Susana Rodríguez Rosique (Ed.)
**Expressing Surprise at the Crossroads**

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# Volume 389

# Expressing Surprise at the Crossroads

Mirativity, Exclamativity and Cooptation in Romance Languages

Edited by
Susana Rodríguez Rosique

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Susana Rodríguez Rosique

# 1 Expressing surprise in Romance languages: Key pieces of an unresolved puzzle

## 1 The mirative phenomenon: The emergence of a new category

Mirativity takes the spotlight amid rising interest towards evidential studies, particularly in the last decades of the 20th century and at the very beginning of the 21st. It was in this context that Aksu-Koç and Slobin (1986) noted that the perfect in Turkish could convey both indirect evidentiality (inferential and reportative) and direct perception denoting surprise. Later on, DeLancey (1997) related Aksu-Koç's findings to certain facts in other languages. For instance, in Hare, the final particle *-lõ* could convey both indirect evidentiality of a past event as well as direct evidence concerning a present, unexpected event. Similarly, some Tibetan languages codified a mirative distinction in their copular systems, related to the notions of volition and control, and to the markedness of person. These aspects could also be linked to the fact that in Korean the marking of new information was used just immediately after the speaker's access to knowledge.

The above antecedents led DeLancey (1997: 47–48) to define mirativity as a constellation revolving around inferentiality, new information and surprise, and emerging as a separate category from evidentiality.[1] In fact, the expression of the speaker's unprepared mind for certain information may occur in different evidential contexts, both direct and inferential as well as reportative ones. Mirativity

**1** Against those who claim the independence of mirativity as a category (DeLancey 1997, 2001, 2012; Aikhenvald 2012; Hengeveld & Olbertz 2012; Peterson 2013), Lazard (1999) argues that, in contrast to what happens with evidentiality, mirativity hardly occurs as distinguishable from some other notions. Thus, some of the examples used by DeLancey to delimit the mirative category are seen by Lazard as forms which do not convey specific information about the source (as evidentials do), nor do they inform about the speaker's psychological state or provide modal meaning. They only interpose, between the speaker and their utterance, an unspecific reference towards the origin of information. For this reason, according to Lazard, these cases fit better under the category of *médiatif* labeled by Guentchéva (1996). For a later criticism concerning the status of mirativity as an independent category, see also Hill (2012).

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encapsulates, then, the natural trend in languages to make a distinction between information that forms part of the speaker's integrated picture about the world and information that does not belong to that structured system. Hence, DeLancey (2001) finds that mirativity should stand closer to evidentiality and modality within the so-called *natural epistemology* (Chafe and Nichols 1986: VII), since all the three categories are used to mark how a proposition deviates from the ideal of knowledge. In point of fact, from an evidential perspective, direct, visual perception is the unmarked one, while all the others are considered marked sources. Similarly, from a modal perspective, the unmarked information is that which the speaker introduces as certain, whereas the different deviations are represented by different degrees of certainty. Finally, from a mirative perspective, the unmarked information is that which counts as old –known– and integrated, while the marked information is new and unexpected.

In this vein, Peterson (2013) argues that the linguistic status of mirativity as a category seems justified in at least three senses. Firstly, from the perspective of psychology, cognition and acquisition, surprise is considered a primary emotion which is conceptualized as a unique mental event that takes place when a speaker finds new information for which he/she was not prepared. Secondly, in lexico-semantic terms, surprise is precisely the primary meaning of different linguistic elements – both lexical elements such as the Spanish verb *sorprenderse* ('to get surprised'), and some other linguistic elements such as the exclamative intonation. Thirdly, in typological terms, the fact that different languages use different categories to convey mirativity confirms its crosslinguistic validity.

## 2 Refining mirativity

Following the path opened by DeLancey, and with the purpose of semantically delimiting the category, Aikhenvald (2012: 437) details a range of mirative meaning, among which she includes sudden discovery, surprise of the speaker, unprepared mind of the speaker, counter-expectation, and new information. Nevertheless, in spite of this mirative realm, Aikhenvald (2012: 437) argues that the core of the category revolves around surprise and unprepared mind. Indeed, the term *mirative* comes from Latin *mīror*, which means 'to get surprised'.

As happens with the semantic limits of the category, the formal boundaries are also at stake. According to DeLancey (1997: 48–49), languages differ in the degree to which mirativity is integrated within the grammatical level: thus, mirativity is optional both in English and in Hare, although it is morphologically marked in

the former but not in the latter; in some other languages, however, mirativity is compulsory.

Similarly, in the view of Aikhenvald (2012), all languages have linguistic mechanisms to convey sudden discovery, unexpected information and concomitant surprise, but they do not necessarily have to codify it in grammar –they may also express it lexically or by means of exclamatives. In fact, as she did with evidentiality (Aikhenvald 2004), Aikhenvald (2012: 462–473) makes a distinction between grammatical mirativity –which may be codified in the grammar of a language through complex verbal constructions, particles or affixes, and special series of pronouns– and mirative strategies –that is, extensions of non-mirative categories that may trigger mirative values, as happens with verb categories (tense, aspect and mood), evidentiality, person-marking systems, and interrogatives.

From a more general perspective, Peterson (2013) claims that the linguistic expression of mirativity does not have to be homogenous, but it can be lexico-semantically, grammatically or morphologically codified, which does not mean that its grammatical status is overruled. Then, Peterson (2013: 16–38) differentiates parasitic mirativity –where the mirative meaning occurs while also being involved in some other semantic or grammatical categories, such as evidentiality or control markedness systems– from non-parasitic mirativity –where mirativity stands as semantically and grammatically independent. Within the latter, he further distinguishes mirativity which is grammatically marked through prefixes (Nepali), suffixes (Chechen), or auxiliaries (Setswana) from mirativity which is marked through some other linguistic categories, such as verbs –*sorprender(se)* 'to surprise, to get surprised' in Spanish–, illocutionary adverbs –*surprisingly* in English–, intonation patterns, etc.

## 3 A new *girl'n* the hood: Setting the boundaries

If the origins of mirativity are related to evidentiality, its consolidation as a category requires setting the boundaries with exclamativity, especially in Indo-European languages. As commented on by Olbertz (2009) and Hengeveld & Olbertz (2012), exclamativity is a type of utterance –that is, an illocutionary notion that conveys the speaker's assessment of a presupposed propositional content–; by contrast, mirativity is a modal distinction not necessarily linked to the speaker, but related to the propositions that are asserted or questioned. However, as argued by Rett (2011) and Rett & Murray (2012), mirativity in European languages such as English is identified with exclamation –that is, an illocutionary operator that codifies exceeded expectations.

More recently, mirativity has been related to expressiveness. Trotzke and Villalba (2021: 1–2) root the expression of emotion in language in the emotive function claimed by Bühler (1934) and Jakobson (1960). However, the analysis of how languages express emotions has undergone a significant development due to the notion of *expressive meaning* –or to the establishment of an expressive dimension of language (Potts 2007). According to Potts (2005, 2007), a distinction can be made between at-issue and not-at-issue content: i.e., the former can be negated and affected by truth-conditions operators, while the latter cannot. By the same token, Rett (2021: 199–201) has recently claimed that not-at-issue content includes both descriptive and illocutionary content. Whereas descriptive not-at-issue content is oriented towards what is said –i.e., a description of the world that may be true or false–, illocutionary not-at-issue content focuses on the way in which the speaker uses their own utterance in a certain context. From this perspective, Rett (2021: 195) considers that miratives, along with expressives and some other emotive markers, pertain to the domain of a speech-act level dynamic semantics (Farkas and Bruce 2010). In her view, emotive markers –among which miratives constitute a subtype– codify the speaker's emotional attitude towards some proposition made salient by the context of utterance, and they do so as backgrounded, not-at-issue content (Rett 2021: 199).

## 4 A road map of the volume: Looking for mirativity in Romance languages

This volume assumes the premises sketched in the previous sections to analyze how mirativity can be reflected in Romance languages. In this sense, the contributions compiled in the book shed light on some of the aforementioned open questions while also outlining different challenges to follow the traces of mirativity.

As introduced above, one of the recurring topics concerning mirativity in Romance languages lies in whether it can be encoded within grammar or it surfaces as mirative strategies. The chapters included in the First Part of the book ("Mirativity and Grammatical Triggers") deals with the mirative meaning triggered by certain grammar constituents. Chapter 2 ("Mirativity in Spanish middle *se* constructions"), by Maldonado and De la Mora, approaches the middle *se* 'middle marker' construction in Spanish as a potential scenario to trigger mirativity in a compositional way. Middle *se* conceptualizes events as radically compressed –that is, as scenes in which the action does not leave the subject's sphere of action. Consequently, actions emerge in a fast and abrupt manner and *se* specializes as a counter-expectation marker. As a predictable consequence of this event

compression, the middle marker has developed mirative values in collocation with a wide variety of verbs having negative implicatures (such as motion, psych change of state and consumption verbs). After their analysis (based on different oral corpora), the authors conclude that while *se* is not a fully grammaticalized mirative marker, as proposed by DeLancey (1997) or Aikhenvald (2012), it provides the conceptual basis for mirative construals.

The morphological future in Romance languages has often been related to mirativity in the last years (Rivero 2014; Rodríguez Rosique 2015, 2024; Squartini 2018; Escandell-Vidal and Leonetti 2021). Following this line of thought, Chapter 3 ("Disconfirmational MICA in surprise questions (and some notes on concessivity)"), by Mari, offers a reassessment about the mirative value of the Italian future on the general scenario displayed by biased questions and in relation with the negative polarity item *mica* 'non-canonical *not*'. *Mica* disregards the validity of a general inference enhanced by contextual evidence. Future questions are a natural scenario for *mica* to occur in, since they also rely on inferentiality and evidence. When occurring in future questions, *mica* provides the content that is necessary to the formation of a valid clarification-seeking question. From her analysis, Mari concludes that *mica* represents a sub-type of mirative –i.e., a disconfirmational–, based on the un-commitment to general rules and laws. This led the author to trace a continuum between mirativity and concessivity, thus exploring the frontiers of the category.

Although the discussion presented in Section 3 of this Introduction focused on the connection between mirativity and exclamativity, the papers included in this volume reveal the tight relation between mirativity and interrogatives in Romance languages. Beyond standard interrogatives, there are different types of biased, non-canonical questions (Farkas 2020; Cruschina and Bianchi 2022; Trotzke 2024), and some of them closely interact with the mirative category (Celle 2018, 2023). As the paper by Mari advanced, the chapters included in the Second Part ("Mirativity and Interrogatives") also have to do with the mirative reading of certain types of questions. Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 specifically deal with the contrary-to-expectations meaning of reason questions (Brunetti, Tovena and Yoo 2022). Chapter 4 ("Interrogative constructions with *santo*, *cuento* y *cuenta*: rejection and mirativity"), by Cifuentes Honrubia, addresses the Spanish interrogative constructions with *santo*, *cuento* and *cuenta* 'why on earth'. After a diachronic analysis providing an explanation about the origins of these phrases and about their interrogative use, Cifuentes Honrubia deals with the frontiers between mirativity and refutation based on the discursive effect of the contrary-to-expectations sense. In turn, Chapter 5 ("Mirativity in a nutshell: Expressing surprise through Spanish *cómo*"), by Rodríguez Rosique, goes beyond the contrary-to-expectations meaning attributed to reason-*como* 'how' questions and also explores the use of

*cómo* 'what' as an authentic mirative particle encoding surprise as 'sudden realization'. The existence of a connection between mirativity and questions has been largely discussed in the literature –interrogatives are, in fact, one of the mirative strategies identified by Aikhenvald (2012). More specifically, a special type of non-canonical question –i.e., exclamative interrogative (Fernández Ramírez 1959; Escandell 1984; Alonso Cortés 1999) or surprise question (Cruschina and Bianchi 2022)–, which especially emphasizes the mirative, surprise meaning, has been outlined in the literature. All the papers dealing with the relation between mirativity and questions highlight the peculiar intonation that these mirative interrogatives exhibit. Chapter 6 ("Mirativity in *wh*-in-situ questions in Spanish"), by González and Reglero, is precisely devoted to this mirative intonation. The authors compare the prosodic and segmental characteristics of mirative and information-seeking *wh*-in-situ questions in Spanish and, after their acoustic analysis, they show the differences between both types of questions.

Mirativity is clearly identified when the relevant meaning of a construction has to do with surprise. However, isolating it is problematic when dealing with some other notions included in the mirative array of meaning, as established by Aikhenvald (2012). In this vein, the different conceptions of the contrary-to-expectations meaning may cause fuzzy limits and moves between categories –i.e., concessivity and adversativity, as contrast-based categories, are also built on the general notion of contrary-to-expectations.[2] As explored in Chapters 2, 3 and 4, the chapters included in the Third Part ("Mirativity and the Semantic Implications of the Contrary-to-expectations Sense") further develop this idea. Chapter 7 ("The mirative values of Italian *altro che*), by Mauri and Russo, delves into the mirative values of the Italian construction *altro che X* 'other than X'. After a diachronic analysis seeking for its evolutionary path, the authors vindicate *altro che* as an example of second-level mirativity based on surprise at a validity expectation, in line with Mari's paper. Similarly, Chapter 8 ("Mirativity as a semantic notion: The trajectory and status of Sicilian *bì*"), by Scivoletto, traces the evolution of the Sicilian Italian marker *bì* 'oh' from its early meaning as an imperative of the verb *vidì* 'to see' towards its current status as a discourse marker encoding surprise. The author

2 Concerning the distinction between adversativity and concessivity, it is generally assumed that whereas the former conceptualizes contrast from the goal –as an unexpected result–, the latter conceptualizes it from the origin –as an inefficient cause (Rodríguez Rosique 2008: 153–212). In approaching the difference between adversativity and mirativity, Malchukov (2004: 187) argues that adversativity still shows an incompatibility between two utterances, the latter being incompatible with respect to the former; by contrast, mirativity conceives an utterance as unexpected in its own, without assuming the existence of a previous, contrasting utterance. In fact, mirativity conceives an utterance as unexpected against a certain situation.

further outlines a later discourse-pragmatic function of correction which emphasizes the interactional nature of certain mirative constructions.

The chapters included in the Fourth Part ("The Limits of Mirativity") explore the limits of mirativity in different senses. While mirativity is sometimes embedded in exclamativity in the case of Romance languages, as introduced above, Chapter 9 ("Old nominal exclamatives in a new light"), by Sánchez López, shows that this inclusive relation is not so uncontroversial. Sánchez López particularly examines nominal exclamatives in Spanish as constructions conveying an expressive meaning, but which cannot otherwise be considered as mirative. The paper by Sánchez López establishes then an area within the exclamative category that does not overlap with mirativity and can thus help to delimit the frontiers between both categories.

From a broader perspective, Chapter 10 ("Mirativity in Romance: speaker-oriented vs. hearer-oriented expressions of unexpectedness"), by Dessì Schmid, Momma and Wiesinger, revises the role of perspective in defining mirativity. From the previous studies on mirativity, information may be considered new and unexpected for the speaker, for the hearer or audience, and for the main character of a story (Olbertz 2009; Hengeveld and Olbertz 2012; Aikhenvald 2012). If unexpected information may cause problems concerning the boundaries between categories, the status of new information is not uncontroversial either. As far as the information-structure is concerned, a proposition is considered new from the point of view of the addressee. However, in mirative terms, a proposition may be new for the speaker, new for the hearer or new for the main character of a story (Hengeveld and Olbertz 2012; Aikhenvald 2012). Some authors also argue that information must have been recently acknowledged –i.e., the recency requirement (Rett 2011)–, which points to new vs. old information as regards activation rather than shared knowledge (Prince 1981; Chafe 1994; Dryer 1996). Dessì Schmid, Momma and Wiesinger go back to the distinction between speaker's versus hearer's unexpectedness to analyze a corpus of mirative strategies extracted from Spanish and Italian. As the authors recognize, this paper forms part of a broader contrastive study seeking mirative expressions in Romance languages.

Finally, Chapter 11 ("When evidentiality and mirativity meet: the case of *ra'e* in Paraguayan Guarani and Paraguayan Spanish"), by Döhla, ends the volume through an examination of the impact of a stratum constituted by an Amerindian language –Guaraní– in Spanish. In particular, the paper contrasts the function of *ra'e* 'it turned out that' in Paraguayan Guaraní with its use in Paraguayan Spanish, as a polyfunctional construction revolving around recent past, indirect evidence and speaker's emotional reaction.

After the above studies, an interesting pattern shows up: the interactional nature of some of the constructions examined in the book, which stand in the realm of mirativity, highlights the necessity of paying attention to language in use. In this view, some of the constructions treated here emerge –either synchronically or diachronically– as processes of cooptation, through which a structure pertaining to sentence grammar is extracted and redefined in order to operate in a different domain –i.e. that of interaction (Kaltenböck, Heine and Kuteva 2011: 857). Consequently, the grammatical status of mirativity in Romance languages largely depends on what grammar means; if grammar is not just understood as an inventory of conventional units (Langacker 2008), but as an interactional approach to deal with language in use (Heine 2023), then mirativity in Romance languages can fall within the domain of grammar.

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# Part 1: **Mirativity and grammatical triggers**

Ricardo Maldonado & Juliana De la Mora

# 2 Mirativity in Spanish middle *se* constructions

**Abstract:** This paper identifies the most frequent compositional patterns encoding mirativity in Spanish middle *se* constructions. While mirativity in Spanish is not morphemic, it cannot be reduced to a language using "mirative strategies". Although there may be some "lexical strategies" for mirative values (as in verbs of perception *¡mira!* 'look'), Spanish has developed a compositional system whereby middle *se* energetic collocations, normally designating *energetic events* (fast, abrupt, brief events change of state, have extended and specialized to encode mirative readings. It is proposed that mirativity in Spanish is hierarchically organized in collocations where the middle marker *se* combines with: a) verbs having strong negative implications, b) dative markers and, c) other pragmatic factors conveying information that is either new, unexpected or undesired for the speaker. These events run against the canonical representation of world events.

**Keywords:** middle *se,* Spanish reflexives, *se* mirativity, counter expectations*, se me* construction

## 1 Introduction

Surprise is a universal emotion that can be encoded in many ways across languages. Within linguistics, the expression of surprise has been studied as part of *mirativity* (Aikhenvald 2012; DeLancey 1997): "the term 'mirativity' refers to the linguistic marking of an utterance as conveying information which is new or unexpected to the speaker" (DeLancey 2001: 369–370). After DeLancey's (1997) characterization, debates about mirativity, its grammatical status, and its independence from other linguistic categories, have been a hot topic in the field.

Regarding the semantic and grammatical status of mirativity, many authors have agreed that it should not be part of evidentiality; instead, it should be considered a distinct semantic and grammatical category (Aikhenvald 2012; DeLancey 1997, 2001; Peterson 2016, 2017). However other authors, such as Lazard (1999,

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2001) and Hill (2012), consider that mirativity and evidentiality are entwined in a single system. Similar to what has happened with the emergence of cross-linguistic studies on evidentiality, the studies on mirativity were extended to languages that do not obligatorily mark surprise, and have been acknowledged as languages with *mirative strategies* (Aikhenvald 2012) as in the case of Spanish. Following Aikhenvald's ideas on evidentiality and mirativity strategies (2004, 2012), we assume that mirative meanings are contextually bounded and triggered by certain contextual elements. Additionally, we propose that in the case of Spanish middle *se,* mirative meanings are obtained through syntactic-semantic compositional patterns encoding events that are either unexpected or undesired, as they constitute non-canonical conceptualizations (De la Mora 2011, 2024).

In the past two decades, many scholars have shown a myriad of ways in which mirativity can be expressed in Spanish, as in the work by Escandell Vidal and Leonetti (2021), García Negroni and Liebenson (2020), Hengeveld and Olbertz (2012), Maldonado and De la Mora (2015, 2020), Mexas (2016), Olbertz (2009, 2012) Rodríguez Rosique (2015), Sánchez López (2017), Torres Bustamante (2013), to mention a few. The encoding of mirativity through verbal forms has been attested in monolingual Spanish varieties as in the case of mirative future (Escandell Vidal and Leonetti 2021; Rodríguez Rosique 2015, 2024) and for other verbal constructions in Spanish varieties in contact with Quechua (Hengeveld and Olbertz 2012; Mexas 2016; Sánchez López 2017; Torres Bustamante 2013). The mirative uses of the verbal-based particle *mira* 'look' have also been approached by Sánchez López (2017) and Maldonado and De la Mora (2020).

About the relationship between counter-expectations and surprise, Celle et al. (2017) propose that surprise entails an epistemic judgment whereby a specific event is connected to the speaker's set of expectations. Finally, Maldonado's work on Spanish middle-*se* (Maldonado 1999, 2002, 2008), along with variationist studies on variable *se*-marking (Aaron 2004; Aaron and Torres Cacoullos 2005; De la Mora 2011, 2024; Rivas 2015; Torres Cacoullos and Schwenter 2008) have shown a relationship between counter-expectations, surprise and middle-*se* constructions, without providing a full explanation on how middle-*se* can become associated to mirativity meanings.

In this paper, we propose a compositional analysis that can explain how mirative meanings emerge in Spanish middle-*se* constructions. First, we acknowledge previous findings showing that the emergence of mirative readings is a multifactorial phenomenon (Aaron 2004; Aaron and Torres Cacoullos 2005; De la Mora 2011; Rivas 2015; Torres Cacoullos and Schwenter 2008; Squartini 2018; Escandell Vidal and Leonetti 2021). Secondly, we claim that mirativity in Spanish is compositional and that a set of collocations can be identified. We will attempt to locate the most fruitful ones. The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 shows the way in which

energetic constructions extend to mirative values. Section 3 makes a hierarchical proposal for mirativity as a compositional matter. The methods are offered in Section 4; while the data analysis is provided in Section 5. Finally, in Section 6, as a way of conclusions, we offer the most relevant patterns for mirativity in middle *se* constructions.

## 2 Spanish middle *se* and mirativity

In contrast with previous analyses, a fundamental contrast between reflexive *se* and middle *se* has been proposed (Kemmer 1993, 1994; Maldonado 1993, 1999, 2002, 2008). While reflexives involve a split-self representation where the participant interacts with herself as subject and object, middles designate simplex events remaining in the subject's sphere of action and interests. The contrast between reflexives (1) and middles (2) can be observed in already well-known examples from Maldonado (1993, 1999):

(1) *León* ***se*** *imaginó (a sí mismo) bailando con Tongolele*
'León imagined himself dancing with Tongolele.'

(2) *León* ***se*** *cansó (*a sí mismo)*
'León got tired.'

Emotional and physical change-of-state verbs, such as *alegrarse* 'gladden', *angustiarse* 'get anxious', *deprimirse* 'become depressed', *rendirse* 'give up' are natural candidates for a middle construal. In middle construals, the event is compressed as it is limited to happening within the subject's dominion. The contrast may be illustrated by the following diagrams (Figures 1 and 2):

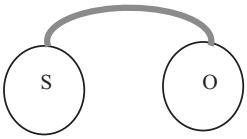


**Figure 1:** Reflexive.

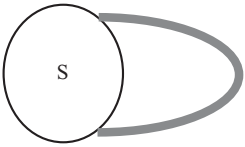


**Figure 2:** Middle.

In reflexives, two participants in the event (S and O) share a split representation of the same referent (Kemmer 1993). In middles, one participant (S), and thus one referent, undergoes some change-of-state or emotion. The event is therefore compressed. An immediate consequence of event compression is that the event involves

dynamicity. It is energetic rather than absolute; (energy neutral) (Langacker 1987, 2017). Events may become energetic via compression of the energy involved in the action or by the mental construal of the event.

Regarding the physical energy of the action, in French, energy-neutral verbs are those where no speed or manner of locomotion is profiled. *Aller* 'go', *venir* 'come', *arriver* 'arrive' take the auxiliary *être* 'be' and are said to be absolutes. In contrast, energetic construals involving a wider set of verbs combine with *avoir* 'have'. These are seen as energetic since they do profile energy or depict manner of locomotion (*courir* 'run', *nager* 'swim', *voler* 'fly', and so forth). Considering mental construal, in Cupeño (Hill 2005), actions involving a high degree of energy may be construed as absolute by cultural determinacies: actions such as skinning and hunting involve considerable energy, however they take absolute zero marking, like other absolute verbs referring to natural behavior of plants and animals as well as mental states. 'Skinning' and 'hunting' undoubtedly involve energy. However, they are encoded as absolute since they depict traditional practices of Cupeño culture. Energetic Events are energetic by physical force or by mental construction. As for Spanish, it has been proposed that *se* marks verbs for compressed conceptualizations and thus covers an important area of energetic events (Maldonado 1993, 2002, 2008). The action is consequently conceptualized as rapid, abrupt, and sudden. While *ir* 'go' designates a long path walked by the subject, *irse* 'leave' focuses on the act of leaving. The same is true for *subir* 'going up along a path' which contrasts with *subirse* where middle *se* depicts getting abruptly on a table (jumping), as it would be the case if a rat should suddenly appear before Valeria's eyes (Figure 4). As a consequence of the focusing function of middle *se*, the locative *a la mesa* 'on the table' is down-graded as an oblique prepositional phrase (PP), thus it is not profiled; in contrast, in Figure 3, the PP *al cerro* 'to the mountain' is profiled as a locative argument of the verb and consequently it is part of the event main figure:

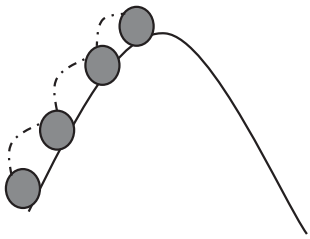

**Figure 3:** Absolute *subir*.
*Adrián subió al cerro*
'Adrian went up the mountain'

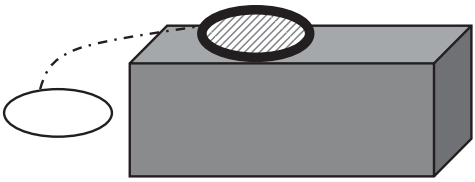

**Figure 4:** Energetic *subirse*.
*Valeria **se** subió a la mesa*
'Valeria got on (jumped) on the table'

Given this contrast, we propose generalization (i):

i) Middle *se* profiles energetic events as it sets focus on the change of state. It crucially downplays the circumstances surrounding the development of the event. (Maldonado 1993, 1999)

Given (i) a further extension pattern is proposed:

ii) Energetic compressed events set the basis to develop further extensions designating counter-expectations construals (Maldonado 1993, 1999)

Generalization (ii) subsumes that, in cases where middle *se* imposes compression, the circumstances surrounding the event are not considered in such a way that the event pops up as a surprise. The first mirative pattern responds to unexpected events. The contrast between neutral absolute (ABS) and energetic counter-expectations events (E-CE) can be attested by comparing the (a) and (b) examples below:

(3) a. *La pelota cayó de la canasta sin tocar el aro (basketball)* [ABS]
'The ball fell through the basket without touching the ring.'
b. *La pelota **se** cayó de la mesa* [E-CE]
'The ball fell down from the table.'

(4) a. *Juan (*se) cayó al agua con toda elegancia. (diving)* [ABS]
'Juan fell elegantly in the water'
b. *El borracho **se (*0)** cayó al agua vestido* [E-CE]
'Juan fell down in the water dressed.'

The second dimension of mirativity is an extension of unexpectedness. Counter-expectation events may be undesirable as they run contrary to normal conceptualizations. The falling of a drunkard in (4b) may be expected as we see him wobbling or tripping, yet the event is accidental, it contradicts the canonical representation of humans as normally standing on their feet. More than being unexpected it is undesired.

In (3a) and (4a) the subject controls her/his falling action, consequently falling is the natural outcome and the utterance does not take middle *se*. In contrast, the examples in (b) lack control and the event is seen as accidental. They take the middle marker *se* to signal counter-expectations. An analysis in terms of force dynamics (Talmy 1988) was offered to account for counter-expectations energetic events (Maldonado 1988, 1999), as in Figure 5.

The action is represented in the higher tier by the left-to-right arrow with a plus sign indicating a stronger force. This induces a change of state (the squiggly arrow) of the thematic participant (the circle). Expectations constitute the resisting antagonistic force (the right-to-left arrow) being overcome by the stronger force of

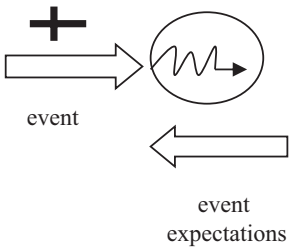


**Figure 5:** Counter-expectations *se*.

the action. The clitic *se* designates the resisting force being contradicted by some change of state. Mirative construals designate the conceptualizer's unprepared mind for some event, which involves different degrees of subjective involvement, as in (3b and 4b). Miratives contrast with an external objective representation of the event, as represented by the unmarked absolute construal. Examples (3a) and (4a) are absolutes where expectations are not profiled. The contrast between the *internal* versus *external* construal, proposed by Delbecque (2021), aligns with our absolute/energetic-counter-expectation analysis. Additionally, we sustain that *event-compression* is a prerequisite for the mirative construal.

Delancey's notion of mirativity came about in 1997 and the term was not undertaken in Maldonado's work since in Spanish *se* is not a fully developed mirative marker. Not only does it not specialize in coding only mirative construals but, more importantly, the mirative values of energetic *se* are not implicative. Energetic *se* is not a full-fledged mirative morpheme in Spanish. Consider (5):

(5) Context: Two friends are talking about a subway accident, and after seeing some press pictures they seem to be surprised that some people survived
*la verdad lo hubiera creído que todos* ***se*** *hubieran muerto* MIRATIVE?
'Truly, I would have expected all to be dead'

The use of *se* with a mirative reading in (5) is questionable, given the context. The speaker seems to have enough information to believe that, under the circumstances, people could die. The event however is undesirable. A cold and distant report in the newspaper would not use *se*, yet involvement may play an important role, since the speaker may manifest empathy with respect to the unfortunate event. The mirative value in (5) is thus a matter of construal. Examples like (5) made it necessary for specialists to search for further conditions determining mirative readings. Multifactorial analyses have been put forward to pint-point the determining conditions for mirativity in motion verbs (Aaron 2003, 2004; Aaron and Torres Cacoullos 2005; Torres Cacoullos and Schwenter 2008) and consumption verbs in Spanish (De la Mora 2011, 2024; Rivas 2015).

In the *salir/salirse* contrast Aaron and Torres Cacoullos (2005) find that proximity among interlocutors favors *salirse*. As in (6), *salirse* is more likely to co-occur with close rather than distant third-person subject referents. Thus, non-identified or non-specific subjects, such as generic 'one' in (7) (coded as distant), are normally not found with *salirse* as can be seen in the following examples from Aaron and Torres Cacoullos (2005):

(6) *[Speaking of a son] ¡También* ***se*** *me quiso salir [de la escuela]! También tuve que ponerle otro hast'aquí.*
'He also wanted to leave-SE [school] on me! I had to tell him again to straighten up.'

(7) *Cuando uno sale de la escuela, pues realmente uno sale a probar –¿verdad?–, a probar campos*
'When one leaves-0 school, well, really, one is going out-0 to try out [different fields] –right?–, to try out fields'
(Aaron and Torres Cacoullos 2005: 617)

Torres Cacoullos and Schwenter (2008) corroborate this finding with *subir(se)* and *bajar(se)*. Evidence for speaker involvement was found dominantly with imperatives (as opposed to causatives and other infinitive constructions), with unexpressed subjects and first and second-person pronouns. Participant affectedness is found particularly with datives. This finding will be stressed in our study. Moreover, focus on change of state, as proposed by Maldonado (1999), is found meaningful in the preference of telic uses for *subirse* 'go up' and *bajarse* 'go down' with the prepositions *a* 'to' and *de* 'from' (Torres Cacoullos and Schwenter 2008).

