

A RE-EXAMINATION OF SPANISH ARTICLES
WITH THE AID OF SEMANTIC AND SYNTACTIC FEATURES

by

Dragoslav Jurisich

B. A., Simon Fraser University, 1968

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS
in the Department
of
Modern Languages

(C) DRAGOSLAV JURISICH 1969

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

April, 1969

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my gratitude to professor Edward A. Colhoun, whose direction and penetrating criticism were invaluable. Also many thanks to professors Frederick Candelaria, Trevor Hill, and Tai Whan Kim.

EXAMINING COMMITTEE APPROVAL

E. Colhoun
Senior Supervisor

T.W. Kim
Examining Committee

T. Hill
Examining Committee

F. Candelaria
Examining Committee

ABSTRACT

Three representative analyses of Spanish articles were chosen: A. Alonso's "Estilística y gramática del artículo en español", W.F. Bull's analysis in Spanish for Teachers: Applied Linguistics, and A. Llorach's "El artículo en español". These works were critically analysed and compared with each other. Although each analysis pretends to define the role of the Spanish articles, none of them succeeds in explaining fully what governs the use of the article in Spanish. This led me to assume that the use of the article cannot be fully explained within any framework of grammatical analysis without the aid of semantic and syntactic features. My analysis, therefore, concentrates on finding pertinent features that govern the article. The method used for establishing these features is a diagnostic comparison of well formed utterances.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	page
Introduction	1
1. Amado Alonso and the Spanish Articles.....	3
2. William Bull and the Spanish Articles.....	14
3. Allarcos Llorach and the Article in Spanish.....	20
4. Summary.....	22
5. The Article in Spanish--My Interpretation.....	24
6. Selected Bibliography.....	38
7. Bibliography.....	39

A RE-EXAMINATION OF SPANISH ARTICLES
WITH THE AID OF SEMANTIC AND SYNTACTIC FEATURES

The first part of this paper examines previous works on the Spanish articles, specifically those by Amado Alonso, William F. Bull, and Alarcos Llorach, with occasional reference to A. Bello. The second part, which is my own interpretation of the articles in Spanish, is the result of three assumptions basic to my analysis:

- a) The article's sole function is to put into common focus the subject of discourse of a, more or less, homogenous Spanish community.
- b) The articles in Spanish are governed by a bundle of semantic and syntactic features, which form part of the noun itself, and consequently are not constituents of the noun phrase. As a result they emerge only sometimes, as free morphs, in the final string of a derivation; i.e., zero article is marked by some feature, contained in the noun even at the surface structure.
- c) A noun, or a nominalized substantive, is defined by the very same features which govern articles.

Another assumption, less central to my analysis, is that dialectal variations depend on the absence or addition of a feature or features, or on a combination of features, not permissible in the Spanish spoken by Amado Alonso, Alarcos Llorach, or my Argentinian informant.

The assumptions are mine, but the train of my thoughts has been greatly influenced by the writers named above and by those who write within the framework of generative grammar. Especially helpful were certain works by David M. Perlmutter,¹ Paul M. Postal,² and M.M. Roldan.³

The method used for establishing pertinent features that govern the articles is a diagnostic comparison of well formed utterances.

¹David M. Perlmutter. "On the Article in English". Eric/Pegs Clearinghouse for Linguistics. Pegs no. 29. April 1968..

²Paul M. Postal. "On So Called 'Pronouns' in English". Edited by E.D. Dineen. 17th Annual Round Table No. 19, 1966.

³Maria de las Mercedes Roldan. "Ordered Rules for Spanish: Selected Problems of Syntactic Structure". Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Indiana University. 1965.

1. Amado Alonso and the Spanish Articles

Throughout his essay on the article⁴ Amado Alonso is busy destroying some old notions and terminology connected with the definite and indefinite article, especially those consecrated by the Royal Academy. He differs in opinion with previously accepted interpretations on several issues, but basically there are five points that stand out as radically different:

- 1.1 The status of the definite and indefinite articles
- 1.2 The function of the indefinite article
- 1.3 Common focus
- 1.4 what can and cannot be classified or introduced⁵
- 1.5 The use of the article (the definite article).

Each point will be treated separately in this section of the paper. To avoid cumbersome repetition, the definite article will be represented by El and the indefinite article by Un.

If I sometimes differ in opinion with Amado Alonso, the difference is in perspective and method, seldom in actual facts. His research on the article I hold in high esteem. Moreover, his interpretation is fundamental to my analysis.

⁴Amado Alonso, "Estilística y gramática del artículo en español", Estudios lingüísticos temas españoles, Editorial Gredos, Madrid, Second Edition, (1961).

⁵Terms classified and introduced are explained in Section 1.4.

