

# A constructionist approach to the development of the Spanish topic marker *en cuanto a* ‘in terms of’<sup>1</sup>

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## 1. Introduction, data and research questions

The diachronic development of topic markers in Romance languages such as Spanish *en cuanto a* ‘in terms of’ is still a research desideratum. With regard to topic markers in general only the development of French *quant à* has been investigated extensively so far (cf. Combettes *et al.*, eds., 2003). However, it has never been analysed against the background of Construction Grammar (CxG), as the framework of CxG is still not often applied in Romance linguistics (but see De Knop *et al.*, eds., 2013 and Boas / González-García, eds., 2014). So one goal of this qualitative and quantitative study is to describe *en cuanto a* as a construction. In detail, the present study asks: How is *en cuanto a* to be described at both the formal and the meaning level? How can the construction’s use and its restrictions of use be described? And to what extent can the development of *en cuanto a* be regarded a case of constructional change (cf. Hilpert 2013)?

Generally, “much research over the last decade has demonstrated that the concept of grammatical construction is an effective tool for conducting diachronic research [...]” (Boas / González-García 2014: 5). *En cuanto a* is considered a construction because its form, function and meaning are “not strictly predictable from its component parts or from other constructions recognized to exist” (Goldberg 2006: 5). Since *en cuanto a* is (nowadays) usually followed by an NP, which as a whole can be identified as a construction, this study adopts a constructionist approach to the rise and development of this ‘topic marking construction’ in terms of frequency and entrenchment. Boas / González-García (2014: 2) also state that “Romance languages qualify as the perfect test bed for construction grammarians interested in historical facts”.

The data for the qualitative and quantitative study of the Spanish topic marker *en cuanto a* are retrieved from the corpora *CORDE* (*Corpus Diacrónico del Español*), *CREA* (*Corpus de Referencia del Español Actual*) and *Corpus del español*.

## 2. Topic, topic markers and related notions in the descriptive grammar of Spanish

As commonly known, information structure is usually described in terms of three dichotomy pairs: theme vs. rheme, focus vs. background, and topic vs. comment (see, for instance, Gabriel 2007: 13).<sup>2</sup>

In this section we focus on the treatment of these notions in the *Gramática descriptiva de la lengua española* (1999), since the present paper deals with a Spanish topic marker. The paper of the descriptive grammar of Spanish by Zubizarreta (1999) on the topic and related notions adopts a generative approach. It is interesting that the two prominent dichotomies theme vs. rheme and topic vs. focus seem to be mixed up in Zubizarreta’s paper (1999). The title of her paper already indicates that Zubizarreta deals with theme vs. focus. In her introduction, however, she explains: “Algunas nociones de la gramática del discurso son relevantes a la hora de describir ciertos órdenes de palabras en el nivel de la cláusula. Estas nociones son las de ‘tema’ (vs. ‘comentario’) y ‘foco’ (vs. ‘presuposición’)” (“Some notions of discourse grammar are relevant if describing certain word orders at the sentence level. These notions are ‘theme’ (vs. ‘comment’) and ‘focus’ (vs. ‘presupposition’); Zubizarreta 1999: 4217). A little later it is explained that the notions of theme and focus are to be examined (1999: 4218), so that the dichotomies seem to be mixed up again. The survey starts with the notion of theme: “Se entiende por tema aquello de lo cual trata la oración; el comentario es lo que se dice sobre el tema. Cabe distinguir dos tipos de temas: el ‘tema discursivo’ y el ‘tema oracional’” (“Theme is understood as what the sentence is about; the comment is what is said about the theme. It is necessary to distinguish between two types of theme: the ‘discourse theme’ and the ‘sentence theme’<sup>3</sup>; Zubizarreta 1999: 4218).

The following example is provided in order to illustrate the difference between *tema discursivo* and *tema oracional*: *El Sr. González es un científico muy erudito, pero su originalidad deja mucho que desear* (“Mr González is a very erudite scientist, but his originality is not as it should be”). At the sentence level, ‘El Sr. González’ is identified as the *tema oracional*, whereby ‘the scientific skills of Sr. González’ could be interpreted as the theme of the discourse (cf. Zubizarreta 1999: 4218). In the following, dislocated entities<sup>4</sup> are treated as *temas oracionales*:

Si bien el tema oracional puede asociarse a distintas posiciones dentro de la oración (sujeto preverbal, objeto directo e indirecto...), en muchas lenguas, y en particular en español, ciertas posiciones pueden funcionar exclusivamente como

tema. Este es el caso de la posición periférica a la izquierda de la oración [...] (Zubizarreta 1999: 4220).

‘Even though the sentence theme can be associated with different syntactic positions (preverbal subject, direct or indirect object...), in many languages – and particularly in Spanish – certain positions may exclusively function as theme [position]. This is the case with the left periphery of the sentence [...]’

This is demonstrated by *el sillón* (‘the armchair’) and *a una amiga* (‘a friend’), that is, by left-dislocation in the following two examples (Zubizarreta 1999: 4220): *El sillón, Pedro lo compró en el mercado de pulgas* (‘The armchair, Pedro bought it in the flea market’) and *A una amiga, Pedro la invitó a bailar* (‘A friend, Pedro invited her to dance’).

Then, Zubizarreta (1999) treats the different kinds of themes, viz. hanging topic and left-dislocation, and explains that, from a discursive point of view, the hanging topic is distinguished from left-dislocation “en que aquel tiene como función cambiar de tema en un discurso dado; por ello puede estar precedido facultativamente por la expresión *en cuanto a* o *con respecto a*” (‘in that the former can fulfil the function of changing the topic in a given discourse; that is why it can be non-obligatorily preceded by the expression *en cuanto a* or *con respecto a* [‘with regard to’]’; Zubizarreta 1999: 4220). She offers the following contextual information ‘a discussion about the distant relation between Juan and his parents’ and the following example to illustrate a hanging topic: (***En cuanto a el hermano, parece que los padres hablan de él todo el tiempo*** (‘In terms of the brother, it seems as if the parents talk about him the whole time’) (1999: 4221; see also Haßler 2011). Hanging topics are well defined and have distinctive properties:

Puede entrar en relación con una posición dentro de la oración ocupada por un elemento pronominal [como en (a)] o un clítico (como en [b]). También puede entrar en relación con una posición ocupada por un epíteto (véase [c]) o puede tener simplemente una relación de tipo inalienable con un sintagma dentro de la oración [como en (d)]:

- (a) *En cuanto al hermano*, parece que los padres hablan de él todo el tiempo.
- (b) *En cuanto al hermano*, parece que los padres lo contemplan mucho.
- (c) *En cuanto al hermano*, parece que *el desgraciado* se lleva bien con todo el mundo, inclusive [sic] con los padres.
- (d) [contexto: discusión sobre los vehículos de Juan] *En cuanto al BMW*, parece que *los frenos* le fallan constantemente (cf. Zubizarreta 1999: 4221).

