

The *parar* + gerund construction in Peruvian Spanish: Analyzing its role in discourse

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RESUMEN: El presente estudio examina la construcción *parar* + gerundio en el castellano peruano. Sus objetivos son: (1) describir las características principales de esta construcción y (2) explorar las propiedades pragmáticas que favorecen su uso. Los datos analizados en este estudio provienen de textos escritos y videos recogidos durante cinco años (principalmente en páginas web aunque algunos datos fueron extraídos de conversaciones). Los resultados muestran que la construcción *parar* + gerundio expresa pluralidad del evento, cuya lectura de habitualidad de la acción se convierte en una característica que define al sujeto. Esto se evidencia en el uso consistente del aspecto imperfectivo en el verbo auxiliar (*parar*) y la naturaleza de los adjuntos adverbiales identificados. Adicionalmente, esta construcción permite al hablante expresar una evaluación negativa sobre la habitualidad de la acción. Esta evaluación negativa se manifiesta en la preferencia por sujetos de la tercera persona gramatical, el tipo de verbo en el gerundio (verbos con una connotación negativa en el castellano peruano), además del lenguaje peyorativo que suele acompañar a esta construcción. El presente estudio es uno de los primeros que indaga sobre la construcción *parar* + gerundio y fija un punto de partida para futuras investigaciones. En términos generales, este estudio contribuye a la existente literatura sobre construcciones de gerundio no estándares en el mundo hispanohablante.

Palabras clave: castellano peruano, pluralidad del evento, construcción de gerundio, habla informal.

ABSTRACT: The present study investigates the *parar* + gerund construction found in Peruvian Spanish. The goal is two-fold: (1) to describe the main features of this construction, and (2) to explore the pragmatic properties that favor its use. The data used in this study come from written texts and videos collected (primarily from the internet but also from conversations) over five years. Results show that this construction denotes event plurality, in which the habituality of the action becomes a defining characteristic of the subject. This is supported by the consistent use of the imperfective aspect in the auxiliary verb (*parar*), and by the nature of the commonly used adverbial adjuncts. Furthermore, this construction conveys the speaker's negative evaluation of the habitual action. This is evident through the preference for a 3rd person subject, the type of verbs in the gerund (verbs that are inherently negative in Peruvian Spanish), as well as the pejorative language that often accompanies this construction. This study is one of the first to explore the *parar* + gerund construction and sets the foundations for future studies on this dialectal feature. More broadly, it contributes to the existing literature on non-standard gerund constructions in the Spanish-speaking world.

Keywords: Peruvian Spanish, event plurality, gerund construction, informal speech.

0. INTRODUCTION

This paper¹ focuses on the *parar* + gerund construction found in colloquial Peruvian Spanish². In this paper, I aim to offer a syntactic and pragmatic account of this structure, through the analysis of naturally occurring data. I first provide a linguistic characterization of this gerund construction, and then I examine the pragmatic properties associated with its use. I will show that this construction has a few key characteristics which distinguish it from other standard gerund structures; specifically, the *parar* + gerund construction indicates the repetition of the event denoted by the gerund ('habitually doing something'), to the point where that event characterizes the subject, and that it is used by speakers to convey a negative evaluation of the frequency of the event. The discussion of these findings will cast light on an understudied structure in Peruvian Spanish and will help to place it within the body of research of non-standard gerund constructions in the Spanish language.

An example of the structure under investigation is presented in (1):

- (1) *Lucas para durmiendo.*
'Lucas is always sleeping'

Structurally, this gerund construction consists of an auxiliary verb (*parar*) followed by a gerund form. The auxiliary verb does not maintain its typical meaning, 'to stop', however. Instead, in this construction, the auxiliary verb helps to convey the meaning of habitually doing the action denoted by the gerund. According to the *Nueva Gramática de la Lengua Española* (RAE and ASALE, 2009: 2212), the *parar* + gerund construction, as used in Peru, is a frequentative periphrasis, and, following the example in (1), this sentence can be paraphrased as 'Lucas sleeps all the time' or 'Lucas sleeps without stopping'. Both the auxiliary verb and the gerund constitute one verbal entity that has become grammaticalized in this Spanish variety (Martel, 2020).

This paper will help to contribute to the larger body of research on Spanish gerunds, by providing new information about the *parar* + gerund construction, a non-standard structure in Peruvian Spanish. Although research on periphrastic gerund constructions in Spanish is vast, investigations on non-standard gerund constructions are less common. Some of these works focus generally on syntactic and semantic descriptions (Niño-Murcia, 1995; Ramos-Pellicia, 1997; Espunya, 1998; Sedano, 2000; Markič, 2011), while others provide a more pragmatic analysis of these constructions (Olbertz, 2008; Amaral, 2013; Sainz-Maza Lecanda and Horn, 2015; García, 2021). To the best of my knowledge, only one study –Martel (2020)– has investigated the *parar* + gerund construction in Peruvian Spanish.

