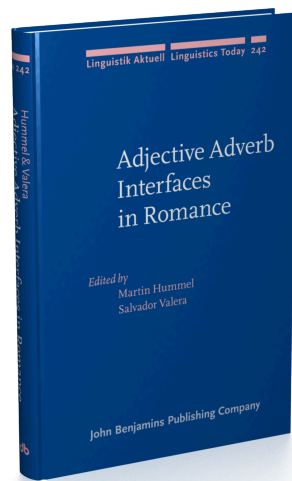


# From adjective to adverbial modal locutions in Spanish

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# From adjective to adverbial modal locutions in Spanish

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This paper focus on an issue at present not well-known, neither in the synchronic nor in the diachronic perspective, that is, the adverbial modal locutions in Spanish with an adjective lexical base – a nominalized adjective or a nominal phrase – displaying the ending *-as*, in a prepositional phrase with the preposition *a*. The paper offers a diachronic analysis of these locutions from the 12th to 20th centuries. It describes the adjectives entering in this construction and provides evidence to support the emergence of an adverbial scheme with a specific, expressive or subjective, function. It also aims to show that the adverbial modal scheme arose relevant to the fifteenth century from the original prepositional phrase by a constructional grammaticalization change.

## 1. Introduction

In Spanish, there is a sort of Adverbial Modal Locution, characterized by its lexical base: a noun or an adjective ending in *-as*, in a prepositional phrase with the preposition *a*, as in *a gatas* in Example (1), and in *a solas*, *a ciegas*, *a tontas y a locas*, in Example (2):

- (1) no podía andar paso ninguno por el peso de las cadenas y por el  
'(He) could not walk a full step because of the weight of the chains and because  
quebrantamiento de sus piernas y cuerpo, sino iba **a gatas** y como podía  
the pain in his legs and body, rather (he) moved **on all fours** and as (he) could'  
(Alonso Maldonado, *Hechos del Maestre de Alcántara don Alonso de Monroy*,  
c. 1492, *CORDE*)
- (2) a. Dixo Moysen al Nuestro Sennor: "Non puedo **a solas** levar esta carga"  
(Almerich, *La fazienda de Ultramar*, c. 1200, *CORDE*)  
'Said Moses to Our Lord: "Not (I) can **unaided/by myself** carry this load"'  
b. y ahora hablamos **a ciegas** (Juan Orozco, *Vejamen*, a 1650, *CORDE*)  
'and now (we) speak **unthinkingly/blindly**'

- c. porque a lo poeta hablas **a tontas y a locas**

‘because as a poet (you) speak **haphazardly**’

(Miguel de Barrios, *Contra la verdad no hay fuerza*, a 1672, *CORDE*)

This paper will focus on locutions with an adjective base (2), locutions with a nominalized adjective base (3), and nominal phrases with an adjective displaying the same ending (4):

- (3) y esto que andas mostrando como por resquicios, acua de mostrarlo **a las claras**

‘and this that (you) are showing as by chinks, (he) just showed it **openly**’

(San Juan de la Cruz, *Cántico espiritual*, 1578–1584, *CORDE*)

- (4) Y si alguno quisiere decir que hay palabras maliciosas, digo que no quiera  
‘And if any man wanted to say that there are malicious words, (I) say that not want

nadie glosar malicias imputándolas a mí, porque yo no pensé poner

anyone gloss malice imputing them to me, because I did not think to put

nada que no fuese claro y **a ojos vistas**

anything that not was clear and **obviously/visibly clear**’

(Francisco Delicado, *La lozana andaluza*, 1528, *CORDE*)

The locutions in (3) and (4) have a similar modal meaning to the locutions in (2) and a similar structure to the preposition and the adjective ending.

This issue falls in the scope of the adjective and adverb interface in Spanish grammar at present not well-known, neither in the synchronic nor in the diachronic perspective.

Diachronically, this subject is a particularly thought-provoking and challenging area, as there is little information on the origin of the aforementioned locutions. It is not known which adjectives can occur or which adjectives were documented historically in the locutions. There isn’t enough evidence to support the aforesaid ending *-as* in an adjective without an agreeing noun. Furthermore, we don’t know how the modal meaning arises.

This paper offers a diachronic analysis of adverbial modal locutions with an adjective ending in *-as* (between the 12th and 20th centuries). It describes the adjectives entering in this construction and provides evidence to support the emergence of an adverbial scheme with a specific function, different from the one of the adverbial adjective as *solo* in (5), and both from the long adjective with *-mente* and from the short adjective in (6); that is, from the attributive system in Romance Languages (Hummel 2013).

- (5) a. legose allas puertas del castillo el **solo**  
 ‘(he) arrived to the doors of the castle he **alone**’  
 (Anónimo, *Cuento de don Tristán*, c1313–c1410, *CORDE*)
- b. si el juyz non lo puede prender por sí **solo**, demande al sennor  
 ‘if the judge not him can capture by himself **alone**, (he should) ask the lord  
 que-l aiude (Anónimo, *Fuero Juzgo*, 1250–1260, *CORDE*)  
 for help’
- (6) a. e alli se tirauan ... tantos dardos que non osauan los armados  
 ‘and there were thrown ... so many arrows that non dare the armed people  
 descubrir los ojos **solamente** (Anónimo, *Historia troyana*, c 1270, *CORDE*)  
 to uncover the eyes **only**’
- b. fue vençido dellos no **solo** / de dolor mas de enojo  
 ‘was defeated by them not **only** because of pain but because of anger’  
 (Pero López de Ayala, *Caída Príncipes*, 1402, *CORDE*)

This chapter aims first, to point out that the main difference between a locution with adjective ending in *-as* (as the ones in (2), (3) and (4)), and long and short adverbs (as the ones in (5) and (6)), is the expressive, or subjective, meaning of the locution; and second, that an adverbial modal productive scheme – with a diachronically increasing amount of adjective types (*derechas* ‘correctly’, *medias* ‘imperfectly’, *hurtadillas* ‘furtively’ / ‘on the sly’ / ‘stealthily’, *escondidas* ‘secretly’, *secas* ‘plainly’, among many others) and tokens – arose relevant to the fifteenth century from the original prepositional phrase. Additionally, the paper will present evidence for a constructional grammaticalization change, via a process of schematization, as well as contextual data that supports the singular expressive function of that scheme.

