

Article

# The History of the Spanish Preposition *Mediante*. Beyond the Theory of Grammaticalization

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**Abstract:** The most generally accepted diachrony of *mediante* assumes a grammaticalization path that started in an absolute clause, which first evolved into a preposition, and later into conjunction. However, data reveals that its development is not connected to an evolution in terms of grammaticalization. Indeed, *mediante* was introduced in Spanish in the fourteenth century as a consequence of syntactic borrowing from Medieval Latin. More specifically, this borrowing entered Old Spanish through Aragonese and Catalan (languages spoken in the east of the Iberian Peninsula). Since its first examples, *mediante* has acted as a preposition, and its form, connected to present participles, would give texts a cultured and Latinising air that was well-suited to the rhetorical guidelines of the European Renaissance and pre-Renaissance. Thus, this paper shows that the writer and rhetorical rules have become a key factor in the evolution of grammar.

**Keywords:** grammaticalization; absolute clause; Old Spanish; syntactic borrowing; Latinisms

## 1. Introduction

The rise of the preposition *mediante* ‘with, through, by means of, via, with the help of’ in Old Spanish has been explained in literature on grammatical change as a consequence of a process of grammaticalization that began in absolute constructions of the present participle (Castro Zapata 2010, 2012; Sánchez Lancis 2001; Sánchez López 2014, 2016). Whereas *mediante* is certainly connected with absolute constructions in Latin (cf. Bello 1988, p. 699), its evolution in Old Spanish is more complex than simply a process of grammaticalization, since the development of prepositional values of *mediante* was already completed in the Latin period. In fact, grammaticalization is not an explanatory hypothesis even for the emergence of *mediante* in the Latin period. Artigas (in this volume) convincingly demonstrates that the Scholastic authors syntactically reinterpreted an ablative construction that had been used sparingly in the Patristic period for the expression of means or cause. Therefore, the conceptual reinterpretation that characterizes the processes of grammaticalization is not observed in Latin either. If prepositional uses of *mediante* are already documented in Latin, it is not surprising that constructions in which *mediante* appears in Old Spanish are clearly prepositional except on rare occasions.<sup>1</sup>

The aim of this work is to analyze the origins of the use of *mediante* in Old Spanish in order to demonstrate that its emergence is the result of a grammatical borrowing.<sup>2</sup> This borrowing would

<sup>1</sup> As pointed out in Sánchez López (Sánchez López 2014, p. 2088). This has even been accepted by authors who argue for a grammaticalization process to explain the existence of *mediante* (see Castro Zapata 2012, pp. 722, 724).

<sup>2</sup> As discussed in Sánchez López (2014), who, however, sometimes seems to exclude *mediante* from this process of copying from Latin:

Las preposiciones improprias *durante*, *mediante*, *no obstante* y *no embargante* derivan todas ellas de participios de presente: las dos primeras se utilizaban ya en latín dentro de cláusulas absolutas temporales o instrumentales;

have reached Old Spanish through the intense socio-cultural relations that Renaissance intellectuals maintained both in the Iberian Peninsula and elsewhere in Europe. In this context, the influence of Italy was key. This influence was introduced in the Iberian Peninsula by the intellectuals of the Crown of Aragon, who also maintained close relations with the most prominent Spanish authors of the period (cf. [Pons Rodríguez 2015](#); [Pascual 2016](#); [Octavio de Toledo y Huerta 2017a, 2017b](#)). Thus, we aim to demonstrate that the presence of *mediante* as a preposition in Old Spanish is closely related to socio-cultural factors that go beyond the narrow evolutionary margins proposed within the theory of grammaticalization<sup>3</sup> The intense cultural relations that were present in Western Europe during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries led to grammatical borrowings that provided syntactic patterns shared among European languages—to the extent that some of these traits belong to what has come to be called *Standard Average European*.<sup>4</sup>

The hypothesis that *mediante* is the result of a borrowing from Latin into medieval Spanish, which was introduced from Aragonese and Catalan, seems more in line with the historical trajectory that the data show. Indeed, even uses of *mediante* that would be described as absolute clauses are, in fact, the result of rhetorical guidelines of the pre-Renaissance and the Renaissance. Therefore, our proposal implies broadening the analysis of grammatical changes and emphasizing the importance of history and culture in the evolution of languages. In other words, we believe that a rapprochement between historical linguistics and philology is essential to any research on grammatical change.<sup>5</sup>

This work is structured as follows. After this introduction (Section 1), I have devoted a brief section to the description of the corpus used and the methodology followed in this study (Section 2). Next, in Section 3, I have considered the evolution of prepositions in a typological context and reflected on the historical importance of the absolute clauses of present participles as a source of prepositions and conjunctions. In Section 4, I have described the grammatical values of the structures in which *mediante* appears in its first documented uses in Old Spanish in order to demonstrate its character as a grammatical borrowing. In Section 5, I have reflected on the importance of external factors as triggers of grammatical change. Next (Section 6), I have briefly discussed the emergence of the conjunction *mediante que* in Spanish. Finally, in Section 7, I have summarized the conclusions I have reached.

## 2. The Corpus

The data for this research are taken from the CORDE database, which is the most extensive historical corpus currently available in Spanish.<sup>6</sup> In this way, I aim to ensure that the conclusions I obtain are the most representative of the language, in general, and do not reflect the rhetorical guidelines of a textual genre or the style of a writer or a group of writers.

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las otras dos corresponden al latín tardío o medieval, donde también aparecen especializadas para cláusulas absolutas en ablativo. Su cronología es muy similar: salvo *no obstante* que entra en el español como calco del latín medieval un poco más tardíamente, las otras tres se documentan desde los orígenes del español.

([Sánchez López 2014](#), pp. 2099–100)

“The improper prepositions *durante*, *mediante*, *no obstante*, and *no embargante* are all derived from present participles: the first two were already used in Latin within absolute temporal or instrumental clauses; the other two correspond to late or medieval Latin, where they also appear to have specialized as absolute ablativ clauses. Their chronology is very similar: except for *no obstante*, which enters Spanish a little later as a calque from medieval Latin, the other three are documented from the origins of Spanish.”

[my translation]

<sup>3</sup> In other words, the humanist influence does not imply a re-latinization of the construction involving *mediante*, but rather it is the trigger for its introduction into the language (for a contrary opinion, cf. [Sánchez López 2014](#), pp. 2084, 2088, 2100).

<sup>4</sup> See [Heine and Kuteva \(2006\)](#) and [Haspelmath \(2001\)](#) on the Standard Average European concept. The work of Cornillie and [Cornillie and Octavio de Toledo y Huerta \(2015\)](#) is particularly relevant for Spanish. The most recent study on the syntactic influence of Latin on European languages is that of [Cornillie and Drinka \(forthcoming\)](#).

<sup>5</sup> For more data on the importance of sociocultural factors on the evolution of Spanish, see [Garachana Camarero \(2018\)](#).

<sup>6</sup> CORDE consists of 250 million words and texts of a variety of types from the time of the language’s beginning up to 1974.

However, I have excluded some texts from our analysis according to the textual criticism guidelines set out in [Rodríguez Molina and Huerta \(2017\)](#). For the study of the rise of *mediante*, it is especially important to handle original editions or copies made within 50 years of their composition. Since the fifteenth century—which was characterized by a clear desire to Latinize syntax—led to the incorporation of constructions in which *mediante* would appear to resemble a present participle, using copies from the fifteenth century to exemplify linguistic use in the fourteenth century could distort our results. Indeed, as we shall see, our research evidences that the use of *mediante* in the fourteenth century is not too far removed from that found in the modern language. In addition to data from CORDE, in specific places, I have resorted to the GRADIA corpus to supplement CORDE searches.

In this paper, I have adopted a usage-based approach to linguistic change. Therefore, I have analyzed the values of *mediante* in constructions documented in the corpora, as well as the characteristics of the texts in which they appear.<sup>7</sup>

### 3. The Evolution of Prepositions in a Typological Context

The evolution of deverbal prepositions deserves particular attention in the literature on grammatical change (cf. among others, the works of ([Giacalone Ramat 1994](#); [König and Kortmann 1991](#); [Kortmann 1992](#)); for Spanish see ([Bosque 1989](#), pp. 197–99)).<sup>8</sup> In European languages, the high number of prepositions originating from participles and gerunds has elicited this attention (cf. [Kortmann 1992](#), pp. 431–32). The recurrence of this type of change can be explained by at least two factors. First of all, it should be noted that verbs, like prepositions, select complements. Thus, from a strictly formal point of view, they correspond to a similar construction: an element governing + an element governed. Secondly, participles are hardly prototypical verbal forms: in Spanish, they lack a morphology that expresses typical verbal values, such as person or mode and, unlike full verbs, they cannot constitute the nucleus of a predicate. In Spanish, this last aspect creates a point of contact with prepositions, which cannot form a phrase on their own but which always need to govern some element.

In addition, [Kortmann \(1992\)](#) points out that participial or gerundial absolute clauses share certain features with prepositional constructions, namely that they both can function as adjuncts with adverbial values and can complement a noun (see 1a and 1b, on the one hand, and 1c and 1d, on the other). This second property, in the case of Spanish, is rejected for the gerund by the educated norm (see 2a and 2b). The *RAE-ASALE* ([RAE-ASALE 2009](#), p. 2045) explicitly argues that adjectival uses are only possible with the gerunds of the verbs *hervir* ‘to boil’, *arder* ‘to burn’, and, with restrictions, *colgar* ‘to hang up’. However, this adjectival use was admitted into the language of past eras for present participles, which, moreover, tend to evolve as adjectives (see 2c and 2d).

