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Romance exclamative markers at the syntax-pragmatics interface:
A compositional approach to exclamativity

Xavier Villalba

Centre de Línguística Teórica and Dept. de Filologia Catalana, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Edifici B, 08193
Cerdanyola del Vallès, SPAIN

Abstract
In this paper I will analyze the set of markers that have been associated with exclamative sentence-type and exclamations in Romance, like Catalan ma, mira, que, and si, Italian guarda and che, or Spanish mira, que, si, and vaya. The hypothesis I will defend is that the meaning encoded by each of these markers contribute to create an exclamation speech act. I will show that we must first distinguish mirative markers like ma, mira or guarda, which encode the surprise attitude of the speaker towards a proposition. A second class of elements are degree operators, like si, which create the necessary domain extension on which the attitude of the speaker is built. Finally, I will show that que/che is a marker of exclamative sentence-type. In the second part of the article I will show that these pragmatic differences have a transparent reflex in syntax: mirative markers occupy the Judge Phrase position in Krifka’s Speech Act Layer, above ForceP and vocatives, so they may combine with different sentence-types, besides exclamatives. In ForceP we find degree operators (and exclamative wh-phrases) in its specifier, and the sentence-type marker que/che in its head. All in all, the paper aims at showing that a compositional approach to exclamativity can deal with the rich set of pragmatic and syntactic properties of exclamative markers in Romance.

Keywords: exclamative marker, exclamative sentence, exclamation, mirativity,

1. Introduction: discourse markers and the syntax-pragmatics interface

Our actual knowledge of discourse markers (or markers) is increasing both from a synchronic and a diachronic perspective, and from works from many different theoretical persuasions. The complete list would be too large to be included here, but one can highlight the pioneering work by pragmatists and discourse analysts (see a.o. Schiffrin (1985, 1987); Fraser (1990, 1996, 1999); Aijmer and Simon-Vandenbergen (2011); Aijmer (2013); Taboada (2006); Tanghe (2016b)). This enormous amount of knowledge also shows another characteristic of the field: its heterogeneity. One clear signal of this state of affairs is the liquid nature of the concept under study. Beyond the consensus on their non-truth conditional meaning, and their anaphoric nature to foreground discourse, discussion abounds on the limits of the concept of what a marker is. Fraser (1990,
1996) proposed a working playground with four subkinds of pragmatic markers: (i) basic markers, which encode the illocutionary force of the utterance; (ii) commentary markers, which add the speaker’s stance toward the propositional content; (iii) parallel markers, which add expressive meaning on a secondary level of the utterance; and (iv) discourse markers, which signal the connection and role of the utterance regarding to the prior discourse. In this article, I will be concerned with the first two categories, without making a strong commitment to finer-grained definitions and classifications.

Besides the taxonomic and terminological debate, a second clear sign of the heterogeneity of the field is the strong encapsulated nature of the research. As a prominent scholar phrases it, “the studies available so far are hardly comparable; the approaches vary with respect to very many different aspects: the language(s) under consideration, the items taken into account, the terminology used, the functions considered, the problems focussed on, and the methodologies employed. Some kind of overview is needed that allows us to sort out the different research directions, methods, and perspectives.” Fischer (2021, 1).

Regardless of the heterogeneity of the field, it is beyond doubt that we have a much better understanding of the meaning and use of pragmatic markers, which has revived interest for offering a theoretical approach to the syntactic encoding of pragmatic meanings. The earlier attempts in the seventies (Ross (1970); Karttunen (1973); Gordon and Lakoff (1975)), which were concerned with speakers’ intentions and beliefs, didn’t find a fertile ground for growing until the nineties, when attention was paid to the left periphery of sentence as a domain for connecting sentential syntax with discourse and speech acts. In this respect, two groundbreaking works merit a special mention. First, Rizzi (1997) offered a highly articulated description of the left periphery of sentence that incorporated pragmatic information like sentence-force, topic and focus as functional categories which interacted with syntactic-based ones and aimed at offering a transparent mapping between syntax and pragmatics. This framework was generally labeled as the Cartographic Enterprise, and as far as the syntax-pragmatics interface was concerned, it was a bold program to attain the “pragmatization of syntax” (Haegeman and Hill (2013); Rizzi (2013); Rizzi and Cinque (2016); Cinque and Rizzi (2015)). Second, following this particular goal, Speas and Tenny (2003) showed that the syntax-pragmatics interface is mediated by dedicated functional projections, what they label the Speech Act Projection and the Sentience projection, where the role of speech act participants and the Point of view involved is encoded. This particular line of research has been developed in recent years by highly articulated proposals like Giorgi (2015, 2018); Krifka (2015, 2021); Wiltschko and Heim (2016); Wiltschko (2021). Leaving aside technical details, these works clearly show a tendency to enriching syntactic representations with several layers of pragmatic meaning, which have been shown to be associated with specific lexical elements, typically labeled markers or markers. These elements not only act as flags of a certain pragmatic meaning or operation, but are also integrated into the syntactic architecture of sentence, and interact with other syntactic elements and operations. For instance, as we will discuss in section 3, the respective order of mirative markers and wh-exclamative phrases is fixed, which suggest a clear syntactic distribution of their roles (see Fraser (2015), and the collective works Bayer and Struckmeier (2016); Zimmermann (2019); Artiagoitia et al. (2022); Gergel et al. (2022)). As Rizzi (2013) emphasizes, the alternative amounts to an impoverished syntax, like the narrow syntax of the Minimalist Program (Chomsky (1995, 2000); Lasnik (2002); Horvath (2010)) or the Simpler Syntax of Culicover (2013); Culicover and Jackendoff (2006), where the computational burden is placed on a very rich set of interpretive mechanisms that must extract the correct information from mostly underspecified syntactic structures. While these authors are not particularly explicit about the way we move from a bare syntax to a rich set of inferences
and commitments, one may think of the sophisticated models of discourse update (Farkas and Bruce (2009); Malamud and Stephenson (2015); Farkas and Roelofsen (2017); Murray and Starr (2021)), which have been quite successful at offering a clearer understanding of the rich set of pragmatic nuances linked to evidentiality and commitment.

