Variability in Spanish adjectival position:
A corpus analysis

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Resum. Variabilitat en la posició adjectival en espanyol: anàlisi de corpus. Les descripcions sintàctico-semàntiques de la posició de l'adjectiu en espanyol expliquen la majoria d'allò que es considera gramaticalment acceptable. Tot i això, la font d'aquestes dades normalment representa llenguatge escrit o generat de forma introspectiva, que no pot explicar fenòmens relacionats amb l'ús del llenguatge o les diferents limitacions al voltant de la producció i el processament, inherents a d'altres registres (File-Muriel 2006). Aquest article examina les limitacions de producció i processament que presenten els registres orals i escrits en l'intercanvi d'informació. S'analitzen mostres de llenguatge d'ambdós registres dins de paràmetres de classificació extrets de les descripcions adjectivals tradicionals (Demonte 1999) així com d'una proposta que considera la fonologia com a part del procés de posició adjectival (File-Muriel 2006).

Paraules clau: espanyol, posició de l'adjectiu, registres lingüístics, sintaxi, fonologia.

Abstract. Variability in Spanish adjectival position: A corpus analysis. Traditional semantic-syntactic descriptions of adjectival position in Spanish account for the majority of what is considered grammatically possible. However, the source of these data seems to only represent written language and/or internally generated data. It does not seem to account for phenomena related to language use or for the different constraints in production and processing inherent to other registers (File-Muriel 2006). This article looks at the production and processing constraints that oral and written registers feature in the exchange of information. Samples of language that can be placed into two different registers (oral vs. written) are analyzed within a series of parameters of classification drawn from traditional adjectival descriptions (Demonte 1999) and a proposal that assigns phonology a role in adjectival placement (File-Muriel 2006).

Keywords: adjectival position, language registers, phonology, Spanish, syntax.

1. Introduction

In Romance Languages in general (and Spanish in particular), it is generally agreed that adjectives surface pre- or postnominally as a result of the upward movement of the noun (Cinque 1994, Crisma 1993), as opposed to Germanic languages, in which adjectives are prenominal due to the lack of movement.

(1)   [D [AP N$_i$ [AP t$_i$]]] Romance

(2)   [D [AP [AP N]]] Germanic
       (Cinque 1994)

Position of Spanish adjectives is also related to their meaning. Bosque and Picallo (1996) talk about a strict hierarchical order of adjectives. This order is determined by the intrinsic meaning of the adjectives themselves. And any alteration of this order would yield an ungrammatical phrase:

(3)   Una comedia musical americana divertida

(4)   *Una comedia musical divertida americana
       (Bosque and Picallo 1996, p. 349-350)

The most common distinction for adjectival position in Spanish in relation to their meaning is that of non-restrictive versus restrictive (RAE and AALE 2010, p. 990). This distinction assigns prenominal position to the former and postnominal position to the latter. A restrictive adjective refers to a quality of a subset of the referent (5). Non-restrictive adjectives identify the whole set of objects being referenced as having that particular quality (6):

(5)   Las ovejas mansas

(6)   Las mansas ovejas

The semantic and syntactic classifications of adjectives in Spanish are straightforward. They can explain the majority of the data. However, there is an interesting phenomenon that occurs in a set Spanish NPs similar to (5) and (6) for which these classifications do not seem to be able to provide an explanation:

(7)   La Roma antigua

(8)   La antigua Roma

The interpretation of (7) as a member of "a group of entities represented by several stages, stadia or facets of the same person or thing (logically, not simultaneous)" (RAE and AALE 2010, p. 993; my translation) requires the categorization of the noun from proper to common. In other words, speakers understand (7) as a member of the class "city of Rome", and it is also understood that there are other possibilities for this class: "modern", "pre-unification of Italy", "15th century", etc. At the same time, speakers interpret *Roma* in (8) as a proper noun and *antigua* as an epithet. This is the result of a recategorization from relational to qualifying adjective, which can be explained by paraphrasing (8) with the adverb *típicamente* (RAE and AALE 2010, p. 993):