- (1) a. **Considering** his family background, he is a most unusual man ([Kortmann 1992](#), p. 436)  
 b. **In many respects**, he is a most unusual man ([Kortmann 1992](#), p. 436)

<sup>7</sup> The searches have taken into account the different spelling variants with which *mediante* has been documented in the history of Spanish, namely, *mediante*, *medjante*, and *medyante*.

<sup>8</sup> In fact, synchronic studies have pointed out the importance of this type of research. In this sense, this affirmation in [Bosque \(1989, p. 199\)](#) is especially interesting:

La segunda pregunta afecta a la recategorización propiamente dicha: “¿por qué obtenemos unas veces preposiciones de los participios pasivos (*excepto*) y otras veces obtenemos adverbios (*incluso*)?”. Es cierto que tanto esta pregunta como la anterior pertenecen al ámbito de la sintaxis histórica, pero las respuestas serían de enorme interés para los que trabajan en la teoría de las categorías gramaticales.

The second question concerns re-categorization proper: “Why do we sometimes get prepositions from passive participles (*excepto* ‘except’) and other times we get adverbs (*incluso* ‘even’)? It is true that both this question and the previous one belong to the field of historical syntax, but the answers would be of enormous interest to those who work on the theory of grammatical categories.”

[my translation]

- c. Leave the box **containing** the dumbbells to me (Kortmann 1992, p. 436)
- d. Leave the box **with** the green lid (Kortmann 1992, p. 436)
- (2) a. \*Caja **conteniendo** botellas de lejía  
“Box **containing** bottles of bleach”
- b. \*El agua **entrando** en la pecera es la de la fuente (RAE-ASALE 2009, p. 2045)  
“The water **entering** the fish tank is from the fountain”
- c. Varones **batallantes** (Octavio de Toledo y Huerta 2017a, p. 73)  
“Battling men”
- d. De día parece un padre **amante** que a su adorada hija contempla ( . . . ) (Benito Pérez Galdós, *Los Ayacuchos*, 1900, CORDE)  
“By day he seems like a **loving** father who admires his beloved daughter”

The process that leads from participial (or gerundial) constructions to prepositions has been explained as a type of evolution that leads from lexical to grammatical categories. This would, therefore, be a change due to grammaticalization. Such a route of change has favored a theoretical apriorism that has led to the characterization of the evolution of *mediante* as a case of grammaticalization, even though its role was ALREADY that of a preposition from the time of its first use in the language (as has been said, the first examples of *mediante* are considered prepositions in (Sánchez López 2014; Castro Zapata 2012)). Moreover, as I pointed out above, examples can already be found in Latin in which the syntactic function of *mediante* is far removed from proper verbal values and can be characterized as prepositional values (cf. Artigas in this volume).<sup>9</sup>

Moreover, following Kortmann (1992, p. 438), prepositions and conjunctions deriving from participles are marginal members of their category, since they usually show features that differentiate them from the core group of prepositions. Namely:

- They usually have a low frequency of use, as a consequence of their stylistic markedness.
- They show greater morphological complexity: they have two or three syllables.
- Sometimes, in addition, they have recurrent internal constituents (Octavio de Toledo *p.c.* 28.5.17).
- If compared to more semantically bleached prepositions and conjunctions, they have a specific and quite complex meaning.
- They recall the structures from which they derive since the complement of the deverbal preposition can often still be interpreted as their direct object or subject.

In the case of *mediante*, it is used less frequently than other prepositions. For example, a quick search in CORPES XXI shows that, while 34,617 cases of *mediante* are documented, other prepositions are found to a greater extent (for example, *desde* ‘from’ is found 263,506 times and *hasta* ‘to’ 234,578 times).<sup>10</sup> *Mediante* has three syllables, while the prototypical Spanish prepositions consist of one or two syllables (*a* ‘to’, *ante* ‘before’, *bajo* ‘beneath’, *cabe* ‘next to’, *con* ‘with’, *contra* ‘against’, *de* ‘from’, *desde* ‘from, since’, *en* ‘in’, *entre* ‘between, among’, *hacia* ‘towards’, *hasta* ‘to, until’, *para* ‘to, for’, *por* ‘for, by’, *según* ‘according to’, *sin* ‘without’, *so* ‘under’, *sobre* ‘on, about, upon’, *tras* ‘after, behind’).<sup>11</sup> Moreover, *mediante*, despite the fact that it is unstressed (Moliner 1966, s.v. *mediante*; RAE-ASALE 2009, p. 2230), is still described as having occasional uses as a present participle (RAE-ASALE 2009, p. 2230). Besides, *mediante*, together

<sup>9</sup> Possibly, this fact could be related to the decline of the verbal values of the present participle in Vulgar Latin (in archaic Latin these had also been the exception, (cf. Campos Souto 2001, pp. 372–73)).

<sup>10</sup> CORPES XXI is a corpus made by the Real Academia Española (RAE) that contains oral and written texts from the Americas, Spain, the Philippines, and Equatorial Guinea. The texts cover a period from 2001 to 2012. I have taken this corpus to test the low frequency of use of *mediante* as compared to other prepositions also in the contemporary language.

<sup>11</sup> The prepositions *cabe* and *so* are infrequent forms in modern Spanish.

with *durante* ‘during’, *excepto* ‘except’, *salvo* ‘except’, *según* ‘according to’, *menos* ‘but, except’, *incluso* ‘even’<sup>12</sup>, forms a subclass among prepositions, that has been called “improper” (Bello 1988, pp. 738–40) or “imperfect” (Pavón Lucero 1999, p. 587).<sup>13</sup> These non-prototypical prepositions do not assign the oblique case to their complements: *\*mediante mí/ti* ‘through me/you’ (Bello 1988, p. 740; Bosque 1989, p. 198). For Bello, the fact that these prepositions do not assign oblique case harks back to their origin seems to prevent their full integration into the class of prepositions. Likewise, *mediante* does not assign nominative case either (Bello 1988, p. 740; Pavón Lucero 1999, p. 589).

Furthermore, these imperfect prepositions cannot govern infinitives, prepositional phrases, or sentences. However, at this point it should be remembered that prepositions, which express exclusively locative values, cannot govern sentences either: *hacia* ‘towards’, *sobre* ‘on, about, upon’, *tras* ‘after, behind’, *bajo* ‘beneath’, and *ante* ‘before’ do not form subordinate locative clauses (Pavón Lucero 1999, p. 571; 2010; Sánchez López 2016). However, it must be remembered that already since the Middle Ages *mediante* can govern a relative clause (example 3) and that from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century it could appear before an infinitive (example 4). It should also be noted that during the same period, *mediante que* ‘because’ existed as causal conjunction, typically with explanatory values (example 5). At present, however, only residual conjunctive uses are found in certain American varieties (example 6)<sup>14</sup> If the conjunctive uses of *mediante que* do not persist in Spanish, it could be because this conjunction was competing with other synonymous conjunctions which were more firmly anchored in the language, such as *dado que* ‘given that’, *visto que* ‘seeing that’, *como* ‘as’, *puesto que* ‘since’. Thus, the fact that *mediante* does not govern clauses in contemporary Spanish seems more to do with stylistic preferences than any real restriction on the preposition. All things considered, it cannot be denied that *mediante* holds a marginal position among prepositions, perhaps due to its having entered the language more recently.<sup>15</sup>

- (3) Pero dexo al onbre sano & franco. el libre aluedrio **mediante el qual** pudiese mereçer & desmereçer allegarse o apartarse ala semejança & nobleza de su fazedor que era y es dios (Fernando Mejía, *Libro intitulado Nobiliario Vero*, 1477–1485, CORDE)

“But to humans, sound and free, He left free will, **through which** they could deserve or not deserve to approach or to stray from the likeness and nobility of their creator who was and is God.”

- (4) a. Enterada S.M. la Reina Gobernadora del oficio de V.E. de 29 de diciembre último ha tenido a bien resolver que **mediante haber cesado** el riesgo que ofrecía la carretera de Aragón a Barcelona, y no ser tampoco grande el que presenta la que va desde aquella ciudad a Valencia, se despache la correspondencia pública de Barcelona por ambas carreras (Real Orden de 8 de enero, citada en Mariano José de Larra, “*Buenas noches. Segunda carta de Figaro a su corresponsal en París, acerca de la disolución de las Cortes, y de otras varias cosas del día*”, siglo XIX, GRADIA)

“Her Majesty the Queen Governor being informed of Your Excellency’s letter of December 29th last, she has seen fit to resolve that, **since** the risk posed by the road from Aragon to Barcelona **has ceased**, and that neither is the risk presented by the road going from that city to Valencia great, the public mail from Barcelona will be despatched by both routes.”

<sup>12</sup> *No obstante*, *no contrastante*, and *no embargante* were also members of this subclass of prepositions. However, the first has remained fixed as a discourse marker, and the second and third have disappeared from the spoken language (cf. Garachana Camarero 2018).

<sup>13</sup> Giacalone Ramat (1994, p. 893) points out, following Kortmann (1992), that deverbal prepositions are not prototypical prepositions, but peripheral ones.

<sup>14</sup> According to Sánchez López (2014, p. 419), the conjunction *mediante que* had particular vitality in the Spanish of the Americas, declining in the 18th century and remaining as a minority usage in the speech of some varieties of the Spanish of the Americas. For example, it is found in Paraguay, where de Granda (1979, p. 281) pointed out a possible grammatical calque from Guarani.

