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## **ADVERJECTIVES IN SPANISH?**

An English speaker knows that to describe or modify nouns and verbs, at least according to its prescriptive grammar rules, we use adjectives and adverbs respectively. To describe the intensity of a football game, you may say “*the game (noun) was intense (adjective). The players played (verb) intensely (adverb).*” In contrast, if you said “*the game was intensely. The players played intense,*” you would know that something is *off*, i.e. in spoken English too, we conform to the aforementioned rule.

Interestingly enough, while Spanish does prescribe the same rule, especially in its teaching grammars, it does not care for it nearly as much. Spanish is my 4<sup>th</sup> language, in which I am conversationally fluent, and I learnt Spanish in a language course in Spain, where I was prescribed this same rule. However, an interaction with Jesica, a native Spanish speaker, revealed the following —

**“viniste (verb) directamente (adverb)?” “Sí, vine (verb) directo (adjective)”**

**[bmiste ðiræktamænte] [si: bine ðiræktol]**

**“Did you come directly? Yes, I came direct.”**

Upon consulting her on this topic, I learnt that it is not only acceptable but also common practice to use adjectives to modify verbs in spoken Spanish! Here, I hypothesize that if this trend is present in spoken Spanish, it is primarily applicable to solely native speakers. To verify the presence of this trend and my hypothesis, I spoke to a set of native speakers and a set of 2<sup>nd</sup> language Spanish speakers (with considerable experience).

When asked about which of the two options — *directamente* and *directo* — they would use to modify the verb *venir* (to come) in conversation, these were the outcomes —

- a) Natives — Jesica (Mexico), Mikel (Spain), Amelia (Ecuador), Sara (Colombia) — confirm that they would use either of the two. In fact, Jesica and Amelia claimed that they specifically preferred using “directo”, the adjective, with the verb.
- b) 2<sup>nd</sup> language speakers — Meghan (USA), Sofia (USA), myself (India), gloria (USA) — the first 3 were in consensus that they would only use *directamente*. Gloria was unsure which was correct but said “probably *directamente*.” Interestingly, Meghan (300-level Spanish), unprompted from my side, identified that the adverb must be used for the verb.

Upon probing further into the specificities of the two phrases, I noted that all of the natives know the grammatical classes of these words. So, the cause of this usage is not a lack of knowledge regarding the specific grammatical classes. Mikel said that specifically while writing, he would stick to using only “directamente (adverb)” But, he would use either while speaking — given that spoken language is usually less prescriptive than written language.

This illustrates the point that native speakers acquire a language based on its usage and not according to the prescriptive or teaching grammar. In contrast, 2<sup>nd</sup> language speakers learn more “*grammatically*” or “*syntactically*” and construct the language accordingly. It also demonstrates an important point about linguistic competence and linguistic performance.

Acquired speakers seem to be more restricted to the realm of linguistic competence, given that they have learnt to speak the language from scratch using the teaching grammars. Their language production is subsumed by teaching grammar rules. However, a native can access the differences in linguistic competence and performance of certain constructs or rules, such as discussed in this observation, with much more ease — things that an acquired speaker would have to learn through conversational experience, things that no Spanish textbook teaches.

To conclude, an important characteristic act of the demographic of my data set is the variety of Spanish speaking countries represented. The tendency to use adjectives instead of adverbs to modify verbs seems to be a universal pattern rather than colloquial to a specific region. My understanding of this modification is that it is simply less arduous to articulate adjectives in Spanish, given that the derivational morpheme for adjectives (*-o / -a*) is much shorter than that of adverbs (*-amente*).