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## **SOME INFINITIVE STRUCTURES IN ASTURIAN**

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### **Abstract**

The aim of this paper is to provide a summary description of some grammar uses of the infinitive in Asturian, mainly in relative clauses and specifically in different patterns including *de* preposition: noun + *de* + infinitive (*el llibru de lleer* ‘The book that must be read’ o ‘the book that usually is read’) or article + *de* + infinitive (*Yera la fía la de faelo* ‘his daughter was who should do it/have done it’, ‘his daughter was usually who did it’).

Asturian differs from other romance languages by the possibility of personal infinitive (unlike French) with preverbal subject (unlike Spanish, Italian or Romanian). The widespread possibility of preverbal subjects within infinitive clauses make it close to Galician and Portuguese inflected infinitive, although in Asturian it does not correlates with the presence of person and number markers. On the other hand, Asturian shows a wider and more nuanced casuistic (from the semantic point of view) than, for instance, similar clauses in Spanish, with a complex gradation between noun and verbal infinitives and a more open range of syntactic structures.

Differences between Spanish and Galician-Portuguese have been explained as a result of the pre-eminence of tense flexion in Spanish towards agreement in its western neighbors. Given our evidences, the intermediate situation of Asturian could also be explained by the relatively weakness of tense and the higher strength of determinative, specificative values, typically related to agreement.

In general, both tense and preverbal placement of subjects strongly depend on the level of determinacy of infinitives, their subject or even their antecedents, if relative clauses. As for the first ones, through different syntactic structures, we can see how mainly the infinitives determined or controlled by articles license preverbal placement for their subjects. In a similar way, the common patterns of infinitive with a preceding subject usually occur with personal pronouns and human or high determined nouns. All of that leads to confirm the pre-eminence of agreement over tense.

Meanwhile, some idiomatic structures considered show how temporal meaning tends to be displaced in infinitive clauses by aspectual, modal or contrafactual senses. This gives an idea of the weakness of tense in infinitive clauses and, otherwise, correlates to a higher tendency to preverbal subjects, under the conditions mentioned above.

Finally, together with the semantics of verbs as a regulatory factor for the placement of subject, it can be seen how its position may strongly depend on certain kind of pragmatic assumptions of the discourse level.

### Keywords

infinitive, subject, Asturian, relative clauses, flexion

## ALGUNAS ESTRUCTURAS DE INFINITIVO EN ASTURIANO

### Resumen

El propósito de este artículo es aportar una somera descripción de algunos usos gramaticales del infinitivo en asturiano, fundamentalmente en oraciones de relativo y especialmente en construcciones con preposición *de*: nombre + *de*+ infinitivo (*el llibru de lleer* “el libro que hay que leer”, “el libro que normalmente se lee” o artículo + *de* + infinitivo (*yera la fía la de faelo* “era su hija quien lo debía hacer”, “era su hija quien normalmente lo hacía”).

El asturiano se diferencia de otras lenguas románicas por la posibilidad de un infinitivo personal (a diferencia del francés) con sujeto preverbal (frente a español, italiano o rumano). La posibilidad de sujetos preverbiales dentro de cláusulas de infinitivo lo aproximan al infinitivo flexionado de gallego y portugués, si bien en asturiano ello no se correlaciona con la presencia de morfemas de número y persona. Por otro lado, el asturiano muestra una casuística más amplia y matizada (desde el punto de vista semántico) que los patrones equivalentes en castellano, con una compleja gradación entre infinitivos verbales y nominales y un elenco más abierto de estructuras sintácticas. Las diferencias entre español gallego-portugués vienen siendo explicadas como efecto de la preeminencia de la flexión de tiempo en español frente a la de concordancia en los romances occidentales vecinos. Nuestros datos permitirían entender la posición intermedia del asturiano por la relativa debilidad de la flexión temporal y el mayor peso de los valores determinativos y especificativos típicamente asociados a la concordancia.

En general, tanto los valores temporales como la posición preverbal del sujeto dependen en gran medida del nivel de determinación de los infinitivos, de su sujeto o incluso de sus antecedentes en el caso de cláusulas de relativos. En cuanto a lo primero, a través de distintas estructuras sintácticas, puede comprobarse como son sobre todo los infinitivos determinados mediante artículo los que habilitan la posición preverbal del sujeto. De modo similar, en el patrón más habitual de infinitivo con sujeto precedente, este rol suelen desempeñarlo pronombres personales o bien nombres personales o altamente determinados. Todo ello llevaría a confirmar la preeminencia de la concordancia sobre el tiempo.

Asimismo, ciertas estructuras idiomáticas consideradas muestran como el significado temporal tiende a ser desplazado en las cláusulas relativas por sentidos aspectuales, modales o contrafactuales. Ello da una idea de la debilidad del tiempo en las cláusulas de relativo y, por otra parte, se corresponde con una fuerte tendencia a sujetos preverbales, bajo las condiciones anteriormente indicadas.