‘[The hanging topic] can be related to a syntactic position which is occupied by a pronoun [like in (a)] or by a clitic (like in [b]). It can also establish a relation to a syntactic position which is occupied by an epithet (see [c]) or it can simply be in relation of an unalienable type with a syntagm of the sentence [like in (d)].

- (a) *In terms of the brother*, it seems as if the parents talk about *him* the whole time.
- (b) *In terms of the brother*, it seems as if the parents contemplate *him* much.
- (c) *In terms of the brother*, it seems as if the *unlucky person* has good relations to the whole world, including his parents.
- (d) [context: discussion about Juan’s cars] *In terms of the BMW*, it seems as if the *brakes* fail regularly.’

Other characteristics of the hanging topic, which are mentioned, are that there is **no** grammatical dependency between the hanging topic and the predicate of the sentence required (cf. example e), and that it may establish a relation with every syntactic position. See example (f) for a position within a relative clause, example (g) for a position within an adverbial clause and example (h) for a position within a subject clause (1999: 4221-4222):

- (e) *Bernardo*, sin embargo, **estoy segura** de que nadie confía en *ese* idiota.
- (f) (En cuanto a) el Sr. González, conocemos a la mujer que lo traicionó.
- (g) (En cuanto a) el Sr. González, terminaremos la tarea antes de llamarlo.
- (h) (En cuanto a) el Sr. González, que María lo haya invitado sorprendió a todo el mundo.
- (e) ‘*Bernardo*, however, **I am sure** that nobody trusts *this* idiot.’
- (f) ‘(In terms of) Mr González, we know the woman who cheated on him.’
- (g) ‘(In terms of) Mr González, we finish the task before calling him.’
- (h) ‘(In terms of) Mr González, that María invited him surprised the whole world.’

Another property that is also illustrated by all the examples mentioned so far is that the hanging topic is only to be found in the left periphery of the sentence, more precisely, of the matrix clause (1999: 4221). Left-dislocation is to be distinguished from a hanging topic because of the fact that it may *also* be used in a subordinate clause (not only in a matrix clause):



- (i) Estoy segura de **que** a sus amigos, María los invitó a cenar.
- (j) Estoy segura de **que** de María, Pedro siempre habla bien.
- (i) 'I am sure (of) **that** her friends, María invited them for dinner.
- (j) 'I am sure (of) **that** of María, Pedro always speaks well [about her].'

If the theme, represented by the left-dislocation, is related to the position of the object, the object pronoun has to be used, which is indicated by example (i) (Zubizarreta 1999: 4222). Furthermore, in case of left-dislocation grammatical dependency between theme and its position within the clause is required. This is indicated by the presence of the prepositions *a* and *de* in examples (i) and (j), respectively (cf. Zubizarreta 1999: 4222). Another difference is that the use as in example (a) is not possible: the left-dislocated element cannot be related to a pronoun: \**Estoy segura de que de María, Pedro siempre habla mal de ella* ('I am sure (of) that of María, Pedro always speaks ill about her'). Finally, it should be mentioned that a left-dislocated element cannot be used in a relative, adverbial or subject clause as in (f), (g) and (h) above (Zubizarreta 1999: 4223).

So according to Zubizarreta (1999), a hanging topic introduces a change of the discursive theme, is used in the left periphery of the matrix clause exclusively, is not restricted syntactically, and grammatical dependency between hanging topic and predicate is not required. Left-dislocation, by contrast, may also be used in subordinate clauses, grammatical dependency must be given, and it is restricted syntactically: "el tema no puede entrar en relación con una posición dentro de una cláusula relativa, de una cláusula adverbial o de una cláusula sujeto" ('the theme cannot be related to a position which is part of a relative clause, adverbial clause or subject clause'; Zubizarreta 1999: 4224). What is especially interesting with regard to other studies of topic markers such as *en cuanto a* (or *quant à*) is the treatment of *en cuanto a* or *con respecto a* as hanging topics and as markers that introduce a change of topic.

### 2.1 The construction *en cuanto a*

As already mentioned with regard to Romance topic markers, only the development of French *quant à* has been investigated extensively so far (cf. Blasco-Dulbecco / Saint-Gerand 2003, Choi-Jonin 2003, Fløttum 2003, Prévost 2003), even though it has never been analysed against the background of Construction Grammar. *Quant à* can be considered the French equivalent to *en cuanto a* in Spanish.

Blasco-Dulbecco / Saint-Gerand (2003) describe topic markers such as French *Quant à* or *Pour ce qui est de* from a morpho-syntactic, semantic and syntactic viewpoint (Blasco-Dulbecco / Saint-

Gerand 2003: 52-54) but call them "adverbial locutions" (2003: 43). Choi-Jonin (2003) is concerned with the different syntactic positions of *quant à*. The syntactic positions considered in this study are: head-position, post-lexical position and intra-clausal position. Fløttum (2003) compares the French "theme markers" *quant à* and *en ce qui concerne*, and her study reveals that "*en ce qui concerne* plays a less local and a freer role than *quant à* and marks typically a theme introduction; *quant à*, signaling a contrast, marks typically the last segment in a series of two" (Fløttum 2003: 185; also Fløttum 2003: 195-200). Prévost (2003) adopts a syntactic-pragmatic perspective and analyses the development of *quant à* during the 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century.

In the present study, the term 'topic marker' is used for the description of *en cuanto a*. In other studies, however, which describe, for instance, the French equivalent *quant à*, other notions are used such as "theme marker" (Fløttum 2003), "adverbial locution" (Blasco-Dulbecco / Saint-Gerand 2003: 43) or "Einleitungsfloskel" (Stark 1999: 136, 140).