The subject matter of the chapter is divided into five sections. Section 2 provides information concerning the source of analyzed data and its general quantitative characteristics. Section 3 is an overview of the topics mentioned herein. Section 4 includes the main results of the qualitative analysis and offers an explanation for the change from a Prepositional Phrase to an Adverbial Locution as an example of constructional grammaticalization. Section 5 summarizes the findings.

## 2. Corpus and methodology

The corpus of this research consists of 7,808 tokens from two different sources. The first is a base corpus made up of 13 texts written between the 12th and 20th centuries from Spanish language (see *Corpus* in Bibliography), comparing Mexican Spanish and Peninsular Spanish from 17th century onwards. This corpus yielded 162 tokens. The second is a complementary corpus from all documents in Books

Section for Spain in the *Corpus Diacrónico del Español* (CORDE), excluding those of the base corpus, which yielded 7646 tokens, to confirm or reject the results of the base corpus. Table 1 contrasts the outcomes of the base and complementary corpus. It shows a low frequency of use of the locutions between the 12th and 15th centuries; a fluctuating frequency between the 16th and 18th centuries; and high frequency of use in the 19th and 20th centuries.

**Table 1.** Total of types and frequency of use: Base corpus vs. Complementary corpus

Base corpus		12th	13th	14th	15th	16th	17th	18th	19th	20th	
	tokens	0	7	1	1	6	10	11	95	31	162
	%		4	.6	.6	3.7	6.1	7	59	19	
Complementary corpus	tokens	67	296	332	444	1329	1174	234	1502	2268	7646
	%	1	4	4	6	17	15	3	20	30	

Figure 1 contrasts how often types were used in both the base corpus and the whole corpus (base and complementary). The frequency is similar in both sources; however, there is a difference in the 19th century, which appears to be more related to the topic of the texts in the base corpus (specifically with the peninsular text), than with the genre (See Table 3).<sup>1</sup>

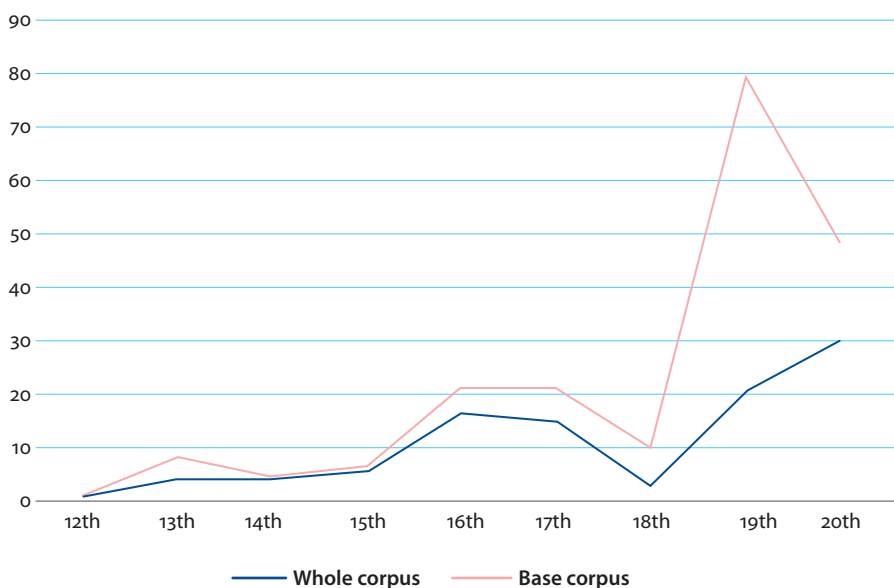
An additional search of all adjective locutions was conducted using a historical dictionary – *Nuevo Diccionario Histórico de la Lengua Española* (NDHE) – in order to confirm the reliability of the results. This dictionary provided not only the absolute number of tokens (1648) but also the normalized frequency (calculated over a million words). Table 2 shows the outcome of the search, which is consistent with the information in Table 1, regarding absolute frequency (low until the 15th century, fluctuating between 16th and 18th centuries and high in the 19th and 20th centuries) and norm frequency behavior (increased in the 19th and 20th centuries).

**Table 2.** NDHE: Absolute and normalized frequency of use (tokens per million words)<sup>2</sup>

	12th	13th	14th	15th	16th	17th	18th	19th	20th	Total
Absolute	2	85	41	102	172	212	174	296	564	1648
Normalized	0.00	0.19	0.08	0.21	0.33	0.43	0.41	0.69	1.29	

1. *La Regenta* criticizes moral and social aspects of the Restoration period in Spain such as adultery, religion and politics.

2. The frequency data in this table only includes the nuclear CDE corpus (XII-XX) for Spain.



**Figure 1.** Frequency of type use: Base corpus vs. Whole corpus

Figure 2 shows the normalized frequency of use in the historical dictionary and confirms the increase during the 19th and 20th century.

The base corpus contrasts data from Peninsular and Mexican Spanish from the 17th century onwards to see if there is a similar behavior between the varieties. Table 3 shows the distribution of types and tokens in the base corpus per century and region. It demonstrates that the adjective types are few, and that their frequency of use is low (most of them < 10%), except for *a solas* and *a oscuras*, which gather almost half of the tokens (48% (78/162)). Table 3 also shows that the frequency of type use in Peninsular Spanish is higher than in Mexican Spanish.

