

Perfective Gerund Complement Constructions in Ecuadorian Spanish of the Andes

The present paper has as its main objective to study the use of the gerund in the Andean Spanish of Ecuador of monolingual speakers. More specifically, this work studies the constructions with “venir” (“to come”), “irse” (“to leave”), “salir” (“to go out”) plus gerund, named Perfective Gerund Complement Constructions (PGCC).

- (1) Salí comiendo arroz
 leave_1PST/s eat_GER rice_m/s
 “I left after eating rice”

The action expressed by the gerund has been completed before the one expressed by the finite verb. The hypothesis that is defended here is that in the syntactic structure of PGCCs, the gerund is a projection of an Aspectual Phrase, rather than a Verbal Phrase, that has acquired a perfective/completive value. And that this Aspectual Phrase is the mandatory complement of an unaccusative finite verb of movement, such as “venir”, “irse” o “salir”. It is proposed that the unaccusative verb has not suffered a grammaticalization process as it has happened with other structures, such as “vengo ejercitando por años” (“I have been exercising for years”), where “vengo” (“I come”) has lost its lexical sense. The evidence supporting that the Aspectual Phrase of the gerund is the mandatory complement of a finite verb is demonstrated by the movement of the clitic that can antecede or precede the verbal set.

- (1) Lo salí comiendo
 CL leave_1PST/s eat_GER
 “I left after eating it”
(2) Salí comiéndolo
 leave_1PST/s eat_GER_CL
 “I left after eating it”

Other pieces of evidence are Wh-movement and the behavior of NPIs. All these tests predict that the direct object of the gerund can be extracted and placed in front of the verb set, which does not occur with objects of the gerund in other varieties of Spanish. The impossibility of passivizing a PGCC shows that the finite verb has not been grammaticalized, and that each verb maintains its own arguments and lexical meaning. It is concluded that the gerund in PGCCs is an aspectual projection that is the mandatory complement of an unaccusative finite verb of movement.

Key words: gerund, Andean Spanish, syntax, periphrasis, perfective gerund