

SPECIFICITY AND EXISTENCE: A REPLY

MARÍA-LUISA RIVERO

University of Ottawa

This paper, a reply to Rojas 1977, re-affirms my conclusion (Rivero 1975) that specificity is marked in Spanish NP's by the mood of restrictive modifiers, and that it is independent of the degree of definiteness and the existential claims associated with those NP's. Specific and non-specific NP's alike may be referring expressions depending on their position in sentences. However, contrary to what I previously assumed, the notion of specificity is not connected with the pragmatic distinction between the referential and attributive uses of definite descriptions.

In Rivero 1975, I discussed the relationship between specificity and existence in Spanish NP's. I concluded that specificity is syntactically marked by the mood of restrictive relatives modifying definite and non-definite NP's, and that existence is a function of the linguistic environment, in which specificity and definiteness are not obligatorily the defining factors. In other words, certain referential and non-referential POSITIONS in Spanish can be defined irrespective of the definiteness and specificity of the NP's that occupy them, and this shows that definiteness and specificity are not automatically connected with existential claims. Rojas 1977 disagrees with these proposals on various grounds. In this paper I would like to show (a) that Rojas's general conclusions are untenable; and (b) that some of the comments he makes with respect to specificity, existence, and definiteness actually reinforce certain of my conclusions, contrary to what he seems to believe.

This paper is organized as follows. In §1 I will discuss Donnellan's distinction (1966) between the referential and attributive uses of definite descriptions. In §2 I will discuss, in a general way, definiteness and specificity, and their independence from existential claims. In §3 I will discuss non-specific definites and existential claims, and so-called '-*ra* indicatives'. I will take this occasion to provide some evidence on certain points that should have been included in my previous article to motivate my argumentation, and to advance a partial definition of the semantic concept of specificity, since previously I discussed only how it was marked in syntax.

1. REFERENTIAL AND ATTRIBUTIVE USES. Before discussing definiteness, specificity, and existence, I would like to agree with Rojas on one point: the pragmatic distinction that Donnellan labeled the 'referential' and 'attributive' uses of definite descriptions is NOT reflected in the mood of restrictive relative clauses, contrary to what I said in my article. There was some confusion in my paper about pragmatics in philosophy and the loose way in which it is used in linguistics—unrelated, in many cases, to a semantic component based on truth-functionality. However, Rojas also shows a high degree of confusion in his discussion.

To show that the distinction between the referential and attributive uses of definite descriptions was not an example of pragmatic ambiguity in Donnellan's sense, I should have provided situations in which definite descriptions could only be used attributively BY VIRTUE OF THEIR SUBJUNCTIVE FORM (i.e. their non-specific

meaning), and only referentially BY VIRTUE OF THEIR INDICATIVE FORM OR SPECIFIC MEANING. I provided no such situation, but neither does Rojas in arguing against my unmotivated proposal. Rojas argues for two claims which lead to a contradiction if accepted together: (a) he considers that referential and attributive uses are solely pragmatic; but (b) he marks Spanish examples as unambiguously referential or attributive BY VIRTUE OF THEIR LINGUISTIC FORM. If the distinction is pragmatic in Donnellan's sense (as I now think it is), it should be possible to provide situations in which, e.g., the definite description that Rojas labels 'attributive' can also be used referentially (i.e., both uses are possible, regardless of the form of the description). To exemplify this pragmatic ambiguity I will discuss only one sentence, but the argument is also applicable to the case that Rojas marks as 'referential' (i.e., it can have an attributive use):¹

- (1) *El que asesinó (IND) a Smith, quienquiera que sea, está loco* 'The one who murdered Smith, whoever he may be, is insane.' (ATTRIB, [4])

Suppose there has been a discussion about Jones, and two opinions have been expressed as to his line of work—he could work for the FBI or the CIA—but it seems improbable that his connection with either agency can be established with certainty. Thereafter, someone who assumes that Jones murdered Smith may refer to Jones by uttering ex. 1,² even though Jones may not have killed Smith; and he will succeed in referring to Jones, regardless of the kind of secret agent that Jones happens to be. This use of the description is referential, and meets all the criteria that Donnellan establishes for referential uses. The attributive use is more obvious, and I will not discuss it. In brief, it is a contradiction to say, as Rojas does, that the distinction is pragmatic—and then to give an example which, by virtue of its form, exhibits an exclusively 'attributive' reading.

To summarize, I failed to provide motivation for the claim that certain specific definite descriptions could only be used referentially, and that some non-specific definite descriptions could only be attributive. In discussing my proposal, Rojas assigns referential and attributive unambiguous readings to Spanish sentences by virtue of their form, but at the same time argues that the distinction is solely pragmatic. In addition, the definition that he provides for the dichotomy is wrong, and at odds with Donnellan's proposals. In this comedy of errors, I have tried to provide a counter-example against my former intentions and in favor of Rojas's

¹ Bracketed numbers after examples are those used by Rojas.

² The speaker's assumption may not be shared by his audience at all, as Donnellan points out. Hence the definitions that Rojas (p. 61) provides for referential ('the identity of the murderer is known to the audience') vs. attributive uses ('the identity of the murderer is unknown to the audience') is at cross-purposes with Donnellan's discussion on many accounts. With respect to the knowledge of the audience, Donnellan says, e.g. (p. 109): 'Can reference fail when a definite description is used referentially? I do not fail to refer merely because my audience does not correctly pick out what I am referring to.'

For a discussion of French definite descriptions with indicative and subjunctive modifiers, together with their referential and attributive uses regardless of mood, see Pavel 1976. The range of French subjunctive relative clauses is much more restricted than that of Spanish. However, for those limited cases where French has a contrast in mood in relative clauses with definite antecedents, Pavel concludes that a subjunctive or an indicative does not prevent an expression from being used either referentially or attributively.

intentions (though his argumentation defeats his purpose), and to establish that the referential and attributive uses of definite descriptions in Spanish belong solely to the realm of pragmatics—a conclusion that Pavel has established for French.³

2. SPECIFIC DEFINITES. If referential and attributive uses are considered solely pragmatic, then my discussion on specificity and definiteness is not invalidated, nor do the properties of specificity and definiteness hinge on Donnellan's distinction. Accordingly, I now wish to refute Rojas's criticisms and counter-proposals. In this section I will examine specific definites—and, implicitly, their parallelism with specific non-definites. I will show, quite trivially, that Rojas's conclusions about definite and indefinite NP's with restrictive clauses in the indicative are wrong.

