PROPOSITIONAL EQUATIONS THROUGH EXPRESSIVE SELECTION: ANOTHER ARGUMENT FOR THE EQUATIVE APPROACH TO BINOMINALS

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ABSTRACT

I focus on a type of binominal construction that has received little attention in the previous literature, e.g., *eso de que Ana baila* 'that thing that Ana dances'. The *eso de que* construction behaves like other extensively studied qualitative binominals in Spanish and Romance regarding two crucial constituent diagnostics: (i) coordination of the *de*-phrases, and (ii) fragment answers with the *de*-phrase. These diagnostics conclusively show that *de* cannot be considered the nominal counterpart of the verbal copula, contradicting the expectations of mainstream approaches to binominals. Then, I argue for an extension of the equative analysis recently put forward in Saab (2022), according to which a subset of expressive elements can introduce equative phrases within the nominal domain. The type of equations proposed in that work only include equations for individuals (e.g., *el idiota de Andrés* 'that idiot Andrés') or for properties (e.g., *una mierda de departamento* 'a shit of an apartment'). This paper shows that equations for propositions are instantiated for the *eso de que* construction, completing thus the empirical picture in the way predicted by the equative approach to binominals. I conclude by conjecturing that these equations are selected by designated expressive heads, an idea that, if proven as correct, gives novel support, and a more explicit content, to the thesis that there is a grammar of expressivity within nominal phrases.

Keywords: binominals, expressivity, Spanish, equatives

RESUMEN

En este artículo, indago sobre un tipo de construcción binominal que ha recibido poca atención en la bibliografía previa, e.g., *eso de que Ana baila*. La construcción *eso de que* se comporta como otras frases binominales cualitativas extensamente estudiadas en español y otras lenguas romances en al menos dos diagnósticos de constituyentes relevantes: (i) la posibilidad de coordinación de las frases preposicionales con *de*, y (ii) la opción de usar legítimamente la frase con *de* en fragmentos cortos. Estos diagnósticos muestran de manera concluyente que *de* no puede considerarse la contraparte nominal de la cópula verbal, lo que contradice las predicciones de las teorías más aceptadas sobre las construcciones binominales. Abogo, entonces, por una extensión del análisis ecuativo presentado recientemente en Saab (2022), según el cual un subconjunto de elementos expresivos puede introducir frases ecuativas dentro del dominio nominal. El tipo de ecuaciones propuestas en ese trabajo solo contempla ecuaciones para individuos (e.g., *el idiota de Andrés*) o para propiedades (e.g., *una mierda de departamento*). Este artículo da sustento a la hipótesis de que las ecuaciones de proposiciones son una posibilidad lógica que queda plenamente instanciada, precisamente, con la construcción *eso de que*, lo que completa el panorama empírico en la forma predicha por el enfoque ecuativo de las construcciones binominales. Concluyo conjeturando que estas ecuaciones son seleccionadas por núcleos particulares, idea que, de ser correcta, da apoyo novedoso, y un contenido más explícito, a la tesis de que hay una gramática de la expresividad en el interior de las frases nominales.

Palabras clave: construcciones binominales, expresividad, español, frases ecuativas

1 INTRODUCTION

Spanish, as many other Romance languages, makes productive use of binominal constructions in which one of the involved nominals is a qualitative noun or adjective.

(1)   a.   el   idiota de Andrés
           the idiot of Andrés
           'that idiot Andrés'

       b.   una mierda de departamento
           a   shit   of apartment
           'a shit of an apartment'

The examples in (1) illustrate the two basic kinds of qualitative binominals: the ones of the (1a) type in which the second DP is definite, and those in (1b) in which the second nominal is a bare NP. In addition, there is also a difference related to the nature of the qualitative noun in each case: an epithet in (1a) and a mixed expressive in (1b). These two differences can be schematized as follows:

(2)   a.   Det + epithet + *de* + DP

       b.   Det + expressive + *de* + NP

Mainstream approaches to qualitative nominals in Romance (and also in Germanic) assume a property ascription relation between the two nominals, which are syntactically related through a subject-predicate relation with the predicate inverted over the subject (SUÑER, 1990; ESPAÑOL-ECHEVARRÍA, 1998; den DIKKEN, 2006; VILLALBA, 2007; ETXEPARE, 2013, among others). Den Dikken makes the point very clear in the following passage:

> At the outset of this exercise, let me point out that what unites all qualitative binominal noun phrases is that they are characterized by the fact *that the first noun phrase ascribes a property to the noun phrase that follows it*. On the assumption […] *that property ascription, in general, is structurally represented in the form of a predication structure, with the ascriber of the property being the predicate and the ascribee the subject, this leads us to the postulation of a syntactic structure underlying all QBNPs according to which there is a predicational relationship between the two noun phrases*. (den DIKKEN, 2006, p. 164-165, my emphasis)

On this view, the preposition *de* 'of' is conceived of as the nominal counterpart of the copula *ser* 'to be' which mediates between the subject and the (inverted) predicate in the sentential domain. Omitting several technical details, the predicate inversion analysis has roughly the following representation:

(2)   [predicate$_i$ *de*$_{copula}$ [subject + t_i]]

According to an alternative approach recently proposed in Saab (2022) (see also Saab and Carranza (2021) and Saab and Orlando (2021)), the central relation is not predication, but

equation. The equative relation is established between an underlying empty noun and the nominal preceded by *de*. For cases like (1a), the equation is between two individuals, but between two properties in cases like (1b). Now, the epithet in (1a) is not a truth-conditional predicate but an expressive operator in Potts' (2005) sense, and a mixed expressive in McCready's (2010) sense in cases as (1b) (see also Gutzmann (2015)).

