Mark Waltermire*

A conceptual perspective of the evolution of Spanish *frente* from body part to locative/spatial concept and beyond

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**Abstract:** The Spanish word *frente* (O.Sp. *fruente* < Lat. *frōns*), meaning ‘forehead’, has changed gradually over time to be incorporated into a wide variety of modern forms that convey locative meanings and spatial relations as well as personal qualities. The purpose of the current study is to determine approximately when these new forms incorporating *frente* developed, the mechanisms for these various changes, and the cognitive ramifications of such developments. A total of 725 tokens of *frente* from works of fiction spanning three time periods (1200–1450; 1451–1750; 1751–2000) are analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively according to collocation, meaning, and syntactic phrase. Each of these analyses, when viewed holistically, shows that the original source lexeme has largely decategorialized as a noun and has been abstracted of its locative/spatial characteristics to be gradually incorporated into prepositional and adverbial forms. It is shown that, conceptually, prepositions profile spatial relations between a trajector and a landmark whereas adverbs profile the location of a trajector alone. These grammatical uses of *frente* as well as other even more abstract uses denoting personal qualities have developed over time due to cognitive processes such as abstraction, synecdoche, metaphor, and inference. Cases such as the evolution of *frente* from concrete noun to uses in locative/spatial forms as well as forms with even more abstract meanings give further justification for the need of a linguistic model that is cognitive-based.

**Keywords:** lexical change, semantic change, Spanish, Cognitive Grammar

1 Introduction

Throughout the past several decades, functional approaches to linguistics have focused on a unique process of evolution in grammars by which a lexical item gradually acquires one or more grammatical functions either in order to fulfill certain functions not yet encompassed by the existing grammar or to provide

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new alternatives to the pre-existing grammatical structure. It is also common
during this process for the source lexeme to remain in use even as new gram-
matical forms develop. Grammaticalization, which is defined by Harder and
Boye (2011: 63) as “diachronic change which gives rise to linguistic expressions
which are coded as discursively secondary” or essentially more grammatical in
nature, has been shown to be a common process among all languages. During
this process, the pathways of development are unidirectional and predictable
due to universal human cognitive processes that guide language use (Bybee
2003; Bybee et al. 1994; Heine 1997; Heine et al. 1991a, 1991b; Hopper and
Traugott 2003; Smith 2011).

One example of a lexeme that has developed into grammatical forms indi-
cating spatial relations in many languages is the word for ‘face’ or similar parts
of the body. Several studies (e.g. Svorou 1986, 1994; Heine 1997; Heine et al.
1991a, 1991b) have shown that in many languages the word for ‘face’ (through
metaphorical extension) acquires a grammatical function in forms similar to ‘in
front of’. It seems that such forms are capable of occurring in a wide variety
of typologically distinct languages due to the fact that the source lexeme is
generally considered to be an important part of the body that indicates mood,
disposition, intelligence, spirituality and similar concepts in all cultures. A
concrete body part such as the face seems to be more of an appropriate
candidate for purposes of grammaticalization because it is “accessible to
human experience” and can easily be “employed for the expression of less
accessible, more abstract concepts” (Heine et al. 1991a: 158–159). It would be
more unusual for a word meaning ‘eyebrow’, ‘temple’, ‘cheek’, etc. to attain new
meanings through the processes of grammaticalization due to the fact that these
body parts are not as indicative of human experience and are not generally
considered to be as important to the characterization of one’s emotions and
states of mind.

It is not surprising, then, to find that a similar type of change has occurred
in Spanish. The word frente (O.Sp. fruente < Lat. frōns), meaning ‘forehead’, has
changed gradually over time to be incorporated into a wide variety of modern
grammatical forms that convey locative meanings and spatial relations.¹
However, as is characteristic of many lexical changes, the original source form
remains in use even as newer forms develop. Therefore, when viewed diachro-
nically it can be seen that various forms, both grammatical and lexical in nature,
exist during different time periods. In the case of frente, many uses have
developed with the passage of time (mainly via preposition collocations), with

¹ The last appearance of the form fruente is in 1618 in the work Sátiras by Lope de Vega Carpio.
(CORDE)
each contributing to a richer, more complex grammar that affords speakers more possibilities in discourse. Though the current study will focus on examples of lexical change and extension to new contexts rather than grammaticalization in the strict sense, the two processes show many similarities such as abstraction away from the original source semantics as well as a change from an open class lexical item into one or more closed class grammatical forms. The purpose of the current study is to determine approximately when these new forms incorporating frente developed, the mechanisms for these various changes, and the cognitive ramifications of such developments.

2 Data collection and methods

Since obviously no examples of recorded conversational language exist for varieties of Spanish spoken before the twentieth century, written texts were used as the sources for the current data. In order to show approximately when certain forms incorporating frente emerged in Spanish, multiple texts were analyzed in which frente occurs at least once. These texts represent a mainly peninsular form of Spanish, though some of the later texts were written by Latin American authors. This is important in order to accurately explain the historical use and development of frente in its totality, including in Spanish-speaking areas other than just Spain. Of course, the older Spanish texts are the only available sources for the language as it was used before colonization of the Americas. As far as I am aware, however, the different uses of frente do not vary greatly from region to region (as there are only a certain number of preposition combinations used with frente in order to create new forms). It should be noted, however, that the frequency of occurrence of some of these forms may be higher in some areas than in others.