<sup>15</sup> For Kortmann (1992, p. 438), the behavior furthest from the core of the category characteristic of improper prepositions is a reflection of a lesser degree of evolution. Generally speaking, this argument is also found in Company and Concepción (1997, p. 149).

b. Que **mediante** no **tener** esa enunciada Vniversidad, Carcel, ni el Colegio avitacion alguna que pueda servir, para ella, sera mui util el que se conceda facultad para hacerla en el Suelo, del proprio Colegio (Anónimo, *Real cédula*, España, 1764, CORDE, Sánchez López 2016)

“That **since** the said University **has no** prison, nor any room in the college, which can serve for this purpose, it will be very useful to grant permission to construct one in the grounds of the College itself.”

- (5) Con la prevención que, **mediante que** en la mayor parte de Andalucía se gasta jabón blando, ( . . . ) en lo que toca a dicho jabón blando no se haga novedad (Bernardo de Ulloa, *Restablecimiento de las fábricas y comercio español*, 1740–1746, CORDE)

“With the precaution that, **since** in most of Andalusia soft soap is used, [ . . . ] no change shall be made with regard to the said soft soap.”

- (6) ( . . . ) son mamás que quieren trabajar y no tengan dónde dejar sus hijos, para esas madres es la guardería, y que están utilizando bien, ¿verdad?, porque **mediante que** dejan acá, ellos (sic) van a trabajar (Encuesta 11, Asunción Servim de Eduardo, Paraguay; CREA, Sánchez López 2016)

“( . . . ) they are mothers who want to work and don’t have anywhere to leave their kids, that’s who the nursery is for, and they’re using it well, right?, because **through** leaving [them] there, they can go to work.”

#### 4. The Evolution of *Mediante*

##### 4.1. The State of the Art

As pointed out in the introduction, the study of the evolution of *mediante* has been shrouded in theoretical and conceptual assumptions that have greatly distorted any explanation of its history. First, the emergence of *mediante* has been explained as a result of a need to increase the prepositional system due to the loss of the Latin case system (cf. [Castro Zapata 2010](#), p. 1; [2012](#), p. 722). However, this explanation does not seem likely if we apply it to Spanish, where *mediante* is first documented at the end of the fourteenth century. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that, as Artigas (this volume) points out, the use of *mediante* in Latin seems to respond to an initial borrowing from Greek that only gained strength in twelfth-century Latin. In that century, *mediante* was mostly employed in a written variety of the language where its existence could have more to do with a desire for stylistic variation than with the loss of declensions, which affected the spoken language and which occurred before the Middle Ages. In addition to the chronological argument, it should be noted that the low frequency of examples of *mediante* in the Middle Ages makes it difficult to consider it as the result of grammaticalization meant to fill the gap left by the loss of Latin case.

Secondly, it has also been asserted that the introduction of *mediante* into Spanish was the result of an attempt to solve problems when translating into Spanish ([Castro Zapata 2010](#), p. 3). However, this second possibility may be excluded on the basis of the studies by [Pons Rodríguez \(2015\)](#) and [Azofra Sierra \(2006\)](#). These scholars demonstrate that Spanish authors tended to avoid translating Latin present participles and usually opted for constructions more typical of Spanish syntax. Thus, [Pons Rodríguez \(2015\)](#) stresses the following:

el participio de presente falta o está muy aislado en la mayoría de los escritos del periodo, no figura en buena parte de los tratados despojados (*Amicicia, Arboleda, Defensa de virtuosas mugeres . . .*) y tampoco es común en las traducciones. ([Pons Rodríguez 2015](#), p. 405)

“The present participle is missing or is infrequent in most writings from the period, it is absent in many of the treatises analyzed (*Amicicia, Arboleda, Defensa de virtuosas mugeres . . .*) and is not common in translations” [my translation]

In turn, [Azofra Sierra \(2006\)](#) points out in relation to the translations of Juan de Mena:

En el caso de la traducción de la estructura que estudiamos, el latinismo más crudo, lo más ajeno al castellano, es la traducción por un falso participio de presente, es decir, una palabra terminada en *-nte*, formada sobre un lexema verbal y a la que se añaden los complementos verbales. Esto, como veremos, es lo menos frecuente: frente a esta traducción que violenta las reglas morfosintácticas del español, Mena se muestra prudente y prefiere adaptar los participios de otra manera. Hemos encontrado varias soluciones: traducción por un adjetivo en *-nte*, traducción por otro tipo de adjetivos, traducción por una subordinada con valor adjetivo (de relativo, de gerundio o subordinada sustantiva en función de complemento predicativo), y traducción por una oración independiente. (Azofra Sierra 2006, p. 69)

“In the case of the translation of the structure we are studying, the crudest Latinism and most alien to Spanish is a translation by a false present participle, that is, a word ending in *-nte*, formed on a verbal lexeme and to which verbal complements are added. This, as we shall see, is a less frequent phenomenon: when faced with such translation, which violates the morphosyntactic rules of Spanish, Mena is cautious and prefers to adapt participles in another way. We have found several solutions: translation by an adjective in *-nte*, translation by another type of adjective, translation by a subordinate clause with adjectival value (relative clause, gerund clause or subordinate noun clause functioning as a predicative complement), and translation by an independent sentence.” [my translation]

Sin renunciar a ensayar nuevos moldes (léxicos y sintácticos) para la expresión culta y literaria, tomando como modelo la lengua latina, se decide [Juan de Mena] en la mayoría de las ocasiones por no forzar la sintaxis del romance y adapta los participios de presente con estructuras oracionales que respetan los valores de la forma originaria sin violentar los patrones sintácticos del romance. (Azofra Sierra 2006, p. 78)

“Without giving up trying new patterns (lexical and syntactic) for cultured and literary expression, taking the Latin language as a model, [Juan de Mena] decides in most cases not to force Spanish syntax and adapts present participles with clausal structures that respect the values of the original form without violating Romance syntactic patterns.” [my translation]

In a recent study, Octavio de Toledo y Huerta (2017a, pp. 72, 80) confirms the conclusions of Azofra Sierra (2006) regarding the scant use of *-nte* forms with verbal value in Juan de Mena’s *Omero romançado*.

In the specific case of *mediante*, it can be seen that, in translations from Latin texts, it often appears in passages without having been present in the original Latin. Thus, when Enrique de Villena uses *mediante* in his translation of the *Aeneid*, he always uses it in the glosses or in the preface and not in the translation itself. Ferrer Sayol uses *mediante* in the translation of Latin texts that do not contain this form.

Thirdly, studies that defend a change via grammaticalization to explain the prepositional value of *mediante* in Spanish ignore the fact that in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the verbal use of present participles is not a patrimonial use, but a grammatical borrowing from Latin. This rhetorical artifice ended up being lost from the wider language, and its verbal values were assumed by the gerund (Bassols de Climent 1992, pp. 234–35 (Bassols de Climent); Muñío Valverde 1995).<sup>16</sup> aquél en latín.”

“( . . . ) in the transition to the Romance languages, [the present participle] succumbs to an ablative gerund which will assume a good part of the functions it had carried out in Latin.”

[my translation]

<sup>16</sup> Campos Souto makes the same point (Campos Souto 2001, p. 373), explicitly stating that: “( . . . ) en el paso a las lenguas románicas, [el participio de presente] sucumbe ante un ablativo de gerundio que asumirá buena parte de las funciones desempeñadas por

The learned nature of the verbal uses of the present participle invalidates the grammaticalization hypothesis for Spanish, especially if we bear in mind that, in the case of *mediante*, these verbal uses are very vestigial. Moreover, the verbal uses of present participles have been described as a stylistic artifice, which attempted to mimic Latin syntax (Azofra Sierra 2006; Muñio Valverde 1995; Campos Souto 2001; Pons Rodríguez 2015) or, in the case of some biblical translations, Hebrew (see Pueyo and Enrique-Arias 2015). This rhetorical artifice, lost in the common language, left only a few traces in Spanish in the form of nouns or adjectives (*amante* ‘lover’, *triunfante* ‘victorious’, etc.) or in grammatical forms that already existed in Latin (*mediante* ‘with, through, by means of, via, with the help of’, *no obstante* ‘in spite of, however’) or which were created on this model (*no contrastante* ‘in spite of, although’, *no embargante* ‘in spite of, although, however’).<sup>17</sup>

As a consequence of what has been explained, the presence of *mediante* in Spanish is neither the result of the need to compensate for the loss of Latin declension, nor the result of a change due to grammaticalization. It is, therefore, necessary to find another explanation for its introduction into Spanish.

#### 4.2. Not Every Grammatical Change Is Grammaticalization

As I have argued, the fact that some of the uses of *mediante* in the medieval period are reminiscent of Latin absolute clauses has favored the explanation of evolution in terms of grammaticalization. Such uses are shown in examples like (7), in which the nominal phrase *sana consideración* ‘proper judgement’ functions as the subject of *mediante*. As such, the ensemble *sana consideración mediante* can be literally interpreted as “with a proper judgement mediating”. According to the authors who defend this theoretical position, *mediante* must have followed an evolutionary line, such as the one outlined in (8). According to (8), the evolution of *mediante* must have come about from an absolute clause whose verbal nucleus would be *mediante*, which would be accompanied by a noun phrase in the ablative case acting as its subject. This construction would be reinterpreted as a prepositional phrase, which, in some contexts, could come to have a conjunctive function at the point that *mediante* extends its scope to include an entire sentence.

