

The unbearable lightness of light verbs. Are they semantically empty verbs?

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Track 3: collocations

Abstract

Contrary to the claim that light verbs are semantically empty verbs, this paper defends the viewpoint that the lexical selection of light verbs is based on their meaning (the *hypothesis of the semantic compatibility*). To provide some evidence of this, the paper will concentrate on *pure light verbs* (*tener* 'to have', *hacer* 'to do', etc.) emphasizing the semantic differences between light verb constructions and their verbal counterparts (e.g. *hacer uso* 'to make use' and *usar* 'to use') and pairs of light verb constructions which share the same noun but take a different pure light verb (*dar una excusa* and *poner una excusa* 'to give/make an excuse').

Keywords

Light verbs, light verb constructions, collocations, semantically empty/full verbs, semantic compatibility, Explanatory and Combinatorial Lexicology.

1 Introduction

The aim of this paper is to provide some insights into the nature of light verbs as a first step to elaborate lexicographic entries for these verbs. The term *light verb* (henceforth LV) will be used here to refer to the values of the lexical function (LF) **Oper₁**. Within the Explanatory and Combinatorial Lexicology (ECL), a value of **Oper₁** is a semantically empty verb (or at least emptied) in the context of its keyword — a predicate — which takes the keyword as its direct object (DO) and the first actant of the keyword as its subject (Mel'čuk, 1996:59). The combination of a LV¹ and its keyword forms a *light verb construction* (LVC), e.g. *to give a talk*, *to have a laugh*. If a LV is a verb which has been emptied of lexical meaning, it follows

¹ We will refer to three types of verbs: LVs or values of **Oper₁**, e.g. *dar* 'to give' in *Pedro da un paseo* 'Pedro takes a walk'; the corresponding full verb or heavy verb, *dar* 'to give' in *Pedro da un libro a Ana* 'Pedro gives a book to Ana'; and the verbal counterpart of the LVC, e.g. *pasear* 'to walk' in *Pedro pasea* 'Pedro walks'.

that LVCs such as the preceding ones are equivalent to their verbal counterparts, namely *to talk*, *to laugh*, iff (= if and only if) the noun and the verb have exactly the same meaning.

Contrary to the previous claim regarding LVs as semantically empty verbs, this paper defends the viewpoint that the lexical selection of these verbs is based on semantic grounds. Specifically, we uphold the hypothesis, named the *hypothesis of the semantic compatibility*, that LVs are connected to the noun with which they form a LVC and to the related full verb by means of semantic links, that is to say, a semantic component which is repeated in the LV and the noun, and in the LV and the full verb. E.g. the Spanish noun *elogio* (aprox. 'praise'), which refers to the action and the effect of praising,² can combine with two LVs: *hacer* 'to do' (*hacer un elogio* 'to give a praise') and *decir* 'to say' (*decir elogios* 'to say praises'). Far from being synonymous, when *hacer* co-occurs with *elogio*, it relates to the component 'action' of the noun ('X's action expressing approval/admiration about Y's achievements or characteristics'). On the contrary, when *decir* combines with *elogio*, it is linked to the component 'effect' ('X's remark expressing approval/admiration about...'). Within an aspectual classification, *elogio*, in the sense of 'effect', can be interpreted as an act. Consider the following sentences:

- (1) [...] diplomático muy distinguido del cual valdría la pena *hacer un elogio* muy extenso...
'a well distinguished diplomat of whom it would be worth to praise extensively...'
- (2) ¿Un hombre que *dice muchos elogios* cuando apenas te conoce, puede ser un buen mentiroso?
'A man who pays you many compliments when he has just recently met you, is he a good liar?'

On the one hand, *elogio* 'praise' in (1) refers clearly to an action 'what a person voluntarily does during a period of time' because it has duration. The intensifier adjective *extenso* 'X is extensive' means that 'X occupies time, X lasts'. On the other hand, *elogio* in (2) refers to an act 'what a person voluntarily and punctually does' because it has no duration; instead of that, it can be quantified as is seen in (2), where *elogio* is in the plural form. The semantic links these two LVs — *hacer* in *hacer un elogio* and *decir* in *decir elogios* — keep with the corresponding heavy ones are: 1) LV *hacer* shares the component 'action' with the corresponding heavy verb *HACER*, a polysemous verb which has several LUs linked by the same 'action' component; 2) LV *decir* shares the complete meaning of *decir* as a full verb 'to express by words', that we will simplify here as 'speech act'.