Peninsular Spanish represents a less advanced stage in the semantic evolution of *salirse* as a counter-expectations marker. It is restricted to "force dynamics" (Talmy 1988) situations of a physical nature, where animate subjects exit from a physically delimited space (Aaron and Torres Cacoullos 2005):

(8) *[Talking about hunting rabbits] ¿Te acuerdas que nos comieron el saco y* ***se*** *nos salieron unos pocos?*
'Do you remember they ate the [whole] sack on us and a few of them got away-SE from us?' (COREC, CCON019A)
(Aaron and Torres Cacoullos 2005: 623)

Inanimate subjects of *salirse* correspond to dislocated injured body parts or things sticking out of their place (*el codo se me ha salido* 'my elbow popped out' (COREC, CCON004D).

In contrast, extensions of *force dynamics* to more abstract situations are abundantly found in Mexican Spanish –not so in Peninsular Spanish– in the following

leaving contexts: (i) leaving against obstacles or rules, (ii) leaving abruptly, (iii) leaving permanently, and (iv) leaving in order to have a good time (Aaron and Torres Cacoullos 2005). Leaving a location against the rules and leaving a group are exemplified in (9) and (10) respectively:

(9) *Así es qu'el más grande, por burrito… tampoco no… ¡**Se** salía de la escuela, señora!*
'So, the oldest, the little fool… didn't either… He would leave (Habla popular, 411)

(10) *Es que teníamos buen equipo, ¿verdá?, … pero **se** salieron unos muchachos y … y ora ya … empezamos con otros*
'It's that we had a good team, right? … but some fellows left SE and … and now … we started up with others' (Habla popular, 18)
(Aaron and Torres Cacoullos 2005: 611)

While the energetic counter-expectation construal can already be found in Old Spanish (Maldonado 1988; Aaron and Torres Cacoullos 2005), its expansion to more abstract domains is a modern Spanish phenomenon. For a diachronic study showing the expansion of energetic and counter-expectations constructions in Spanish not limited to *salirse* see Maldonado (1988).

For consumption, counter-expectations in middle *se* constructions would be likely to occur whenever there is a non-canonical ingestion event (De la Mora 2011; 2024). This can be determined by either the subject, the object, or the whole event. Factors such as lack of animacy of the subject (11a), non-edible objects or not-socially accepted as edible things, such as dog food in (11b), and lack of definiteness of the object (12) favor mirative interpretations:

(11) a. ***El sol se** comió la tela*
'The sun wore down the fabric'
b. *Juan **se** comió **las croquetas del perro***
'Juan SE ate the dog's food'

(12) ?? ***Se** comió pizza*
'S/he SE ate pizza.' (as opposed to 'the pizza')

In the case of (11a) the sun wears down the fabric against one's will. Eating dog food (11b), may be seen as considered health threatening or running against social rules.[1]

1 Example (12) *se plus consumption verb* is marginal since the *se* construction requires a definite marker to designate a full EXPLOITATION READING = 'he ate up all the pizza' (Maldonado 2000).

Non-canonical events are also identifiable in other pragmatic domains. Social rules again play an important role here. Eating someone else's food as in (13) is not well taken. The hypocritical behavior of people protesting against hunting animals while they eat meat as in (14) is, of course, a controversial behavior. Moreover, eating in a hurry runs against an idealized Western cultural frame of eating as a pleasant break in everyday activities (15):

(13) *Salgan, bastante trabajo tengo sin ustedes* ***comiéndose*** *mi comida*
'Get out, I have had enough with you eating-SE my food.'

(14) *seguramente quienes critican que la caza es cruel, casi seguro, están* ***comiéndose*** *una perdiz estofada*
'I am sure that people who are against hunting, almost certainly, they are eating-SE a roasted partridge.'

(15) ***nos*** *los íbamos comiendo corriendo, para que no se dieran cuenta de nuestra ausencia*
'we NOS were eating them in a hurry, so they did not notice our absence.'

In this paper, we attempt to identify the most dominant componential factors determining mirative readings in middle *se* construals in Mexican Spanish. As already claimed, the mirative reading for the clitic *se* is not obligatory. We propose however that there are strong componential tendencies for miratives to emerge. Utterances not marked by *se* are normally read as absolutes as in (16); likewise, those marked by *se* (17) tend to be read as mirative:

[News report]:
(16) *En el accidente murieron cuatro personas* NON-MIRATIVE
'In the accident 4 people died.'
[Talking about his sibling involved in a drug dealing situation]

(17) Context: two friends talking about a family member that recently died and he was a heavy smoker
*Es un hecho que el pinche Chepe* ***se murió*** *de tanto fumar* MIRATIVE
'There is no doubt that the damn Chepe SE died from smoking so much.'

In (16), the absolute construal follows from the objective distance characteristic in a news report. In contrast, (17) the energetic construal *Chepe se murió de tanto fumar* 'Chepe *SE* die from smoking' reflects the speaker involvement and opinion

about the cause of Chepe's death. In the face of dubious cases, such as (5), a further underpinning of the circumstances determining mirative readings is required.

To sum up, previous analyses coincide in important points. Counter to expectation construals are determined by:

a) Speaker involvement and participant affectedness
b) Proximity among interlocutors
c) Focus on change of state (telic events)
d) Non-canonical events.
    a. Inanimate subjects or objects
    b. Socially unacceptable actions
    c. Leaving
        i. against obstacles or rules
        ii. abruptly or permanently

As we shall see, all these factors align with more general patterns of Spanish which we explore in the following sections.

## 3 Proposal for mirative marking in Spanish

This paper attempts to identify the most dominant compositional factors determining mirative readings in middle *se* constructions in Spanish. We undertake Delancey's definition of mirativity involving "utterances conveying information which is new or unexpected to the speaker" (DeLancey 2001: 369–370). Mirative meanings are defined as cases where the event may affect a participant in the event (the theme in most cases), the speech participants as they may be involved with the participant in the event or the event as a whole. The newness or counter-expectation of a mirative event may come from the speaker's knowledge of the world. The event may contradict normal standards in society, such as people eating dog food. Crucially, counter-expectations may also involve undesired situations such as trees burning in the woods, natural catastrophes and unwanted events, such as falling sick, dying and so forth. Event compression can favor mirative readings as some change-of-state may pop up before the speaker's eyes without background information.

The analysis presented in this chapter is not limited to specific verb types such as consumption (De la Mora 2011, 2024) or motion verbs (Aaron 2014; Torres Cacoullos and Schwenter 2018). Instead, we explore the most frequent types of middle *se*+1 collocations, mainly verbs and pronouns, encoding mirativity in oral Mexican Spanish. We include all verb types that occurred in a corpus of informal

oral Mexican Spanish. The choice of oral-informal samples was adopted assuming that speakers would be more prompted to let their subjective evaluations show in their language use in informal speech.

Since we acknowledge the fact that mirativity in Spanish is not strictly morphemic but corresponds to specific collocational patterns we propose the following hypothesis:

> COMPOSITIONAL MIRATIVITY. Mirativity in Spanish is compositional. In the case of the clitic *se*, the clitic must establish specific collocations to impose mirative readings, throughout the following patterns:
>
> i. MEAN VERBS. Middle *se* combined with verbs having negative implications (which we informally call "mean verbs") should favor mirative readings.
>
> ii. DOUBLE CLITIC. The middle clitic *se* combined with dative clitics (*me le(s), te)* should impose a higher degree of subjective involvement and, thus, it should favor mirative readings.
>
> iii. COLLOCATIONS. Collocations and lexicalized constructions, particularly with generic verbs, (*se puso negro* 'it became black') are prompt to develop mirative readings.

By contrast, simple middle *se* constructions combined with verbs not having strong negative implications may require more elaborate contexts to let mirative readings emerge. Mirativity in these cases would depend on more pragmatic factors, which should align with De la Mora's (2011) proposal of non-canonical events.

# 4 Methods

As already mentioned, we are particularly interested in finding collocational patterns that favor mirative readings. We assume that informal oral speech sets the best conditions to identify the most representative contexts for the emergence of counter-expectations. Thus, data from two oral informal corpora were considered: the *Corpus Sociolingüístico de la Ciudad de México* [CSCM] (Martín Butragueño and Lastra 2011), a corpus based on informal semi-controlled interviews and the Corpus AMERESCO Ciudad de México [AMERESCO-CDMX] (Maldonado 2021), which collects fully spontaneous interactions in natural contexts without linguist intervention. The choice of the two corpora follows from our interest in finding whether the degree of (in)formality in language use would determine a higher frequency of mirative uses. We have restricted the search to the dialect of Mexico since AMERESCO-CDMX contains the highest number of middle examples as compared to corpora for other Hispanic dialects, as Figure 6 shows.

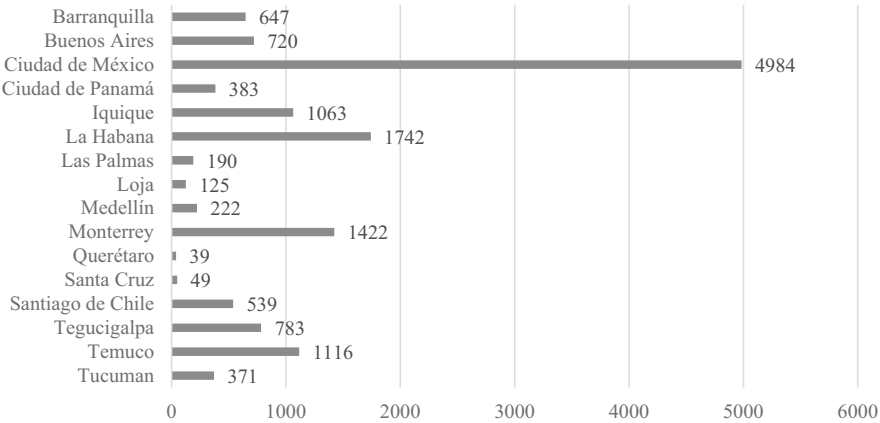


**Figure 6:** Overall cases of *se* per dialect found in AMERESCO Corpus.

Based on the maximal number of the most frequent middle examples found in AMERESCO-CDMX, 2224 cases were selected for each corpus. Using *Antconc*, the 50 most frequent *se* combinations were chosen. Only preclitic (*se*+verb; *se*+clitic+verb) combinations were considered. There were 962 middle examples. As can be seen from Table 1, there were more middle uses in AMERESCO-CDMX than in CSCM which suggests that dialogical discourse results in a higher degree of middle constructions.[2]

**Table 1:** Middle *se* cases across corpora.

| Corpus | Percentages (N) | Relative frequency per million words (Examples/words per corpora) |
|---|---|---|
| AMERESCO | 62% (592) | 2495 (592/237,270) |
| CSCM | 38% (370) | 393 (370/941,819) |
| Total | 100% (962) | |

In order to determine how mirativity was expressed in Spanish middle *se*, all 962 examples were coded for mirative and non-mirative uses with meaningful results:

2 This is corroborated by the dominance of middle over impersonal constructions in four sets of oral data in alternative corpora (see Maldonado 2024).

**Table 2:** Mirative and non-mirative cases for middle *se* Spanish.

| Mirative and non-mirative uses | Percentages (N) |
|---|---|
| Mirative | 36% (350) |
| Non-mirative | 64% (612) |
| Total | 100% (962) |

While the difference is not drastic, data shows that non-mirative uses are more frequent than mirative ones. Middles cover a wide spectrum of energetic meanings associated with compressed change of state events (rapid, abrupt and dynamic readings). It is relevant, nonetheless, to observe that counter-expectation construals correspond to 36% of middle uses; in other words, mirative uses cover an important area in middle constructions which are extensions from non-mirative middle energetic construals.

A further methodological issue is a stake. Table 3 shows that our hypothesis whereby more informal dialogical discourse was expected to render more mirative uses was not backed up by our data, as can be seen in the relative frequencies across corpora:

**Table 3:** Mirative and non-mirative cases by corpora.

| | AMERESCO | Relative frequency per million words | CSCM | Relative frequency per million words |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mirative | 38% (222) | 936 | 34% (128) | 136 |
| Non-mirative | 62% (370) | 1559 | 65% (242) | 256 |
| Total | 100% (592) | 2495 | 100% (370) | 393 |

Since the distribution of mirative and non-mirative uses in the two oral corpora were considered equivalent, we analyzed the data for both corpora as one unit. The significance of this general data corroborates the need to identify the most important factors determining mirative readings in Mexican Spanish middle *se* construals, as per the following section.

# 5 Analysis

The first issue was to determine whether the dynamicity hypothesis was correct. In other words, is it the case that middle *se* influences the emergence of mirative readings?

Recall that there were middle *se* constructions like (18) that were undetermined for mirativity:

(18) *¿no **se acuerda** que ahí lo poníamos?*
'don't you remember that we used to put it there?'

We analyzed the emergence of mirative and non-mirative middle uses. There were 612 non-mirative cases which represented 64% of middle uses. These results are not surprising since middle *se* constructions from the corpus include middle verbs such as change of position (*sentarse* 'sit down' *pararse* 'stand up' *acostarse* 'lie down'), change of emotional state (*alegrarse* 'gladden', *entristecerse* 'get sad', *enojarse* 'get mad' and so forth) as well as physical change of state (*doblarse* 'bend down', *estirarse* 'stretch' and so on), which may but need not imply counter-expectations. Yet, what is important is that almost 40% of the middle *se* universe does designate mirative readings. These results demand an account of the circumstances under which mirative readings emerge.

Middle *se* mirative constructions presented quite systematic behavior. They were classified in four groups according to the following criteria. For the first group, we identified all the miratives that were constructed with "mean verbs", i.e., verbs whose meaning had strong negative implications (19 and 20):

(19) *¿el de metal? ah el de juguete **se rompió** ¡lo rompiste tú!*
'The metal one? Ah, [because] the toy one broke. You broke it!'

(20) *¿pero sí/ **se han quemado** muchas// zonas de árboles?*
'but yes/ have many areas// areas of trees been burned?'

Since 'break' and 'burn down' are actions that may or may not be mirative (*romper un sobre para leer una carta* 'break an envelope to read a letter' *quemar madera en la chimenea* 'burn wood in the fireplace for heating purposes') we marked all instances of "mean verbs" which by construal actually designated counter-to-expectations readings. In the context, these cases triggered unexpected or undesired events.

A second group was composed of "mean verbs" whose construction combined two clitics: middle *se* and a dative clitic *le (me te, nos).* This was determined since the dative form consistently designated a higher degree of involvement of the affected participant in the event. Samples with *se+le* were more prompted to designate mirativity than those with simple *se*. While (21a) could be read as mirative, for (21b) the counter-to-expectations reading was practically unquestionable. Besides *se le murió* 'it died on her', we provide a few more samples (17–19). For (21b) *se*

focuses on the change of state. Even if the dog's decease could be seen as coming, the speaker's involvement causes for the event to be seen as running against her/his expectations-desires:

(21) a. ***Se*** ***murió*** *su* *perro*
MIDDL died POSS.3 dog
'His dog died.'
b. ***Se*** ***le*** ***murió*** *su* *perro*
MIDDL DAT died POSS.3 dog
'His dog died on him.'

(22) *porque de repente a Felipe* ***se le salían*** *pequeñas mentirillas*
'because suddenly Felipe would let slip some little lies.'

(23) *La vía termina ahí ¡ah!* ***se me fue*** *cómo se llama la estación hacia dónde va el tren*
'The rail ends there, ah! It slipped my mind what the name of the station is where the train goes.'

(24) *me cuidara <risas/> la muela pero ya* ***se me cayó*** *lo que me puso*
'I would take care of my tooth <laughs/> but what I put on it *has already fallen out.'*

While examples in (21) dying runs against expectations-desires, unexpectedness in (22) to (24) comes from lack of control: lies come out in the absence of Felipe's control, in the same way that the name of the station slips the speaker's mind. Similarly, the amalgam's falling off from the tooth in (24) is an unexpected control loss problem.

In the "mirative pragmatic" group, we have included all the cases whose mirative interpretation was not determined by a "mean verb", a *se le* + "mean verb" or any other syntactic-semantic determination. Instead, these miratives correspond to pragmatic situations with negative reading which were not strongly determined by the meaning of the verb. Most common cases correspond to collocations with bleached verbs (*dejar* 'let', *poner* 'become', *quedar* 'remail') where the adjective or the participial form facilitates the negative reading, as in (25) *quedar* 'let' and a past participle (*abiertas* 'open', referring to food which, ideally, should be packed up and put away to prevent it go dry).

(25) *a ver si no se secaron-* ***se quedaron*** *abiertas*
'Let's see if they didn't dry up- they stayed open.'

Other mirative construals determined by "pragmatic factors", in non-canonical situations (De la Mora 2011, De la Mora (in prep.)) are exemplified by cases in which people stay longer than they should or in situations where people do not do anything when they are expected to respond:

(26) *Puede estar sembrando y así pero como que* ***se queda*** *ahí en algún punto*
'He may be planting and so on, but he kind of stays there at some point.'

(27) *I: el tipo/* ***se la pasa sentado*** *en su casa ¿no?*
'The guy spends all the time there sitting at home, right?'

Crucially, negative polarity can also contradict normal expectations. This is the case of events expected to happen which are negated:

(28) *y la otra estudió/ odontología pero* ***no/ se ha recibido****/ tiene mucho miedo…*
'and the other studied / dentistry but no / has not graduated / and she is very afraid that…'

(29) *tiene que contestar / ella todavía como que* ***no se da cuenta*** *que hay una autoridad*
'She has to answer / she still seems not to realize that there is an authority.'

An alternative construal must be observed. In the absence of a lexical verb with negative implications, there may be constructions where a semantically bleached verb forms a collocation-construction to trigger mirative readings. The most productive pattern involves a bleached (grammaticalized) verb and a wide variety of "mean" adjectives, past participles or nouns designating some unwanted change of state: *quedarse dormido* 'fall asleep', *ponerse rojo* 'become/get red (as for a body part)'. In this case, it is the adjective, the past participle or the noun and not the verb implying some negative results which imposes a mirative effect. The most common light verbs for mirativity are *hacerse* 'unplanned happen/go', *quedarse* 'fall/ undergo', *ponerse* 'unplanned get/become'. Here are some examples. Notice that the iterative situation in (30) does not make the event habitual and thus expected. Every time the man falls sick, the event runs against the speaker's expectations-desires:

(30) *Tiene diabetis* (sic) *y a cada rato* ***se pone bien malo***
'He has diabetes and all the time he gets really bad.'

(31) *…otra vez de vidrio// así pues ya/ de repente* ***se hizo tan monótono****/ porque pues*
'[made] of glass again// so thus / suddenly it became so monotonous.'

(32) *así como que…o sea* ***se quedó pasmado o… soprendido***
'he kind of ...I mean, he became stunned or...surprised.'

As can be expected, constructions with bleached verbs of support may also occur with a middle-dative clitic *se le* combination which strengthens a counter-expectations reading:

(33) *I: en ocasiones/ que ya* ***se me hizo*** *bastante* ***tarde****// salgo corriendo*
'sometimes/ when it's already quite late// I leave in a hurry.'

Some of these bleached verb constructions have already become idioms *hacerse pipi/popó* 'pee/poop accidentally', *ponerse verde* 'turn green (with fright)'. Of particular interest is the productivity of *pasarse de* 'go beyond…', which can make quasi-idioms with a set of complements, such as *la raya* 'of the line' *listo* 'clever', *verga* 'cock', *lanza* 'lance'. In all cases, the subject goes over some established limit:

(34) *luego lo invitamos y ni viene,* ***se pasa*** *de la raya*
'then we invite him, and he doesn't even come, he crosses the line.'

(35) ***se pasaba de listo*** *con mi mamá y sí se pasaba de listo peroooo ya…*
'he was being too clever with my mother and yes, he was being too clever but not anymore.'

(36) *no manches [mhm]* ***se pasaron de lanza*** *mhm y nada., nos les hicieron nada*
'damn! They went too far mhm and nothing., they got away with it.'

Given this array of possible combinations, we may want to identify the most productive construals for mirativity in Mexican Spanish. The distribution for middle *se* constructions correspond to different collocations:

**Table 4:** Mirative middle *se* constructions.

| Constructions | Percentage | Cases (n) |
|---|---|---|
| lex-mean | 42% | 148 |
| lex-mean-DC | 38% | 133 |
| lex-prag | 6% | 21 |
| prag-neg | 1% | 4 |
| constr-BV | 9% | 33 |

**Table 4** (continued)

| Constructions | Percentage | Cases (n) |
|---|---|---|
| constr-DC | 2% | 6 |
| Constr | 2% | 6 |
| Total | 100% | 351 |

A series of findings can be extracted from these results. Mirativity in Spanish is constructional in a very specific way. The middle clitic *se* selects lexical forms rather than bleached verb constructions (BV) or other constructions types for mirative readings. Moreover, "mean verbs" and "mean verbs" +double clitic *se le* collocations (lex-mean-DC) constitute 80% of the mirative universe. The distribution is so clear that no finer statistical analysis is necessary. Cases where the lexical import of the verb is insufficient are solved by bleached verb+past participle constructions, which are on their way to becoming idioms. These constitute only 13% (9%+2%+2% bleached verb constructions) of the mirative spectrum. Given the strength of the semantic-constructional determinacy, there is very little room for pragmatic determinations. Only 7% of the mirative cases can be characterized as pragmatically determined. We conclude that mirativity in Spanish is compositional or constructional in a very narrow sense. While open to pragmatic situations, mirativity in Spanish is dominantly restricted to syntactic-semantic conditions. Middle constructions with "mean verbs" dominantly encode mirative readings and these can be reinforced by double clitic (DC) se+*le* collocations where the affectedness on the human entity is put forward by the dative clitic *le*. Textbooks and traditional grammars refer to the *se me* construction as a fixed form for unplanned occurrences (Schmitz 1966; Terrell, Andrade, Egasse and Muñoz 2009). Alternatively, we propose to see it as a collocation where *se* is a middle marker designating energetic mirative construals while the dative clitic *le* marks affectedness. The distinction is necessary since, in the right context, the clitic *se* alone may trigger mirative readings.

It is worth seeing the verbs and constructions that constitute the mirative group. Mirative constructions fall in three dominant categories: change of state, change of location and emotional changes. We will compare first the behavior of *se*+ "mean verbs" versus *se le* + "mean verbs" in change of state. Table 5 offers the results for change-of-state:

**Table 5:** Mirative change-of-state.

| **Mirative se+Mean verbs physical change-of state** | **Mirative *se* Mean verbs with dative clitic physical change-of state** |
|---|---|
| ***acabarse* 'run out of something'** | ***acabarse* 'run out of something'‘** |
| ***descomponerse* 'break down'** | ***descomponerse* 'break down'** |
| ***morirse* 'die'** | ***morirse* 'die'** |
| ***romperse* 'break'** | ***romperse* 'break'** |
| ***secarse* 'dry out'** | ***secarse* 'dry out'** |
| *adormecerse* 'num' | *ahogarse* 'drown' |
| *arriesgarse* 'take a risk' | *apagarse* 'go out' |
| *comerse* 'eat up' | *desatarse* 'untie' |
| *desinflarse* 'deflate' | *despertarse* 'wake up' |
| *echarse (a perder)* 'spoil' | *enfermarse* 'get sick' |
| *emborracharse* 'get drink' | *ensuciarse* 'ger dirty' |
| *encontrarse* 'run with someone' | *entumirse* 'get numb' |
| *enfermarse* 'get sick' | *hincharse* 'swell' |
| *gastarse* 'wear down' | *inflamarse* 'swell' |
| *inundarse* 'flood' | *llenarse* 'fill up' |
| *quemarse* 'burn' | *reventarse* 'break' |
| | *transformarse* 'transform' |
| | *vencerse* 'give up' |

The number of miratives in both constructions is basically the same. We can observe however that there are only five verbs appearing in both constructions. These are marked in boldface for convenience. There seems to be some degree of specialization for each construction. Not surprisingly, many double clitic constructions involve different types of whole-part relationships (*ensuciarse* 'ger dirty', *entumirse* 'get numb', *hincharse* 'swell, *inflamarse* 'swell', *llenarse* 'fill up', *marcarse* 'mark'). All other cases designate events where the subject interacts with some object. The double clitic construction designates a higher degree of subject involvement. The behavior of mental/perceptual change may reinforce our observations. We must clarify that the notion of "mental change" assumed here is broad; it includes not only mental (*olvidarse* 'forget') and emotional (*enojarse* 'get mad') but also perception verbs like *notarse* 'become apparent/visible' or situational verbs like *meterse en problemas* 'get in trouble'. The constructions involving simple and double clitic in mental changes are the following:

**Table 6:** Mirative. Mental change.

| **Mirative *se*+Mean verbs Mental change** | **Mirative Mean verbs with double clitic Mental change** |
|---|---|
| *irse* 'leave/go away a memory' | *irse* 'leave/go away a memory' |
| *meterse* 'get in (trouble)' | *meterse* 'get in (trouble)' |
| *olvidarse* 'forget' | *olvidarse* 'forget' |
| *aburirse* 'to get bored' | *notarse* 'become visible' |
| *burlarse* 'make fun of somebody' | *ocurrirse* 'occur' |
| *confiarse* 'excesive trust' | *pasarse* 'forget' |
| *creerse* 'believe' | |
| *darse cuenta* 'realize' | |
| *enojarse* 'get angry' | |
| *enterarse* 'get to know' | |

Simple *se* clitic constructions attract more verbs than their double clitic counterparts. There may be some specialization phenomenon at hand. Notice first that there are only three verbs occurring in both constructions (*irse* 'leave/go away a memory', *meterse* 'get in (trouble)', olvidarse 'forget'). This suggests that there may be situations for which only one member is enough and others that require at least two components. The difference may be related to the fact that, in mental verbs, whole-part relations do not seem to be prominent. Whatever happens to the participant mentally or emotionally seems to happen to the individual as a whole. In contrast, physical changes-of-state tend to involve some (body)part profiled from the whole participant; thus, the double clitic construction encodes the presence of two members involved in the event (the part and the whole). Change of location may shed some light into the problem as it may lean in favor of one of these two tendencies.

The behavior of miratives for change of location seems to follow the pattern of change-of-state verbs. Whole-part relationships seem to be quite relevant for the contrast between simple and double clitics in *se* mirative constructions:

**Table 7:** Mirative change of location.

| **Mirative *se* + Mean verbs Change of location** | **Mirative Mean verbs + double clitic Change of location** |
|---|---|
| *caerse* 'fall down' | *caerse* 'fall down' |
| *irse* 'leave' | *irse* 'leave' |
| *meterse* 'get into' | *meterse* 'get into' |
| *perderse* 'get lost' | *perderse* 'get lost' |
| *quedarse* 'remain at some place' | *quedarse* 'remain at some place' |

**Table 7** (continued)

| **Mirative *se* + Mean verbs Change of location** | **Mirative Mean verbs + double clitic Change of location** |
|---|---|
| *salirse* 'get out' | *salirse* 'let out (lies)' |
| *abrirse* 'open up' | *alzarse* 'rise' |
| *darse la vuelta* 'turn' | *aparecerse* 'show up' |
| *desparecerse* 'disappear' | *bajarse* 'go down' |
| *llegarse* 'get something' | *colgarse* 'hang up' |
| *llevarse* 'carry off' | *escurrirse* 'drain down' |
| pasarse 'pass' | *estirarse* 'stretch' |
| *separarse* 'break up' | *juntarse* 'join' |
| | *levantarse* 'get up' |
| | *pararse* 'stand up' |
| | *pegarse* 'stick to' |
| | *perderse* 'get lost, miss something' |
| | *quitarse* 'move out of reach' |
| | *subirse la temperatura* 'raise the temperature' |

A slight dominance in double clitic constructions is observable. The difference may be understood as a phenomenon related to whole-part configurations in at least two different ways. There are cases, such as temperature (*subirse la temperatura* 'raise the temperature') and body fluids (*escurrirse los mocos* 'drain the snot') or abstract elements (*salírsele pequeñas mentirillas* 'let little lies out', *bajarse la pila* 'lower one's battery'/ 'people lose energy') which inherently belong in the dative participant dominion and, unexpectedly, they may leave such dominion. There are also others with which the dative participant interaction designates losing control against her/his will: *parársele el auto* 'the car stops on her/him', *estirársele la tela* 'the fabric stretching on someone', *me la aventaste y se me perdió* 'you threw it at me and I lost it'). It can be seen that the dative clitic contribution in the *se le* mirative collocation is one of affectedness imposed on the participant as s/he loses control of some object belonging in his/her dominion or of some part of him/herself. The basic patterns emerging from our data may let us offer some basic general remarks.

# 6 Conclusions

In this paper we have tried to show that mirativity in Spanish is not morphemic nor implicative. Events running against expectations may appear in contexts that may suggest a non-mirative construal. Yet we have also shown that Spanish has

developed collocations whose first reading is mirative. Of all possible markers, the middle clitic *se* is the one offering the best conditions to depict mirative readings. We have proposed that mirativity in Spanish is compositional in the sense that the clitic *se* makes specific collocations whose first reading is mirative. Middle *se* offers the basis for mirative readings in cases where the event is compressed to only conceptualize the change of state (Maldonado 1988, 1993, 1999). Compressed events are energetic in the sense that the circumstances surrounding the event are not profiled, thus they focus on the rapid or abrupt emergence of some change. While this constitutes the base for a mirative construal, it is insufficient to always warrant a counter-expectation construal. Our data suggests that there are two dominant collocations imposing mirativity: a) those where middle *se* combines with a mean verb carrying strong negative implications (*morirse* 'die', *romperse* 'break' *caerse* 'fall down') and b) those where the middle clitic *se* combines with a dative clitic *me, te, le(s)* where the event running against natural expectations is anchored in the affectedness of a strongly involved participant in the event. These two patterns cover the vast majority of mirative cases in our data. A crucial finding is the fact that mirative middle *se* constructions tends to specialize. We were tempted to follow a general feeling shared in Hispanic studies that the *se me* construction is the epitome of counter-expectations construals. Yet our data show a more interesting profile. For change of state simple clitic and double clitic constructions are equally prominent. We may assume that change of location does favor the double clitic construction since a whole-part construal is dominantly at play. And yet for mental changes, the simple middle *se* construction is dominant as the whole individual mental transformation is what is being put forward. All other cases seem to be pragmatically determined since they correspond to De la Mora's (2011, 2024) non-canonical event construal. These are determined by more specific factors which previous analyses have already underscored and are in line with our findings. Speaker involvement has rightly been defined as influenced by definite subjects and definite events as opposed to generic or irrealis situations (Aaron 2003, 2004; Aaron and Torres Cacoullos 2005; Torres Cacoullos and Schwenter 2008). Focus on change of state was corroborated by telicity in verbs of motion with punctual prepositions *a* 'to' and *de* 'from' (Torres Cacoullos and Schwenter 2008). Participant affectedness is encoded by *se*+ "mean verbs" in negative situations. Affectedness is already there, yet it is mostly reinforced by dative clitics (*me, te, le*) as corroborated in all studies. Unexpectedness comes about in non-canonical events under atypical conditions: unexpected subjects (the wind, the rain, insects), themes (dog food) or situations contradicting norms (eating someone else's food). These conditions elaborate in detail what the basic template [SE+MEAN VERB(+LE)] provides for mirativity to arise. We have identified only a few pragmatic conditions determining mirative readings, an endeavor which we will attempt to spell out in future efforts. Middle *se* depicts

compressed energetic events (Maldonado 1988, 1993, 1999). This conceptualization sets the base for the emergence of mirative unexpected construals, close to 40% of the middle energetic construals are already mirative. No, we cannot claim that mirativity is implicative in Spanish, however, we sustain that the collocation of *se (le)*+ "mean verb", at least for Mexican Spanish, is quite close.