So as to pinpoint approximately when different forms using frente emerged in Spanish, three general time periods were chosen to roughly represent equal spans of time from the years 1200 to 2000, though these periods were not chosen arbitrarily. For the current study, I will refer to the following three time periods: (1) 1200–1450 (Old Spanish, pre-colonial), (2) 1451–1750 (early colonial), and (3) 1751–2000 (late colonial, post-colonial). The exact date of publication of several

2 Shifting the first two time periods by 50 years (i.e. pre-colonial (1200–1500), colonial (1500–1800), and post-colonial (after 1800), which would more accurately reflect periods of colonization, was undesirable in terms of achieving equal spans of time. If divided this way, the late colonial / post-colonial period would be underrepresented by 100 years.
texts (especially those written prior to 1400) is uncertain, which further necessitates the use of general time periods. Of the texts representing the period 1200 to 1450, I found approximately 225 tokens of *frente*. In order to more clearly describe the development of this lexeme over time, I decided to use a similar number of tokens via random selection for subsequent time periods, despite the much more frequent use of *frente* after 1450. This ensured a similar representation for each time period.

The data were retrieved from the *Corpus del Español* (Davies 2002) (hereafter CdE), a 100 million-word corpus of Spanish, and the *Corpus Diacrónico del Español* (Real Academia Española; hereafter CORDE), a 200 million-word corpus of Spanish. Both corpora include data spanning back to the early 1200s. These corpora allow one to search for individual lexical items (and different collocations in the case of CdE) by time period as well as by register (spoken language, fiction/books, newspapers, magazines, and academic writing) when applicable. Given the historical nature of the current study, the only register used was fiction/books. No translations from other languages were included in the current study. All examples presented in this study were retrieved from the CORDE online corpora and electronic texts made available online through the *Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes*. Since only 225 examples of *frente* were encountered in texts written prior to 1450, the examples for each of the two subsequent time periods were chosen at random using both electronic corpora. As mentioned previously, a similar number of examples was desired for each time period, so I decided to include 250 tokens of *frente* for each of the two latter periods, resulting in a total of 725 tokens of *frente*. Using electronic versions of texts proved to be invaluable due to the fact that examples of *frente* and the contexts in which it is used can be retrieved quickly. Context is extremely important since *frente* has many different uses developing over time whose meaning could only be determined from the full, original context in many cases. Context helped to indicate whether *frente* was being used to refer to a military front or not, whether it referred to the actual forehead or what the forehead represents (mental faculties, emotions, moods, etc.), and whether (when combined with the preposition *a* to form *al frente*) it was being used to describe the heading of a document or taking charge of a situation.

Particularly important in determining whether *frente* was being used to signify ‘forehead’, what that part of the body represents, or just the general ‘front of someone or something’, was the co-occurrence of body parts. When body parts co-occurred with *frente*, it was clear that it was being used to signify an actual forehead or brow. Out of the total 329 occurrences in which *frente* was used to signify this body part, 143 (43.5%) occurred with the description of one
or more different parts of the body. This did not automatically exclude other possibilities of meaning, of course, but it did give a good indication that frente was being used to refer to a ‘forehead’ or ‘brow’. The examples in which there were no co-occurrences of body parts were deciphered through context.

Also important in distinguishing between the different meanings of frente as the head of a noun phrase was the subject matter of the text. For example, the rites of baptism and confirmation and the authorities vested upon the bishop and priest in conducting these ceremonies is fully described in Siete partidas (Alfonso X, 1265). The use of frente in these texts surely signifies ‘forehead’. The use of definite articles (singular la and plural las), possessive determiners (mi ‘my’, tu ‘your’, su ‘his/her’, and nuestra ‘our’), and verbs and adjectives related to the forehead also indicated uses of frente for this body part. The following examples illustrate these types of occurrences.

(1) llegándose al rucio, le abrazó y le dio a beso de paz en la frente.
‘Coming up to the gray horse, he hugged it and gave it a kiss of peace on the forehead.’

(2) dio se en la frente una grand palmada.
‘She slapped herself hard on the forehead.’

(3) ya se arruga la frente.
‘He’s already furrowing his brow.’

(4) quiso adornar su calva y venerable frente con la corona Crotalogica.
‘[He] wanted to adorn his bald and venerable forehead with the Crotalogic crown.’
Several examples encountered in the various texts in which frente was used to signify ‘forehead’ include reference to frente as a symbol of the mind or state of mind. This conclusion is based largely on contextual evidence found in the texts. Consider the following two examples.

(5) *bajo la frente más negra; Hay pensamiento y hay vida.*

‘Beneath the darkest forehead there is thought and there is life.’

*(Martín Fierro, 470)*

(6) *en la frente llevas escrito que no te igualó en ligereza el Hipogrifo de Astolfo.*

‘You have written on your forehead that Hipogrifo de Astolfo did not equal you in agility.’