1.1 The Status of the Definite and Indefinite Articles

Amado Alonso recognizes only one article, the definite one. Un is something else. El is not a determiner, and if it sometimes functions as such, it is only in its tertiary role. These claims are based on the following grounds:

1.1.1 Un is many times an indefinite pronoun, never an article.

1.1.2 Un is also a number.

1.1.3 Un is never opposed to El in the sense of determined-undetermined.

1.1.4 Un can be pluralized.

1.1.5 Un combines with the article, which would be impossible if Un were also an article.

1.1.6 Un can be pronominalized while El cannot.

I disagree with point 1.1.6 because of my view that neither Un nor El can be pronominalized. If a claim is made that

1. uno ha traído una carta (para usted),
someone brought a letter (for you)

derives from

2. un muchacho ha traído una carta,
a boy brought a letter

it is just as possible to say that

3. él ha traído una carta
he has brought a letter

derives from

4. el muchacho ha traído una carta,

the boy has brought a letter

where El is also pronominalized. Therefore, if it is maintained that the pronoun él is stressed while the definite article is always unstressed, the difference between the so-called masculine indefinite article un and the pronominalized uno can also be pointed out. My position on this point is that the pronoun stands for the whole noun phrase and not just for a part of it.

Point 1.1.5 is an historical relic rarely occurring in modern speech. Det + Pron + N is still heard in the Lords Prayer: ...el Tu nombre. Some native speakers who still teach their children to say "el Tu nombre", consider incorrect

5. el uno es tonto y el otro listo,

one is stupid, the other smart

and others would consider it acceptable. I assume that those who reject 5, consider uno as a pronoun, and those who accept it as a well formed sentence, consider uno as a nominalized substantive. If we now ask ourselves why they differ in usage, and this question should be asked, my answer is that they arrange the bundle of features differently.

Concerning point 1.1.4, unos will not be considered as a member or Un in this paper. Reasons for this are given in 5.2.

In 1.1.3 Amado Alonso claims that the only time Un is opposed to El is when the function of Un is to present or introduce an entity in the common focus. This function belongs to the technique of speech and has nothing to do with determination ~ undetermination. In agreement with Amado Alonso, I will not consider that the function of Un and El is the opposition of determined ~ undetermined, but that both are determiners of some kind.

The claim in 1.1.2 is logical, but Amado Alonso did not take time to substantiate it. Nevertheless, William F. Bull holds the same view (see 2.2.1), as does David M. Perlmutter,⁶ for the indefinite article in English. My analysis will be similar to that of W.F. Bull.

Regarding 1.1.1 I am in agreement with Amado Alonso, but for different reasons: Both Un and El are represented as articles only on the surface structures; otherwise they are represented by features (see section 5).

1.2 The Function of Un

According to Amado Alonso Un has two functions. The primary function is classification and the secondary is presentation or introduction. He presents us with a pair of sentences:

6. ¿Es eso una pitillera? ¡Que va a ser una pitillera!

Is this a cigarette case? It can't be a cigarette case!

⁶David M. Perlmutter. "On the Article in English". Eric/Pegs Clearinghouse for Linguistics. Pegs No. 29. April 1968.

His claim is that the speaker is classifying the object, establishing whether the object really belongs to the class pitillera. True, there is some kind of classifying going on in 6, but what really happens is that the object is so strangely shaped that the speaker, who, at the same time sees the object, cannot believe his eyes. This example given by Amado Alonso is mentioned here because it lends itself to William Bull's point of view (although he did not have this specific example in mind) that the bewilderment is caused because the entity is outside of common cultural context.⁷ Alarcos Llorach tacitly refuted this function, by using the same term for something else⁸ (see 3.5.2).

1.3 Common Focus

The only time when Un and El are used in contrast to each other is when the function of Un is to present or introduce an entity 'en la esfera común' (common focus). As soon as the object that can be classified is presented, Un cannot be used again. The common focus can be large, belonging to everybody, or narrow, pertaining to a closed social circle. Amado Alonso takes the family as an example.

⁷William F. Bull, Spanish for Teachers: Applied Linguistics, New York, Ronald Press, (1965).

⁸Emilio Alarcos Llorach, "El artículo en español", To Honor R. Jakobson, Janua Linguarum, Series MAIOR XXXI, The Hague-Paris (1967).

If a member of the family declares

7. compré una pala,

I bought a shovel

this shovel, if it is the only shovel in their possession, will henceforth be referred to as 'la pala'. It cannot be classified or introduced again with Un. If it is not the only shovel in their possession, it will be introduced in common focus at the first mention of the object, and from then on, if and while the focus is not interrupted, it will be identified with El.

Amado Alonso neglected to explain that it is possible to say about the same shovel:

8. es una pala muy buena para....

it's a very good shovel for....

In this case the speaker is actually taking the object out of common focus, and, perhaps subconsciously, is comparing it with other shovels. Therefore, he is 'classifying' it. The emphasis felt in 8, is a concomitant feature of the features that govern Un.

In this paper the common focus will be essentially the same as that proposed by Amado Alonso, but represented differently.

1.4 What Can and Cannot be Classified or Introduced

In this part of the essay, Amado Alonso explains why some things are identified before ever being classified.

1.4.1 Un can classify only entities but not matter:

9. eso es agua
that's water

10. eso es un libro
that's a book

1.4.2. A unique entity, present or absent, cannot be classified, but it must be identified:

11. el sol
the sun

The interrogative sentence

12. ¿Qué tienes en la mano?

What do you have in your hand?

can be answered either as 12' or 12"

12' un libro (classification, i.e. not a pencil)
a book

12" la gramática de Bello (El = identification)
Bello's grammar

12" cannot be classified because it is the only grammar that Bello wrote.

While classifying persons we can either use or omit Un:

13. ¿Qué eres? Soy soldado.
What are you? I am a soldier.

