Transformational grammar as an aid in teaching Spanish grammar for ALM Spanish level two

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TRANSFORMATIONAL GRAMMAR

AS AN AID IN TEACHING SPANISH GRAMMAR

FOR ALM SPANISH LEVEL TWO

A Thesis

Presented to

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Master of Arts in Spanish

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PREFACE

This study has been prepared as a teacher's guide in the use of transformational grammar to teach a few grammatical structures in ALM Spanish Level Two. It is intended to aid the Spanish teacher in analyzing specific grammar points within the grammar section of the text. In essence, the present study has been prepared for the Spanish teacher who has a limited knowledge of linguistics or transformational grammar.

There seems to be a need at the high school level for a precise system of rules which provides grammatical information for the Spanish examples found in ALM Spanish Level Two. The precise system of rules provided by transformational grammar bases its analysis on clarity and a systematic presentation. Through this systematic analysis, the teacher can give the student specific rules which explain the linguistic intuition of the native speaker. The student, instead of merely being told "This is the way it is in Spanish," can be told why the Spanish speaker uses certain constructions.

Transformational grammar can be utilized effectively by the teacher to deepen the grammar presentation of ALM Spanish Level Two. This guide has been an attempt to provide a partial analysis of a few sample sentences from the text.

I wish to express my appreciation and gratitude to Doctor John Wonder and Doctor Alberto Eraso for their observations and comments. Their suggestions were of great value during the preparation of this teacher's guide.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Importance of Transformational Grammar

The importance of transformational grammar in teaching Spanish, English, or any language has been put forth by Jacobs and Rosenbaum. They have specified that the knowledge of the grammar of any language is based on the following four skills:

1. the ability to distinguish between the grammatical and ungrammatical strings of a potentially infinite set of utterances,
2. the ability to interpret certain grammatical strings even though elements of the interpretation may not be physically present in the string,
3. the ability to perceive ambiguity in a grammatical string,
4. the ability to perceive when two or more strings are synonymous.¹

Skill (1), the ability to distinguish between the grammatical and ungrammatical strings, can be exemplified in the following two Spanish strings:

1. Ese es el señor quien de hablé te.
2. Ese es el señor de quien te hablé.

By means of this skill, students will be able to perceive that sentence (1) is ungrammatical.

Skill (2), the ability to interpret certain grammatical strings, can be illustrated with the sentence Me lo dás. The interpretation of the subject NP may not be physically present; however, the speaker of Spanish

can understand the full meaning of this sentence.

Skill (3) is the ability to perceive ambiguity. The speaker of Spanish can perceive six possible interpretations for *Se lo da*.

1. *Se lo da a él.*
2. *Se lo da a ellos.*
3. *Se lo da a ella.*
4. *Se lo da a ellas.*
5. *Se lo da a Ud.*

Skill (4) indicates the ability of perceiving when two or more strings are synonymous:

1. *Eso es el señor de quien te hablé.*
2. *De quien te hablé es ese señor.*

Transformational grammar provides a very effective method of explaining how these four skills work. This has been achieved by an attempt to construct a precise, explicit grammar of any given language.

**Structures Analyzed**

The basic structures analyzed through transformational grammar in this guide are:

1. direct and indirect object structures
2. subject and object noun phrase complements
3. relative clauses

The ALM sample sentences for object structures were taken from Unit 14. The noun phrase complements were taken from Unit 21, and the
relative clause from Unit 23. All of these units are in ALM Spanish Level Two text.²

The format for each chapter has been to present the phrase structure rules applicable to the structures analyzed. Then tree diagrams and transformation rules were utilized to show the generation of a given structure from deep to surface structure.

Sources of Data

This study has been based on Jacobs and Rosenbaum's English Transformational Grammar. Spanish sentences from ALM Spanish Level Two were analyzed in this study. In addition, some notational conventions from Roger Hadlich's A Transformational Grammar of Spanish were adopted in the presentation of certain syntactical features.

Basic Theory of Transformational Grammar

Jacobs and Rosenbaum have stipulated that all sentences have a deep structure and a surface structure.³ The deep structure is considered to be the closest to, if not identical with, the primitive semantic structure of any sentence, before any transformations have been applied. The surface structure is the final form of the sentence after all transformations have been applied. For example, the deep structure of

²Barbara Kaminer de Mujica and Guillermo Segreda, ALM Spanish Level Two (San Francisco, California; Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1970).