*(Don Quixote de la Mancha, Tomo I, 298, ch. 25)*

These uses suggest an even older meaning of frente that, according to Francisco del Rosal, originally derived from Greek *phronéo*, “which ... is to know, because it is the seat of wisdom and prudence” (1992: 329, my translation).

These source semantics were retained in Latin and later in its daughter languages, including Spanish. Other examples found in the texts indicate this meaning of frente without explicitly referring to this physical body part. In the following examples, the only interpretation that can be made with regards to the significance of frente is that it means ‘mind’.

(7) *ya no espero jamás cosa buena de muchacho, en quien advierto frente muy osada.*

‘I never expect good things from boys anymore, whom I warn (against having) a very audacious mind.’

*(Obras escogidas, “Defensa de las mujeres”, 53, Section 5)*

(8) *quien tal fruente tiene, segunt lo que aprendistes,*

who such mind has according to what you learned what
muestra?
it shows
‘According to what you have learned, what does it mean to have such a mind?’
(El libro del Cavallero Zifar, 267.4-5)

(9) guárda de la memoria. Que es la fruente.
guardian of the memory what is the mind
Ymagen del coraçon. Que son los oios.
reflection of the heart what are the eyes
‘Guardian of memory. Which is the mind. Reflection of the heart. Which are the eyes.’ (Estoria de España, par. 43)

It should be noted that each of the occurrences of frente just described co-occur with determiners (in the form of possessives and definite articles) or adjectives, which indicates that they are prototypical nouns. This concrete object (though not so much what it symbolizes) had already been generalized into the much more abstract concept of a front side of non-animate objects in Latin. Figure 1 shows the generalization of frente as ‘forehead’ to convey locative meanings for both animate and inanimate referents in Latin.

‘forehead’ → ‘front (+ animate) → ‘front (+/- animate)’

Figure 1: The path of generalization that affected the meaning of frente in Latin.

The source semantics of frente in Latin as a locative have been retained in Spanish, but have developed in other ways, namely by indicating space and quality, sometimes in ways that have resulted in uses that are distinct from those in other Romance languages.

The important question, of course, is how this generalization occurs. Heine et al. (1991a: 156–157) refer to the abstracting principle involved in this process as “isolating abstraction” in which “lexemes become more ‘abstract’ by losing their semantic specificities and being increasingly reduced ... to one particular part of their meaning”. In the case of frente, only one particular aspect of its original meaning (locative) remains in grammatical forms that occur later in its development, whereas before this generalization occurs it has richer meanings such as those described in Rosal (1992: 329) in which frente means ‘the seat of wisdom and prudence’ and is perceived as much more than just a locative. Once
this abstraction occurs, the process of metonymy associates a part of the body with the whole. Instead of referring to one specific area of the body, it now refers to a much larger, more general area of the body and thus attains the qualities that are characteristic of the front of the body in general (i.e. represents the front part of an animate referent). These cognitive processes precede the process of metaphorical extension in that the lexeme now represents a locative quality for animate referents that can extend to uses in other domains. The various shifts in domain correspond to the linear progression of domains set up in Heine et al. (1991a: 157) as represented in Figure 2.

PERSON > OBJECT > PROCESS > SPACE > TIME > QUALITY

Figure 2: Domains of conceptualization involved in metaphorical transfer.

It should be noted that *frente* would have already proceeded through the process of metonymy before reaching the domain of PERSON if it originally began as a specific part of the body that was gradually abstracted of one of its characteristics and synecdochically transferred to this domain in Latin. This locative concept (having resulted from isolating abstraction) was then transferred metaphorically to the domain of OBJECT. This follows from the basic logic that objects also have “fronts”.

Vantage point (perspective) of the speaker is very important in the construal of this front location considering that when the speaker changes locations with regards to an immobile object, the “front” changes as well. The development of *frente* in Spanish then proceeded to the domain of SPACE in which it indicates locative and spatial relations in adverbial and prepositional phrases that are relative to the speaker’s vantage point and the perception of a clear front-back axis. This transformation across conceptual domains concurs with the two major characteristics of metaphorical transfer described in Bybee et al. (1994: 283) in which: (1) there is a “shift from a more concrete to a more abstract domain” and (2) there is a “preservation of some of the relational structure originally expressed”.

As Heine et al. (1991a: 160–164) explain, the transfer from one domain to another does not happen in discrete steps. Rather, there is an overlap of meanings and domains or what they describe as “chains”. In the development of *frente* across the domains of PERSON > OBJECT > SPACE, there is an overlap of meanings in PERSON and OBJECT, given that both have “fronts”, and SPACE. In fact, it seems that the concept of SPACE as a relevant domain in its progression exists almost from the very beginning. The source lexeme, though concrete, is highly representative of a “front” SPACE, hence the use of *frente* in the
prepositional phrase *enfrente de* found as early as 1256 in the anonymously written *Carta de donación [Documentos de Alfonso X dirigidos a Andalucía]*. This aspect of *frente* actually persists across the domains of PERSON and OBJECT because it is part of its inherent meaning.

