

## Spanish *lo*: reference to and via properties

Ana Aguilar Guevara & Mayra García Rodríguez (National Autonomous University of Mexico)

**GOAL.** This presentation discusses Spanish particle *lo*, which most of the grammars consider to be a neuter definite article (e.g., RAE & ASALE, 2009), even though: i) Spanish does not currently have neuter grammatical gender; ii) *lo* usually cannot accompany nouns; iii) it is unclear whether or not *lo* is a determiner; and iv) it is not always evident that its meaning contribution is definiteness.<sup>1</sup> We particularly focus on the nominal use of *lo*, illustrated in 1-9 (and previously studied by Villalba, 2009).<sup>2</sup> Our aim is to provide a comprehensive characterization of two semantically and morphosyntactically differentiated types of nominal *lo*-phrases, necessary to accomplish a compositional analysis for each construction.

**CHARACTERIZATION. Interpretation of LO-phrases of type A:** i) they would usually be translated into English as a free relative clause like *what is ADJECTIVE/VERB* (1,2,4 and 5);<sup>3</sup> ii) they refer to concrete (1, 4 and 5) or abstract (2-3) maximal portions or pluralities of inanimate objects displaying the property designated by the constituent with which *lo* combines; iii) as such, they are sensitive to tests of maximality and existence presupposition, and iv) can occur in usual definite contexts identified in the literature, such as immediate situation, larger situation, anaphora, bridging and kind reference (Hawkins, 1978; Schwarz, 2009, 2013). **Distribution of LO-phrases of type A:** i) they can be constituted of *lo* + an adjective phrase, always headed by a masculine, singular adjective (1), *lo* + a dependent relative clause (2), or *lo* + a prepositional phrase always headed by *de* ‘of’ (3); ii) the *lo* particle in these phrases can be replaced by a demonstrative pronoun (4); iii) the phrases can be accompanied by the universal quantifier *todo* ‘all’ (5).

- 1      Lola le va a arreglar **lo dañado** a la pared  
Lola it goes to fix      LO damaged to the wall  
‘Lola will go to fix what is damaged on the wall’
- 2      Eso es **lo que me dijeron**  
That is LO that me said  
‘That is what they told me’
- 3      **Lo de Bert** es una excelente noticia.  
LO of Bert is an excellent news.  
‘The news about Bert is excellent’
- 4      Yo suscribo **lo aquello propuesto**.  
I subscribe LO that proposed  
‘I subscribe to what has been proposed’
- 5      Lola va a arreglar **todo lo dañado en la pared**.  
Lola goes to fix all LO damaged in the wall  
‘Lola will go to fix all what is damaged on the wall’

**Interpretation of LO-phrases of type B:** i) they can be translated to English with a noun derived from an adjective plus the suffix *-ness* (6-8); ii) they refer to the unique properties denoted by the

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<sup>1</sup> This *lo* should not be confused with his homophone, the accusative version of the third-person pronoun *lo*, as in *¿Te gusta este libro? Yo lo compré* (‘Do you like this book? I bought it’).

<sup>2</sup> The exclamatives and adverbial uses of *lo* will not be discussed. The reader can learn about the former in Gutiérrez-Rexach (1996, 1999, 2001, 2008), Villalba (2008), and Villalba & Bartra-Kaufman (2010), and the latter in Gutiérrez-Rexach (1999), Bosque & Moreno (1990) and García-Rodríguez (2018).

<sup>3</sup> Example (3) will not be adequately translated with a free relative clause because it refers to a matter, and for that particular type of inanimate object there are better options, like the nouns *news*, *gossip*, *problem*, etc.

constituents with which *lo* combines; iii) as these phrases are still definite, they show sensitivity to the corresponding presupposition tests; and iv) they can occur in usual definite contexts. **Distribution of LO-phrases of type B:** i) unlike *lo*-phrases of type A, type B can only be constituted of *lo* + an adjective phrase; a prepositional phrase headed by *de* ‘of’ specifying the entity holding the property must complement the adjective (6), unless the identity of the holder can be retrieved contextually (7); ii) the gender and number of the heading adjective can show two patterns, depending on the syntactic configuration: either is masculine and singular no matter the features of the NP referring to the property holder (6), or must agree in gender and number with the holder (7); presumably, the latter pattern only occurs when an NP referring to the holder is an indirect object of the verb the *lo*-phrase is an argument too (in 7, the *lo*-phrase is the subject); iii) example 7 also illustrates another fact corroborating the existence of nominal constituents referring to properties, namely, the presence in the lexicon of verbs selecting the semantic type of these phrases, like the colloquial use of *salir* ‘come out’; iv) phrases of type B, in contrast to type A, cannot be replaced by neuter demonstratives (8); v) they can neither be accompanied by the quantifier *todo* ‘all’ (9):

6. A Lola le molesta **lo antivegetariano de Juana**  
To Lola her bothers LO antivegetarian of Juana  
‘The antivegetarianness of Juana bothers Lola’
7. A mis hermanas les salió **lo antivegetarianas/\*o**  
To my sisters them came out LO antivegetarian-F.PL/M.SG  
‘My sisters’ antivegetarianness emerged’
8. # **Lo eso claro del Mar Caribe** ofrece visibilidad total  
LO that clear of-the sea Caribe offers visibility total
9. \* A Lola le molesta **todo lo antivegetariano de Juana**  
To Lola her bothers all LO antivegetariano of Juan

**TOWARDS AN ANALYSIS.** To account for the data above, we will propose an adaptation of McNally & de Swart (2015)’s analysis of two classes of Dutch DPs formed by a definite article plus an adjective (i.e. lacking a heading noun). In their analysis, one of the classes, which would correspond to *LO*-phrases of type A, has the syntax of a small clause and the semantics of a free relative, so that reference is made to (inanimate) individuals displaying the property designated by the adjective. The other one, corresponding to *LO*-phrases of type B, is headed by adjectives associating the properties they designate to individuals (referred to by the DP inside a complementing PP, or retrieved contextually); the adjectives directly combine with the definite article, resulting in a construction referring to a property.

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