



No es por nada: Spanish argumentative preface and discourse operator

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ABSTRACT

No es por X pero Y is a Spanish structure that can appear combined with an adversative sentence and anticipates a possible misinterpretation by the listener. It acts as a semi-fixed construction. It respects the communicative intention of the speaker and mitigates the negative effects that what is said can have on his/her social image. At the same time, when *no es por nada* appears as an independent form in a peripheral position or as a reactive turn, it functions as an assertion enhancer with sentence mobility. This function as a discourse operator reveals a grammaticalization process of cooptation that is not yet completed as it still coexists with the free construction.

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1. Introduction

This paper aims at describing the structure at the beginning of the utterance “*No es por* [lit. is not for] + *X* + *sentence Y*” and the expression that comes up: *No es por nada* [not for nothing] when acting independently (in peripheral position or as reactive turn). This construction is commonly found in oral interaction and other discourses that reproduce or imitate it (see the discourse on social networks). This construction introduces highlighted information after denying a possible cause of the enunciation. Consequently, the preface anticipates and guides the listener’s interpretation. It works as an element of reformulation in advance.

In this work, we look for those syntactic contexts where this construction appears, its variants, and the argumentative functions it performs. Apart from considering the degree of fixation of this construction, we evaluate the possibility of *no es por nada* to be further advanced in the grammaticalization process until it becomes a pragmatic marker (Fraser, 1996, 2009). This study is part of a research project on macrosyntax and adopts a pragmalinguistic methodology as defined by Fuentes-Rodríguez (2017a). In macrosyntax we apply the approach of Blanche Benveniste (2003), Berrendonner (1990, 2002). These authors extend the syntax to the utterance, including the peripheral complements (*préfixes*, *suffixes*, *postfixes*) that appear modifying the entire sentence and that cannot be explained from the point of view of the sentence. An utterance is the minimal unit of text organization. On the periphery, there are indications about the contextualization of the information and the references to the speaker’s subjectivity and his/her communicative intention (see Fuentes-Rodríguez, 2017b). This theoretical framework allows us to explain the structure we are analyzing since it occupies a peripheral position that does not depend upon the core of the sentence.

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The starting point in Pragmatic Linguistics methodology is the discourse, which takes place in a context, and performs a multidimensional study. Within a discursive type, macro and micro textual structure act in an interconnected way. The macrostructure includes the structuring of the discourse, its informative, argumentative, and polyphonic organization. This methodological approach allows us to analyze communication taking into account the objective pursued by the speaker. This is fundamental to be able to analyze our object of study: expressions that seek to attenuate a possible negative effect of what is said on the listener.

The corpus is composed by different contemporary Spanish corpora: corpus MEsA, consisting of digital discourse, and Crea and Corpes,¹ both belonging to the RAE (Royal Academy of Spanish Language). We will analyze the appearance of this structure through the historical corpus of Spanish Language (CORDE). Hence, we can document when the expression *no es por nada* starts to become fixed in Spanish.

2. Argumentative frame or prefatory phrase?

According to the Constructional Grammar (Fillmore, 1988; Goldberg, 1995, 2003), “C is a CONSTRUCTION iff_{def} C is a form–meaning pair $\langle F_i, S_i \rangle$ in such a way that some aspect of F_i or some aspect of S_i is not strictly predictable from C’s components or from other previously established constructions” (Goldberg, 1995: 4). As Goldberg argues, these “stored pairings of form and function” include “morphemes, words, idioms, partially lexically filled and fully general linguistic patterns” (Goldberg, 2003: 219). Among the syntactic constructions where we can find the structure “no es por X” (“no es por X, sino por Y”; “no es por X, es por Y”; “no es por X, pero Y”), we focus on the last. This construction is made up by a preceding enunciative complement (Gutiérrez Ordóñez, 1997).² “No es por X”, which refutes the cause of the enunciation. *Pero* [but] usually follows this construction, linking it to the propositional predicative act. Then, the construction is [No es + cause of the act of saying + *pero* + sentence]. In an emphasized structure, the conjunction *pero* connects an extrapositional complement (Dik, 1997) to the rest of the sentence. Likewise, we find it along with parenthetical sentences that could be attached to the host utterance with a coordinating conjunction *y* [and], *o* [or] (see Author, 2017b). This construction appears in different contexts and, in our opinion, it shows different degrees of fixation until a new form emerges: *no es por nada* [not for nothing]. Constructive freedom is lost and the structure advances to its grammaticalization as a comment clause (Brinton, 2008) or a pragmatic marker (Fraser, 1996). Currently, all these stages coexist, providing with an interesting overview of the evolution process.

2.1. *No es por X + Y, argumentative frame? The prefatory phrase*

The pragmatic function of the initial structure is an argumentative frame (Lo Cascio, 1998) that establishes the reasons for the enunciation. At the same time, the speaker rejects those supposed arguments of the interlocutor (polyphonically³). In this way, the speaker specifies the reasons for uttering the speech act, mitigating the effects (but Y) it has, according to what is codified and generally admitted. Thus, the speaker is anticipating a possible misinterpretation of his/her speech. The discourse contains at least two voices (polyphony): the speaker of the utterance and the interlocutor or other virtual listener who can misinterpret what is said (*énonciateur* for Ducrot).

El locutor L muestra un enunciador (que puede ser él mismo u otro) que aserta cierta proposición P. Dicho de otro modo, introduce en su discurso una voz-que no es necesariamente la suya-responsable de la aserción de P. (Ducrot, 1984, 152). [The speaker L presents an enunciator (who may be himself or another) who asserts a certain proposition P. In other words, he introduces in his speech a voice -which is not necessarily his own-responsible for the assertion of P].

Nolke bases his theory, ScaPoLine, on the existence of different points of view within the linguistic material.

Ainsi le locuteur peut-il construire plusieurs types d’images de lui-même, ou plutôt des divers rôles qu’il est susceptible de jouer dans ses énoncés. On en distinguera deux types principaux: LOC, qui est une image du locuteur dans son rôle de constructeur de l’énonciation (et partant, de son sens), et différentes images de lui comme source de points de vue. C’est donc LOC qui construit la configuration polyphonique dont il fait lui-même partie. Selon la ScaPoLine, la

¹ We first started with MEsA corpus (<http://www.grupoapl.es/materiales-corpus/corpus-mesa>), due to its nature and because it is the most current corpus, but since we did not have many hits in it, we carried out the same search in the Corpus of Reference of Current Spanish (CREA) and the Spanish corpus of 21st Century (CORPES). This allows us for a broader vision of the performance of this construction in today’s Spanish as well as it allows us to contrast the construction variations. Both corpora of the RAE include various types of discourse. According to RAE (1975–2004), CREA contains about 160 million form. Corpes comprises 312 million orthographic forms. The MEsA corpus only includes digital discourse, and it has a length of 3.020.639 words, although it is under construction.

² According to enunciation theory (Benveniste, 1966, 1970) the enunciation is the individual act of producing a statement, directed to an addressee, in certain circumstances. See also Récanati (1979), Ducrot (1984) and Nolke (1993, 2001), Nolke et al. (2004). For Nolke, the listener’s interpretation instructions, which are expressed in the linguistic structure, appear in the different contexts of realisation (Nolke et al., 2004: 23). Linguistic analysis must take into account all these factors and, above all, the intention of the speaker, as well as the different voices in the discourse (polyphony).

³ Polyphonic analysis, according to Ducrot (1984), differentiates between the speaker who emits the sounds (*locuteur*) and the *énonciateur* (utterer) who is responsible for the speech acts of speech. Ducrot bases his Argumentation Theory in the dialogic process that is inherent to speech. The difference in voices and figures in discourse can be explained by this as they can combine in an enunciation. Discourse continuity of utterances can give a clue about its argumentative function. See also Reyes (1994).

configuration se compose de quatre éléments: Le locuteur-en tant que constructeur (LOC) assume la responsabilité de l'énonciation. Les points de vue (pdv) sont des entités sémantiques porteuses d'une source qui est dite 'avoir le pdv'. Les sources sont des variables. Elles correspondent aux énonciateurs d'Anscombe et Ducrot (...) (Nølke, 2009, 86).