- (7) si alguno mira a otro que le bien paresca o lo alaba de fermoso o de donoso, luego paresca daño en él de ojo, siquier de fascinaçión. E aquí deven entender, **sana consideraçión mediante**, que la cabsa d’esto es que aquel que alaba la cosa mirada, pues se d’ella paga, pareçe en esa ora que mira más fuerte, firme e atentamente que otra, (Enrique de Villena, *Tratado de fascinación o de aojamiento*, 1422–1425, CORDE)

“If one person looks at another person in such a way that that person looks pleasing to him, or if he praises him as being handsome or graceful, then he will suffer damage to his eye, or “fascination”. And by this must be understood, **with a proper judgement mediating**, that the cause of this is that since the person who praises the object of his gaze is pleased by it, it seems at that moment that he is looking more strongly, more firmly and more attentively at that than at anything else”.

- (8) [ABSOLUTE CLAUSE [SUBJECT NP in ablative case] [VF present participle (*mediante*))] > [PP [PREP. *mediante*] [NP]] > [CAUSAL SENTENCE [CAUSAL CONJUNCTION *mediante* que] [sentence]]

However, as we shall see, a careful analysis of the first documentation of *mediante* in Spanish shows that it was already behaving like a preposition in the fourteenth century, which is the time of its introduction into the language. The examples documented prior to this century are found in works preserved in later editions in which the presence of *mediante* may be due to the intervention of

<sup>17</sup> See Garachana Camarero (2018) for the analogical influence of *no obstante* in the creation of *no embargante* and *no contrastante*.



the copyist. There is, therefore, no need to propose the existence of two stages of the introduction of *mediante* into Spanish, one medieval and one Renaissance.<sup>18</sup>

As for the examples reminiscent of absolute ablatives, such as (7), they were rare, and their documentation is concentrated in the fifteenth century when the Latinizing influence is evident. Moreover, the cases of plural concordance between *mediante* and the accompanying nominal element are also concentrated mainly in the fifteenth century (see example 9).

- (9) le fuemos rrebeldes; & non obedecemos el dicho del señor nuestro dios para andar en sus leyes que nos dio **mediantes** sus sieruos los profetas (Anónimo, *Biblia romanceada*, c.1400, CORDE)

“we were rebellious to God and did not obey his command to follow the laws that he gave us **through** his servants the prophets.”

This plural agreement has been considered an argument in favor of the verbal value of *mediante* and has been proposed as an indication of the existence of a process of grammaticalization. However, the fact that *mediantes* appears far less than the singular *mediante* has been overlooked. Although it could be argued that this is because the accompanying nominal elements appear more frequently in the singular, we cannot dismiss the frequent cases of non-agreement in which the singular *mediante* accompanies a plural nominal element (10). Above all, we cannot ignore the desire to Latinize that permeates the rhetoric of the fifteenth century in Europe, which would have favored hybrid constructions, such as that of (15), in which *mediante* presents plural morphology and characteristics of a participle, but has a prepositional function. Thus, if the cases that could be cataloged as absolute clauses are Latinisms characteristic of the Spanish of the fifteenth century, and if the majority of the examples in which *mediante* appears in plural form can be considered hybrid structures in which *mediante* has the morphology of a participle, but the function of a preposition, the hypothesis of a grammaticalization process loses validity—at least if we want to conceive of it as a change that took place in Old Spanish.

- (10) Segúnd avemos recontado, el rey que estaua en la çibdat, de Granada, después que **mediante** los faoures que ovo del Rey e de la Reyna fué reçebido por rey en aquella çibdat (Hernando del Pulgar, *Crónica de los Reyes Católicos*, 1480–1484, CORDE)

“As we have recounted, the [Moorish] king who was in the city of Granada, after he was received as king in that city **as a result** of the favors he obtained from the King and Queen [ . . . ]

#### 4.3. The Introduction of *Mediante* in Old Spanish

The first documentation of *mediante* in Old Spanish dates back to the fourteenth century (see Table 1). In this century, I have documented *mediante* on 13 occasions—having eliminated the cases found in works that did not meet the criteria for textual reliability set out in Rodríguez Molina and Huerta (2017). Of these 13 cases, 10 correspond to textual fragments in which *mediante* reproduces the temporal meaning of the Latin participle *medians*, *-tis*, used as an adjective and whose meaning ‘to be halfway’ is the result of translating the Greek verb μέσσω (cf. Artigas in this volume). This can be seen in examples (11) to (13), where *mediante* means ‘in the middle of’.

<sup>18</sup> For a different opinion, cf. Sánchez López (Sánchez López 2014, pp. 2157–58). She argues that, in the fifteenth century, there was a re-introduction of the construction with *mediante*, used as a participle and not as a preposition. The data, however, show that most of the examples in the fifteenth century are hybrid constructions in which *mediante* appears in a plural form, but has a prepositional function. In fact, in the fourteenth century, this usage already existed (see example 15). The examples from both the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries are the same grammatical calque, which imitated a Latin construction in which agreeing and non-agreeing forms alternated (cf. Artigas in this volume). The difference, if anything, has to do with the greater use of *mediante* in the fifteenth century, as this is the period of its embedding in the language, and the consequent greater presence of structures in which *mediante* offered a form that could suggest a present participle. However, this is not a sufficient reason to propose two different historical moments for the introduction of *mediante* in Spanish, especially when the first fourteenth-century documentations are found in the work of authors whose admiration for Latinisms is well known, namely, Juan Fernández de Heredia and Ferrer Sayol.

- (11) E aquesto deue hombre fazer quando ay echa la simjente. Si el jnujerno sera temprado. E que non sea pluujoso. deues sembrar la çeuada glatic que es blanca & de grant peso. faza **mediante** enero en los lugares temprados. (Ferrer Sayol, *Libro de Palladio*, CORDE)

“And this must be done when the seed is sown there. If the winter is going to be mild and not rainy, you should sow latic barley, which is white and heavy, until **mid**-January in temperate places.”

- (12) E quasi **mediante** febrero tu la sembraras en vn foyo. (Ferrer Sayol, *Libro de Palladio*, CORDE)

“and around **mid**-February, you will plant it in a hole.”

- (13) E deuen se trasplantar de **mediante** agosto fasta a **mediante** setiembre con mucho estiercol. (Anónimo, *Memoria de las labranzas*. BNM 10211, 1385, CORDE)

“And they should be transplanted from **mid**-August to **mid**-September with a lot of manure.”

**Table 1.** Distribution of the uses of *mediante* in the XIV-XV centuries.

Century	Preposition	‘In the Middle of’	Noun	Adjective	Dios Mediante and Other Expressions	Conjunction	Absolute Clause
xiv	15.38% (2/13)	76.9% (10/13)	—	—	7.6% (1/13)	—	—
xv	85.5% (213/249)	—	4% (10/249)	0.40% (1/249)	2.8% (7/249)	0.40% (1/249)	6.8% (17/249)

In the fourteenth century, I also find two cases that can already be described as prepositions: neither the syntax of the construction nor the meaning of *mediante* allows for an interpretation as an absolute clause. One of the examples documented in the fourteenth century shows an absence of agreement between the participle and its object (14): *mediante* has a clear instrumental grammatical use, characteristic of the modern language, where *mediante* can alternate with other prepositions or prepositional phrases, such as *con* ‘with’, *gracias a* ‘thanks to’, *a través de* ‘through’. In fact, *mediante las cañas* can be glossed as ‘with the canes, by way of the canes, through the canes’. Another clear indication of the prepositional value of *mediante* is the fact that it is introduced by the verb *ligar* ‘tie’. I will discuss this example later.

- (14) Otra manera ay de fazer vjñyas es a saber que hombre ha muchas cañas al derredor de la parra o de la çepa. E ata hombre los sarmjentos a cada vna caña al entorno. E los vnos sarmjentos se ligan con los otros **mediante** las cañas. (Ferrer Sayol, *Libro de Palladio*, 1380–85, CORDE)

“There is another way of making vines, namely that you put many canes around the vine or the stock. And you must tie the shoots around each canes. And some shoots are linked with the others **through** the canes.”

The other prepositional example of *mediante* in the fourteenth century, although showing concordance between *mediante* and the accompanying nominal phrase, is actually a hybrid construction: *mediante* shows present participle morphology, but a prepositional function. In fact, in (15), the participle appears in plural form, but the nominal complement that accompanies it is placed after it—as is characteristic of prepositional phrases—and the semantic value of *mediante* is close to the one in (14): *mediantes las pregarías de los fieles* can be glossed as ‘by way of/thanks to the prayers of the faithful’. The only example that would allow us to venture an interpretation as an absolute clause would be (16); however, it is a construction close to the idiom *Dios mediante* ‘with the help of God’, which already functioned in Latin as an idiomatic expression (cf. Artigas, this volume).

- (15) Et mayorment aquesto era en aquel tiempo quando haun por todo el mundo non auia alguna yglesia que, **mediantes** las pregarías de los fieles christianos, temprasse et amansasse las penas del

mundo. (Juan Fernández de Heredia, *Traducción de la Historia contra paganos de Orosio*, 1376–1396, CORDE)

“And this happened mainly in the time when in the world there was not yet a church that **thanks** to the prayers of the Christian faithful, tempered, and calmed the pains of the world.”

- (16) & enuio los en sçia a predicar la palaura de dios. la qual cosa los sobre dichos sanctos uarones la gracia de dios **mediante** con senyales & uirtudes cumplieron. (Juan Fernández de Heredia, *Gran crónica de España*, I. Ms. 10133 BNM, 1385, CORDE)

“and sent them to Scythia to preach the word of God, which the above-mentioned holy men, **through** the grace of God, achieved with signs and virtues.”