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Alda Mari

# 3 Disconfirmational MICA in surprise questions (and some notes on concessivity)

**Abstract:** Through the study of the particle MICA in Italian, this paper addresses the question of mirativity in the broader context of future and questions. It achieves three main results: (i) it shows that MICA is not a common ground management device; it is a particle that manipulates inferences rather than anchoring to discourse participants, patterning with disconfirmational evidentials cross-linguistically. (ii) it proposes that semantic and pragmatic composition can interact and do not proceed independently, and (iii) it establishes a new connection between mirativity and concessivity.

**Keywords:** Mirativity, concessivity, future, questions, *mica*

## 1 Introduction

Future questions are one of the many contexts in which the Italian discourse particle MICA can be found. In this context (note the future *avrà* 'will have'), MICA creates a biased question, and, more specifically, a mirative question.[1]

(1) Oh, no ! (Sara) non **avrà mica** detto ad Anna che ho un altro figlio da lei (Sara) ? ! ? Non può averlo fatto ! Cielo, e se invece fosse così ?[2]
'Oh no ! Sara will have not told Anna that I have another son from her (Sara) ? ! ? She cannot have done it ! God, what if instead she did it ?'

In the specific case (1), as the punctuation '? ! ?' reveals, the MICA-question is imbued with surprise (also spelled out in the preceding 'Oh, no !'), and it is loaded with a series of presuppositions that surface as expectations that have been referred to as 'biases'

1 In the absence of an English direct translation for Italian *mica*, we illustrate right from the bat the effects that it enhances. As we show, we consider *mica* as the representative of a class of disconfirmational evidentials, and capitalize it, as representative of a class.
2 https://www.wattpad.com/277641804-pensami-federico-rossi-20-vendetta-o-quasi

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in the literature.[3] (i) First, the speaker believes that Sara would not be able to tell Anna that the speaker has another son from her (Sara). (This has been called the *speaker bias* and it is spelled out later in the discourse as *Non può averlo fatto!* 'She cannot have done it!'.) (ii) Second, the speaker might have evidence, in the context of utterance, that Sara has told Anna. This is the *evidence bias*. (iii) Third, the speaker expects a positive answer to the question (*answer bias*). Furthermore, the question is a true question[4] that reveals uncertainty and requires a clarification, as the follow up with *Cielo, e se invece fosse così ?* 'God and what if it is indeed the case?' shows. Note that, replacing *mica* with *forse* ('maybe') removes all these biases and with them, the effect of mirativity.

The ability of MICA to create bias and enhance mirativity can be appreciated by comparing MICA future questions with future questions without MICA, which we dub as 'bare future questions' (see Mari 2021; Giannakidou and Mari 2023).

(2) Dove sarà Anna? Non la vedo.
where be.FUT.3SG Ann? not her see.1SG
'Where might Ann be ? I do not see her.'

(3) Anna sarà a casa ora?
Ann be.FUT.3SG at home now?
'Might Ann be at home now ?'

None of these questions features a surprise effect. Surprise comes with biases and expectations, whereas bare future questions are anti-biased: they are questions that reveal a state of complete uncertainty, that might not even require an answer and that the speaker can address to themselves (see e.g. Littell et al. 2010; Eckardt and Beltrama 2019; Giannakidou and Mari 2023).

Our study aims to disentangle the semantic contribution of future tense and MICA to explain the nature of these biases and how these biases and the surprise effect arise. For the purposes of this paper, we will not address the interaction of future and question operators in the absence of MICA (see Giannakidou and Mari 2023; Mari 2024) but focus on the following three questions: (i) what is the meaning of future ? (ii) what is the meaning of MICA ? and (iii) how do questions (QUES), future (FUT) and MICA interact ?

We submit that MICA triggers an expectation that takes the form of a defeasible generalization (or a generic rule). It delivers a conclusion that is contrary to the default inference, no matter whether the expectation is a positive or a negative one.

**3** See, among many others Krifka (2015), Malamud and Stephenson (2015), AnderBois (2019), Buring and Gunlogson (2000), Larrivée and Mari (2022).
**4** *Pace* Frana and Rawlins (2019).

In line with much of the literature (see for a recent discussion Frana and Rawlins 2019; Greco 2022; Magistro 2023), we will assume that MICA and NON-MICA have the same interpretation and that (4-a)–(4-b) are in free distribution.

(4) a. Mica Avrai già mangiato?
mica have.FUT.2SG already eaten?
'You have not eaten yet, don't you ?'
b. Non Avrai Mica già mangiato?
not have.FUT.2SG MICA already eaten?
'You have not eaten yet, don't you ?'

We will proceed by focusing on MICA in Section 2, where we discuss previous analyses as well as our new proposal. We recall in Section 3 our own epistemic analysis of Italian future, relying on Mari (2009); Giannakidou and Mari (2018b, 2023b, to appear). Section 4 brings these two pieces together within the specific context of questions. Section 5 discusses the consequences of the analysis, highlighting the evidential underpinnings of the mirative effect associated with MICA. Section 6 offers some comments on a previously unnoticed connection between mirativity and concessivity, comparing MICA questions to their corresponding concessive questions in French. Section 7 concludes.

# 2 MICA, expectations and reasoning

It is uncontroversial that MICA is a negative element that is anaphoric to information available in the common ground. Theoreticians have focused on individuals' beliefs, and disagree on whether it is presupposed that the speaker expects $p$ or $\neg p$.

## 2.1 The debate

**First attempt: speaker bias towards** $p$. According to Cinque (1991), MICA can deny a proposition that has never been expressed linguistically, but simply inferred or believed to be believed by the addressee. Cinque discusses the context in which the speaker S sees the addressee A pouring milk into a dish for S's cat. S infers that $p$ (in this case: the milk is good for cats) is assumed by A.

(5) Guarda che il latte non fa mica bene al gatto.
'Look, the milk is NOT good for cats'

According to Cinque's analysis, NON introduces a regular negation and MICA adds a definedness condition: in the context *c*, *p* is presupposed by some participant in the conversation.

**Second attempt: in questions, the speaker is biased towards** ¬*p*. Frana and Rawlins (2019) provide new evidence against Cinque's analysis, and elaborate a scenario where Clara invites Miles for dinner and makes clear to him that she will prepare her best dishes. When he gets there, Miles barely touches any food. Clara asks him:

(6) Non Hai mica già mangiato?
not have.2SG MICA already eaten?
'You have not eaten yet, haven't you ?'

Clara expects that Miles has *not* eaten yet, she is biased towards ¬*p*, but has evidence (evidence bias) that *p* (Miles barely touches any food).

Frana and Rawlins (2019) maintain Cinque's generalization for assertions, but provide a different generalization for questions, overall proposing what follows:

(7) Frana and Rawlins (2019) generalization.
a. In **assertions**, MICA sentences are felicitous in contexts where *p* is assumed by some participant in the conversation (as in Cinque 1991).
b. **Questions** with MICA are felicitous if the speaker has prior bias (prior to the ex- change) for ¬*p*.

We show that this generalization is not correct for questions, and that a unified account for both assertions and questions is possible.

**New observation: the valence of the speaker's bias is not relevant.** We observe that, even in questions, *p* can be expected to be part of the common ground (rather than ¬*p*), as the following case, where *p* is expected to be true by the speaker, shows. The context is one in which I am eating a whole bag of chips and my friend asks me:

(8) Scusa non sei mica a dieta?
orry not be.2SG MICA at diet?
'Sorry to ask, aren't you on a diet ?'

The speaker expects *p* to be true (that I am on a diet) and has evidence for ¬*p* (that I am not on a diet as I am eating a whole bag of chips). We conclude that MICA is not sensitive to the valence of the speaker's bias presupposition (if any; as we indeed argue, the bias is inferred and not presupposed), and it does not always create a bias reversal as argued by Frana and Rawlins (2019a).

## 2.2 New proposal

We propose that MICA is anaphoric to rules and generalizations of the form (9), where *E* is a body of evidence (a set of propositions) available in the context of utterance *c*.

(9) *E* then *normally q*

(9) is a defeasible inference that can be based on stereotypes, norms, commonsense reasoning. It is enhanced by contextual information or general knowledge (see a.o. Dowty 1979; König 1991; Krifka et al. 1995; Mari et al. 2012; Mari 2014).

MICA states that a certain generalization does not hold and that the inference associated with the generic generalization should not go through, according to the speaker.

(10) a. MICA is defined if:
The context *c* makes available a rule of the form:
*E* THEN *normally q*
b. If defined MICA means:
*E* AND ¬*q* (= ¬ (*E* THEN *normally q*))

Unfolding (8), the reasoning goes as follows.

(11) a. eating a lot (E) → not on a diet (¬*p*) *defeasible generalization*
b. MICA: eating a lot (E) AND on a diet (*p*) *MICA content*
c. <u>*p* and ¬*p* are valid alternatives.</u> *Question*

The same analysis applies to MICA-assertions, and there is no need to differentiate them from questions (*pace* Frana and Rawlins 2019).

Consider the scenario in which the addressee (A) is far away and the speaker (S) announces that the addressee's sister will pick them up (Cinque 1991; Frana and Rawlins 2019). In so doing the speaker seems to presuppose that the addressee's sister can drive. The addressee clarifies that his sister is not able to drive.

(12) S: Sei lontano. Ti viene a prendere tua sorella.
'You are far away. Your sister is going to pick you up.'
A: Non sà mica guidare.
'She is not MICA able to drive.'

According to our account, what matters for MICA is that there is a contextually available generalization according to which if someone picks up a person who is far away, they will probably use the car.

(13) a. Defeasible inference:
pick up ($E$) → *normally* can drive ($p$)
b. MICA:
pick you up AND not drive

As we see, the mechanics remain intact, no matter whether the defeasible generalization leads to the conclusion that $p$ (8) or $\neg p$ (12) is true, and no matter whether an assertion or a question is at stake.

Furthermore, dealing with conditionals allows us to derive the expected inference that the addressee's sister will not pick him up. As per König (1991), by *conditional perfection* if the conclusion does not hold, then the premise does not hold either.

(14) Conditional perfection[5]
a. Given If $E$ then normally $q$,
b. And given $E$ AND $\neg q$,
c. Then $\neg E$

This inference could not be derived on an account that relies on mere speaker's expectations about the truthfulness of the prejacent.

If our analysis is correct, MICA relies on a conditional reasoning and turns out to be a disconfirmational particle, that rejects contextual evidence as valid (see also Aikhenvald and Dixon 2014).

# 3 The modal semantics of Italian future

## 3.1 Background on future and future questions

It is no longer controversial that the future tense is not the dual of the past tense (see among many others, Enç (1987), Bertinetto (1979), Copley (2009), Mari (2009), De Saussure and Morency (2012), Giannakidou and Mari (2013b, 2018b), Frana and

5 The conditional perfection is an instance of Modus Tollens

Menéndez-Benito (2019), Escandell-Vidal (2021) among many others; *pace* Prior (1962), Kissine (2008).)

The modal future can have present and past orientation in a way akin to *dovere* (*must*) and *potere* (*might*), which has lead several theoreticians to conceive of the future as an *epistemic* modal (Bertinetto 1979, Mari 2009, Pietrandrea 2005, Giannakidou and Mari 2013a, 2018b), with some amount of disagreement as to the force of future, underspecified for some (e.g. Pietrandrea 2005, Baranzini and Mari 2019) and universal for others, with (Giannakidou and Mari, 2018a) or without bias (Mari 2021; Giannakidou and Mari 2023).

(15) a. Flavio sarà nella sua camera.
'Flavio must/might be in his room.'
b. Flavio deve essere nella sua camera.
'Flavio must be in his room.'
c. Flavio può essere nella sua camera.
'Flavio might be in his room.'

Several theoreticians have argued in favor of an evidential theory for future. They have argued that future is inferential evidential (Frana and Menéndez-Benito 2019, Eckardt and Beltrama 2019) or a subjective evidential (after Mari 2010b, Ippolito and Farkas 2021). The very fact that future cannot be used in questions that are addressee-oriented (16) has been used as an argument for future as an evidential (Frana and Menéndez-Benito 2019).

(16) #Quanti Anni avrai?
how.many Years have.FUT.2SG?
'How old might you be?'

Indeed, future would trigger what is called the interrogative flip, that is to say the phenomenon whereby the addressee is the source of the evidence needed to answer the question, whereas, in assertives, the source of the evidence grounding the assertion is the speaker. The flip is argued to occur with evidentials in biased questions (Bhadra (2020), Korotkova (2016), Murray (2016), a.o.), according to a reasoning that proceeds as follows: (i) a question containing an evidential expects that the hearer has the type of evidence encoded by the evidential (e.g. Speas and Tenny 2003, Aikhenvald 2004, Murray 2016; San Roque et al. 2017, Bhadra 2020), (ii) the evidential future is an inferential, (iii) the evidential future can be felicitously used in questions only if the hearer does not have direct evidence to answer the question. This would explain the infelicity of (16) as a case of presupposition failure with the addressee having direct evidence rather than indirect evidence. (Note, indeed,

that, if the addressee is in a state of confusion and does not remember their age anymore, the question is felicitous, see discussion in Eckardt and Beltrama 2019).

However, the emergence of the interrogative flip is not a solid argument for the evidential nature of Italian future. Epistemic modal questions such as (17) are also odd, on the assumption that the addressee knows their own age and that this impossibility is not due to evidentiality.[6]

(17) #Quanti anni Puoi avere?
How many years Can have?
'How old might you be?'

What we call the anti-addressee effect (see Giannakidou and Mari 2024) is not a peculiarity of evidentials, and the Italian future, again, aligns with epistemic modals.

In a series of recent works, Mari (2021) and Giannakidou and Mari (2024) propose that questions with future are reflective and do not even require an answer. They pattern along with conjectural questions that have been identified cross-linguistically. Modal questions belong to this class (see also Kang and Yoon 2019). Evidentials can also enhance conjectural questions (Eckardt and Beltrama, 2019; Matthewson, 2010), as data from Gitksan (Littell et al., 2010) reveals (see Matthewson 2010 for extensive discussion of the data).

The question still stands of whether anti-knowledge or inferentiality is the hallmark of Italian future.

## 3.2 Inference as ancillary to anti-knowledge marking

The following much debated contrast (see Giannakidou and Mari (2016) and references therein) shows that the Italian future, just like epistemic modals cannot be used when the speaker has direct evidence for the truthfulness of *p*.

Context: Direct visual perception of rain, the speaker sees the rain falling.

(18) a. #Starà piovendo.
be.FUT.3SG Raining
'It must/might be raining'

6 Ippolito and Farkas (2021) have a mixed account, very similar to Mari (2010b), where the future has an anti-knowledge presupposition and a subjective component. According to Ippolito and Farkas, the evidential component of Italian future triggers the interrogative flip. See Mari (2021) and Giannakidou and Mari (2023) for extended comments to Ippolito and Farkas proposal.

b. #Deve star piovendo.
Must be Raining
'It must be raining'

Context: I see a wet umbrella.

(19) a. Starà piovendo.
be.FUT.3SG Raining
'It must/might be raining.'
b. Deve star piovendo.
must be Raining
'It must be raining.'

This contrast is intended to show that Italian future is incompatible with *knowledge*.

There is no doubt that epistemic modals have evidential presuppositions (Von Fintel and Gillies 2010; Giannakidou and Mari 2016, 2021a,b, 2024), and indeed, the epistemic modal base is itself the evidential basis for epistemic modals.[7] The question whether Italian future is *primarily* an anti-knowledge marker or an inferential evidential is legitimate. This specific question is addressed in great details in Mari (2021) and we will not duplicate the demonstration here. One important point is that when inference entails knowledge, then the Italian future cannot be used, as in (20). Consider the context where there are 3 boxes and 1 ball. The ball is hidden below one of the three boxes. The ball is neither in A nor in B.

(20) #Sarà (FUT) in C
'It is maybe in C.'[8]

Why is it that future is felicitous in (19-a) (the umbrella case) and not felicitous in (20) (the boxes case)? In line with Giannakidou and Mari (2016) we claim that this is due to the fact that in the context of (19-a) the speaker has a lack of knowledge

7 The epistemic modal base can encode both endogenous or exogenous evidence, that is either evidence based on external facts, or subjective beliefs and preferences or a combination of both (see Giannakidou and Mari 2021b). Most of the times, unless otherwise lexicalized (see for instance Nuyts (1992); Mari (2016a)), the two sources of evidence are tightly intertwined.

8 Note that the addition of *dunque* (*therefore*) improves the acceptability. *Dunque* enhances a quasi-temporal interpretation, targeting the ratification time (Mari, 2016b) at which the boxes will be turned upside down and it will be revealed where the ball is hidden. The same observation holds for *allora* (*then/therefore*)

about whether it is raining outside, while, in the context of (21) the speaker has knowledge of where the ball is (box C is the only option).

Both direct and indirect sources (Willett 1988) can be sources of knowledge. We learn from direct experience as well as from inference or hearsay. However, these same types of sources may not produce knowledge, depending on their degree of reliability.

Epistemic modals are sensitive not to evidence type but to evidence quality.[9] The lack of knowledge component enhances uncertainty and thus leaves room for all sorts of inferences (granted they do not lead to knowledge): the inferential component of epistemic modals hinges on their being anti-knowledge markers.

The inference that the future relies upon is of the following form:

(21) If *E* then *normally q*.

Where *E* is a set of propositions, conceived as the intersection of stereotypicality conditions (worlds where the course of events follows normality conditions) as well as subjective preferences (worlds that comply with what the speaker believes and their personal credences), and, most importantly here, *contextually learned evidence*.[10]

## 3.3 Analysis

We adopt here the concepts and the analysis of Giannakidou and Mari (2016, 2018b, 2021a,b),[11] recalling only the main building blocks and definitions. Our starting notion will be the one of the epistemic state of an individual anchor *i*, which, for Italian future, is always the speaker.

(22) *Epistemic state of an individual anchor i*
An epistemic state M(*i*) is a set of worlds associated with an individual *i* representing worlds compatible with what *i* knows or believes in the context of utterance.

**9** Note that lack of knowledge is not cancellable (as the recent account of Ippolito and Farkas (2021) proposes by deriving lack of knowledge as an implicature), as future statements would otherwise be compatible with scenarios of direct evidence.

**10** For further discussion on the nature of the content of the evidence on which Italian future relies, see Mari (2010a, 2021); Giannakidou and Mari (2018b, 2023).

**11** All the definitions in this section are cited from their latest version in Giannakidou and Mari (2021a).

A nonveridical state conveys epistemic uncertainty if (and only if) it is partitioned into *p* and ¬*p* worlds.

(23) *Nonveridical information state*
An information state M(*i*) is nonveridical about *p* iff M(*i*) contains both *p* and ¬*p* worlds (Figure 1).

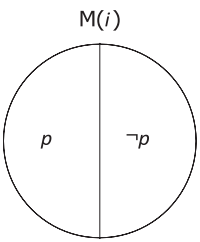



**Figure 1:** Uncertainty: partitioned epistemic state.

A function $\text{Ideal}_S$ selects those worlds in M(*i*) which best comply with *stereotypicality, speakers's expectations, beliefs and also credences* Giannakidou and Mari (2016, 2018b, 2023). This function does not add an ordering. It restricts the set of relevant worlds to those that follow the regularities expected by the speaker.

(24) $\text{Ideal}_S$.
Given the epistemic modal base M(*i*), the $\text{Ideal}_S$ set contains worlds that comply with stereotypicality conditions, as well as subjective preferences of the speaker *i* (Figure 2).

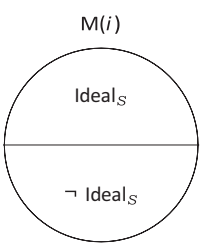



**Figure 2:** $\text{Ideal}_S$: Stereotypicality and speaker's credences.

$\text{Ideal}_S$ is a subset of M(*i*), that includes the evidence available in the context of utterance.

Future (FUT) quantifies over the set of $\text{Ideal}_S$ worlds and adds the information that *p* is true there. In other terms, *p* is true in all worlds that comply with the contextual evidence as well as the expectations and credences.

(25) An Italian future sentence presupposes (see for the formal analysis Giannakidou and Mari 2018b, 2023):
(i) that the epistemic M(*i*) is partitioned between *p* and ¬*p* worlds,
(ii) that M(*i*) is partitioned between $\text{Ideal}_S$ and non-$\text{Ideal}_S$ worlds, and asserts that
(iii) All $\text{Ideal}_S$ worlds are worlds in which *p* is true.
= In all worlds compatible with what the speaker *i* knows/learns in the context of utterance and that comply with stereotypicality and defeasible preferences, *p* is true (Figure 3).

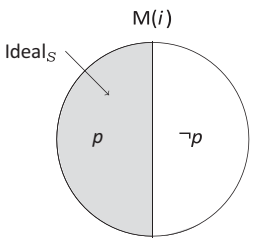



**Figure 3:** The meaning of Italian future.

# 4 FUT and MICA in questions

Bringing the pieces together, recall from Section 2 that MICA has the content spelled out in (10), repeated here in (26):

(26) a. MICA is defined iff:
The context *c* makes available a rule of the form:
*E* THEN *normally q*
b. If defined MICA means:
*E* AND ¬*q* (= ¬ (*E* THEN *normally q*))

(27) rewrites (26b) in terms of $\text{Ideal}_S$, where $\text{Ideal}_S$ is a set of propositions that comply with stereotypicality and normalcy conditions as well as preferences and facts of the worlds, as we explained above in Section 3. As a subset of M(*i*), $\text{Ideal}_S$ include worlds in which the newly learned evidence is true.

(27) At issue content of MICA:
In all $\text{Ideal}_S$ worlds ¬*q* is true.
= In all worlds compatible with stereotypicality conditions, preferences and contextual evidence, ¬*q* is true.

To account for the effect of MICA in questions, we start with the interpretation of future questions, on the assumption that QUES is a speech act operator that scopes over FUT (see Figure 4). QUES creates two alternatives. One in which all $\text{Ideal}_S$ are $p$ worlds, and one in which only some of the $\text{Ideal}_S$ are $p$ worlds.

(28) $[[\text{ QUES(FUT }(p))\text{ }]]^{M,i,Ideal}$ =
{In all $\text{Ideal}_S$ worlds $p$} OR {not in all $\text{Ideal}_S$ worlds $p$}

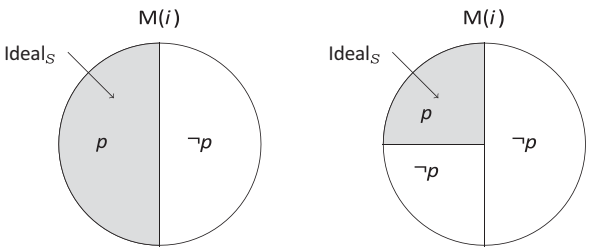



**Figure 4:** Non optimal question QUES > FUT – with uninterpreted MICA.

This question is not 'optimal'. Rephrasing it, it asks whether all worlds compatible with $\text{Ideal}_S$ $p$ is true or whether there are only some of the worlds in $\text{Ideal}_S$ in which $p$ is true. As per Hamblin (1958) and later Groenendijk and Stokhof (1982), questions denote sets of mutually disjoint alternatives.

Our main claim is that the effect of MICA in future questions is of strengthening the distinction between the two alternatives guaranteeing disjointedness. Consider the second alternative in (28) highlighted here in (29):

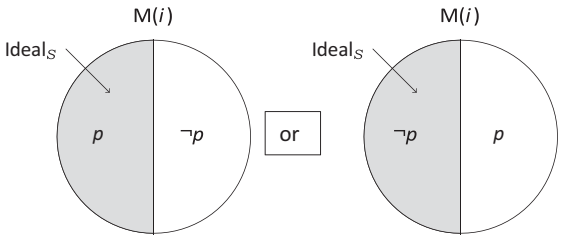
(29) *Not* in all $\text{Ideal}_S$ worlds $p$.

Strengthening leads to (30), where the $\text{Ideal}_S$ worlds are all non $p$ worlds.

(30) Strengthening of (29).
In all $\text{Ideal}_S$ worlds *not* $p$.

By substitution of the strongest meaning (30), the second alternative in (28) is replaced by the content that MICA provides (26), namely that all the $\text{Ideal}_S$ worlds are $\neg p$ worlds. Furthermore, note that the first alternative of the question is identical to the presupposition of MICA. The resulting MICA-question will thus be as in (31), illustrated in Figure 5.

(31) [[ MICA − QUES(FUT ($p$)) ]]$^{M,i,Ideal}$ =
{In all Ideal$_S$ worlds $p$} OR {in all Ideal$_S$ worlds $\neg p$}.




NON-MICA-QUES > FUT

**Figure 5:** MICA future question.

It is clear that the maximization effect does not proceed compositionally.[12] It is a pragmatic principle that allows strengthening at issue meaning according to instructions given by the lexical items available in the utterance, which we have referred to as 'substitution of the strongest meaning'. In other terms, since the strongest meaning (30) is available in the sentence, it is interpreted where needed.

What happens between QUES and FUT in the absence of MICA is a matter for a different paper. We anticipate here that in the case of bare future questions, the order FUT and QUES is reverse and that (28) is not generated to begin with (see Mari 2021; in press).[13]

# 5 Discussion

## 5.1 The sources of the mirative effect

Where does the mirative effect come from? Recall that Ideal$_S$ worlds are evidence worlds: their basis is what the speaker knows and learns in the context of utterance,

**12** Research in progress is further elaborating on the question of the interaction at the compositional level between at-issue and non-at-issue meaning, and envisages the possibility that non-at-issue composition can 'rescue' semantically un-interpretable forms issued by regular composition at the at-issue level. For more results on compositionality, see Mari (in press).

**13** Note that, considering the evidence compatible with both $p$ and non-$p$ leads us to consider the evidence as irrelevant (no matter the evidence question). This immediately explains why MICA can be used in 'by any chance' questions (independently of everything questions): 'Mica hai una penna ?' / *Do you have a pen, by any chance?* The explanation of how this reading arises is left for future research

as well as stereotypicality conditions and preferences. This is the evidential basis for what the speaker believes, and from which inferences are derived and calculated.

The question, by opening up two possibilities in which the evidence holds and it is compatible with *p* being true as well as with ¬*p* being true, signals that the evidence available to the speaker is not sufficient to settle whether *p* is true or whether ¬*p* is true.

The recent literature on common ground management devices has brought to light *enimitive* (from Latin *enim*, *indeed*) (Panov 2020). Enimitives are expressions of confirmation.

(32) Mirabiliter **enim** moratus est, sicut nosti.
'For he has a strange moral habitus **as you know**.' (Cic. Att. 2.25.1)

Unlike enimitive, disconfirmational MICA acts as a type mirative element. Mirativity arises in two steps: the speaker enters in the conversation with some previous bias towards *p* or its negation. New evidence intervenes in the course of the conversation that leads to an unexpected conclusion. The mechanism enhanced by MICA is different in that nothing is presupposed about a prior speaker's bias. The prior bias is inferred insofar as MICA denies that the conclusion to which the evidence leads is endorsed by the speaker.

## 5.2 MICA vs. FUT: sensitivity to the valence of the inference

We have stated in Section 2 that MICA has the property of canceling a defeasible inference, no matter whether the inference leads to the conclusion that *p* or to the conclusion that ¬*p*. In other terms, MICA does not impose any constraint on the valence of the speaker bias. Future also features an evidential presupposition: evidence can be only be used if it supports *p*.

Recall the contrast between the diet case (8) and the Miles-is-not-eating case (6). In the diet case (here (33) = (8)), the speaker has a prior belief that *p* and acquires evidence that ¬*p*. In Miles-is-not-eating case ((34) = (6)) the speaker has a prior belief that ¬*p* and acquires evidence that *p*.

(33) Scusa non sei mica a dieta?
sorry not are MICA at diet?
'Sorry to ask, aren't you on a diet?'

(34) Non hai mica già mangiato?
not have.2SG MICA already eaten?
'You have not eaten yet, haven't you?'

Interestingly, Italian future cannot be used in Scenario 1, as illustrated in (35).

**Scenario 1: The speaker has evidence that the addressee is *not* on a diet.**

(35) Scusa non #sarai mica a dieta?
sorry not be.FUT mica at diet?
'Sorry to ask, aren't you on a diet?'

The future can only be used if the evidence supports *p* as in Scenario 2.

**Scenario 2: The speaker has evidence that the addressee *is* on a diet.**

(36) Scusa Non sarai mica a dieta?
sorry Not be.FUT mica at diet?
'Sorry to ask, aren't you on a diet?'

FUT and MICA are compatible only in the case in which the evidence supports *p*. This furthermore shows that MICA does not flip the evidential source, but acts at a different level of the evidential information, namely the inferences that evidence enhances, like other disconfirmational evidentials cross-linguistically (Aikhenvald 2014).

## 6 Mirativity and concessivity: A new connection

Reasoning with normalcy conditions and canceling defeasible inferences based on normalcy- based rules is the hallmark of conditional concessives and concessives more generally (König (1991), see Baranzini and Mari (2019) on Italian and French concessives).

(37) Concessive reasoning
*E* THEN *normally q*
*E* AND ¬*q* (= ¬ (*E* THEN *normally q*))

(38) Even if he is cute, he does not have a girlfriend.
Generic rule: he is cute then he should normally have a girlfriend. Rule cancellation: he is cute and he does not have a girlfriend.

Further confirmation that our analysis is on the right track comes from the observation that MICA (future) questions might be cross-linguistically translated into

concessive questions. This is the case in French, which resorts to the concessive *quand même* ('nonetheless').

The question arising in the Miles-is-not-eating scenario, where Susan is asking Miles whether he has already eaten (contrary to what she expects) has the following form:

(39) Tu n' as/aurais quand-même *pas* mange?
you not has/would.have nonetheless not eaten?
'You have not eaten yet, haven't you?'

The question that my French addressee would formulate wondering whether I am really on a diet, seeing me eating a whole packet of chips will be as:[14]

(40) Tu es quand même à la diète, n'est-ce pas ?
'You are nonetheless on a diet, don't you?'
(Scenario 1: contextual information leads to conclude that the addressee is *not* on a diet)

The concessive reasoning acknowledges (and accepts) the premises, but blocks the normal conclusion that would follow from those premises. The concessive *quand même* question also reveals an amount of surprise and the concessive question is disconfirmational of the inference that available evidence would enhance, just like MICA-questions.

Furthermore, French disentangles the negative from the concessive component. Indeed, the negation *ne . . . pas* appears only when the speaker has prior belief that $\neg p$, as in (41). Note that the *quand même* can be dislocated.

(41) Tu n'as pas mangé? . . . *quand-même*
'You haven't eaten?' . . . *Litt*: *Nonetheless*
'You haven't eaten, haven't you?'

When the speaker has a prior belief that $p$ is true, *quand même*, without the negation, is used.

**14** These concessive questions are akin to tag questions, or even raising declaratives. The precise nature of these concessive questions in French is the matter of future research

(42) Tu es à la diète ? . . . quand même !
'You are on a diet' . . . Litt: nonetheless
'You are on a diet, haven't you?'