[Thus, the speaker can construct several types of images of himself, or rather of the various roles he is likely to play in his utterances. We will distinguish two main types: LOC, which is an image of the speaker in his role as constructor of the utterance (and therefore of its meaning), and different images of himself as a source of points of view. Therefore, it is LOC who constructs the polyphonic configuration of which he himself is part. According to the ScaPoLine, the configuration consists of four main elements: The speaker-as-constructor (LOC) takes responsibility for the utterance. Points of view (pdv) are semantic entities carrying a source which is said to 'have the pdv'. Sources are variables. They correspond to the enunciators of Anscombe and Ducrot].

Nølke et al. (2004) point out that in "Ce mur n'est pas blanc" [this wall is not white], two points of view are implied: pdv1: "The wall is white", someone thinks so, as opposed to his statement, which coincides with that of pdv2: "pdv1 est injustifié" [pdv1 is unjustified] (Nølke et al., 2004: 26–27).

This polyphony is shown in discourse through linguistic traits. For instance, quotations, evidential imperfect (Reyes 1994), echoes or negation. In this regard, Ducrot explained that denial implies the rejection of information uttered by another énonciateur.⁴ Likewise, he defined it for the contraposition stated for *pero* [but] (see Ducrot 1977 about *mais*). In the structure studied here there is a negation at the beginning (*No es por ...*). With this expression the speaker 1 rejects this possible interpretation of the virtual viewpoint 2 (presupposed).

The following fragment clearly shows the function of this preface (prefatory phrase): the intention of not being misinterpreted.

- (1) Usuario 1 (hombre): *No es por el país, no me malinterpreteis pero noruega me la sople, es por la oportunidad laboral, es una compañía importante y para mi currículum sería genial. En España desarrollar videojuegos está jodido* (MEsA, FO 2017 abr-jul SPA 06) [(1) User 1 (male): It's not the country, don't get me wrong, but I couldn't care less about Norway, it is because of the job opportunity, it's an important company and for my curriculum it would be great. In Spain it's complicated to develop videogames]

User 1 denies that his actions are motivated by the country, Norway. The user does this because he/she assumes that another enunciator (it could be the addressee) believes that could be the reason.

The speaker can use this structure strategically. User 1 is aware of this possible interpretation ("I couldn't care less about Norway" can be understood as xenophobic) and could actually intend to offend or criticize but recognizing it could threaten his face.⁵ This stipulation at the beginning is used by ways of precaution, protecting his face.

According to Lo Cascio (1998: 43–44), the argumentative frame refers to "the pragmatic situations in which the argument is developed: topic, types of interlocutors, (...), objectives, conditions, sociolinguistic and cultural situations, time and space, precedents of the discussion, types of texts, etc." (my translation). This frame can include all those recommendations that the speaker wants the listener to take into account when interpreting his/her message.

The preface is necessary in order to fulfill the speaker's expectations as far as argumentation is concerned. He anticipates the possibility of inferences that the listener could make or its possible objection. It functions as an enunciative and argumentative construction: enunciative because the speaker expresses the reason for his/her act of saying, anticipating a misinterpretation by the listener; and argumentative because he/she wants to convince the other to accept the uttered speech. This is developed below. The voice of interlocutor 1 prevails as it continues from *pero*. This element leads to the most relevant information. The first fragment is marginal from a phonetic and syntactic point of view.

As we can see, this polyphonic contrast is expressed by means of negation, the contrast established by *pero*, and also by the peripheral position of the construction at the beginning of the statement. All of these elements combined are used for determining the meaning of the construction. This construction adopts a group function in a first step towards fixation. We can compare it in the following examples:

- (2) *Siente frío, pero no es por la visita de Augusta sino porque está mal abrigado.* (Corpes, Majfud, Jorge: La reina de América. Alicante: Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, 2004) [He is cold, but it is not because of Augusta's visit, but because he is not warm enough]

In this utterance, the subject of the main verb (*es*) is the information expressed in the previous sentence (He feels cold). It is followed by a complement of cause: "because of Augusta's visit".

In (1) "no es por el país" [It's not the country], the subject of the verb can only be found if it is assumed that there exists a hidden structure of the kind "no es por el país por lo que lo digo" [I'm not saying it because of the country]. This syntactic distribution is a first step in the extrapositional functioning of the construction. This is relevant for the fixation process that ends with *no es por nada* as we will review in the following section.

⁴ See also Nølke (2009, 84).

⁵ We interpret face in the sense of Goffman (1967), Bravo (2005) as a social image created in interaction. It is a basic concept in the theory of verbal impoliteness (Brown and Levinson 1987[1978], Culpeper, 1996; Bousfield, 2013) These prefaces serve to attenuate a possible face threatening act (FTA).

2.2. The construction “No es por + noun, pronoun, verb, ..., pero + sentence.”

This structure, studied by Lanero (2018), is a construction that develops procedural meaning⁶ that, at the same time, generates new discourse operators. It would be a semi-fixed or hybrid construction, with fixed and free slots.

[C]onstructions range from schematic to substantive (the syntax-lexicon continuum). Syntactic structures and idiomatic expressions differ in their schematicity, thought in a gradient way. Constructional approaches claim that a vast part of the grammar consists of grammatical constructions that combine open slots with lexically specified ones (Gras, 2016, pp. 123–124).

It is made up of a fixed part, *no es por*, that allows to position nouns and infinitives after it, which are usually negative. Within these, the speaker can select any lexical element, although the whole structure (*no es por* + np or infinitive) adopts a group function, as in the instances below:

- (3) Usuario 33 (hombre): *no es por criticar a los españoles* y mucho menos piensen que soy xenofobo, pero realmente, algunos hacen daño a la humanidad, es por eso que en latinoamerica son odiados, porque no han habido mas bárbaros que ustedes, pero todo en la vida trae una factura y ya se las cobrarán. el único español que merece respeto es aless gibaja y hace olvidar que son gente mala. (MEsA, YT 2015 ago 10 ALE 01)
[User 33 (male): I don't mean to criticize the Spaniards and don't you [lit. and much less] think I am xenophobic, but really, some do harm to humanity, that is why in Latin America you guys are hated, because there have never been barbarians like you, but everything in life is paid and you will be accounted for. the only Spaniard who deserves respect is aless gibaja and he makes us forget that you are bad people.]
- (4) *No es por fastidiarte la fiesta*, pero no creo que seas el tipo de chico dispuesto a esperar... no sé si me explico. (Corpes, M.Ron: *Culpa mía*. Barcelona: Penguin Random House Grupo Editorial, 2017)
[Not to rain on your parade, but I don't think you're the kind of guy who's willing to wait... I don't know if I'm making myself clear].
- (5) *No es por presumir*, pero yo ya era una joven hermosa y casadera y me hablaba con Manolo. (Corpes; A.Díaz González: *Los años de la ballena. El misterio del pozo masconato*. www.literanda.com: Literanda, 2014)
[Not to brag, but I was already a beautiful, marriageable young woman, and I was engaged to Manolo].

The following table illustrates construction possibilities:

Table 1

No es por + X: forms and functions.

Forms	Functions
<i>No es por</i> + negative content:	The negative effect is minimized by anticipating it. Emphasized and reinforced information is presented, and the recipient is warned that there is no negative or impolite intention.
a) Infinitives: to bother, to annoy, to criticize, to despise, to justify myself, to rub salt into the wound...	Pragmatic function: Mitigation of impoliteness.
b) Nouns: sorrow, sexism, malpractice	It may be a criticism of a possible interpretation of the other, which is negative for the speaker and is refuted with this intervention. <i>No es por</i> introduces the interlocutor's argument. It gives way to the informatively relevant part and assumed by the current speaker.
<i>No es por</i> + positive content: pretty, show off, brag about, flatter	It anticipates an incomplete interpretation: the speaker does not intend for the message to be interpreted as flattering or persuasive. Pragmatic function: Facework, to mitigate something that is considered undesirable according to the norms regulating the interaction.