In his study, Martel (2020) compares the *parar* + gerund construction to the *pasarse* + gerund construction (as in *Ellos pasan largas horas buscando* 'They dedicate/spend long hours looking for', my translation, from Martel, 2020's data). The author provides a syntactic and semantic analysis of these two gerund constructions, and convincingly shows that *parar* behaves as a raising verb, while *pasar* behaves as a control verb. In the case of *parar* + gerund, according to Martel,

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² By the term Peruvian Spanish, I refer to the Spanish spoken in Peru. I do not imply, however, that the Spanish spoken in Peru is uniform throughout the country. For the purposes of the present study, I use the term Peruvian Spanish to generally refer to the Spanish spoken in Peru because the structure under study can be found among speakers from the three main Peruvian Spanish varieties: Amazonian, Andean, and Coastal (Lima). I recognize that even this classification oversimplifies the linguistic panorama of Peru (for example, see Sessarego, 2015). Furthermore, this structure may potentially occur in other countries as well, but, to the best of my knowledge, I am unaware of the *parar* + gerund construction occurring in non-Peruvian contexts.

parar does not assign a thematic role to the subject (e.g. *para lloviendo* ‘it is always raining’, my translation, from Martel 2020’s data). On the contrary, the verb *pasar* assigns a thematic role to the subject, making phrases like **pasa la tarde lloviendo* ungrammatical (example from Martel, 2020’s data).

Perhaps more relevant to the present study, Martel (2020) indicates that these two structures denote repetitive actions, which in both cases add a “habitual” reading to the event. The author follows Součková (2011) and refers to this as *event plurality*, which I will discuss further in §0.2. Additionally, Martel suggests that adverbial adjuncts (e.g. *todos los días* ‘every day’) are not required in the *parar* + gerund construction whereas, in the *pasarse* + gerund construction, adverbial adjuncts must appear. Finally, Martel claims that both verbs are in the process of grammaticalization, but that of the *parar* + gerund is in a more advanced stage. The present paper will add to the discussion of the *parar* + gerund construction by corroborating several of Martel’s claims through the examination of a larger set of data, expanding on the syntactic description of the construction, and exploring the contexts that may trigger its occurrence in discourse.

0.1. Other meanings of *parar*. While the goal of this paper is to investigate the *parar* + gerund construction specifically, we must note that the verb *parar* is versatile in Peruvian Spanish. The *Diccionario de la Lengua Española* (RAE, 2014) notes that one of the less common, colloquial meanings of the verb *parar* is ‘permanecer en un sitio’ (‘to stay in a place’). This less common meaning seems to align with the construction under study here. Specifically, both have a sense of longevity, and both are found primarily in colloquial speech. It is reasonable to conclude, therefore, that “parar” in the *parar* + gerund construction may possibly have its roots in this less common definition, although further investigation would be needed to confirm this. It may be further supported by the fact that, in Peruvian Spanish, there are other phrases with this meaning of *parar* (e.g. *parar* + adjective –*ella para callada* ‘she is always quiet’; and *parar en* + location –*ella para en casa* ‘she’s always at home’). Having said that, Martel (2020) claims that the *parar* + gerund construction is in an advanced stage of the grammaticalization process, and that it really functions as its own entity.

It is important to note that Peruvian Spanish speakers also utilize the more common meaning of the verb *parar*, and other standard uses, such as (*no*) *parar de* + infinitive. Like in other Spanish varieties, the verb *parar* here maintains its standard meaning (‘to stop’) as the following sentences show *Lucas no para de llamarme* (‘Lucas does not stop calling me’) or *Lucas paró de llamarme* (‘Lucas stopped calling me’). The use of this standard meaning of the verb *parar* adds further support for the grammaticalization of the *parar* + gerund construction in Peruvian Spanish and underscores its non-standard meaning.

0.2. Characteristics of the *parar* + gerund construction. In this paper, I will argue that the *parar* + gerund construction in Peruvian Spanish has some key features: event plurality, habituality, and a negative evaluation of the frequency of the event denoted by the gerund. To begin, the non-standard meaning of the *parar* + gerund construction as used in Peruvian Spanish can be best explained by “external event plurality”. *Event plurality* (also known as *pluractionality*) broadly implies the repetition of events; this could be done across “time or space, or across distinct participants” (Wood, 2006: 429). Cusic indicates that there are two types of event plurality: internal (i.e. repetition of an event on a single occasion), and external (i.e. repetition of an event on multiple occasions) (1981, as cited in Amaral, 2013 and Wood, 2006). In Peruvian Spanish, the *parar* + gerund construction denotes that the action in the gerund is repeated over multiple occasions. Martel (2020) also claims that event plurality is associated with this construction.

Furthermore, not only does the *parar* + gerund construction indicate external event plurality, but it implies a repetition that is so constant that it can characterize the subject. In her study of the *vivir* + gerund construction in Bogotá, Amaral (2013) makes similar observations. Specifically, Amaral states that the *vivir* + gerund construction indicates a repetitive action with such habituality that it becomes a defining characteristic of an individual or entity. She quotes: “[t]he number of occasions on which an action has been performed is so great that the reference to the individual occasions and events is lost, and the action becomes a property attributed to the agent (Cusic, 1981: 93)” (2013: 112). In this paper, I will use the term *habituality* when referring to this quality of the habitual action becoming a defining characteristic of the subject.