This is an ongoing debate, and the present work aims at offering some evidence from exclamative markers for a rich syntax-pragmatic interface encoding the speaker’s attitude and epistemic knowledge in a specialized speech act layer, along the lines of Krifka (2021). Consider the different elements that use to fall under this label (I will follow Leipzig Rules for glosses):

1. a. Ma que és bonic això! (Ca., CTILC)
   "How pretty this is!"

   b. Si (que) n’és, de bo! (Ca., CTILC)
   "How good it is!"

   c. Maria bé canta plan! (Oc., Morin (2008))
   Maria EM sing.3sg well
   "How beautifully Maria sings!"

   d. A l'ze za partio, Mario! (Pa., Benincà (1996))
   EM cl.3sg be.3sg already depart.ptpc Mario!
   "How early Mario has departed!"

   e. Se lo ha comido todo. ¡Vaya! (Sp., Espinal et al. (2022))
   REFL it has eaten everything EM
   "She ate everything. Wow!"

While generally associated to exclamative sentences, it is unclear whether their exact contribution to the sentence is encoding the exclamation illocutionary force or rather they contribute akin meanings, like mirativity (Delancey (1997); Sánchez López (2017); Unger (2019)). In this paper, I will follow the standard distinction between exclamative sentences and exclamations (Rett (2011); Siemund (2015); Villalba (2017, 2023); Trotzke and Giannakidou (to appear)): while the former are a formal encoding of sentence-type, just as declarative or interrogative sentences, the latter are speech acts, just as assertions or questions. Even though exclamative sentences typically perform an exclamation speech act, this is not necessarily the case, just as not all interrogative sentences perform a question speech act. Hence, we can find exclamative sentences without exclamation force (rhetorical exclamatives: Yes, of course. What a genius you are!, see Andueza (2011)), just as declarative sentences with exclamation force (He is a liar!). I will defend that these different meanings are formally encoded across the rich left periphery of sentence.

As a background for the discussion, I will consider the following typology of exclamative markers:

For example, I will argue in detail that in (2), ma, guardate and mira are mirative markers, si and come are degree operators, and que is a maker of exclamative sentence-type:

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1CTILC is the acronym for Corpus Textual Informatitzat de la Llengua Catalana, a Catalan corpus of texts from 1832 created by the Catalan language academy (Institut d’Estudis Catalans). It can be consulted online at https://ctil.iec.cat/.


2CORPES XXI is the acronym for Corpus del Español del Siglo XXI, a Spanish corpus of contemporary texts created
Table 1: Classification of exclamative markers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>kind of marker</th>
<th>information encoded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mirative marker</td>
<td>mirativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>degree operator</td>
<td>domain extension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>complementizer</td>
<td>sentence-type</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(2) a. **Ma que és bonic això!** (Ca., CTILC)  
   EM EM be.3sg nice this  
   ‘How pretty this is!’

b. **Si (que) n’és, de bo!** (Ca., CTILC)  
   EM EM of-be.3sg of good  
   ‘How good it is!’

c. **Guardate come piove oggi!** (It., Badan (2020))  
   EM how rain.PRS.3sg today  
   ‘Surprisingly how it’s raining today!’

d. ¡**Mira que eres tonto!** (Sp., CORPES XXI)  
   EM EM be.2sg silly  
   ‘How silly you are!’

Henceforth, this article is intended as a contribution to the above-mentioned theoretical debate on the syntax-pragmatics interaction. As I will show, the very specific role of exclamative markers and their strict ordering suggest that we can extend recent insights of the so-called “pragmatization of syntax” to an interface construction such as exclamativity, while integrating the heterogeneous set of exclamative markers into a coherent compositional analysis.