Lanero (2018) focused mainly on the adversative construction that supposes a change of orientation in the enunciation, and on the difference with other relative restrictive sentences (“no es por lo que lo digo”). The presence of negation implies a polyphonic dimension. [*No es por X*] denies the communicative intention of the speaker. X is an enunciative complement, therefore the reason for uttering. Denying it implies a confrontation with the opinion of the other alleged utterer. The presence of *pero* directs the listener towards the second segment, which appears as the main information (Ducrot, 1984; Flamenco, 1999; Nølke et al., 2004).

Soient p et q deux phrases; énoncer p PA q. c'est:

- (1) Présenter p comme un argument possible pour une éventuelle conclusion r.
- (2) Présenter q comme un argument contre cette conclusion, i.e., dans le cadre de la théorie argumentative présentée dans Ducrot 1973, comme un argument pour $\neg r$.
- (3) Attribuer à q plus de force argumentative en faveur de i, que l' on n'en attribue à p en faveur de r. La suite p PA q, prise dans sa totalité, est donnée argumentativement orientée en faveur de $\neg r$. (Anscombe-Ducrot, 1977, 28)

[If we consider P et Q to be two sentences; then p PA q is:

- (1) To present p as a possible argument for a possible conclusion r
- (2) To present q as an argument against this conclusion, i.e., within the framework of the argumentative theory presented in Ducrot 1973, as an argument for $\neg r$.

⁶ It provides instructions on how to process received information. See Wilson (2016).

(3) To attribute to *q* more argumentative force in favour of *i* that the one that can be attributed to *p* in favour of *r*. The sequence *p PA q*, taken as a whole, is argumentatively oriented in favour of $\neg r$.]

Both segments joined by *pero* show two points of view which are different and anti-oriented. In [*X pero Y*], the first segment leads to conclusion *p*, and the second to “no *p*”. The speaker identifies with this second point of view. For this reason, we need to consider that the first segment acts as background and the adversative clause appears as the foreground (Averintseva-Klisch, 2008). The speaker reinforces the utterance and denies the reason for what is said: “It’s not because of *X* that I say this, but *Y* (relevant information)”.

The speaker establishes this exception to avoid an interpretation that could affect his/her face. Thus, the force of *Y* and its possible effects are lessened. He/she anticipates the interlocutor and rejects his/her possible objections. This makes us infer that *Y* constitutes content that could be misinterpreted by the listener and, at the same time, it can be attributed to socially improper or offensive reasons. For example, out of the speaker’s envy, in order to damage the listener’s face or to impose himself to the listener in some way. Hence, saying “I am the best” is not positively considered in a social sense: it is negatively valued that a person praises him/herself and imposes it on others. For this reason, the speaker can mitigate that utterance with the expression:

(6) *No es por presumir, pero soy la mejor* [Not to be arrogant, but I am the best]

This prefatory phrase (argumentative frame) allows for a correct fitting of the speaker and the listener’s face in the interactive relationship. The first segment can serve as a mitigation strategy and is intended to solve a possible interactive conflict. This is also the intention of verbs and nouns used in the construction *No es por* + *X*. They usually are negative elements, and when they are positive, they refer to something socially unacceptable. (see Table 1 above).

The syntactic pattern negation + affirmation is very common in other instances of affirmation reinforcement: the corrective structure “*No es X sino Y*” [lit. “It’s not *X* but it’s *Y*”] or “*No es X, es Y*” [lit. “It’s not *X*, it’s *Y*”] propose this polyphonic dimension (Anscombe-Ducrot 1977; Nolke et al., 2004). We can see this on the following tweet:

(7) Usuario 23 (no identificado): Totalmente de acuerdo. *No sólo con Cepeda, con todo el mundo fue una absoluta vergüenza. No es por lo que dicen sino por cómo lo dicen. Decir por ejemplo que la canción de Amaia es fácil y que es injusto me parece una absoluta falta de respeto a todo el mundo. Muy deficiente.* (MEsA, TW 2017 dic OPE 08)

[User 23 (unidentified): I totally agree. *Not only with Cepeda, with everyone he was an absolute shame. It is not what they say but how they say it. To say, for example, that Amaia’s song is easy and that it is unfair seems to me like a total lack of respect to everybody. Very deficient.*]

Lanero (2018:47) suggests the construction fixation and the possible interpretation of the first segment as an enunciation element. For her *No es por...* is a variant of *No lo digo por...*, which means the first segment is enunciative. The fact that *No es por...* can also occur followed by a relative expression reinforces the hypothesis. We can see this in the following fragment from Corpes:

(8) *No es por jactarme que lo digo, pero luego de un mes de intensiva tarea, pienso que de verdad me he convertido en un experto operador de teléfonos móviles.* (Corpes, G. Machado: «Educación permanente». El devorador de paisajes. Montevideo: Estuario, 2011). [I’m not saying it to boast but after a month of intensive work, I actually believe I have become an expert mobile phones operator].

In effect, the speaker denies a complement of enunciation, the possible reason for his speech act (which follows after *pero*). The speaker wants to make his communicative intention clear so that his communication is not understood in the wrong sense. In (8) he/she thinks that his/her interlocutor may interpret his assertion that he has become an expert as a pretentious speech act.

The verbs that appear and most of the usual expressions in this context express intrinsically impolite acts. Lanero has gathered the following: *aguar la fiesta; cotillear; criticar; dar la tabarra; desconfiar; desilusionar; desmerecer; despreciar; difamar; echar en cara; escurrir el bulto; exagerar; faltar; fastidiar; incordiar; inquietar; insistir; intrigar; hablar (desear) mal; hurgar en la herida; joder; jorobar; llevar la contraria; menospreciar; meter cizaña; molestar; ofender.*

Y otros que apuntan al “autoelogio del hablante o al elogio excesivo hacia el interlocutor, actitudes que socialmente también se valoran de forma negativa en una cultura como la nuestra [And others verbs that point to “self-praise of the speaker or excessive praise towards the interlocutor, attitudes that, socially, are also valued negatively in a culture like ours]: *alabarme; alardear; darme jabón; dármelas de (echármelas de); fardar; farolear; hacerse el chulo; hacer la pelota; halagar; presumir*”] (Lanero, 2018: 55).

For this reason, she defines it as a structure with mitigating value, a “disarmer”, taking the term from Boretti (2000), but this mitigation does not prevent the perception of contradictory messages. This “dilemma” characterizes what Lauerbach (1989:35) calls double bond schema:

The *Double-Bind Schema* is a special case of the *Disarm Schema* in that it makes partly explicit the dilemma speakers face when they are caught between the necessity of observing the Rules of Politeness and that of pursuing an interactional goal that can only be reached by violating those rules.

These disarmers constitute a good sample showing how strongly conventionalized polite speech is.

Así pues, *No es por X* prepara el terreno, es un indicio formal de la inminente transgresión de una regla de cortesía y, en consecuencia, previene sobre el verdadero propósito del locutor. El valor opositivo de *pero* es esencial para la reinterpretación del prefacio en sentido contrario, de modo que las expectativas generadas por este se verán confirmadas con la enunciación de *Y* (Lanero, 2018: 58).

[Therefore, *No es por X* prepares the ground, it is a formal indication of the imminent transgression of a politeness rule and, in consequence, it warns about the true purpose of the speaker. The oppositional value of *pero* [but] is essential for the interpretation of preface in the opposite sense, thus, the expectations that it creates will be confirmed by uttering Y.]