Haßler (2011) discusses the development of topic and focus markers in French and Spanish as phenomena of grammaticalisation or lexicalisation (cf. Haßler 2011: 49). Besides focusing on *quant à*, she is also concerned with the function and development of *en cuanto a*. Both topic markers have their roots in Latin *quantum ad* and are said to have scarcely changed their semantics and function. However, the quantifying characteristics of *quantum ad* have been lost but the meaning of *quant à* and *en cuanto a* is regarded compositional (Haßler 2011: 62). Contrasting the following two examples

- (a) *El hermano, parece que los padres hablan de él todo el tiempo.*
- (b) *En cuanto al hermano, parece que los padres hablan de él todo el tiempo.*
- (a) 'The brother, it seems as if the parents talk about him the whole time.'
- (b) 'In terms of the brother, it seems as if the parents talk about him the whole time.'

Haßler explains that the topic marker *en cuanto a* fulfils the same function as dislocation but does so in a more explicit way (Haßler 2011: 55).<sup>5</sup>

Analysing the development and the use of the topic marker, Haßler (2011) shows that in the 13<sup>th</sup> century *cuanto a* is more prominent than *en cuanto a* (see also section 3). Even though the former is predominantly used, both topic markers seem to be in use (Haßler 2011: 60). In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the use of both, *cuanto a* and *en cuanto a*, varies even more (Haßler 2011: 61). And for the 16<sup>th</sup> century the following is found out:

Die topikalisierende Bedeutung von *en cuanto a* setzte sich im 16. Jahrhundert durch, wobei zunächst der pragmatische Bezug zwischen dem

topikalisierten Element und dem Inhalt des Hauptsatzes dominiert. Das mit *en cuanto a* topikalisierte Wort, [sic] muss also nicht im Satz durch ein Pronomen aufgenommen werden, es steht aber in Relevanzbeziehung zu Elementen des nachfolgenden Satzes (Haßler 2011: 61).

‘The topicalising meaning of *en cuanto a* was established in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Initially, the pragmatic relation between the topicalised element and the content of the matrix clause dominated. The word which is topicalised by *en cuanto a* does not have to be repeated by a pronoun in the sentence. However, there are relations of relevance to elements of the sentence that follows.’

It is particularly interesting that – besides the topicalisation of subjects – the topicalisation of verbs seems also possible: *en cuanto a lo de gobernaros*. If a verb represents the topicalised element, the pronoun *lo* often represents the nominal bearer<sup>6</sup> (Haßler 2011: 61). *En cuanto a* clearly has a topicalising function which is not bound to particular syntactic or semantic elements. Nevertheless, Haßler rejects speaking about grammaticalisation or lexicalisation as information structure itself is seen as bound to pragmatics and as topic markers only fulfil their function in discourse. She prefers the term ‘pragmaticalisation’ instead (Haßler 2011: 62). Another reason to favour the term ‘pragmaticalisation’ instead of grammaticalisation or lexicalisation is the fact that *quant à* and *en cuanto a* have long been in use now, even though their function as topic marker developed explicitly from the 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century. So their use increased over time (see also section 3), which is usually bound to respective pragmatic conditions. Therefore, their development should be described in terms of pragmaticalisation (Haßler 2011: 66).

## 2.2 Interim summary

Considering the state of research and the studies mentioned above, no constructionist approach has been applied to any topic marker so far. In general, linguistic phenomena in Romance languages are sparsely analysed against the background of CxG (cf. also Boas / González-García 2014: 1). Even though Haßler (2011: 62) states that the meaning of *en cuanto a* is compositional, its exact meaning “is not strictly predictable from its component parts or from other constructions recognized to exist” (Goldberg 2006: 5). So a constructionist approach to the analysis seems useful. Indeed, Latin *quantum* lost its quantifying semantics but *quanto* still means ‘quantum’, thus indicating a quantitative unit, which is clearly to be separated from the semantics of *en cuanto a*, meaning ‘in terms of’. Thus *en cuanto a* can be said to have a construction status; it is (partly) non-compositional in nature. It consists of the following component parts:

Table 1. Component parts of *en cuanto a*.

<i>en</i> ‘in’	<i>quanto</i> ‘quantum’	<i>a</i> ‘to’
preposition	noun	preposition
grammatical unit	lexical unit	grammatical unit

Hence, in the present paper the topic marker is regarded a construction. The constructionist approach is generally characterised as follows:

What makes a theory that allows constructions to exist a “construction-based theory” is the idea that the network of constructions captures our grammatical knowledge of language *in toto*, i.e. **it’s constructions all the way down** (Goldberg 2006: 18).

De Knop / Mollica (2013: 12) also point out that all CxG approaches consider every construction, from morpheme to sentence, as a potentially independent, symbolic unit, which also shows its own formal rules and rules of content.<sup>7</sup>

The topic marking construction itself – *en cuanto a* – is not schematic. However, since ‘it’s constructions all the way down’, the construction is insofar partly schematic as the construction is only used when it is combined with another construction such as an NP. Hence, the structure [*en cuanto a* + {...}] can be regarded a partly schematic construction because by using [*en cuanto a* + {...}] one slot has to be filled.

Regarding *en cuanto a* a construction has two advantages. From a terminological perspective, it is not necessary to think about its designation: if it is regarded a construction, it is superfluous to argue whether we deal with an adverbial locution etc. (see Fløttum 2003 or Blasco-Dulbecco / Saint-Gerand 2003). And the question whether the development of *en cuanto a* is to be described in terms of grammaticalisation, lexicalisation, pragmaticalisation or constructionalisation also has a place in a diachronic constructionist analysis (cf. Hilpert 2013 and Traugott / Trousdale 2013). Constructionalisation is understood as follows:

Constructionalization is the creation of form<sub>new</sub>-meaning<sub>new</sub> (combinations of) signs. It forms new type nodes, which have new syntax or morphology and new coded meaning, in the linguistic network of a population of speakers. It is accompanied by changes in degree of schematicity, productivity, and compositionality. The constructionalization of schemas always results from a succession of micro-steps and is therefore gradual (Traugott / Trousdale 2013: 22).

Traugott / Trousdale (2013: 22) “focus on two main kinds of constructionalization, namely grammatical constructionalization, and lexical constructionalization”, but they also consider “changes that result in part-contentful part-procedural constructions”, which they call “‘intermediate’ or ‘hybrid’ constructions” (2013:



26). Hilpert's notion of constructional change, however, is thought to not only cover all *-isation* processes but also processes of change in frequency and processes affecting syntax:

Constructional change is more encompassing than the changes that characterize grammaticalization. Specifically, it includes processes of lexicalization, processes of syntactic change that do not instantiate grammaticalization, processes within derivational morphology, and processes of frequency change that are unrelated to grammaticalization (Hilpert 2013: 8-9).