14. ¿Quién eres? Soy un soldado.
Who are you? I am a soldier.

But if we are referring to entities, Un is obligatory:

15. La parker es una pluma

*The parker is a pen

Parker is the name of a pen

We cannot say

15' *La parker es pluma

*The parker is pen

Bello, in his grammar §856,⁹ observes that Un is often emphatic. Amado Alonso considers this as an accidental feature, never primary. The presence of Un points to the individual, and the absence of Un to the category of the individual:

16. Es un emperador, (classifies the individual)

He is an emperor

17. Es emperador, (points to his role in the society)

He is an emperor

English speakers possess the same type of mechanism, but the contrast in meaning is sharper:

16' Es un rey, (classifies the individual)

He is a king (not a prince)

17' es rey (points to his role in the society, but he is still a king)

He is king (not a person of royal blood, but simply the number one man)

⁹ Andres Bello - Rufino J. Cuervo, Gramática de la lengua castellana, Editorial Sopena, Argentina, S.A., Bs. As., Séptima edición, (1964).

1.4.3 The generic cannot be classified:

18. El perro es el amigo del hombre

The dog is man's friend

Amado Alonso does not consider as generic sentences like

19. Un hombre cauto no acomete empresas superiores a sus fuerzas

A cautious man's grasp does not exceed his reach

Un in this case points to an individual who represents the type in question. I consider both sentences generic. In fact, there are generic sentences with the definite, indefinite, and zero article:

20. La mujer que no resista la mirada de nuestro padre es mujer pecadora

21. Una mujer que no resista la mirada de nuestro padre es mujer pecadora

22. Mujer que no resista la mirada de nuestro padre es mujer pecadora

A woman who cannot look our father in the eye is a sinner

Consider further

23. Nosotros decimos cocinar y ustedes dicen cocer

We say cocinar 'to cook' and you say cocer 'to cook'

where nosotros and ustedes seem also generic: ustedes could stand for the Spanish speakers from Spain and nosotros, say, for Argentinians. My point of view is that the meaning of generic is not carried either

in the article or in the word itself, but that it is derived from the context.

1.4.4 Matter cannot be classified because in its essence it is not composed of entities that can be classified:

24. El oro es mas valioso que la plata

Gold is more valuable than silver

If we can sometimes say

25. Ésta es una plata de baja aleación

This is an alloy with a small proportion of silver

it is only because by mixing silver with different metals, in different proportions, that we get different qualities of silver, entities that can now be classified as good, better, worse, etc. The matter requires the presence or absence of the article, depending on whether we think of the matter as a unique entity or as a category.

1.5 The Use of the Article

The article in Spanish forms a system that has nothing to do with Un, but rather with the presence and absence of the definite article, El ~ \emptyset .

26. El hombre parecía fatigado

The man appeared to be tired

27. El hombre es mortal

Man is mortal

28. No es hombre quien se porta así

A man does not behave like this

In 26 El with the noun presents an individual, a person. In 27 El points to mankind itself. In 28 the absence of the article refers neither to the single individual nor to the whole generic group, but to the qualities that are expected to be found in any human being. The noun with the definite article circumscribes the existing palpable or abstract entities. The noun without the article refers to our subjective valuation.

29. ¿Sabes que nuestro amigo Juan ha comprado
automóvil?

Do you know that our friend Juan bought
a car?

The speaker is talking not about the object itself but about the category that may change Juan's way of life. If Juan already had a car the speaker could not attach that much importance to the event and he would be forced to say 'un automóvil' or 'otro automóvil'. In other words the word 'automóvil' without the article is not a real object, but a category subjectively assigned. Finally, abstract entities are treated exactly the same way as the palpable ones.

2. William Bull, and the Spanish Articles¹⁰

2.1 The definite and indefinite article are mathematically opposed as:

2.1.1 definite = unique

2.1.2 indefinite = partitive

2.2 Bull's claim is that the orientation of both Spanish and English speakers depends on public and private numbers.

2.2.1 Public numbers are one, two, three, etc.
(cardinal numbers).

2.2.2 Private numbers are 'some', 'all', plural suffix, etc.

2.3 All numbers, if not determined by the definite article are partitive, except, todos 'all'

30. unos estudiantes salieron premiados (some of many)

some students were honored

31. tres estudiantes salieron premiados (three of many)

three students were honored

32. los tres estudiantes salieron premiados (all the students from this group)

the three students were honored

2.4 The definite article indicates totality in three ways:

2.4.1 A total group the three students

¹⁰William F. Bull, Spanish for Teachers: Applied Linguistics, New York, Ronald Press, (1965).

2.4.2 A generic whole ' the dog barks

2.4.3 A unique entity the sun

Therefore the definite article stands in contrast with all numbers, including the indefinite article.

2.5 With such a division in mind the speaker and hearer must agree on three fundamental things before they can communicate:

2.5.1 What is the subject of discourse,

2.5.2 the number under consideration,

2.5.3 if the number under consideration is total or partitive.

Only when all three have been agreed upon are the facts in common focus. The speaker must initiate the common focus and either maintain it or shift to another entity or entities.

The subject of discourse is defined by the noun stem, the number by the number suffix, and whether a number is partitive or not by the presence or absence of the definite article.

