

## On the transitivity of intransitive verbs. A Spanish-English contrastive corpus-based analysis of the verbs *dormir* and *sleep*

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**Abstract.** This paper offers a Spanish-English contrastive corpus-based study of the possible transitive uses of the verbs *dormir* and *sleep* in Peninsular Spanish and the American and British varieties of English, respectively. The results obtained show that their transitivity cannot be reduced, as usually pointed out in the literature, to the cognate object construction (*dormir el sueño de los justos/sleep the sleep of the just*), since, in addition to this pattern, both intransitive verbs undergo a transitivity process in other structures which have gone almost unnoticed in the literature: namely, (i) lexical causative constructions (*dormir al niño/sleep the baby*), (ii) transitive patterns with other non-subcategorised objects, different from cognates (*dormir la borrachera/sleep the meal*), (iii) constructions with direct objects promoted from adverbial prepositional phrases (*dormir la mañana/sleep the morning*), (iv) and finally, the *way* construction (*sleep your way to the top*), only attested in English. My main objective is to highlight the syntactico-semantic similarities and differences which these constructions exhibit in Spanish and English, as well as those concerning their frequency of occurrence.

**Keywords:** Inergative/unaccusative, cognate object, causativity, phraseological expression, *way* construction

### [es] Sobre la transitivización de los verbos intransitivos. Un análisis de corpus contrastivo español-ingles de los verbos *dormir* y *sleep*

**Resumen.** Este trabajo ofrece un análisis de corpus contrastivo español-ingles sobre los posibles usos transitivos de los verbos *dormir* y *sleep* en la variedad peninsular del español y en las variedades americana y británica de la lengua inglesa, respectivamente. Los resultados obtenidos demuestran que su transitividad no puede reducirse, como se suele señalar en la bibliografía, a la construcción de objeto cognado (*dormir el sueño de los justos/sleep the sleep of the just*), ya que, además de en esta, ambos verbos intransitivos experimentan un proceso de transitivización en otras estructuras que han pasado prácticamente desapercibidas en los estudios sobre ellos; en concreto, (i) estructuras causativas léxicas (*dormir al niño/sleep the baby*), (ii) esquemas transitivos con otros objetos no-subcategorizados por el verbo, diferentes de los cognados (*dormir la borrachera/sleep the meal*), (iii) construcciones con objetos directos derivados de sintagmas preposicionales de naturaleza circunstancial (*dormir la mañana/sleep the morning*), (iv) y finalmente, la construcción *way* (*sleep your way to the top*), solo constatada en inglés. Mi objetivo fundamental es resaltar, por una parte, tanto las semejanzas como las diferencias sintáctico-semánticas que estas construcciones exhiben en español y en inglés, y por otra, las que conciernen a su índice de frecuencia.

**Palabras clave:** Inergativo/inacusativo, objeto cognado, causatividad, fraseologismo, construcción *way*

**Cotents:** 1. Introduction. 2. A syntactico-semantic description of the verbs *dormir* and *sleep*. 3. Methodology. 4. Results and discussion. 4.1. COCs. 4.2. Lexical causative constructions. 4.3. Transitive structures with non-subcategorised objects different from cognates. 4.4. Adverbial transitive structures. 4.5. The *way* construction. 5. Conclusions.

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## 1. Introduction<sup>2</sup>

Since the last decades of the twentieth century transitivity is considered a multifaceted linguistic phenomenon which involves some other elements, besides the number of participants in the clause (Alarcos Llorach 1994; Alcina and Bleca 1975; Hopper and Thompson 1980; Morera Pérez 1989; Taylor 1995):

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Transitivity involves a number of components, only one of which is the presence of an object of the verb. These components are all concerned with the effectiveness with which an action takes place, e.g., the punctuality and telicity of the verb, the conscious activity of the agent, and the referentiality and degree of affectedness of the object. (Hopper and Thompson 1980: 251)

Transitivity cannot be thought, thus, any longer as an either-or category which distinguishes, as traditional studies do, between transitive and intransitive verbs on the basis of their complementation by a direct object. For Roberge (2002) and Bilous (2012), it is, in fact, a potential feature of any verb.

Consequently, from that moment onwards, the different (in)transitive uses of a verb have been the focus of several studies which have accounted for the possible alternations in which they appear (Levin 1993; Devís Márquez 1993; Martínez Vázquez 1998a). The Spanish and English intransitive verbs *dormir* and *sleep* are interesting in this regard, since they are frequently stated, as well as many others, like *roncar/snore*, *llorar/cry*, and *laugh/reir(se)*, for instance, to enter the so-called cognate object construction (COC, henceforward), illustrated in (1-2), where they undergo a transitivity process with the addition of a direct object not included in their argument structure (Correas 1625 [1954]; Cano Aguilar 1981; Alarcos Llorach 1968, 1994; Levin 1993; Macfarland 1995; Höche 2009; Armstrong 2011; Ibáñez and Melis 2015):

- (1) [...] sus familias dormían un inocente sueño de beatitud burguesa, [...]. (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2001)  
“[...] their families slept an innocent sleep of bourgeois bliss, [...]”
- (2) She just wanted to go home and sleep a peaceful sleep in her own bed. (*COCA*, Fiction, 2015)

Though in my corpus this pattern has indeed been attested in both languages, my main objective is to show that the transitivity of *dormir* and *sleep* cannot be exclusively reduced to the COC, since both verbs have been found in other transitive patterns which, having gone almost unnoticed in the literature in relation to them, deserve special attention: namely, (i) lexical causative constructions, like (3-4), (ii) structures with non-subcategorised direct objects, different from cognates, such as those in (5-6), (iii) patterns with direct objects of adverbial nature of the type illustrated in (7-8), and finally, (iv) the *way* construction, like (9), only attested in English:

- (3) La primera es dormir al Rey Kong. (*CORPES XXI*, Web, 2004)  
“The first one is to put King Kong to sleep”.
- (4) COT deaths were more than halved last year following a national campaign to sleep babies on their back. (*BNC*, Newspaper, 1985-1994)
- (5) Tras dormir el disgusto, Amada estaba dispuesta a dar carpetazo al agrio episodio de la tarde anterior con Lucas, [...] (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2009)  
“After sleeping off her annoyance, Amada was ready to put an end to the bitter episode of the previous afternoon with Lucas, [...]”
- (6) Sit and sleep three meals served every day. (*COCA*, TV Movies, 1995)
- (7) Las dos duermen la mañana [...] (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2001)  
“They both sleep the morning [...]”
- (8) I had slept the night in a stony field outside the terminal, [...] (*GloWbE*, US)
- (9) I did sleep my way through Hollywood. (*GloWbE*, GB)

The previous examples clearly show that not only *dormir*, but also *sleep*, are verbs that, as Correas (1625 [1954]) states, “hazen a dos manos”. Therefore, due to their dual character, they are representative of a particular verbal class which has received different names over time: *amphibious verbs* (Visser 1963-1973: 97), ‘bivalent verbs’ (*verbos bivalentes*) (Rivas 1996: 41), *ambitransitive verbs* (Dixon and Aikhenvald 2000a: 4), and *dual transitivity verbs* (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 217).

Besides this introduction, the paper contains five other sections. Section 2 reviews the syntactico-semantic characterisation of the verbs *dormir* and *sleep*. Section 3 explains the methodology that underlies my study to proceed, in section 4, with the discussion of the results obtained. Finally, in section 5 the most significant findings of my study are gathered together.

## 2. A syntactico-semantic description of the verbs *dormir* and *sleep*

*Dormir* and *sleep* are usually considered clear examples of intransitive verbs because they have complete meaning:

1. Intr. Hallarse en el estado de reposo que consiste en la inacción o suspensión de los sentidos y de todo movimiento voluntario. (*RAE* 2014)

I. *intransitive*. 1. a. To take repose by the natural suspension of consciousness; to be in the state of sleep; to slumber. Also occasionally, to fall asleep. (*OED* 2022)

However, to classify a verb simply as intransitive may cause problems of analysis since, as postulated in the Unaccusative Hypothesis, originally formulated within Relational Grammar by Perlmutter (1978) and later reviewed in Government and Binding Theory by Burzio (1986), intransitive verbs do not show a uniform syntactic, semantic and aspectual behaviour. Hence the distinction established between unaccusative and unergative intransitive verbs.

Though both verbal classes only require one single participant (their grammatical subject), its nature is different in each case. Being variants of telic transitive verbs that denote a change of state or location, the grammatical subject of unaccusative verbs is a non-agentive participant which corresponds to the patient direct object of their transitive version, as seen in (10a-11b); in contrast, unergative verbs, also called pure intransitives for lacking the aforementioned transitive version, as (12a-13b) show, denote atelic activities which require an agentive subject:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| (10a) El barco se hundió.<br>“The ship sank”. | (10b) Los piratas hundieron el barco. (Armstrong 2011: 284)<br>“The pirates sank the ship”. |
| (11a) The cup broke.                          | (11b) John broke the cup. (Levin 1993: 29)  |
| (12a) Juan nadó.<br>“John swam”.              | (12b) *Los piratas nadaron a Juan. (Armstrong 2011: 291)<br>*“The pirates swam John”.       |
| (13a) The children laughed.                   | (13b) *The clown laughed the children. (Kijparnich 2011: 112)                               |

As expected, these semantic and aspectual differences have an impact on their syntactic behaviour. Since the “unaccusative diagnoses” differ in the different languages of the world, I only illustrate here those that are valid in Spanish and English with the verbs *dormir* and *sleep* (Bosque 1989; Torrego 1989; Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1995; Campos 1999; Mendikoetxea 1999; Kuno and Takami 2004; Kijparnich 2011; Ausensi 2019); in Spanish, specifically, the compatibility only of unaccusative verbs to admit bare plural subjects in postverbal position, like *animales* in (14), their possibility to form absolute participle constructions, such as (15), their feasible combination with aspectual auxiliaries of the type of *acabar* in (16), and finally, the possible attributive use of their participles as nominal modifiers, as (17) illustrates:

- (14) \*Han dormido animales. (Torrego 1989: 254)  
\*“Have slept animals”.
- (15) Medio dormido, se lo bebió de un trago [...]. (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2010)  
“Half asleep, he drank it up in one gulp”.
- (16) \*Un niño acabado de dormir. (Torrego 1989: 254)  
\*“A just slept boy”.
- (17) [...] era la escena que le había interpretado la dormida Paula [...]. (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2001)  
“[...] it was the scene that the sleeping Paula had played for him [...]”.

