

THE PROPER USE OF *EVERY*, *ALL*, AND *ALL THE* IN ENGLISH: A PEDAGOGICAL NOTE

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Castilian speakers learning English have a tendency to overuse the expression *all the* in noun phrases (NPs) in cases where *every* or *all* is required. The purpose of this paper is to suggest a strategy for teaching these expressions, within the context of an English grammar course or a grammar unit in a higher level language course, so as to help students learn to avoid such errors. This strategy involves first clarifying the fine-grained semantics of universal expressions within English and (independently) within Castilian, and then subsequently contrasting the two systems. The approach advocated here will thus underscore, at a general level, (1) the limitations of teaching these expressions in terms of simple translation equivalences, and (2) the critical contributions that can be made to language pedagogy by results in theoretical linguistic research (in this case, on NP semantics and pragmatics).

1. INTRODUCTION

Among the various challenges posed by the English determiner system for speakers of Castilian and other Romance languages, that which is presented by the expressions *every*, *all*, and particularly *all the* appears to be especially difficult. The examples in (1), taken from work by students in the Department of Translation and Philology at Pompeu Fabra University (Barcelona), illustrate one typical sort of error, namely, the overuse of *all the* where *every* or *all* is called for:

- (1) a. ...it is also common to say...«the best immigration policy is to close the borders». To close the borders to *all the people*, of course. (*everyone* or *all people* required)
- b. ...there was a lot of wine...to drink, so that as in *all the weddings* many people drank more than what they should [sic]. (*every wedding* or *all weddings* required)

The purpose of this paper is to suggest a strategy for teaching the proper use of these expressions, within the context of an English grammar course or a grammar unit in a higher level language course, so as to help students learn to avoid such errors. The strategy is grounded in two fundamental convictions. First, I will suggest below that it is extremely helpful to teach the use of these expressions from a comparative perspective. By examining their behavior within the context of a general comparison of the determiner systems of English and Castilian, we can find patterns of similarities and differences that clarify the internal logic of each system and thus perhaps make them easier for the student to understand. Second, analysis of the errors students make suggests that they misuse these expressions because they model their English usage on the usage of what they mistakenly believe are the Castilian translation equivalences. Thus, I have become convinced that the use of these expressions has to be taught via a careful and precise explanation of their intrinsic semantics; it cannot be assumed that (for example) *every* and *todos los* have the same conventional interpretation, even if one often serves as an appropriate translation of the other. This latter point leads to a further noteworthy observation: insofar as our un-

derstanding of *every* and related expressions results from applying the methods used in pure research in the semantics of natural language, this paper also presents a simple but clear example of how work in theoretical linguistics can have relatively direct applications in the classroom.

One caveat before proceeding: The word *all* in English is misused in other ways by learners of English. For example, they tend to overuse it both as a pronoun (e.g. *All was mixed up* instead of *Everything was mixed up*) and in situations where *the whole* is required (e.g. the incorrect *all the house* rather than the correct *the whole house*). In this article, I will confine my discussion to just the kind of error illustrated in (1).

2. WHY DOES THE PROBLEM IN (1) ARISE?

The error illustrated in (1) arises because the system of noun phrase (hereafter, NP)-related universal expressions is different in English and Castilian. Setting aside the definite article and the demonstrative determiners, English has two universal determiners, *each* and *every*, illustrated in (2a-b), plus the so-called predeterminer *all*, which combines with both definite and bare NPs, as shown in (2c-d) (see e.g. Greenbaum and Quirk 1990:75):

- (2) a. *Each student* came to see me.
- b. *Every word* is different.
- c. *All the union representatives* met this morning.
- d. *All human beings* have certain basic rights.

Note that whether or not the definite article is present, *all* combines only with mass ((3a,c)) and plural count ((2c,d)) nouns, and not with singular count nouns ((3b,d)):

- (3) a. *All the meat* had gone bad.
- b. **All the house* was lit up.
- c. *All meat* combines well with green vegetables.
- d. **All house* can be constructed of wood.

