SPANISH ABSOLUTE CONSTRUCTIONS AND ASPECT

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This paper is devoted to the study of the aspectual value of absolute constructions in Spanish. Special attention will be paid to the correlation holding between the perfective interpretation of these structures and their ability for licensing an overt subject NP. On the basis of such a correlation, it will be claimed that past participles together with predicates selecting an event argument project an ASP(ect) head providing the adequate structural context for the Case-marking of their subject.

0. Introduction

A widespread assumption in the standard literature dealing with the study of secondary predication is that all major syntactic categories may contain a subject position under certain structural conditions (cf. Stowell (1983)). In other words, subject-predicate relations can be expressed by means of a variety of syntactic structures, some of which may be non-sentential. The core of the discussion regarding asymmetries between sentences and categories which exhibit a defective distribution with respect to lexical subjects has mainly focused on the properties of small clauses (SCs). As is well-known, SCs are projected from heads which, although they are able to assign a thematic role to a subject NP,they nevertheless lack TENSE and AGR functional nodes; hence, they cannot Case-mark it.

This paper is devoted to the analysis of a kind of structures, namely, *absolute constructions* (ACs), whose properties, although they have been paid less attention than those of SCs, illustrate the asymmetry cited above straightforwardly. ACs pattern with SCs in that they lack a functional structure capable of licensing a NP subject position. In contrast, since they are

always generated, contrary to SCs, as *non governed* (maximal) projections, there is no available *external* Case-marker for their subject.

The bulk of this paper deals with the study of the aspectual value of ACs. It will be shown that there is a strong correlation between the 'internal temporality' of the predicates heading ACs and their ability to licence a subject position. Extending a recent proposal about absolute past participles in Spanish made in de Miguel (1990), we will claim that predicates taking a [+perfective] feature, together with participles, project a 'flat' functional structure, that is, an ASP(ect) node, which is responsible for the Case-marking of their subject. At the same time, it will be argued that verb movement into COMP and hence subject inversion, rather than playing a central role in Case assignment of the subject, may be viewed as an instance of a more general phenomenon closely connected to temporally defective contexts.

The structure of this paper is as follows. In the first section, empirical observations regarding the main characteristics of ACs as well as their differences with respect to other related constructions will be presented. In the second section three different approaches dealing with the problem of Case assignment in ACs will be discussed. The third section is devoted to the study of the aspectual interpretation of ACs. As we will show, despite the heterogeneous characteristics of predicates heading ACs, an interesting generalization emerges concerning their aspectual interpretation: namely all of them have a perfective reading.[1] Finally, in the fourth section it will be claimed that subject NPs get Case in ACs by means of a sort of 'aspectual agreement' rule taking place between the ASP head and the NP moved into its specifier position.

1. Absolute Constructions: A Brief Descriptive Account

'Absolute constructions' have not received a precise and uniform analysis within the GB framework. As is well-known, under such a heading different kinds of structures are subsumed. According to Stump (1985), ACs exhibit the main syntactic characteristics of

adverbial subordinate clauses, but they are distinguished by a special peculiarity: they lack any sort of subordinating conjunction which overtly specifies their logical connection with the clause they modify. This peculiarity is shown in the examples in (1), which illustrate the three classes of ACs discussed in Stump's work, namely, "free adjunct constructions" (1a), "nominative absolute constructions" (1b), and "augmented absolute constructions" (1c):

(1) a. *Walking home*, he found a dollar

     b. *His father being a sailor*, John knows all about boats.

     c. *With the children asleep*, Mary watched TV.

     [apud Stump (1985)]

Although the absence of an overt complementizer is crucial in the analysis of ACs as we will see below, it should be said that it does not constitute the only relevant property of such constructions. Moreover, a close look at the examples cited above reveals a sharp contrast regarding the conditions for licensing their subject position. Notice that the ACs in (1), as well as their Spanish counterparts in (2), fall under two different subsets depending on the nature of their respective subjects: a lexical NP in (b)-(c), and an empty category in (a):

(2) a. Jugando e$_i$ al bridge, mis tías$_i$ se entretienen

         Playing e$_i$ to-the bridge my aunts$_i$ *se* entertain

         'Playing bridge, my aunts keep themselves amused'

     b. Jugando *Juan* al bridge, las discusiones serán inevitables

         Playing J. to-the bridge, the arguments will-be inevitable

         'Juan playing bridge, arguments will be inevitable'

     c. Con *la ventana* abierta, pasamos mucho frío

         With the window open   we-stand much cold

         'With the window open, we are very cold'

On the basis of these data, it is quite reasonable to suppose that the examples in (1a) and (2a) pattern, with regard to licensing conditions for the embedded subject, with control structures, since it is the matrix clause that provides the antecedent NP for the empty category filling the subject position in the AC. In contrast, such an analysis cannot be extended to the remaining examples in (1)-(2), which turn out to be problematic for Case Theory, as has been often observed.

A somewhat different approach to ACs is given in Beukema (1982). According to this author, "free adjuncts" are not a set of constructions belonging to the broader class of ACs, as in Stump's approach. On the contrary, he claims that ACs ("absolute free adjuncts" in his terminology) are a particular sample —in that they include an overt subject— of the "free adjuncts". The later constructions, in turn, are defined as "nonfinite phrases which are adjoined to phrases in such a way that the free adjunct modifies the clause in an adverbial function" —cf. Beukema (1982:71). Given that the omission of the complementizer is not conceived as a relevant property of free adjuncts, Beukema's classification does not exclude examples such as those in (3), in which an overt subordinating particle appears:

(3) a. I got soaked, (*while*) sailing across the estuary

     b. He wrote this poem *while* drunk

     [apud Beukema (1982)]

In short, the two definitions sketched above do not overlap. As for Spanish, notice that the choice between the first criterion and the second one yields different results regarding the analysis of the adverbial infinitive clauses in (4).[2] Thus, if Stump's definition is adopted, these examples and ACs cannot be clustered together, since the infinitives —contrary to both gerunds and participles— should be preceded by a subordinating element (from now on we use the convention (...)* instead of *(...) to mean 'ungrammatical without the parenthesized part' when these parenthesis comes at the beginning):

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(4) a. *(Después de)**   hablar el presidente, todos aplaudieron

          (After of)   to-speak the president, all clapped

          'When the president had spoken, everybody clapped'

    b. *(Al)**   salir el sol, se pusieron en camino

          To-the to-rise the sun, *se* put-they in way

          'At sunrise, they set off'

    c. *(Con)**   ser Juan rico, vive miserablemente

          (With) to-be J. rich, lives miserably

          'Although Juan is rich, he lives squalidly'

    d. *(De)**   seguir las cosas así, nos arruinaremos

          (From)   to-continue the things so, ourselves will-ruin

          'If things go on like that, we will go bankrupt'

(5) a. (*De) cantando la Caballé, el teatro se llenará

          (From) singing the Caballé, the theater *se* will-fill

          'If Caballé sings, the theater will fill up'

    b. (*Por) habiendo demostrado el domador su valentía, los espectadores aplaudieron

          (For) having proved the tamer his courage, the audience clapped

          entusiasmados

          enthusiastic

          'The tamer having proved his courage, the audience clapped with enthusiasm'

(6) a. (*Sin) leída la sentencia, el juez se retiró

          (Without) read-*ptp* the sentence, the judge *se* retired

          '(Without) having read the sentence, the judge retired'

    b. (*Por) efectuado el examen, los alumnos respiraron

          (For) effected the exam, the students breathed

          'Having finished the exam, the students breathed'

In this work we will take for granted —in line with Beukema's approach— that the most relevant property of ACs consists in including an overt subject NP. However, we will follow

Stump's main assumption that complementizers never emerge in this kind of constructions. Putting aside for the moment the question about the definitive format that the definition of ACs must adopt, let us consider a salient peculiarity of such constructions, namely the heterogeneous nature of their predicates. Notice that, besides participles and gerunds, adjectives can also head an AC, as in (7)-(8):

(7) a. Limpias las armas...

         Clean the weapons

         'Once the weapons clean...'

     b. Llenos los requisitos legales...

         Full the requirements legal

         'Once the legal requirements fulfilled...'

         [apud Bello (1874)]

(8) a. Hartos de estudiar los colegiales, la maestra decidió llevárselos al parque

         Fed-up of to-study the pupils, the teacher decided to-take-them-away to-the park

         'The pupils being fed-up with studying, the teacher decided to take them away to

         the park'

     b. Fija la mirada en sus hijos, Pedro tomaba el sol

         Fix the gaze on his children, P. was-taking the sun

         'His eyes fixed on his children, Pedro was basking in the sun'

     c. (Una vez) llena la sala, era casi imposible respirar

         (Once) full the lounge, it-was nearly impossible to breathe

         'Once the lounge was full, it was nearly impossible to breathe'

     d. Tenso el gesto, el gato nos observaba desde la silla[3]

         Tense the posture, the cat us observed from the chair

         'In a tense attitude, the cat stared at us from the chair'

In view of such data, it could be argued that this is so because the adjectives *limpias* 'clean', *llenos* 'full', etc., being the 'strong' forms[4] corresponding to the regular participles *limpiadas*

'cleaned' and *llenados* 'filled', respectively, behave in a sense as true participles; hence they are allowed to head an AC. Note, however, that this conjecture is not borne out by the examples in (9) and (10), which show that both adverbs and PPs can also play the role of a predicate in ACs:

(9) a. Así las cosas, el Gobierno decretó el estado de excepción

So the things, the Government decreed the state of emergency

'Things being like that, the Government decreed the state of emergency'

b. Lejos los buques, la población isleña pudo regresar a sus casas

Far-away the ships, the population insular could return to their houses

'Once the ships were away, the insular population could return back home'

[apud Gutiérrez (1985)]

(10) a. En malas condiciones las conservas, las intoxicaciones se sucedieron durante varios

In bad condition the canned-food, the intoxications *se* followed during several

días

days

'The canned food being in bad condition, poisoning went on for several days'

b. Bajo mínimos el aeropuerto, es casi imposible aterrizar

Below minimums the airport, it-is almost impossible to land

'The airport being below minimum safety-conditions, it is almost impossible to land'

c. Fuera del alcance de los radares los aviones, las incursiones aéreas resultaron

Out of-the scope of the radars the planes, the air raids resulted

devastadoras

devastating

'Planes being beyond the scope of the radars, the air raids were devastating'

On the basis of the analysis just outlined, we will proceed to summarize the main formal properties of ACs:

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(i) ACs are not lexically selected by the predicate of the clause they modify.