2.6 Clues to the hearer are:

2.6.1 the universe of discourse,

2.6.2 the shared experience of the speaker and hearer,

and

2.6.3 their shared knowledge and common cultural heritage.

Under direct and mutual observation the definite article and the demonstratives perform exactly the same function. In other words, if something can be pointed to, it carries the definite article without first introducing it with the indefinite article. So, some entities are in common focus even before speaking.

2.7 When the subject of discourse is not present, and therefore cannot be mutually observed, the noun may refer to:

- 2.7.1 one unique,
- 2.7.2 a restricted total,
- 2.7.3 a generic whole.

If there is mutual observation, each entity is unique. Abstracts, of course, cannot be observed and the interpretation depends on context, shared experience and knowledge.

Once we know how Spaniards organize the universe of discourse, the use of the articles can be easily explained.

2.8 Spaniards consistently make unique entities with the definite article: el rey 'the king', el presidente 'the president', el sereno 'the night watchman', and the speaker assumes that the hearer knows without introduction that there is only one 'sereno' on the job.

Next, the uniqueness depends on the closeness of a group (family, club, team, etc.). Man and wife can refer to their personal possessions with the definite article:

33. ¿Dónde está el coche?

Where is the car?

The same question directed to an unknown person would be nonsensical, since the speaker and the hearer do not share common focus.

2.9 Spaniards consistently mark generic totality in singular and in plural

34. Me gustan los huevos.

I like eggs.

The unique, generic and restricted are in contrast with all numbers. When there is no previous mutual experience, unshared entities and unshared numbers are indicated either by the unmodified noun or by a number (the indefinite article and any other number, public or private).

35. Veo al niño allí (shared focus)

I see the child there

36. Veo un niño allí (unshared focus)

I see a child there

2.10 The initiation of common focus informs the hearer about two things:

2.10.1 There was no previous shared experience of the entity or entities in question, and

2.10.2 Number morpheme indicates that a previously unconsidered entity has been introduced into conversation.

Unfamiliar becomes immediately familiar and unique, and the definite article is then obligatory. It is now perfectly clear that what is determined is not the substance but the number of the noun phrase in question.

2.11 Next, Bull introduces the four primary functions of the noun which must be known if the correct article is to be used.

2.11.1 A noun is used simply as a label

37. Hoy es domingo

Today is Sunday

2.11.2 A noun is used as a modifier of another noun

38. zapatos de niño

children's shoes

2.11.3 A noun is used as an adverbial modifier

39. ir a pie

to walk

2.11.4 A noun is used as a symbol for an objective entity:

40. auto

car

In the first three cases the noun has no number and cannot be modified

37' *hoy es lindo domingo

*today is nice Sunday

38' *zapatos de niño sucio

*children's shoes dirty or *dirty children's shoes

39' *ir de pie pequeño

untranslatable

2.12 The articles can apply only to nouns that are used as symbols for objective entities. Moreover, nouns

are used as labels for all three persons.¹¹ When the noun is used with the article, or with any other modifier belonging to the same set, it is automatically in the third person. Since the direct address isn't in third person the article is omitted:

40. ¡Gatito, ven acá!

Come here, kitty!

41. ¡Montañas, no me la escondan!

Mountains, don't hide her from me!

2.13 If someone is addressed directly in third person for some special reason, the definite article must be used:

42. ¡La señora no quiere sopa?

The lady does not want soup?

2.14 An unmodified plural noun may initiate common focus:

43. ¿Qué compraste? Compré camisas.

What did you buy? I bought shirts.

Plural suffix is more than one and less than all, and therefore, does not contradict the previous rules. Singular is considered by Bull, in this analysis, as mathematically neutral (zero number), and as such it can be out of the number realm.

2.15 A measureable entity (i.e. mass nouns) cannot be modified by a number:

¹¹First, second and third person, singular or plural.

44. me falta harina

I don't have any flour

45. necesito agua

I need water

Bull's explanation is especially appealing because it gives the overall description of the system. His interpretation of the organization of the discourse (Discourse is used here as: the faculty of thinking consecutively and logically and also as the art or manner of conversing) is used as the starting point for my interpretation, but we do not always coincide. One of the divergent points is the treatment of 'generic' (the reasons are given in 1.4.3).

3. Alarcos Llorach and the Article in Spanish¹²

Alarcos Llorach considers Un outside of the article system for the same reasons as Amado Alonso. For him there are two articles in Spanish:

3.1 The article of positive value /+article/ which is represented by el, la, lo, los, las.

3.2 The article of negative value /-article/ which is represented by /+zero/.

Zero article is an identifier only and it is indifferent to the number.

¹²Emilio Alarcos Llorach, 'El artículo en español', To Honor R. Jakobson, Janua Linguarum, Series MAIOR XXXI, The Hague-Paris (1967).

46. ¿Tiene auto? Si, tiene tres.

Does he have a car? Yes, he has three.

3.3 Next, he subdivides nouns in two groups

3.3.1 Continuous field (campo contínuo) which would correspond to mass nouns, and

3.3.2 Discontinuous field (campo discontinuo) which corresponds to count nouns.

3.4 The proper noun, with or without the article, carries in itself the values which the article assigns to the common noun.

3.5 With this in mind he makes yet another bipartite division of nouns:

3.5.1 The noun without the article is only an identifier:

46. ¿Tiene auto? Si, tiene tres.