(4)   a.   [el *idiota* [$_{EqP}$ [de Andrés] [$_{Eq'}$ Eq *index*$_{<1, e>}$]]]

      b.   [*una mierda* [$_{EqP}$ [de departamento] [$_{Eq'}$ Eq *index*$_{<1, <e, t>>}$]]]

In this study, I provide a further piece of evidence for the equative analysis coming from the possibility of having propositional equations of the following type:

(5)   [Eso de que Ana venga   otra   vez] no   me   sorprende.
       that of   that Ana comes.SUBJ another   time   not   me   surprises
       'That thing that Ana comes again does not surprise me.'

This construction contrasts with the following one in which the subject DP minimally differs from the subject in (5) in having the neuter weak form *lo* 'it' instead of a strong demonstrative:

(6)   [Lo de que Ana viene otra   vez] resonó   con   fuerza.
       it   of   that Ana comes another   time   resonated   with   strength
       'The said thing that Ana comes again resonated strongly.'

Etxepare (2013), which may be the unique available work comparing the two last sentences in the literature, claims that they are differentiated by a set of crucial semantic and syntactic properties and proposes that DPs like those in (6) behave similarly to qualitative binominals of the (1a) type. I agree with Etxepare in that, perhaps, the two types of DPs must be distinguished, but disagree in many essential aspects of his analysis. As I will show, both the binominals in (1) and the *eso de que* construction in (5), in which the DP is headed by a strong demonstrative, form a natural class of equative nominals, with (perhaps) exclusion of the *lo de que* DPs. This is, indeed, contrary to the analysis put forward in Etxepare.

The paper is organized as follows. In the next section, I present the theory I defended in Saab (2022), according to which qualitative binominals in Romance are underlyingly equative structures, and present two crucial tests, fragment answers and coordination, that show that the copular analysis of the preposition *de* 'of' must be rejected for canonical examples of qualitative binominals. In section 3, I apply these tests to the two relevant constructions under consideration in this study and argue that the preposition *de* is not a copula in the *eso de que* construction. The same tests give negative results in the *lo de que* construction, leaving open the analytical space in this case. The logical conclusion is, then, that there is no subject-predicate structure of the type den Dikken proposes underlying the grammar of *eso de que* DPs. In section 4, I generalize the equative analysis I proposed in Saab (2022) to the *eso de que* construction and provide some additional conjectures regarding possible analyses for the *lo de que* DPs. The final picture results in three types of equations in the

nominal domain: (i) equations for individuals (e.g., *el idiota de Andrés* 'that idiot Andrés'), (ii) equations for properties (e.g., *una mierda de departamento* 'a shit of an apartment'), and (iii) equations for propositions (e.g., *esa estupidez de que Andrés canta bien* 'that bullshit that Andrés sings well'). The syntactic structures that introduce these equations are selected by particular functional heads semantically specialized for expressive meanings. I conclude that if this is on the right track, then, we can give novel support, and a more explicit content, to the thesis that there is a grammar of expressivity inside nominal phrases.

2 TWO ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE PREDICATE INVERSION APPROACH

Among the arguments presented by Saab (2022) for defending his equative approach, there are two worth-mentioning now. First, at least for the case of the *det + epithet + of + DP* construction, it is possible to show that the epithet is not a truth-conditional predicate. A comparison between slur words in predicative position (see (7)), in which the slur has predicative force, and epithets in binominal environments (see (8)), shows that binominals do not maintain the predicative force that the slur word has. Put differently, the epithets in (8) do not classify to Andrés or Ana into the set of homosexuals or prostitutes, respectively.