Examples of this structure can be found in all corpora. Hence, in Corpus MEsA:

- (9) Usuario 13 (no identificado): @Usuario22 *No es por restar méritos a Don Álvaro de Bazán, pero afirmar que es el mejor marino de la historia de España y del mundo estando también un tal BLAS DE LEZO por enmedio...* (MEsA, PW 2017 feb-jul MUN 05)
[User 13 (unidentified): @User 22 not to detract from the merits of Don Álvaro de Bazán, but saying that he is the best sailor in the history of Spain and the world when we also have a certain BLAS DE LEZO in the scene...]
- (10) User 13 (unidentified) A: No te ha pasado que ↑
B: No te ha pasado que ↓
C: No te ha pasado que ↓
D: No te ha pasado nunca que ↓/se te estropea el coche ↑§
A: § y y *no es por por vacilar* ↑/→ pero sabes bastante de mecánica (MEsA, YT 2016 feb DIA 01)
[A: Has it happened to you that ↑
B: Has it happened to you that ↓
C: Has it happened to you that ↓]
D: Has it ever happened to you that ↓ your car breaks down ↑§
A: § not to brag ↑/→ but you know a lot about mechanic]

MEsA corpus also contains forms of suspended structures where the propositional content of Y is implied or replaced by an image:

- (11) Usuario 191 (no identificado):
No es por ofender pero ☹ (MEsA, IG 2018 ene 21 LEO 01)
[User 191 (unidentified): Not to offend but ☹]

We could say that we are facing the fixation of a syntactic pattern [enunciative complement + *pero* [but] + sentence]. In the corpus analyzed, we can still find some examples where the first segment correlates to another sentence. The following user extends the complement [*No es por* + infinitive + *y mucho menos* [lit. and much less] (scalar operator) + subjunctive].

- (3) Usuario 33 (hombre): *no es por criticar a los españoles y mucho menos piensen que soy xenofobo, pero realmente, algunos hacen daño a la humanidad, es por eso que en latinoamerica son odiados, porque no han habido mas bárbaros que ustedes, pero todo en la vida trae una factura y ya se las cobrarán. el único español que merece respeto es aless gibaja y hace olvidar que son gente mala.* (MEsA, YT 2015 ago 10 ALE 01)
[User 33 (male): I don't mean to criticize the Spaniards and don't you [lit. and much less] think I am xenophobic, but really, some do harm to humanity, that is why in Latin America you guys are hated, because there have never been barbarians like you, but everything in life is paid and you will be accounted for. the only Spaniard who deserves respect is aless gibaja and he makes us forget that you are bad people.]

In Crea and Corpes, we can find a greater number of verbal forms, similar to those pointed out by Lanero: complicate matters, point out, presume ... We also find it along with a pronoun: *no es por eso* [lit. it is not because of that] (56 instances in Crea), also as refutation of the cause of the enunciation. Most of the time, though, we find it as a free construction. It is closer to interactive use when it comes to replicating the interlocutor:

- (12) ADELAIDA.-¿Como el elecho?
LUIS.-Exacto. Por aquí hay muchos, son arbustos improductivos que crecen por generación espontánea.
ADELAIDA.-*No es por eso*. Mi padre desea que yo complete mi educación, eso es todo.
LUIS.-¿Tu educación? ¿Qué es lo que te falta por aprender? (Crea, C.Gallego: Adelaida, 1990)
[ADELAIDA.- Like the fern?
LUIS.-Exactly. There are plenty around here. They are unproductive bushes that grow by spontaneous generation.
ADELAIDA.-I didn't mean that [lit. it is not because of that] My father wants me to have an education, that's all.
LUIS.- your education? What's left for you to learn?]

In sum, the structure that underlies the use of *no es por nada* that we study in this work is a construction that carries a polyphonic meaning (enunciation) and a possible intensifier (argumentation) or focus function (see Fig. 1):

[*No es por X, pero Y...*]: metadiscursive complement. Peripheral, it anticipates the objection. It denies an argument (X) and mitigates an assertion that can threaten the face of the listener. It mitigates disagreement.

Fig. 1. *No es por X, pero Y.*

- the negation + affirmation sequence confronts two points of view to highlight the second
- in the first segment, the communicative intention of the speaker is denied
- *pero* allows to focus the information on the second segment.

This structure is a productive construction, as it allows the use of different lexical items expressing different purposes. It reinforces an assertion by opposing it to those arguments that must be rejected in order to take the text in its correct sense. A concrete case is the construction *No es por nada, pero Y* [lit. It is not for nothing, but Y] with a generic negation. *No es por nada*

seems to have advanced in the process of fixation until it appears in syntactic contexts that are typical of pragmatic markers, as shown below.

3. No es por nada

No es por nada shares structure with the first segment of the construction previously seen, but it replaces the enunciative complement with the pro-form *nada* [lit. nothing]. Denial is generic, encompassing all possible reasons, and disabling a negative interpretation:

Aquí el aporte informativo es prácticamente inexistente. Su función se limita, pues, a advertir sobre el carácter más o menos conflictivo de las aseveraciones, preguntas o peticiones que siguen (Lanero, 2018: 57)[Here the informative contribution is practically non-existent. Its function is limited to warning about the more or less conflictive nature of the assertions, questions or requests that follow].

The author related this expression to other anticipatory and mitigating structures already evidenced by Albelda (2010: 64). In fact, as we can subsequently see, the generalization that establishes *nada* also extends the set of pragmatic possibilities.

Regarding the syntactic structure, we find three different schemes (see Fig. 2):

- [*No es por nada, pero X*]: Construction enunciative complement + *pero* + sentence
- [*No es por nada, X*]. Enunciative complement + assertion
- [*X. No es por nada.*]: Assertion + enunciative element.

Fig. 2. Syntax of *No es por nada*.

3.1. [*No es por nada, pero* + sentence]

No es por nada acts as a minimizer or disarmer, setting a warning or alert. Its performance is complex. It affects several areas simultaneously: interpretation, effects on the interlocutor's face, and argumentative function.

- Speaker's protection frame: It makes inactive an inference from the listener about the existence of a negative intention of the speaker when saying *Y*.
- The act that follows has a mitigation function that deactivates its impolite load or minimizes it.
- As a consequence, it constitutes a reinforcement of what has been said.

This preface is necessary for the speaker because what is stated after *pero* can be interpreted in an impolite or inadequate way, socially speaking. The results found in the MEsA corpus present the mitigation of a recrimination or an accusation. For instance, in (13) we can see an attack to young people (user 35) for not fixing the issue they are talking about. It is based on the widespread bias that young people are not fully aware of their role in the society. User 13 therefore criticises the condescending tone he uses.

- (13) Usuario 13 (hombre): [Mención al usuario 35] jajaja ojo a la condescendencia con la k[que] hablas chaval, jajaja, eres patético amigo, y sinceramente, y *no es por nada*, pero son los de tu generación los k[que] no han sido ni están siendo capaces de arreglar esto, así k[que] deja de criticar las generaciones (MEsA, IG 2018 abr 27 FEM 01)
[User 13 (man) [referring to user 35] hahaha look at the condescension you use, kiddo, hahaha, you are pathetic, my friend, and honestly, and *not for nothing*, but the people from your generation are the ones that are not and have never been capable of fixing this, so you better stop criticizing generations].

Compared to the previous examples (*por* + NP or an infinitive) where the specific reason is made clear, in this case, it is generalized to "There is no reason". We would therefore be facing an *excusatio*.

Sometimes, *no es por nada*, from a discursive and pragmatic point of view, presents an excuse in regards to a possible accusation or justification:

- (14) Usuario 118 (hombre): @sanchezcastejon @greenpeace_esp Yo, *no es por nada* pero creo recordar q fue Zapatero el q[ue] sentó las bases del impuesto al sol. Y en CM permitió cementerio d neumáticos...[emoticono pensativo y emoticono con mascarilla] (MEsA, TW 2017 jun SAN 01) [User 118 (man) @sanchezcastejon @greenpeace_esp I, *not for nothing* but I believe it was Zapatero the one who laid the foundations for the sun tax. And in CM allowed for a tires cemetery ...]