(9)   La Roma típicamente antigua

The meaning contrast between (7) and (8), however, ignores that, in current use, both seem to have acquired the meaning of (8)[1]. The role of language use is thus crucial. Generally speaking, traditional semantic-syntactic based descriptions of adjectival position in Spanish take examples from written language and/or introspective data: "epithets are adjectives that [...] almost always appear prenominally and are characteristic of literary language" (RAE and AALE 2010, p. 996; my translation). Most of the examples that appear in this work are taken from literary works. This is not to say that there are no processes of accessing the information in written language. However, the processes and constraints found in the exchange of information in oral registers are different (File-Muriel 2006). To that effect, some studies (Wasow 1997, Arnold *et al.* 2000: quoted in File-Muriel 2006) defend the role of phonology, in terms of constituent weight (measured in syllables), in production and perception processes, and argue that speakers save the hardest constituents to produce (i.e. the heaviest) for last. Given that traditional descriptions of adjectival position in Spanish seem to assign characteristics of written language to language in general, this paper aims at including spoken registers. In other words, this paper considers that in order to make assertions about language on the topic of adjectival placement, it is necessary to look at the production and processing constraints that oral and written registers feature in the exchange of information. This study does that by taking samples of language that can be placed into two different registers (oral vs. written) and then analyzing them within a series of parameters of classification drawn from traditional adjectival descriptions (Demonte 1999) and a proposal that assigns phonology a role in adjectival placement (File-Muriel 2006).

Thus, the article is organized in the following manner. In the next section, I will explain the parameters of the analysis as well as the features of the language samples. Since these parameters are based in the aforementioned literature (Demonte 1999, File-

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1. I am not arguing for a total disappearance of the restrictive meaning of (7). This observation is based on a simple internet engine search of both NPs, and the results found pointed at an exclusive use of both NPs in the sense of (8). Given the appropriate context, surely the meaning intended for (7) would surface.

Muriel 2006), I will explain the meaning of the different concepts that I use. Next, I will present a number of tables containing numeric results and percentages of the different parameters. Given the nature of percentual data, I cannot make categorical assertions, but rather show tendencies found in naturally occurring language. Lastly, I will finish with a summary of the findings.

2. The Study

2.1. Samples of language – corpora

The first corpus is a series of oral interviews conducted by Ranson (1987) in Puente Genil, Spain. It amounts to some 92,000 words. The conversations deal with cultural, social and family topics. The data from this corpus is referred to as EH (*español hablado*; 'spoken Spanish').

The second source of information is a speech given by Fidel Castro on March 7, 1983 in New Delhi, India. This 11,000+-word speech was chosen at random from a larger corpus, consisting of about 3 million words, of speeches given by Castro since 1959 until 2005. This second corpus is tagged as EE (*español escrito*; 'written Spanish')[2].

Table 1 shows the distribution of data in the two corpora. Adjectives in pre- and postnominal position occur in roughly the same percentages in both registers.

Table 1: Number and percentage of adjective position

	Prenominal	Postnominal
EH	74/343 (21.5%)	269/343 (78.5%)
EE	173/639 (27%)	466/639 (73%)

2.2 Parameters of classification

From the corpora mentioned above, examples of Noun Phrases with just one adjective, in both positions, were selected. The analyzed NPs contained both eventive and object-denoting nominals. The other categories that were considered were the type of adjective and the syllable weight. For the former, I followed the classification made by Demonte (1999), in which she establishes that adjectives can be classified according to their intrinsic meaning as well as to the the relationship that they have with the noun they accompany.

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2. The sample of language of the written corpus (EE) is a speech. It is inherently oral, but this register differs from a 'spoken' register in that, prior to acquiring that orality, it had to be thought out and somehow processed in a way closer to that of written language.

For the latter, I followed File-Muriel (2006), and established the syllable weight as the difference between the number of syllables in the noun and the adjective. The basic idea of this proposal is that lighter adjectives tend to precede nouns, whereas heavier adjectives tend to follow them. This is attributed to production and processing constraints. In the following sections, I will present both proposals in more detail. The table below is a summary of the different classification variables considered in the study.