Castilian, like English (and again setting aside the definite article and demonstratives), has two universal determiners, *cada* and *todo/toda* (hereafter *todo*), in addition to the predeterminer *todo(s)/toda(s)* (hereafter *todo(s)* or *todos los*), illustrated in (4):

- (4) a. *Cada estudiante* vino a verme.
- b. *Todo ciudadano* tiene derecho a votar.
- c. *Todos los representantes* de los sindicatos se reunieron esta mañana.

Unlike the situation in English, it seems unlikely that the use of *todo* without the article, as in (4b), is the same as the use of *todo(s)* with the article ((4c)), for a couple of reasons. First, there is no plural counterpart to *todo* as used in (4b); (5a) is impossible. However, *todo(s)* does occur with the full range of singular and plural definite NPs, as shown in (4c) and (5b-c).

- (5) a. **Todos ciudadanos* tienen derecho a votar.
- b. *Toda la carne* está en el congelador.
- c. *Toda mi casa* está cubierta de polvo.

In English, although there are limits on the use of *all* with singular count nouns, those limits apply irrespective of whether a determiner is present, strongly indicating that there is no difference between the use of *all* with and without the determiner.

Second, *todo* in (4b) is necessary to make *ciudadano* into an acceptable NP; singular count nouns, with certain well-defined exceptions, do not have the same distribution as NPs, as seen in the unacceptability of (6).

(6) **Ciudadano* tiene derecho a votar.

Again, this contrasts with *all* in English. With very few exceptions such as *all day*, *all* attaches only to expressions which independently serve as NPs in English.

Now let us compare the two systems. As far as I can determine, *cada* and *each* correspond extremely closely syntactically, semantically and pragmatically (see the next section for discussion). However, as we will see shortly, *every* and *todo* are not semantically identical; worse still, the distributional facts suggest that *all* does not have a true determiner use that corresponds directly to that of its ostensible equivalent *todo*. Thus, there is clear potential for confusion.

Resources for students of English generally have little to say about the differences between *all* or *all the* and *every*, other than the obvious difference involving grammatical number. The matter is not addressed at all in the recent books from Cambridge University Press designed for secondary-level teaching (ESO) of English in Spain (e.g. Littlejohn et al. 1996), and though Greenbaum and Quirk (1990:122ff.), Downing and Locke (1992:438-9), and the *Collins Cobuild English Grammar* discuss the expressions separately, they neither contrast them explicitly nor provide the crucial information necessary for the student to see the differences. For example, Downing and Locke (ibid.) simply report that, «...*all* can refer to mass nouns...and certain temporal and locative nouns...*every* refers to any number of entities considered individually, with the additional feature *all of them*.» Moreover, the little that grammar resources do say is virtually useless or, worse, misleading. For example, Coe (1980:37) says, «We use *every* to talk about all the individuals in a group of three or more...e.g. Every job has its bad points (i.e. All jobs have their bad points)». Here, the paraphrase given in parentheses, while accurate, is misleading in the sense that it reinforces (or at least does nothing to counteract) the assumption learners might make that *every* and *all* are fully interchangeable, an assumption which, as we will see shortly, is incorrect. Swan (1980:39) is similarly misleading: «*All* and *every* can also be used to talk about the members of a particular group. (*All* is followed by *the* or another 'determiner'; *every* is not.)...'*She's eaten all the biscuits*'. '*What, every one?*' '*Every single one*'».

Another familiar problem is the definition of one expression in terms of another. For example, the *Collins Cobuild English Grammar* (§1.227) observes, «'All' includes every person or thing of a particular kind». It then says:

You use 'each' and 'every' when you are talking about all the members of a group of people or things. You use 'each' when you are thinking about the members as individuals, and 'every' when you are making a general statement about all of them. (ibid., §1.228)

Obviously, this sort of circularity does nothing to help the student learn how to distinguish *every* and *all* (or *all the*). We need a more detailed semantic analysis of these expressions, with crucial examples that illustrate their differences. I now turn to such an analysis.