Finally, a third quality of the *parar* + gerund construction is the negative evaluation that accompanies this structure from the speaker’s point of view. In other words, this construction is triggered by the need of the speaker to negatively evaluate the frequency of the action expressed by the verb in the gerund. To exemplify, in (1), transcribed again here for convenience, *Lucas para durmiendo*, the *parar* + gerund construction indicates that *sleeping* is what Lucas habitually does. Moreover, the frequency of the action, *sleeping*, is negatively evaluated by the speaker. For the speaker, Lucas should be using his time doing other activities (*e.g.* studying, cleaning the house) instead of sleeping. At best, this behavior is bothersome. In her study of pluractionality in Hausa, Součková (2011) uses the term *special plurals* to describe plural forms that “express meanings that go beyond simple plurality (‘more than one’)” (p. 186). Furthermore, Součková indicates that pluractional verbs help to convey “affective connotations” in Hausa, at least for some speakers (2011: 195). The fact that plural forms can extend their plurality meaning and, therefore, allow for “affective connotations” such as complaints and negative evaluations from the speakers applies directly to the *parar* + gerund construction.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. In section 1, I describe the data collection process as well as the data analysis. In section 2, I present the results, first describing the main characteristics of the *parar* + gerund construction, and then explaining the pragmatic properties that generally favor its use. In section 3, I discuss the significance of the results. Finally, in section 4, I conclude with suggestions for future research and some final remarks.

1. METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS

The goals of the present study are: (1) to describe the main linguistic features of the *parar* + gerund construction in Peruvian Spanish, and (2) to explore its pragmatic properties in discourse. To examine the linguistic landscape of this construction, I collected data from a wide range of sources. Because this construction rarely appears in formal documents, the tokens analyzed in this paper come from colloquial speech³. Specifically, the tokens analyzed here were collected from: (1) social media sites (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube); (2) online newspaper articles; (3) television programs; (4) the sociolinguistic PRESEEA-Lima corpus; and (5) informal conversations. This method is similar to that used by Amaral (2013), who also collected naturally occurring instances of the *vivir* + gerund construction through online and published sources.

Because my focus is on the *parar* + gerund construction used in Peruvian Spanish, and in an effort to ensure that tokens were produced by Peruvian speakers, I verified that all tokens came

³ I found two instances of the *parar* + gerund construction in Peruvian literature. In both cases, these instances appeared as part of dialogs or as reported speech, highlighting the colloquial use of this structure. One instance was found in Mario Vargas Llosa’s 1963 novel *La ciudad y los perros* (2015: 324), while the other was found in Jaime Bayly’s 1994 novel *No se lo digas a nadie* (1994: 103). These instances are not part of the analysis, but nonetheless they support the colloquial nature of this structure.

from Peruvian outlets. To that end, I used the following criteria. On social media sites, I first visited web pages associated with Peruvian organizations and entities, and from there I examined comments and posts. For tokens found on YouTube, for instance, I only examined streamed videos of Peruvian television programs, and then tracked tokens of the gerund construction under study in the actual videos and in the comments section. The online newspaper articles consulted were only Peruvian, and they yielded two types of sources: the comments section and, in three cases, the actual article. Two of these three tokens correspond to quotes from an interview, and the third appears in the headline of a sports newspaper about an old rivalry. Television programs included Peruvian televised shows and movies, as well as stand-up comedy shows performed by Peruvian artists. With respect to the PRESEEA corpus data, tokens were extracted from the sociolinguistic interviews of Spanish speakers from Lima. Lastly, the informal conversations always took place between Peruvian speakers. Overall, these criteria allowed me to verify that all tokens came from Peruvian outlets, even when I was unable to collect information about each speaker who used the *parar + gerund* construction.

I collected the data between 2014 and 2019. In total, there were 266 tokens of the *parar + gerund* construction included in the analysis. However, I was only able to obtain and transcribe the contextual information for 224 of them. This mismatch in the number of tokens merits an explanation. In the early stages of the data collection, several *parar + gerund* tokens were recorded but the entire context was not transcribed immediately. When I revisited the social media sites later to transcribe the context, the online comment or video was either deleted or no longer available. Similarly, for all tokens in informal conversations, I was only able to transcribe the *parar + gerund* construction itself, and not the context. Thus, for the linguistic characterization of the *parar + gerund* construction, all 266 tokens were included in the analysis since the structure of the construction was always transcribed. For the pragmatic description, where the context becomes crucial, only 224 tokens were analyzed (henceforth, the “contextualized tokens”).

The contextualized tokens can be divided into two main categories: *text* (online newspaper articles, social media sites, and the PRESEEA corpus) and *audio/video* (television programs). Table 1 below shows the distribution of the contextualized tokens data.

Category	Source	Tokens (N = 224)
Text (N = 112)	Online newspaper articles	18
	Social media sites	89
	PRESEEA corpus	5
Audio/video (N = 112)	Television programs	112

Table 1 - General distribution of the contextualized tokens.

For the linguistic characterization of this construction, I coded the following variables (primarily following Sedano, 2000): person, tense, aspect, mood, and animacy. I also coded for polarity to explore whether this construction is commonly used in grammatically affirmative/negative sentences; the verb in the gerund; and the presence (or lack thereof) of any adverbial adjuncts, in order to examine which ones were most common.

