

Bien mirado: Absolute Clause and Discourse Marker*

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the construction *bien mirado* as a discursive marker. In the first part, based on the data provided by the CDH and CORPES corpora, we will examine the discursive functioning of *bien mirado* and the delimitation problems associated with the constructions of absolute clause or free adjunct, taking especially into account the notions of subject of predication, co-referentiality, the semantic relationship between the main clause introduced by *bien mirado* and the previous discursive element, the position (initial, medial, or final), the parenthetical character, as well as the argumentative and informative values, along with the reformulating one. In the second part, we will instead focus on the origins of the construction, on the contrastive historical delimitation with absolute clauses and on the frequency distribution, additionally developing a hypothesis about the subjectification process involved in discourse functioning – linked to the discursive character of absolute constructions, the parenthetical nature, and the meaning of *mirar* as a verb of thought or judgment.

Keywords: absolute clause; discourse marker; reformulator; subjectification

Resum. *Bien mirado*: clàusula absoluta i marcador discursiu

El propòsit d'aquest treball consisteix a analitzar la construcció *bien mirado* com a marcador discursiu. A la primera part del nostre treball, a partir de les dades subministrades pels corpus CDH i CORPES, analitzarem el funcionament discursiu de *bien mirado* i els problemes de delimitació amb les construccions de clàusula absoluta o adjunt lliure, tenint en compte especialment les nocions de subjecte de la predicació, la correferencialitat, la relació semàntica entre l'oració principal introduïda per *bien mirado* i l'element discursiu previ, la posició (inicial, medial o final), el caràcter parentètic, els valors argumentatiu i informatiu, i el valor reformulador. A la segona part del treball, ens centrarem en els orígens de la construcció, en la seua delimitació històrica contrastiva amb clàusules absolutes i en la seua distribució de freqüències, i desenvoluparem una hipòtesi sobre el procés de subjectivació implicat en el funcionament discursiu, i que estarà vinculat amb el propi caràcter discursiu de les construccions absolutes, el caràcter parentètic de les mateixes i el significat de *mirar* com a verb de pensament o judici.

Paraules clau: clàusula absoluta; marcador discursiu; reformulador; subjectivació

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1. Introduction

This paper addresses the construction *bien mirado*¹ and its possible consideration as a discourse marker. The RAE-ASALE dictionary (2014) defines it as: “loc. adv. If it is thought or considered accurately or carefully. *Bien mirado, no tienes razón* [*All in all, you’re not right*].” According to this definition, the construction is grammaticalized as an adverbial idiomatic phrase and cannot syntactically affect the sentence that it heads. On the other hand, it seems to develop some type of discourse value, since what is thought – or considered – may not correspond to the sentence introduced by it, but to something previous. Likewise, that introduced sentence appears to reflect some type of conclusion drawn from the discursive relationship involved.

Luis Santos (2003: 457) collected the construction, albeit relating it to *si bien se mira* [*if you look closely*], which makes his analysis very partial, since we do not know if it shows a similarity in their functioning, or an equivalence. In any case, *si bien se mira* is believed to have an epistemic value, as well as a corrective or rectifying meaning.

Marcos Sánchez (2011) thoroughly examined the use of this construction as a discourse marker. Despite being eminently synchronic, her work raises the historical hypothesis of its origin as an absolute construction (2011: 142). *Bien mirado* is understood as a discourse marker which results from a process of semantic weakening of the verb *mirar* [*to look at*], and therefore, it stops being a verb of visual perception to become one of mental activity, developing discursive values from there. The construction pattern exhibits gender and number invariance, positional mobility, and intonational independence (2011: 137-138). She established three main values for the discourse marker: (1) non-paraphrastic reformulator of counterargumentative distance, which legitimizes the counterargumentative movement of the sentence that it introduces; (2) reconsideration marker, which justifies the formulation of the sentence introduced by it; and (3) epistemic modalizer, by making it independent of the connection with the previous context and able to acquire modal values of argumentative reinforcement (3):

- (1) Sobre el tema de éstas y de su garantía parecería haber algún punto de coincidencia entre la posición sostenida por el editorial de *El País* y la que reflejan los artículos de Sastre; *pero, bien mirado*, tal coincidencia sería sólo aparente. 1980 [*On the subject of these and their guarantee, there would seem to be some point of coincidence between the position held by the El País editorial and*

1. Bien [well-ADV.] mirado [look-PTCP.M.SG.]

that reflected in Sastre's articles; but, come to think of it, such a coincidence would only be apparent.]

- (2) Como fórmula jurídica es aberrante, sin duda. Pero sólo porque avala de modo público una práctica que se suele ejercer a escondidas. *Bien mirado*, no sólo muchos policías, sino también muchos jueces, muchos políticos y muchos, muchísimos ciudadanos piensan como el tribunal israelí. 1996
[As a legal formula, it is aberrant, without a doubt. But only because it publicly endorses a practice that is usually carried out secretly. All in all, not only many police officers, but also many judges, many politicians and many, many citizens think like the Israeli court.]
- (3) Y Anselmo dice que eso no se dice, que eso no se explica, que el arte es arte y que cada uno ha de imaginarse lo que quiera, claro, *bien mirado*, yo no me mosqueo, porque es verdad, 1988
[And Anselmo says that that is not said, that that is not explained, that art is art and that each person has to imagine what they want, of course, though, I don't get upset, because it is true,]

Furthermore, importantly, these discursive values match other uses where the participle develops sentential values (2011: 143).

We will begin by commenting on sentence values rather than discursive ones. Some of them can be easily distinguished from discursive uses, an example being provided by the occurrence of *bien mirado* as an adjective or as the attribute of a verb. It also assumes the role of participle with the verbs *haber* [to have] and *tener* [to have], and complements the verb *mirar* [to look at]:

- (4) E por ende, desquel Infante la ovo bien mirado, dixo a los del Consejo del Rey qué le paresçia, que la devian tomar. 1406-1411
[And therefore, since the Infante looked at it carefully, he told those in the King's Council what he thought: that they should take it]
- (5) mas acuérdaseme decir Homero, fuente de habilidades, ser dificultosa cosa en el hombre bien mirado mostrar tanta sequedad, 1589
[but I remember that Homer, a source of skills, said that it was difficult for a thoughtful man to show so much dryness]
- (6) Trahia el Confessor bien mirado el lugar y la parte, 1605
[The Confessor had carefully considered the place and the part]
- (7) el mozo nunca iniciaba la conversación, por ser muy corto y bien mirado. 1909
[the boy never started the conversation, because he was very short and cautious]
- (8) Ya lo tengo bien mirado, y es así como te digo. 1517
[I have already had a good look at it, and it is as I tell you]

- (9) Te lo digo como amigo: para mí que te estás volviendo majara, así como lo oyes, majara, no riges bien, deberías ir a un médico que te miraran bien mirado. 1995

[I'm telling you as a friend: I think you're going mad, just as you hear it, mad, you are out of your mind, you should go to a doctor so that they could take a good look at you.]

Differentiating these latter constructions from discursive uses does not normally pose any significant difficulties. The problem, both theoretically and in practical terms, lies in distinguishing the uses of this construction as a discourse marker from the ones where it plays the role of an absolute clause, especially considering that no consensus has hit her to been reached on what exactly an *absolute clause* is.

The notion of *absolute construction* or *clause* has proved highly controversial, since authors have had real trouble differentiating it from concepts such as *semi-absolute clause*, *pseudo-absolute clause*, *incidental construction*, *free adjunct* or *noun clause*. We will stick to a unifying criterion according to which three distinct types of absolute constructions arise: a) free adjuncts (with or without a subject); b) integrated into the sentence (*esos sucesos tuvieron lugar bien entrado el mes de abril* [*those events took place well into the month of April*]); and c) noun clauses (Hernanz & Suñer 1999) used in independent utterances (*detenidos dos hermanos que vendieron dosis de droga mortales* [*two brothers who sold deadly drug doses arrested*]). We are interested in the first type, i.e. those behaving as sentential adjuncts.

For Hernanz & Suñer (1999: 2546), absolute constructions are not the same as *incidental constructions*, also called *free adjuncts* – e.g. *detenido e interrogado, negó tener conocimiento de los hechos que se le imputaban* [*when detained and interrogated, he denied having knowledge of the facts which were attributed to him*], the main difference being that the latter lack an explicit subject. However, RAE (2009: 2896 et seq.) recalls the controversy raised by regarding these constructions as provided with a tacit subject,² since they would be equivalent to absolute constructions then: *una vez publicado el libro, nos pareció mucho más breve* / *una vez publicado, nos pareció mucho más breve* [*once the book was published, it seemed much shorter to us* / *once published, it seemed much shorter to us*]. In any case, although the need, or not, for an explicit subject – as well as its co-reference with the subject of the main clause³ – has long been debated upon, our choice in this paper is to follow the proposal of assigning the status of an absolute clause both to constructions with an explicit subject and to those without it; and, as for the existence or non-existence of co-reference with the subject of the main clause, we do not see it as a differentiating feature (beyond what it actually implies).

RAE defines absolute clauses (2009: 38.11a) as “units of predication that establish an attributive relationship between a noun item and some attribute that is

2. Obviously, no reference is made to a *syntactic subject*, but rather to a *subject of predication* understood as a semantic concept, which allows for its compatibility with other syntactic functions.