Rojas believes that the presence in a Spanish sentence of a definite NP with a restrictive clause in the indicative ensures the presupposition (or entailment) that something exists which fits the definite description. In other words, in his view, the syntactic make-up of an NP that combines a definite article with an indicative, and nothing else, ensures that that NP counts as a referring expression. Certain definite expressions in 'restricted' modal environments are not associated with an existential claim, but then they are modified by relatives in the subjunctive (p. 68):

Definite NP's normally imply the existence of the NP (indicative); it is only in certain restricted modal contexts ... that they may lose their existential import (subjunctive).

This is a completely untenable proposition; existential claims are independent of definite-indicative correlations. Consider the examples provided by Lope Blanch (1958:385):

- (2) *El libro que próximamente* {(a) *escriba* (SUBJ), (b) *escribiré* (IND)} *será todavía mejor* 'The book that I {(a) may, (b) will} write will be even better.'

Neither indicative nor subjunctive definite descriptions presuppose (or imply) that there is something which fits the description. However, the two sentences are not equivalent from a semantic point of view,⁴ and the distinction is connected to what I have labeled 'specificity', which I will discuss below (§3). Ex. 2 shows that a definite NP with an indicative relative clause in a typical 'referential position' (i.e. subject position) is not automatically connected with an existential claim, any more than is its subjunctive counterpart.

Rojas also believes that, if an indefinite NP is associated in a given sentence with an existential claim (presupposition, implication etc.),⁵ then its relative clause will

³ I will briefly touch upon subjunctive NP's in fn. 8, with this same idea in mind.

⁴ Lope Blanch simply says: 'En las oraciones de relativo, ... la lengua permite oscilaciones de matices semánticos muy delicados.' The recent version of the Spanish Academy grammar considers that, in this type of sentence, the subjunctive indicates 'un matiz de mayor eventualidad o incertidumbre' (Real Academia 1973:478). From this it should be clear that I will use SEMANTIC in the sense of 'meaning by virtue of linguistic form'; I will not take the view that there is a semantic difference only if the conditions that lead to an assignment of truth value are different.

⁵ I spoke about existential 'presuppositions' in my previous paper, but I attempted to avoid the controversy of presupposition vs. implication with respect to definite descriptions. I used EXISTENTIAL CLAIM-IMPORT as a neutral label. Rojas uses 'presupposition' and 'implication', sometimes switching terminology within one paragraph. However, I will ignore this dichotomy except in examples 5a-b.

be in the indicative. If no existential claim is associated with the indefinite description, the restrictive relative clause will be in the subjunctive (p. 68):

Indefinite NP's may or may not imply the existence of the NP; therefore, the notion of 'specificity' helps distinguish those indefinite NP's which have an existential presupposition (indicative) from those which do not (subjunctive).

This contention is also untenable. There are indefinite descriptions with relative clauses in the indicative, and no existential claims; and there are indefinite ones with subjunctives and no existential claims—but these are not semantically identical. Their difference in meaning relates to specificity, and could not relate to existence, since existential claims are inapplicable in both cases:

- (3) *Te enseñaré un libro que {escriba, escribiré} próximamente* 'I will show you a book that I {may, will} write soon.'

Furthermore, the distinction covers non-definite NP's in general, again with no connection with existential import:

- (4) *Te enseñaré varios libros que {escriba, escribiré} próximamente* 'I will show you several books that I {may, will} write soon.'

In conclusion, Rojas is wrong in his general statements about definite and indefinite NP's with indicative restrictive modifiers (my 'specific' NP's) and existential import. On the other hand, my general conclusion (Rivero 1975:45), that a definite specific (= indicative) NP in a sentence does not automatically ensure that there is an object fitting the description, is corroborated by these examples. The same is true of indefinite and non-definite specifics (= indicative).

In his sweeping generalizations about definites and indicatives, Rojas has argued against the obvious. His §5 is also dedicated to defending the untenable claim that a definite-indicative NP correlates with an existential claim. In my article, I had discussed the following examples:

- (5) a. *Juan quiere pescar {el, un} pez que según él pesa cinco libras, y tal pez no existe* 'John wants to catch {the, a} fish (SPEC) which according to him weighs five pounds, and such a fish does not exist.' [Rivero 20b, Rojas 19]
 b. **Juan quiere pescar {un, el} pez que según mi opinión pesa cinco libras, y tal pez no existe* 'John wants to catch {a, the} fish (SPEC) which according to me weighs five pounds, and such a fish does not exist.' [Rivero 20a, Rojas 20; ≠ indicates semantic anomaly.]

I said that the descriptive content of the relative clause in 5a is attributed to John by *según él* 'according to him'; as a result, no existential claim is associated with that definite description, and the second conjunct creates no contradiction. In other words, an indicative definite description does not automatically assure an existential claim. In 5b, on the other hand, there is at least one contradictory reading, because the description is attributed to the speaker by *según mi opinión* 'according to me'. The speaker cannot assert the contrary of what is presupposed (or implied), i.e. that there is a fish fitting the description. Rojas accepts the readings as discussed, together with their degree of acceptability, and purports to present a different treatment. However, if certain confusions are set aside, the only coherent interpretation of his proposal is a repetition of my conclusions.

Let us consider 5b: Rojas says (68) that it is anomalous because 'the speaker contradicts himself by asserting both the existence and the non-existence of the same object.' Perhaps he is taking a Russellian view of definite descriptions, where the existential claim connected with *el pez que según mi opinión pesa cinco libras* is part of the assertion; but he does not use the same approach for 5a, which makes his discussion inconsistent. Translated into the terminology used to discuss 5a, Rojas may have intended to say that the speaker contradicts himself by negating in the second conjunct that which was presupposed in the first. But that is what I said, and that is what Rojas says I said; so I am at a loss to understand whether he agrees or disagrees with me.