I was also interested in the pragmatic properties that normally accompany the *parar + gerund* construction. An initial analysis of the verb in the gerund showed that several of these verbs had an intrinsically negative connotation in Peruvian Spanish (e.g. *cagar* ‘to mess up something or

someone’, *joder* ‘to bother someone severely or to ruin something’, *chupar* ‘to drink excessively’). If the verb in the gerund had an intrinsic negative connotation (and there was no grammatical negation), the token was coded as negative. It soon became clear that the verb in the gerund by itself did not always provide enough information to evaluate a *parar* + gerund token. In the instances where the gerund verb itself did not yield a specific evaluation, I examined any adverbial adjuncts and the broader context to determine the evaluation of the token. By and large, the evaluation of the *parar* + gerund was operationalized as: *negative*, *positive*, or *unidentifiable*. Tokens were labeled as *negative* if there was evidence that the speaker evaluated the frequency of the gerund action in a derogatory, mocking, pejorative, sarcastic, and/or scornful way, or if the speaker provided a direct negative criticism. If evidence of these negative indicators were absent, the tokens were labeled as *positive*. Finally, if it was unclear how to label or determine the evaluation of a token, then they were labeled as *unidentifiable*.

The following examples (2-4) illustrate how these variables were operationalized. These examples involve verbs that inherently carry a negative evaluation (*cagar*, *joder*, *chupar*). This negative evaluation is sometimes (in the cases of 2 & 4) exacerbated by other grammatical elements in the phrase.

- (2) ...*deja de hacerte expulsar que nos paras cagando*... (social media site)
‘... stop getting kicked out [of the game] because you are constantly messing us up...’
- (3) ...*lo paraban jodiendo al tío*... (television program)
‘... they used to always bother the guy...’
- (4) ...*esta para chupando todo el día*... (television program)
‘... this one is constantly drinking all day...’

In (2), the author of the comment complains directly at a soccer player who is hurting the team by frequently being sent off from the field. The use of *dejar de* ‘to stop doing something’ before the *parar* + gerund construction suggests that this is a habitual action from the player. Similarly, the sentence in (3) is part of a conversation in which two reporters jokingly evoke the countless times a famous Peruvian broadcaster was severely bothered in public. Both reporters seem to be joking around as they remember those moments. In sentence (4), the speaker refers to a person who drinks habitually. In fact, the presence of *todo el día* ‘all day’ reveals that the action of drinking is a habit of that person. The use of the pronoun *esta* ‘that one’ to address the drinking individual helps to convey a criticism or, at the very least, shows a condemning attitude toward that individual. The criticism or negative evaluation, however, does not refer to the act of drinking but instead to how habitual the act of drinking is (hence, the presence of *todo el día*).

While analyzing the data, I also identified cases where the verb in the gerund was not sufficiently informative to cue an evaluation. Only with the examination of the entire context could one eventually identify the elements that accompany the *parar* + construction. To exemplify, let us examine the context in (5), which includes the verb *hacer* ‘to do/to make’ in the gerund.

- (5) ...*ya no es como antes... ya no hay fumones, nada... más que nada, ha cambiado bastante... en eso más que nada porque acá arribita nomás pe... paraban fumando... paraban haciendo lo que quieren... robaban... traían moto... robaban, de todo hacían... ahora ya no...* (the PRESEEA corpus)⁴
‘... it [the neighborhood] is not like it used to be... there are no stoners anymore, nothing... more than anything else, it has changed a lot... in that regard more than anything, because here, just here... they were constantly smoking... they were constantly doing what they wanted to do... they used to steal... they used to bring motorcycles... they used to steal, they used to do everything... not anymore...’

⁴ Because many of these examples come from informal writing, and others from videos, and for the sake of consistency in my transcriptions, I have used “...” to indicate where natural pauses in speech occur. These ellipses do not represent elided information. I have also modified spelling for ease of understanding and consistency (e.g. “huevoazo” instead of “webonazoooo”).

Here, the speaker is talking about the neighborhood and is describing how it was in the past. In the description, the speaker comments about a drastic change from the past, where it was common to find drug users and thieves in the neighborhood. In this case, the verb *hacer* holds neither a positive nor negative evaluation intrinsically, but when we examine the larger context, it becomes clear that the speaker is criticizing the previous condition of the neighborhood; for that reason the token was evaluated as negative. Unless we take into consideration the entire context, the *parar + gerund* construction in (5) by itself does not provide us with information under which we can assign an evaluation. The token in (5) shows the importance of the context in the analysis to fully examine the *parar + gerund* construction and its role in discourse.

2. RESULTS

In this section, I present the results of the analysis. In §2.1, I focus on the structure of the *parar + gerund* construction. For the sake of clarity, in this section, all 266 instances of this construction are analyzed. In §2.2, I present the findings of the pragmatic analysis of this construction, including its evaluation properties. For the evaluation properties, specifically, only the contextualized tokens (N=224) are included in the analysis.

2.1. Linguistic characterization of the form.

2.1.1. Person. The most common grammatical person used in the *parar + gerund* construction is the third person (n=193), 73%, followed by the second person (n=40), 15%, and the first person (n=30), 11%. Interestingly, impersonal *se* constructions (n=2) were also identified but constitute less than 1% of the data⁵.

2.1.2. Tense, Aspect, and Mood. The *parar + gerund* construction favors predominantly the present tense (n=239), 90%, and the imperfect tense (n=24), 9%. Two instances in the conditional, and one in the future tense, were also found, together constituting 1%. There were no instances of the preterit or perfect tenses. This strong preference for imperfective aspect further supports event plurality ('repetition of events') and earlier claims of habituality (RAE and ASALE, 2009; Martel, 2020). Furthermore, the indicative (n=262), 98.5%, was the most used mood, although four instances of the subjunctive were also identified, 1.5%.