Does he have a car? Yes, he has three.

47. bebo vino

I drink wine

3.5.2 The noun with the article and the proper noun are classifiers:

48. bebo el vino

I drink wine

the proper noun can substitute /+article + noun/ but not /-article + noun/.

Observe

49. son juguetes de niño

these are children's toys

50. son juguetes del niño
these are the child's toys

50' son juguetes de Juanito
these are Juan's toys

3.6 Yet another division was necessary to explain the whole system:

3.6.1 the bound morpheme singular

3.6.2 the bound morpheme plural

Continuous field (mass noun) in the singular indicates the unity of the field. Pluralized continuous field indicates that the field is subdivided. With the discontinuous field, plural implies that there is a certain number of countable entities, and singular indicates the indifference to number. The role of Un is to express the negative value or the singular count noun.

3.7 Finally, Alarcos Llorach treats generic as a product of predication and not of the article. Observe

51. El hombre es mortal

Man is mortal

52. El hombre entró en la casa

The man entered the house

Although 51 is generic and 52 is not, the article modifying the subject is the same in both sentences.

4. Summary

All three writers, in the works discussed above, deny the status of the article to Un. The crucial question

is: what is the so-called indefinite article, and what is its function? For Amado Alonso Un is a classifier and introducer; for Bull Un is a number and therefore 'partitive' (all numbers are partitive, since the number indicates a part of a whole). Alarcos Llorach assigns the same status and function to Un as Amado Alonso.

Regarding the definite article, Amado Alonso considers it a weakened demonstrative (which is historically correct), and leaves it at that. Its function is to 'circumscribe' entities, and to indicate that an entity is already in common focus. Bull does the same thing, only he names it 'unique', and contrasts it with all 'private and public numbers', which are 'partitive' (except the private number all, which indicates totality). Then he states what are the four primary functions of the noun, and assigns the article to nouns used as 'symbols for objective entities' and to nouns that are in 'third person' (vocative is in second person and cannot be used with the definite article). For Alarcos Llorach the noun without the article is an 'identifier'. The proper noun and the noun with the definite article are 'classifiers'. The identifier can be changed to classifier if it is used with the definite article.

When Amado Alonso writes about 'classifiers', 'introducers', and 'valuation', or when Bull states that the definite article indicates 'uniqueness', they are using

words that sharply define expressed thoughts. The question is, how can we define in words a word that has almost lost its meaning? It is my contention that the discrepancy of opinions and the failure to give satisfactory and complete explanation lies in the fact that sharply defined words are not sufficient to explain articles, and that the answer is to be found instead in bundles of semantic and syntactic features.

5. The Article in Spanish--My Interpretation

My treatment of the article in Spanish is partly composed of borrowed, but modified, ideas. The first task will be to explain how Spanish speakers communicate orally among themselves. Before a meaningful discourse can occur, that which is to be communicated must be organized in some fashion. The speaker and the hearer must possess the same type of organization if they are to belong to the same language group. They must have not only the same lexicon, but also the same outlook.

For example,

53. ¿Sabes qué Juan ha comprado automóvil?

Do you know that Juan bought (a) car?

is a statement totally conditioned by the economic situation. If the speaker and the hearer were to live in some country where the ownership of a car isn't anything out of the ordinary, no special valuation could be given to

it; it should be simply a purchase, not an event, and the output would have to be

54. ¿Sabes qué Juan ha comprado un automóvil?

Do you know that Juan bought a car?

The subjective valuation is still possible but not with that particular item. Moreover if 53 is used in some opulent closed society, the sentence may even be interpreted as ironic.

The following organization of discourse is borrowed from William F. Bull (see Section 2).

5.1 In order to be able to understand each other the speaker and the hearer must possess:

5.1.1 the same lexicon,

5.1.2 shared experience,

5.1.3 shared knowledge and common cultural heritage.

5.2 These three commonly possessed points of orientation Spaniards organize with a system based on private and public numbers.

5.2.1 Public numbers are uno 'one', dos 'two', tres 'three', etc. (i.e., cardinal numbers)

5.2.2 Private numbers are uno/unos 'one/some/a few', algunos 'some', plural marker, todo 'every/each/all', todos 'all/every'

All numbers are partitive except todo/todos when indicating totality (to make it clearer, when todo/todos translate as 'all').

The definite article El (which is realized as *el*, *la*, *los*, *las*, and *lo*), as will be seen in this chapter is assigned the feature of uniqueness. Private partitive numbers cannot be combined with the feature of uniqueness.

5.2.3 The subject of discourse is defined by the noun stem, the number, by numbers, and number marker (bound plural morpheme). Without the definite article the noun with the number is partitive; with it, it becomes unique. Since the number 'one' belongs to both public and private numbers, it cannot combine with the definite article because the language does not admit [+unique] + [+private] in the same bundle of features. Observe

- 55. comí una manzana, y quedan dos (partitiveness)
I ate one apple and two are left
- 56. comí dos manzanas, y quedan dos (partitiveness)
I ate two apples and two are left
- 57. comí las dos manzanas (uniqueness)
I ate both apples or I ate the two apples
- 57' *comí las dos manzanas, y quedan dos
*I ate the two apples, and two are left
- 58. *comí la una manzana
*I ate the one apple
- 58' comí la manzana (uniqueness)
I ate the apple
- 58" *comí la manzana, y quedan dos
*I ate the apple, and two are left

57' and 58" are impossible because if something that is unique is consumed, nothing is left over. Number 58 is incorrect because two [+unique] features (one from la and one from una) cannot occur together. The [+unique] feature pertaining to the definite article is stronger because it designates the unique total while Un is only the unique partitive.

