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Mexican Spanish**

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## **Syntactic Functions of Gerunds in Mexican Spanish**

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### **Abstract**

This paper presents an overview of the most relevant syntactic functions of gerunds in Mexican Spanish, based on a corpus of 60 texts of different typologies and genres; 30 of the gerunds were taken from written texts and the other 30 from spoken texts. The corpus reveals that gerunds are a very frequent non-finite form employed by Spanish Mexican users of the language. The number of gerunds registered in written and spoken corpus was very similar. Actually, in the written texts, there were 128/269 (47.6%) gerund constructions, while in the oral texts, there were 141/269 (52.4%) gerund constructions. Nevertheless, the number of gerunds displaying the different syntactic functions was not equal. Firstly, gerunds in periphrases were the most repeated gerund constructions in our corpus, especially those presenting a progressive meaning, and above all, the periphrasis constituted by the auxiliary verb *estar* + *gerund*, which was by far the gerund construction most frequently registered. Then, gerunds as internal adjuncts with a modal meaning were the second most recurrent construction in the corpus. With regard to these two constructions, it was found that in the written texts the most numerous gerund clauses were internal adjuncts with a modal meaning, while in the spoken texts, the most frequent gerund construction was the verbal periphrasis with a progressive meaning. The other gerund constructions were not so widespread in our corpus

**Keywords:** Gerunds, syntactic functions, progressive periphrases, modal gerunds.

## Introduction

In order to present what a gerund is and its different syntactic functions, it is important to first define the non-finite forms. To do this, the non-finite forms or converbs should be seen as forms that have lost some verbal characteristics and simultaneously have acquired some nominal, adjectival or adverbial features. In other words, they are less finite, thus they are dependent verb forms. That is why in a variety of text genres, infinitives, gerunds and participles can display very different syntactic functions from those displayed by the prototypical finite forms or verbs.

The more a verb loses criteria of its finiteness (in European languages ‘finiteness’ usually means marked for person, mood, number, tense, aspect, diathesis...), the more it becomes nonfinite. This means that there exists, according to the number of verbal characteristics lost or left, a scale between finiteness and nonfiniteness, not a clear-cut distinction [...] The resulting forms on the finiteness/ infiniteness scale are called ‘infinitives’, ‘gerunds’, ‘participles’. (Raible, 2001: 601)

Consequently, gerunds can be defined as non-finite forms that in many European languages (such as English, French and Spanish) have a specific suffix: *-ing* (for English), *-ant* (for French)<sup>1</sup>, and *-ndo* (for Spanish) and “[...] have both nominal and verbal features, both aspects of the content being (often) apparent in the same context.” (Schybsbye, 1965: 61) In English, French, Spanish and other languages this non-finite form occurs in many constructions in an assortment of text genres.

## Theoretical Background

In Spanish, gerunds can play a variety of syntactic roles such as external adjuncts, internal adjuncts, predicative constructions and periphrases (Fernández Lagunilla, 1999: 3443-3503). Gerunds as external adjuncts can show different meanings: a) temporality, b) causality, c) condition and d) concession.

According to Muysken (2005: 42), one main usage of gerunds in Spanish is specifically in adverbial clauses. The author emphasizes two aspects, first the position of the gerund because it can be positioned before or after the main clause, and second the subject of the gerund because the non-finite form can have either the same or a different subject than the main verb. Niño-Murcia (1995: 93) agrees with Muysken and states that too much attention has been given to the adverbial value of the gerund because Spanish speakers use

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<sup>1</sup>In French besides the suffix they must have the particle ‘en’, which precedes all the gerund forms and distinguishes them from the *participe présent* (present participle).

gerunds that are equivalent to an adverb since they modify the verb of the sentence in which they are located.