The collection of locutions identified above is not exhaustive. I began by looking at the group of previously defined examples and later added the locutions found in the base corpus texts to the items list.

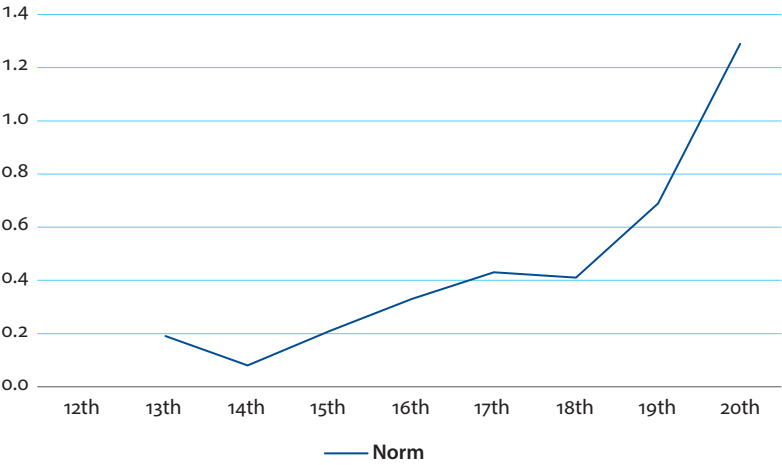


Figure 2. Normalized frequency of type use in NDHE

Table 3. Types and tokens in the base corpus

	12th	13th	14th	15th	16th	17th sp	17th MEX	18th sp	18th MEX	19th sp	19th MEX	20th sp	20th MEX	Total
<i>A primas</i> 'firstly, originally'		1												1
<i>A osadas</i> 'boldly'		3												3
<i>A derechas</i> 'correctly, rightly'		2		1		1								4
<i>A medias</i> 'half, faultily'		1						1		5	2	7		16
<i>A sabiendas</i> 'knowingly, consciously'			1			1					1			3
<i>A las derechas</i> 'honestly'					2	1								3
<i>A escondidas</i> 'secretly'					1			1	2				2	6
<i>A ojos vistas</i> 'obviously'					3	1				2				6
<i>A duras penas</i> 'with great difficulty'						1				3	1	2		7
<i>A secas</i> 'plainly'						1				2		1	3	7

Table 3. (continued)

	12th	13th	14th	15th	16th	17th SP	17th MEX	18th SP	18th MEX	19th SP	19th MEX	20th SP	20th MEX	Total
<i>A solas</i> 'alone, in private'							4	1		34	5	5	1	50
<i>A o(e)scuras</i> 'in the dark'								5		20		3		28
<i>A hurtadillas</i> 'furtively'								3		2	1	1		7
<i>A ciegas</i> 'blindly'										1		1		2
<i>A tientas</i> 'gropingly, uncertainly'										6	4	3	1	14
<i>A las malas</i> 'by force'											2			2
<i>A las claras</i> 'openly'											1			1
<i>A las primeras</i> 'suddenly, all of a sudden'											1			1
<i>A tontas</i> 'thoughtlessly, carelessly'													1	1
<b>Total</b>	0	7	1	1	6	6	4	10	1	77	18	23	8	162
<b>%</b>		4	.6	.6	4	4	2	6	.6	48	11.1	14.1	5	

### 3. The state of the art

In general, Spanish historical linguistics has neglected the field of adverbial grammar. Nevertheless, it is well known that there are two ways an adverb is formed from an adjective: (i) an adjective that functions as an adverb without formal change (adverbial adjective or short adjective) (Hummel 2014), and (ii) an adverb with an adjective base and the suffix *-mente* or long adverb (Company 2014). But the knowledge about adverbial locutions with adjectives ending in *-as* is still scarce in both synchronic and diachronic perspectives.

Synchronically, the categorical status of the prepositional locutions we are dealing with, namely *a* and a lexical basis ending in *-as*, is not controversial for grammars and grammarians who mention them. These locutions are considered adverbial modifiers, unanalyzable or indecomposable syntactic units with a non-compositional meaning (Corpas 2003; RAE-ASALE 2009: §§ 1.10c, 12.9l), or



phraseological units (García-Page 2008; Pavón 1999; Ruiz Gurillo 1997); however, it is unknown how they reached their current morphosyntactic features.

In diachronic perspective, there is no information regarding the origin of the ending *-as* in the locution; however, three aspects related to the vowel, to the consonant of the ending *-a*, and to the missing noun in the locution are pointed out in linguistic literature. As for the vowel, it has been said that the vowel *a* not only characterized the feminine of Latin nouns 1st declension, but also the plural neuter nouns; it has been related with the evolution of this neuter gender class (Mariner 1968; Spitzer 1941) – the proper gender for the indeterminate, according to Mariner (1968). It has been suggested that some collective neuter nouns developed a feminine doublet so Latin had pairs such as *braccia* – *brachias*, *labra* – *labras* (documented in *defixionum tabellae*) (Väänänen 1968). The *a* of *-as* functioning as a singular feminine marker has been considered as an effect of the complex history of the neuter in Romance languages (Mariner 1968: 1298).<sup>3</sup> Spitzer (1941: 347) affirms that it codifies a mental feminization of collectives and that its feminine feature is reflected in the elements it agrees with. For this author, the vowel is a subjective marker that reveals a speaker's feeling.

Concerning the final consonant *s*, typical of the Latin Plural Accusative, most of the authors who mention this matter assess it as an *s* analogical with final /s/ of some other Latin adverbs such as the comparative *magis* 'more', *laxius* 'more loose', *foras* > español antiguo *fuera*s 'outside' (Lausberg 1966: §§ 696–698; Menéndez Pidal 1904/1940: § 128; Penny 1991/2002: 131). Lausberg (1966: § 699) claims that the explanation of adverbial *-as* remains obscure.