Me lo da provides the informations that the subject NP is of the third person singular, and that furthermore the subject NP is nonemphatic [-emph], and can therefore be eliminated.

Transformations can convert deep structures into intermediate structures before arriving at the surface structure. The three basic transformations used by Jacobs and Rosenbaum were adjunction (addition), substitution, and deletion. The adjunction transformation adds a constituent or feature to a structure. The substitution replaces one element with another, and the deletion simply removes a constituent or element. Hadlich has added the permutation transformation to these three basic transformations. The permutation changes the order of elements in a structure. This study has made use of the permutation through inversions which exchange the positions of constituents.

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CHAPTER II

DIRECT AND INDIRECT OBJECT STRUCTURES

In this chapter a few Spanish sentences with object structures have been analyzed through transformational grammar. These object structures have been taken from the grammar section of *ALM Spanish Level Two* (Unit 14). Jacobs and Rosenbaum's *English Transformational Grammar* (Chapter 18) has been used as a guide for this analysis. In addition, Roger Hadlich's *A Transformational Grammar of Spanish* was referred to for the presentation of certain features underlying Spanish pronouns.\(^1\)

In order to facilitate an additional grammatical presentation by the teacher using *ALM Spanish*, the same example sentences used in the grammar section have been presented here for further analysis.

Verb Phrase Structure Rule

Jacobs and Rosenbaum have suggested the following phrase structure rule for the verb phrase with indirect object constructions:

1. \( VP \rightarrow VB \ (NP) \ (NP) \)

In order to show the transformation and derivation of the sentence *me lo da a mí*, the phrase structure rule above has been amended to show the prepositional phrase as a third constituent of the VP.

2. \( VP \rightarrow VB \ (NP) \ (NP) \ (PP) \)

\( \text{da lo me a mí} \)

The preposition has been suggested by Jacobs and Rosenbaum as a feature in the deep structure "in particular as features of noun segments."\(^2\) However, the authors have admitted that the derivation of the prepositional phrase remains uncertain. They have also suggested the prepositional phrase as a special constituent.\(^3\) For the purpose of this study, the PP has been utilized as a constituent in the verb phrase rule (Chapter II) and as a constituent of the embedded sentence in relative clauses (Chapter IV).

**Sentences analyzed**

The following sentences have been taken from *ALM Spanish Level Two*:

1. *Me da el libro* \(\rightarrow\) *Me lo da.* (page 26)
2. *Le da el libro* \(\rightarrow\) *Se lo da.* (page 26)
3. *Puedo lavarme las manos.* (page 30)
4. *Me puedo lavar las manos.* (page 30)

---


\(^3\) Ibid., p. 141.
In this deep structure the VP consists of a VB, two NP's, and a prepositional phrase. The first NP lo is the accusative and the second NP me is the dative. The PP a mi has been placed at the end of the constituent VP. The feature [-emph], which means not emphatic, has been added to the subject NP él and the PP a mi so that the deletion of these constituents may be applied.  

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Dative-Accusative Inversion

This transformation reverses the order of the dative \textit{me} and the accusative \textit{lo} noun phrases when in the form of atonic pronouns. The prepositional phrase has its own transformational rules which will not be discussed in this study.
**Dative N and VB Inversion**

The dative noun segment me and the VB da have exchanged positions in this transformation.
Accusative N and VB Inversion

The third inversion for this structure has reversed the order of the accusative lo and the VB da. Features for the VB da have been added to show that meaning or the potentiality of meaning is preserved when the deletion transformation removes the subject NP dni. Another deletion transformation can remove the PP a m to generate the surface structure:

Me lo da.
As noted above, two deletion transformations have removed the NP le and the PP a mĩ. The features in the matrix verb da have shown that it is ambiguous with reference to gender and person (Ud., el, ella).

If the prepositional phrase a mĩ had [+emph] as a feature, the surface structure would be:

Me lo da a mĩ.

A placement transformation could then generate:

A mĩ me lo da.
Deep Structure

Le da el libro (a ella). $\rightarrow$ Se lo da.