In example (1) the gerund clause *faltando Juan* (*missing Juan*) displays a conditional meaning; this clause could be paraphrased by a finite clause with the conjunction ‘if’ (in English) or *si* (in Spanish): *Si Juan falta*. In addition to the gerund clause, it is important to take into consideration that the conditional mood in which the main verb is conjugated (*la fiesta resultaría aburrida/ the party would end up being boring*) confirms this sense.

(1) *Faltando Juan*, la fiesta resultaría aburrida (Fernández Lagunilla, 1999: 3467)

Gerunds as internal adjuncts can be considered as: a) modal gerunds, b) illocutive gerunds, c) locative gerunds and d) lexicalized gerunds. According to Fernández Lagunilla (1999: 3480), these gerunds neither have a subject of their own, nor make reference to the subject nor to the direct object of the verb they modify.

Modal gerunds can be used in a diversity of contexts: a) in a passive periphrasis, b) in a sentence, c) in an active construction, and d) in an active construction without making reference to any nominal element. Illocutive gerunds modify the locutionary act that produces the sentence in which they are inserted. This function is very clear because the main verb is a verb of communication (*verbum dicendi*), such as *say, tell, speak, affirm, confirm, assert*, etc. Locative gerunds are used only as location complements with locative stative verbs. The gerunds belong to a very specific lexical group of verbs which indicate motion or change from one place to another one. Finally, lexicalized gerunds are those non-finite forms that do not conserve the syntactic properties of the verb to which they belong (Fernández Lagunilla, 1999: 3484).

In (2) we observe a lexicalized gerund *exceptuando* (*except*), which is used as a conjunction in order to introduce an exception; in other words, the only aspect not referred to by the previous statement.

(2) [...] y yo estoy enamorado de ella y ella no lo está de mí [...] ni quizá [...] lo haya estado nunca de nadie, *exceptuando* Lytton. (El País, Babelia, in Fernández Lagunilla, 1999: 3485)

Predicative gerunds can be considered: a) predicates of a direct complement, b) predicates of a nominal syntagm, and c) independent gerunds. The verbs that accept the gerund as a predicate of their direct complement are just a few: perception verbs (*see, hear*), representation verbs (*describe, paint*), verbs of finding (*discover, find*), intention verbs (*want, need*), and verbs of effort or difficulty (*stand, support*). The nominal syntagms that accept a predicative gerund are restricted to those nouns that have specific semantic and syntactic characteristics, such as nouns derived from the perception verbs (i.e., *vision, image, photo, noise, sound*), communication nouns (i.e., *call, letter, text, message, report, words*), proper nouns (i.e., *Egypt, John, University of Southern California*), etc. Finally, the independent gerunds are gerunds that “seem to function as a verbal head in an independent sequence, not governed

syntactically.” (Herrero, 1995: 165) It is important to analyze these constructions syntactically in order to establish their function.

In (3) we examine an example of the gerund clause *cerrando la puerta* (*closing the door*) that plays the role of predicate of a direct complement (*Pedro*), the verb of the main clause is the perception verb *to see* conjugated in past tense, indicative mood, third person singular.

(3) Vi a Pedro *cerrando la puerta* (Ojea, 2011: 179)

Verbal periphrases are very common in Spanish and periphrases with gerunds are no exception. Martínez Vilinsky (2012: 201) offers the following definition:

A verbal periphrasis is a group of two or more verbs which co-occur to form a complex linguistic unit that functions as the nucleus of the predicate. The first one is called auxiliary verb and is inflected. The second or main verb gives the periphrasis its semantic content and it is a non-finite form: infinitive, gerund or participle.