Section 3.4 addresses the question if the construction under survey can be considered a case of constructional change, and to what extent.

Constructions are "conventionalized pairings of form and function" (Goldberg 2006: 3; see also Fischer 2006: 1-2). Any construction represents a conventionalised form-meaning pair "unabhängig davon, wie schematisch oder konkret die jeweilige Form- oder Bedeutungsseite sein mag" ('no matter how schematic or concrete its respective form or meaning may be'; Fischer 2006: 2). Hilpert (2013: 5) even speaks about constructions as being "mentally represented along a continuum of schematicity". De Smet / Cuyckens (2007) explain that a construction is an "automated routinized chunk of language that is stored and activated by the language user as a whole, rather than 'creatively' assembled on the spot" (De Smet / Cuyckens 2007: 188; see also Hennemann 2013: 166). These routinised chunks of language can also be considered "building blocks of grammar":

Constructions can be informally characterized as the 'building blocks' of grammar, as they can be combined to form phrases, sentences, and larger stretches of discourse. Most commonly, constructions are understood as signs, that is, symbolic pairings of a form and a meaning that display structural idiosyncrasies or a high level of entrenchment [...] (Hilpert 2013: 4-5).

So all things considered, the present paper adopts the following definition of 'construction' with regard to *en cuanto a*:

Any linguistic pattern is recognized as a construction as long as some aspect of its form or function is not strictly predictable from its component parts or from other constructions recognized to exist. In addition, patterns are stored as constructions even if they are fully predictable as long as they occur with sufficient frequency (Goldberg 2006: 5).

However, the criterion of frequency is always somehow problematic. When can a particular construction be said to occur with *sufficient* frequency? How many data are to be analysed in this connection? That is why Imo (2007: 4) pleads for the analysis of frequency in certain contexts or text

genres. Hence, the data in the present study are retrieved from three corpora, *CORDE* (*Corpus Diacrónico del Español*), *CREA* (*Corpus de Referencia del Español Actual*) and *Corpus del español*, whereby it is to be expected that most data are to be found in written texts because the construction is said to be bound to written text genres: *En cuanto a* is a typical element of written discourse (cf. also Ewert-Kling 2010: 15; Stark 1999: 136).

### 3. Corpus analysis

As Hilpert (2013) points out, CxG has its origins in a synchronically oriented tradition so that

[...] definitions of the term 'construction' are mainly designed to capture whether or not a linguistic pattern in synchronic usage constitutes a construction. A diachronic perspective complicates the picture: we know that the *be going to* future is a construction in Present-Day English, but it is a non-trivial question when exactly this pattern started to be a construction (Hilpert 2013: 22).

With regard to the structure under survey in the present study, it is known that *en cuanto a* is a construction in Present-Day Spanish (even though it has never been regarded a construction in the constructionist sense), but it is to analyse how the construction developed over the centuries. Thus, a diachronic viewpoint seems fruitful. Furthermore, the following subsections address these questions: How can the construction's use and its restrictions of use be described? And to what extent can the development of *en cuanto a* be regarded a case of constructional change (cf. Hilpert 2013)?

#### 3.1 Kind of data and methodology

In the *Corpus del español* it is possible to search for lexemes or collocates without respecting the use of capital and small initial letters. It was searched for *cuanto a*. Consequently, the results found are *En cuanto a* and *en cuanto a*, but also *Cuanto a* and *cuanto a* because in former centuries the topic marker was also used without the preposition *en*.

The corpora of the *Real Academia Española* *CORDE* and *CREA* were – as well as the *Corpus del español* – used to check the frequency of *en cuanto a*. As these corpora differentiate the use of capital and small initial letters, it was searched for both *En cuanto a* and *en cuanto a*. That is why the tokens had to be added.

As the table indicates, each corpus comprises different centuries. In the *Corpus del español* the data include the time span from the 13<sup>th</sup> century till the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the *CORDE* no results earlier than the 15<sup>th</sup> century were found. The latest data are from the 20<sup>th</sup> century because *CORDE* is a diachronic corpus. The latest data are from 1975. *CREA* is *CORDE*'s counterpart and comprises the time span from 1975 till 2004. For the present study, *CREA* was only used for the search from 2000-2004

because examples from the 21<sup>st</sup> century were required.

### 3.2 Quantitative analysis

The work with the three corpora shows that the frequency of *en cuanto a* has increased over time so that the construction can nowadays be said to occur “with sufficient frequency” (Goldberg 2006: 5). Following Hilpert (2013), it is to be distinguished between different kinds of frequency changes a construction may undergo: absolute frequency, relative frequency and type frequency. “Absolute frequency (or token frequency) measures how often a construction occurs within a fixed amount of running text. Trivially, a construction may become more or less frequent over time” (Hilpert 2013: 7). The following table demonstrates that the absolute frequency of *en cuanto a* has increased:

Table 2. Change in frequency of *en cuanto a*.

Century	Corpus del español – tokens	CORDE – tokens	CREA (2000-2004)
13 <sup>th</sup>	3	---	
14 <sup>th</sup>	---	---	
15 <sup>th</sup>	22	10 + 2 = 12	
16 <sup>th</sup>	899	316 + 90 = 406	
17 <sup>th</sup>	393	360 + 73 = 433	
18 <sup>th</sup>	917	384 + 82 = 466	
19 <sup>th</sup>	1653	1059 + 1035 = 2094	
20 <sup>th</sup>	1606	2000 + 1943 = 3943	
21 <sup>st</sup>			1769 + 1538 = 3307

The *Corpus del español* comprises a total amount of 100 million words from Old Spanish to the late 1990s, the *CREA* more than 200 million words, and the *CORDE* corpus approx. 125 million words. It is important to note that the use of the construction must be calculated against the background of the fact that in the *Corpus del español* the centuries are not represented by the same amount of words: there are 18 million words from the 1200s-1400s, 42 million words from the 1500s-1700s, and about 40 million words from the 1800s-1900s (Davies 2009: 140). Hence, one can group together the results displayed by the *Corpus del español* as follows:

Table 3. Tokens with respect to the amount of words per time span.