Table 2: Classification Parameters

Parameter	Variables			
Type of Noun	• Eventive • Object-Denoting			
Position	• Postnominal • Prenominal			
Type of Adjective	• Qualifying • Relational	• Individual/Episodic • Intersective/Subsective • Restrictive/Non-restrictive		
	• Adverbial	• Intensional	• Modal • Focalising	
		• Eventive	• Circumstantial • Aspectual	
Syllable Weight				

2.2.1 Semantic classification of adjectives

According to Demonte (1999), adjectives can be classified according to their intrinsic meaning and in relation to noun that they accompany. In relation to the former, adjectives are classified in three different categories: Qualifying (Q), Relational (R), and Adverbial (A). Q- and R-adjectives differ from one another in that the former refers to an essential quality of the noun it accompanies (see 10, below) whereas the latter refers to a group of properties of an external referent with which the noun establishes a specific semantic relationship (11):

(10)   Nieve blanca

(11)   Vaca lechera
         (Demonte 1999, p. 172-173)

A-adjectives do not assign properties to nouns. Instead, they are the nominal equivalent of the adverb "*–mente*" (*-ly* in English):

(12) a. Mirada *fría*
      b. Le miró *fríamente*
      (Demonte 1999, p. 205)

There are two types of A-adjectives: *intensional*, which modify the properties associated with a referent; and *eventive,* which refer to processes and objects that take place "in time, space and in a certain fashion" (Demonte 1999, p. 205, my translation). Intensional A-adjectives don't change the noun by modifying its referential status (extension), but by modifying the description of the referent (intension):

(13) a. El *famoso* asesino
      b. El *presunto* asesino
      (Demonte 1999, p. 139)

In (13a) the extension of the noun is modified by a quality that immediately puts the assassin into the category of "famous assassins." In (13b), the intension of the referent is modified by stating that all the characteristics that may be associated to an assassin-like behavior are just alleged.

Within this category of intensional A-adjectives, we can establish two further subcategories: *modal* intensional and *focalising* intensional. Modal intensional adjectives modify the meaning of the referent (see 13b, above), and also express the attitudes of the speaker and/or subject to some events and/or relations:

(14) La *probable* reacción *hostil americana*

Focalising intensional adjectives modify to the point of almost becoming unique referents, because the features of the referent modified by the adjective are applied only to the mentioned referent and not to other possible candidates. That is, the 'real objection' in (15) is the one that most satisfies the condition of 'being an objection' among all the possible existing objections:

(15) La *verdadera* objeción
      (Demonte 1999, p. 140)

The second type of A-adjectives, *eventive* adjectives, "modify the temporal and situational aspects of the noun (16) or signal the way in which the action represented by the noun is performed (12a)" (Demonte 1999, p. 208):

(16) El *cercano* puente

The data above belong to the first subclass of eventive adjectives, *circumstantial* eventive. The second subclass is called *aspectual* eventive and it is exclusively applied to deverbal nouns to explain how the action is structured in terms of frequency or periodicity:

(17) a. La *ocasional* visita.
      b. Las *periódicas* revisions.
      (Demonte 1999, p. 141)

The classification of adjectives according to the noun they accompany is divided into different binary contrasts. For Q- and R-adjectives, we can establish three possible oppositions:

(18) the adjective is individual or episodic.

(19) it is absolute (intersective) or relative (subsective).

(20) it is restrictive or non restrictive.

An individual adjective points to an inherent quality of the referent (see 10, above). Episodic adjectives have a temporal or spatial constraint, and they are limited to postnominal position when they function as attributive modifiers:

(21) a. Un vaso lleno
      b. *Un lleno vaso
      (Demonte 1999, p. 143)

An adjective is intersective when it modifies all the possible classes of objects that a referent can be, and it is subsective when it modifies only one of those classes:

(22) Nieve blanca

(23) Elefante pequeño
      (Demonte 1999, p. 144-145)

In (23), *pequeño* is relative because a small elephant is not necessarily a small animal, when compared to other members of the class "animal".