Once the conceptual meaning of *frente* became more abstract in Latin, thereby representing ‘a general front (of anything)’, it was free to be incorporated into locative and spatial predications in the form of an adverbial or prepositional phrase in Spanish. As Penny (1991: 197) has already stated, many prepositions in Spanish have been created on the basis of nouns. In other words, the locative/spatial concept associated with *frente* that has emerged as a result of the processes of isolating abstraction and synecdoche existed before prepositional phrases with *frente* emerged. The already-existing prepositions (en ‘in/on’, a ‘to’, and de ‘of/from’) were then combined with the new concept of *frente* as ‘front’ and could be incorporated into a variety of prepositional and adverbial phrases.

The syntactic elements that occur before and after *frente* were taken into account for all examples in order to determine its meanings and grammatical functions within a given context. As has already been stated, determiners occurring before the lexeme indicate nominal uses. The vast majority of examples from earlier texts indicate this type of usage (202/225, or 89.8% of total uses for the first time period). If a preposition (such as en, a, or de) occurs before *frente*, this signals adverbial and prepositional uses. The only exception to this, however, were cases in which *en* was used as a locative marker indicating a specific place ‘on the forehead’ (*en la frente*). These uses of *en* always co-occurred with the definite article. The possibility of such an intervening element is characteristic of members belonging to an open class (Bybee et al. 1994); in this case, as a noun. Therefore, in examples such as *Et de la confirmacion que facen los obispos con crisma en la fruente* ... ‘And concerning the confirmation that the bishops administer with a chrism on the forehead’, the locative preposition *en* is used as the head of a prepositional phrase indicating specific location (example from *Siete partidas, Tomo III, Partida IV*, 38, law 2).

In forms other than those meaning ‘forehead’, it is actually the occurrence of prepositions that determine the construal of *frente* because its later, more abstract meanings remain similar (indicating ‘front’ location or space) in most cases. Prepositions determine the discourse entity that receives reference from *frente* and what entity it relates to spatially (either a physical/concrete object or a more abstract concept). It should be noted, however, that the mere occurrence of *de* after *frente* does not automatically indicate a prepositional function. Several examples were encountered in which *de* simply indicated the possessor of a forehead or mind, as in:
la habló de un chisme mundano, para alejar Quizás algunas nubes sombrías que comenzaban a espesarse en la frente de la condesa. ‘She spoke to her of worldly gossip, maybe to drive away some dark clouds that were starting to gather on the countess’ forehead.’ (La mujer de todo el mundo, ch. 16.21-22).

Once again, however, these examples co-occur with the definite article la and point to a specific forehead or mind belonging to a specific person.

3 Syntactic positions and meanings of frente

By examining the semantic content and syntactic positions of frente in the three periods designated in Section 2, it will be possible to determine when particular forms using frente emerged in Spanish. Through the diachronic quantitative analysis of these factors, it will be possible to show the development in meaning of frente over time and, as a result, show the extension of this lexeme’s possible uses to domains other than the purely concrete and physical. Table 1 shows the position of frente with regards to other syntactic elements in each of the forms encountered for the current study and their percentages of occurrence for each time period. Table 2 shows the percentages of different meanings of frente by time period.

Table 1 clearly shows the expansion of grammatical forms incorporating frente over time. During the first time period, frente is used almost exclusively as a noun save for 23 uses (a mere 10.2% in the prepositional phrase enfrente de ‘in front of’ and the adverbials de frente ‘in front’ and frente a frente ‘face to face’). These meanings were already present in Latin, of course. The two adverbials, unlike enfrente de, however, did not appear in Spanish until the early 1400s (de fruente in 1406 (Historia del gran Tamorlán by Ruy González de Clavijo) and frente a frente in 1440 (Libro de amor e amicicia by Alonso Fernández de Madrigal)). Syntactic forms incorporating frente begin diversifying somewhat

Chi-square tests were run for both collocations (Table 1) and meanings (Table 2) of frente for each of the three time periods, but only for the subgroup of uses given for all three periods with the exception of frente a frente ‘face to face’, which was excluded due to only a single token in the first time period.
Table 1: Syntactic position of frente by time period.

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<thead>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(la(s)) frente(s)</td>
<td>108/225 (48%)</td>
<td>115/250 (46.0%)</td>
<td>35/250 (14.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEF.ART</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>en la(s) frente(s)</td>
<td>83/225 (36.9%)</td>
<td>45/250 (18.0%)</td>
<td>14/250 (5.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on DEF.ART</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>en frente de</td>
<td>15/225 (6.7%)</td>
<td>14/250 (5.6%)</td>
<td>4/250 (1.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in front of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other DET frente</td>
<td>11/225 (4.9%)</td>
<td>62/250 (24.8%)</td>
<td>21/250 (8.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de frente</td>
<td>7/225 (3.1%)</td>
<td>8/250 (3.2%)</td>
<td>13/250 (5.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