Finalmente, junto a la semántica del verbo como factor regulador de la posición del sujeto, puede verse como esta llega a depender fuertemente de cierto género de presuposiciones pragmáticas de nivel discursivo.

### **Palabras clave**

infinitivo, sujeto, asturiano, cláusulas de relativo, flexión

## **1. Introduction**

The aim of this paper is to describe, in a purely expository way, some idiosyncratic uses of the infinitive in Asturian. Asturian differs from other romance languages (Piera 1987; Ledgeway 1998; Mensching 2000; Scida 2004; Schulte 2007) by the possibility of personal infinitive (unlike French) with preverbal subject (unlike Spanish, Italian or Romanian). This make it close to Galician (García Gondar 1978; Longa 1994) and Portuguese inflected infinitive (Raposo 1987; Da Silva 2008), though in Asturian infinitive lacks of person and number inflection. In this work, we will focus on the rules of subject placement in this language with respect to nominal, verbal and relative infinitives. We will not refer to either interrogative or exclamative infinitives or infinitives as adjectival complements.

## **2. Nominal infinitives**

Nominal infinitives may be accompanied, like in Spanish (Ramírez 2003), by determiners (typically a definite article, *e/*) and different syntactic arguments. When article *e/* appears before infinitive, its arguments should usually occupy postverbal position, even those interpretable as subjects, either nominative (1) or prepositional

subject, inserted by preposition *de* (2):

- (1) *El lladrar los perros despertóme pela nueche*  
 The to bark the dogs woke up-me at-the night  
 “The barking of dogs woke me up at night”
- (2) *El lladrar de los perros despertóme pela nueche*  
 The to bark of the dogs woke up-me at-the night  
 “The barking of dogs woke me up at night”

Nonetheless, the lack of article allows preverbal placement for infinitive subjects in certain contexts, like in copular sentences:

- (3) *Aprobar ellos la propuesta va ser difícil (/Ellos aprobar ...)*  
 To approve they the proposal will be difficult (/they to approve ...)  
 “It will be difficult for them to approve the proposal” (cf. Portuguese *Eles aprovarem a proposta será difícil*)
- Ganar Francia a Brasil ye impensable (/Francia ganar...)*  
 To beat France to Brazil is inconceivable (/France to beat...)  
 “It’s inconceivable that France beats Brazil” (cf. French *La France battre le Brésil, ce serait inconcevable*)
- Sanar María foi una gran noticia (/María sanar...)*  
 To heal Mary was a great news (/María to heal ...)  
 “Mary’s healing was was great news”

Otherwise, the omission of the article-preceding infinitive seems general for a generic (4) not temporal sense (5), as expected of a nominal determiner:

- (4) *Lladrar los perros quita de dormir (/ \*Los perros lladrar ...)*  
 To bark the dogs prevents of to sleep (The dogs to bark ...)  
 “The barking of dogs prevents sleeping”
- Ruxir l’aire quita de dormir (\*L’aire ruxir ...)*  
 To roar the wind prevents of to sleep (The wind to resound ...)  
 “The roaring of wind prevents sleeping”

- (5) \**Lladrar los perros espertóme pela nueche* (/ \**los perros lladrar*)  
To bark the dogs woke up-me at the night (/The dogs to bark...)  
“The barking of dogs woke me up at night”

However, infinitives without article are also possible with causative or experimental verbs, even expressing a temporal value, always with postponed subject (as 8):

- (6) *Lladrar los perros alertónos de la presencia d’extraños* (\**los perros lladrar...*)  
To bark the dogs warned-us of the presence of strangers (\*The dogs to bark...)  
“Barking dogs warned us of the presence of strangers”  
*Ruxir l’aire desanimólos de salir* (\**L’aire ruxir...*)  
To roar the wind discouraged-them of to leave (\*The wind to resound ...)  
“Roaring wind discouraged them to leave”

Thus, main verb determines the position of the subject in the clause and provides tense to the infinitive, depending on either the presence of article or the semantic features involved. In this sense, subjects referred to human beings show a particular behavior. If common nouns, postverbal placement is anyways required:

- (7) *(El) colar la fía dionos una gran pena*/ \**(El) la fía colar ...*  
(The) to depart the daughter brought-us a great sorrow/ (The) the daughter ...  
“The departure of our daughter brought us great sorrow”  
*(El) cantar los neños alegrónos la casa*/ \**(El) los neños cantar ...*  
(The) to sing the children gladden-ed us the home/ \*(The) the children to sing  
“The singing of children gladden-ed our home”

However, with a higher degree of determinacy (when subject is expressed by proper names or pronouns), the article-preceding infinitive is precisely which allows both preverbal and postverbal position:

- (8) *Colar María dionos una gran pena*/ \**María colar ...*  
To depart Mary brought-us a great sorrow/ \*María to depart ...