(ii) They adopt an adverbial interpretation which does not correlate with any overt complementizer.

(iii) They have a lexical NP subject, coreferent or not with a NP in the main clause.

(iv) They are headed by an heterogeneous class of predicates, ranging from non finite verbal forms to adjectives, adverbs, and PPs.

As has been underlined by many grammarians in their account of ACs, a further property may be added to the inventory illustrated in (i)-(iv), namely intonation: ACs, indeed, are cut off from the remaining part of the sentence with a melodic inflection. Nevertheless, such a phenomenon is by no means exclusive of these constructions. Observe that both adjectives and participles can also be separated from the context by a pause although they are not ACs, as shown in (11):

(11) a. La rueda de prensa, convocada a las tres, empezó con una hora de retraso

          The press conference, summoned at three, started with one hour of retard

          'The press conference, which had been summoned at 3 pm, started one hour late'

      b. Temblorosa y taciturna, la mendiga pedía limosna

          Trembling and taciturn, the beggar asked-for alms

      c. La vendedora, amable y jovial, regalaba caramelos a los niños

          The saleswoman, kind and cheerful, gave sweets to the children

Despite the fact that the examples in (11) and ACs pattern alike from the melodic point of view, a vast array of differences can be drawn between both sorts of constructions, which we summarize below:

1) The so-called 'incidental'[5] adjectives (and participles) in (11), contrary to ACs, are connected to an NP in the matrix clause, as the agreement holding between *temblorosa* 'trembling-*fem* '/ *taciturna* 'taciturn-*fem* ' and *la mendiga* 'the beggar-*fem* 'in (11b), etc. shows.

2) While ACs may correlate with a parallel clause involving an incidental adjective, the opposite situation is not always allowed, as the contrast between (12a) and (12b) illustrates:

(12) a.   Convocada la rueda de prensa a las tres, los periodistas tuvieron

Summoned the press conference at three, the reporters had

que alterar su agenda de trabajo

to   alter   their   agenda

'The press conference having been summoned at three o'clock, the reporters had

to alter their agenda'

b.   *Amable y jovial la vendedora, regalaba caramelos a los niños

Kind and cheerful the saleswoman, she-gave sweets to the children

3) Incidental adjectives have a neutral semantic interpretation closely related to that of non-restrictive relatives. Thus, the examples in (13), where an adverbial subordinate clause appears as a substitute for the incidental adjectives in (11b) and (11c), cannot be understood as paraphrases of the latter examples:

(13) a.   #??La mendiga, por estar temblorosa y taciturna, pedía limosna

The beggar, for to-be trembling and taciturn, asked-for alms

'The beggar, because she was trembling and taciturn, asked for alms'

b.   #??La vendedora, una vez amable y jovial, regalaba caramelos a los niños

The saleswoman, once (she was) kind and cheerful, gave sweets to the children

Seemingly, although the incidental predicate in (11a) is a participle, it has a depictive interpretation rather than an adverbial one, contrary to what happens in (12a). This is illustrated in (14a) and (14b), respectively:

(14) a. La rueda de prensa, que había sido convocada a las tres, empezó con una hora de

The press conference, which had been summoned at three, started one hour

retraso

late

b. Una vez que / puesto que la rueda de prensa fue convocada a las tres, los

Once that / given that the press conference was summoned at three, the

periodistas tuvieron que alterar su agenda de trabajo

reporters had to alter their agenda

'Once/since the press conference was summoned at three, the reporters had to

alter their agenda'

4) Finally, a further salient difference holding between ACs and incidental adjectives concerns the semantic inferences of both kinds of constructions. As has been pointed out by Stump (1985:21-22),

"It is not absolutely clear that inferences regarding the logical role of a nonrestrictive

relative clause or a coordinate clause have precisely the same status as those pertaining

to the role played by a free adjunct or absolute".

Empirical evidence supporting this claim is provided by the contrast in (15):

(15) a. Esta lavadora, que es alemana, es muy sólida

This washing machine, which is German, is very solid

b. Esta lavadora, siendo alemana, es muy sólida

This washing machine, being German, is very solid

According to Stump, the causal connection between 'to be solid' and 'to be German' is merely suggested in the case of (15a); in contrast, an utterance of (15b) "apparently constitutes an assertion of the causal connection".

Having stated the general properties of ACs, in the next section we will proceed to take into consideration the problem of Case assignment to the subject NP.

2. Case Assignment in Absolute Constructions

As has been noted above, an interesting issue raised by ACs concerns the heterogeneous nature of their predicates. In fact, this phenomenon can be easily explained on the assumption that predicates, according to familiar suggestions in the literature, are "semantic entities that need not have any particular syntactic characteristics" (cf. Napoli (1989:6)). However, the crucial point to take into account from a syntactic point of view is that ACs can be headed, besides non finite verbal forms, by lexical categories —adjectives, prepositions, adverbs— which, although capable of assigning a thematic role to an external argument, cannot license a subject NP. As known, the conditions licensing a subject NP are provided by a functional 'architecture' (i.e., the head INFL) rich enough to assign nominative case. Such a requirement fails in ACs, since non finite verbal forms are morphologically defective in that they lack temporal and agreement morphemes. The same situation arises with regard to non verbal predicates (adjectives, adverbs and PPs): these items, as has been suggested in Stowell (1983:291), are similar to the INFL node of non finite verbal forms in that they cannot assign case to their subjects. Moreover, given that the ungoverned nature of ACs prohibits case assignment from an external position —contrary to what happens in the case of small clauses—, one is forced to conclude that the licensing of NP subject in such constructions is only available by means of exceptional mechanisms.

The problem sketched out above has attracted the attention of many linguists, and several approaches have been formulated in order to solve it, specially in the case of ACs headed either by non finite verbal forms or by the preposition *with* [6] [cf. (1b), (2b), (4)-(6), and (1c), (2c), respectively]. All of them are addressed, obviously, to answer the following question: how is nominative case made available in non canonical predication domains, that is, domains which

lack temporal and agreement morphemes? These approaches, which we will not attempt to consider here in detail, fall into three groups:

1. The hypothesis of *Abstract Agreement*, proposed in Reuland (1983). This author claims that NP-*ing* constructions are "tenseless finite clauses" containing an abstract AGR marker associated with the inflected morpheme -*ing*, which lacks the pronominal features supplied by AGR:

(16)   [-tense, + AG] ---> -ing   [apud Reuland (1983:127)]

Such a marker has nominative case if ungoverned[7], and transmits it to the subject NP just like any other AGR. Hence, the internal structure of ACs would have the following format:

(17)...[s' [s NP [INFL [AGR   -ing   ]] [VP ...]]]
$$+ \text{nominative}$$
[apud Reuland (1983:128)]

Reuland's approach raises several difficulties when applied to ACs in Spanish. To start with, it remains unclear how his claim concerning the status of -*ing* can be extended to the inflected morheme -*do* of past participles. Moreover, such a stipulation is by no means applicable to predicative non verbal heads that often emerge in ACs in Spanish as well as in English. In other words, Reuland's strategy fails to case mark the NPs in italics in (18); the same problem arises in English examples illustrated in (19), as Beukema (1982) has pointed out:

(18)   a.   Muerto *el perro*, se acabó la rabia

              Dead the dog, *se* finished the rabies

              'Once the dog is dead, the rabies is over'

(18) b.   En baja forma *las nadadoras alemanas*, las medallas fueron para las americanas

In low shape the German swimmers, the medals were for the Americans.

'The German swimmers being in a bad shape, the medals were for the Americans'

c.   Exhaustos *los excursionistas* después de la larga caminata, se retiraron a descansar

Exhausted the hikers after the long walk, they went off for a rest

'Exhausted after the long walk, the hikers went off for a rest'

(19) a.   *Their father* dead...

b.   *Her husband* a professor...

c.   *The meeting* in uproar...

[apud Beukema (1982:81)]

Secondly, the assumption of such an "unfalsifiable" rule -cf. Stump (1985:38)- gives rise to non trivial questions concerning the interface between morphology and syntax in GB framework. Notice that as a matter of fact, given a rule as (16), the fundamental properties distinguishing *-ing* ACs and Portuguese inflected infinitives turn out to be unclear.

Third, Reuland's analysis cannot account for the fact that the order displayed by the constituents of Spanish ACs is *Predicate - NP*. Such an order, contrary to what happens in English or French, is mandatory in languages like Spanish, Catalan or Italian, which belong to the Null Subject Parameter. Thus, given the assumption discussed above that an abstract element in INFL is responsible for case marking the subject NP, the ungrammaticality of the examples in (20), in sharp contrast to the wellformedness of (19), would entail that case assignment takes place in a diferent way than in (17), where the NP remains 'in situ':

(20) a.   *El perro muerto, se acabó la rabia

The dog dead, *se* finished the rabies

(20) b. *Los excursionistas* exhaustos después de la larga caminata, se retiraron

      The hikers   exhausted   after the long   walk, they went off

      a descansar

      for a rest

  etc.