\(\chi^2 = 73.01; \text{df} = 8; p < 0.0001\)

| frente a frente    | 1/225 (0.4%) | 2/250 (0.8%) | 9/250 (3.6%) |
| face to face       |            |            |            |
| al frente de       | 0/225 (0%) | 1/250 (0.4%) | 30/250 (12.0%) |
| to DEF.ART of      |            |            |            |
| de enfrente        | 0/225 (0%) | 1/250 (0.4%) | 5/250 (2.0%) |
| from in front      |            |            |            |
| frente de          | 0/225 (0%) | 1/250 (0.4%) | 3/250 (1.2%) |
| front of enfrente  |            |            |            |
| frente             | 0/225 (0%) | 1/250 (0.4%) | 2/250 (0.8%) |
| front              |            |            |            |
| frente a frente    | 0/225 (0%) | 0/250 (0%) | 99/250 (39.6%) |
| front to al frente |            |            |            |
| to DEF.ART front   | 0/225 (0%) | 0/250 (0%) | 14/250 (5.6%) |
| del frente         | 0/225 (0%) | 0/250 (0%) | 1/250 (0.4%) |
| from DEF.ART front |            |            |            |


during the second time period with uses of the forms al frente de, de enfrente, frente de, and enfrente. Of course, three of these exploit the use of the preposition de, similarly to enfrente de albeit with changes in meaning in the case of frente de (‘front of the’) and de enfrente (lit. ‘from in front’; ‘opposite/facing’). This is important not so much from a semantic perspective (since the source semantics of frente have largely been retained from Latin) but from a syntactic one given the gradual emergence of new forms incorporating frente in Spanish. By the third time period, we see many more forms with frente (as shown in Table 1) and concomitant changes in meaning (as shown in Table 2). Of these,
the most notable is frente a, which expresses a variety of meanings (e.g. ‘opposite/facing’, ‘facing (abstract)’, ‘against’, and ‘compared to’).

As can be seen in Table 2, the use of frente as ‘forehead’ (which occurs 158 out of 225 times (70.3%) between 1200 and 1450), has diminished over time to a mere 15.2% of total occurrences between 1751 and 2000. In the Spanish of the 15th century, the major use of frente was for “the upper part of the face, stretching between both temples and from above the eyes until the cranium begins to recede” (Alonso 1986: 1171, my translation). Though this is the only definition of frente I was able to find in dictionaries of medieval Spanish, new uses for the lexeme were already being carried over from Latin, mainly as ‘mind’ (21 out of 225 uses, or 9.3%). Other meanings found in texts published before 1451 are related to a locative front (either animate ‘military’ or inanimate) and were likewise retained from Latin. The appearance of these forms and meanings in the language are likely the result of a cultist innovation, made all the more likely due to low frequencies of use. In the case of the locative, this was likely retained from Latin while the use of frente as a military front (though also existent in Latin) likely emerged through imitation of French front. 4

4 As can be seen in Table 1, several prepositional and adverbial phrases incorporating frente (such as al frente (de) and del frente) make use of the masculine definite article el. It might

<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘forehead’</td>
<td>158/225 (70.3%)</td>
<td>133/250 (53.2%)</td>
<td>38/250 (15.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘mind’</td>
<td>21/225 (9.3%)</td>
<td>53/250 (21.2%)</td>
<td>10/250 (4.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘front’ (locative)</td>
<td>20/225 (8.9%)</td>
<td>13/250 (5.2%)</td>
<td>13/250 (5.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘in front of’</td>
<td>15/225 (6.7%)</td>
<td>14/250 (5.6%)</td>
<td>21/250 (8.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘in front’</td>
<td>7/225 (3.1%)</td>
<td>7/250 (2.8%)</td>
<td>14/250 (5.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘military front’</td>
<td>3/225 (1.3%)</td>
<td>21/250 (8.4%)</td>
<td>7/250 (2.8%)</td>
</tr>
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</table>

($\chi^2 = 84.42; df = 10; p < 0.0001$)
Meanings of *frente* remain relatively stable between 1451 and 1750 with only two new meanings emerging during this time period (a ‘meteorological’ front (1605, in *Arcadia, prosas y versos* by Lope de Vega) and ‘opposite/facing’ (1611, in *Suplemento al tesoro de la lengua española castellana* by Sebastián de Covarrubias). Though no other meanings emerge during this time, older meanings (like ‘mind’ and ‘military front’) become more common (from 9.3% to 21.2% for ‘mind’ and 1.3% to 8.4% for ‘military front’) while reference to a specific part of the body (‘forehead’) decreases during this time (from 70.3% to 53.2%). It is during the third time period (1751 to 2000) that a plethora of new meanings emerge in Spanish. The meanings (Table 2) and forms (Table 1) of *frente* expand greatly during this time, providing further evidence that the specialization of meanings of *frente* occurred precisely in the 1700s (Toledo 2016).

By examining the evolution of *frente* according to the type of syntactic phrase in which it occurs over time, it can be shown that it has become more discourse-functional and, for this reason, has largely decategorialized as a noun. The definition of “noun” that I will use follows that given by Lyons (1968) and Hopper and Thompson (1984, 1985) in which it is perceived as referring to a “physical object”. For “preposition” and “adverb”, I refer to Svorou (1986). She claims that “adverbs [are] expressions that relate some entity to some given place by pointing at it deictically or anaphorically” and prepositions are “expressions that relate some entity to some place which is explicitly mentioned” (1986: 520). Table 3 shows the distribution of *frente* as it occurs in different syntactic phrases for each of the three major time periods.

