

snippets

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The question of whether meteorological verbs have an external argument corresponding to a spatio-temporal argument has been around for some time, both in traditional grammars (Bello 1847: §773) and in early formal approaches (see Bolinger 1977, Ruwet 1991 for discussion); it has received some renewed attention from the locative subject hypothesis (Fernández-Soriano 1999). While Fernández Soriano has shown that verbs like *llover* ‘rain’ have a locative subject, the question remains whether that locative starts as an argument of the verb or not. Here we will show that the locative subject is an argument in the class of (1a) *–amanecer* ‘dawn’, *atardecer* ‘dusk’, *anocheecer* ‘nightfall’– but not in (1b) *–llover* ‘rain’, *nevar* ‘snow’–, where *aquí* ‘here’ is directly merged in a subject position.

- (1) a. Aquí amanece tarde.
 here dawns late ‘Here, the dawn is late’
 b. Aquí llueve mucho.
 here rains a lot ‘Here, it rains a lot’

Consider the possibility of having a depictive adjective in the predicate. This is possible with the *amanecer*-class, but not with the *llover*-class; this suggests that only the first class has a verb-internal constituent able to license the adjective’s agreement.

- (2) a. ...este raro domingo que amaneció soleado y atardeció nublado
 this weird Sunday that dawned sunny and got dark cloudy
 (www.nosolosurf.com/2010/04/half-moon.html)
 b. *Llovió nublado.
 it.rained cloudy

The *amanecer*-class can take DPs with spatial or temporal meaning. The *llover*-class does not.

- (3) a. El 5 de junio anocheció lluvioso y gris.
 the 5th of June nightfalled rainy and grey
 ‘At nightfall the 5th of June, it was rainy and grey’
 b. *El día llovió.
 the day rained

The presence of these DPs provides further evidence that *nublado* in (2) is an adjective: they control agreement.

- (4) a. Los días amanecían siempre nublado-s.
 the days dawned always cloudy-pl
 b. La mañana amaneció nublado-a.
 the morning dawned cloudy-fem

Only the *amanecer*-class allows preverbal definite DP subjects. The *llover*-class accepts a noun phrase provided it is non-definite, post-verbal and denotes a theme –the entity that falls from the sky– (5).

- (5) a. Llueven piedras.
rain.3pl stones ‘It rains stones’
b. Nievan fractales.
snow.3pl fractals
(<http://cientificamentecorrecto.wordpress.com/2012/02/02/nievan-fractales/>)
c. *Las piedras llueven.
the stones rain

The *amanecer*-class allows for a use as a light verb, with a personal subject, and a compulsory depictive where the verb only places the time of the day where the subject had some state (6). Personal subjects, even in a metaphorical reading, are impossible with the *llover*-class (7).

- (6) a. Juan amaneció enfermo.
Juan dawned sick
‘At dawn, Juan was sick’
b. Atardecí sin cosechar esperanza.
I.dusked without gathering hope
‘At dusk, I had got no hope’
(http://mispoesias.com/ver_poesia.phtml?cod=347340)
(7) *Juan llovió sangre.
Juan rained blood
Intended: ‘Juan bleed as if it rained blood’

The contrasts above can be understood if only the *amanecer*-class has an external argument position –occupied by a spatio-temporal argument in their strong use– which is also available in the light verb use.

References

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