2. The second approach, which argues for a rule of *Aux-to-Comp*, differs from Reuland's analysis in that it suggests a direct connection between order inversion of the constituents in ACs and case assignment to their subject. As is well known, this hypothesis, which was put forward in Rizzi (1982), postulates —alongside the canonical process of Nominative Case marking, involving a structural frame [---- TENSE]— a special mechanism which raises Aux to COMP. This movement creates the appropriate context for Case-marking the lexical subject located after the auxiliary:

(21)   Assign Nominative Case to NP in the context Aux----

       [apud Rizzi (1982:87)]

Rizzi's proposal provides straightforward answers to some problematic questions raised by ACs. Notice that, under this account, we can be dispensed with an abstract AGR, Nominative case being assigned by an element closely related to INFL, i.e., the auxiliary. On the other hand, the exceptional status of a mechanism such as (21) correlates significantly with the phenomenon of inversion outlined above; hence, it turns out to be more adequate than Reuland's analysis in order to account for ACs in languages belonging to the Null Subject Parameter.

Despite the facts just mentioned, the generalization that Rizzi formulates has to face some crucial points involving ACs which remain open. Let us consider some of them in more detail. Notice, first, that Italian ACs follow the paradigm illustrated in (22)-(23):

(22) a. *(?)Mario avendo accettato di aiutarci, potremo risolvere il problema

Mario having accepted to help-us, we'll-be-able to-solve the problem

b. *Avendo* Mario *accettato* di aiutarci, potremo risolvere il problema

[apud Rizzi (1982)]

(23) a. *(?)Gianni essendo disposto ad aiutarci,...

Gianni being ready to help-us,...

b. *Essendo* Gianni *disposto* ad aiutarci,...

[apud Rizzi (1982)]

As has been noted above and is shown in these examples, ACs with a lexical subject in initial position are ruled out in Italian as well as in Spanish. However, in Spanish, contrary to Italian, subjects cannot be as a rule located between the auxiliary and the main verb:[8]

(24) a. *Habiendo resuelto* el juez absolver al acusado, el juicio concluyó sin incidentes

Having decided the judge to absolve the defendant, the trial ended without incidents

'The judge having decided to absolve the defendant, the trial ended without

incidents'

b. **Habiendo* el juez *resuelto* absolver al acusado, el juicio concluyó sin incidentes

(25) a. *Estando dispuesto* Juan a ayudarnos, los problemas serán mínimos

Being ready Juan to help-us, the problems will be minimal

'Juan being ready to help us, problems will be minimal'

b. ?*Estando* Juan *dispuesto* a ayudarnos, los problemas serán mínimos

These contrasts clearly indicate that the strategy involving *Aux-to-Comp* is incompatible with the distribution of the constituents in Spanish ACs. Possibly, this is due to the weakness of *haber* (and, to a certain extent, of *estar*) as far as government is concerned.

A further difficulty for the *Aux-to-Comp* analysis comes from ACs whose predicate is a single verbal form and not a compound one. Such a possibility, which (as far as we know) is not

explored in Rizzi's work, cannot be captured by the principle formulated in (21), neither in Spanish nor in Italian. In other words, since no auxiliary precedes the NPs in italics in (26), the way they receive Case remains unclear under Rizzi's analysis:

(26) a. Resolviendo *el juez* absolver al acusado...

          Deciding the judge to absolve the defendant...

      b. Dispuesto *Juan* a colaborar...

          Ready   Juan to collaborate...

Finally, a third problem should be mentioned. We have already noted that predicates emerging in ACs exhibit very heterogeneous syntactic characteristics. As a consequence, it turns out that in many cases the element preceding the subject NP is not an auxiliary verb. This entails a serious limitation concerning the scope of the rule stated in (21):

(27) a. *Furiosa* María con su marido...

          Furious María with her husband...

          'María being furious at her husband...'

      b. *Así* las cosas...

          So the things...

          'Things being like that...'

      c. *En estado de alerta* la población...

          In state of alert the population...

          'The population being in a state of alert...'

Indeed, as these examples show, adjectives ((27a)), as well as adverbs ((27b)) and PPs ((27c)) can play the role of a predicate in ACs: three categories which cannot be collapsed, obviously, into a single 'Aux' item.
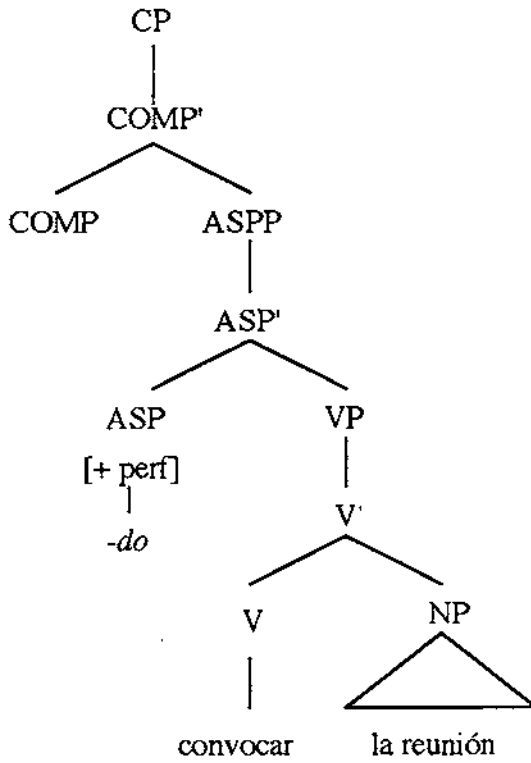
3. The third approach we will take into consideration was put forward by de Miguel (1990) in her analysis of Spanish absolute (past) participles. Following the assumption advocated in Pollock (1989) that both temporal and agreement features commonly associated to the category INFL should rather be seen as two independent functional heads, T(ense) and AGR(eement), de Miguel assumes that a further functional projection —headed by *aspect* — can be present in the clause. More precisely, she argues that absolute participle clauses are aspectual phrases projected from a head ASP(ect) taking the feature [+ perfective]. This is due to the perfective aspectual value of absolute participles as well as their lack of temporal features.

Departing from these assumptions, de Miguel proposes to derive absolute participle clauses through a mechanism that —to put it in an informal way— collapses both the strategy of *Aux-to-Comp* and Raposo's (1987) approach to Portuguese inflected infinitives. Her analysis can be summarized as follows. Consider (28), where the relevant part of the full clause structure is in italics:

(28)   *Convocada la reunión*, los políticos interrumpieron sus vacaciones

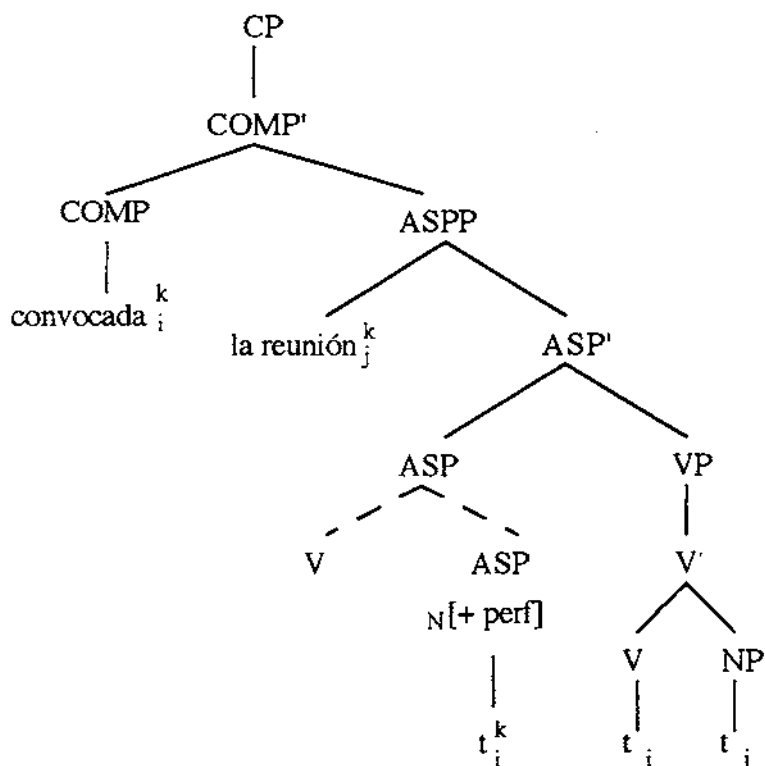Summmonned the meeting, the politicians suspended their holiday

The D-Structure representation of the AC in (28) looks, in its essentials, like (29):

(29)

```
                    CP
                    |
                  COMP'
                 /      \
              COMP      ASPP
                         |
                        ASP'
                       /     \
                    ASP       VP
                   [+ perf]    |
                     |         V'
                    -do       /   \
                             V     NP
                             |    /__\
                         convocar  la reunión
```

As shown in (29), the surface subject *la reunión* is generated as the object of the transitive verb *convocar*. At S-Structure, V raises to the ASP head to incorporate the aspectual suffix *-do* ; once this movement has taken place, the verb becomes a *nominal* agreement element (that is, it carries gender and number features but lacks those of person). From ASP position, the complex N[V-*do*] raises in turn to COMP. On the other hand, since the NP *la reunión* cannot receive Acusative Case under object position, it should move to the first available specifier node, namely the specifier of ASP. Hence, the resulting structure will be (30):

(30)

```
                        CP
                        |
                      COMP'
              _____/    _____
           COMP                    ASPP
            |                   ___/    \___
            | k           la reunión k      ASP'
        convocada i                j    ___/    \___
                                     ASP           VP
                                   _/ ^ \_          |
                                  V   ASP   V'      V'
                                   N[+ perf]      _/  \_
                                      |          V    NP
                                     t k         |     |
                                      i         t i   t j
```

[apud de Miguel (1990), p. 171]

Given the analysis sketched above, an answer to the following question has to be provided: how is Nominative Case assigned to subject NP in absolute participle constructions? Notice that, as the structures outlined in (29)-(30) lack both Tense and AGR nodes, there is no clear candidate suitable for this particular purpose. According to de Miguel's proposal, the verb, after being raised to COMP, governs ASPP and hence its head. As a consequence, the features associated to ASP, by virtue of being governed, become —on a par with nominal agreement— 'strong' enough to govern and assign Case:[9] indeed, the ASP head, once governed, will be coindexed with the subject NP located in the specifier position of ASPP by means of the familiar rule of Specifier-Head Agreement; that is, a mechanism similar to the one which has been advocated for in canonical Nominative Case assignment via AGR.