(7) a.   Andrés   es   *puto*.
          Andrés   is   homosexual$_{pejorative}$

     b.   Ana   es   *puta*.
          Ana   is   prostitute$_{pejorative}$

(8) a.   El   *puto*   de   Andrés…
          the *epithet*   of   Andrés

     b.   La   *puta*   de   Ana…
          the *epithet*   of   Ana

Second, there is good evidence that the preposition *de* is not a copula and forms a constituent with the nominal following it. As (9) and (10) respectively indicate, the *de*-phrase can be conjoined with other *de*-phrase and also be part of a short answer to an echo question, both facts incompatible with a copular analysis for *de*:

(9)   los   idiotas   de   Andrés   y   de   Pablo
      the   idiots   of   Andrés   and   of   Pablo

(10) A: el   idiota   de   QUIÉN?
           the idiot   of   WHO

      B: de   Andrés
           of   Andrés

These diagnostics also extend to the *det + expressive + of + NP* construction with positive results:

(11)　una　mierda　de　departamento　y　　de　oficina
　　　　a　　shit　　of　apartment　　　and　of　office

(12)　A:　una　mierda　de　QUÉ?
　　　　　a　　shit　　of　WHAT

　　　B:　de　oficina
　　　　　of　office

Both coordination and fragment answers require that *de* forms a constituent with the following DP/NP string in order to be conjoined with another phrase of the same type or to be a grammatical fragment, respectively. Of course, it could be the case that the conjoined phrases or the fragment answers are bigger and contain the structure that also licenses the putative copula *de*. Without a doubt, this is indeed the case when it comes to verbal copulas. Consider, for instance, these two sentences containing coordinate structures:

(13)　a.　Ana　es　inteligente　y　　muy　profesional.
　　　　　Ana　is　intelligent　and　very　professional
　　　　　'Ana is intelligent and very professional.'

　　　b.　Ana　es　inteligente　y　　es　muy　profesional.
　　　　　Ana　is　intelligent　and　is　very　professional
　　　　　'Ana is intelligent and is very professional.'

The simplest analysis for each coordinate structure is that there are different bits of structure conjoined in each case: APs vs. TPs, respectively:

(14)　a.　[$_{AP}$ inteligente] y [$_{AP}$ muy profesional]

　　　b.　[$_{TP}$ Ana es inteligente] y [$_{TP}$ *pro* es muy profesional]

By parity of reasoning, we should wonder whether it could be the case that a bigger structure is being coordinated in examples like (9) and (11), as well. These putative bigger structures would, of course, include the copular element *de*. Adapting den Dikken's (2006) analysis of predicate inversion for examples like (9), the representation would be approximately as follows (see section 3.1 for more details on den Dikken's approach):

(15)　[$_{DP}$ the [$_{LinkP}$ idiots [$_{Link'}$ of [$_{RelP}$ Andrés t_{idiot}] and [$_{Link'}$ of [$_{RelP}$ Pablo t_{idiot}]]]]]

There are many problems with such an analysis. First, the conjoined phrases are Link' constituents, an issue potentially solved if the predicate *idiota* moves, in a sort of ATB extraction, from its base position as complement of both RelPs to the specifiers of each LinkP. This looks like an unwanted complication. But even if we take this approach for

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granted, it is unclear how the predicate ends with its plural form. At any rate, the burden of proof is on the proponents of the predicate inversion analysis.

Similar considerations apply to the fragment answer test. Again, in the case of verbal copulas there are two grammatical strategies: (i) answering with a true fragment, like in (16B), or (ii) answering with the full sentence, like in (16B'):

(16)   A: Ana   es   QUÉ?
              Ana   is   WHAT

       B: muy   profesional
              very   professional

       B':   Es   muy professional.
              is   very   professional

If these strategies were available for binominals, we would expect that, in addition to the answer in (10B), which by assumption would be a bigger fragment including at least some projection of the Link head, the answer in (17B), in which the only piece of fragment is the subject of the putative subject-predicate structure, should also be perfectly grammatical. Yet, (17B) is by far less natural than (10B):

(17)   A: el   idiota de QUIÉN?
              the   idiot   of   WHO

       B: ??Andrés
              Andrés

But there is more. In the sentential examples, answers like (16B') are not fragment answers at all. It is the full sentence that works as an appropriate answer. By analogy, the nominal counterpart of (16B') should be a full DP; i.e., something like the perfectly grammatical (18B):

(18)   A: el   idiota de QUIÉN?
              the   idiot   of   WHO

       B: el   idiota de   Andrés
              the   idiot   of   Andrés

Put differently, *de Andrés* in (10B) cannot be the nominal counterpart of (16B'). On the predicational analysis, *de Andrés* should be just a LinkP. The problem is that LinkPs cannot be used with independence of its selector head, i.e., D. Again, the burden of proof is on the proponents of the predicational analysis.

In sum, the inversion analysis is not justified semantically or syntactically. In contradistinction, the equative approach put forward in Saab (2022) does not suffer of any of these shortcomings. As is clear, in (4), repeated below, the relevant prepositions do form

a constituent with their DPs or NPs, respectively. This analysis straightforwardly predicts the behavior of the *de*-phrases under coordination and fragment answers.