In this tweet the theme, *Yo*, that coincides with the subject, is placed at the beginning of the sentence, as a thematization complement (Hidalgo, 2003; Fernández Lorences, 2010). Syntactic dislocation shows it. As a consequence, *no es por nada* is put in between.

Some other variants can be:

- (15) Usuario 12 (hombre): *No es por nada* pero seguramente yo actuaría así también, y no por faltar el respeto en algo tan serio. Sino porque soy nervioso y me río (MEsA, TW 2017 may-sep MAL 01) [User 12 (man) *Not for nothing*, but most likely I would act the same way, and not for being disrespectful regarding such a serious matter. But because I am always nervous, and I laugh]

In (15), the first structure is connected by means of “y no por faltar al respeto ...” [not for being disrespectful], which is still seen as an enunciation complement. In (16), user 211 gives certain information to justify something that was mentioned earlier.

- (16) Usuario 211 (hombre): *No es por nada*, pero en el DNI vienen los nombres de los padres ☹ (MEsA, YT 2017 jul-sep VID 03) [User 211 (man) *Not for nothing*, but the ID card shows the name of the parents ☹]

A variation could be *no es por mala onda* [not to be nasty] which also corresponds to elements with a procedural meaning:

- (17) Usuario 200 (hombre): *No es por mala onda* pero es malísimo jaja (MEsA, YT 2017 jul-sep VID 04) [User 200 (man) *Not to be nasty* but the name is horrible, haha]

In the following example we can see an interrogation that at the same time implies a criticism and a suggestion.

- (18) Usuario 5 (mujer): *No es por nada*, pero porqué (sic) no pones fotos tuyas y no de una web. (MEsA, FO 2016 oct-dic JAR 08) [User 5 (woman) *Not for nothing* but why wouldn't you put your own pictures instead of getting them from a website.]

On other occasions, it precedes an argument, which delegitimizes what was said by the other interlocutor in a situation of confrontation. The argument is, therefore, reinforced.

- (19) Usuario 39 (no identificado): O estas exagerando, o te inventaste la mitad.
SOLO voy a salones chinos para hacerme las uñas.
1-por que las hacen mejor que las españolas.
2-por que salen mejor de precio.
Y no es por nada, pero el sitio que tengo más cerca esta siempre a reventar. Clientas habituales que se comen 1 hora de espera para ponerse sus uñas. Y no tardan 30 min, si no sus 2 horitas bien dedicadas. (...) Lo siento pero lo que has escrito tu me suena más a cuento para quitarte competencia que otra cosa. (MEsA, BL 2011 jul 5 MUN 01)
[User 39 (unidentified) Either you are exaggerating, or you made up half of it. I ONLY go to Chinese salons to get my nails done. 1-because they do them better than Spanish girls do. 2-because they have a better price. And *not for nothing*, but the closest place that I have is always about to burst. Regular customers who queue for an hour waiting to get their nails done. And it doesn't take 30 min, but at least 2 hours well dedicated. (...) I'm sorry but what you have written sounds to me more like a story to get rid of competitors than anything else.]

User 39 reacts against a user that is criticizing her going to Chinese salons and justifies it. After this, user 39 argues that many people do it too.

In the following example, we can see again the confronting opinions of two users:

- (20) Usuario 2 (hombre): Pues *no es por nada*, pero estoy con el comentario 1.
Me parece una pedazo de serie, que me deja con ganas de más. Quizás es que a ti te gusten series de gran calidad y frenéticas como... ¿Walking Dead? (MEsA, BL 2013-14 nov-oct SOL 01) [User 2 (man): Well, *not for nothing* but I agree with comment 1. I think it's a great series that makes me want to see more of it. Maybe it's just that you like series of great quality and frenzied like... The Walking Dead?]

No es por nada functions as a single element because we cannot syntactically destroy the group, neither insert words in the middle nor expand it: **No es por nada ni por gusto* [not for nothing neither for fun] **No es ni siquiera por nada* [lit. it is not even for nothing].

There are other expressions in which *nada* can be integrated in an idiom or an argumentative marker: *de nada* [you are welcome] (21), *nada más* [nothing else], *nada más y nada menos* [no more and no less than], *más que nada* [more than anything].

- (21) —Muchas gracias, señora —dijo, antes de partir.
—Ya hijito, *de nada*. Vuelve cuando quieras, más bien. Ya sabes dónde atiende.
(Corpes, R.Tola Pedraglio: Flores amarillas. Lima: Alfaguara, 2013.)
[-Thank you so much, ma'am — he said, before leaving.
- Sure, dear, you are welcome. Come back whenever you want to, actually. You know where to find me.]

Thus, *no es por nada* drops the rest when it goes by its own. It remains unmentioned, omitted and only the exception remains (the mitigation of the assertion), which becomes part of it. It could even be a suggestion, a mitigated request, or perhaps an assertion to impose on the listener.

What calls the attention here is its distribution. The conjunction *pero* joins the preface (peripheral complement) to the nuclear sentence. The same happens when we insert a parenthetical utterance which introduces information that affects the whole propositional content of the utterance in which it is inserted. The coordinating conjunctions *y*, *o* relate the peripheral complement (with procedural meaning) to the propositional core. Therefore, a macrosyntactic approach is necessary to explain the relations between marginal components of the utterance. In this case, *no es por nada pero...* serves as an intensification of the sentence meaning, after having excluded in the preface a reason which may reduce its validity.

- (22) Aquí, en primer lugar —y eso hay que reconocerlo—, ha habido una importante, importante disminución de recursos destinados por el Gobierno de la Nación a la atención de las personas con necesidades sociales, y eso es un hecho (DSPA n° 12, IX legislatura (2012), página 73. IU Los Verdes, Sr. Baena Cobos) [Here, in the first place - and this must be recognized - there has been a significant, significant decrease in resources allocated by the Government of the Nation to the protection of people with social needs, and that is a fact]

No es por nada is clearly enunciative (metadiscursive). The speaker is anti-oriented towards criticism and uses *pero* to present the argument that legitimizes the disagreement as well as reinforces it. This is a polyphonic marker. The interpretation would be: “I am looking at comment 1 not for any special reason and opposite to what you suppose.” This is followed by refutative argumentation. If we check on Corpes, we can find the same speech acts that we have seen above: complaints, objections, recriminations, among others (23,24). Even an advice or a recommendation (25):

- (23) *No es por nada*, pero me habéis dejado solo. (Corpes, Despeyroux, Denise: Bienvenido a Girasol. Montevideo: dramaturgiauruguay.gub.uy, 2007.) [Not for nothing, but you left me alone]
- (24) Mire, señor Miravet, *No es por nada*, pero hace cuatro meses que trabajo para usted y ni siquiera se ha tomado la molestia de venir a conocerme. (Corpes, B.Marsé: «Te llamaré». En jaque. Barcelona: Anagrama, 2006.) [Look, Mr Miravet, not for nothing, but I've been working for you for 4 months and you haven't even bothered to get to come see me.]
- (25) “Fumas mucho otra vez –observa Carmela-. *No es por nada*, pero deberías rebajar la dosis. Ésa, que me he fijado, es ya la segunda cajetilla. Y tienes una tos que no me gusta.” (Corpes, L.Ortiz: Las manos de Velázquez. Madrid: Planeta, 2006.) [You are again smoking too much – says Carmela-. Not for nothing, but you should lower the amount. That one, that I've seen, is already the second packet. And I don't like the sound of your cough.]

In the following example (26), *no es por nada* goes after a negative segment (a recrimination) and precedes a deontic construction (obligation).

- (26) (...) hermano, miren, *no es por nada*, pero hay que ser valiente, muy valiente, hermano mío, y humilde, humilde, humilde, como decía Barba Jacob, (Corpes, J.L.Díaz-Granados: Los años extraviados. Bogotá: Planeta Colombiana, 2006.) [(...) brother, look, Not for nothing, but we need to stay brave, very brave, my brother, and humble, humble, humble, as Barba Jacob used to say.]

