The Spanish Nominalized Infinitives: A proposal for a classification

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This article analyzes nominalized infinitival constructions in Spanish that conform to the patterns (a), (b), and (c), as exemplified in (a'), (b'), and (c') respectively.

(a) Determinant + Noun Phrases (D+NP)
(a') Aquel escribir de Gabriel explica su fama
‘That writing-INF of Gabriel explains his fame’

(b) Determinant + Complementizer Phrase (D+CP)
(b') El escribir novelas ella explica su fama
‘The writing-INF novels she explains her fame’

(c) Determinant + Agreement Phrase (D+AgrP)
(c') Su escribir novelas explica su fama
‘His/her writing-INF novels explains his/her fame’

Studies on nominalized infinitivals focus mainly on structures that behave clearly as NPs (a), or CPs (b), dismissing other type of constructions. Based on differences in the internal configuration and distribution of the structures, I argue that there is a third pattern (c). Consistent restrictions in its internal structure, such as the incompatibility of the presence of adverbs and genitive subjects, as well as accusatives and genitive subjects, among others, suggest that type (c) is not an exception but an actual pattern. This proposal explains the properties and contexts for the structures analyzed.

0 Introduction

Most of the literature on nominalized infinitivals in Spanish argue for the distinction of two types of constructions: CP-like and DP-like constructions (see Plann (1981), Wilkins (1985), De Miguel (1995)), and the cases that do not fit into any of those categories are disregarded as exceptions. I argue here that in Spanish there is a third
type of nominalized infinitival: verbal infinitival, which patterns in a structure with AgrP. I follow a three-type distinction that follows along the lines of Zucchi’s (1993) proposal.

The inspection of nominalized infinitival constructions in Spanish shows that they are not structurally uniform. We find Prima facie in two categories. The first one: nominal infinitives present c-selection properties of nouns and pattern in structure with noun phrases. The second one: sentential clause infinitives present a projection that patterns in structure along with CPs. On one hand, nominal infinitives present the same characteristics of a deverbal nominal: adjectival modification, selection of determiner, genitive subject. On the other hand, sentential infinitives present restriction in the selection of determiners, nominative subjects, direct objects, auxiliaries, and can be modified by adverbs.

1 Nominal infinitives

This type of nominalized infinitival patterns like NPs in that it accepts adjectival modification, freedom in the selection of determiners, and genitive subjects. Like any bare nominal, this type of nominal accepts adjectival modification. For instance, the infinitival murmurar ‘to whisper’ in (1a) like the noun murmullo in (1b) may be modified by adjectives either in preposed or in postposed position. For clarity, in the example, the adjective in question is underlined.

(1) Nominalized Infinitival
   a. El suave murmurar / El murmurar suave    (Adj - Nominal - Adj)
      the soft whisper-INF / the whisper-INF’ soft ‘the soft whispering’
   b. El suave murmullo / El murmullo suave     (Adj - Deverbal - Adj)
      the soft whisper(n) / the whisper(n) suave ‘the soft whisper’

   In addition, this type of nominal presents freedom in the selection of determiners. Nominal infinitivals can take demonstratives, indefinite articles, possessives or definite articles as illustrated in (2) below.

(2) a. Aquel/Ese grito me exaspera     (Dem/indef - Nominal.)
      that    screaming-INF me exasperates
      ‘That screaming exasperates me.’

     b. Aquel/Ese grito me exaspera         (Dem/indef - Deverbal)
     ‘That scream exasperates me.’

     c. Su/el murmurar explica la reacción de María (Poss/def - Nominal.)
     his/the whisper-INF explains the reaction of Mary
     ‘His/the whispering explains Mary’s reaction.’
d. Su/el murmullo explica la reacción de María
   (Poss/def - Deverbal)
   ‘His/the whispering explains Mary’s reaction.’