“Mary’s departure brought us great sorrow”

*Trabayar tu pela nueche nun-y presta a la familia/ \*Tu trabayar ...*

To work you at-the night not-them pleases to the family/ \*You to work ...

“Your working at night doesn’t please your family”

- (9) *El colar María dionos una gran pena / El María colar ....*

The to depart Mary brought-us a great sorrow/ The Mary to depart ...

“Mary’s departure gave us great sorrow”

*El trabayar tu pela nueche nun-y presta a la familia/ El tu trabayar ...*

The to work you at-the night not-them pleases to the family/The you to work “Your working at night doesn’t please your family”

As seen in (7), (8), (9) the lack of article in this kind of subjects allows their anteposition to infinitive only when this is determined by *el*, while the co-occurrence of articles with both infinitive and subject avoids it. Even more, though the article of infinitive usually prevails over that of noun, in copular sentences (as seen in 3) even the article of the subject can take the control over the whole infinitive clause in case of preverbal placement:

- (10) *El lladrar los perros ye normal/ Los perros lladrar ye normal/ \*El los perros lladrar ye normal.*

“The barking of dogs is a normal thing”

*El cantar los niños ye señal d’alegría/ Los niños cantar ye señal d’alegría/\*El los niños cantar ye señal d’alegría.*

“The singing of children is a sign of joy”

Therefore, article works as an agreement marker between both of them, its presence being obligatory in this kind of structures, as well as prevalent over tense, in a similar way to infinitive of Galician and Portuguese (see also Raposo 1987: 95-97).

### 3. Verbal infinitives

Let’s consider now verbal infinitives whose subject is supposed to be that of the matrix sentence (11, 12). In Spanish, in such structures, infinitive usually changes into a

subordinated clause with finite verb when subjects differ (*me alegro de venir* “I’m happy to come (myself)” but *me alegro de que vengas* “I’m happy that you come”). Likewise, the so-called *influence verbs* keep on the same pattern in the first case (*se impuso a sí mismo dejar de fumar* “he forced himself to quit smoking”) but both options if different subjects (*impuso a sus hijos dejar de fumar/que dejasen de fumar* “he forced his sons to quit smoking”).

As for Asturian, infinitive is possible even when subjects differ:

- (11) *Alégrome de venir (yo)/ Alégrome de venir tu*  
Rejoice me of to come (I)/ Rejoice me of to come you  
“I’m happy to come (myself)/ “I’m happy that you come”  
*Confórmome con trabayar (yo)/ Confórmome con trabayar ellos*  
Settle for me with to work (I) / settle for me with to work they  
“I settle for working (myself)/ “I settle for them to work”

And also:

- (12) *Prometí venir (yo)/ Prometí venir los güelos*  
Promised to come (I)/ promise to come the grandfathers  
“I promised to come (myself)/ “I promised grandparents would come”  
*Asegúrome sabelo (yo)/ Asegúrome sabelo elles*  
make sure-me to know-it (I)/ Make sure-me to know-it they  
“I’d make sure to know it (myself)/ “I’d make sure that they know it”

Anyways, subordinate clauses are also a common option for the last case (*alégrome de que vengas tu, confórmome con que trabayen ellos* [11], *prometí que los güelos veníen, asegúrome qu’elles lo saben, paezme que vosotros tenéis razón* [12]).

Note that in sentences with a prepositional main verb (11) only the first person pronoun *yo* may optionally precede the infinitive.

- (13) *Alégrome de yo venir / \*Alégrome de tu venir*  
“I’m happy to come (myself)/ “I’m happy that you come”

*Confórmome con yo trabayar / \*Confórmome con ellos trabayar*

“I settle for working (myself)/ “I settle that they work”

In such cases, preverbal position implies identity between infinitive subject and addresser. Meanwhile, with non-prepositional verbs, any kind of subject can be placed before infinitive, on the condition of being the same for both sentence and clause:

(14) *Yo prometí venir/ Prometí yo venir*

“I promised to come (myself)”

*Yo prometí venir los güelos/ \*Prometí yo venir los güelos*

“I promised grandparents would come”

*Tu prometisti venir/ Prometisti tu venir*

“You promised to come (yourself)”

*Tu prometisti venir la fía/ \*Prometisti tu venir la fía*

“You promised that your daughter would come”.