And in English, their incompatibility, on the one hand, to enter pseudo-passive patterns, the *way* construction, resultative constructions, and COCs, as exemplified in (18-21), and the possible use of their passive participles as nominal premodifiers, as seen in (22), on the other:

- (18) Both beds have been slept in. (*COCA*, TV Movies, 1997)
- (19) She simply sleeps her way up the Hollywood Ladder [...]. (*GloWbE*, US)
- (20) [...] praying either to sleep herself to death or to wake from [...] a nightmare. (*COCA*, Fiction, 2017)
- (21) [...] Annie sleeps a good, unfeeling sleep [...]. (*COCA*, Fiction, 2018)
- (22) \*The slept man.

Whereas the English examples above leave no room for doubt about the unergative character of *sleep*, already pointed out in Levin (1993: 222), Kijparnich (2011: 107), and Kim and Lim (2012: 32), the grammatical Spanish examples (15) and (17) could question the unergativity of *dormir*. In my view, however, they do not invalidate its unergative nature, highlighted in Torrego (1989: 254) and Baños Baños (2015: 638), because, as concluded in Van Valin’s (1990) semantic study of split intransitivity, neither unaccusativity nor unergativity manifest as unified syntactic phenomena in the language. The studies by Torrego (1989), Kuno and Takami (2004) and Kuno *et al.* (2004) are interesting in this regard as they confirm that some verbs can test both as unaccusatives and unergatives. Torrego (1989), for instance, demonstrates that the Spanish ungrammatical examples with postverbal bare plural subjects after unergative verbs, such as (14), become grammatical with the insertion of a locative phrase in preverbal position, like *Aquí* and *En este parque* in (23-24):

- (23) Aquí han dormido animales. (Torrego 1989: 255)  
“Animals have slept here”.
- (24) En este parque juegan niños.  
“Children play in this park”.

Similarly, Kuno and Takami (2004) and Kuno *et al.* (2004) provide examples of English COCs and *way* constructions with unaccusative and transitive verbs which call into question the *Unergative Restriction*, postulated in the literature as determining their behaviour (Massam 1990; Marantz 1992; Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1995; Macfarland 1995; Mittwoch 1998; Felser and Wanner 2001; Kim and Lim 2012; Melloni and Masini 2017):

#### I. COCs with unaccusative verbs (Kuno and Takami 2004: 111-116):<sup>3</sup>

- (25) John died a gruesome death.  
(26) Mary blushed a deep/sudden blush.  
(27) The apples fell just a short fall to the lower deck.  
(28) The tree grew a century’s growth within only ten years.

#### II. *Way* constructions with unaccusative and transitive verbs (Kuno *et al.* 2004: 74; 89):

- (29) Rainwater trickles its way to the underground pool.  
(30) Blood dripped its way from his head to his shoulder, and from there to the ground.  
(31) Sue pushed/forced her way through the crowd.  
(32) The water forced its way into the cracks.

Therefore, one should question whether Armstrong’s (2011: 296) distinction of two Spanish verbs *dormir* (an unergative one, similar to a transitive verb of “class 2” [*Dormí toda la tarde/Dormí una siesta muy larga*];<sup>4</sup> and an unaccusative one, equivalent, for its part, to a transitive verb of “class 1” [*Dormí al niño/Se durmió el niño*]), which seems to be right, could be applied to its English counterpart *sleep*.<sup>5</sup>

One verb that appears to be a candidate for the simultaneous existence in both continuums is *dormir* (= sleep). In Spanish, this verb can mean either *put/fall asleep* or simply *sleep*. When it means *put/fall asleep* it functions like a class 1 verb: it has both a transitive and an inchoative and when it means *sleep* it is an unergative that can take an internal argument in some circumstances.

### 3. Methodology

Since my aim is to study the potential transitivity of Spanish and English intransitive verbs, I have carried out a corpus-based analysis of the verbs *dormir* and *sleep*. The reason that motivates the choice of these two verbs, in detriment to others, is precisely their attestation in other transitive patterns, different from COCs. My study reveals, therefore, unknown traits to date about their possible transitivity, which, due to the theoretical orientation of most of the works devoted to its research, on the one hand, and to the fact that it is a linguistic phenomenon that has not been usually accounted for as a whole, on the other, has received scarce attention in the literature.<sup>6</sup>

*Dormir* has been specifically examined in the Peninsular variety of Spanish included in the last version (beta 0.94) of the *CORPES XXI* corpus (RAE and ASALE 2021), for being considered more homogeneous, despite its internal variation, than Latin American Spanish (García de Diego 1963; Haensch 2001). As García

<sup>3</sup> With the exception of *die*, unanimously acknowledged as a participant in the COC (Baron 1971; Massam 1990; Macfarland 1995; Kuno and Takami 2004; Höche 2009; Kijparnich 2011), the remaining instances of COCs with unaccusative verbs are not valid for Höche (2009: 162) as they are not real language examples. For Nakajima (2006), Iwasaki (2007) and Ogata (2011), however, they constitute a good starting point for their research.

<sup>4</sup> Hence the frequent relationship established between unergative and transitive verbs (Hale and Keyser 1993a; Armstrong 2011: 19).

<sup>5</sup> Armstrong’s (2011: 50) distinction of two transitive verbal classes in Spanish is based on the following parameters: (i) their behaviour with the inchoative clitic *se*; (ii) their (in)compatibility with *hacer* in analytic causative patterns; (iii) their (un)grammaticality when combining with unintentional causer datives; (iv) the meaning and the modification of their participial adjectives; (v) the possible omission of their direct objects; (vi) their potential combination with the telic marker *se*; (vii) and finally, the semantic role of their grammatical subject.

<sup>6</sup> To my knowledge, in fact, there are only few corpus-based studies that account for the transitivity of intransitive verbs, if from a partial viewpoint. Some cases in point are Höche’s (2009) and Kim and Lim’s (2012) works on English COCs, Buján Otero and Mellado Blanco (2010), which focuses on the Spanish idiomatic transitive expression *dormir el sueño de los justos* and its German counterpart, Martínez Vázquez (2014a; 2014b), where English and Spanish reaction object constructions are examined, and González Romero (2022), which offers an analysis of the Spanish patterns equivalent to the English *way* construction. Ibáñez and Melis (2015) is an exception in this regard since it deals with this topic in Spanish from a global perspective.

de Diego (1963: 13) remarks, this is so because “España es una y América es múltiple”. *Sleep*, for its part, has been inspected in the American and British varieties of English included in the *GloWbE* corpus (2013), for being usually recognized as “the two most commonly used varieties of the English Language” (Han 2019).<sup>7</sup> The limitations of the *GloWbE* corpus as regards the time period and registers it comprises, if compared with the *CORPES XXI* corpus (see Table 1), have led me, furthermore, to analyse the transitivity of *sleep* also in the *COCA* (2008) and *BNC* (2007) corpora. This way my Spanish-English contrastive analysis will become balanced, thus allowing to reach sound and reliable results:

Table 1. General features of the corpora used in my study

	TOTAL NUMBER OF WORDS	TOTAL NUMBER OF WORDS IN THE LINGUISTIC VARIETIES ANALYSED		TIME PERIOD	REGISTERS
<i>CORPES XXI</i>	+ 333 millions	+ 99.9 millions (Peninsular Spanish)		2001-2021	oral/written
<i>GLOWBE</i>	1.9 billion	+ 386 millions (US)	132 millions (GB)	2012-2013	Internet
<i>COCA</i>	1 billion	1 billion		1990-2019	oral/written
<i>BNC</i>	100 millions	100 millions		1980s-1993	oral/written

In my first search, I have looked for both verbs as lemmas in these four corpora. As the number of concordances obtained is extremely high, I have resorted to the proximity criterion that allows the combination of the lemma with a particular word class, so as to exclude as many intransitive examples as possible. Due to the nominal nature of direct objects, on the one hand, and the frequent modification attributed to cognate objects (COs, henceforward), on the other, in my second search I have chosen the noun among the word categories listed in the *CORPES XXI*, *GloWbE* and *BNC* corpora, placing it in an interval of three spaces to the right of *dormir* and *sleep*. This way I have been able to retrieve objects with pre- and postmodification, like the ones illustrated in (33-36), thus reducing the initial numbers of examples to a great extent:

- (33) [...] como si ella [...] durmiera un profundísimo sueño. (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2011)  
 “[...] as if she slept [...] a very deep sleep”.
- (34) Did you sleep a good sleep? (*COCA*, Fiction, 2018)
- (35) Y allí seguirían, durmiendo un sueño eterno. (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2011)  
 “And there they would continue, sleeping an eternal sleep”.
- (36) [...] before we sleep the sleep of death. (*GloWbE*, US)

Owing to the different interface of the *COCA* corpus, I have manually analysed the examples initially retrieved from it in order to discard as well those cases with a postverbal noun phrase functioning as subject, and as adverbial, like (37-38), and those in which it is part of a prepositional phrase, such as *in the same bed* in (39). Despite their transitivity, I have also excluded the examples with pronominal direct objects of the type of *me* in (40).<sup>8</sup> This same manual process has been carried out on the concordances obtained from the other three corpora, once the proximity criterion has been applied:

- (37) A few feet from me sleeps a man once well-to-do as a shopkeeper. (*GloWbE*, GB)
- (38) [...] dormiremos esta noche en una celda apestosa. (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2001)  
 “[...] we will sleep tonight in a stinking cell”.
- (39) I loved cuddling up to her and sleeping in the same bed. (*GloWbE*, GB)
- (40) Insistía en dormirme con cuentos [...]. (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2001)  
 “She insisted on putting me to sleep with tales [...]”.