(19)   a.   [el *idiota* [$_{EqP}$ <u>de Andrés</u>][$_{Eq'}$ Eq *index*$_{<1, e>}$]]]

b.   [*una mierda* [$_{EqP}$ <u>de departamento</u>][$_{Eq'}$ Eq *index*$_{<1, <e, t>>}$]]]

3 *ESO DE QUE VS. LO DE QUE*

3.1 THE PREDICATE INVERSION ANALYSIS IN ETXEPARE (2013)

According to Etxepare (2013), the *lo de que* construction (see (6)) must be semantically and syntactically distinguished from the *eso de que* construction (see (5)). While it is true that in some environments their meanings overlaps, the construction with neuter *lo*, Etxepare argues, seems to be specialized to refer to an event of saying. One fact that Etxepare offers as evidence is that the *lo de que* construction cannot be modified by truth-conditional predicates like *ser falso* 'to be false' when occurring as a complement of a verb of saying or similar ones. Here is one of his minimal pairs:

(20)   a.   Pedro dijo   que había que echar   al   capataz,
              Pedro said   that had   that fire-INF to-the caporal,
              lo   cual   es   falso.
              CL   which is   false
              'Pedro said that the caporal had to be fired, which is false.'

b.   Pedro dijo lo de que   había que echar   al   capataz,
              Pedro said CL of   that had   that fire-INF to-the caporal,
              #lo   cual   es   falso.
              CL   which is   false
              'Pedro said this thing that the caporal had to be fired, #which is false.'

(ETXEPARE, 2013, ex. (16))

In contradistinction, the alternative with the strong demonstrative is perfectly felicitous, at least according to Etxepare's judgments:

(21)   Pedro dijo aquello de que   había que echar al   capataz,
        Pedro said that   of   that had   that fire-INF to-the caporal,
         lo   cual   es   falso.
        CL   which   is   false
        'Pedro said that thing that they had to fire him, which is false.'

(ETXEPARE, 2013, ex. (27))

Canonically, the construction headed by *lo* combines with verbs referring to events of saying, like I illustrated with the example in (6). The alternative with the demonstrative is also compatible with those predicates, although crucially they can also refer to regular propositions, like in (21). In addition, both kinds can be selected by unaccusative predicates, under the speech act reading, a fact incompatible with regular sentences introduced by the complementizer *que* 'that':

(22) a. Entonces llegó   eso / lo de que había que
         then   arrived that / CL of that had   that

         echar a   la   monarquía.
         fire   to   the   monarchy
         'Then arrived this thing that we had to get rid of the monarchy.'

     b. Y   entonces vino   eso / lo de que éramos
         and then   came   that / CL of that were.1PL
         unos flojos.
         a.PL   dull.PL
         'And then came this thing that we were dull people.'

(adapted from Etxepare (2013, ex. (18))

Etxepare also claims that *lo de que* construction is incompatible with verbs that unambiguously selects propositions, but not arguments referring to speech acts. Here is his example with the verb *creer* 'to believe'. Again, in this case, the alternative with the demonstrative is perfectly grammatical:[1]

(23) Creía   {aquello / *lo} de que había que echar al
      believed.3SG that   CL of that must COMP fire   to-the
      capataz.
      caporal
      '(S)he believed that thing that we had to fire the caporal.'

(adapted from Etxepare (2013, ex. (20))

In sum, it seems that *lo de que* construction, but not its alternative with a neuter demonstrative, is incompatible with propositional readings. For Etxepare, this is evidence that the *lo de que* nominals are specialized to refer to events of saying. Although I agree with at least some of Etxepare's judgments, it seems clear that there are other environments in

1 Here, I am reproducing Etxepare's judgments. I do not find the sentence with *lo de que* ungrammatical, although I do perceive a subtle difference with the perfect *creía aquello de que*. Other Rioplatense speakers I consulted did not find any difference between the two sentences and one of the reviewers (not a Rioplatense speaker) agrees with them.

which it is unlikely to attribute a quotative reading to constructions of the *lo de que* type. To my ears, *lo de que* DPs can have factive readings like in the following examples:

(24) a. Lo   de   que   Ana   venga   no   me   parece   una
        it   of   that   Ana   comes.SUBJ   not   me   seems   a
        buena   idea.
        good   idea
        'That Ana comes doesn't seem a good idea to me.'

   b. No   me   sorprende   lo   de   que   Ana   haya
        not   me   surprises   it   of   that   Ana   has.SUBJ
        venido.
        come
        'That Ana has come did not surprise me.'

As with other factive clauses, the CPs preceded by *de* obey subjunctive selection (compare with the indicative in the previous examples). Similar factive or eventive readings are observed when *de* is followed by an infinitival clause:

(25) a. Lo de ir   hoy   me   parece   una   buena   idea.
        it of go.INF today me seems a good idea
        'Going today seems a good idea to me'

   b. Lo de desaprobar tantos   estudiantes fue   frustrante.
        it of fail.INF   many   students   was frustrating
        'The fact of failing so many students was frustrating.'