Furthermore, as deverbal nominals like (3b) and (3d), this type of nominalization accepts genitive subjects: either of-subjects (3a) or possessive pronoun subjects (3c).

(3) a. El suave murmurar del mar
    (Nominal. - of-subject)
    the soft whisper-INF of the sea
    ‘the soft whispering of the sea’

b. El suave murmullo del mar
   (Deverbal - of-subject)
   the soft whisper(noun) of the sea
   ‘the soft whisper of the sea’

c. El gritar suyo molesta a la gente
   (Nominal. - poss pron)
   the scream-INF of his bothers to the people
   ‘The screaming of his bothers people.’

d. El grito suyo molesta a la gente
   (Deverbal - poss pron)
   the scream(noun) of his bothers to the people
   ‘The scream of his bothers people.’

2 Sentential Infinitivals

Other types of constructions with nominalized infinitival form the pattern along with CP structures. Let us examine some characteristics. Contrary to the nominal infinitives, sentential infinitives show restriction in the selection of determiners; they only accept definite articles (4a) as its tensed counterpart (4b), and they do not accept demonstratives or indefinite articles as it is shown in (4c) or possessives (4d).

(4) a. El escribir novelas ella explica su fama
    (Infintive)
    the writing-INF novels she explains her fame

b. El que ella escriba novelas explica su fama
   (Tensed)
   that she writes novels explains her fame

c. ?? Aquel/ese escribir novelas ella explica su fama
   (4c)
   that writing-INF novels she explains her fame

d. * Su/escibir novelas ella explica su fama
   (Poss/def - Deverbal)
   her/that writing-INF novels she explains her fame
Sentential infinitivals only allow nominative subjects (5a) just like a tensed clause (5b).

(5)  a. El escribir novelas ella explica su fama  (Infin.)
     the writing-INF novels she explains her fame

     b. El que ella escriba novelas explica su fama  (Tense)
        that she writes novels explains her fame

In addition, sentential infinitivals accept direct objects Case marked for accusative.

(6)  a. El escribir novelas ella explica su fama
     the writing-INF novels she explains her fame

Sentential infinitivals occur with manner and time adverbs:

(7)  a. El escribir ella novelas constantemente explica su destreza.  (Adv. manner)
     the writing-INF she novels constantly explains her ability

     b. El haber ella conducido ayer un camión explica su alegría  (Adv. Time)
        the aux-INF she driving yesterday a truck explains her happiness

An argument for the CP projection of this type of nominals is that they take auxiliaries as it is illustrated in (8) below.

(8)  a. El poder escribir novelas ella explica su fama
     the aux-INF writing novels she explains her fame

     b. El haber escrito novelas ella explica su fama
        the aux-INF writing novels she explains her fame

2.1 Some restrictions

So far we have presented the structure of two main classes of nominalized infinitives; nevertheless, restrictions in the internal structure of sentential nominalized infinitivals lead us to hypothesize that this type - the sentential infinitivals - is not a homogeneous class. The restrictions that this type of construction presents are the following: In sentential infinitives the presence of adverbs is incompatible with of-subjects as illustrated in (9).

(9)  * el escribir constantemente de ella explica su habilidad
     the write-INF constantly novels of her explains her ability

Furthermore, the presence of accusatives is incompatible with of-subjects such as in (10), where the logical subject de ella ‘of hers’ is understood to be part of the accusative and not the logical subject.
(10) el escribir constantemente novelas [de ella] explica su habilidad
   the write-INF constantly novels of her explains her ability
   ‘The writing constantly [of] novels [about her] explains his/her ability.’

Sentential infinitivals do not allow adjectives either preposed (11a) or postposed (11b).

(11) a. * El continuo escribir ella novelas explica su destreza. (preposed Adj.)
   the continuous write-INF she novels explains her ability
   b. * El conducir ella rápido un camión explica la multa  (postposed Adj.)
   the driving-INF she fast a truck explains the fine

Also in constructions with sentential infinitives, nominative subjects (12a) are
incompatible with possessive determiners such as in (12b) and demonstrative
determiners (12c).

