

# A corpus-based study of aspect: *still* and *already* + verb phrase constructions into Spanish<sup>1</sup>

Rosa Rabadán, University of León

## Abstract

This paper explores *still* and *already* + verb phrase constructions, their semantics, and the resources Spanish uses to convey their meanings. The aim is to explore some of the ways in which the grammars of the two languages, English and Spanish, encode aspectual transitions. The contrastive procedure is based on the parallel corpus P-ACTRES, and combines qualitative and quantitative corpus analysis: the English→Spanish equivalences are qualitatively identified and their relevance is assessed quantitatively. The similarities and differences are analyzed and used as a basis to formulate some empirically-grounded (although necessarily partial) considerations on cross-linguistic lexis-grammar relations. The results also raise questions about contrast and grammaticalization across the languages.

## 1. Introduction

Both English and Spanish convey aspect by means of a variety of different resources, including adverbs. *Still* and *already* + verb phrase constructions constitute an interesting English-Spanish contrastive case study not least because of the complexity of the meanings they convey.

Both English aspectuals and Spanish *todavía* [*still*] and *ya* [*already*] have received ample attention in terms of their lexical idiosyncrasies, for English: van der Auwera 1993; Michaelis 1993 and 1996, Krifka 2002; Ippolito 2007; for Spanish: Garrido 1991 and 1993; Fernández Lagunilla and De Miguel Aparicio 1999; Delbecque 2006. When considered cross-linguistically, however, we are, in a way, in a murky area. Previous work (Krifka 2002) has helped reveal that an exclusively lexical approach to these contexts does not necessarily help, because of different solutions in

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each of the languages or, simply, because of the absence of formal markers in one of them.

This paper sets out to explore *still/already* + *verb phrase* contexts in English and the resources Spanish uses to convey their meanings. The aim is to find out whether Spanish offers additional grammatical alternatives to *todavía* [‘still’] and *ya* [‘already’] + *verb phrase* constructions which are capable of conveying the aspectual transitions.

An outline of the aspectual semantics of *still* and *already* + constructions and their Spanish counterparts is provided in section two below and there is a concise account of the corpus in section three and of the procedure followed in section four. Both the quantitative and qualitative descriptions of these aspectual constructions are dealt with in sections five and six, while section seven is devoted to the contrast proper. The conclusion in section eight, which focuses on the relationship(s) between cross-linguistic contrast and single-language grammatical treatment, points at regularities in grammaticalization and/or “optimization patterns” in Spanish.

## 2. Still *and* already + *verb phrase constructions and their Spanish counterparts*

The (lexical) semantics of *still* and *already* indicate that they are primarily aspectual operators that, associated to the (grammatical) meaning of verbal structures, contribute to refining the expression of the aspectual transitions in a given proposition, in other words, they improve our understanding of the ‘internal temporal constituency of the situation’ (Comrie 1976: 4). Basically they convey two core notions: ‘absence of change or continuation’ in the case of the *still* contexts (example a) and ‘imminent change or inception’ in the case of those marked by *already* (Garrido 1991), as in example b.

a. They still love you, Neely (FGJ2E.s274)

b. My mask was already getting misty (FPT1E.s1121)<sup>2</sup>

They also mark, at varying degrees, the attitude of the speaker towards the situation or event (ter Meulen 2004:245) and mark a transition—in the

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<sup>2</sup> Examples a and b come from the P-ACTRES corpus <http://contraste.unileon.es/corpussearch/new/demo.html> [Accessed 7 September 2014]

case of *already*—or a continuation—in the case of *still*—in the temporal development of the situation.

*Still + verb phrase constructions* indicate that the situation continues to obtain at the time referred to, and involve some contrast with what might have been expected in a similar situation. These constructions carry a presupposition that the situation obtained before the time referred to—the previous phase—and continues to obtain at the time of reference. They may also involve a contrast with what would have been expected.

*Already + verb phrase constructions* highlight the time of inception, of the beginning of the situation, indicating that it obtains at the time referred to, and marking a polarity transition from a negative to a positive phase. Again, they may also imply that the situation has begun earlier than expected (Huddleston and Pullum 2002:710-13).

In their aspectual uses, Spanish *todavía/aún* and *ya* are taken to be the formal equivalents of *still* and *already*—and also of *yet* and *anymore*.<sup>3</sup>

*Todavía + verb phrase constructions* are taken to be inclusive, and indicate that the action/event already obtained before the time referred to. In this sense they convey continuity with a previously existing situation, which is generally interpreted as indicating durative aspect, as in example c.

By contrast, *ya + verb phrase constructions* are exclusive, meaning that the situation obtains at the time referred to but not before, which is generally interpreted as indicating inceptive aspect. It is the case of Victor's expectations in example d.

c. La exigencia del pago de la factura farmacéutica de diciembre de 2001 la llevó el Ejecutivo PSOE-PAR a los tribunales cuando todavía gobernaba el PP. [The demand, in December 2001, for the pharmaceutical debt to be met, was brought to court by the center-left regional government of Aragón when the Conservatives were still in power (in Madrid)].

d. Víctor ya ha puesto límite a sus aspiraciones como colegiado, (...) [Victor has already abandoned all hope of becoming a referee...]<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Deictic uses of Spanish adverbs *todavía* and *ya*, e.g., *ya hablamos* [we will talk then] or intensifier *todavía más* [still/even more] (Sánchez López 1999:2602) are not treated in this paper.

<sup>4</sup> Original Spanish examples c and d have been taken from the CREA corpus (RAE 2014) [Accessed 7 September 2014].

These Spanish constructions also ‘combine factual and subjective information about what is happening’ (ter Meulen 2004:241), which determines to a large extent which resources are better equipped to convey the information. As in English, the presuppositions concerning the transitions (ter Meulen 2004:246; García Fernández 1999: 3153) from a negative to a positive phase or the continuation of a previously existing one seem to be the key to how we interpret these contexts.