The negation seems to play a true negative role, creating a negative question. The concessive has a clear non-at-issue status, and reveals a stance of incredulity on the part of the speaker. This stance is unfolded as a concessive reasoning, whereby the speaker acknowledges the evidence, yet does not endorse the conclusions that this evidence leads to.

In Italian, MICA seems to act at the at-issue level, as it cannot be dislocated as in French:

(43) a. Non hai mangiato ? #mica
'You haven't eaten ? #nonetheless'
b. Sei a dieta ? #mica
'Are you on a diet? #nonetheless'

Furthermore, MICA and NON-MICA, as we announced it right from the bat, are in free distribution, at least in some dialects, including Milanese, which I am a speaker of. Both forms with overt and covert negation *non* can be used in the scenarios discussed here above, in which either prior belief that $p$ or prior belief that $\neg p$ can be inferred.

In spite of those differences, the observation is now put forward that there is some deep semantic relation between MICA, concessivity and mirativity, and future cross-linguistic research will determine whether this connection is a matter of fortuity or whether it is revealing of a deeper mechanism that mirativity and concessivity share, as we are suggesting. Way more work is needed to determine whether *quand même* questions are exclamatives or *queclaratives* and what the precise composition might be (see Mari, in press for more thoughts about how semantic and pragmatic composition can interact).

# 7 Conclusion

In this paper we have proposed that MICA is a sub-type of mirative, which we have labeled disconfirmational, as it does not recognize the validity of the inference enhanced by contextual evidence. When used in future questions, MICA highlights that contextual information is to be discarded, while creating a true question revealing uncertainty. Given the evidence learned, the speaker is in a state of

uncertainty that requires clarification. MICA interacts with QUES and FUT providing the content necessary to the formation of a valid clarification seeking question.

Future questions in Italian are a natural locus for its use, as they also rely on inferentiality and evidence. We have highlighted how the conditional reasoning underlying the semantics of future and MICA proceeds, and we have finally discovered a connection between MICA, mirativity and concessivity that revolves around the cancellation of generic rule based defeasible inferences. Future work will tell us to what extent mirativity and concessivity cross-linguistically and cross-categorically meet.

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# Part 2: **Mirativity and interrogatives**

José Luis Cifuentes Honrubia

# 4 Interrogative constructions with *santo*, *cuento*, and *cuenta*: Rejection and mirativity

**Abstract:** This paper has as its aim to study the functioning and origin of the locutions with a causal meaning *a santo de qué*, *a qué santo*, *a cuento de qué*, *a qué cuento* and *a cuenta de qué*. These phrases introduce marked interrogative constructions, so they imply negative evaluation by the speaker, that is, they constitute a grammatical sign of the negative implication of the causal question in which they are inserted. The data from all the examples supplied in the CDH and CORPES corpora for the forms *a santo de qué*, *a qué santo*, *a cuento de qué*, *a qué cuento* and *a cuenta de qué* are analyzed, and an account of the main functional characteristics of the mentioned structures is given. Although the constructions studied have many points in common with the marking of mirativity –above all, the reference to some new information that contradicts the speaker's expectations– they do not express surprise, but rather mark rejection by the speaker.

**Keywords:** interrogative construction, rejection, grammaticalization, analogy, mirativity

## 1 Introduction

In Spanish, the possibility of using adverbial locutions with a causal meaning has been raised. Such phrases introduce marked interrogative constructions, insofar as they imply a negative assessment by the speaker. RAE/ASALE (2009: 1662) points out that the expressions *a santo de qué* 'why on earth', *a cuento de qué* 'why on earth', and *a cuenta de qué* 'why on earth' lead rhetorical interrogative constructions, whether direct or indirect, and all three of them suggest the lack of justification for something:

(1) ***A santo de qué*** *nos exigen a los militares lealtad a regímenes desleales con el ideal, con la tierra y con la raza*
'Why on earth do they demand from us, the military, loyalty to regimes that are disloyal to the ideal, to the country and to the race'

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(2) *– ¿Y* ***a cuento de qué*** *esas prisas?*
'– And why on earth that hurry?'

(3) *¿Y* ***a cuenta de qué*** *lo de mirar a las ventanas del hotel Roma?*
'And why on earth should we look towards the windows of the Roma hotel?'

The previous examples found in RAE/ASALE show questions in which the speaker considers that loyalty should *not* be demanded, that there ought to be *no* rush and that he/she should *not* look wards the windows.

We should add to the above the constructions *a qué santo* 'why on earth' and *a qué cuento* 'why on earth', whose functioning and meaning are similar:

(4) *Bueno, no sé* ***a qué santo*** *la Sapo estaría aquel día con nosotras porque no la invita nadie. 2009*
'Well, I don't know why on earth la Sapo would be with us that day because no one invites her.'

(5) *sabemos que tus amos se han ausentado, y deseamos saber dónde están. . . pero sin engaño [. . .]*
'We know that your masters have been absent, and we wish to know where they are. . . but without cheating [. . .]'
*No hay engaño. . . yo no tengo por qué engañar. . . ¿Pero* ***a qué cuento*** *quieren saber los gachupines dónde están mis amos? 1906*
'There is no cheating. . . There's no reason for me to cheat. . . But why on earth do the guys want to know where my masters are?'

While Example 4 implicitly reveals the speaker's rejection to the presence of *la Sapo* at the meeting, Example 5 conveys the notions of annoyance and rejection to the interlocutor's desire to know the masters' whereabouts.

Thus, the five above-mentioned constructions are arguably syntactic marks that unveil the rhetorical intention with which they are uttered, in addition to which they grammatically signal the negative implication of the causal question where they appear. This negative implication must be understood as a rejection to a given previous content precisely marked by the construction itself. We likewise need to bear in mind, though, that the rejection is transmitted in an intensified way; rather than being a mere assertion of annoyance, it conveys an emotional and expressive content emanating from the speaker.

Despite these types of interrogative phrases with a negative implication being far from uncommon both in Romance languages and in any other linguistic

environment,[1] it becomes interesting to highlight the presence of three nouns in Spanish –*santo* 'saint', *cuento* 'tale', and *cuenta* 'account'– which fail to show neither the causal meaning nor the negative one transparently. Such marked interrogative phrases may not be exceptional, but the way in which they occur is indeed quite specific to each language.

This paper has as its aim to study the functioning and origin of the locutions with a causal meaning *a santo de qué, a qué santo, a cuento de qué, a qué cuento*, and *a cuenta de qué*. The data obtained from all the examples supplied in the CDH and CORPES corpora[2] for the forms *a santo de qué, a qué santo, a cuento de qué, a qué cuento* and *a cuenta de qué* will be analyzed to that end. Section 2 centers on examining the information obtained from the examples, thus seeking to describe the main functional characteristics of these structures. After placing the emphasis on the main features related to the origin and development of the different adverbial locutions that convey a causal meaning[3] in Section 3, Section 4 will revolve around the possibility of understanding the rejection implied in these constructions as an example of mirativity. The paper will come to an end with a few brief conclusions.

## 2 Data analysis

The five constructions under study are formally fixed, since they allow neither the presence of determiners modifying the possible noun nor the introduction of

**1** The expression most commonly used in Catalan to express rejection seems to be *per quins set (or cinc) sous?!* 'why on earth'. As for Romanian, the lack of resemblance to Spanish constructions does not stop the utilization of *le ce* 'why on earth' to imply the existence of a negative attitude or response –in contrast to the neutral register associated with the causal interrogative *de ce* 'why'. Portuguese can use not only *por que carga de água?* but also *por que raio?* (both) 'why on earth' with a causal value and a negative implication. French also boasts a variety of colloquial constructions with a negative implication, among them *en quel honneur?* and *à quoi bon? (*both) 'why on earth'. In turn, Italian resorts to phrases such as *perché mai?, per quale motivo?, a che pro?, a che scopo?* or *con che coraggio?* (all are translated as) 'why on earth' to quote but a few. Similarly, taking the cue of languages like English or German, which often use vulgar or taboo terms as a mark of rejection (*what the devil?/was zum Teufel?*), Romance languages offer this possibility too:*¿por qué diablos?, de ce dracu?, pourquoi diable?, perché diavolo?, por que diabos?* or *per què diables?* illustrate this practice.

**2** The CDH corpus consists of 355,740,238 records and covers a set of texts framed within a period going from the 12th century to the year 2000. Even though the dating of the examples included in the corpus may be questionable at times, I have preferred to always keep the dates presented in the corpus. The CORPES XXI corpus (version 0.92) contains ca. 312 million forms, coming from both written texts and transcriptions of oral ones.

**3** Sections 2 and 3 are based on Cifuentes 2023.

changes in the set of preceding or following prepositions; and the interrogative pronoun must always be *qué*. The meaning also appears fixed in a joint causal value, without considering the partial meaning of the elements that make up the construction. The grammaticalization thus becomes clear.

According to the data obtained, these constructions are grouped together into two sets as captured in Table 1, separated by almost half a century: *a qué santo* and *a qué cuento* vs. *a cuenta de qué, a cuento de qué*, and *a santo de qué*. The difference also correlates not only with the form but also with their present-day success and frequency of use.

**Table 1:** Contrasted adverbial locutions.

| | ***A santo de qué*** | ***A qué santo*** | ***A cuento de qué*** | ***A qué cuento*** | ***A cuenta de qué*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1825–1851 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| 1851–1875 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| 1876–1900 | 11 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 1901–1925 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| 1926–1950 | 17 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| 1951–1975 | 33 | 10 | 16 | 0 | 4 |
| 1976–2000 | 37 | 10 | 37 | 0 | 16 |
| 2001– | 73 | 8 | 71 | 1 | 38 |
| | **175** | **37** | **126** | **5** | **64** |

The data likewise prove that direct interrogatives appear more often than indirect ones, even though the occurrences of *a cuento de qué* and *a qué cuento* contradict the trend (see Table 2):

**Table 2:** Types of interrogatives.

| | **Direct interrogatives** | **Indirect interrogatives** | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *A santo de qué* | 126 | 49 | **175** |
| *A qué santo* | 32 | 5 | **37** |
| *A cuento de qué* | 60 | 66 | **126** |
| *A qué cuento* | 2 | 3 | **5** |
| *A cuenta de qué* | 48 | 16 | **64** |
| | **268** | **139** | **407** |

The possibility of finding examples of *a cuento de* and *a cuenta de* with an interrogative particle other than *qué* exists. Nevertheless, it seems clear that they don't act as a causal interrogative construction with a negative implication in such cases, but

rather as a complex preposition and an interrogative adverb, which incidentally lacks the negative implication of causal structures:

(6) *Casada con el director Carlos Rivas, que ahora la dirige en Hamlet, la metamorfosis –los sábados y domingos, en la sala Arriba de Rivas–, regala una perla de la intimidad familiar,* ***a cuento de cómo*** *es trabajar con el marido: 2011.*
'Married to the director Carlos Rivas, who now directs her in Hamlet, the metamorphosis –on Saturdays and Sundays, in the Arriba de Rivas theater– gives away a portrayal of family intimacy, about what it is like to work with her husband.'

(7) *Este dicho día sus mercedes ordenaron y mandaron que se le diesen a Francisco Díaz, racionero y organista de Avila, 10 ducados para ayuda a su camino de la mesa capitular y después se verá, de que se provea la prebenda,* ***a cuenta de quién*** *ha de ser. 1600–1713.*
'This day, your graces ordered and commanded that 10 ducats be given to Francisco Díaz, distributor of rations and organist of Avila, to help him on his way to the chapter table and after the prebend is provided, we will see on account of whom it must be.'

A mention equally deserves to be made of the potential occurrence of questions that constitute non-sentential units, and even only the interrogative construction, with no link to any syntactic group whatsoever, in direct as well as indirect interrogatives, as captured in Table 3:[4]

(8) *y me pregunto* ***a santo de qué*** *su odio contra mí. 1981.*
'and I wonder where on earth his hatred against me comes from.'

(9) *Fue él quien a mi vuelta del primer viaje a Nueva York me acusó de abandono del hogar y de adulterio. No yo, ¿****a santo de qué****?, fue él quien consiguió las pruebas y se hizo con los documentos que demostraban mi culpabilidad. 1994.*
'It was he, when I returned from my first trip to New York, who accused me of desertion and adultery. Not me, why on earth? He was the one who obtained the evidence and got hold of the documents which proved me guilty.'

**4** When it comes to *a qué cuento*, the shortage of attested examples prevented us from finding documentation in this regard. Nonetheless, everything seems to suggest the same likelihood of operation as in the other elements, both in this aspect and regarding the rest of references to *a qué cuento* that we mention but do not exemplify.

(10) *!. . . yo la creía incasable. . . si hubiese sospechado lo contrario. . . ¿Casarse? ¿**A qué santo**? ¿No estaba tan bien así? ¡Me he llevado chasco! no seré el solo. 1852.*
'!. . . I thought she was unmarriageable. . . if I had suspected otherwise. . . Getting married? Why on earth? Wasn't she so well like that? I really feel let down! I won't be the only one.'

(11) *¿**A cuento de qué** tanta negatividad? 2006*
'Why on earth so much negativity?'

(12) *¡Válgame!. . . ¿pero eso **a cuenta de qué**? 1896.*
'My goodness!. . . but that, why on earth?'

**Table 3:** Non-sentential constructions.

| | Only the interrogative construction | Non-sentential units | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *A santo de qué* | 59 | 15 | **74** |
| *A qué santo* | 15 | 5 | **20** |
| *A cuento de qué* | 34 | 13 | **47** |
| *A qué cuento* | – | – | |
| *A cuenta de qué* | 25 | 7 | **32** |
| | **133** | **40** | **173** |

The constructions can appear either coordinated to other adverbial locutions or headed by a discursive connector:

(13) *¿Por qué y **a santo de qué** viene que demos el nombre de Griego a un barrio que por historia añeja es el más filipense de Madrid? 1951.*
'Why and on what account are we supposed to name as Greek a neighborhood that, due to ancient history, is the one most closely linked with King Felipe in Madrid?'

(14) *– ¿Por qué lo digo? Por todo. ¿A qué me vine yo a Coslada? ¿Pero **a santo de qué**? 1956.*
'–Why do I say it? For all. Why did I come to Coslada? But why on earth?'

(15) *– ¿Y **a cuento de qué** viene eso ahora? 2002.*
'– And what on earth is all that about?'

(16) *¿Pero **a cuenta de qué** habrían llevado a cabo un sacrificio –si aquello lo fue– en presencia 2020.*
'But why would they have made a sacrifice –if that was one– in the presence of.'

It is particularly interesting to highlight that the construction sometimes appears between exclamation marks instead of question marks. The consequent change of intonation results in strengthening the rejection meaning implied in the question over that of the question itself. This seems to prove the intensifying emotional and expressive value referred to above, which becomes recognizable by not admitting emotional reinforcements such as *diablos (devils), carajo (fuck)* or *coño (fuck)*, among others. In any case, a phonetic analysis can provide evidence that the intonation differs because, if the constructions are represented between exclamation marks, they carry a differentiated intonation with them; instead, when appearing between question marks, non-neutral interrogatives may be formally marked by the intonation: the latter not only serves to define the interrogative grammatical modality but also to decisively guide utterance interpretation (Escandell 1999: 3944):

(17) *¡**A santo de qué** voy a agarrar yo allá un catarro intestinal! 1958.*
'Why on earth am I going to catch an intestinal catarrh there!'

(18) *LINA ¡Que yo tiro de la alarma de incendios? ¡Pero bueno! ¡Y eso **a cuento de qué**! 2003.*
'LINA. That I pull the fire alarm? Oh well! And that, why on earth!'

(19) *– Así se escribe la historia –dijo Ruiz–. ¡**A qué santo** iba a querer Aparicio que ese mequetrefe, leyera eso frente a su cuerpo! 1961.*
'– This is how history is written, said Ruiz. Why on earth would Aparicio want that good-for-nothing to read that in front of his body!'

Note that it is also possible to find the constructions *a santo de, a cuento de*, and *a cuenta de* in the declarative modality, that is, without the interrogative particle *qué*. In such cases, they function as complex prepositions, though, to which must be added that the complex prepositions do not imply any type of negative response from the speaker in any of these examples. Although they do seem to endow the entire predication with a certain emotional charge of negative value, its impact is much lower than the one conveyed via an interrogative modality:

(20) *Fíjese que esta tarde me enfadé con él* ***a santo de*** *los sombreros, porque el sombrero que él quería ponerse a mí me parece. . . 2009.*
'Note that this afternoon I got angry with him due to the hats, because the hat that he wanted to wear seems to me. . .'

(21) *Y entonces la Guirra le soltó una estupidera tan completita, que hasta la madre del tendero, tan de antiguo muerta que ni misas le decían ya, saltó al tenderete de maldiciones seguidas de alegatos,* ***a santo de*** *que si el hombre se quedaba con los repartos "pa que la señora criara. . .1941–1961.*
'And then La Guirra unleashed such a complete stupidity that even the shopkeeper's mother, dead so long ago that they didn't even say masses for her anymore, jumped into the stall with curses followed by allegations, related to whether the man kept the deliveries "for the lady to raise. . .'

(22) *¡Y todo este hablar salió* ***a cuento del*** *pleito que tratan entre sí de sustentar dos hermanos propios carnales! 1920.*
'And all this talk originated in the lawsuit that two brothers by whole blood are trying to sustain with each other!'

(23) *Todo esto* ***a cuento de*** *que hoy hay comida con Telmo Orbe. 2020.*
'All this because today we have lunch with Telmo Orbe.'

(24) *– ¿Desayuno* ***a cuenta de*** *los contribuyentes, inspector?*
*– Desayuno* ***a cuenta de*** *tu puta madre. 2018.*
'– Breakfast on taxpayers' account, inspector?
– Breakfast on your fucking mother's account.'

(25) *Y achacábanle,* ***a cuenta de*** *que lo consentía, los rumores que este hombre iba cada día introduciendo con levantar la ciudad y ponerla en arma sin saberse la causa ni la razón de estos solevamientos; 1621–1630.*
'And he was blamed, because he consented to it, for the rumors that this man was introducing every day about raising the city and putting it in arms without knowing either the cause or the reason for these uprisings;'

Now then, it deserves to be highlighted that although the complex preposition *a santo de* is documented after the interrogative construction, the time difference acquires far more relevance in *a cuento de* and *a cuenta de*. And the complex preposition appears prior to the adverbial locution, as Table 4 shows:

**Table 4:** Adverbial and prepositional uses[5].

| | *A cuento de* | | *A cuenta de* | | *A santo de* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Adverbial locution** | **Prepositional locution** | **Adverbial locution** | **Prepositional locution** | **Adverbial locution** | **Prepositional locution** |
| 13th c. | 0 | 1+0 | 0 | 5+3 | 0 | 0 |
| 14th c. | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1401–1450 | 0 | 7+0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1451–1500 | 0 | 1+0 | 0 | 9+0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1501–1550 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 14+0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1551–1600 | 0 | 2+2 | 0 | 210+5 | 0 | 0 |
| 1601–1650 | 0 | 1+0 | 0 | 283+2 | 0 | 0 |
| 1651–1700 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 35+0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1701–1750 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 34+0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1751–1800 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 32+0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1801–1850 | 0 | 0+1 | 0 | 30+0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1851–1875 | 0 | 1+0 | 2 | 16+0 | 0 | 0 |
| 1876–1900 | 1 | 0+2 | 3 | 60+1 | 11 | 0 |
| 1901–1925 | 0 | 2+0 | 0 | 38+5 | 4 | 1+1 |
| 1926–1950 | 1 | 9+0 | 1 | 44+3 | 17 | 1+1 |
| 1951–1975 | 16 | 3+1 | 4 | 66+4 | 33 | 0 |
| 1976–2000 | 37 | 0+7 | 16 | 373+3 | 37 | 0 |
| 2001– | 71 | 55 | 38 | 680+28 | 73 | 2+0 |
| | 126 | 95 (66+29) | 64 | 1983 (1929+54) | 175 | 6 (4+2) |

Despite the analyses carried out, the consideration of the 5 constructions under study as interrogative adverbial locutions becomes controversial. Doubts exist on whether *a santo de qué, a cuento de qué*, and *a cuenta de qué* should be regarded as adverbial locutions (even though it seems clear that *a qué santo* and *a qué cuento* function as interrogative adverbial locutions of a causal nature), since it could be understood that *a santo de*, *a cuento de*, and *a cuenta de* act/behave as complex prepositions. The syntactic analysis of *por qué* turns out to be controversial: while some authors consider it an adverbial locution similar to the interrogative adverbs of other languages (e.g. *why* in English or *warum* in German), others claim that it must be seen as a prepositional phrase (RAE 2009: 1660). It is my contention that we should raise the same polemic in relation to the three constructions examined. After all, *a santo de*, *a cuento de*, and *a cuenta de* may show prepositional examples —as collected during the process of data analysis.

**5** The two rows of numbers in the prepositional locution column indicate the combinatorial analysis with a nominal group and the one with a sentence, in that order.

# 3 Historical development

The data contained in Table 1 show the constructions grouped together into two sets, separated by almost half a century (*a qué santo* and *a qué cuento* vs. *a cuenta de qué, a cuento de qué*, and *a santo de qué*). This difference likewise finds a correlation in their shape, as well as their current success and frequency of use.

On the other hand, the formal and significant affinities between the various constructions force us to take into account the interference relationships that may have arisen between them, as far as use is concerned. The concept of *analogy* has to do with the influence that some forms are able to exert on others seeking to extend certain patterns or schemes, or to eliminate/remove certain irregularities (Elvira 2010: 31). In other words, this is a process where a linguistic form evolves to resemble another due to an indirect association mediated by some higher-order pattern or generalization (Blevins & Blevins 2009: 4). However, the analogical extension does not simply consist in a formal affinity (Elvira 1998: 151). It may become strengthened by the presence of common semantic or functional features among the elements experiencing the formal influence; expressed differently, as Itkonen (2005:13) would put it: analogy relates to a specific context in which it is used. The idea that analogy relies on both form and meaning arises as a fundamental cognitive principle which plays a key role not only in the acquisition of language but also in its changes (De Smet and Fischer 2017: 241).

Traugott and Trousdale (2013: 38) referred to analogical thinking as an important factor when it comes to increasing productivity or schematicity. Analogy allows us to modify constructions, but also leads –via analogical thinking– to build more abstract types or schemes, as a cognitive principle inside the speaker's brain. The ability to combine (items) and categorize requires analogical thinking. In effect, analogical thinking and reasoning precede many changes, as they involve the recognition by the speaker of similarities between two constructions; hence the capacity to trigger numerous changes.

Our findings reveal that the first accredited constructions are the currently less usual variants —namely: *a qué santo* and *a qué cuento*— during the first half of the 19th century. The other three constructions emerged almost 50 years later, in the second half of the 19th century. The popularity of *a santo de qué* was greater from the very beginning, although it apparently coincides with *a cuento de qué* in the 21st century, *a cuenta de qué* seeming to be less successful:

(26) *¿**Á qué santo** ese púdico alboroto Con que en su casa la discordia siembra? 1828.*
'Why on earth that discreet fuss with which he sows discord in his house?'

(27) *qué sentido tiene la expresion de "que hay piedra que le derribe del brazo"; ni* ***á qué cuento*** *viene la oscurísima é impertinente alusion al mal poema 1833.*
'what is the meaning of the expression "that there is a stone knocking him off the arm"; nor why on earth the extremely dark and impertinent allusion to the bad poem'

(28) *Pues, ¿****a cuenta de qué*** *hemos de juntarnos con franceses que no nos dejan hacer lo que nos sale de dentro, sino que hemos de ir al remolque de sus señorías? 1873.*
'Well, why on earth do we have to get together with Frenchmen who don't let us do what comes out of our inner selves, and instead we have to go along with what their lordships say?'

(29) *contraviniendo la ley de Naturaleza. . . ¿y* ***a santo de qué****? vamos a ver. . . Eso sí, por encima de todo la Naturaleza. 1885.*
'contravening the law of Nature. . . and why on earth? let's see. . . Needless to say, above all, Nature.'

(30) *¿****a cuento de qué*** *está tu abuelo en este mundo feo y malo? El pobre no sirve ya 1888.*
'Why on earth is your grandfather in this ugly and bad world? The poor thing is already useless.'

In my view, the negative implication conveyed through these constructions reflects the "division of pragmatic labor" concept developed by Horn (1984)[6] and later included by Levinson in his M principle (2004: 136):[7] *what is said in an abnormal way is not normal*; or expressed differently, if a marked expression is used, the most common interpretation –a neutral causal (or final) interpretation, in this

**6** The use of a marked (relatively complex or verbose) expression when the possibility to utilize (simpler or less cumbersome) alternative unmarked expressions exists tends to be interpreted as delivering a marked message (one that the unmarked alternative could not have transmitted).

**7** *Speaker's maxim*: it indicated an abnormal, non-stereotypical situation by resorting to marked expressions which contrast with the ones that you would use to describe the corresponding normal, stereotypical situation.

*Recipient's corollary*: What is said in an abnormal way indicates an abnormal situation, or marked messages indicate marked situations, more precisely:

Where *S* has said "p" with a marked expression M, and an unmarked alternative expression *U* exists which contains the same denotation *D* which the speaker might have employed in the same sentence-frame instead. Then, where *U* would have I-implicated the stereotypical or more specific subset *d* of *D*, the marked expression *M* will implicate the complement of denotation *d*, namely: *đ* of *D*.

case– needs to be avoided. The locution's marked character evidently stems from the noun of origin of the different constructions, as well as from its actual structure, since *a qué* usually implies purpose rather than cause.

I contend that the origin of the construction can be linked to the interrogative construction *a qué*, a very common one of which we find 12,656 examples in the CDH, for instance, from the origins of Spanish, and with abundant examples dated as early as the 15th century:

(31) *¿**A qué**·m' descubriestes las telas del coraçón? / A la salida de Valencia mis fijas vos di yo / con muy grand ondra e averes a nombre. / Cuando las non queriedes, ya canes traidores, / ¿por qué las sacávades de Valencia, sus honores? / ¿A qué las firiestes a cinchas e a espolones? 1140 [s. XIV].*
'Why did you reveal the webs of the heart to me? I gave you my daughters when leaving Valencia / with great honor and plenty of assets. / When you didn't want them, already traitorous dogs, / why did you take their honors from Valencia? / Why did you wound them with girths and spurs?'

(32) ***A qué** aprouecha el exorzismo. 1252–1270 [principios del s. XIV].*
'What is exorcism for?'

The use of the construction in the examples above obviously conveys a notion of purpose, rather than cause, thus seeming to match the meanings of the constructions we have been dealing with so far.[8] The ideas of cause and purpose have frequently appeared very closely related to each other, even to the extent of becoming confused sometimes (Ferrater Mora 1999: 270). We all know Aristotle's classification of cause into four types: efficient –the principle of change; material– the one from which something arises or through which it comes to be; formal –the idea or the paradigm that also resembles the essence, since "it is before it was"; and final – the reality towards which something tends to be.

Thus, various causes concur –and not only one– in the production of something. However, despite all four causes playing a role in the production process, the final cause seemingly prevails to a certain extent, insofar as it is the "good" of the thing and, as such, can be considered the good *par excellence* (Ferrater Mora 1999: 271).

**8** Nonetheless, Galán (1999: 3636) includes *a santo de qué* within the rhetorical interrogatives that convey a negative implicature, under the heading of *final nexuses*. For Galán (1999: 3630), causality implies "before" and purpose corresponds to "after", which means that the agent may interpret the action as a 'motive' (something due to which they act) or as an 'incentive' (something for which they act).

As said above, the uses of the construction *a qué* convey a final meaning. Nevertheless, the possibility exists to identify different uses in the 18th century: the construction appears with the verb *venir (to come)* and an inanimate subject – which prevents it from expressing a purpose (since the latter implies the will of an agent)– and the verb means something similar to 'happen, occur.' The incompatibility of purpose with an inanimate subject joined to the conceptual relationship existing between cause and purpose usually leads to interpreting the question as referring to the cause or reason for what happened. Furthermore, a rejection by the speaker implicitly appears in these cases: a question is always asked about the cause of a specific event that has occurred, and the fact that the question refers precisely to that event suggests an attitude of rejection on the part of the speaker:

(33) ***A qué viene*** *alabar de piadoso al León, que mató al Profeta, porque no tocó al cadaver, y perdonó al jumento, non comedit Leo de cadavere, nec laesit asinum. 3. Reg. 13. 28. 1703.*
'Why praise the pious Lion, who killed the Prophet, because he did not touch the corpse, and spared the donkey? Leo de cadavere, nec laesit asinum. 3. Reg. 13. 28.'

(34) *¿**á qué viene** este texto para convencer aquel aserto? 1732.*
'Why does this text come to confirm that assertion?'

(35) *Pues si no lo he dicho, ni pensado nadie, ¿**a qué viene** essa enumeración de dignidades, y interrogación declamatoria subseguida a ella? 1745.*
'Well, if I have not said it, and no one has thought about it, what is the use of this enumeration of dignities, and the declamatory interrogation following it?'

It equally becomes necessary to address a number of documented constructions from much earlier period, where the purpose becomes a final cause and the constructions combine with the structures *a honor de* and *a honra de (in honor of)*:

(36) *Et porque nuestra voluntat es que en el nuestro tiempo non se minguen nin se pierdan los derechos de Dios por mingua de la nuestra justicia, mas que crescan cada dia a servicio del e **a onra de** sancta eglesia e de nos, 1255.*
'And because our will is that in our time God's rights do not diminish or be lost due to the decrease of our justice, but rather that they increase every day for the service and honor of the holy church and of us,'

(37) *E en aquella montaña fizo el Arçobispo dos iglesias, la una a honra de Sancta María Magdalena, e la otra* ***a honra de*** *Sant Miguel; 1430.*
'And the Archbishop built two churches on that mountain, one in honor of Saint Mary Magdalene, and the other in honor of Saint Michael.'

(38) *Al octauo dia saldras fuera & faras tu sacrificio* ***a onor de*** *mercurio. 1256.*
'On the eighth day you will go outside and make your sacrifice in honor of Mercury.'

(39) *por mandamiento de nuestro senor el Rey, fazemos fuero et carta* ***a honor de*** *Dios et de nuestro senor el Rey de Leon et de Castiella. 1234–1275.*
'By command of our lord the King, we make a charter in honor of God and of our lord the King of León and Castile.'

Already since the Middle Ages, it was very common for these constructions to appear alongside God, the Virgin, and various saints, thereby expressing the final reason for the action described. However, one can find some interesting interrogative constructions combined with *santo (saint)* in Correas:

(40) *¿****A onor de ké santo****?*
*Kuando no agrada hazer alguna kosa. 1627.*
'In honor of which saint?
When you don't like to do something.'

(41) *¿****A honra de qué santo****?*
*Cuando no se tiene por bien hacer algo. 1627.*
'For the honor of which saint?
When it's not considered good to do something.'

The final cause of the action linked to a saint seems to favor negative uses or rejection:

(42) ***A buen santo*** *lo enkomendáis.* ***A buen santo*** *lo enkomendastes.*
*Es más usado por ironía. 1627.*
'You entrust it to a good saint. You entrusted it to a good saint
It is more used for irony purposes.'