As to 5a, Rojas contests my proposal that no existential claim is connected with the definite-indicative description; but again he appears to repeat my conclusion. According to Rojas (68), 'in Juan's universe of discourse, the fish in question does exist ... The second conjunct does not destroy the existential presupposition connected with Juan's beliefs.' This statement amounts to saying that an existential generalization (in the sense of Quine) will not obtain; and it is equivalent to what I said in my paper, once we understand the peculiar sense in which Rojas uses the expression 'existential presupposition' here. In other words, Rojas finds that Juan must be attributed the belief that there is a fish. However, from that opaque reading we cannot apply the rule of existential generalization and conclude that there is a fish; it is to 'a fish outside of Juan's belief' that the notion of existential presupposition (or implication) applies. If, after admitting that the fish in question is connected only with Juan's beliefs, Rojas says that the definite NP carries an 'existential presupposition', his confusing discussion reaches a conclusion which is identical to what I proposed.

In summary, I hope to have shown that it is impossible to establish a non-contextual link between existential claims, indicatives in relative clauses, and definiteness. The conclusions reached apply to indefinites as well, and reinforce my previous claim that both types of NP's derive their referring function from their position in sentences.⁶

3. NON-SPECIFIC DEFINITES (i.e. definite descriptions with restrictive relatives in the subjunctive) will be discussed below. In §3.1, I will deal with non-past contexts; in §3.2, I will be concerned with past contexts and so-called '-ra indicatives', and will provide a general discussion of specificity from a semantic point of view.

3.1. The context in which definite-subjunctive NP's appear in Spanish is defined too narrowly by Rojas (63):⁷

A definite head noun and a dependent clause in the subjunctive can co-occur only when the existence of that head noun, as well as its ability to fit the description ... are in question ...: *¿Encontraré la solución que resuelva (SUBJ) todos mis problemas?* 'Will I find the solution that might solve all my problems?'

⁶ This is equivalent to saying that NP's do not refer or fail to refer per se, but that they refer or fail to refer when in sentences—a conclusion which is hardly novel, except that the referring properties of definite descriptions have not been discussed with respect to the mood of restrictive modifiers.

⁷ For a further discussion of this example, see fn. 14, below.

It is difficult for me to see what Rojas means by 'the existence of that head noun' as separate from 'its ability to fit the description'. (If he means that lexical items *per se* have referring properties, he is mistaken.) However, it seems that this rather obscure specification of the environment is intended to exclude future contexts that are not questions. In effect, according to Rojas, the following example taken from my paper has a generic interpretation—but not, as I proposed, a non-specific interpretation with no existential claim:

- (6) *Juan bailará con la chica que tenga* (SUBJ) *ojos azules, la cual no existe todavía* 'John will dance with the girl (NON-SPEC) who has blue eyes, who does not exist yet.' [Rivero 19b, Rojas 17]

To refute Rojas, it would suffice to point out that 2a has no generic interpretation, and has the same type of environment as 6; i.e., there are non-specifics outside the restricted positions that Rojas seems to consider. Or again, in 7 (taken from a school pamphlet giving instructions about gym uniforms), there can be no generic interpretation for the NP in object position:

- (7) *El profesor de gimnasia le indicará el color que le corresponda* (SUBJ) 'The gym teacher will indicate to him/her {whichever, the} color that he/she {will, may} be assigned.'

Ex. 7 is about an arbitrary color; the idea is that each child will have only one color, regardless of what color it is. (As the instructions specify, the child will be assigned the color of the team to which he belongs.)

However, Rojas's ensuing discussion shows that he sees a non-generic interpretation in 6, when he offers the following paraphrase for what he mistakenly calls the generic reading:

- (8) *Si existe una chica que tenga* (SUBJ) *ojos azules, Juan bailará con ella* 'If a girl who has blue eyes exists, John will dance with her.' [18]

Obviously, 8 is not generic; it is about an arbitrary, unique, perhaps non-existent girl. If we follow Vendler's syntactic pattern (1968:16–25), which is Rojas's source of ideas in this case, the generic interpretation would be *Si una chica tiene ojos azules, Juan bailará con ella* 'If a girl has blue eyes, John will dance with her.' I do not see this 'generic' interpretation in 6—nor a generic interpretation in the syntactic pattern that I am now proposing, for that matter; but that is hardly relevant at this point.

Paraphrase 8, as proposed by Rojas for 6, raises the issue of the syntactic and semantic relationship between definites and indefinites (left unexplained by Vendler, who derives all definites from indefinite sources), as well as the relationship of relative and conditional structures; but it does not impinge on generic vs. non-generic interpretations.⁸ Again, the discussion seems to apply to the indefinite

⁸ Rojas claims that another of my examples has only a generic interpretation:

[9b] {*El, Un*} *comentario que esté* (SUBJ) *suscitando Picasso queda fielmente reflejado en primera plana* '{The, A} comment (NON-SPEC) that Picasso is causing is faithfully reflected on (the) first page.' [Rivero 14a, 15a, 17a]

I will discuss only the definite description. Since Rojas refers (63) to Vendler's conditional gloss for generics, but does not provide a gloss, it is impossible to see what the generic interpretation would be in this case, or whether the confusion would arise that appeared in connection with 6.

description with restrictive clause in the subjunctive (i.e., it has a non-generic interpretation).

Since verbs of propositional attitude like *querer* 'want' and *interesar* 'interest' provide environments which are equivalent to the future contexts just discussed, a sentence such as *Juan quiere (ver) la carta que escribas* (SUBJ) 'John wants (to see) the letter that you {will, may} write' (NON-SPEC) is similar to the ones just discussed, and does not have a generic interpretation.

To recapitulate, future and modal environments exhibit definite NP's with restrictive relatives in the subjunctive that are non-generic, much as they exhibit indefinite NP's under similar conditions. The semantics of the non-generic, non-specific NP's in modal and future (also negative) environments is more problematic, in my view. However, since Rojas has almost totally excluded those environments from Spanish, he does not raise the issue of their interpretation, and I will not deal with the problem here.