3. SOLVING THE PROBLEM, PART I: SORTING OUT THE FACTS

The universal expressions in both English and Castilian can essentially be classified along two dimensions: Whether they are generic or not, and whether they are potentially referential or not (in which latter case they are necessarily distributive—see below for examples). The relevance of genericity is easily seen in the following examples involving *each* and *cada*:

(7) a. *Each student* has received a letter.

b. ??*Each mammal* is warm blooded.

c. *Cada estudiante* ha recibido una carta.

d. ??*Cada mamífero* tiene sangre caliente.

(7b,d), while technically grammatical, sound very odd, in contrast to (7a,c). The difference: (7a,c) are not generic sentences; they express accidental generalizations over finite sets of students. On the other hand, (7b,d) sound like (failed) attempts to make a generic statement about mammals as a class. *Each* and *cada* simply cannot be used to make nonaccidental generalizations.

In contrast, *todo* has a distribution which is essentially complementary to that of *cada*:

(8) a. ??*Todo estudiante* ha recibido una carta.

b. *Todo mamífero* tiene sangre caliente.

The contrast between (8a) and (8b) shows that *todo* is possible *only* in generic sentences.

Finally, *every*, unlike the more specialized *each*, and *todo*, can appear in both generic and nongeneric sentences:

(9) a. *Every student* has received a letter.

b. *Every mammal* is warm-blooded.

We can distinguish these expressions in terms of contrasts in what is called their domain of quantification, that is, the (types of) sets of things they can express generalizations about: *each* and *cada* can only generalize over contextually restricted sets of individuals; *todo* can only generalize over what could be considered a maximally general or totally unrestricted set of individuals; and *every* can generalize over any kind of set whatsoever.

All of the NPs containing these determiners share the property of being nonreferential and, concomitantly, necessarily distributive. What this means is that, in order for a sentence of the form e.g. [[*Every N(ominal)*]_{NP} [Verb Phrase]] to be true, the predicate that the verb phrase corresponds to has to be applicable to the individuals the *N* describes, as individuals. For example, if Alice, Bob, and Carla are the three students in my class, and I truthfully assert (10a), then (10b) must be true:

(10) a. *Every student* in my class won 5000 pesetas in the lottery.

b. Alice won 5000 pesetas in the lottery, Bob won 5000 pesetas in the lottery, and Carla won 5000 pesetas in the lottery.

These determiners contrast with referential universal determiners such as *the* or *los*, which are not necessarily distributive. Thus, in the same situation, (11) does not entail (10b).

(11) *The three students* in my class won 5000 pesetas in the lottery.

Relatively, the distributivity of NPs with the determiners *every*, *each*, *cada* and *todo* entails that they can be the subjects of predicates that only hold of groups, such as *meet* (in the sense of *reunirse*), only under special circumstances. (Note that *meet* should not be confused with *meet with*, which does not require a group-denoting subject.):

(12) **Every professor met to talk about the problem.*

Every is bad in (12) because its interpretation requires that individual professors have the property of meeting to talk about the problem. But this is not possible: *meet* only accepts singular or plural subjects that refer to or generalize over groups, and never singular subjects that refer to individuals, as the contrast between (13a,b) and (13c) shows:

(13) a. *The group met to talk about the problem.*

b. *The professors met to talk about the problem.*

c. **The professor met to talk about the problem.*

However, consistent with these observations, an *every* NP is acceptable with *meet* if *every* distributes over groups:

(14) *Every group met to talk about the problem.*

Additional evidence that NPs containing necessarily distributive determiners can never be used to refer to a group comes from their unacceptability in deictic sentences like those in (15), which require in the position following *be* expressions that describe individuals or pluralities of individuals (see e.g. Jenkins 1975):

(15) a. **This is/These are every/each professor.*

b. **Esto es cada/todo profesor.*

One simply cannot point to a group of professors, either physically or figuratively, via a deictic pronoun, and use the expressions *every professor* or *each professor* to identify the group. Identifying every professor involves performing as many acts of pointing as there are members of the group of professors.