The formula can be presented as

[+unique total] + [+unique partitive] → [+unique total]
and the formula will generate 58'.

Since these features are not considered binary, they could be left unmarked, but the plus sign will be used, since, in the final analysis, they will have to be used in bundles containing binary features. Also, the absence of a feature may have to be indicated by its negative value.

5.4 Spanish speakers must also know before initiating conversation

- 5.4.1 what the subject of discourse is,
- 5.4.2 the number in consideration,
- 5.4.3 whether a number is total or partitive, public or private.

Only when all three are present are the facts in common focus. Things that are considered unique regardless of whether they were or were not previously introduced in common focus are always used with the definite article:

59. la luna 'the moon', el presidente 'the president', el sereno 'the night watchman', etc.

Uniqueness is a relative notion in the sense that it depends on whether the uniqueness pertains to an open social group, or a closed social circle, i.e., family, clubs, political parties, etc. Amado Alonso's example with la pala illustrates this point well (see 1.3). The same can occur in less homogenous groups: At a church picnic the participants would refer to their children

60. los chicos juegan bien
the children are playing well

and not

61. unos chicos juegan bien
some children play well or some children
are playing well

although otherwise that would be a well formed sentence.

If someone should ask about the same group of children

62. ¿Cómo juegan los niños?

How are the children playing?

the answer could be

63. Unos chicos juegan bien, pero los otros...!
Some children are playing well, but the
others...!

In this case the common focus is dismembered, and since unos is a private number it cannot combine with El. One or the other must be chosen, depending on what we want

to say. We cannot say

60' *los chicos juegan bien, pero los otros chicos....!

*the children are playing well, but the other children....!

since we spoke about all children and there are no others that concern us. We could, nevertheless, say

60" Los chicos juegan bien, pero los otros....!

The children are playing well, but the others.....!

In this case we are comparing the total group of children with the other picnickers.

If entities are not in common focus before speaking they must be introduced with Un. Once the entity is introduced in common focus, the speaker and hearer can either maintain or drop it. Once the common focus is lost it must be initiated again. If we can point to something, that object can be spoken of with either the demonstrative adjective or the definite article, without any introduction.¹³ Demonstratives, therefore, belong to the common focus, and are also related to the feature of pointing.

Now consider

59. el presidente

the president

64. Juan

Juan (proper noun)

¹³It is interesting that blind people hardly ever use demonstratives, and as a consequence employ the indefinite article very often (from a personal observation in a chess club). The same thing likely occurs in Spanish.

Both are unique but 59 is with the definite article and 64 is without it. Proper nouns are often called 'labels', especially by those who write within the framework of tagmemics. Since Juan is just a name, it is devoid of number and it is unique without being total or partitive.

Now we have three types of uniqueness:

5.4.4 +unique proper noun

5.4.5 +unique total El + N

5.4.6 +unique partitive Un + N

This can be presented with a scale of strength where strength 1 is the weakest.¹⁴

5.4.7 Strength: $\frac{\text{Un}}{1} \quad \frac{\text{El}}{2} \quad \frac{\text{Proper noun}}{3} \rightarrow$

[+strength 3] is the strongest and eliminates the possibility of occurrence of the other two. [+Strength 2] is stronger than [+strength 1] and the same thing happens.

Proper nouns will be considered in this paper as [+unique 3] and the nouns used with the definite article as [+unique 2].

In this analysis el niño is not directly substitutable by Juanito as Alarco Llorach suggested in 50 and 50'.

Observe:

67. la ropa de obrero

work clothes

¹⁴The idea of scaled strength is borrowed from J. Foley. It is used by Foley in his unpublished work on phonology.

68. la ropa del obrero
the workman's clothes

69. la ropa de Juan
Juan's clothes

Direct substitution of el obrero in 68 by Juan in 69 could only result from the desire to condense two facts in one, i.e.

70. la ropa es de obrero, y Juan es obrero
these are work clothes, and Juan is a worker

The change from 68 to 69 requires two steps: addition and deletion

71. la ropa del obrero Juan
the clothes belonging to the worker, Juan
which is, 68 plus Juan, and deletion can be applied in 71 to either Juan or el obrero.

