

Linguistic strategies referring to politicians in the Spanish written press...

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ABSTRACT This article proposes an empirical study on the naming strategies when referring to politicians. More precisely, our analysis is based on a corpus of journalistic articles in contemporary Spanish and gathers a homogeneous set of so-called loose appositive constructions referring to politicians. The aim of the study is to provide a structured analysis of the linguistic features of the appositive constructions collected in our database. We will argue that the 1084 appositive constructions examined present a predicational relationship. We distinguish between three types of predicational appositive constructions: specificational, attributional, and identificational constructions. Together with a description of the syntactic and semantic characteristics of these constructions, we also examine their informative role in journalistic articles. More precisely, we consider how syntax reflects a different semantic content and a different discourse function.

KEY WORDS Appositive construction – Spanish written press – Naming strategies – Secondary predication.

SUMMARY 1 Introduction. – 2 Our approach. – 3 Predicational appositive constructions. – 4 Different kinds of predicational appositive constructions. 4.1 Predicational appositive constructions of specification. 4.2 Predicational appositive constructions of attribution. 4.3 Predicational appositive constructions of identification. – 5 Appositive constructions in newspaper discourse. – 6 Predicational appositive constructions in our corpus. 6.1 Morpho-syntactic characteristics. 6.2 Semantic observations. 6.3 Discourse function. – 7 Conclusion.

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Estrategias lingüísticas referidas a políticos en la prensa escrita española: un análisis de las construcciones apositivas

RESUMEN El artículo presenta un estudio empírico de las estrategias denominativas para referir a políticos. Nuestra investigación se basa en un corpus de artículos periodísticos en español contemporáneo y agrupa construcciones apositivas bimembres que indican políticos. El presente estudio persigue proponer un análisis estructurado de las características lingüísticas de las construcciones apositivas registradas en el corpus. Argüimos que 1084 construcciones apositivas examinadas presentan una relación predicativa. Luego, distinguiremos entre tres tipos de construcciones apositivas predicativas: las especificativas, las atributivas y las identificativas. Tras detallar las propiedades sintácticas y semánticas, examinaremos el papel informativo que asumen en los artículos periodísticos. Más precisamente investigaremos cómo la sintaxis se refleja en un contenido semántico particular y en una determinada función discursiva.

PALABRAS CLAVE Construcción apositiva – La prensa española escrita – Estrategias denominativas – Predicación secundaria.

SUMARIO 1 Introducción. – 2 El procedimiento. – 3 Construcciones apositivas predicativas. – 4 Varios tipos de construcciones apositivas predicativas. 4.1 Construcciones apositivas predicativas de especificación. 4.2 Construcciones apositivas predicativas de atribución. 4.3 Construcciones apositivas predicativas de identificación. – 5 Construcciones apositivas en el discurso periodístico. – 6 Construcciones apositivas predicativas en el corpus. 6.1 Características morfosintácticas. 6.2 Observaciones semánticas. 6.3 Función discursiva. – 7 Conclusión.

Les stratégies linguistiques utilisées pour renvoyer à des politiciens dans la presse écrite en espagnol: une analyse des constructions appositives

RÉSUMÉ Cet article présente une étude empirique des stratégies dénominatives employées pour renvoyer à des politiciens. Notre travail de recherche se base sur un corpus d'articles de presse en espagnol contemporain et rassemble les appositives détachées indiquant des politiciens. L'étude vise une analyse structurée des caractéristiques linguistiques des constructions appositives employées dans notre base de données. Nous argumentons que les 1084 constructions appositives enregistrées présentent une relation prédicative. Ensuite, nous distinguons trois types de constructions appositives prédicatives: les spécifiques, les attributives et les identificatives. Après avoir détaillé les caractéristiques syntaxiques et sémantiques, nous étudierons le rôle informatif qu'elles assument dans les articles de presse. Plus précisément nous investiguons comment la syntaxe se reflète dans un contenu sémantique particulier et dans une fonction discursive spécifique.

MOTS CLÉ Construction appositive – La presse espagnole écrite – Stratégies dénominatives – Prédication secondaire.