In both Spanish and English constructions aspectual functions and positive/negative polarity marking can overlap.<sup>5</sup> This second function, however, goes beyond the scope of this paper. Rather, this study will concentrate on two issues:

- Are these aspectual transitions conveyed by the same lexical–grammatical means or in Spanish are there alternative, equally and/or more frequently used resources?
- Do *still/todavía* + *verb phrase constructions* and *already/ya* + *verb phrase constructions* show comparable degrees of grammaticalization cross-linguistically? Does ‘more frequent’ imply ‘more grammatical’?

To try to (tentatively) answer these questions, and some more that arose during the process, a contrastive procedure has been employed using parallel corpus P-ACTRES 2.0. as a source of empirical data.

### 3. The P-ACTRES 2.0 corpus

P-ACTRES 2.0 (<http://actres.unileon.es/inicio.php?elementoID=12>) is a do-it-yourself (DIY) bidirectional parallel corpus comprising original texts in one language, English or Spanish, and their translations into the other. It contains over 4 million words in both directions. P-ACTRES EN→ES contains slightly over 2.5 million words distributed into different subcorpora: books, fiction and non-fiction, press -newspaper and magazine articles-, and miscellaneous texts. Excerpts of around 15,000 words have been used for the book subcorpora, and full texts for

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<sup>5</sup> Spanish does not have differentiated resources for positive and negative contexts. *Ya* and *todavía* are considered as polarity items by the standard grammar of Spanish (RAE 2009: 3636-3637 and 2330-2333) and appear in positive environments. Negative environments use *ya no* and *todavía no* respectively. Empirical data show both operators enter a double polar opposition: *todavía/ ya no* [still/ anymore] vs *ya/ todavía no* [already/ yet] (Sánchez López 1999: 2598-2603).

all the others. The version of P–ACTRES ES→EN used for this study dates from March 2013, and contains just under two and a half million words, distributed among books (fiction and non-fiction) press (newspapers and magazines) and miscellanea (table 1). The tagged parallel texts have been aligned at sentence level and can be searched with the Corpus Work Bench browser (CWB) (Izquierdo, Hofland and Reigem 2008).

Table 1: Contents of P-ACTRES 2.0 EN-ES (March 2013)

<b>P–ACTRES 2.0 EN→ES</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Spanish</b>	<b>Total</b>
Books (Fiction and non-fiction)	890,820	974,132	1,864,952
Press (Newspapers and magazines)	235,106	264,191	596,858
Miscellanea	40,178	49,026	89,204
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,166,104</b>	<b>1,287,349</b>	<b>2,453,453</b>

P–ACTRES 2.0 is used to obtain basic diagnostic information about language use and cross-linguistic interpretation. ‘Diagnostic’ here means ‘instrumental’ in that translation performance is not the goal of the study but a means to empirically unveil problem areas between English and Spanish and to focus on formally dissimilar equivalents which might be overlooked otherwise. This is also the reason why original Spanish materials (P–ACTRES ES→EN) have not been sampled and analyzed in this particular study.

#### 4. Procedure

This research combines qualitative and quantitative corpus analysis and is modelled on the following stages: selection, description, and contrast. The P–ACTRES EN→ES parallel corpus querying capabilities which supported our selection criteria include detailed POS selection of up to three items on complete, start, end or part of words (e. g. verb + base form; past tense; gerund or present participle, etc.) among other features.<sup>6</sup> These made it possible to concentrate on those constructions where aspectual transition marking is likely to show, excluding other uses of *already* and, particularly, of *still*.

<sup>6</sup> See P-ACTRES demo for more information <http://actres.unileon.es/demo.html> [Accessed 4 September 2014].

## 5. 'Still' + verb phrase construction corpus data

## 5.1. Selection and sampling

An initial query for any construction which included *still* came to 1280, of which 613 (47,9, nearly 50% of the total) combined with verb phrase constructions. This selection restriction was adopted so as to focus on the aspectual uses of these constructions. As mentioned above, P–ACTRES EN→ES search tools offer the possibility of querying for different verbal combinations so as to cover all possible scenarios. To ensure the representativeness of the selection quantitatively, the strategy employed has been stratified random sampling. Table 2 shows that over 25% of the occurrences happen in the environment of an *-ing* form, followed at a considerable distance by past (15.7%) and past participle (PP) forms (10.7%), and more neutral tenses such as the simple present (9.5%). Constructions including base forms of the verbs ([would, may, etc] still + V base) range between 9% and 6.1%. Every other combination ranks below 5%.

Table 2. Still + verb construction selection

<b>STILL Construction</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>n<sup>7</sup></b>	<b>%</b>
+ -ING	156	62	25.6
+ PAST	95	38	15.7
+ PP	66	26	10.7
+ PRES	58	23	9.5
+ V BASE	56	22	9
+ PRES S	47	19	7.8
+ BE BASE	38	15	6.1
+ HAVE PAST	24	9	3.7
+ HAVE PRES	20	8	3.3
+ HAS	15	6	2.5
+ HAVE BASE	11	4	1.6
+ BE PAST	8	3	1.2
+ BEING	6	2	0.8
+ BEEN	6	2	0.8
+ ARE/AM	4	2	0.8
+ IS	2	1	0.4
+ HAVING	1	0	
+ HAD PP	0	0	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>613</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>100</b>

<sup>7</sup> 'N' refers to population size and 'n' to sample size (StatTrek 2014).

Despite the relatively low figures for some of the queries, every single possibility will be considered for cross-linguistic solutions as some of these options may throw some light on the interpretation of these constructions.

The search for translation solutions yielded a marked preference for the periphrastic solutions (table 3 in bold). The periphrastic cluster *Seguir/ continuar/ pasar + gerund* [continue + ing form] constitutes (40%) of the cases. Additionally, *(todavía) estar + gerund* and negative periphrases *sin dejar de/ no terminar de + infinitive* [(not) stop + ing form] contribute a further 7% of the Spanish options. An alternative to this overwhelming preference is the imperfect tense accompanied by *aún/todavía* [still] (21%) followed by the same construction in the present tense, which represents 20% of the solutions.