This paper will concentrate in *pure LVs* (Alonso Ramos, 2004:91), a subclass within LVs which has a greater degree on meaning extension than the others. Pure LVs are considered to have completely lost their lexical meaning till such an extent as to become verbs with only grammatical meaning like auxiliary verbs. This paper will provide some evidence to show that even pure LVs have their own lexical meaning. Firstly, LVCs, e.g. *hacer uso* 'to make use', will be contrasted to their verbal counterparts, e.g. *usar* 'to use' — a verb with the same meaning as the noun and morphologically derived from it — to emphasize the differences. Secondly, pairs of LVCs sharing the same noun but taking a different pure LV (*dar una cabezada*, *echar una cabezada* 'to have/take a snooze', both equivalent to *cabecear* 'to have/take a snooze') will be compared to highlight also the dissimilarities. In both cases the

² *Elogio* can be defined as a lexical unit (LU) with a disjunctive semantic component (*elogio*: 'action or effect') or as a vocable with two LUs each of them with one of the components (*elogio1*: 'action' and *elogio2*: 'effect').

relevant question is: what is the semantic contribution of the pure LV to the LVC when the meaning of the LVC does not match up exactly with its verbal counterpart or when the meaning of two apparently synonymous LVCs do not coincide?

This research is mainly carried out within the theoretical and methodological framework of the ECL (Mel'čuk et al., 1995), which is part of the Meaning Text Theory (MTT) (Mel'čuk, 1997). Data has been collected from two corpora — *Corpus de referencia del español actual* (CREA) and *Corpus del español* (CdE) —, several Spanish monolingual dictionaries and different Internet pages. The paper is organized in five sections. After this Introduction, a review of some approaches to lexical meaning in LVs will be offered (Section 2). Next we will prove the presence of meaning in LVs by comparing two types of expressions: LVCs and their verbal counterparts (Section 3.1), and pairs of LVCs sharing the same noun equivalent to a verbal counterpart (Section 3.2). In Section 4 some tentative generalizations will be made concerning the meaning of LVs. Finally Section 5 will draw some conclusions.

2 The nature of the meaning of LVs

In the ECL, a LVC is considered a type of *collocation* (Mel'čuk et al., 1995:46), where the collocative, or LV, is lexically selected by its base, the noun, in a more or less arbitrary way to acquire a sentence configuration. As there is no lexical meaning in the LV, its role is restricted to add grammatical information about tense, mood and person (Alonso Ramos, 2004:24). Despite general claims denying that LVs are meaningful LUs, some concessions, within ECL, have been done. Accordingly, Mel'čuk (1992:32-33) has remarked that even if values of **Oper**₁ are semantically (quasi-)empty, LUs included as values of the LF for the same keyword are not necessarily exact synonyms. Furthermore, the author declares that they can differ semantically from each other in many nuances. In the same line, Alonso Ramos (2004:85-87) has drawn attention to two possible perspectives to analyze the semantic emptiness of LVs: from the syntagmatic viewpoint, she claims that LVs are semantically empty₂ because they are not selected for their lexical meaning, and consequently, they can only provide the noun with temporal, modal, etc. information. From the paradigmatic viewpoint, LVs can be semantically empty₁ in the sense that they have an abstract meaning including only generic components which characterize the semantic class of the verb. Further on, Alonso Ramos (2004:91-93) has recognized that not all LVs are semantically empty₁, some of them maintain semantic links with other senses of the corresponding full verbs.

Apart from the previous authors, who admit that LVs can be somewhat meaningful even if this is not the focus of their approach, it is possible to find many other researchers who have addressed the question of the lexical meaning of LVs in a more direct way. Among these authors, we can distinguish two different approaches: 1) those who concentrate on the relationship between LVs and their heavy counterparts, and 2) those who lay emphasis on the relationship between LVs and the keyword noun.

1) The focus on the relationship between LVs — *to take* in *X takes a walk* — and their heavy counterparts — *to take* in *X takes an apple from the tree* — brings together mainly authors adhering to cognitive frameworks. In general lines, the semantic links between both LUs are considered as extensions of a polysemous word. In cases where they cannot manage to isolate a distinct meaning of a particular LV, it is assumed that the meaning of the LV has to be examined within the construction where it is placed. As representative works in this approach,

we mention the analysis of *to take* (Norvig & Lakoff, 1987) or the extensive study about *to give* (Newman, 1997). Brugman (2001), for her part, has reviewed several LVs in order to verify that they have meaning and not only function, as well as to prove that the relationship between light and heavy verbs shows regularities cross-lexically, that is to say, the same semantic links which relate a LV to the heavy one is repeated in other pairs.

