

Depictive object complements revisited: from Classical Latin to present-day English, Spanish and Italian

This paper builds into the Lexical Constructional Model (LCM henceforth; cf. Ruiz de Mendoza & Mairal 2008) insights from a constructionist, usage-based analysis of depictive secondary predicates after English cognition verbs (cf. 1):

(1) I find her *so sweet* (BNC HGK 2426)

The italicized phrase in (1) above qualifies as an object-related depictive, since it is semantically obligatory and encodes a fairly stable property of the entity/person in the object slot. The focus of this paper is two-fold. First, it examines the most salient semantico-pragmatic properties of object depictives in English against their Latin counterparts in the light of representative works in Classical Latin (e.g. Caesar's *The Civil Wars*, Cicero's *In Catilinam I-II*). The major finding emerging from the diachronic examination of this construction in Latin and English is that subjectivity (i.e. the expression of a stance by the subject/speaker towards the state of affairs/event in the complement clause; Traugott and Dasher 2002) becomes the major determinant of the semantico-pragmatic properties of English object depictives.

Second, from a synchronic standpoint, in the light of data from the British National Corpus in conjunction with elicitation from native speakers, object depictives involving cognition verbs in English are shown to form a family of constructions where at least three lower level constructions can be detected. These involve coercion (Michaelis 2004) *via* a reflexive pronoun in the object slot (2a), a progressive verb form with an inherently stative state of affairs (2b), and an imperative form with a *prima facie* non-controllable state of affairs (2c).

(2) (a) (...) [D]inner guests could know themselves *safe from distasteful anecdotes* (...) (BNC CJF 1867)

(b) I was thinking it *another room bigger* (BNC KPU 2855)

(c) Consider it *done*, sir (BNC CKC 41)

A corpus-based analysis of object depictives in present-day Spanish and Italian in the CREA and La Repubblica corpora, respectively, reveals that these three lower-level configurations also hold in present-day Spanish and Italian. However, these two languages, unlike English, also allow for another lower-level configuration involving coercion *via* an imperfect verb with a default counterfactual interpretation and a locative complement (cf. 3):

(3) (a) Yo te *hacía en Roma*

(b) Ti *facevo a Roma*

'I thought you *(were) in Rome'

Crucially, a default/partial inheritance system with overrides of the type invoked in Cognitive Construction Grammar (Goldberg 2006) is shown to accommodate the commonalities as well as the idiosyncratic (or language-specific) particulars of this family of constructions in English, Spanish and Italian. This finding is of pivotal importance for the account of argument (or level-1) constructions in the LCM, since this part of the model has thus far been exclusively concerned with the analysis of NPs and finite-clauses as complementation strategies after cognition verbs in English (cf. 4a-b):

(4) (a) He considered *the proposal*

(b) He considered *that the proposal was viable*

It is thus concluded that, synchronically, subjectivity aptly spells out the connection between morphosyntactic compression and the expression of a more personal, judgemental stance by the subject/speaker inherent in this family of special level-1 constructions.

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