
The distribution and licensing of *-ra* in Eonavian Spanish: A nanosyntactic analysis^{*}

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Abstract

The imperfect subjunctive form *-ra* found in the variety of Spanish spoken between the Eo and Navia rivers in Asturias has not only the modal value observed in Standard Peninsular Spanish (*Ojalá lloviera* ‘I wish it rained’), but it may also carry temporal values such as pluperfect (*Cuando llegué yo, Ana ya saliera* ‘by the time I arrived, Ana had already left’) and simple past (*(Las flores) me las regalara mi abuela* ‘(the flowers) my grandmother gave them to me’). This paper offers a tentative formal analysis of the licensing conditions of *-ra* in affirmative contexts in this variety, using the nanosyntactic framework (Starke 2005). The hypothesis based on features is presented in combination with Ojea’s (2005) work on assertiveness and mood selection: two main factors, a syntactic (subordination) and a semantic (level of assertiveness) one, are examined to identify the number and order of features, as well as their semantic value (modal, pluperfect, and deictic). Evidence from spontaneous speech as well as data from an online survey completed by 45 Eonavians conform the empirical basis of the study. The analysis predicts that the difference between Standard and Eonavian Spanish follows from the number of features that *-ra* lexicalizes in each variety, as illustrated in concrete examples.

Keywords: Nanosyntax; subjunctive; modality; deixis; Eonavian Spanish.

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1. Introduction

The conditions and contexts that determine the distribution of moods in Spanish have been studied exhaustively in several works over the past few years (Bosque 1990, Suñer 1990, Alcoba Rueda 1995, Laca 2010, among many others). All of them aimed at establishing a theory of grammatical modality that would be able to (i) identify the features which determine the presence of each morphosyntactic mood in those languages that have more than one and (ii) explain their distribution. This paper approaches these issues by focusing on the *-ra* form of the so-called imperfect subjunctive (*amara*) in a particular variety of Peninsular Spanish (see figures 1 & 2), spoken between the Eo and Navia rivers in Asturias (henceforth EoN).

Figure 1: EoN speaking area in Spain



Figure 2: EoN speaking area in Asturias



This form appears not only in typically subjunctive contexts, where it freely alternates with the form *-se*, as in (1), but also in other contexts in which an indicative will be expected in Standard Spanish, either in the form of a pluperfect (2) or a preterite (3):

- (1) Ojalá lloviera(~lloviese).
 hopefully rain.3sg-*ra*¹
 ‘I wish it rained’

¹ The *-ra/-se* is assumed to be the form of the “imperfect subjunctive” in Spanish. That being said, I chose to gloss it in this fashion to be neutral as to what interpretation it may have: subjunctive, pluperfect, or preterite.

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- (2) Cuando llegué yo, Ana ya saliera. (Standard: *había salido*)
when arrive.PRET.1sg I Ana already leave.3sg-*ra* had left
'By the time I arrived, Ana had already left'
- (3) (las flores) me las regalara mi abuela. (Standard: *regaló*)
the flowers 1sg. dat 3pl.acc offer.3sg-*ra* my grandmother offered
'(The flowers) my grandmother offered me'

This paper has two main goals: on the one hand, describe the use of *-ra* in affirmative contexts in EoN; on the other hand, present a preliminary, formal analysis in nanosyntactic terms that would account for the distribution of *-ra* in the aforementioned variety.

The work is divided as follows: first I will briefly review the diachrony of the form *-ra*, its origin, evolution, and present-day uses in Standard Peninsular Spanish and EoN. Section 2 introduces the use of *-ra* in affirmative contexts² in Standard Spanish, and in section 3 I present and discuss the results of a survey on the use of *-ra* in EoN. The fourth part, *Looking inside -ra: its structure in Nanosyntax*, has a more theoretical orientation and develops a hypothesis based on features that crucially relies on the nanosyntactic apparatus and Ojea's (2005) analysis of assertiveness and mood selection. The proposal can be summarized as follows: the degree of assertiveness and selection of mood in main clauses are both associated with a series of semantic values and syntactic features that will get lexicalized by means of a morpheme *-ra*, and the difference between the use of *-ra* in Standard Peninsular Spanish and EoN follows from the number of features that *-ra* lexicalizes in each variety. The final section is devoted to discuss unresolved issues and open questions related to the analysis.

1.1. Origin, evolution and present-day uses of -ra in Standard Spanish and EoN.

The form *-ra* comes from the Latin *amaveram*, originally used as a pluperfect ('to had loved'). Over time, *-ra* started to acquire typically subjunctive values in Spanish (Alcoba Rueda, 1995; Rojo y Veiga, 1999), thus becoming an alternate form to the etymological subjunctive *-se* (< Lat. *amavissem*). Nowadays, these two forms coexist in Standard Peninsular Spanish as well as in EoN (see 1 above), although in the latter there is a noticeable preference for the use of subjunctive *-se*. Unlike Standard Spanish, however, speakers of EoN still maintain the etymological use of *-ra* as a pluperfect (see 2 above), as it happens in Galician (Freixeiro Mato, 1998) and Portuguese (Mateus, 1989). The corresponding pluperfect form in Standard is the imperfect preterit form of the auxiliary verb *haber* followed by a participle: *habías comido* '(you) had eaten'. Also, it is possible in EoN to use *-ra* with a simple past interpretation, which I will be referring to as the "preterite" reading (see 3 above), as in (4):

- (4) Aquí comiéramos una vez. (Standard: *comimos*)
here eat.3pl-*ra* one time ate
'We ate here once'

² Thus, in this contribution I do not consider the polarity subjunctive controlled by negation.