The situation described for the fourteenth century is modified in the century following. Thus, as shown in Table 1, the temporal values of *mediante* disappeared, overshadowed by the use of *mediado* ‘in the middle of’, with which *mediante* had been in competition since the time of Latin (cf. Artigas in this volume; Sánchez López 2014, p. 411). By contrast, in the fifteenth century, *mediante* begins to be documented as an adjective with the meaning of ‘that which is in the middle’ (17) and as a noun with the meaning of ‘mediator, envoy, messenger’ (18).

- (17) Dize las treguas ser paz sequestra adora como a tiempo & **mediante** o puesta en medio entre la guerra passada & la guerra a venidera. (Alonso de Palencia, *Universal vocabulario en latín y en romance*, 1490, CORDE)

“He says that truces are an intermediate peace, a time that **lies between**, that is to say, between the past war and the future one.”

- (18) a. Mucho mejor puede alabar qualquier **mediante** al que ama e recontar sus virtudes que él mesmo; demás con menos suspeçión se puede fablar con el mediante que con el que ama. (Juan de Mena, *Tratado de amor*, c1444, CORDE)

“Any **mediator** can praise the one he loves and explain his virtues much better than he himself can, and with less suspicion, we can talk to the mediator than to the one that loves.”

b. Interpres. tis. (...). es nombre simple. (...) no esta en vso. quiere dezir interprete. **mediante**: & mensaiero: y el que traslada algo de vna lengua en otra. (Alonso de Palencia, *Universal vocabulario en latín y en romance*, 1490, CORDE)

“Interpres, -tis () is a simple name. (...) it is not in use; it means interpreter, **mediator**, and messenger, and someone who translates something from one language to another.”

c. Internuncius. es **mediante**: o mensaiero entre ambas partes. (Alonso de Palencia, *Universal vocabulario en latín y en romance*, 1490, CORDE)

“Internuncius. Is a **mediator** or messenger between both parties.”

Otherwise, most of the examples of *mediante* found in the fifteenth century can be described as prepositions. The order of the elements was the same as that in the prepositional phrases: *mediante* came before the nominal element governed by it. Furthermore, *mediante* also appeared in the singular as a fixed form, even if it was accompanied by a plural nominal phrase (19).

- (19) La reyna doña ysabel, que tenía vn singular desseo de proueer en las yglesias de sus reynos de personas notables, suplicó al papa que proueyesse a este claro varón del obispado de córdoua, el qual fue proueydo de aquella yglesia & **mediante** los ruegos y exortaciones que de parte de la reyna le fueron fechas, aceptó la prouisión que el papa le hizo de aquella dignidad. (Hernando del Pulgar, *Crónica de los Reyes Católicos*, 1486, CORDE)

“Queen Isabella, who had a singular desire to have notable people in the churches of her kingdom, begged the Pope to give the bishopric of Cordoba to this distinguished man, who was granted that

church and, **thanks to** the pleading and exhortation of the Queen, accepted the Pope's granting him that dignity."

Moreover, even when the present participle shows plural agreement with the following nominal complement, its reading is usually that of a preposition with the above-mentioned values of 'with, by way of, thanks to'. Also, the syntax of the construction is mostly that of a preposition and not that of an absolute clause: the nominal element accompanying *mediante* is postposed in most cases. In fact, of the total of 37 cases with plural agreement documented in the fifteenth century, only eight have the noun phrase before *mediante*. Indeed, these are always fixed constructions in which the noun phrase in front of *mediante* is a personal pronoun or a demonstrative (*ellos mediantes*, *aquellas mediantes* 'because of them, thanks to them'). The remaining examples show the syntax typical of prepositional government and characteristic prepositional meaning. We are, therefore, dealing with hybrid constructions imitating rhetorical patterns which aspire to make Old Spanish more similar to Latin.

Example (20) shows this hybrid character of *mediante* when used in the plural: "la boz humana se faze mediantes .ix. ofiçios" can be interpreted as 'the human voice is produced via/by way of/thanks to nine actions'. This gloss would be confirmed by the fact that *mediantes ix ofiçios* is a parallel structure to *mediante agua & aire* 'through water and air', which appears a little earlier in (20). In this case, the plural variant *mediantes* is not used, despite the plural nature of *agua & aire* 'water and air'.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, in both cases, *mediante* is governed by the verb *se faze* 'it is made' on which it depends directly, which makes it difficult to attribute a verbal value to *mediante* and reinforces the hypothesis that it has prepositional value in (20). In the same vein, the [-animated] character of the noun phrase that accompanies *mediante-mediantes* prevents a mediation reading and favors their interpretation as prepositions denoting the instrument or means by or with which an action is achieved or accomplished. In other words, when the noun governed by *mediante* is a [-human, -animated, -agentive] noun, the event being talked about does not occur 'with the help or intervention of someone', but rather, since there is no entity that can perform any action, the interpretation of *mediante* with the sense of 'by way of, by means of' is triggered. When in the construction there is no agent controlling the action, an instrumental interpretation is activated. The noun that appears next to *mediante* no longer 'intervenes or helps' but becomes the means or instrument through which an action is carried out or a state is reached.

- (20) Musam. desta causa dixeron algunos llamada de moys: por quel son dela musica mayor mente & qual quier sonable boz se faze **mediante** agua & ayre & que por ende fingeron ser .ix. musas: por que la boz humana se faze **mediantes** .ix. ofiçios (Alonso de Palencia, *Universal vocabulario en latín y en romance*, 1490, CORDE)

"Muse. Some called this the call of the muses, because the sound of the music and any voice that sounds is mainly done **through** water and air. Therefore, they pretended that there were nine muses since the human voice is produced **through** nine actions."

Examples in which *mediante* has a plural form (*mediantes*) often appear in constructions in which the noun phrase governed by *mediante* refers to people. This personal reference could favor an interpretation in terms of an absolute clause: the character [+animate, +human] of the noun that accompanies *mediante* can confer a predicative character on the construction in which *mediante* has both an adjectival and a participial value.

However, it is often the case, even when the nominal element that appears next to *mediante* refers to an animate entity, that we are far from the reading of an absolute clause, since the animate entity usually has the role of a means through which something is done or achieved and not of an agent that

<sup>19</sup> Certainly, it could be argued that until the eighteenth century, with phrases formed by the coordination of two singular nouns, the verb could agree in both singular and plural. That said, it would seem that the presence of *mediante* that appears later could have tipped the balance in favor of the plural agreement. However, this does not appear to be the case.

performs the action (Sánchez López 2014, p. 413). This is the case in example (21), in which even the personal pronoun *ellos* ‘they’ appears before *mediante*. This order and the agreement between *mediantes* and the personal pronoun in the third person could lead to a reading of ‘with them intervening’. However, the reading of the whole passage favors an instrumental interpretation in terms of ‘by way of them, thanks to them’, which does not necessarily imply an active intervention of the children mentioned in the example. Rather, children are the means through which the father gains friends. Therefore, this use of *mediante* in (21) is closer to the semantics associated with the preposition, since the reading of this passage does not seem to confer any kind of agentive role on the referent of the animated noun phrase, but rather, as pointed out earlier, this prepositional phrase seems to denote an instrument through which an action is carried out or an event takes place. Thus, a Latinizing construction was being used for the expression of prepositional values. That is, to say, a Romance construction is hiding under a Latin guise.

- (21) E si tanto el padre bive que los fijos a senio lleguen, exemplos buenos e menospreçio del mundo d’ellos como expertos confirmantes, speçializantes lo que él ha visto e cognoçido. Allende d’esto, en estas hedades las amistades que ellos **mediantes** ganan escusan de costas ganaçiosas, acarreadas por ellos (Enrique de Villena, *Tratado de la consolación*, 1424, CORDE)

“And if a father lives so long that his children grow old, [they will become] good examples and will despise their world as experts who can confirm and detail what their father has seen and known. Beyond this, the friendships which [old people] gain at that age **through** [their children] compensate for what they have cost them.”

The non-agentive character of the referent of the noun phrase [+animated, +human] that appears next to *mediante* (*ellos mediante*) is further highlighted in examples, such as (22). In fact, in this case, it does not seem that the early prophets could be considered mediators, but rather the instruments through which the *law* was spread.

- (22) fizieron pedernal en non oyr la ley que mando el señor delas huestes con su espíritu **mediantes** los prophetas primeros (Anónimo, *Biblia romanceada*. *Real Academia de la Historia*, p. 87, c1400, CORDE)

“they insisted on not hearing the law that the Lord of Hosts sent with his spirit **through** the early prophets.”

Examples like (21) and (22) allow *mediante* to be considered a preposition that, on occasion, lends itself to rhetorical license, which was very much to medieval taste. In this sense, it is significant that the first example of plural *mediante* (*mediantes*) agreeing with a preceding noun phrase is not found in texts until 1424. Up to that point, the post-positioning of the nominal phrase was the rule, even when *mediante* appeared in plural form. This fact reinforces the hypothesis that the pre-position of the nominal complement and the plural agreement—otherwise a minority—appear to be more of a Latinizing trend with a syntactic structure closer to that of the mother tongue that could be achieved rather than effective use of an absolute clause in the Romance language. Significantly, the first examples with a nominal element positioned before *mediante* that have been retrieved in the work of Villena (an author known for his Latinizing syntax).<sup>20</sup>

Another indication that points to the possibility that the plural use of *mediante* was the result of a Latinizing trend is found in examples, such as (23), where the plural of *mediante* is used despite the fact that the nominal element governed by it appears in the singular.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Sánchez López (2014, p. 416) also commented on the limited functionality of the Latinized constructions.