(12) a. El haber ella hecho estudios en Cuba le ayudó a mejorar se español
   (Det-Nom)
   the have-INF she done studies in Cuba helped to improve his Spanish
   b. * Su haber ella hecho estudios en Cuba le ayudó a mejorar se español
      (Pos-Nom)
   his/her have-INF she done his studies in Cuba helped to improve his Spanish
   c. * Ese haber él escrito esa carta explica su alegría  (Demons.- Nom)
   that have-INF he written that letter explains his/her happiness

In conclusion, the structural restrictions that occur in constructions with
nominalized infinitivals are the following:

(i) the presence of adverbs (characteristic of sentential infinitives) is
    incompatible with of subjects (characteristic of nominal infinitives).

(ii) the occurrence of accusatives (characteristic of sentential infinitives) is
     incompatible with of-subjects (characteristic of nominal infinitives).

(iii) sentential infinitivals do not allow either pre-posed or post-posed adjectives

(iv) the presence of possessive determiners (nominal) is incompatible with
     nominative subjects (clausal).
3 Mixed Categories

In addition to the restrictions presented above, some constructions with nominalized infinitivals seem to belong to mixed categories. As indicated previously, the presence of adjectives is proper for nominal infinitives, whereas auxiliaries occur with sentential infinitives. There appears to be structures that allow the occurrence of both: adjectives and auxiliaries. The adjective can occur in preverbal position such as in (13a) or postverbal position such as in (13b).

(13)  a. Su fácil poder recobrarse lo hace muy buen atleta
      his easy-ADJ AUX-INF recover-INF CLT makes very good athlete
      ‘His being able to recover makes him a good athlete.’

      b. el haber conducido rápido causó el accidente
      the AUX-INF driven fast-ADJ caused the accident
      ‘The fast driving caused the accident.’

Moreover, this type of category allows the co-occurrence of demonstratives/indefinite/definite articles – which are characteristic of nominal infinitives – and accusatives, which are characteristic of sentential infinitives (14).

(14) El/Aquel/Ese escribir novelas explica su fama
      the/that writing-INF novels explains -his fame- ACC

This mixed category allows the simultaneous occurrence of demonstratives and adverbs as shown in (15). Analogously, it allows the occurrence of a possessive pronounal subject and accusative object, as illustrated in (16).

(15) Aquel conducir camiones imprudentemente representa un peligro
      that-DEM driving-INF trucks careless-ADV represents a danger

(16) Su escribir novelas explica su fama
      his/her writing-INF novels explains his/her fame
      ‘That writing novels of him/hers gave him/her fame.’

Furthermore, adjectives and adverbs can co-occur in this mixed category (17).

(17) Su continuo conducir camiones imprudentemente representa un peligro
      his/her continuous driving-INF trucks careless represents a danger
      ‘His/her continuous careless driving represents a danger.’

To sum up, in addition to the structural restrictions presented in the previous section, nominalized infinitivals present a mixed category that allows the following co-occurrences:
(i) This mixed category permits the co-occurrence of adjectives (characteristics of nominal infinitives) and auxiliaries (characteristics of clausal infinitives).

(ii) The mixed category allows the co-occurrence of demonstratives/indefinite/definite articles (which are characteristic of nominal infinitives) and accusatives (which are proper of sentential infinitives).

(iii) This mixed category allows the simultaneous occurrence of demonstratives (nominal) and adverbs (clausal).

(iv) It also allows the occurrence of a possessive pronoun subject (nominal) and an accusative object (sentential).

(v) The mixed category allows the co-occurrence of adjectives (nominal) and accusatives (sentential).

The structural restrictions and the co-occurrence of categories suggest the existence of a third type of structure: a verbal infinitive that has AgrP characteristics.\(^1\) Evidence for the AgrP nature of this structure is provided by the fact that it allows modals as well as accusative case and the modification of adjectives and adverbs. It also presents some structural contrast with respect to the other two types of nominalizations.