For the sake of the argument, let's take for granted that Etxepare is correct in his idea that *lo de que* specifically refers to speech events and let's see what type of conclusion he extracts from his paradigms. Essentially, he assimilates the *lo de que* construction to qualitative binominals of the (1a) type and assumes a predicate inversion analysis. Following den Dikken's (2006) analysis for (what den Dikken himself calls) the *comparative binominal* in (1a), with the modifications in Villalba (2007), Etxepare proposes the following syntactic representation for examples like (1a):

(26) a. el idiota del doctor 'that idiot doctor'

   b. $[_{DP}$ el $[_{LinkerP}$ Link^0 $[_{RelP}$ $[_{DP}$ el doctor] [de + Rel]^0 $[_{FunctionalP}$ SIMILAR idiota]]]]

For those familiar with the particular approach to predicate inversion taken by den Dikken, the analysis is more or less transparent. There are two functional heads, Rel(ator) and Linker, serving different functions in the nominal structure. The Rel head mediates in the subject / predicate relation (the subject DP *el doctor* and the comparative predicate *SIMILAR idiot*, respectively). Empty predicates like SIMILAR must raise to the Linker position in order to be licensed, which is possible only if Rel moves to the Link position in a sort of phase extension

strategy. If this happens, all the FunctionalP in (26b) moves to the complex Rel+Link position, crossing the subject and giving rise, thus, to the inverted predicate configuration:

(27) $[_{DP}$ el $[_{LinkerP}$ $[_{FunctionalP}$ SIMILAR idiota] $[[de+Rel] + Link]^0$ $[_{RelP}$ $[_{DP}$ el doctor] t_{Rel} $t_{FunP}]]]$

The extension of this analysis to the *lo de que* construction proposed by Etxepare includes a silent adjectival predicate that also triggers predicate inversion. Omitting some technical complications, here is the representation he defends for an example like (28a):

(28)   a.   lo de que había que echar al capataz 'this thing that we/they have to fire the caporal'

        b. $[_{DP}$ lo $[_{LinkerP}$ SAID de+que $[[_{Force\ Phrase}$ había que echar al capataz] (de) (SAID)]]]$

(adapted from Etxepare (2013, ex. (66))

The silent SAID predicate moves to the Linker position crossing the subject position, a full ForceP, in this case. Like in den Dikken's analysis, inversion is licensed for the need to identify the silent predicate, a process that, as I already noted, requires prior movement of the Rel head to the Link position.

As for the *eso de que* construction, Etxepare does not offer any particular analysis, since his focus is on those constructions that are specialized for a putative quotative reading. At any rate, let's pause for a moment and evaluate part of Etxepare's argument. As already noted, the central assumption is that qualitative binominals are underlying subject/predicate structures with the predicate crossing the subject. We have seen that this analysis for binominals is challenged for two different considerations. First, I have shown that epithets have no predicative force (compare again the examples in (7) and (8)). In den Dikken's analysis, the particular meaning *idiota* has when occurring as epithet is enriched by the postulation of an empty predicate like SIMILAR, which, according to him, gives the epithet its particular "comparative" flavor. Yet, this is a stipulation that, in addition, does not capture the type of expressive meaning epithets have in qualitative binominals. Second, basic constituent tests, coordination and fragment answers, refute the copular analysis for *de*, a crucial ingredient of the inversion predicate thesis. But this was shown only with respect to examples like those in (1). In order to see whether a predicational analysis can be applied to the constructions under consideration in this study, we have to carefully investigate what particular results the constituent diagnostics give regarding *lo de que* and *eso de que* constructions. As we will immediately see, the results are extremely informative.

3.2 CONSTITUENT TESTS

Recall that coordination and fragment answer tests are used by Saab (2022) as a way to test the copular hypothesis. As the examples from (9) to (12) demonstrate, the diagnostics contradict the copular analysis. Now, when the same tests are applied to the *lo de que* and *eso de que* constructions the results are in frank contradistinction: whereas the *lo de que* nominal gives negative results, the *eso de que* one behaves exactly like qualitative

binominals, i.e., refuting the copular hypothesis. Consider first the construction headed by the strong demonstrative. The coordination test gives clear grammatical results. Thus, the following sentence in which the two *de*-phrases are conjoined is perfectly grammatical:

(29) Eso   de que Juan baile   y   de que Ana cante es
      that   of that Juan dances and of that Ana sings is
      ridículo.
      ridiculous
      'That thing that Juan dances and Ana sings is ridiculous.'

Answering an echo question with the full *de*-phrase is also perfect. Indeed, one cannot avoid the preposition:

(30) A: Eso de   QUÉ?
          that of   WHAT

      B: *(de) que Juan   baile
          *(of) that Juan   dances

Now, when it comes to applying the same tests to *lo de que* construction, the results are ungrammatical:

(31) *?lo   de que Juan baile   y   de que Ana cante es
      it   of that Juan dances and of that Ana sings is
      ridículo.
      ridiculous
      'This thing that Juan dances and Ana sings is ridiculous.'