Let's now look at the concept of syllable weight and its relationship with processing and production constraints as explained by File-Muriel (2006).

2.2.2 The Role of Phonology in Adjectival Placement – Syllable Weight

As I mentioned in the introduction, it is necessary to consider that the production and processing constraints in oral registers differ from those of written registers, and it is only by looking at all of them that we can make assertions regarding language in general and adjectival placement in Spanish in particular. I follow File-Muriel (2006), who introduces the concept of syllabic weight (i.e. the difference in syllable counts between nouns and their accompanying adjectives) and performance-based restrictions in production and processing of speech. The author proposes a "heaviness shift rule" (HSR)[3], which states that a light adjective (that is, an adjective with fewer syllables than the accompanying noun) tends to be preposed (23), whereas a heavier adjective tends to be postposed (24):

    (23) *Falsas* modestias

    (24) Fuerzas *armadas*
           (File-Muriel 2006, p. 203)

Word length is, then, a factor in retrieval and processing. Postnominal position is favored in attributive adjectives in spoken Spanish "because [they are] generally longer than the noun [they modify]" (File-Muriel 2006, p. 208). Conversely, "prenominal placement of attributive adjectives in spoken discourse is reserved for light, frequently occurring, non-relational adjectives" (File-Muriel 2006, p. 208). In his study, which considers both written and spoken discourse, 83.3% of the preposed adjectives in written discourse are equal to or lighter than the noun, whereas that percentage goes up to 100 in spoken discourse. This difference is attributed to performance-related constraints, which are higher when the discourse is less planned (i.e. spoken), which leads him to note that there is "a difference in ease of production and processing between the two registers" (File-Muriel 2006, p. 213). With this, I conclude the description of the study. In the next section, I will discuss some of the most interesting findings. These results try to show the extent to which the traditional descriptions, which, as I mentioned before, are strongly based in written registers, hold when tested with other registers that may

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3. The HSR is not without controversy. File-Muriel references the Principle of Phonology-Free Syntax (Miller *et al.* 1997) as a base for rejecting HSR. PPFS claims that rules of phonology (such as HSR) cannot affect rules of syntax, since the application of these rules is unidirectional and once past the phonological stage, it is impossible to go back to it. The observations regarding the HSR are then regarding a phenomenon of usage, but not a part of the grammar.

have different performance and production constraints. At the same time, I will show the extent of the role played by syllable weight in the data from the corpora.

3. Discussion of Results

In the first part of this section, I will discuss the results obtained by classifying the NPs of both corpora (see table 1) according to Demonte (1999). I will show the different tendencies that the NPs in the two different registers present regarding adjectival position.

3.1. The Role of Semantics in Adjective Position

It is generally claimed (Demonte 1999, RAE and AALE 2010) that Q- and A-adjectives are more or less free to appear pre- and postnominally while R-adjectives are restricted to postnominal position. The data in table 3 shows that this is true for both registers.

Table 3: Position and adjective type

	Qualifying	Relational	Adverbial
Prenominal (EH)	47 (64%)	--------	27 (36%)
Postnominal (EH)	125 (46.4%)	59 (22%)	85 (31.6%)
Prenominal (EE)	65 (35.7%)	--------	117 (64.3%)
Postnominal (EE)	60 (13.2%)	263 (57.5%)	134 (29.3%)
Pre/Post (EH)	27.4% / 72.6%	0% / 100%	24.2% / 75.8%
Pre/Post (EE)	52% / 48%	0% / 100%	46.7% / 53.3%

As for the relative frequency of use in both registers, R-adjectives are diametrically opposed to themselves. Whereas in written Spanish, R-adjectives are the most widely used type of adjective (57.5%), in spoken Spanish they are the least used semantic category (22%). At first sight, these raw data suggest is that the way that referential expressions are modified depends fundamentally on the register in which they take place.

Regarding the second possibility for semantic classification, which considers the relationship between the adjective and the noun it accompanies, table 4 shows the results[4].