3. A historical overview of the main positions on this matter can be found in Gutiérrez 2020, Del Rey 2019 and Eloundou 2020, as well as in the monograph authored by Pérez Jiménez 2007.

predicated of it without a verb mediating between them in personal form.” Pérez Jiménez (2007: 19 et seq.) used the features listed below to describe the subgroup that we previously labeled as “free adjuncts” (with or without subject):

- They are constituents that appear necessarily linked to a main clause.
- They are detached from the main clause’s melodic curve by a tonal inflection – graphically represented with commas.
- Positional freedom: they can not only precede or follow the main clause linearly but also appear parenthetically inside it.
- They denote a situation or state of affairs that is interpreted as a cause, a conditioning circumstance, an objection, an explanation... linked to the situation described in the main clause.
- In addition to being predicative structures without verbal support, they are comprised of a predicate and a subject of predication.
- The subject of the clause may either appear explicitly realized or be tacit.
- The predicate can be a phrase with the function of an adjective, a noun, a preposition, an adverb or a participle.

The conception of the absolute clause as a thematic element stands out as another of its most frequently mentioned characteristics, since a tendency exists to assume some situation that either occurred or will occur before the one denoted in the main clause takes place (RAE 2009: 38.11w). This thematic status would relate to its position before the main clause, or expressed differently, the state of affairs portrayed through the absolute construction comes to be interpreted as triggering the situation described in the main clause (Pérez Jiménez 2007: 310). De Roberto (2012: 234) defended the thematic value of absolute constructions even when the clause appears after the main clause. In fact, Pérez Jiménez (2007) devoted much of his monograph to provide evidence that, regardless of their position, absolute constructions serve to convey thematic information.

The possibility to consider tacit subjects for *bien mirado* obviously stems from the participle’s capacity for agreement, since the latter makes possible anaphoric relationships with a previous non-immediately explicit element. Anaphora clearly provides a way to relate elements in discourse, but this can also be achieved by means of another instrument (one which incidentally also characterizes the uses of *bien mirado*): parenthesis (Kluck, Ott & De Vries 2015: 1-2). Parentheses present a constituent closely linked to its environment, which means that it contains information that is secondary (or thematic, we would say) with regard to the main proposition; hence its proneness to have elliptical elements – even more so in a gender- and number-marking language like Spanish. Furthermore, the parenthetical structure could be considered somewhat *iconic*, insofar as (expanding Kaltenböck’s proposal 2013: 308) the formal detachment of the main clause shows its secondary status.

Even though the so-called “parenthetical constructions” differ from absolute clauses, they undoubtedly share a number of meeting points, and, in any case, an interrelation connects them due to their recognition as a source for the development of discourse markers. Parenthetical constructions are defined as digressive struc-

tures inserted in the middle of another structure without becoming integrated into it – i.e. their omission does not affect the rest of the structure or meaning (Brinton 2017: 8). Absolute constructions do not fit into this characterization, essentially because parenthetical constructions do not indicate a thought operation, but rather a certain attitude towards the following sentence (Brinton 2017: 128); in other words, they do not behave as a syntactic constituent (Kaltenböck, Heine & Kuteva 2011: 857) owing to their inherent extrapositionality (Fuentes 2015: 193).

Notwithstanding the above, and despite their functional dissimilarity, we must remember that all verb-based parenthetical constructions seemingly use (Fuentes 2015: 179) verbs of thought, opinion, or perception (albeit in the first person), thus resembling *bien mirado*, since its meaning is equivalent to the one conveyed by a verb of thought or judgment. Parenthetical constructions also interestingly constitute one of the historical origins of discourse markers (Brinton & Traugott 2005: 137). Brinton (2017: 13 et seq.) established a series of syntactic pathways to develop discourse markers among which, evidently, was not the evolution from absolute clause to discourse marker; she left a possibility open, though, by mentioning certain participial constructions, e.g. *put in another way* and *worded plainly* (2017: 23 and 293). In any case, numerous similarities exist between the semantic development of *bien mirado* and the semantic processes involved in parenthetical pathways.

As will be proven in our paper, the evolution in the status of *bien mirado* from absolute construction to discourse marker illustrates a process of subjectification (Cifuentes 2018) through which this item goes loses its propositional meaning to acquire a discursive or metatextual one, thus mirroring some of the functions of parenthetical constructions (Kaltenböck, Heine & Kuteva 2011: 864): they fulfill a reformulating purpose (as they serve to specify, explain, or clarify a previously introduced content); they do not contribute to the truth-conditional content of a sentence; they cannot be asked or denied; and their meaning necessarily has to do with the main clause. Garcés Gómez (2020: 72), after thoroughly analyzing a specific parenthetical item, highlighted its discursive functions, which specifically include: organizing the discourse through the provision of a link to what was previously said; reformulating whatever has been expressed to present it from a new perspective; and increasing the argumentative force of a discourse utterance or segment. This last aspect deserves being commented upon in more detail.

Pérez Jiménez dedicated the last chapter of his book (2007: 327 et seq.) to deal with the argumentative value of absolute constructions. In his view, the absolute clause represents an argumentative sequence and its propositional semantic content can consequently be interpreted as relevant information to evaluate the content of the main clause. The meaningful interpretation of the *absolute clause-main clause* relationship requires establishing a causal, consecutive, or concessive connection – to quote but a few – which is understood argumentatively, since the absolute clause acts as an argument and the main clause serves to provide a conclusion. Thus, we could argue that, thanks to its status as a thematic content, the absolute clause argumentatively contributes to highlight (or focus) the rhematic content of the main clause. Note, however, that the uses of *bien mirado* as a marker are not

likely to develop argumentative values, due to its propositional meaning being minimized; even so, it will continue to prove useful if the need arises to highlight the main clause's rhematic content.

This paper therefore has as its aim to study the discursive uses of *bien mirado*, for which purpose all the occurrences of this form supplied in the CDH and CORPES corpora will be analyzed, paying attention to examples of *bien mirado* that include variations in gender and number too. After centering on the discourse operation of *bien mirado* and the problems related to accurately delimiting absolute clauses, Section 3 takes the reader on a historical tour around the uses of this construction. Our work will come to an end with a few brief conclusions.

2. *Bien mirado* as a discourse marker

Bien mirado exhibits gender and number variability in absolute constructions; that is, *bien mirados*, *bien mirada*, and *bien miradas*⁴ can be used too. Nonetheless, the value of the participle indicating thought or judgment, i.e. mental activity, is common to all its uses, which could be seen as a first step in subjectification, since we move from a meaning based on the external situation ('to admire, to contemplate') to one associated with an internal situation ('to think, to judge'), in the sense conveyed by Traugott (1989: 34):⁵

- (10) E desde vuo *bien pensado e mirado en su entendimiento* el cobro que podía dar a su señor, 1250 [s. XVI (1500-1503)].
[and since he had thought and reasoned well about the payment he could give to his master]

Although certain agreement exists on the Latin nature of absolute constructions with past participles, insofar as most Latin absolute ablatives occur with these types of participles (Del Rey 2019: 183), doubts arise as to whether Spanish constructions, very frequent in the medieval language, represent a direct continuation of the equivalent Latin uses (Elvira 2004: 456). In any case, during the Middle Ages, it was common for the noun (with respect to which the participle performs a predicative or modifying function) not to be absent from the absolute construction. Likewise, these constructions tended to appear in initial position, adapting to a discourse organization where such a position serves to express previous circumstances, facts or situations, from a temporal or causal point of view, as opposed to the message's informative core that is usually conveyed in the second member (Elvira 2004: 457).

4. Bien [well-ADV.] mirados [look-PTCP.M.PL.]; bien [well-ADV.] mirada [look-PTCP.F.SG.]; bien [well-ADV.] miradas [look-PTCP.F.PL.].
5. The visual sensory meaning is not the first value of this verb, since the Latin verb *mirari* meant 'to be amazed,' 'to be surprised,' 'to admire,' which was the notion firstly denoted by the verb in Spanish, before evolving to mean 'to contemplate,' and finally, 'to direct the view' (Corominas & Pascual 1985). The sense transmitted as a verb of thought or judgment verb can be easily obtained from 'to contemplate,' as shown by the example supplied.

It goes without saying that, when the participle plays a predicative function with regard to the noun, the consideration of this construction as a discourse marker is out of the question. Likewise, the presence of any complement modifying the participle will give proof of its predicative nature, thus discarding the possible conception of the construction as a discourse marker. Numerous constructions account for these possibilities:

- (11) La ira non conveniente de hermosa faze fea, mas vuestro gesto plaziente, bien mirado por la gente, con saña más vos arrea. 1438-1456
[Unsuitable anger makes the beautiful ugly, but your condescending gesture, highly regarded by people, stimulates you more viciously.]

- (12) Y después de bien mirado y considerado todo lo que habíamos visto, tornamos a ver la gran plaza. 1568-1575
[And after looking carefully and considering everything that we had seen, we returned to see the great square]

- (13) aunque estos daños y truecos no siempre serían ciertos, bien mirado por personas doctas y prudentes en gran parte se acertarían y por poca luz que hubiese no se haría. 1618
[Although these damages and exchanges were not always true, if carefully considered by learned and prudent people they would be largely correct, and it would not be done regardless of how little light there was]

- (14) Desta manera aconçe en vosotros llamar fortaleza lo que bien mirado con prudencia es verdadera cobardía. 1553
[In this way it happens to call strength in yourselves, which, (if) looked at with prudence, is true cowardice.]

- (15) Así que, todo bien mirado, este uso era feo e sin provecho e sospechoso, por lo cual yo huiré d'él en cuanto pueda e así hará todo cavallero que quisiere mi compañía. 1516
[so, all things considered, this use was ugly and useless and suspicious, which is why I will flee from it as soon as I can, and so will every gentleman who should want my company.]