<sup>21</sup> It could be argued, however, that the nominalizations with neuter *lo* can have a collective meaning which justifies the plural agreement.

- (23) “La santa sanctorum del tabernáculo enseñava el çielo emperial, que es asignado a la santa Trinidat et a los sus ángeles; et el santuario del tabernáculo, que era en doble mayor, enseñava e demostrava la tierra e la mar; por quanto era común a los saçerdotes; la çaga del tabernáculo blanca enseñava el çielo christalino; las pieles, **mediantes** lo bermejo, enseñavan el çielo estrelloso del firmamento (Enrique de Villena, *Tratado de Astrología*, 1428, CORDE)

“The sanctum sanctorum of the tabernacle showed the imperial heaven, which is assigned to the Holy Trinity and their angels, and the sanctuary of the tabernacle, which was twice as large, showed the land and the sea since it was common to the priests. The rear of the tabernacle, which was white showed the crystalline sky; the hides, **by means of** the red, showed the starry sky of the firmament.”

The syntactic and semantic behavior of constructions with *mediante* from their introduction into the language in the fourteenth century contributes to the idea that from this moment onwards we have to do with an instrumental or causal preposition. The constructions close to absolute clauses are the result of rhetorical artifice. In fact, the process of consolidation of *mediante* in Old Spanish is so advanced in the fifteenth century that there are documented examples in which *mediante* is followed by the preposition *de* (24). A century later, the preposition *a* will be added (25). However, none of them will take hold.<sup>22</sup>

- (24) a. Y quando fallare onbre ley y encomendaças tales que se alcance **mediante de** sus çiençias y obras este grado angelical, ( . . . ) ella sin dubda es la Ley, con la qual será seguro que permanecerá su alma en el ligamiento de las vidas después de la muerte del cuerpo.” (Anónimo, *Traducción castellana del Libro de El Kuzari de Yehudah Halevi*, c1450, CORDE)

“And when a man finds such a law and such commendations that he can achieve this angelic degree **through** his knowledge and works, this is no doubt the law with which, he may be sure, his soul will remain in the union of lives after the death of the body.”

b. La segunda rrazon es por que procurar saber las cosas aduenjderas **mediante de** los spiritus malignos es graue pecado. (Lope de Barrientos, *Tratado de adivinar y magia*, 1445, CORDE)

“The second reason is that it is a serious sin to try to know the things that will come **through** the evil spirits.”

- (25) Amigo di de buen grado que **mediante a** mi gran dios yo satisfare a los dos lo que me aueys demanda(n)do (Micael de Carvajal, *Tragedia Josephina*, a1540, CORDE)

“Friend, kindly say that **through** my great God, I will satisfy both of you in what you have asked of me.”

The presence of these prepositions next to *mediante* has been explained as an example of the re-categorization of the present participle as a preposition (Espinosa Elorza 2010, p. 245). However, given that we already have clear examples of the prepositional value of *mediante* since the fourteenth century, it seems that the presence of *a* ‘to’ and *de* ‘of’ (which have no semantic value in the constructions

<sup>22</sup> However, they come to have sufficient significance for the conjunctive variants *mediante de que* and *mediante a que* to be developed.

(i) la cual mejora en cuanto a la dicha D.a Jusepa me pertenece, **mediante de que** como está dicho, yo pagué su dote de entrada en el convento y gasto. (Juan de Ayala, *Testamento*, 1658, CORDE) “This improvement, in reference to the aforementioned Dona Jusepa, belongs to me **since** as has been said, I paid for her dowry to enter the convent and the associated expenses.”

(ii) No puede estimarse por excesiva esta suma **mediante a que** en ella se incluye el valor del chile (José María Quirós, *Memoria de Instituto*, 1817, siglo XIX, CORDE) “This sum of money cannot be considered excessive as it includes the price of chili.”

*mediante a* or *mediante de*) was due to the strangeness of *mediante* as a preposition. When these prepositions were added to *mediante*, its inclusion in the paradigm of the prepositions was validated, conferring on the structures *mediante a* and *mediante de*, the form of a prepositional expression.<sup>23</sup> Something similar happened to *no obstante de*, *no embargante de*, and *no contrastante de* ‘in spite of’ (cf. Garachana Camarero 2018). Sánchez López (2016), following Berg (1998, p. 173), explains this type of change by analogical paradigmatic pressure, which particularly affects meaning-bearing words.<sup>24</sup> Later on, Fisher (2011, p. 35) points to the formal or semantic similarity of new constructions with others belonging to a well-consolidated paradigm in the language as a decisive element in the consolidation of new forms in the language (Sánchez López 2016).

Another argument in defense of the grammatical status of *mediante* as a preposition is its early use in coordinated prepositional phrases, such as those of (26) and (27). These examples show that the prepositional phrase headed by *mediante* is coordinated with another one introduced by a synonymous preposition, with an instrumental (27) or causal (28) meaning, *por* ‘with, through, by’.

- (26) No biuos estantes. O no firmes. De quales naturas. De como se deuen dar o **por** quien: & **mediante** quien. (Fernando Mejía, *Libro intitulado Nobiliario vero*, 1477–85, CORDE)

“Not being alive, or not [being] firm. Of what nature. On how they should be given or **by** whom: and **through** whom.”

- (27) y que por eso acostumbran los cristianos derramar con devoción agua bendita sobre las sepulturas, porque, **mediante** aquella santa agua y **por** la devoción con que allí se derrama, huyen los demonios de los monumentos [Talavera, *Impugnación*, 1478, CORDE]

“And that because of that Christians are accustomed to spilling holy water with devotion on the graves, because, **through** that holy water and **through** the devotion that is spilled there, the demons of monuments flee.”

Further proof of the consolidation of *mediante* in the Spanish grammatical system can be found in the examples in which *mediante* governs a relative clause (28), an indirect question (29), or a completive clause (30).

- (28) y ouo el grado singular espiritual **mediante** el qual se juntó al Nuestro Señor y a las ynteligençias separadas (Anónimo, *Traducción castellana del Libro de El Kuzari de Yehudah Halevi*, c1450, CORDE)

“and he had reached the singular spiritual level **through** which Our Lord and these different kinds of intelligence were joined.”

- (29) Los círculos, cuadrángulos y cuadrados que en él se consideran, las líneas diametrales, colaterales, verticales ( . . . ) diagonales, horizontales y de la contingencia, y las demás, **mediante** con qué y por dónde ha de obrar (Luis Pacheco de Narváez, *Advertencias para la enseñanza de la filosofía y destreza de las armas*, 1642, CORDE)

“The circles, quadrangles, and squares which are included in it, the diametrical, collateral, vertical, [ . . . ], diagonal, horizontal, and tangential lines, etcetera, **with** which and along which it will act.”

- (30) en lo que toca a cardoso el es moço muy onrad y visto su buen tino he hecho con el lo que me pidio **mediante que** me dixo queria mucho a vm. (Fernández Alcaide 2009)

<sup>23</sup> I refer to the expanded paradigm of prepositions since in these cases *mediante a/mediante de* function as prepositional phrases and not as stand-alone prepositions.

<sup>24</sup> In Sánchez López (2014, pp. 415–16), a cross with *por medio de* is proposed as a possible explanation for the existence of *mediante de*.

“As far as Cardoso is concerned, he is a very honest young man and, given his good sense, I have done with him what he asked me **since** he told me that he loved Your Worship very much.”

But maybe the most conclusive proof of the prepositional nature of *mediante* from its very first documentation is found in the example of the translation of *De re rustica*, also known as *Opus agriculturae*, by Ferrer Sayol, quoted earlier. The example is repeated below (14'). It is significant that this early example of Ferrer Sayol translates the Latin preposition *per* 'by, with' by *mediante* (see 31 for the Latin example). That is to say, Ferrer Sayol resorts to *mediante* as an alternative to *per*, whose prepositional value in Latin is beyond doubt and whose parallelism with Spanish *por* 'by' could have favored the use of this preposition instead of the innovative *mediante*.

(14') Otra manera ay de fazer vññas es a saber que hombre ha muchas cañas al derredor de la parra o de la çepa. E ata hombre los sarmjentos a cada vna caña al entorno. E los vnos sarmjentos se ligan con los otros mediante las cañas. (Ferrer Sayol, *Libro de Palladio*, 1380–1385, CORDE)

“There is another way of making vines, namely that you put many canes around the vine or the stock. And you must tie the shoots around each cane. And some shoots are linked with the others **through** the canes.”

(31) aliud genus est in quo cannis pluribus circa dispositis ipsa uitis **per** cannas sarmentis ligatis in orbiculos flectitur se sequentes. (Palladius Rutilius Taurus Aemilianus, *Opus agriculturae* (LLA 603)—LLT-B lib.: 3, cap.: 11, pag.: 78, linea: 2, *Brepolis*.)

“There is another procedure in which the vine itself, **with** several canes places around it, and with the shoots intertwined by means of the canes, twist in successive circles.”

In view of the above, it does not seem possible to defend the idea of an evolutionary path for *mediante* leading from a present participle used in an absolute clause to a preposition. The data we have available reflect its clearly grammatical use from its beginnings. The few examples that could fall under the rubric of an absolute ablative structure can be understood as the result of a Latinizing trend, which was in decline from the end of the fifteenth century. In this way, in the sixteenth century, constructions in which a nominal element is placed before *mediante* are practically reduced to the lexicalized expression *Dios mediante* 'with the help of God', which already alternates with the alternative *mediante Dios* (32). In this century, the use of the plural of *mediante* diminishes drastically. In fact, although the possibility of a plural agreement persists until the twentieth century, it is a stereotypical formulation which is not really productive in the language. Thus, the most recent examples in our corpora appear under the lexicalized expressions *mediantes las oraciones* 'through the prayers' (33) and *Dios y la justicia mediante* 'with the help of God and justice' (34). In both cases, *mediante* has a prepositional value.