Periphrases are one of the most productive constructions with gerunds. In verbal periphrases, gerunds follow an auxiliary verb such as *estar* (*be*), *seguir* (*continue*), *terminar* (*end up*), etc. in order to constitute a syntactic unit. Yllera (1999: 3393) states that there are several compulsory characteristics that distinguish periphrases from other constructions with gerund. These characteristics are: a) the gerund must have a verbal quality rather than an adverbial or adjectival character, b) the subject of the gerund must correspond to the subject of the auxiliary verb, and c) there must not be any complements that exclusively modify the auxiliary verb. The most common auxiliary verbs that generate periphrases with gerunds are: *estar* (*be*), *ir* (*go*), *venir* (*come*), *andar* (*walk*), *llevar* (*take*), *quedar(se)* (*stay*), *seguir* (*continue*), *continuar* (*continue*), *proseguir* (*go on*), *acabar* (*finish*), *terminar* (*end up*), *empezar* (*begin*) and *comenzar* (*start*). Gerund periphrases can be classified by the aspectual meaning they express as a semantic unit in: a) inchoative periphrases (i.e., *ir* + *gerundio*), b) progressive periphrases (i.e., *andar* + *gerundio*), and c) terminative periphrases (i.e., *acabar* + *gerundio*).

In (4) there is a gerund periphrasis constituted by the auxiliary verb *estar* (*be*) and the gerund *contando* (*telling*); this periphrasis marks progressive meaning, as Muysken (2005: 39) asserts. The auxiliary verb is conjugated in present tense, indicative mood, first person singular. It can be observed that the clitic *te* (*you*) is connected to the gerund *contando*; however, in Spanish it is also common to see clitics as separate words preceding the auxiliary verb *estoy* (*I am*): *te estoy contando* (*I am telling you*).

(4) Préstame atención, *estoy contándote* algo muy serio. (Vieira, 2010: 2)

In this theoretical section, it has been argued that gerund in Spanish is a non-finite form that is commonly used with four main syntactic functions, i.e., as external adjunct, as internal adjunct, as predicative construction and as verbal periphrasis. As external adjuncts, gerunds can display four main meanings: time, cause, condition and concession. As internal adjuncts, gerunds

can be modal, illocutive, locative or lexicalized. As a predicative construction, gerunds can be a predicate of a direct complement, a predicate of a nominal syntagm or an independent construction. Finally, as a periphrasis, gerunds can present three main meanings: inchoative, progressive and terminative.

## **Methodology**

### *Corpus Formation*

For this research a corpus of 60 texts of different typologies and genres has been collected. According to Rück (1991: 37-38), there are several textual typologies; however the most common one is the typology that establishes that texts can be classified in relation to their structure as descriptive, narrative, expository, argumentative and injunctive.

We have taken the concept of textual genre from Bakhtin (1986: 60) who states that “Wealth and diversity of speech genres are boundless because the various possibilities of human activity are inexhaustible.” In fact, the author insists that textual genres are characterized not only by their thematic content but also by the selection of specific vocabulary, utterances and grammatical sources that constitute the text.

Thus, taking into account both concepts (typology and genre), we have considered a variety of textual genres for our corpus; it must be mentioned that all of them belong to Mexican Spanish. From the written material we have examined 15 different genres: 1) reports, 2) editorials, 3) reviews, 4) essays, 5) thesis chapters, 6) promotion articles, 7) biographies, 8) fragments of novels, 9) stories for children, 10) e-mails, 11) exams, 12) advertisements in magazines, 13) cooking recipes, 14) blogs and 15) forums on the Internet. From the oral material we have examined 15 different genres: 1) spontaneous conversations, 2) phone conversations, 3) conversations through Skype, 4) sports chronicles, 5) radio interviews, 6) television interviews, 7) welcome speeches, 8) closing remarks in speeches, 9) conferences, 10) songs, 11) film excerpts, 12) radio news reports, 13) academic meetings, 14) television publicity and 15) humorous stories. It is important to mention that we have considered two different texts from each genre.

### *Analysis Procedure*

Through analyzing the corpus, we first identified all the gerunds in the 60 texts. Afterwards, we have sorted them according to the theoretical frameworks of Fernández Lagunilla (1999), Yllera (1999), Muysken (2005), Ojea (2011) and Martínez Vilinsky (2012), complemented by the ideas of Niño-Murcia (1995) and Herrero (1995). Our classification can be schematized in the following way.