In sum, the total number of transitive concordances with *dormir* amounts to 407 (5.10%) and those with *sleep*, for their part, to 819 (0.64%):

<sup>7</sup> According to the information provided by WorldData (2022), they are the two English varieties with the largest number of native speakers. American English, in particular, is spoken by more than 270 million people, and British English, for its part, by more than 65 million speakers. Notice in this respect that the third position, occupied by Canadian English, is spoken by a much smaller number of people: specifically, about more than 22 million speakers.

<sup>8</sup> Though their analysis would surely enrich my research, even altering the results here put forward, their study is left for further investigation, due to the high number of pronominal transitive concordances attested in the four corpora. Therefore, English resultative constructions with *sleep*, like (20), are outside my work, as they usually have a fake reflexive pronoun as object (Randall 1982; Simpson 1983; Rapoport 1990; Carrier and Randall 1992; Goldberg 1995; Boas 2003).

Table 2. Number of examples analysed

	<i>DORMIR</i>	<i>SLEEP</i>			
	<i>CORPES XXI</i>	<i>GLOWBE</i>		<i>COCA</i>	<i>BNC</i>
		<b>US</b>	<b>GB</b>		
<b>Initial number of examples</b>	20,551	42,096	38,817	95,600	10,055
<b>Number of examples (proximity criterion applied)</b>	7,970	15,560	13,260	95,600	3,405
<b>Transitive examples analysed</b>	407 (5.10%)	118 (0.75%)	130 (0.98%)	514 (0.53%)	57 (1.67%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>407 (5.10%)</b>	<b>819 (0.64%)</b>			

#### 4. Results and discussion

The different syntactico-semantic characterisation of the direct objects in the transitive examples in my corpus has led me to classify them in five groups, whose frequency of occurrence is indicated in Table 3:<sup>9</sup>

Table 3. Transitive structures with *dormir* and *sleep* in my corpus

	<i>CORPES XXI</i>	<i>GLOWBE</i>		<i>COCA</i>	<i>BNC</i>
		<b>US</b>	<b>GB</b>		
<b>Cognate object constructions</b>	253 (62.16%)	30 (25.42%)	25 (19.23%)	144 (28.01%)	16 (28.07%)
<b>Lexical causative constructions</b>	71 (17.44%)	3 (2.54%)	3 (2.30%)	15 (2.91%)	3 (5.26%)
<b>Structures with non-subcategorised objects different from cognates</b>	73 (17.93%)	22 (18.64%)	37 (28.46%)	151 (29.37%)	0 (0.00%)
<b>Adverbial direct object patterns</b>	10 (2.45%)	27 (22.88%)	39 (30.00%)	114 (22.17%)	33 (57.89%)
<b>Way-constructions</b>	0 (0.00%)	36 (30.50%)	26 (20.00%)	90 (17.50%)	5 (8.77%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>407 (5.10%)</b>	<b>118 (14.40%)</b>	<b>130 (15.87%)</b>	<b>514 (62.75%)</b>	<b>57 (6.95%)</b>
		<b>819 (0.64%)</b>			

##### 4.1. COCs

Despite coming from the internal accusative structure, characteristic of classical languages (Bassols de Climent 1945; Rodríguez Adrados 1992; Bary and De Swart 2005), the COC has also become, due to its peculiar syntactic and semantico-pragmatic characterisation, the focus of innumerable analyses of various modern languages, where their presence has likewise been verified: Romance languages (French [Gougenheim 1964], Spanish and Catalan [Real Puigdollers 2007, 2008] and Italian [Melloni and Masini 2017]), Germanic languages (English [Baron 1971; Massam 1990; Macfarland 1995; Horita 1996; Iwasaki 2007; Höche 2009; Sailer 2010; Kim and Lim 2012; Wilson 2019]), Slavic languages (Russian [Pereltsvaig 1999]), Semitic languages (Hebrew [Mittwoch 1998; Pereltsvaig 2002]), and Sino-Tibetan languages (Chinese [Hong 1999]).

Since its study in relation to modern languages has been carried out mainly on English, I take Sweet's (1891) definition of COs in the 19th century as my starting point, as it is still pertinent nowadays (Huddleston and Pullum 2002; De Swart 2007; RAE and ASALE 2009; Sailer 2010; Kitahara 2010; Wilson 2019):

Sometimes an intransitive verb is followed by a noun in the common form which repeats the meaning of the verb, as in *sleep the sleep of the just, fight a good fight*, where the noun is simply the verb converted into a noun, and in *fight a battle, run a race*, where the noun repeats the meaning, but not the form, of the verb. Such object-nouns are called cognate objects. (Sweet 1891: 91)

<sup>9</sup> Examples representing the *Location Subject Alternation* (Levin 1993: 82), like *At night we slept two nurses in one tent* (*GloWbE*, GB) and *The tent sleep six [...]* (*COCA*, Magazine, 2004), are outside my study, despite their transitive use and meaning ("12. To provide with sleeping accommodation" [*OED* 2022]), because, as a particular class of the "Oblique" *Subject Alternations*, it "do[es] not involve a change in transitivity, but [...] a change in the number of noun phrases found with the verb" (Levin 1993: 79).

COs are, in sum, morphological or semantic nominalisations of the intransitive verb with which they constitute, for De Swart (2007) and Kim and Lim (2012), a complex unit where a clear syntactico-semantic imbalance exists: “in the case of the cognate object construction [...] the formal construction is transitive due to the occurrence of the cognate object whereas on the semantic level it is intransitive as it represents a one-place predicate” (De Swart 2007: 17).<sup>10</sup>

In my corpora the COCs with *dormir* have a higher frequency of occurrence than their *sleep* counterparts, having been attested in 253 examples (62.16%); the English ones have been documented, for their part, in 215 instances (26.25%). As regards their COs, a similar number has been identified in each language. In Spanish, specifically, *siesta* (196 cases), *sueño* (54 instances), *cabezada* (two attestations), and *letargo* (one example); and in English, *sleep* (204 cases), *slumber* (four examples), *siesta* and *nap* (three instances each), and *dream* (one attestation).

However, two important differences have been observed between them. The first one concerns the kind of relationship that they maintain with the verb. Whereas in English both morphological (*sleep*) and semantic (*slumber*, *siesta*, *nap*, and *dream*) cognates have been attested, in Spanish no morphological cognate has been found since the prototypical CO of the verb *dormir* (the noun *sueño*) does not derive from it by means of ‘lexical gemination’ (*gemación léxica*, Cano Aguilar 1981). They all are, thus, only semantically related to the verb.<sup>11</sup> In any case, they all refer to inanimate abstract entities created from the verbal action. Hence, following Jespersen (1924), Quirk *et al.* (1985), Macfarland (1995), Rivas (1996), Kuno and Takami (2004), De Swart (2007: 46) and Kim and Lim (2012), among others, they have to be considered *effected objects*.<sup>12</sup>

The COs common to both corpora show, in another respect, a different frequency of occurrence. Whereas those with *sleep* (204 cases; 94.88%) far surpasses those with *sueño* (54 cases; 21.34%), the instances with *siesta* in Spanish (196 instances; 77.47%) overruns their English equivalents with *nap* and the Spanish borrowing *siesta* (three cases each; 2.79%).<sup>13</sup> The reason which, in my view, explains the high productivity of the English verb-noun combination *sleep-sleep*, if compared with that of *dormir-sueño*, is its morphological relationship. Being a mere formal repetition of the verb *sleep*, the noun *sleep* is, in opposition to *sueño*, the expected object in the COC and undoubtedly, thus, the most recurrent one. The massive presence of the sequence *dormir-siesta* in the Spanish corpus is to be attributed, for its part, to the idiomatic nature of the fixed expression *dormir la siesta*, defined as “tr. Dormir durante la siesta” (RAE 2014). This imbalance between *siesta* and *nap* confirms, furthermore, the linguistic idiosyncrasy of COs, stated in Pereltsvaig (1999: 287) and Lavidas (2013: 78).

My corpus-based analysis has brought to light, moreover, two important results, similar to those set forth in Höche’s (2009) study on COCs in the British variety of English, which call into question the prototypical pattern of cognates as modified indefinite noun phrases (Jones, 1988; Sailer, 2010), verified in my corpora in 92 concordances; specifically, in 38 Spanish attestations (23 cases with *siesta*, 14 instances with *sueño*, and the only example with *letargo*) and in 54 English instances (48 cases with *sleep*, two examples with *siesta*, two attestations with *nap* and two other ones with *slumber*). Although their reference is mostly marked by the indefinite article, as shown in (41-47), the zero determiner, and *tanta* and *one* have also been documented as markers of their indefiniteness, as manifest in examples (48-51):<sup>14</sup>

- (41) Roque dedicó la tarde a dormir una larga siesta. (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2002)  
 “Roque spent the afternoon taking a long nap”.
- (42) [...] y Marcillo se fue a dormir un sueño de mujeres asustadas. (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2004)  
 “[...] and Marcillo went to sleep a sleep of frightened women”.
- (43) [...] durmió un profundo letargo hasta su descubrimiento [...]. (*CORPES XXI*, No Ficción, 2002)  
 “[...] he slept a deep lethargy until his discovery [...]”.
- (44) [...] she is sleeping a dreamless sleep [...]. (*GloWbE*, US)
- (45) [...] he imagined them preparing to sleep a long siesta. (*COCA*, Fiction, 1992)

<sup>10</sup> According to De Swart (2007: 16), this is, in fact, the most common interlinguistic scenario. Therefore, in opposition to Macfarland (1995), Huddleston and Pullum (2002) and Lavidas (2013), and in agreement with Jones (1988), this author does not consider authentic, at least in English, COCs with transitive verbs.

