

## Capturing meaningful generalizations at varying levels of resolution: The case of the family of “ser + muy de-PP” constructions in Spanish

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On the basis of 1,710 examples of Spanish *es muy de* (‘is very of’) from the Corpus del Español NOW, together with acceptability judgements from 10 native speakers of Castilian and South American Spanish, this paper provides a principled constructionist account (cf. Goldberg, 2006; Goldberg and Herbst, 2021) of the main characteristics of expressions like (1)-(4) below, with special focus on the acceptability differences of the nominal slot in the PP.

(1) *Él es muy de bares/del siglo XXI/de un equipo como la Juventus*

Lit. ‘He is very of bars, /of the century XVI/of a team like the Juventus.’

‘He is very into bars/very XXI century/a big supporter of a team like the Juventus.’

(2) *Él es muy de levantarse muy temprano*

Lit. ‘He is very of get.up.himself very early.’

‘He is very into getting up early.’

(3) *Mi marido es muy de que yo haga lo que me propongan*

Lit. ‘My husband is very of that I should.do the which me propose.’

‘My husband is very in favour of me doing whatever I’m asked to do.’

(4) (a) *Tu ayuda es muy de agradecer*

Lit. ‘Your help is very of thank.’

‘Your help is very appreciated.’

(b) *Él es muy de fiar*

Lit. ‘He is very of trust.’

‘He is very trustworthy.’

Examples (1)-(4) are best handled in terms of coercion between an intensifier (*muy* ‘very’) and non-stative/non-gradable elements, such as (i) bare nouns, definite and indefinite NPs (cf. (1)), (ii) active infinitival clauses (cf. (2)), (iii) finite *que*- (‘that’)-clauses (cf. (3)), and passive infinitival clauses (cf. (4)). These combinations qualify as stativizing constructions (Michaelis 2011) and, more specifically, as individual-level predicates (i.e. stative predicates denoting an essential, time-stable property) with a characterizing, evaluative interpretation (Fernández-Leborans and Sánchez López, 2015: 112). This explains why *ser* (‘be’) cannot alternate with *estar* (‘be.at’) in constructions of this kind (cf. (5)), and why PPs resisting a gradable, evaluative construal are infelicitous (cf. (6)(a)-(b)).

(5) *Él está muy #de bares/#de levantarse temprano*

Lit. ‘He is.at very of bars/very of get.up early.’

(6) (a) *La temperatura es de 30 grados*

‘The temperature is of 30 degrees.’

(b) *#La temperatura es muy de 30 grados*

Lit. ‘The temperature is very of 30 degrees.’

The specific constructional interpretations in (1)-(4) arise from contextual adjustments (Carston, 2015), including variables like (i) the (non-)human nature of the main clause subject, (ii) to extent to which the state of affairs is controllable by the main clause subject, and (iii) the actual or potential iterativity of the state of affairs. Thus, the coerced PPs may be contextually modulated as encoding a person's habits (cf. (1)-(2) or inclinations (cf. (3)), a potential modal deontic habituality (cf. (4)(a)), and/or an evaluative property of a person, entity or event (cf. (4)(b)).

In sum, the semantico-pragmatic hallmarks of the sub-constructions in (1)-(4) can be subsumed under a family of *ser muy de*-PP constructions, with this general meaning: '**X** (SOMEONE/SOMETHING) **(SUBJECT)** IS SUBJECTIVELY CONSTRUED AS HAVING **Y** (A HIGHLIGHTED CLASSIFICATORY PROPERTY (OF AN INDIVIDUAL/CLASS) **(ATTRIBUTE)**'.

**Keywords:** intensifier, coercion, gradability, subjectivity, pragmatic adjustment.

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