *verba adiecta* in Spanish.

## 4. CONCLUSION

In order to avoid unnecessary repetitions, I will confine myself to summarizing very briefly the results of this paper. Since, due to the complexity of the subject, I am left with less problems solved than questions unanswered, I will dedicate this conclusion mainly to the latter.

The grammatical structures of the Spanish periphrases are heterogeneous; it is, however, correct to consider them as special types of constructions, because all of the finite verbs in periphrases are grammaticalized to such an extent that they cannot function as independent predicates, and in all of them grammaticalization is incomplete.

The grammatical expression of Phasal Aspect in Spanish is also heterogeneous: Egressive Aspect is not grammaticalized at all, Ingressive Aspect is weakly grammaticalized, Prospective and Immediate Perfect Aspect are more strongly grammaticalized and the Perfect is so strongly grammaticalized that it has almost ceased being Aspect.

The most important of the problems unsolved, concern the relation between Aspect and Tense on both ends of the Phasal system.

I have not dealt with the causes of the reinterpretation of Aspect in terms of Tense, because in my opinion this is a problem that requires a historical and psycholinguistic investigation that exceeds the limits of this

paper.

Due to a lack of clear rules to restrict the use of *ir a* for the expression of Future, I have been unable to determine the extent to which the aspectual form has acquired temporal meaning here. Hence, my definition of the meaning of the periphrastic Future is provisional.

The two functions of the Perfect and its replacement in its aspectual function by other participle constructions, have only played a marginal role in this paper. It would be very interesting to study the development of the Perfect and the function and structure of its substitutes as part of an investigation of periphrastic predicates which is not restricted to verbal predicates.

In the course of the preparation of this paper, I have been confronted with two problems that are related in a more indirect way to the subject, which I have not been able to pursue in a satisfactory way.

The first problem is that of the *verba adiecta*, which should be analysed more carefully in order to find out, whether they all behave like *empezar* or not. In the latter case perhaps a more sophisticated analysis than the one presented here might be required.

The other problem concerns the periphrases which are not purely aspectual. As is to be entailed from the diversity of current interpretations, it is not easy to determine the exact function of periphrases such as *acabar por* and *llegar a* plus infinitive. It would be worthwhile to have a closer look at this matter.



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