Prenominal and Postnominal Demonstratives in Spanish: A Minimalist Approach

1. Abstract

Looking at the literature on the internal structure of DPs, we see that they make reference to the different structures we can find depending on the different elements that appear ‘heading’ the DP, such as articles and demonstratives, the two elements this paper is about. However, since we can see both elements coexisting in the same phrase, they cannot be elements of the same nature, and they cannot occupy the same position, as Giusti (1997) points out, (1):

(1) Los estudiantes éstos fueron a la bar
    the students these went to the bar

Following quite recent researches such as Giusti (2002), Brugè (2002), Panagiotidis (2000), or Campos (2005), I will show that the demonstrative belongs to a class of elements different from the determiners and the adjectives. In fact, and according to Roca (1996), DemP is an existent category, a functional head projecting an XP (his DemP) situated below DP.

Moreover, we find two different positions for the demonstrative in Spanish, since it can be pre- and post-nominal (2-3):

(2) Esa casa
    That house

(3) la casa esa
    the house that

Traditionally it has been assumed that it is because the demonstrative does not raise why the article has to show up in order to head the DP. Bernstein (1997) already notices that there exist a difference in meaning, since the prenominal demonstrative, (2), can be both anaphoric
or deictic, while the postnominal one, (3), can only be anaphoric. In order to have a deictic meaning we need a locative, as in (4):

(4) la casa esa de ahí

the house that of there

Therefore, I will argue in this paper that there exists a feature [+ deictic] that triggers the raising of the demonstrative to D, and which makes the expletive article appear in D when not checked, this is to say, when the demonstrative does not move.

2. References