Thus, according to Correas, the 17th century often witnessed the use of interrogative causal constructions which express a final cause implying a rejection of what is said, as attested by the example below:

(43) *– ¡Ay, qué apariencia de cocina! ¡Levántate de ahí! ¡Maldito seas! –dijo la vieja–. ¿Cómo tienes esta olla sin hervir? ¿**A qué santo** la dejé yo encomendada? 1604.*
'– Oh, see what the kitchen looks like! Get up from there! Screw you! –said the old woman. How do you have this pot without boiling? To which saint did I entrust it?'

Nonetheless, as Correas likewise pointed out, these constructions seem to relate to humorous and ironic uses involving a certain degree of rejection, as illustrated in the previous example. Numerous occurrences appear to give proof of these humorous uses:[9]

(44) *¿cómo no tiene pelo blanco en toda la barba ni alguno negro en la cabeza? Y si es tan mozo como parece, ¿para qué depone de cosas tan antiguas? Díganos en qué Jordán se baña o **a qué santo** se encomienda, para que le pongamos candelitas cuando lo hayamos menester. 1604.*
'How come he has neither white hair in all his beard nor any black hair in his head? And if he is as young as he seems, why does he shy away from such old things? Tell us in which Jordan he bathes or to which saint he commends himself, so that we can put little candles for him when we need it.'

(45) *Y pues desta arte a todos los destruye,/¡**qué Santo** tan propicio tiene, o Santa,/ el que los pleytos y abogados huye! 1605.*
'And then he destroys everyone in this way,/what a propitious Saint he has,/ who flees from lawsuits and lawyers!'

In my opinion, various structures converge at the origin of *a qué santo* to shape the causal value with an implied rejection conveyed by the construction. We must firstly start from the Christian tradition according to which God is the first cause of everything and saints become necessary interveners for events whose help can be requested to achieve success in certain actions. Furthermore, the possibility exists to use *encomendar x a un santo* (*entrusting x to a saint*) in a humorous sense if the result is seen as contradicting the expectations. These humorous structures present various variations in form, such as *a buen santo, a honra de santo,* and *a honor de santo* –and they may apparently behave as interrogative constructions too. An idea of annoyance seems to be suggested in them all. These constructions date back to the 17th century.

**9** The Dictionary of Authorities provides the following definition of *encomendarse a buen santo* 'commending oneself to a good saint': Phrase with which it is implied that someone has somewhat miraculously escaped from some danger, or has achieved something for which they had little hope.

One more step was taken in the 18th century, given that the interrogative constructions of purpose headed by *a qué* –highly common for centuries– began to show causal meanings when combined with the verb *venir (to come)* and an inanimate subject, by means of which the speaker asks about the cause of an event which has already occurred while simultaneously rejecting it.

One last influence which may relate to the origin of this construction is the perception of vulgar or taboo terms within interrogative constructions as rejection marks. The emphatic presence of these elements commonly suggests the speaker's rejection of what is being asked:

(46) *Ya le toma el enemigo./¿Y* ***a qué diablos*** *me llama? 1600.*
'The enemy already takes him. / And what the hell are you calling me for?'

(47) *– ¿Pues* ***para qué diablos*** *–dixo Sancho– las tengo de besar? Béselas la madre que las hizo, o Barrabás, que no tiene mocos; 1614.*
'– Well, why the devil –said Sancho– do I have to kiss them? May the mother who made them kiss them, or Barabbas, who does not have a runny nose.'

(48) *– Por Dios, señor nuestro amo –replicó Sancho–, que vuesa merced se queja de bien pocas cosas. ¿****A qué diablos*** *se pudre de que yo me sirva de mi hacienda, que ninguna otra tengo, ni otro caudal alguno, sino refranes y más refranes? 1615.*
'– By God, our master –replied Sancho– your grace complains about very few things. Why the hell does it bother you that I use my estate, since I don't have any other, nor any other wealth, except for proverbs and more proverbs?'

Therefore, the euphemistic consideration of *santo (saint)* in interrogative constructions (as opposed to vulgar or taboo terms) as well as the humorous use of *santo* suggesting annoyance and the causal construction *a qué viene (how come?/why on earth)* with an inanimate subject may have converged in the origin of the interrogative causal locution *a qué santo*, which simultaneously expresses a rejection of the event occurred to which the question alludes. The construction seems to allow for uncommon uses, such as those conveying a negative implication, in a simple way, insofar as it is formally marked (by the noun *santo*, and by the originally final structure *a qué*).

It was already explained in the previous section that the construction *a qué cuento* is the second one documented in the CDH corpus. The fundamental problem lies in the fact that the low number of occurrences –only five– does not seem to suffice for an in-depth analysis. However, and considering that 4 of the five documented examples present a combination with the verb *venir* (*to come*), the hypothesis about its origin that the current data lead me to pose points at the convergence of different factors: (a) the possible influence of *a qué santo* and vulgar construc-

tions such as *a qué diablos*; (b) the role played by the construction *a qué viene*, which transmits a negative implication; and finally, (c) the possibility of understanding *cuento* in a euphemistic and humorous way, since the meaning of *cuento* as 'purpose' can be interpreted with other negative values of the noun, including 'fib, deceit, gossip or, mess.' In addition, we should not forget either that the first two examples appear in negative structures, which is why the negation contributes to the rhetorical interpretation of the construction as conveying annoyance:

(49) *qué sentido tiene la expresion de "que hay piedra que le derribe del brazo"; ni* ***á qué cuento*** *viene la oscurísima é impertinente alusion al mal poema que sobre Adónis escribió en griego la antigua Praxila, 1833.*
'What sense does the expression "that there is a stone that knocks him off the arm"; nor why on earth the incomprehensible and impertinent allusion to the bad poem that the old Praxila wrote in Greek about Adonis,'

(50) *Ni él se explicaba para qué era aquello, ni* ***a qué cuento*** *venía en el problema de su educación. 1883.*
'Not even he could understand what that was for, nor what on earth it had to do with the problem of his education.'

Similarly, we find the construction *ir/venir con el cuento (tell a tale)* since the early 19th century, where the interpretation of 'fib, deceit, gossip, entanglement' becomes highly common:

(51) *pero puede* ***irse con el cuento*** *á otro que no haya visto Gaviotas. 1802.*
'but you can go with the tale to someone else who hasn't seen Seagulls.'

The three remaining elements (*a santo de qué, a cuento de qué,* and *a cuenta de qué*) are documented at a later date and practically at the same time; hence why the relationships between them could have been evident.

The case of *a cuenta de qué* is peculiar, since a long tradition exists of using *a cuenta de* as a complex preposition, prior to its emergence in the 19th century, as shown in Table 4. Consequently, the first reason justifying the appearance of the interrogative phrase is the previous and habitual existence of the complex preposition *a cuenta de* (RAE-ASALE 2014):

> 1. loc. prepos. En compensación, anticipo o a cambio de. *Quédate con el coche a cuenta de lo que te debo.*
> '1. prepositional locution. In compensation, advance or in exchange for. Keep the car on account of what I owe you.'

*Cuenta* already had the meaning of "the reason for each thing" sometimes in Nebrija and Covarrubias, and the dictionary of Authorities defines *cuenta* as "Computation, calculation, or reason for something, which is done with arithmetic operations of adding, subtracting, multiplying or dividing", thus making the causal interpretation seem straightforward. It also needs to be borne in mind that the earliest uses presented combinations with *venir (come)* and *ser (be)*, which may have favored an increased interference with the occurrences of *venir a cuento (to be relevant)*:

(52) *Ni qué falta hacían en el mundo vuestros heréticos discursos, ni* ***a cuenta de qué*** *venía esa endiablada Constitución. . . 1875.*
'Neither was there a need in the world for your heretical speeches, nor what on earth that devilish Constitution was needed for. . .'

(53) *No comprendía Maximiliano* ***a cuenta de qué*** *era aquello; 1885–1887.*
'Maximiliano did not understand what on earth that was about;'

Likewise, although *a cuento de qué* may have been constructed through the influence of *cuento (fib), venir/estar a cuento (to be applicable)*, and *ir/venir con el cuento (tell a tale)*, we must remember that few uses of *a cuento de* as a complex preposition exist (see Table 4), which suggests a high degree of interference with the prepositional uses of *a cuenta de*:[10]

(54) *Aunque parezca que no, viene esto* ***a cuento de*** *que el paje, después de haber almorzado ya veía las cosas con otra serenidad y discurría más acertadamente sobre lo que le estaba pasando. 1849.*
'Although it may not seem like it, this has to do with the fact that the page, after having had lunch, already saw things with a different serenity and reasoned more accurately about what was happening to him.'

(55) *Viene esta advertencia* ***a cuento de*** *que Cleopatra, así que se vio en Madrid, 1884.*
'This warning relates to the story that Cleopatra, as soon as she saw herself in Madrid,'

We must additionally consider that only one use of *a cuento de qué* is attested in the 19th century, which leads to assume that interferences with *a cuenta de qué* were

**10** We previously pointed out above that Nebrija referred to 'cuenta' as one of the meanings of *cuento*. This is confirmed by the Dictionary of Authorities: "In the old days it was interchangeable with Cuenta".

more than possible. On the other hand, and despite the low frequency of use, *a qué cuento* might have influenced the locution too:

(56) *– Y verdaderamente, chico, ¿**a cuento de qué** está tu abuelo en este mundo feo y malo? 1888.*
'– And really, boy, why on earth is your grandfather in this ugly and bad world?'

(57) *Con los ojos llenos de ese suave azul fresco y tonificador, los tiros del parapeto no se conciben, no se sabe **a cuento de qué** se disparan. 1930.*
'With eyes full of that soft fresh and invigorating blue, shots from the breastwork are inconceivable, no one knows why on earth they are fired.'

As for *a santo de qué*, to my view, its origin was probably determined not only by the locution *a qué santo* but also by the interferences with *a cuento de qué* and *a cuenta de qué*. The relationship between *a qué cuento* and *a qué santo* comes into play here as well. It seems worth considering, for example, that the prepositional locution *a santo de* is likely to have appeared in the 20th century,[11] which may also prove the previous influence exerted by all these elements:

(58) *para averiguar el porqué se habían suprimido los repiques **á santo de** su devoción, al mostrarle algo que sacaba bajo su almohada, 1903.*
'to find out why the chimes related to his devotion had been suppressed, by showing him something that he took out from under his pillow,'

(59) *Pues muy sencillo; **a santo de** que los barceloneses que les atrapara la lluvia desprovistos de paraguas. . . 1916.*
'Well, very simple; due to possibility of Barcelonians being caught by the rain without umbrellas. . .'

**11** Despite the existence of previous constructions, the comparative meaning contradicts the causal one, which is why they were disregarded:

Como a santo de su ley, ó por algun temor, él tambien se guardaua; 1667.
*As a saint of his law, or for some fear, he also guarded himself;.*
Como á santo de milagro me sacan por las aldeas, y luego al punto que salgo, 1850.
*They take me out through the villages like a miraculous saint, and then right when I leave,*

Curiously enough, the construction *a santo de qué* will enjoy the most success as a causal interrogative structure in every century, which suggests that it probably determined the extension in the use of the other constructions:

(60) *Pero si no hay quien la apee de una fidelidad que no viene al caso. ¡Fiel a mí!, ¿**a santo de qué**? ¡Te aseguro que me ha hecho cavilar más esa sosona! 1885.*
'But if there is no one to relieve her of a fidelity that is irrelevant. Faithful to me!, why on earth? I assure you that that bland woman has made me think more deeply!'

(61) *A doña Lupe le pareció la amonestación muy impertinente y descortés, porque ¿**a santo de qué** venía el hablar de pecados ajenos, teniendo tantos propios 1885.*
'Doña Lupe found the warning very impertinent and discourteous, because what on earth was the point of talking about other people's sins, having so many of their own?'

All these relationships can be seen reflected in Figure 1:

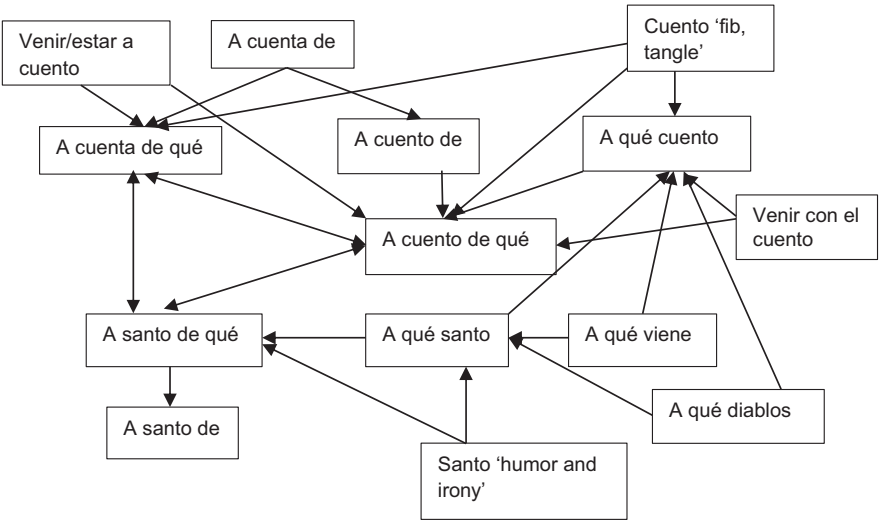


**Figure 1:** Motivation relationships.

# 4 Mirativity, rejection, and counterexpectations

The question we must ask ourselves is whether the five constructions we have been considering constitute a manifestation of mirativity. It is well known that some languages have grammatical miratives which encode the speaker's surprise; however, many others encode mirativity by means of other grammatical categories. Any language owns ways to express mirative meanings, but that does not mean it has grammatically encoded mirativity (Aikhenvald 2004: 207; 2012: 474); hence Aikhenvald's distinction between grammatical mirativity (grammatically encoded)[12] and mirativity strategies (extensions from categories not essentially mirative to mirative values)[13] which seems to fit the case of Romance languages.

Mirativity has to do with marking information as new or surprising (De Lancey 1997, 2001) and consequently serves to react before an unexpected stimulus. The mirative construction accounts for an epistemic situation subjected to an evaluative expression by the speaker; more precisely, speakers convey an affective evaluation about some newly acquired knowledge contrasting or opposed to their previous cognitive assumptions. In other words, the information acquired by speakers goes against their expectations: it is something that has surprised them –a characteristic property of the mirative meaning, as seen above. Therefore, surprise entails an assessment by the speaker according to which a situation did not develop as expected. Undoubtedly, a construction is marked as contradicting the speaker's expectations in the five constructions under study, and the type of locution used marks precisely such counter-expectation.

Needless to say, the expression of surprise cannot exist without a violation of expectations (Mocini 2014: 153). For that reason, mirativity has usually been considered a semantic notion implying counter-expectations which can thus be analyzed as a modal negative notion. Surprise arises as a dialogic response to a discovery of something that contravenes a previous belief or assumption, i.e. thanks to a discrepancy between what is expected and what actually happens. Only things that we witness or believe to be true can surprise us, and, conversely, we cannot be surprised by states, events, or actions that we neither know about nor have witnessed (Peterson 2013: 11).

Various studies have gradually refined the definition of mirativity. Thus, mirative marking may belong to information that is new not only to the speaker but also

**12** For example, in languages such as Turkish, Albanian, or Quechua, the grammatical encoding of surprise can take place via a verbal morpheme; in other languages, it is expressed by means of verbal complexes –this happens in Magar– or using some independent particle, as Guarani does; several Jukunoid African languages also use certain pronouns to express surprise.

**13** For example, the use of future, conditional, and perfect tenses in Spanish.

to the addressee (Hengeveld & Olbertz 2012: 488), and even add a third subject to these two: the main character of a narrative (Aikhenvald 2012: 437).

Celle and Lansari (2015) specified the possibility for different types of mirative meanings to exist depending on the origin of the surprise, although the situation is seen as conceived in an incongruent way to the reality considered by the conceptualizer in all of them. The most widespread typology of mirative meanings is the one proposed by Aikhenvald (2012: 437), who distinguishes five of them: a) sudden discovery, sudden revelation, or realization; b) surprise; c) unprepared mind; d) counter-expectation, and e) new information. Despite all these values conveying a reaction towards a certain piece of information or event, authors such as Mexas (2016) highlight that only the first notion would constitute the core of mirativity, the other four (values) being linked to mirativity through a secondary derivation occurred in specific contexts.

In principle, then, the meaning of the five proposed constructions might seem to approximately match the mirativity values. However, another issue needs to be addressed: if the beginnings of mirativity led to the problem of its separation from evidentiality (Aikhenvald 2004: 195; 2012: 436), its consolidation as a category in Romance or Germanic languages –and in the Indo-European family as a whole– is related to its differentiation from exclamation. This acquires special relevance in the constructions examined because of their nature as direct and indirect interrogative constructions, even though, as already mentioned above, they appear between exclamation marks on some occasions.

Exclamations, which stand out as the most representative manifestation of expressive meaning (Porroche 2015: 189), are grammatical forms which express a variety of affective responses of the speaker when faced with a certain situation, one of them being surprise. In fact, surprise is a semantic feature of exclamative sentences (Aikhenvald 2012: 462), and the emotion of surprise may be conveyed in many ways, just as it can carry a positive or negative affect. For Hengeveld and Olbertz (2012: 490), exclamative constructions (identified with ponderative exclamatives) transmit an illocutionary concept and express the speaker's evaluation about a presupposed (rather than asserted) propositional content, whereas mirativity reflects a modal distinction, does not constitute a type of sentence, and is not necessarily linked to the speaker; instead, it forms part of the propositions which are stated or questioned rather than presupposed. Thus, while exclamatives express emotional meanings, including surprise, mirativity provides an assertion with a modal component (Torres 2013: 140): the speaker's beliefs relevant to the assertion, or expressed differently, beliefs clashing with the discovery of the facts that constitute the assertion. It is this shock that triggers surprise, which means that, unlike what happens in exclamatives, the surprise is 'derived' (Torres 2013: 14). Ponderative exclamatives describe the purpose that speakers want to achieve with

their expression; by contrast, mirativity is a semantic concept that modifies the propositional content of a linguistic expression (Olbertz 2009: 79).

It clearly follows from all that has been exposed in the previous sections of this paper that the five constructions considered fundamentally relate to interrogation. Therefore, the question we should ask ourselves is whether mirativity can materialize in interrogative constructions. According to Olbertz (2009: 85–86), the mirative perfect is likely to be used in interrogatives: *¿y el hijo de la señora Anita no ha estado aquí?* 'and Mrs. Anita's son is not here?', since it exemplifies a rhetorical question to which the speaker knows the answer. Olbertz likewise points to similar examples proposed by De Reuse (2003: 88) in the Western Apache language, which suggests that mirativity and interrogation are reconcilable. Kornfeld (2019: 179) studied the mirative construction *no va y* + *verbo* 'does not go and + verb', whose origin she found in a rhetorical question. This author additionally claims that, the same as in other constructions derived from rhetorical questions (e.g. *¿qué vas a hacer?* 'what are you going to do?' or *¿qué me van a hablar de amor?* 'what are they going to tell me about love?', Di Tullio 2011, Kornfeld 2014), the phonological contour becomes blurred and the speakers use different strategies for graphic representation in writing (question or exclamation marks, ellipsis) –this also happens sometimes in the five constructions analyzed in this study. Finally, Piatti (2020) collected various examples of mirative constructions in interrogative structures, among them *¿en serio?* 'seriously?' or *¿sí?* 'yes?', in conversational contexts where the surprise derived from the counter-expectation seems clear. She similarly highlighted other examples where the speaker produces a mirative marking through the repetition –in an interrogative modality– of the addressee's words.

All the above leads us to conclude that no contradiction exists between mirativity and interrogative modality, neither in theoretical terms nor from a practical point of view (as attested by the aforementioned examples). Now then, do the five constructions examined imply mirativity strategies? Looking at the examples provided, it seems obvious that they are likely to contain the values of sudden discovery, unprepared mind, counter-expectation, and new information; however, I do not think one can speak about *surprise*. Not every information that contradicts expectations causes surprise: concessive or adversative constructions are illustrations thereof. Speakers do not use any of the constructions under study to transmit their surprise to the addressee in search of an answer. What they do is express disagreement or rejection towards the previous intervention, or towards a previous event. Being an intentional reactive content, the presence of a previous element to refer to becomes necessary (the content asked, regardless of whether it is explicit or implicit). Note that the reiteration of previous elements can generally serve argumentative opposition purposes (Brenes 2011: 118).

Surprise does not appear in the constructions analyzed; rejection –a different value– does instead, although it shares plenty of features with mirativity (counter-expectations, new information, sudden discovery, unprepared mind. . .). Surprise and rejection differ to a significant extent, though, and the intensification of rejection goes beyond mere surprise. Rejection marking frequently appears in languages too. By way of example, numerous vulgar elements are used inside interrogative constructions to mark rejection, not surprise, and also convey new information and counter-expectation meanings *(e.g. ¿por qué cojones dices eso?* 'why the fuck do you say that?'). The constructions with *santo, cuento*, and *cuenta* provide yet another way to mark rejection –but not surprise– in the interrogative modality.

## 5 Conclusions

The grammaticalized nature of the five constructions under examination stems from their being formally fixed: they allow neither the presence of determiners modifying *santo, cuenta*, and *cuento* nor the implementation of changes in the set of prepositions that precede (and follow) the noun, and the question must always be introduced by the constituent *qué.* The meaning equally appears fixed in a joint causal value, without considering the partial meanings of the elements that make up the construction.

Although the phrases examined may occur in direct and indirect interrogative constructions, they do so more often in direct ones. The position of the subject, when it appears, tends to be post-verbal, even though a preverbal position is possible as well. They make independent constructions –without a verb– possible, the most common type of structure being the one where the locution appears alone, without heading a sentence or nominal group.

The different locutions allow us to build marked partial interrogative constructions, implying that the speaker rejects or denies the asked content. As far as *a qué santo* and *a qué cuento* are concerned, these values coexist with the values of *santo* and *cuento* as nouns.

*A qué santo* and *a qué cuento* should be regarded as interrogative adverbial locutions of a causal nature when they appear grammaticalized with the rejection meanings considered, but doubts arise as to whether *a santo de qué*, *a cuento de qué*, and *a cuenta de qué* should be treated as adverbial locutions, since one could understand that *a santo de*, *a cuento de*, and *a cuenta de* constitute complex prepositions which combine with *que*. This controversial analysis still remains unsolved for the time meaning, although their consideration as adverbial locutions seems to be preferred.

Despite having varied frequency of use levels, all these locutions are still possible in the 21st century.

The origin of these five locutions dates back to the 19th century according to the data supplied by the corpus. However, two stages seemingly exist in their emergence which coincide with their formal structure: *a qué santo* and *a qué cuento* are documented approximately half a century earlier than the other three locutions.

The euphemistic perception of *santo* in interrogative constructions, as opposed to vulgar or taboo terms (*a qué diablos*), and the humorous use of *santo* indicating annoyance, as well as the causal construction *a qué viene* with an inanimate subject, may have converged in the origin of the interrogative causal locution *a qué santo*, simultaneously expressing the rejection of the previous event to which the question refers. As the construction is formally marked (by the noun *santo* and the originally final structure *a qué*) it seems to pave the way for uncommon uses, such as those conveying a negative implication.

*A qué cuento* appears in very few examples. Nonetheless, we have assumed an origin due to several factors: the influence exerted either by of *a qué santo* or by the construction *a qué viene*, with a negative implication; the possibility to understand *cuento* in a euphemistic and humorous way; and the presence of negation in the first uses to mark a rhetorical interpretation of annoyance.

The complex preposition *a cuenta de* seems to be at the origin of *a cuenta de qué*, to which the uses of *venir/estar a cuento* and the constructions with *cuento* should be added as other possible influences.

*A cuento de qué* could also have been influenced by the complex preposition *a cuento de*, which surely relates to *a cuenta de*. It is likewise worth highlighting the role played by the constructions with *cuento* understood as 'fib, tangle' and *venir/estar a cuento*, and, of course, by the presence of *a qué cuento*.

As for *a santo de qué*, its origin most probably has to do with *a qué santo*. Attention should additionally be paid in this respect to the use interferences that the similarity in terms of meaning and formal scheme between *a santo de qué, a cuenta de qué*, and *a cuento de qué* may have caused.

Although the constructions studied have many points in common with the marking of mirativity –above all, the reference to some new information that contradicts the speaker's expectations– they do not express surprise, but rather mark rejection by the speaker.

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# 5 Mirativity in a nutshell: Expressing surprise through Spanish *cómo*

**Abstract:** This paper deals with the use of Spanish *cómo* 'how' as a mirative particle equivalent to English *what*. *Como* 'how / as / if' / *cómo* 'how' is a very productive constituent in the grammar of Spanish. As a stressed unit, it is an exclamative, interrogative adverb that may occur in reason questions, where it triggers a sense of counter-expectation. Interestingly, however, it may move forward and enter into the domain of discourse, where it conveys the speaker's surprise towards an immediately activated situation –i.e., sudden realization. This semantic evolution is further supported by a process of cooptation through which a certain constituent may abandon sentence grammar to play an interactional role. More generally, *cómo* 'how / what' may show different senses that fall under the array of mirative meaning.

**Keywords:** Spanish *cómo*, reason-interrogatives, cooptation, mirativity

## 1 Introduction

*Como* 'how / as / if ' / *cómo* 'how' is a very productive element in the grammar of Spanish (RAE / ASALE 2009). As an unstressed unit –(*como* 'how / as / if')–, it may play the role of a preposition (1); of a conjunction introducing a causal (2), a conditional (3) or even a noun clause (4); and of an adverb introducing a modifying clause (5):

(1) *La verdad solo se dice como último recurso*.
'The truth is only told as the last resource'

(2) *Como has llegado tarde, no puedes entrar*.
'Since you are late, you cannot come in'

(3) *Como hagas eso otra vez, no te compro el helado*.
'If you do that again, I will not buy you an ice-cream'

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(4) *Ya verás como consigue ganar*.
'You will see how he finally wins'

(5) *La manera como actuó es inadmisible*.
'The way how / in which he behaved was unacceptable'

As a stressed unit –(*cómo* 'how')–, it falls within the category of exclamative-interrogative adverbs. In interrogative environments, *cómo* 'how' is usually linked to different interpretations. It may convey, for instance, a meaning of manner, both in direct (6) and in indirect (7) interrogatives. In these cases, the variable triggered by *cómo* can be both an argument (6) and an adjunct (7)[1]:

(6) *¿Cómo estás?*
'How are you?'

(7) *Aún no han averiguado cómo sucedió el accidente*.
'They still haven't discovered how the accident happened'

As an interrogative adverb, *cómo* 'how' further admits a causal interpretation (8), where it may alternate with *por qué* 'why' (9) without completely losing its manner interpretation (10):

(8) A: *Según veo, te gusta demasiado*.
'As I see, you like it very much'
B: *¿Cómo lo sabes?*
'How do you know?'

(9) *¿Por qué lo sabes?*
'Why do you know?'

(10) *¿De qué manera lo sabes?*
'In which way do you know?'

Interestingly, in these causal contexts, *cómo* 'how' (11) may develop an unexpectedness implication that can be captured by the paraphrasis *cómo es posible que* 'how is it possible that' (Cano Aguilar 1995). In cases such as (11), thus, the causal

**1** Note that whereas the whole subordinate sentence *cómo sucedió el accidente* 'how the accident happened' constitutes an argument of the main predicate *averiguar* 'to discover', the constituent *cómo* 'how' works as an adjunct of the predicate *suceder* 'to happen' within the subordinate.

meaning –explicit in (12)– coexists together with an implicature that contradicts the speaker's expectations –specified in (13)– (Cruschina and Bianchi 2022):

(11) *¡¿Cómo has tardado tanto?!*
'How can you be so late?!'

(12) *¿Por qué has tardado tanto?*
'Why are you so late?'

(13) > *¿Cómo es posible que hayas tardado tanto?* / *No puedo creer que hayas tardado tanto*
'How is it possible that you are so late? / I can't believe that you are so late'

Beyond these cases, *cómo* 'how' may occur alone to convey the speaker's surprise towards a situation that has just been generated. *Cómo* –now translated as 'what'– seems to have been deprived from the causal component and it can be exclusively paraphrased as *no me lo puedo creer* 'I can't believe it'.

(14) *[Temprano por la mañana, la casa de A y B está muy desordenada. A tiene mucho trabajo y nada de tiempo para ordenarla. B le promete que ordenará la casa durante el día. Cuando A regresa por la noche, todo está impecable]*
'Early in the morning, A and B's home is really untidy. A has too much work and no time to tidy up and clean the mess up. B promises A that he will tidy and clean the house up. When A comes back at night, everything is impeccable'
*-A: Cómo?!*
'What?!'
*-B: Te dije que lo haría*
'I told you I would do it'

The *Diccionario de la Lengua Española* 'Dictionary of Spanish Language' (RAE online) includes cases as (14) under the denomination of 'interjections'; however, from a grammatical perspective, this function of *cómo* 'what' has not received too much attention.[2]

Hence, the aim of this paper is to analyze the relation between the use of *cómo* 'what' in (14) and the exclamative interrogative construction triggering counter-expectation in (11). The connection that is unraveled between these two

**2** Specifically, the *Nueva Gramática de la Lengua Española* (RAE / ASALE 2009: 2513) just include it within expressive –or symptomatic– interjections, as those which focus on speaker's emotional reactions.

types of *cómo* 'how / what' points to a process of cooptation (Kaltenböck, Heine and Kuteva 2011; Heine 2023) through which *cómo* 'how / what' emancipates (Mithun 2008) from the original construction, thus enabling to relate sentence grammar (11) to interactive grammar (14). The use of *cómo* 'what' as an interjection is further related to mirativity –that is, to the natural trend in languages to distinguish between information that forms part of the speaker's integrated knowledge about the world and information that does not belong to that structured system (DeLancey 1997). To accomplish the objective of this project, the mirative *cómo* 'what' will be isolated from certain cases of echoic interrogatives where *cómo* 'how' occurs and which are related to the acts of refutation and rejection of a previous proposition. In particular, this paper seeks out to show that the mirative *cómo* 'what' can convey the speaker's reaction of surprise towards certain information that has just been activated, which corresponds to the semantic core of mirativity (Aikhenvald 2012). In order to fulfill its goals, the paper is organized as follows: Section 2 shows the actual versatility of *como* 'how / as / if'/ *cómo* 'how' in contemporary Spanish through the analysis of its most representative values in an interactional corpus –i.e., the corpus GestINF (Rodríguez Rosique and Cifuentes Honrubia, online)–; this contemporary situation is also compared to the diachronic behavior of *cómo* 'how' across Romance languages. Section 3 addresses the occurrences of *cómo* 'how' through a specific type of interrogative –the exclamative interrogative– while exploring the linguistic features and discursive functions of this construction. Section 4 focuses on the use of *cómo* 'what' as an interjection or mirative particle, which is then isolated from its role in the structures presented in Section 3. Finally, Section 5 outlines the most relevant conclusions derived from the analysis and, more generally, discusses certain challenges concerning the limits of mirativity.

# 2 Looking for *como / cómo*

## 2.1 Some remarks on the data

As introduced above, *como* 'how / as / if/ *cómo* 'how' is a very productive constituent in the grammar of contemporary Spanish. Most of its uses are thus easily located in the corpus of interaction GestINF, although this is a small-size corpus.