Centuries	Corpus del español – tokens	Total amount per centuries
13 <sup>th</sup> – 15 <sup>th</sup>	25	18 million
16 <sup>th</sup> – 18 <sup>th</sup>	2209	42 million
19 <sup>th</sup> – 20 <sup>th</sup>	3259	40 million

So considering the quantitative data of the *Corpus del español* with regard to the amount of words per time span, the table above demonstrates that the use of the construction has increased from 0.0001389% in the 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century over 0.00526% in the 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century to 0.00815% in the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century.

### 3.3 Qualitative analysis

The only examples from the 13<sup>th</sup> century that were found are the following three from the *Corpus del español*. All three of them have the same source:

- (1) **En cuanto a** caza [...] (Cavanilles, Antonio: Memoria sobre el Fuero de Madrid del año 1202)  
‘In terms of hunt [...]’ [1202]
- (2) Ratifica la disposición del fuero **en cuanto a** las calidades que deben tener los vecinos [...] (Cavanilles, Antonio: Memoria sobre el Fuero de Madrid del año 1202)  
‘Ratifies the disposition of the law in terms of the qualities which the neighbours should have [...]’ [1202]
- (3) Con esto terminó la importancia del fuero antiguo de Madrid, **en cuanto a** la parte legal. (Cavanilles, Antonio: Memoria sobre el Fuero de Madrid del año 1202)  
‘With this ended the importance of the ancient law of Madrid, in terms of the legal part.’ [1202]

The examples show that the construction *en cuanto a* is used sentence-initially (1) and in mid-position (2) – and even parenthetically at the right periphery of a sentence (3). The construction is used with a definite NP (2, 3) as well as with an NP without any article (1).

In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, no token was found in the *Corpus del español* or the *CORDE*, so that one could speculate that *en cuanto a* in the three



examples of the 13<sup>th</sup> century are due to an idiolect – above all because it is only used by one single author.

In the 15<sup>th</sup> century the use of the construction begins to emerge. The results show that in this century the construction *cuanto a* instead of *en cuanto a* is also to be found (cf. also Haßler 2011: 60). Especially interesting is that in example (5) both constructions<sup>8</sup> seem to co-exist as both instances have the same source (such as example 4):

- (4) **Cuanto a** la hermosura, dezían los cristianos que no avía comparaçión [...] (Colón, Cristóbal: Textos y documentos completos de Cristobal Colón) ‘(In) terms of beauty, said the Christians, there was nothing comparable [...]’ [15<sup>th</sup> cent.]<sup>9</sup>
- (5) [...] y era entonçes por allí el tiempo, **cuanto a** los aires y, templança, como por Março en Castilla y, **en cuanto a** los árboles y yervas, como por Mayo. (Colón, Cristóbal: Textos y documentos completos de Cristobal Colón) ‘[...] and it was then that time, [in] terms of the airs and balminess, like in March in Castile and, in terms of the trees and weeds, like in May.’ [15<sup>th</sup> cent.]
- (6) E esto sea **cuanto a** lo segundo. (Villena, Enrique de Aragón, Marqués de: Tratado de astrología) ‘And this is.SUBJ in terms of the second [one]’ [15<sup>th</sup> cent.]

Again, the construction (*en*) *cuanto a* is to be found in different syntactic positions.

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century the *Corpus del español* shows a total amount of 899 results, whereby both constructions are in use: *cuanto a* and *en cuanto a*. Example (7) shows that the construction is used with an object pronoun, and in example (8) the construction is used with a proper noun:

- (7) **Cuanto a** mí, paréceme [...] (Valdés, Juan de: Diálogo de doctrina cristiana) ‘[In] terms of me, it seems to me [...]’ [1526]
- (8) **En cuanto a** Aristóteles, mi sospecha es que [...] (Sepúlveda, Juan Ginés de: Epistolario. Selección) ‘In terms of Aristotle, my suspicion is that [...]’ [1532]

If used sentence-initially, French *quant à* may also appear with a proper noun, with different kinds of a nominal group, or with a personal pronoun: “En

position frontale, *quant à* peut être suivi, le plus souvent d’un nom propre [*Quant à Jaroslav Jeru, il...*], d’un syntagme nominal défini [*Quant à l’eau du puits, il...*], d’un syntagme nominal possessif [*Quant a ton ami, je...*] et enfin d’un pronom personnel [*Quant à lui, tu...*]” (Choi-Jonin 2003: 135).

The following two examples are syntactically used in mid-position (9) or parenthetically (10):

- (9) [...] **cuanto a** lo primero [...] (Torres Naharro, Bartolomé de: *Himenea*) ‘[in] terms of the first [...]’ [1512]
- (10) [...] y que, **en cuanto a** la paga, la hagamos [...] (Pérez de Herrera, Cristóbal: Discursos del amparo de los legítimos pobres...) ‘[...] and that, in terms of pay, we make.SUBJ the payment [...]’ [16<sup>th</sup> cent.]

Comparing the results for the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century, the results of the *Corpus del español* do not reflect that the use of the construction has increased but with regard to the *CORDE* the use can be described as having slightly increased or at least as being stable. Furthermore, *cuanto a* and *en cuanto a* are still co-existing:

- (11) [...] nuestra fe dilata, que es mejor que oro y plata **cuanto a** la tierra se aventaja el cielo [...] (Martín de la Plaza, Luis: Poesía) ‘[...] our deep faith, which is better than gold and silver [in] terms of the earth it exceeds heaven [...]’ [1601]
- (12) [...] en los pasos de sus méritos (**cuanto a** expresa testificación de la Iglesia a lo menos) [...] (Paravicino y Arteaga, Hortensio Félix: Oraciones evangélicas y panegíricos funerales) ‘[...] in the steps of his merits ([in] terms of expressed testimony of the church at least) [...]’ [1606]
- (13) Dios [...], a cuya gracia reconozco, humilde **cuanto a** la naturaleza y al arte debo [...] (Paravicino y Arteaga, Hortensio Félix: Oraciones evangélicas y panegíricos funerales) ‘God [...], whose grace I recognise, mostly [in] terms of the nature and art I owe [...]’ [1606]
- (14) [...] creció con él el sangriento ánimo, si bien **cuanto a** su esposa [...] (Céspedes y Meneses, Gonzalo de: El buen celo premiado)

‘[...] grew in him the blood lust, though [in] terms of his wife [...]’ [1612]