4 The Contrast between Nominal infinitives and verbal (AgrP) infinitives

Grimshaw & Selkirk (1976) and Salvi (1982) showed that NPs such as (18a) and (18b) differ in their internal structure. In the structures where the logical subject of the infinitive is introduced by the preposition de ‘of’, the infinitive may only be modified by adjectives, but not by adverbs, as shown by the ungrammaticality of (18c).

(18) a. El murmurar suavemente
      the whisper-INF softly
      ‘the soft whispering’

          b. El suave murmurar del mar
             the soft-ADJ whisper-INF of the sea
             ‘the soft whispering of the sea’

          c. * El murmurar suavemente del mar
             the whisper-INF softly of the sea

\(^1\) For the sake of exposition we will refer to the AgrP - type of nominalization as verbal infinitive.
As indicated before, the occurrence of the of-subject is incompatible with the presence of the direct object. Although a case such as (19a) is grammatical, the subject of the infinitive is understood to be other than the one introduced by the proposition de, ‘of’ in this case, los ancianos ‘the elders’ since the whole construction la guerra de los ancianos ‘the war of the elders’ becomes the direct object of evocar ‘to evoke’. The meaning conveyed is that the evoked thing is the war of the elders and not that the elder evoke the war. The semantic alternation does not depend on the order of the elements in the clause, as it is show in (19b).

(19) a. * El evocar la guerra de los ancianos  
    the evoking-INF the war of the elders

   b. * El evocar de los ancianos la guerra  
    the evoke-INF the war of the elders

Structures that contain the deverbal nominals cese ‘cease’ instead of the verbal form show that in Spanish, adverbs cannot modify nouns (as shown by the ungrammaticality of (20a)) and nouns cannot take non-prepositional direct objects (20b).

(20) a. * El cese repentinamente de las hostilidades  
    the cease(INF) sudden of the hostilities  
    ‘the sudden cease of the hostilities’

   b. El cese repentino de las hostilidades  
    the cease(INF) sudden of the hostilities  
    ‘the sudden cease of the hostilities’

In order to derive the properties of the nominal and AgrP-like structures, we assume along the lines of Siloni (1997) that the syntactic representation of nominalized infinitivals contains a verbal projection. That is to say that they are not represented in the lexicon as nouns, but inserted in the syntax as verbs and then embedded in N via V-raising. In an attempt to account for the asymmetries in syntactic distribution, we propose for nominal infinitivals like (21), which contains adjectives and of-subjects, the structure presented in (23); and for AgrP infinitivals such as (22), where there occurs adverbs and direct object, the simplified structure presented in (24).

(21) El suave murmurar del mar  
    the softADJ whisper-INF of the sea  
    ‘the soft whispering of the sea’

(22) El cesar repentinamente las hostilidades  
    the cease-INF suddenly-ADV the hostilities-ACC  
    ‘to cease suddenly the hostilities’
5 The Contrast between sentential infinitives and verbal (AgrP) infinitives.

So far, I have argued for two different structures, cases such as (23) project a nominal structure, whereas (24) projects an AgrP structure. But what kind of structure do cases such as (25) project?

(25) El haber escrito novelas ella explica su fama
the aux-INF writing novels she explains her fame

The occurrence of a direct object novelas ‘novels’ excludes the analysis in (23) since it indicates that a VP node is present. Hence, we have two alternatives, one is to assign
the analysis proposed in (24) or to assign a third kind of structure. In order to discuss the alternatives, it is necessary to review the characteristics of nominalizations found in (25) compared to those represented in (24)).

As previously mentioned, one of the differences between sentential and AgrP structures is that in the former a nominative subject is accepted, as illustrated in (26a), whereas in the latter the appearance of a nominative subject is incompatible with the presence of a possessive, as shown in (26b).