3.2. I turn now to the most controversial sentences discussed in my paper—examples where a clear-cut existential claim is associated with a definite description modified by a restrictive relative clause with a superficial imperfect subjunctive in *-ra* (or, as we shall see, an imperfect subjunctive in *-se*); e.g.,

- (9) *El que fuera presidente republicano en el exilio había dicho ...* 'The one who (may) have been the president of the republic in exile had said ...'

This example appears in a context where the definite description applies to an individual still alive, who made a declaration upon his recent return to Spain;⁹ the sentence makes the existential claim that there was an individual fitting the description of being the president of the republic in exile. In my previous paper, I assumed that such examples were not semantically equivalent to their counterparts with superficial indicatives:

It has been pointed out that syntactic form fails to disambiguate generic from non-generic readings; e.g., all the sentences that Vendler gives as generic also have non-generic interpretations, and there are situations in which they would be interpreted as non-generics. Ex. [9b] has a non-generic interpretation, and perhaps a generic one too (I will not deal with generics here). The non-generic reading fits, in my view, the following situation: suppose someone says that a negative comment about Picasso has appeared in the paper, and somebody else replies that the comment is not negative—that it can even be interpreted as some sort of praise. The first speaker can then answer with [9b]; he grants that he may not know what the characteristics of the comment are, but that there is nevertheless a comment on the first page. (The same characteristics appear in phrases such as *El comentario que sea* 'Whichever comment it is'.) Then, after a lengthy discussion on the characteristics of the comment, an exasperated speaker may reply: *Bueno, el comentario que sea* (SUBJ), *pero ahí está publicado. Así que leelo.* 'Okay, whichever comment it is, but it is published there. So read it.' Now it is clear that the existence of the comment is not in question; what is doubted is how to describe it. I labeled these phrases 'attributive' in my previous paper, but in this type of situation they appear to be used referentially. This reinforces the conclusions of §1 above, and indicates the independence of specificity from referential and attributive uses.

⁹ This example comes from a recent airmail edition of the Spanish newspaper *ABC*. It is parallel in structure to my previous example *El que asesinara a Smith está loco* 'Whoever it was that murdered Smith is insane', which some of Rojas's informants found ungrammatical (62). The two sentences exhibit a definite description with a (covert) human antecedent for the

- (10) *El que fue presidente republicano en el exilio había dicho ...* 'The one who was the president of the republic in exile had said ...'

Spanish sentences like 9 have long been controversial from both normative and descriptive points of view. Many normative grammarians, through the 19th and 20th centuries, have held that these *-ra* forms in non-modal past contexts are totally equivalent, from a semantic point of view, to their indicative counterparts; and that they should be avoided, since they play no distinct role (Salvá 1852:181–2; Bello & Cuervo 1970:245; Real Academia 1931:274; Alonso & Henríquez Ureña 1971:156; Gili y Gaya 1961:179; Real Academia 1973:480). As a result, they have been called '*-ra* indicatives', a designation that I will use here as a technical term.¹⁰

There have been diatribes against this 'indicative use' (Mallo 1947, 1950), as well as soothing words comparing normative and descriptive approaches (Bolinger 1948). According to some grammarians (e.g. Alonso & Henríquez Ureña), it is avoided by the best authors; but the studies of Wright and others find it in the works of the most prominent writers, including members of the Real Academia—which, through its grammar, condemns the form. Many find it an archaism, others do not (Lenz 1935:290, Alonso 1935). Some feel that it is disappearing (Gili y Gaya); others believe that it is used more and more often (Lamíquiz 1971). Some feel that it is a hypercorrection used to '*distinguirse del lenguaje corriente*', as Gili y Gaya puts it; however, Staubach, studying the registers where it appears, finds it used most often in the colloquial columns of newspapers, and in hastily written crime write-ups and police notices, as opposed to careful style. Even structuralist accounts of the Spanish verb system differ as to its inclusion or exclusion from the system; e.g., Hernández Alonso (1973:177) excludes the 'indicative' value of *-ra* forms because he sees it as an archaism, and accepts the view that its use is less and less frequent. On the other hand, Lamíquiz (1969:255) includes it in the system, but only in its etymological value as a pluperfect—because, according to him, it is used more and more often.

After this array of views, it should no longer be surprising that there is a divergence of opinions as to the semantic equivalence of *-ra* forms with indicative tenses.

relative clause in subject position of a non-modal, non-negative, non-future string. (It surprises me that my other example, *El comentario que suscitara Picasso queda fielmente reflejado en primera plana* 'The comment that Picasso caused is faithfully reflected on (the) first page', was judged grammatical; it offers the characteristics that I have given above, except for an overt noun which is not human.) Since these types of structures are easily found in all types of newspapers, I will discuss them as grammatical.

¹⁰ Wright studied the history of the *-ra* verb form in Spain (1929, 1932, 1933b, 1947), its use in Spanish America (1926c), and its relation with forms of the subjunctive (1926a, 1926b, 1931, 1933a). He showed that Spanish forms of the type of *amara* (classified from a morphological and synchronic point of view as pluperfect subjunctives) still retain the pluperfect indicative value (= *había amado*) which their etymological antecedent (cf. Latin *amaveram*) had up to ca. 1378. This use diminished and practically disappeared after 1459 (Davis 1934); around 1533, Juan de Valdés in his *Diálogo de la lengua* considered it an archaism, and a reprehensible use. There are no examples of *-ra* indicatives between 1616 and 1774; but the form re-appears, with exactly the same value (or so normative grammarians assume) in the early 19th century. It has been used ever since then, almost exclusively in adverbial and relative clauses (Wright 1926a, b, 1931; Alonso 1935; Lenz 1935; Staubach 1946; García de Diego 1951; Meier 1970; Lamíquiz 1971).