<sup>11</sup> Therefore, they are not considered COs in those studies which defend that cognates must be morphologically related to the verb. In these works these objects represent a different class variously named as *transitivizing objects* (Massam 1990: 163), *hyponyms of COs* (Felser and Wanner 2001: 106), *hyponymous or hyponymic objects* (Hale and Keyser 2002: 71; Real Puigdollers 2008: 158), or simply *non-COs* (Ogata 2011: 3). Though differentiated, Wilson (2019: 2) classifies both kinds as *Inclusive Objects*, due to the similarities they share. A similar position is held by RAE and ASALE (2009: 4102), which calls them ‘internal accusatives’ (*acusativos internos*). Two interesting cases in point are Real-Puigdollers (2007) and Melloni and Masini (2017) as, consequently, they deny the existence of COCs in Spanish.

<sup>12</sup> The status of verbal argument which, following Massam (1990) and Macfarland (1995), here I attribute to COs contrasts with the adjunct status ascribed to them in Jones (1988), Moltmann (1989), Mittwoch (1998), Huddleston and Pullum (2002), and Sailer (2010). Both are, however, defended in Pereltsvaig (1999) and Nakajima (2006), where object and adjunct cognates are differentiated.

<sup>13</sup> The attestation of *sleep-nap* in my corpora, if only on three occasions in American English, overrules the ungrammaticality attributed to this combination by Gallego (2012: 109).

<sup>14</sup> Their prototypical indefinite and inanimate reference reinforces, in my view, the syntactico-semantic asymmetry observed by De Swart (2007) and Kim and Lim (2012), as both properties (indefiniteness and inanimacy) entail a low degree of individuation and referentiality in such participant (Austin, 1982; Lichtenberk, 1982; Roegiest, 2007), and, consequently, a low level of transitivity in the clause (Hopper and Thompson 1980: 253).

- (46) [...] she's not quite ready to sleep a full nap yet. (*GloWbE*, GB).  
 (47) Even Mahattan slept a restless slumber along this stretch of Madison Avenue. (*COCA*, Fiction, 2001)  
 (48) Duerme siestas de diez minutos en los lugares más insospechados [...]. (*CORPES XXI*, No Ficción, 2010)  
 "He takes 10-minute naps in the most unsuspected places [...]".  
 (49) [...] while Carolyn slept deep black sleeps. (*BNC*, Fiction, 1985-1994)  
 (50) [...] ya le dije que no durmiera tanta siesta. (*CORPES XXI*, Oral, Televisión, 2013)  
 "[...] I already told him not to take so many naps".  
 (51) [...] he is only capable of sleeping one long sleep in 24 hours. (*GloWbE*, GB)

My first finding concerns their modification, which, contrary to expectation, is not compulsory for the grammaticality of the construction; and the second one, the kind of determiners found in them, which, as defended in Massam (1990), Macfarland (1995) and Kuno and Takami (2004), cannot be reduced to the class of indefinites.<sup>15</sup>

In particular, 160 cases of unmodified COCs have been attested in Spanish (two instances with *cabezada*, and 158 examples with *siesta*) and five ones in English (one case with *siesta*, another one with *nap*, and three examples with *sleep*). Their lack of modification cannot be, however, considered a deviation from the prototypical form of COs, if for different reasons; in (52-55), because the meaning of their heads entails some kind of modification: *cabezada*, "coloq. Sueño corto y ligero" (RAE 2014), *siesta*, "Sueño que se toma después de comer" (RAE 2014) or "An afternoon rest or nap; *esp.* that commonly taken during the hottest hours of the day in tropical countries. Also *transferred*" (OED 2022), *nap*, "A short or light sleep, *esp.* one taken during the day; a snooze" (OED 2022); and in (56-57), because the possessive determiner *his* and the intensifier *such* of the indefinite determiner provides the CO *sleep* with connotations (possession and a high degree, respectively) that make their expected modification unnecessary:

- (52) [...] la vio [...] en actitud de dormir una cabezada, [...]. (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2016)  
 "[...] he saw her [...] in an attitude of sleeping a snooze, [...]".  
 (53) Northrop trató de dormir la siesta bajo la sombra. (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2003)  
 "Northrop tried to take a nap in the shade".  
 (54) Oh, it is just sleep a siesta. (*BNC*, Oral, 1985-1994)  
 (55) Do not worry, I sleep a nap here. (*COCA*, TV movies, 2010)  
 (56) There he ate his food, slept his sleep, lived his life and wrote his poems. (*COCA*, Oral, 2000)  
 (57) He replied, 'I have never slept such a sleep'. (*GloWbE*, GB)

My results contradict, thus, those studies which consider the CO modification pragmatically and grammatically essential for two main reasons; first, to modify a verbal event when the language does not have an adverb for such a purpose (Jespersen 1924; Moltmann 1989);<sup>16</sup> and second, to avoid the redundancy and, consequently, the violation of Grice's (1975) first *maxim of quantity* (Rice 1987; Alarcos Llorach 1994; Goldberg and Ackerman 2001; Rodríguez Ramalle 2003; Melloni and Masini 2017).

As regards their reference, definite COs overrun indefinite ones in both corpora. Though their definiteness is frequently marked by the definite article (158 examples with *siesta*, 27 instances with *sueño*, 139 cases with *sleep*, two examples with *slumber* and the only attestation with *dream*), as seen in (58-62), two other definite determiners have been attested with *sueño* and *sleep*, if with a lower frequency of occurrence; specifically, possessives (seven Spanish examples and 15 English ones), and demonstratives (just one case in each language), as illustrated in the series of examples (63-66):

- (58) [...] no ha sido capaz esta tarde de dormir la siesta [...]. (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2001)  
 "[...] he has not been able to take a nap this afternoon [...]".  
 (59) [...] el texto ha dormido el sueño de los justos [...]. (*CORPES XXI*, Prensa, 2001)  
 "[...] the text has slept the sleep of the just [...]".  
 (60) He truly sleeps the sleep of the just. (*GloWbE*, GB)  
 (61) We have slept the enchanted slumber, the Draocht Suan, for many centuries. (*BNC*, Fiction, 1985-1994)  
 (62) The sweetest sleep the fairest-bonding dreams. (*COCA*, TV Movies, 1995)  
 (63) [...] donde los muertos, los degollados [...] duermen congelados su sueño eterno. (*CORPES XXI*,

<sup>15</sup> In Höche's (2009) analysis modified and unmodified COs constitute, respectively, 44.8% and 34.4% of the corpus (3,139 examples with 400 different verb-noun combinations). Indefinite and definite COs represent, for their part, 55.5% and 43.8% of the corpus.

<sup>16</sup> Hence the frequent relationship established between COCs and intransitive patterns with adverbial modification, such as *Él durmió profundamente/She took the veronal to sleep soundly* (Jones 1988; Moltmann 1989; Kitahara 2010; Lavidas 2013). Whereas for Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 673) they are synonymous structures, Jones (1988), Lavidas (2013) and RAE and ASALE (2009: 4102) appreciate several stylistic contrasts between them. Due to their *orotund style* (Quirk *et al.* 1985: 750), COCs are considered characteristic of formal registers and, consequently, not very common in everyday language.



- Ficción, 2020)  
 “[...] where the dead, the beheaded [...] sleep their eternal sleep frozen [...]”.
- (64) Sleep your best sleep ever. (*COCA*, Web, 2012)
- (65) [...] la ciudad dormía ese sueño tan merecido de los pueblos laboriosos, [...]. (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2001)  
 “[...] the city slept that well-deserved sleep of industrious nations, [...]”
- (66) [...] I slept that great sleep of destiny [...] (*GloWbE*, GB)

The high percentage of the definite determiner with *siesta*, *sueño* and *sleep* is not surprising, if we take into account the idiomaticity of the fixed expressions *dormir la siesta* (158 cases), *the sleep of death* (19 concordances), and the bibleism *el sueño de los justos/the sleep of the just*, as Mellado Blanco (2017) calls it (21 and 23 examples, respectively),<sup>17</sup> frequently attested in both corpora. Despite their idiomatic character, they have been documented with some internal modification, thus calling into question the invariability of phraseological expressions (Fernando and Flavell 1981: 17). *Siesta*, for instance, has been found in possessive modified and unmodified phrases, as shown in (67-68), and *el sueño de los justos, the sleep of the just* and *the sleep of death*, with adjectival modification, as exemplified in (69-71); moreover, an adjectival alternative to *the sleep of death* has also been registered, both bare and modified, as seen in (72-73):