No es por nada is the equivalent to “I do not mean it with any intention”. This reinforces the assertion because it denies that there are reasons for the speaker to enunciate it: “the speaker is honest”. The fact that it is not mentioned makes what has actually been said, stronger, allowing it to appear along with other speech acts that are not intended to destroy the face of the addressee. Then *no es por nada* goes from the mitigation function of impolite acts to the enunciative function of assertion reinforcement.

At Crea, we find it with statements that express positive emotions.

- (27) *Y no es por nada*, pero no me parece que esté bien. (Crea, M.Signes: Antonio Ramos, 1963. Diputación de Salamanca, 1977) [And not for nothing, but it just doesn't seem right to me.]

It is a preface before saying something personal or important, a framework that gives way to the main speech act. It keeps operating in the enunciative area,⁷ now with a broader content that precedes the information considered relevant and therefore is now focalized.

- (28) *No es por nada*, pero ¿soy el único que tiene hambre? -se quejó Gepecé, rompiendo el clima de misterio e incertidumbre-. En todo el día sólo he comido las raíces cocidas que nos ha dado el gorila, y, francamente, tampoco es que fueran un banquete, ¿eh? (Crea, J.A.Martín Piñol: Los dragones de hierro. Madrid: Alfaguara, 2010.) [Not for nothing, but am I the only one who is hungry? -Gepecé complained, tearing up the atmosphere of mystery and uncertainty-. All day I have only eaten boiled roots that the gorilla has given me, and frankly, it's not like they were a banquet, ok?]

In such a manner we find that [*No es por nada*, *pero* + sentence] extends to most of the speech acts. It goes from indicating, “I'm just saying, there is no reason behind what I'm saying and therefore you should not take it as an impolite act” to meaning “I focus the information that follows, I express my implication and therefore I intensify the content.”

This generalization process covers both the lexical and the syntactic levels:

- a) meaning generalization: 1) *no es por* [lit. It is not for] + addressee's reasons → 2) *no es por* + *nada* [lit. nothing] (generalization), complete rejection → 3) it moves to the positive, to the pragmatic function of intensifying the utterance.
- b) syntactic change, as we can see in the following section: initially it was a peripheral complement attached to the clause by *pero*, but it later became an autonomous element with an independent function, mobility in the utterance and abstract meaning. It acts as a discursive operator (Fuentes-Rodríguez, 2003), no longer linked to the predicative structure, not even as a peripheral complement (comment clause in Brinton, 2008).

Therefore, we can assert that the construction [*No es por nada* (enunciative peripheral complement) + *pero* + sentence], as a semifixed structure has been deriving in a later stage to the next [*No es por nada* (enunciative operator) + *pero* + sentence]. The construction has developed in the grammaticalization of *no es por nada* as a discourse operator.

The operator is a pragmatic marker (Fraser, 1990, 1996) with procedural meaning that acts in the utterance (frequently as a peripheral element), without verbal function nor designative meaning (see Fuentes-Rodríguez, 2009).

This procedural meaning can be oriented towards the indication of metadiscursive content, which could be the intention of the speaker (as *frankly*), modality (*of course*), argumentation (*even*) or focalization (*just*). It is a procedural device since it provides instructions to the listener to guide his/her interpretation (Wilson, 2016). In the expression under study, *no es por nada* provides information about the act of saying or the communication intention of the speaker. It's meaning is equivalent to

⁷ The speaker's marks in his/her speech may show his/her subjective attitude towards what is said (modality) or his/her communicative intention when emitting the message (enunciation). Both are included in the metadiscourse. Kaltenböck et al. (2011) call these theticals.

“no lo digo por nada” “my speech act does not derive from any reason”. It functions as one unit and is not integrated in the sentence. We cannot establish who the subject of that verb is. We cannot alter the order of its elements: “Por nada no es”.

The first process of generalization or abstraction, as indicated by Company, is therefore in place. It is ‘un proceso irreversible y gradual, y por lo general unidireccional, de debilitamiento del significado referencial de las formas y ganancia de un significado gramatical más abstracto’ (Company, 2003: 9) [‘an irreversible and gradual process and, in general, unidirectional, where the referential meaning of the forms is reduced and a more abstract grammar meaning is gained’]. Traugott (1995a, 15) precises:

In the case of the development of DMs, what we have is the development of highly specific constructions via strategic use in discourse to a sentential adverbial and ultimately a DM. Here there is no discourse > syntax > morphology, but syntax via pragmatic strengthening in discourse > syntax with different function. The data investigated therefore suggest that grammaticalization should be defined as: the process whereby lexical material in highly constrained pragmatic and morphosyntactic contexts becomes grammatical, and already grammatical material become more grammatical.

This process, from generalization to a more abstract and intersubjective meaning (López-Couso, 2010) has also been experienced by other grammaticalized elements (Lehmann, 1985, 2002; Traugott 1995a, 1995b, 2010).⁸ *No es por nada* adds instructions for the interpretation of the statement that constitutes its scope: it reinforces assertion (argumentation) and denies that there are reasons for the enunciation. The syntactic changes that we see below show us its function as an enunciative operator related to the utterance, with an intensifying function of the assertion act. The concept of the cause of uttering is lost and generalized as a reinforcer.

No es por nada, then, evolves from a free structure with conceptual content (stage 1), as (29) → to a peripheral complement of the utterance (stage 2), as (23 below), and from there → to pragmatic operator (stage 3), as (30). It can be used in the statement, establishing a thetical dimension (Kaltenböck et al., 2011; Heine, 2013), pointing at the speaker’s implication degree in the statement together with an intensifying informative effect. It can be understood as a cooptation process, that, according to Heine (2013, 1205–6), occurs when “«units such as clauses, phrases, or words are taken from the domain of sentence grammar and deployed for purposes of discourse organization»”. Let us demonstrate how it works:

- (29) Si sonrió siempre *no es por nada* en particular. Es que con estos dientes que tengo no resulta fácil cerrar la boca... (Crea, ABC, 12/05/1988) [If I smile all the time, it’s not for anything in particular. It’s just that with these teeth I have, it’s not easy to close my mouth.]
- (23) *No es por nada*, pero me habéis dejado solo. (Corpes, D.Despeyroux: Bienvenido a Girasol. Montevideo: dramaturgiauruguay.gub.uy, 2007.) [Not for nothing, but you left me alone]
- (30) 12/04/2017 12:14:55: H1: por cierto ya tambien he evolucionado un poco *no es por ná[da]* (MEsA, WA 2017, en-jun) [By the way, I have also evolved a bit, not for nothing.]

In (29) *no es por nada* still functions as autonomous elements that hold a function within the sentence and maintain its lexical content intact. Smiling does not refer to a specific reason. In (23) we can see it acting as a group. It works as a construction: it is a peripheral complement located on the left side, ahead. It precedes the assertion following *pero*, counter-oriented to this reason that we can presupposed the recipient has. The speaker anticipates the objection of the aforementioned presupposed listener. However, in (30) *no es por nada* appears as a peripheral element on the right side, and it does not indicate that *nada* is making it advance. Speech act is reinforced by the use of *no es por nada*. It functions in the margins as other pragmatic markers (*frankly, to be honest, sincerely ...*)

The conditions for grammaticalization, pragmaticalization or cooptation are met (the terms are used by different authors): There is a syntactic fixation, losing of designative content, and derives towards procedural content. It does not function within the sentence anymore but as peripheral within the utterance. It’s meaning is procedural and points towards discourse coordinates, in this case, enunciative and argumentative. As a result, a process of subjectivization (key for grammaticalization) is set forward.

In many studies on subjectification, authors have observed that when forms or constructions are pragmatically enriched and begin to encode valorative meanings, either subjective or intersubjective, they frequently undergo decategorization and weakening of their etymological referential meaning –changes typical of standard grammaticalization– while at the same time gaining extrapositional scope, more predicational autonomy and independence of syntactic structure – changes which are not typical of standard grammaticalization (Company, 2008: 203).