It seems clear that the participle behaves predicatively in each one of the examples above, which consequently prevents us from seeing it as a potential discourse marker. Some cases exist, though, when the lack of punctuation leads us to harbor doubts about the predicative nature of the participle:

- (16) porque los correos podran yr y venir en ocho o nueve dias y este tiempo tampoco se perdera porque en quanto bueluen se yran haziendo las cartas conforme al stilo que se tiene por stado poniendo dentro la cortessia y en el sobrescripto los nombres de que embiaren memoria los virreyes y *bien mirado*

esto es tan pura materia destado que no solo no creo que repararan en que no vayan despachadas por Cancelleria pero que lo tendran por mas fauor; 1901 [*because couriers will be able to come and go in eight or nine days and this time will not be wasted either because, as soon as they return, the letters will be written according to the usual style putting courtesy inside, and in the superscription, the names of those of whom the viceroys send memory and, looking at all this, it is such a pure a matter of state, that not only I do not think they will notice that they are not dispatched by the Chancellery but they would have it more in their favor*]

The absence of punctuation allows for a twofold interpretation of this passage: (a) *y bien mirado esto, es tan pura materia destado* [*and looking at all this, it is so pure a matter of state*]; and (b) *y, bien mirado, esto es tan pura materia destado* [*and, all in all, this is so pure a matter of state*]. Whereas the first interpretation portrays *bien mirado* as a free adjunct or absolute construction, the second one exemplifies its utilization as a reconsideration marker. These doubts could even make us think about punctuation problems, especially in old texts, due to the work of editors, since we do not know the extent to which they might have favored a predicative reading or discursive one.⁶

Thus, we should seemingly differentiate the predicative uses of *bien mirado* (which illustrate absolute clauses by taking a complement or referring to a noun), from those where it alludes to a previous or implicit action, rather than to a preceding noun. Furthermore, the presence of anaphoric pronominal elements in texts greatly complicates the constructional analysis. We must not forget in this regard that absolute constructions generally have a clear discourse value (De Roberto 2012: 203). Bello in turn remarked (1964: §1179) that absolute constructions are used in descriptions which recapitulate already-mentioned circumstances, or expressed differently, they perform an undoubted discursive function. According to Narbona (1993: 464-465), because they refer to a previous event, absolute constructions shape what has been said in advance and provide a framework where the new information will rest. RAE's grammar follows along the same line by claiming (2009: 2903) that the absolute construction assumes a given situation that precedes the one mentioned in the main clause (hence its thematic function). Suñer likewise commented (2013: 58) on the thematic value of absolute constructions because they take up information mentioned beforehand in the speech and offer it as a framework within which the main event can be accommodated on a temporary basis. Note that, according to numerous authors, absolute clauses denote a state of affairs that is interpreted as triggering the situation described in the main clause (Pérez Jiménez 2009: 327).

The possibility also exists to find these discourse values combined with other elements (of the construction) in inflectional variation, since they are typical of the absolute construction:

6. This problem was also pointed out by Del Rey (2019: 191) when he specified that the editing criteria adopted, especially in the establishment of pauses within paragraphs, can influence the identification of a construction as an absolute one or as a free adjunct, i.e. with or without a subject.

- (17) Pero *bien mirada la cuestión*, muy claro se ve ser de palabras, puesto que Krause afirma que el pensamiento de otros seres que yo, se da siempre de un modo relativo, 1880-1881

[But looking at the question closely, it is very clear that it is about words, since Krause affirms that the thought of other beings different from me always occurs in a relative manner.]

- (18) Y lo más admirable es que pretendan hacer valer contra las nuestras el argumento negativo, tomado del silencio de los autores antiguos, siendo así que este, *bien miradas las cosas*, es sin comparación más fuerte contra las suyas. 1730

[And the most admirable thing is that they try to assert, against ours, the negative argument, taken from the silence of the ancient authors, while this one, all things considered, is incomparably stronger against theirs.]

Once the discursive relationship has been accredited, the presence of an anaphoric element as the subject of the participle precisely reinforces such an anaphoric relationship:

- (19) Volviendo la vista al dilatado panorama que va dejando atrás, y marcando con la mente los sitios en que ha puesto su planta, ¡qué pobre, qué mezquino le parece lo explorado, comparándolo con lo que tiene sin explorar!... *Bien mirado todo*, ¿qué ha hecho él hasta entonces más que retozar en mies abierta; herborizar, como si dijéramos, en campo libre? 1878

[Looking back at the vast panorama that he is leaving behind, and marking with his mind the places where he has placed his foot, how poor, how petty what he has explored seems to him, comparing it with what he has yet to explore!... All things considered, what has he done until then but frolic in open fields; herbalize, so to speak, freely in the field?]

- (20) Ay muchos que a los primeros encuentros desta enfermedad luego mandan sangrar al enfermo, con intencion de preuenir los daños venideros. Pero *bien mirado esto*, los que lo hazen, son como los que quieren echar agua por toda la casa para matar vn pequeño fuego, 1600

[There are many who, with the first symptoms of this disease, then order to bleed the patient, with the intention of preventing future damage. But when you look at this, those who do so are like the ones who want to pour water all over the house to extinguish a small fire.]

- (21) Hemos dicho que el cristiano se llama cristiano porque sigue a Cristo como discípulo a su maestro, como caballero a su capitán, como vasallo a su señor. *Lo cual bien mirado*, será gran confusión para muchos que quieren ser llamados sus discípulos. 1555

[We have said that the Christian is called Christian because he follows Christ as a disciple does with his master, a knight with his captain, a vassal with his

lord. Which, if you look closely, will cause great confusion for many who want to be called his disciples.]

It further complicates matters if the subject of the participle of the absolute construction also functions as the subject of the main clause, since it may then be seen as the subject of the main clause rather than of the participle:

- (22) Sin Cati seguramente no lo hubiera contado, habría intentado llegar él conduciendo y se hubiera estrellado por ahí. *Lo que bien mirado* no le hubiera producido a Carlos Aguirre ninguna consternación; 2002

[Without Cati he would surely not have survived, he would have tried to make it driving and would have crashed the car somewhere. What, looked at closely, would not have caused Carlos Aguirre any consternation;]

- (23) - Si he de hablar con franqueza, Sr. D. Fructuoso de mi alma, esa página histórica no resulta muy gloriosa que digamos... expreso lo que siento... y *bien mirado* ello es un acto político más que militar. 1898

[If I must speak frankly, Mr. D. Fructuoso of my soul, that historical page is by no means very glorious... I am expressing what I feel... and when you look at it, it is a political act rather than a military one.]

- (24) por que con todas estas maneras de humor puedan resistir al calor que ya el verano viene y es natural. y *esto bien mirado* no es sino inuierno mas tarde en las regiones frias que en las callentes. 1513

[so that with all these provisions they can resist the heat, since summer is coming already and it is natural, and looking closely, this is nothing but a later winter in cold regions than in hot ones.]

In all the cases above, considering – or not – a delimiting pause makes possible a double syntactic interpretation, as it happened in example 16, to which must be added that punctuation in texts sometimes turns out to be unfortunate.

We have verified in previous examples that the appearance of an anaphoric relative was common in the syntax of *bien mirado*. Not all relatives behave in the same way, though:

- (25) un pájaro en una jaula y un reloj de cuco, *que bien mirado* podrían ser la misma cosa; 2001

[a bird in a cage and a cuckoo clock, which, all in all, could be the same thing]

- (26) No quisiera pasar a la historia como el hombre que le cortó la cabeza... Aunque *bien mirado* lo que importa es pasar, salvarse del olvido, 2010

[I wouldn't want to go down in history as the man who cut off his head... Although, all in all, what matters is passing, being saved from oblivion,]

- (27) *Lo que bien mirado* no le hubiera producido a Carlos Aguirre ninguna consternación; 2002
 [What, all in all, would not have caused Carlos Aguirre any consternation;]
- (28) & con mi poco valer el poco aueros gozado harto goza *bien mirado* quien algun tiempo os gozo pues gozaros siempre yo era vn bien demasiado. 1517
 [to have enjoyed so little with my little value, however, is to enjoy a lot for someone who enjoyed you, because always enjoying you was an excessive good.]
- (29) no sucedía esto relativamente á los ministros, á quienes, bien mirado, había dejado muertos el golpe del 7 de Julio. 1847-1849
 [This did not happen relatively to ministers, whom, in short, the coup d'état of July 7 had left dead]
- (30) Como nos enseña Freud, la mujer desea lo contrario de lo que piensa o declara, *lo cual, bien mirado*, no es tan terrible porque el hombre, como nos enseña Perogrullo, obedece por contra al dictado de su aparato genital o digestivo. 2001
 [As Freud teaches us, a woman desires the opposite of what she thinks or declares, which, however, is not so terrible because a man, as Perogrullo teaches us, obeys the dictates of his genital or digestive system.]

Regardless of the punctuation problems detected in some of the preceding constructions, and without considering now the possibility of the relative being valid as the subject of a possible absolute construction with *bien mirado* (a possibility excluded in all the examples), we verify that the position of *bien mirado* is not possible in every context: both *lo que* [what] and *quien* [who] make it possible for *bien mirado* to appear, delimited by pauses, before or after the relative. Nevertheless, *que* [which] and *lo cual* [what] only permit the presence of *bien mirado* after them, and with a previous pause, of course:

- (31) (25). *como si flotaran en la nada, un pájaro en una jaula y un reloj de cuco, *bien mirado*, que podrían ser la misma cosa
- (32) (30). *Como nos enseña Freud, la mujer desea lo contrario de lo que piensa o declara, *bien mirado*, *lo cual* no es tan terrible porque el hombre, como nos enseña Perogrullo, obedece por contra al dictado de su aparato genital o digestivo.

Two questions need to be answered after this detailed exposition: 1) Can *bien mirado* function as a discourse marker and as an absolute construction? And 2) What values does it have as a discourse marker?