SOMMAIRE 1 Introduction. – 2 Notre approche. – 3 Construccions appositives prédicatives. – 4 Différents types de constructions appositives prédicatives. 4.1 Construccions appositives prédicatives de spécification. 4.2 Construccions appositives prédicatives d'attribution. 4.3 Construccions appositives prédicatives d'identification. – 5 Construccions appositives dans le discours journalistique. – 6 Construccions appositives prédicatives dans le corpus. 6.1 Caractéristiques morphosyntaxiques. 6.2 Observations sémantiques. 6.3 Fonction discursive. – 7 Conclusion.

Linguistic strategies referring to politicians in the Spanish written press: an analysis of appositive constructions

An Vande Castele

1 Introduction

In today's society, politics represents a large share in daily newspapers. Because of its importance in the media, it seemed interesting to us to investigate specific linguistic characteristics of this type of information. Combined with our research interest in people's identification strategies, we decided to investigate how the Spanish written press informs about politicians. In this paper we propose an empirical analysis based on a corpus of journalistic articles in contemporary Spanish, in order to describe the different linguistic strategies used to refer to politicians.

2 Our approach

The present article on the naming strategies referring to politicians is based on a corpus that gathers 1084 appositive constructions. It contains a homogeneous set of examples of so-called loose appositive constructions referring to politicians and it is integrated in a research project published in Vande Castele (2010) on different ways of describing people in the Spanish informative press, more specifically in the newspaper *El País* (1998-2003). In this study 10783 nominal expressions were subject to an exhaustive analysis.

Next to a detailed syntactic and semantic description of the different kinds of appositive constructions, we will provide a discourse approach on the role they play in the informative press. To be able to contrast the

use of the appositive constructions with other nominal expressions used to refer to human beings, we decided to analyse the appositive constructions (for instance *el presidente de los Estados Unidos, Bush*), as already mentioned, proper names used alone (like *Bush*), and other descriptive noun phrases (for example *el presidente de los Estados Unidos*). Based upon the fact that some of the referents only appear once in an article and that for other referents many different expressions follow one another, it seemed interesting to find out if there is a specific order of appearance for the different kinds of linguistic expressions used to refer to the same referent. Another question that arises concerns the status of the proper name. Sometimes this name is used alone, while on other occasions it appears within a descriptive expression. In brief, this approach should enable us to present a thorough analysis of formal characteristics and should give us the possibility to offer an original functional approach on the identification and description of politicians in the language of the Spanish press.

3 Predicational appositive constructions

Previous research distinguishes two types of appositive constructions: so-called loose appositive constructions, and close appositive constructions (Acuña Fariña 1999, Forsgren 2000, Martínez 1994, Meyer 1992, Neveu 1998, Paula Pombar 1983, Suñer Gratacós 1999 and Van Langendonck 2007). Examples (1) and (2) illustrate both types: the first exemplifies a loose construction; the second presents a close apposition.

- 1) **El obispo de Mondoñedo, José Gea**, promulgó ayer una pastoral en la que rechaza que “publicar a los cuatro vientos” arregle el problema [...].
(*EL PAÍS*, 24/03/01, P. 24)
- 2) **El juez Ruiz Polanco** abrió diligencias previas por la denuncia de un abogado sobre el vertido del *Prestige* [...]. (*EL PAÍS*, 24/12/02, P. 24)

As announced in the preceding section, we will concentrate on the loose constructions and try to offer an accurate analysis of the different subtypes of these appositive constructions. Generally they are described as two juxtaposed noun phrases separated by a pause, which is formalised by the means of a comma or another punctuation mark with a separating value. The two segments of this appositive construction are supposed to be co-referential. They both refer to the same extra-linguistic entity, but their referential status is not identical. In some appositive constructions the second segment describes, or develops the content of the first member of the construction, whereas in others it has a specifying or identifying function.

In the next section, we will detail the different kinds of relationship between the units in the registered appositive constructions.