Table 3: Type of syntactic phrase incorporating *frente* by time period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of phrase</th>
<th>1200–1450</th>
<th>1451–1750</th>
<th>1751–2000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NP</td>
<td>202/225 (89.8%)</td>
<td>224/250 (89.6%)</td>
<td>68/250 (27.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PP</td>
<td>15/225 (6.7%)</td>
<td>15/250 (6.0%)</td>
<td>138/250 (55.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AdvP</td>
<td>8/225 (3.5%)</td>
<td>11/250 (4.4%)</td>
<td>44/250 (17.6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

($\chi^2 = 297.75$; df = 4; p < 0.001)

It is possible that these meanings emerged earlier in Spanish. Dates given here are solely from the works sampled for the current research and are not exhaustive for the second and third time periods.
Table 3 shows that the emergence of new grammatical functions of frente occurred after 1750. As can be seen in Table 3, the use of frente as part of prepositional and adverbial phrases increases dramatically from 1751 to 2000 while the use of frente in nominal phrases decreases. After 1750, the use of prepositional phrases is most common. Adverbial phrases (e.g. de frente and frente a frente) are the least common type of syntactic phrase incorporating frente and did not even emerge until after 1400 (as explained previously). This development corresponds directly to the pathways of grammaticalization proposed in Heine and Kuteva (2007) in which nouns develop into adjectives and adverbs. Though frente itself has not developed into a full-fledged adjective or adverb, its incorporation into these types of phrases provides further evidence of the similarities between grammaticization and lexical change of terms originally expressing body parts.

Unlike prepositional phrases, adverbial phrases do not establish spatial relations between two explicit entities, but rather refer to general location with regard to only one explicit entity. The following examples from Martín Fierro and El triunfo de las castañuelas illustrate such a contrast.

(11) recorre luego la fila; **Frente a** [PP] cada indio
he covers later the line in front of every Indian
se para; Lo amenaza cara a cara.
himself stops him he threatens face to face
‘Later he covers the line; he stops in front of every Indian; He threatens him face to face.’ (286)

(12) trajo también a un químico, que vivía en la guardilla de **enfrente** [AdvP].
he brought also PERS a chemist that lived in the ward of in front
‘He also brought a chemist, who lived opposite the ward.’ (24–25, ch. 3)

In example (11), the referent receives spatial reference from an explicit entity (NP complement cada indio), whereas there is only an implied spatial reference in example (12). In this sense, adverbial uses are perceived to be more locative than spatial because location is not defined in relation to a second element. Space seems to be a domain that can only be inferred through contextual clues in adverbial forms.
4 Cognitive perspectives of space and location

To illustrate the perception of such a difference, it will be necessary to describe these two image scenes using a cognitive approach that accurately describes human perception of location and space as they are used in language. Though other studies have described such spatial relations in terms of ‘figure’ and ‘ground’ (see Talmy 1983), I prefer to use the terminology established in Langacker (1987a). Within this cognitive framework, discourse entities are referred to as “trajectors” and “landmarks”. A trajector (tr) is the discourse entity being located within the conceptual scope of a predication. It receives reference in relation to the landmark. A landmark (lm) gives reference to the trajector within the scope of predication. Though these terms can be used to explain a variety of locative and spatial phenomena, the discussion here will focus solely on the location of persons (11) and objects (12) (as pertains to the current data). The notion of scope is very abstract, but also very important in the construal of spatial relationships. Langacker (1987b: 56) describes scope of predication as “that portion of relevant domains which it specifically invokes and requires for its characterization”. He provides the following example: “...the conception of a finger provides the ... scope of predication for *knuckle*, since the designatum of *knuckle* is identified in large measure by its position within a finger” (1987b: 56). In describing the location of the person identified in example (11), the scope of predication is more general (less immediate) due to the fact that his location is relevant to movement. In other words, animate entities, by changing their location, also change the scope of predication. A stationary entity (such as a knuckle or the ward in example (12)) provides a much more immediate scope in that movement of location (and thus a shift in scope of predication) does not occur.

As I have already suggested, it seems that prepositional phrases of the type shown in example (11) profile spatial relations while adverbial phrases (such as example (12)) profile location. Figure 3 represents spatial perception on the basis of example (11).

In Figure 3, the landmark is *indio* ‘Indian’ while the trajector is the implicit (Spanish is a “pro drop” language) third person singular subject *él* ‘he’. The trajector can be located due to the presence of an explicit landmark that gives it reference within the scope of predication. The location of the trajector is established by an explicit relation described in the phrase *frente a cada indio se para* ‘he stops in front of every Indian’. In this type of form, there is more emphasis on the spatial relation between the two entities than there is on the location of the
trajector alone. Outside the scope of predication is the speaker (or viewer). The speaker is not part of the scene being profiled, but rather is the profiler. Notice that the position of the speaker is very important in the construal of the front-back axis. If the speaker is locating the trajector from Position 3, the landmark is in front of the trajector. However, if the speaker is located in Position 1, the construal of “front” shifts and now the trajector is in front of the landmark. The range of vantage points for the speaker is very flexible and this aspect of the construal of spatial relations affects the alignment of the front-back axis.