2) On the contrary, it seems that authors whose target is to find an explanation for the relationship between the LV and the noun occupying the position of DO belong mostly to functional approaches, particularly associated to lexicographic projects. Among them, we refer to Apresjan (2007, 2009), Barrios (2010), Bosque (2004) or some authors within the framework of the “lexique-grammaire” such as Giry-Schneider (1987) and Vivès (1984). They agree that aspectuality plays a major role in the relation LV-noun. According to Apresjan (2009), the selection of a LV is conditioned by the lexical meaning of the LV and the semantic class of a Vendlerian classification to which the noun belongs. He claims that there is “semantic agreement” between the LV and the noun: “they should have at least one non-trivial recurrent (repetitive, common) semantic component in their meaning” (Apresjan, 2009:4). Bosque talks about “redundancy” and “agreement of lexical features” (Bosque, 2004a:47, 2004b).

Beside these approaches,³ Reuther (1996:198-199) proposes the description of the meaning of a LV in three different parts: a more general (taxonomic) part, a specific part which shows the semantic links with other senses of the given verb, and another specific part containing the semantic characteristics of nouns that typically appear in collocations with the verb.

3 An analysis of pure LVs within LVCs

In this Section, we will compare LVCs with their verbal counterparts, on the one hand, and pairs of LVCs, on the other hand. In both cases, there is a monolexical verb semantically related to the LVC; LVs belong to the group of pure LVs. We will try to prove that LVs contribute meaning to LVCs and to some extent, we will show the semantic links between light-full verbs and LVs-nouns. Pure LVs are a special group of LVs frequently compared to (quasi-)auxiliaries because of their semantic emptiness. In Colloquial Spanish studies, they have been called *verba omnibus* or *pro-verbs*; in language teaching, they are often used to improve the vocabulary asking students to replace LVs with more precise equivalents, e.g. *verter* instead of *dar la opinión* ‘to give the opinion’. Although there is no complete agreement about the list of pure LVs in Spanish, scholars accept that, at least, *hacer* ‘to do/make’, *dar* ‘to give’, *tener* ‘to have’, *poner* ‘to put’, *tomar* ‘to take’ and *echar* ‘to throw’ belong to the group.

3.1 LVCs *versus* verbal counterparts

The equivalence between LVCs, such as *tener respeto* ‘to have respect’ or *dar una orden* ‘to give an order’, and verbal counterparts, *respetar* ‘to respect’ or *ordenar* ‘to order’, can be based on the fact that pure LVs are semantically empty verbs. In this sense, the semantic weight of

³ This classification is not exhaustive. Some other researchers have addressed the question in more or less depth, as for example Martín Mingorance (1998) or de Miguel (2007) for the Spanish language.

the construction is carried by the predicative noun. It cannot be denied that in many contexts, the verbal counterpart and the LVC itself are equivalent expressions. E.g. *ordenar* 'to order' and *dar una orden* 'to give an order' can replace each other in (3):

- (3) a. [...] el teniente Mauricio *dio la orden* de atacarlos.
'[...] the lieutenant Mauricio gave the order to attack them.'
b. [...] el teniente Mauricio *ordenó* atacarlos.
'[...] the lieutenant Mauricio ordered to attack them.'

Nevertheless, the replacement is not possible in all the situations. For instance, (4a) can be expressed with *dar una orden* 'to give an order' but not with *ordenar* 'to order' (4b):

- (4) a. [...] cuando un tío *da una orden*, se cumple a rajatabla.
'[...] when an uncle gives an order, it must be carried out to the letter.'
b. [...] cuando un tío *ordena* *(algo), se cumple a rajatabla.
'[...] when an uncle orders *(something), it must be carried out to the letter.'

The reason is that LVCs accept not to state explicitly the content of the object — e.g. *orden* 'order' in (4a) —, putting the emphasis in its mere existence. However, with verbal counterparts, it is needed to specify the content unless a pronominal mark has been left instead, as *algo* 'something' in (4b). On the contrary, it seems that verbal counterparts (5a), and not LVCs (5b), are the only ones with the capacity to form performative statements. For instance, in (5a), the speaker, talking in the first person singular of the Indicative Present, is performing a speech act in the moment of the enunciation, while the same speaker in (5b) only describes a speech act.