De Miguel's analysis is interesting as it tries to capture a phenomenon that is crucial under our conception of ACs, namely the relationship holding in them between Case marking and the aspectual value of the past participle, syntactically instantiated as the functional projection

ASPP. As a minor remark about this linguist's hypothesis, it has to be said that her assumptions concerning the main factor triggering the movement of V to COMP — the necessity for the features in ASP to become, through government, strong enough to license a subject NP— might be reformulated in different terms, as we will see below.

Before developing the core of our analysis, it should be noted, however, that the proposal just sketched gives rise to some problems when extended to ACs non headed by a past participle. An important issue in this regard concerns (absolute) gerunds.[10] At first sight, these constructions look very similar to absolute participles, insofar as they preclude any sort of subordinating conjunction in COMP position. Nevertheless, they differ from participles in very significant ways, which we summarize immediately.

To start with, notice that gerunds, contrary to past participles, lack the aspectual feature [+perfective]. Therefore, while the former refer to durative situations, the latter imply that a given action is completed. Examples in (31a)-(31b) and their respective paraphrases in (32a)-(32b) illustrate the distinction just made:

(31) a. Jugando Juan al bridge, la partida se alargará

          Playing Juan to-the bridge, the game will-last-longer

          'With John playing bridge, the game will last for longer'

      b. Disputado el primer encuentro, la eliminatoria quedó decidida

          Contended the first match, the preliminary round remained decided

          'The first match having been played, the preliminary round was decided'

(32) a. *Si / dado que* Juan juega al bridge, la partida se alargará

          If / given that J. plays bridge, the game will-get-longer

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(32) b. *Una vez / después de* que se hubo disputado el primer encuentro, la eliminatoria

        Once /   after   that had been played the first match, the preliminary round

        quedó decidida

        reamained decided

        'Once / after the first match had been played, the preliminary round was

        decided off'

Secondly, it has to be noted that, as a consequence of their lacking gender, number and person morphemes, gerunds emerging in ACs cannot agree with a (subject) NP:

(33) *Jugando él / ella* al bridge...

      Playing he / she bridge...

This amounts to saying that little morphological evidence can be adduced in order to support a mechanism for licensing the subject NP parallel to the one that has been argued for with respect to absolute participles (i.e., the familiar rule of Specifier-Head Agreement).However, this difficulty might be dispensed with by assuming —with Belletti (1990)— that a sort of abstract agreement takes place in this case, due to the defective nature of the gerundival morphology. Recall, incidentally, that the same situation arises in infinitive clauses with an overt lexical subject (cf. exs. in (4)).
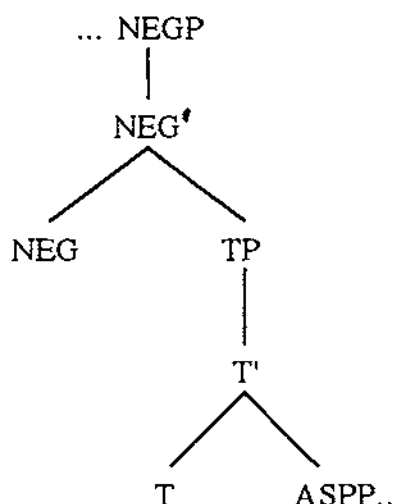
Finally, a third difference holding between gerunds and participles in ACs involves negation. Observe in this regard that only the former can be preceded by a negative particle:

(34) a. *No* diciendo María la verdad, se engaña a sí misma

        Not telling María the truth, *se* deceives to herself

        'In not telling the truth, Maria deceives herself'

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(34)   b.   *Ni siquiera* cantando la Caballé, se llenará el Liceo

Not even   singing the Caballé, will-fill-up the Liceo

'Even if Caballé sings there, the Liceo theater will not fill up'

(35)   a.   *No reunido el Congreso, el presidente renunció a su intervención

Not assembled the Parliament, the president gave-up to his intervention

'The Parliament not having been assembled, the president gave up his allocution'

      b.   *Ni convocada la rueda de prensa con antelación, los periodistas llegaron tarde

Not-even summoned the press conference in advance, the reporters arrived late

'In spite of the fact that the press conference had been summoned in advance,

the reporters arrived late'

If we assume, in line with Pollock (1989), that negative sentences can be analyzed as containing a negative phrase (NEGP) situated between the functional nodes AGRP and TP in their underlying representation, a straightforward explanation for the contrasts in (34)-(35) naturally suggests itself. As has been pointed out by Belletti (1990), negation should not be allowed to appear in absolute participle constructions because NEGP fills a position outside the node ASPP dominating such constructions. In contrast, the wellformed sentences in (34) seem to indicate that gerunds surface from deep representations projecting up to the node that NEG takes as its own complement, that is, TP. The relevant part of the structure is synthesized by the tree in (36):

(36)

```
        ... NEGP
           |
          NEG'
          /  \
        NEG    TP
                |
                T'
               / \
              T   ASPP..
```

Since a detailed analysis of gerunds is beyond the scope of this paper, we will not pursue this issue here. Let us put them aside and come back to ACs headed by a non verbal predicate illustrated in (7)-(10). As han been noticed above, these constructions share most of their general properties with verbal ACs. Moreover, they have the flavour of absolute past participles in that they take a perfective value. This being so, they are clear candidates to be explained following de Miguel's proposals. However, some difficulties arise in attempting to provide a unified account for both kinds of constructions. A crucial difference holding between them is that ACs headed by a non verbal predicate lack morphological aspectual marks such as -*do* or -*ndo*. According to de Miguel, who deals with the problem only marginally, clauses including adjectives like *contento* in (37), instead of ACs, should be merely considered 'adjective constructions':

(37)   Contento *él*, contentos todos

Happy he, happy everybody

'If he is happy, everybody is happy'

Actually this linguist, who follows in this respect a suggestion made in Belletti (1981) —cf. also Belletti (1990)—, does not clearly state what "adjective constructions" are meant to be, nor the way their subject receives case, specially when it shows up as a non pronominal NP.[11] On

the other hand, given the examples in (27b) and (27c), both 'adverb constructions' and 'PP constructions' should be added to the syntactic paradigm which encompasses "adjective constructions".

Summarizing, this section has been devoted to the discussion of one crucial problem involving ACs, namely the way their lexical subject is licensed. After a short look at different proposals which deal with this question, it is possible to conclude that, as far as Spanish is concerned, de Miguel's approach provides very interesting insights in this regard. Nevertheless, as has been formulated, it does not cover ACs headed by predicates other than past participles.

In the following section we will address the issue of the aspectual value of ACs in more detail, and we will try to show that ACs can be given an unified account regardless of whether they include a past participle or a non verbal predicate. According to our hypothesis, both kinds of constructions, despite their external differences, can receive an analysis involving a functional projection ASPP on the basis, crucially, of their common *perfective* aspectual value.

3. The Aspectual Value of Absolute Constructions

As is well known, what is traditionally called *aspect* refers to a broad array of facts, including "tense, morphological aspectual markers, adverbial expressions, lexical meaning of predicates, and the syntactic or semantic nature of their arguments" —cf. Tenny (1987:16). Given that aspect is a non unitary phenomenon, it should not be constrained to verbal morphology. In this work we will take for granted —in line with Tenny (1987), Bosque (1990) and de Miguel (1990), among others— that there is no sharp distinction between *aspect* 'sensu stricto' and *aktionsart*. As Bosque (1990:177) has pointed out, both notions are not as independent from each other as would appear in view of their respective definitions.

Turning back to ACs, let us focus, for the time being, on the cases in which an adjective heads these constructions. It could be argued that the ability of adjectives to play the role of a predicate

follows either from the feature [+ V] they take, or from their close link with the participles. However, such an approach is misleading, as can be shown in (38):

(38) a. *Franceses* los perfumes, las ventas se dispararon

          French the perfumes, the sales boomed

          'The perfumes being French, the sales boomed'

      b. *Tímido* Juan, no abrió la puerta

          Shy Juan, he did not open the door

          'Being shy, Juan did not open the door'

      c. *Interesante* el partido, todo el mundo estaba pendiente del televisor

          Interesting the match, everybody was hanging on the TV-set

          'The match being interesting, everybody was hanging on the TV-set'

Note that the illformedness of the examples in (38), which at first sight seem very close to those in (7) and (8) above, is by no means due to semantic factors. This can be proved on the basis of the following examples, where the adjectives in italics in (38) surface associated with a verbal form (tensed or untensed), the resulting sentence being grammatical:

(39) a. Dado que los perfumes eran franceses...

          Given that the perfumes were French...

      b. Siendo Juan tímido...

          Being Juan shy...

      c. Como el partido era interesante...

          As the match was interesting...

A careful look at the predicative adjectives emerging in (39) and in (7)-(8) —repeated here as (40)— clearly suggests that only the latter are closely related to participles, as has been observed by some grammarians —cf. Bello (1874:§ 1176); in other words, they belong to the set of so-called "perfective adjectives" (cf. Bosque (1990)):

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(40) a. Limpias las armas...

Clean the weapons...

b. Llenos los requisitos legales...

Fulfilled the legal requirements...

c. Hartos de estudiar los colegiales, la maestra decidió llevárselos al parque

Fed-up with studying the pupils, the teacher decided to take them away to the park

d. (Una vez) llena la sala, era casi imposible respirar

(Once) full the lounge, it was almost impossible to breathe

etc.

According to Bosque (1990), perfective adjectives (PVAs)[12] are lexical items connected both morphologically and semantically to participles: the morphological link comes from their respective roots, which are alike, while the semantic one follows from the fact that "they denote the result of actions or verbal processes ending up in a particular state" —cf. Bosque (1990:178-179). In order to account for such a connection, Bosque proposes deriving PVAs from related participles by means of a lexical morphology process which, so to say, inherits the event argument <e> selected by them.