1. Gerunds as external adjuncts
  - a. Temporal gerunds
  - b. Causal gerunds

- c. Conditional gerunds
- d. Concessive gerunds
- 2. Gerunds as internal adjuncts
  - a. Modal gerunds
  - b. Illocutive gerunds
  - c. Locative gerunds
  - d. Lexicalized gerunds
- 3. Predicative gerunds
  - a. Gerunds as predicates of a direct complement
  - b. Gerunds as predicates of a nominal syntagm
  - c. Independent gerunds
- 4. Gerund periphrases
  - a. Inchoative periphrases
  - b. Progressive periphrases
  - c. Terminative periphrases

## Analysis

After having presented the theoretical background and the methodology, we now continue with the corpus analysis according to the classification scheme presented above. It is important to state that all the categories of gerunds that were proposed in the classification were found in the spoken texts of the corpus. However, neither conditional nor concessive gerunds were found in the written texts of the corpus.

Moreover, there were two main categories of our classification that were by far the most frequently observed in the corpus (in both written and spoken texts): the progressive periphrases 124/269 (40.1%) and the modal gerunds 68/269 (25.3%), as can be observed in table 1. It is important to mention that in the written texts, the most frequent gerund clause was the modal gerund; while in the spoken texts, the most frequent gerund construction was the verbal periphrasis with progressive meaning.

### *External Adjuncts*

In the category of gerunds as external adjuncts, there were 10 temporal gerunds (3.7%), 4 in written texts and 6 in spoken texts; 9 causal gerunds (3.3%), 7 in written texts and 2 in spoken texts; 2 conditional gerunds (0.7%), both registered in spoken texts; and only 1 concessive gerund (0.4%) found in a spoken text.

- (5) Italia consiguió darle la vuelta a un marcador contrario, ya que Japón llegó a abrir una ventaja de dos goles en el primer tiempo, y tan sólo anotó el gol del triunfo *faltando cinco minutos para el final del partido*. (Sports report, 19/06/2013)
- (6) Anotando dos goles, Ronaldo no sólo le da confianza al equipo, sino también tranquilidad (Sports chronicle, 23/01/2010)
- (7) Es que decía el mensaje que haciendo 200 puntos en una compra entre



hoy y mañana te regalan una mochila. (E-mail, 12/02/2014)

- (8) Me atrevo a afirmar que como amigos, pero siempre manteniéndose el respeto (Closing remarks in speech, 20/06/2013)

In example (5) one can observe the gerund clause *faltando cinco minutos para el final del partido* (*missing five minutes for the end of the game*) with temporal meaning, since the gerund clause communicates an action that temporally situates the action expressed in the main clause. In example (6) the gerund clause *anotando dos goles* (*scoring two goals*) has a causal meaning, for the reason that Ronaldo gives trust and calm to the team is precisely because he scored two goals. In example (7) the gerund clause *haciendo 200 puntos en una compra entre hoy y mañana* (*making 200 points in one buy between today and tomorrow*) displays a conditional meaning; this clause could be paraphrased by a finite clause with the conjunction *si* in Spanish (or 'if' in English): *Si haces 200 puntos...* (*If you make 200 points...*). Finally, in example (8), there is the gerund clause *pero siempre manteniéndose el respeto* (*but always keeping respect*) with a concessive meaning, the nexus *pero* (*but*) highlights the concessive sense of the clause.

#### *Internal Adjuncts*

In the category of internal adjuncts, the most frequently found gerunds were by far the modal gerunds with 68 frequencies (25.3%), 51 in written texts and 17 in spoken texts. Besides modal gerunds, there were 7 lexicalized gerunds (2.6%), 2 of them found in written texts and the other 5 in spoken texts. Finally, there were 5 illocutive gerunds (1.8%), 3 found in written texts and 2 in spoken texts; and also 5 locative gerunds (1.8%), 1 found in a written text and the other 4 in spoken texts.