(26) a. El haber ella hecho estudios en Cuba le ayudó a mejorar su español
the have-INF she done studies in Cuba CLT helped to improve her Spanish
‘(She) having done her studies in Cuba helped her improve her Spanish.’

b. * Su haber ella hecho estudios en Cuba le ayudó a mejorar su español
her have-INF she done studies in Cuba CLT helped to improve her Spanish

AgrP constructions allow pre-posed adjectives, as shown in (27a and b), but sentential infinitives such as (28) do not allow such adjectives.

(27) a. Su hacer poco dinero
his/her make-INF little money
‘his/her making little money’

b. Su continuo hacer poco dinero
his/her continuous make-INF little money
‘his/her continuous making little money’

(28) a. El hacer él poco dinero
the make-INF he little money
‘his making little money’

b. * El continuo hacer él poco dinero
the continuous make-INF he little money

AgrP infinitive constructions with genitive or possessive subjects allow a whole range of determiners: demonstratives as in (29a,b), or definite article like (29c). In sentential constructions, the nominative subject is allowed only with the definite articles (30a) and disallowed with indefinite articles (30a, b).

(29) a. Aquel comer apresuradamente de Juan
that eat-INF I in a rush of Juan GEN
‘Juan’s eating in a rush.’

b. ese recitar poesías suyo
that recite-INF poems of him/hers POSS
‘her/his reciting of poems’
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c. El escribir novelas suyo
   the write-INF novels of him/ hers POSS
   ‘her/his writing novels’

\(30\) a. El haber él escrito esa carta explica su alegría
   his have-INF he NOM written that letter explains his happiness
   ‘His having written that letter explains his happiness.’

b. * Ese haber él escrito esa carta explica su alegría
   that have-INF he NOM written that letter explains his happiness

c. * Aquel haber él escrito esa carta explica su alegría
   that have-INF he NOM written that letter explains his happiness

The main internal differences illustrated in cases (26) – (30) argue for a clear distinction between verbal and sentential infinitives. To summarize, the main differences between constructions such as (31) and (32) are presented in (i)- (iii).

\(31\) El hacer ella poco dinero
   the make-INF she little money
   ‘His making little money’

\(32\) Su continuo hacer poco dinero
   his/her continuous make-INF little money
   ‘his/her continuous making little money’

(i) In cases such as (31) there occurs a nominative subject, whereas in cases such as (32) a possessive subject is present; the presence of the nominative is incompatible with the occurrence of a possessive.

(ii) Pre-posed adjectives are allowed in (32) but disallowed in (31).

(iii) Demonstratives and indefinites are allowed in (32) but not in (31).

In terms of the syntactic projection of these structures, it seems logical to assume that all the differences listed above could not be explained consistently with one analysis (one projection). Thus, we propose that sentential nominalization project a structure such as (33) below.

According to our proposal, structures such as (33) implicate embedding CP under DP. The presence of a possessive subject is incompatible in this analysis because there is no argument to which the possessive can be linked to since CP’s do not take arguments, although they may be arguments themselves. In contrast, possessives can occur in AgrP structures like (24) above since D behaves in a similar way to the complementizer of sentential complements in which each one turns its complement (NP and AgrP respectively) into an expression that is able to occur in
argument position. That is to say, that in the derivational process once AgrP is embedded under D, the argument to which the possessive can be linked becomes available.

(33)

In addition, the presence of pre-posed adjectives is not allowed in (33) since adjectives are not modifiers of CPs. However, the difference in the determiners each structure takes does not follow from the structures presented (24) and (33); they may differ in the fact that they instantiate different CP structures. In view of the differences between the two types of constructions in question, the projection proposed seem preferable than to try to force a single analysis for the two types of constructions.