An alternative model can be found in other contexts where infinitive is optionally interpretable as a noun complement. Like in Spanish, if subjects differ, subordinates clauses with finite verb are required:

(15) *Tengo mieu de viaxar (yo)/ de qu’ ella viaxe*

Have fear of to travel (I)/ of that she travel

“I’m afraid of travelling”/ “I’m afraid that she will travel”

*Ye culpable de perdese (él) /de que se perdieren los niños*

Is guilty of to loss-refl. (he)/of that refl-lost the children

“He is guilty of having get lost” (himself)/“he is guilty of children having get lost”

However, in Asturian, infinitive clauses are also possible even when subjects differ, requiring some discourse opening to be acceptable:

(16) *Tengo mieu de viaxar ella (y nun volver)*

Have fear of to travel she (and not to come back)

“I’m afraid that she will travel (and won’t come back)”



*Ye culpable de perdesse los neños (y mancasse)*  
Is guilty of to loss the children (and hurt)  
“He is guilty of children having get lost (and hurt)”

Thus, while in (11) and (13) the subject of infinitive is controlled by addresser, and in (12) and (14) depends on the coincidence between sentence and clause, in (15-16) its presence and position requires non-identity of subjects between sentence and clause, as well as, at least, the expectative of a second consecutive infinitive, not necessarily specified, with the same subject. In any case, infinitive clause is controlled from the discourse level.

Noteworthy is that the last examples correspond to utterances *oriented* either to causes and experimentants or to consequences, and that they can be interpreted in a modal way. The same kind of oriented infinitive can be found in some imperative sentences, usually periphrasis with movement verbs, in which an original preposition can be omitted: *ven llavate yo* (“come here so that I’ll wash you”), *traí’l platu fregalu* (“bring me the plate so that I can wash it”), *baxa dátelu* (“come down and I’ll give it to you”). The anteposition of subjects is also general in final contexts, similarly to Galician-Portuguese inflected infinitive and even to some varieties of Spanish (NGLE 501-502; Suñer 1986; Morales 1989). Unlike Spanish standard, this kind of infinitives license a different subject from that of matrix sentence, providing evidences like these:

- (17) *Hai que mercar plátanos pa los neños merendar/ pa merendar los neños*  
“We must buy bananas for children to snack on”  
*Truxeron la ferramienta pa yo trabayar/ pa trabayar yo*  
“They provided the tools for me to work”

In these structures we can note a progressive assimilation of modal, probabilistic sense in the infinitive clause at the expense of strictly temporal meaning. The weakening it implies for tense in the infinitive clause could explain the variable position of subject. Actually, in strictly temporal constructions (akin to Spanish *antes*

*de marchar Ana, después de venir Juan, al llegar el momento, etc.*), Asturian offers a complex phenomenology concerning the possible placement of subject. In general, it seems to be governed by the same rules commented above (regarding proper nouns and pronouns) giving rise to different sense nuances. Consider these examples:

- (18) *Antes de colar Ana/ Antes d'Ana colar (Antes d'acabar la seronda/ \*Antes de la seronda acabar)*

"Before Anne leaves" ("Before autumn ends")

*Depués de venir Xuan/ Depués de Xuan venir (Depués de venir l'iviernu/\*Depués de l'iviernu venir)*

"After John came" ("After Winter came")

*Al yo llegar/ Al llegar yo (Al llegar el momentu/ \*Al el momentu llegar)*

"When I came" ("When the moment arrived")

But the more relevant thing here is the expression of different senses depending on the subject placement. While its postposition typically indicates the temporal frame in which the main event develops, preverbal location tends to suggest some contrafactual meaning in the infinitive clause with regard to matrix sentence, even in an interpellative way:

- (19) *Antes de trabayar Ana, la familia vivía mal*

Before of to work Anne, the family lived badly

"Before Anne began working, her family lived badly"

*Antes d'Ana trabayar, trabayo yo*

Before of Anne to work, work I

"I prefer to work myself rather than Anne"

- (20) *Depués de venir Xuan, les coses meyoraron*

After of to come John, the things improved

"After John's coming, things improved"

*Depués de Xuan venir con tanto trabayu, nun-y dais nin les gracias*

After of John to come with great work, not him give even the thanks

"Although John came with great effort, you don't even thank him"

- (21) *Al llegar yo, la xente taba callao*  
At the to arrive I, the people was quiet  
'When I arrived, people was quiet'  
*Al yo llegar, la xente calló*  
At the I to arrive, the people shut up  
"Upon my arrival, people shut up""

Note that the stronger temporal meaning, the higher probability for postverbal placements; and the more weakness of tense in favor of modal sense, the higher tendency to preverbal. This seems to be coherent with the higher degree of discursive opening shown in general by this kind of infinitive clauses with respect to their correlatives with finite verb.

In this general frame, we are to highlight the so-called relative infinitives. We will consider two different kinds of relative infinitive in Asturian: the one inserted by the typical relative pronouns and a second one that consists on some idiomatic patterns in which infinitives are introduced by the preposition *de* o *article + de*.