While prepositions profile spatial relations between two entities within a given scene, it seems that adverbs profile only the location of the trajector. Figure 4 shows the type of locative profiling that occurs in example (12).

Notice that the trajector (guardilla) is not located with reference to an explicit landmark. The description of the scene described in (12) is not vivía en la guardilla enfrente del LM ‘lived in the ward in front of the LM’, but rather vivía
en la guardilla de enfrente, literally ‘lived in the ward of in front’ (i.e. ‘opposite the ward’). The landmark is anaphoric. It is assumed that the speaker knows that the landmark is a ward or some other type of building, but two possible landmarks exist for reference. In this sense, only the location of the trajector is profiled explicitly. Speaker position is irrelevant since the trajector is encountered opposite the landmark regardless of changes in speaker position.

5 Beyond space and location

Other meanings of frente (‘in charge’, ‘resolution’, ‘header’, ‘facing (abstract)’, ‘façade’, ‘against’, and ‘compared to’), all of which were found in texts from the third period, have also emerged in Spanish. The following examples illustrate these uses.

(13) y después que aquel pastel; Lo tuvo bien amasao; Puso al frente un encargao; Y a mí me llevó con él. And after that pastry it he had well kneaded he put in charge a manager and PERS me he took with he ‘And after he had the pastry bread well kneaded; He put a manager in charge and took me with him.’ (Martín Fierro, 373)

(14) Esteban hizo un cambio de frente para retirarse, Esteban made a change resolutely in order to withdraw viendo que el hacendado se entraba en el comedor. seeing that the owner himself entered in the dining room ‘Esteban resolutely made a change to withdraw, seeing that the owner was coming into the dining room.’ (Nativa, 75, ch. 5)

(15) pero no es tal nuestro intento al poner al frente but not is such our intention by to put upfront de esta colección que hemos formado los presentes of this collection that we have formed the present renglones. lines ‘But it is not our intention by putting on the first page of this collection that we have come up with the present lines’ (Genio e ingenio del pueblo andaluz, 66)
(16) ¿Qué son los pretextos frente a la confluencia obligatoria de dos vidas?

‘What are the pretexts facing the obligatory confluence of two lives?’ (Rosaura, 58)

(17) Al frente principal daban el zaguán, el comedor, la cocina, y los dormitorios.

‘The main façade gave way to the hall, the dining room, the kitchen and the bedrooms.’ (Rosaura, 15)

(18) perdóneme el lector la falta de gusto, la petulancia anacrónica, la insolencia típica de los viajeros frente a los que no han salido de su barrio.

‘Forgive me, reader, the lack of pleasure, anachronous petulance, the typical insolence of travelers against those that have never left their neighborhood.’ (Bomarzo, 327)

(19) puede servir para comparar entre lo que se deja de obtener en el capitalismo, frente a lo que se podría lograr en otro modo de producción.

‘It can be used to compare between what stops being obtained in capitalism, compared to what could be achieved in another means of production.’ (Los imperios financieros, 89)

These meanings are not exclusive to Spanish, of course (e.g. ‘header’ exists in Portuguese; ‘against’ exists in French; ‘compared to’ exists in Italian). These meanings in other Romance languages likely resulted from the same processes of abstraction and generalization as in Spanish. Two meanings, however, seem unique to Spanish – ‘in charge’ (example 13) and ‘resolution’ (example 14).
Example (13) shows a rather innovative use of *frente* that, when used with the verb *poner* ‘to put, to place’ means ‘to put in charge’ (DRAE 2014). If this form were translated literally it would be ‘(to put) at the front’. However, this form has been abstracted away from a literal locative meaning and is best translated as ‘to put in charge’. To arrive at the meaning of this form, I would posit that a process of inference is necessary. This is to say that “the speaker IMPLIES more than s/he asserts, and the hearer INFERS more than is asserted” (Bybee et al. 1994: 285). This two-sided process describes a key mechanism that enables forms to become increasingly more abstract. One of the implications of a word meaning ‘front’ has to do with describing that which occurs first, which ultimately can be applied to social contexts (in this case, ‘at the front of (a job)’, or ‘in charge’). This development extends to an even more abstract domain that Heine, Claudi, and Hünnemeyer have described as QUALITY. So now this domain may be incorporated into the development of *frente* following the sequence of domains (Figure 2, reproduced here for convenience) as described in Heine et al. (1991a: 157).