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4. Since R-adjectives are restricted to postnominal position the comparison is only made with Q-adjectives, as they are free to appear before or after the noun.

Table 4: Position and Q-adjectives

	Individual/Episodic	Intersective/Subsective	Restrictive/Non-restrictive
Prenominal (EE)	60/5 (92% / 8%)	47/18 (72.3% / 27.7%)	0/65 (0% / 100%)
Postnominal (EE)	59/1 (98% / 2%)	58/2 (96% / 4%)	60/0 (100% / 0%)
Prenominal (EH)	33/14 (70% / 30%)	33/14 (70% / 30%)	0/47 (0% / 100%)
Postnominal (EH)	122/3 (98% / 2%)	97/28 (77% / 23%)	125/0 (100% / 0%)

Quite uncontroversially, the association between position and restriction of the referent is held by the data, in both registers, as the restrictive/non-restrictive column in the table shows. Unfortunately, the other two binary oppositions do not yield such clear-cut results. In spite of that, there are some observable tendencies.

Episodic adjectives appear in a 15 to 1 ratio in favor of prenominal position (30% to 2% in postnominal position) in EH. Most of the adjectives are related to the time or the order of an event or a thing:

(25)   Sí, es eso que es difícil es el *primer* contacto

(26)   ¿Te pongo algo de *segundo* plato?

In EE, the tendency to prenominal position for episodic adjectives is maintained, although the ratio is considerably lower, only 4 to 1. The examples are also related to time or order of events or things:

(27)   […] problemas […] que amenazaron en estos últimos tiempos

(28)   No reciben jamás en *el primer año* de su vida

With the opposition intersective/subsective, the data show an interesting situation. Demonte (1999, p. 144) explains that adjectives related to size are considered to be subsective, since it is a quality relative not only to the referent, but also to the group that the referent belongs to (see also 23, above). Crucially, all the subsective adjectives in the data are size adjectives, for both EH (29) and EE (30) and in both positions:

(29)   a. Para *las grandes ciudades* no se hace.
       b. *El tamaño chico* vienen saliendo setenta.

(30) a. Los imperialistas se consumen de odio […] frente a *un país pequeño*.
      b. A *dos miembros importantes* y respetados del Movimiento.

The interesting point is that (30 a-b) are the only two postnominal subsectives in EE. While the other percentages in table 4 are relatively similar for subsective adjectives, the fact that so few examples of this type of adjective appear in postnominal position is hard to explain.

Moving on to Adverbial adjectives, recall that that they have the tendency to appear postnominally (see table 3). The total numbers show a radical favoring of prenominal position of A-adjectives in EE, with almost double the percentage of occurrences than in EH. Furthermore, an analysis of the different subcategories of A-adjectives yields the following percentages:

Table 5: Position and A-adjectives

	Intensional modal/focalising	Eventive circumstantial/aspectual
Prenominal (EH)	14/13 (52% / 48%)	9/1 (90% / 10%)
Postnominal (EH)	68/17 (80% / 20%)	16/7 (65% / 35%)
Prenominal (EE)	45/72 (38% / 62%)	56/6 (90% / 10%)
Postnominal (EE)	95/39 (71% / 29%)	67/10 (87% / 13%)

In relation to the first column, it seems that focalising is a semantic feature that favors prenominal position, at least in EE. Recall that focalising adjectives isolate a particular instance of the referent, which is interpreted as the one that more accurately describes the condition expressed by the adjective. In (31), the "steps" that are taken are only those that are "necessary". Likewise, there is only one type of attempt in (32), and it is qualified as "permanent":

(31) Emprendimos *las gestiones necesarias* con todas las partes.

(32) Para continuar *su permanente intento* de destruir este Movimiento.