Although the three types presented above seem well differentiated, there are some cases that cannot be accounted for by the structures proposed. In the following section, I review the structures that are not predicted by our analysis.
6 Problematic cases

6.1 Lack of Objects

Although our proposal accounts for some cases considered as exceptions in other studies\(^2\), Spanish presents some infinitival constructions that are not accounted for in the proposed syntactic analysis examined in this paper; for instance, the absence of object arguments in nominal infinitivals such as the following ones:

(34) a. el declamar de José
    the recite-INF of J.
    ‘Jose’s recitation’

    b. * el declamar de la poesía
    the recite-INF of the poem
    ‘the reciting of the poem’

This fact is unexpected since the corresponding derived noun allows an object as it is illustrated in (35) below.

(35) la declamación de la poesía
    ‘the recitation of the poem’

There is no principled account that to my knowledge of why nominal infinitives are limited in their capacity to project an argument structure, with the exception of the PP with the subject function.

1.6.2 Post-posed Adjectives

In constructions such as (36a) the VP *contar historias tenebrosas* ‘to tell scary stories’ is modified by an adjective (*continuo* ‘continuous’ in this case). We infer that the adjective is higher in the derivation than the VP. What remains unexplained is why the adjective cannot occur after the VP such as in (36b).

(36) a. su continuo contar historias tenebrosas
    his/her continuous tell-INF stories scary
    ‘his/her continuous telling scary stories’

    b. * su contar historias tenebrosas continuo
    his tell-INF stories scary continuosly

In trying to account for (36b), we note that the position of post-posed adjectives is also constrained in NPs headed by a lexical nouns such as (37). This example shows that the adjectives may occur in postnominal position only if they are adjacent to the head

\(^2\) See Plann (1981), Wilkins (1985), and De Miguel (1995) among others.
noun. Thus in (37a) cruel has scope over cuidad ‘city’, but not in (37b) where the meaning conveyed is that the city is cruel but not the destruction.

(37) a. la destrucción cruel de la ciudad  
the destruction cruel of the city  
‘the cruel destruction of the city’

b. ?? [la destrucción de la ciudad] cruel 
the destruction of the cruel city  
‘the destruction of the cruel city’

The fact that adjectives may occur in postnominal position only if they are adjacent to the head noun suggest a possible cause not only for the ungrammaticality of (36b) but also for the ill-formedness of (38).

(38) * su murmurar continuo palabras dulces 
his/her whispering continuous words sweet

If we assume that adjectives must be adjacent to the head noun, this would explain the ungrammaticality of (36b) and (38) since the NPs lack a head to which the adjectives could be adjacent. However, there is a problem to this explanation, it only works if we assume along that prenominal adjectives, unlike postnominal adjectives are not subject to the requirement that they be adjacent to the head noun (see Zucchi (1993:240)). If prenominal subjects were subject to the same adjacency requirements, then, (36a) would be ungrammatical since the NP lacks a head noun to which it could adjoin.

However, cases such as (39) show that the adjective amable ‘warm’ has to be adjoined to the head noun when it occurs pronominally as well a postnominally. Note that (39a-c) are well formed as long as there is a NP to adjoin to, in the case in which a PP intervenes between the adjective and the NP, the construction is ill-formed (39d)

(39) a. la amable acogida  
‘the warm welcome’

la acogida amable  
the welcome warm  
‘the warm welcome’

b. la amable acogida de Maria  
the warm welcome of Maria.  
‘Maria’s warm welcome’

c. * la amable de Maria acogida  
the warm of Maria welcome

Regarding the structural position of adjectives, Jackendoff (1977:221) posits two conditions. (i) both prenominal and postnominal adjectives are sisters to N-bar or
to an even higher nominal projection. (ii) both prenominal and postnominal adjectives must be adjacent to the head of the constituent they modify. Jackendoff proposes that in NP-structures in which a VP is embedded under a non-lexical NP, V is the head of the lexical category. This structure is parallel the one I propose in (24), in which AgrP is embedded under DP. Thus I assume that AgrP functions in a similar way to V in which it is the head of the nominal category. Based on the two conditions proposed, the grammaticality of (36a) is predicted since AgrP is dominated by DP (equivalent in our terms to NP), which is compatible with condition (i). The adjective in (36a) is also adjacent to the infinitival head, as required by condition (ii). In contrast, in (36b) the position of the adjective is incompatible with (i) which explains its ungrammaticality.