- (67) [...] con la intención de dormir su siesta entre su colonia de focas y bestias marinas [...]. (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2012)  
 “[...] with the intention of taking a nap among his colony of seals and sea beasts [...]”.
- (68) Pisarle los huevos con otro tanque cuando duerma su panzuda siesta. (*CORPES XXI*, Web, 2002)  
 “To step on his balls with another tank when he takes his paunchy nap”.
- (69) [...] despertaron a Ruth y a García, que, [...], dormían el sueño postcoito de los justos. (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2001)  
 “[...] They woke up Ruth and García, who, [...], were sleeping the postcoital sleep of the just”.
- (70) Hathaway, M. Bale, and the rest of the cast can now sleep the untroubled sleep of the just [...]. (*GloWbE*, GB)
- (71) [...] but if by jogging are awaked at all, immediately return to sleep again, and so sleep the sleep of eternal death. (*GloWbE*, GB)
- (72) Five feet from me Andy slept the sleep of the dead, [...]. (*COCA*, Magazine, 1992)
- (73) For three days and nights, my son has slept the sleep of the living dead. (*COCA*, TV Movies, 2008)

As regards the bibleism *el sueño de los justos* and *the sleep of the just*, nevertheless, an interesting semantic contrast has been observed. Whereas in the 23 English examples it always refers to human subjects, thus manifesting its biblical sense which alludes to the “act of sleeping easily and deeply”, in Spanish it has been more frequently found with non-human subjects (18 versus three instances), and, consequently, with the meaning “fallig into oblivion”, manifest in (59), thus evidencing a clear polysemic character.<sup>18</sup>

## 4.2. Lexical causative constructions

The attestation of examples like (74-77) in my corpora is in itself an extremely significant finding as it demonstrates the existence of lexical causative structures with *dormir* and *sleep* to which the extensive bibliography on causativity has paid almost no attention, if for different reasons:

- (74) [...] los especialistas en esta terapia aclaran que no consiste en dormir al paciente [...]. (*CORPES XXI*, Prensa, 2006)  
 “[...] specialists in this therapy clarify that it does not consist of putting the patient to sleep [...]”.
- (75) # Always sleep your baby on their back, [...]. (*GloWbE*, GB)
- (76) Ayudado por sus compañeros, durmió el balón y el partido [...]. (*CORPES XXI*, Prensa, 2002)  
 “Helped by his teammates, he slept the ball and the game [...]”.
- (77) Sleep your yo-yo. (*COCA*, Press, 1999)

*Sleep*, in particular, is not included in the research on causativity because, considered a clear unergative verb, it does not take part, as earlier explained, in the so-called causative alternation in English. And *dormir*, for its

<sup>17</sup> For Buján Otero and Mellado Blanco (2010: 130), it is a situational, and not a literal bibleism, because it does not come from a specific biblical quotation, but from an idea extracted from one or several excerpts; according to Röhrich (2004: 1346-1347), from *The Book of Proverbs* 24.15, and *Moses* 26.6.

<sup>18</sup> Its polysemy is also perceived in its formally identical German and English counterparts (*den Schlaf der Gerechten schlafen* and *sleep the sleep of the just*), though their meanings, for Buján Otero and Mellado Blanco (2010) and Luque Nadal (2010), are different from those observed in Spanish.

part, because it is not usually included in the few verbal groups that seem to enter such alternation in Spanish. For Cano Aguilar (1977: 243), they comprise, in fact, just some unaccusative change of state or location verbs; in particular, those denoting the beginning or end of a process (*empezar, acabar*), deajectival verbs (*empeorar, mejorar*), and motion verbs (*subir, bajar*).<sup>19</sup> Hence the frequent relationship established between causativity and transitive verbs in Spanish:

Numerosos verbos transitivos pueden emplearse con significación *causativa* o *factitiva*. En tales casos el sujeto no realiza por sí mismo la acción del verbo, sino que ordena, encarga, dirige o costea la acción que otro ejecuta: *Carlos III construyó la puerta de Alcalá; Me hago un traje nuevo; El general X ha ganado una batalla importante; El municipio erigirá un monumento a Cervantes*. Un verbo normalmente intransitivo como *dormir* toma significado causativo en *dormir a un niño*. (RAE 1973: 3.5.1.e)

As in COCs, in these lexical causative patterns, which entail immediate or direct causation by merging together in the verbal semantics the notions of cause and effect, essential in any causative relationship (Comrie 1976, 1985; Shibatani 1976a; Song 1996; Payne 1997; Esquivel Rodríguez 2010; Vivanco Gefaell 2016), *dormir* and *sleep* also increase their valency with the addition of a second participant, which, nevertheless, functions here as subject.<sup>20</sup> As a result of this incorporation, the direct object slot is filled in, as shown in (78a-79b), with the subject participant of the intransitive structure with which this transitive pattern forms the *Causative/Inchoative Alternation* (Cano Aguilar 1977; Mourelle De Lema 1981; Moreno Cabrera 1984; Levin 1993; Haspelmath 1993; Cuervo 2008; RAE and ASALE 2009; Esquivel Rodríguez 2010; Heidinger 2015; Vivanco Gefaell 2016; López García 2018):

- (78a) En la orilla, una mujer duerme a su niño. (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2005)  
 “On the shore a woman puts her child to sleep”.  
 (78b) En la orilla, el niño se duerme.  
 “On the shore, the baby sleeps”.  
 (79a) Sleep your baby on a firm, clean, dry mattress. (*GloWbE*, GB)  
 (79b) Your baby sleeps on a firm, clean, dry mattress.

Consequently, in lexical causative constructions *dormir* and *sleep* are not the unergative verbs of the COC, but unaccusative verbs. This is undoubtedly manifest in Spanish where the complex particle *se* attaches to the verb *dormir*, which becomes pronominal (*dormirse*), providing it with an inchoative meaning (“13. Prnl. Quedarse una persona o un animal dormidos” [RAE 2014]), which, according to Cuervo (2008: 62), RAE and ASALE (2009: 4107) and López García (2018: 8), is crucial for the causative alternation to take place.<sup>21</sup> Notice, in fact, the presence of the attributive verb of ‘becoming’ *quedarse* in this definition.

The animacy of the verbal internal argument alluded to in this definition is, in another respect, called into question, as my corpus-based analysis has also yielded causative structures with inanimate direct objects. Therefore, I have grouped them in two classes: those with animate direct objects and those with inanimate direct objects. The former, which fit the senses “9. tr. Hacer que alguien se duerma. *Dormir a un niño, a un paciente*” (RAE 2014) and “11. To cause to sleep or fall asleep” (*OED* 2022), only have personal reference in English, as seen in (80-81); specifically, *baby* in six cases, and *son* in one. In Spanish, however, they also have animal reference (7 instances), as (82) shows. In most of the cases (36 attestations), some of which are exemplified in (83-84), their reference, sometimes under the form of a collective noun (*grada, audiencia, público* and *Real Madrid*), is, nevertheless, personal:

- (80) [...] a barefoot woman [...] lulling to sleep a baby she nurses quite publicly; (*COCA*, Blog, 2012)  
 (81) Granny was singing to sleep my eldest son with a very old rant called [...]. (*GloWbE*, GB)  
 (82) Rohipnol [...], un somnífero “muy potente”, puede dormir a un elefante. (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2007)  
 “Rohypnol [...], a “very powerful” sleeping pill, can put an elephant to sleep”.  
 (83) ¿Cómo demonios iba a dormir a un crío bajo el estrépito de una guerra? (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2009)  
 “How the hell was I going to put a kid to sleep under the din of a war?”  
 (84) ¡Pero, nunca nadie podrá decir de mí que he dormido a mi público! (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2002)  
 “But, no one will ever be able to say that I have put my audience to sleep!”.

<sup>19</sup> This explains why *dormir* has only been found in the following works on causativity: RAE (1973), Aranda (1990), RAE and ASALE (2009: 4109), Armstrong (2011: 296-297), and Ibáñez and Melis (2015: 180).

<sup>20</sup> For their contrasts with analytic or periphrastic causatives, constructed around the verbs *hacer* and *dejar* in Spanish and *make* in English (Pérez Tattam 2002; Cuervo 2003), see Comrie (1976, 1985), Shibatani (1976a, 1976b), and Vivanco Gefaell (2016).

<sup>21</sup> According to Haspelmath (1993), this change is frequent from an interlinguistic perspective, though under different forms. Although the Spanish verbs that enter this alternation are more common with *se* than without it (RAE and ASALE 2009: 4109), Heidinger (2015: 565) considers them the unmarked variants of the Spanish causative alternation.

The latter are, for their part, subject to a two-fold semantic classification in Spanish: on the one hand, 26 instances with inanimate direct objects related to sports, such as *partido*, *duelo*, *encuentro*, *balón* and *pelota*, which, like (85), match the meaning “5. intr. Dicho de lo que estaba inquieto o alterado: Sosegarse o apaciguarse. U. t. c. prnl” (RAE 2014); and on the other, two examples with a body part (in my corpus, always *brazo*), thus fitting, like (86), the definition “14. prnl. Dicho de un miembro: adormecerse (entorpecerse)” (RAE 2014):

- (85) Intentó dormir el partido y permitió a la Real soltarse en ataque. (*CORPES XXI*, Prensa, 2004)  
 “He tried to put the game to sleep and allowed Real to loosen up in attack”.
- (86) A Dani le dormí la otra tarde los dos brazos, [...]. (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2008)  
 “I numbed Dani’s both arms the other afternoon, [...]”.