A number of grammarians have felt that, when the *-ra* form appears in the restrictive relative of a definite description which, because of the linguistic environment, is associated with an existential claim (*'-ra* indicatives'), this is nothing but an allomorph of an indicative morpheme (or several, with neutralization). Rojas accepts this position as uncontroversial. However, other grammarians have perceived a semantic distinction between *'-ra* indicatives' and their indicative counterparts. Alonso (52) is ambivalent as to its use in Argentina; he feels that in certain cases it describes events already known to the audience, but that in other cases it provides additional information. Fish 1963 finds two distinct semantic values that justify it from a normative point of view. Criado de Val (1948:164) places it in a transitional modal zone, between an indicative and a subjunctive. Commenting on the definite description *La torre de plata que el rey construyera* 'The silver tower that the king (may have) built', used by Benavente, he says:

En este ejemplo no cabe duda alguna de que es posible la sustitución de 'construyera' por 'había construido'. Sin embargo, usando la forma simple, el estilo de la frase varía, tomando un leve sentido hipotético y extra-temporal.¹¹

Pottier (1969:38) attributes to the *-ra* form 'soit une plus grande hypothèse que le prétérit, soit une action secondaire du prétérit, avec effet de sens d'antériorité'. He also feels (1972:182) that *-ra* indicatives were not equivalent to pluperfect indicatives even in the Middle Ages. Lamíquiz 1969, 1971, by giving the form a special slot in the structural system of the Spanish verb that he proposes, also implicitly recognizes its non-identity with other forms, even though he places it within the indicative system.

In view of the variety of opinions, no position on *-ra* indicatives can be considered uncontroversial. Merely quoting Kany 1945, as Rojas does, does not constitute evidence for one position vs. another.¹² However, I did not motivate my position either—namely, that the morphological distinction between subjunctive and

¹¹ Note that it is a substitution that preserves grammaticality, but changes meaning. The same type of substitution is discussed by the Real Academia in connection with future indicatives and present subjunctives, as in 2.

¹² The only justification that Rojas provides deals with *-ra* forms in complement clauses, and does not stand scrutiny. He refers to the following example:

[12] *Lástima que tuvieras (SUBJ) otro compromiso* 'It's a pity that you had another commitment.'

Here, he says (p. 65), the 'true *-ra* subjunctive' can be replaced by a present subjunctive, with an ensuing difference on the time axis, as in:

[13] *Lástima que tengas (SUBJ) otro compromiso* 'It is a pity that you have another commitment.'

I am puzzled as to what could constitute a 'true' *-ra* subjunctive in [12], since it is an ambiguous sentence, and Rojas has glossed only one of the readings. Ex. [12] can be understood as past or non-past time reference: *Lástima que tuvieras otro compromiso* {ayer, hoy, mañana} 'Too bad that you had another commitment {yesterday, today, tomorrow}.'

This use of *-ra* has been discussed in the literature; thus Spaulding (1931:57) gives the following example from Pereda, with the English gloss: *Más vale que no te encontraras con él* 'It is better that you shouldn't meet with him.' The example can also be read as 'It is better that you did not meet with him', paralleling Rojas's only gloss for [12]. There is also the present subjunctive form *Más vale que no te encuentres con él*, which can be glossed more or less as Spaulding does for the *-ra* form. According to Spaulding, *-ra* forms with non-past reference are

indicative corresponds to a semantic distinction in relative clauses with past reference and existential claims.

As I have shown above with respect to future environments (2–3) and modal contexts (5a–b), specificity does not necessarily correlate with existence. I have also indicated that examples such as *El comentario que sea* ‘Whatever comment it is’, in the situation discussed in fn. 8, have definite descriptions that are non-specific, but make an existential claim about a comment; this indicates that non-specific NP’s may also be associated with existence. Let us accept the view that *-ra* indicatives are not paraphrases of indicative past tenses; then, as in the non-past, non-modal environment for *El comentario que sea*, there is a non-specific NP associated with existence in past, non-modal environments. Specificity is independent from existence in that, regardless of the specificity of a given NP, the description may or may not be associated with an existential claim.

With this view, the semantic distinction between 2a and 2b is parallel to the difference between 11a and 11b:

- (11) *La torre que el rey* {(a) *construyera*, (b) *construyó*} *se derrumbó* ‘The tower that the king {(a) may have built, (b) built} crumbled.’

The existential claim in 11 derives from the past, non-modal environment and the past reference of the relative clause, while the non-referential status of the definite NP’s in 2 is the result of the future environment, but not of the specific or non-specific nature of the NP’s.

The values of the present subjunctive of 2a (future reference), the present subjunctive of *el comentario que sea* (present reference), and the *-ra* form of 11a (past reference), all fall among the traditional values assigned to subjunctives in Spanish.¹³ There is a degree of uncertainty in the sentences with the subjunctive

semantically distinct from present subjunctives, the *-ra* form having a stronger hypothetical value.

In view of this ambiguity, which is the ‘true’ *-ra* subjunctive for Rojas? The one about a past event? Is the non-past one a ‘false’ subjunctive? Are there two *-ra* meanings here? Are the ‘true’ *-ra* subjunctives of Spanish those that, in transformational terms, look like obligatory complementizers in embedded clauses with past reference, as in Rojas’s gloss for [12]? Or is the ‘true’ *-ra* subjunctive the one that appears in subordinate clauses with non-past reference, and which cannot be treated as simply a subjunctive complementizer because it contrasts with ‘another’ subjunctive complementizer, namely the present subjunctive?

Furthermore, it is difficult to draw conclusions from these examples of complement clauses, because there is a wider choice of mood in relatives than in complements. As Spaulding says (p. 76), ‘It is in adjective clauses that the greatest latitude in the use of moods is allowed. In many cases either indicative or subjunctive may be correctly used, with only a shade of distinction.’ It is that shade of distinction that I am trying to determine in this paper, but syntactic methods of substitution do not provide an answer. Spaulding identifies several different cases in which the subjunctive is used in relative clauses; but except in parenthetical clauses (*que yo sepa*) and in those whose antecedent is a negative word such as *nadie* ‘no one’, the indicative is also grammatical. As Togeby puts it, ‘le mode des propositions relatives est libre’ (1953:44).