With this, it can be confirmed what Traugott (1995a) suggested for the evolution of discourse markers:

In the case of the development of DMs, what we have is the development of highly specific constructions via strategic use in discourse to a sentential adverbial and ultimately a DM. Here there is no discourse > syntax > morphology, but syntax via pragmatic strengthening in discourse > syntax with different function. The data investigated therefore suggest that grammaticalization should be defined as: the process whereby lexical material in highly constrained

⁸ Traugott (2016) discusses the evolution of clausal-final pragmatic markers in English. She connects pragmatic markers, tags and comment clauses.

pragmatic and morphosyntactic contexts becomes grammatical, and already grammatical material become more grammatical (Traugott, 1995a: 15).

Heine's conditions (2003, 579) are also fulfilled: bleaching, generalization, decategorization but not erosion or phonic reduction. To sum up:

- a) meaning generalization:
 - 1) *no es por* [lit. It is not for] + addressee's reasons (descriptive meaning)
 - 2) *no es por + nada* [lit. nothing] (generalization), complete rejection
 - 3) procedural meaning: *no es por nada* evolves to the pragmatic function of intensifying the utterance
- b) syntactic change and possible decategorization:

free construction negation + verb + cause complement > peripheral complement > enunciative operator with mobility.

The process also involves 3 stages, which coexist in current Spanish: autonomous elements with a function within the sentence + descriptive meaning > construction semifixed > pragmatic marker (operator).

No phonic reduction is produced. It unfolds from the intra-clausal function (microsyntax) to another peripheral one, within the utterance (macrosyntax, discourse syntax) and later a fixation as a pragmatic marker. As Traugott (1995a: 15) defends, "syntax via pragmatic strengthening in discourse > syntax with different function", i.e. grammatical material "become more grammatical".

3.2. Discourse operator contexts: [*No es por nada, X*]/[*X, no es por nada*]

No es por nada can function as an argumentative marker of the statement and has mobility (Brinton, 2010, Zorraquino et al., 1999). We find instances where the conjunction *pero* [but] can be elided and therefore the relation is established asyndetically, as in the following extract:

- (31) Usuario 15 (mujer): [Mención a Usuario 1] Hola buenas tardes te de Dios es hermoso que te expreses así de ella Dios te Bendiga y *no es por nada* harían una excelente pareja. (MEsA, YT 2015 jul RAW 01) [User 15 (woman). Mention to user 1 – Hello, Good evening it is amazing that you refer to her like that God bless you and *not for nothing*, (but) you guys would be a great couple.]

This distribution could already be interpreted as that of an operator in the initial position: [*Y no es por nada, pero A*] → [*Y no es por nada, A*]. The structure would be [*y*+ enunciative complement + sentence]. We have already discussed its lexical and syntactic fixation. It has a unique meaning and provides an enunciative content. Therefore, we consider it an operator. We even find it coordinated with another enunciative operator, *sinceramente* [honestly] or *es un decir* [just saying], which reinforces the interpretation of the structure (argumentative force).

- (32) ¿O para McGee, el que disputó (*es un decir, y no es por nada*; a buen entendedor, pocas palabras ..., dice el refrán) el sprint (*es un eufemismo*) por la victoria? (Corpes, P.Horrillo: «Intrascendencia y transición». El País. Madrid: elpais.com, 2001-07-26). [Or for McGee, the one who disputed (*just saying*, and *not for nothing*; word to the wise, the saying goes) the sprint (it is a euphemism) for the victory?]

As an operator, it can have mobility within its clause. In terms of syntactic distribution, it has greater freedom than the previous construction. For this reason, it may appear in a final position in the utterance that constitutes its scope, [*Y, no es por nada*], supporting what has been mentioned, as in (34):

- (33) 12/04/2017 12:14:55: H1: por cierto ya tambien he evolucionado un poco *no es por ná[da]* (MEsA, WA 2017, ene-jun) [By the way, I have also evolved a bit, *not for nothing*.]

Por cierto [by the way] presents a comment, revealing that it was not planned but that it also serves to reinforce what has been said. *No es por ná[da]* in the final position, increases the argumentative force of the assertion. It may also appear with a longer pause, as the following example shows:

- (34) Usuario 26 (no identificado): [Mención al usuario 27]
 Repase usted la etimología de la palabra "nativo".
 No es por nada.
 Es para que no se rían de usted, cuando expresa estas afirmaciones expuestas en su "post" (MEsA, PW 2017 dic 29 PAI 01) [User 26 (unidentified) Mentioning user 27– Check the etymology of the word "native". *Not for nothing*. It is so that they do not laugh at you, when you express these assertions exposed in your "post"]

No es por nada may appear as a whole intervention, as disjuncts (Greenbaum, 1969) or modal pragmatic markers:

- (35) 16/05/2018 0:15 - H1: *No es por na[da]*[Not for nothing] (MEsA, WA 2018, abr-may)

Similarly, we found it in Crea and Corpes in initial, mid, and final position within the clause:

- (36) En el canal católico, en el estelar de las escotadas se refieren a la potestad presidencial de perdonar a un condenado a muerte como "tirar la cadena". *No es por nada*, pero el chiste me resultó hartó más difícil de explicar a mi hija que la palabra sexo. (Crea, Revista Hoy, 09-15/09/1996). [In the Catholic channel, in the cleavage show they refer to the presidential power to be able to forgive a death row prisoner as "throwing the chain". *Not for nothing*, but the joke was more difficult for me to explain to my daughter than the word sex.]
- (37) -Es que vamos hechos una mierda. Y tú, *no es por nada*, hueles peor que el barrio. (Corpes: F.Casavella: Los juegos feroces. Barcelona: Mondadori, 2002). [- We are a total disaster. And you, *not for nothing*, smell worse than the hood]
- (38) Tenía razón pero aquello era otra cosa, si lo quería llamar corrida pues que lo hiciera pero de eso a "Las Ventas" hay un abismo, *no es por nada*. (Corpes, M.T.Hernández Díaz: «Mis novios». Crónica, 2010) [- He was right but that was another thing, if he wanted to call it *corrida* (bullfighting) that's fine but "Las Ventas" is a totally different thing, *not for nothing*.]

No es por nada begins as a preface, an argumentative frame which functions as a peripheral complement and is followed by *pero* + sentence. From this point on, it develops a function as a discursive operator that, as it has already been mentioned, it can appear alone in reactive intervention or within an utterance, with mobility (initial, intermediate or final position) and reinforces the assertion presented.

This process is still under development and allows us to admit the coexistence of different stages, as Hopper (1991: 23) asserts: ‘when a form or set of forms emerges in a functional domain, it does not immediately (and may never) replace and already existing set of functionally equivalent forms, but rather the two sets of forms co-exist’.

4. Data in corpora

In the MEsA corpus, *no es por nada* occurs 11 times: 2 on Blogs, 2 on Forums, 1 on Instagram, 1 on Web Pages, 2 on Twitter, 1 on Whatsapp, and 2 on YouTube. Because this number is too scarce, we compare these results with RAE corpora, where it has a more significant presence. The following table collects the data distributed according to the different contexts in which it occurs (see Table 2):

Table 2

Comparison of the three corpora.