2.1.3. Animacy. In 90% of the analyzed tokens (n=239), the subject in the *parar + gerund* construction is animate. In 6% of the cases (n=16), the subject is inanimate. The remaining tokens (n=11) were labeled as unidentifiable because, without a context or no explicit subject, it was difficult to accurately determine the animacy of those subjects.

2.1.4. Polarity. The presence of negation barely occurred in the data. In fact, in 99% of the cases (n=263), *parar + gerund* constructions occurred in grammatically affirmative phrases.

2.1.5. Summary. The *parar + gerund* construction favors the third person (and to a much lesser extent, first and second), and the present tense. If instances occur in the past tense, the imperfective aspect is the one employed. Furthermore, the indicative is the most preferred mood, and subjects are generally animate. Almost exclusively, instances with the *parar + gerund* construction in the analyzed data occur in grammatically affirmative phrases.

2.1.6. Other syntactic forms. The examples presented in §1 show instances of the most common structure of the *parar + gerund* construction, but there is some variation with regards to

⁵ One token (*paraba preguntando*) was ambiguous because, without the entire context available, it could correspond to the first or third grammatical person. In the analysis, this token was coded as *unidentifiable*.

its structure. In fact, it is not uncommon for the gerund to appear before the auxiliary verb, as shown in (6):

- (6) ...*vagando paras con los pirañas de tus amigos...* (television program)
 ‘...lazing around you constantly are with your gang member friends...’

It is also possible to find instances, such as the ones shown in (7) and (8), where the verb in the gerund appears more than one time in the same phrase:

- (7)...*nos para mintiendo, mintiendo y mintiendo...* (the PRESEEA corpus)
 ‘... you are constantly lying, lying, and lying to us...’
 (8)...*si es que son de esas personas que todo el tiempo paran viajando y viajando...* (television program)
 ‘... if you are one of those people that all the time are constantly traveling and travelling...’

Structures such as the one presented in (9), where adverbial adjuncts and/or conjunctions occur between the auxiliary verb and the gerund, were present in the data as well:

- (9) ...*todo el mundo debe alucinar pues que... que tu vida es una orgía completa y que ustedes paran todo el día pues haciendo mil cosas... cuando en realidad no es tan cierto...* (television program)
 ‘... everybody must imagine that... that your life is a full orgy and that you two are constantly all day doing, well, a thousand things... when in fact that is not true...’

The tokens presented in § 2.1.6 are all included in the analysis, but the question of what and how these structures add to the interpretation of the *parar + gerund* construction is not further explored. In future studies, it may be interesting to investigate how the *parar + gerund* construction interacts with other syntactic features such as focus marking (as these tokens seem to suggest).

2.2. Pragmatic properties.

2.2.1. Type of verbs. As described in §1, the verb in the gerund was central to the pragmatic analysis because it was often the first cue used to evaluate the *parar + gerund* construction. Table 2 below shows the most common verbs found in the analyzed data, ordered alphabetically. The table includes only those verbs with more than two instances in the data. The translations (in parenthesis) refer to the meaning commonly shared among Peruvian Spanish speakers, and specifically to how it is used in the corresponding context. Furthermore, I have underlined the verbs that, by themselves, have an intrinsically negative meaning in this Spanish variety. In boxes with more than one verb, the number of tokens applies to each one of them.

Number of Tokens	Verb(s)
10	<u>cagar</u> ‘to mess up something or someone’
9	<i>decir</i> ‘to tell’, <i>hacer</i> ‘to do/to make’
8	<u>joder</u> ‘to bother someone severely, or to ruin something’
7	<u>pelear</u> ‘to fight’
6	<u>chupar</u> ‘to drink excessively’, <u>huevear</u> ‘to waste time’, <u>lesionar</u> ‘to injure’, <u>perder</u> ‘to lose’
5	<i>cambiar</i> ‘to change’, <i>reír</i> ‘to laugh’, <i>viajar</i> ‘to travel’
4	<i>comer</i> ‘to eat’, <u>fregar</u> ‘to obnoxiously bother someone’, <u>malograr</u> ‘to ruin something’
3	<i>chatear</i> ‘to chat’, <i>dormir</i> ‘to sleep’, <i>ganar</i> ‘to win’, <u>quejarse</u> ‘to complain’, <i>tomar</i> ‘to drink’, <i>ver</i> ‘to see’

Table 2 - Most common verbs in the gerund found in *parar + gerund* constructions.

Table 2 reveals that several of the most commonly used verbs in the gerund have an intrinsically negative connotation. In fact, if we look at the data set as a whole (n=266), 60 tokens

(around 22%) have verbs that appear in the gerund with an intrinsically negative connotation. Furthermore, it is telling that stative verbs do not appear in the gerund; all the verbs in the gerund are activities that can be repeated on several occasions to the point of habituality.

