Book Reviews

BUSTOS PLAZA, ALBERTO: *Combinaciones verbonominales y lexicalización*. Studien zur romanischen Sprachwissenschaft und interkulturellen Kommunikation. Band 18. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2005. ISBN 3-631-529112. 243 p.

Spanish verb-noun combinations involving verbs frequently known as delexical, support or light verbs are subject to scrutiny by Bustos Plaza in this publication, a product of his doctoral thesis at Carlos III University, Madrid. Representing a niche area of phraseology often overlooked in compilations of phraseological expressions, glossed over in descriptions of collocations, inconsistently treated in dictionary entries, and rarely included in grammars, their importance in the area of translation and language acquisition is undisputable. While many authors have illuminated the cross-linguistic differences between the choice of support verb, indicating the unpredictability in its choice, a characteristic which typifies collocations in general, few authors have treated systematically the types of syntactic constraints which some verb support constructions undergo, such as restrictions in article use, variation in number, and adjectival modification, to name a few. Similarly, few investigations to date have tried systematically to classify verb support constructions on the basis of such syntactic restrictions. Bustos Plaza's work contributes in a timely and appropriate manner not only to establishing the importance of verb support constructions within the wider field of collocational studies, but also in terms of enriching our appreciation of the variety of these structures by proposing a framework of analysis based on different degrees of syntactic restriction.

As the author maintains, studies of these forms generally focus on the presence of a delexical verb, supposedly in stages of grammaticalization, which has the function of conjugating the noun, frequently an abstract, deverbal noun. Bustos Plaza proceeds to present evidence against a case of grammaticalization, favouring instead lexicalization. The author has centred his study on examples which include the verb *dar,* originating from a corpus of twentieth century Spanish novels (details of which appear in the appendix). He does not limit himself to examples of abstract, deverbal nouns as verb complements, and neither does he insist on the existence of a corresponding morphologically and semantically related verb as a defining criterion.

Comprising six chapters, the main content of Bustos' study can be found in chapters two to four. Chapter two provides a welcome and highly informative literature review from a multilingual perspective. Parenthetically, one of the many strengths of Bustos Plaza's work is precisely his familiarity with and his incorporation of research conducted on verb-noun constructions in different languages. This is of particular importance as, while publications on the topic for languages such as Spanish and English may be few, for languages such as German and French, extensive research exists reaching back several decades and, as the author maintains, many findings for these languages are also relevant for Spanish. The literature review is structured, however, not in terms of language groups, but in terms of the different perspectives taken on verb support constructions. Thus we find, early studies on the topic focussed on the characteristics of nominal constructions, that is, a nominal paraphrase with an abstract noun which may alternate with a simple corresponding verb. Among the early studies, the author identifies two representatives from the Prague School as pioneers in the study of so-called 'function verbs', Dubský and Šabršula. The former considers such verbs variants of the corresponding simple verb form, part of a general tendency towards analytical constructions in Spanish, and also attempts to distinguish certain function verb constructions from idioms such as *tomar el pelo*, an aspect with Bustos Plaza also covers in chapter three when discussing combinations such as *dar la lata*. Šabršula takes the perspective that the constructions are composed of a noun contributing semantic content, while the verb is a carrier of grammatical markers. Šabršula investigates the additional semantic content expressed through the noun phrase (e.g. variation in number which may indicate conativity or iterativity), and the function verb (e.g. aspect). An important concept discussed by Šabršula involves internal and external equivalence (*confrontación interna y externa*); the former constituting the equivalence of a function verb phrase with a corresponding verb in the same language (*prendre l'âge / vieiller* in French*),* while the latter involves linking the function verb phrase with a corresponding verb in another language (*prendre sa source* in French corresponds to *quellen* in German). Further, Šabršula considers the valency pattern of function verb phrases with a discussion of what constitutes the true direct object of constructions such as *donner un coup de pied à quelqu'un* and *faire usage de quelque chose*, as well as outlining other syntactic characteristics that typify the construction. These early discussions on identifying features provide a basis for later investigations

and, indeed, are also reflected in Bustos Plaza's own examination of these constructions in Spanish.

In the German speaking world, extensive literature exists on the study of such verb-noun combinations, known as Funktionsverbgefügen (FVG). Commonly, two types are distinguished, those involving a verb – noun combination (*Auskunft geben*), and those involving a verb and prepositional object (*in Bewegung setzten*). The verbs contribute additional information such as causative (*in Gang bringen*), inchoative (*in Gang kommen*), or passive meanings (*Anwendung finden*). One of the main representatives of the German school, Peter von Polenz, views FVG as constructions in the throes of grammaticalization, evidence of which being the loss of the verb's semantic content, while Helbig speaks of the varying degrees of grammaticalization of the verb and the lexicalization of the combination. German studies on FVG have identified a series of syntactic restraints that characterize this construction and which may also apply to equivalent constructions in other languages.