**PERSON > OBJECT > PROCESS > SPACE > TIME > QUALITY**

Example (14) shows another use of *frente* that has entered the conceptual domain of QUALITY through the process of inference. This use modifies dynamic verbs by describing the way in which an action is carried out. Though this form functions as an adverb, it can easily be seen that it does not orient discourse entities with regards to location. This meaning seems to have evolved from the inference of *frente* as the foremost part of an entity, or that which precedes all others. Since *frente* in this case means ‘with great resolution, impetus and activity’, it can be concluded that its meaning has derived from a conception of ‘front’ as ‘first and foremost’ (DRAE 2014). This construal has social implications in that what is “first and foremost” is generally very important in a person’s daily activities and requires great resolution in order to be completed. The meaning of *frente* in this sense has been inferred, then, through implications that are tied to its inherent quality of representing a front location.

A process that I will call “structural inference” also operates in the construal of these more abstract forms. This type of inference is different from that described by other researchers (Dahl 1985; Traugott 1989; Bybee et al. 1994) in that the structure of the form itself leads to an inference about its meaning by the hearer. In other words, it is not only the semantic content of the form that determines its construal but also the syntactic structure. Erica García and Florimon van Putte allude to a similar process with regards to the development
of zeroes in Spanish in their study entitled “Forms are Silver, Nothing is Gold”. They describe this type of inference as:

strictly pragmatic ..., emphasizing what happens when speakers combine forms so as to facilitate their hearers’ putting two-and-two together. In the process of inferring a larger message from the combination of specific meaningful forms, inferential shortcuts become possible. The more frequently these take place, the more likely it is that the individual contribution of the original parts will be lost sight of, and that a larger, more generalized interpretation will be conventionally associated with the expression as a whole – whose constituent elements remain, nonetheless, formally recognizable. (1989: 380)

More abstract forms using frente depend on the use of prepositions which demands that the hearer “put two-and-two” together. The interpretation of the form depends on the hearer’s construal of it (which is largely dependent on the structure of the phrase). Of course, these prepositions were already meaningful to speakers and hearers alike before frente was used in prepositional and adverbial phrases, but they took on new meanings when used in these forms.

Frequency of use becomes important at this stage in that the component parts, when uttered frequently in the same form, become part of a larger form that has meaning as a single linguistic unit or chunk (see Bybee 2011). This effect is even apparent in the orthography of the forms de enfrente and enfrente de, which have fused graphemically over time from the forms de en frente and en frente de. Though the fused and unfused forms mean exactly the same thing, they provide evidence that the constituent frente is less easily analyzable in terms of its original source semantics and that they are now perceived as chunks. It can be effectively concluded that enfrente represents a singular locative/spatial concept rather than a conglomeration of disparate parts. The same type of fusion occurred in the form delante (< de in ante) which also means ‘in front’ and occurs in similar contexts as frente, having resulted from similar processes (Penny 1991: 197). It is likely that the occurrence of enfrente de in older texts is relatively infrequent due to an early presence of delante as used in adverbial and prepositional senses. Though the current study does not focus on the relative frequencies of occurrence of these forms diachronically (which would ultimately show whether this assertion is true or not), it does seem that this is the case given that in Siete partidas (by Alfonso X, 1265) there are 288 occurrences of delante while not a single example of frente is used in this way. Though delante is much more confined in its usage, it would be interesting to see whether Old Spanish shows any variation in its use and whether there is a decline in its occurrence relative to the development of forms with frente for the same discourse functions. Perhaps due to early propositional and adverbial uses of delante, frente did not enter the domains of TIME or PROCESS. The competing
form delante, which also signifies SPACE in the prepositional phrase delante de ‘in front of’, is commonly used as an adverbial meaning ‘with priority, in the front part or place behind which there is someone or something’ as in los desafíos por delante ‘the challenges ahead’ (DRAE 2014). Clearly, delante represents both TIME and PROCESS, neither of which is attested for frente. This may represent a historical split between these two related forms, which overlap synchronically only with respect to the domain of SPACE.

6 Conclusion

In this study, I have focused on an important linguistic phenomenon that is characteristic of many of the world’s languages in which a body part meaning ‘forehead’ is abstracted of its locative/spatial characteristics and gradually incorporated into prepositional and adverbial forms. In the process of generalization, frente has diverged gradually from its source semantics as both ‘forehead/mind’ and ‘locative front’ in Latin, allowing it to be incorporated into a wider variety of forms. As a result, it no longer refers exclusively to a concrete entity (though this meaning still exists, of course). Consequently, it has largely decategorialized as a noun due to a change in discourse function that has become increasingly more grammatical (rather than lexical) in nature. These grammatical uses of frente encompass a wide variety of meanings that have evolved over time due to cognitive processes such as abstraction, synecdoche, metaphor, and inference. These cognitive processes serve to explain how generalization of the lexeme occurs. I have also tried to show that, conceptually, prepositions profile spatial relations between a trajector and a landmark whereas adverbs profile the location of a trajector alone. Cases such as the evolution of frente from concrete noun to adverbials indicating quality give further justification for the need of a linguistic model that is cognitive-based. The semantic and grammatical expansion of frente over time represents only one case of the evolution of a particular lexeme in one language. However, through the continued research of specific instances like the one pursued here, linguists will be able to further corroborate the various theories proposed with regards to lexical change.

References


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**Electronic Literary Texts**