Finally, it has been explained that the missing noun in the locution (i.e., the missing noun head with which an adjective agrees, like *solas* in (2)) is an example of an ellipsis (García Calvo 1964; Mariner 1968; Spitzer 1941).

In this paper, I assume that the ending *-as* in the locution has a concomitant explanation, a subjective motivation; namely, it corresponds to one of the devices that the Spanish language created to encode expressiveness.<sup>4</sup> As for the ellipsis hypothesis, it is a plausible explanation for early locutions, as we will see in Section 4, but not for all of the locutions in the corpus.

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3. This phenomenon is known as “the feminization of neuter” (*la feminización del neutro*).

4. Our explanation covers locutions with nominal basis as *a gatas* (Example (1)). See Ortiz Ciscomani (2014) for details.

#### 4. Adjectives documented in the locution: Types and tokens

Table 4 includes all of the locutions found in the whole corpus and their development from the twelfth century until the twentieth century. The corpus documented a total of twenty-five adjective types: sixteen adjective types as the term of the Prepositional Phrase, three as modifiers of a noun, and six more as nominalized adjectives. The frequency of use in the whole corpus was low in the early centuries; it went oscillated and then tended to increase in the last two centuries.

**Table 4.** Adjectives types and tokens in locutions in the whole corpus (basic and complementary)

	12th	13th	14th	15th	16th	17th	18th	19th	20th	Total
<i>A primas</i> 'firstly, originally'		25	2							27
<i>Primas</i>	50	72	12							134
<i>A certas</i> 'truly'	1	3	1	1						6
<i>Certas</i>		33	204	23						260
<i>A derechas</i> 'correctly, rightly'	5	18	4	39	24	39	5	23	66	223
<i>A medias</i> 'half, faultily'	10	18	24	51	58	39	21	162	391	774
<i>A paladinas</i> 'openly, clearly'		4		2				6	1	13
<i>A sabiendas</i> 'knowingly, consciously'	1	97	77	249	339	30	13	77	140	1023
<i>Ad sabiendas</i>		2	1							3
<i>Sabiendas</i>		2								2
<i>A solas</i> 'alone, in private'		15	2	30	550	796	85	457	618	2553
<i>A osadas</i> 'boldly'		14	6	28	59	7	2	1		117
<i>A ciegas</i> 'blindly'				1	50	83	27	74	129	364
<i>A escondidas</i> 'secretly'				6	25	24	10	43	128	236
<i>A oscuras</i> 'in the dark'				2	107	32	22	212	237	612
<i>A secas</i> 'plainly'					39	50	19	49	101	258
<i>A tientas</i> 'gropingly, uncertainly'					5	4	21	106	133	269

(continued)

Table 4. (continued)

	12th	13th	14th	15th	16th	17th	18th	19th	20th	Total
<i>A tontas y a locas</i> 'haphazardly'					2	26	1	27	11	67
<i>A tontas</i> 'thoughtlessly, carelessly'									1	1
<i>A hurtadillas</i> 'furtively'					14	6	3	70	76	169
<i>A pie(s) juntillas</i> 'firmly'					2	4	2	10	20	38
<i>A duras penas</i> 'with great difficulty'				7	10	10	3	116	102	248
<i>A ojos vistas</i> 'obviously'				6	30	10	3	8	17	74
<i>A las duras</i> 'in the hard situations'					1	3			2	6
<i>A las claras</i> 'openly'					11	11	7	139	122	290
<i>A las derechas</i> 'honestly'					9	10	1	8	1	29
<i>A las calladas</i> 'on the sly'								6		6
<i>A las primeras</i> 'suddenly, all of a sudden'								1		
<i>A las malas</i> 'by force'								2	3	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>303</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>445</b>	<b>1335</b>	<b>1184</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>1597</b>	<b>2299</b>	<b>7808</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>20.5</b>	<b>29.5</b>	<b>100</b>

The fixedness or non-compositionality of the expressions in Table 4 can be seen as variable to some degree, according to the gradual nature of the notion.<sup>5</sup> Thus, early locutions *-a solas* 'alone, in private', *a sabiendas* 'knowingly, consciously' – tend to be perceived more as motivated and linked to the literal meaning – especially out of its context of use –, than some of the locutions from the 15th or 16th century

5. Non-compositionality is a complex notion often mentioned as a criterion in the definition of fixed expressions. Four properties are associated with non-compositionality: motivation/non motivation; transparency/opacity; analyzability/unanalyzability and literal/figurative meaning which, although referred to as dichotomies, as Langacker (1987: 449) points out, lend more easily to a claim of partial rather than a full or clearcut compositional/non compositional dichotomy. See Svensson (2008) for a detailed account of the complexity of non-compositionality.

onwards such as *a pie juntillas* ‘firmly’ or *a tontas y a locas* ‘haphazardly’, which are also motivated, but unanalyzable, figurative and opaque.

The frequency data provided by the NDHE in Table 5 yielded a total of less adjective types than the whole corpus did; however, the tokens behavior was similar in both the dictionary and the whole corpus. The total normalized frequency confirms and supports the diachronic increased use of these locutions.