Already at the beginning of this study, we established a first approach by which we excluded from our working corpus those examples of *bien mirado* where this

construction behaved as an adjective, an attribute, a participle of the verbs *haber* [to have] and *tener* [to have], and a complement of the verb *mirar* [to look]. Similarly, we disregarded absolute constructions with an explicit subject: the predicative function of the participle with regard to a noun removes the possibility of seeing the construction as a discourse marker. Likewise, the presence of any complement modifying the participle will prove its predicative nature, consequently justifying its non-consideration as a potential discourse marker. Thus, we will formally confine the examples of *bien mirado* as a discourse marker to those cases where it appears isolated between pauses and no type of noun phrase can possibly be assigned to it as an agreed implicit referent. In other words, this group only includes those examples where there is neither a complement nor agreement, or in which the hypothetical tacit subject of the construction is a previous or implicit action.

Concerning the meaning of *bien mirado* as a potential discourse marker, we pointed out in the introduction that a tendency exists to consider a corrective or counterargumentative value. Marcos Sánchez (2011: 149-150) clearly expressed it, albeit integrating it into *reconsideration*, which may be either co-oriented with prior information or anti-oriented. Nonetheless, Marcos Sánchez likewise stressed that, along with these connection values, the construction has uses where it gets rid of such values (precisely from the idea of deliberation provided by reconsideration) and develops epistemic modal meanings (2011: 152-154): evidential (since it refers back to how the information expressed in the main clause is acquired, which eventually legitimizes it) and argumentative-reinforcement-oriented (mentioning the source strengthens the assertion, which explains why it usually combines with other markers of the same type: *claro* [of course], *en realidad* [indeed/in reality], etc.).

It is customary to summarize the functions of discourse markers by dividing them into two large types: a connection function; and a subjective modal one. Among the elements with a connection function, a group of so-called *reformulators* is usually singled out, namely those which organize the discourse in such a way that the speaker can return to previous elements in order to reinterpret them and present them from a different perspective. This is consequently a retroactive process through which one can not only explain, rectify, reconsider, or recapitulate what was previously said, but also detach oneself from it (Garcés 2008: 69). Likewise, reformulation tends to be subdivided into two main types of relationships: *paraphrastic* and *non-paraphrastic* (Garcés 2008: 71-73). In the former case, a relationship of discursive equivalence arises based on a certain semantic equivalence. In the latter, a change of enunciative perspective takes place through a hierarchical subordination of the reference elements with respect to the reformulated ones. Depending on the greater or lesser degree of distance from the aforesaid reference elements, we can normally distinguish three sorts of markers: *recapitulation*, *reconsideration*, and *separation*.

Thus, reformulation markers would characteristically be invariable linguistic items without a sentence syntactic function that perform a connection function with another – explicit or implicit – preceding element and guide communicative inferences. We can summarize what differentiates them from other connectors

in the following six features (Garcés 2008: 82-85): 1) They involve a process of reinterpreting a previous explicit or implicit element which can range from equivalence to significant distancing; 2) The retroactive process can introduce a new point of view that will match the reference point or not; hence the polyphonic nature; 3) A hierarchical relationship of equality or subordination exists between the related elements; 4) The meaning of reinterpretation can merge with other argumentative or informative values; 5) They exhibit positional mobility; and 6) They result from a grammaticalization process.

One can identify reconsideration markers (Garcés Gómez 2008: 126) because the relationship with what was said before does not have as its aim to synthesize the essential, but to offer a new perspective which will either support or reject the previous proposal. This consideration of already existing perspectives, which may be carried out explicitly or implicitly, can be assessed as a positive or negative justification of what was said, or implied, in advance. Garcés also drew a distinction between those reconsideration markers which suggest that the point of view reformulated in the main clause should be regarded as the last and definitive one, and the ones which report a new standpoint after pondering the total set of things previously uttered.

Bien mirado clearly seems to fall within the second group, since it implies previously considering other perspectives. A new formulation is subsequently put forward from this reinterpretation (the main clause) which can become a justification with a variety of values (causal, counterargumentative, consecutive...) differing either from what was expressed beforehand or from the inferences drawn. In my view, the challenge lies in distinguishing when *bien mirado* is being used as an absolute clause and as a marker, since the absolute construction will equally convey an idea of reconsideration, affecting discursive values too, as already explained above. Furthermore, we must bear in mind that its pragmatic value stems from the meaning of *mirar* [to look] as a verb ('to think, to judge'). Thus, the key to differentiation seems to be understanding marker uses as the result of a grammaticalization process.

The acquisition of non-propositional (e.g. metalinguistic or textual) meanings constitutes the context for the semantic-pragmatic expansion identified with grammaticalization processes (Brinton 2017: 28). Unfortunately for the construction *bien mirado*, these meanings are possible in its use as an absolute construction too, and, furthermore (considering the value of the verb *mirar* [to look] and its appearance in absolute constructions), they can also occur with the other three inflectional variants – *bien mirados*, *bien mirada*, *bien miradas* – although the respective frequencies of use vary. The determining factor accordingly has to be in the fixation of the construction, which will lead to very blurred boundaries between the various uses.

As highlighted above, all those in which a participle performs a predicative function about a noun stops us from regarding the construction as a discourse marker. This happens especially if the noun acts as a subject, but also if *bien mirado* develops other types of complements or is governed by *después de* [after], which obviously leads to exclude all these cases from the categorization as discourse markers and to classify them as *absolute clause* uses instead.

On the contrary, the parenthetical uses of *bien mirado* alluding to explicit or implicit information which does not correlate with a noun phrase that can be considered an antecedent and present a main clause with a non-masculine, singular subject, or one exhibiting another type of sentence modality, can be understood as exemplifying a discourse marker function:

- (33) ¿Quién, cuándo, dónde? *Bien mirado*, Rosalie Nzang Ondo se había convertido en una mujercita de una belleza luminosa, 2007
 [Who, when, where? All in all, Rosalie Nzang Ondo had become a little woman of luminous beauty.]
- (34) faltaba información fiable, esa que se obtiene sólo con trabajo, porque, *bien mirado*, ¿qué datos tenían ellos en su poder sobre los alumnos nuevos? 2004
 [Reliable information was missing, that which can only be obtained through work, because, all in all, what data did they have in their possession about the new students?]

In turn, the cases which feature *bien mirado* in a parenthetical way referring to some previous explicit or implicit information which does not coincide with an antecedent noun phrase, and presenting a main clause that includes a masculine, singular subject (whether it is a noun or an anaphoric element), turn out to be problematic, since such items could be considered the subject of *bien mirado*, thus leading to classify the construction as an absolute clause.

My proposal consists in categorizing these uses as markers too. After all, if the construction is already grammaticalized, as evidenced by the previous examples of non-agreement, the grammaticalization will also take place in these cases, with the pause serving as a formal mark because, should the speaker want to express a propositional content as an absolute construction, he would not need to iconically separate the verb from the subject. Furthermore, in all such situations, *bien mirado* does not provide a content argument meant to reach the main clause (unlike what happens in absolute constructions), since I simply see it as an element of connection with some previous explicit or implicit reference (‘if you think or consider accurately or carefully’) which equally serves to highlight or focus the main clause: *tu padre, bien mirado, no será responsable* [your father, after all, will not be responsible] vs. *bien mirado tu padre, no será responsable* [considered how your father is, he will not be responsible].

A syntactic and semantic union between the subject and the participle becomes visible in absolute uses. There is no such union when the construction plays the role of a marker, insofar as the conceptual separation has iconically been grammaticalized in advance and, therefore, the marker links, reformulates, and informatively highlights the rhematic information on the subject, though failing to constitute an argument. When this occurs with more abstract items such as anaphoric subjects, the conceptual separation will prove more difficult. However, for me, the delimitation of uses is already clear and they will be perceived as discourse markers all the same.

Concerning modal uses, they do not seem acceptable to me. Marcos Sánchez (2011) resorted to them because of the difficulties faced when trying to find the sentence with respect to which *bien mirado* introduces a new perspective. The three examples that she provided are arguable:

(35) 6. Cantidad y calidad en las leyes de la memoria

Bien mirado, las leyes cuantitativas de la memoria y el olvido coinciden en gran parte con las del aprendizaje verbal. 1975

[6. *Quantity and quality in the laws of memory*

All in all, the quantitative laws of memory and forgetfulness largely match those of verbal learning.]

(36) Y Anselmo dice que eso no se dice, que eso no se explica, que el arte es arte y que cada uno ha de imaginarse lo que quiera, claro, *bien mirado*, yo no me mosqueo, porque es verdad, el arte es el arte, y el artista no va a dar un folleto explicativo. 1988

[*And Anselmo says that that is not said, that that is not explained, that art is art and that everyone has to imagine what they want, of course, though, I don't get upset, because it is true, art is art, and the artist is not going to give an explanatory brochure.*]

(37) —En realidad, *bien mirado*, es lógico que tengas celos. 2002

[*Actually, however, it's logical for you to be jealous*]

In example 37, regardless of the combination with *en realidad* [*actually*], the main clause is interpreted as a continuation of something previous; and therefore, it seems only natural to think that *bien mirado* refers to that prior content. What is more, in the light of the broad context that surrounds the dialogic scene, an unquestionable link connects with the preceding mention of jealousy:

—Estás celoso, ¿eh? [*—You're jealous, right?*]

—Por el amor de Dios, Juan —siguió Charo después de un rato—. Parece mentira que después de ocho años no tengas todavía las cosas claras, que te den ataquitos, como a un crío. No sé lo que te pasa, estás muy raro últimamente. [*—For God's sake, Juan, —Charo went on after a while. I can't believe that after eight years you are still unable to think clearly, that you have tantrums, like a child. I don't know what's wrong with you, you've been really weird lately.*]

—En realidad, *bien mirado*, es lógico que tengas celos [...]. En el fondo, es como si tú fueras mi marido, porque, la verdad, hace tanto tiempo que no me acuesto con él... [*—Actually, though, it's logical for you to be jealous [...]. In short, it's as if you were my husband, because, the truth is, it's been so long since I last slept with him...*]

Seen in a broader context, the text shows that jealousy constitutes known information because it is mentioned previously, and although Charo points out at first that Juan should not be jealous, *bien mirado* serves to rethink what has been said and contradicts her previous statements, concluding that jealousy is logical. Therefore, it has a clear connection value.