Although both senses also underlie the meaning of *sleep*, the first one (“I. *intransitive*. 4. *figurative*. a. To be dormant, inert, inactive, inoperative, or quiescent. *spec.*, [...] [*OED* 2022]), registered in 17 instances, shows greater semantic heterogeneity than in Spanish. A clear tendency to refer to technological machines and devices has been, nonetheless, observed in their direct objects, as (87-88) show. The last one (“I. *intransitive*. 3 *transferred*. a. Of limbs: To be numb, to be devoid of sensation, esp. as the result of pressure” [*OED* 2022]), for its part, has not been attested in my corpora:

- (87) More magnets in the cover wake and sleep the iPad (*GloWbE*, GB)
- (88) Use the idevicediagnostics too to restart, shutdown and sleep the device [...]. (*GloWbE*, US)

As regards their subjects, it should be noticed that, whereas all the causative patterns with inanimate direct objects, except for the English example (87), have an agentive human participant in both languages, as (85-88) illustrate, those with animate ones have been attested, as manifest in (82-84), with animate as well as inanimate subjects, but only in Spanish (31 and 12 cases, respectively).<sup>22</sup> Therefore, instead of agents, these latter participants should be attributed the semantic role of instigator or *effector* (Van Valin and Wilkins 1996), as long as they are the conscious causers of the verbal action which, in contrast to agents, do not necessarily show the traits of control and volition (Esquivel Rodríguez 2010: 153; Ibáñez and Melis 2015: 180; Mourelle de Lema 1981: 18; Vivanco Gefaell 2016: 38).

Finally, I would like to emphasise that the frequency of occurrence of both causative patterns is higher in Spanish than in English: whereas in Spanish they have been attested on 43 (10.53%) and 28 (6.86%) occasions, in English only 7 (0.85%) and 17 (0.87%) instances have been registered.

### 4.3. Transitive structures with non-subcategorised objects different from cognates

The transitive patterns with *dormir* and *sleep* included in this section have received no attention in the studies about their potential transitivisation. In my view, this fact is to be attributed, on the one hand, to the extremely low frequency of occurrence which, contra expectation, they have in English (only one case; 0.12%),<sup>23</sup> and on the other, to the behaviour, characteristic of Germanic languages, which they exhibit in Spanish.<sup>24</sup>

The 73 Spanish expressions with non-subcategorised objects different from cognates in my corpus (18.46%) are subject to a two-fold semantic classification on the basis of their (non-)idiomatic meaning. Specifically, 42 examples have been registered with the fixed expression *dormir la mona*, whose origin goes back, according to Ruiz Mateo (2020), to the sixteenth century, when the term *mona* was used “para referirse a la borrachera o a la persona ebria”, and the expression *dormir la mona*, for its part, to a common practice at the parties of the time which consisted of “ofrecerles vino a los monos para observar los efectos del alcohol”. Due to its phraseological nature, it shows almost no internal variation (Fernando and Flavell 1981: 17). In fact, only one example slightly modified with the insertion of the adverbial *allí* between the verb and the object has been found:

- (89) Un par de indigentes duermen la mona arropados por cartones. (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2011)  
 “A couple of homeless people sleep it off wrapped in cardboard”.
- (90) [...] optaron por llevarme al apartamento de Sandra para que durmiera allí la mona. (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2005)  
 “[...] they chose to take me to Sandra’s apartment so that I could sleep it off there”.

<sup>22</sup> Despite admitting their presence in lexical causative constructions, Cano Aguilar (1977: 250) defends the Spanish preference to use periphrastic causative constructions with inanimate subjects.

<sup>23</sup> The single attestation of this pattern in English is indeed surprising, since non-subcategorised objects do appear in some of its prototypical grammatical schemes: among others, COCs, *way* constructions, intransitive resultative constructions, and reaction object constructions.

<sup>24</sup> Typologically, Germanic languages, like English, are classified as *satellite-framed languages* and Romance languages, like Spanish, in contrast, as *verb-framed languages* (Talmy 1985, 2000).

The expression *dormir la borrachera*, registered on 14 occasions, should also be included in this group as it is a clear non-idiomatic synonym of *dormir la mona*. Owing to the literal meaning of its components, it shows greater internal variability. As examples (91-93) show, besides the separation between verb and direct object, its direct object head has been found in singular and plural (13 and one instance, respectively), and the definite article, being the most recurrent one (11 examples), replaced by possessive (two cases) and indefinite determiners (one concordance):

- (91) [...] mientras dormía desmayada la borrachera que deja el anís. (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2003)  
“[...] while she unconscious slept off the drunkenness that anisette leaves”.
- (92) Te pasas el día tumbada durmiendo tus borracheras. (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2001)  
“You spend the day lying down sleeping off your binges”.
- (93) [...] mientras Taboada dormía una espantosa borrachera [...]. (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2003)  
“[...] while Taboada slept a frightful drunk [...]”.

The corpus-based analysis carried out has yielded, moreover, three other non-idiomatic alternatives to the phraseologism *dormir la mona*, which also have as heads of their direct objects a synonym of the term *borrachera*, though informal in nature: “coloq. Borrachera, embriaguez” (RAE 2014); namely, *dormir la tranca*, *dormir la cogorza* (one attestation each one), and *dormir la melopea* (two cases). It is their colloquial flavour that explains, in my opinion, their low frequency of occurrence in the corpus and, consequently, their inner invariability:

- (94) ¡Ale, a dormir la tranca a otro sitio! (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2011)  
“Come on, to sleep off the binge somewhere else!”
- (95) Puede que aún esté durmiendo la cogorza de anoche. (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2011)  
“He may still be sleeping off last night’s drunkenness”.
- (96) Cuando te marchaste a dormir la melopea, el otro se quedó de guasa. (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2009)  
“When you went to sleep the bender, the other remained joking”.

Closely related to them are the expressions in the corpus which indirectly allude to the terms *mona*, *borrachera*, *tranca*, *cogorza* and *melopea* through other words maintaining with them some kind of contiguity relationship. They are, thus, clear examples of metonymies (Langacker 1991; Azaustre and Casas 1994; Paradis 2004), which, in my view, fit two of the groups differentiated in Lausberg’s (1991) typology: first, those which mention a particular reason, such as *la bebida de la noche anterior*, *las cervezas de la comida*, and *el vino* in examples (97-99), to refer to its consequence (‘a drunkenness’); and second, those which, by naming a container, like *farra* and *verbena* in (100-101), hint at its content (‘the alcohol there drunk’), as well as at its consequences (‘a drunkenness’):<sup>25</sup>

- (97) En algunos casos duermen la bebida de la noche anterior. (*CORPES XXI*, No Ficción, 2011)  
“In some cases they sleep off the previous night’s drink.”
- (98) [...] con la misma cara que si hubiese estado durmiendo las cervezas de la comida [...]. (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2011)  
“[...] with the same face as if he had been sleeping off the beers from lunch [...]”.
- (99) [...] los mendigos dormían el vino en sus cartones. (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2020)  
“[...] the beggars slept the wine in their cardboard boxes”.
- (100) Es posible [...] que aún confíe en que Bruno sigue durmiendo la farra. (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2012)  
“It is possible [...] that he still trusts that Bruno is still sleeping off the party”.
- (101) [...] los árboles [...] aún dormían la verbena de la noche anterior [...]. (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2009)  
“[...] the trees [...] still slept the open-air party of the previous night [...]”.

This group comprises eight more instances with the same syntactic behaviour as the fixed expression *dormir la mona* and its non-idiomatic versions, which, however, cannot be considered their synonyms. The four examples illustrated in (102-105) are, specifically, semantically associated with them due to the connotations of their direct objects: *resaca*, “Malestar que padece al despertar quien ha bebido alcohol en exceso” (RAE 2014) (attested twice), and *sus tormentos de alcohol*, *los efectos de la dosis de la droga*, and *el atracón de pescado*, found just once. The direct objects of the four remaining attestations (*disgusto*, *excitación*, *batalla* and *espera*) have nothing to do, for their part, with the excesses caused by the consumption of food and toxic substances, as seen in (106-109):

<sup>25</sup> These examples verify that metonymies are not exclusive of literary language, but “part of the ordinary everyday way we think and act as well as talk” (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 37).

- (102) Debía estar durmiendo la resaca del día anterior. (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2012)  
“He must have been sleeping off the hangover from the day before”.
- (103) El pintor [...] a menudo dormía sus tormentos de alcohol. (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2012)  
“The painter [...] often slept his torments of alcohol”.
- (104) [...], después de dormir los efectos de la dosis de la droga que había comprado la noche anterior en la barriada de Torreblanca. (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2005)  
“[...] after sleeping off the effects of the dose of the drug he had bought the night before in the neighbourhood of Torreblanca”.
- (105) Takuro dormía el atracón de pescado que se había dado [...]. (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2020)  
“Takuro slept the fish binge he had eaten [...]”.
- (106) Tras dormir el disgusto, Amada estaba dispuesta a dar carpetazo al agrio episodio de la tarde anterior con Lucas, [...]. (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2009)  
“After sleeping off her annoyance, Amada was ready to put an end to the bitter episode of the previous afternoon with Lucas, [...]”.
- (107) [...] nos fuimos todas a dormir aquella excitación tan locuaz [...]. (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2011)  
“[...] we all went to sleep that loquacious excitement [...]”.
- (108) Y ya para dormir la batalla, el [...] Meliá Alicante [...] ofrece habitaciones a buen precio. (*CORPES XXI*, Prensa, 2010)  
“And to sleep off the battle, the [...] Meliá Alicante [...] offers rooms at a good price”.
- (109) [...] cuando la pista y la maquinaria duermen la espera de la próxima revelación. (*CORPES XXI*, Miscelánea, 2016)  
“[...] the track and the machinery sleep the wait for the next revelation”.

In any case, the transitive patterns in this section resemble COCs as they contain the unergative verb *dormir*, which also increases its argument structure with the addition of a non-subcategorised object. However, in contrast to COs, which are implicit in the verbal meaning, these ones resemble the objects of *reaction object constructions* (ROCs, henceforward), illustrated in (110-111), which are more frequent in English than in Spanish (Levin 1993; Felser and Wanner, 2001; Martínez Vázquez 2014a; 2014b):

- (110) She mumbled her adoration. (Levin 1993: 98)  
(111) Ella murmura su incredulidad. (Martínez Vázquez 2014b: 193)  
“She mutters her disbelief”.