The perspective of the lexico-grammatical school founded by Maurice Gross, working primarily in French, maintains that the support verb (as it is termed here) 'conjugates' the noun, and contributes aspectual meanings. Alonso Ramos, the main proponent of the lexical grammatical school working in Spanish, bases her investigations on Mel'čuk's Meaning-Text theory. Within this framework, verb support constructions are considered collocations in which the noun selects a verb.

Finally, within the context of Busto Plaza's literature review, Irsula Pena (1994) and Koike (2001) are among the main proponents of a collocational framework for such noun-verb combinations; the former distinguishes three different groups based, roughly speaking, on the characteristics of the verb: verbs with a figurative meaning, verbs with aspectual meanings, and combinations which have a single verb equivalent. Koike, on the other hand, differentiates between noun-verb combinations with 'general' verbs (e.g. *tomar, hacer, dar, coger*) and those with 'specific' verbs such as *celebrar (aquelarre), cerrar (trato), circular (rumor), clavar (multa)* (to name just a few examples derived from the appendix).

In chapter three, Bustos Plaza introduces his own four-tier classification of verb-noun combinations in Spanish, viewed from a collocational perspective situated between lexis and grammar. Group one comprises combinations of the type *dar un paseo* in which the noun phrase is still the syntactic direct object of the verb; group two embraces verb-noun combinations of the type *dar la lata* in which the noun is used in a figurative sense; examples from group three are characterised by a

noun in singular without a determiner, but which have a variant with determiner belonging to the first group, e.g. *dar orden*; finally, in group four, nouns are devoid of any determiner, e.g. *dar alcance*. For each group, the author discusses the particular characteristics of both the noun phrase and the verb. In terms of the noun phrase, these include the use of determiner, modifiers, variation in number, suffixation, pronominalization, the order of syntactic components, and the possibility of using pseudo cleft constructions. A decreasing scale of syntactic flexibility from group one through to group four is apparent as the discussion proceeds.

The first group (*dar un paseo)* consists of a verb + direct object syntagma in which the noun selects the verb; a general verb such as *hacer, poner, tener, tomar* may be substituted for a specific verb such as *asestar* and *impartir* in expressions such as *impartir una orden* and *asestar golpes*. Such substitutions constitute paradigms: *le dio/ pegó/ arreó/ asestó/ plantó/ soltó/ metió un golpe*, although it must be remembered that the specific verbs can contribute additional aspectual elements. General verbs such as *dar* potentially combine with nouns from broad semantic sets such as that illustrated by Bustos Plaza (*dar* + [a violent physical movement]: *patada, paliza, puñetazo* etc.) to which new members can potentially be added (i.e. if one were to coin a noun to designate a violent physical movement, one might reasonably expect that it would select the verb *dar*). This characteristic is shared by specific verbs (e.g. *asestar* + *golpe/ hachazo/ cuchillada*), but whereas the general verb may equally easily combine with a different semantic set (e.g. *dar* + [emotion] *alegría/ angustia/ ánimo/ susto/ espantada/ asco),* the specific verb does not generally possess this degree of polysemy.

Perhaps the most interesting member of the four groups involves the second, as this group includes members that appear suspiciously similar to idioms (*coger una mona, hacerse un lío, hacer una pirula, echar un polvo* etc.). Bustos Plaza identifies three characteristics of the noun phrase of this category which, in his view, distance this group from idioms: the possibility of pronominalization (*este tostón me lo llevan durante toda la tarde*); the flexible word order of the verb and noun phrase (*bastante guerra dan los vivos para que nadie se ande atareando con los vivos*); the possibility of pseudo cleft constructions (*es la lata lo que estaban dando a todo el mundo*). In addition, despite the figurative meaning of the noun (e.g. *lata*), this word constitutes a lemma in dictionary entries, and it may also appear with the same figurative meaning in contexts in which the verb *dar* does not appear; additionally, adjectival derivatives of the word with the same meaning may exist

(*latoso, guerrero*). Consequently, Bustos Plaza argues in favour of considering these within the framework of verb-noun combinations.

The characteristics of the third group (*dar orden*) are of a different nature; this group represents examples of more advanced lexicalization as the noun phrase admits none of the syntactic variations that one might expect, and which indeed typify the noun phrases from the first group. Thus, among the examples in group three, we do not find the possibility of variation in number or constituent order, the addition of modifiers, suffixation, pronominalization, or pseudo cleft structures. According to the author, general rather than specific verbs typify this group (with the exception of a few examples featuring specific verbs *surtir efecto, formarse idea*), and the verb may not be substituted by another to form a verb paradigm, a characteristic of group one combinations. The author concludes that examples from group three represent complex lexical units with the noun constituting part of the verbal unit.

The noun phrase of fourth group (*dar alcance*) displays the highest degree of restriction; it appears in singular with no determiner, and does not admit any of the syntactic variations permitted by the first group. The verbs in this group form a limited set of general verbs which, as the author maintains, are intransitive due to the direct object being subsumed into the verbal unit.