**Table 5.** Adjectives types and tokens in locutions in the NDHE: Absolute and normalized frequency (tokens per million words)

	12th	13th	14th	15th	16th	17th	18th	19th	20th	Total
<i>A derechas</i>	0	11	2	6	4	10	2	2	7	44
‘correctly, rightly’		0.02	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.06
<i>A medias</i>	0	3	7	2	3	11	16	22	79	143
‘half, faultily’		0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.03	0.05	0.19	0.30
<i>A paladinas</i>	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3
‘openly, clearly’		0.00		0.00						0.00
<i>A sabiendas</i>	0	50	25	60	14	11	2	6	7	175
‘knowingly, consciously’		0.12	0.06	0.14	0.03	0.02	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.21
<i>A solas</i>	0	10	0	9	98	123	65	93	173	571
‘alone, in private’		0.03		0.02	0.23	0.30	0.22	0.27	0.42	1.49
<i>A osadas</i>	2	9	5	19	6	5	0	0	0	46
‘boldly’	0.00	0.02	0.01	0.04	0.01	0.01				0.09
<i>A ciegas</i>	0	0	1	0	8	10	17	12	33	81
‘blindly’			0.00		0.01	0.02	0.04	0.02	0.08	0.17
<i>A escondidas</i>	0	0	0	0	3	3	3	4	34	47
‘secretly’					0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.08	0.08
<i>A oscuras</i>	0	0	0	1	3	7	15	48	72	146
‘in the dark’				0.00	0.00	0.01	0.03	0.11	0.17	0.32
<i>A secas</i>	0	0	1	0	9	8	10	14	15	57
‘plainly’			0.00		0.02	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.03	0.11
<i>A tientas</i>	0	0	0	0	0	4	16	23	57	100
‘gropingly, uncertainly’						0.00	0.03	0.05	0.13	0.21
<i>A tontas y a locas</i>	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	3	2	9
‘haphazardly’						0.00		0.00	0.00	0.00
<i>A hurtadillas</i>	0	0	0	0	5	0	8	14	15	42
‘furtively’					0.01		0.01	0.03	0.03	0.08
<i>A pie juntillas</i>	0	0	0	0	0	4	2	7	2	15
‘firmly’						0.01	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.03
<i>A pie(s) juntillas</i>	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	7	12	22
‘firmly’					0.00	0.00		0.01	0.02	0.03
<i>A duras penas</i>	0	0	0	4	1	2	9	17	38	71
‘with great difficulty’				0.00	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.04	0.09	0.15

(continued)

Table 5. (continued)

	12th	13th	14th	15th	16th	17th	18th	19th	20th	Total
<i>A ojos vistas</i>	0	0	0	0	12	1	3	9	6	31
‘obviously’					0.02	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.01	0.05
<i>A las claras</i>		0	0	0	1	2	5	14	12	34
‘openly’					0.00	0.00	0.01	0.03	0.02	0.06
<i>A las derechas</i>		0	0	0	3	6	1	0	0	10
‘honestly’					0.00	0.01	0.00			0.01
<i>A las calladas</i>								1		1
‘on the sly’								0.00		0.00
Absolute	2	85	41	102	172	212	174	296	564	1648
Normalized	0.00	0.19	0.08	0.21	0.33	0.43	0.41	0.69	1.29	

#### 4.1 First adjective in the locutions

Just a handful of adjectives were documented in the early locutions from the twelfth to the thirteenth century, as can be seen in Table 4 (above): *a primas* ‘firstly’, *a certas* ‘truly’, *a paladinas* ‘openly, clearly’, *a derechas* ‘correctly’, *a medias* ‘half, faultily’, *a solas* ‘alone, in private’, *a sabiendas* ‘knowingly’ ‘consciously’, *a osadas* ‘boldly, with audacity’.

The total of tokens in the eight early locutions tends to increase from the 12th through the 14th century. Types also increased from 5 in the 12th century to 8 in the 13th and 14th centuries. Most of them (6) recur until the 20th century. Just *a primas* and *a certas* ceased to be used before the 16th century.

Semantically, the adjectives in these locutions are restricted to two etymological meanings:

1. spatial orientation (or location) and sequential order in space, and
2. cognitive, mental or intellectual position.

As to the ‘spatial/locative-orientation’ adjectives, two expressions were documented: *a derechas* ‘to the right’/ ‘correctly’ and *a medias* ‘half’/ ‘faultily’; both of them accounted for the direction or position assumed by an entity from a reference point; that is, involving deictic values. The examples in (7) with *a derechas*, used from the 12th through the 20th century, are clear cases of referential-deictic meaning.<sup>6</sup> They

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6. *Ad derechas* is an orientational-directional locution, corresponding to *Deixis am Phantasma* (deixis in the imagination or deixis to refer to absent referents) (Bühler 1990). Its use implies that the speaker is situated in a virtual space and that he locates a referent based on their own laterality

specify the orientation or direction from a reference point: *aqua de Becedas* in (7a), *the back of the hill* in (7b). In both examples, an elliptic locative noun as *pars, partis*, feminine, is attainable. See that *a derechas* in (7b) is preceded by *derechamientre* ‘in straight line; without deviation’, without any deictic value.

- (7) a. et deinde ad derechas usque ad aquam de Becedas,  
 ‘and from there to the right continuously to water of Becedas,  
 et de aqua de Becedas **a derechas** usque ad illam cabecam  
 an from water of Becedas **to the right** continuously to that source’  
 (Anónimo, *Fernando III confirma a la ciudad de Avila los límites meridionales*, 1219, *CORDE*)
- b. Aqui parte Lerma con Vra e torna a la calçada de los molinos  
 ‘Here splits Lerma with Vra and come back to the roadway of the mill  
 de Abre, entre Vascones e Ramosa, e salle al moion que está entre  
 of Abre, between Vascones and Ramosa, and (it) goes to the landmark  
 that is between  
 Villaquella e Vascones e derechamientre a la vina bragada, e por lomo del  
 Villaquella e Vascones  
 and directly to the sacred vineyard, and by the side of the  
 cerro **a derechas** a valde taias  
 hill **to the right** to valde taias’ (Anónimo, *Carta-puebla y fueros dados á la villa de Lerma por el emperador Alfonso VII*, 1148, *CORDE*)

The referential deictic meaning of *a derechas* occurs in characteristic linguistic contexts as setting verbs or nouns denoting places and physical space.

In the 12th and 13th centuries we also found tokens of *a derechas* ‘rightly’ with not a deictic but a modal value (61% (14/23)), as the one in (8). Unlike the examples in (7), the topic is a moral one in (8), an act that caused harm and pain to a man in his right foot, symbolizing the righteousness or rectitude that must guide one’s actions. This token involves not a setting but a cognitive verb, *da a entender* ‘to make somebody understand something’.