If Juan were not a worker the apparent substitution could not occur without a loss of meaning:

72. la ropa es de obrero, y la ropa es de Juan
these are work clothes, and the clothes are Juan's

which would give us

73. la ropa de obrero (es) de Juan
the work clothes are Juan's

If the speaker wishes to use

$\left[\begin{array}{l} +\text{unique} \\ +\text{strenght } 3 \end{array} \right]$ as $\left[\begin{array}{l} +\text{unique} \\ +\text{strength } 2 \end{array} \right]$,

he is free to do so, but not without modifying it:

74. Él es el Napoleón mismo

He is the Napoleon incarnated

Modification can change

$\begin{bmatrix} +\text{unique} \\ +\text{strength } 3 \end{bmatrix}$ as $\begin{bmatrix} +\text{unique} \\ +\text{strength } x \end{bmatrix}$

(where $x \leq 2$)¹⁵

75. Es el Napoleón de nuestro siglo

He is the Napoleon of our century

76. Él es un Napoleón de nuestro siglo

He is a Napoleon of our century

Since modification requires automatically

$\begin{bmatrix} +\text{unique} \\ +\text{strength } x \leq 2 \end{bmatrix}$

we must add another feature to our list:

5.4.8 $\begin{bmatrix} +\text{modifier} \end{bmatrix}$

now we have

$\begin{bmatrix} +\text{unique} \\ +\text{strength } 3 \\ +\text{modifier} \end{bmatrix} \longrightarrow \begin{bmatrix} +\text{unique} \\ +\text{strength } x \leq 2 \end{bmatrix}$

It is also possible to convert a noun that is

$\begin{bmatrix} +\text{unique} \\ +\text{strength } 2 \end{bmatrix}$ to $\begin{bmatrix} +\text{unique} \\ +\text{strength } 1 \end{bmatrix}$

Observe

11. el sol

the sun

11' ¡Eres un sol!

*you are a sun (you are my sunshine (?))

¹⁵where x is equal or smaller than 2

By using a metaphor we can change the unique total to unique private partitive. This feature will be named

5.4.9 [+personifier]

and the change is effected like this:

$$\begin{bmatrix} +\text{unique} \\ +\text{strength } 2 \\ +\text{personifier} \end{bmatrix} \longrightarrow \begin{bmatrix} +\text{unique} \\ +\text{strength } 1 \end{bmatrix}$$

To avoid writing the strength feature we can simply write [+unique 1], [+unique 2] or [+unique 3] each number marking respective strength value. Unique 3 can be directly converted to [+unique 1]:¹⁶

77. es un Hitler

he is a Hitler

The generic feature is unnecessary for our analysis (see 1.4.3); the meaning of generic is derived from the context. The speaker hardly ever utters an ambiguous sentence; he says what he means. The sentence is rarely detected as ambiguous by the hearer, but he may interpret it wrongly:

78. el hombre parece fatigado

a) the man seems tired

b) man seems tired

¹⁶The speaker has the power to invent, but only by using the mechanism readily understood by the hearer. A person in the process of learning a new language, often makes the mistake of using his own mechanism in the new language. For instance, the direct translation of 'll' makes no sense in English.

Any Spaniard will, as a 'first choice, interpret 78 as (a) but if the discourse was on a philosophical level, he would just as easily get the meaning of 78 (b). In order to interpret 78 correctly the hearer must consider the linguistic context in which el hombre is found, or the situational context may be such that meaning is obvious.

Consider

79. Reyes lo adoraron [a Cristo] como rey que es de los reyes.

The kings adored him [the Christ] since he is the king of kings.

Los reyes is

+unique	2
+plural	
+animate	
+human	
etc.	

 but only [+unique 2] and [+plural]

are pertinent features to my analysis. Since some nouns lack either singular or plural (i.e. cólera 'anger', vejez 'old age' have no plural, and enaguas 'petticoat', gafas 'glasses' have no singular),¹⁷ and because the change from singular to plural sometimes changes the meaning (i.e. alfiler 'pin', alfileres 'pin money', corte 'court', cortes 'Spanish parliament'), these features seem necessary for this type of analysis:

5.4.10 [+singular]

5.4.11 [+plural]

¹⁷It would be perhaps better to say that they rarely appear in both singular and plural. Enagua is seldom heard.

Reyes in 79 is $\begin{bmatrix} +\text{unique } 3 \\ +\text{plural} \\ +\text{valuation} \end{bmatrix}$

when a noun is converted from $\begin{bmatrix} +\text{unique } 2 \end{bmatrix}$ to $\begin{bmatrix} +\text{unique } 3 \end{bmatrix}$ (that is, los reyes to reyes) strength is added to the meaning. This conversion indicates that a subjective valuation was in process, hence

5.4.12 $\begin{bmatrix} +\text{valuation} \end{bmatrix}$

now we have a conversion

$$\begin{bmatrix} +\text{unique } 2 \\ +\text{valuation} \end{bmatrix} \longrightarrow \begin{bmatrix} +\text{unique } 3 \end{bmatrix}$$

The matter, as has already been seen in 1.4.4, is never +unique 1, that is if we refer to the pure matter. This is so because they are, as Alarco Llorach calls them, words 'de campo contiguo' (or as Christophersen¹⁸ named them, continue words, which is approximately the same as mass nouns).

The matter is usually $\begin{bmatrix} +\text{unique } 2 \\ +\text{singular} \end{bmatrix}$

but if it is said that a thing is made of something then we have

$$\begin{bmatrix} +\text{unique } 2 \\ +\text{singular} \end{bmatrix} \longrightarrow \begin{bmatrix} +\text{unique } 3 \\ +\text{singular} \end{bmatrix}$$

This change is not different from the one in 79:

80. una silla de madera
a wooden chair

¹⁸Paul Christophersen. The Article: A Study of Their Theory and Use in English. (Copenhagen-London 1939).