	<i>No es por nada</i> ...(free construction)	<i>No es por nada pero</i> + sentence	<i>No es por nada</i> operator
Corpus MEsA: 11 instances	1 (9.09%)	8(72.72%)	2 (18.18%)
Corpes: 77 instances	9 (11.68%)	49 (63.63%)	19 (24.67%)
CREA: 43 instances	9 (20.92%)	29 (67.44%)	5 (11.62%)

The dimension of each corpus justifies the difference in the number of occurrences, but all show the same tendency. The next figure illustrates the presence in the three corpora (see Fig. 3):

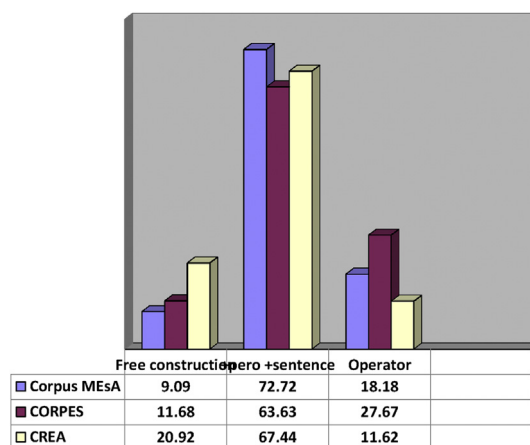


Fig. 3. *No es por nada* in the corpora.

These data reveal the predominance of the construction over the operator, which can mean that this element is still unfolding in a process of grammaticalization (Traugott and Trousdale, 2013). As shown in CORDE (Historical Corpus of Spanish language), this structure shows a late emergence, which helps to support the hypothesis of this paper. In this corpus, it appears 0 times from 1200 to 1800, 2 times on the 19th century and 16 in the 20th (see Table 3).

Table 3

No es por nada in Corde.

CORDE	Free structure with lexical meaning	Construction with <i>pero</i>	Operator
S.XII-XVIII	0	0	0
S. XIX	1	0	1
S.XX	3	9	3

The first documentation dates from 1897, but it is a free construction: “*no es por nada ofensivo*” [It is not offensive at all]. The other example of the 19th century has a distribution as a reinforcement operator of the assertion. We can find this in 3 other examples found in the 20th century:

- (39) Es una idea que se me ha ocurrido hoy -agregó Martina, que no quería descubrir lo de la carta de la duquesa-; *no es por nada* (CORDE 1898, A.Ganivet: Los trabajos del infatigable creador Pío Cid)[It's an idea that occurred to me today,” added Martina, who didn't want to find out about the letter from the duchess, not for nothing.]

The 3 examples in XX are not entirely clear because they occur as independent utterances and can be interpreted as idioms, as a justification with full lexical meaning. It works as an enunciative complement still free: “this (what I say) is not for nothing”. Or it can be considered the first step to extrapositionality. In this case, the process of development as a discursive operator starts.

- (40) - A mí la democracia... ¡Uf! *No es por nada*, ¿comprendes? Yo creo que será muy hermosa y todo pero... ¿qué quieren?, ¡es una cuestión de olfato! El pueblo me hiede... (Corde, J.R.Pocaterra: Tierra del sol amada, 1918). [Democracy to me ... Ugh! *Not for nothing*, you understand? I think it can be very beautiful and all but ... what do you expect?, it is a matter of instinct! The people stink for me ...]

In the following two examples, it is closer to a freer structure and *por nada* is acting as a cause complement.

- (41) ¡Que lástima que nuestro flamante interprete local no haya estampado al pie del artículo su nombre y dos apellidos! *No es por nada*, solo por felicitarle y, al mismo tiempo, por saber a quién tener que acudir cuando necesitemos una aclaración en las discusiones que puedan surgir entre nosotros en la interpretación de nuestro Programa. (CORDE, J.Tornero, El tema de las dictaduras, 1933) [What a shame that our splendid local interpreter did not stamp his name and two last names on the footer of the article! *Not for nothing*, just to congratulate you and, at the same time, to know who to approach to when we need clarification on the discussion that could arise among us in the interpretation of our Program.]
- (42) El señor Ramón se queda un momento callado. Se rasca la cabeza y baja la voz.
- No le diga nada a la Paulina.
- Descuide.
El señor Ramón se mira la puntera de las botas.
-*No es por nada*, ¿sabe? Yo sé que es usted un hombre discreto que no se va de la lengua, pero a lo mejor, por un casual, se le escapaba a usted algo y ya teníamos monserga para quince días. Aquí mando yo, como usted sabe, pero las mujeres ya las conoce usted... (CORDE, C.J.CELA:LA COLMENA, 1951 –1969)
[Mr. Ramón is quite for a moment. He scratches his head and lowers his voice.
- Don't tell anything to Paulina.
- No worries.
Mr. Ramón looks at the point of his boots.
- Is not for nothing, you know? I know that you are a discrete man that wouldn't go blabbing around but maybe, by chance, you would spill the beans and we would have problems for 15 days. I'm in charge here, as you know, but you already know women]

20th century results show that the form *no es por nada* can be used in a free construction with lexical meaning, preferably followed by *pero* and is already in the first stages of its evolutionary process. Along there can also be found structures that are yet not fixed, where the structure has a full conceptual meaning: it denies the cause of the action expressed in the verb, as it can be observed in the following examples:

- (43) Lola está un poco estropeada y delgaducha, porque no come; *no es por nada*, debe de ser el calor, y que se angustia cuando ve a su mamá nerviosa.m.aZANA, 1929, Carta [Cartas de Manuel Azaña y Cipriano de Rivas Cherif] [Lola is a little spoiled and thin, because she doesn't eat; it's not for nothing, it must be the heat, and she gets anxious when she sees her mother nervous.]
- (44) LIBRE. Si *no es por nada*; es por lo que tiene usted de maestro. Díaz-Cañabate, Antonio 1952, HISTORIA DE UNA TERTULIA [If it's not for nothing, it's because of what you have as a teacher.]

These constructions coexist with *pero*, where *no es por nada* acts as a preface, an enunciative complement. This complement points to the intention of the speaker as an intermediate construction in the process of being fixed. The first segment is grammaticalized (*no es por nada*), but it functions as enunciative preface if the counter argument appears (*pero* + sentence).

- (45) Talita, andá a buscar la antología de Gardel*. Está en la mesita de luz, que es donde debe estar una cosa así.
- Y de paso me la devuelve -dijo la señora de Gutusso-. *No es por nada* pero a mí los libros me gusta tenerlos cerca. Mi esposo es igual, le juro. [Talita, go and look for the Gardel anthology*. It's on the bedside table, which is where something like that should be.
- And give it back to me while you're at it,” said Mrs. Gutusso. It's not for nothing, but I like to keep books close to me. My husband is the same, I swear.] (J.Cortázar: Rayuela 1963)

There are not many cases, but they show all the steps in an evolutive process from its beginning.

The corpora show the coexistence of the three patterns (free construction, semifixed construction with *pero* and the discursive operator), although this last stage shows less data. This could indicate that it is an operator which is under development but does not present much extension in the data yet. From the corpora analyzed, Corpes shows a higher percentage, which is significant as it is the one corpus with the most recent data. It could be concluded that the use of *no es por nada* as a discursive operator is becoming widely spread.

5. Conclusions

No es por nada is a form that has been increasing and diversifying its uses in current Spanish. Since its first occurrence in the late 19th century, we find it in different contexts. In the construction with *pero*, it occurs as a preface (argumentative frame) used to minimize the reasons for saying, protecting the speaker's face and mitigating the attack on the other in recriminations, objections, directive speech acts, recommendations, etc. Thus, it extends its use to other speech acts, compared

to the structure that originates it: *No es por X, pero Y* [not for X, but Y]. In this way, it is used to support the assertion. This generalization extends its scope and its syntactic distribution. The next step is its evolution to an enunciative-argumentative operator. The speaker emphasizes what has been said and assumes responsibilities in the assertive act carried out. *No es por nada* can appear in the initial, intermediate or final position of the utterance. It has been fixed, then, although it still coexists with the semifixed construction, including *pero* and with the free construction. It is one more case of coalescence like in other operators under construction (see *que conste, te lo digo yo, ya ves, si no te importa ...*)

In the field of the creation of discursive operators, elements with procedural content, the evolution shows the trend towards the coexistence of free constructions, with other semi-fixed ones (such as *no es por* + sustantivo or infinitive + *pero* sentence) and finally the fixation as a discursive operator.

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Conflict of interest

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