In the second column, the total number of examples is different from that the first column. In spite of the fact that, according to the literature, eventive adjectives appear both with events and objects (see 12-17, above), there are not any data in the corpora of this type of adjective with object-denoting nominals that could not be at the same time interpreted as intensional modal. Thus, all the examples in the second column in table 5 refer to eventive nominals. Let's see what happens with a combined analysis of the frequency of occurrence of both types of A-adjectives with eventive nominals:

Table 6: Eventive nominals and A-adjectives

	Modal/Circums	Focal/Circums	Modal/Aspect	Focal/Aspect
Prenominal (EH)	4 (24%)	5 (62.5%)	1 (12.5%)	----
Postnominal (EH)	13 (76%)	3 (37.5%)	7 (87.5%)	----
Prenominal (EE)	14 (23%)	42 (69%)	3 (30%)	3 (50%)
Postnominal (EE)	48 (77%)	19 (31%)	7 (70%)	3 (50%)

In both EH (33) and EE (34), three fourths of the adjectives classified as modal/circumstantial are postnominal:

(33) El mío lo que sabe es *del estudio normal*.

(34) No le faltó a Namibia *el apoyo creciente* del Movimiento.

In the second column, the frequency is reversed. When circumstantial adjectives are also focalising, they appear in prenominal positions two thirds of the time. This is consistent with the numbers in table 6 regarding focalising adjectives, and in this case, the relative percentages in EH give a much more definite picture of the situation, at least for eventive nominals:

(35) *La Santa Cena*

(36) *La traicionera agresión* a Siria

Regarding aspectual adjectives, there are far fewer examples of this type of adjective in the corpora, to the point that there are no instances of aspectual adjectives that are focalised in EH. The third column shows that modal and aspectual adjectives adhere to the tendency shown in the first column, where modal adjectives tend to be placed in postnominal position, for both EE (37) and EH (38):

(37) Constituyen una esperanza para *los combates futuros*.

(38) Mira que *el jueves pasado* estuvimos al lado.

Regarding focalising adjectives, in EE, the distribution of prenominal and postnominal focalising aspectual adjectives is equally balanced:

(39) Angola decidiera con Cuba *la retirada gradual* de las tropas.

(40) Por buscar *inmediata solución* al agudo déficit de alimentos.

Lastly, the distribution of object-denoting nouns with adverbial adjectives yields noteworthy data. The distribution of prenominal intensional modal/focalising A-adjectives in EH was virtually the same (52%-48%, see table 5).

Table 7: Object-denoting nominals and A-adjectives

	Modal	Focalising
Prenominal (EH)	3 (18%)	14 (82%)
Postnominal (EH)	48 (77 %)	14 (23%)
Prenominal (EE)	16 (29%)	39 (71%)
Postnominal (EE)	42 (71%)	17 (29%)

As with the case of eventive nominals, the distribution of adverbial adjectives with object-denoting nominals in both EE and EH shows a tendency for postnominal position when the adjectives are of the modal subcategory (41) and a tendency for prenominal position when they are focalising (42):

(41) a. Además tienen *una paga especial* de la empresa.
       b. Soy capaz de dejarme *las puertas abiertas*.

(42) a. La industrialización […] no puede ser *el triste subproducto* dejado por las transnacionales.
       b. *Una inconmovible política* de cooperación.

To this respect, RAE and AALE (2010, p. 997; my translation) argues that "the larger the descriptive content of an adjective […] the bigger will be the resistance to appear prenominally. […] Likewise, when a physical property […] is associated with […] evaluative nature, prenominal position favors the prominence of this feature".

In the next section, I test the assertions made by File-Muriel (2006) against the data. These assertions may offer a plausible explanation to the distribution of R-adjectives (see table 3).

3.2. The Role of Phonology in Adjective Position

File-Muriel (2006) proposed that heavier adjectives tend to be postposed, whereas lighter adjectives tend to appear prenominally. He also claims differences between spoken and written discourse in terms of weight. Table 8 below displays the recount of occurrences in both corpora in relation to their syllabic weight:

Table 8: Position and syllable weight[5]