- (15) [...] pues **cuanto a** la ofensa yo no le agravio de malicia; y **cuanto a** la verdad, él no puede saber [...] (Pérez de Montalbán, Juan: Sucesos y prodigios de amor)  
‘well, [in] terms of the offence I do not insult him of malice; and [in] terms of the truth, he cannot know [...]’ [1620]

The construction is also combined with a verb in the infinitive (or here, with two infinitives):

- (16) [...] **en cuanto a** faltar y no saberse de su hija [...] (Céspedes y Meneses, Gonzalo de: Sucesos trágicos de don Enrique de Silva)  
‘[...] in terms of missing and not knowing about his daughter [...]’ [1612]

If studying the distribution of the results in the table above, it is obvious that in the 18<sup>th</sup> century the use of the construction has increased compared to the century before. Still, both constructions are to be found – *cuanto a* and *en cuanto a*:

- (17) Esto **en cuanto a** Gramática, y Metafísica. (Feijoo, Benito Jerónimo: Teatro crítico universal, vol. 7)  
‘This in terms of Grammar and Metaphysics.’ [1736]
- (18) La idea que entonces se tenía **en cuanto a** las cosas que [...] (Forner, Juan Pablo: Discurso sobre la historia de España)  
‘The idea they then had in terms of the things which [...]’ [1776]

In the examples (17) and (18) *en cuanto a* is used with both, an NP without definite article (17) and an NP with definite article (18). In the following example, sentence-initial *Cuanto a* is bound to a definite NP:

- (19) “**Cuanto a** la estada en Valladolid, a mi place de [...]”. (Martínez Marina, Francisco: Teoría de la Cortes o Grandes Juntas Nacionales)  
‘[In] terms of the stay in Valladolid, I like to [...]’ [1794]

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the 1653 results of the *Corpus del español* and the 2094 results of the *CORDE* do not only show that the use of the construction has increased but also that *cuanto a* and *en cuanto a* are still co-existing, even though *cuanto a* is less used in comparison to *en cuanto a*:

- (20) **Cuanto a** los Ayuntamientos [...] (Costa, Joaquín: Oligarquía y caciquismo [...])  
‘[In] terms of the mayoralty [...]’ [1878]

A quantitative study of the relative frequency reveals that *cuanto a* is becoming surpassed by *en cuanto a*: “Relative frequency measures how often a construction occurs in comparison to some alternative construction. A change in relative frequency could be that a construction surpasses another one in frequency or becomes surpassed itself” (Hilpert 2013: 7). If analysing in how many instances *cuanto a*, compared to *en cuanto a*, is used, it is to say that *en cuanto a* is used much more frequently: *cuanto a* is only used in 35 instances of 500 examples, that is, in only 7%.

For the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the *Corpus del español* offers examples from transcribed oral texts. 654 examples of 1606 results are to be found in transcribed interviews retrieved from daily newspapers such as *ABC*, which are regarded oral in character, and transcribed oral speech, named “Habla Culta: Caracas / Bogotá / Buenos Aires” or “España oral” etc. These transcribed oral texts represent dialogues. Clearly, in interviews one should distinguish between the interviewer’s speech, who usually has formulated his questions in advance, and the interviewee’s answer, who answers spontaneously. The interviewer’s speech is always closer to conceptual writtenness than to conceptual orality.

- (21) [...] es un récord mundial **en cuanto a** precio. (Habla Culta: Buenos Aires: M8 A)  
‘It is a world record in terms of price.’ [20<sup>th</sup> cent.]
- (22) [...] **en cuanto a** su legislación, **en cuanto a** la práctica, **en cuanto a** la modificación de los procedimientos [...] (Habla Culta: Bogotá: M14)  
‘[...] in terms of his legislation, in terms of the practice, in terms of the modification of the procedures [...]’ [20<sup>th</sup> cent.]

Since the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, *en cuanto a* + NP seems to be entrenched so far that instances of *cuanto a* cannot be found any longer. So in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the construction *en cuanto a* finally surpasses *cuanto a* in frequency. Even though there is a tendency to use the construction with a definite NP, examples with an NP without definite article can also be found (21).

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century section of the *CORDE*, however, no instance can be found in oral texts. In the *CREA*, which was used to retrieve some data from the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the time span 2000-2004, very few examples come from oral texts: For *en cuanto a* there are only 4 out of 1769 examples in oral speech, and for *En cuanto a* only 2 of 1538 can be found. Nevertheless, it is to question whether the construction can be said to expand to oral texts nowadays.





### 3.4 En cuanto a – an example of constructional change?

Bybee (2013) expresses the idea that constructions are mentally stored as exemplar clouds. Exemplars, which are understood as “categories formed from tokens of experience that are judged to be the same” (Bybee 2013: 53),

[...] come in a variety of sizes, ranging from a single segment, such as a vowel, to whole paragraphs, such as the Pledge of Allegiance. The exemplars themselves are grouped together by similarity. Thus, the vowels of *hit*, *swim*, and *sip* may be grouped together, the different phonetic realizations of a word, such as *pretty* will be grouped together, as well as exemplars for longer sequences, such as *all of a sudden*. These exemplar clouds, as they are called, constitute categories (Bybee 2013: 53).

As the provided vowel example or example of phonetic realisation shows, these exemplar clouds can be formed according to different criteria such as phonetic, semantic, pragmatic, or even contextual criteria (Bybee 2013: 54):

For any word, phrase, or construction, exemplar categories from these different domains are linked. Thus, an exemplar model of language must allow for links across domains, based on co-occurrence in experience. Such links create the form-meaning correspondences that constitute constructions. Thus, exemplars, like constructions, provide for direct pairings of form with meaning without intermediate representations (such as phrase structure or phonemic representations) (Bybee 2013: 54).

This understanding of exemplar clouds is necessary or helpful with regard to Hilpert's definition of constructional change. The underlying criterion to constructional change is that “constructions are not fixed, but flexible, displaying formal and functional variation”, whereby this variation can be studied diachronically (Hilpert 2013: 6). According to Hilpert (2013: 6), “[o]ne variant of a construction, that is, one subtype of the construction that has a certain configuration of features, may become more frequent over time, as other variants become less frequent”. *Cuanto a* is considered to have been one variant of the construction *en cuanto a*. As was already shown in section 3.3, both *en cuanto a* and the variant *cuanto a* can be regarded as having been affected by constructional change, more precisely, by constructional change at the frequency level. Constructional change may operate on single symbolic units (Hilpert 2013: 16). In detail, constructional change is defined as follows: It “selectively seizes a conventionalized form-meaning pair of a language, altering it in terms of its form, its function, any aspect of its frequency, its distribution in the linguistic community, or any combination of these” (Hilpert 2013: 16).<sup>10</sup> So constructional change

occurs if any aspect of the construction's frequency changes, whereby

[...] changes in frequency do not only concern text frequency, but crucially also the relative frequency of functional and structural variants of the construction. [...] Changes in these frequencies will alter the cloud of exemplars that represents the construction in speakers' minds (Hilpert 2013: 17).

