

Negation and Spanish zero event deverbal nominals

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This paper deals with the interaction of negation with Spanish zero deverbal nominals that refer to an event (e. g. *ataque* ‘attack’, *descenso* ‘drop’, *envío* ‘shipment’, *uso* ‘use’, etc.). Firstly, it is shown that this type of nominals can be preceded by the negative particle *no* (1).

- (1) a. La DGT multó el no uso del cinturón de seguridad.
the DGT fined the no use of.the seatbelt of security
‘The SVLA fined the non-use of the security seatbelt.’
b. El no descenso de los precios del alquiler preocupa a los españoles.
the no drop of the prices of.the rental worries DOM the Spanish.people
‘The non-drop of the rental prices worries the Spanish people.’

Regarding the interpretation(s) that arise(s), I claim that <*no* + zero event deverbal nominal> does not give rise to the negative or inhibited eventuality reading, contrary to what happens with verbal predicates (2). This reading consists in affirming that there is an eventuality that takes place: the external argument—or initiator, in terms of Ramchand (2008)—refrains itself from triggering the corresponding positive eventuality, which was expected to happen in the first place (Higginbotham 1983; Przepiórkowski 1999; Fábregas & González Rodríguez 2020, a. o.). Among the predicates that force this reading, we find perception verbs, as they select an eventuality that takes place (3). Thus, in (3), it is expected that the designer will send the suit, but he finally refrains from doing so.

- (2) El diseñador no envió el traje.
the designer not ship the suit
‘The designer did not ship the suit.’
(3) El asistente vio al diseñador no enviar el traje.
the assistant saw DOM.the designer not ship the suit
‘The assistant saw the designer not shipping the suit.’

Contrary to what happens within the verbal domain, the ill-formedness of sequences in (4) shows that the inhibited eventuality reading does not arise with <*no* + zero event deverbal nominal>, as this construction is incompatible with perception verbs.

- (4) a. *El asistente presenció el no envío del traje por parte del diseñador.
the assistant witnessed the no shipment of.the suit by part of.the designer
b. *La policía vio el no uso del cinturón de seguridad por parte del conductor.
the police saw the no use of.the seatbelt of security by part of.the driver
‘The police saw the non-use of the security seatbelt by the driver.’

I claim that <*no* + zero event deverbal nominal> gives rise to the negated eventuality reading. This interpretation consists in denying that an eventuality took place. Thus, in a sentence such as (1a), where *no* precedes a zero event deverbal nominal, it is denied that the eventuality consisting in using the seatbelt took place. That no eventuality takes place is shown by the incompatibility of <*no* + zero event deverbal nominal> with frequency modifiers. Examples in (5) are ungrammatical, as it is not possible to measure the frequency of an eventuality that does not happen.

- (5) a. *La frecuente no firma de acuerdos solo empeora la situación.
the frequent no signing of agreements only makes.worse the situation
‘The frequent non-signing of agreements only makes the situation worse.’
b. *El frecuente no uso del cinturón de seguridad ha incrementado los accidentes.
the frequent no use of.the seatbelt of security has increased the accidents
‘The frequent non-use of the security seatbelt has increased the accidents.’

Following Ramchand's (2008) VP structure, Fábregas & González Rodríguez (2020) claim that, for the inhibited eventuality to arise, *no* must occupy a NegP which merges with InitP, so it refutes the causative relation between the causative (InitP) and the process (ProcP) subevents, turning it into an inhibition relation (6).

(6) [TP [... [NegP *no* [InitP [ProcP [...]]]]]]

I assume a syntactic analysis for event deverbal nominalizations (Alexiadou 2001; Fábregas 2016). Thus, given that a verbal base such as *enviar* ('to ship') denotes a dynamic eventuality, ProcP must be projected. I also assume that the initiator is placed within InitP (7).

(7) *envío* <---> [ClassP [NP [InitP [ProcP ... [$\sqrt{789}$]]]]]

I claim that, in parallel fashion to what happens with VPs, the inhibited eventuality reading arises with event deverbal nominalizations when NegP is merged over InitP. I propose that the reason why zero event deverbal nominals do not give rise to this interpretation lies in the configuration of the exponent which spells out the projections of their syntactic structure. Following Fábregas' (2014, 2016) analysis for these nouns, for a nominal such as *envío* 'shipment', there is a single exponent /*envi-*/ which acts as a portmanteau morpheme that does Phrasal Spellout of the constituent formed by the root, InitP, ProcP, and NP, which must be hierarchically ordered and adjacent. The inhibited eventuality reading does not arise with zero event deverbal nominals because if NegP is merged over InitP, *no* breaks the constituent: NP and InitP are no longer adjacent, given that there is no projection that dominates NP and InitP without also dominating NegP (8). As a result, the syntactic configuration cannot be materialised, and the inhibited eventuality reading does not arise.

(8) /*envi-*/ <---> *[NP [NegP [InitP [ProcP [$\sqrt{789}$]]]]]

The analysis predicts that the inhibited eventuality reading should be available with event deverbal nominalizations with explicit derivative suffix (e. g. *comparece-ncia* 'appearance'). For a nominal such as *comparecencia* 'appearance', $\sqrt{compar-}$ spells out the root, /*-ec-*/ InitP and ProcP, /*-nci-*/ the NP, and /*-a*/ the ClassP. Thus, when negation is merged over InitP, no constituent is broken. Therefore, the inhibited eventuality reading should be available.

(9) [ClassP *-a* [NP *-nci-* [NegP *no* [InitP *-ec-* [ProcP *-ec-* [$\sqrt{compar-}$]]]]]]]

This prediction is borne out, as the grammaticality of (10) shows. From the compatibility of <*no* + event deverbal nominal with explicit derivative suffix> with perception verbs (10), it follows that the inhibited eventuality reading arises. In (10), it is expected that the president will appear, but he finally refrains from carrying out the corresponding affirmative eventuality.

(10) Los periodistas presenciaron la no comparecencia por parte del presidente.
the journalists witnessed the no appearance by part of the president
'The journalists witnessed the non-appearance by the president.'

Secondly, our proposal supports the claim that Spanish lacks a zero nominalizer suffix (- \emptyset) (Fábregas 2014, 2016). If it did, it would lexicalise NP, thus, negation would not break the constituent, and the inhibited eventuality could arise. The analysis also predicts that this reading will not arise in other languages in which - \emptyset does not form zero nominals, such as English (Borer 2013). This prediction is borne out, as sequences in (11) show.

(11)a. *The journalists witnessed the non-capture of illegal immigrants by the police.
b. *The teacher saw the non-use of calculators by the students.

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