¹³ What is a subjunctive? The question can be answered from a multiplicity of points of view within linguistic theory. We may suggest the following for a transformational grammar with a syntactic and a semantic component, together with a pragmatic level:

(1) Certain subjunctives (or indicatives) appear to be exclusively syntactic, as in the complement sentence of *Quise que hablara Vd.* ‘I wanted you to talk.’ The matrix verb is the controlling factor, and the mood is obligatory and predictable.

forms that is lacking in the indicative counterparts. However, the uncertainty is not about the existential status of the object fitting the description—since, as we have seen in future environments, it is clear that there is no object fitting the description (and there may never be one), while in past or present non-modal environments there is an object fitting the description.¹⁴ The uncertainty of non-specific NP's deals with the pairing up of an individual (or object), existing or not, and its characteristics; in certain cases, it is the pairing up of an individual with the descriptive content of the relative clause. A non-specific NP means we are not certain that it is this individual, rather than some other, that could be assigned the description in the relative clause; or, when we use *que sea* 'whichever it is', where there is no descriptive content, what is indicated is that no characteristics are known. I think that this is the literal sense (following Searle 1969), by virtue of linguistic form, of subjunctives in relative clauses—regardless of the existential status of the description and its definiteness. In the case of a definite NP in the singular which is non-specific (as in 2a), the individual is envisioned as unique, but we are still uncertain as to its characteristics.

(2) There are complement clauses, and other structures, that allow a choice of mood with a difference in meaning. In these cases the complement sentence will have to be assigned (a) a different underlying structure for each mood, or (b) distinct rules of semantic interpretation at some level of the derivation (i.e., mood makes a semantic contribution).

(3) Finally, there seems to be a solely pragmatic contribution of mood in the polite interpretation of *Quisiera hablarle* 'I would like to talk to you.' The literal sense, by virtue of linguistic form, is a statement about a hypothetical state of affairs; but by pragmatic inference, sentences of this type are interpreted as requests (see Rivero 1976 for the properties of the equivalent *Querria hablarle*). It appears that the literal hypothetical sense could be treated by the semantic component as an 'independent subjunctive', while the non-literal sense is part of pragmatics.

This discussion does not preclude a unitary treatment of all these subjunctives. However, a unitary treatment would mean that the grammar of mood might not be formalizable in Spanish, since some of its uses are pragmatic. Bolinger 1974, for quite different reasons, reaches a similar conclusion.

¹⁴ Rojas proposes that subjunctive relatives with definite antecedents (*la solución que resuelva todos mis problemas* 'the solution that might solve all my problems', as in the quotation beginning §3.1) are paraphrases of subjunctive relatives with *poder* 'can' (*la solución que pueda resolver todos mis problemas*) or with *ser capaz de* 'be capable of' (*la solución que sea capaz de resolver todos mis problemas*). However, I find that there is no paraphrase relation, and that Rojas's proposal leads to a contradiction. *Poder* and *ser capaz* involve in each case a semantic distinction that prevents the sentences from being equivalent. Thus it is perfectly coherent to say *¿Encontraré al hombre que {pueda, sea capaz de} resolver todos mis problemas, pero que no los resuelva?* (with the approximate gloss 'Will I find the man who {could, would be able to} solve all my problems but who {may, will} not solve them?') However, it is contradictory to say *¿Encontraré al hombre que resuelva todos mis problemas, pero que no los resuelva?* (approximately: 'Will I find the man who would solve all my problems, but who would not solve them?')

A second problem is that *poder* and *ser capaz de* may also appear in restrictive indicative clauses with definite antecedents, again with a similar difference in meaning. It would be contradictory to say *¿Encontraré al hombre que resolverá todos mis problemas, pero que no los resolverá?* 'Will I find the man who will solve all my problems, but who will not solve them?'; but it is not contradictory to say *¿Encontraré al hombre que {podrá, será capaz de} resolver todos mis problemas, pero que no los resolverá?* 'Will I find the man who {could, will be able to} solve all my problems, but who will not solve them?' In all these examples, *poder* is ambiguous

With this general definition in mind, let me examine the difference between the specific (indicative) and the non-specific (subjunctive) definite descriptions in 2, and the types of situation in which they could be appropriate. Suppose a writer has an exclusive contract with a publisher, and the publisher accepts any book the writer gives him. Then the writer can utter 2a to reassure the publisher if sales have been lagging, or to boast if sales have been very good etc.; he is indicating that he has not planned any particular book, but that he intends to write an arbitrary book—only one for the moment. If that same writer has signed a contract for a book, and if certain specifications have been set as to the content, title etc., then 2b would be more appropriate. By uttering 2a, under this second set of circumstances, the writer could give the impression that he does not take very seriously the plan that has been set up in the contract. Note that there is no difference as to intentions or commitment; the probability that there will be a book in the future is the same in 2a as in 2b.

The non-specific NP with a present time-reference exhibits the same general meaning. By uttering *Bueno, el comentario que sea, pero ahí está publicado* 'Okay, whichever comment it is, but it is published there', in the situation described in fn. 8, the speaker admits that he does not know the characteristics of the object.

Consider now an example of a perfective subjunctive, from the newspaper *ABC*:

- (12) *Estas siamesas, posiblemente las primeras que hayan nacido (SUBJ) por vía vaginal, se encuentran en período de recuperación* 'These Siamese twins, possibly the first to be born vaginally, are improving.'¹⁵

From 12 it follows that there are Siamese twins who were the first to be born vaginally (if there is no previous pair, then it must be this pair). The subjunctive in the restrictive clause emphasizes the uncertainty about the pairing up of the individuals considered and the characteristics assigned to them; however, only one pair will fit the description.

Let us now consider the *-ra* form of examples like 11a. The uncertainty is not about the existential status of the object (there is an object fitting the description). But this situation does not make the *-ra* form unique among subjunctive morphemes—since, as we have seen, phrases like *el comentario que sea* can be used as referring expressions. The uncertainty is about the characteristics of the object. When the king built the tower, was it this one or some other tower? I think that it is this sense of uncertainty that makes *-ra* indicatives appropriate for journalistic style. The journalist advances an alleged correlation, but he is not necessarily responsible for the pairing up of the individual with the description.¹⁶ Again, *-ra*

between personal ability and possibility; but neither sense is equivalent to the subjunctive *resuelva* or the indicative *resolverá*, as we can see. These conclusions are applicable to non-definite NP's.