All other solutions are below 5%, which may not be important from the quantitative point of view, but do seem quite promising qualitatively.

Table 3. Translation solutions for STILL constructions

<b>STILL constructions translation solutions</b>	<b>Cases</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Verbal periphrases: <i>seguir, continuar, pasar + gerund</i></b> [continue + gerund]	<b>97</b>	<b>40</b>
Imperfect + <i>aún/ todavía</i>	52	21
Present + <i>aún</i>	48	20
<b>Verbal periphrases: <i>(todavía) estar + gerund</i></b> [be + gerund]	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>Aún/ todavía</i> + conditional/ future tense	9	4
Present + $\emptyset$	8	3
<b>Neg periphrases: <i>no/ sin dejar de, no terminar de + inf</i></b> [not stop + gerund]	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>
Lexical aspect: <i>mantener, paso a paso</i> [keep to; step by step]	4	2
<i>Aún/todavía</i> + attributive construction	3	1
<i>Aún/ todavía NO</i> + present perfect	2	1
Other	3	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>100</b>

## 5.2. Description

### 5.2.1. Verbal periphrases

Spanish verbal periphrastic schemes are constructions that show different degrees of grammaticalization and have specialized—mainly—in particular modal or aspectual meanings (Fernández de Castro 1999; Gómez Torrego 1999: 3323-3347). A further function of Spanish periphrases is to allow the speaker or writer to present his/her point of view concerning the process, action or event referred to.

The case of (mainly) *seguir* + *gerund* [continue + gerund] is commonly associated to aspectual content, to the expression of durative and iterative meanings.<sup>8</sup> To interpret *seguir* + *gerund* constructions access to the previous phases of the process or state referred to is required. By itself, *seguir* + *gerund* indicates that whatever the process, action or state, it was already happening in a previous stretch of time and persists at the time of reference in the text.

As shown in examples 1 to 3, the periphrastic construction can be conjugated in all tenses, according to needs (Matte Bon 1995: 162), and is not accompanied by any additional element that would replicate English *still*. Just two instances have been found where *seguir* + *gerund* is reinforced by *todavía* (examples 4 and 5). In both cases *todavía* acquires an additional pragmatic meaning concerned with speaker's (or writer's) expectations: that the situation persists longer than it is reasonable to expect.

- (1) China would **still have a** vast, underdeveloped countryside, (...) (PNJS2E.s22)  
China **seguiría teniendo** una enorme y subdesarrollada zona rural [...] (PNJS2S.s22)
- (2) I gorged myself like a teenager on sleep and **still felt worn** out. (ELE1E.s304)  
Me regodeaba en la cama como una adolescente y **seguía sintiéndome** exhausta. (ELE1S.s312)
- (3) Eats **still rated** high-e.g., last night's banquet at Lucas-Carton. (FBE1E.s691)

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<sup>8</sup> Since no appreciable difference in meaning has been found between *seguir* + *gerund* and *continuar* + *gerund* and the former is far more frequent in contemporary Spanish (Yllera 1999: 3422), in this paper they are considered variants of the same periphrasis.

La comida **continuaba situándose** a gran altura, por ejemplo el banquete de anoche en el Lucas-Carton. (FBE1S.s703)

- (4) [...] although he confessed five years later that it was all fiction based on the rumours current at the time, the story **still persists today**. (EAR1E.s73)

[...] aunque cinco años más tarde confesó que se trataba de una pura ficción basada en los rumores corrientes en la época, la historia **aún hoy sigue circulando**. (EAR1S.s74)

- (5) [...] and watched the smoke **still rising** from the Pentagon, lit by the floodlights that had been brought in. (ECR1E.s893)

...y vimos que **todavía seguía saliendo** humo del Pentágono, iluminado por los focos que allí se habían instalado. (ECR1S.s880)

*Seguir* + *gerund* generally conveys an uninterrupted process, either continuous or iterative, and occasionally may alternate as a translation option with *no/sin dejar de* + *infinitive* [(without/not) stop + gerund]. *Dejar de* + *infinitive* is another grammaticalized periphrastic construction used to convey two possible meanings (RAE: 2178-2180): a) interruption of a state or event (which is not necessarily completed) and b) continuation, when accompanied by a morphological negative, as in example 6:

- (6) The thing was that Ricky was **still making records** and that's what I wanted to do, too. (EDB1E.s225)

El hecho es que Ricky **no dejaba de sacar** discos, y eso es lo que yo quería. (EDB1S.s233)

According to Matte Bon (1995: 163), who acknowledges the close relationship of these constructions with *todavía /ya (no)* constructions, this is particularly true of *no/sin dejar de* + *infinitive*, although there is a difference in focus: whereas the periphrastic construction indicates absence of change or interruption of some process or state by means of lexical semantics, *todavía* relies on the pragmatics of the situation. In this sense, *no/sin dejar de* + *infinitive* would be interpreted semantically whereas *todavía* would have to refer to the contextual information obtaining from the situation.

*Estar* + *gerund* is another of the periphrastic choices to translate *still* + verb constructions into Spanish. Unlike progressive constructions in English, *estar* + *gerund* does not have tense status in the grammar of

Spanish (RAE 2009: 2185-2192).<sup>9</sup> It is very frequent in contemporary Spanish and it is extremely sensitive to the grammatical context. Basically, it signals progressive aspect and focuses specifically on the actualization of the internal time of the action, process or event, as in example 7, where the process is presented as ongoing and open-ended. However, *estar* + *gerund* may also indicate iteration or gradual change within the process, as in example 8, which conveys the intermittent manifestations of activity and the constant modification of the situation (Yllera 1999: 3402-3412; RAE 2009: 2189).