In example 36, *bien mirado* introduces the main clause *yo no me mosqueo* [*I don't get upset*]. However, the sentence would sound incoherent if there were not a previous relationship, since something must have happened before so that he could have gotten angry – though he did not – and what happened earlier is very simple: the interlocutor has attacked his public image by uttering the phrases “that is not said” and “that is not explained” to answer his question. In other words, although his interlocutor’s response could be seen as impolite, and thus likely to irritate the speaker, that does not happen because he has reconsidered what his interlocutor said and pondered it in accordance with the explanations provided, all of which proves the existence of a connection value.

In example 35, *bien mirado* introduces the sentence *las leyes cuantitativas de la memoria y el olvido coinciden en gran parte con las del aprendizaje verbal* [*the quantitative laws of memory and forgetfulness largely coincide with those of verbal learning*]. In my opinion, the author has been talking about memory and forgetfulness for some time; in fact, the construction begins in section 6. *Quantity and quality in the laws of memory*, but *bien mirado* incites to rethink all that was said before about memory, thus showing a clear connection value with the previous information.

Therefore, we can conclude that *bien mirado* in these examples only acts as a connecting marker of reconsideration.

It is also worth examining other uses of *bien mirado* in which it does not introduce a main clause, for instance, when the expression appears followed by ellipsis, sometimes mediating between *bien mirado* and the main clause, or when it ends the intervention in the absence of a main clause:

- (38) ¡Qué agradecidos nos estaban por habernos ocupado! [*How grateful they were to us for hosting them*]

Pero que, bueno, ellos, *bien mirado*... ellos, por encima de todo, respetaban mucho... esto... digo... [*But, well, they, however... they, above all, respected a lot... this...*]

«Es que yo me levanto muy temprano», explicaba mi suegra con su vocecita azucarada. 2019 [*“It’s just that I get up very early,” my mother-in-law explained in her sugary little voice.*]

- (39) A Julián todavía le duraba el sofoco, la llamarada de indignación; pero ya le pesaba, de su corta paciencia, y resolvía ser más sufrido en lo venidero. Aunque *bien mirado*... [*Julián still had the hot flush, the flare of indignation; but he was already worried about his short patience, and he resolved to be more uncomplaining in the future. Although, however...*]

—¿Quiere escotar un sueño? —preguntó el de Naya al verle tan cabizbajo y mustio. 1886 [*Do you want to share a dream? —Naya’s man asked when he saw him so crestfallen and sad.*]

In both examples, the ellipses try to graphically represent the process of reconsideration of what was previously expressed. The absence of a main clause followed

by a marker normally correlates with the presence of a different voice (narrator vs. enunciator; enunciator 1 vs. enunciator 2) which supplies the new point of view. Another possibility would be for the absent main clause to remain implicit, conveying a counterargumentative value about what was previously said.

A different case arises when the expression appears between exclamation marks, since an epistemic value of confirmation is clearly expressed:

- (40) —Mañana qué es, Roberto, ¿un día muy triste o un día muy feliz? [*—What is tomorrow, Roberto, a very sad day or a very happy day?*]
 —¡Un día muy feliz, mujer! [*—A very happy day, woman!*]
 Filo sonríe. En uno de los dientes de delante tiene una caries honda, negruzca, redondita. [*Filo smiles. In one of his front teeth she has a deep, blackish, rounded cavity.*]
 —Sí, ¡bien mirado! 1951-1969 [*—Yes, of course!*]

No connection takes place in this example, since there is no main clause that can be modified (or reconstructed) in any way. It seems to be an isolated meaning, though, and there are no more occurrences of the construction with an exclamative modality. Furthermore, doubts arise as to whether the construction has a predicative value too.

Despite no other examples being available, this is a fairly common construction for *bien pensado* [well-ADV. thought-PTCP.M.SG]. *Pensar* [to think] shares meaning and equivalence with *mirar* [to look], since the latter behaves as a verb of thought or understanding. Unlike what happens with *bien mirado*, quite a few examples of exclamative constructions with *bien pensado* can be found, sometimes with exclamations and, on other occasions, without them⁷ – and even modified by *muy*⁸ [very]. The earliest examples date back to the 18th century,⁹ with over 20

7. —¿Le parece a Vd. —dije, afectando oficiosidad—, que suba pasito a pasito a ver si doña Restituta duerme o vela? [*“Do you think,” I said, feigning solicitousness, “that I should go up step by step to see if Mrs. Restituta is sleeping or awake?”*]
 —Bien pensado. Mejor es que te estés en la trastienda de centinela, y en caso de que sientas ruido en el entresuelo me avisas al instante. 1873 [*Of course. It is better for you to stay in the back room as a sentinel, and if you hear noise on the mezzanine, let me know instantly.*]
 A casa del Tío Bartolo / Debemos ir al momento / Que allí hay una guapa chica / Que vale lo que yo peso. [*To Uncle Bartolo's house / We must go right away / There is a pretty girl there / Who is worth what I weigh.*]
 —¡Bien pensado! ¡Bien pensado! / Gritaron todos a un tiempo, 1840 [*—Of course! Of course! / They all shouted at the same time.*]
8. Debo acompañarte, querida mía, y juntas rezaremos el oficio del día, que es hermoso sobre toda ponderación. [*I must accompany you, my dear, and together we will recite the office of the day, which is beautiful beyond all praise.*]
 —Muy bien pensado. Lo leeremos. 1876 [*—It goes without saying! We will read it.*]
9. The first example, from 1763, is a ponderative exclamative construction with *qué* [what]. The relationship between exclamative constructions and attributive ones seems feasible too (*me parece todo muy bien pensado* [it all seems very well thought out to me]) and examples from previous centuries exist. The positive evaluation seems to represent an intermediate step for confirmation. Mariq. Sólo por darles en cara, / aunque el propósito rompa, / hemos de pelar la pava / esta noche

examples detected in the 19th century. All of the above leads us to conclude that the exclamative use of *bien mirado* emerged by analogy with *bien pensado*, due to the significant similarity between *mirar* and *pensar*. On the other hand, these exclamative uses as a discourse marker are not clear, since the verb seems to retain a full meaning which results from an evaluative and expressive assessment of what was said before.

The first reformulation uses of *bien pensado* occurred in the late 18th century, which suggests that the motivation probably worked like this: *bien mirado* > *bien pensado*:

- (41) Amanece sereno, aunque con nubes. Visita del párroco y diputados del clero, que dicen están separados de la unión los del comercio. Bien pensado, no hay seguridad de ello. 1794
[It dawns serene, albeit with clouds. The parish priest and representatives of the clergy are visiting; those of commerce say they are separated from the union. However, there is no certainty about it.]
- (42) —¡Lo que aprende un hombre viajando! —decía Isidro—. ¡De lo que pende, bien pensado, dije yo, el origen de las clases y de las alcurnias! 1842 [*—What a man learns by traveling! Isidro said. —The origin of classes and lineages, in short, depends on it, I said.*]

3. Origins

The fact that the construction was already collected by Correas in his *Vocabulary of sayings and proverbial phrases* attests to its antiquity:

- (43) Es mui usada esta fórmula. «Bien mirado, ai en ello esto i esto»; «Bien mirado, parece ke tiene rrazón». 1627 [*This structure is widely used. “All in all, this and this are found in that”; “however, it seems that he is right.”*]

The RAE dictionary did not include the construction until its 1869 edition, where it appears under the entry *mirado* and is defined as “Adv. Mod. If it is thought or considered accurately or carefully. *Bien mirado, no tienes razón* [*All in all, you’re not right*].” In other words, neither the definition nor the example have

á dos carrillos. [*Mariq. Just to get in their face, even if the purpose breaks, we have to go for a kiss and a cuddle tonight, and stuff ourselves.*]

Todas. ¡Qué bien pensado! 1763 [*All. How well thought out!*]

Mariana. si nosotras ostentamos / á su vista nuestras gracias, / puede ser que se enamoren; / puede Dios tocar la aldaba / de su corazón; ser puede / que salgamos de tan ardua / dificultad; nuestra hora / puede ser que sea llegada, / y, en fin, lo que puede ser / sábelo Dios y lo calla. [*Mariana. If we display our graces for them to see, they may fall in love; God can touch the knocker of their heart; maybe we will be able to get out of such an arduous difficulty; perhaps our hour has arrived, and, in the end, what may be, God knows it and/but keeps it to himself.*]

Todas. ¡Bien pensado! 1765 [*All. How well thought out!*]

changed since then. The 1884 edition included it under the entry *mirar*, the classification being slightly modified in that of 1984: it goes from having the status of an adverbial modifier to being considered an adverbial idiomatic phrase.

If it was assumed in the early 17th century that *bien mirado* constituted a formulaic use (as shown by Correas), it seems logical to think that the first examples are earlier (we have normally respected the punctuation of the exemplified editions, except for some clearly erroneous cases, and regardless of the ambiguous ones discussed above). Thus, the first uses found in the corpus date back to the second half of the 15th century:

- (44) Y no sin causa estos sabios y dotísimos varones en este exercicio se ocuparon, porque *bien mirado*, estando el sentido repartido entre la letra y el canto, muy mejor puede sentir y acordarse de lo que va cantando por consonantes que en otra manera. 1481-1496¹⁰

[And not without reason, these wise and very learned men were engaged in this task, because, all in all, since the senses are divided between the lyrics and the song, one can feel much better than otherwise and remember what you are singing.]