- (8) La tercera plaga que le fezieron / fue quando le atrauesaron el clauo  
 ‘The third wound which him was made / was when him (they) pierced the nail  
 por el su pie derecho commo quier que amos gelos atrauesaron pero antes el /  
 through his right foot although both (feet) to him (they) pierced but first the /

---

(de Ferran Petrel 2008: 112), assuming that a virtual addressee does the same. As Fillmore (1975) points out, the deictic use of locating expressions involving notions like (*left* and) *right* implies the speaker to be aware of his addressee’s point of view, and that speaker and hearer are oriented toward the object in the same way also (Fillmore 1975).

derecho en que nos da a entender que los pasos que nos otros / andamos que los  
 right (foot) which make us understand that the steps we / walk that (we)  
 andamos a **derechas** & en buenas obras  
 walk **rightly** and in good works' (Anónimo, *Castigos*, 1293, *CORDE*)

The new meaning is embodied in a descriptive context which mentions Jesus' feet, but foregrounding his right foot so that a *derechas* 'rightly' emerges with some expressive force when referring to the correct way of walking in life. This locution is documented in the first centuries in moral, legal texts.

As to the emergence of the locution with a new modal meaning, in (8), it is difficult to delimit their constituents as we do with the two clear constituents of the expression in (7). In the context in Example (8), the two elements integrate into one unit seemingly similar to (7), but functionally and semantically different from it.

Other adjectives in these locutions, such as *primas* (< *primus*, *prima*, *primum* 'first, prime'), involve a sequential order. This adjective refers to sequentiality and, by extension, to hierarchy. It has been documented in moral texts as *Fueros*, in (9), which set behavioral rules or laws in a region; a *primas* emphasizes or stresses the first or foremost step to consider or take in a particular situation; see the example below.

- (9) Tod omme que colmenas ouiere et a **primas** poblare / corral con sus  
 'Every man who hives had and **firstly** settled / in ground whit his  
 colmenas, nenguno non sea osado de meterly hy otras colmenas  
 hives, no one dare to introduce there other hives'

(Anónimo, *Fuero de Cáceres*, 1234–1275, *CORDE*)

Por esto mandamos defender e firmar al que a **primas** labro en ella;  
 'Because of this (we) order to defend and to affirm who **firstly/originally**  
 worked in it;

ca quien entrare en lauor agena a de pechar X morabedis  
 because whoever enter into field not owned must pay X morabedis'

(Anónimo, *Fuero de Véjar*, 1234–1275, *CORDE*)

Both expressions, a *derechas* and a *primas*, that involving deixis and that involving sequential order, undergo semantic change to a new abstract meaning comprising a modal perspective, in specific texts, from objective-locative meaning to modal-positive (evaluative) meaning.

The second semantic domain is that of the cognitive, mental or intellectual position, or modal adjectives. Four adjectives ending in *-as* were documented in the locution. The realm can be divided into two groups: those referring to externalized attitudes (external signs) or visible attitudes as a *paladinas* 'openly' and a *solas* 'alone', and those referring to internal attitudes, as in a *osadas* 'boldly' and a *sabiendas* 'consciously'.

A *paladinas* ‘openly’ in (10) is emphasized by using it in contrast with *en proverbios* ‘in proverbs’, not directly, and preceded by an adversative nexus suggesting that the motivation of its use is to highlight a different way of acting, generally not a common one.

- (10) Pedit e tomaredes, porque el uuestro gozo sea complido. Estas cosas uos dix  
 ‘Ask and will receive, for your enjoyment be fulfilled. These words to you (I)  
 said  
 en prouerbios..., mas **a paladinas** uos dire del Padre  
 in proverbs... but **openly** to you (I) will speak about the Father’ (Anónimo,  
*Nuevo Testamento*, 1260, *CORDE*)

The adversative context of a *paladinas* ‘openly’ is not an isolated case. Indeed, most of the locutions involving external position occur in contrast contexts, using different textual strategies in linguistic contexts that raise interpretations contrary to the expected situations, and lead to modal-expressive effects.

A *solas* in (11) underlines the difficulty of the task that Moises was trying to achieve alone and without help. The context is highly modal, introduced by a question: *que es esto que fazes?* ‘what is this that you are doing?’, followed by a negative adverb and a modal epistemic verb, *non podras* ‘you cannot’.

- (11) Vio Getro el grant afan que traya Moisen e dixo: “Que es esto que fazes?  
 ‘Saw Jethro the huge responsibility which had Moses and said: What is this  
 (you) are doing?  
 Non lo podras fer **a solas**  
 Not it (you) can do **without help**’  
 (Almerich, *La fazienda de Ultra Mar*, c.1200, *CORDE*)

Regarding the internal adjective group, it includes *a certas*, *a osadas*, *a sabiendas*. We have a case of this sort with *a certas* in (12), talking about punishment for those who deceive people and take advantage of them. The use of the locution at the beginning of the sentence, preceded by *et*, emphasizes the rejection of deception used in selling a book.

- (12) Et **a certas**, si alguno, queriendo conprar el ailleno libro de fueros, dió a entender  
 a  
 ‘and **truly**, if someone, willing to buy the alien book of fueros, hinted to  
 qui era el libro [que podía comprar el libro] por poco pretio, en guisa que non  
 lo  
 who had the book [who could buy the book] at a cheap price, knowing that  
 (he) not



auía de uender aqueill libro por aqueill pretio, ad aqueill qui'l mentió no ha dubda

will sell that book at that price, to the one to whom (he) lied no will have doubt que aqueilla uéndida deue ser reuocada,

that the sale must be revoked' (Anónimo, *Vidal Mayor*, 1250, *CORDE*)

The use of *a osadas* and *a sabiendas* (in 13) presuppose previous knowledge contrasting with the context of the clause they introduce. *A osadas* 'boldly' refers to the Peter's fearless manner of speaking or preaching in the presence of Nero, which differs from his previous attitude when denying the Lord. The locution's expressive meaning enhances the unexpected behavior of Peter. Likewise, *a sabiendas* 'knowingly' highlights the undesirable, blameworthy behavior of a son that hurts and disrespects his parents while being fully aware of his misconduct and his corresponding punishment. As we can see, as the construction expands it incorporates derived adjectives that imply counter-expectations.