The careful reader may argue that sentences such as those in (16) counterexemplify the above claims about *every* specifically:

(16) a. *Everyone met to talk about the problem.*

b. *That's everything.*

c. *This is every man we've got.*

Although space precludes a detailed discussion of such examples here, it simply seems that the pronouns *everyone/everything* differ from the determiner *every* in not being necessarily distributive; and that certain *every* noun phrases modified by relative clauses have a special amount interpretation which is not distributive (see Carlson 1977, Heim 1987 for discussion of how sentences like (16c) should be understood as claims about a quantity of men rather than about specific individuals.). Although such examples add to the general complexity of the facts the student must learn, we can set them aside for the purpose of teaching the proper use of *every* vs. *all the*, and I will not say anything further about them here.

In sum, both English and Castilian have universal distributive determiners which allow for quantification over either contextually restricted sets (*each*, *every*, *cada*) or general classes of individuals (*every*, *todo*). We can see that the student of English already has some work to do in figuring out when to choose between *each* vs. *every*, in cases where a

restricted set of individuals is being generalized over (a problem which unfortunately cannot be addressed in this paper). However, the situation is made more complicated by the parallel existence of an alternative means of expressing universality, via the predeterminers *all* and *todo(s)*. Let us therefore now consider these expressions.

In order to appreciate the semantic differences between expressions such as *every/each/cada/todo N* and *all (the) N/todos los N*, it is important to keep in mind the differences in their syntax. *Every*, etc. are determiners which combine with a bare nominal to form a noun phrase. In contrast, *all* and *todos* arguably combine with full NPs to form other NPs (see e.g. Dowty 1986 for *all*); they are perhaps better referred to as pre-NPs rather than as *predeterminers*. The interpretation of NPs containing these expressions is thus unsurprisingly going to be a function of the interpretations of the NPs with which they combine. And since there are semantic differences between definite and bare NPs in English and Castilian, we should not be surprised to find differences between e.g. NPs of the form *all the N* and those of the form *todos los N* in the two languages.

First let us look at what unites *all* and *todos*, and distinguishes them from the determiners discussed above. Both combine with referential NPs, and so we should not be surprised to find that the NPs they appear in are also referential. That is, in contrast to what we saw with *every* NPs in (12) and (15), *all the N* and *todos los N* are compatible with predicates of groups and in deictic sentences:

- (17) a. *All the professors* met to talk about the problem.
- b. *Todos los profesores* se reunieron para hablar del problema.
- c. These are *all the cookies*.
- d. Estas son *todas las galletas*.

Thus, we can already see one reason why it is simply not possible to treat *every N* and *todos los N* as translation equivalents: doing so loses the fact that the former is necessarily distributive, and thus accordingly restricted in its interpretation, while the other is not.

But now let us consider the finer details involving the predeterminers, and the corresponding differences between English and Castilian. *All the N*, unlike *todos los N*, cannot systematically be used in generic sentences: (18a) can only be used to talk about a specific set of dogs which are familiar in the context, whereas (18b) is ambiguous between that interpretation and a generic one. The generic interpretation of (18b) would be expressed using *all N* in English, as in (18c):

- (18) a. *All the dogs* have four legs.
- b. *Todos los perros* tienen cuatro patas.
- c. *All dogs* have four legs.

The nongenericity of *all the N* is what rules it out in the sentences in (1), repeated below:

- (1) a. ...it is also common to say...«the best immigration policy is to close the borders.» To close the borders to *all the people*, of course. (*everyone* or *all people* required)
- b. ...there was a lot of wine...to drink, so that as in *all the weddings* many people drank more than what they should [sic]. (*every wedding* or *all weddings* required)

In (1a) the student is talking about the establishment of a law applying to people in general; the relevant statement in (1b) is clearly intended to apply to weddings as a class. Consequently, generic *every* or *all N* is required.