The most accessible reading of (4) is the preterite, although it can also be interpreted as a pluperfect, equivalent to the Spanish *habíamos comido* ‘(we) had eaten’.

So far, three uses of *-ra* have been distinguished: (a) subjunctive, found in EoN and Standard, (b) pluperfect, and (c) preterite, the last two being absent from the Standard, and present in EoN.³

There is a crucial difference between the pluperfect (b) and the preterite (c) use: in the case of (b), *-ra* is the only form available in EoN to convey a pluperfect reading, which is in all equivalent to the indicative *había ...-do* in Standard; in (c), however, the situation is different: EoN has two forms to express the temporal value “preterite” (e.g. *I ate*), which are 1. the simple past indicative form *comí* and 2. the *-ra* form *comiera*. The former is the most natural way of expressing a temporal preterite in EoN, as it is in Standard. Also, given that EoN lacks the present perfect form *he comido* ‘I have eaten’, speakers of this variety use the simple past instead. By contrast, the use of *-ra* as a preterite is only grammatical under certain conditions that go beyond the scope of this paper (Jardón, *in preparation*).

Table 1: Uses/readings of *-ra* in Standard Peninsular Spanish and EoN

Use/reading	Standard	EoN
<i>Subjunctive</i>	cantara~cantase	(cantara)~cantase
<i>Pluperfect (etymological)</i>	había cantado	cantara
<i>Preterite (simple past)</i>	Canté	cantara/ canté
<i>Present Perfect</i>	he cantado	canté/tengo cantado

2. The use of (Standard) *-ra* in affirmative contexts

As already mentioned in the *Introduction*, many studies have been published addressing the issue of selection and distribution of mood in Spanish (Bosque, 1990; Suñer, 1990; Quer, 2001; Laca, 2010; Fábregas, 2014; Demonte, 2015; among others). There is a general consensus in the literature as to the fact that mood selection in subordination is somehow conditioned by the non-assertiveness of the matrix predicate:

(5) Verbs of obligation, will and desire:
 Deseaba que se fuera.
 wish.IMPERF.1sg that SE leave.3sg-*ra*
 ‘I was wishing that (s/he) would leave’

(6) Verbs of influence:
 Le exigió que contestara a las preguntas.
 3sg.dat demand.PRET.3sg that answer.3sg-*ra* to the questions
 ‘(S/he_i) demanded that (s/he_j) answered the questions’

³ As an anonymous reviewer points out, temporal uses of *-ra* are attested in some cases in Standard: *El que fuera primer ministro...* See examples (8-11) and discussion.

- (7) Purpose clauses:
Se quedó para que estuvieras tranquilo.
SE stay.PRET.3sg for that be.2sg-*ra* calm
'(S/he) stayed so that you be calm'

Also, certain temporal subordinators can select a subjunctive *-ra* (8), although there are cases (Fábregas, 2014: 41) where this form can alternate with an indicative form (9). It is important to point out that in these cases the form *-se* can be used instead of *-ra*, confirming that we are still dealing with a "subjunctive".

- (8) Nos fuimos después de que {llegaran~llegasen}.
1pl.pron leave.PRET.1pl after of that arrive.3pl-*ra*~arrive.3pl-*se*
'We left after (they) arrived'

- (9) Nos fuimos después de que
1pl.pron leave.PRET.3pl after of that
{?intentaron / intentaran~intentasen} agredirnos.
try.PRET.3pl try.3pl-*ra*~*se* assault.1pl.acc.
'We left after (they) tried to assault us'

Unlike other subjunctives, this Standard *-ra* extends to "quasi-lexicalized" temporal expressions such as (10), where it cannot be substituted by *-se* anymore, and also to journalese (11) inside subordinate relative clauses. Sentences like (11) in principle would not work with *-se*, although the phenomenon is becoming more and more widespread.

- (10) Pudiera (*pudiese) ser cierto lo que dices.
can.3sg-*ra* (*-*se*) be true pron.3sg.acc that say.2sg
Lit. '(it) could be true what you say'

- (11) Ha muerto el que fuera primer ministro durante la guerra.
aux.3sg died pron.3sg that be.3sg-*ra* prime minister during the war
Lit. '(he) has died the (man) who was prime minister during the war'

Apart from the limited uses exemplified in (10) and (11), *-ra* in Standard Spanish seems to be only legitimated as a subjunctive: only the non-assertive predicates (i.e. those presupposing the truth of their complements), aka non-veridical (Demonte, 2015) like (12b), license the imperfect subjunctive *-ra*:

- (12) a. Le conté que {*aproba-ran~-sen / habían aprobado}
3sg.dat tell.PRET.1sg that pass.3pl-*ra*~-*se* aux.3pl passed
el examen.
the exam
'I told him/her that (they) had passed the exam'

- b. Se alegró de que {aprobaras~aprobases / ??aprobaste}
 SE be glad.PRET.3sg of that pass.2sg-*ra*~-*se* pass.PRET.2sg
 el examen.
 the exam
 ‘S/he was glad that you passed the exam’

3. *-ra* in EoN: The study

In view of the variety of syntactic contexts and temporal interpretations to which speakers of EoN seemed to associate the *-ra* form (see also Appendix II), I created an online questionnaire to investigate the distribution of *-ra* in EoN based on two factors:

- The degree of *syntactic independence* of the sentence containing *-ra*: main sentence, adverbial subordinate and nominal subordinate.
- The *degree of assertiveness* of the predicates containing *-ra*, following Hopper & Thompson’s (1973) classification.