¹⁵ I assume that the antecedent of the restrictive clause in the subjunctive is *las primeras (siamesas)* 'the first (Siamese twins)'. Perhaps this definite description, in apposition with *estas siamesas* 'these Siamese twins', is predicative—and, as such, non-referring. If that is the case, the non-specific character of the expression is not affected; however, the existential claim is then associated with *estas siamesas*.

¹⁶ Perhaps this aspect is also the basis of a dialectal use reported by Gil Leyva (Lope Blanch 1953:77), with imperfect subjunctives after quotations with the approximate gloss 'as so-and-so

indicatives are appropriate when talking of historical or past events whose characteristics can no longer be ascertained, as in an example that Lenz gives from a Chilean newspaper:

- (13) *El Señor N. ha sido curado de las heridas que recibiera en un accidente automovilístico* 'Mr. M. has been treated for the wounds that he received in a car accident.'

The proposal that *-ra* indicatives are similar to other subjunctives in relative clauses in indicating non-specificity, irrespective of existence, provides a natural way to relate *-ra* indicatives to the etymological subjunctives in *-se* which appear in identical environments. In effect, imperfect subjunctives in *-se*, which are in free variation with *-ra* forms in practically all types of syntactic structures, have been used since the 19th century in relative clauses modifying definite descriptions that carry existential claims, exactly under the same conditions as *-ra* indicatives.¹⁷ For examples, see Spaulding 1931; Wright 1932, 1947; Kany 1945; Togeby 1953; Bejarano 1962. The following sentence is from Bejarano, who finds it in the writings of Miguel Delibes:

- (14) *Experimenté un malestar rígido y sofocante muy parecido al que me embargase (SUBJ) ante la tumba de Manolito García ...* 'I experienced an uneasiness, tense and suffocating, very similar to that which overcame me in front of Manolito García's grave ...'

Distributional criteria lead to the undesirable conclusion that subjunctives and indicatives in restrictive relative clauses are variants of each other, since they may commute freely while preserving the same degree of grammaticality. This does not mean, however, that aspects of distribution are excluded when the status of *-ra* indicatives is considered. There are characteristics in the sentences where *-ra* indicatives appear which point toward uncertainty. Consider the sentences provided by prescriptive grammarians, concerned exclusively with the temporal value of the *-ra* uses that they censure (glosses are mine):

- (15) a. *El acuerdo que ayer se tomara en la reunión ha sido ratificado* 'The agreement that was reached yesterday at the meeting has been ratified.' (Gili y Gaya, 179)

said': *Detén el coche—ya está frenado—Y sin embargo se mueve, dijera Galileo* 'Stop the car—it is already stopped—but it moves, as Galileo would have said.' Here someone is using an expression clearly attributable to someone else.

¹⁷ To claim that the *-se* forms in 14 are also neutralizations of past indicatives is not very economical from a functional point of view. This would mean that three sets of constructions—relatives with *-ra* indicatives, relatives with *-se* indicatives, and relatives with any indicative past tense—are all paraphrases of each other. I find the price of etymology very high in this case. Bolinger, who in many of his writings has been reluctant to accept the notion of free variation between subjunctives and indicatives, has also argued (1956) that *-ra* and *-se* forms are not semantically identical, and that *-se* is more remote and detached than *-ra*. What is important to my discussion is that *-se* forms are used in environments that associate existential claims with definite NP's.

I have discussed specificity with an implicit binary approach. However, if specificity is treated in terms of a scale, as Bolinger's discussion indicates, it would still be independent from existential claims and definiteness.

- b. *Se ha confirmado la noticia que este diario diera* 'The news that this newspaper reported has been confirmed.' (Alonso & Henríquez Ureña, 156)
- c. *La noticia que este diario diera tiene confirmación* 'The news that this newspaper reported is confirmed.' (Alonso, 52)
- d. *Se comenta el discurso que anoche pronunciara el presidente* 'The speech that the President gave last night is being discussed.' (Real Academia 1973:480)

The sentences provided by these different grammarians exhibit the constructions with the impersonal *se*, and with agentless passives which are typical of the types of structure in which *-ra* indicatives appear in newspapers, as in my earlier example (Rivero 1975:43, from *ABC*):

- (16) *Este trabajo enlaza con el que ya se publicara la semana anterior* 'This work connects with the one which was already published last week.'

In my view, the passive and impersonal constructions, together with the *-ra* form, emphasize the detachment and lack of commitment of a writer who is not a participant. The temporal value of *-ra* indicatives does not exhaust their semantic import.

Thus it seems undesirable for several reasons to maintain that *-ra* indicatives are equivalent to past-tense indicatives for the sake of etymology: (a) not only *-ra* but also *-se* forms appear in NP's associated with existential claims; (b) certain present and perfective subjunctives are also associated with existential claims; and (c) the semantic difference between indicatives and subjunctives is maintained not only in these existential environments, but also in non-existential ones.

4. CONCLUSIONS. In this paper I have re-affirmed my earlier conclusions on specificity, definiteness, and existence. Specificity relates to definite and non-definite NP's, regardless of the existential status of those NP's in the sentences in which they appear. However, I have relinquished the claim that referential vs. attributive uses of definite descriptions (Donnellan) are not pragmatic, and that they correlate with specific and non-specific NP's in Spanish. I have shown that the general conclusions of Rojas on definites and indefinites with restrictive relatives in the indicative are untenable, since definite and indefinite NP's with indicative restrictive clauses (my 'specifics') are not automatically associated with existential claims. I have shown that the environments that Rojas assigns to non-specific definites are too narrow; that some non-specific definite NP's (i.e., those marked syntactically with restrictives in the subjunctive) are associated with existential claims other than those exhibiting the controversial *-ra* indicatives; and that the claim that *-ra* forms associated with referring expressions are free variants of indicative past tenses is based on etymology, not on synchronic factors.