The structure of the article is as follows. In section 2, I will consider the pragmatic contribution of exclamative markers, which will be classified in three classes (see Table 1): mirative markers (section 2.1), degree operators (section 2.3), and sentence-type markers (section 2.4). In section 3, I will suggest how these markers are distributed in the architecture of sentence. Finally, I will close the article with the conclusions.

2. The pragmatics of exclamative markers

2.1. Mirative markers

Since the pioneering work by Delancey (1997, 2001), mirativity has been recognized as a category distinct from evidentiality (but see Lazard (1999); Hill (2012); Hengeveld and Olbertz (2012); Delancey (2012); Aikhenvald (2012) for discussion). It is generally accepted that mirativity is not concerned with the source of the information, but rather with its unexpected status regarding the speaker’s epistemic state. Consider the classical Turkish example from Slobin and Aksu-Koç (1982) commented by Delancey (1997, 37):

(3) a. **Nixon istifa et-ti**  
   Nixon resignation make-PST  
   ‘Nixon resigned.’

by the Spanish language academy (Real Academia Española). It can be consulted online at https://www.rae.es/CORPES XXI/.
b. Ecevit istifa et-mis.
‘(Surprisingly) Ecevit resigned.’

In a context where Nixon resignation was a matter of discussion, and something highly plausible, the expression of surprise was inadequate (3)-a, but in the case of Turkish prime minister Ecevit, this was totally unexpected. Hence, the mirative marker mis marks this information as unexpected in (3)-b.

When it comes to encoding this particular meaning, Romance languages display a wide range of markers, mostly based on 2nd person imperative forms (see Tanghe (2016a); Remberger (2021) for a general view). For instance, in Catalan (example (4)), we have the markers goita from the verb guaitar ‘look’, mira lit. ‘look’, and its shortened form ma, found in Valencian Catalan, from mirar ‘look’ Institut d’Estudis Catalans (2023, 34.3.1.3). In Italian (example (5)), it is prominent guarda, derived from the verb guardare ‘look’ Waltereit (2002); Cardinaletti (2015); Badan (2020). Similarly, Occitan shows guarda, from guardar ‘look’. Portuguese has a form olha, from the verb olhar ‘look’, and Spanish (example (6)) features the form mira, derived from the verbal form mirar ‘look’ Sánchez López (2017); Fuentes-Rodríguez (2020), and the form vaya, derived from the imperative of ir ‘to go’ Espinal et al. (2022).

(4) Ca., CTILC
a. Mira que són dolents!
   EM EM be.3pl bad
   ‘How bad they are!’

(5) It.
   EM which thing stupid.3f has done
   ‘Wow what a stupid thing (s)he did!’

b. Guardate come piove oggi! Badan (2020)
   EM you.2sg how rain.prs.3sg today
   ‘Surprisingly how it’s raining today!’

(6) Sp., CORPES XXI³
a. ¡Mira que eres tonto!
   EM EM be.2sg silly
   ‘How silly you are!’

¹ Other prominent mechanisms are also found, like fronting. See for instance, Jones (2013); Authier and Haegeman (2019); Cruschina and Remberger (2017); Cruschina and Bianchi (2021) for Romance, and also Trotzke (2017) for German.

² These deverbal markers are not exclusively mirative, but they usually have a rich array of pragmatic meanings; see Fuentes-Rodríguez (2020); González López and Trotzke (2021) for Spanish mira, Octavio de Toledo y Huerta (2001); Espinal et al. (2022) for Spanish vaya; and Cardinaletti (2022) for Italian guarda.

³ CORPES XXI is the acronym for Corpus del Español del Siglo XXI, a Spanish corpus of contemporary texts created by the Spanish language academy (Real Academia Española). It can be consulted online at https://www.rae.es/CORPES XXI.
b. Se lo ha comido todo. ¡Vaya!
   Refl it has eaten  everything  
   ‘She ate everything. Wow!’

In all the cases, the speaker is expressing her surprise regarding the information denoted by the utterance.

Markers derived from verbs do not exhaust the list of mirative markers: following Norrick (2009), we can consider forms traditionally included in the class of interjections, since they also mark that the information is unexpected for the speaker. This is the case of Catalan markers manoi, oh, òndia (see Cuenca (2008)) and even some uses of Balearic Catalan ídò (Mascaró (2014)):

(7) Ca., CTILC
   a. Manoi, que és grossa!...I com pesa, la mala bèstia!
      EM  EM is big  and  how weighs the  bad beast
      ‘Oh boy, how big she is! ...And how heavy, the ugly brute!’
   b. Òndia, tu, quin xou!
      EM  you what show
      ‘Wow, what a show, man!’
   c. Oh, quina virtut que té vostè!
      EM  which.F virtue EM  has you
      ‘Wow, how virtuous you are!’
   d. –I fan pagar per veure-la. –Idò!
      and make.3pl pay.inf for see.inf-her EM
      ‘–And they even make you pay for seeing her. –Wow!’