2.2.2. Adverbial adjuncts. The adverbial adjuncts were also central to the pragmatic analysis of the *parar + gerund* construction. Particularly in cases where the verb in the gerund did not convey an intrinsic negative meaning, adverbial adjuncts provided additional information for the pragmatic analysis of this construction. Among all analyzed tokens (n=266), the most common adverbial adjuncts were: *siempre* ‘always’ (n=13), *todo el día* ‘all day’ (n=10), *nomás* ‘only’ (n=7), *solo* ‘only’ (n=4), *a cada rato* ‘all the time’ (n=3), and *todos los días* ‘every day’ (n=3). Other adverbial adjuncts were also present, but they did not appear more than two times in the data. We must note that adverbial adjuncts were not always present in the data. This corroborates Martel’s (2020) claim that, in the *parar + gerund* construction, adverbial adjuncts are optional.

Importantly, these adverbial adjuncts consistently reiterate the habitual nature of the verb in the gerund. They imply that the subject does not simply do the action repeatedly; they do it *siempre* (‘always’) and *todo el día* (‘all day’). Others (such as *nomás* and *solo*) indicate that this action is the only thing the subject does, emphasizing that the action has become a defining characteristic of the subject. Although the adverbial adjuncts are not required for this construction (Martel, 2020), when they are used, they again and again support the notion of habituality.

The token in (10) below exemplifies this latter point. Here, a commenter reacts to a video interview with a Peruvian athlete. In the remark, the commenter refers to the act of laughing (or not acting seriously), and how this act is a characteristic of the athlete –it is what the athlete habitually does and what he is best known for. During the second part of the remark, the commenter highlights that this lack of professionalism is problematic for the team.

- (10) ... *ojalá así también te rías el sábado, payaso... para riéndose nomás este huevonazo... pónganle huevos HDP... amen su patria...* (social media site)
 ‘...[directed to the athlete] hopefully you laugh on Saturday, too, you clown... [directed to the audience] all this fool ever does is laugh... [to the whole team] grow a pair, SOBs... love your country...’

2.2.3. Evaluation. As stated earlier, the second goal of this paper is to examine the contexts of the *parar + gerund* construction, and determine what elements favor its use in discourse. For this part of the analysis, tokens were only analyzed if the full context was transcribed (n=224). Table 3 below shows the results. In 98% of the tokens, the *parar + gerund* construction and/or the context in which it occurs convey a negative evaluation of the activity or state expressed in the gerund (based on the criteria presented in §1). Four instances were labeled as *unidentifiable*, and none as *positive*.

Evaluation	Number of tokens	Percentage
Positive	0	0%
Negative	220	98%
Unidentifiable	4	2%
Total	224	100%

Table 3 - Percentages of the evaluation in the *parar + gerund* construction.

There were *unidentifiable* cases where the context was not sufficiently informative to establish an evaluation. The sentence in (11) is an example of an instance labeled as *unidentifiable* in the data.

- (11) ...¿**paraba pichangueando** acá también?... (television program)
 ‘... was he constantly playing soccer here too?...’

This instance comes from a televised news report about the early experiences of a Peruvian soccer player. In the interview, the reporter is asking the friends of the player if he used to play soccer in the sports fields around the neighborhood. Based on the criteria outlined in §1, it was difficult to assign an evaluation to this instance. In this specific case, it seems that the scenes were cut, and interviews edited to flow together (as is often the case in televised news reports). Therefore, it was not feasible to obtain sufficient information (before the journalist asks the question) in order to determine the reporter’s attitude toward the frequency of the action denoted by the verb in the gerund.

In addition to the gerund verb itself and adverbial adjuncts, another common indicator of a negative evaluation was the presence of pejorative language. This is one element that distinguishes the *parar* + gerund construction from other non-standard gerund constructions. One may argue that the semi anonymity of social media outlets favors this type of language, and not necessarily the presence of the *parar* + gerund construction. Yet, instances of pejorative language in the data do not only appear in texts found in social media outlets, but also in the data from audiovisual sources. Specific to the data in this study, pejorative language was mainly found in the form of insults, curse words, and sexual references. Some examples include (12) and (13)⁶.

- (12) ...*carajo*, *ustedes no cambian*, ¿no?... *todo el día paran hueveando*... (television program)
 ‘...damn it, you all do not change, no?... all day you are constantly wasting time...’
 (13) ...*a tu mujer también se la paran comiendo mis patas cuando sales a trabajar*... (social media site)
 ‘... having sex with your wife is all my buddies do when you go to work...’

In (12), the speaker shows discomfort and criticizes his personnel for continuously wasting time on the job. One can identify the use of *carajo*, used here as an interjection to express annoyance or disappointment. We can also spot the adverbial adjunct *todo el día*, which again helps to convey the habituality of the action denoted by the gerund. Likewise, in (13), the commenter seems to be mocking, and viciously attacking, the other person by referring to his wife. The commenter explicitly uses the verb *comerse*, which has a sexual connotation in Peruvian Spanish.

Of all the variables explored, grammatical person shows the most variation across the analyzed data (see §2.1.1). While most tokens appear in the second and third person, several tokens appear in the first person⁷. Upon further examination of first-person tokens, it became clear that, when using the *parar* + gerund construction, the negative evaluation conveyed by the structure lessens and, in turn, the meaning conveyed by the entire construction seems to work in favor of the speaker or commenter. The instance in (14) below illustrates this point.

