Lexical Syntax and Auxiliary Selection in Old Catalan and Old Spanish

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I. GOAL. The general purpose of this paper is to provide a syntactic analysis of the argument structure relations (in the sense of Hale & Keyser (2002)) and gradiency factors involved in the selection of perfective auxiliary (HAVE vs. BE) with intransitive verbs. In particular, I will show how Mateu's (2003) comparative syntactic proposal for languages like Italian, French, German, and Dutch can also be naturally extended to account for the diachronic data from Old Catalan (Batlle 2002) and Old Spanish (Aranovich 2003). In so doing, I will also review Mateu's (2004, 2005) syntactic explanation of those semantic determinants involved in auxiliary selection with intransitive verbs, which have been worked out in excellent descriptive works like Sorace's (2000), *inter alia* [*Caveat*: Following Sorace (2000f) and Mateu (2003f), I put pronominal/reflexive verbs aside since there is an additional morphosyntactic condition involved in Romance languages; but see Aranovich (2003)].

II. DESCRIPTIVE GENERALIZATIONS. Sorace (2000, 2004) showed that in those languages that have selection of perfective auxiliary (HAVE vs. BE), some intransitive verbs (e.g., unaccusatives like It. *morire* 'die' or unergatives like It. *lavorare* 'work') require a given auxiliary more categorically than others (e.g., unaccusatives like It. *esistere* 'exist' or unergatives like It. *trionfare* 'triumph'). The former are called "core verbs", while the latter are called "intermediate verbs". Quite interestingly, in this paper I put forward an important correlation whose supporting generalizations have already been reached independently in both synchronically-oriented works (Sorace 2000, 2004) and diachronically-oriented ones (Batlle 2002; Aranovich 2003): namely, it is the general case that those verbs that are more variable syncronically with respect to BE-selection in Italian are the ones that earlier lost the BE auxiliary in both Old Catalan and Old Spanish. Indeed, Batlle (2002) and Aranovich (2003) arrived at very similar generalizations concerning Old Catalan and Old Spanish, respectively: e.g., quite typically, the first verbs to loose BE are those verbs of existence and appearance, the more conservative ones being those expressing telic change of {state/location}. The relevant insights of these two diachronic works can be nicely adapted into Sorace's (2000, 2004) proposal of the so-called "Auxiliary Selection Hierarchy" (ASH): for example, the ASH applied to Old Catalan can be depicted as in (1) [NB: Unfortunately, Batlle (2002) and Aranovich (2003) don't mention Sorace's (2000) important work on auxiliary selection!].

III. TOWARD AN EXPLANATION OF THE FACTS. Despite the descriptive merits and important insights of Sorace's (2000) descriptive work on the ASH, Mateu (2004) points out that her account falls into a non-trivial problem, which she in fact acknowledges too (cf. Sorace (2000: 861): "the reader will not find an explanation of why particular semantic components are more crucial to the selection of particular auxiliaries than others"). For example, a relevant point regarding Sorace's account of BE-selection in Italian is why telic change of {state/location} is more important (i.e., "weighs more") than existence of state. A similar question arises when dealing with Old Catalan and Old Spanish: why appearance and existence verbs are the first ones to loose BE-selection (cf. some relevant data in (2)), telic change of {state/location} verbs being the more conservative ones. I argue that important questions like the previous ones should force us to work out which are the formal and *explanatory* constraints that limit the number of lexical-semantic classes of verbs relevant to the aux-selection problem. Indeed, as Sorace's descriptive model stands, notice that it is not clear at all why one has to posit six or seven (but not eleven or twenty!) lexical-semantic classes of verbs when dealing with the aux-selection problem. In order to solve this non-trivial problem, following Mateu (2004), I argue that the possible combinations of discrete semantic features associated to the syntactic argument structures of unaccusative verbs (cf. 3a) and unergative verbs (cf. 3b) turn out to be limited/reduced to the ones in (4), which can be read as a formalization of the descriptive picture in (1). The semantic features encoded by the relational heads of both (3a) and (3b) allow one to make some interesting predictions concerning the digital semantic determinants involved in aux-selection with intransitive verbs: the semantic features that become more important (i.e., those ones "weighing" more) are precisely those that encode maximally different situations -this statement is expressed by a fully positive feature specification (cf. (4a) and (4e))-. By contrast, those features that are less important are precisely those that encode minimally different situations -this statement is expressed by a {partially/fully} negative feature specification: cf. (4b) and (4c-d), respectively-. In short, an approach that makes use of a formally restricted set of syntactically transparent semantic features (cf. discussion on (3)/(4)) can be argued to be more explanatory than a descriptive lexical-semantic one like Sorace's (2000), Batlle's (2002) or Aranovich's (2003).