The notion of *event argument* was proposed by Davidson (1967), who put forward the idea that ordinary predicates —in particular, action verbs— include, alongside the places assigned to the open arguments of the sentences where they appear, a position for 'events'. Events are individual entities that constitute an additional argument of the verb, thus belonging to its thematic grid. Furthermore, it can be stated that, from a semantic point of view, sentences in which an action is predicated involve an implicit existential quantification over events (cf. Higginbotham (1982)). Now, if we assume, in line with Bosque (1990), that PVAs include an event argument <e> in their thematic grid, the strong similarities arising between the examples in (40) and absolute participles can be easily attributed to the fact that both sort of constructions share an event argument.

On the basis of the data just discussed it could be argued that the examples in (38) are illformed because, adjectives such as *francés* 'French', *tímido* 'shy' and *interesante* 'interesting' not being derived from participles, they do not incorporate an event in their thematic grid. Notice that this conjecture, although correct, merely constitutes a rough approach to the problem, as the examples in (41) show:

(41)   a.   *Exhaustos* los excursionistas... [= (18c)]

Exhausted the hikers...

   b.   *Furiosa* María con su marido... [= (27a)]

Furious María at her husband...

   c.   *Lejano* ya el fantasma de la guerra, la recuperación económica será rápida

Far-away already the ghost of the war, the economic recovery will-be quick

   d.   *Temblorosa* María al saber lo ocurrido, pidió un tranquilizante

Shivering María at knowing the facts, she-asked for a tranquillizer

Despite the fact that the adjectives in italics in (41), unlike PVAs, do not come from past participles, these sentences have the flavour of ACs, and actually pattern with them. Hence, it turns out that PVAs and the class of adjectives taking an event argument do not overlap; rather, such items are subsumed under a broader set of adjectives. This amounts to saying that the selection of an event argument in the case of the adjectives which appear in (41), instead of being subject to morphological requirements, depends on semantic factors.

How can the aspectual nature of adjectives be accounted for in a more precise way? In Hernanz (1988) we have argued that most adjectives in Spanish fall under two classes according to the value they take with respect to the opposition [+/-perfective]. This opposition, in turn, can be interpreted in terms of the ability of adjectives to subcategorize for an event argument. The criterion we propose in order to check the aspectual value of adjectives is based on the distribution of *ser / estar* in Spanish: adjectives carrying the feature [-perfective] take *ser*, while

those which have a perfective reading, that is, 'perfective adjectives' (PAs), only allow *estar*.[13]

Notice, in this regard, the contrasts holding between (42) and (43):

(42) a. Los perfumes eran / *estaban franceses

        The perfumes ser_{past} /*estar*$_{past}$ French

    b. Juan es / ??está tímido

        J. ser_{pres} /*estar*$_{pres}$ shy

    c. El partido era / ?estaba interesante[14]

        The match ser_{past} /*estar*$_{pres}$ interesting

(43) a. Los excursionistas *eran / estaban exhaustos

        The hikers ser_{past} /*estar*$_{past}$ exhaust

    b. María *era / estaba furiosa

        M. ser_{past} /*estar*$_{past}$ furious

    c. El fantasma de la guerra *era / estaba lejano

        The war ghost ser_{past} /*estar*$_{past}$ far away

    d. María *era / estaba temblorosa

        M. ser_{past} /*estar*$_{past}$ shivering

Apart from their behaviour with respect to *ser / estar*, further pieces of evidence can be adduced —as has been pointed out by Bosque (1990) and Suñer (1990)— providing direct empirical support for the idea that adjectives differ as far as their aspectual value is concerned: their ability to be modified by aspectual adverbs such as *ya* 'already' or *completamente* 'completely', the occurrence of intensifier words like *bien* 'outright', etc. Note that the application of these tests, although it can give rise to some slight asymmetries between participles and PVAs on the one hand, and PAs, on the other, allows, nevertheless, to draw a sharp distinction between adjectives including an event argument <e> in their thematic structure and those lacking it:

(44) a. Limpias y *bien* limpias las armas...

Clean and well clean the weapons...

'The weapons being completely clean...'

b. *Completamente* hartos de estudiar los colegiales...

Completely fed-up of studying the pupils...

'The pupils being completely fed-up with studying...'

c. Llena *del todo* la sala...

Full entirely the lounge...

'The lounge being full to the top...'

d. *Totalmente* tenso el gesto...

Totally tense the attitude...

'In a totally tense attitude...'

(45) a. *Completamente* exhaustos los excursionistas...

Completely exhausted the hikers...

b. Furiosa *del todo* María con su marido...

Furious outright María with her husband...

c. Lejano *ya* el fantasma de la guerra...

Far-away already the ghost of the war...

d. *Medio* temblorosa María al saber lo ocurrido...

Half shivering María at knowing the facts...

(46) a. *Los perfumes eran *completamente* franceses

The perfumes were completely French

b. *Juan es tímido *del todo*

Juan is shy outright

c. *Interesante *ya* el partido...

Interesting already the match...

Besides the contrasts illustrated in (44)-(46), the analysis just outlined leaves some questions open. It could be argued, for instance, that participles and PVAs have a perfective interpretation

which looks 'stronger' than that of PAs. Note in this regard that adjectives like *furioso* 'furious', *exhausto* 'exhausted', etc., even taking *estar*, lack the resultative reading that PVAs such as *lleno* 'full' (< *llenar* 'to fill'), *limpio* 'clean' (< *limpiar* 'to clean'), etc. exhibit. This is shown in the examples in (47), where the inclusion of the aspectual particle *una vez* 'once' yields clear contrasts:

(47) a. ??Una vez exhaustos los excursionistas, se retiraron a descansar

Once exhausted the hikers, they withdrew to rest

b. ??Una vez furiosa María con su marido...

Once furious María at her husband...

c   Una vez limpias las armas...

Once clean the weapons...

d. Una vez llenos los requisitos legales...

Once fulfilled the legal requirements...

On the other hand, the examples in (48) suggest that PVAs do not behave, in turn, like true participles, as the former adopt a 'descriptive' reading while the latter disallow it:

(48) a. Fija / *fijada la mirada en sus hijos..

Fix / fixed the stare on his children

b. Tenso (# tensado) el arco...

tight (tightened) the bow...

A careful analysis of slight aspectual differences distinguishing participles from PVAs and PAs is beyond the scope of this paper. We will also put aside the relationship between these aspectual differences and the specific adverbial interpretation which ACs take. Returning now to the main issue of this section, we will claim, on the basis of the data just discussed, that the notion of *event argument* does not exclusively correlate with, so to say, a 'strict' *perfective* reading, that is, a perfective interpretation defined in terms of overt morphological evidence. As

we will see immediately, there are semantic properties concerning predicates heading ACs which themselves justify the postulation of an event <e> in their argumental structure.

In order to provide empirical support for the statement just made, we will depart from the distinction —formulated in Kratzer (1988)— between two classes of predicates: "stage-level predicates" and "individual-level predicates". As is well-known, the former express transitory properties, while the latter refer to individual characteristics, independent from spatiotemporal location. Thus, for instance, *to stand on a chair, to be angry / surprised, to be on / off form, to be on the alert*, etc. denote temporary properties or situations which last only for a (more or less) short time. In contrast, *to be intelligent / French / blonde, to be from Barcelona, to have long arms*, etc. express permanent properties lasting a boundless period of time. On the basis of these and other facts (which we will not discuss here), Kratzer argues that these two kinds of predicates differ regarding their thematic grid: stage-level predicates include an extra argument position for events while individual-level predicates lack this additional position.

Keeping in mind the approach advanced here, let us turn back to the analysis of ACs. According to our hypothesis, the licensing of such constructions is constrained by the aspectual nature of their predicate, which has to be marked as [+ perfective]. We have assumed as well that alongside items displaying an overt aspectual morphology, like past participles, there are other forms that can also be conceived as involving a perfective aspectual value, insofar as they select an event argument, namely the stage-level predicates. To put the issue at a more intuitive level, we argue that the licensing of a predicative structure implies, in the marked case illustrated by ACs, a 'flat' architecture, in which only part of the functional nodes of a full clause are projected. More precisely, ACs arise from deep representations containing an ASP node while lacking both TENSE and AGR. When a past participle shows up, the ASP node is associated to the morpheme -*do*, as has been noted by de Miguel (1990); in the absence of an overt aspectual morphology, it is the event argument <e> selected by the adjective playing a predicative role that is at the source of ASP, this node being the last resort to 'save' ACs.

The analysis sketched here crucially relies on the fact that, in temporally defective contexts like ACs, a subject-predicate relation can only be licensed if the item playing the role of the predicate takes a perfective value. As we will see below (cf. section 4), this requisite may be accounted for in a principled way on the assumption that some kind of 'aspectual agreement' holding between subject and predicate is at work in the constructions under discussion. For the time being, let us consider a last piece of evidence in support of the significance of aspectual factors in the syntactic behaviour of ACs. Notice the contrast illustrated in (49), where the relevant clauses are in italics:

(49) a. *Con el niño enfermo*, no se puede trabajar

With the child ill, not *se* can work

'With one's child ill, one cannot work'

b. *Con el niño rubio*, no se puede trabajar

With the child blond, not *se* can work

The examples in (49) sharply differ in that the former is interpreted as an AC with a conditional reading (i.e., 'If the child is ill...'), whereas the latter can only be paraphrased as an adverbial complement (i.e., 'In the company of the blond child...'). This contrast can easily be derived from the different aspectual value of both adjectives *enfermo* 'ill' (a stage-level predicate selecting an <e>), and *rubio* 'blond' (an individual-level predicate). Thus, since the adjective *enfermo* has a perfective value, it can project an ASP node; this possibility, however, is precluded in (49b) due to the [- perfective] feature selected by *rubio*. In view of such data, the question may now be raised whether the presence of a Case assigner, namely the preposition *con* 'with' in the examples illustrated above, constitutes itself a sufficient condition in order to license the subject NP, or some further requirement is at work. Note that if the first alternative is chosen, there is no natural way of ruling out (49b) in the relevant sense discussed here, that is, with an absolute reading.