#### **4. *Quien* + infinitive**

In Spanish, relative infinitive clauses are only possible in oblique contexts, the relative depending on the presence of a preposition (*alguien con quien hablar* "somebody to talk with") or if its antecedent does not work as subject of the infinitive (*varios libros que leer* "some books to read"). Moreover, they usually occur in patterns with no antecedent (*no hay con quien hablar* "there's nobody to talk with") or when antecedent has an indefinite or generic sense (*nada que hacer* "nothing to do") (NGLE, 507).

Asturian differentialism concerns personal relative pronoun *quien* (uninflected for number), for it can refer to the infinitive subject in non-prepositional contexts:

- (22) *Nun hubo quien la querer / Nun hubo quien la quixera*

Not was who her to love/ Not was who her loved

“There was nobody to love her”

*Tien bien quien lu ayudar / Tien bien quien lu ayude*

He has well who him help/ He has well who him helps

“There’s a lot of people to help him”

Copulative sentences or with a generic existential sense (*¿Nun vendrá quién nos ayudar?*, “Would anybody come to help us?”) refuse any explicit antecedent nearly always, as it also happens in other relative clauses with *quien* and finite verb in Asturian (GLLA 1998: 227-228). On the other hand, if explicit antecedent, the impersonal relative pronoun *que* and a finite verb are required:

- (23) *Nun hubo persona que la quixera/\*Nun hubo persona quien la querer/\*Nun hubo persona quien la quixera*

“There was no person who loved her”

*Tien bien parientes que lu ayuden/\*Tien bien parientes quien lu ayudar/ \*Tien bien parientes quien lu ayuden*

“He’s got many relatives who’d help him”

However, specified antecedent is possible when acting as the object of the infinitive:

- (24) *Nun hubo persona a quien querer*

Not was person to who to love

“There was no person she might/should love”

*Tien parientes a quien ayudar*

Has relatives to who to help

“He’s got relatives he might/should help’

In such cases, infinitive allows human subjects if expressed by a proper noun or a pronoun (see above), the subject agreeing or differing from that of the matrix sentence. The placement of this subject is free:

- (25) *Xuan tien parientes a quien ayudar él/ Xuan tien parientes a quien él ayudar*  
“John has got relatives to whom he might/should help”  
*Xuan tien parientes a quien ayudar yo/ Xuan tien parientes a quien yo ayudar.*  
“John has got relatives I might/should help”

The relative clause can here be inserted by impersonal relative pronoun *que* (cf. *Xuan tien parientes a los qu'él ayudar*). Nevertheless, a non-human subject does not seem viable in the infinitive clause (*\*María tien parientes a quien lladrar los perros* “Mary has got relatives to whom dogs might/should bark”). Moreover, in (25) it's visible some modal sense (obligatory or probabilistic), not obvious when relative infinitives refer to a subject antecedent, with a rather factual sense (see 22-23, where it is assumed that “in fact, nobody loves her” or “indeed, he has relatives that help him”).

Therefore, we are facing again grammatical constructions akin to the inflected infinitive in Galician and Portuguese regarding the possibility of a preverbal subject. In any case, the restriction of this pattern to human subjects (and to relative pronoun *quien*) is remarkable in line with the above mentioned cases, as well as the emergence of modal senses in spite of temporal, as seen in previous chapters. Actually, some examples considered there (see 16), though taken from verbal phrases, were also interpretable as possible patterns of relative infinitive with nominal antecedent (*mieu de viaxar*). Precisely, a consequence of the grammatical relevance of relative infinitives in Asturian (and more specifically of their constructions with subject) will be the development of some other idiomatic patterns of relative, apart from the typically articulated by *quien, que*, etc.

## **5. Non-human noun + preposition *de* + infinitive**

Relative patterns *noun + preposition + infinitive* are common either in Asturian and Spanish. Though prepositions may vary, we are to circumscribe this analysis to

cases with *de*. Note, first of all, that these patterns represent the inverse, complementary model to the type of noun infinitive exemplified in (2) (*infinitive + de + noun*), above analyzed.