(1)   The *Auxiliary Selection Hierarchy* (ASH) in Old Catalan
TELIC CHANGE OF LOCATION/STATE   selects BE   --least variation
---(**+**stable) cut-off point (telic verbs)
ATELIC CHANGE OF LOCATION/STATE
---(**-**stable) cut-off point (appearance verbs)
APPEARANCE OF STATE
---(**-**stable) cut-off point (appearance verbs)
---(**-**stable) cut-off point (stative verbs)
EXISTENCE OF STATE
---(**-**stable) cut-off point (stative verbs)
UNCONTROLLED PROCESS
CONTROLLED PROCESS   selects HAVE   --least variation

(2)   a.   Old Cat.: (…) si neguna res *avia* esdevengut al emfant   (appearance verbs)
                If anything HAD become to the child
      b.   Old Sp.: (…) los daños que le *han* venido (…)
                the casualties that HAVE come to him
      c.   Old Cat.: (…) no m'*ha* res romàs de dubte.   (existence verbs)
                No doubt HAS remained on me
      d.   Old Sp.: (…) pusimoslo en el poco rescoldo que *habia* quedado
                (We) put it on the few embers that HAD remained
Nota bene: By the time that HAVE was initially selected by appearance and existence verbs and also coexisted with BE in contexts similar to those in (2), the latter auxiliary was still the only one selected by telic change of state verbs (cf. Batlle 2002; Aranovich 2003).

(3)   a. $[_v \ v \ [_{X1} \ X_{1[\pm T]} \ [_{X2} \ Z_2 \ [_{X2} \ X_{2[\pm r]} \ Y_2]]]$ (unaccusative argument structure)
      b. $[_v Z_1 \ [_v \ v \ [_{X1} \ X_{1[\pm R]} \ Y_1]]]$ (unergative argument structure)
Nota bene: roughly, [+*T*] and [-*T*] correspond to BECOME and BE functions, respectively; [+*r*] and [-*r*] correspond to Hale & Keyser's (1993f.) 'terminal coincidence relation' and 'central coincidence relation', respectively: the birelational element X_2 relates two non-relational elements Z_2 and Y_2, 'Figure' and 'Ground', respectively. On the other hand, [+*R*] encodes the agentive DO function, while [-*R*] subsumes whatever function assigned to non-agentive unergative verbs. While the non-relational element Z_1 is interpreted as 'Originator', Y_1 is the created object that can typically be conflated into the verbal head X_1: cf. Hale & Keyser 1993/2002; Y_1 can be interpreted as 'Incremental Theme' in the sense of Harley (2002) and Mateu (2002).

(4)   a. $[_v \ v \ [_{X1} \ X_{1[+T]} \ [_{X2} \ Z_2 \ [_{X2} \ X_{2[+r]} \ Y_2]]]$ selects BE   --least variation
           ---(**+**stable) cut-off point (telic verbs)
           ---(**-**stable) cut-off point (appearance verbs)
      b. $[_v \ v \ [_{X1} \ X_{1[+T]} \ [_{X2} \ Z_2 \ [_{X2} \ X_{2[-r]} \ Y_2]]]$
           ---(**-**stable) cut-off point (appearance verbs)
           ---(**-**stable) cut-off point (stative verbs)
      c. $[_v \ v \ [_{X1} \ X_{1[-T]} \ [_{X2} \ Z_2 \ [_{X2} \ X_{2[-r]} \ Y_2]]]$
           ---(**-**stable) cut-off point (stative verbs)
      d. $[_v Z_1 \ [_v \ v \ [_{X1} \ X_{1[- R]} \ Y_1]]]$
      e. $[_v Z_1 \ [_v \ v \ [_{X1} \ X_{1[+R]} \ Y_1]]]$ selects HAVE   --least variation

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