- (9) Y yo echaba pal monte, entreverándome entre los madroños y pasándome los días comiendo verdolagas. (Story: Rulfo, Juan. 1953. El llano en llamas)
- (10) El programa de "Selección de deportes a nivel genético molecular" será supervisado por la Academia de las Ciencias de Uzbekistán en cooperación con el Comité Nacional Olímpico y varias de las federaciones deportivas del país, incluyendo la del fútbol, natación y remo. (Promotion article: 10/02/2014)
- (11) Retomando lo que ya dijeron los compañeros, yo creo que sí es importante que se tomen en cuenta los factores que presentaste al inicio. (Academic meeting, 14/09/2012)
- (12) Hay allí, pasando el puerto de Los Colimotes, la vista muy hermosa de una llanura verde, algo amarilla por el maíz maduro. (Novel fragment: Rulfo, Juan. 1955. Pedro Páramo)

In example (9) we observe three modal gerunds: *entreverándome entre los madroños*, *pasándome los días* and *comiendo verdolagas* (*hiding among the arbutus*, *spending the days* and *eating purslane*). The first two gerund constructions give information about how the main character of the story says that he run away to the mountains (*yo echaba pal monte*); the last gerund

clause contains a modal meaning *comiendo verdolagas* (*eating purslane*) about the second gerund clause *pasándome los días* (*spending the days*). In example (10) we can observe the lexicalized gerund *incluyendo* (*including*), which is used as a preposition that introduces one or more parts of a group previously mentioned in the co-text. In example (11) the gerund clause *retomando lo que ya dijeron los compañeros* (*reconsidering what my colleagues have already stated*) has an illocutive value; the verb in the non-finite form is a *verbum dicendi*. Example (12) shows a locative gerund, *pasando el puerto de Los Colimotes* (*passing the port of Los Colimotes*); it is important to recognise that the gerund is a movement verb, *pasando* (*passing*), while the verb that precedes the gerund is a locative verb, *hay* (*there is*).

### *Predicative Constructions*

In the category of predicative constructions, there were in first place 12 gerunds considered as predicates of a nominal syntagm (4.5%), 5 of them were found in written texts and the other 7 in spoken texts; 7 gerunds were predicates of a direct complement (2.6%), 6 were found in spoken texts and only 1 in a written text; finally there were 5 independent gerunds (1.8%), 3 in spoken texts and the other 2 in written texts.

(13) Blanca Nelly, propietaria vitalicia de biología, ecología y anatomía, y su mano firme, pero nunca en exceso, *siendo estricta cuando debe de serlo* (Closing remarks in speech, 20/06/2013)

(14) Tempranito llegaré si me dices que me amas. Yo te vi, yo te vi, yo te vi, yo te vi *llorando*. Sí, sí te vi, sí te vi, sí te vi *llorando*. (Song from the film *Rudo y Cursi*: 2008)

(15) ¡Tú siempre comiendo y fumando! No manches. (Spontaneous talk, 7/02/2014)

In (13) we examine an example of the gerund clause *siendo estricta cuando debe de serlo* (*being strict when it is necessary*) that plays the role of a predicate of a nominal syntagm (*Blanca Nelly*). In example (14) *llorando* is a gerund clause that is considered a predicate of a direct complement; the verb of the main clause is the perception verb *ver* (*to see*) conjugated in past tense, indicative mood, first person singular. Concerning this example, Ojea (2011: 179) states: “[...] in this construction the perception verb selects an individual as its complement and not a proposition, which means that the V-ndo complement must be treated here, as expected, as a non-nominal category, i.e. as a predicative adjunct [...]”. Thus, the direct complement of the perception verb *ver* (*to see*) is *te* (*you*), which at the same time is the subject of the predicative gerund clause *llorando* (*crying*). Finally, in (15) we can appreciate an independent gerund with an exclamative value. In the example the subject of the gerund is *tú* (*you*), but there is no finite verb that syntactically governs the gerund construction.