4 Different kinds of predicational appositive constructions

As a result of our study we argue that so-called loose appositive constructions present a predicational relationship. This relationship can be compared with the predicational function of attributes in copular constructions. The two linked noun phrases present an interdependent relationship. The main difference between appositive constructions and copular constructions concerns the sentence level at which the predication takes place. While predication in copular constructions appears in the head phrase, in appositive constructions it is a secondary predication, subordinate to the principal predication realised in the head phrase. Next to this, appositive structures also differ from copular ones in that they do not have a copular verb to make the predicational relationship explicit. Nevertheless, we wanted to apply the analysis proposed for copular constructions to our appositive constructions, based on the predicational relationship the appositive constructions and copular constructions have in common. Essentially our theory is based on the taxonomy of Higgins (1967), which has been refined by contributions by Mikkelsen (2005), Fernández Leborans (1999) and Van Peteghem (1991). Taking into

account the constructions registered in our corpus, we distinguish between the following types of appositive construction:

- predicational appositive constructions of specification;
- predicational appositive constructions of attribution;
- predicational appositive constructions of identification.

In the following paragraphs we will detail their characteristics.

4.1 Predicational appositive constructions of specification

In predicational appositive constructions of specification two referential expressions follow each other. Nonetheless both segments are not referential in the same sense. The first segment has a semantic reference, which generally describes the social role of the person designated. The second part of the construction offers the pragmatic reference and reveals the identity of the individual semantically described by the first part.

The construction in (3) can be considered as a typical example of a predicational appositive construction of specification.

- 3) **El ministro de Trabajo, Eduardo Zaplana**, acusó a los Gobiernos socialistas de “arruinar el sistema público de pensiones” [...].

(*EL PAÍS*, 03/02/03, P. 72)

It begins with a definite nominal phrase. This first appositive segment usually indicates a professional occupation. In the second appositive part a proper name appears, which specifies the identity of the designated individual. Very often, this type of appositive construction appears in the first sentence of an article and serves to introduce a person in discourse.

4.2 Predicational appositive constructions of attribution

Predicational appositive constructions of attribution start with a denominative expression. This element ensures the pragmatic reference, since it singles out a specific individual. The second segment, then, predicates something about the first segment. This last member does not have a referential content. The second, attributional part of the construction denotes a property assigned to the first appositive segment; it indicates a concept.

The attributional appositive construction can be illustrated as follows:

- 4) *No queremos la guerra, aseguró ayer **Recep Tayyip Erdogan, líder del Partido de la Justicia y el Desarrollo, que gobierna en solitario en Ankara.*** (EL PAÍS, 07/02/03, P. 3)

The sentence cited above presents an attributional construction with a proper name in the first segment and a descriptive noun phrase in the second appositive segment. This noun phrase is not introduced by a determiner and, as regards its extension, it is a rather long expression.

4.3 Predicational appositive constructions of identification

Identificational appositive constructions combine two referential expressions. The first appositive segment has a pragmatic reference; it indicates an existing individual. Even though it is an expression with a referential function, this part of the construction remains unidentifiable. The second unit thus reveals the identity of the referent indicated by the first segment. We could state that this appositive member offers an answer to the question '*who is the X, designated by the first appositive segment?*'

Still, to be able to identify the proper name in the first part of the appositive construction, the second segment has to present an anaphoric element. This element usually refers to an expression

already mentioned in the text or —when it is not textually anchored— it may also be inferable from the discourse situation. In the example cited below, the anaphoric element is the possessive determiner *su*, which connects Alex Salmond to the Scottish National Party, of which he is the leader.

- 5) Sus principales oponentes, los 35 miembros electos del Partido Nacionalista Escocés (SNP), tienen sus propios planes. **Alex Salmond, su líder**, concibe la devolución parlamentaria como un primer paso para conseguir la “igualdad entre las naciones”. (*EL PAÍS*, 02/07/99, P. 3)

5 Appositive constructions in newspaper discourse

Before discussing the discourse functions of appositive constructions in informative press, it is useful to indicate some peculiarities of newspaper discourse. Firstly, for the compilation of our corpus, we decided to select the informative articles of the Spanish daily *El País*. An informative discourse has to meet two opposing requirements: namely the condition of a maximum on information and a minimum of space. In other words, a journalist has to seek a balanced equilibrium between exhaustiveness and conciseness. The informative genre intends to inform people about current events and tries to realise this goal in an objective, impartial way. Furthermore, journalistic writing aims at a wide and heterogeneous public. As a consequence, it is not clear for a journalist how much information can be assumed as commonly known. So he has to start from the idea that the amount of shared knowledge is rather low. Meyer (92: 100) confirms this:

Journalists must assume little shared knowledge with the audience they are writing for.