GestINF is an audiovisual corpus that has been designed for capturing, as accurately as possible, the relationship between informational configuration and linguistic structure (Rodríguez Rosique 2021). It is currently made up of eight interactions, each being approximately forty minutes long. Four different participants

are involved in each conversation. In order to control Common Ground –as the sum of beliefs, information and mutual suppositions that speakers bring with them or accommodate during communication (Stalnaker [1978] 1999: 84)–, the interactions were organized according to cultural communities –that is, groups of people who share certain information which other people which do not form part of those groups lack (Clark 1996). The notion of cultural communities applied to the universe nested in a university campus –in fact, all of the interactions were recorded at the University of Alicante– meant working with university groups (professors, students, administration staff, and maintenance staff). Likewise, in order to control activated information –that is, that portion of information which is *salient* or prominent in the participants' mind at a certain moment of the interaction (Chafe 1994; Dryer 1996)–, all the participants of the same interaction received two different texts that acted as triggers of the conversation. Finally, in order to monitor the whole process of the interaction and keep track of every single detail that could unfold in the interactions, the conversations were recorded in audiovisual format. The result is a hybrid product which is placed halfway between a guided corpus and a spontaneous one. As regards the former, the participants knew that they were being recorded,[3] that their interaction formed part of a research project, and that they had two triggering texts. Alternatively, through a spontaneous corpus, the only instruction that the participants received was "talking".

Most of the examples used throughout this paper have been extracted from GestINF, which allows for computing the productivity of *como* 'how / as / if' / *cómo* 'how' in contemporary Spanish. Thus, Interactions 1 and 4 emerge as the most relevant, since the participants' filiation –stronger than in the other interactions– was particularly linked to the use of *cómo* 'how' in interrogative / exclamative contexts and as a mirative particle, which constitutes the main goal of this paper. Nevertheless, certain uses –specifically those examined in Section 4– have also been compared to other corpora in order to be able to access scenarios similar to those in GestINF, either by restricting the search to spoken speech (as with the cases obtained from Corpus del Español Contemporáneo del siglo XXI, compiled by Real Academia Española and accessible online) or by selecting relevant fragments reproducing dialogs (as with the examples obtained from Google Books).

The main goal of this section is to offer a synchronic x-ray of *como* 'how / as / if' / *cómo* 'how' in contemporary Spanish, which is mirrored in the picture offered by some authors concerning its behavior along the history of Spanish since Ancient

**3** In fact, they signed a consent agreement before their involvement in the activity, which is kept by the research project. A model of this agreement can be seen at https://si.ua.es/es/vertice/contratos-de-cesion-de-derechos-de-imagen-y-autor.html

Latin to nowadays (cf. Cano Aguilar 1995).[4] The symbiosis between synchrony and diachrony can also explain that the sense of counter-expectation that is related to *cómo* 'how' extends across Romance languages. The mirative pattern triggered by this particle seems, in point of fact, productive in some other typological families.

## 2.2 A snapshot of *como / cómo*

As mentioned above, *como* 'how / as / if' / *cómo* 'how' has a weak, non-accentuated version and a strong, accentuated one, respectively. In its unstressed version, *como* 'how / as / if' may work as an adverb introducing a relative clause that modifies an explicit antecedent (5). In current Spanish, however, these contexts are usually monopolized by complex constituents preceded by prepositions,[5] and it is quite more natural for *como* 'how / as / if' to occur in free relative clauses that include their own antecedent, as in (15), obtained from GestINF. In (15) the participants are talking about a radio program, and the clause introduced by *como* 'as' specifies the way in which the people hosting the program develop the different sections: *como quiera* 'as she / he wants', that is, *como quiera llevarla* 'as she / he wants to carry it out'.

(15) *H2: hombre / sí que llevan [unn pequeño]*
'man / they do have [a small]'
*H4: [sí / pero →]*
'[yes / but →]'
*H2: [cada uno] lleva su sección →*
'[each of them] has their own section →'
*H4: pero la lleva <u>como quiera</u> /*
'but they host it as she/he wants'
(GestINF, Int. 1, min. 16:04)

**4** This section means to sketch the backbone of *como* 'as / since / if / how' / *cómo* 'how', although it cannot be exhaustive in the development of the current uses of this constituent. For a comprehensive, exhaustive analysis of *como* 'as / since / if / how'/ *cómo*'s 'how' uses (including its role in prepositional phrases or complex markers such as *como para 'in a way as'*, *como si* 'as if', *como que* 'since / sure that'. . .), see Moreno Ayora (1991).

**5** Complex relative constituents are *el que* 'the one that / who (male)' / *la que* 'the one that / who (female)' / *lo que* 'what / which (neuter)' and their plurals (*las que* 'the ones that / who (female)' / *los que* 'the ones that / who (male)), as well as the parallel versions with *cual* 'which' (*el cual* 'the one which / who (male)', *la cual* 'the one which / who (female)', *lo cual* 'what / which (neuter)', and their plurals: *los cuales* 'the ones which / who (male)', *las cuales* 'the ones which / who (females)'). The version of (5) with a preposition and a complex relative constituent would be *La manera en la que actuó es inadmissible* 'The way in which they behaved was unadmissible'.

According to RAE / ASALE (2009: 1617), these free relative clauses headed by *como* 'as' are functionally equivalent to the Spanish manner adverb *par excellence –así* 'this way / like this'–, so they may thus play the same role as this constituent. This situation enables *como* 'as' to progressively acquire predicative functions, either together with copular verbs[6] or with complete lexical predicates, as illustrated in (16) and (17), respectively.

(16) *H4: [. . .] mucha gente se SIENTE* / *como subsumida a–/ a los maestros de–/ [del control.]*
'[. . .] too many people feel / as subsumed to–/ to the masters of– / of control]'
(GestINF, Int. 4, min. 13:06)

(17) *H4: [no puedes juzgar → una pregunta como] buena o mala* / *¿sabes?* ↑/
'[you can't judge → a question as] good or bad / you know'
(GestINF, Int. 4, min. 04:06)

It is in these cases where the difference between preposition and adverb becomes fuzzy.[7] This distinction is even more imperceptible when the attribution of a property to a certain entity does not occur either within the sentence scope or mediated by a verb –be it copular or not, as shown in (16) and (17)–, but appears within the clause, as in (18), where the participant is talking about the status that an extreme right-wing group can have as a political party.

**6** Its occurrence with copular structures is quite frequent, particularly with the verb *ser* 'to be', which does not play a predicative function, but a discursive, identifying one. In these cases, *como* 'as' displays a mitigating value widely discussed in the literature: *[es como una especie de–/ es como una especie de TRUCO* / *que hacen para →]* 'Its a kind of treat that they do to. . .' (GestINF, Int. 4). This mitigating value overlaps with the current use of *en plan* 'in a way, in a sense': *H4: que tenía como veinte años–/ NUESTRA EDAD* / *y se definía como →* / *eeeeee→ ¿unitaria?*↑ *o algo así* / *en plan → como abogo por la unidad de España* 'that she had like twenty years / like us / and she defined herself such as unitary?, or something like that / in a way such as I claim for the unity of Spain'.

**7** In fact, it is difficult to replace *como* 'as' by *de la (misma) forma que* 'in the same form as', *del modo en que* 'in the way as', *de la (misma) manera en que* 'in the same way as', which RAE / ASALE (2009: 1620) considers a test to classify *como* 'as' as a relative adverb: **de la manera que subsumida* 'of the manner of subsumed', **de la manera que buena o mala* 'of the manner of good or bad', **del modo en que partido* 'of the manner of a party'.

(18) *H4: no sé / pero a mí me sorprende mucho el tema deeee / la existencia de vox como [partido.]*
'I don't know / but which surprises me most is the issue of/ the existence of vox as a [party]'
(GestINF, Int. 4, min. 09:57)

The adverb *como* 'as' can convey the manner in which the main event is carried out, as illustrated in (15) above, or it can also have it matched with some other event involved in the main structure (Cano Aguilar 1995). In the latter, the adverb develops a comparative value, as can be observed in (19), where the clause introduced by *como* 'as' matches the pain experienced by animals to that suffered by humans (> *Los animales sufren igual que los humanos sufren* 'Animals suffer the same as humans suffer').

(19) *H1: [y además] / es que los animales SUFREN en las pelis / como humanos / entonces me da mucha pena / [entonces no lo veo]*
'[and also] / annimals suffer in the movies / like humans / then I'm very sorry / [then I don't see that]'
H4: *[sufren como humanos]*
'[they suffer like humans]'
(GestINF, Int. 4, min. 19:52)

Beyond its uses as an adverb and as a preposition, *como* 'as /since / if' might also behave as a conjunction. In fact, it is quite frequent in causal environments (20) and conditional ones (21):

(20) *H2: pero yo creo que lo hizo a broma // yo creo que → mmm–/ como hoy en día está todo tan políticamente correcto (con cambio de voz) / pues digo voy a preguntarlo así / podía haberlo preguntado de otra forma / pero yo creo que fue una gracia / así →*
'but I think that he was joking // I think that → mmm / as nowadays everything is based on political correctness (with a change of voice) / then I say I'm gonna ask this way / she could have asked other way / but I think that it as a joke / thus →'
(GestINF, Int. 4, min. 05:54)

(21) *H2: [de verdad / ¿eh? ↑] / yy–/ me fastidia que lo–/ la gente lo va a ver a las dos de la mañana →/ entonces / mmm–/ me van a hacer espóiler el lunes / pero ya he avisao que como me hagan espóiler no hablo a nadie*

'[really / you now] and / it bothers me that / that people will see it at 2 a.m in the morning → / then / they're going to spoil on Monday / but I have urged them that if somebody spoils it, I will not speak them'
(GestINF, Int. 4, min. 12:24)

Whereas in *como* 'as / since' causal construction the cause is introduced as assumed –and the postposition of the *como* 'as / since' clause is in fact blocked[8] (RAE / ASALE 2009: 3463)–, in *como* 'if' conditionals the protasis is presented as insufficient for the apodosis (Schwenter 1996) –that is, as a non-justified condition to trigger the extreme consequence occurring in the apodosis: i.e., stop talking to somebody just because they are spoilers, as in (21).

In its stressed version, *cómo* 'how' constitutes an interrogative-exclamative adverb, and it can thus introduce direct exclamatives, as in (22). The participants are here talking about a section of a tv program which simulates a confrontation or a fight between two stand-up comedians through their respective acting. By using the exclamative, H2 reacts towards the situation left after one of the comedians verbally "attacked" the other one.

(22) *H4: pero / yo creo que ese es el mayor ejemplo de / HACER HUMOR metiéndose con alguien / [pero al mismo tiempo ser–/ ser amigos yy → / yy →]*
'but / I think that this is the best example of / doing humor attacking somebody / [but at the same time / still being friend and → / and →]'
H3: *[claro / eso iba a decir →/ los Roast →]*
'sure / that's what I was trying to say → / the Roast →]'
*H4: yy está muy bien / uf*
'and that's cool / guagu'
*H2: ufff / madre mía / ¡<u>cómo lo dejó</u>!*
'guau / oh my god / how he left him!'
(GestINF, Int. 1, min. 20:00)

As happens with *wh*-exclamatives, the constructions with *cómo* 'how' retain the speaker's reaction towards a certain stimulus.[9] In Castroviejo's (2010: 6–9)

**8** There is also a complex causal marker (*como que* 'since / it is for sure that') which confirms or reinforces a previous utterance: *Es una noticia segura, como que me la ha contado el propio interesado* 'This is a confirmed information, since the witness himself has told me' (cf. Rodríguez Ramalle 2015).

**9** Bosque (2017: 2–4) argues that speaker's emotional reaction is usually acknowledged as surprise. However, the author outlines that exclamatives may also express disappointment, enthusiasm, frustration. . . In his view, the relevant emotion is pragmatically determined.

view, exclamatives exhibit two properties: a) a specific intonation that operates upon b) a set of propositions linearly ordered. This set of propositions includes, in turn, a subset of false propositions, a subset of true propositions, and a true proposition which is stronger than the others and which triggers the idea of counter-expectations –or exceeded expectations, in Rett and Murray's (2013) terms.

*Cómo* 'how'-exclamatives can be embedded in other predicates –i.e., indirect exclamatives–, which frequently constitute perception verbs, as shown in (23). The sense of exceeded expectations still prevails in these cases.

(23) *H2: sí / yyy / ya te digo / Ignatius → // es un personaje–/ pero el tío / ¿has visto cómoo– / cómo domina también la filosofía? ↑*
'yes / and / I say / Ignatius → // he is a piece of work / but the guy / did you see how–/ how he can know about philosophy as well? ↑'
(GestINF, Int. 1, min. 16:47)

In interrogative environments, *cómo* 'how' can introduce either direct (24) or indirect (25) interrogatives. In these cases, the adverb is bound to a variable that affects the manner in which the main predicate is carried out. Thus, the variable triggered by *cómo* 'how' in (24) is related to the way in which a window can be opened, whereas the variable in (25) is linked to how things went for a girl who mocked a politician who was assassinated at the end of the Spanish dictatorship.

(24) *H2: [¿y no sabías →?]*
'and didn't you know →?]'
H1: *[(risas)]*
'[(laugh)]'
H4: *[y yo] / no / ¿cómo se abre esto?* ↑/ *y mi madre / ¿llamo a la gata?* ↑
'[and I] / no / how can I open this? ↑ / and my mom / Do I call the kitty? ↑'
(GestINF, Int. 4, min. 22:31)

(25) *H4: qué le pasó a la– / a la chica esta → / que era → / era estudiante de historia e hizo un chiste de Carrero Blanco / y la–/ la procesaron / la audiencia →*
'what happened to / to that girl who / who was a history student and she did a joke about Carrero Blanco / and she / and she was prosecuted / the court →'
H3: *¡ostras / es verdad! / sí*
'my god / that's true! / it was'
H4: *la procesaron*
'they prosecuted her'
*H3: sí que lo vi*
'yes I saw that'

*H4: y no vaaa–/ a poder trabajar →*
'and she can't / can't work →'
*H1: [¡hala!]*
'[wow!]'
*H3: [¡quéé fueerte! →]*
'[that's awful!]'
*H4: [y no creo →] / no sé cómo se quedó / pero →*
'[and I don't →] / I don't know how things ended / but →'
(GestINF, Int. 1, min. 21:19)

The form *cómo* 'how' can occur in reason interrogative contexts, where it adds a sense of counter-expectation. These cases are frequent in Spanish spoken speech, and are therefore found in GestINF. In (26), H4 asks their mates how / why somebody has (can have) a Linguistics face. This is the way in which the other participants have defined one of their professors at the University, but the description escapes H4's expectations (as everybody knows, someone can have a round, oval, pale or even a funny face, but not a Linguistics one).

(26) *H3: [el hombre de Lingüística (entre risas)]*
'[the man of Linguistics (laughing)]'
H2: *[y nos entendemos (entre risas)]*
'[and we understand each other (laughing)]'
H3: *y no tiene nada [que ver con la Lingüística / el hombre ese]*
'and there's nothing [to do with Linguistics / that man]'
H4: *[cómo ↑ se tiene cara de lingüística →]*
'[how ↑ can someone have a Linguistics face →]'
(GestINF, Int. 4, min. 35:45)

As Cano Aguilar (1995: 18–19) argues, in these cases the speaker's queries originate from their being puzzled about the very existence of something, or about its cause of existence. From his perspective, when this question occurs in interaction, it may point to a previous utterance –that is, to the *énonciation* itself, not just to the content of it.

Indeed, *cómo* 'how'-interrogatives may be part of so-called echo-questions –i.e., clarifying questions with a metalinguistic purpose (RAE / ASALE 2009: 3179–3188). Information is not openly requested in the form of clarifying questions, but in using them the speakers request the addressee to repeat a fragment. This is what happens in (27), where H2 has not understood H3's question (he probably has not heard it) and he asks the addressee to say it again.

(27) *H3: pero a ti te pagan esas por horas*
'But are you paid by hours'
*H2: ¿cómo?* ↑
'Excuse me?'
*H3: ¿que te pagan* / *[por horas ↑?]*
'I have asked you if you are paid by hours'
(GestINF, Int. 8, min. 07:38)

The occurrence of *cómo* 'how / what' in (27) is due to a problem of access to a previous utterance and that is why it plays a clarifying role. In these cases, the utterance in which the interrogative appears exhibits the usual interrogative intonation (high – low), and the discourse progression –H3's answer– confirms the clarifying request related to *cómo* 'how / what'.

The label of echo-question points to the fact that these interrogatives are built upon a certain utterance or fragment that has been previously proffered. The form *cómo* 'who' frequently co-occurs with *que* 'that' in this situation (Barrio Corral 2018).[10] However, *cómo que* 'how that' is no longer used with a clarifying purpose nor for the addressee to repeat a question, but rather as the speaker's requirement for the addressee "to explain their own words" (RAE / ASALE 2009: 3187), since the speaker is, to some extent, showing surprise. In (28), H2 requests from H4 an explanation concerning why the proper functioning of the work group they have together is due to a luck component –and not to the intensive effort of their members.

(28) *H4: [nosotros–/] nosotras hemos tenido suerte* / *peroo* →
'we/ we have been lucky / but →'
*H2: yo no (con ironía)*
'not me (with irony)'
*H4: si yo* / *voy con Celia* →
'If I / I go with Celia →'
*H1: [(risas)]*
'[(laughing)]'

**10** Although *cómo que* 'how that' is usually used when the interrogative is based on a previous utterance, it is not necessary that *que* 'that' occurs when *cómo* 'how' points to a previous utterance. In fact, Escandell-Vidal (1999: 3968–3970) establishes the difference between *cómo* 'how' and *cómo que* 'how that' in terms of direct or indirect quotation: whereas *cómo* 'how' literally reproduces the addressee's words (*Llama tú* 'You call'> *¿Cómo* llama tú? 'How can you say *you call*?'), *cómo que* 'how that' introduces an indirect quotation that may have been modified by the speaker (*Usa el color amarillo* 'Use the yellow color'> *¿Cómo que use el color amarillo*? 'How can you say that I need to use the yellow color?').

*H2: [¡NO!]*
'[no!]'
*H3: ¡ah! / ¡pues si vais en el mismo grupo! [(risas)]*
'ah! / you are in the same group! [(laughing)]'
*H2: no / pero es que lo estoy diciendo / ¿cómo que has tenido suerte? ↑/ suerte hemos tenío las tres.*
'no / but this is what I mean / how can you say that you are lucky? ↑ / we are all three lucky'
(GestINF, Int. 4, min. 33:15)

In Escandell-Vidal's view (1999: 3968–3970), *cómo que* 'how that' constitutes a particle or a discursive operator in cases above that furnishes the utterance with two functions: i) it represents a reportative marker that reproduces a previous utterance, and ii) it conveys the sense of rejection of said utterance. Hence, according to her, *cómo que* 'how that' makes explicit a speaker's negative attitude towards the utterance that has been previously suggested by the addressee, either because the addressee's words seem unexpected or because they are considered inappropriate to a certain extent.

The same negative effect is observed when *cómo* 'how' occurs with the verb periphrasis <*ir a* 'going to' + infinitive>. Note that in (29), by using the interrogative with *cómo* 'how', H3 rejects an idea previously uttered by H4 in regard to the fact that a kitty could recognize them when it sees animals on television.

(29) *H4: que salen animales / mi gata es como / que presta atención / ¡animales! →*
'where animals star / my kitty is like / it pay attention / *animals! →*'
*H1: [(risas)]*
'[(laughing)]'
*H2: [sí / claro (entre risas)]*
'[yes / sure (laughing)]'
*H4: ¿sabes? ↑*
'you know'
*H2: [es imposible]*
'[that's impossible]'
*H3: [es imposible]*
'[that's impossible]'
*H4: [es súper adorable]// que–/ que nooo*
'[it's a sweetie] // no / but'
H3: *¡¿cómo va a reconocer a los animales de dibujos?!*
'how can it recognize cartoon animals?!'
(GestINF, Int. 4, min. 20:56)

The verbal periphrasis <*ir a* 'going to' + infinitive> has developed a modal value (Olbertz 1998: 330–333; Bravo 2008: 220–229) linked to refutation (García Negroni 2016) and discursive negation (Cifuentes 2022). This modal value is considered the result of projecting the physical distance between the origin and the goal of a trajectory –which corresponds to the lexical value of the verb *ir* 'to go'– onto the notional distance representing the difference between two points of view –that of the speaker and that of the addressee– (Melis 2006: 921–923), and it accounts for the use of the periphrasis to reject a previous utterance.

However, as pointed out in section 1, *cómo* 'how' can be used on its own to convey the speaker's surprise towards an activated situation. This is what happens in (30), where H3 shows her astonishment towards H1's utterance, in which the speaker narrated how H4 pulled up the nails of her kitty because they caused her an allergy.

(30) *H1: [pero ELLA / a su gata le quitó] las uñas para que no le arañase*
'but she / to her kitty she pulled up / its nails in order not to be scratched'
H4: *sí / porque lo–/ lo [único–/]*
'yes / because / the [only think]'
H2: *[¿cómo que le quitó? / ¿le cortó? ↑]*
'what do you mean by "she pulled up"? / you mean that she cut them? ↑]'
H1: *[no / le QUITÓ]*
'[no / she pulled them up]'
H4: *[no no / le quité las uñas de delante]*
'[no / I pulled its front nails up]'
H2: *[¡¿perdona?!]*
'[excuse me?!]'
H1: *[ya / yo también me quedé igual] cuando me lo dijo*
'[yes / I felt the same] when she told me'
H3: [*¿cómo? ↑*]
'[what? ↑]'
(GestINF, Int. 4, min. 23:18)

In contrast to what happens with *cómo que* 'how that' or with *cómo* + <*ir a* 'going to' + infinitive>, this use has not necessarily been linked to an addressee's previous utterance (note, in fact, the difference with respect to H2's utterance –with *cómo que* how that'–, that reproduces H1's own words), but it is rather related to the event itself that has just been activated –and which is prominent in the participants' mind–, that is, H3 pulled up her kitty nails to avoid her allergy.

The independent use of *cómo* 'what' seems to rather represent the consequence of a process of cooptation emerging from the exclamative interrogative occurring in (26). The interjective *cómo* 'what' loses progressively both the causal sense triggered by the exclamative interrogative and the connection to some other participant's utterance, as well as the negative effect associated to *cómo que* 'how that' and to cómo + <ir a 'going to' + infinitive>. The result is that the independent use of *cómo* 'what' can be used to convey the speaker's surprise –i.e., an interpretation similar to *I can't believe it*– towards a situation that has just been activated, which falls within the semantic core of mirativity.

## 2.3 *Como / cómo*: A diachronic mirror

As also shown in the previous subsection, *como* 'how / as / if' / *cómo* 'how' is a very productive constituent in the grammar of Spanish. In diachronic terms, one could think of a primary meaning from which all the others could stem; however, as pointed out by Cano Aguilar (1995: 12), the diversity in the use of *como* 'how / as / if' / *cómo* 'how' can lie in its own origins.

*Como* 'how / as / if how / as / if' / *cómo* 'how' comes from Latin QUOMODO, which was an exclamative-interrogative adverb originally used in *wh*-questions to ask about the way in which the main event is performed. The form starts to be contracted as *quomo* already in Latin, and in earlier documents can be found both as in its Romance version (*cuemo*) and as a result of hypercorrection (*commo*). Due to its lexical transparency, QUOMODO replaced UT –which seemed archaizing even in Classic Latin– in manner, comparative contexts. As outlined by Cano Aguilar (1995: 92–93), the basic opposition between *cómo* 'how' / *como* 'how / as / if' is linguistically crystallized through the difference between the tonic and the atonic form, respectively, since this is the clue to distinguish the exclamative-interrogative constituent from the relative, modifying adverb. From Cano Aguilar's (1995) perspective, both *cómo* 'how' and *como* 'how / as / if' have a manner meaning and, similarly, both can also lose it. As the manner sense progressively fades, the clause introduced by *cómo* 'how' / *como* 'as / since / if / how' can move to a peripheral syntactic status: it can then ask for the causes of the utterance as an *énonciation* –in the interrogative contexts–, or it may become equivalent to *lo que* 'which' and move from a relative, modifying clause to an apposition (in explanatory contexts).[11] Similarly, by losing

**11** From this stage, Cano Aguilar (1995) points out that the anaphoric reference of the relative constituent may be mitigated and *como* 'how / as / since / if' may then be turned into a coordinative constituent, which could explain its role in different correlations that cannot be discussed here due to length restrictions.

its manner meaning and its exclamative-interrogative intonation, *como* 'as / since / if' may become a conjunction and is thus placed in the domain of subordinate constituents, where it is then ready to gain causal and conditional meanings. In turn, its ability to introduce both sentential and clausal constituents (and thus function as a preposition) is directly linked to an original ellipsis of the subordinate verb.

The situation that arises in Latin is replicated in contemporary Spanish and it further extends to other Romance languages. Cano Aguilar (1995: 14–15) summarizes a double hypothesis to explain the origin of the complex map of meaning displayed by *cómo* 'how' / *como* 'how / as / if'. According to Dardel (1983), QUOMODO undergoes an evolutionary process that develops gradually in a proto-Romance stage; according to Herman (1963), this is an independent –but parallel– process which takes place in each Romance language from the primary manner-comparative meaning.

Whereas both the evolution and the polysemy of values related to the unstressed *como* 'how, as, if' seem more complex, the scenario portrayed by the stressed *cómo* 'how' in contemporary Spanish can be easily traced through history and it is also reflected in some other languages –Romance or not–, which suggests a need to investigate typological patterns. One of these recurrent paths is the interrogative use of *cómo* in causal contexts and its further mirative development.

## 3 From questioning to counter-expectation

There seems to be a typological pattern through which interrogative constituents that originally asked for the manner in which the main event is performed end up appearing in casual contexts (Tsai 2008; Halonen and Sorjonen 2012; Fleury and Tovena 2018). The speakers use this reason-how questions to ask the addressee about how the situation embedded in the interrogative could have occurred, since it contradicts their expectations (Brunetti et al. 2022). This is also an especially common trend in Romance languages, which inherit the situation displayed in Latin.

In accordance with this pattern, *cómo* 'how' in Spanish may occur in contexts where the manner in which the main predicate occurs is not at stake, either because the interrogative does not admit this reading or because this information is already explicit (Cano Aguilar 1995: 18). This is what happened in (26) –repeated now in (31)– and what is also observed in (32). In fact, the interrogative in (31) is not meant to obtain an answer about the different ways of putting on a linguistics face; likewise, the aim of (32) is not for the addressee to answer how the work was done –i.e., working every single afternoon, sharing their tasks, etc.

In other words, *cómo* 'how' does not trigger a variable bound to the manner in which the main predicate is carried out (Desmets and Gautier 2009), but instead the variable has to be solved with information that is external to the event (Brunetti et al. 2022).

(31) *H3: [el hombre de Lingüística (entre risas)]*
'[the Linguistics man (laughing)]'
*H2: [y nos entendemos (entre risas)]*
'[and we understand each other (laughing)]'
*H3: y no tiene nada [que ver con la Lingüística / el hombre ese]*
'and he has nothing to do [with Linguistics / that man]'
*H4: [cómo ↑ se tiene cara de lingüística →]*
'[how ↑can somebody have a Linguistics face →]'
(Corpus GestINF, Int. 4, min. 35:45)

(32) *H3: [estaba chulísimo]*
'[it was great]'
*H2: y todos diciendo ¡((pero)) si es imposible! / ¿cómo hicisteis todo eso?* ↑
'and everybody said ((but)) that's impossible! / how could you do all that? ↑'
*H1: no sé / es que nuestra finalidad era más como / para quee →*
'I don't know / our goal was that you / that you →'
*H4: [no os aburrierais]*
'[don't ge bored]'
(Corpus GestINF, Int. 4, min. 26:54)

*Cómo* 'how' operates here in a causal environment, and it can thus alternate with *por qué* 'why' (Cano Aguilar 1995: 18).[12]

(33) *¿Por qué se tiene cara de lingüística?*
'Why does anybody have a Linguistics face?'

(34) *¿Por qué hicisteis todo eso?*
'Why did you do all that?'

**12** Cano Aguilar (1995: 18) argues that the connection between *cómo* 'how' and *por qué* 'why' is already attested in Cuervo (1953), and that this analogy is precisely the one used by *Diccionario de Autoridades* (RAE [1726–1739] 1976) to describe *cómo* 'how'. Similarly, these early sources explicitly outline the surprise-sense related to these interrogatives.

However, the alternation is not absolute.[13] While *por qué* 'why' asks about the cause of the event (a predicate-bound variable), *cómo* 'how' seems to require an explanation concerning a proposition that escapes the speaker's expectations (Brunetti et al. 2021). Indeed, reason-*cómo* 'how' interrogatives add a sense of speaker's astonishment, which can be captured by the paraphrasis with *cómo es posible que* 'how is it possible that' (Cano Aguilar 1995: 18).

(35) *¿Cómo es posible que tenga cara de lingüística?*
'How is it possible that someone can have a Linguistics face?'

(36) *¿Cómo es posible que hicierais todo eso?*
'How is it possible that you did all that?'

Since the proposition about which *cómo* 'how' inquires contradicts the speaker's expectation, these interrogatives are considered biased; more specifically, they always convey a speaker's certain negative stance towards the proposition embedded in the interrogative (Brunetti et al. 2022). This is the reason why they are compatible with structures conveying the speaker's distance towards their utterance – either as a consequence of the metaphorical projection of the lexical distance onto the interactional one (in the case of <*ir a* 'going to' + infinitive>), or as a result of an utterance proffered by some other speaker (in the case of *cómo que* 'how that')–, as commented in the previous subsection.

According to some linguists, reason-*how* questions are characterized by a number of recurrent features. Following Desmets and Gautier's (2009) study, based on the modal reading that is conveyed by this type of interrogatives, the modal frequently occurs within the structure, and, if this is not the case, the modal can always be made explicit without altering the original meaning triggered by the construction. In this sense, both (31) and (32) would admit the paraphrasis in (37) and (38), respectively.

(37) *¿Cómo se puede tener cara de lingüística?*
'How can anybody have a Linguistics face?'

(38) *¿Cómo se puede hacer todo eso?*
'How can anybody do all that?'

**13** According to Brunetti et al. (2021), whereas the reason interrogative introduced by *pour quoi* 'why' can be answered by *parce que* 'because', this answer should not be available for a reason-*comment* interrogative.

Likewise, according to these authors, reason-how questions usually include degree expressions, as outlined in (39), where a certain quantity of work –a totality– is contemplated as hardly apprehensible.

(39) *¿Cómo hicisteis todo eso?*
'How did you do all that?'

Finally, Desmets and Gautier (2009) also argue that these constructions usually occur together with contrast markers or with structures that convey contrast to some extent.[14] This is illustrated in (40), where the opposition is doubly marked – both through the contrastive marker *pero* 'but' and through the insubordinate *si* 'if'-construction with a refutational meaning.

(40) *H2: y todos diciendo ¡((pero)) si es imposible! / ¿cómo hicisteis todo eso? ↑*
'and everybody said '(but) that's impossible! / how did you do all that? ↑'

One of the questions that are usually addressed in the literature concerning the presence and behavior of manner particles in reason questions has to do with what kind of interrogative they constitute.[15] From Desmets and Gautier's perspective (2009), these are rhetorical questions that include two different –contradictory– pieces of information: the presupposition of *p* and the assertion of the impossibility of *p* –that the authors formalize as "non (modalité) *p*". This divergence thus represents a source of conflict between two conceptions of the world –that of the speaker and that of the addressee–, which triggers an expressive component that extends from surprise to indignation.