Taking into account the data from spontaneous speech collected beforehand (Appendix II), the prediction for syntactic independence was that the form *-ra* would be licensed in all the three types; as for the other factor, assertiveness, the prediction was that non-assertive predicates such as *lamentar* ‘to regret’ would license the (subjunctive) *-ra* form both in EoN and Standard, and the assertive ones such as *contar* ‘to tell’, which force the indicative mood in their complements (Hopper, 1974; Sheehan & Hinzen, 2011; Demonte, 2015), would only license the (temporal, indicative) *-ra* in EoN in contrast to the Standard past perfect or preterite. In short, *-ra* would be licensed in EoN under predicates carrying any degree of assertiveness.⁴

3.1. Methodology

An online questionnaire was distributed among 45 EoN speakers with the following heading:

Figure 3: Introduction to the questionnaire, adapted from the original Spanish

How does it sound?

Welcome, and thank you for participating. You will now be presented with situations and a sentence in capital letters for each situation. Your task is to tell me how natural that sentence sounds to you (in scale 1 to 3: choose 3 if it sounds perfectly natural; choose 2 if it is a little strange but one might hear/say it; choose 1 if it sounds totally unnatural)

⁴ Crucially, as one reviewer observes, subjunctive is not licensed under assertive predicates in EoN Spanish: e.g. **Veo que ya acaben* ‘I see that they finish.subj’. If *-ra* is licensed in these contexts it is because of its temporal values in EoN.

The participants were then asked to provide the following information before the start of the test: place of birth (town), other places of residence (if any), and the age range (12-18, 18-25, 25-30, 30-45, 45-60, +60).⁵

A total of 9 sentences were tested in the questionnaire, as in Table 2 below. Due to space constraints, I do not reproduce here the complete list of situation types (see Appendix III), although one example is presented in (13):

(13) Context:

El otro día fui a una fiesta y me sorprendió ver a Marta, la que nunca sale de casa

‘I went to a party the other day and I was surprised to see Martha, who never goes out’.

Sentence:

ME DIJO QUE LA CONVENCIERAN SUS NUEVOS AMIGOS.

‘She told me that her new friends {convinced/ had convinced} her’

Table 2: Target sentences in the study

Construction type	Target sentences
Main sentence	Ana ya se <u>fuera</u> cuando yo llegué. ‘Ana had already left when I arrived’
Adverbial subordinate clause	La gente ya los conocía porque <u>salieran</u> en el periódico. ‘People knew them already because they {appeared/had appeared} in the newspaper’
Strongly assertive: <i>to assure</i>	Te aseguro que lo <u>viera</u> de la que venía en coche. ‘I assure you I {saw/had seen} him while I was driving here’
Assertive with topicalized argument: <i>to tell</i>	Me dijo Pablo que A SU NOVIA la <u>pillaran</u> conduciendo borracha. ‘Pablo told me that HER GIRLFRIEND {was/had been} caught driving drunk’
Assertive: <i>to tell</i>	Me dijo que la <u>convencieran</u> sus nuevos amigos ‘She told me that her new friends {convinced/had convinced} her’
Weakly assertive: <i>to think</i>	Pensaba que las <u>escribiera</u> tu madre ‘I thought your mother had written them’
Semifactives: <i>to see</i> <i>to remember</i>	Vi que <u>anduviera</u> por los alrededores del museo aquel día ‘I saw that he had walked around the museum that day’
	Me acuerdo que mi abuela <u>tuviera</u> unas parecidas en casa ‘I remember that my grandma had had a similar set at home’
Factive: <i>to thank</i>	Te agradezco que siempre <u>fueras</u> así de bueno conmigo ‘I thank you for always being so good to me’

Out of the nine sentences, only the one selected by a factive verb (*agradecer* ‘to thank’) license the *-ra* form in Standard Spanish:

⁵ There was no “age effect”: the results do not show any tendency to accept/reject a sentence based on age. The same can be applied to the place of birth and residence.

- (14) Te agradezco que siempre fueras así de bueno conmigo.
 2sg.dat thank.PRES.1sg that always be.2sg-*ra* so of good with.me
 ‘I thank you for being so good to me’

The other 8 sentences have temporal indicative values that in Standard would be expressed by a past perfect form or (in some cases) by a preterite.