- (7) Nomenclature and taxonomy of these fungi are **still evolving**, and further changes should be expected. (EWD1E.s476)  
 La nomenclatura y la taxonomía de estos hongos está todavía evolucionando, y se esperan más cambios. (EWD1S.s473)
- (8) The precise number of those present is hard to establish, since deputies were **still arriving** from remote regions in June. (EBUB1E.s397)  
 Es difícil calcular el número preciso de los presentes, porque en junio **aún estaban llegando** representantes de regiones remotas. (EBUB1S.s404)

### 5.2.2. Imperfect + ‘aún/todavía’

The second most typical solution is an imperfect tense accompanied by *todavía/aún*. The Spanish imperfect signals a process or situation continuing in the past with no end-point. All our occurrences include *aún* or *todavía* in the construction, indicating that the situation continues to obtain at the time referred to, contrary to what might have been expected. No difference has been reported in the use of the periphrasis or the imperfect construction on the basis of verb semantics (action, event, state...). Neither have corpus data yielded any noticeable systematic difference in the use of *todavía* and *aún*, as illustrated in examples 9 and 10,

- (9) [...] more casualties were destined for the surgeons, particularly aboard the Bellerophon and the Aigle, which **were still engaged in** a bloody struggle. (EAR1E.s353)

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<sup>9</sup>At different points in history, *estar* + *gerund* has been considered part of the tense system (Bello 1847:§ 617, 619).

[...] más víctimas eran enviadas a los cirujanos, especialmente a bordo del Bellerophon y el Aigle, que **aún se hallaban** en medio de una contienda sangrienta. (EAR1S.s353)

- (10) [...] watching the fields where an occasional gang of Mexicans **was still working**, racing against the dark. (FGJ1E.s478)

[...] contemplando los campos en los que **aún trabajaban** algunos grupos de mexicanos en una veloz carrera contra el crepúsculo. (FGJ1S.s457)

### 5.2.3. *Present* + ‘aún/todavía’

Spanish uses the simple present to mark actualization of the process, action, state or event within the framework regarded as here and now by the speaker (Rojo and Veiga 1999:2900-2918, Rabadán 2009:462). If the context requires presupposed information about the stage prior to the one that obtains, Spanish will make use of *todavía* or *aún* to indicate that the situation referred to is a continuation of some state, process or event previously in existence. Examples 11 and 12 illustrate this use but their pragmatics are different. In 11 the situation is neutral in that ‘I still have not run out of coffee’, whereas 12 must be interpreted that whatever is being referred to was previously made with sugar everywhere, but now this situation obtains only in those places where sugar cane continues to be affordable.

- (11) “I **still got coffee** in my truck”. (FHC1E.s203)

**Todavía tengo** café en el camión. (FHC1S.s197)

- (12) It is undoubtedly **still made with** sugar in countries where sugar cane is cheap. (EWRI1E.s125)

Sin duda alguna, en aquellos países donde la caña de azúcar abunda y resulta asequible **todavía se emplea** el azúcar. (EWRI1S.s128)

Together with these three preferred translation solutions, our corpus search has yielded a number of less frequent choices which, although not relevant quantitatively, may shed some light on the internal workings of both languages, and/or on susceptible points of language interference in this particular area.

#### 5.2.4. ‘Aún/todavía’ + *conditional/future tenses*

Conditional and future tenses represent 4% of the translation solutions and in all cases are instances of “third code language” (Øverås 1998),<sup>10</sup> as in example 13, where a present subjunctive [*sigan protegidas/ estén protegidas*] would be more acceptable.

- (13) The surfaces, however, **will** probably still **be protected**, either by a thin layer of ultrafiltrated synovial fluid gel (boosted lubrication) or by the adsorbed lubricin monolayer (boundary lubrication). (ENMFV1E.s390).

Las superficies, sin embargo, probablemente **estarán todavía protegidas**, por una capa fina de gel de fluido sinovial ultrafiltrado (lubricación reforzada) o por la monocapa adsorbida de lubricina (lubricación de barrera). (ENMFV1S.s387)

#### 5.2.5. *Present + Ø*

Simple Present without any further modification accounts for 3% of the solutions into Spanish. In these cases there is a meaning change in the texts, as in example 14—the English text refers to the continuation of a situation that was widespread in the past, but has become unusual in the present; the Spanish translation just states a present day fact, without any link to a previous situation.

- (14) There are villages in Lebanon that **still have** a high percentage of fair-skinned blonds. (RGR2E.s74)

En algunas aldeas libanesas **hay** un elevado porcentaje de individuos rubios de tez clara. (RGR2S.s64)

#### 5.2.6. *Lexical aspect: ‘mantener, paso a paso’*

A further minority option for the *still* + verb constructions into Spanish is to use either lexical aspect as encoded in certain verbs (example 15) or more analytic resources to convey iteration, as in example 16. While *mantener* [keep to] and *paso a paso* [step by step] may not contribute significantly to the question of whether more frequent means more

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<sup>10</sup> For further comments see footnote 12, also Ebeling (1998).

grammatical, these translations do show that Spanish offers additional formal possibilities to convey aspectual transitions.

- (15) The Army was **still sticking** to night landings in spite of experience in Sicily. (ELAR1E.s447)  
El ejército **mantenía tozudamente** su confianza en la bondad de los desembarcos nocturnos, a pesar de la experiencia de Sicilia. (ELAR1S.s432) [*The Army unyieldingly/stubbornly stuck to....*]
- (16) The tree is **still growing and** taking shape. (EKAH1E.s232)  
**Paso a paso**, el árbol crece y toma forma. (EKAH1S.s220) [*Step by step/ Gradually, the tree.....*]

#### 5.2.7. 'Aún/todavía' + *attributive construction*

An infrequent solution (1%) is to combine the aspectual *todavía* with attributive constructions as in example 17. Our data suggest that this is the choice when the English 'dynamic' constructions are better conveyed by 'static' categories in Spanish.

- (17) Roger Cressey **was still fuming** at their refusal. (ECR1E.s826)  
(18) Roger Cressey **todavía estaba furioso** por su negativa-. (ECR1S.s815)

#### 5.2.8. 'Aún/todavía no' + *present perfect*

The Spanish present perfect includes the meaning of 'resultative', which is obviously incompatible with the continuation signaled by the *still* construction. A negative has been used as an avoidance strategy to convey the meaning of the English text, as in example 18.