- (5) a. [...] *les ordeno* que guarden silencio.
'[...] I order you to keep silent.'
b. ?*Les doy la orden* de que guarden silencio.
'[...]?I give you the order to keep silent.'

Differences between pure LVCs with their verbal counterparts can be classified in three groups (Sanromán Vilas, 2009): 1) those which depend on the item we are dealing with, either the simple verb or the verb + noun phrase; 2) those which are based on the semantic class of each of the LUs: the LV, the predicative noun or the correlated single verb; and 3) those which rely on the particularities of each LU, e.g. *dar* 'to give' as a concrete LV, *broma* 'joke' as a predicative noun and *sospechar* 'to suspect' as a correlated single verb. The first type of differences should be addressed in the Grammar because of their general and systematic nature. However, the second and third types should be registered in the Dictionary because of their lexical-semantic character. For reasons of space we only offer an overview of the differences of the first type.

The fact that we are dealing with two different grammatical units — a verb and a phrase — gives rise to four major differences between these expressions. Firstly, verbal counterparts of LVCs happen to be often polysemous words and LVCs refer often to one of the senses of the verb. E.g. *usar* 'to use' can display meanings like: 'to make useful for a particular purpose' in (6a); 'to wear on usually' in (6b); 'to get maximum benefit from something in a particular moment' in (6c).

- (6) a. [...] es un producto que *se usa* en la agricultura andaluza...
'[...] it is a product used in the andalusian agriculture'
b. El abrigo, porque allá no *se usa* sombrero ni nada de eso.

- 'The coat, because there neither hat nor nothing like that is used'
 c. Nuestro gobierno haría bien en [...] *usar* todos los medios a su alcance...
 'Our government would do well by [...] using all the means within its reach'

Among these meanings, the only one which can be expressed by *hacer uso* 'to make use' is (6c): *Nuestro gobierno haría bien en [...] hacer uso de todos los medios...* 'Our government would do well by [...] making use of all the means...'. Secondly, using the verb, the actual moment of the action can be specified as an act — or as a series of reiterative acts — (*El conferenciante tose discretamente* 'The lecturer coughs discreetly'); however, with the LCV, it is a characteristic of the action, or act, as a whole what is described (*El conferenciante tiene una tos discreta* 'The lecturer has a discreet cough'). One way of characterizing an act is by counting the number of times it is repeated (*Le dio dos/tres besos* 'He gave her two/three kisses') or by specifying the type (*Le dio un beso fraternal/de saludo* 'He gave a brotherly/greeting kiss'). Thirdly, predicative nouns and verbal counterparts of LVCs (7) often have the same number of Sem(antic) actants (X, Y, Z), which can be expressed as S(urface)-Synt(actic) actants depending either on the noun or on the verb.

- (7) a. *la tos de X* 'X's cough' — *X tose* 'X coughs'
 b. *el uso de X de Y* 'X's use of Y' — *X usa Y* 'X uses Y'
 c. *la orden de X a Y de Z* 'X's order to Y to Z' — *X ordena a Y Z* 'X orders Y Z/Z to Y'

However, when predicative nouns make part of LVCs, most of their Sem actants and the noun itself become dependents on the LVs in SSyntR(epresentation). Thus, in LVCs in (8), the first Sem actant of the noun (X) is always the subject of the LV; when the noun has two Sem actants, Y can be expressed in SSyntR as dependent either on the noun, as *influencias* in (8b), or on the LV, as *su padre* in (8c); when the noun has three Sem actants, as in (8d), Y (*los estudiantes*) is expressed as dependent on the LV and Z (*de que regresen...*), on the noun.