	< -3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	> +5
Pre (EH)	-----	11 (14.9%)	21 (28.3%)	28 (37.8%)	10 (13.6%)	4 (5.4%)	-----	-----	-----
Post (EH)	-----	10 (3.7%)	47 (17.4%)	89 (33%)	77 (28.7%)	28 (10.5%)	13 (4.8%)	5 (1.9%)	-----
Pre (EE)	8 (5%)	19 (10.9%)	36 (20.6%)	61 (35%)	28 (16%)	15 (8.6%)	6 (3.4%)	1 (.5%)	-----
Post (EE)	6 (1.2%)	28 (5.6%)	59 (11.9%)	102 (20.6%)	112 (22.6%)	93 (18.7%)	82 (16.5%)	9 (1.9%)	4 (1%)

Syllabic weights ranging from -2 to +2 (since they are the only ones that have data in both positions and corpora) yield the following:
- For EH, 43.2% of the prenominal adjectives are lighter than the noun; 19% are heavier.
- For EE, 31.5% of the prenominal adjectives are lighter than the noun; 24.6% are heavier.
- The difference in percentages regarding heavy and light adjectives is almost four times as big in EH (24.2%) than in EE (6.9%).

These results are still consistent with the general affirmation that lighter adjectives are more frequently found in prenominal position. The fact that the difference in EH is bigger may be an indication that indeed, the constraints in the spoken register are bigger and therefore the speakers do try to leave heavier material for the end. This situation is exacerbated when the type of adjective is considered. Recall that relational adjectives do not appear before the noun (see table 3). File-Muriel (2006) also observed that, consistently, this type of adjective is the heaviest overall. The following table supports that claim:

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5. Syllable weight is expressed in terms of +/- [a number] or 0. For example, a weight of +2 indicates that the adjective had two more syllables than the noun. The two columns of the extremes have been collapsed for reasons of space, as there were a few instances of less than – 3 and more than +5 in syllable weight.

Table 9: Position and type of adjective in heavy syllable counts (EE)

	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	Total
Prenominal R	----	----	----	----	----	----	0
Prenominal Q	5	2	2	----	----	----	9 (2.5%)
Prenominal A	24	13	4	1	----	----	42 (11.6%)
Postnominal R	57	57	39	6	----	2	200 (55.1%)
Postnominal Q	17	13	5	2	2	1	40 (11%)
Postnominal A	38	24	9	1	----	----	72 (19.8%)

Postnominal relational adjectives have the heaviest weight of all in the written register. This shows that a less constrained register, because it has been carefully planned (e.g. a speech), has more possibilities of accommodating this type of adjective. That does not mean that everyday speech is incapable of doing that, but the incidence of relational adjectives in the EH data (see table 3) is less than half that of EE. If speakers have to deal with heavier phonological material, in situations with greater production and processing constraints, they may reduce the frequency of use of this material in postnominal position.

4. Summary

Semantics shows that relational adjectives are restricted to postnominal position in both registers. It also shows that Adverbial adjectives, although more freely used, show a tendency to prenominal position when they are focalising. This tendency is present in both registers, although the written register seems to favor it more. The traditional association of restrictive meaning with postnominal adjectives and non-restrictive meaning with pronominal is upheld in the data. On the other hand, episodic adjectives are more likely to be prenominal, without significant differences in register, whereas intersective adjectives are more frequently postnominal in both registers as well.

The role of syllabic weight in adjective position also yielded thought-provoking results. The main idea behind this concept is that heavy material tends to be postposed and light material tends to be preposed. While this is true in the data for both registers, the percentages of prenominal adjectives that are heavier and lighter are closer in the written register than in the spoken register. This, as File-Muriel (2006) explains, may suggest that the processing and production constraints are higher in spoken registers and, as a consequence, heavier prenominal adjectives are far less common in this register. Another interesting finding is that R-adjectives are the heaviest of all three classes of adjectives in our corpora. This not only confirms File-Muriel's claim about the status of

R-adjectives in written discourse as the heaviest, but it also explains why R-adjectives are the least frequent adjectives in the spoken register (see table 3).

Thus, it seems that the main factor to determine adjectival position in Spanish is the interaction of semantics and phonology (a "semantics-phonology interface" of sorts). Relational adjectives, which semantics predicts them to be postnominal only, happen to be the heaviest type (in syllabic weight) of all, which explains why their incidence is so different in different registers.

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