- (19) Your luggage **is still packed**. (FCJ1E.s526)  
(20) **Aún no has deshecho** la maleta. (FCJ1S.s510) [*You have not unpacked yet*]

#### 5.2.9. *Others*

In those cases where the *still* construction has been reinterpreted lexically into Spanish, as example 19, some degree of meaning loss or change applies.

(21) Garcia was killed by treason in 1895, because – so Cuban opinion **still holds** - he was about to throw in his lot with the revolution. (EHE1E.s73)

García fue muerto a traición en 1895 porque - **según una creencia general**- estaba a punto de ponerse al lado de la revolución. (EHE1S.s72)  
[according to general belief]

Our study reveals that Spanish favors periphrastic resources over adverbial solutions to convey the aspectual values encoded by *still* constructions in English, while corpus data show that other options are possible though significantly less used. These findings are discussed in more detail in section seven below.

## 6. ‘Ya’ + verb phrase construction corpus data

### 6.1. Selection and sampling

P–ACTRES EN→ES yielded 332 cases of contexts including *ya* [already] combined with verbal constructions.<sup>11</sup> Table 4 shows that 45% of the occurrences happen in the environment of a Past Participle form, followed at great distance by *-ing* verbal contexts (19%), passive constructions (9%) and past tenses (9%). All other possible contexts represent under 3%.

Table 4. Already + verb construction selection

<b>ALREADY constructions</b>	N	n	%
+ PP	150	82	45
+ ING	63	34	19
+ BEEN	32	17	9
+ PAST	29	16	9
+ PRES	12	6	3
+ V BASE	7	4	2
+ PRES S	7	4	2
+ HAVE BASE	6	3	2
+ HAS	5	3	2
+ HAD PP	5	3	2
+ HAVE PAST	4	2	1
+ BE BASE	3	2	1

<sup>11</sup> *Ya* + verb phrase constructions constitute 65.5% of all the occurrences of *ya* in our corpus (out of a total of 506)

+ IS	3	2	1
+ HAVE PRES	2	1	0.5
+ BEING	2	1	0.5
+ BE PAST	1	1	0.5
+ ARE/AM	1	1	0.5
+ HAVING	0	0	
<b>TOTAL</b>	332	<b>182</b>	100

Our search of P–ACTRES EN→ES shows that *ya* is present in over 90% of the translated texts, irrespective of the translation solution (table 5). It also shows a clear preference for the present and past perfect in Spanish—21% and 19% respectively—independently of the input construction in English. As alternatives, our empirical data yield *ya* + *present tense* (14%), *ya* + *imperfect* (13%), verbal periphrases (12%) and *ya* + *attributive construction* (10%). All other solutions are less than 5%, which, while not impressive quantitatively, could be interesting qualitatively.

Table 5. Translation solutions for ALREADY constructions

<b>ALREADY construction translation solutions</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>Ya</i> + Present Perfect	38	21
<i>Ya</i> + Past Perfect	34	19
<i>Ya</i> + Present	26	14
<i>Ya</i> + Imperfect	23	13
<i>Ya</i> + attributive construction	18	10
<b>Verbal periphrases: <i>estar</i> + <i>gerund</i></b> [ <i>be</i> + <i>gerund</i> ]	<b>12</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Verbal periphrases: <i>ir/ comenzar/ empezar/ ponerse a</i> + <i>infinitive</i></b> [go/ start/ begin/ start to]	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>
( <i>Ya</i> ) + Simple Past	8	4
Modal constructions	8	4
Other	5	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>100</b>

### 6.2. Description

By contrast with the empirical results for the *still* constructions, *already* environments tend to find a much more defined match in Spanish

positive phase indicator *ya*. *Ya* contexts convey the idea of change into/inception of a phase or stage that did not obtain before, but that has just started to obtain.

### 6.2.1. ‘*Ya*’ + *present perfect*

The Spanish Present Perfect indicates result in the present of an action started in the past. Our data show that as an equivalent for *already constructions*, this tense is overwhelmingly accompanied by *ya*, as illustrated in examples 20 and 21. The pragmatics of the context can be described as ‘this process/event is a change with respect to what has come before and applies to the speaker’s present’.

- (22) This experiment is in progress as I write, but the participants **have already told** me a great deal about this agony and the stages of despair the rejected lover must endure. (EHF1E.s489)
- (23) En el momento en que escribo estas líneas, el experimento está en pleno desarrollo, pero los participantes **ya me han contado** muchas cosas sobre esta angustia y las fases de la desesperación por las que debe pasar el amante rechazado. (EHF1S.s477)
- (24) ... maybe, just maybe, the elderly human might be sacrificed because he **had already lived** a full life, would not be missed, and had little future. (EGJBM1E.s149)
- (25) ... quizá, sólo quizá, la persona mayor debería sacrificarse porque **ya ha vivido** su vida, no la van a echar de menos y no tiene mucho futuro por delante. (EGJBM1S.s124)

### 6.2.2. ‘*Ya*’ + *past perfect*

All our Past Perfect cases (19%) include *ya* in the construction, independently of whether it is a conditional or a subjunctive-sensitive context (example 22), or a neutral factual statement, as in example 23. As its English counterpart, the Spanish Past Perfect encodes an action that has happened before another past time action.

- (26) “So what’s he up to now?” (FCA1E.s1277) Osnard asked, as if the subject **had already lost** its interest for him. (FCA1E.s1278)
- (27) - ¿Y ahora a qué se dedica? - preguntó Osnard, como si para él el asunto **ya hubiese perdido** interés-. (FCA1S.s1241)

- (28) If she had also prophesied fame and fortune, which he **had already achieved**, he might have been more inclined to believe her apparent prediction about his death. (EAR1E.s33)
- (29) Si la profetisa también había vaticinado fama y fortuna, cosas que Nelson **ya había adquirido**, es probable que se sintiese más inclinado a creer en la supuesta predicción sobre su muerte. (EAR1S.s34)

### 6.2.3. ‘Ya’ + *present*

14% of our empirical data correspond to present tenses modified by positive phase indicator *ya*. This construction conveys resultative meaning in Spanish (section 5.2.8 above), indicating that the action or state that obtains at the time of reference results from a process that started in a previous time phase, as in examples 24 and 25.

- (30) Immediately after they left I ordered a bottle of hock from Frau Dielendorfer and am **already feeling better...** (FBW1E.s731)
- (31) En cuanto se marcharon, le pedí a Frau Dielendorfer una botella de vino del Rin y **ya me siento mejor...** (FBW1S.s727)
- (32) Would there be demonstrators for Lebanese independence on what people **have already called** “liberation square” in Beirut? (PATG5E.s9)
- (33) ¿Habría manifestantes a favor de la independencia libanesa en la que la gente **llama ya** “plaza de la liberación” de Beirut? (PATG5S.s8)

### 6.2.4 ‘Ya’ + *imperfect*

13% of our translation solutions correspond to no-end point imperfect tenses modified by positive phase indicator *ya*. Our data indicate that this solution is used to describe that the situation obtains at the referred time, not necessarily before, as in examples 26 and 27.

- (34) When she was **already living** with this man? (FLE1E.s437)
- (35) - ¿Cuando ella **ya vivía** con ese chico? (FLE1S.s434)
- (36) And then in April, during talks with U.S. officials in Beijing, North Korea asserted that it **already possessed** nuclear weapons. (RONT1E.s31)
- (37) Y después, en abril, durante unas conversaciones con altos representantes de Estados Unidos en Pekín, Corea del Norte afirmó que **ya poseía** armas nucleares. (RONT1S.s31)

6.2.5. 'Ya' + *attributive construction*

A further strategy, which accounts for 10% of our results, consists of an attributive construction to report on a situation that applies at the time of reference as opposed to the previous (non-applying) time phase, as in examples 28 and 29.

- (38) ...for I remember finding my classmates **already sitting** about in clusters on the desktops, benches and window ledges. (FIK1E.s125)
- (39) ...porque recuerdo que mis compañeros **estaban ya sentados** en grupos en pupitres, bancos y antepechos de ventanas. (FIK1S.s130)
- (40) Eighty miles out, the island forks north and south, and with the South Fork **already filled** up with vacation houses... (FHC1E.s486)
- (41) Al cabo de ciento veinticinco kilómetros, la isla se bifurca en norte y sur, y como el South Fork **ya estaba plagado** de casas de veraneo... (FHC1S.s471)

6.2.6. *Verbal periphrases*

*Estar* + *gerund* [be + gerund] accounts for 7% of the periphrastic solutions in our analysis. Semantically, it represents an action under development, which is necessarily non-culminative and where time span may be limited by adverbials. The more general meaning it conveys, as compared with that of the previous periphrases—it is widely used for purposes other than just aspectual delimitation—invariably demands the presence of aspectual operator *ya*, as in example 30.

- (42) The world economy is **already decarbonizing**: over the past two centuries,... (RLA1E.s34)
- (43) La economía mundial **ya está prescindiendo** del carbono: en los dos últimos siglos,... (RLA1S.s35)

Up to an additional 5% of solutions correspond to highly grammaticalized periphrastic constructions, which occupy an important slot in the Spanish system as they assume fine meaning distinctions, often aspectual and/or modal. Our empirical data reveal that *ponerse/ empezar/ comenzar a* + *infinitive* [begin to + infinitive], together with *estar* + *gerund* are options into Spanish for *already*+ *verb phrase* constructions.

*Ponerse a* + *infinitive* [start to + infinitive] conveys the sudden inception of an action (Gómez Torrego 1999: 3374), with a certain degree

of speaker disengagement as in example 31, where no end or solution to the argument with the waiter is inferred

- (44) ...he was **already arguing** with the waiter, who pointed at me. (FHC1E.s59)  
(45) **Se puso a discutir** con el camarero, que me señaló. (FHC1S.s60)

*Empezar/comenzar a + infinitive* is yet another aspectual periphrasis, which includes lexical aspect (García-Miguel 2005:406), and may use *ya* as a reinforcement to better signal the inception, as in example 32.

- (46) Walking beside her, Langdon was **already feeling** the tingle of anticipation that accompanied his face-to-face reunions with great works of art. (FBD1E.s989)  
(47) A su lado, Langdon **ya empezaba a notar** ese cosquilleo de impaciencia que siempre le invadía momentos antes de ponerse frente a las grandes obras de arte. (FBD1S.s925)

#### 6.2.7. (*Ya*) + simple past

Spanish Simple Past constructions are perfective by default. When used with *ya*, as in example 33, they mean “there and then, at that particular point”, and *ya* functions as a deictic, as mentioned in note 2 above. In this temporal use the difference with example 34, which does not include *ya*, is imperceptible.

- (48) Out of the corner of my eye I **already knew** the challenge came two men down, but I stood in front of three long enough to agree with my earlier assessment. (FSA2E.s753)  
(49) Con el rabllo del ojo **ya vi** que el desafío estaba a dos hombres de distancia, pero me detuve delante del tercero el tiempo suficiente para confirmar mi anterior afirmación. (FSA2S.s722)  
(50) Poppy zippered his coat, eyeing me, and seemed **already hunched** against the cold outside. (FHC1E.s193)  
(51) Poppy se subió la cremallera de la cazadora y **pareció encorvarse** contra el frío de la noche-. (FHC1S.s189b)

### 6.2.8. Modal constructions

A very small number of solutions opt for constructions combining modal adverbs and non-factual tenses, i.e. some verbal form in the subjunctive or a future, as in example 35. The stance is different in the English and the Spanish texts: the former assumes that the receiver is in possession of that knowledge; the latter conveys a high degree of uncertainty about whether the receiver has the necessary information.<sup>12</sup> Pragmatically, the Spanish text has a certain whiff of superciliousness about it, as it triggers the interpretation “I do not believe that you know”.

(52) The sugars, as **you already know**, aren't very abundant. (EWR11E.s98)

(53) Los azúcares, como **posiblemente sabrá**, no son muy abundantes. (EWR11S.s100) [*as you may/probably know...*]

### 6.2.9. Others

This scant undefined group consists of those cases where the grammatical *already + verb construction* has been translated mainly by lexical solutions. Example 36 uses a fixed prepositional phrase but fails to target the inception meaning contributed by *already*, example 37 has reinterpreted the aspectual transition into a noun phrase indicating ‘outcome’, and example 38 uses a verb and also misses the aspectual part.

(54) My mind was **already racing**, developing a new list of what had to be done and done now. (ECR1E.s97)

(55) Mi mente iba **a mil por hora**, reelaborando la lista de los pasos que había que seguir en ese momento. (ECR1S.s101) [*My mind was buzzing...*]

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<sup>12</sup> The construction *posiblemente sabrá* is not widely used in Spanish; rather it seems to derive from “third code” (translated) uses (Øverås 1998). A web search of *posiblemente sabrá* has yielded 702 results, *ya sabrá* comes up to 690,000. The singular and plural constructions of *ya (already) + second person present tense [you already know]* have yielded significantly higher numbers: the formal (*usted*) *ya sabe* 1,470,000 and the neutral-informal (*tú*) *ya sabes* 3,960,000. In the plural, (*ustedes*) *ya saben* appears 1,850,000 times, whereas (*vosotros*) *ya sabéis* contributes 1,310,000 results.

- (56) I stared out at the cold, granular deluge, the bluish fog, the street **already swollen** with water, and I shivered, wishing the house were easier to warm. (FKI1E.s31)
- (57) Contemplé el frío diluvio, la niebla azul, **la crecida de agua** en la calle, y sentí un escalofrío. (FKI1S.s30)
- (58) Lamenté que la casa no fuera más fácil de calentar. (FKI1S.s31) [... *the floodwaters in the Street...*]
- (59) Though very few people realize it, the European Union he gave birth to is **already closer** to Visa than it is to a state: it is a decentralised network that is owned by its member-states. (ELM1E.s28)
- (60) Si bien son muy pocos los que reparan en ello, la Unión Europea que Monnet promovió **se parece más** a Visa que a un Estado: es una red descentralizada propiedad de sus Estados miembros. (ELM1S.s28) [...*looks more like Visa than a state...*]

Corpus data reveal that the aspectual values conveyed by *already* constructions are mostly encoded in Spanish by means of *ya* + tense combinations. Aspectual periphrases are not a mainstream option and frequently include lexical aspect and/or are reinforced by adverbs. A more detailed discussion follows in section seven below.

### 7. Contrast

Corpus data show markedly different scenarios in the resolution into Spanish of the English *still/already* + *verb phrase constructions*.

*Still* solutions present two major strategies, verbal periphrases and *aún/ todavía* combined with a tense form. The (slight) preference for periphrastic constructions (47%) suggests that these forms constitute a widely accepted resource to encode the aspectual core meaning of ‘continuation of previous stage or actions, which persists at the time of reference’. The one and only function of Spanish verbal periphrases such as *seguir/ continuar* + *gerund* is precisely to express a number of finely grained aspectual values that are frequently encoded by lexical means in other languages, such as French (e.g. *Il chante toujours/ Sigue cantando* [He is still singing]) (Yllera 1999:3394). This specialization would explain why the aspectual operators *aún/ todavía* are not required in these constructions, as corroborated by our findings—over 90% of the *seguir/ continuar* + *gerund* cases do not feature either of them.

By contrast, the majority of *estar* + *gerund* constructions incorporate *aún/ todavía* to clearly delimit the aspectual meaning of ‘continuation of stage or action at the time of reference’, as in examples 7 and 8 above.

*Dejar/ terminar de* + *infinitive* stands in a complementary relation to *seguir/ continuar* + *gerund*, i.e., stating one implies negating the other. Our corpus data show that both periphrases are used in conjunction with negative elements *sin* [without] and *no* in order to maintain the aspectual meaning of continuation.

The second strategy (45%) amounts to reinforcing tenses that have the feature of ‘continuation, duration’ inbuilt in their grammatical meaning with aspectual operators *aún/ todavía*. These include primarily the Spanish imperfect and the present tense.

Other options (8%) include lexical solutions, particularly lexical aspect, and the use of litotes. Particularly interesting is the latter, statistically a marginal use illustrated by example 18 above, but that supplies an alternative option: the Spanish translation keeps the aspectual transition –the situation continues to obtain at the time of reference–but the means of expression are, to a point, converse [*still packed* → *unpacked yet*].

Corpus data show that *already* + *verb phrase constructions* have been translated overwhelmingly by means of formally parallel solutions into Spanish, that is, tenses accompanied by *ya* (71%). The choices have been the present and past perfects (43%), the present (14%), the imperfect (13%) and the simple past (45) as a minority solution.

Verbal periphrases are not a prime option here, as they were for the *still* + *verb phrase constructions*. Considered jointly, (*ya*) *empezar/ comenzar/ ponerse a* + *infinitive* and (*ya*) *estar* + *gerund*, account for just 12% of the solutions.

*Empezar/comenzar a* + *infinitive* is considered a ‘phasal periphrasis’ (RAE 2009:2172-2175) and may indicate ‘initial stage of an activity or state within a situation’ or contribute an iterative or habitual slant when the initial stage applies to an indeterminate number of occurrences of the same activity, e. g. *Empecé a ver películas antiguas* [I started watching old films]. *Ponerse a* + *infinitive*, roughly equivalent to the previous periphrasis, focuses specifically on the inception point, without signaling any progression. An additional distinction is that inception is a built-in feature of *empezar* and *comenzar* as aspectual verbs (García-Miguel 2005: 405-411). Corpus data reveal that *ya* is frequently included in the

periphrastic construction as a way to signal that the inception is underway at the time of reference.

As discussed above, *estar* + *gerund* concentrates on the progression of an action or situation, and is frequently accompanied by adverbs that focus on a particular point of the progression. *Ya* signals that the situation being referred to did not happen earlier.

Attributive constructions translating English non-finite structures account for a further 10%. Solutions featuring the Spanish (perfective) Simple Past convey temporal, not aspectual meanings, and represent 4% of the cases analyzed. The rest of the options consist of modal solutions (4%) that shift the meaning partially in Spanish and lexical combinations (3%) that also miss the aspectual phases highlighted in English.

P→ACTRES EN→ES data reveal an overwhelming majority of solutions focus on the translation of aspectual transitions into Spanish. Corpus data suggest that the complementary relationship that holds between English constructions containing *still* and *anymore* seems to be replicated in the Spanish periphrases *seguir/ continuar* + *gerund* and *dejar/ terminar de* + *infinitive*. No such relation has been observed between any two of the solutions given to *already* + *verb phrase constructions*.

Whether these intra-linguistic relationships may contribute to more clearly defined cross-linguistic equivalences needs to be further explored on a broader basis.

### 8. *Concluding remarks*

Our experimental study shows the existence of formally dissimilar equivalents in Spanish for the aspectual English constructions. It also raises a number of issues, some contrastive, some related to grammaticalization.

The aspectual transitions encoded by *still* + *verb phrase constructions* can be encoded in Spanish by means of verbal periphrases indicating precisely how the actions, processes and events are seen in terms of their relation to the previous stage and the expectations of the speaker concerning the subsequent stage. Spanish aspectual periphrases follow regular patterns, since they can be conjugated in all tenses (appropriate secondary interpretations ensuing), are strongly lexicalized and show

high degrees of grammaticalization<sup>13</sup>: they form a grammatical, phraseological and semantic unit, they cannot be interpreted in terms of their individual components and are associated to certain contexts by speakers of the language. All of which qualifies them as cross-linguistic equivalents of the English construction.

According to corpus data *still + verb phrase construction* finds significant translation equivalents in *seguir + gerund* and (NEG) *dejar de + infinitive*, as alternatives to '*aún / todavía*' + *verb phrase constructions*. In over 90% of these periphrastic solutions the adverb is not present, which suggests a considerable semantic strength. In the few cases where it appears, it adds a hint of annoyance on the part of the speaker, who would rather have the situation changed. Our findings suggest then that verb phrase constructions with *todavía* belong in well-defined aspectual transition (phasal) uses which may involve some degree of emphasis.

*Already + verb phrase constructions* primarily prefer a more straightforward solution, *ya + verb phrase constructions*, to indicate the aspectual transition: that the situation obtains at the time of reference and is assumed to continue. Empirical findings suggest that *ya + verb phrase constructions* mark the change of period (RAE 2009:2331) whereas (*ya*) + *verbal periphrases* contexts focus exclusively on the inception (and/ or iteration) point.

Parallel corpus data highlight the importance of tackling jointly the study of both positive and negative resources English-Spanish (Bosque 1980, González Rodríguez 2009). Hence, scalar analyses of English aspectuals, among them Israel (1997 and 2011), do not serve well in a joint study involving *ya* and *todavía*, as the set of relations represented by *already* and *yet* on the one hand, and *still* and *anymore* on the other, are not found in Spanish (or at least not in the same way).

These results underscore more general contrastive issues, such as the fact that the grammatical treatment of any given phenomenon in the different languages may introduce an additional contrastive parameter in the analysis. English features specialized separate forms for positive and negative contexts, Spanish does not. The analytical framework(s) that work(s) for the English aspectuals involve(s) polarity. Where English offers 'polarity-sensitive aspectual adjuncts' (Huddleston and Pullum

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<sup>13</sup> Spanish grammar makes a distinction between fully grammaticalized verbal periphrases (RAE 2009: 2140-2222), as it happens here, and semiperiphrastic constructions (RAE 2009: 2125-2131).

2002:710), Spanish gives ‘phasal adverbs’ (RAE 2009: 2330-38), with polarity regarded as unrelated to the main topic and—in a way—marginal. Any attempt at bringing both angles together in the analysis requires the analyst to carry out a “grammatical treatment contrast” prior to the case study.

Another contrastive issue concerns the benefits of contrasting (grammatical) constructions rather than single elements, as it helps reveal cross-linguistic associations that are not readily accessible.

Contrastive data also draw attention to whether the higher frequency of verbal periphrases over *aún/todavía* + *verb phrase constructions* points towards a distinctive grammaticalization pattern in Spanish (Mair 2004) that may convey the aspectual phases involved in the interpretation of these contexts more accurately and ‘grammatically’. If we are to take “semantic suitability, salience and frequency” (Traugott and Heine 1991:9) as indicators of grammaticalization processes, Spanish aspectual periphrases do qualify as an expressive optimization over other resources: *seguir*, *continuar*, *pasar* + gerund are aspectually similar to constructions with verbs *mantener(se)* and *quedar(se)* [keep doing]. These do not, however, qualify as periphrases.<sup>14</sup> Another, equally interesting question arising from this study is why the periphrastic solution is substantially less favored as an equivalent to *already* + *verb phrase constructions*.

To answer these questions further work is required using Spanish materials translated into English as well as non-translated materials. The former will help identify additional cross-linguistic equivalences and, possibly, spot lexical-grammatical choices that can be put down to translated language (Johansson 2009:12). Non-translated materials will serve as control data to verify whether or not grammatical differences between original and translated resources are statistically significant. Pertinent results can then be fed into the PETRA 1.0<sup>©</sup> application for use in the evaluation of the grammatical quality of translated texts (Rabadán et al. 2013).

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<sup>14</sup> For more information on the interdependence and internal cohesion of periphrastic components, their syntactic properties and (related) ongoing grammaticalization processes in RAE (2009: 2116-40).

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