Generally, mirative markers precede the proposition they modify, but most of them may appear as well after the relevant proposition:

(8) Ca., CTILC
   a. Tu, goita les pentinetes del monyo! Ma!
      you look  the.f.pl combs of.the bun  EM
      ‘Look at the bun’s combs! Wow!’
   b. Si que estem frescos, manoi!
      EM  EM  stay.1pl cool  EM
      ‘How cool we are, wow!’

(9) It., Munaro (2019)
   a. Maria ha dimenticato le chiavi! Toh!
      Maria has forgotten  the.f.pl keys  EM
      ‘Maria has forgotten the keys! Wow!’
   b. Gianni ha passato l’esame! Pero!
      Gianni has passed  the=exam EM
      ‘Gianni has passed the exam! Wow!’

(10) Sp., CORPES XXI
   a. ¿Es que has trazado una raya? ¡Vaya!
      is  that have.2sg draw.ptcp a line  EM
      ‘Did you draw a line? Wow!’
b. ¡Vaya!, ya abrió los ojos –dijo tu hija.
  wow already.open.pst.3sg the.pl eyes say.pst.3sg your daughter
   ‘Wow! she opened her eyes —your daughter said.’

In these cases, we can follow Espinal et al. (2022) and consider that the mirative marker modifies a propositional anaphor bound by the previous proposition. This rephrases the idea advanced by Światkowska (2006) that interjections are inherently anaphoric (see also Munaro (2019) regarding the interjection mo in Emilian varieties).

To sum up, Romance displays a rich gamut of mirative markers, which modify a proposition encoding the unexpected nature of the information provided.

2.2. Mirativity ≠ exclamativity

We have seen that exclamative sentences appear reinforced by mirative markers, which is expected, for Michaelis (2001, 1031) remarked that “exclamations convey surprise” and Unger (2019, fn. 1) makes the strong claim that “that exclamativity and mirativity are essentially the same phenomenon, and that exclamations, exclamatives and mirative utterances express the same range of pragmatic meanings.”

Notwithstanding, there is strong empirical evidence for separating mirative and exclamative meanings. On the one hand, authors like Olbertz (2012), Cruschina et al. (2015), and Sánchez López (2017) highlight the fact that mirative contents are not restricted to exclamative sentences, but occur in declaratives (11a)/(12a)/(13a) or interrogatives as well (11b)/(12b)/(13b).

Witness:

(11) BP, Moreira (2017)
   a. O João, nossa, eu não sabia que ele era tão esperto.
      the John em I not knew.1sg that he was.3sg so smart
      ‘John, wow, I didn’t know he was so smart.’
   b. Nossa, mas o que aconteceu?
      em but the that happened.3sg
      ‘Wow, but what happened?’

(12) Ca., CTILC
   a. Ma, noi! Sí, que li vint!
      boy yes that loc come.1sg
      ‘Wow, boy! Sure I am coming!’
   b. Per què no dorms, òndia!
      for what not sleep.2sg em
      ‘Why don’t you sleep, wow!’

(13) Sp., CORPES XXI
   a. Ah, vaya, ahora resulta que estamos jugando.
      em em now results that stay.1pl play.ger
      ‘Wow! Wow! So it’s like we are playing now.’
   b. ¿Es que has trazado una raya? ¡Vaya!
      is that have.2sg draw.ptcp a line em
      ‘Did you draw a line? Wow!’

It is clear, thus, that mirative markers, while particularly common with exclamative sentences,
since both encode expressive meanings, are by no means restricted to this particular sentence-type.

On the other hand, it is not clear that exclamative sentences must involve the surprise meaning associated with mirativity. For instance, Chernilovskaya (2014) discusses cases like the following:

(14) What a delicious dessert John baked! I am not surprised, though. He’s a professional cook.

Here, the emotional content encoded by the exclamative cannot be one of surprise, as it would enter into contradiction with the continuation. This fact is confirmed by Mandarin Chinese exclamatives, which mark this distinction formally (Badan and Cheng (2015); Wang (2023)): whereas demonstrative based exclamatives (15)-a involve a surprise meaning, *duōme* exclamatives (15)-b don’t.

(15) a. Lǐsī zhéme/nàme gāo a! [surprise exclamative]
Lǐsī this.EM/that.EM tall SFP
‘How tall Lisi is!’

b. Lǐsī duōme gāo a! [non-surprise exclamative]
Lǐsī much.EM tall SFP
‘How very tall Lisi is!’

As one anonymous reviewer points out, one might consider whether these examples ask for extending the pragmatic interpretation of mirativity to including admirative meanings, which don’t need to include surprise. However, I will not pursue this possibility any further, and I will consider mirativity as a separate pragmatic and syntactic component from exclamativity.