(32) A: lo de QUÉ?
          it of WHAT

      B: *de que Juan baile
          of   that Juan dances

These results show that it is very likely that the *de*-phrases form a constituent with the following CP in the DPs of the *eso de que* type. In other words, the *eso de que* nominals pattern exactly like the qualitative binominals in (1). Methodologically speaking, positive results, like the ones obtained with *eso de que* and binominals, must be taken as robust evidence, provided, of course, that other confounding factors are set apart (see section 2). Now, as for negative results, like the ones obtained in (31) and (32), no robust conclusion can be made (otherwise, we can be led to well-known fallacies). If I made this perhaps obvious clarification, it is because we need to avoid the incorrect conclusion that in the *lo de que* construction *de* does *not* form a constituent with the following CP phrase. Our diagnostics only demonstrate that the *eso de que* construction parallels the behavior of qualitative binominals in contradicting the copular analysis. In principle, the *lo de que* construction is amenable to the predicate inversion analysis or to other alternatives. I will discuss these other alternatives in the following section after extending the equative analysis to the *eso de que* nominals.

4 EXTENSIONS AND SPECULATIONS ON THE GRAMMAR OF EXPRESSIVITY

4.1 EXTENDING THE EQUATIVE ANALYSIS TO PROPOSITIONAL BINOMINALS

The equative analysis proposed in Saab (2022) has as an essential ingredient the idea that nominal indexes can be of different semantic types, as stated in the Pro-form and Traces Rule:

(33)   If α is pro-form or trace, *i* is an index, and *g* is an assignment whose domain includes *i*, then $[\![α_i]\!]^g = g(i)$.

(HEIM; KRATZER, 1998, p. 292)

For cases like (1), repeated below for convenience, the relevant nominal indexes are ordered pairs of numbers and individuals or properties, respectively:

(34) a.   el   idiota   de   Andrés
            the   idiot   of   Andrés
            'that idiot Andrés'

      b.   una   mierda   de   departamento
            a   shit   of   apartment
            'a shit of an apartment'

On the syntactic side, the crucial assumption is the active presence of an Eq(uative) head, whose precise denotation is determined at LF by a set of allosemy rules. Consider again the simplified analyses for the binominals in (1) (see Saab (2022) for details):

(35) a.   [el *idiota* [$_{EqP}$ [de Andrés] [$_{Eq'}$ Eq *index*$_{<1, e>}$]]]

      b.   [*una mierda* [$_{EqP}$ [de departamento] [$_{Equ'}$ Eq *index*$_{<1, <e, t>>}$]]]

The relevant denotations are provided below:

(36) a.   denotation of Eq in (35a): $[\![Eq]\!]$: *<e, <e, e>> = λx. λy: x = y. x*

   b.   denotation of Eq in (35b): $[\![Eq]\!]$: *<<e,t>, <<e,t>, <e,t>>> = λf. λh: f = h. f*

In words, when Eq selects an individual as complement, like in (35a), Eq is semantically realized as a partial identity function including an equative presupposition for individuals. In (35b), instead, Eq is also realized as a partial identity function but, in this case, the semantic objects under the equative relation are properties, since the complement of Eq is of the property type.[2] Nothing in Saab's system prevents the existence of other types of

2 Notice that the presuppositional analysis, modeled here in terms of partial identity functions, is somewhat forced by the semantic calculus, at least in the case of (34a), i.e., we need that the EqP node denotes in individuals in order the semantic calculus proceeds routinely. By stipulating that the Eq heads denotes the

semantic objects falling under the equative relation. In fact, since Spanish has indexes for propositions (extensionally, of the *t* type), the absence of any mention of this possibility was surprising in Saab's system. Fortunately, the gap is filled with the *eso de que* nominals, which, as I have shown in the previous section, parallel the behavior of the binominals in (1) regarding the relevant constituent tests.

Now, extending the equative analysis to the relevant cases is straightforward. Indeed, the syntax is almost identical to qualitative binominals, except that in this case the two arguments of Eq denote in the propositional type, with the complement of Eq being an index of the *t* type or, alternatively, a trace (also of the *t* type) left by movement of the demonstrative to the left periphery of the bigger DP, an option I don't consider here. Consider the analysis for an example like (37a) given in (37b):