6.3 The reflexive and intrinsic clitics

Another peculiarity of infinitival NPs is the behavior of reflexive and intrinsic clitics. In cases such as (40), infinitives take the clitic se ‘self’. In this case, the clitic corresponds to the object argument of the verb. A case representing an intrinsic clitic with se is presented in (41).

(40) afeitar-se 
    shave-INF himself-CL
    ‘shaving oneself’

(41) arrepentir-se 
    repent himself-CL
    ‘to repent oneself’

The clitic in (41) is morphologically undistinguishable from a reflexive clitic, but it does not correspond to a logical argument of the verb, as is shown by the fact that the verb arrepentir ‘to repent’ cannot take a direct object as it is illustrated in (42a and b) below.

(42) a. * Jose arrepiente a Maria
    Jose repents to Maria

b. * Jose arrepiente a si mismo
    Jose repents to himself

Grimshaw and Selkirk (1976) point out that the inherent reflexive clitics, unlike other clitics, can appear in nominal infinitives. Consider the following cases:

(43) a. * el creerle de Pedro
    the belier-INF-CL of Pecro
    ‘Pedro’s believing in him/her’
b. el (tú) comerlos exageradamente
   the you eat-INF-CL-ACC excessively
   ‘your eating them excessively’

c. el (tú) creerle incondicionalmente
   the you believe-INF-DAT inconditionally
   ‘your believing her unconditionally’

d. el afeitarse de Juan
   the shave-INF-CL of Juan
   ‘Juan’s shaving’

e. el afanarse de Sandra
   the hurry-INF-CL of Sandra
   ‘Sandra’s hurry’

f. el avengorzarse de Pedro
   the be ashamed-INF-CL of Pedro
   ‘the shame of Pedro’

The fact that inherent clitics can occur in nominal infinitives follows from the fact that inherent clitics are not arguments of verbs, thus they may not require the presence of a VP-node to adjunct. Conversely, reflexive clitics seem to play the role of Direct Objects. Then, the question is why they are not barred from nominal infinitivals like other object clitics. Burzio (1986) argues that while non-reflexive clitics bear a Theta-role, namely arguments of the verb, reflexive clitics may be analyzed as grammatical markers bearing no theta-role. The assumption that reflexive clitics, like inherent clitics, are not arguments of verbs is explained by assuming that the reflexive clitic is an arbitrary marker whose function is to indicate that the verb has undergone a lexical rule which has the effect of deleting a theta-role (an argument) of the verb. If this assumption is correct, the cases in (43 a-d) may be explained. If non-reflexive clitics are arguments of the verbs, they should be able to occur in an infinitival NP only when the NP is analyzed as containing a VP node. Thus, the ungrammaticality of (43a) is explained by the presence of the prepositional subject that forces the analysis for nominal subjects (23 above), but the occurrence of the clitic requires the presence of a VP-node. In contrast, (43b and c) are well formed since the VP-analysis is not longer blocked by the presence of a prepositional subject. (43d-f) are accounted for by the fact that reflexive and inherent clitics do not require the presence of a VP-node.

In conclusion, the assumption that the cases of nominalized infinitivals are syntactic and not lexical in nature allows a new inspection of the data on infinitives with a more flexible approach that permits a more principled statement of the properties of the three main infinitival structures; nominal, sentential and verbal (AgrP). Assuming that infinitives are verbal in nature shows that the syntactic-based analysis accounts for the symmetries/asymmetries in syntactic distribution that the three constructions present.
References