This contrast between *all the* and *todos los* is related to another difference between English and Castilian, namely the fact that definite singular mass and plural (count) NPs in English are almost never generic, whereas in Castilian they can systematically be interpreted as either generic or nongeneric:

- (19) a. I like *the meat*. (nongeneric only)
- b. Me gusta *la carne*. (generic or nongeneric)
- c. *The dogs* have four legs. (nongeneric only)
- d. *Los perros* tienen cuatro patas. (generic or nongeneric)

In the few cases when the definite plural can be generic in English, as in (20a), *all the* can be, too:

- (20) a. *The mammals* are warm blooded.
- b. *All the mammals* are warm blooded.

Note also that the necessarily generic interpretation of *all N* NPs (see (21a-d)) and the nonexistence of *todos N* ((21e)) in Castilian can also be explained.

- (21) a. *All students* are entitled to a good education. (students as a class)
- b. ??*All students* have received a letter.
- c. *All glass* is really highly viscous liquid.
- d. ??*All glass* broke in the earthquake.
- e. **Todos estudiantes* han recibido cartas.

Bare plural NPs in Castilian have only an existential interpretation—combining them with *todos* is like trying to combine *todos* with any other indefinite NP (e.g. *todos unos estudiantes*), which is impossible. Why it is impossible would involve undertaking a detailed study of the semantics of *todos/all*, something which is beyond the scope of the present paper (though see Dowty 1986, Lasersohn 1995), but presumably we can attribute this incompatibility to the fact that *todos* is a universal expression and can guarantee the relevant universal entailments only if the NP it combines with denotes a delimited and perhaps even familiar set of individuals or quantity of matter, which the Castilian bare plural NP does not. In contrast, bare NPs in English are ambiguous between an existential interpretation and an interpretation as the name of a kind (Carlson 1980). It follows from Carlson's analysis that the latter interpretation meets the semantic delimitedness requirement that *all* appears to demand of the NPs it modifies, even though the NP itself is not morphologically definite.

In sum, these facts underscore the central and independent role of the NP to which *all/todos* attaches in determining the behavior of *all the/todos los*, and confirms that, indeed, it is misguided to treat *all the* and *todos los* as unanalyzed units, even for pedagogical purposes. Rather, the traditional treatment of *all* in *all the* as a «predeterminer», or its more recent treatment in the theoretical linguistics literature as a type of adverb (e.g. Dowty 1986), is more appropriate. Finally, we can now see why *every* and *todos los* often serve as translation equivalents despite being (perhaps surprisingly) semantically quite different: *Every* is possible in both generic and nongeneric contexts because there are no restrictions on the nature of the entities it generalizes over (or, alternatively, on the type of generalization it can be used to make), whereas *todos los* is possible in both contexts because *los* is.

Although, as noted above, there are additional, subtle differences between these determiners (e.g. between the nongeneric uses of *each* vs. *every*), the student who masters the material discussed in this section will avoid the most frequent and glaring errors involving their use.

4. SOLVING THE PROBLEM, PART II: A PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGY

Now that we have clarified the semantic similarities and differences between the universal expressions in Castilian and English, we can turn to the question of how we might teach this material to students of English in the context of a grammar class or unit. I should emphasize that my goal here is not to propose specific classroom activities (which may vary according to the level of the students and the overall nature of the course) but rather (1) to suggest a helpful sequence for treating the material and (2) to encourage the use of contrasts, both between Castilian and English, and between felicitous and infelicitous sentences.

Since the differences between *all the N* and *todos los N* are paralleled by differences in the definite articles, and since the latter are perhaps easier to understand (and probably already familiar to the students), it seems opportune to discuss the material on the universal determiners soon after a unit on (or review of) the generic uses of noun phrases in English, preferably one which includes a contrastive look at definite plurals in English and Castilian. The latter can serve as a useful reference for a contrast between *all the N* and *todos los N*; conversely, discussion of the universal expressions will naturally bring up the issue of generic noun phrases and thus offer another opportunity to review and reinforce the facts related to that problematic topic.