- (45) se deve poner límite e tasa en la marca de los peynes e astillas en que se texen los dichos pannos, que commo fueren mayores en cuenta han de ser más espesos de puas, que *bien mirado* pocos peynes e ningunos se hallarán en estos reynos ser legítimos en marca. 1495

[A limit and restriction must be placed on the marking of the combs in which such cloths are woven, since they must be thicker with spikes if they have a greater number of threads, since, all in all, few or no combs will be found in these kingdoms that are legitimate in the sign]

In any case, the data supplied by the RAE corpora about the uses of *bien mirado* as a discourse marker practically coincide in time with the predicative uses of the participle with a complement (absolute or free adjunct uses), though the latter are more frequent, as confirmed from the distribution of examples of not only *bien mirado* but also *bien mirada/as/os*. Obviously, the uses of *bien mirado* as a participle of the verbs *haber* [*to have*], *ser* [*to be*] and *tener* [*to have*] appear the most often at the beginning.

As for the predicative uses of the participle with a complement (understood as absolute constructions in a broad sense), they are the ones which resemble the functional value of the discourse marker to a greater extent, and despite being nearly simultaneous to the discursive use as a marker (remember the conceptual closeness between absolute clause and discourse marker), their higher frequency might have determined the discourse fixation as a marker:

10. There is an earlier example whose dating remains doubtful.

- (11) La ira non conviniente de fermosa faze fea, mas vuestro gesto plaziente, bien mirado por la gente, más con saña vos arrea. 1400-1500.
[Unsuitable anger makes the beautiful ugly, but your pleasant gesture, well regarded by people, stimulates you more viciously.]
- (46) Mucho quisiera loar vuestro baronil estado, mas conbite no bien dado muy mejor está pa dar, porque bien mirado en vos quanta destreça en vos toca, ¿qué debemos hacer nos? 1445-1480
[I would like to praise your manly state a lot, but praise not given in excess, is much better to do, because considering well in you all the skill that corresponds to you, what should the rest of us do?]
- (47) Lo qual por los prinçipes bien mirado paresçioles muy dudoso de dar a Camarena e a los otros sus compañeros la respuesta. 1481-1482
[Considering this well by the princes, it seemed very doubtful to them to give the answer to Camarena and his other companions.]

Furthermore, we must consider the far more abundant uses of the participle in absolute constructions without *bien*:

- (48) Pero, pues a los sessenta,/obstynado/en pecado,/teneyns tan duro el pellejo,/yo fallo, segun mi cuenta,/que, mirado/vuestro fado,/es perdido mi consejo. 1450
[However, if at sixty (obstinate in sin) you have such a tough skin, I understand, in my opinion, that considering your fate, my advice is useless.]

The 16th century marked the beginning of a jump in the frequency of use of *bien mirado* as a marker, which grew even more significantly from the 20th century onwards – in contrast to its occurrences in absolute constructions.

Table 1. *Bien mirada*

	Adjective and attribute	Participle of <i>haber</i> and <i>tener</i>	Participle of <i>mirar</i>	Predicative use with a complement	TOTAL
1401-1450	1			2	3
1451-1500	1			2	3
1501-1550	12			6	18
1551-1600	3	1		9	13
1601-1650	5			4	9
1651-1700	1			3	4
1701-1750	1			2	3
1751-1800				2	2
1801-1850				4	4
1851-1900	2		1	8	11
1901-1950	1		1	2	4
1951-2000				9	9
2001-	2		2	17	21
	29	1	4	70	104

Table 2. *Bien miradas*

	Adjective and attribute	Participle of <i>haber</i> and <i>tener</i>	Participle of <i>mirar</i>	Predicative use with a complement	TOTAL
1401-1450				1	1
1451-1500	5	1		4	10
1501-1550	3			5	8
1551-1600	2	1		7	10
1601-1650	4			7	11
1651-1700	1			3	4
1701-1750	0			7	7
1751-1800	0			0	0
1801-1850	0			0	0
1851-1900	1			4	5
1901-1950	2			4	6
1951-2000	0			7	7
2001-	1			12	13
	19	2		61	82

Table 3. *Bien mirados*

	Adjective and attribute	Participle of <i>haber</i> and <i>tener</i>	Participle of <i>mirar</i>	Predicative use with a complement	TOTAL
1451-1500	3			0	3
1501-1550	10			2	12
1551-1600	4			6	10
1601-1650	8	1		2	11
1651-1700	2			1	3
1701-1750	0			2	2
1751-1800	0			0	0
1801-1850	1			0	1
1851-1900	3			1	4
1901-1950	0			0	0
1951-2000	1			4	5
2001-	2			4	6
	34	1		22	57

Table 4. *Bien mirado*

	Adjective and attribute	Participle of <i>haber</i> and <i>tener</i>	Participle of <i>mirar</i>	Predicative use with a complement	Discourse marker	TOTAL
1401-1450	2	11		5	1	19
1451-1500	8	9		7	3	27
1501-1550	15	29		18	56	118
1551-1600	17	34		19	68	138
1601-1650	14	14		15	58	101
1651-1700	6	3		2	20	31
1701-1750	1	1		5	9	16
1751-1800	0	2		0	5	7
1801-1850	0	0		3	14	17
1851-1900	5	0		11	53	69
1901-1950	1	1		1	48	51
1951-2000	3	0	7	4	210	224
2001-	9	0	4	6	259	278
	81	104	11	96	804	1096

From my point of view, the construction has not exactly evolved from absolute clause to discourse marker. Rather, *bien mirado* acts as an absolute construction in generic uses which perform an undoubted discourse function: they depend on a sentence that they introduce (despite appearing at the end of it) and which may be interpreted as a cause, consequence, or objection, among other options, of a given or inferred previous content. This discursive textual connection function becomes enhanced with other discourse relationships, including parenthetical character or the lack of subject and complements, as well as their argumentative value and thematic character.

As highlighted above, parentheses constitute a mechanism for presenting a constituent related to its environment, or expressed differently, they are an element of discursive connection in themselves. The absence of an explicit subject in the absolute construction forces an anaphoric – and consequently discursive – analysis, since an agreement is sought with a previous element that may be a noun phrase or a prior predicative content. The argumentative value of absolute constructions, alongside their thematic nature, likewise entail discursive values, insofar as the absolute clause argumentatively describes the causal, consecutive or counterargumentative ways, to quote but a few, in which the main clause connects with the previous content. Therefore, its status as a thematic content makes it easier for the absolute clause to highlight the main clause's rhematic content on an argumentative basis.

In the uses identified as typical of the discourse marker, *bien mirado* does not significantly deviate from the type of discursive content conveyed by absolute constructions. Firstly, the lack of complements of any kind helps soften the predicative value of the construction. Secondly, the absence of an explicit subject, combined with the anaphoric reference to a previous predicative content – and

not to an explicit noun phrase with which agreement is required – acquire special relevance. Thirdly, the fact that the construction lacks complements and a subject causes it to lose its argumentative nature: no argument means no predicative content; there is only a reconsideration of some previous reference. Finally, since it does not include a predicative argumentative content, the construction does not have a thematic character; instead, it expresses, on the one hand, a connection value to some previous element, and, on the other, it rhematically focuses the main clause.

In the light of the above, the uses of *bien mirado* as a reformulating discourse marker of reconsideration are thus nothing but the development of a type of absolute construction that has neither a subject nor complements and is limited to serving as a link with something previous seeking to focally present the main clause. Not surprisingly, the uses as a marker have almost coincided in time with absolute ones, since they basically constitute a development of one of these uses in which discursive functions are maximized. The meaning of *mirar*, as ‘to think, to consider,’ conditions this evolution too, since it favors the reformulation value. Similarly, the presence of *bien* modifying *mirado* becomes essential, since it significantly aids the introduction of another perspective: *bien* opposes the previous content, which is not *bien mirado* [*highly regarded*], since a new approach is highlighted (the main clause) and positively marked against the previous content that can serve either to contrast with what was previously said or to explain it, as well as for other contents.

The fixation of the construction in the masculine singular, along with the loss of agreement with any noun phrase, equally become key to categorize the use as a discourse marker. Absolute constructions with a feminine, or in plural, have also abounded since the 15th century; however, the feminine gender and the plural number necessarily require an agreement with a noun phrase – thus implying a predicative character for *bien mirad** and a restriction of the discourse value to functioning as an absolute construction. The masculine singular allows references to a prior or implied sentential or predicative content, not to a noun phrase, which contributes to break the agreement with any sort of tacit nominal subject. Likewise, the consideration of a feminine or plural subject in the main clause will prevent the agreement of *bien mirado* with that subject and make easier its relational function with the previous content, which in turn can help in delimiting the construction’s marker value.

Bien mirado can occupy three positions: before the main clause (either in an absolute initial position or in an initial position after a conjunction or marker); after the main clause; and in the middle of it, with two main possibilities: after the subject and after the verb:

- (49) Pete ordenó al boxeador recoger el equipaje, y los tres subieron al apartamento. *Bien mirado*, había sitio para todos. 2003

[Pete ordered the boxer to pick up the luggage, and the three of them went up to the apartment. After all, there was room for everyone.]

- (50) Porque, *bien mirado*, ¿qué sentido tiene esforzarse en resolver una situación que no sirve de nada y que apenas da para vivir? 2010
[Because, after all, what's the point of striving to resolve a situation that is of no use and which barely suffices to make a living?]
- (51) Así pues, la abundancia de malas noticias es, *bien mirado*, una buena noticia. 1997
[Thus, the abundance of bad news is, after all, good news.]
- (52) El esquirol, *bien mirado*, no deja de tener algún parecido con los putos. 1980
[The scab, after all, still bears some resemblance to male prostitutes.]
- (53) A Tomás no le hizo gracia aquel recelo, pero ¿por qué había de creerle nadie, *bien mirado*? 2017
[Tomás did not like that suspicion, but why should anyone believe him, after all?]