As in the previous structure, the verb phrase for the deep structure above consists of a verbal followed by two noun phrases and a prepositional phrase. As a general rule, the dative le includes the \[^{+\text{musc}}\] feature. Again, the subject NP el and the PP a ella have the feature \[^{-\text{emph}}\]. This will eventually require a deletion transformation of both constituents.
Dative-Accusative Inversion

Again, the dative le and the accusative lo have exchanged positions to generate the above intermediate structure.
Dative and VB Inversion

If libro had been in the deep structure instead of the accusative le, the next transformation, the accusative and VB inversion, would not be obligatory to generate this surface structure:

Le da el libro.
Accusative and VB Inversion

The transformation above has now made a substitution transformation for the dative le obligatory in order to generate the intermediate structure:

El se lo da a ella.

The dative substitution has now replaced le with se. Since él and ella are marked with the feature [-emph], deletion transformations can then be applied to derive the surface structure:

Se lo da.
The features in the matrix verb da have preserved the meaning or the potentiality of meaning in the surface structure. As mentioned in the previous structure, me lo da, the PP a ella could have been retained for emphasis if its feature had been [+emph]. This would have generated:

Se lo da a ella.
Deep Structure

Puedo lavarme las manos.  
No puedo lavar las manos.

The deep structure above is identical for both sentences.
Dative-Accusative Inversion

With a deletion transformation of the NP yo, the surface structure will be:

Puedo lavarme las manos.

Another transformation can generate the other surface structure:

Me puedo lavar las manos.

This will be shown in the next page.
The dative *me* has been removed from under the domination of the VP and placed in front of the auxiliary. In addition, the deletion of the NP *me* has generated the surface structure:

Me puedo lavar las manos.
Summary

The [-emph] feature has been added to the subject NP and the prepositional phrase to illustrate the deletion transformations of these constituents. The following transformations have been utilized in this chapter in order to derive the object structures:

1. Dative-Accusative Inversion Transformation
2. Dative and VB Inversion Transformation
3. Accusative and VB Inversion Transformation
4. Dative Substitution Transformation
5. Dative Placement Transformation
6. Deletion Transformation
CHAPTER III

SUBJECT AND OBJECT NOUN PHRASE COMPLEMENTS

This chapter has as its focus a few example sentences which contain subordinate clauses. These subordinate clauses (or embedded sentences) function as the subject or object of the main verb. Chapters 20 and 21 of Jacobs and Rosenbaum's text have been used for the derivation of these structures.

The phrase structure rule for the noun phrase

1. \( NP \rightarrow (\text{ART}) \ N \ (\text{S}) \)

stipulates that any noun phrase may contain a sentence as one of its components. This is true whether the NP functions as subject of the sentence or direct object or object of a preposition in the VP as shown respectively in (2), (3), and (4) below:

2. \( S \rightarrow NP \ VP \)

   \( \text{Que Juan estudie} / \text{no me preocupa.} \)

3. \( VP \rightarrow VB (NP) \)

   \( \text{Odio} / \text{que Juan estudie.} \)

4. \( VP \rightarrow VB \ldots (PP) \)

   \( \text{Insisto} / \text{en hacerlo.} \)

As noted in rule (1) above, the embedded sentence must have a head noun of which the embedded sentence is the complement. Therefore, the term noun phrase complement is utilized for this embedded sentence (subordinate clause).

As indicated by Jacobs and Rosenbaum, all noun phrases contain
nouns in their deep structure. In the following English sentences, the head noun is the noun segment "it," which is deleted only under certain conditions:

1. It worries me that John doesn't study.
2. That John doesn't study worries me.

For the purpose of this study, *ello* has been utilized as the deep structure representation of the head noun in Spanish. The following sentences will illustrate the subject NP complement and the object NP complement:

1. Que Juan estudie no me preocupa.
2. Odio que Juan estudie.

---

As illustrated above, the head noun for the subject noun phrase is *ello*. If there were no embedded sentence, the generated surface structure would be:

Ello no me preocupa

The steps in the generation of the correct surface structure for the sentence above will be shown in subsequent pages.
Object Noun Phrase

Odio que Juan estudie.

This time the embedded sentence que Juan estudie functions as the object of the main sentence.

Sentences analyzed

The following sentences are from ALM Spanish Level Two text:
1. Me encanta que venga. (page 223)
2. Es verdad que Juan estudia mucho. (page 224)
3. No es verdad que Juan estudie. (page 224)
4. Es posible que Juan estudie. (page 224)
5. Mamá dice que Juan estudia. (page 227)
6. Mamá dice que Juan estudie. (page 227)
Deep Structure

Me encanta que venga.