- (8) a. *El barbero tiene tos*. 'The barber has cough'
 b. *Carlos hizo uso de sus influencias*. 'Carlos made use of his contacts'
 c. *Carlos le tiene respeto a su padre*. 'Carlos has respect towards his father'
 d. *El Gobierno les da la orden a los estudiantes de que regresen a sus clases*. 'The Government gives the order to the students to go back to their lessons'

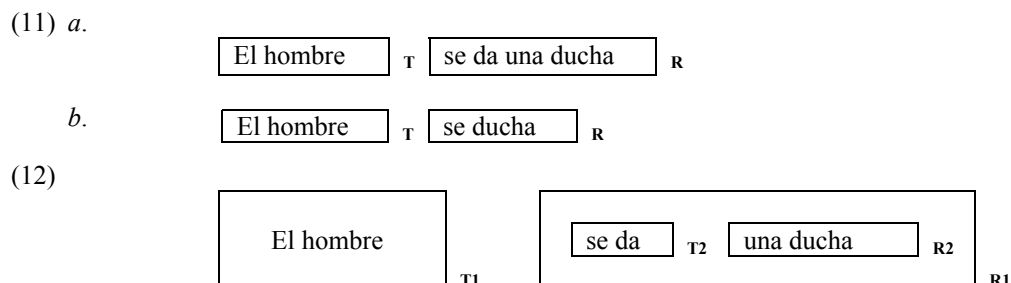
Lastly, a LVC and the verbal counterpart do not have the same Sem-Comm(unicative) S(tructure).⁴ In MTT (Mel'čuk, 2001) a Sem-CommS describes how the utterance's propositional meaning is organized to be transmitted as a message. For instance, the propositional meaning represented in (9) can be expressed by a single verb (10b) or by a LVC (10a):

- (9) 'X applies soap and jets of water all over X's body to wash X's body'
 (10) a. *El hombre se da una ducha*. 'The man takes/has a shower'
 b. *El hombre se ducha*. 'The man showers himself'

To organize the propositional meaning of an utterance several Sem-Comm oppositions have to be considered. For the purpose of this explanation, only two are needed: thematicity and unitariness. Thematicity, the main organizational feature of any message (Mel'čuk, 2001), is about the basic division of the propositional meaning in Theme and Rheme. We say "basic"

⁴ A similar remark is made within the Functional Lexematic framework (Martín Mingorance 1998:22).

because in any message there is always something to say (Rheme) about something (Theme). Sentences in (10) are divided in Theme (_T) and Rheme (_R) in (11). The difference between (11a) and (11b) is that the former, but not the latter, admits a second-order division in Theme and Rheme, presented in an approximately way in (12):



According to Mel'čuk (2001, forthcoming), thematicity has consequences in the lexicalization of meaning in the sense that Sem nodes that are expressed together by one LU should not belong to different thematic areas. As can be seen, the meaning in (9) has lexicalized in (11b) in one LU (*ducharse*) because its Sem nodes belongs to the same thematic area (_R); on the contrary, (9) is expressed in two LUs (*dar* and *ducha*) in (12) because the Sem nodes pertain to different Sem areas (_{T2} and _{R2}). With regard to unitariness, Mel'čuk (2001) refers to the important distinction made in natural languages between representing a situation as a single fact (called *unitary*) or as a simultaneous or subsequent occurrence of several facts (named *articulated*). The simple verb *ducharse* describes a single fact, while the LVC *dar una ducha*, among other nuances, is used to talk about more than one fact which take place simultaneously or consecutively.

3.2 Pairs of LVCs equivalent to a single verbal counterpart

There are LVCs which share the same predicative noun, although they can admit two (or even three) pure LVs: *hacer/tomar un descanso* 'to get/have/take a rest', *dar/poner una excusa* 'to give/make an excuse', etc. Within a linguistic framework assuming the semantic emptiness of pure LVs, the equivalence of these pairs of expressions is clear. And it becomes even clearer if, in addition to this, it is shown that for each pair of expressions, a correlated single verb is available (*descansar* 'to rest', *excusarse* 'to excuse', etc.). Actually, it is possible to find language samples where a pair of LVCs sharing the same noun are synonymous (13):

- (13) Voy a *echar/dar una cabezada*. ¿Quieres tú dormir también un poco?
'I am going to take/have a snooze. Do you want also to sleep a little bit?'