For Brunetti et al. (2022), however, reason-*how* interrogatives are not rhetorical questions, since it is not always assumed that the proposition has to be necessarily true. More specifically, the authors cite Halonen and Sorjonen's (2012) paper to vindicate that these interrogatives exhibit the simultaneous and interconnected existence of both elements pointing to the seeking of information and elements conveying a certain stance. Halonen and Sorjonen (2012), in fact, char-

**14** Desmets and Gautier (2009) outline some other features, such as their frequent co-occurrence with negation or with negative polarity items, and extractions (as with the case of French). The interaction between this reason-*cómo* 'how' and negation has also been argued for the diachronic evolution of *cómo* 'how' in Spanish when it occurs in reason interrogatives (Cano Aguilar 1995: 20). However, the presence of negation is not indispensable in contemporary reason-*cómo* interrogatives (RAE / ASALE 2009: 1657).

**15** It is well-known that interrogatives go beyond the act of seeking information itself. For a recent analysis of non-canonical questions see Trotzke (2024).

acterize reason-*how* interrogatives according to the following components: a) an interrogative force asking about the reasons of the event; b) a bias through which the speaker expects a negative answer to the question; c) a surprise effect, triggered by the speaker's learning of the possible truth of the proposition; and d) an emotive import (surprise, confusion, astonishment…) caused by the mismatch between the speaker's expectation and the event described in *p*. From the perspective of Brunetti et al. (2022), these components are not present in the same degree in all reason-*how* questions, and these structures can thus be a mechanism through which the speaker tries to adjust their expectations while playing a real, authentic interrogative function.[16] Then, and based on above examples, whereas in (31) H4 seems to use the reason-*cómo* question to express that it is not possible to have a linguistics face, in (32) H2 expects some kind of answer to her question –and this is how the other participants (H1 and H4) interpret it, since they collaborate to offer a joint answer: i.e., *nuestra finalidad era que no os aburrierais* 'our purpose was for you not to get bored'.

In addition, in Cruschina and Bianchi's (2022) view, biased interrogatives such as reason-*how* questions would fit better under the label of surprise or disapproval questions than as rhetorical questions.[17] Cruschina and Bianchi (2022) revise the typology elaborated by Farkas (2020) and propose a new type of interrogatives. According to Farkas, both assertions and canonical questions can be used to improve the information that the speaker and the addressee share about a certain open issue –that is, about an issue consisting of a set of alternative propositions. The goal of the participants lies thus in reaching a joint commitment about the true alternative that solves the issue. In this sense, canonical questions should meet the following features to ensure the true alternative: a) an open issue, since the matter cannot be resolved beforehand; b) speaker's ignorance, since the speaker cannot previously commit with a given alternative; c) addressee's competence, since the speaker assumes that the addressee supports their commitment with the true alternative; and d) addressee compliance, since the speaker assumes that the addressee will be able to solve the issue with the adequate, true alternative. In non-canonical questions, one –or various– of these features may fail. According to Cruschina and Bianchi (2022), rhetorical questions and surprise questions are similar because the openness of the issue is not relevant in both of them and because the addressee's competence is automatically assumed. However, whereas rhetorical questions are

**16** Their proposal is demonstrated by an experiment that the authors report in a different paper (Brunetti et al. 2021), where they corroborate that *comment*-reason questions preserve some interrogative illocutionary force.

**17** Celle (2018) argues that rhetorical questions can also trigger surprise in French. In a later study (Celle 2023), however, she also explores the possibilities of surprise-questions in French.

used to outline the obviousness of the answer, surprise questions convey the speaker's astonishment towards a certain state of affairs –i.e., they are speaker-oriented speech acts.[18]

In accordance with its marked interpretation as non-canonical, reason-*cómo* questions exhibit a peculiar prosody that may be graphically reflected. This means that both interrogative and exclamative marks frequently co-occur in the representation of these utterances –(32), in fact, could be transcribed as *¡¿Cómo hicisteis todo eso?!* 'How could you do all that?!'–. This tonal swinging can also be captured through transcriptions signs, as in (31): *cómo ↑se tiene cara de lingüística→* 'how ↑ can somebody have a Linguistics face →'.

*Cómo* 'how' may go further in its way from the sentence –where it is linked to a bound-predicate variable– to the discourse –where it points to the relations between the speaker, the addressee and the discursive, contextual situation. In particular, it can leave the causal environments to become an authentic interjection or discourse particle –as described by Cruschina and Bianchi (2022)–: i.e, a mirative particle.

## 4 *Cómo* and the expression of surprise

In certain cases, *cómo* 'how' leaves the causal contexts and moves (even more) towards the domain of discourse. This can be observed in (30) above, which has been repeated in (41) for the sake of clarification:

(41) *H1: [pero ELLA / a su gata le quitó] las uñas para que no le arañase*
'but she / to her kitty she pulled up / its nails in order not to be scratched'
*H4: sí / porque lo–/ lo [único–/]*
'yes / because / the [only think]'
*H2: [¿cómo que le quitó? / ¿le cortó? ↑]*
'what do you mean by "she pulled up"? / you mean that she cut them? ↑]'

**18** In the grammars of Spanish, the label *exclamative interrogatives* (Fernández Ramírez 1959; Escandell-Vidal 1984; Alonso Cortés 1999) has been used as an equivalent term to the surprise-questions identified by Cruschina and Bianchi (2022). This label has been used to describe, for instance, certain interrogatives where morphological future operates, such as the one formed by the construction <*no ir* (FUT.) *a* 'not go (FUT.) to + inf.>: *¡¿No irás a decirme que no te gusta?!* 'Are you really telling me that you don't like?!' (Rodríguez Rosique 2023). In the same line as proposed by Cruschina and Bianchi (2022), in contrast to rhetorical questions (with an argumentative goal), these exclamative interrogatives exhibit an expressive, speaker-oriented nature (i.e., you are telling me that you don't like it + I can't believe that you are telling me that you don't like it).

*H1: [no / le QUITÓ]*
'[no / she pulled them up]'
*H4: [no no / le quité las uñas de delante]*
'[no / I pulled its front nails up]'
*H2: [¡¿perdona?!]*
'[excuse me?!]'
*H1: [ya / yo también me quedé igual] cuando me lo dijo*
'[yes / I felt the same] when she told me'
*H3: [¿cómo? ↑]*
'[what? ↑]'
(GestINF, Int. 4, min. 23:18)

This fragment has been reproduced in the way as it is transcribed in the corpus GestINF (https://www.cervantesvirtual.com/portales/proyecto_gestinf/charla_04/, minute 23:25). The videos that form part of the corpus were transcribed and revised by three people, who interpreted the utterance proffered by H3 as a surprise-*cómo* 'what'. A slow, analytical viewing and a repeated listening show, however, that H3 does not say *¡¿cómo?!* 'what?!', but *¿¡tú?!* 'you?!'. Nevertheless, I considered this example still valid because it encapsulates the interpretation that three native speakers of Spanish –two of them linguists– made about the situation: against an unintelligible fragment, the three transcribers coincided in that the best way to convey the surprise reflected by H3's face and her attitude in the interaction was through the use of *¡¿cómo?!* 'what?!'.

*Cómo* 'how / what' plays the same role in (42), obtained from Corpus del Español del Siglo XXI, compiled by Real Academia Española (https://www.rae.es/banco-de-datos/corpes-xxi). The example is extracted from an entertainment show (*La Resistencia*) and reproduces the interview that the host of the show does with an actress. Through the use of *cómo* 'what', the conductor conveys his surprise towards the fact that the movie in which the actress stars has been released, and immediately afterward moved away from the movie theaters.

(42) *A: ya está estrenada / se estrenó el siete de septiembre / ya no está en cine*
'It is already released / it was released on September 7 / it is no longer in theaters'
*B: hostia / ¿cómo cómo?*
'Damn? What? What?'
*A: sí, sí*
'Yes, yes'
(RAE, CORPES XXI, La Resistencia 2018. "Entrevista a Esther Expósito", min. 17:14)

Both in (41) and in (42) *cómo* 'what' has lost its interrogative status. In these cases, *cómo* 'what' cannot be replaced by *por qué* 'why' without drastic changes in their meaning, as can be seen in (43) and (44).

(43) *H1: [pero ELLA / a su gata le quitó] las uñas para que no le arañase*
'but she / to her kitty she pulled up / its nails in order not to be scratched'
H3: *#¿por qué?*
'Why?'

(44) *A: ya está estrenada / se estrenó el siete de septiembre / ya no está en cine*
'It is already released / it was released on September 7 / it is no longer in theaters'
*B: hostia / #¿por qué, por qué?*
'damn / why?'

Note that H3's utterance in (43) becomes an addressee-oriented question that seeks the reason why he has pulled her kitty out its nails, something that is communicatively blocked, since H1 has already explained it (i.e., *para que no le arañase* 'to prevent it from scratching her'). Similarly, the replacement of *cómo* 'how / what' by *por qué* 'why' in (44) gives the interrogative back its original status of seeking information –the speaker asks now for the reason why the movie has been moved away from the movie theaters–, and the reiteration becomes anomalous –that is, redundant.[19]

In contrast to the alternatives with *por qué* 'why', *cómo* 'what'-utterances convey expressive speech acts that invoke the speaker's surprise towards a situation that has just been activated. In this sense, they can be paraphrased through *no me lo puedo creer* 'I can't believe it', as (45) and (46) respectively make explicit. Note that, in the case of (46) the astonishment is also reinforced by the use of another interjection –*hostia* 'damn'– at the beginning of B's turn, which can be semantically equivalent to *¡¿cómo?!* 'what?!'.

(45) *H1: [pero ELLA / a su gata le quitó] las uñas para que no le arañase*
'but she / to her kitty she pulled up / its nails in order not to be scratched'
*H3: No me lo puedo creer*
'I can't believe it'

19 According to Potts (2007), the reiteration of an expressive results in emphasis, as shown in (39); however, the reiteration of *por qué* 'why' should be blocked due to redundancy.

(46) *A: ya está estrenada / se estrenó el siete de septiembre / ya no está en cine*
'It is already released / it was released on September 7 / it is no longer in theaters'
*B: hostia / no me lo puedo creer*
'damn / I can't believe it'

Interestingly, as opposed to the reason-*cómo* 'how' questions examined in Section 3, the syntactic status of *cómo* 'what' has also changed. More specifically, while the reason-*cómo* 'how' questions may be embedded in subordinate predicates without losing their counter-expectation meaning (47)-(48),[20] this possibility is blocked in the cases of surprise-*cómo* 'what' (49)-(50).

(47) *H2 pregunta que cómo hicisteis todo esto > H2 pregunta que cómo pudisteis hacer todo eso.*
'H2 asks how did you do all that > H2 asks how could you do all that'

(48) *H4 pregunta que cómo se tiene cara de lingüística > H4 pregunta que cómo se puede tener cara de lingüística.*
'H4 asks how somebody can have a Linguistics face > H4 asks how somebody have can have a Linguistics face'

(49) **H3 pregunta que cómo.*
'H3 asks how'

(50) **B pregunta que cómo.*
'B asks how'

The counter-expectation meaning of the reason-*how* question structure, which worked as an implicature (Cruschina and Bianchi 2022) and which made possible for the structure to preserve its interrogative-illocutionary force (Brunetti et al. 2022), seems to have been conventionalized in cases such as (41) and (42). The linguistic status of *cómo* 'what' has also changed: it is not a *wh*-constituent working on the utterance level (instead of the predicate) anymore, but it rather constitutes a real interjection or discourse particle –i.e., a mirative particle.

There is, however, a kind of controversy revolving around the definition of interjection, as well as its limits with respect to some other categories (Cuenca

**20** Interestingly, the embeddedness of the reason-*cómo* question works better –it doesn't miss its counter-expectation sense– if the subordinate mark is preserved. This could be a clue to assume the constructional status of the reason-how questions, as proposed by Desmets and Gautier (2009).

2000). In Heine's (2023: 183–185) terms, an interjection is a constituent that belongs to the domain of interaction –in fact, *cómo* 'what' in (41)-(42) points to the relation between the speaker, the addressee and the communicative situation– and that conveys a sudden change in the cognitive state or in the emotional sense of the speaker –in particular, *cómo* in (41) and (42) expresses the speaker's surprise towards a recently activated situation. The definition of interjection, then, generally overlaps with some other categories; for instance, the *Nueva Gramática de la Lengua Española* (RAE / ASALE 2009: 2479) defines interjections as the category that specializes in forming exclamative utterances. Nevertheless, the case of mirative *cómo* does not seem to come from the exclamative utterances presented in (22) and (23), but from the reason-*how* questions examined in Section 3. In fact, (22) –which is now repeated in (51)– could be paraphrased as "*la manera en la que lo dejó supera mis expectativas*" 'the manner how he left him exceeds my expectations', which is still linked to a manner component and fits the definition of exclamatives as exceeded expectations (Rett 2011; Rett and Murray 2013). However, *cómo* 'what' in (41) and (42) is paraphrased as "*no me lo puedo creer*" 'I can´t believe it' –that is, as I cannot conceive this event, since it is beyond my expectations. Therefore, the behavior of *cómo* 'how / what' enables one to trace a kind of inflection between exclamativity and mirativity.

(51) *H2: ufff* / *madre mía* / *¡<u>cómo lo dejó</u>!*
'wow / my god / how he left him!'
(GestINF, Int. 1)

The different structures exhibited by *cómo* are placed along the domain extending from biased interrogatives, exclamatives and mirativity.[21] They are sometimes related to counter-expectation understood as refutation or discursive rejection. This could lead us to think that *cómo* always relates to a situation that is reported by the addressee and towards which the speaker shows a negative attitude –as indeed happens with *cómo que* 'how that' and *cómo* 'how' + <*ir a* 'going to'+ infinitive>–; in other words, we take the risk to think that the mirative *cómo* is just an elided reason-*how* question that can be restored. However, the interjective *cómo* 'what' occurring in (41)-(42) directly points to the semantic core of the mirative category,

**21** As one of the reviewers points out, *cómo* 'how' behaves in a similar way to *qué* 'what' in certain contexts. I agree in that they show a kind of parallelism. Both can in fact occur with the periphrasis *ir a* 'going to' + infinitive to convey refutation or discursive rejection, and both can end up as mirative particles (i.e., *what*-particles). However, at first sight, it seems that they follow different paths, or, at least, the role of reason questions is not so prominent for *qué* 'what' in comparison to *cómo* 'how'. Anyway, this contrast deserves a future, careful investigation.

which means that it can convey the speaker's surprise conceived as sudden realization. In these cases, neither a situation reported by the addressee nor a negative color by the part of the speaker is necessary –which contributes both to mitigating the effect of rejection or refutation and to focusing on the speaker's surprise towards an activated situation. This is clearly observed in (52), extracted from Google Books.

(52) *El Pintado se volvió y vió á D. Nicolás Angulo, el Matemático ó el Caballero, como mejor queramos.*
'The Pintado turned and looked at D. Nicolás Angulo, the mathematician or the knight, as we prefer'
-*¡Cómo! ¿Usted por aquí, D. Nicolás? dijo el Pintado*
'What!? I can't believe that you are here, Don Nicolás, said the Pintado'
(Google Books, El bazar, p. 46).

*¡Cómo!* 'what' in (52) conveys the speaker's surprise towards a situation that has just been activated and of which the speaker appears as the main witness. The negative effect has disappeared too. The interjective –mirative particle– *cómo* 'what' is not then restricted to the speaker's refutation of an addressee's previous proposition nor does it always imply the speaker's negative attitude. In syntactic terms, as illustrated in (41)-(42), *cómo* 'what' further emancipates (Mithun 2008) here from the sentence structure and enters the category of resources that regulates interaction (Heine 2023); that is, it now operates at the level managing the relation of the speaker with the utterance, with the addressee and with the communicative situation.

# 5 Conclusions

As shown throughout the article, *como* 'how / as / if' / *cómo* 'how' is a very productive constituent in the grammar of Spanish. Even in ancient stages of the language, it could occur in reason interrogatives not only to seek the manner in which the main predicate happened (a predicate-bound variable), but also to ask for the cause of an event itself that is beyond the speaker's expectations (a situation-bound variable). This type of interrogatives already existed in Latin and they seemed to replicate in different Romance languages. The pattern also seems productive in other language-families. These reason-how questions relate to the speaker's negative attitude and posit a quotative nature, since they are conceived as a reacting utterance that rejects or refuses a previous (addressee's) proposition,

which explains that, in the case of Spanish, they usually co-occur with linguistic mechanisms explicitly conveying a reportative meaning (*cómo que* 'how that') or a distance sense (*cómo* 'how' + <*ir a* 'going to'+ infinitive). This sense of counter-expectation, understood as refutation or discursive rejection, overlaps with mirativity and can even fall under the array of meanings outlined by Aikhenvald (2012), although its status either as grammatical meaning or as discursive effect remains controversial (see Cifuentes Honrubia and Mari and Russo in this volume).

The interjective –mirative particle– *cómo* 'what', however, goes a step further. On the one hand, in semantic terms, it moves forwards until the very mirative core established by Aikhenvald (2012), in the sense that it falls outside both the reportative value and the negative sense to convey just the speaker's surprise towards a recently activated situation; that is, the mirative, interjective *cómo* 'what' may express the speaker's surprise conceived as sudden realization. Besides, this use can be semantically distinguished from the *wh*-constituent that occurs in the exclamative constructions. On the other hand, in grammatical terms, the status of *cómo* 'what' has also changed. From being a *wh*-interrogative constituent, it has become a discourse particle or an interjection; that is, it has moved from sentence grammar to the grammar of interaction through a process of cooptation –i.e., a mechanism through which any sentence-constituent can be extracted from its original environment to play a role in interaction, and to convey not a restricted meaning, but an evaluating one which is based on the speaker's attitudes, shared knowledge and the relations between participants (Kaltenböck, Heine and Kuteva 2011: 857; Heine, Kaltenböck, Kuteva and Long 2013: 173–174; Heine 2023: 267–278).

The path taken by *cómo* 'how / what', thus, overlaps with mirativity at different stages. The status within the category of its final stop (the mirative, interjective *cómo* 'what') depends in some way on the conception of grammar at stake. If grammar is comprehensively conceived not just as an inventory of conventionalized units (Langacker 2008), but as an interactional approach that allows for analyzing language in use (Heine 2023), then *cómo* 'what' can legitimately form part of the grammatical core of mirativity.

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Carolina González & Lara Reglero

# 6 Mirativity in wh-in-situ questions in Spanish

**Abstract:** This study compares the prosodic and segmental characteristics of mirative and information seeking wh-in-situ questions in Spanish (MIR and INF respectively). Both question types share syntactic and prosodic similarities, including a sentence-final wh-in-situ word and a melodic contour consisting of an initial rise, a medial declination, and a steep final rise. The acoustic analysis of elicitation data from 14 native speakers of Spanish also reveals prosodic and segmental differences among both question types. Specifically, MIR wh-in-situ questions have a significantly more elevated high pitch and nuclear tonal range than INF questions, and a final rise much steeper than in INF questions, consistent with final upstepping (¡H%). In addition, there are durational and Voice Onset Time (VOT) differences for the wh-word onset, both of which are significantly longer in MIR questions than in INF questions. We suggest that longer duration and longer VOT of the onset in wh-words in MIR questions might be connected to the phonological realization of mirative focus, together with an extra high peak and focal tonal range. Alternatively, it might be a case of boundary lengthening indicating an intermediate prosodic break at the end of MIR wh-in-situ questions.

**Keywords:** Intonation, prosody, wh-in-situ, mirative focus, new information focus

## 1 Introduction

In Spanish, wh-questions tend to be fronted (1a), but wh-in-situ questions are also common (1b), particularly if conveying unexpectedness or surprise: The latter can be considered to have a mirative reading. The present study examines the prosodic and segmental characteristics of mirative wh-in-situ questions in Spanish (henceforth MIR), comparing them to neutral in-situ questions requesting new information (henceforth INF).

(1) a. *¿Qué* *dijo* *Maialen?*
What say.PST.3SG Maialen
'What did Maialen say?'
b. *¿Maialen* *dijo* *qué?*

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The wh-phrase in INF and MIR wh-in-situ questions has focus, i.e. the information center of the sentence (Chomsky 1971; Horvath 1986; Rochemont 1986; Tuller 1992; Zubizarreta 1998; Escandell Vidal 1999; Badan & Crocco 2019). Prosodically, focused constituents tend to stand out over non-focused ones. In Spanish and other languages, focused elements can be realized as independent intonational units (Gutiérrez-Bravo 2008). Often, a high intermediate boundary tone (H-) occurs before the focused constituent (Hualde 2014: 268–270; Hualde & Prieto 2015). In addition, non-focused constituents tend to have reduced pitch range (see for example de la Mota 1997; Face 2002). Focused constituents might also carry the main prominence of the sentence (as Badan & Crocco 2019 show for mirative questions in Italian) and be associated with specific intonational contours (Huttenlauch et al. 2016).

We frame our study within the Auto-Segmental (AM) model of intonation that considers that intonation is connected to stressed syllables and phonological boundaries (most commonly intonational phrases; Pierrehumbert 1980; Pierrehumbert & Beckman 1988; Ladd 2008). We follow the prosodic labeling conventions of the Spanish Tones and Break Indices framework (Sp_ToBI; Estebas-Vilaplana & Prieto 2009; Prieto & Roseano 2010; Hualde & Prieto 2015, among others). Under this system, the last main stress of an utterance carries the nuclear pitch; other stressed syllables have prenuclear accents. The edges of certain phonological constituents are marked with boundary tones. In Spanish, boundary tones occur at the end of full intonational phrases (IPs) and at the end of intermediate phrases (ips). Tones can be low (L), high (H), and mid (M); bitonal and tritonal tones arise through their combination. Pitch accents ("tones") associated with stressed syllables are indicated with *; with intermediate phrases, with -, and with full intonation phrases, with % (Aguilar et al. 2009).

Figure 1 provides an example of prosodic annotation for a neutral information seeking wh-in-situ question. The first prenuclear accent, on the stressed syllable of the word *pequeña* 'small', is rising, with the peak aligned with the post-tonic syllable (L+>H*). The second prenuclear accent on the verb *vio* 'saw' is low (L*); so is the nuclear accent on *qué* 'what'. The final IP boundary is high (H%); there is no intermediate phrase.

Most wh-questions in Spanish begin with "c" (*cuándo* 'when', *cómo* 'how') or "q" (*qué* 'what', *quién* 'who'); both graphemes correspond to the voiceless velar stop consonant /k/. In addition to comparing the prosody of mirative and information-seeking wh-questions, our study also examines various durational measures associated with consonants in prosodically prominent positions. One of them is consonantal duration, which is reportedly longer in stressed syllables compared to unstressed syllables, both in Spanish (Quilis 1981; Borzone de Manrique & Signorini 1983; Lavoie 2001) and more generally across languages (González 2003, 2018). Another durational measurement is voice onset time or VOT, i.e., the time that elapses from

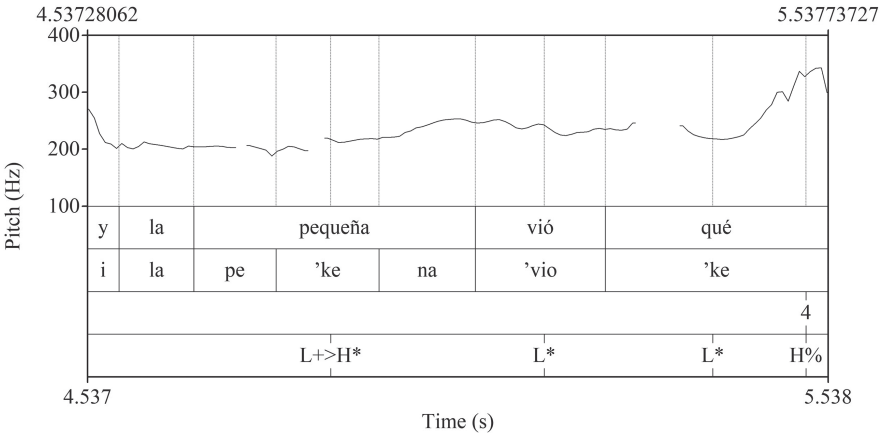


**Figure 1:** Spanish ToBI annotation for *¿Y la pequeña vio qué?* 'And the little girl saw what?' (INF interpretation, participant 22).

the release of a stop consonant and the vibration of the vocal folds for the following vowel (Castañeda 1986; Rosner et al. 2000; Asensi et al. 2009, among others). For English, several studies observe longer VOT in stressed syllables (see for example Lisker & Abranson 1964; Turk 1993; Lavoie 2001). Some studies show that this is the case for Spanish too (see for example Castañeda 1986; cf. Simonet et al 2014). Since prosodically prominent contexts such as stressed and phrase-initial syllables are conducive to increased duration and hyper-articulation (de Jong 1995; Cho & Keating 2009; Cole et al. 2003), we examine whether this also occurs in mirative and new-information questions in Spanish, since both appear to be associated with prosodic prominence (Zubizarreta 1998; González & Reglero 2023).

This paper is organized as follows. In Section 2, we discuss the relationship between Focus and wh-in-situ, in particular the association of MIR with mirative Focus, and of INF with new information focus. In Section 3, we introduce the methodology employed in our experimental study. Section 4 presents the findings of our study, and Section 5 provides a discussion and conclusion.

# 2 Focus and Spanish wh-in-situ

## 2.1 Focus types

Focus, the information center of a sentence (Chomsky 1971), is usually analyzed according to two main dimensions: Size and meaning (Gussenhoven 2007). Accord-

ing to its size, focus can be classified as "broad" (the whole sentence is focused), or "narrow" (only one constituent, or part of a sentence is focused). Regarding its meaning, there is a well-known distinction between "new information focus" and "contrastive focus" (Kiss 1998). New information focus corresponds to the non-presupposed part of a sentence (Chomsky 1971, 1976; Jackendoff 1972; Zubizarreta 1998), whereas "contrastive focus" negates the value of a variable and introduces a new value for it (Kiss 1998; Zubizarreta 1998) (see examples (2b) and (4b) below).

This paper focuses on the meaning dimension of focus, examining the intonational characteristics of "new information" and "mirative focus" in wh-in-situ questions in Spanish. For "new information focus", we use the question-answer test to elicit the new information of a sentence. As shown in (2), in Spanish, *una tontería* ' a silly thing' is the new information in (2b), as it answers the question in (2a) (note that focused information is marked with F in the examples). Based on the context provided by the question, *Maialen* said something (presupposed information), but we don't know exactly what (new information).

(2) a. *¿Qué dijo Maialen?*
What say.PST.3SG Maialen
'What did Maialen say?'
b. *Maialen dijo [$_F$ una tontería].*
Maialen say.PST.3SG a silly.thing
'Maialen said a silly thing'

As extensively discussed in the Spanish literature (Zubizarreta 1998; Gutiérrez-Bravo 2008; López 2009), "new information focus" in Spanish appears rightmost, to receive nuclear stress.[1] In the more complex example in (3), (3b) is ungrammatical because the new information does not appear in the rightmost position in the linear string, in contrast to (3c) and (3d) (note that the prosodic boundary # in (3d) makes *una tontería* ' a silly thing' rightmost).

(3) a. *¿Qué dijo Maialen en clase?*
What say.PST.3SG Maialen in class
'What did Maialen say in class?'

1 We follow Zubizarreta's (1998) judgments in this paper but see Ortega-Santos (2016) for a review of experimental work showing dialectal variation (for example, in Argentinian Spanish, Mexican Spanish or Southern Iberian Spanish).

b. **Maialen dijo [$_F$ una tontería] en clase.*
Maialen say.PST.3SG a silly.thing in class
'Maialen said a silly thing in class'
c. *Maialen dijo en clase [$_F$ una tontería].*
d. *Maialen dijo [$_F$ una tontería] # en clase.*

"Contrastive focus" is characterized by the presence of a context statement, rather than a question-answer pair. Provided the context statement in (4a), *una tontería* 'a silly thing' (indicated in capital letters) is contrastively focused in (4b). Note that the position of the contrastively focused element is free, as opposed to "new information focus" (Zubizarreta 1998).

(4) a. *Maialen dijo una mentira en clase.*
Maialen say.PST.3SG a lie in class
'Maialen told a lie in class'
b. *Maialen dijo [$_F$ UNA TONTERÍA] en clase (no una mentira)*
Maialen say.PST.3SG a silly.thing in class NEG a lie
'María said a silly thing in class (not a lie)'

Even though "new information focus" and "contrastive focus" in Spanish have received quite a bit of attention in the literature (see for example Zubizarreta 1998; Gutiérrez-Bravo 2008; López 2009), Jiménez-Fernández (2015a, b) proposes a three-way distinction when it comes to the focus system in Spanish. In particular, he argues for a distinction between "new information focus", "contrastive focus" and "mirative focus" (this proposal is based on work by Cruschina (2012) for Italian). The concept of "mirative focus" was first coined by Cruschina (2012), inspired by the notion of "mirativity" in DeLancey (1997, 2001), that is, the universal semantic category marking sentences that report information that is unexpected or surprising to the speaker. An example of "mirative focus" in Spanish is provided below in the context of focus fronting (following convention, "mirative focus" is indicated in capital letters as well).[2]

(5) *¡No me lo puedo creer! ¡TRES TROZOS DE TARTA*
NEG CL CL can.PRS.1SG believe Three pieces of cake
*se ha comido Ángela!*
CL AUX eaten Ángela
'I can't believe it! THREE PIECES OF CAKE Ángela ate!'
(Jiménez-Fernández 2015a: 52)

2 For a semantic discussion of this phenomenon, see Cruschina (2019).

In order to test for the mirative nature of a constituent in a given sentence, Jiménez-Fernández (2015a) proposes to add the sequence *pero eso no me sorprende* 'but that doesn't surprise me'. In contexts with mirative focus, this would lead to a pragmatic anomaly, as indicated by # in (6).

(6) *Creía que no tenían nada de dinero y mira: ¡AL*
think that NEG have nothing of money and look to.the
*CARIBE se van de luna de miel! # Pero eso no*
Caribbean CL go of moon of honey but that NEG
*me sorprende.*
CL surprise
'I thought that they had no money at all and look: They are going to the Caribbean for their honeymoon! But that doesn't surprise me'.
(Jiménez-Fernández 2015a: 52)

As observed in the dialogue in (7), this is not the case for "contrastive focus", as *pero eso no me sorprende* 'but that doesn't surprise me' is perfectly acceptable with this focus type.

(7) A *Si he entendido bien, se han ido a México.*
if AUX understood well CL AUX gone to Mexico
'If I understood correctly, they went to Mexico'
B No, ¡Te equivocas! ¡A CUBA se han ido de viaje de
NEG CL be.wrong to Cuba CL AUX gone of trip of
novios! ¡No a México! pero eso no me sorprende.
couple NEG to Mexico but that NEG CL surprise
'No you are mistaken! They went TO CUBA for their honeymoon! Not to Mexico! But that doesn't surprise me'.
(Jiménez-Fernández 2015a: 52)

## 2.2 Focus and wh-in-situ questions

In wh-questions, wh-phrases carry the main focus of the sentence, regardless of whether they are fronted or in-situ (Horvath 1986; Rochemont 1986; Tuller 1992; Escandell Vidal 1999). As INF in situ questions elicit new information and can be used in out-of-the-blue contexts, Reglero (2007) and Reglero & Ticio (2013) argue

that they are associated with "new information focus".[3] As shown in (8), a phrase that is used to elicit completely new information, such as *dime una cosa* 'tell me something' is compatible with INF in situ questions (Reglero & Ticio 2013).