(32) e **mediante Dios** llegarés en buena disposición (Fernando de la Torre, *Libro de las veynte cartas e quistiones*, c1449, CORDE)

“And you will arrive in good **in good order**.”

(33) Andamos padre mio en esta machina de negoçio tan grande en sy y en los muchos negocios que dependen del; alumbre su divyna Magestad al Rey nuestro Señor y a sus ministros para que en todo se acierte a hacer su santa voluntad, como lo confio en su misericordia **mediantes** las oraçiones de Vuestra R. (Pascual Boronat & Barrachina, *Los moriscos españoles y su expulsión*, 1901, CORDE)

“We are engaged, Father, in this business which is so great in itself, and in the many matters which depend on it; may His Divine Majesty enlighten our Lord the king and his ministers so that in everything His holy will may be done, as I trust in His mercy, **through** the prayers of Your Reverence.”



- (34) Dios y la justicia **mediantes** han de coger a los bandidos, (Tomás Carrasquilla, *La marquesa de Yolombó*, 1928, CORDE)

“With the help of God and justice, they will catch the bandits.”

## 5. The Influence of Culture on the Evolution of Languages. Grammatical Borrowings

At this point, it is important to return to the hypothesis of the grammatical calque that I have focused on in this work as a possible explanation for the existence of *mediante* in Spanish. In fact, the first documentation of *mediante* in Old Spanish in the fourteenth century are from the work of the Aragonese Juan Fernández de Heredia and the Catalan Ferrer Sayol, as well as from two other texts, also written in the Kingdom of Aragon, namely, *Memoria de las labranzas* and the *Gestas del rey don Jayme de Aragón*. Therefore, the recourse to *mediante* may have to do with the influence of the author’s mother tongue and culture (Catalan and Aragonese). Indeed, when commenting on Villena’s profuse use of the present participle in this work, [Pons Rodríguez \(2015\)](#) points out the following:

Como elemento impulsor de esta característica de su *usus scribendi*, además del peso del latín, no se puede descartar el que este rasgo fuera propio de la lengua aragonesa, que tan afín le resultaba. ([Pons Rodríguez 2015](#), p. 406)

“As a driving force of this characteristic of his *usus scribendi*, in addition to the weight of Latin, it cannot be ruled out that this trait was characteristic of the Aragonese language, which was so similar to it”. [my translation]

This influence of the linguistic varieties of the eastern part of the Peninsula on medieval and Renaissance Spanish has been observed in other areas of its grammar; for example, the extension of the lack of number and gender inflection in the participle of the compound tenses ([Fernández-Ordóñez 2011](#); [Rodríguez Molina 2010](#)), in the evolution of certain locative expressions, and of particular prepositions and conjunctions ([Octavio de Toledo y Huerta 2016](#); [Ridruejo 1984](#)), as well as the use of the indicative future in counterfactual subordinate clauses ([Ridruejo 1984](#)).

However, it should not be forgotten that the presence of the present participle in Catalan and Aragonese could also be the result of a learned borrowing introduced at the end of the Middle Ages. Indeed, [Campos Souto \(2001, p. 373\)](#) and [Mesa Sanz \(2004\)](#) point out that present participles in the vernacular language do not constitute patrimonial forms. Specifically, [Mesa Sanz \(2004, p. 371\)](#) considers the existence of the present participle in Romance languages to be the result of the rhetorical artifice of the medieval language so that no Romance language inherits it directly from Latin.<sup>25</sup> However, whatever the origin of the use of present participles in the linguistic varieties of the eastern part of the Peninsula, the imprint of Catalan and Aragonese on the Spanish language cannot be ignored, either as importers of linguistic novelties or as the origin of innovations<sup>26</sup> ([Fernández-Ordóñez 2011](#); [Octavio de Toledo y Huerta 2017a](#); [Pons Rodríguez 2015](#); [Ridruejo 1984](#); [Rodríguez Molina 2010](#)). In the specific case of *mediante*, Aragonese or Catalan authors are the first to use this grammatical form in

<sup>25</sup> According to [Bassols de Climent \(1992, p. 234\)](#):

Si bien en el período clásico tiene [el participio de presente] un significado acusadamente verbal en cuanto expresaba acciones (como los verbos) y no cualidades (como los adjetivos), no obstante ya en el latín arcaico y popular va ganando terreno su valor nominal sobre el verbal. Triunfa esta tendencia en romance ( . . . ).

While in the classical period, [the present participle] has a markedly verbal meaning insofar as it expressed actions (like verbs) and not qualities (like adjectives), in archaic and popular Latin, its nominal value steadily gains ground over the verb. This trend prevails in Romance ( . . . ).  
[my translation]

<sup>26</sup> An identical influence is observed in the emergence of *no obstante*, *no embargante*, and *no contrastante* (cf. [Garachana Camarero 2018](#)). And the same can be said of the preposition *durante*.

their works written in Spanish, so it is safe to assume that Aragonese and Catalan would have served as catalysts for the introduction of a Latinizing structure in Spanish that would not triumph, in general, but would leave its mark on the preposition *mediante*.<sup>27</sup>

In dealing with the influences of eastern linguistic varieties on the introduction of learned (Latin) linguistic traits in Old Spanish, [Octavio de Toledo y Huerta \(2017a\)](#), p. 82) points out that key authors from the fourteenth century were trained in Italy or in Catalonia and Aragon: Villena, Mena, Santillana, Martínez de Toledo, or Alfonso de la Torre, among others. It is also important to point out, following [Octavio de Toledo y Huerta \(2017a\)](#), that the Latinisms introduced in the Romance languages at this time arrived via translations of legal, administrative, or technical texts so that there is no diglossic situation that might have inhibited their extension into the vernacular language. On the contrary, they are what [Barra Jover \(2010\)](#), p. 64) called “unmarked Latinisms”, which, since they were not introduced into the language through prestigious variants, but through everyday communicative situations among speakers, can be consolidated more easily into the language.

Present participle constructions re-analyzed as prepositions constituted a rhetorical fashion on the rise at this point in Western European history. This is evidenced by the fact that similar structures exist in other Western European languages. In the specific case of *mediante*, there are synonymous forms in Catalan *mediant* (35), French *moyennant* (36), or Italian *mediante* (37), whose first documentations are close in time to those of Spanish (all seem to be concentrated in the fourteenth century).

- (35) speram en Nostre Senyor Déu, **mediant** lo seu divinal auxili, partir de aci lo terç jorn de festes de Nadal (*Lletres reials a la ciutat de Girona*, 1293, II-6, Carta 627, linia: 18, CICA)

“we hope in our Lord God, **through** his divine help, to leave from here the third day of the Christmas festival.”

- (36) ... **moiennant** les prieres de l’eglise (JEAN GOLEIN, *Rational B.D.*, c.1370–1372, p. 679). [*Traité du sacre*, DMF]

“**thanks to** the prayers of the church.”

- (37) E **mediante** la grazia di Dio tutti gli altri guarirono (Simone Sigoli, *Viaggio al monte Sinai*, TLIO)

“And **by** the grace of God, all the others will be healed.”

In addition to *mediante* (and *durante*), Spanish, Catalan, Aragonese, French, and Italian also employ *no obstante* and *no contrastante* ‘although’. Moreover, Spanish and Aragonese also used *no embargante* ‘in spite of, although, however’, which, like *no obstante*, was used as a preposition, a conjunction and a counter-argumentative discourse marker (cf. [Garachana Camarero 2018](#); [Pérez Saldanya and Salvador 2014](#)). All of these forms are Latinisms, which were disseminated in European languages from the fourteenth century. Consequently, attention should be drawn to the importance of not misidentifying grammatical change as grammaticalization. In fact, the data provided by the texts do allow us to explain the introduction of *mediante* into Spanish as a result of a grammatical calque that, coming from the east of the Peninsula, triumphed in Spanish, while it was lost in Catalan. What was the origin of the misunderstanding? It seems to be the wide explanatory power of the Theory of Grammaticalization, which can sometimes make it possible to explain on the basis of this approach processes of change that respond to other evolutionary mechanisms, such as the grammatical calque (for this question cf.

<sup>27</sup> An identical influence is observed in the emergence of *no obstante*, *no embargante*, and *no contrastante* (cf. Removed for peer review.). The same can be said for the preposition *durante*.

This idea, applied to the present participle, in general, is already found in [Ridruejo \(1984\)](#). On the other hand, [Lapesa \(1986\)](#) and [Meilán García \(1991\)](#) point out a possible influence of French for the use of present participles, in general, in Old Spanish.

Harris and Campbell 1995). It is, therefore, necessary to pay attention to the data and not to ignore the socio-cultural factors in which the language is set and which, therefore, can be decisive in its history.

## 6. And after the Calque . . . Grammaticalization?

In the previous pages, I have argued that the existence of *mediante* in Spanish is not the result of a grammaticalization process. Nonetheless, from the preposition *mediante*, the conjunction *mediante que* 'because' was later developed, the existence of which could perhaps be explained as a case of secondary grammaticalization.<sup>28</sup> However, the concept of secondary grammaticalization itself is not well outlined in grammatical theory and is entangled in a theoretical discussion which is yet to be resolved. If we add to this the fact that the existence of *mediante que* can be argued to be the result of the broadening of the scope of the preposition *mediante* by coming to encompass a whole clause, we can explain the emergence of *mediante que* as an analogical expansion which was favored by the re-analysis of *mediante*. Consequently, it is also possible to explain the existence of *mediante que* without resorting to the theory of grammaticalization.<sup>29</sup> As I will demonstrate in the following paragraphs, the process follows paths of change in which analogy is key.