### *Gerund Periphrases*

Periphrases were by far the most frequent gerund constructions observed in the corpus. Moreover, the most recurrent periphrasis was the one with a

progressive meaning with 124 frequencies (46.1%), 48 in written texts and 76 in spoken texts; in second place, 9 inchoative periphrases (3.4%) were found in the corpus, 3 in written texts and 6 in oral texts; finally, there were 5 terminative constructions (1.8%), 4 in spoken texts and only 1 in a written text.

(16) Estos comités municipales y los coordinadores distritales *están* ahora *ocupándose* de crear, de constituir comités en cada sección electoral del país. (Welcome speech, 04/01/2011)

(17) Chávez inicia escribiendo obras de teatro en los años setenta cuyo enfoque eran los problemas político sociales de los chicanos, también ponía énfasis en el bilingüismo y en el sentido del humor de dicho grupo. (Thesis chapter, April, 2013)

(18) Tú me quieres ganar, en fa... por eso se te acaba el aire, güey, y te acabas tronando antes. (Film fragment: Y tu mamá también, 2001)

In (16), there is a gerund periphrasis constituted by the auxiliary verb *estar* (to be) and the gerund *ocupándose* (dealing); this periphrasis marks progressive meaning, as Muysken (2005: 39) asserts. The auxiliary verb is conjugated in present tense, indicative mood, third person plural. In (17) there is another gerund periphrasis with inchoative meaning in which we can observe the auxiliary verb *iniciar* (to begin) conjugated in present tense, indicative mood, third person singular, and the gerund *escribiendo* (writing). Finally, in (18) there is another gerund periphrasis formed by the verb *acabar* (to end up) and the gerund *tronando* (running out). The auxiliary verb is the finite verb *acabar* (end up) that is conjugated in present tense, indicative mood, second person singular. The clitic *te* (you) appears as a separate word, preceding the auxiliary verb *acabas*; however, as it has been stated in the theoretical section, it is also possible to see the clitic joined to the gerund *tronando*: *acabas tronándote* (you end up running out). One example of the clitic joined to the gerund can be observed precisely in (16) *ocupándose*. Notice that in all the examples the auxiliary verb precedes the gerund, and the subject of the gerund is identical to that of the auxiliary (Muysken, 2005: 40).

It is important to state that gerund periphrasis *estar* + gerund was the most common gerund construction in our corpus representing 27.5% (74/269) of all the gerund constructions found. This periphrasis presents a perspective of the action during its development. In other words, it presents actions in progress and it is frequently used in order to denote a continuous activity.

Furthermore, the auxiliary verb *estar* was found in a variety of moods, tenses, and persons, as can be observed in examples (19-26). In (19) it is used in present tense, indicative mood, third person singular. In (20) it is found in perfective past tense, indicative mood, third person singular. In (21) it is conjugated in imperfective past tense, indicative mood, third person singular. In (22) it is used in future tense, indicative mood, third person singular. In (23) it is conjugated in present tense, subjunctive mood, first person plural. In (24) it is conjugated in past tense, subjunctive mood, first person singular. In (25) it is found in past perfect tense, subjunctive mood, third person singular. Finally, in (26) the auxiliary verb is used in another non-finite form, i.e., infinitive. All

these examples demonstrate the different contexts in which this gerund construction can be used in Spanish.