With regard to *cuanto a* it can be said that its relative frequency, compared to *en cuanto a*, decreased, while the absolute frequency of *en cuanto a* increased. Consequently, *cuanto a* disappeared from the exemplar cloud, as the data have shown. Since the 20<sup>th</sup> century the cloud of exemplars, which contained both *en cuanto a* and *cuanto a* has obviously been altered, and, according to the data, *cuanto a* does not any longer represent a construction in speakers' minds. In the context of the present study, however, it should be differentiated between actively used and passively stored constructions: if working with a certain corpus, one can only rely on the retrieved data and never know if a certain construction is stored in a speaker's mind, even though it may not be used actively.

## 4. Conclusion and outlook

The present study offered a description of *en cuanto a* at both the formal and the meaning level. *En cuanto a* was formalised as a construction consisting of the following component parts: preposition + noun + preposition. The construction's nature is (partly) non-compositional. Its exact meaning is not strictly predictable from its component parts. The lexical unit *cuanto* still means ‘quantum’, even though Latin *quantum* lost its quantifying semantics. *Cuanto* indicates a quantitative unit. Taking all component parts together, the topic marking construction means ‘in terms of’. *En cuanto a* itself is clearly not schematic. Relying on the principle ‘it's constructions all the way down’, however, the construction is insofar partly schematic as the construction is always used in combination with another construction such as an NP. So the pattern [*en cuanto a* + {...}] can be regarded a partly schematic construction.

From the 15<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century *cuanto a* and *en cuanto a* co-existed but since the 20<sup>th</sup> century no use of *cuanto a* can be found any longer. Diachronically, the use of the construction *en cuanto a* increased (criterion of absolute frequency) and has become entrenched. It is nowadays typical to use *en cuanto a* + definite NP, but the topic marker can also be found with NPs lacking the definite article. An additional, quick comparison between *en cuanto a trabajo* and *en cuanto al trabajo* ‘in terms of work’ via Google shows for *en cuanto a trabajo*: 418,000 results and for *en cuanto al trabajo*: 2,170,000 results.

It was also tested in Google whether *en cuanto a* + VP is similarly frequent: for *en cuanto a correr* ‘in terms of running’ more than 26,000 results were

displayed. So in comparison to *en cuanto a* + NP, *en cuanto a* + VP can clearly be regarded as being used less. However, many examples are from speech which is oral in character as from chat forums, for instance:

- (23) **En cuanto a correr**, hacerlo durante un mínimo de 10 kilómetros semanales ya produciría beneficios estables [...] <sup>11</sup>  
'In terms of running, doing it for at least 10 kilometres per week, it will produce stable effects already [...]'
- (24) **En cuanto a correr** por las mañanas, me como medio pan tostado con mermelada y medio litro de agua [...] <sup>12</sup>  
'In terms of running in the morning, I eat half of a toasted bread with marmalade and [drink] half a litre of water [...]'
- (25) Tras leer la entrada y algunos de los comentarios no podía más que comentar que estais en lo cierto muchos de vosotros **en cuanto a correr** [...] <sup>13</sup>  
'After reading the beginning and a few commentaries I only could comment that most of you are right with regard to running [...]'
- (26) Realizar ejercicio ayuda en muchos aspectos, pero **en cuanto a correr** Marcos G nos comparte: [...] <sup>14</sup>  
'Exercising helps in many respects but in terms of running Marcos G. explains to us: [...]'

The corpus analysed showed that the topic marking construction is used in various syntactic positions. Nowadays, there seems to be a tendency to put a comma after *En cuanto a* + NP or + VP if used sentence-initially.

The most important aspect of Hilpert's definition of constructional change is that it operates on a single symbolic unit (Hilpert 2013: 16), and the analysis has shown that it operated on the construction *en cuanto a*. *En cuanto a* underwent a constructional change with regard to its absolute frequency. More precisely, with respect to *cuanto a* it was shown that its relative frequency, compared to *en cuanto a*, decreased, while the absolute frequency of *en cuanto a* increased. According to the data, *cuanto a* finally disappeared from the exemplar cloud in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. <sup>15</sup> Furthermore, the notion of constructional change encompasses, besides syntactic changes and changes in frequency, all -isation processes such as grammaticalisation or lexicalization. Haßler (2011) argues that the diachronic development of *en cuanto a* can best be described in terms of pragmaticalisation. Even though *en cuanto a* was in use even before the 14<sup>th</sup>

century, its function as topic marker developed explicitly from the 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century. As a result, the topicalising meaning of *en cuanto a* was established in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Relations of relevance are established between [*en cuanto a* + {...}] and elements of the sentence that follows. In comparison to left-dislocation, the unit which is topicalised by *en cuanto a* does not have to be repeated by a pronoun in the sentence. Future research, however, could concentrate on the emergence of *en cuanto a*, asking when the components combined to form a construction, i.e. when exactly this pattern started to represent a construction. As is indicated by Haßler (2011), *en cuanto a* has its roots in Latin *quantum ad* so that the construction's components – at least two of them – happened to combine in Latin already. Since the process of constructionalisation is understood as “the creation of form<sub>new</sub>-meaning<sub>new</sub> (combinations of) signs” (Traugott / Trousdale 2013: 22), this might be a helpful background. The pragmatic conditions which favoured the development of the topic marking function of *en cuanto a* from the 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century could also represent a research field for future studies.

Future studies should also focus on a detailed and subtle analysis of this construction in oral speech, or at least in speech which can be regarded conceptually oral. It should be investigated whether there is a growing tendency that the construction is used with a definite NP instead of an NP without any article. Furthermore, a comparison of *en cuanto a* with other topic marking constructions – perhaps in a certain text genre like academic writing – in terms of relative frequency could represent an interesting task for future research. The question of why the longer version (*en cuanto a* instead of *cuanto a*) ‘survived’ seems also interesting, and why the shorter and more economic variant of the topic marker did not become entrenched.