- (13) Quanto fue el esfuerzo en Peidro se provava,/el que por la voz ante de la  
'How big was the effort in Peter proved/(he) who by the voice in front of the  
fembra negava;/después, delante Nero, **a osadas** fablava,/todas sus amenazas  
woman denied;/later, in front of Nero, **boldly** preached/ all his (Nero's) threats  
un pan non las preciava  
a bit not appreciate' (Berceo, *Loores de Nuestra Señora*, 1236–1246, *CORDE*)  
Fjlo qui **a sabiendas** feriere al padre o a la madre, et mayorment si lo trayere  
'A son who **knowingly** hurts his father or his mother, and mainly if (he) grabs  
them  
por los cabeillos o lo esmentiere ante omnes bonos ... por dreito deue ser  
by the hair or (he) disproves them in front of good man ... by law must be  
desheredado tal fillo  
disinherited that son' (Anónimo, *Vidal Mayor*, 1250, *CORDE*)

In sum, the adjectives in early locutions that etymologically refer to visible spatial features, or to internal or attitudinal features, evolved to account for a different, but modal meaning such as righteousness, certainty, consciousness or awareness, boldness, and something to be highlighted or emphasized in modal contexts.

#### 4.2 Adjectives entering in the Adverbial Modal Locution: Fifteenth-twentieth centuries

From the 15th century onward (see Table 4), the Adjective types diversified diachronically; new types appeared every century and the frequency of use also increased, especially during the 19th and 20th centuries in modal contexts of use.

We have two tokens of *a ciegas*, ‘blindly’, in (14). The locution is used in both examples in highly subjective contexts; the first, regarding the effects of envy in human being, is underlined by the negative judgment expressed by other previous modal elements as *malamente* ‘badly’ and *la ciega fortuna* ‘the blind fortune’, rising expressiveness; in the second instance, talking about the ignorance reflected by the words of *doctor Sepúlveda*, the subjective perspective is strengthened by the interrogative clause itself.

- (14) si ellos no alcançan tanto poder, y les despojan de aquello que justa o  
 ‘If they not reach much power, and (they) were plundered from what rightly or  
 injustamente poseen y tienen recibido de mano de la ciega fortuna,  
 wrongly (they) possess and had received from the hand of the blind fortune,  
 cuya enemiga y contraria yo soy, porque lo que ella distribuye malamente a  
ciegas,  
 whose enemy and contrary I am, because what she distributed badly blindly ...,  
 yo los quito de aquellos injustos poseedores ...,  
 I remove it from those unjust owners’ (Pedro Hernández de Villaubrales,  
*Peregrinación de la vida del hombre*, 1552, CORDE)  
 Éstas todas son palabras del doctor Sepúlveda. ¿Qué más claro puede mostrar  
 el  
 ‘These all are words from doctor Sepúlveda. How much clearly can show the  
 doctor lo poco que entiende cerca del hecho desta materia en que tanto ha  
 querido  
**doctor** how little (he) understands about this matter in which so much (he)  
 wanted  
**a ciegas** zahondar?  
 blindly to deepen? (Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, *Controversia*  
*entre Las Casas y Sepúlveda*, 1552, CORDE)

In (15) we have examples with *a tientas* ‘groping’ and *a tientas* ‘groping’ y *a tontas* ‘foolishly’, both referring to an inconvenient or unsuitable behavior. The context in both instances accounts for the subjective perspective. In the first example, they considered that crazy people, answering even with teasing and groping, prevail over the wisest and top writers in discussions. In the second example, *Andrenio* considers the behavior of blind people guiding others *a tientas* as oblivious behavior.

- (15) nuestros locos, hasta burlando i respondiend**a a tientas** (véase que harían  
 ‘Our crazy men, until mocking and answering **groping** (see what (they) would  
 do  
 de veras), en cualquier género de disputas vencen i vienen a concluir a los  
 más sabios  
 really) in any type of dispute (they) overcome and defeat the wisest

i maiores letrados que tiene el mundo  
and top writers that are in the world’ (Jerónimo de Mondragón, *Censura de la locura humana y excelencias della*, 1598, *CORDE*)  
Yo-dixo [Andrenio]-no me espanto que el ciego pretenda guiar a los otros, que,  
I-said [Andrenio]- I am not fearful that the blind wants to guide others, that,  
como él no ve, piensa que todos los demás son ciegos y que proceden del  
because he does not see, thinks that the rest are blind and that (they) proceed  
in the  
mismo modo, a tientas y a tontas  
same way, **groping** and **foolishly**’  
(Baltasar Gracián, *El Criticón. Primera parte*, 1651, *CORDE*)

Table 6 shows the diachronic type frequency. The Adjective type doubles from the 12th to thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, increasing to thirteen in the 15th century and to twenty-one and twenty-two in the subsequent period.<sup>7</sup>

Table 6. Type frequency: Diachronic increasing

12th	13th	14th	15th	16th	17th	18th	19th	20th
4 →	8	8 →	13 →	21	21	21 →	22	22

Table 6 also demonstrates that the number of adjective types remained almost the same from the sixteenth century onwards. However, some resources were added during that period to intensify/strengthen the inherent expressive meaning of the location: (i) the diminutive suffix<sup>8</sup> *-ill* affixed to the adjective base as in *a hurtadillas* in (16), (ii) a nominal phrase with an adjective with the ending *-as* and without agreement as *a pies juntillas* in (17); (iii) and a nominal phrase with the definite article<sup>9</sup> and an adjective nominalized as *a las claras* in (18).<sup>10</sup>

7. As we pointed out (Section 2), the collection of locutions identified is not exhaustive.

8. The diminutive suffix, which is multifunctional when added to a deverbal (participle) adjective as the base of the locution, shows the subjective function that Reynoso Noverón (2005: 81) calls *centralizing function* and that increased or intensified the base meaning. Indeed, this property of the locutions evokes the Latin diminutive with the expressive effect mentioned by Meillet (1928/1972: 108) and the inner geminate consonants, specially *-ll-*, inherently expressive (Meillet 1928/1972: 104).