- (14) ... *siempre soy agradecido porque la gente me tiene cariño*... *y yo les tengo cariño también a toda esa gente*... *porque yo soy un tipo que a pesar de que me han hecho, entre comillas... una imagen de ser medio reacio... de ser medio... serio... soy todo menos serio, ¿no?... si yo paro molestando todos los días... es más... los chicos del equipo... grande, chico, lo que sea... me dicen que no saben por qué yo me río todos los días... todo el día... soy un hombre feliz*... (television program)
 ‘... I am always grateful because people treat me with affection... and I treat those people with affection too... because I am a guy that, despite being made out as quote, unquote... a somewhat reluctant person... of being a bit... serious... I am anything but serious, no?... if I am constantly bothering every day... what is more... the guys from the team... old, young, whatever... they say that they do not know why I laugh every day... all day... I am a happy man...’

⁶ Instances of pejorative language was also present in the token shown in (10).

⁷ There were two instances of this construction appearing with an impersonal *se*. These also carried a negative evaluation of the impersonal ‘people’. The following example comes from a critique of a television show: ... *ese floro “yo no vengo a faltarle el respeto a nadie”... y se para insultando y punteando en todo su dizque show*... ‘... that lie “I don’t come here to disrespect anyone”... and people are constantly insulting and grinding up on others throughout all of their supposed show’.

The *parar + gerund* construction in (14), as in previous instances, conveys the meaning of habitually doing something ('to bother', in this case). The adverbial adjunct, *todos los días* 'every day' adds to the habituality meaning of the structure. Additionally, the interviewee states that, different to what other people think or say, he has an amusing personality around people. I labeled this instance with a negative evaluation, based solely on the verb in the gerund, *molestar* 'to bother'. The use of the first person in this construction, however, is key: It helps the interviewee boost his public figure, and thus appear less serious and more friendly, contrary to his current public image. All instances with the first person show a similar reading, in which the speaker or commenter tries to remedy an unfavorable characteristic when talking about themselves. A possible explanation of the variation in grammatical person will be discussed in §3.

3. DISCUSSION

These data clearly support the idea that the *parar + gerund* construction in Peruvian Spanish is not only an instance of event plurality (its strong preference for imperfective tenses), but that it goes so far as to indicate that the action is a defining characteristic of the subject (adverbial adjuncts). Furthermore, the data show overwhelmingly that this structure appears in discourse when the speaker intends to demean or show a negative evaluation of that habituality.

To begin, results revealed a strong preference for the imperfective aspect in the auxiliary verb. The consistent use of imperfective aspect, and importantly the absence of perfective aspect, shows that this structure in fact aligns with the notion of external event plurality, and more specifically, habituality. These data support Martel's (2020) claim that this gerund construction denotes habitual actions. This habituality is sometimes emphasized by the presence of adverbial adjuncts, as well. The types of adverbial adjuncts that appear (*solo*, *todo el día*, *nomás*, etc.) highlight this sense of habituality; these actions are not just repeated, but so much so that it defines the subject. If the *parar + gerund* construction already conveys habituality, one might wonder why these adverbial adjuncts also appear. I posit that speakers use these adverbial adjuncts to emphasize that the frequency of the action in the gerund is a defining characteristic of the subject, not only a habitual action that they carry out. Martel (2020) also finds this construction sometimes appearing with adverbial adjuncts; unlike with the *pasarse + gerund* construction, where these adverbial adjuncts are required. Specifically, Martel argues that they are optional with the *parar + gerund* construction, and my data corroborate this.

Numerous grammatical features found in these data support the claim that this structure denotes a negative evaluation on the part of the speakers of the habitual action. For example, 22% of the verbs in the gerund have an intrinsically negative connotation. Even in cases of *parar + gerund* constructions where the verb in the gerund did not carry an intrinsically negative meaning, the context around the construction overwhelmingly (98% of the cases analyzed) showed a negative evaluation of the frequency of the action. Speakers/commenters often used adverbial adjuncts and pejorative language, such as slurs and sexual references, to convey this negative evaluation. The consistent use of pejorative language with this construction (illustrated by the examples in this paper) has not been reported in studies about other gerund constructions, making this feature unique to the *parar + gerund* construction.

Further support for this appears in the results about grammatical person. In the analyzed data, the second and third person were the most favored ones, and the first person, though present, was the least common. A possible explanation resides in the negative evaluation associated with the *parar + gerund* construction. One can argue that it is often more convenient, and perhaps easier, to negatively assess the actions of someone (or something) other than ourselves. In other words, we

are more likely to criticize others than we are ourselves. Interestingly, tokens exhibiting the first person do exist in the data. When the first person is used, however, the negative evaluation associated with the *parar + gerund* construction changes; in these cases, the construction still carries a negative evaluation, but the speaker uses it to seem more relatable, or to potentially lessen negative sentiments about themselves. To the best of my knowledge, no other gerund construction in Spanish shows a similar pattern in relation to the grammatical person.

An anonymous reviewer has pointed out that the preference for the second and third grammatical person may be related to the sources from which the data was collected. In social media outlets, for instance, we tend to react to what other people say or do. Regarding the instances found in (online) newspaper articles, a plausible explanation may reside in that these newspapers can be described as sensational. These are valid observations. However, it is important to bear in mind that only a portion of the data came from social media outlets and newspapers. In fact, exactly half of the tokens came from audiovisual sources. While it is true that *parar + gerund* tokens can be, and are, found in social media and tabloids, their presence is not limited to these outlets; the *parar + gerund* construction appears across many types of sources in informal contexts. Regardless of where the token appears, I posit that the *parar + gerund* construction favors the second and third person grammatically because it is a precise way for speakers to negatively evaluate the habituality and frequency of others' actions. When speakers opt to talk about themselves using the *parar + gerund* construction, the negative evaluation remains, but it seems to work in their favor.