In such patterns, the different behavior between human and non-human antecedent should be noted again. As for the non-human nouns, in Spanish, phrases like *caña de pescar* (“fishing rod”), *hora de dormir* (“time to sleep”), etc. usually mean typified concepts, implying a stable semantic link between both elements, so that they may be fixed as mere noun phrases without any eventive meaning. But, once again, the same construction happens to be more versatile in Asturian, since it can be referred to a circumstantial link between noun and infinitive, eliciting anyway some modal, obligatory or probabilistic meaning (like 25) or at least some intentional sense:

- (26) *El coche de pintar metiéronlu dientro'l garaxe*  
 The car of to paint have put-it inside the garage  
 “They moved the car to be painted into the garage”

On the other hand, the semantic relationship between noun and infinitive is restricted in Spanish to the performative frame of the event meant by verb (*hora de dormir*) or else to instrumental, causative factors (*caña de pescar*). Anyway, a verb-object relationship is never specified. Nevertheless, in Asturian, antecedents can work as the object of infinitive (in 26 is the car that must be painted), something especially visible in some redundant semantic patterns:

- (27) *El llibru de lleer tiéneslu enriba la mesa*  
 The book of to read have-you-it on the table  
 “The book you must read is on the table”  
*El vino de beber ye lo d'esa botella*  
 The wine of to drink is it of that bottle  
 “The wine we can/must drink is that in that bottle”

Here, further the modal sense suggested in translation (cf. English *a book to read*), there is an added degree of specification (a book or a class of wine are opposed

to other possible). Thus, this construction adds both modal and specificative meaning, not defined by a generic quality like other kind of relatives (cf. *Por fin topé un llibru que lleer* “at last I’ve found a suitable book for me to read”) but through certain performative conditions.

Note the parallelism between this class of prepositional relative infinitives and the corresponding with *quien*, regarding either their possibility of both subject and object antecedent, their elicited modal sense or the different degrees of referential determinacy.

Moreover, these infinitive clauses license specified subject. When a circumstantial, instrumental or causative relationship between noun and infinitive is assumed, the position of subject is optional, avoiding the lexicalization of the infinitive phrase:

- (28) *La caña de (yo) pescar (yo)/ La mio caña de pescar*  
The rod of (I) to fish (I)/ The my fishing rod  
“The rod I usually/must fish with” / “My fishing rod”  
*La ropa de (tu) vestir (tu) / La to ropa de vestir*  
The wear of (you) to wear (you)/ The your clothes formal wear  
“The clothes you can/must wear” / “Your formal clothes”.

Usually, the intercalated item is a pronoun or, less frequently, a more complex subject, human anyway:

- (29) *La caña de (mio padre) pescar (mio padre) / La caña de pescar de mio padre*  
“The rod my father usually (/must) fishes with” / “My father’s fishing rod”  
*El perru de(l mio hermanu) cazar (el mio hermanu)/ El perru de caza del mio hermanu*  
“The dog my brother usually (/must) hunts with” / “My brother’s hunting dog”

Note that, in *generic* clauses with *que*, specified subjects seem to be more clearly restricted to postverbal position:

- (30) *Por fin alcontré un llibru que lleer yo/ \*que yo lleer*  
 At last found a book that to read I/\*That I to read  
 “At last I’ve found a book for me to read”

Hence, the anteposition of subject in the former examples is correlated to a maximum degree of performative specification. If noun acts as the object of infinitive, its syntactic behavior does not seem substantially different:

- (31) *El coche de (yo) pintar (yo)*  
 “The car I must/can Paint”  
*El llibru de (tu) lleer (tu)*  
 “The book you must/can read”  
*El vino de (nosotros) beber (nosotros)*  
 “The wine we must/can drink”

However, in (31) modal sense is highly remarked. Then, it may be seen a gradation between relative infinitives with *que* (30), those with *de* and instrumental or causative antecedent (28-29) and relative infinitives with their object as antecedent (31). If the first ones (restricted to object position with respect to matrix verb) express a generic, qualitative sense (*un llibru que lleer yo* “a suitable book for me to read”), clauses with either instrumental or causative antecedents oscillate between both aspectual and modal values (*la caña de yo pescar* “the rod with which I usually fish”, “with which I may/must fish”). Meanwhile, in clauses with object as antecedent, modal sense (obligative or intentional) is clearly prevalent, as well as non-existent or very weak the purely aspectual: *el llibru de tu lleer* “the book you must read” or “you are allowed to read”.

By comparing this phenomenology with the evidences considered in previous chapters, we can see that relative structures *de + infinitive* are complementary to the typical ones by *que/quien + infinitive*, the full activation of verbal values (temporal, aspectual and modal) being made in a similar way to personal relative *quien*.



## 6. Human noun + *de* + infinitive

There are in Spanish some lexicalized constructions *human noun + de + infinitive* (*una persona de trabajar, un hombre de comer, una mujer de hablar claro*, etc.) in which both quantitative and aspectual values are involved (“a person who usually works hard”, “a man who usually eat much”, “a woman who usually speaks out”). In them, noun acts systematically as the subject of the infinitive. These patterns follow some syntactic restrictions: they seem to need concise, generic references ([*un*] *hombre de comer, [una] mujer de hablar claro*, but #*el hombre de comer, #la mujer de hablar claro*) and often occur in attributive sentences (*Manuel es [un] hombre de comer; María parece [una] mujer de hablar claro*).