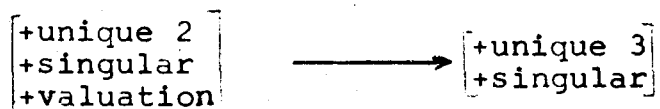
81. eso es oro

this is gold

17. es emperador

he is an emperor

Utterances 80, 81, and 17 are the result of the same process:



If a subdivision is made, then, of course, we can have

25. ésta es una plata de baja aleación

this is an alloy with a small portion
of silver

which can now be subdivided into good, bad, cheap,
expensive, etc.

5.5 Certain nouns have different meanings as they
vary in gender¹⁹

el corte 'the cut' but la corte 'the court, metropolis'

el capital 'capital (money)' but la capital 'the
capital (city)'

Since the gender sometimes causes the difference in
meaning, two more features are needed

5.5.1 [+masculine]

5.5.2 [+feminine]

¹⁹These examples were taken from M. M. Ramsey -
R.K. Spaulding, A Textbook of Modern Spanish. Holt,
Rinehart and Winston (copyright 1894). New York (1963).

The so-called neuter form of the article, lo, is used only before adjectives. Its function is said to be nominalization. My assumption is that any word that is nominalized adds to the existing bundles of features, features that every noun must have: [+unique] , [+strength] and either [+masculine] or [+feminine]. If a word contains all these features except [+strength] it automatically converts, at the surface level, the masculine article el and the feminine article la to the so called neuter article lo.

With this, the list of features is complete. No other features are needed for description and explanation of the article in Spanish.

List of Features

Semantic and Syntactic Features

- 1 [+unique]
- 2 [+strength 1]
- 3 [+strength 2]
- 4 [+strength 3]
- 5 [+singular]
- 6 [+plural]
- 7 [+modifier]
- 8 [+masculine]
- 9 [+feminine]

Semantic Features

- 10 [+personifier]
- 11 [+valuation]

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHYBooks and Articles Mentioned in the Text

- Alonso, Amado. "Estilística y gramática del artículo en español". Estudios lingüísticos, temas españoles. Editorial Gredos, segunda edición, Madrid (1961).
- Bello, Andres - Cuervo, Rufino J. Gramática de la lengua castellana. Editorial Sopena, Argentina S.A., Bs. As. Séptima edición (1964)
- Bull, William F. Spanish for Teachers: Applied Linguistics. New York, Ronald Press, (1965)
- Christophersen, Paul. The Article: A Study of Their Theory and Use in English. Copenhagen-London (1939).
- Llorach, Emilio Alarcos. "El artículo en español". To Honor R. Jakobson. Janua Linguorum, Series MAIOR XXXI. Mouton, The Hague-Paris (1967). pp. 18 - 24.
- Ramsey, Marathon Montrose - Spaulding, R. K. A Text-book of Modern Spanish. Holt, Rinehart and Winston (copyright 1894). New York (1963).

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

- Alonso, Amado. "Estilística y gramática del artículo en español". Estudios lingüísticos, temas españoles. Editorial Gredos, segunda edición, Madrid (1961).
- _____. Gramática castellana. Segundo curso 7a edición. Editorial Losada S.A., Bs. As. (1947)
- Bello, Andres - Cuervo, Rufino J. Gramática de la lengua castellana. Editorial Sopena, Argentina, S.A., Bs. As. Séptima edición (1964).
- Bull, William F. Spanish for Teachers: Applied Linguistics. New York, Ronald Press, (1965).
- Chafe, Wallace. "Language as Symbolization", Language 43, (1967). pp. 57 - 91.
- Christophersen, Paul. The Article: A Study of Their Theory and Use in English. Copenhagen-London (1939).
- Filmore, Charles. "The Case for Case". Universals in Linguistic Theory. Eds. Emmon Bach and Robert Harms, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, (1968). pp. 1 - 88
- Goldin, Mark G. Spanish Case and Function. Georgetown University, (1968).
- Hill, Archibald A. "A Re-examination of the English Articles". Monograph Series on Language and Linguistics, No. 19. (1969). pp. 217 - 231.
- Javens, Charles. "A Study of Old Spanish Syntax: The Fifteenth Century". An unpublished doctoral dissertation, The University of North Carolina, (1965)
- Jespersen, Otto. Essentials of the English Grammar. London, (1933)

- Llorach, Emilio Alarcos. "El artículo en español".
To Honor R. Jakobson. Janua Linguorum, Series
MAIOR XXXI. Mouton, The Hague-Paris (1967).
- de Nebrija, A. Gramatica castellana (1492). Edición
crítica de Pascual Galindo Romeo y Luis Ortiz
Muñoz, Madrid, (1946).
- Perlmutter, David. "On the Article in English".
Eric/Pegs Clearinghouse for Linguistics, Pegs
No. 29. April 1968. Washington, D.C.
- Postal, Paul M. "On So Called 'Pronouns' in English".
Edited by E.D. Dineen. 17th Annual Round Table
No. 19. (1966). pp. 177-206.
- Ramsey, Marathon Montrose - Spaulding, R.K. A Textbook
of Modern Spanish. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
(copyright 1894). New York (1963).
- Roldan, Maria de las Mercedes. "Ordered Rules for
Spanish: Selected Problems of Syntactic Structure".
An unpublshed doctoral dissertation. Indiana
University. (1965).