3.2. Results

Table 3 below summarizes the percentages of acceptability for each type of sentence:

Table 3: Percentages of acceptability for target sentences

Construction type	Acceptability (% of answers 2 or 3)
Main sentence	71%
Adverbial subordinate clause	77%
Strongly assertive: <i>to assure</i>	22%
Assertive with topicalized argument: <i>to tell</i>	88%
Assertive: <i>to tell</i>	82%
Weakly assertive: <i>to think</i>	82%
Semifactives: <i>to see</i>	35%
<i>to remember</i>	42%
Factive: <i>to thank</i>	88%

These results seem to indicate that, contrary to expectations, temporal *-ra* in EoN is not licensed under any type of predicate. Before going into details, it is important to bear in mind that these non-Standard uses of *-ra* are limited to oral speech and informal texting, as a consequence of the “normative” pressure in schools and Standard conventions in writing style. This was the main drawback of a questionnaire that consisted in judging written sentences instead of oral speech. In fact, speakers were all conscious about this difference when they refer to “our talking, the way we speak in town or at home”, as opposed to “what is correct, the way it needs to be said” in Standard terms. In order to minimize the impact of “prescriptivism” among EoN speakers, the questionnaire was introduced by a short text (see Figure 3 above), asking the participant to judge the sentence in terms of how natural it sounded to his/her ear in a scale of 1 to 3, where 2 was defined as “not perfect but acceptable, I could say it/hear it”. Having an intermediate step between “perfect” and “bad” in that sense facilitated the avoidance of normative pressure in their judgements.

Table 3 shows the percentages of acceptability among speakers: these were obtained by adding the amount of answers 2 and 3 that each sentence has received. According to Table 3, there are two cases in which *-ra* does not seem to be acceptable among EoN speakers: *-ra* under strongly assertive predicates (*to assure*: only 22% of acceptability), or under semifactives (*to see*: 35% of acceptability; *to remember*: 42% of acceptability, hence slightly marginal). As for the first case, some of the participants pointed out to me that the reason they rated

sentence (15) the lowest score had to do with the presence of the adjunct *de la que venía en coche*:

- (15) Te aseguro que lo viera [de la que venía en coche].
'I assure you I {saw/had seen} him [while I was driving here]'

The informal judgments of five speakers of EoN show that a couple of similar sentences, although slightly modified, are felt as perfectly natural:

- (16) Te aseguro que nunca lo viera tan enfermo.
'I assure you I {never saw/had never seen} him so ill'
- (17) Me aseguró que lo viera el viernes [de la que venía en coche].
'He assured me that he {saw/had seen} him on Friday [while he was driving here]'

The adjunct has been suppressed in sentence (16), and a negative adverbial element has been added: *nunca* 'never'.⁶ Sentence (17) shows that if the main predicate *assure* is put in past tense, the adjunct can stay without yielding ungrammaticality. Of course the data are interesting by itself, but the only point I want to make here is that strongly assertive predicates can in fact license the temporal *-ra* in EoN.

Semifactive predicates also seem problematic for the licensing of *-ra* in the questionnaire. That may be due to a potential ambiguity between a pluperfect and a preterite interpretation of the two sentences presented under semifactive verbs (18):

- (18) Vi que anduviera... 'I saw {he walked/he had walked}'
- (19) Me acuerdo que (ella) tuviera⁷... 'I remember (she) {had/had had}'

Whenever a sentence like (18) is presented as unambiguously pluperfect (20), EoN speakers accept the temporal *-ra*:

⁶ I agree with the intuition of an anonymous reviewer who stated that the reason why *nunca* 'never' licenses the pluperfect reading is not because it is a negative element, but rather because it implies a notion of 'before' that allows the building of a contrast between temporal points.

⁷ Spanish native speakers of other varieties may object that *acordarse* 'remember' takes a prepositional complement like "acordarse DE que..." and that the sentence is bad otherwise, as in "acordarse que...". Nevertheless, it is highly used without the preposition in this area of the North West of Spain.

- (20) Me quedé de piedra cuando vi que ya
 1sg.pron stay.PRET.1sg. of stone when see.PRET.1sg that already
 acabaran los deberes.
 finish.3pl.-*ra* the homework
 ‘I was extremely surprised when I saw that (they) had finished their
 homework’

Other semifactive verbs like *deducir* ‘deduce’ or *darse cuenta* ‘realize’ also license a temporal *-ra* in EoN:

- (21) (como en casa reinaba el silencio) deduje que
 since in home rule.IMPERF.3sg. the silence deduce.PRET.1sg that
 mi hermana aún no llegara del instituto.
 my sister still no llegar.3sg.-*ra* from.the high school
 ‘Since the house was all silence, I deduced my sister had not yet arrived
 from high school’

- (22) Era ya tarde cuando me di cuenta de que
 be.IMPERF.3sg already late when 1sg.pron realize.PRET.1sg of that
 marcharas.
 leave.2sg-*ra*
 ‘It was already late when I realized that you had left’

Further evidence is provided from spontaneous speech in (23):

- (23) ¿Te acuerdas que merendáramos aquí una vez?
 2sg.pron remember that eat.1pl.-*ra* here one time
 ‘Do you remember we ate here once?’

The conclusion that can be drawn from these examples is that semifactive predicates in fact license the temporal *-ra*, despite the *a priori* low acceptance of those sentences in the questionnaire.

4. Looking inside *-ra*: Its structure in Nanosyntax

The goal of this fourth section is to provide a (preliminary) formal analysis to account for the distribution of *-ra* in EoN, although the proposal covers also the Standard cases.

4.1. The theoretical framework: Nanosyntax

Nanosyntax is an approach to the architecture of Grammar that has been developed in the past decade (Starke 2005, Fábregas 2007, Caha 2009, among others). It addresses linguistic phenomena which have been traditionally considered “morphological” and “lexical” from a syntactic, cartographic

perspective, where the Lexicon is a variable postsyntactic repertoire of exponents or morphophonological forms associated to a syntactic tree: in this framework, the morpheme *-ra* is not a primitive entity, but rather it is composed of a series of syntactic projections, each one codifying a single semantic feature. These projections are assumed to be ordered hierarchically as part of a universal sequence (Starke 2005, Caha 2009, Romeu 2013, among others).