Despite their similarities, these transitive structures cannot be, however, classified as ROCs for several reasons. First, because *dormir* does not belong to the semantic verbal classes that, according to Levin (1993: 98), Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 305) and Martínez Vázquez (2014a: 179-183; 2014b: 202-204), enter such structure; namely, *manner of speaking verbs* and *verbs of gestures and signs*. Second, because their direct objects, eventive in nature, lack the resultative meaning characteristic of ROs (Kogusuri 2009; Martínez Vázquez 2014a; 2014b).<sup>26</sup> And finally, because, being usually introduced in the clause by the definite article (55 attestations), they are not correlative with the grammatical subject of the clause, as ROs, which, in contrast, are joined to the verb either directly or by means of possessive determiners (Mirto 2007; Kogusuri 2009; Martínez Vázquez 2014a: 186).

Since their meaning can be paraphrased as “X removes the effects of the event implied in the direct object by sleeping”, these Spanish structures fuse together, as Germanic languages do, two different predications in a simple sentence (a main one of eventive nature encoded in the direct object and a secondary one denoting manner expressed through the verb *dormir*), thus questioning Talmy’s (1985; 2000) well-known typological distinction between satellite- and verb-framed languages. It is precisely the incorporation of the manner component in the verb that leads me to postulate an interlinguistic relationship between both typologies, recently observed in relation to motion, reaction object, resultative, and *way* constructions (Filipovič 2007; Beavers *et al.* 2010; Croft *et al.* 2010; Martínez Vázquez 2013, 2014b, 2016; Rodríguez Arrizabalaga 2014, 2022; González Romero 2022).

The English counterparts of these particular Spanish structures have not been analysed in my study because, with the exception of (112), they all contain the transitive complex verbs *sleep off/away*, present in (113-114):

- (112) Sit and sleep three meals served every day. (*COCA*, TV Movies, 1995)  
(113) I began spending more and more time [...] sleeping off hangovers. (*COCA*, Fiction, 1995)  
(114) [...] and two, [...], would crash out and try and sleep away the jet lag. (*BNC*, Fiction, 1985-1994)

<sup>26</sup> According to Martínez Vázquez (2014a: 186-188), the most common ROs are conventional formulae which denote speaking acts (*hola/hello*), nouns derived from illocutive verbs (*asentimiento/approval*), and nouns which express attitudes or states of mind (*admiraación/admiration*).

*Sleep* enters, nonetheless, two idiomatic patterns with non-subcategorised objects, lacking *dormir* in their Spanish equivalents; in particular, *sleep a wink*, and the phraseological expression with *sleep* coordinated with *eat*, usually in conjunction with other verbs; namely, *drink*, *live*, and *breathe*. The first one, attested in 173 instances (21.12%), most of which in the negative, as (115) shows, hardly exhibits any internal variation. Only in the two concordances illustrated in (116-117) has it been modified: in the former the direct object carries adjectival modification and in the latter *wink* is replaced by *lick*. In the second one, documented, for its part, in 37 instances (4.51%), *sleep*, always the last element in the coordinated verbal sequence, is complemented by a semantically diverse wide range of direct objects, as seen in (118-120):

- (115) I couldn't sleep a wink that night. (*COCA*, TV Movies, 2012)  
 (116) He said [...] he hadn't slept a goddamned wink. (*COCA*, Fiction, 1997)  
 (117) [...] but Afiya hadn't slept a lick. (*COCA*, Fiction, 2017)  
 (118) I eat and sleep basketball. (*COCA*, Newspaper, 2000)  
 (119) In the words of an ancient saint, he did eat, and drink, and sleep eternal life. (*COCA*, Blog, 2012)  
 (120) [...] you live, breathe, eat and sleep your business. (*COCA*, Blog, 2012)

#### 4.4. Adverbial transitive structures

The presence of *dormir* and *sleep* in the so called 'Construction with promoted direct object' (*Construcción con promoción a objeto directo*) (Esquivel Rodríguez 2010: 162) or *Locative Preposition Drop Alternation* (Levin 1993: 43-44) is extremely significant since, as Levin (1993: 43) remarks, it is associated just with "certain verbs of motion". In consequence, it is frequently illustrated with directional locative adverbials that denote either a path or a goal:

- (121a) Carlos corrió en el Tour de Francia. (Esquivel Rodríguez 2010: 162)  
 "Carlos raced in the Tour de France".  
 (121b) Carlos corrió el Tour de Francia.  
 "Carlos raced the Tour de France".  
 (122a) Martha climbed up the mountain. (Levin 1993: 43)  
 (122b) Martha climbed the mountain.

As (121a-122b) show, the transitive structures in this alternation contain a direct object of adverbial nature which, by losing the head of the prepositional phrase from which it derives, ceases to be a peripheral argument to display a central function in the sentence. They constitute, thus, one more case in which an unergative verb increases its valency with the addition of a non-canonical direct object (Payne 1997; Esquivel Rodríguez 2010).

The semantic behaviour that *dormir* and *sleep* exhibit in this particular structure, more frequent in English (213 cases; 26.00%) than in Spanish (10 instances; 2.45%), is extremely striking from a contrastive viewpoint. Curiously enough, in the Spanish corpus no locative direct object has been found as complement of *dormir*. All the promoted direct objects attested have temporal or modal meaning. Specifically, the eight temporal ones, of which examples (123-126) are a sample, have the prepositions *por* or *durante* omitted and the terms *mañana*, *noche* (three cases each one), and *día* and *hora* (one attestation each) as heads; the two modal instances, illustrated in (127-128), have dropped, for their part, the preposition *en* and contain the nouns *paz* and *silencio* as their heads:

- (123) [...] podrá irse a su cama, a dormir la mañana con el recuerdo de Nancy. (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2005)  
 "[...] he will be able to go to his bed, to sleep the morning with the memory of Nancy".  
 (124) Después, a partir de los siete meses más o menos, quizás duerma la noche del tirón. (*CORPES XXI*, No Ficción, 2016)  
 "Afterwards, from seven months more or less, he may sleep the night all at once".  
 (125) Cuando el sol despuntaba, buscaba la oscuridad y dormía el día. (*CORPES XXI*, Ficción, 2020)  
 "When the sun rose, he sought the darkness and slept the day".  
 (126) Dormimos las seis horas de vuelo [...]. (*CORPES XXI*, No Ficción, 2009)  
 "We slept the six hours of flight [...]"  
 (127) [...] películas como [...] *Los canallas duermen paz* (1960) [...]. (*CORPES XXI*, No Ficción, 2009)  
 "[...] movies like [...] *The scoundrels sleep peace* (1960) [...]"  
 (128) Solsona y Cardona, [...], duermen el silencio de la historia perdida en esa Cataluña [...]. (*CORPES XXI*, No Ficción, 2009)  
 "Solsona y Cardona, [...], sleep the silence of the history lost in that Catalonia [...]"

Locative direct objects, however, do appear in the English corpora, if with a lower frequency of occurrence than temporal ones. They have been found, in particular, in 23 instances, where the preposition that most commonly drops is *in*, as seen in (129-130). The 189 attestations with temporal direct objects are, for their part, semantically more varied than their Spanish counterparts. They allude to different parts of the day (*morning, night, afternoon, evening*), seasons (*winter, summer*), other temporal concepts (*minute, moment, week, month, year, century, era*), and events like *episode, lesson, flight, ride* and *journey*.<sup>27</sup> Though the preposition that is omitted in them is clearly determined by their object head noun, the most frequent one is *during*, as can be appreciated in (131-134). Finally, the single instance found with a direct object denoting manner, in which the preposition deleted is *in*, as manifest in (135), resembles the Spanish example (127):

- (129) Some were sleeping the van, others were sleeping on cardboard [...] (COCA, Blog, 2012)  
 (130) But I was sleeping All Star Hotel. (COCA, TV Movies, 2006)  
 (131) I [...] can never sleep pre-surgery worry nights. (COCA, Blog, 2012)  
 (132) [...] the pasture where she slept hot summers [...]. (COCA, Fiction, 2006)  
 (133) The Book tells us that each drop allows a man to sleep a century. (COCA, Fiction, 1992)  
 (134) its the second episode of the season, [...] its boring and I slept the whole episode. (GloWbE, US)  
 (135) But they sleep peace and quiet, ya. (BNC, Oral, 1985-1994)

In my view, the holistic interpretation that Levin (1993: 44) attributes to the transitive structures with locative direct objects also explains, due to the close relationship that exists between the notions of space and time, the meaning of promoted temporal direct objects. Notice that their prepositional counterparts receive, in contrast, a partitive interpretation. Therefore, not only the path and the place, but also the time they denote, have to be understood as completely covered: the path, “traversed”, the goal, “attained” (Levin 1993: 43), and the time, spent. The manner component of modal direct objects ascribes, for its part, a property to the clausal subject, and not to the verbal process as that of their prepositional versions do. They function, thus, similarly to subject complements and not to manner adverbials. The coordination of the noun *peace* with the adjective *quiet* in (135) is quite illustrative in this regard.

#### 4.5. The way construction

The *way* construction is defined, in general terms, as a grammatical pattern that denotes real or figurative motion events mainly through unergative verbs that express the manner how they take place, but which do not necessarily imply movement.<sup>28</sup> It is, thus, considered a prototypical structure of satellite-framed languages (Jackendoff 1990; Goldberg 1995; Kuno *et al.* 2004; Luzondo 2013; Pedersen 2013; Perek 2018), and non-existent or marginal in verb-framed languages (Martínez Vázquez 1998b; Mateu Fontanals 2000; Pedersen 2013; González Romero 2022).