The matrix verb *encanta* contains the feature [-fact]. The feature [+fact] accompanying a verb indicates no association of necessity, uncertainty, imposition, positive bias, or negative bias.² The [+fact] feature also includes verbs used in indirect or reported speech. The [-fact] feature in the matrix verb, on the other hand, expresses the semantic components of necessity, uncertainty, imposition, positive bias or negative bias. It is the [-fact] feature which makes the subjunctive transformation obligatory.

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The feature [-fact] on the matrix verb *encanta* will generate the feature [+subj] on the verb of the embedded sentence. In addition to other necessary features, the subjunctive feature will select from the lexicon the correct surface form *venna*.
The deletion of *ello* is analogous to the "it-deletion" transformation. According to Jacobs and Rosenbaum, this transformation is obligatory whenever the pronoun "it" appears before its noun phrase complements.\(^3\) The above transformation has left the embedded sentence *que el venía* as the subject NP of the structure. On page 3 of this chapter, the example sentence *ello que Juan estudió no me preocupa* becomes *que Juan estudió no me preocupa* by application of the *ello* deletion transformation.

Accusative and VB Inversion

The inversion of the noun segment me with respect to the verbal encanta is obligatory.
NP and VP Inversion

The primary constituents NP and VP have exchanged positions to generate the above tree diagram. The subject noun segment el can then be deleted to derive the surface structure:

Me encanta que venga.

The same inversion transformation may be applied to the example sentence on page 3.

Que Juan estudie no me preocupa. $\rightarrow$ No me preocupa que Juan estudie.

*The inversion transformation which shifts the position of the embedded sentence in this manner is termed "extraposition."
Deep Structure

Es verdad que Juan estudia.

This time, the [+fact] feature of the matrix VP has not required a subjunctive transformation of the embedded verbal. The following transformations can then be applied to generate the surface structure:

1. *Ello* Deletion Transformation
2. NP and VP Inversion Transformation
The inversion of the NP and VP has placed the subject noun phrase at the end of the structure.
Deep Structure

No es verdad que Juan estudie.

This deep structure is similar to the previous example analyzed except that the negative constituent has been added. The matrix VP es verdad consists of the [+fact] feature. This feature will be changed to [-fact] when the NEG constituent is placed in front of the main constituent VP.
The constituent NEG has been moved between the main constituents NP and VP. As a result of the NEG placement the matrix VP has changed from a [+fact] to a [-fact] feature. Again, it is matrix VP that has required a subjunctive transformation to follow. The ello deletion transformation will then generate the intermediate structure:

Que Juan estudie no es verdad.
Subject NP Placement and Surface Structure

The subject NP **que Juan estudie** has been moved to the end of above structure.
Deep Structure

Es posible que Juan estudie.

As in the previous structures, the following transformations can be utilized to generate the surface structure:

1. **Elllo** Deletion
2. Subjunctive
3. NP and VP Inversion
The [-fact] feature of the matrix VP as posible has indicated the semantic component of uncertainty. This, in turn, has made the subjunctive transformation obligatory for the verb of the noun phrase complement.
Mamá dice que Juan estudia.

The [fact] feature of the matrix verb has indicated that the VB in the embedded sentence does not require a subjunctive transformation. The ello deletion transformation will then generate the surface structure:

Mamá dice que Juan estudia.
The subjunctive transformation has been applied to generate the above surface structure. Again, the [-fact] feature of the matrix verb dice has required this transformation of the embedded sentence. In this particular structure the [-fact] feature has expressed the semantic component of imposition as opposed to a reported speech.
Summary

Elllo has been used as the head noun of the subject and object noun phrase complements. The [-fact] feature of the matrix verb has made the subjunctive transformation obligatory. The subjunctive feature was added to the verbal of the noun phrase complement of embedded sentence. The following transformations were utilized to derive the surface structure:

1. Subjunctive Transformation
2. Elllo Deletion Transformation
3. NP and VP Inversion Transformation
CHAPTER IV

RELATIVE CLAUSE

Relative clauses have been analyzed in this chapter as sentences which are embedded in noun phrases. Chapter 25 of Jacobs and Rosenbaum's text has been utilized as a guide for the derivation of the relative clause.

As suggested by the authors, the deep structure of a sentence with a relative clause would show an NP followed by the relative clause. The relative clause of this deep structure contains a noun phrase of identical reference. This NP of identical reference is the essential difference between a relative clause and a noun phrase complement.