(37)   a.   eso de que Ana baile *'that thing that Ana dances'*

   b.
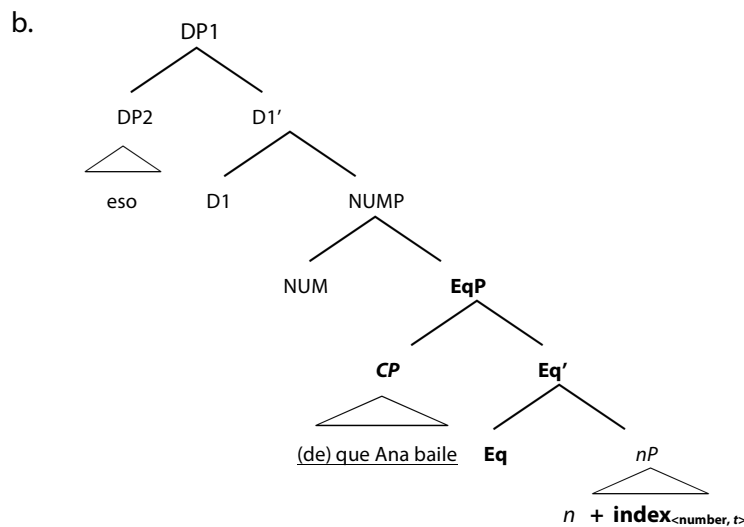
relevant partial identity function, like in (36a), the desired result is obtained. Interestingly, this is not a mere technical detail; there are at least two empirical reasons militating in favor of a presuppositional analysis for this type of equation. The first reason is that, as is well-know, binominals like (34a) are always definite (e.g., **un idiota de Andrés* 'an idiot of Andrés') and the prepositional coda *de Andrés* is always definite, as well (e.g., **el idiota de un professor* 'the idiot of a professor'). This essentially shows that the equation between the two individuals is backgrounded. The second reason has to do with a less explored property of this construction, namely, the DP following *de* cannot be a strong pronoun (e.g., **el idiota de él* 'that idiot he'). Given the focus nature of strong pronouns in Spanish and other Romance languages, this follows, again, from the requisite that the *of*-DP be backgrounded, which cannot be satisfied by a pronoun introducing new information in the discourse. Now, as noted by an anonymous reviewer, this is not the case with binominals like (34b), which can be definite or indefinite (compare (34b) with *esa mierda de departamento* 'that shit of an apartment', which is also perfectly fine). The crucial requisite here is that the NP following the *of*-phrase be always a bare NP, a fact that directly follows under my previous analysis. As for the definite/indefinite alternation, the theory does not capture it transparently. A lot depends on our understanding of *backgrounded properties*. Yet, there is also an alternative analysis according to which these binominals do not introduce equations as presuppositions, but as part of the asserted content. Interestingly, when we look at the technical details more closely, we see that in this case introducing partial identity functions is not forced by the semantic calculus. At any rate, I leave this possible alternative for another occasion.

The relevant allosemy rule would realize Eq as shown below:

(38) ⟦Eq⟧: $\langle t, \langle t, t \rangle\rangle^a = \lambda p.\lambda q: p = q.\, p$

This denotation correctly captures the fact that the CP meaning is backgrounded, one salient property of this type of constructions (see also footnote 2). Salience may be due to the fact that the backgrounded sentence was previously asserted (the canonical case, in many examples), but also because it is a known fact / event, like we saw in section 2.1.

4.2 COMING BACK TO *LO DE QUE*: SOME SPECULATIONS

The constituent tests of coordination and fragment answers applied to the *lo de que* construction in (31) and (32) in section 3.2 give negative, inconclusive results. In principle, such results are compatible with at least some version of the predicate inversion analysis pursued by Etxepare in (28), repeated below:

(39) a. Lo de que había que echar al capataz 'this thing that we/they have to fire the caporal'

b. [$_{DP}$ lo [$_{LinkerP}$ SAID de+que [[$_{Force\ Phrase}$ había que echar al capataz] (de) (SAID)]]]

(adapted from Etxepare (2013, ex. (66))

Of course, the analysis should be adjusted to account also for cases in which the reading is incompatible with an underling SAID predicate (see (24) and (25)). In any case, before we reach any conclusion, we should take a closer look at the underlying factors that give the aforementioned negative results. Let's start with the fragment answer test, repeated below:

(40) B: lo   de   QUÉ?
          it   of   WHAT

A: *de   que   Juan   baile
        of   that   Juan   dances

Note first that the only grammatical strategy is answering with the full DP, as shown in (41A). The option of answering with the bare CP is strongly ungrammatical (41A'):

(41) B: lo   de   QUÉ?
          it   of   WHAT

A: lo   de   que   Juan   baile
        it   of   that   Juan   dances

A': *que   Juan   baile
         that   Juan   dances

This is a very interesting result, since it shows that the putative subject CP cannot serve as a good answer either. One is tempted to assume that facts like (41A) seem to advise an alternative explanation of the ungrammatical (40A). A clear difference between the *eso de que* construction and *lo de que* one is that in the latter there is a clitic-like element, the neuter *lo*. Suppose that the neuter element requires to be adjoined to its immediate host, the *de*-phrase in this case. If this operation applies before the generation of the fragment answer, then it follows that the only grammatical strategy would be that in (41A). There are some independent facts that advise this type of approach. Consider the following examples (< … > = ellipsis site):

(42) A: Compré   el   libro de Borges.
         bougth.1SG the book of   Borges
         'I bought Borges' book.'

     B: Compraste el   libro de QUIÉN?
         bougth.2SG the book of   WHO
         'You bought WHOSE book?'

     A': de Borges < compré el   libro>
          of Borges   bought the book
          'Borges''

The answer in (42A') is a fragment. I follow Merchant (2004) in assuming that the fragment is generated by moving the remnant and eliding the entire TP (but other in situ approaches would give the same results; Weir (2014) or Stigliano (2022)). The fragment is perfectly grammatical as it is. Now, compare (42A') and (43A'), which form a perfect minimal pair:

(43) A: Compré   el   libro de Borges.
         bougth.1SG the book of   Borges
         'I bought Borges' book.'