Table 5. Position of *bien mirado*

	Beginning	Middle	End	TOTAL
1401-1450	1	0	0	1
1451-1500	3	0	0	3
1501-1550	35	20	1	56
1551-1600	31	34	3	68
1601-1650	48	9	1	58
1651-1700	14	6	0	20
1701-1750	7	2	0	9
1751-1800	2	3	0	5
1801-1850	10	4	0	14
1851-1900	42	11	0	53
1901-1950	39	9	0	48
1951-2000	166	40	4	210
2001-	201	52	6	259
	599	190	15	804

The examples of *bien mirado* as a discourse marker in final position corresponding to the 16th and 17th centuries occur in verse and, therefore, little can be said in that respect – taking into account the literary characteristics of that period too. As for present-day examples, they are scarce and mostly serve to clarify the link between the previous sentence that they affect and a previously implied content:

- (54) El tipo que daba las toallas en la entrada, chulesco y acanallado, me pareció más propio de un burdel que de un establecimiento higiénico... aunque los burdeles también cumplen funciones higiénicas, bien mirado. 2008
[The guy who gave the towels at the entrance, cocky and ribbed, seemed to me more typical of a brothel than of a hygienic establishment... although brothels also fulfill hygienic functions, come to think of it.]
- (55) los pilotos son contratados privadamente y los controladores pasan un psico-técnico y un stage de intensa preparación, tras acreditar al menos un título universitario de grado medio y un suficiente dominio del inglés (lo cual no deja de ser una oposición, bien mirado). 2009
[Pilots are hired privately and controllers pass an aptitude test and go through an intense preparation stage, after accrediting at least an intermediate university degree and a sufficient command of English (which is nothing but a competitive exam, after all).]

Reconsideration markers link the content that they introduce to a previous element about which they present a new approach. The previous examples convey this value, precisely seeking to explain more clearly to the interlocutor what discursive function the sentence at the end of which they appear – and which supplies another point of view – performs with respect to what was previously said.

The initial position does not need to be an absolute initial one, since it always follows a conjunction, and very often a discourse marker too – either a connector, a modalizer or a focalizer. In fact, the construction sometimes occurs in initial position after a vocative, though the latter may follow or precede *bien mirado*, unlike interjections, which can only appear before it:

- (56) Rey, bien mirado, / Eres injusto y perjuro. 1579
[King, truly, / You are unjust and perjured.]
- (57) Y bien mirado, Señora, decid, ¿no es impertinencia querer pasar malos días porque yo os dé Noches Buenas? 1666-1695
[And all things considered, Lady, say, isn't it impertinent to want to have bad days because I give you Good Night?]
- (58) ¡Por Alah! Bien mirado, me parecen iguales en belleza y diferentes sólo en el sexo. 1916
[By Allah! Truly, they seem equal to me in beauty and different only in sex.]

Numerous examples in medial position can be found throughout the 16th century and in the early 17th century. Nonetheless, since many of them are recorded in verse texts, the textual model may have strongly influenced the structural organization of sentences. Also very importantly, *bien mirado* occurs after a relative (which forces us to categorize the position as a medial one) because, as pointed out earlier on in this paper, some relatives necessarily imply its postposition. Although *bien*

mirado can occur within an interrogative construction, it tends to appear at the beginning¹¹ (we only found it once at the end of the interrogative construction¹²). Likewise, the possibility exists for *bien mirado* to mediate between dual constructions (e.g. consecutive and comparative ones). This usually happens in old texts, though, since the current ones prefer the initial position:

(59) porque es tan poco lo que para sustentar la vida es necessario, que no ay hombre que tenga tan poco que, bien mirado, no tenga algo superfluo. 1529-1531
[Because so little is necessary to sustain life that there is no man who has so little that, all in all, he does not have something superfluous.]

(60) aquél peón rebelde que se parecía tanto, bien mirado, a este comerciante que... pero no era posible. 2009
[that rebellious laborer who looked so much, after all, like this merchant that... but it was not possible]

Notwithstanding the above, *bien mirado* is most commonly situated after the subject in a medial position (although it often appears after the verb as well) because that makes it easier to mark the known informative element or starting point on which a new perspective is predicated; hence the rhematic content's high proclivity to be marked grammatically in a focal manner too:

(61) La ley, bien mirado, no es otra cosa más que una voluntad racional del legislador, 1575-1588
[The law, after all, is nothing but a rational will of the legislator,]

(62) Soberano, bien mirado, no es solo quien decide sobre la excepción; también quien puede hacerlo en razón de la legitimidad de la que goza en el seno de la comunidad. 2020
[Sovereign, however, is not only the one who decides on the exception; also whoever can do so thanks to the legitimacy that they enjoy inside the community.]

11. *Bien mirado* appears in 28 examples before the interrogative construction, compared to 9 where it occurs inside it. Nevertheless, the two recent examples (1985 and 2019) belonging to this last group differ from the others in that they appear preceded by a conjunction: one after a noun clause (¿sabes que, bien mirado, los guantes...? [do you know that, after all, the gloves...?]), and the other after the conditional conjunction *si* [if] (¿Y si luego, bien mirado,... [What if, after all...?]). Furthermore, the remaining examples come from the 16th century – with one from the 19th century. This seems to confirm the tendency for the position to be external to the interrogative modality.
12. We doubt that this example should be included within the interrogative construction: *A Tomás no le hizo gracia aquel recelo, pero ¿por qué había de creerle nadie, bien mirado?* 2017 [Tomás did not like that suspicion, but why should anyone believe him, after all?]

Table 6. *Bien mirado* in medial position

	Verse	Relative pronoun	Anaphoric determiner	TOTAL
1501-1550	8	2	1	20
1551-1600	17	5	1	34
1601-1650	6	1	2	9
1651-1700	1	3	1	6
1701-1750	0	1	1	2
1751-1800	1	0	2	3
1801-1850	1	0	2	4
1851-1900	1	2	2	11
1901-1950	0	2	2	9
1951-2000	0	24	6	40
2001-	0	24	10	52
	35	64	30	190

When used as a marker, *bien mirado* invariably follows the conjunction *que* [*that*] of subordinate clauses,¹³ normally introduced by a verb of language or thought – e.g. *rogar* [*to beg*], *decir* [*to say*], *considerar* [*to consider*], *responder* [*to respond*], *creer* [*to believe*], *pensar* [*to think*], *explicar* [*to explain*], *reconocer* [*to recognize*], *hacer ver* [*to make see*], *omitir* [*to omit*], and *mirar* [*to look*]¹⁴ – and never precedes the main verb, even though that might functionally happen (especially when it is in the first person). In the end, this does not happen because it becomes semantically clear that what relates to some previous reference is the propositional content of the subordinate clause, not the communicative value of the speech act. RAE defined *bien mirado* in these terms: “if one thinks or considers accurately or carefully,” which means that, rather than the fact of thinking or considering, it is what the speaker thinks or considers that relates to a preceding content:

(63) Yo creo que, *bien mirado*, el Deseo tiene razón... 1934
 [*I think that, truly, Desire is right...*]

(64) Dice la abuela que, *bien mirado*, mamá había tenido suerte. 2013
 [*Grandma says that, however, Mom had been lucky.*]

13. There is only one example (among ca. 30) where *bien mirado* occurs between the main verb and the conjunction *que* [*that*]. It dates back to the 16th century:

Hecho me hauéys reýr con la resoluta sentencia de la madama. Y os digo, bien mirado, que aquí y allá y en toda Europa me parece que se acaua la casta de los hombres valerosos, que mantengan la verdadera honrra militar. 1566

[*You made me laugh with the madam's casual sentence. And I tell you, though, that here and there and throughout Europe it seems to me that the breed of brave men who maintain true military honor is coming to an end.*]

14. Except for two examples with stative verbs: *ocurrir* [*to occur*] and *encontrar* [*to find*].

The connection meaning of *bien mirado* is one of its most interesting features. Stump pointed out that the logical connection between an absolute construction and the main clause depends on the speaker's inferences (1985: 14) and can consequently adopt different contextual values: e.g. temporal, causal, conditional, modal, or concessive. Indeed, according to Pérez Jiménez (2009: 20), the denotation of a situation or state of affairs which may be interpreted as a cause, conditioning circumstance, objection or explanation of what is described in the main clause arises as one of the defining properties of absolute constructions.

The value of the relationship established between the starting information and the main clause, which often proves hard to specify, tends to be classified generically as cause, condition, objection... Elvira (2004: 459) recalled that, according to the oldest syntactic patterns, constructional relationships are determined by contextual factors, and it will correspond to linking words (of all types) to make that relationship explicit in a more grammaticalized discourse organization.¹⁵ In any case, the possibility of other elements indicating the relationship is not ruled out, even though the one between the absolute clause and the main clause has a contextual nature. The relationship can be specified via: inferences from the meaning of the lexical items involved, the order of segments, knowledge of the world, or the presence of connectors (Stump 1985: 307). Pinkster (2021: 392) claimed that absolute constructions in Latin began to contain items through which the absolute clause-main clause link became more explicit, due to the increased use of more elaborate and complex sentences (particularly in historical and didactic texts).

In accordance with RAE (2009: 38.12f), certain syntactic marks favor the semantic interpretation of absolute constructions associated with the main clause to which they belong. The examples exposed therein are time-related (e.g. *apenas* [*barely*], *una vez* [*once*], *ya* [*already*]). Despite the corpora containing numerous occurrences of *bien mirado* with *después de* [*after*], the construction denotes a temporal moment in these cases (Perez Jiménez 2007: 25-26). Thus, the construction exhibits a clearly predicative character that excludes the possibility of categorizing it as a discourse marker:

- (65) ¡Resolver el conflicto! Pero, después de bien mirado el caso, ¿dónde estaba el conflicto? 1888
 [Resolve the conflict! But, after looking at the case carefully, where was the conflict?]