### 2.3. Degree operators

It is generally assumed that exclamative sentences must include a degree operator creating the necessary domain extension which surpasses the speaker’s expectations (Zanuttini and Portner (2003); Castroviejo (2006); Rett (2011)). This function is typically encoded by specialized words modifying a gradable adjective or noun:

(16) a. Que agradable que es passé una vetllada així! (Ca., CTILC)
how pleasant EM is pass.INSF an evening this
‘How pleasant it is to spend an evening like this!’

b. ¿Eres idiota?, ¡menudo susto me has dado! (Sp., CORPES
are.2SG idiot small fright ME.DAT(CL) have.2SG give.PTP XXI)

‘Are you idiot? What a fright you gave me!’

c. Nossa, que raiva que eu tive, menino. (BP, Moreira (2017))
EM what anger EM I have.PST.1SG boy
‘Wow, how angry I was, boy.’

d. Cât de înalt este acel turn! (Ro., Giurgea (2015))
how of high is that tower
‘How high that tower is!’

e. Ítte bellu ki ses! (Sa., Jones (1993))
what beautiful EM are.2SG
‘How beautiful you are!’

Besides this well-studied set, some Romance languages feature that-exclamatives as well, namely exclamative sentences that are headed by a complementizer like element, as Catalan and French (see section 2.4 and Villalba (2003)):

(17) a. ¡Que n’és, de car! (Ca., Villalba (2003))
   ‘How expensive it is!’

b. Que cette histoire est obscure! (Fr., Gérard-Naef (1980))
   ‘How dark this story is!’

As the translation highlights, these exclamative sentences involve a degree reading, just as wh-exclamatives do. Henceforth, we can follow the original idea from Villalba (2003) and developed by Sánchez López (2020) that a null degree operator is doing the job in these sentences in a similar way to the wh-word com ‘how’ and the marker si. We can appreciate the parallelism between that-exclamatives with a null operator and exclamatives with degree operators si and comme/cómo:

(18) Ca., Villalba (2003)
   a. ¡Que n’és, de car!
      ‘How expensive it is!’
   b. ¡Si que n’és, de car!
   c. ¡Com és, de car!

(19) Fr.
   a. Qu’elle est jolie! Jones (1996)
      ‘How pretty she is!’
   b. Si c’est gentil! Le Goffic (1993)
       ‘How nice it is!’
   c. Comme elle est jolie! Jones (1996)
       ‘How pretty she is!’

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6This marker is not to be confounded with the polarity marker si Batllori and Hernanz (2013) nor the si ‘if’ in the expression of regrets Sánchez López (2017), which do not need a degree quantification and involve a counterfactual situation.

(i) a. Ah! Si elle m’aimait! (Fr., Delatour et al. (2004))
   ‘Alas, if only she loved me!’

b. ¡Si al menos hubieras estado allí! (Sp., Sánchez López (2017))
   ‘If only you had been there!’
We must note that Spanish lacks *that*-exclamatives, and that the use of *si* is much more restricted in French and Spanish than in Catalan, but besides these differences, these exclamative constructions encode the degree quantification by means of an operator, which can be realized overtly (*si*, and *com|cómo|comme*) or covertly, as a *that*-exclamative. I will come back to the exact syntactic representation of these constructions in section 3.

**2.4. Sentence-type markers**

We have seen that some exclamative markers are better analyzed as mirativity (section 2.1) and others as degree operators section 2.3. Now I will consider exclamative markers that seem to encode the exclamative sentence-type. Sure, not everybody agrees that an exclamative sentence-type exists, on a pair with the declarative, interrogative, imperative or optative (see, for instance, Rosengren (1997, 2011); d’Avis (2013, 2016)). However, certain elements make exclamative sentences clearly distinctive in most languages (Michaelis (2001); Villalba (2008, 2023); Siemund (2015)). One outstanding element is the complementizer heading so called *that*-exclamatives in Catalan or French (21), but also in Germanic languages (22) (see Villalba (2003, 2017, 2023); Trotzke and Villalba (2020, 2021)).

(21) a. ¡Que n’és, de car! (Ca., Villalba (2003))
   that of.it-is of expensive
   ‘How expensive it is!’

b. Que cette histoire est obscure! (Fr., Gérard-Naef (1980))
   that this story is dark
   ‘How dark this story is!’

(22) a. Dat hij die boeken kan lezen! (Du., Bennis (1998))
   that he those books can.3sg read.inf
   ‘Wow, he can read those books!’

---

7The future tense encodes a mirative value in this example. See Escandell-Vidal and Leonetti (2021).
8Unlike their Romance counterparts, Germanic *that*-exclamatives (see Truckenbrodt (2013); Trotzke and Villalba (2021)) are not restricted to degree readings. This can be appreciated in a context where the source of surprise is not a degree of a property but a proposition:

(i) Trotzke and Villalba (2021)
   a. Dass er gestorben ist! (Ge.)
      that he die.prp has
      ‘So surprising that he died!’

b. #Que ha mort! (Ca.)
   em has die.prp
   ‘So surprising that he died!’
b. Dass die Geige spielt! (Ge., d’Avis (2013))
    that she violin plays
    ‘Wow, she plays the violin!’

c. Att du hann till mötet! (Sw., Delsing (2010))
    that you reach,pst.2sg to meeting.def
    ‘What a surprise that you reached the meeting!’