As stated in Chapter III, the noun phrase rule has been formulated to show the noun phrase complement with a head noun in the deep structure:

1. \[ NP \rightarrow N \ (S) \]

\[ \text{Me preocupa} \ \text{el} \ \text{que} \ \text{Juan} \ \text{no estudia.}\]

In the relative clause, on the other hand, the noun phrase rule shows a noun phrase of identical reference preceding the relative clause in the deep structure:

2. \[ NP \rightarrow NP \ (S) \]

For example, the sentence, \text{el estudiante que estudia aprende}, would be:

\[ \text{el estudiante} \ \text{el estudiante} \ \text{estudia} \ \text{aprende} \]
The difference in the deep structure between the relative clause and the noun phrase complement has been illustrated in the following tree diagrams:

**Noun Phrase Complement**

Que el estudiante estudie me complace.

As noted in the deep structure above, the embedded sentence, que el estudiante estudie, is the complement of the head noun ello.
Relative Clause Transformation

El estudiante que estudia aprende.

The deep structure of the relative clause shows the NP of identical reference in the embedded sentence.

Sentences analyzed

The following Spanish sentences from the grammar section of ALM Spanish Level II (page 273) have been analyzed:

1. Ese no es el pastel que hice yo.
2. Esa es la señora que vino ayer.
3. Ese es el disco de que te hablé.
4. Ese es el señor de quien te hablé.
Ese no es el pastel que hice yo.

The features for pastel and pastel have been added to show the article transformations which generate the intermediate structures. The features [-near -far] indicate the medial *ese as opposed to the proximal *este and the distal *aquel.¹

Relative Clause Transformation

This transformation has moved the NP pastel of the embedded sentence to the front of the embedded sentence.
Article Transformation

The double application of the article transformation has created the article segments *el* and *que* to the left of the identical noun phrases. As noted above, the article segments have acquired the same features as their noun segments.
Relativized Noun Deletion Transformation

The noun segment *pastel* has been deleted from the embedded sentence.
The negative placement transformation and the inversion of NP \text{yo} and the VB \text{hice} have generated the surface structure above.
Deep Structure

Esa es la señora que vino.

Again, the features of the identical noun phrases have been added to show the application of the article transformation.
The double application of the article transformation has added the article segments *la* and *que* in front of the noun segments. The article segments have acquired the same features as their noun segments.
The relativized noun deletion transformation has been applied to the embedded sentence to generate the surface structure. The deletion of the noun segment *señora* has left the relative pronoun *que* as the NP of the embedded sentence.
Deep Structure

Ese es el disco de que te hablé.

As noted in the deep structure, the prepositional phrase within the VP of the embedded sentence contains the identical NP disco.
As shown in this tree diagram, the PP with its two segments de disco has been moved from under the domination of the VP to the front of the embedded sentence. The features above have been added to the identical NP's disco and disco in order to illustrate the next transformation. The features [-animate] and [-human] indicate that the que segment needs to be created to the left of disco.
As in the previous structure, the double application of the article transformation has created the article segments *el* and *que* in front of the identical NP's. The article segments have acquired the same features as their noun segments.
The relativized noun deletion has removed the noun segment *disco* from the PP of the embedded sentence to generate the above intermediate structure.
The optional deletion transformation has deleted the NP *te* from the embedded sentence and an inversion has exchanged the NP *te* and the VB *hablé*. These two transformations have generated the above surface structure.
Deep Structure

Ese es el señor de quien te hablé.

As seen above, the features [+def +pro +rel +animate +human] have been added to the noun segment señor to show the creation of the quien segment.
The tree diagram above shows only the NP structure of the main constituent VP. As noted above, the PP de senor has been moved to the front of the embedded sentence.
Article Transformation

The article segment *quien* has been placed between the preposition *de* and the noun segment *señor*. The article segment *quien* was utilized instead of *que* because the noun segment *señor* contains the features [+animate] and [+human].
The noun segment señor has been deleted from the prepositional phrase of the embedded sentence.
The deletion of *yo* and the inversion of *hablé* and *te* have generated the surface structure above.
Summary

Three basic transformations have been utilized in this chapter to generate the relative clause:

1. Relative Clause Transformation
2. Article Transformation
3. Relativized Noun Deletion Transformation

The relative clause transformation moved the noun segment to the front of the embedded sentence. The article transformation added the article segments *el, que* or *quien* in front of the noun segments. The relativized noun deletion deleted the noun segment which followed *que* or *quien* to generate the relative clause in the surface structure.