The same pattern does not offer these class of restrictions in Asturian and, moreover, it can mean generic, quantitative and aspectual senses (32) as well as authentic temporalized events (33):

- (32) *L' home de trabayar gana más que'l que ye folgazán*  
The man of to work earn more than the that is lazy  
“Hardworking men (usually), earn more than the lazy ones”
- (33) *Los homes de trabayar más duro tuvieron depués más vacaciones*  
The men of to work more hard had then more holidays  
“The men who worked harder, had more holidays afterwards”
- La muyer de falar claro convidólos depués a unes copes*  
The woman of to speak clearly invited-them then to some cups  
“That woman who had spoken out, invited them for a drink later”
- El mozu de traenos en coche yera primu de Xuan*  
The boy of to bring-us in car was cousin of John  
“That boy who brought us by car was John’s cousin”

As in 33, *human noun + de + infinitive* has a strongly specificative sense (“precisely these men, that woman or that boy”), in such a way that it is especially common without any explicit antecedent, this one being assumed (see next chapter). Moreover, the pre-eminence of this specificative value explains why equational

sentences seem to be the normal context for these structures:

- (34) *Ye'l mio primu 'l de tar cansáu*  
 Is the my cousin the of to be tired  
 "It's really my cousin who's tired"  
*Ye María la de ser trabajadora*  
 Is Mary the of to be hardworking  
 "It's precisely Mary who is hardworking"  
*Foi Xuan el d' aparcar el coche*  
 Was John the of to park the car  
 "It was John who actually parked the car"

On the other hand, human antecedent rejects acting as the object of the infinitive, the alternative being a *que* clause with a finite verb, as proof of complementarity between both constructions:

- (35) *L'home que yo contraté trabajó duro* / \**L'home de contratar yo ...*  
 "The man I hired worked hard"  
*La muyer que tu conocías falaba claro* / \**La muyer de conocer tu ...*  
 "The woman you knew spoke out"

However, possible counterexamples can be found, reflecting, together with high determination (36), a singular marking of modal, intentional values (37) in an interpellative way generated in the discourse level:

- (36) *El fontaneru de recomendate yo trabajó bien*  
 "(Consider that) The plumber I've recommended you worked fine (precisely that one)"  
 (37) *El fontaneru de recomendate yo tien que ser seriu*  
 "(Consider that) A plumber must be very fine, so that I could recommend him to you".

Then, this kind of human antecedents acting as infinitive objects behave in fact like inanimate nouns, the only difference being their apparent difficulty in setting the subject before the infinitive in the last case, unless lack of antecedent (see next section):

- (38) \**El fontaneru de yo recomendate tien que ser seriu*  
\**El fontaneru de yo recomendate trabajó bien*

## **7. Article + de + infinitive as explicative relative**

The strongly specificative sense of this class of sentences also explains the high frequency of this relative construction with assumed, tacit antecedent, namely with sequences *article + de + infinitive* (see 33):

- (39) *El de traenos en coche yera Xicu*  
The of to bring-us in car was Xicu  
“It was Xicu who brought/ should bring us by car”  
*La de falar claro ye la moza de Manuel*  
The of to speak clearly is the girl of Manuel  
“It’s Manuel’s girl who speaks/must speak out”

In such cases, antecedent as the object of the infinitive is common and even may condition the presence and position of subjects. Sometimes, depending on verbal semantics, a specified subject is required to remove any ambiguity concerning both argument roles and modal or tense values involved:

- (40) a. *El d’ avisar llegó tarde*  
“That one who should have warned arrived late”  
*El de yo avisar llegó tarde*  
“That one to whom I warned (/should have warned) arrived late”  
b. *La de contratar ye María*  
“It’s Mary the person to be hired” or “who must hire people”  
*La de contratar la CIA ye María*  
“It’s Mary who was (/should be) hired by the CIA”

Anyways, tacit objects as antecedents license preverbal position of subject in the infinitive clause (unlike 38):

(41) *El de yo recomendate trabajó bien* (see 36)

*El de yo recomendate tien que ser seriu* (see 37)

Like in previous examples, the presence and placement of the infinitive subject as well as tense and modal values involved in relative clause seem to be controlled in the discourse level.