Several principles have been proposed within Nanosyntax to manage the relation between syntax and the set of exponents. Two of them are relevant for the analysis of *-ra*:

- *Exhaustive Lexicalization Principle* (Fábregas 2007, Ramchand 2008)
Every syntactic feature must be identified in Lexicalization.
- *Superset Principle* (Starke, 2005)
If there is no lexical item on a speaker's repertoire that corresponds to a syntactic structure X, the speaker must choose the one containing all the features of X, i.e. a *superset* of X. Among the possible candidates, the *Panini Condition* states that the speaker will select the most specific item, i.e. the most similar form (in number and nature of the features) to X.

4.2. Proposal

My proposal takes four factors into consideration:

- a) The type of sentence and predicate: whether *-ra* appears in a matrix clause or an embedded clause, and also whether the matrix verb is assertive to a higher or lower degree.
- b) The features in the Complementizer Phrase (CP), following Ojea (2005).
- c) The semantic value of *-ra*: modal, pluperfect, preterit.
- d) The number of syntactic projections that *-ra* lexicalizes in each construction.

Ojea (2005), adopting Rizzi's (1997) cartographic analysis of CP and Hopper's (1974) work on features, proposes a structure like (24):

(24) [ForceP_{+/-assertive} [MoodP_{+/-indicative} [TP [AspP [VP

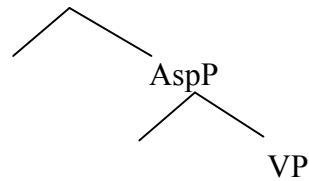
The scheme in (24) implements in structural terms the idea that the degree of assertiveness of different predicates is somehow connected to the selection of mood in embedded clauses: in (24), the projection ForceP has an "assertive feature" in a local structural relation with the mood selector in MoodP, giving rise to four possible combinations of features. Out of these four combinations, two are relevant for the purposes of this paper:

- [+ assertive, + indicative] appears in matrix sentences and in the majority of sentences selected by assertive predicates.

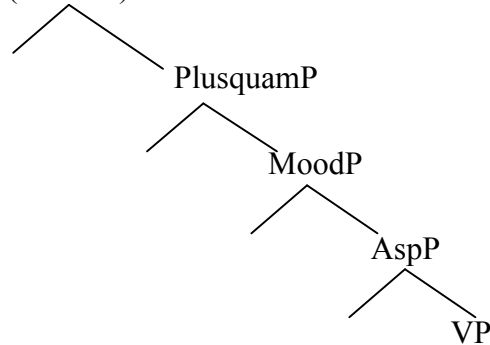
- [- assertive, - indicative] appears in the majority of sentences embedded under non assertive predicates.

My proposal for *-ra* goes as follows: the features [+/- assertive; +/- indicative] are associated to a series of semantic values and syntactic features that will be lexicalized by means of the morpheme *-ra*, and the difference on the use of *-ra* in Standard and EoN follows from the number of features that *-ra* lexicalizes in these varieties, (25) and (26) respectively:

- (25) *-ra* in Standard Peninsular Spanish \leftrightarrow MoodP



- (26) *-ra* in EoN \leftrightarrow (DeixisP)



In (26), DeixisP is associated to the preterite reading of *-ra*, and PlusquamP to the pluperfect interpretation.⁸ (26) shows something already observed at the beginning: data from spontaneous speech in EoN, as well as from the questionnaire, indicate that such form can be interpreted as a pluperfect or as a preterite (27), even repeatedly in one sentence (28):

- (27) Aquí comiéramos una vez.
 ‘(We) {ate/had eaten} here once’

⁸ Even though I assume that PlusquamP must be decomposable, here it is represented as an atomic head to show how syncretism works. In Section 5, building on Carrasco Gutiérrez (2000) and Demirdache & Uribe-Etxebarria (2000, 2007), I anticipate that this Plusquam has some relation with Aspect that must be represented syntactically, but this goes far beyond the scope of this contribution.

- (28) Dijo que hubiera gente que tuviera que pagar más de 100€ por una entrada.
'(S/he) said that there {were/had been} people that {had/ had had} to pay more than 100€ for a ticket'.

In contrast to (27-28), there are cases like (29-30), where *comprara* 'buy-*ra*' cannot have a pluperfect reading, and where the equivalent Standard past perfect is also bad:

- (29) *Al final no le comprara nada hoy. (EoN)
'At the end I had not bought anything today'

- (30) ??Al final no le había comprado nada hoy. (Standard)
'At the end I had not bought anything today'

The issue of temporality and deixis in (29-30) may be the key to understand these restrictions. This is a correlated problem I am not going to address here. In (29), the only way of getting a past interpretation is by means of a preterite like *compré* 'I bought', and in (30) by means of a present perfect *he comprado* 'I have bought', a form which is absent from the EoN variety.






Based on the evidence collected from EoN speakers, a generalization arises: Whenever the form *-ra* can be interpreted as a preterite in EoN, it will also allow a pluperfect reading, given the right context, but not vice versa. Therefore, the cases where there is a "preterite *-ra*" are a superset of those cases with a "pluperfect *-ra*".