9. The definite article functions here as expressiveness intensifier (Ortiz Ciscomani 2009: § 3.9.3.1).

10. Adverbial expressions as *a la brava*, without the plural, are hardly documented in *CORDE* in the late sixteenth century. The adjective is a negative value adjective, lexically-semantically related to the undesirable or counter-expected value of the locution with *-as*. It deserves a separate study.

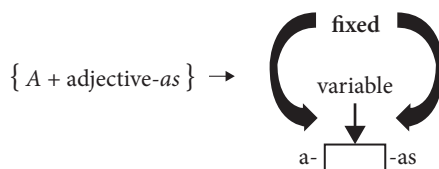
- (16) Y dice que le recibió como **a hurtadillas**, porque así como lo que se hurta  
 'And (he) says that (he) received him as **stealthily**, because as well as what is  
 stolen  
 es ageno, así aquel secreto era ageno del hombre  
 is foreign, as well that secret was foreign to men'  
 (San Juan de la Cruz, *Cántico espiritual*, 1578–1584, *CORDE*)
- (17) Al tomarla el escribano/confesión de lo que ha hecho/ella niega **a pies juntillas**/  
 'When receveid the writer/(the) confession of what she had done/she deny  
**blindly**/  
 lo que pecó a pies abiertos  
 that which (she) sinned ...'  
 (Francisco de Quevedo y Villegas, *Poesías*, 1597–1645, *CORDE*)
- (18) Como si más claro digera: esto, Señor mío, Esposo mío, que andas dando de  
 ti a mi  
 'As if clearer (she) said: this, my Lord, my Husband, which (you) give from  
 you to my  
 alma por partes, acaua de darlo del todo; y esto que andas mostrando como por  
 soul in parts, finish to give it entirely; and this that (you) are showing as at  
 resquicios, acaua de mostrarlo **a las claras**  
 chinks, (you) finish showing it **clearly/openly**'  
 (Francisco de Quevedo y Villegas, *Poesías*, 1597–1645, *CORDE*)

All of the characteristics mentioned herein, such as the increase of types and tokens; the semantic opacity of the directional meaning of the preposition, which is parallel to the new modal meaning; and the ambiguous limits of the constituents of the Prepositional Phrase are features shared by the locutions. They suggest that a new mechanism for adverbial modal function emerged. This new syntactic pattern arose for a specific semantic purpose: to underline or to magnify an atypical circumstance to carry out an event. That condition is generally related to the total absence of a quality associated with a behavior: *a ciegas*, *a oscuras*, and *a tientas* refer to absence of light and, by extension, to a rare behavior; *a secas*, without any ornament or kindness; *a tontas y a locas*, without common sense or reasonableness; *a escondidas*, *a hurtadillas*, out secretly, out of sight.

The change that comprises the Preposition *a* and an Adjective base ending in *-as* in an Adverbial Locution capable of accounting for expressive meaning involves a process of schematization or constructional grammaticalization (Gisborne & Patten 2011). Grammaticalization is understood here as a process that affects, or applies to, constructions (Goldberg 1995) more than to individual items (Bybee 2003; Himmelmann 2004: 31); a process by which a construction, in specific contexts, acquires a new grammatical function (Company 2003; Kuryłowicz 1965; Hopper &

Traugott 1993/2003; Lehmann 1982/1995; among many others). Constructions are “pieces of grammar” (Kay & Fillmore 1999:2), conventional form-function pairings (Goldberg 1995) originated in actual utterances; they are abstracted from a large number of utterances (Bybee 2010; 2011), whereas constructs are utterance-tokens that instantiate constructions.

The construction or scheme that emerged with this grammaticalization change has some fixed elements: the initial vowel *a* and the ending *-as*, and a slot which is filled with variable lexical material, as illustrated in Figure 3.



**Figure 3.** From Prepositional Phrase to Modal Locution Scheme

In other words, grammaticalization is concerned here, as suggested by Fried (2013:422), with changes in the relationship between form and function within a particular linguistic pattern or construction, a change in the constituent internal structure (Bybee 2008).

## 5. Concluding remarks

In this paper, with a large corpus as support, I showed quantitative and qualitative information about the historical development of Adverbial Modal Locutions with a preposition and an adjective characterized by the ending *-as*. The analysis showed that the adjectives in the locutions are semantically restricted to those referring to polar semantic values (counterparts positive *vs.* negative, presence or absence of a quality or property), generally highlighting unexpected or atypical features. Diachronically, the adjectives diversify regarding types but also increase in tokens, suggesting that an Adverbial Modal Locution scheme (a new adverbial formation pattern) emerges from the original prepositional phrase as of the fifteenth century with a specific function: accounting for an expressive or subjective meaning. The semantic and syntactic features of the original Prepositional Phrase blur or fade, promoting an interpretation as a unit with modal value, changing from referential to abstract meaning; from objective features in space to moral/mental/subjective/positions; from descriptive to evaluative meaning. As we saw, the context is crucial; the locution occurs in particular modal contexts, which collaborates for the

emergence of the new meaning. The whole feature suggests a change involving a process of schematization; that is to say, it can be considered as a sample of constructional grammaticalization.

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