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The analysis outlined above has focused on empirical evidence concerning adjectives. Notice, however, that an interesting prediction concerning the aspectual status of PPs and adverbs heading ACs follows from our hypothesis. Despite the heterogeneous nature of these elements, all of them share the common property of subcategorizing an event argument. If this requirement is not fulfilled, the ASP node cannot be projected, and therefore the resulting sentence will be ungrammatical. A carefull look at the data shows that this prediction holds true. Consider again (10) and (18b) —renumbered as (50)—, as well as (51):

(50) a. En malas condiciones las conservas...

In bad condition the canned food

b. Bajo mínimos el aeropuerto...

Below minimums the airport

c. Fuera del alcance de los radares los aviones...

Beyond the scope of the radars the planes

d. En baja forma las nadadoras alemanas...

In low shape the German swimmers

(51) a. (Una vez) en órbita el satélite...

(Once) in orbit the satellite

b. A cinco metros de la cima los alpinistas...

Five meters from the summit the alpinists

c. En perfecta formación los soldados...

In perfect formation the soldiers

Not unexpectedly, predicative PPs emerging in the ACs in (50)-(51) have similar characteristics to those exhibited by items taking an event argument: they cooccur with *estar*, allow aspectual adverbial modifiers, and refer to transitory properties. This is shown in (52):

(52) a. Las conservas *estaban* /*eran en malas condiciones

          The canned food was in bad condition

      b. El aeropuerto *está* /*es bajo mínimos

          The airport is below minimums

      c. *Totalmente* en baja forma las nadadoras alemanas...

          Completely off shape the german swimmers...

      d. *Ya* a cinco metros de la cima los alpinistas..

          Already five meters from the summit the alpinists

    etc.

The situation illustrated in (50)-(51) has no parallel in (53). Notice in this respect that the inability of the PPs *de buena familia* 'from a well-off family', *de plata* 'of silver', etc. to head an AC correlates significantly with the illformedness of the examples in (54):

(53) a. *De armas tomar la tía Julia...

          Of bad temper Aunt Julia

      b. *De buena familia Juan...

          From a well-off family Juan

      c. *De plata el collar...

          Of silver the necklace

    etc.

(54) a. La tía Julia *era* /*estaba de armas tomar

          Aunt Julia was bad tempered

      b. *Siendo Juan *completamente* de buena familia..

          Being Juan completely of well-off family

      c. *Una vez que el collar fue de plata...

          Once the necklace was of silver

A further piece of evidence supporting the hypothesis sketched here is provided by NPs, which, in contrast with other syntactic categories, rarely act as predicates in ACs. Putting aside the fact that NPs are arguments, this is so because of their non temporal nature. Consequently, such a property makes it impossible for them to include an event <e> in their thematic grid. It should be noted, nevertheless, that under relatively exceptional conditions NPs can also play the role of a predicate in ACs. The examples in (55)-(56) illustrate the scope of the phenomenon:

(55) a. *Presidente Felipe González, la situación del país cambió

President Felipe González, the situation of the country changed

'F. G. being the president, the situation of the country changed'

b. *Reina María, decidió actuar como tal

Queen María, she decided to act as such

'Being the queen, Maria decided to act as such'

(56) a. *Una vez* presidente Felipe González...

Once president Felipe González...

'Once F. G. has become president...'

b. Reina *por un día* María...

Queen for a day María...

'Being queen for a day, María...'

The contrasts adduced in these examples can be interpreted as follows: due to expressions such as *una vez* 'once', *por un día* 'for a day', *a la sazón* 'on that occasion', etc. the complexes *NP-NP* in (56) are endowed, to a certain extent, with a 'temporal' architecture capable of licensing a predicative link between both NPs. In other words, the expressions just quoted fulfill a function somewhat similar to that of the inflected morphemes adjoined to the copula in the sentences in (57):

(57) a. Felipe González es/era/fue/será presidente

'Felipe González is/was/will be a president'

b. María es/era/fue/será reina

'María is/was/will be a queen'

Summarizing, the discussion developed so far leads us to conclude that a systematic connection can be put forward between the at first sight heterogeneous nature of predicates heading ACs and a perfective aspectual value: such a value can surface either morphologically —by means of a non finite verbal form— or lexically, that is, through the, so to say, *aktionsart* of predicates selecting an event argument.

4. ASPP and Case-Marking

We have argued in the preceding section that the licensing of ACs is constrained by their aspectual value. As for the issue concerning the way the event argument <e> selected by the predicate is syntactically projected, we have assumed, following recent approaches formulated in Bosque (1990), de Miguel (1990) and Suñer (1990), among others, that an argumental structure including an event surfaces as an ASP(ectual) node. In other words, the event <e> projects until a functional node ASPP, exhibiting an internal structure similar to the one which has been postulated for the remaining syntactic categories within the X' theory. This amounts to saying that it is the event argument that licenses the projection ASPP. With this proposal in mind, let us move the core of the discussion in this section to the mechanisms which make it possible for subject NP of ACs to be governed and case-marked, as well as to the way such mechanisms interact with the ASPP node.

In section 2, when discussing Rizzi's and de Miguel's analysis, we have noted that both proposals —putting aside the important differences holding between them— share the assumption that a close connection has to be established in ACs between raising of the predicate (or the auxiliary verb) to COMP on the one hand, and government and case assignment of the

lexical subject NP, on the other.[15] Although our analysis is, to a large extent, compatible with such an assumption, we will propose, to conclude, a somewhat different approach. Specifically, we would like to suggest, in a preliminary way, that the well-known phenomenon of subject inversion in ACs can be conceived as not necessarily connected to government and Case assignment to the subject. In order to show in more detail how this hypothesis works, two requirements should be fulfilled. Firstly, an alternative explanation for raising of the predicate into COMP must be provided; secondly, it is necessary to elucidate which element within the projection headed by ASP governs and Case marks the inverted subject.

Before addressing both questions, some general considerations concerning the syntactic behaviour of ACs are in order here. To start with, note that predicate raising to COMP in ACs is closely linked to a peculiarity of these constructions which has been stated above (cf. section 1). Recall in this regard that ACs lack any sort of subordinating conjunction which overtly specifies the nature of the adverbial connection holding between them and the matrix clause they modify. Such a 'gap' obviously correlates with the fact that at the S-S level the structural space belonging to COMP is no longer available, as it has been filled by the raised predicate. As has been noticed by Belletti (1990), this assumption provides a natural explanation for the otherwise unclear phenomenon of ungrammaticality of both absolute gerunds in (5) and absolute past participles in (6) —renumbered as (58) and (59), respectively. At the same time, it draws a sharp difference between these constructions and the adverbial infinitives in (4) [= (60)], which, in contrast, allow a subordinating particle preceding them:

(58)   a.   (*De) cantando la Caballé...

              (From)   singing the Caballé

        b.   (*Por) habiendo demostrado el domador su valentía...

              (For) having proved the tamer his courage

(59)   a.   (*Sin) leída la sentencia, el juez se retiró

              (Without) read-ptp the sentence, the judge se retired

(59) b. (*Por) efectuado el examen, los alumnos respiraron[16]

(For) effected the exam, the students breathed

(60) a. (Después de)* hablar el presidente, todos aplaudieron

(After) to-speak the president, all clapped

b. (Al)* salir el sol, se pusieron en camino

(To-the) to-rise the sun, they set off

c. (Con)* ser Juan rico, vive miserablemente

(With) to-be J. rich, lives miserably

'Although Juan is rich, he lives squalidly'

d. (De)* seguir las cosas así, nos arruinaremos

(From) to-continue the things so, ourselves will-ruin

'If things go on like that, we will go bankrupt'

On the basis of such facts, an interesting possibility could be explored , that is, the absence of an overt subordinating conjunction in ACs is due to the fact that the raised predicate behaves to a certain extent as a complementizer. Appealing evidence in support of this supposition comes from some historical data concerning the development of ACs. As has been observed in Bello (1874:§ 1185ff) among others, the ACs in (61), which were fully grammatical in Old Spanish, are at the source of the examples in (62), where agreement between NP and *salvo* or *excepto* is no longer possible:

(61) a. *Salvos los niños, todo el mundo estaba cansado

Safe-*pl* the children, everybody was tired

'Except for the children, everybody was tired'

b. *Excepta María, todos se quedaron en casa

Except-*fem* María, all stayed at home

'Except for María, everybody stayed home'

(62) a. Salvo los niños...

b. Excepto María...

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Moreover, the close connection holding between raised predicates in ACs and complementizers receives additional confirmation from the fact that many adverbial complementizers in Spanish, as well as in other languages, derive from absolute past participles: *supuesto (que)* 'in case (that)'(< past participle of *suponer* 'to suppose'), *dado (que)* 'given (that)' (< past participle of *dar* 'to give'), *puesto (que)* 'since' (< past participle of *poner* 'to put'), etc.

Secondly, there are interesting pieces of evidence in favour of the idea that predicate raising to COMP in ACs can be conceived as a particular instance of a general phenomenon whose scope goes beyond government and Case marking of the subject. Consider the following examples:

(63)   a.   Si (*María*) tuviese (*María*) dinero, se compraría la casa

           If (María) had (María) money, *se*   would-buy the house

           'If María had the money, she would buy herself the house'

     b.   **María* tuviese dinero, se compraría la casa

           María   had   money, *se* would-buy the house

           = a

     c.   Tuviese *María* dinero, (y) se compraría la casa

           Had   Mary   money, (and) *se* would-buy the house

           = a

In these cases, as has been observed in Rizzi (1982), (1988) for similar examples in Italian and English, if the complementizer *si* 'if' is omitted, the resulting structure (i.e., (63b)) is ungrammatical, unless subject-verb inversion has applied, like in (63c). Given the acceptability of both alternatives illustrated in (63a) concerning the subject position,[17] the question may now be raised why inversion is the only available strategy for preserving the conditional reading of the sentence when conjunction *si* does not surface. A possible (informal) answer is that in (63c) the verb, once moved into COMP, 'absorbs', in a sense, the role played by *si* in (63a). Notice, on the other hand, that V-raising and hence subject inversion cannot be attributed to

government and Case marking requirements, since in the sentence under discussion (i.e.,(63c)) the verb, crucially, is inflected.