The etymological subjunctive *-se*, for its part, will correspond to the tree in (31), in all similar to (25), accounting for the fact that Standard *-ra* and *-se* are in free variation:

- (31) *-se* in EoN and Standard Peninsular Spanish \leftrightarrow MoodP
-
- ```
graph TD; MoodP --- AspP; MoodP --- VP1[VP]; AspP --- VP2[VP];
```

Table 4 below combines the four factors that were mentioned at the beginning of this subsection:

Table 4: Semantic and syntactic factors in the distribution of *-ra* in EoN

| Construction type                                   | CP features (Ojea 2005)                              | Semantic value of <i>-ra</i> | Syntactic tree associated to <i>-ra</i>                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Main sentence                                       | ForceP<br>[+assertive]<br><br>MoodP<br>[+indicative] | Preterite or pluperfect      | <b>(DeixisP)</b> <sup>9</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Adverbial subordinate clause                        |                                                      |                              |                                                                                                                            |
| Strongly assertive: <i>to assure</i>                |                                                      |                              | PlusquamP,                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Assertive with topicalized argument: <i>to tell</i> |                                                      |                              |                                                                                                                            |
| Assertive: <i>to tell</i>                           |                                                      |                              | MoodP,<br>(... AspP, VP)                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Weakly assertive: <i>to think</i>                   |                                                      | Pluperfect                   | <b>PlusquamP</b>                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Semifactives: <i>to see</i><br><i>to remember</i>   |                                                      |                              |                                                                                                                            |
| Factive: <i>to thank</i><br>(EoN=Standard)          | ForceP<br>[-assertive]<br>MoodP<br>[-indicative]     | Modal                        | <b>MoodP</b><br><br>AAspP<br><br>VP |

Based on that information and the syntactic trees proposed in (25-26) and (31), I will give some examples of how *-ra* is lexicalized and why. In order to illustrate how lexicalization takes place following Table 4, three sentences from the questionnaire have been selected as examples:

*Example 1*

- Sentence embedded under factive predicate: *Te agradezco que siempre fueras así de bueno conmigo* ‘I thank you for being so good to me’
- CP features: [-assertive, -indicative]
- Syntactic structure: [MoodP [AspP [VP
- Exponent: *-ra* in Standard as in (25), *-ra* in EoN by superset (26)

<sup>9</sup> The parentheses indicate that in these cases *-ra* may lexicalize up to PlusquamP (pluperfect reading) or up to DeixisP (preterite reading), but crucially the first option (pluperfect) is always available given the right context, so there is an implicational hierarchy between the two: having the preterite interpretation implies that the pluperfect is also available at some point.

---

*Example 2*

- Sentence embedded under weakly assertive predicate: *Pensaba que las escribiera tu madre* ‘I thought your mother had written them’
- CP features: [+ assertive, + indicative]
- Syntactic structure: [PlusquamP [MoodP [AspP [VP
- Exponent: *-ra* in EoN by superset (26). In Standard, *-ra* cannot get lexicalized in this case because it violates the aforementioned Exhaustive Lexicalization Principle: the structure (25) does not identify all the features of the syntactic structure above. Under assertive predicates, the Standard lexicalizes imperfect *haber* + participle, i.e. a past perfect.

*Example 3*

- Causal (adverbial) sentence: *La gente ya los conocía porque salieran en el periódico* ‘People knew them already because they {appeared/had appeared} in the newspaper’
- CP features: [+assertive, +indicative]
- Syntactic structure: ([DeixisP] [PlusquamP [MoodP [AspP [VP
- Exponent: *-ra* in EoN (26). The Standard lexicalizes either a simple past form *salieron* ‘appeared’ or a past perfect form *habían salido* ‘had appeared’, depending on what temporal interpretation is at stake

The goal of section 4 was to develop a theoretical analysis that could account in a systematic way for the facts discussed earlier: the distribution of *-ra* in affirmative contexts in EoN, as well as the difference between this variety and Standard Peninsular Spanish. It is true that this proposal leaves us with important open questions and remarks, some of which are addressed in the concluding section *Two puzzles*. Nevertheless, it can also be regarded as a first attempt in accounting for this type of variation in systematic formal terms, combining the descriptive power of variation facts with the predictive power of a theory of the internal Grammar of individuals.

## 5. Two puzzles

Although my analysis contemplates the possibility of lexicalizing *-ra* and interpreting it as a preterite, it does not allow us to identify precisely what is underlying the licensing of this *-ra* form or its alternative, the simple past form *canté* ‘I sang’, to obtain the preterite reading. In order to give an answer to this issue, it would be a promising line of research to look at theories of aspectuality and sequence of tenses (Suñer y Padilla-Rivera 1990, Demirdache & Uribe-Etxebarria 2000, 2007), with a special interest in the aspectual classification of Spanish past perfect forms proposed by Carrasco Gutiérrez (2000). She distinguishes on the one hand an aspectual “perfect” form identified by the adverb *ya* ‘already’ as in *Hace una hora él ya había comido* ‘lit. One hour ago, he had already eaten’, denoting a state of affairs in which, one hour before now, he has already ingested food (i.e. he is in the state of having a full stomach) and on the

other hand an aspectual “perfective” form denoting a past event, as in *Se había sacado el carnet el año anterior* ‘(S/he) had gotten his driving license the previous year’.