Chapter four deals with the question of whether verb-noun combinations constitute incipient examples of grammaticalization or lexicalization, and Bustos Plaza clearly comes out in favour of the latter. The author applies the criteria of Lehmann (1985, 1995) and Diewald (1997) to detect grammaticalization which include degree of phonological / semantic erosion, degree of integration into a paradigm, and possible variation. As Bustos Plaza demonstrates, the examples of verb-noun combinations from group one do not fulfil such criteria, although the question remains whether examples from other groups with a more pronounced degree of syntactic restriction are more likely to respond positively.

Although, as the author concedes, grammaticalization and lexicalization processes may, on occasion, be difficult to distinguish, Bustos Plaza considers three different levels of lexicalization: occasional formations (constructions coined in an ad hoc manner, typical of literature or advertising), institutionalized and, finally, lexicalized formations. The examples from groups three and four represent more advanced stages of lexicalization (lexicalized formations) while examples from group one (*dar un paseo*) are at a more incipient stage (institutionalized formations):

despite no longer representing free combinations, the constituents do still represent a verb – object syntagma. For each stage of the lexicalization process, Bustos Plaza considers a series of qualifying criteria (from Ryder 2000) which he applies to examples from each group.

The fifth chapter addresses the issue of internal and external equivalence (*confrontación interna y externa*). Essentially the question revolves around the level of equivalence between the verb-noun combination and a simple verb, an issue of some importance as this is often held as a key characteristic used to identify these structures. While, as Bustos Plaza maintains, external equivalence refers to the simple existence of an equivalent expression in a foreign language and is not used to identify verb-noun combinations, with respect to internal confrontation, three possibilities exist: a morphological and semantic relationship (*dar un abrazo / abrazar*), a semantic relationship without the morphological connection (*dar clase / enseñar*), and a morphological relationship with no semantic equivalence (*dar friegas / fregar*). The first case is considered the principal form of equivalence, while the second is accepted when there is no morphologically related equivalent verb; the third case, is not accepted by the author as a valid example of equivalence. Other researchers studying German or French have claimed that, even in the first case, the verbs are not necessary fully interchangeable as the meaning is often not entirely identical. Bustos Plaza details contexts in which the exchange of the verb-noun combination for a single verb is not possible due to the difficulties that this creates in the use of, for example, determiners and modifiers (*Piensa dar aprobada general/*Piensa aprobar generalmente*). This suggests that the existence of the two forms provides the speaker with the option of further specification of the noun. Further differences the author provides concern the syntactic roles of the constituents, for example, in *Álvaro da un beso a Raquel* and *Álvaro besa a Raquel* there is a change of the direct object; in the case of *Manual dio ayuda a Daniel* and **Las circunstancias dieron ayuda a Daniel*, we witness restrictions in the selection of the subject. Using the example of *dar alcance* and *alcanzar,* the author also points to the far more restricted range of meanings expressed by the verb-noun combination in comparison to the single verb, as well as the subtle semantic differences existing between their use. Finally the author discusses the aspectual elements of the verb-noun combination absent in the simple verb.

On a final note, in the appendices we find an illustrative compilation of verb-noun combinations with both general and specific

verbs, as well as lists of combinations with the verb *dar* belonging to groups three and four of Bustos Plaza's classification.

Final questions that the reader might have concern the division of general and specific verbs; according to Irsula Pena (1994) there is no clear dividing line between the two groups, but rather the difference is a question of degree. An interesting topic to pursue might be how this transition from general to specific verbs could be described in terms of syntactic restrictions and semantic specialization. Both general and specific verbs are presented in the appendix, and whereas *aquejar +dolor, cantar +alabanza, profesar +amistad* are more easily identified as specific verbs due to the strong semantic component they retain, other examples such as *correr +riesgo, llevar +cuenta, levantar +calumnia* possess a lesser degree of semantic motivation. Further, although the author has focussed his attention on the verb *dar* as being representative of the category of general verbs, the reader could benefit from examples (perhaps provided in the appendix) illustrating the extent to which the classifying features of each of the four groups apply to noun-verb combinations with other general verbs.

To conclude, Bustos Plaza has made a rewarding contribution to Spanish language studies, and this book will prove of interest not only to students of Spanish linguistics, but also to those involved in contrastive studies in the areas of lexicology, grammar, and phraseology.

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OSUNA, FRANCISCO: *Las construcciones de relativo*, Córdoba: Universidad, 2005. ISBN: 84-7801-756-9. 260 págs.

En la *Introducción* (págs. 11-14), explica el autor por qué utiliza la denominación de "construcciones" frente a las más usuales "proposiciones", "oraciones", etc. También expone el punto de vista desde el que va a abordar su estudio, que es la descripción de su función semántica, entendiendo por función semántica la función referencial.

En el capítulo primero (págs. 15-53) expone en qué consiste el valor "relativo" de este tipo de construcciones. Frente a la interpretación más extendida, que consiste en interpretar el término "relativo" con un