

Non-embedded infinitives in a heritage speaker of Spanish

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Infinitivals cannot be the main verb in root clauses in Spanish except in very limited circumstances, typically in non-assertive contexts such as (1) (cf. Hernanz 1999, Grohmann & Etxepare 2003, 2005). Hernanz' observation is formalized in (2)(1). Otherwise, root infinitives like (3) are unattested in adult speech.

- (1) ¿Salir yo con este frío? De ninguna manera
Go-out I with this cold? Of no way "Me going out in this cold? No way!"
- (2) **Root-Tense generalization:** A root clause must have a T with specified tense.
- (3) *Entonces yo sali-r de mi casa.
then I leave-INF of my house

In this paper I analyze instances of non-embedded infinitives like (3) found in the production of Osmin, a heritage speaker of Spanish from Guatemala who moved to the United States at age 9, and returned to live in Guatemala when he was 25 in 2015. His story is narrated as the episode "Dime quién soy", (Radio Ambulante, NPR). Osmin produces a total of 246 verbs, 56 of them infinitives, and 49 of those (87%), non-embedded. These examples appear in the following contexts: a) they are main-clause, root infinitives such as (4)a,b; b) they appear in relative clauses ((4)c-d), and c) they appear in adjunct clauses ((4)e). None of them are possible in monolingual Spanish.

- (4) a. Y eso día fui normal: **levanta-r**, estuve feliz, estuve jugando.
and that day was normal: get.up-INF was happy, was playing
"And that day was normal: to get up, I was happy, I was playing."
- b. Entonces, ellos **pega-r-me** con cinchos, paletas.
then, they hit-INF-CL with belts, sticks
"So they hit me with belts, sticks."
- c. Eso día que yo **sali-r** aquí, yo carga toda mi vida.
that day that I leave-INF here, I carry all my life
"That day that I left here, I carried all my life."
- d. Entonces, ese nombre que yo **acostumbra-r**
then that name that I get.used.to-INF
"So that was the name I got used to."
- e. Y como él **promete-r** que yo voy a regresar más tarde...
and since he promise-INF that I go to return-INF later...
"And since he to promise that I was going to return later..."

These infinitives can be interpreted as involving different tenses. Furthermore, they can be conjoined with inflected verbs, as in (5), where the infinitive *cuidar* 'take care of' is conjoined with a tensed verb *estuvo* 'was'. Assuming conjuncts are parallel, this

suggests that the infinitive has features similar to the inflected verb. Finally, these infinitives have overt subjects.

- (5) Si él no estuvo en la casa y yo no **cuida-r** a él, **sabe-r**
If he not was in the house and I not take.care-INF to him, know-INF
qué, dónde yo voy a esta-r el día de hoy.
what where I AUX tobe-INF the day of today
“If he hadn’t been in the house, and I hadn’t taken care of him, I wonder what, where
I would be today.”

Osmin’s production is very similar to that of monolingual speakers in three relevant respects. First, he has no preverbal bare NP subjects (as many HSp and L2 speakers do), second, unaccusative verbs appear in VS order with existential subjects, and third, the distribution of aspect in past tense converges with mon-Sp. His phonetic output sounds impressionistically like that of a monolingual speaker as well.

I propose that the syntactic representation for these infinitives is specified for tense, but that they are spelled out as infinitives because that form is the default. In other words, it is the morphological spell-out where the Osmin’s grammar diverges from monolingual speakers’ (cf. Lardiere 1998 a. o.). In support of this hypothesis, I note that Osmin’s speech also has a few instances where the verb shows a non-target morphological form, given the features of the subject. For example, *puede* can.3p with a 1st person subject, which should trigger *puedo*. Likewise, overregularized irregular verbal forms suggest that the mapping between abstract features and morphological exponents may explain the presence of root infinitives.

References

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