It is possible in this context to consider the possibility that the form *-ra* in EoN is in fact an “aspectually perfective plusquam” as defined by Carrasco Gutiérrez. If that is the case, then the answer for the preterite/pluperfect controversy is to be found in the domain of Aspect.

A second question that arises is the following: why is it that in EoN both *-ra* and *-se* can lexicalize a modal value, as in the case of Standard? If we postulate a structure like (26) for *-ra* in EoN, by the Panini Condition the form *-se* is expected to be selected whenever the CP has the features [–assertive, –indicative], by virtue of the exponent *-se* being more specific than *-ra*, as it happens in Portuguese (Mateus, 1989). In this regard, there is a notable preference towards the use of *-se* in the modal cases, although it is not as systematic as in Portuguese.

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## Appendix I: Results

45 participants<sup>10</sup> (only 41 judging the case of matrix sentence, which was included later).

| Age range (in years) | Number of participants | Place of birth                                   |                                                                                 |
|----------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 12-18                | 5                      | EoN area                                         | Ribadeo, Vegadeo, Tapia de Casariego, Boal, Navia, Coaña, El Franco, Castropol. |
| 18-25                | 13                     |                                                  |                                                                                 |
| 25-30                | 12                     | Elsewhere (but with strong ties in the EoN area) | Llanera, Oviedo, Valdés, Degaña, Tenerife.                                      |
| 30-45                | 8                      |                                                  |                                                                                 |
| 45-60                | 6                      |                                                  |                                                                                 |
| +60                  | 1                      |                                                  |                                                                                 |

| Construction type             | Sentence                                                                                                            | Number of answers 1, 2 and 3. |    |    | % of acceptability (2+3) |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----|----|--------------------------|
|                               |                                                                                                                     | 1                             | 2  | 3  |                          |
| Matrix sentence               | Ana ya se <u>fuera</u> cuando yo llegué<br>'Ana had already left when I arrived'                                    | 12                            | 15 | 14 | 71                       |
| Causal                        | ...porque <u>salieran</u> en el periódico<br>'... because they {appeared/had appeared} in the newspaper'            | 10                            | 17 | 18 | 77                       |
| Strongly Assertive            | Te aseguro que lo <u>viera</u> ...<br>'I assure you I {saw/had seen} him...'                                        | 35                            | 8  | 2  | 22                       |
| Assertive with top. argument: | Me dijo Pablo que a su novia la <u>pillaran</u> ...<br>'Pablo told me that HER GIRLFRIEND {was/had been} caught...' | 5                             | 21 | 19 | 88                       |
| Assertive                     | Me dijo que la <u>convencieran</u> ...<br>'She told me that she {was convinced/had been convinced}...'              | 8                             | 13 | 24 | 82                       |
| Weakly assertive              | Pensaba que las <u>escribiera</u> tu madre<br>'I thought your mother had written them'                              | 8                             | 15 | 22 | 82                       |
| Semifactives                  | Vi que <u>anduviera</u> por los alrededores...<br>'I saw that he had walked around...'                              | 29                            | 10 | 6  | 35                       |
|                               | Me acuerdo que mi abuela <u>tuviera</u> ...<br>'I remember that my grandma had had...'                              | 26                            | 11 | 8  | 42                       |
| Factive                       | Te agradezco que siempre <u>fueras</u> ...<br>'I thank you for always being...'                                     | 5                             | 15 | 25 | 88                       |

<sup>10</sup>

42 of them completed the questionnaire online, 3 via Skype.

**Appendix II: Spontaneous speech data from EoN speakers**

| Construction type  | Spontaneous speech data<br>(speaker's initials appear in parentheses)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Matrix sentence    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Aquí <u>comiéramos</u> un día</i> (J.J.) ‘Here we ate once’</li> <li>• (Context: about taking the dog to the vet’s hospital) <i>Me dijo que sería mejor dejarla en observación pero... yo no <u>podiera</u> dejarla allí... y al día siguiente le <u>diéramos</u> de comer y le <u>fuera</u> bien</i> (P.F.)<br/>                     ‘(The vet) told me that it would be better to leave her (the dog) in observation but... I couldn’t leave her there... and the following day we fed her and she went fine’.</li> <li>• <i>¿Qué cenáramos el año pasado? ¿Sopa de pescado hiciera?</i> (H.P.)<br/>                     ‘What was it that we {ate/had eaten} last year? Was it fish soup that I {made/ had made}’</li> </ul> |
| Strongly assertive | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Estaba segura de que <u>suspendiera</u> ... y al final ya ves, aprobé</i> (A.L.)<br/>                     ‘I was sure I had failed... and at the end you see, I passed’</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Assertive (topic)  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>El libro se lo <u>prestara</u> a Berta para que hiciera los deberes</i> (C.J.)<br/>                     ‘THE BOOK I {gave/had given} it to Berta so that she could do the homework’</li> <li>• <i>El año pasado a tu hermana la <u>viera</u></i> (A.L.)<br/>                     Lit. ‘Last year YOUR SISTER I saw her’</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Assertive          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Dijo que <u>hubiera</u> gente que <u>tuviera</u> que pagar más de 100€ por una entrada</i> (P.F.)<br/>                     ‘(S/he) said that there {were/had been} people who {had/had had} to pay more tan 100€ for a ticket’</li> <li>• <i>Me contó que <u>tomara</u> una pastilla y que se <u>mareara</u> un montón</i> (P.F.)<br/>                     ‘(She) told me she {took/had taken} a pill and that (she) started feeling sick’</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Semifactive        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>¿Te acuerdas que <u>merendáramos</u> aquí una vez?</i> (J.J.)<br/>                     ‘Remember we {ate/had eaten} here once?’</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

