

The Effect of Frequency on the Loss of Split-Intransitivity in Old Spanish

Aranovich's (2003) study of split-intransitivity in Old Spanish from a diachronic viewpoint argues for a semantic treatment of split-intransitivity. In this study, Aranovich proposes the Semantic Displacement Hypothesis (SDH), which states "In the diachronic development of the Spanish perfect auxiliary system, the closer the subject is to being a prototypical patient, the longer the predicate resists the displacement of *ser* by *haber*" (Aranovich 2003:11). Aranovich's study does not take into account another possible factor that could have influenced the ability of a verb to resist displacement: frequency. Aranovich himself points frequency out as a possible alternative or a complementary approach to his analysis. This presentation reports on an empirical study using the one hundred million word Corpus del español to investigate if frequency played a role in explaining the progressive loss of a split-intransitive system in Spanish and concludes that both Aranovich's semantic classes proposed in his treatment and frequency are needed to more adequately explain the phenomenon that some verbs were able to maintain their ability to combine with *ser* as an auxiliary longer than others.

Aranovich, R. (2003). The Semantics of Auxiliary Selection in Old Spanish. *Studies in Language* 27:1, 1-37.