Finally, relevant data concerning the analysis of ACs come from French and English, where no subject inversion phenomenon takes place in such constructions, as is well-known:

(64)　a.　*Ceci* dit...

　　　　　This said...

　　　b.　*His father* being a sailor...　[= (1b)]

On the assumption that subject inversion applies because there is no internal Case assigner capable of licensing the subject of ACs, it appears to be a paradoxe that French or English, having a much weaker INFL than Null Subject languages, lack a strategy such as V-raising into COMP in order to provide the adequate context for subject government in these constructions. In other words, even if the familiar approaches accounting for Case marking of lexical subjects in ACs turn out to be true, there is no natural way to extend them in order to cover cases like those in (64). In contrast, our proposal, although not providing a straightforward solution to the problem under discussion, is open to explaining seemingly disparate properties exhibited by ACs in different languages.

Turning back to the mechanisms which trigger movement of the predicate into COMP, it seems plausible to assume that such mechanisms, given that the COMP node is an important axis of parametric variation, are related to non trivial aspects regarding differences between the behaviour of both Null Subject languages and English (or French). As far as English is concerned, clear evidence can be given in order to show that the nature of COMP exhibits sharp contrasts in this language with the corresponding node in Spanish:

(65)　a.　*When* (*while*) fighting in France, he was taken prisoner

　　　b.　*After* leaving Interstate 45, I noticed a sign...

(65) c. She looked pleadingly at her parents *as though* entreating forgiveness

[apud Stump (1985)]

(66) *While* drunk / at the beach / stranded in enemy territory, he was taken prisoner

[apud Stump (1985)]

As is illustrated in (65)-(66), there is no incompatibility in English, at least in structures close to ACs, between an overt complementizer and temporally defective domains. In contrast, such an incompatibility exists in Spanish:

(67) a. *Esta solución, *si* necesaria...

This solution, if necessary...

b. *Juan, *mientras* en baja forma...

Juan, while in low shape...

c. *Pedro, *cuando* luchando...

'Pedro, when fighting...'

etc.

In view of these facts, it may be argued that the COMP position is less temporally 'inert' in Spanish than in English; hence, it is capable of attracting either a non finite verbal form or a predicate selecting an event argument.[18] The core of this suggestion is related to a proposal made in Stowell (1982:563), according to which "the COMP position is where tense operators may appear, at some level of grammatical representation". Tense operators fix, in Stowell's words, "the understood time frame of the complement clause relative to the tense of the matrix". As well-known, the choice of the complementizer correlates with the temporal framework of the complement clause. Therefore, some mechanism is needed in order to capture the matching between complementizer and the tense operator type. Recall in this respect that ACs are defective in a double sense, as they lack both a complementizer and a TENSE node. In view of such facts, it could be conjectured that the only strategy in order to make 'visible' the internal temporality of the complement clause is V-raising into COMP, thus allowing ASP to take scope

over its clause operand. The same mechanism holds in the case of predicates selecting an event argument <e>, which is a variable (cf. Kratzer (1988)) and, as such, has to be bound by an operator, located in COMP.

The assumptions just made would allow us to capture a significant generalization involving ACs and the examples in (63) cited above. Observe in this regard that both kinds of constructions, while differing as for the mechanisms licensing the subject NP —recall that the latter contain an inflected verb—, share some kind of *temporal defectivity* : ACs lack the TENSE node, whereas the embedded verb in (63c) appears in subjunctive mood. Thus, it is this peculiarity and not government requirements that might be conceived as forcing the verb to move into COMP.

Having sketched the core of our proposal about the mechanisms triggering verb (or predicate) raising into COMP, we leave for further research its formulation in a more precise and formal way.[19] In any event, it should be said that the examples in (63) are by no means the only cases where a straightforward correspondence can be drawn between temporal defectivity and obligatory subject inversion in Spanish. The same holds true in complement clauses selected by verbs like *temer* 'to fear', *lamentar* 'to regret', *rogar* 'to beg', etc., which, crucially, demand subjunctive mood.[20] As has been noticed in Torrego (1983: 562), the possibility of omitting the complementizer *que* 'that' (at a somewhat formal level of speech) "correlates systematically with the absence of a phonetically realized subject before the verb".[21]

(68) a.   Lamento que (*María*) haya suspendido (*María*) el examen

           I-regret   that (María) has-*subj* failed   (María) the exam

      b.   Lamento haya suspendido *María* el examen

           I-regret   has*subj* failed   María   the exam'

      c.   *Lamento *María* haya suspendido el examen

           I-regret   María has-*subj* failed the exam

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Notice, again, that while the unacceptable version of (68) is directly ruled out due to the constraint just noted the reason why the verb moves into COMP in (68b) remains unclear in a large extent, under the classical assumption that raising is triggered by government requirements.
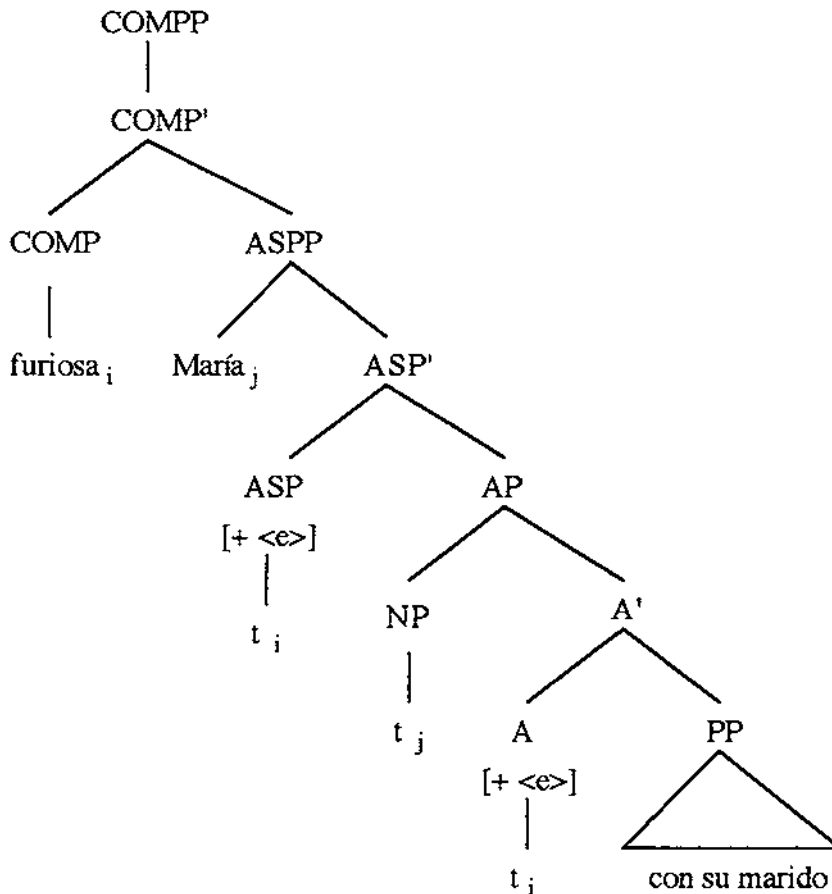
Other instances of the correlation we are arguing for are illustrated in the examples in (69), where the clause in italics has a concessive reading:

(69)   a.   *Diga lo que diga Juan*, nadie le va a creer

             Says-*subj* what .says-*subj* Juan, nobody is going to believe him

             'Whatever Juan says, nobody is going to believe him'

      b.   *Juan diga lo que diga, nadie le va a creer

             Juan says-*subj* what says-*subj*, nobody is going to believe him

      c.   *Estudie María poco o mucho*, difícilmente aprobará

             Studies-*subj* María little or much, unlikely will-pass

             However much Maria studies, she is unlikely to pass'

      d.   *María estudie poco o mucho, difícilmente aprobará

             Maria studies-*subj* little or much, unlikely will-pass

Let us now address the second question raised above, that is, which element, within the projection headed by ASP, governs and Case marks the inverted subject in ACs. We will assume that the candidate for governing and Case marking the subject is the head of ASPP, the ASP node. This analysis —illustrated in (70)— can be summarized as follows. The head of the predicate (instantiated in the example under discussion by an adjective phrase) raises to ASP° and from this position it moves, in turn, into COMP. As we have pointed out below, head-to-head movement applies because of the perfective aspectual valence of the predicate selecting an event argument; more precisely, it is the status of <e> as a variable that triggers this movement, the COMP position hosting the tense operator which fixes the temporal reference of the subordinate clause and attracts the variable <e> located under its scope.

The subject NP, on the other hand, since cannot be given Case in its D-S position within the small clause selected by ASP, raises to the first available specifier node, that is, the ASPP specifier, where Nominative Case will be assigned via the familiar rule of Specifier-Head Agreement. This is schematized in (70):

(70)

```
                    COMPP
                      |
                    COMP'
                   /      \
             COMP          ASPP
              |            /    \
           furiosa_i   María_j   ASP'
                               /      \
                            ASP        AP
                          [+ <e>]     /   \
                             |      NP      A'
                            t_i     |      /   \
                                   t_j   A      PP
                                       [+ <e>]  /\
                                         |     /__\
                                        t_i  con su marido
```

In view of such an analysis, it could be argued that the Specifier-Head Agreement rule advocated above for Case marking the subject NP in ACs lacks the necessary morphological support in cases where, as in (70), the ASP head has no overt aspectual marks. It should be said in this respect that the existence of syntactic phenomena that remain underspecified at the morphological level is a well-known fact in grammatical analysis. The discussion in depth of this issue, which directly concerns the interface between morphology and syntax, is open to further research. Following a recent suggestion made in Farkas (1990), it could be assumed that certain paradigmatic features (PFs) do not have syntagmatic feature (SF) counterparts. To

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be more precise, suppose that a PF ("a feature that determines the choice of an item from a paradigm"[22]) is invisible to agreement. Suppose as well that agreement, being a syntagmatic process, involves SFs. Departing from Farkas' assumption that a particular PF will be invisible with respect to agreement iff it does not have a SF counterpart,[23] we can conclude that the adjective *furiosa* in (70), which includes an event argument in its thematic grid, has the PF [+perfective] but it has no SF for aspect. In other words, we may stipulate that perfective adjectives (as well as perfective PPs or adverbs) are underspecified regarding aspect; hence the rule of Specifier-Head Agreement cannot be morphologically instantiated.