However, (14) proves that these expressions are not equivalent in all the contexts. In (14) *dar una cabezada* cannot be replaced by *echar una cabezada*:

- (14) Sin darse cuenta, *dio/*echó una cabezada* de la cual se levantó un poco sobresaltado...
'He took a snooze without noticing it and he woke up startled'

The reason is that while *cabezada* 'a short and light sleep' has a neutral semantic component regarding the volitional character of the sleep, what means that the noun can refer either to voluntary or involuntary sleeps, *echar* co-occurs only with voluntary acts, and *dar* can select either voluntary or involuntary acts. The opposition *dar/echar una cabezada*, far from being an isolated case, represents an example of the links of semantic compatibility between LVs and nouns. In what follows, some examples within the semantic field of emotion nouns,

speech nouns and nouns of corporal acts will be shown. Within the semantic field of emotion nouns two groups can be distinguished (Sanromán Vilas, 2003): internal cause emotion nouns (ICs) and external cause emotion nouns (ECs). In ICs, as *admiración* 'admiration', *envidia* 'envy', *odio* 'hate', the emotion is born in the experiencer as a result of a judgment made about an object. With ECs, as *alegría* 'joy', *asombro* 'amazement', *disgusto* 'upset', it is required the existence of an external fact that triggers the emotion. Overall, ICs co-occur with *tener* 'to have' and *sentir* 'to feel'⁵. When ICs combine with *tener1* (15), it is emphasized that these nouns behave mainly as emotional attitudes addressed to an object; that is why the expression of the object is compulsory (*Tolstoi* in (15a), *le* in (15b)).

- (15) a. *La admiración que tuvo Pasternak por Tolstoi* —a quien conoció de niño...
 'The admiration Pasternak had towards Tolstoi — to whom he met as child...'
 b. Especialmente Primitivo le *tenía envidia* porque amaba el poder...
 'Specially Primitivo had envy towards him because he loved power...'

However, if ICs come with *sentir*, the stress is on the feeling. So, the role of the experiencer is foregrounded (16) while the object of the emotion is presented as background information:

- (16) Comencé a *sentir respeto y cariño* por aquel estudiante...
 'I started to feel respect and affection to that student'

ECs can co-occur also with *tener* and *sentir*. *Sentir* points at the experience too, but *tener* emphasizes the nature of stage-level predicates of ECs and exhibits a different government pattern with ECs than it does with ICs (Sanromán Vilas, 2008). Contrast (17), where *tener2* has two SSynt actants (the experiencer and the emotion), with (15), where *tener1* governs three SSynt actants: the experiencer — *Pasternak* (15a), *Primitivo* (15b) —, the emotion — *admiración* (15a), *envidia* (15b) — and the object of the emotion — *Tolstoi* (15a), *le* (15b) —.

- (17) Cuando murió la madre, *tuvo una depresión* tremenda.
 'When the mother died, he had a deep depression'

Moreover, if ECs are so momentary that the cause of the emotion and the emotion itself become identified the one with the other, ECs can co-occur with *llevarse* lit. 'to take away'. Notice that in (18), *llevarse* can combine with *disgusto* 'upset', *susto* 'fright', *alegría* 'joy', but not with *desesperación* 'desperation' or *angustia* 'anguish':

- (18) [...] me *llevé un disgusto* (*susto, alegría, *desesperación, *angustia*) cuando mi hija mayor decidió casarse a los 19...
 'I got upset (I had a fright, joy, desperation, anguish) when my oldest daughter decided to marry at 19...'

Speech nouns such as *énfasis* 'emphasis', *excusa* 'excuse', *objeción* 'objection', etc. can combine with more than one pure LV. We will present briefly *excusa2* 'excuse' = 'pretext that X addresses Y to do or not to do Y' and *objeción* 'objection' 'argument that X expresses against Y'. *Excusa2* 'excuse' co-occurs with *poner* 'to put' and *dar* 'to give': when the selected LV is *poner* 'to put', the accent lies on the content of the excuse; however, when it is used with *dar* 'to give', the communicative side of the excuse, addressed to somebody, is emphasized. This is the reason why *excusa*, with *dar*, accepts the adjective *pública* 'public' (19a), but the use of the same modifier with *poner una excusa* 'to put an excuse' is of doubtful acceptability (19b).

⁵ *Sentir* 'to feel' is not considered an empty **Oper₁** but with emotional/perceptual meaning.

- (19) a. [...] quienes no han tenido la gentileza [...] de *dar una excusa* PÚBLICA para justificar...
'[...] who has not been kin enough [...] to give a public excuse to justify...'
b. [...] quienes no han tenido la gentileza [...] de *poner una excusa* *PÚBLICA...
'[...] who has not been kin enough [...] to make a public excuse...'

Objeción 'objection', which accepts *hacer* 'to make' and *poner* 'to put', comes preferably with *hacer* when the focus is on the action (20a) and with *poner*, when the target is the result (20b).