The consolidation of *mediante* in Spanish, which, as was stated, became evident in the attempt to adapt it paradigmatically to the language through combinations with other prepositions that would turn it into a prepositional locution, also led to further enlargement of its scope. Thus, from the sixteenth century onwards, we begin to find instances of *mediante* governing verbal infinitives and complement clauses. This is the beginning of the process of formation of the conjunction *mediante que*. As shown in (38), the prepositional use of *mediante* before nominal elements allowed its analogical extension in contexts in which this nominal element was an infinitive, which at times, in spite of being preceded by an article, had a verbal value (see examples in 39, and especially Sánchez López 2016). From these constructions, an additional analogical extension of *mediante* emerged when it started to be employed before complement clauses headed by *que*. From here, there was a re-analysis of *mediante* and *que* as causal conjunction. At this point, as pointed out by Sánchez López (2016), *mediante* loses its traits of semantic selection, as it goes from governing terms that denote entities that can be interpreted as instruments to governing sentences (40).

(38) [PP[<sub>prep</sub> *Mediante* [NP]] > [PP[<sub>prep</sub> *Mediante* [INF]] > [PP[<sub>prep</sub> *Mediante* [QUE + CLAUSE]] > [CAUSAL SENTENCE [causal conj. *Mediante que* [CLAUSE]]]

(39) a. Todos estos indios destas prouinçias referidas (. . . ) es gente que vsan y acostumbran poner en las flechas hierba ponzoñosa y pestilencial, con que matan la gente (. . . ) y **mediante** el vsar desta hierua pestilencial para su defensa, se conseruan y an defendido siempre de los españoles, y nunca an sido enteramente subiectos, ni domados dellos. (Fray Pedro de Aguado, *Historia de Santa Marta y Nuevo Reino de Granada*, 1573–1581, CORDE)

“All these Indians of the aforementioned provinces are people who usually put on the arrows a poisonous and pestilent herb with which they kill people, and, **through** using this stinking herb for their defense, they keep and have always defended themselves from the Spaniards, and they have never been completely subdued or controlled by them.”

b. paresciole a Yamque Yupangue que su padre era ya de gran edad y que **mediante andar** ellos en la guerra sería posible morir y no hallarse ellos a su muerte (Juan de Betanzos, *Suma y narración de los incas*, 1551, CORDE)

<sup>28</sup> The concept of *secondary grammaticalization* was coined by Givón (1991) to refer to the second type of change that Kuryłowicz (1965) proposed in his definition of grammaticalization, namely, a change that leads from grammatical elements to more grammatical ones. Later, Traugott (2002) created the notion of *primary grammaticalization* to allude to the evolutive steps that lead from the lexical to the grammatical. For a review of the concept of secondary grammaticalization, cf. Winter-Froemel (2014).

<sup>29</sup> The most detailed study on the creation of *mediante que* is that of Sánchez López (2016).

“It seemed to Yamque Yupangue that his father was very old and that, **since** they were at war, he could die and they would no be present when he died.”

- (40) Los papeles periodicos no dan a sus autores menos derecho; pues el producir sus noticias en esta forma no es efecto de corta literatura, sino de haver imaginado, que combenia propagar asi las noticias, **mediante que** se facilita la lectura de mayor numero de personas. (Juan Antonio Llorente, *Discursos sobre el orden de procesar en los tribunales de Inquisición*, 1797, CORDE)

“Periodical publications do not give their authors less right; for producing their news in this way is not the consequence of bad literature, but of their having imagined that it was appropriate to publish news in this way **since** it made it easier for a greater number of people to read it.”

The causal meaning of *mediante que* is explained by the fact that this sense was already one of its prepositional values. That is, the sense of mediation and of a means by which an action is carried out or a state is reached evolve into causation: carrying out an action by way of someone or something allows for the inference that such thing is done thanks to it, that is, because of it. In the prepositional uses, the sense of causation must be understood as a positive cause. In the conjunctive uses, this causal sense was established in the expression of the explanatory or justifying cause, which, as [Sánchez López \(2016\)](#) points out, is the characteristic value of the sentences headed by *mediante que*.

## 7. Conclusions

In this paper, I have reflected on the introduction of the preposition *mediante* in Spanish. Traditionally, its emergence in the language has been described as a process of grammaticalization. However, a detailed analysis of the data shows us, from its very first documentation, examples in which *mediante* appears well established as a preposition (in fact, it already existed in Latin). The constructions in which *mediante* has a verbal value in Old Spanish are the result of the Latinizing trends of the (pre)Renaissance, which, in spite of the positive appraisal of vernacular languages, exalted Latin to the extent of generating syntactic structures that violated the grammar of these languages. Hybrid constructions in which *mediante* appeared with plural morphology—impossible for Spanish prepositions, which are never inflected—can not be considered in most cases as verbal uses of *mediante*. In fact, in almost all cases, despite its plural form, *mediante* is a grammatical particle with a prepositional function.

Considering the difficulty of explaining the existence of *mediante* as the result of a process of grammaticalization, an alternative explanation is preferred based on the detailed analysis of the examples obtained from CORDE and the GRADIA corpora. This study has shown that the first examples of *mediante* are documented in texts written by Aragonese and Catalan authors. Something similar happens with other prepositions, conjunctions, and discourse markers originating in early present participles, namely, *durante* ‘during’, *no obstante*, *no embargante* ‘in spite of, although, however’, and *no contrastante* ‘in spite of, although’. Moreover, these constructions have been documented in the languages of Western Europe since the fourteenth century with similar values. Consequently, the hypothesis can be ventured that they consist of a grammatical borrowing from Latin that spread through the European languages and reached Old Spanish through the Crown of Aragon, or, more specifically, through Aragonese and Catalan.

The triumph of *mediante* as a preposition probably has much to do with the exceptional character of present participles in Spanish, which would have favored the primacy of prepositional values, which did not violate the syntactic rules of Spanish where the present participle is not a grammatical class. However, as has already been pointed out, the prepositions coming from participles have a form and meaning that are not particularly consistent with a class of words characterized by their low semantic load and limited phonetic length. Quite possibly, for this reason, examples soon began to be documented in which *de* was placed after the preposition, and more rarely, *a*, in clear parallelism with what happened with *no embargante de*, *no obstante de*, and *no contrastante de* ‘in spite

of'.<sup>30</sup> The postposing of a preposition constitutes a grammatical redundancy, given that *mediante*, *durante*, *no embargante*, *no obstante*, and *no contrastante* were already prepositions. Then, how does one explain this redundancy? The answer is that the use of the prepositions *a* and *de* following *mediante*, *durante*, *no obstante*, *no embargante*, and *no contrastante* was an attempt to formally integrate these forms derived from a participle into the paradigm of prepositions. This highlights the importance of analogy in speakers' linguistic behavior, as they often try to standardize grammatical paradigms on the basis of the functional or semantic resemblance they perceive between linguistic forms.

Finally, once the prepositional form was established in the language, the causal conjunction *mediante que* was created, which was used in Spanish from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. The formation of the conjunction *mediante que* from the preposition *mediante* suggests its re-analysis in contexts in which *mediante* does not govern a phrase, but rather a sentence. *Mediante que* is an extension of the prepositional use of *mediante* motivated by the analogical extension of the type of complement it appears next to. In the same way that *por* or *para* can be followed by a nominal element, an infinitive verb, or a sentence, *mediante* started out governing nominal phrases and ended up governing clauses as well. The process would have been facilitated by the use of *mediante* before infinitives. This functional change was accompanied by the consolidation of explanatory or justifiable causal meanings of *mediante que*, which did not become established in the language.

### Main Corpus

BREPOLIS = Brepolis Library of Latin Texts Series A–B, Turnhout, Brepols ([apps.brepolis.net](http://apps.brepolis.net)).

CICA = Corpus informatitzat del català antic (<http://www.cica.cat>).

CORDE = Real Academia Española, Banco de datos (CORDE) [en línea]. *Corpus diacrónico del español*. <<http://www.rae.es>> [Enero de 2015].

CORPES XXI = Real Academia Española, Banco de datos CORPES XXI [en línea]. *Corpus del Español del Siglo XXI*, <<http://web.frl.es/CORPES/view/inicioExterno.view>> [consulta junio 2016].

DMF = Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique/Université de Lorraine (2015): *Dictionnaire du Moyen Français* [online], <<http://www.atilf.fr/dmf>>.

GRADIA = Corpus de Gramática y diacronía ([gradiadiacronia.wix.com/gradia](http://gradiadiacronia.wix.com/gradia)).

TLIO = Corpus testuale dell'Italiano antico (<http://www.ovi.cnr.it/>).

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<sup>30</sup> Cuervo, in his note 143 on Bello's *Gramática*, points out the use of prepositions *durante*, *mediante*, *obstante*, *embargante*, *excepto* followed by *a* or *de*, as a result of the analogy with synonymous locutions, such as *a pesar de*, *sin embargo de*. For Cuervo, these are objectionable constructions which he qualifies as carelessness that “deben evitarse a todo trance” (‘should be avoided at all costs’, Cuervo note 143 in [Bello 1988](#), pp. 969–70. My translation).

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