Alternatively, it could be assumed that some sort of default nominative Case is at work in the cases under discussion. Notice that such a mechanism is independently justified in order to account for aforisms, headlines, etc., which very often lack a copulative verb carrying both temporal and agreement morphemes. This is shown in (71):

(71)   a.   Perro ladrador, poco mordedor

           Dog   barker   little   biter

           'A dog that barks does not bite'

       b.   Un hombre, un voto

           One man,   one vote

       c.   El aeropuerto, bajo mínimos

           The airport,   below minimums

Further research is needed in order to formulate in a more precise way either alternative. At present, the choice between them must be left open.

5. Conclusions

In this work he have analyzed two central issues concerning the grammar of ACs in Spanish, namely the nature of the predicates heading such constructions, as well as the mechanisms which allow for the subject NP to be given Case. We have postulated that a common property can be assigned to every (non verbal) predicate emerging in ACs, that is, an event argument which is projected into an ASP node. As for Case-marking, evidence has been provided in order to dissociate this mechanism from predicate raising into COMP and, consequently, from subject inversion. Such a process, which in fact can be conceived as a different version of the familiar rule of 'Aux-to-Comp' (cf. Rizzi (1982)), namely as an instance of '<e>-to-Comp', takes place because the predicate selecting the variable <e> is attracted by the tense operator located in COMP. Thus, since the structural space corresponding to the COMP node is no longer available, no complementizer is allowed to fill this position in ACs. Concerning Case-marking of the subject NP, we have claimed that the aspectual perfective value of the predicate makes it possible for the Specifier-Head Agreement rule to apply, under some morphologically underspecified version.

Summarizing, the core idea developped in this work is that a strong connection should be postulated between temporality and Case-marking. It is the temporality —conceived in a wide sense which includes aspect— that makes it possible to provide a unified account for disparate categories ranging from non finite verbal forms to adjectives, PPs and adverbs, when used as predicates. Sligthly modifying Stowell's (1983) proposal regarding mechanisms which license "subjects across categories", it seems plausible to conclude that, as far as ACs are concerned, such mechanisms, rather than depending on an external Case assigner, are contingent on the functional structure (i.e., an ASP node) projected by the category behaving as a predicate.

Notes

[1] This statement obviously excludes absolute gerunds. Despite the fact that such constructions differ in very significant ways from absolute participles and other related constructions having a perfective aspectual value (cf. # 2), we assume that they all fall under the core proposal of this work concerning the nature of mechanisms which license overt subjects in temporaly defective domains (cf. # 4). Further research is needed in order to determine the precise format that the functional structure of ACs headed by a gerund must adopt.

[2] Spanish grammars usually exclude such constructions from the scope of ACs. This is shown in Alcina & Blecua (1975:884-5), where a sharp distinction is drawn between examples such as those in (4) and "absolute predicatives", which correspond to ACs in our terminology.

[3] We borrow the example in (8d) from Gutiérrez (1986:172).

[4] This class of adjectives, as we will see below, have a clear perfective value, 'inherited' from their link to regular participles:

(i)   limpio / limpiado   harto / hartado

        clean / cleaned   fed-up (*adj*) / fed-up (*ptp*)

(ii)   fijo / fijado   lleno / llenado

        fix / fixed   full / filled

        etc.

See Bosque (1990) for a more detailed analysis of these adjectives.

5 This term is used in Gutiérrez (1986:143).

6 In this paper we will not take into consideration ACs introduced by *con* 'with'. Cf. Suñer (1988) for a detailed analysis of these constructions in Spanish.

7 According to Reuland (1983:126ff), this condition accounts for the contrast between (ia) and (ib):

(i)   a.   John kept walking slowly, the rain drenching the road

        b.   *John kept walking slowly, while the rain drenching the road

8 As the examples in (24b) and (25b) show, *haber* 'to have' and *estar* 'to be' do not behave in an homogeneous way regarding the *Aux-to Comp* rule. This may be due to the fact that the former auxiliary, contrary to *avere* in Italian, has completely lost its originary meaning, while the latter still keeps its locative value. Hence, it could be argued that it is the lexical weakness of *haber* that precludes it from governing and Case-marking the subject NP in ACs.

Catalan provides a further piece of evidence giving support to this conjecture. Notice that in this language, which has a much more restrictive use of non copulative *estar*, the examples parallel to (25b) are clearly marginal:

(i)   a.   ??*Estant*   en Joan *disposat* a ajudar-nos...

              estar-ger the Joan ready   to help-us

              Joan being ready to help us...

        b.   *Estant*   *disposat* en Joan a ajudar-nos...

              estar -ger ready the Joan to help-us

[9] Raposo (1987:92), formulates the mechanism of Case assignment in Portuguese inflected infinitives in the following way:

"In absence of [+ Tense], Infl (or Agr in Infl) is capable of assigning nominative Case to a lexical subject only if it is itself specified for Case".

[10] We will not explore here whether both infinitive clauses with an overt subject —see the examples in (4)— and ACS can be given a unified account. In fact, the former structures differ from the latter in very significant ways which we will not attempt to investigate in this work. Concerning this question, cf. Fernández Lagunilla (1987) and Rigau (1991), among others.

[11] According to de Miguel (1990:180-181), *él* can be analysed in (37) as a contrastive pronoun which, being located in a non argumental position, does not need Case. Notice that, on this assumption, there is no natural way to explain how the NP *Juan* gets Case in (i):

(i)   Contento *Juan*, contentos todos
        Happy   Juan, happy   all
        'If Juan is happy, everybody is happy'

[12] We label this class of adjectives as 'perfective verbal adjectives' (PVAs) in order to distinguish them from 'perfective adjectives' (PAs), that is, adjectives which, although not derived from participles, take a perfective value. See the discussion below.

[13] Needless to say, some adjectives, being neutral for their inherent aspectual valence, allow both *ser* and *estar* in Spanish. Thus, they are situated between the two opposite poles of the scale. See Hernanz (1988).

[14] It should be said that some of the adjectives marked with the feature [-perfective] can appear with *estar* in the appropriate context. Since these differences are not relevant for our analysis, we will not pursue the issue here (cf. Hernanz (1988)).

[15] See Belletti (1990) for a somewhat revised version of Rizzi's (1982) analysis.

[16] On the basis of the examples in (i), it should be argued that absolute past participles allow overt complementizers:

(i) a. *Una vez* leída   la sentencia, el juez se retiró

 Once   read-*ptp* the sentence, the judge retired

 b. *Después de* efectuado el examen, los alumnos respiraron

 After   carried-out the exam, the students breathed

Notice, however, that —as the illformedness of the examples in (59) shows— such a possibility is exclusively limited to items having a temporal or aspectual value. In view of such data, it may be assumed that the particles in italics in (i), rather than filling the structural space corresponding to COMP, are a sort of temporal or aspectual intensifiers located in an adjunct position.

[17] Both alternatives are allowed since Spanish is a Null Subject Language.

[18] Consider, in this regard, the following examples adduced in Bosque (1990:204):

(i) a. Antes de terminada la película...

 Before of ended the film

 'Before the film ends/ended...'

(i)   b.   Hasta muy avanzado el verano...

Until very advanced the summer

'Until well into summer...'

c.   Después de muerto...

After   dead

'After (s)he dies/died...'

(ii)   a.   *Antes de limpia la sala...

Before   clean the lounge

'Before the lounge is/was clean'

b.   *Hasta muy enfermo su abuelo...

Until very ill   his grandfather

'Until his father is/was quite ill...'

c.   *Después de descalzo...

After   barefoot

'After having taken off his/her shoes...'

Notice that the contrasts between (i) and (ii) correlate in a significant way with the different aspectual status of participles (*terminada, avanzado*, etc.) and perfective verbal adjectives (*limpia, descalzo*, etc.), respectively (cf. section 3).

[19] PPs behaving as predicates in ACs —cf. the examples in (50)-(51)— raise an obvious problem for our analysis, given that the whole projection rather than P moves into COMP. On the basis of some significant facts whose analysis we will not pursue here, we could assume some kind of incorporation process holding between P and its complement NP. Notice, in this regard, that no article is allowed to appear within the NP:

(i)   a.   *En las malas condiciones las conservas...

In the bad condition   the canned food

(i)   b.   *Bajo los mínimos el aeropuerto...

Below the minimums the airport

[20] According to Torrego (1983), "*que* -deletion" in Spanish, contrary to Italian, is not restricted to subjunctive complements. However, as this linguist notes, "given the stylistically marked character of this construction, acceptability judgments are necessarily subtle". It should be said, on the other hand, that the examples she gives in which subjunctive does not appear are constructed, significantly, either in future or in conditional. I will not pursue this issue here.

[21] Concerning the omission of Italian complementizer *che* 'that', see Rizzi (1982). On the fact that the possibility of subject inversion involves the 'selected/non selected' distinction, cf. Rizzi & Roberts (1989).

[22] Cf. Farkas (1990:544).

[23] An interesting contrast in Spanish providing empirical support to Farkas's approach is adduced in Bosque (1985):

(i)   a.   Pedro y María coinciden *el uno   con   el otro*

Pedro and María agree the one-*masc* with the other-*masc*

Pedro and María agree with each other

        b.   *Pedro y María coinciden *el uno   con   la otra*

Pedro and María agree the one-*masc* with the other-*fem*

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