

# Andean Ecuadorian Spanish gerund complexes: a case of grammatical change in language contact environments

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## Introduction

In this paper we analyse several gerund structures found in the Spanish spoken in the Ecuadorian Highlands. These verbal complexes involve an inflected verb (often a verb of movement) and a gerund which carries the main lexical meaning, and have been usually approached by claiming they were borrowed from Ecuadorian Quechua, the other main language spoken in the area. These gerund complexes convey an aspectual value that seems to diverge from the prototypical aspectual reading of gerunds in Peninsular Spanish. Thus, in (1a) *vendiendo* does not express the simultaneous meaning the gerund encodes in Peninsular Spanish (1b).

- (1) a. *Vendiendo papas vengo de mercado* Haboud (2005: 26)  
Lit.: Selling potatoes I come from market  
Intended: “I come from the market after having sold potatoes.”  
b. *Saliendo del mercado me encontré a Pepe*  
Lit.: Leaving of-the market CL met to Pepe  
“I met Pepe, when I was leaving the market”

## 1. The analysis

We claim that these gerund structures fall into different patterns depending on the degree of grammaticalisation of the inflected part of the verbal complex. While many cases present a high degree of grammaticalisation and can be analysed as periphrases in a monoclausal structure (2), others can be shown to be biclausal and in these cases, as mentioned above, gerunds encode an aspectual value of anteriority (3). Finally, a third group of complexes displays hybrid behaviour (4).

- (2) *Entonces la mamá le dio haciendo el fiambre* Aguiló (1992: 243)  
Lit.: Then the mother gave him making the sandwich  
Intended: “At that time, his mother prepared a sandwich for him”  
(3) *Vendiendo papas vengo de mercado* [= (1)]  
Lit.: Selling potatoes I come from market  
Intended: “I come from the market after having sold potatoes.”  
(4) *Siempre salgo cocinando el almuerzo* Haboud (2005: 17)  
Lit.: I always go-out cooking the lunch  
Intended: “I go out after cooking lunch”

A closer examination of the two varieties of Spanish under study (i.e., Peninsular Spanish and Andean Ecuadorian Spanish) supports our claim of different patterns in terms of monoclausal or biclausal structures. In order to illustrate our analysis, we apply several syntactic tests (subject selection, clitic climbing and topicalisation, among

others). Relevant evidence in this respect comes from two surveys with native speakers of Andean Ecuadorian Spanish.

Additionally, our approach focuses on the functional properties of gerunds, which allows us to contrast the intervening functional categories of the languages in contact in Andean Ecuador (i.e., Spanish and Quechua). Consequently, we pose that the grammatical change undergone in Andean Ecuadorian Spanish can be related to the convergence of functional properties – see also Sánchez (2003), and Muysken (2005, 2008).

### 3. Results and conclusions

Our results show significant parallelisms between Andean Ecuadorian and Peninsular Spanish, which in turn allows us to claim that these structures are not just the result of borrowing from Quechua (as traditionally claimed), but their appearance can be traced to the properties of gerunds in Spanish. Even though it is indisputable that contact with Quechua is the trigger for the promotion of the perfective value of gerunds in Andean Ecuadorian Spanish, textual corpora (such as CORDE, CORDIAM, etc.) provide diachronic evidence of gerunds that convey anteriority. Accordingly, the genesis of these structures is twofold. These verbal complexes are possible because linguistic contact has contributed to the preservation of the anteriority value of gerunds in Spanish. This fact, together with the easiness to grammaticalize shown by verbs of movement, has increased their productivity in this variety of Spanish.

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#### **Databases and sources of data**

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