     B: Compraste el   <libro> de QUIÉN?
         bougth.2SG the book   of   WHO
         'You bought WHOSE book?'

     A': *(el)   de Borges < compré $t_{el\,de\,Borges}$ >
          *(the) of Borges   bought
          'Borges''

In this case, the speaker (43B) makes her question with a nominal ellipsis structure, in which the noun *libro* is elided. Under this condition, the speaker (43B') cannot answer with a bare *de*-phrase; she must use the entire *el de…* phrase instead. Note that for cases like these nobody would conclude that *de* doesn't form a constituent with the following DP. Again, the reason for the impossibility of answering with a bare *de*-phrase derives from the independent fact that articles, being clitic-like elements,

require o be attached to the *de*-phrase. Therefore, it seems that there are good reasons to think that the negative result with the fragment answer test is due to independent morphophonological properties of articles/clitics.

However, this consideration does not apply to the coordination case, repeated below:

(44) *?lo   de que Juan baile   y   de que Ana cante es
      it   of that Juan dances and of that Ana sings is
      ridículo.
      ridiculous
      'This thing that Juan dances and Ana sings is ridiculous.'

A lot depends here on assumptions regarding the semantic and morphosyntax of the construction. It could be, for instance, that there is some restriction at play having to do with the operation that inserts *de* as a case marker or, alternatively, that there is some semantic condition triggered by *lo* relative to the uniqueness of the events denoted by the coordinate CPs. At this point, then, we must leave open the possibility of extending either the equative or the predicate inversion analysis (or even another possible competitor). What our constituent diagnostics indubitably show is that the *eso de que* construction patterns like the qualitative binominals, suggesting a unification for the three constructions in terms of the equative approach:

(45) a.   el   idiota de Andrés (equation: $e = e$)
            the   idiot   of Andrés
            'that idiot Andrés'

      b.   una   mierda de departamento (equation: $\langle e, t \rangle = \langle e, t \rangle$)
            a   shit   of apartment
            'a shit of an apartment'

      c.   eso   de que Ana cante   (equation: $t = t$)
            that of that Ana sings.SUBJ
            'that thing that Ana sings'

The qualitative binominals in (45a) and (45b) introduce an equative presupposition but also include an expressive element (*idiota* and *mierda*, respectively). In fact, this expressive ingredient is a precondition for having the said equation. Syntactically, this must be captured in terms of selection. One could stipulate an Ex(pressive) head that syntactically select Eq:

(46) $Ex^0_{[\_\_Eq]}$

Such a head would harbor the expressive element, which could be subject to subsequent movements to the left periphery of the DP. As is well-known, demonstratives, not only in Spanish, use to have an evaluative dimension, as well. Indeed, the bare demonstrative in

(45c) can make the evaluation explicit by forming a complex demonstrative phrase with an expressive in the nominal position, like in the following examples:

(47) a.   esa   boludez de que Andrés canta bien
         that   bullshit   of   that   Andrés   sings   well
         'that bullshit that Andrés sings well'

     b.   esa hijaputez   de denunciar   maestros
         that wickedness   of denouncing   teachers
         'that wickedness of denouncing teachers'

If this speculation I am suggesting here is on the right track, then the Ex-head could select different types of expressive words, ranging from epithets to mixed expressives of various kinds. The specific expressive that corresponds to each case would depend, among other things, on the type of Eq head selected in each case. If Eq selects individual indexes, then Ex selects epithets; if Eq selects property indexes, then Ex selects mixed expressives of the mixed type, and so on:

(48) $[_{ExP}$ Spec = {idiota, mierda, boludez} $Ex^0_{[\_\_Eq]}$ $[_{EqP}$ … Eq^0 {Index$_e$, Index$_{<e,t>}$, Index$_t$}…

Assuming that the neuter *lo* does not have an expressive dimension we can exclude it, then, from the set of expressive equations that are the topic of main interest here.[3] Analyses along the lines of Etxepare (2013) or, alternatively, of Bosque and Moreno (1990), according to which the neuter in this case denotes individuals (facts or speech acts are conceptualized as individuals in Bosque and Moreno's approach) restricted by the complement of the neuter, are both worth exploring.

5 CONCLUSIONS

In this contribution, I have extended the equative analysis of binominals to the *eso de que* construction. The assimilation between the three types of Spanish nominals in (45) was justified on semantic and morphosyntactic considerations. These considerations not only show that the equative analysis is compatible with the semantic interpretation and syntactic behavior of the *eso de que* construction but that the well-known predicate inversion thesis fails in making the right predictions in this particular empirical domain as well.

If the conjectures made at the end of this study are grounded empirically, then we can licitly conclude that the particular type of equative presuppositions that the Eq head introduces depends on syntactic selection by an expressive element (called Ex by convenience), a conclusion that makes clear that there is a true syntax of expressivity and that, consequently, leaves a set of important questions and issues open for further research.

3 At the moment, I do not have robust semantic diagnostics that corroborate this speaker intuition.

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