“[S]ince all Romance languages are descendants of Latin”, Boas / González-García (2014: 5) describe future studies “on comparing and contrasting grammatical constructions in languages belonging to the same language family” as a “particularly fruitful exercise” (Boas / González-García 2014: 5) Because of the same origin that Romance languages have, “one would expect that most constructions in Romance languages today have direct and comparable counterparts in other Romance languages” (Boas / González-García 2014: 5). Against this background, a concrete comparison of the development, use and restriction of use between, for instance, French *quant à* and Spanish *en cuanto a* is required, or – from a broader perspective – a contrastive analysis of similar topic marking constructions across different (Romance) languages would be fruitful.



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### Corpora

- Corpus de Referencia del Español Actual:  
<http://corpus.rae.es/creanet.html>.
- Corpus del español:  
<http://www.corpusdelespanol.org/>.
- Corpus Diacrónico del Español:  
<http://corpus.rae.es/cordenet.html>.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Acknowledgements: I gratefully thank 'Reviewer 1' for his fine-grained reception of my paper and for his helpful comments. I also thank journal editor Thomas Hoffmann, who motivated me to articulate some of my thoughts more clearly.
- <sup>2</sup> For a detailed discussion of the notions *theme* and *rheme* see Neumann-Holzschuh (1997: 36-41), for the overlapping of the dichotomy pairs see Ewert-Kling (2010: 86) and for different kinds of focus see Krifka (2006). From a formal point of view, the focus is prosodically salient (Gabriel 2007: 69; Ewert-Kling 2010: 89), and the topic is usually bound to particular syntactic features – either with particular topic markers such as *en cuanto a* or processes like dislocation (cf. Ewert-Kling 2010: 93). However, there are other studies in which the term *focalisation* is used as a synonym for saliency / accentuation in general, as Neumann-Holzschuh (1997) explains: "Wir möchten die Begriffe *Topikalisierung* und *Topik*

weitestgehend meiden und *Fokussierung* synonym für Hervorhebung im allgemeinen verwenden [...]" ('We would like to avoid using the notions *topicalisation* and *topic*, and use *focusing* as a synonym for emphasis in general.'). Neumann-Holzschuh 1997: 65). In their introductory paper to the volume *Focus and Background in Romance Languages* Dufter / Jacob (2009: 1-18) give an overview about the notion of focus in Romance languages. They also give an overview about early theories of information structure and deal with the Prague school, its concepts such as theme and rheme, and mention the Praguian theorists Mathesius, Firbas and Daneš. Their volume contains, for instance, papers by Brunetti (2009), Dufter (2009), Kato / Ribeiro (2009) and Leonetti / Escandell-Vidal (2009), who treat questions regarding focus structures in Romance languages.

- <sup>3</sup> Generally, it is spoken about the *discourse topic* and the *sentence topic*.
- <sup>4</sup> Syntactic dislocation can be regarded a topic marking construction without an explicit lexical topic marker. So the focused entity is only marked by being dislocated from the usual sentence structure. It is to be distinguished between left-dislocation and right-dislocation. Dik (1997: 389) describes left-dislocation as an entity which "specifies an ensemble of entities with respect to which the following clause is going to present some relevant information". In the case of right-dislocation, by contrast, the extra-clausal constituent is to be found at the right periphery of the sentence. According to Dik, right-dislocation is "defined in general as characterizing constituents which present information meant to clarify or modify (some constituent contained in) the unit to which they are adjoined" (Dik 1997: 401). See also Ewert-Kling (2010), who prefers to use the notions of left-detachment and right-detachment.
- <sup>5</sup> According to Haßler (2011), there are generally two ways of topicalisation: Besides dislocation as primary means of expression of topicalisation there is also the possibility to mark topics by means of topic markers. At first sight, these are lexical elements, which are put before the topic such as span. *en cuanto a, con respecto a, respecto de, por lo que toca* (Haßler 2011: 54; see also Contreras 1976: 81).
- <sup>6</sup> The sequence *lo de gobernaros* represents a case of nominalisation.
- <sup>7</sup> However, in the original framework of CxG, in Berkeley CxG, partly schematic constructions were the only constructions recognised to exist (cf. Fillmore 2013; see the papers by Fillmore / Kay / O'Connor 1988 and Kay / Fillmore 1999). Fillmore (2013), for example, explains that a phrase such as *She loves me* cannot be considered a construction since valency structures represent fully schematic constructions, which are not constructions in Berkeley CxG because "[...] everything we know about such a sentence, including the case forms of the two pronouns, can be



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explained by what we know about valence, two patterns for valent realization, grammatical function and the case form of personal pronouns etc.” (Fillmore 2013: 126).

- <sup>8</sup> *Cuanto a* is considered a variant of *en cuanto a* (see also Hilpert 2013: 6). There is no difference between *en cuanto a* and *cuanto a* at the semantic level. Formally, the latter consists of only two component parts instead of three. For the sake of simplicity, if speaking about both *en cuanto a* and *cuanto a*, I will sometimes address them as ‘both constructions’.
- <sup>9</sup> If the exact year is not mentioned but only the century, the exact date was also not mentioned in the corpus.
- <sup>10</sup> Traugott / Trousdale (2013: 26) describe a constructional change as “a change affecting one internal dimension of a construction”, which “does not involve the creation of a new node”.
- <sup>11</sup> <http://www.foroatletismo.com/entrenamiento/averigua-cuanto-tienes-que-correr-para-mejorar-tu-fondo/> (last accessed 11/08/2014).
- <sup>12</sup> <http://runfitners.com/2013/11/correr-en-ayunas-riesgos-y-beneficios-primera-parte/> (last accessed 11/08/2014).
- <sup>13</sup> <http://jeronimosanchez.com/7-razones-por-las-que-es-mejor-caminar-que-correr/> (last accessed 11/08/2014).
- <sup>14</sup> [http://www.yanswersbloges.com/b4/2010/06/guia\\_respuestas\\_correr/](http://www.yanswersbloges.com/b4/2010/06/guia_respuestas_correr/) (last accessed 11/08/2014).
- <sup>15</sup> Generally, adopting a constructionist approach to topic markers allows a concrete formalization and uncovers their rise, development and – possibly – disappearance in terms of absolute and relative frequency.

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