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**Appendix III : Contexts and target sentences in the study (in capital letters)**

|                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Matrix sentence    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Aquella noche, ANA YA SE <u>FUERA</u> CUANDO YO LLEGUÉ.</i><br/>‘That night, ANA HAD ALREADY LEFT WHEN I ARRIVED’</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Causal             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Un grupo de música español se fue a México a dar unos conciertos. Allí la gente ya los conocía <u>PORQUE SALIERAN EN EL PERIÓDICO.</u></i><br/>‘A Spanish music band went to Mexico to give some concerts. The people there knew them already BECAUSE (THEY) HAD APPEARED IN THE NEWSPAPER’.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Strongly assertive | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Un cazador con fama de mentiroso llamó a su compañero jurándole que lo llevaría a donde estaba el jabalí. Pero cuando llegaron al lugar señalado, no vieron ni rastro del animal. El mentiroso se lamentaba diciendo: <u>TE ASEGURO QUE LO <u>VIERA</u> DE LA QUE VENÍA EN COCHE.</u></i><br/>‘A hunter with bad reputation for lying called his friend swearing that he would take him where the wildboar was. But when they reached the place, they saw no trace or sign of the animal being nearby. The liar grumbled and said: I ASSURE YOU THAT I {SAW/HAD SEEN} IT (THE ANIMAL) WHILE I WAS DRIVING HERE’.</li> </ul> |
| Assertive (top.)   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>El otro día me dijo Pablo que <u>A SU NOVIA LA <u>PILLARAN</u> CONDUCIENDO BORRACHA</u> en la general el domingo pasado.</i><br/>‘Pablo told me the other day that THEY {CAUGHT/ HAD CAUGHT} HIS GIRLFRIEND DRIVING DRUNK in the motorway last Sunday’.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Assertive          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>El otro día fui a una fiesta y me sorprendió ver a Marta, la que nunca sale de casa. <u>ME DIJO QUE LA CONVENCIERAN SUS NUEVOS AMIGOS.</u></i><br/>‘I went to a party the other day and I was surprised to see Marta, who never goes out. SHE TOLD ME THAT HER FRIENDS {CONVINCED/HAD CONVINCED} HER.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Weakly assertive   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>El padre de María encontró unos sobres cerrados debajo del sofá. Decidió abrirlos y descubrió que eran cartas de amor. En ese momento llegó María y enfadada dijo: "¡no las leas! ¡son mías!" Su padre contestó: "<u>perdona, PENSABA QUE LAS <u>ESCRIBIERA</u> TU MADRE</u>".</i><br/>‘Maria’s father found some closed envelopes under the sofa. He decided to open them and found it that there were love letters. In that moment Maria arrived and</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                           |

|                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                     | <p>angrily said: “don’t read them! They are mine!”. Her father answered: “Sorry, I THOUGHT YOUR MOTHER HAD WRITTEN THEM’.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <p>Semifactives</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="533 383 1318 748"> <p>• <i>Un policía interrogaba al sospechoso del robo de un cuadro muy famoso: Policía- ¿Estuvo usted en la ciudad el pasado miércoles? / Sospechoso-- No / Policía-- Está mintiendo. VI QUE ANDUVIERA POR LOS ALREDEDORES DEL MUSEO AQUEL DÍA.</i><br/>                     ‘A policeman interrogated a suspect of the stealing of a famous painting: (Policeman)- Were you in town last Wednesday?/ (Suspect)- No (Policeman)- You are lying. I SAW YOU HAD WALKED AROUND THE MUSEUM THAT DAY.’</p> </li> <li data-bbox="533 781 1318 1160"> <p>• <i>Teresa y Rodrigo estaban visitando el museo de la porcelana. Teresa vio unas tazas blancas con flores, y le dijo a Rodrigo lo maravillosas que eran. Él le contestó: ¡anda! Me acuerdo que MI ABUELA TUVIERA UNAS PARECIDAS EN CASA HASTA HACE POCO.</i><br/>                     ‘Teresa and Rodrigo were visiting the museum of the Porcelain. Teresa saw white cups with flowers painted on them, and told Rodrigo how wonderful they seemed. He answered: oh, I REMEMBER MY GRANDMA HAD HAD A SIMILAR SET AT HOME UNTIL RECENTLY’</p> </li> </ul> |
| <p>Factive</p>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="533 1202 1318 1608"> <p>• <i>Una pareja al borde de la separación fue a la consulta de un psicólogo para intentar salvar su matrimonio. Para la primera sesión, cada uno debía llevar escritas las virtudes que veía en su pareja. La mujer escribió: TE AGRADEZCO QUE SIEMPRE FUERAS ASÍ DE BUENO CONMIGO.</i><br/>                     ‘One couple that were about to divorce went into therapy in an intend to save their marriage. For the first session, both of them should write in a piece of paper the things they liked about each other. The woman wrote: I THANK YOU FOR ALWAYS BEING SO GOOD TO ME’.</p> </li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |