

REFERENTIAL PROPERTIES OF SPANISH NOUN PHRASES

MARÍA-LUISA RIVERO

University of Ottawa

This article discusses two aspects of definite and indefinite NP's in the grammar of Spanish: SPECIFICITY, which is formally marked by the mood of restrictive relative clauses; and EXISTENTIAL IMPORT, which derives from the linguistic environment by principles connected with presuppositions in general. Specificity and existential import belong to the grammar of Spanish, not to the realm of pragmatics. In Spanish, Donnellan's referential descriptions constitute a sub-set of specific NP's (definite specific NP's in the singular with an existential presupposition determined by the linguistic environment). Attributive descriptions, on the other hand, are singular, definite, non-specific NP's having an existential presupposition.*

This paper studies the referential properties of Spanish definite and indefinite noun phrases. It discusses two different and almost independent elements connected with reference and delimitation in Spanish¹:

(1) SPECIFICITY, a property exhibited by both definite and indefinite NP's, and formally marked by the mood of restrictive relative clauses for those NP's with non-reduced relatives (§2).

(2) EXISTENTIAL IMPORT, exhibited by definite and non-definite NP's, by specific and non-specific NP's, and defined by the linguistic environment (§3).

To provide a basis for the discussion, definiteness will be briefly discussed in §1.

1. DEFINITENESS. In an indirect way, the notion of definiteness has been of great concern to logicians, who have dedicated long discussions to the properties of definite descriptions, i.e. NP's in the singular preceded by the definite article and followed by restrictive modifiers. Philosophers have associated definite descriptions both with uniqueness and existence. I will examine the notion of uniqueness in this section, together with its linguistic implications, leaving the discussion of existence to §3.

Let us consider Russell's example *The author of Waverley was a poet* as the basis for the present discussion. According to Frege, in statements such as this, there is a presupposition about the existence of an individual who is UNIQUE in possessing the property described by the restrictive modifier (e.g. being the author of *Waverley*). Russell's contextual or syncategorematic definition of definite descriptions is equivalent to the conjunction of three propositions, one of which embodies a uniqueness claim:

* This work was supported by the Canada Council through Grant S72-0384. I am indebted to Barbara Hall Partee and Keith Donnellan for valuable comments and criticism.

¹ This article does not discuss generic NP's, nor what Kuno 1970 terms 'qualitative NP's'. Many qualitative NP's in Spanish are easily identifiable by the absence of a determiner, as in (a) or (b) below:

(a) *Es médico* '(He) is (a) doctor.'

(b) *Llevo sombrero* 'I wear (a) hat': QUALITATIVE NP.

(c) *Llevo un sombrero* 'I wear a hat': INDEFINITE NP.

(d) *Llevo el sombrero y no el pañuelo* 'I wear the hat and not the scarf': DEFINITE NP.

Spanish qualitative NP's have been briefly discussed by Alonso (1957:137).

- (1) At least one person authored Waverley: EXISTENTIAL CLAIM.
- (2) At most one person authored Waverley: UNIQUENESS CLAIM.
- (3) Whoever authored Waverley was a poet: PROPERTY ASCRIPTION.

(A definite description 'will only have an application in the event of THERE BEING ONE SO-AND-SO AND NO MORE' (Whitehead & Russell 1925:I.30); '*the*, when it is strictly used, involves UNIQUENESS' (Russell 1905:481).² For Russell, what distinguishes 'the so-and-so' from 'a so-and-so' is the implication of uniqueness in the definite description.

Both Frege and Russell speak of existence and uniqueness, but in very different ways. For Frege, existence and uniqueness are logically prior to the property ascription, and constitute a PRESUPPOSITIONAL CONDITION for the statement. Russell thinks that uniqueness and existence are components of the assertion, since he does not make a formal distinction between presupposition and assertion. In other words, the presuppositional condition that a definite description should have a unique referent is, for him, a component of the assertion.

Russell and Frege also deal with existence, but I will leave the discussion of the existential import of definite descriptions to §3, where I will justify this separation using evidence from Spanish. There I will show that uniqueness is distinguishable and independent from existence—and that existence derives from the environment for both definite and indefinite NP's, while uniqueness is connected with the definite article. That is, it does not make sense to speak of uniquely existential presuppositions in Spanish, as if they were an indivisible property, limited to certain definite NP's.

Another interesting question raised by Russell's approach to definite descriptions has been widely discussed in writings on logic, and more recently in linguistic literature (Keenan 1971, Karttunen 1973). In this section I will state the problem in terms of uniqueness, but it applies equally well to existence and to presuppositions in general: Does a definite description guarantee uniqueness of reference? or is it secured by the user and the context, together with the expression? In other words, do sentences presuppose (or entail, in Russell's view), or do speakers presuppose? Are presuppositions pragmatic or logical? Russell conceives of uniqueness and existence as logical properties of propositions connected with sentences, not with speakers and situations. The opposite view is summarized by Linsky (1967:117):

Russell says that a definite description 'will only have an application in the event of there being one so-and-so and no more'. But can I not refer to someone as 'the old madman', even though he is not mad and more than one man is? Does my phrase not have 'application' to the one to whom I am referring? Certainly, I was speaking of him. What is usually said here is that uniqueness of reference is secured by making the description more determinate, e.g., by saying, 'the old man who lives next door'. But this attempt to secure uniqueness of reference through increased determination of the 'referring expression' is otiose, for what secures uniqueness is the user of the expression and the context in which it is used TOGETHER with the expression.

I will return to this question in §3.

When a linguist tries to see the correlation between the notion of uniqueness in logic and the definite article in natural language, he finds himself in the unnatural

² In these and subsequent quotations, the emphasis is mine.

situation of having to consider singular definite NP's as elements of a different nature from plural definite NP's, since uniqueness as conceived in logic can only apply to a singular NP—plural NP's being studied by the logic of classes. However, there are numerous arguments which indicate parallelisms in the syntactic and semantic behavior of singular and plural NP's in natural languages with the sg./pl. dichotomy, as this paper will implicitly show. For instance, referentiality and attributiveness (in the sense of Donnellan 1966) apply in a similar way to singular and plural NP's in Spanish, and are marked by the same surface-structure features (see exx. 5a–b below). Besides the syntactic and semantic evidence which can be adduced against a separate analysis of singular and plural definite NP's in linguistics, it seems intuitively incorrect to speak of uniqueness in the case of plural NP's. In the example *The young girl appeared suddenly*, we are referring to an entity with the idiosyncratic property of being young; but it is difficult to see how the idiosyncrasy is preserved in *The young girls appeared suddenly*. Thus it appears that, when linguists discuss definite descriptions, co-extensiveness with a set would be a more useful notion than uniqueness. The definite article indicates that we are referring not to 'one so-and-so and no more', but to the totality of the so-and-so's exhibiting the attribute(s) mentioned in the descriptive phrase. When the set has only one member, the linguistic 'co-extensiveness with a set' and the 'uniqueness' of logical definite descriptions are perhaps very similar; but when we are speaking of plural definite NP's, the distinction becomes clearer. As Bierwisch has pointed out (1971:417), the linguistic feature DEFINITE corresponds in logic both to the iota-operator, bound to unique individuals, and to the lambda-operator, which forms the class of precisely those elements exhibiting the property represented by a given predicate, with the difference that the definite article forms expressions of the same type irrespective of their plural or singular status.

In some cases the philosophical notion of uniqueness has become incorporated into traditional grammatical theories about definiteness under the notion of 'previous knowledge' of the referent. Bello & Cuervo's Spanish grammar (1970: 102), expresses it as follows: 'el artículo [definido], pues, señala ideas; ideas determinadas, consabidas del oyente o lector; ideas que se suponen y se señalan en el entendimiento de la persona a quien dirigimos la palabra'.³

This definition is then combined with that of co-extensiveness with a set (102–3):

Pudiera pensarse que cuando se toma un sustantivo en toda la extensión de su significado, no deberíamos emplear el artículo. ¿De qué *materia* determinada se trata, cuando decimos *la materia es incapaz de pensar*? Tomándose el sustantivo en toda la latitud de su significado, ¿para qué sirve el artículo? En nuestra lengua sirve entonces para indicar que se trata de TODA UNA CLASE de objetos que se supone conocida.

I think that to draw a parallelism between the philosophical notion of uniqueness and the traditional grammatical notion of previous knowledge of the referent is

³ Similar ideas are presented in an interesting study by Alonso, 150–51: 'La lógica, de donde tal concepto [determinación o indeterminación del objeto nombrado] procede, entiende por determinación EL MODO DE SIGNIFICAR QUE SEPARA A UN INDIVIDUO DE ENTRE SUS CONGÉNERES; las gramáticas suelen acomodar esta idea ... a la que el objeto nombrado sea o no consabido del hablante y del oyente ...' Cf. also Lenz (1935:288): '[el artículo definido] presenta al sustantivo como un concepto ya existente en la mente del que habla y del que oye.'

incorrect. There is a very clear counter-example of the previous-knowledge hypothesis in Spanish, as the following discussion indicates.

In his influential article, Donnellan has classified the use of definite descriptions as either referential or attributive; when referential, the definite description is connected with a specific individual we have in mind; when attributive, it states something about whoever fits that description. For Donnellan, the two uses are independent from the form of the definite description. Spanish is one of the languages which formally mark Donnellan's distinction by the mood of the modifying restrictive relative clause within a definite description. We can translate Donnellan's ambiguous example *Smith's murderer is insane* as either 4a or 4b if we want to disambiguate the definite description. The appearance of the subjunctive in 4b bars the possibility that the speaker has in mind the individual he wants to refer to (I will return to this distinction later):⁴

- (4) a. *El que asesinó a Smith está loco* (IND) 'The one who murdered Smith is insane' (REFERENTIAL).
 b. *El que asesinara a Smith está loco* (SUBJ) 'Whoever it was that murdered Smith is insane' (ATTRIBUTIVE).⁵

Ex. 4b, with the subjunctive mood in the verb of the restrictive relative clause *que asesinara a Smith*, clearly indicates that there is no previous knowledge involved in the use of the definite article, since the speaker need not know who murdered Smith. This fact becomes clearer in so-called opaque contexts:

- (5) a. *Quiero que vengan los niños que eran culpables* (IND) 'I want the children who were guilty to come' (REFERENTIAL).
 b. *Quiero que vengan los niños que fueran culpables* (SUBJ) 'I want the children who may have turned out to be guilty to come' (ATTRIBUTIVE).

Ex. 5b can be ended with *sean quienes sean* 'whoever they might be' with no contradiction. The definite article presupposes nothing but co-extensiveness with the set of those who are guilty. In other words, those members having the property expressed by the relative clause and the set of individuals specified by the definite article are co-extensive; the individual(s) specified by the restrictive relative clause are all the members of the domain of the relative clause.⁶

There is a class of Spanish NP's which also lead to the conclusion that definiteness does not necessarily indicate previous knowledge: e.g. *el que sea* (SUBJ) 'whoever that is' (lit. 'the (one) that {is, may be}'); *el N que sea* as in *el niño que*

⁴ Throughout this article I will use the following convention: IND (= Indicative) or SUBJ (= Subjunctive) will be placed after the Spanish verb to indicate the mood of the restrictive relative clause modifying the NP under discussion.

⁵ Glosses are only approximate: e.g., in the English gloss of 5b, we could be talking about some specific children whose guilt we doubt. The Spanish counterpart does not have such an interpretation. The subjunctive marks the degree of specificity of the NP, not the degree of possibility connected with the relative clause.

⁶ It follows from the above discussion that *los* and *todos los* may be equivalent when in relation to a restrictive relative clause. In other words, certain *los* are equivalent to universal quantifiers. However, I will not discuss this question here.

sea (SUBJ) 'whatever child that {is, may be}'. NP's which correspond to phrases with *whatever*, *whoever* are prefixed with the definite article and modified by a restrictive relative in Spanish, with a subjunctive verb 'to be' which has the sole function of indicating attributiveness.⁷

The traditional notion of previous knowledge is perhaps connected with that definiteness which is not inherent but derived transformationally within a sentence or a discourse. However, a non-specific indefinite NP can be coreferential with a definite NP,⁸ though the common referent is not necessarily known. Consider the following example:

- (6) *Contrataremos a una secretaria que sea rusa* (SUBJ) *y la secretaria traducirá*
'We will hire a secretary who will be Russian (NON-SPECIFIC) and the secretary will translate.'

I have not established a dichotomy between the definite article on the one hand and the indefinite on the other. In the type of examples discussed in this paper, definite NP's (including those with the universal quantifier) exhibit co-extensiveness with the set having the property expressed by the relative clause. Indefinite NP's; NP's modified by quantifiers such as *muchos* 'many', *varios* 'several' etc.; and non-definite NP's in general do not indicate co-extensiveness. Furthermore, specificity or non-specificity as reflected by restrictive modifiers is a property of all NP's:

- (7) a. *Nos conviene hablar con muchos atletas que participan* (IND) 'It is advisable for us to talk to many athletes who participate' (SPECIFIC).
b. *Nos conviene hablar con muchos atletas que participen* (SUBJ) 'It is advisable for us to talk to many athletes who may participate' (NON-SPECIFIC).

The traditional definite/indefinite dichotomy—which, among Romance grammarians, derives from the grammar of Port-Royal—was attacked by 20th-century linguists, but was nevertheless accepted in early generative studies (as still seen in Chomsky 1965). However, it was again rejected in later analyses, seemingly caught up in the never-ending series of cycles which mark the study of natural language: 'The relevant opposition, then, is not between the definite and indefinite articles, but rather between the presence and absence of the definite article' (Perlmutter 1970: 246).

⁷ Native grammarians pay little attention to this aspect of relative clauses in Spanish, perhaps because it provides a counter-example to the hypothesis which connects the article with the idea of 'previous knowledge'. For instance, Bello-Cuervo does not comment upon the implications of subjunctives in relative clauses, and the majority of native grammarians follow suit. In Bello-Cuervo (134) I find the following example taken from Cervantes: *Podéis bautizar vuestros sonetos y ponerles el nombre que quisiéredes* 'You can christen your sonnets and give them whichever name you want.' It is difficult to reconcile this definite determiner and restrictive clause in the subjunctive translated by 'whichever [lit. THE] name you want' with the 'previous knowledge' hypothesis. Foreign grammarians, on the other hand, emphasize the distinction which Cervantes' verse exemplifies so well (Ramsey [1894] 1967: 420): 'After a relative pronoun referring to a person, thing or idea which is either unknown or not definitely known, the verb of the dependent clause is subjunctive.'

⁸ For the correlation between specific/non-specific NP's and referential/attributional NP's, see §2. The comments in fn. 5 apply to the glosses in exx. 7a-b as well.

2. SPECIFICITY. As I have pointed out above, definite NP's in Spanish can be marked as to their referential or attributive character, in Donnellan's sense, by the mood of restrictive relative clauses. Donnellan (1971:102) expresses the difference between attributive and referential descriptions in the following way:

A speaker who uses a definite description attributively in an assertion states something about whoever or whatever is the so-and-so. A speaker who uses a definite description referentially in an assertion, on the other hand, uses the description to enable his audience to pick out whom or what he is talking about and states something about that person or thing.

The two uses are then exemplified with *Smith's murderer is insane*. In the attributive use, we do not necessarily know who murdered Smith; in the referential use, we know the specific person whom we feel is responsible for the murder. Spanish expresses a referential NP by a restrictive relative in the indicative, as in ex. 4a, and an attributive NP by a subjunctive relative clause, as in 4b.

Some philosophers (e.g. Donnellan, and Stalnaker 1972) have claimed that, from a logical point of view, the distinction between referential and attributive definite NP's belongs to pragmatics (the study of linguistic acts and the contexts in which they are performed, the study of language in relation to its users), and that it has no consequences as far as syntax and semantics are concerned. Thus Donnellan (1971:110) states:

In general, whether or not a definite description is used referentially or attributively is a function of the speaker's intentions in a particular case. 'The murderer of Smith' may be used either way in the sentence 'The murderer of Smith is insane'. It does not appear plausible to account for this ... as an ambiguity in the sentence. The grammatical structure of the sentence seems to me to be the same whether the description is used referentially or attributively: that is, it is not syntactically ambiguous. Nor does it seem at all attractive to suppose an ambiguity in the meaning of the words; it does not appear to be semantically ambiguous. (Perhaps we could say that the sentence is pragmatically ambiguous: the distinction between roles that the descriptions play is a function of the speaker's intentions.)

However, some logicians have considered that the distinction between the referential and the attributive can be interpreted as a syntactic one connecting it to modal and epistemic contexts only, with the description falling inside the scope of the modal operator in the attributive sense and outside it in the referential sense. For instance, Hintikka 1969 discusses the example *A believes that the next Governor of California will be a Democrat*, and formalizes its two meanings as follows;

- (8) a. Ba (g is a Democrat).
 b. $(\exists x) (x = g). Ba (x \text{ is a Democrat}).$

Here 8a represents the attributive reading, 8b the referential reading.

A similar divergence of views can be found among linguists. McCawley 1970, 1973 has taken the position that referential and attributive NP's have different underlying (semantic) structures, thus incorporating the distinction into grammar; and Hasegawa 1972, while criticizing the grammatical level at which McCawley chooses to represent the dichotomy, accepts the assumption that referential and attributive NP's have different formalizations in a generative grammar of English. On the other hand, Partee 1972 expresses reservations about the place of the referential/attribution distinction in natural language, and sees the possibility of assigning it to pragmatics.

In Spanish, observation of the surface-structure distinction between referential and attributive NP's moves the dichotomy away from pragmatics into the realm of grammar (SEMANTICS-SYNTAX). In other words, referentiality and attributiveness are not solely connected with the pragmatic context of reference, and do not need to be relativized to circumstances. A semantico-syntactic connection exists between an NP and its referentiality or attributiveness. There are rules of grammar connected with this dichotomy which can be violated on purely grammatical grounds like other syntactic and semantic rules. Later on, I will briefly present additional arguments pointing toward the conclusion that the referential/attributive function of definite NP's is not solely pragmatic in Spanish, and I will show how the distinction is connected with rules of grammar. (For similar conclusions pertaining to other languages, see Keenan & Ebert 1973.)

My contention in this paper is that a speaker of Spanish knows about the referentiality of an NP, not by virtue of his knowledge of the pragmatic conditions under which sentences involving referentiality are uttered, but by his knowledge of the syntax and the semantics of Spanish. Grammatical form in Spanish succeeds in distinguishing between those NP's which are referential and those which are not: referentiality is information which belongs to the theory of grammar, and not to some theory beyond grammar. It is governed by rules which derive from the grammar of sentences, and not from some more encompassing pragmatic theory.

In Spanish, indefinite NP's too can be modified by restrictive relatives in the subjunctive or the indicative (7a-b). Linguists have discussed the semantic distinction between 7a and 7b under the label of 'specificity'. In recent years a number of linguists (e.g. Partee, and Heringer 1969) have pointed out the parallelism between the specificity contrasts of indefinite NP's and the referential/attributive distinction of definite NP's, in contrast with the views of philosophers who consider that definite and indefinite descriptions do not refer in a comparable way.⁹

The specific/non-specific nature of indefinite NP's has been discussed in linguistics—independently of the referential/attributive dichotomy—as an aspect of syntax and semantics (cf. Baker 1966, Karttunen 1969), in a way reminiscent of the treatment found in the philosophical literature in connection with discussions on opacity and transparency: the specific or non-specific character of an indefinite NP is attributed to the scope of an existential quantifier which is either wider (specific) or narrower (non-specific) than the verb which is responsible for an opaque context, including abstract performatives. The parallelism with Hintikka's formalization of attributive and referential readings of definite descriptions is clear. A different linguistic proposal developed more recently is the interpretive one: thus Jackendoff 1972 proposes treating the distinction of specific and non-specific NP's (which he connects with modal contexts alone) through semantic interpretation rules at the

⁹ Linguists working on Spanish have felt the complete parallelism between definite and indefinite NP's with respect to their specificity. Thus Hadlich (1971:190) states: 'The only difference between such pairs as *lo que quieres* and *lo que quieras*, *una persona que lo sabe* and *una persona que lo sepa*, and *algo que te gusta* and *algo que te guste* is that the speaker has a specific thing in mind for the antecedent when he uses the indicative, but something as yet unspecified when he uses the subjunctive.'

level of surface structure. It should be clear that, under this hypothesis, the distinction belongs to grammar, not to a theory of pragmatics.

In a previous paper (Rivero 1974) I have explored two separate hypotheses in connection with Spanish NP's: (1) that Donnellan's notion of referentiality for definite NP's, and linguistic specificity for indefinite NP's, are, linguistically speaking, one unique phenomenon; and (2) that 'referentiality-specificity' has syntactico-semantic consequences of the kind which has led generative grammarians formally to incorporate distinctions into their grammar, and in this sense does not belong to pragmatics alone. I will briefly recapitulate some of my arguments here.

As I have pointed out above, the fact that Spanish formally marks many of its NP's as REFERENTIAL/SPECIFIC or as ATTRIBUTIVE/NON-SPECIFIC is an indication of the non-pragmatic nature of the distinction; and the marking of the definite referential and the indefinite specific by the indicative, while the subjunctive is connected with both attributive and non-specific NP's, is a hint that definite and indefinite NP's may share some common property in this respect.

From now on I will adopt the terminology SPECIFIC/NON-SPECIFIC to refer to definite and indefinite NP's alike. Specific definite NP's include, as a subclass, Donnellan's referential NP's. Donnellan's referential NP's are, in Spanish, specific definite NP's in the singular with an existential claim (in a way which will be discussed in §3) along with the uniqueness claim ('having one unique referent') which philosophers attach to definite descriptions (cf. §1). Donnellan's attributive NP's are non-specific NP's with all the other conditions attached as well (definiteness, singularity, existential claim, uniqueness claim). In what follows, I will argue that specificity must be formally incorporated into the grammar of Spanish, and that what differentiates specific from non-specific NP's (referential and attributive NP's included) has linguistic consequences of a semantic and syntactic nature. Referential NP's behave like the specific NP's in the arguments which follow, attributive NP's like the non-specific ones.

The following additional syntactic consequences of the specific/non-specific distinction apply to definite and indefinite NP's alike:

(a) An NP cannot be modified at the same time by restrictive clauses in the indicative and the subjunctive (an NP cannot be simultaneously specific and non-specific). The result of combining the two moods is ungrammatical, as in the following:

- (9) a. **Me interesa {la, una} guía que tiene (IND) mapas y que esté (SUBJ) escrita en español.*
 b. *Me interesa {la, una} guía que tenga (SUBJ) mapas y que esté (SUBJ) escrita en español* 'I am interested in {the, a} guide which (NON-SPECIFIC) may have maps and which (NON-SPECIFIC) may be written in Spanish.'

(b) Stacked relative clauses must all bear the same mood when their antecedents are coreferential:

- (10) a. **Cómprame {los, unos} pasteles que sean (SUBJ) de chocolate que tienen (IND) guindas.*

- b. *Cómprame {los, unos} pasteles que sean (SUBJ) de chocolate que tengan (SUBJ) guindas* 'Buy me {the, some} cakes which (NON-SPECIFIC) are (made) of chocolate which (NON-SPECIFIC) have cherries.'

(c) NP's modified by reduced relative clauses are ambiguous between a specific and non-specific interpretation, but NP's modified by one or more reduced relatives and one or more full clauses can receive only one interpretation as far as their specificity is concerned: the one determined by the mood of the non-reduced clause. The NP headed by *muchacha* 'girl' in 11a can only be interpreted specifically, while in 11b it can only receive a non-specific interpretation:

- (11) a. *Quiere casarse con {la, una} muchacha que sea (SUBJ) rubia y con pecas* 'He wants to marry {the, a} girl who may (NON-SPECIFIC only) be blonde and with freckles.'
 b. *Quiere casarse con {la, una} muchacha que es (IND) rubia y con pecas* 'He wants to marry {the, a} girl who is blonde and with freckles' (SPECIFIC only).

In Spanish, contrary to what appears to be the case in English according to Kuno, pseudo-clefting applies to all kinds of NP's alike: definite and indefinite, specific and non-specific. Therefore, specificity is not a criterion to differentiate between Spanish NP's in this respect:

- (12) a. *Quiero {el, un} sombrero que sea (SUBJ) rojo* 'I want {the, a} hat which is red' (NON-SPECIFIC).
 b. *Quiero {el, un} sombrero que es (IND) rojo* 'I want {the, a} hat which is red' (SPECIFIC).
 c. *Lo que quiero es {el, un} sombrero que sea (SUBJ) rojo* 'What I want is {the, a} hat which is red' (NON-SPECIFIC).
 d. *Lo que quiero es {el, un} sombrero que es (IND) rojo* 'What I want is {the, a} hat which is red' (SPECIFIC).

An additional argument, not presented in Rivero 1974, deals with non-restrictive relative clauses. Smith 1964 pointed out that English NP's with a non-specific interpretation cannot include appositive relative antecedents. Thus 13a, an ambiguous sentence, has a grammatical interpretation if the NP is considered as specific; but 13c, with an overt non-specific NP, is ungrammatical. Specific NP's, definite and indefinite alike, can include non-restrictive relative clauses, as in 13b:

- (13) a. *Quiero casarme con {la, una} chica rubia, la cual es francesa* 'I want to marry {the, a} blonde girl, who is French.'
 b. *Quiero casarme con {la, una} chica que es (IND) rubia, la cual es francesa* 'I want to marry {the, a} girl who is blonde, who is French' (SPECIFIC).
 c. **Quiero casarme con {la, una} chica que sea (SUBJ) rubia, la cual es francesa* '*I want to marry {the, a} girl who is blonde, who is French' (NON-SPECIFIC).

This set of examples shows another syntactic consequence of the specific/non-specific distinction, together with the parallelism of the definite and indefinite NP's with respect to their realization of specificity.

Perhaps one reason which has kept linguists from advocating the parallelism between definite and indefinite NP's in relation to their referentiality and specificity, respectively, is that a number of transformational grammarians have argued that the specific/non-specific distinction can be found only in future, negative, and opaque contexts (Dean 1968, Jackendoff). On the other hand, Donnellan's discussion of definite NP's does not connect the referential and attributive use with modal contexts; and even though other philosophers like Hintikka present a different view, it is Donnellan's work which has recently been influential in linguistics.

The distinction between specific and non-specific definite and indefinite NP's is clearly found outside modal, negative, and future contexts, as exx. 4 and 14 indicate:

- (14) a. {Un, El} comentario que {esté suscitando, suscitara} (SUBJ) Picasso queda fielmente reflejado en primera plana '{A/one, The} comment (NON-SPECIFIC) that Picasso {is causing, caused} is faithfully reflected on (the) first page.'¹⁰
- b. {Un, El} comentario que suscitó (IND) Picasso queda fielmente reflejado en primera plana '{A/one, The} comment (SPECIFIC) that Picasso caused is faithfully reflected on (the) first page.'

Specificity has in some cases been connected with negation (Fillmore 1967). This correlation has already been criticized by Stockwell et al. 1968 and is not applicable to Spanish, where NP's can be specific and non-specific, independent from negation.

To summarize: Spanish NP's can be, irrespective of their definiteness, specific or non-specific. Specificity and its lack are formally marked in surface structure by the mood of non-reduced restrictive relative clauses. Specificity influences the syntactic behavior of Spanish NP's, and must be incorporated into the grammar of Spanish. Specific definite NP's include Donnellan's referential descriptions; non-specific definite NP's include attributive descriptions. Donnellan has assigned the referential and attributive USES of definite descriptions to the realm of pragmatics; however, speaking from a linguistic point of view, the distinction is also syntactico-semantic in Spanish. There is only one kind of specificity: it is found in definite and non-definite NP's alike, in modal and non-modal contexts, and is not necessarily connected with negation.

3. EXISTENTIAL IMPORT. Philosophers have been well aware that not all definite descriptions carry the existential presupposition that there is a (unique) object fitting the description. This observation is at the base of Frege's distinction between

¹⁰ A similar example, but with a non-specific definite NP in non-subject position is this one (weekly airmail edition of the newspaper *ABC*, Madrid, 26 April 1973, p. 26): *Este trabajo enlaza con el que ya se publicara* (SUBJ) *la semana anterior* 'This work connects with the one which was already published last week' (NON-SPECIFIC).

The subjunctive forms in *-ra* shown in examples 14-18 have been criticized by normative grammarians, even though they are frequently used. The grammar of the Real Academia Española (1973:480) considers that such constructions are unjustified from the point of view of the tradition of the language. I think that, from a synchronic point of view, the *-ra* forms correlate with present subjunctives in indicating non-specificity (in relation to past events), and that they cannot be considered mere variants of indicative forms.

SENSE and REFERENCE. Bertrand Russell incorporated existence into his theory of definite descriptions by distinguishing between primary and secondary occurrences of descriptions: primary ones entail existence, while secondary occurrences are seen as a part of a larger proposition and do not entail existence. Thus Russell felt that *The king of France is not bald* is ambiguous in that the definite description can receive a primary interpretation entailing existence (overlooking many details which are not relevant to our discussion, it is the interpretation in which the definite description is outside the scope of the negation: 'There exists one unique individual such that ..., it is not the case that he is bald'), and a secondary interpretation which does not entail existence (with the definite description under the scope of the negation: 'It is not the case that there exists one unique individual ... such that he is bald'). In other words, Russell felt that existence, because it is contextually defined, is not among the properties which things may or may not possess.

The view in linguistics seems a little different, because the definite article is associated automatically with the idea of existence in a number of discussions. Thus, in her discussion of the attributive/referential distinction, Partee (417 ff.) states that existence is always presupposed whenever the definite article is used. It seems to me that this position is equivalent to saying that sense and reference, in Frege's interpretation, are always present in definite NP's in natural language. This paper will show that there are sentences in Spanish that contain definite NP's without an existential presupposition.¹¹

It is also the opinion of a number of linguists that, even though the existence of a referent is never in question in definite cases, indefinite NP's may vary as to their existential import. According to Stockwell et al., the attributive/referential distinction involves acquaintance rather than existence, while the specific/non-specific ambiguity involves existence. This distinction in existential import is the reason why they (115) find the [\pm spec] feature of indefinites inappropriate for definite NP's. I will demonstrate, however, that definite and indefinite NP's derive their existential presuppositions through the same means.

In §2 I showed, with a number of arguments which did not touch on existence, that in Spanish the referential/attributive distinction of definite NP's and the specific/non-specific classification of indefinite NP's are partially the same dichotomy. I will now show that the distinction both for definite and indefinite NP's is not based on the presence vs. absence of an existential presupposition. The distinction discussed by Donnellan concerns definite descriptions connected with existential presuppositions, but there are specific and non-specific definite NP's with no existential presuppositions. In the same manner we can find both specific and non-specific indefinite NP's with or without existential presuppositions. Finally, existence is independent of specificity, not because it is connected to definiteness in an intrinsic way, but because it is a separate aspect from both specificity and

¹¹ Existence is to be understood as a grammatical property in the sense that the rules of Spanish grammar bind speakers, regardless of their ontological commitments, to the position that there is an object (or several) in the actual world fitting the description, when they use sentences with those NP's discussed here.

I will not discuss the notion of reference or existence in connection with possible worlds, but I will base my presentation on the dichotomy ACTUAL (PRESENT) WORLD VS. OTHER WORLDS.

definiteness. In other words, it is possible to talk of a unique object or individual which is specific without presupposing that it exists, and it is also possible to talk of an object or individual which is not unique and particular or specific, at the same time presupposing that it exists.

I will now proceed to show that existence is independent from definiteness and specificity in Spanish. In non-modal present contexts, definite and indefinite descriptions alike carry an existential presupposition, their specificity being irrelevant.¹² Let us first consider definite descriptions in non-modal contexts. Example 14 and the one in fn. 10, which are repeated below for ease of reference, presuppose the existence of the objects or events mentioned by their definite descriptions:

- (15) a. *El comentario que {esté suscitando, suscitara} (SUBJ) Picasso queda fielmente reflejado en primera plana* ‘The comment (NON-SPECIFIC) that Picasso {is causing, caused} is faithfully reflected on (the) first page.’
 b. *El comentario que {suscita, suscitó} (IND) Picasso queda fielmente reflejado en primera plana* ‘The comment (SPECIFIC) that Picasso {is causing, caused} is faithfully reflected on (the) first page.’
- (16) *Este trabajo enlaza con el que ya se publicara (SUBJ) la semana anterior* ‘This work connects with the one (NON-SPECIFIC) which was already published last week.’

The difference between the specific definite description (15b) and the non-specific definite examples (15a, 16) is not one of existence but of acquaintance. The existence of a comment and of a previously published work, at the time identified by the verb of the restrictive relative clause, is not in question, and the presupposition remains constant under negation and interrogation. In the specific case (15b), we are speaking of a comment which is being (or was) made, whatever its nature. In 16 we speak of a work which has been (or was already) published, whatever its nature; in other words, we know of the existence of a publication.

¹² The conclusions of this section are that existence is contextually defined, and that it is not attached automatically to definite or indefinite NP's, nor to specific or non-specific ones. Existential presuppositions are determined by the linguistic environment; there are ‘existential’ positions rather than ‘existential’ NP's in Spanish. I have not attempted to establish which are the ‘existential’ positions, and the conditions determining them are complex. The presence of modalities, as we shall see, blocks existential presuppositions. Future contexts have the same effect; and the axis of time in the matrix, in relation to that of the restrictive relative clause which marks the degree of specificity, is a factor which can influence the existential status of a given NP. My examples do not exhaustively represent existential and non-existential positions, but only that limited set needed to demonstrate the point that existence derives from the environment, not from definiteness or specificity.

I have not dealt with the relation between the time axis in the relative clause and existential presuppositions. For instance, the non-specific NP in 16—*el que ya se publicara la semana anterior*—presupposes existence at the time indicated by the relative clause, i.e. in the past and not necessarily present existence; thus it is not a contradiction to continue the example with *que ya no existe porque quemaron todos los ejemplares de la revista* ‘which does not exist at present because they burned all the magazines’. In my own examples I have provided alternative tenses with existential presuppositions connected with the present (actual) world.

Parallel examples with indefinite NP's share the existential presuppositions of their definite counterparts, whether specific (17a) or non-specific (17b, 18):

- (17) a. *Un comentario que {esté suscitando, suscitara} (SUBJ) Picasso queda fielmente reflejado en primera plana* 'A comment (NON-SPECIFIC) that Picasso {is causing, caused} is faithfully reflected on (the) first page.'
- b. *Un comentario que {está suscitando, suscitó} (IND) Picasso queda fielmente reflejado en primera plana* 'A comment (SPECIFIC) that Picasso {is causing, caused} is faithfully reflected on (the) first page.'
- (18) *Este trabajo enlaza con uno que ya se publicara (SUBJ) la semana anterior* 'This work connects with one (NON-SPECIFIC) which was already published last week.'

As in the definite examples, the existence of a comment or a published work is not in question. Therefore the difference between the definite cases and the indefinite ones is not one of existence or of previous knowledge, since both pairs of examples (15a, 16, and 17a, 18), definite and indefinite respectively, involve lack of acquaintance. The difference is that definiteness involves co-extensiveness with the set specified by the relative clause, while indefiniteness does not. In 15a–b only one comment was made, although in 17a–b there was not necessarily only one comment.

Modal and future contexts affect the existential presuppositions connected with definite and indefinite NP's. Thus, in future contexts, specific definite and indefinite NP's retain their existential presuppositions, while their non-specific counterparts lose them:¹³

- (19) a. **Juan bailará con {la, una} chica que tiene (IND) ojos azules, la cual no existe todavía* 'John will dance with {the, a} girl (SPECIFIC) who has blue eyes, who doesn't exist yet.'
- b. *Juan bailará con {la, una} chica que tenga (SUBJ) ojos azules, la cual no existe todavía* 'John will dance with {the, a} girl (NON-SPECIFIC) who has blue eyes, who doesn't exist yet.'

Specific NP's involve existence in all the environments I have discussed so far, but existential presuppositions can be blocked by the environment for this type of NP's as well. The sentence in 20a, with an expression which specifically attributes the responsibility for the description to the speaker, retains the existential presuppositions connected with the descriptive phrase; that in 20b has the description specifically attributed to the matrix subject and does not carry existential presuppositions:

- (20) a. **Juan quiere pescar {el, un} pez que según mi opinión pesa (IND) 5 lbs., y tal pez no existe* 'John wants to catch {the, a} fish (SPECIFIC)

¹³ * indicates semantic anomaly. Note that 19b is ambiguous in that the relative clause can have a future or a present reference. The non-specific present interpretation retains its existential presupposition. The non-specific future interpretation ('the girl who has blue eyes when he dances with her') has no existential presupposition. These changes in existential import depending on different factors present in the tree emphasize my conclusion that existence is not inherent in any NP.

which according to me weighs 5 lbs., and such a fish does not exist.'

- b. *Juan quiere pescar {el, un} pez que según él pesa (IND) 5 lbs., y tal pez no existe* 'John wants to catch {the, a} fish (SPECIFIC) which according to him weighs 5 lbs., and such a fish does not exist.'

In other words, the attribution of a description in a given sentence to somebody other than the speaker frees the speaker of any ontological commitment about the object spoken about.

In conclusion, this section has shown that existential presuppositions are associated with definite and indefinite NP's irrespective of their specificity. Existential presuppositions are not inherent in any given NP, but are relative with respect to the linguistic environment; they respond to a principle which resembles the cumulative hypothesis for presuppositions, as discussed in Karttunen 1973.

4. CONCLUSIONS. Departing from philosophical notions in connection with the question of reference in Spanish, I have first discussed 'uniqueness' and its relationship with definiteness—concluding that, if this logical notion were to be applied to natural language in the way discussed by logicians, it would lead to a radical separation of plural and singular NP's in linguistics, and would ignore parallelisms between definite and indefinite NP's. As Bierwisch indicates, linguists should talk about uniquely identifiable sets (with one or more members) rather than about uniquely identifiable individuals.¹⁴

The notion of 'previous knowledge', which some traditional grammarians have considered as the linguistic equivalent of 'uniqueness', ignores non-specific definite NP's, a sub-set of which are called 'attributive' by Donnellan; these show that definiteness is not necessarily connected with previous knowledge or acquaintance.

The question of the referential vs. the attributive use of definite descriptions has a linguistic counterpart in the grammar of Spanish. Referentiality and attributiveness are syntactic and semantic in nature, not simply pragmatic. Referential NP's are a sub-set of specific NP's; attributive NP's belong to the class of non-specific NP's. The specific/non-specific distinction interrelates closely with syntactic positions to allow existential presuppositions which follow cumulative principles; the dichotomy is not connected with opacity and transparency, nor with modality, and can be found outside these contexts.

The distinction between specific and non-specific NP's must be separated from the distinction between NP's connected or not with an existential presupposition. Just as a definite determiner does not automatically presuppose that there is an object fitting the description, neither does a specific NP presuppose such an object. Existence is a presuppositional condition separate from definiteness and specificity; but given that definiteness and specificity are parts of the linguistic environment, they contribute to the cumulative principle followed by existential presuppositions. An 'existential' NP can be specific or non-specific, definite or indefinite—its existential import being determined by the environment in a way which I have not tried to

¹⁴ Bierwisch has an interesting discussion on the distinction between sets and individuals, a question which I have not explored at all in this paper.

determine. A 'non-existential' NP can be definite or indefinite, specific or non-specific.

If we try to relate Donnellan's referential/attributive distinction to Spanish NP's, we can see that the referential NP's are a sub-set of the specific singular definite NP's of Spanish (those carrying an existential presupposition), while the attributive NP's are those non-specific singular definite descriptions associated with existential presuppositions. A conclusion to be drawn from this study is that the notions developed in the philosophical literature can be a source of inspiration to linguists, but they must be carefully scrutinized before they can be applied to natural language.

I have discussed three aspects of Spanish NP's connected with reference, but have not adopted any particular formalism. Two of the aspects presented—definiteness and specificity—are related to the theory of grammar, not to pragmatics; they must be incorporated into the syntactico-semantic structure of Spanish. I will not present a formalization here, but will discuss the conclusions of my paper with respect to a number of proposals related to some aspects of reference similar to those exhibited by Spanish. Of the three aspects I have considered, definiteness seems the most amenable to a feature analysis, and in a number of cases (anaphoric definiteness) it seems to be connected to a feature-changing transformation (a definitization transformation). Specificity has been discussed in the literature in connection with indefinites, both as a feature [\pm specific] (Fillmore) and as an existential quantifier with varying scopes (Baker, Karttunen 1969), and partially as the pragmatic distinction between the attributive and referential use. Specificity is not pragmatic in Spanish; the feature analysis cannot reflect the property of scope which connects it with the speaker or with different subjects in a phrase-marker, and locates it at different levels in the tree so as not to block its existential presuppositions. The notion of specificity discussed here seems to apply not only to definite and indefinite descriptions, but also to propositions which can function as arguments. In Spanish, certain embedded sentences are formally marked as specific or non-specific by the presence of the indicative and the subjunctive. I have discussed a number of those cases in Rivero 1971, with a somewhat different perspective, but the connection is not difficult to make: certain indicative complementizers are associated with a positive presupposition about the truth of the complement sentence, much as restrictive relatives in the indicative are associated with a presupposition about the existence of an object fitting the description. However, the presuppositions of complement clauses in the indicative can also be blocked by the environment, and respond to cumulative principles. It will perhaps be necessary to separate specificity from truth in complement clauses in the same way that I have differentiated between specificity and existence in this paper. A solution reflecting the specificity of descriptions and propositions in a similar way would be interesting.

Finally, the existential import of definite and indefinite NP's is the most complex of the three aspects I have discussed, interacting as it does with the linguistic environment in a way which relates to the observations made by Karttunen 1973 concerning presuppositions in general; but as far as I can see, in the examples I have discussed, it does not correlate with an extralinguistic context. The presup-

positional condition for existence in Spanish seems to be determined by the grammatical structure of sentences, and is satisfied on the basis of grammatical features alone. The existence of an individual or object is presupposed, but is nevertheless part of the grammar of the statement. This position combines two different hypotheses: (1) existence is contextually defined, and is not one of the properties which definite or indefinite NP's possess per se; (2) certain presuppositions are GRAMMATICAL (logical) relations of sentences, not pragmatic in nature alone. The existential presuppositions I have discussed do not seem to depend on linguistic contexts in Spanish, but only on linguistic environments. They do not need to be defined in relation to sets of sentences whose truth is taken for granted.

My conclusions should not be interpreted as being in disagreement with the incorporation of pragmatic theory into linguistics. I have merely pointed out that certain aspects of speech acts, considered in recent literature as not deriving from grammar, do belong in the grammar of Spanish; specificity is one of those aspects. At the same time, it seems that if a pragmatic theory of presuppositions is needed, a grammatical (logical) theory of presuppositions must be developed as well. In other words, in view of the Spanish material, one can conclude that speakers presuppose; and they can do it independently of grammar. However, certain sentences presuppose too; and speakers who use them commit themselves automatically to presuppositions which they cannot violate without at the same time violating the rules of grammar. Existence is one of those presuppositions belonging to the realm of grammar in Spanish.

REFERENCES

- ALONSO, AMADO. 1957. Estilística y gramática del artículo en español. *Estudios lingüísticos, temas españoles*, 125–60. Madrid: Gredos.
- BAKER, C. L. 1966. Definiteness and indefiniteness in English. U. of Illinois master's thesis.
- BELLO, ANDRÉS, and RUFINO J. CUERVO. 1970. *Gramática de la lengua castellana*. 8th edition, ed. by Niceto Alcalá-Zamora y Torres. Buenos Aires: Editorial Sopena Argentina.
- BIERWISCH, MANFRED. 1971. On classifying semantic features. *Semantics*, ed. by Danny D. Steinberg & Leon A. Jakobovits, 410–35. Cambridge: University Press.
- CHOMSKY, N. 1965. *Aspects of the theory of syntax*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.
- DEAN, JANET. 1968. Non-specific noun phrases in English. (Harvard Computational Laboratory, Report no. NSF–20.) Cambridge, Mass.
- DONNELLAN, KEITH. 1966. Reference and definite descriptions. *Philosophical Review* 75.281–304. [Reprinted in *Semantics*, ed. by Danny D. Steinberg and L. A. Jakobovits, 100–114. Cambridge: University Press, 1971.]
- FILLMORE, C. J. 1967. On the syntax of preverbs. *Glossa* 1.83–125.
- HADLICH, ROGER L. 1971. *A transformational grammar of Spanish*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.
- HASEGAWA, K. 1972. Transformations and semantic interpretation. *Linguistic Inquiry* 3.141–59.
- HERINGER, JAMES T. 1969. Indefinite noun phrases and referential opacity. *Papers from the 5th Regional Meeting, Chicago Linguistic Society*, 89–97.

- HINTIKKA, J. 1969. Semantics for propositional attitudes. *Philosophical logic*, ed. by J. W. Davis et al., 21–45. Dordrecht: Reidel.
- JACKENDOFF, R. S. 1972. *Semantic interpretation in generative grammar*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- KARTTUNEN, L. 1969. *Problems of reference in syntax*. U. of Indiana dissertation.
- . 1973. Presuppositions of compound sentences. *Linguistic Inquiry* 4.169–94.
- KEENAN, EDWARD 1971. Two kinds of presupposition in natural language. *Studies in linguistic semantics*, ed. by C. J. Fillmore & D. T. Langendoen, 45–52. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- , and K. H. EBERT. 1973. A note on marking transparency and opacity. *Linguistic Inquiry* 4.421–4.
- KUNO, SUSUMO. 1970. Some properties of nonreferential noun phrases. *Studies in general and oriental linguistics, presented to Shirô Hattori on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday*, ed. by R. Jakobson & S. Kawamoto, 348–73. Tokyo: TEC Company.
- LENZ, RODOLFO. 1935. *La oración y sus partes*. 3rd ed. Madrid.
- LINSKY, LEONARD. 1967. *Referring*. New York: Humanities Press.
- MCCAWLEY, J. D. 1970. Where do noun phrases come from? *Readings in English transformational grammar*, ed. by R. A. Jacobs & P. S. Rosenbaum, 166–83. Waltham, Mass.: Ginn.
- . 1973. External NP's versus annotated deep structures. *Linguistic Inquiry* 4.221–40.
- PARTEE, B. H. 1972. Opacity, coreference and pronouns. *Semantics of natural language*, ed. by D. Davidson & G. Harman, 415–41. Dordrecht: Reidel.
- PERLMUTTER, D. M. 1970. On the article in English. *Progress in linguistics*, ed. by M. Bierwisch & K. E. Heidolph, 233–48. The Hague: Mouton.
- RAMSEY, M. M. 1894. *A textbook of modern Spanish*. 1967 revised edition by Robert K. Spaulding. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- REAL ACADEMIA ESPAÑOLA. 1973. *Esbozo de una nueva gramática de la lengua española*. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe.
- RIVERO, M. L. 1971. Mood and presupposition in Spanish. *Foundations of Language* 7.305–36.
- . 1974. Definite and indefinite NP's in Spanish. *Linguistic studies in Romance languages*, ed. by J. Campbell et al., 189–202. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown U. Press.
- RUSSELL, B. 1905. On denoting. *Mind* 14.479–93.
- SMITH, C. 1964. Determiners and relative clauses in a generative grammar of English. *Lg.* 40.37–52.
- STALNAKER, ROBERT C. 1972. *Pragmatics*. *Semantics of natural language*, ed. by D. Davidson & G. Harman, 380–97. Dordrecht: Reidel.
- STOCKWELL, R. P., et al. 1968. *Integration of transformational theories on English syntax*. Springfield, Va: National Technical Information Service.
- WHITEHEAD, ALFRED N., and BERTRAND RUSSELL. 1925. *Principia mathematica*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: University Press.

[Received 4 October 1973.]