- (20) a. [...] *la objeción se hizo* de forma atenta y respetuosa...
'[...] the objection was made kindly and respectfully...'
b. Solamente le tengo que *poner una objeción* a este rico postre...
'I only must make an objection to this nice dessert...'

Concerning acts and actions related with the body (*cabezada* 'snooze', *descanso* 'rest', *ducha* 'shower', etc.), we will comment *descanso* 'X's pause during an activity' and *ducha* 'shower' 'X's act, X applying soap and jets of water all over X's body to wash X's body'. Both nouns co-occur with *tomar(se)* 'to take' which focus on X, Agent and Patient of the action (21):

- (21) a. [...] para que los empleados *tomaran sus descansos* y comieran...
'[...] for the employees to take their rests and eat...'
b. *Me tomé una ducha* caliente para relajarme...
'I took a hot shower to relax myself...'

Descanso 'rest' combines also with *hacer* 'to make' and *ducha* 'shower' with *darse* 'to give to oneself'. *Hacer un descanso* 'to have a rest' focuses on the rest itself as the period when X is not doing the main activity (22). *Darse una ducha* 'to have a shower' gives prominence to X, not as a Patient or Beneficiary of the action, but as an Agent of the action itself (23).

- (22) [...] un agradable jardincillo con sombra, que constituye un buen lugar para *hacer un descanso*.
'[...] a small and nice garden with shadow, which represents a good place to have a rest'
(23) Se levantó, *se dio una ducha* y bajó a cancelar la cuenta.
'He woke up, had a shower and went down to cancel the bill'

4 Tentative generalizations about LVs

Pure LVs share lexical aspect and some characteristics of the subject, e.g. volitionality, with predicative nouns. In some cases these are also the semantic features LVs have in common with the heavy counterparts, e.g. *hacer* 'to do/make'. In other cases, possible nuances in the lexical aspect of LVs are supported by its government pattern, e.g. *tener* 'to have'. Nevertheless, LVs like *tomar* 'to take', *sacar* 'to take out' o *poner* 'to put' inherit the basic meaning of the heavy counterpart by means of metaphorical links. For instance, the basic meaning of *tomar* 'to take' is 'to grasp with the hand'. The relation between *tomar* 'to take' as a heavy verb and as a LV is not so evident in expressions such as *tomar una ducha* 'to take a shower' or *un trago* 'a sip', unless it is claimed that in both situations hands are used. The semantic link is still less visible in *tomar la siesta* 'a nap' or *una decisión* 'a decision'. Thus, we consider that what LV *tomar* inherits from its heavy counterpart 'to grasp with the hand' is the fact that the direction of movement is always towards the self. This kind of deictic information, withheld by the LV, makes possible that *tomar* is mainly used for reflexive actions, that is, actions where Agent and Patient are the same person.

In aspectual classifications, there is a basic division between events with duration and without it. Here we have found a correlation between this division and the use of LVs. Nouns which combine with *tener* and *llevar(se)* are mainly states and never admit *dar*, *hacer* or *echar*, which come with actions, acts or activities. Regarding *tener* and *llevarse*, two generalizations can be done. First, *tener* is a polysemous LV that has at least two LUs: *tener*₁, with three Synt actants, combines with individual states, mainly attitudes; *tener*₂, with two, co-occurs with episodic states. Second, *llevarse* combines only with episodic states, mainly those which have a very short duration. *Hacer*, *dar*, *echar*, *tomar*, *poner* co-occur with actions and acts. As said above, *tomar* goes with reflexive actions, while *poner* prefers results of actions. *Hacer* and *dar* are neutral with respect to the volitional dimension; however, *echar* is marked as [+ volitional]. Finally, *hacer* can combine with activities, but not *dar* or *echar*. We consider that this type of generalizations, once tested enough, should be consigned in the Dictionary under the entry of the corresponding light verb.

5 Conclusions

In this paper we have tried to show that LVs are not semantically empty, but they have links of semantic compatibility with the noun within the same LVC and with the heavy counterpart. To prove this hypothesis, we have shown that there is no complete equivalence between LVCs (*dar una orden*) and their verbal counterparts (*ordenar*), and between two LVCs sharing the same predicative noun (*hacer/poner una objeción*). Within the limitations of this study, some preliminary and tentative generalizations about LVs have been done. The study will be developed further with the aim of elaborating lexicographic entries for Spanish LVs.

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