- (19) Además, *está lloviendo*. Tal vez cuando pase la lluvia, llegue la gente. (Film fragment: Atlético San Pancho, 2001)
- (20) [...] por lo que se convirtieron en líderes del Movimiento Chicano, cuya ideología *fue gestándose* en documentos como El Plan de Delano (Universidad de Loyola, 1966) [...] (Thesis chapter, April, 2013)
- (21) Y él había bajado a eso: a decirles que allí *estaba comenzando* a crecer la milpa (Story: Rulfo, Juan. 1953. El llano en llamas).
- (22) ¿Qué *estará pensando* nuestro gobierno? (Welcome speech: 04/01/2011)
- (23) Ya no *estemos perdiendo* el tiempo pensando que las cosas van a mejorar por decisión de los de arriba. (Welcome speech, 04/01/2011)
- (24) Siempre me han hecho sentir como si ya *estuviera viviendo* aquí diez años. (Television interview, 28/10/2011)
- (25) Parecía que me *hubiera estado esperando*. (Novel fragment: Rulfo, Juan. 1955. Pedro Páramo)
- (26) No importa la edad que tengas, siempre tienes que *estar aprendiendo*. (Television interview, 28/10/2011)

The results illustrated in the analysis are summarized in table 1, following the classification offered in the methodology section. In the third column we present the results obtained in written texts and in the fourth column we present the results obtained in spoken texts in order to point out the differences found in both data.

**Table 1. Results of the Corpus Analysis**

Main categories		Written texts	Spoken texts	All texts	Relative frequencies
External adjuncts	Temporal gerunds	4	6	10	3.7%
	Causal gerunds	7	2	9	3.3%
	Conditional gerunds	-	2	2	0.7%
	Concessive gerunds	-	1	1	0.4%
Internal adjuncts	Modal gerunds	51	17	68	25.3%
	Illocutive gerunds	3	2	5	1.8%
	Locative gerunds	1	4	5	1.8%
	Lexicalized gerunds	2	5	7	2.6%
Predicative constructions	Gerunds as predicates of a direct complement	1	6	7	2.6%
	Gerunds as predicates of a nominal syntagm	5	7	12	4.5%
	Independent gerunds	2	3	5	1.8%
Periphrases	Inchoative periphrases	3	6	9	3.4%
	Progressive periphrases	48	76	124	46.1%
	Terminative periphrases	1	4	5	1.8%
Total		128	141	269	99.8%

## Conclusions

Throughout this paper, we have demonstrated that the gerund in Mexican Spanish is a non-finite form that is commonly used in many different textual genres and contexts with a considerable number of syntactic functions. In this study we have stated that there are four main syntactic functions that gerund clauses can display within a text, i.e., external adjuncts, internal adjuncts, predicative constructions, and verbal periphrases.

As external adjuncts, gerunds in our corpus were not so abundant; they constituted barely 8.1% of the corpus. The most frequent function displayed by gerunds in this section was the temporal one with 3.7%. Secondly, causal gerunds constituted 3.3% of the corpus. Lastly, conditional and concessive gerunds were only found in the spoken data and they constituted 0.7% and 0.4% respectively.

As internal adjuncts, gerunds were more numerous than the external adjuncts, and they formed 31.5% of the corpus. The most frequent construction in this section was the modal gerund with 25.3%. Secondly, lexicalized gerunds represented 2.6% of the corpus. Finally, we found the illocutive and locative gerunds, which constituted 1.8% each.

As predicative constructions, gerunds were not as numerous as internal adjuncts but were more abundant than external adjuncts. They constituted 8.9% of the corpus. The most commonly registered construction was the gerund as a predicate of a nominal syntagm with 4.5%. Secondly, there was the gerund as a predicate of a direct complement with 2.6%. Finally, there was the independent gerund with 1.8%.

Gerunds as verbal periphrases were the most commonly used in the corpus; they represented 51.3%. Progressive periphrases were the most frequent with 46.1%. Secondly, inchoative periphrases were found with 3.4%. Finally, terminative periphrases were registered with 1.8%.

In this study we have presented important data about the syntactic functions gerunds have in a variety of textual genres from Mexican Spanish. Nevertheless, there is still research to be carried out in the area of non-finite forms in different varieties of Spanish from different linguistic perspectives.

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