In brief, this paper indicates that the syntactic form of definite NP's with restrictive modifiers in the indicative (specifics) does not insure their automatic status as referring expressions—an uncontroversial claim that Rojas chose to attack. The paper also shows that definite NP's with subjunctive modifiers (non-specifics) may function as referring expressions, if in referential position, because specificity and existentiality are different dimensions of Spanish NP's.

REFERENCES

- ALONSO, A. 1935. El problema de la lengua en América. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe.
- ALONSO, A., and P. HENRÍQUEZ UREÑA. 1971. Gramática castellana. 26th edition. Losada: Buenos Aires.
- BEJARANO, V. 1962. Sobre las dos formas del imperfecto de subjuntivo y el empleo de la forma en *-se* con valor de indicativo. *Strenae* [Estudios dedicados al profesor García Blanco], 77-86. Salamanca.
- BELLO, A., and R. J. CUERVO. 1970. Gramática de la lengua castellana. 8th edition, ed. by Niceto Alcalá-Zamora y Torres. Buenos Aires: Sopena Argentina.
- BOLINGER, D. L. 1948. On the *-ra* form. *Hispania* 31.341-2.
- . 1956. Subjunctive *-ra* and *-se*: 'free variation'? *Hispania* 39.345-9.
- . 1974. One subjunctive or two? *Hispania* 57.462-71.
- CRIBADO DE VAL, M. 1948. Sintaxis del verbo español moderno. Madrid: CSIC.
- DAVIS, R. 1934. A note on the *-ra* indicative in Fifteenth Century Spain. *Philological Quarterly* 13.218-20.
- DONNELLAN, K. 1966. Reference and definite descriptions. *Philosophical Review* 75.281-304. [Reprinted in *Semantics*, ed. by D. Steinberg & L. A. Jakobovits, 100-114. Cambridge: University Press, 1971.]
- FISH, G. T. 1963. The neglected tenses: *hube hecho*, indicative *-ra*, *-re*. *Hispania* 46.138-42.
- GARCÍA DE DIEGO, V. 1951. Gramática histórica española. Madrid: Gredos.
- GILI Y GAYA, S. 1961. Curso superior de sintaxis española. 8th edition. Barcelona: Spes.
- HERNÁNDEZ ALONSO, C. 1973. Sobre el tiempo en el verbo español. *Revista Española de Lingüística* 3.143-79.
- KANY, C. 1945. American-Spanish syntax. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- LAMÍQUIZ, V. 1969. El sistema verbal del español actual: intento de estructuración. *Revista de la Universidad de Madrid* 18 (Homenaje a Menéndez Pidal, I), 241-65.
- . 1971. *Cantara* y *cantase*. *Revista de Filología Española* 54.1-11.
- LENZ, R. 1935. La oración y sus partes. 3rd edition. Madrid: Publicaciones de la Revista de Filología Española.
- LOPE BLANCH, J. M. 1953. Observaciones sobre la sintaxis del español hablado en México. México, D.F.: Instituto Hispano-Mexicano de Investigaciones Científicas.
- . 1958. Algunos usos de indicativos por subjuntivo en oraciones subordinadas. *Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica* 12.383-5.
- MALLO, J. 1947. El empleo de las formas del subjuntivo terminadas en *-ra* con significado de tiempos de indicativo. *Hispania* 30.484-7.
- . 1950. La discusión sobre el empleo de las formas verbales en *-ra* con función de tiempos pasados de indicativo. *Hispania* 33.126-39.
- MEIER, H. 1970. Sintaxis verbal española, peninsular e hispanoamericana. *Actas del III Congreso Internacional de Hispanistas*, 601-11. México.
- PAVEL, T. 1976. Noun-phrases: logical and linguistic properties. To appear in *Canadian Journal of Linguistics* 21.
- POTTIER, B. 1969. *Grammaire de l'espagnol*. Paris: P.U.F.
- . 1972. *Introduction à l'étude linguistique de l'espagnol*. Paris: Ediciones Hispano-americanas.
- REAL ACADEMIA ESPAÑOLA. 1931. Gramática de la lengua española. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe.
- . 1973. *Esbozo de una nueva gramática de la lengua española*. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe.
- RIVERO, M. L. 1975. Referential properties of Spanish noun phrases. *Lg.* 51.32-48.
- . 1976. A speech-act analysis of polite verb-forms in Romance. *Proceedings of the 6th Linguistic Symposium on Romance Languages* (to appear).
- ROJAS, N. 1977. Referentiality in Spanish noun phrases. *Lg.* 53.61-69.
- SALVÁ, V. 1852. Gramática de la lengua castellana. 9th edition. Valencia: José Ferrer de Orga.

- SEARLE, J. 1969. *Speech acts*. Cambridge: University Press.
- SPAULDING, R. K. 1931. *Syntax of the Spanish verb*. New York: Holt.
- STAUBACH, C. N. 1946. Current variations in the past indicative uses of the *-ra* form. *Hispania* 29.355-62.
- TOGEBY, K. 1953. *Mode, aspect et temps en espagnol*. Copenhagen: Munksgaard.
- VENDLER, Z. 1968. *Adjectives and nominalizations*. The Hague: Mouton.
- WRIGHT, L. O. 1926a. The subjunctive forms in *-ra* and *-se* in Spanish American speech. *Hispania* 9.170-73.
- . 1926b. Further remarks on *-ra* and *-se*. *Hispania* 9.201.
- . 1926c. The indicative forms in *-ra* in Spanish America. *Hispania* 9.288-93.
- . 1929. The indicative function of the *-ra* verb form. *Hispania* 12.259-78.
- . 1931. The disappearing Spanish verb form in *-re*. *Hispania* 14.107-14.
- . 1932. The *-ra* verb form in Spanish. (University of California publications in modern philology, 15:1.) Berkeley.
- . 1933a. The *-se* verb form in the apodosis. *Hispanic Review* 1.335-6.
- . 1933b. Grammar slips in the new Spanish constitution. *Modern Language Forum* 18.96-7.
- . 1947. The Spanish verb form with the greatest variety of functions. *Hispania* 30.488-95.

[Received 14 June 1976.]