Furthermore, data showed that animate subjects were preferred over inanimate subjects. This preference for animate subjects was also reported by Sedano (2000) for various gerund constructions. In the *parar + gerund* case, the preference for animate subjects may relate to the fact that this construction helps to convey a negative evaluation. Although subjects can be inanimate, it is reasonable to suggest that most of our criticisms/negative evaluations are directed toward other people, explaining the strong preference for animate subjects.

Interestingly, grammatical negation rarely appeared with the *parar + gerund* construction, a feature also reported by Sedano (2000) for gerund constructions. This limited use of grammatical negation found in the data further supports the claims that the *parar + gerund* construction itself carries a negative evaluation. In the two contextualized tokens that had grammatical negation, one used the conditional to describe a hypothetical situation, and the other one compared the subject to another group of people. In the latter case, the use of grammatical negation redirects the negative evaluation to the other group of people. Generally, however, grammatically negating this construction would theoretically imply a positive evaluation, which is incongruous with the inherent pragmatics of the construction itself (e.g. *?Ella no para molestando* 'She is not constantly bothering').

The fact that the *parar + gerund* construction is associated with a negative evaluation is not unheard of. As stated earlier, pluractional forms seem to have "affective connotations (typically negative)" (Součková, 2011: 195). Amaral (2013) found a similar characteristic with the *vivir + gerund* construction. In the case of *parar + gerund*, various features in and around the structure support this claim about its use to express a negative evaluation.

Overall, the findings suggest that the *parar + gerund* construction in Peruvian Spanish conveys: (1) repetition of events (event plurality); (2), a habitual action, used to define the subject; and (3) a negative evaluation by the speaker or commenter regarding the frequency of that habitual action.

4. CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have provided a linguistic characterization of the *parar + gerund* construction in Peruvian Spanish and examined its pragmatic properties. I have argued that the *parar + gerund*

construction can be best understood as event external plurality. Moreover, the repetition of the event is so habitual that the action becomes a defining characteristic of the subject, aligning with Cusic's proposal (1981, as cited in Amaral, 2013). Finally, I have shown that the *parar* + gerund construction is used by Peruvian Spanish speakers to negatively evaluate the frequency of the event denoted by the gerund.

The habituality of the action denoted by the gerund is captured in these data by the imperfective forms in the verb *parar*. This habituality is often accompanied by adverbial adjuncts. Critically, the habituality of the action characterizes the subject.

This habituality carries with it a negative evaluation of the frequency of the action denoted by the gerund. This evaluation can be shown in different ways: a verb in the gerund with an intrinsically negative connotation; an adverbial adjunct; the use of pejorative language; the preference for second and third grammatical persons; and/or an indicator elsewhere in the context to prove the speaker's negative evaluation.

Further research around this construction is needed, however, and could go in many different directions. In this paper, I have examined naturally occurring data to examine the contexts in which this structure is commonly used, but further examination could shed light onto how this gerund construction compares to and interacts with other ones used in Peruvian Spanish. Specifically, it would be interesting to examine how gerund constructions with *andar*, *estar*, and *venir* as auxiliaries—all of which are also present in Peruvian Spanish—compete with the *parar* + gerund construction in discourse. Martel (2020), for instance, compares the syntactic and semantic properties of *parar* + gerund and *pasarse* + gerund. Pursuing this type of studies will lead us to a more ample understanding of gerund use in Peruvian Spanish.

It would be also worthwhile to examine linguistic attitudes toward instances of the *parar* + gerund construction in discourse. My impression is that, although it tends to occur in colloquial contexts, this structure is not a stigmatized feature in Peruvian Spanish. Before making any conclusions, it is necessary to conduct a thorough investigation of who exactly uses the *parar* + gerund construction and, fundamentally, how speakers perceive it.

The question of the origin of the *parar* + gerund construction can also be promising in future research. Niño-Murcia (1995) describes the use of gerund constructions as one distinctive linguistic feature of the Andean region. If future studies suggest that this construction is of Andean origin, and not currently stigmatized, that would be notable, because many Andean features in Peruvian Spanish have been, and continue to be, highly stigmatized among Peruvians (Zavala, 2011). It would also be interesting to ponder the possibility of whether this structure had its roots in the less common definitions of *parar* as described in §0.1., and how it relates to other *parar* structures found in Peruvian Spanish (like *parar* + adjective).

Finally, the present paper highlights the benefit of examining naturally occurring data from a wide range of sources. For instance, the data analyzed here came from social media sites, television programs, conversations with Peruvians, and a corpus. By using this methodological approach, I was able to aggregate enough tokens of this feature to develop a sound analysis of its form and role in discourse. Overall, this analysis contributes to the discussion of non-standard gerund constructions used in Spanish. While there are similarities with other gerund constructions, the *parar* + gerund structure found in Peru does have unique characteristics. The present analysis of the *parar* + gerund construction in Peruvian Spanish provides a foundation for future studies on this dialectal feature and furthers our understanding of gerund constructions in Spanish more broadly.

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