On the other hand, *article + de + infinitive* often works as an explicative relative clause, to some extent autonomous with respect to the matrix sentence:

(42) *Xicu, el de traenos en coche, ye sobrín de Roberto*

“Xicu, the one who brought (/usually bring) us by car, is Robert’s nephew”

*María, la de convidanos a cenar, quier casase col xefe*

“Mary, the one who invited (/usually invites) us to dinner, wants to marry her boss”

*Tu, el de tanto quexate, nun trabayes tanto como dices*

“You, the one who complains so much (/although you complain), don’t work as hard as you say”

The most remarkable thing about these constructions is their clearly temporal-aspectual interpretation, lacking of an obvious modal sense. Moreover, their grammaticality fully depends either on the degree of specification of the antecedent or on the meaning of infinitive, regardless of semantics of noun and main verb or its syntactic role with respect to matrix sentence. Moreover, together with proper names and personal pronouns (as seen in 42), this structure allows every highly determined noun as its antecedent, either explicitly (by means of demonstratives or possessives) or by a mere contextual assumption:

(43) *Esa rapaza, la d’avisar al médicu, yera estranxera*

“That girl, the one who warned the doctor, was a foreigner”

*Esos perros, los de lladRAR tanto, llevaben díes ensin comer*

“Those dogs, the ones barking so much, had not eaten in days”

*Aquel coche, el de turriar contra l’árbol, nun pasara la revisión*

“That car, the one that crashed against the tree, had failed the review”

Under similar conditions, antecedents also may work as objects of the infinitive, the insertion of a specified subject being then possible:

- (44) *Esi fontaneru, el de (yo) recomendate (yo), saliôte baratu*  
“This plumber, the one I recommended you, worked cheaply”  
*Aquel perru, el de (Xuan) amarrar (Xuan) al árbol, mordía los vecinos*  
“That dog, the one John tied to the tree, used to bite the neighbors”

In these cases, subjects can be freely placed if proper names or pronouns (44), whereas other nouns are obligatorily postverbal:

- (45) *Esi fontaneru, el de recomendate los vecinos, saliôte baratu* /\**el de los vecinos recomendate.*  
“That plumber, the one the neighbors recommended you, worked cheaply”  
*Aquel perru, el d’amarrar los niños, mordía a los vecinos* /\**el de los niños amarrar*  
“That dog, the one the children tied, used to bite the neighbors”

The semantics of infinitive is what determines the grammatical suitability of these patterns. Unlike transitive verbs, infinitives of unaccusatives seem to need temporal delimitation:

- (46) *Nel, el de marchar ceo, nun llegó a conocelu* (\**Nel, el de marchar Ø, nun llegó a conocelu*)  
“Nel, the one who left early, didn’t get to meet him”

Modal verbs also require concurrence of either an object or o a second infinitive:

- (47) *Xuan, el de querer marchar (/la moto), mercó un coche* /\**Xuan, el de querer Ø, mercó un coche*  
“John, the one who wanted to leave (/the motorbike), has bought a car”

Finally, in case of copulas or passive patterns, these relative clauses are only

viable if a quantifier is added (or pragmatically assumed), the infinitive construction implying then intentional sense and even contrafactual meaning:

(48) *Xuan, el de ser tan trabayador, pidió'l retiru (/ \*el de ser Ø trabayador)*

“John, the one supposed to be so hardworking, requested retirement”

*María, la de tar tan cansada, siguió de folixa tola nueche / \*la de tar Ø cansada*

“Mary, the one supposed to feel so tired, kept on partying all night”

## 8. Conclusion

Asturian shows a complex gradation between noun and verbal infinitives, with a more open range of cases than in Spanish (Fernández Lagunilla 1987; De Miguel 1995; Rigau 1995; Hernanz 1999; Ortega-Santos 2003; Martínez Conesa 2011; Paz 2013) and, in general, relatively close to Galician and Portuguese. This is reflected in the widespread possibility of preverbal subjects within infinitive clauses, although it does not correlate with the presence of person and number markers in the infinitive, as the so-called *inflected infinitive* idiosyncratic of the two western ibero-romance languages.

Differences between Spanish and Galician-Portuguese (see also recent comparative studies by Gawelko 2005; Vanderschueren 2013) have been explained as a result of the pre-eminence of tense flexion in Spanish towards agreement in its western neighbors. Given our evidences, the intermediate situation of Asturian could also be explained by the relatively weakness of tense and the higher strength of determinative, specificative values, typically related to agreement.

In general, both tense and preverbal placement of subjects strongly depend on the level of determinacy of infinitives, their subject or even their antecedents, if relative clauses. As for the first ones, through different syntactic structures, we have seen how mainly the infinitives determined or controlled by articles allow preverbal placement for their subjects. In a similar way, the common patterns of infinitive with a preceding subject usually occur with personal pronouns and human or highly determined nouns. All of that leads us to confirm the pre-eminence of agreement over tense.

Meanwhile, some considered idiomatic structures show how temporal meaning tends to be displaced in infinitive clauses by aspectual, modal or contrafactual senses. This gives an idea of the weakness of tense in infinitive clauses and, otherwise, correlates to a higher tendency to preverbal subjects, under the above mentioned conditions.

Finally, together with the semantics of verbs as a regulatory factor for the placement of subject, we have seen how its position may strongly depend on certain kind of pragmatic assumptions of the discourse level.

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