As remarked by Villalba (2017); Corr (2018, 2022), *que* is the default force marker in Ibero-Romance, where it may encode interrogative (Prieto and Rigau (2007)), optative (Sánchez López (2017)) and exclamative sentence-types (Villalba (2003)). Henceforth, I will argue that it is a marker of exclamative sentence-type.

What is less clear is how should we treat the *que* marker appearing in wh- and definite exclamatives:

(23) a. Que bo que és! Ca.
    how good is
    ‘How good it is!’

b. ¡Las/ Menudas cosas que come! Sp.
    the.f.nl/small things eat
    ‘The things she eats!’

Villalba (2016) makes the claim that we must take this marker as the same exclamative marker heading *that*-exclamatives, on the basis of diachronic evidence: both *that*-exclamatives and *wh*-exclamatives with *que* appear regularly in texts in the second half of the 19th century. However, this is not a settled issue, and the cartographic tradition follows the proposal developed for Italian by Benincà (1996), which treats the marker as the realization of a Focus head. We will consider the details of Benincà’s proposal in section 3, but the idea seems counter-intuitive, for Romance languages do not mark focus by means of markers. Note, for instance, mirative focus fronting:

(24) a. Des sautereles grillées ils mangent dans ce pays. (Fr.,
    some grasshoppers grilled they eat in this country
    Authier and Haegeman (2019))

    ‘Grilled grasshoppers they eat in this country.’

b. (Pensa te!) Una tigre abbiamo visto! (It.,
    think.impr.2sg you a tiger have.1pl see.pTCP
    Cruschina and Bianchi (2021))

    ‘(Guess what!) We saw a tiger!’

c. Ite abbistu, custu pitzinu! Su giornale est leghende. (Sa., Jones (2013))
    what clever this child the newspaper is reading
    ‘How clever this child is! He is reading the newspaper.’

Even though this fronting is customarily analyzed as movement to a peripheral FocusP (Cruschina et al. (2015); Cruschina and Remberger (2017)), there is no Romance variety including any marker. Hence, we can be suspicious about treating *che/ki/que* in exclamative sentences as a genuine focus marker. Consequently, I will maintain the idea that it is rather a marker of exclamative sentence-type in parallel with interrogative and optative markers.
3. The distribution of exclamative markers in the Speech Act Layer

In this section, I connect the pragmatic properties of the exclamative markers described in the previous section with the syntactic structure of the left periphery. To achieve this goal, I adopt the Speech Act Layer by Krifka (2021), which assumes three functional projections in the left periphery of sentence encoding three pragmatic values. The lower projection is Judge Phrase (JP), which encodes subjective epistemic and evidential attitudes. JP is dominated by Commitment Phrase (ComP), which encodes the commitment of the speaker with respect to the truth value of the proposition. Finally, the highest projection is Act Phrase (ActP), which encodes the relation of the proposition to the common ground, namely its illocutionary force. Schematically:

\[
\text{ActP} \quad \text{[Act]} \quad \text{ComP} \quad \text{[Com]} \quad \text{JP} \quad \text{[J]} \quad \text{ForceP} \quad \text{[TP]}\]
\]

We can apply Krifka’s framework for building the meaning of utterances compositionally: the proposition (ForceP) is modified by JP, adding epistemic or evidential nuances. Then, the modified proposition is further modified by ComP, which incorporates the (degrees of) commitment of the speaker regarding the proposition (operator \(\vdash\)). Finally, the illocutionary force of the utterance incorporated in ActP applies to the modified proposition to yield the resultant speech act, which in our case study is an exclamation.

First, since mirative markers encode the speaker’s surprise towards the situation expressed by the proposition they modify, I assume that they appear in the layer devoted to the speaker’s epistemic states, namely JP (we restrict ourselves to Catalan for space reasons, but we will analyze similarly Italian guarda or Spanish mira and vaya; see Espinal et al. (2022) for a similar proposal for Spanish vaya):

\[
\text{ActP} \quad \text{[Act]} \quad \text{ComP} \quad \text{[Com]} \quad \text{JP} \quad \text{[J]} \quad \text{ForceP} \quad \text{[TP]}\]
\]

The mirative marker sets the evidential/epistemic value of the proposition, in this case, one of surprise. The commitment operator \(\vdash\) encodes the strong commitment of the speaker towards the proposition and towards the attitude expressed (see Villalba (2024) for a detailed proposal on the commitments involved in exclamations), and the illocutionary operator \(!\) in ActP converts the proposition into an exclamation, as we have stated in the introduction is not restricted to exclamative sentences. Hence, my analysis encodes exclamative sentence-type in ForceP, and exclamation illocutionary force in ActP.