Syntactically, the verb in the *way* construction is complemented by two obligatory constituents: a non-subcategorised object with the noun *way* as head, introduced by a possessive determiner correlative with the clausal subject, and a directional phrase (Jackendoff 1990; Levin and Rapaport Hovav 1995; Goldberg 1995; Pedersen 2013; Ausensi 2019).

My results concerning this grammatical pattern are the expected ones since, against its noticeable frequency of occurrence in English (157 cases; 19.16%), in Spanish no single instance has been found. Far from suggesting its non-existence in Spanish, this fact indicates that *dormir* is not a verb that has entered the Spanish equivalent of the *way* construction to date, thus confirming the findings obtained in González Romero’s (2022) recent study, where a total number of 62 different verbs, from which *dormir* is absent, are attested in the 1,075 examples that make up her corpus.<sup>29</sup>

As regards the English examples of the *way* construction, several findings deserve special attention. Except for example (136), which contains an inanimate subject clearly personified, they all have human subjects, thus verifying one of the distinguishing traits of its central meaning for Goldberg (1995: 212); namely, that the movement denoted must be self-propelled:<sup>30</sup>

- (136) Once (God forbid) the US sleeps its way to a nuclear Iran, you’ll see [...] (COCA, Blog, 2012)  
 (137) You’ll sleep your way to the grave. (COCA, TV Movies, 2003)  
 (138) # Well, actually, I believe women need to sleep their way to the top. (COCA, Web, 2012)

<sup>27</sup> Their synonymous examples with the complex verb *sleep away*, like “*Erios*” *must be the name of whoever slept away the centuries here* (COCA, Fiction, 2022), have not been included in my study owing to its original transitivity.

<sup>28</sup> See the examples of the *way* construction with transitive and unaccusative verbs in (29-32).

<sup>29</sup> Besides a semantically heterogeneous class including the verbs *cantar, cavar, cocinar, colorear, comer, comprar, coser dinamitar, excavar, gruñir, hervir, insultar, lamer, martillar, masticar, matar, oler, pagar, perforar, quemar*, and *tejer*, González Romero’s (2022) corpus comprises creation and construction verbs, verbs which entail the maintenance and improvement of the way, fight verbs, and motion verbs.

<sup>30</sup> For Luzondo (2013: 353), however, the semantic feature that characterises the subject of the construction is its potential ability to move.

Though usually a prepositional or adverb phrase, like *to the podium* and *up* in (139-140), its obligatory directional constituent has been attested in my corpus, if just once, in the form of an adjective phrase, as manifest in (141):

- (139) [...] you slept your way to the podium. (*COCA*, TV Movies, 1994)  
 (140) You can't sleep your way up in the workplace? (*COCA*, Magazine, 1994)  
 (141) [...] they are angry that they couldn't sleep their way higher. (*GloWbE*, US)

Besides being more recurrent than adverb phrases (151 versus five instances), the prepositional constituent of the construction has been attested headed by a wide range of preposition, besides *to*, which is the most common one; as illustrated in the series of examples (142-148), namely, *up*, *down*, *into*, *out of*, *through*, *throughout*, *around*, and *across*. Though fewer in number, different adverbs have also been documented: specifically, *up*, *in*, and *around*, as illustrated in (149-151). The following examples manifest, moreover, against Goldberg (1995: 214) and in agreement with Hilpert (2014: 38), that the movement denoted in the construction does not necessarily address a specific goal. Notice, in fact, the presence of *around* in (148-149):

- (142) [...] I was sleeping my way up and down hills [...]. (*COCA*, Fiction, 2004)  
 (143) She's gonna sleep her way right into my promotion. (*COCA*, TV Movies, 2008)  
 (144) [...] and you'll be tired in a way you can't sleep your way out of. (*COCA*, Fiction, 2018)  
 (145) [...] I did sleep my way through Hollywood [...]. [...] (*GloWbE*, GB)  
 (146) He slept his way throughout campus until Justin got him. (*COCA*, TV Movies, 2014)  
 (147) The girl slept her way across the country. (*COCA*, TV Movies, 2004)  
 (148) [...] a highly decorated, widely-respected general slept his way around the world. (*GloWbE*, US)  
 (149) I was one of those people who [...] sleep my way around [...]. (*GloWbE*, GB)  
 (150) Maybe you can sleep your way up. (*COCA*, TV Movies, 1994)  
 (151) I think he slept his way in. (*COCA*, TV Movies, 1991)

The use of the preposition *through* in my corpora should be also highlighted because it is the only one attested in the five examples with a temporal adverbial as the final component of the construction, thus proving Kuno *et al.*'s (2004: 82) and Szczesniak's (2013: 180-181) hypothesis that postulates that, besides spatial, the distance specified in the *way* construction can be temporal:

- (152) We'd [...] tried to sleep our way through the empty summer days. (*COCA*, Fiction, 2019)  
 (153) We [...] tried to sleep our way through the storm. (*COCA*, Magazine, 1999)  
 (154) I'm sleeping my way through my senior year. (*COCA*, TV Movies, 1993)  
 (155) All I really wanted was [...] and to sleep my way through life. (*BNC*, TV Movies, 1985-1994)

Finally, it is worth noticing that the expression of abstract motion events in the *way* constructions in my corpus exhibits a lower frequency of occurrence than that of physical ones; specifically, 11 examples out of 157 have been registered. In them all, *to* is the head of their final constituent:

- (156) Isn't it nice that you can sleep your way to be thin and beautiful. (*COCA*, Magazine, 2005)  
 (157) Sleep your way to greatness. (*COCA*, Magazine, 1996)  
 (158) Follow the SITC guide to snoozing and sleep your way to good health! (*GloWbE*, GB)

## 5. Conclusions

The Spanish-English contrastive corpus-based analysis carried out has revealed, first of all, that the intransitive verbs *dormir* and *sleep* behave as transitive verbs more often than expected, as they have been attested in four transitive patterns different from the COC; namely, lexical causative structures, patterns with non-subcategorised objects other than cognates, transitive constructions of adverbial nature, and the *way* construction, only documented in English. However, taking into account the global frequency of occurrence that their transitive uses have in the corpora analysed, *dormir* (5.10%) seems to be more prone to transitivity than *sleep* (0.64%). In any case, their dual character leaves no room for doubt, thus confirming De Swart's (2007: 16) statement that "[n]ot only do we find semantically transitive verbs realized in an intransitive fashion, [since] we also find constructions in which an alleged intransitive verb occurs with something which looks like a direct object".

The presence of both verbs in transitive lexical causative constructions, more recurrent in Spanish (17.44%) than in English (2.93%), has demonstrated, in another respect, that, not only *dormir*, as suggested by Armstrong (2011: 296), but also *sleep*, have an unaccusative intransitive use in English that denotes change of state. In



this particular pattern, *dormir* and *sleep* increase their valency with the addition of a second participant that functions as subject. As a consequence, the object slot in this transitive structure is left blank to be filled in with the same participant as the one that acts as subject in their intransitive use. The lexical causative constructions in my corpora have shown, moreover, three different meanings, determined by the animacy of their direct objects, which clearly influence the semantic role of their grammatical subjects.

The four remaining transitive structures documented in my corpora contain, for their part, the unergative verbs *dormir* and *sleep*. Despite being more recurrent in Spanish (62.16%) than in English (26.25%), the COCs examined present a similar number of cognates in both languages which, however, differ in the relationship they maintain with the verb (morphological and semantic cognates in English and only semantic cognates in Spanish), and in their frequency of occurrence. My analysis of the COC with *dormir* and *sleep* has brought to light, moreover, two results which call into question the prototypical pattern of COs as modified indefinite noun phrases: first, that their modification is not compulsory; and second, that their reference is not exclusively indefinite.

*Dormir* has also been found with a noticeable frequency of occurrence (18.46%) in a grammatical pattern with other kind of non-subcategorised objects which, by merging together in a simple sentence two different relations of predication (a main one of eventive nature encoded in the direct object and a secondary one denoting manner expressed through the verb *dormir*), as Germanic languages do, challenges Talmy's (1985; 2000) well-known typological distinction between satellite- and verb-framed languages. The concordances here included contain the phraseological expression *dormir la mona*, its non-idiomatic variants *dormir la borrachera*, *dormir la tranca*, *dormir la cogorza* and *dormir la melopea*, and by extension, other instances which, though not always semantically related to them, also mean "X removes the effects of the event implied in the direct object by sleeping". Contra expectation, this particular structure is almost non-existent in my English corpora (0.12%). Its extremely low frequency of occurrence is to be attributed to the fact that, to express such contents, English resorts to the complex verbs *sleep off* and *sleep away*, left outside my study owing to their transitivity. My English corpora have yielded, however, concordances of two different transitive phraseological units with non-subcategorised objects which, not being semantically related to the aforementioned ones, lack *dormir* in their Spanish counterparts: on the one hand, those with *sleep a wink* (21.12%), and on the other, those in which *sleep* is coordinated with the verb *eat* (4.51%).

The unergative verbs *dormir* and *sleep* have been registered as well in some transitive structures with direct objects which, promoted from prepositional phrases, show adverbial nature. In the two languages analysed they have been attested denoting time and manner, and in English, furthermore, also location. In my view, these locative and temporal structures receive a holistic interpretation, which they lack in their prepositional counterparts. The direct objects that denote manner behave, for their part, as subject complements since their function is to ascribe some property to the clausal subject. Finally, as regards its frequency of occurrence, it has to be highlighted that this particular construction is more common in English (26.00%) than in Spanish (2.45%).

The last transitive pattern attested in my corpora is the so called *way* construction, which, not surprisingly, has only been documented in English with a remarkable frequency of occurrence (157 cases; 19.16%). My results have shown, in another respect, that this particular English construction denotes, more often than not, real self-propelled physical or temporal motion events which do not necessarily address a specific goal.

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