Hence the necessity arises to create a common context. This can be realised in very different ways: by clarifications or specifications of a different nature. Still, the creation of supplementary information is opposed to the condition of writing in an economical way. So, the

journalist has to look for expressions which allow adding information without increasing the extension of the text too much. In that context the use of nominal constructions is very appropriate, since they tend to be shorter than their verbal equivalents. According to Varantola (1984: 89):

Modification of nouns is thus a major means of information cramming and space saving in journalism.

As a result, appositive constructions, which could be defined as nominal constructions with a high informative value, appear to be very useful. Moreover, López García (1996) points out that in journalistic discourse proper names as well as common names require explicit anchoring. Although proper names are generally defined as uniquely identifying expressions, they often appear with descriptive complements in order to guarantee a correct interpretation by the readers in newspaper discourse. In Jucker (1992: 207) we find a similar statement:

Under normal circumstances, personal names have unique reference, but very often a person's name alone does not enable the reader to identify the designated individual. It is generally his or her role in public life that constitutes the newsworthiness of the individual thus designated.

In this way, the use of appositive constructions can be considered as a means of making more explicit the reference of the designated individuals or a way of supplying additional information.

6 Predicational appositive constructions in our corpus

In the next table we will indicate how frequently the different kinds of predicational appositive constructions (PAC) are used in our informative corpus:

TABLE 1 DISTRIBUTION OF THE APPOSITIVE CONSTRUCTIONS IN OUR CORPUS			
PAC of specification 929 (85.7%)	PAC of attribution 142 (13.1%)	PAC of identification 13 (1.2%)	Total 1084

The majority of the predicational appositive constructions used in Spanish informative written press are specifying constructions. Next are found attributional constructions, and finally only 13 appositive constructions of identification were located in our corpus.

In the next section we will examine whether the different types show a different morpho-syntactic, semantic or pragmatic behaviour.

6.1 Morpho-syntactic characteristics

We will now investigate how the predicational appositive constructions are composed. First of all, we can observe that the majority of the examined constructions present a proper name in one of the appositive segments (99.4% of the analysed cases)¹. In the following tables the different possibilities are listed.

We can observe that the specificational appositive construction puts the proper name in the second part. In the first there usually appears a definite description (which can be introduced by a definite article, a possessive determiner, or a relative determiner). Here are the figures and some examples:

¹ Only 4 out of the 1084 examples did not have a proper name in the appositive constructions. An example: “Una persona murió ayer [...] tras el asesinato por “hombres de uniforme” de **un famoso actor de televisión, miembro del principal partido de la oposición, Unión de los Republicanos (RDR, en sus siglas en francés)**” (*El País*, 03/02/03, p. 8)

TABLE 2 CONSTITUENTS OF THE SPECIFICATIONAL APPOSITIVE CONSTRUCTION	PAC of specification
Definite noun phrase + proper name	1582 (99.4%)
Indefinite noun phrase + proper name	8 (0.5%)
Definite noun phrase + definite noun phrase	1 (0.1%)
Total	1591

- 6) La visita de Franks a Rota tuvo un efecto imprevisto, el aplazamiento del desayuno de trabajo que iba a mantener **la ministra de Asuntos Exteriores, Ana Palacio**, con **su colega francés, Dominique de Villepin**.
(*EL PAÍS*, 17/03/03, P. 23)

The attributional appositive construction presents an inverted constituent order: the proper name appears at the beginning of the construction and is generally followed by an undetermined noun phrase.