Moreover, the proposal entails that mirativity is encoded in a position higher than ForceP. Such a move is confirmed by the placement of mirative markers with respect to vocatives. As Slocum (2016); González López (2022); González López and Schmid (2023) have highlighted, two kind of vocatives must be distinguished regarding their function and position. On the one hand, initial vocatives typically fulfill a call role, and are placed above ForceP. This is the case in example (4a), repeated here for the sake of reference:

\[
\text{Tu, goita les pентinetes del monyo! Ma!}\]
\[
\text{Ca., CTILC you look the.F.PL combs of the bun EM}
\]

‘Look at the bun’s combs! Wow!’

The pronoun is intended to call the hearer attention, and is placed before the mirative marker goita. Slocum (2016); González López (2022); González López and Schmid (2023) argue that
these vocatives (calls) are generated in Voc(call)P above ForceP. However, these authors do not take into account the speech act layer, so we will suggest that the projection is rather above ActP:

\[ \text{Voc(call)P} \rightarrow \text{ActP} \rightarrow \text{Act} \rightarrow \text{ComP} \rightarrow \text{JP} \rightarrow \text{ForceP} \rightarrow \text{que bo [Force' que [TP és]]}] \]

In contrast, lower vocatives are typically used for maintaining contact between speaker and listener and appear typically after mirative markers, as in the following examples:

(29) Ca., CTILC

a. Ma, chica, quina falla més bonica.
   em girl what bonfire so pretty
   ‘Wow, girl, what a pretty bonfire!’

b. Òndia, tu, quin xou!
   em you what show
   ‘Wow, what a show, man!’

c. Goita, noi bufó, quina pila de caça!
   em boy cute which F pile of game
   ‘Wow, cute boy, what a stock of game!’

These lower vocatives do not involve any call, and in some cases, the second person pronoun tu is used in utterances without any physical hearer.

Moreover, as the last examples show, wh-exclamative words are always lower than low vocatives. The same is true for degree operators and sentence-type markers:

(30) Ca., CTILC

a. Noi, si que et costa.
   boy EM EM you DAT(CL) costs3SG
   ‘Boy, how much it takes you!’

b. Un vestit?... noia, si que anirem mudats!
   a dress girl EM EM GO.FUT.IPL well.dress.PTPC
   ‘A dress? Girl, how well dressed we will be!’

(31) Sp., CORPES XXI

a. Pero Isabel, qué tonterías se te ocurren.
   but Isabel what nonsenses REFL YOU DAT(CL) happen
   ‘Come on, Isabel, what nonsense are you coming up with.’

b. Bueno, hombre, vaya genio...
   well man what temper
   ‘Ok, man, what a bad temper…’

While Slocum (2016); González López (2022); González López and Schmid (2023) argue that these vocatives (adresses) are generated below ForceP, the interaction with mirative markers, degree quantifiers, and sentence-type markers suggests that they appear in a Voc(addr)P just above ForceP (see Hill (2007, 2014) and Espinal (2013)):

\[ \text{ActP} \rightarrow \text{Act} \rightarrow \text{ComP} \rightarrow \text{Voc(addr)P} \rightarrow \text{JP} \rightarrow \text{forceP quin xou [force’ [TP ]]}}] \]

Moreover, the structure in (32) helps us explain the generation of the Catalan mirative marker manoi ‘wow’, as a lexicalization of the mirative marker ma in JP and the vocative noi ‘boy’ in Voc(addr)P.
(33) Ca., CTILC
   a. Ma, noi, quina remorassa!
      boy which bignoise
      ‘Oh, boy, what a big noise!’
   b. Manoi, que en són, de bones!
      of.it are.3pl of good.f.pl
      ‘Wow, how good they are!’

Once the form is fixed, manoi is reanalyzed as a mirative marker and precedes addressee vocatives, just as other mirative markers do:

(34) Manoi, Pip, company! [...] quin savi no sou! (Ca., CTILC)
    Pip friend which thinker not are.2sg
    ‘Wow, Pip, my friend, […] what a thinker you are!’

Finally, since the placement of degree operators and sentence-type markers is ForceP, we can maintain the marker che/que in the head of Force in all exclamative types:

(35) a. Que bo que és!
    b. [ActP [Act ! ] [ComP [Com b ] [IP [J ] [ForceP que bo [Force' que [TP és ] ]]]]]

(36) a. Si que és bo!
    b. [ActP [Act ! ] [ComP [Com b ] [IP [J ] [ForceP si [Force' que [TP és bo ] ]]]]

(37) a. Que n’és de bo!
    b. [ActP [Act ! ] [ComP [Com b ] [IP [J ] [ForceP OP [Force' que [TP n’és de bo ] ]]]]

We can thus summarize the syntax-pragmatics interaction of exclamative markers as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>kind of marker</th>
<th>information encoded</th>
<th>position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mirative marker</td>
<td>mirativity</td>
<td>Judge Phrase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>degree operator</td>
<td>domain extension</td>
<td>Specifier of ForceP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>complementizer</td>
<td>sentence-type</td>
<td>head of ForceP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Pragmatic meaning and syntactic position of exclamative markers.