Syntactic marks also appear – normally before the construction and separated by a pause – for *bien mirado* as a discourse marker which clearly explain the relationship between the content implied by *bien mirado* and the main clause, thus providing a sample of the possible values connecting them. *Bien mirado* is always outside the direct and immediate reach of the connector, even if a pause does not separate it from the item in question. It goes without saying that abso-

15. This could be understood as a variation of the well-known statement by Givón (1979: 208-209): “today’s syntax is yesterday’s pragmatics.”

lute constructions do not need a connecting word to express the relationship with the main clause (Quingshun-Bingjun 2015: 25); however, connectors undoubtedly contribute to make such connection explicit – usually determined through an inference process (Elvira 2004: 458; Perez Jiménez 2007: 328; RAE 2009: 38.12a). Obviously, despite no need existing for *bien mirado* (as a marker) to be parenthetically coordinated with such connecting word, the explicit presence of the latter helps both to interpret the inferred relationship between the main clause introduced by *bien mirado* and the discursive content referred to – insofar as that interpretation remains open on many occasions – and to specify the nature of the relationship.

Elements can likewise be found that reflect the enunciator's modal attitude instead of the connection relationship. Conjunctions or conjunctive phrases always precede *bien mirado*.¹⁶ However, discourse marks mostly appear before *bien mirado* too (postposition is possible, albeit only in some isolated examples). Examples of markers acting as modalizers or focalizers after *bien mirado* are easier to find:

- (66) *Bien mirado, incluso resulta preferible*. 1988
[All things considered, it is even preferable]
- (67) *Bien mirado, sin embargo, tampoco al primo Gregorio debió resultarle fácil reconstruir su existencia*. 1998
[After all, though, it can't have been easy for cousin Gregorio to reconstruct his life either.]
- (68) *Bien mirado, quizá tengan otros propósitos, incluso inconscientes*. 2009
[After all, perhaps they have other purposes, even unconscious ones]
- (69) *Bien mirado pues, lo suyo había sido una liberación*. 2018
[All in all, therefore, what happened to him had been a liberation]

16. The examples collected below do not contradict what has been stated about the position of *bien mirado*, since we must bear in mind that the item appears after the introductory sentence, in one case; and in the other, it does not directly affect the concessive construction, but rather the sentence introduced by *resultaba*:

Estuve con fiebre, Viejo, le dice ella, y me dolía la garganta, pero eso no tiene importancia, fue hasta una suerte, *bien mirado*, porque dio la casualidad de que cuando llegó el cartero estaba sola. 2018

[I had a fever, Old Man, she tells him, and my throat hurt, but that doesn't matter, it was even lucky, after all, because it just so happened that, when the postman arrived, I was alone.]

Yo estaba junto a la puerta y comprendí que no había forma de impedirle aparecer en el living, vestida de sujetador canela y panty escarlata, que, *bien mirado*, aunque con un indudable encanto, resultaba excesivamente púdica. 1972

[I was next to the door and understood that there was no way to prevent her from showing up in the living room, dressed in a cinnamon-colored bra and scarlet panties, which, all in all, though with an undoubted charm, was excessively modest.]

- (70) ¿Y si luego, *bien mirado, a fin de cuentas*, la empresa no me da un puesto en Madrid, ni en ningún sitio? 2019
[What if, after all, the company doesn't give me a position in Madrid, or anywhere else?]

Table 7. Explicit values

	XV	XVI	XVII	XVIII	XIX	XX	XXI	
Ca [because]	1	2						3
Porque [because]	2	14	8	3	8	11	8	54
Pues [since]		7	4			1	3	15
Que [that]	1	6	4	1	1	6	5	24
(Y) así [(and) so]		3	1					4
Así que [so]		2					1	3
De modo que [so that]				1	1			2
De suerte que [so that]			1					1
Por manera que [so that]		1						1
Así pues [thus]						1		1
De manera que [so]		2	2					4
Y asimismo [and also]		1						1
Conque [so]			1					1
(Y) es que [(and) so]						1	1	2
Después de todo [after all]						1	2	3
Y el caso es que [and the truth is]						2		2
En tanto que [insofar as]						1		1
En realidad [in fact]							1	1
En esencia [essentially]							1	1
En consecuencia [consequently]							1	1
En el fondo [overall]							2	2
Cuando [when]							1	1
Por lo demás [otherwise]							1	1
A fin de cuentas [after all]							1	1
Lo que sucede es que [what happens is that]						1		1
Y/e [and]		23	27	2	8	18	9	87
O [or]					1	1	3	5
O sea que [so]							1	1
Claro que [of course]						6	3	9
Mas [further]		6	3					9
Mas ya que [but since]		1						1
Mas que [but]		1						1
Empero [however]		1	1					2
Sino [but]						1		1
Por más que [however]						3		3
Por cierto que [by the way]		1						1
Y eso que [and still/even though]					1			1

Table 7. Explicit values

	XV	XVI	XVII	XVIII	XIX	XX	XXI
Fuera de que [other than]				1	1		2
Aunque [although]		4	5		9	25	52
Pero [but]		3	3	4	9	17	19
Claro [of course]						1	1
Verdaderamente [truly]		1					1
Sin embargo [however]					1	1	2
Sin duda [without a doubt]			1				1
Afortunadamente [fortunately]					1		1
Aun [still/even so]		1		1			2
Bueno [well]						1	3
Incluso [even]						1	1
Quizá [perhaps]						1	4
Hasta [even]						3	2
También [also]		1				3	1
Tampoco [neither]					1	4	5
No [no]							1
	4	81	61	13	42	101	134
							436

According to the table above, the first uses have a causal nature, which seems to justify why they were initially the most numerous. The frequency of use seems to jump from cause to copulative coordination in general during the 17th century, with a diversity of interpretations, and today – and already since the 20th century – counterargumentative uses stand out as the most common by far. Even though we can obviously not extrapolate the indicated intersentential relationship to the interpretive values in cases where no explicit connection mark is present, it seems to me that it may be a representative sample of the relationship involved, broadly speaking. Modal and focus adverbs appear much less often than connectors, but we have also recorded this possibility.

4. Conclusions

Bien mirado enables different types of constructions, but absolute constructions and its uses as a discourse marker are the most relevant ones in discursive terms. Absolute constructions have a discourse value because they assume a given situation prior to that of the main clause and trigger it. Therefore, they convey a connecting, argumentative, and thematic value.

The presence of a noun with a participle in a predicative function makes it impossible to consider the construction as a discourse marker for absolute constructions. Likewise, the presence of any complement modifying the participle proves its predicative nature and, consequently, discards its categorization as a possible discourse marker. Thus, we formally delimit the examples of discourse markers to those cases where *bien mirado* occurs isolated between pauses and without any

type of noun phrase as an agreed referent. However, the punctuation problems of texts along with the possible presence of anaphoric subjects in the main clause often make it difficult to detach one case from the other.

A syntactic and semantic union exists between subject and participle in absolute uses; there is no such union in the uses as a marker, though, since iconically the conceptual separation has already been grammaticalized in such a way that the marker links, reformulates, and informatively highlights the rhematic information on the subject topic, albeit not constituting an argument.

The uses of *bien mirado* as a discourse marker fail to constitute a content argument to reach the main clause (as was the case in absolute constructions), because it simply functions as a connection element with some explicit or implicit previous reference, additionally serving to highlight or focus the main clause.

The use of *bien mirado* as a marker appeared in the second half of the 15th century, and became consolidated in the lexicographic consciousness of the early 17th century. This use embodies a development of the discourse uses of the absolute clause from the constructions without a noun antecedent that, however, evoke a previous action. The discourse function of textual connection also increases with other discourse relationships, such as parenthetical character, lack of subject and complements, argumentative value, and thematic character.

The lack of any type of complement contributes to relax the predicative value of the absolute construction. In turn, the absence of an explicit subject and the anaphoric reference to a preceding predicative content, rather than to an explicit agreed noun phrase, becomes particularly relevant. The lack of complements and subject in the construction results in the loss of its argumentative nature by the absolute construction, insofar as neither a predicative content nor argumentation exists, but only a reconsideration of something previous. Finally, the construction lacks any thematic content since it does not have a predicative argumentative content; instead, it expresses, on the one hand, a connection value with some prior element, and, on the other, it rhematically focuses the main clause. In other words, the development of a type of absolute construction with no subject or complements occurs, one limited to serving as a link with some previous content for the purpose of presenting the main clause in a focal manner.

The value of *mirar* [to look] as ‘to think, to consider’ facilitates the connection value, and so does the presence of *bien* modifying *mirado*, since it notably helps incorporate a new point of view. Likewise, the construction’s fixation in the masculine singular, together with the loss of agreement with any noun phrase also become crucial to consider that it is being used as a discourse marker.

Bien mirado functions as a reformulation marker involving a previous process of considering other perspectives, and a new formulation comes into play via this reinterpretation (the main clause) which can become a justification with several values (causal, counterargumentative, consecutive...) either from what was previously expressed or from the inferences drawn.

The type of relationship implied between the main clause and the previous contents in the uses of *bien mirado* as a discourse marker may largely vary. Causal values seem to stand out especially during the earlier period, based on the types of explicit marks in the examples; and from the 20th century onwards, counterargumentative values have clearly predominated.

Finally, despite the initial one being the most common position for *bien mirado*, historical records attest to the fact that it may appear not only in initial positions but also in medial or final ones.

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