TABLE 3 CONSTITUENTS OF THE ATTRIBUTIONAL APPOSITIVE CONSTRUCTION	PAC of attribution
Proper name + undetermined noun phrase	127 (89.4%)
Proper name + indefinite noun phrase	7 (4.9%)
Proper name + definite noun phrase	5 (3.5%)
Definite nom. group + undetermined nom. group	1 (0.7%)
Indefinite nom. group + undetermined nom. group	2 (1.4%)
Total	142

Consider the following examples:

- 7) **Gholamali Khoshroo, viceministro de Asuntos Internacionales iraní**, afirmó que un ataque a Irak sólo “exacerbaría la tensión y la inseguridad en la región” [...]. (EL PAÍS, 10/02/03, P. 5)
- 8) **Gaspar Llamazares, el nuevo coordinador general**, dice tener ya un diseño de dirección en la cabeza, pero quiere ir despacio y pactar todo lo que sea posible con el otro sector, porque la frágil y mínima mayoría de la que dispone le empuja a eso. (EL PAÍS, 31/10/00, P. 36)

The predicational appositive constructions of identification also start with a denominating element. All the constructions we found in our corpus show the same constituent structure: a proper name in the first segment and a definite group in the second member².

TABLE 4 CONSTITUENTS OF THE IDENTIFICATIONAL APPOSITIVE CONSTRUCTION	PAC of identification
Proper name + definite noun phrase	13 (100%)
Total	13

- 9) El primer ministro Ehud Barak deberá abonar a los religiosos de Shas una factura más moderada que la exigida por **Ariel Sharon, el líder del Likud**, por un mes de tranquilidad política [...]. (EL PAÍS, 31/10/00, P. 3)

We still want to draw the attention to one more finding regarding the internal structure of the appositive constructions we have

² Certain attributional constructions also presented a definite group in the second part of the construction. The main difference between the identificational and the attributional type concerns the more subjective value, which can only be assigned to the attributional one. For instance the example (8) cited above.

analysed. It concerns the extension of the descriptive part. We observe that the attributional constructions tend to present a much longer descriptive group than the other two types. A very clear example is this one:

- 10) *No queremos la guerra*, aseguró ayer Recep Tayyip Erdogan, líder del Partido de la Justicia y el Desarrollo, que gobierna en solitario en Ankara. (EL PAÍS, 07/02/03, P. 3)

6.2 Semantic observations

On semantic level, the three types of appositive constructions also have their peculiarities. As we stated earlier, the first segment of a specificational appositive construction refers semantically to an individual. Usually it concerns a reference to the professional occupation of the person, or more generally speaking his social role, as shown in these examples:

- 11) El presidente del Gobierno español, José María Aznar, y el nuevo canciller alemán, Gerhard Schröder, celebrarán hoy, en Bonn, su primera entrevista formal [...]. (EL PAÍS, 10/11/98, P. 20)
- 12) Tanto **el líder del PSOE, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero**, como el secretario de UGT, Cándido Méndez, coincidieron en afirmar que de Azores ha salido “un ultimátum a la ONU”, un hecho de extraordinaria gravedad. (EL PAÍS, 17/03/03, P. 22)

The semantic classes to which the descriptive part of the attributional construction refers are more numerous. Most frequently it concerns the profession held by the politician or another social role in a political context (for instance his role as a candidate for a public office). Besides the reference to a political position, in this type of appositive constructions an indication to the private sphere of the politician is also common (for example: the personal role as a partner, a parent, a friend, as someone with particular habits, qualities, etc.).

After all, the descriptive value of this constituent seems to be the most important. So, as we already mentioned in a previous subsection, an attributional construction tends to be longer. The more descriptive content sometimes expresses a rather subjective meaning. The following example serves as an illustration:

- 13) El único que repitió los modos broncos fue **Frutos, el gran perdedor de la reciente Asamblea**. (EL PAÍS, 31/10/00, P. 36)

Regarding the descriptive part of the identificational constructions, we observe that the majority also refer to a professional role in society. For instance:

- 14) **Colin Powell, el secretario de estado norteamericano**, calificó de éxito el resultado obtenido [...]. (EL PAÍS, 25/10/03, P. 2)

6.3 Discourse function

In this last part we will discuss how and when the different kinds of predicational appositive constructions are used in the Spanish informative press. Since we compiled our own corpus, we have the complete articles and not only paragraphs³. This approach allows us to analyse how the referential process evolves in a text.

We decided to investigate the informative role of the different appositive constructions and tried to determine which types are preferably used to introduce new referents in a discourse and which are more likely to indicate given information. Therefore we distinguished between first appearances in a text and subsequent mentions to persons already introduced in the article. The results are presented in the next table:

³ At this point our empiric approach differs from most corpora-based studies, since they are mostly limited to fragments, paragraphs of texts, by using the Spanish on-line databases CREA or CORDE for instance.