One must note that this idea is incompatible with the proposal developed for Italian by Benincà (1996), which treats the marker che as the realization of the Focus head. We have criticized the proposal on theoretical grounds in section 2.4, but it is true that the relative position of dislocates between the wh-exclamative word and the marker che in Italian (38)-a and Paduan (38)-b is a major empirical issue Benincà (1996, 33):

(38) a. Che bel libro, a tua sorella, che (le) hanno regalato! (It., what nice book to your daughter that to.her have.3pl given Benincà (1996))
    ‘What a nice book, to your sister, they gave her as a a gift!’

b. Che bel libro, a to sorela, che i ghe ga regal`a! (Pa., what nice book to your daughter that cl.sbj cl.dat have.3pl given Munaro (2003))
‘What a nice book, to your sister, they gave her as a gift!’

If we assume the left periphery by Rizzi (1997), where left-dislocates appear in the higher TopP, between the ForceP and FocusP (39), we must conclude that, in these varieties, che cannot be in ForceP, but in the head of FocusP.

(39)

According to Benincà’s proposal, the wh-phrase first moves to the specifier of FocusP, and then further moves up to the specifier of ForceP, leaving the dislocate behind.

If we extend her proposal to Ibero-Romance varieties, we run into trouble, for dislocates must precede exclamative wh-words, wh-phrases and markers. Consider the following examples:

(40) Ca., CTILC
a. D’aquest tema, quantes besties que se’n diuen!
   of=+this subject how.f.pl nonsenses em se=cLpart say.3pl
   ‘How much nonsense people say about this subject!’
b. ¡Aquesta si qu’és lletja!
   this.f em that=+is ugly
‘How ugly is this one!’

(41) Sp., Tirado (2016)

a. A Pedro, qué cosas (que) le pasan.
   to Pedro what things DAT.3SG happen.3PL
   ‘The things that happen to Pedro.’

b. A María, vaya regalo (que) le han hecho.
   to Maria what gift DAT.3SG have.3PL make.ptpc
   ‘What a gift they gave to María.’

If we maintain the proposal for Paduan and Italian by Benincà (1996), we must conclude that the wh-exclamative word remains in Focus, from where it would be able to check its exclamative feature against that of Force. However, we still have no answer why Italo-Romance varieties should allow the extra movement, in contrast with Ibero-Romance varieties.

Moreover, the particular case of Italian and Paduan described in (38) is far from being conclusive once one considers a broader set of examples. For instance, Munaro (2003) remarks that the order dislocate $\gg$ exclamative phrase is not totally excluded in Bellunese, and is even required with exclamative words:

(42) Be., Munaro (2003)

a. Che/Quanti bei vestiti, to sorela, che la a compra!
   what/how.PL beautiful.PL dresses your sister EM CL.SBJ has buy.ptpc
   ‘Your sister, how (many) beautiful dresses she has bought!’

b. ?To sorela, che/quant bi vestiti che la a compra!
   your sister what/how.PL beautiful.PL dresses EM CL.SBJ has buy.ptpc
   ‘How hard you have worked for this party!’

(43) Be., Munaro (2003)

a. *Quant, par sta festa, che ave laora!
   how for this party EM have.2SG work.ptpc

b. ?Par sta festa, quant che ave laora!
   for this party how EM have.2SG work.ptpc
   ‘How hard you have worked for this party!’

These data suggest that the apparent cases of dislocation in (38) might be reanalyzed as parentheticals, as suggested for other cases of embedded CLLD by Hernanz (2011) and Villalba (2022) (on parentheticals and the left periphery, see Koev (2021); Giorgi (2018)). Henceforth, these cases would not necessarily support the claim that che is a focus marker.

In any event, the available evidence seems to support the analysis I defend for che/que as an exclamative sentence marker, rather than the proposal that analyzes it as a focus marker.

4. Conclusions

In this paper, I have shown that the set of markers that have been associated with exclamative sentence-type and exclamations in Romance have a specialized pragmatic role in building the meaning of an exclamation speech act, and their role is encoded transparently in the syntactic structure. Mirative markers encode the surprise attitude of the speaker towards a proposition, and they appear in the Judge Phrase position in Krifka’s Speech Act Layer, above ForceP and vocatives, so they may combine with different sentence-types, besides exclamatives. Degree
operators, which create the necessary domain extension on which the attitude of the speaker is built, occupy the specifier of ForceP, next to the marker of exclamative sentence-type, in the head of ForceP. The resultant picture of the paper shows that we can offer a compositional approach to exclamativity dealing with the rich set of pragmatic and syntactic properties of exclamative markers in Romance. Henceforth, we can take the results on the different role of exclamative markers and their strict ordering as evidence for a rich syntax-pragmatics interface along the lines of the Cartographic Program.

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References

Linguistica 8.