In order to understand the differences among the universal expressions, and in particular, between *all the* and *todos los*, students first need to understand clearly the difference between sentences that express accidental generalizations and those that express law-like ones. A reasonable strategy, therefore, is to begin a unit on universal expressions by discussing the behaviors of *each/cada* and determiner *todo*, for example, with sentences such as those in (7) and (8) above. Since the Castilian facts are quite clear, it is relatively easy to get students to see the semantic difference between an accidental generalization and a nonaccidental generalization or law-like statement. In particular, the oddness of sentences like (7d) is very salient to them, and thus can help them understand the nature of the typical mistakes they make with *all the*, illustrated in (1) above. Another benefit of beginning with *each* in particular derives from the simple fact that it is quite straightforwardly translated as *cada*: students will feel happy to have dealt with a simple case, and can mentally «file» it away and limit their attention with greater confidence and concentration to the more problematic facts.

With the discussion of *each* and *todo* as a backdrop, the interpretation of *every* will then be easy for the students to understand: it can be used to make accidental generalizations, like *each*, or generic statements, like *todo*. Nothing more needs to be said until the moment comes to contrast it with *all the*. For what are by now obvious reasons, it would seem unadvisable to appeal to their knowledge of *todos los* as a translation equivalent in order to help them understand what *every* means.

All the is saved for last, both because it is structurally and semantically rather different from the rest, and also because it is the expression students have greatest trouble using correctly. Since they should already understand the difference between nonaccidental and accidental generalizations, they should have little trouble understanding at least at a conceptual level a contrast like that in (22):

- (22) a. *All the* people (as opposed to the animals) were saved from the sinking ship.
- b. ??*All the* people have certain rights. (if generic, should be: *all* people)
- c. *Todas las* personas tienen ciertos derechos.

What might be more difficult for them is to feel intuitively that (22b) does not express a nonaccidental generalization—the sentence will probably sound just as good to them in English as (22c) does in Castilian. However, it may help them to remember that (22b) is impossible if they are told that it sounds just as bad in English as (7d) or (8a) do in Castilian.

Once the class understands that *all the* cannot be used in generic sentences, the instructor can address the question of why this should be. At this point, the students can be reminded of the parallel facts involving definite singular mass and plural count NPs without *all/ todo* (see (18-20) above), and the pre-determiner/adverb status of *all/ todo* (as used in (22)) can be emphasized. When the students see that *all the* noun phrases are best understood as a species of definite noun phrase, the instructor can, if he or she so desires, then go on to point out the difference between *all the* and *every* with respect to predicates like *gather* and the deictic *This is/These are*. Discussion of these facts will, among other things, show the students that they cannot solve the problems they have with *all the* by simply forgetting about it altogether and using *every* indiscriminately.

5. CONCLUSION

To summarize, in this paper I have focused on one of the typical problems students have with the use of universal expressions in English, namely the overuse of *all the*, suggesting some reasons why this problem arises and offering a pedagogical strategy for helping students overcome it. The key feature of the strategy involves pointing out clear cases in which each of the expressions can and cannot be used in English and Castilian, appealing to the oddness of certain Castilian examples to impress upon the students in a particularly vivid manner how the overuse of *all the* will sound to native speakers. In order to describe when each expression can and cannot be used, it was necessary to abandon the (long suspect if often convenient) method of definition in terms of paraphrase or translation equivalence and appeal to the relatively basic (if not trivial) semantic notions of accidental vs. nonaccidental generalization and distributivity.

Although I have restricted my discussion to one example, the general sort of error discussed in this paper is extremely common—for example, the correct use of additive connectors such as *moreover*, *in addition*, and *besides* is similarly problematic. However, since the sort of error discussed here is associated more with higher-level, rather than lower-level, students, and does not necessarily result in failed communication, it is easy to ignore. Nonetheless, students who fail to master such facts will never sound like native speakers, and thus even the comparatively fine distinctions between *every* and *all the* clearly fall within the responsibilities of the language teacher, at least at advanced levels. This paper therefore also constitutes a plea to linguistic researchers and the developers of grammar materials to treat such distinctions in greater detail and with greater care, so that both students and teachers will come to a better understanding of *all the* facts of English.

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