TABLE 5 INFORMATIVE FUNCTION OF THE APPOSITIVE CONSTRUCTIONS				
	PAC of specification	PAC of attribution	PAC of identification	Total
Introduction in discourse	878 (95.0%)	118 (83.7%)	6 (46.2%)	1002
Subsequent mention	46 (5.0%)	23 (16.3%)	7 (53.8%)	76
Total	924 (100%)	141 (100%)	13 (100%)	1078

These figures show that to introduce new referents in a discourse the specificational appositive construction seems the most appropriate. For the attributional construction the first appearance is still the most frequent, but the percentage for further mentions is already higher. For the identificational appositive construction we can observe the opposite result. The increased use as a further mention could be explained by the fact that this construction needs to be contextually anchored, since this type often serves to remind the reader of the identity of the person named in the first appositive segment.

Regarding the specificational constructions, our corpus analysis showed that this type very often appears in the first sentence of an article. In long articles it is in the first sentence of the lead —the paragraph in bold which introduces and summarizes the article—, as in (15).

- 14) **El primer ministro de Marruecos, Abderramán Yussufi**, dejó muy claro ayer en Bruselas que su país no necesita un nuevo acuerdo pesquero con la Unión Europea. (EL PAÍS, 22/10/99, P. 78)

After this construction, the following references to the same person are realised by repetition of the proper name, generally the last name

alone (*Yussufi*), or his function as the Prime Minister of Morocco (*el primer ministro marroquí*).

The next fragment illustrates the use of an attributional construction as a second mention to a referent.

- 16) Todas las encuestas anunciaban la victoria **del actual presidente del Parlamento, Filip Vujanovic**, quien en la primera rueda de elecciones de diciembre obtuvo un 84% de votos. Ninguno de los otros candidatos había obtenido apoyo relevante del electorado en el primer intento de las elecciones. **Vujanovic, candidato del Partido Demócrata Socialista (DPS)**, ejerce además el cargo de jefe interino de la República [...].
(*EL PAÍS*, 10/02/03, P. 11)

In this extract, we are dealing with a first appearance to the referent by the means of a specificational construction and for the second appearance an attributional construction is used, which reveals another aspect of the person.

(17), finally, exemplifies the use of an identificational appositive construction:

- 17) “[...] aún no teníamos una red telefónica adecuada”, explica Luis Millán Vázquez de Miguel, el consejero de Educación, Ciencia y Tecnología de Extremadura.
(*EL PAÍS*, 17/03/03, P.35)

This construction appears as a second occurrence to the referent. For the first occasion a descriptive noun phrase was used: *el consejero de Educación de Extremadura*.

7 Conclusion

As a conclusion, we could state that our corpus-based study allows us to define for each type of appositive construction some specific properties and a preferred discourse role.

Schematically, the predicational appositive of specification can be described as follows:

PREDICATIONAL APPOSITIVE CONSTRUCTION OF SPECIFICATION

“el ministro de Trabajo, Eduardo Zaplana”

FIRST SEGMENT

- denoting element
- semantic reference

SECOND SEGMENT

- identifies a specific individual
- pragmatic reference

This construction is commonly used to introduce new referents in a discourse.

For the predicational appositive construction of attribution we present the following analysis:

PREDICATIONAL APPOSITIVE CONSTRUCTION OF ATTRIBUTION

“Recep Tayyip Erdogan, líder del Partido de la Justicia y el Desarrollo”

FIRST SEGMENT

- referential expression
- selects an individual

SECOND SEGMENT

- attributional expression
- assigns a property

In this construction the descriptive part occupies an important role in the text. It provides additional information on the person named in the first segment.

The predicational appositive construction of identification, finally, can be defined as follows:

PREDICATIONAL APPOSITIVE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTIFICATION

“Alex Salmond, su líder”

FIRST SEGMENT

- pragmatic reference
- selects an individual
- unknown referent

SECOND SEGMENT

- identifies the referent
- identificational predicate
- contextually anchored

This construction is rarely used in our press corpus. The most important aspect concerning this type is the requirement of a clear anchoring device towards preceding elements in the text or contextually evoked referents.

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