(8) *Dime una cosa: ¿Maialen dijo qué?*
tell.me.IMP one thing Maialen say.PST.3SG what
'Tell me something: What did Maialen say?'

Additionally, INF in situ wh-phrases need to appear rightmost in the linear string (9), a property characteristic of "new information focus" (compare with (3) above; Zubizarreta 1998; Gutiérrez-Bravo 2008; López 2009).

(9) a. *¿Maialen le contó un cuento a quién?*
Maialen CL.DAT.3SG tell.PST.3SG a story to who
'Who did Maialen tell a story?'
b. **¿Maialen le contó a quién un cuento?*
c. *¿Maialen le contó a quién # un cuento?*

In contrast to INF, MIR in situ questions require heavy contextualization (10), and the position of the wh-phrase does not need to be rightmost, as in (11). Based on these properties, Reglero & Ticio (2013) argued that in situ wh-phrases in mirative contexts are associated with "contrastive focus" (compare with (4) above; Zubizarreta 1998).[4]

(10) Speaker 1: *Maialen dijo que se sabía "El Quijote"*
Maialen say.PST.3SG that CL.3SG know.PST.3SG the Quijote
*de memoria.*
of memory
'Maialen said that she knew "Don Quixote" by heart'

3 See Uribe-Etxebarria (2002) for a proposal in which in situ wh-questions in Spanish have "contrastive focus".

4 According to Reglero & Ticio (2013), this claim applies to in situ echo questions with both mirative/surprise and repetition readings. Reglero & Ticio (2013) did not consider the possibility of "mirative focus" for the surprise reading as it was proposed and discussed later for Spanish (Jiménez-Fernández 2015a, b).

Speaker 2: *No me lo puedo creer: ¿Maialen dijo QUÉ?*
NEG CL.1SG CL.ACC.3SG can believe.INF Maialen say.PST.3SG what
'I can't believe it: Maialen said WHAT?'

(11) *¿Maialen le contó a QUIÉN un cuento?*
Maialen CL.DAT.3SG tell.PTS.3SG to who a story
'Maialen told a story to WHO?'

However, in situ MIR questions are not compatible with a sequence such as *pero eso no me sorprende* 'but that doesn't surprise me' (12), which indicates that these in situ questions are not compatible with "contrastive focus" (compare with (6) above; Jiménez-Fernández 2015a).

(12) Speaker 1: *Maialen dijo que se sabía "El Quijote" de memoria.*
Maialen say.PST.3SG that CL.3SG know.PST.3sg the Quijote of memory
'Maialen said that she knew "Don Quixote" by heart'
Speaker 2: *No me lo puedo creer: ¿Maialen dijo QUÉ? # Pero eso no me sorprende.*
NEG CL.1SG CL.ACC.3SG can believe.INF Maialen say.PST.3SG what But that NEG CL surprise
'I can't believe it: Maialen said WHAT?' But that doesn't surprise me'

Furthermore, Badan & Crocco (2019) have recently proposed that Italian surprise echo questions (13a) carry "mirative focus". In particular, they argue that they convey a counter-expectational or surprise value. It is this unexpected/surprise context that triggers "mirative focus". Additionally, surprise echo questions in Italian differ from information-seeking wh-questions syntactically and prosodically. Syntactically, information-seeking wh-questions need to be fronted (13b), unlike mirative ones (13a). Prosodically, Italian MIR questions realize the main sentence prominence on the wh-phrase, while INF questions realize it on the verb. Furthermore, in MIR questions, the wh-phrase has an upstepped rising pitch accent (L+¡H*) and a wide tonal range, unlike INF questions. In addition, there is a rising intermediate boundary after wh-phrases in MIR questions, but not in INF questions.

(13) a. *Le vendono DOVE le mandorle?*
CL sell.PRS.3PL where the almonds
'They sell (them) where the almonds?'
b. *Dove vendono le mandorle?*
Where sell.PRS.3PL the almonds
'Where do they sell the almonds?'
(Badan & Crocco 2019: 47)

Based on the previous evidence, we follow González & Reglero (2023) and extend Badan & Crocco's (2019) account of Italian surprise echo questions. We propose that MIR in situ questions in Spanish also carry "mirative focus".

## 3 Methodology

The data for the study was collected in Summer 2015 in the Phonetics laboratory at the University of Deusto in Spain. A total of 22 participants were recruited to take part in both a reading and elicitation task, conducted entirely in Spanish; this part of the study focuses on 14 of these participants. Participant sessions lasted approximately 1 hour, and all participants were compensated for their participation in the study.

Participants where bilingual in Spanish and Basque; they were selected for the study since Basque Spanish is a Spanish dialect where wh-in-situ questions can have neutral information-seeking readings (another one is Mexican Spanish) (Jiménez 1997; Uribe-Etxebarria 2002; Etxepare & Uribe-Etxebarria 2005; Reglero 2007; Reglero & Ticio 2013, among others). Table 1 provides information about each participant's hometown in addition to their Bilingual Language Profile (BLP) scores (Birdsong et al. 2012). Positive scores indicate Spanish dominance, negative scores signal Basque dominance, and scores of 0 equal dominance in both languages. As observed in Table 1, all participants were Spanish dominant except for three, which were Basque dominant.

This part of the study focuses on the elicitation task, which was conducted via an interactive powerpoint that embedded auditory and visual input for participants to react to. The task involved several sentence types: Statements, yes-no questions, fronted wh-questions, and wh-in-situ questions with informational, repetition and mirative meanings. We focus here on wh-in-situ questions from this task (INF and MIR); examples of these questions and their contexts are reproduced in (14–15) below.

**Table 1:** Participants and BLP scores.

| | Dominance score | Spanish Score | Basque Score | Town |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| P15 | 168 | 199 | 31 | Santurtxi |
| P11 | 155 | 190 | 35 | Leioa |
| P9 | 123 | 209 | 86 | Trapagaran |
| P22 | 85 | 161 | 76 | Galdakao |
| P8 | 80 | 177 | 97 | Bilbao |
| P1 | 76 | 201 | 125 | Leioa |
| P5 | 51 | 182 | 131 | Sopelana |
| P21 | 49 | 178 | 129 | Barakaldo |
| P4 | 38 | 201 | 163 | Sopelana |
| P20 | 26 | 180 | 154 | Galdakao |
| P13 | 14 | 176 | 162 | Sopelana |
| P14 | –2 | 170 | 172 | Arrankudiaga |
| P7 | –5 | 188 | 193 | Durango |
| P3 | –40 | 159 | 199 | Gorliz |

(14) Information-seeking context

a. Esta mañana, María, Olivia y Amaia han ido juntas a comprar flores. María ha comprado claveles. Olivia tulipanes. Para preguntar por Amaia, una posibilidad sería decir: ¿Y qué ha comprado Amaia?¿Cuál sería la otra manera de decirlo?
*'This morning, María, Olivia and Amaia have gone out together to buy flowers. María has bought carnations. Olivia has bought tulips. To ask about Amaia, one possibility would be to say: And where did Amaia buy? What would be another way to ask this question?'*

b. Expected answer

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *¿Y* | *Amaia* | *ha* | *comprado* | *qué?* |
| and | Amaia | AUX | buy.PTCP | what |

'And what did Amaia buy?'

(15) Mirative reading context

a. Entras en casa y tu madre y tu hermana te dicen: "Papá quiere comprarse un unicornio." Te sorprende mucho lo que te han dicho. Hazles una pregunta para comprobar qué quiere comprarse tu padre.
*'You get home and your mom and your sister say to you: "Dad wants to buy a unicorn". You are surprised by what they just said. Ask them a question to double-check what your dad wants to buy.'*

b. Expected answer

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *¿Papá* | *quiere* | *comprarse* | *QUÉ?* |
| dad | want.PRS.3SG | buy.INF | what |

'Dad wants to buy WHAT?'

A total of 280 target sentences was analyzed (20 questions x 14 participants). All sentences were segmented and coded manually in *Praat* following Spanish ToBi conventions (Aguilar et al. 2009; Estebas Vilaplana & Prieto 2009). Data was recorded with a Tascam DR-05 digital recorder with omni-directional microphones at 44,000 Hz (wav, mono). As indicated in Section 1, we analyzed both prosodic and segmental characteristics of wh-in-situ sentences. For the former, we examined each sentence's melodic contour, highest tonal peak, nuclear contour (i.e., the final pitch movement of the sentence, comprising the last pitch accent or "nuclear stress" and the final boundary tone) and focal tonal range (i.e., the difference between the highest and lowest pitch in the wh-in-situ questions). These results are discussed in detail in González & Reglero (2023); we summarize them in Section 4, since they are connected to the segmental analysis of this part of the study.

Examples of the prosodic analysis for INF and MIR in-situ questions are given in Figures 2 and 3 below. The melodic curve of the INF question in Figure 2 displays an initial rise up to the verb *sube* 'goes up', followed by a slight medial fall and a steep final rise during the wh-in-situ word. This melodic pattern was the most frequently attested one for both INF and MIR wh-in-situ questions in our study. The INF question in Figure 2 shows a rising nuclear contour (L* H%); the highest pitch occurs sentence-finally, reaching 336 Hz. The focal tonal range is 149 Hz (336 Hz-187 Hz), corresponding to 10.2 semitones.

An example of a mirative wh-in-situ question from the same participant is shown in Figure 3. This is a slightly longer sentence compared to those in Figures 1 and 2; its melodic curve follows mostly the initial rise, medial fall and steep final rise observed in most wh-in-situ questions analyzed, but also includes an additional, small medial rise throughout the verb *volando* 'flying'. The highest pitch occurs sentence-finally, reaching 412 Hz. The focal tonal range is 235 Hz (412 Hz-177 Hz), corresponding to 14.6 semitones. The nuclear contour involves an upstepped rise (L+H*↑H%).

Pitch measurements across speakers and sentence types are given in Hz and semitones (ST); the latter normalizes pitch across speakers and wh-contexts. Following Rietveld & Gussenhoven (1985), Toledo (2000) and Pàmies-Bertrán et al. (2002), the threshold needed for a pitch difference to be perceived is 1.5 ST.

The segmental measurements we examine include the duration of the wh-word relative to sentence duration (following Chung 2012; cf. Navarro Tomás 1918; De la Mota 1997; Face 2000, 2001). For example, in Figure 2 the wh-word has a duration

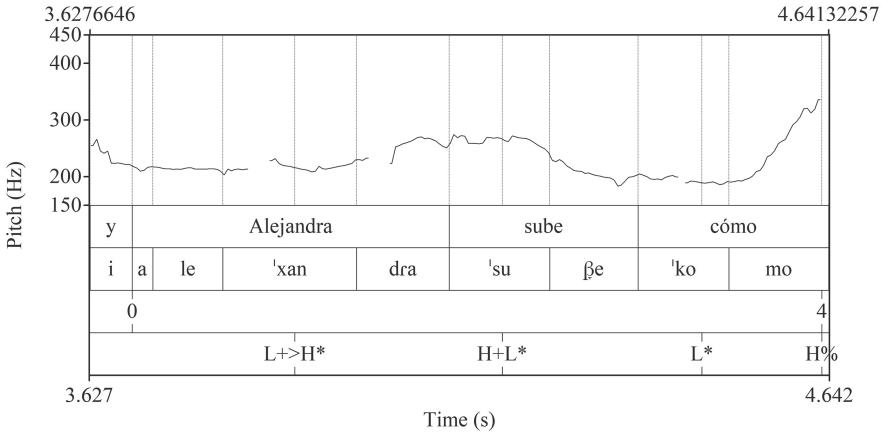


**Figure 2:** INF wh-in-situ question: *¿Y Alejandra sube cómo?* 'And Alejandra goes up how?' (participant 22).[5]

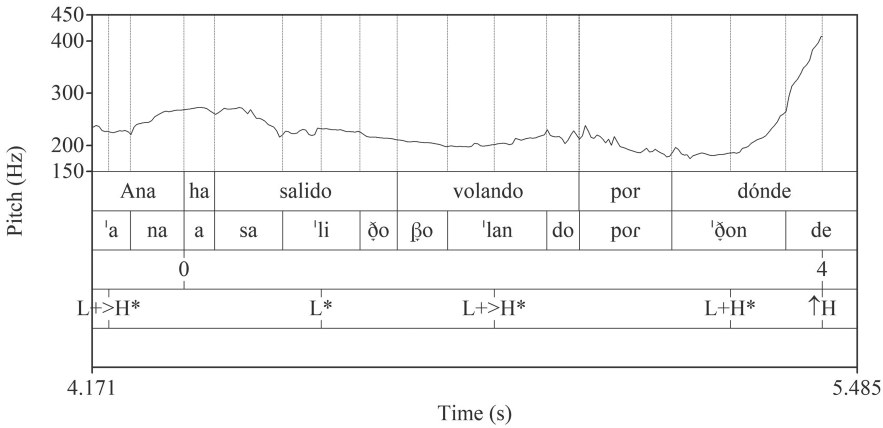


**Figure 3:** MIR wh-in-situ question: *¿Ana ha salido volando por dónde?* 'Ana has gone out flying from where?' (participant 22).

of 263 ms., while in Figure 3, the wh-word is 320 ms. long. They correspond to 26% and 24% of the sentence duration, respectively. We also examine the duration of wh-onset /k/ and its VOT (see Section 1).

5 Following Spanish ToBI conventions, a 0 in the annotating tier indicates that two words are pronounced as a single prosodic word; and a 4 indicates the final boundary of an IP.

# 4 Results

## 4.1 Summary of prosodic results

As reported in González & Reglero (2023), all MIR questions and 84% of INF questions show a melodic pattern involving a rise through the syllable following the first pre-nuclear accent; medial declination (i.e., pitch lowering) up to the wh-phrase; and a steep final rise, as shown in Figures 1–3.

The highest pitch in MIR wh-in-situ questions was significantly more elevated compared to INF questions. Specifically, MIR wh-in-situ questions had a final high pitch 44 Hz (2.1 ST) higher on average than for INF questions. This surpasses the perceptual threshold of 1.5 ST (T'hart 1981). The nuclear tonal range was also significantly more elevated in MIR than INF questions, with an average difference of 52 Hz (2.9 ST). This also surpasses the perceptual threshold. Finally, both INF and MIR wh-in-situ questions tend to show rising nuclear configurations. The nuclear pitch tends to be either low (L*) or rising (L+H*), with the pitch continuing to rise steeply throughout the end of the sentence (H%). MIR questions have an overall final rise much steeper than in INF questions, consistent with final upstepping (¡H%) (González & Reglero 2023).

## 4.2 Segmental results

Durational averages for the participants in the study are shown in Table 2. First, wh-words are slightly longer in INF wh-in-situ questions than in MIR questions, averaging 25% and 22% of the total sentence duration. A dependent paired t-test shows that the difference is not significant ($p > .5$).

For wh-words beginning with /k/, there is a 16 ms. difference between its duration in INF contexts (84 ms. on average) and MIR contexts (with an average of 101 ms.). This difference is significant (paired t-test; $p = 0.001$). All participants but two show this pattern: P7 has a comparable duration for /k/ in both contexts, and P11 a shorter /k/ in MIR contexts. To normalize these results across participants and wh-word types, we divided the duration of /k/ over the duration of the whole wh-word. On average, /k/ accounts for 33% of the duration of wh-words in MIR questions, compared to 29% in INF questions. Most participants show this pattern, except for P7, P9, P20 and P22, who show comparable results across both question types.

Finally, we find that the voice onset time for /k/ (the time from stop burst to onset of voicing), is on average 42 ms. long in MIR questions, compared to 34 ms. long in INF questions. This 8 ms. difference is significant (paired t-test: $p$=.001). All

participants show this pattern, except for P22, who displays longer VOT values in INF questions.

**Table 2:** Durational measurements.

| | Relative wh-word duration | | Duration of wh-onset /k/ | | Relative duration of wh-onset /k/ | | VOT of wh-onset /k/ | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **INF** | **MIR** | **INF** | **MIR** | **INF** | **MIR** | **INF** | **MIR** |
| P1 | 25% | 24% | 94 ms | 141 ms | 33% | 45% | 48 ms | 69 ms |
| P3 | 25% | 25% | 81 ms | 127 ms | 25% | 38% | 32 ms | 45 ms |
| P4 | 26% | 23% | 79 ms | 100 ms | 26% | 28% | 34 ms | 39 ms |
| P5 | 25% | 19% | 89 ms | 108 ms | 33% | 42% | 30 ms | 46 ms |
| P7 | 22% | 22% | 79 ms | 78 ms | 31% | 28% | 21 ms | 31 ms |
| P8 | 24% | 22% | 91 ms | 110 ms | 28% | 38% | 26 ms | 33 ms |
| P9 | 28% | 23% | 85 ms | 90 ms | 29% | 28% | 31 ms | 35 ms |
| P11 | 27% | 17% | 99 ms | 91 ms | 28% | 29% | 43 ms | 48 ms |
| P13 | 25% | 24% | 84 ms | 108 ms | 28% | 35% | 37 ms | 45 ms |
| P14 | 26% | 20% | 91 ms | 112 ms | 31% | 38% | 34 ms | 46 ms |
| P15 | 27% | 24% | 79 ms | 83 ms | 24% | 25% | 31 ms | 36 ms |
| P20 | 24% | 23% | 84 ms | 89 ms | 32% | 30% | 37 ms | 48 ms |
| P21 | 25% | 24% | 69 ms | 95 ms | 23% | 28% | 33 ms | 46 ms |
| P22 | 24% | 21% | 74 ms | 75 ms | 29% | 28% | 33 ms | 26 ms |
| Overall | 25% | 22% | 84 ms. | 101 ms. | 29% | 33% | 34 ms | 42 ms |

# 5 Discussion and conclusion

As reported in González & Reglero (2023), MIR and INF wh-in-situ questions differ prosodically. Specifically, MIR questions have significantly higher nuclear peaks and nuclear tonal ranges than INF questions. In addition, the analysis of segmental characteristics of wh-phrases in these contexts shows significant duration differences as well: /k/ onsets in wh-questions are significantly longer and have longer VOTs in MIR contexts compared to INF.

The prosodic differences between MIR and INF are consistent with previous studies investigating differences between information-seeking or neutral questions and mirative ones in other question types. For example, in Catalan, Italian and Spanish, other types of information-seeking and counter-expectational questions reportedly differ in tonal contours and/or tonal range (Gili Favela et al. 2015; Prieto et al. 2015; Huttenlauch et al. 2016, among others). For questions similar to the ones we investigate, Badan & Crocco (2019) found that INF questions in Italian are most often fronted and have the main sentence prominence on the verb. In

contrast, MIR questions are not fronted and carry the main sentence prominence on the wh-phrase; the wh-word is also associated with its own intermediate phrase (see also Section 1).

To our knowledge, no previous study has investigated the segmental properties of questions with neutral and mirative focus. We would like to contextualize our results in view of the acoustic properties of velar stop /k/ in Spanish. Durationally, /k/ in Spanish tends to be around 90 ms. long (Lavoie 2000). The duration of /k/ in onset of INF wh-in-situ words is comparable (with an average of 84 ms. and a standard deviation of 8 ms.); for MIR, it is slightly longer (101 ms., with a standard deviation of 19 ms.).

The VOT for /k/ is around 26–35 ms. long on average in Peninsular Spanish; in stressed syllables VOT tends to be 1.5 ms. longer than in unstressed syllables (Castañeda 1986; Asensi et al. 1998). In onset of INF wh-in-situ words, the VOT for /k/ is on the long side (mean: 34 ms; st. dev: 7 ms.), but still falling mostly within the range reported in non-interrogative contexts. In MIR contexts, VOT is longer on average that previously reported measurements (mean: 42 ms; st. dev. 10 ms.); over half of the participants have extra-long VOT in this context.

Previous studies report that lengthening of the preceding syllable, particularly the vowel, is common before a prosodic boundary; this is referred to as "pre-boundary lengthening" (van Santen 1992; Wightman et al. 1992; Ladd 1996; Byrd 2000; Tabain 2003; Gussenhoven 2004; Hualde 2007; Rao 2010, inter al.). Longer duration and VOT of /k/ at the beginning of wh-words in MIR questions could be connected to the phonological realization of mirative focus, together with an extra high peak and focal tonal range. Alternatively, it might act as boundary lengthening, signaling an intermediate prosodic break before the wh-word in this question type. In either case, our study is the first to uncover segmental differences between information-seeking and mirative focus in Spanish.

Our next steps will involve the analysis of the intonation of the additional speakers in the study, and the examination of further correlates of focus. These include the presence of prosodic breaks before the wh-word, the duration of the preceding syllable, and the relative intensity of the wh-phrase (Chung 2012; Face 2001, 2002; Gryllia et al. 2016, inter al.). We will also compare the results from the elicitation task discussed here to those of the reading task.

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# Part 3: **Mirativity and the semantic implications of the contrary-to-expectations sense**

Caterina Mauri & Antonia Russo

# 7 The mirative values of Italian *altro che*

**Abstract:** The Italian linguistic construction [*altro che X*] (lit. 'other than X', also manifested as *altroché*) is attested in contemporary Italian with two mirative functions, "mirative rejection" and "mirative confirmation", respectively. Based on the CODIT corpus of Italian, this study aims to delineate the evolutionary trajectory of [*altro che X*] from its original meaning 'other than/different from' to its current mirative values of rejection and confirmation. Furthermore, it seeks to demonstrate that the mirative functions of [*altro che X*] are the culmination of a single diachronic pathway, prominently influenced by dialogic, corrective and exclamatory contexts. Finally, drawing from the diachronic evolution of [*altro che X*], this paper proposes an expanded interpretation of mirativity, encompassing not only surprise triggered by a specific entity or event (first-level mirativity), but also surprise triggered by some expectation regarding the validity or invalidity of an entity or event (second-level).

**Keywords:** Grammaticalization, Pragmatics, Italian, Correction, Mirativity

## 1 Introduction: Aims and scope

According to the literature, mirativity marks "that the speaker's mind was 'not prepared' for the information which is now being relayed" (DeLancey 1997: 36). In other words, mirativity consists in the explication, through more or less grammaticalized linguistic means, of surprise conceived as sudden discovery, sudden revelation or realization, unprepared mind, counter-expectation and new information (Aikhenvald 2012).[1]

**1** This article is the result of a continuous collaboration between the two authors. For the purposes of Italian academia, Caterina Mauri is responsible for Sections 1, 3.4, 3.5, 4; Antonia Russo is responsible for Sections 2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 5. We wish to thank two anonymous referees, Daniel van Olmen, and Susana Rodríguez Rosique for useful comments on a first version of the article. The research here presented was partly developed within the PRIN 2022 PNRR project "DiverSIta: diversity in spoken Italian", coordinated by Caterina Mauri (University of Bologna; MUR project code P2022RFR8T - CUP J53D23017320001). The project is funded by the European Union - NextGenerationEU with the The National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) - Mission 4 'Education and Research' - Component 2 'From Research to Business - Investment 1.1m Public Call PRIN 2022 NRRP published with the DDN. 1409 of 14.09/2022.

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Starting from this definition, we will argue that the Italian construction [*altro che X*], literally 'other than X', deriving from the meaning 'different from X', has acquired mirative values over the centuries. We will show that the mirativity expressed by this construction is different from the more prototypical examples of mirativity discussed in the literature, pointing to the relevance of expectations as sources of surprise. Let us consider some examples:

(1) *Lo stesso, ultimo tentativo del premier di*
DEF:M.SG same:M.SG last:M.SG attempt:M.SG of:DEF.M.SG premier of
*salvarsi con l' arrivo dei "voltagabbana"*
save:INF:REFL with DEF.M.SG arrival: M.SG of:DEF.M.PL turncoat
***(altro che responsabili!)*** *finisce con l' aggravare*
**altro che responsible:PL** end:PRS:3SG with DEF.M.SG aggravate:INF:REFL
*la crisi*
DEF.F.SG crisis:SG
'The same, last attempt of the premier to save himself with the arrival of the "turncoats" (**far from responsible!**) ends up aggravating the crisis' (ItTenTen20)

(2) ***Altro che*** *noia, la vela entusiasma i giovani*
**altro che** boredom DEF.F.SG sailing excite:PRS.3SG DEF.M.PL young.people
'**Far from/Forget** boredom, sailing excites young people' (ItTenTen20)

(3) ***Altro che*** *pucciosa... questa fa gonfiare il*
**altro che** cute :F.SG... this:F.SG make:PRS.3SG swell:INF DEF.M.SG
*mio cuoricino*
my:M.SG little.heart:M.SG
'**Other/more than** cute. . .this one makes my little heart swell'. (ItTenTen20)

(4) *Storia stupenda e finale perfetto* ***altroché!!***
story:F.SG amazing:F.SG and final:SG perfect:M.SG **altroché!!**
'Wonderful story and perfect final, **no doubt**!' (ItTenTen20)

We argue that in these examples [*altro che X*] (or *altroché*) has a mirative value, because it conveys some surprise by the speaker (DeLancey 1997). If we look at example (1), we indeed see that the speaker not only rejects the idea of responsibility connected to the politicians at issue, but they also appear to be surprised by the fact that anybody could have considered them (i.e. the turncoats) as responsible. In this case, it is clear that the speaker has a completely opposite opinion, in fact the example could be paraphrased as "other than responsible, all the opposite!". A similar and more explicit example is the one in (2): in this case [*altro che X*] is used to reject what was previously said/

inferred from the context, conveying a certain surprise at the fact that someone might have thought that sailing bores young people. The rejection is then strengthened by a diametrically opposite position, i.e. sailing excites young people.

The two points of view in (2) occupy different positions along an argumentative scale and contribute to different argumentative directions (Ducrot 1980): the first argues against the enthusiasm of young people for sailing, while the second argues in favor. The speaker presents both arguments because they are both deemed as relevant in the context, but the second one is positioned at a higher level on the scale and thus exhibits greater argumentative strength (cf. Birkelund 2012: 7).

In example (2), the rejected element and its substitution are both made explicit in the utterance, and the same occurs in example (3). Yet, in the latter the alternatives connected by [*altro che X*] contribute to the same argumentative direction. They are indeed not opposite to each other, but rather constitute different degrees along the same semantic scale of appreciation. Both *cute* and *makes my little heart swell* attribute a positive evaluation to a certain State of Affairs (SoA), but the latter (*makes my little heart swell*) is positioned at a higher degree of positive emphasis, thereby reinforcing the positive evaluation already expressed by the adjective *cute*. In this case, therefore, [*altro che X*] is not used to convey an opposition, but is rather employed to reinforce the speaker's position and, at the same time, to convey a certain surprise at the fact that someone might have considered the object in question *only* cute, and not something more.

Finally, in example (4) we observe the use of *altroché*, that is, the univerbized form of *altro che*, attested in Italian as a strategy of confirmation. The speaker is not only reinforcing their illocutionary stance, but they are also somehow surprised and seem to add between the lines "how could anybody doubt that the story was wonderful??". As we shall see, this usage represents the last stage in the diachronic evolution of [*altro che X*] and shows a conventionalization, both at a semantic and syntactic level, of the reinforcing value of this construction already present in cases like (3).

Although surprise is clearly perceptible in the examples just discussed, what exactly works as surprise trigger is not straightforward. This paper has two major aims. First of all, based on the diachronic corpus of Italian CODIT, we will identify the successive stages that led [*altro che X*] from the original meaning of 'other than/different from' (Gianollo & Mauri 2020) to the rejective and confirmative mirative values just discussed. We will show that the mirative uses of [*altro che X*] are the outcome of a single diachronic trajectory, in which dialogicity and exclamative contexts play a central role.

Second, we will also question the identification of the surprise trigger within mirative [*altro che X*] constructions and we will address the issue of the *locus* of surprise, proposing a second-level mirativity type, rooted in the acknowledgment of some unexpected validity belief, rather than in the acknowledgment of some

unexpected SoA. We will indeed argue that the speaker's surprise may be triggered by (i) the sudden realization that a given entity or event holds true, but also (ii) by the sudden realization of some (wrong) *expectation* that a given entity or event could hold (or not hold) true (i.e., surprise at a validity expectation).

The article is structured as follows. Section 2 presents the corpora used for data collection and the methodology adopted for the analysis. Section 3 is dedicated to the analysis of the data, in order to illustrate the successive diachronic stages through which [*altro che X*] developed the functions attested in contemporary Italian. Section 4 focuses on the concept of mirativity, both in general and in relation to the construction under examination. Finally, Section 5 will draw some conclusions, summarizing the most relevant results drawn from this work.

## 2 Data and methods

Our main source of data was the CODIT corpus (*COrpus Diacronico dell'ITaliano* 'Diachronic corpus of Italian', Micheli 2021), which includes texts from the 13th century to the 20th century. It contains about 29 million tokens and it is structured into five subcorpora depending on the chronological period. The periodization follows that adopted for the MIDIA corpus (see Iacobini, De Rosa & Schirato 2017) and is based on important linguistic and social facts of Italian history" (Micheli 2022: 2).

The first step of the diachronic analysis was to delimit the object of our study. From the origins, the construction [*altro che X*] was indeed used not only with the meaning of 'other than/different from X' but also (and very frequently), with an exceptive value 'unless/except X' in both negative (5) and positive (6) sentences:

(5) *Non mi ricorda d' avere né udito né*
NEG 1SG.DAT recall:PRS.3SG of AUX:INF neither hear:PRTC.PST nor
*letto che segno di vittoria Cristo si*
read:PRTC.PST that sign:M.SG of victory:F.SG Christ REFL
*portasse al limbo* ***altro che*** *lo splendore*
bring:SBJV.PST:3SG to:DEF.M.SG limbo **altro che** DEF.M.SG splendour:SG
*della sua divinità*
of:DEF.F.SG her F.SG divinity:F.SG

'I do not recall having neither heard nor read that Christ took any sign of victory to limbo **other than** the splendour of his divinity' (Giovanni Boccaccio, *Esposizioni sopra la Comedia di Dante,* 14th cent.)

(6) *Tancredi, serbati coteste lagrime a meno disiderata*
Tancredi save:IMP:2SG this:F.PL tear:F.PL to less desired:F.SG
*fortuna che questa, né a me le dare, che*
luck F.SG that this:F.SG nor to me DEF.F.PL give:INF that
*non le desidero. Chi vide mai alcuno* ***altro che***
NEG them desire:PRS.1SG who see:PST.PFV.3SG ever anyone **altro che**
*te piangere di quello che egli ha voluto?*
you weep:INF of what M.SG that **he** AUX.IND.PRS.3SG want:PRTC.PST
'Tancredi, save these tears for less desirable fortune than this, nor give them to me, for I do not desire them. Who ever saw anyone **but** you weep for what he wished?' (Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron*, 14th cent.)

We decided to exclude such occurrences from our diachronic dataset, which in the end consists of 479 occurrences of [*altro che X*], from the 13th to the 20th centuries (see Table 1), and includes all usages of *altro che* (also in its univerbized form *altroché*), but the exceptive ones.

**Table 1:** Total occurences of *altro che/altroché* over the centuries.

| | XIII | XIV | XV | XVI | XVII | XVIII | XIX | XX | TOT. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Altro che/ Altroché** | 3 | 39 | 45 | 95 | 22 | 20 | 190 | 65 | **479** |

Each occurrence was coded based on a set of parameters that have been judged to be relevant for the diachronic path. First, we considered if [*altro che X*] was an *argument* of the verb (*tenere* 'keep' in (7)) or not (as in (8)), since with the emergence of its mirative values this construction has gradually acquired a certain degree of syntactic independence.

(7) *Così quelle persone che tengono* **altro che** *quello che*
so those:F.PL people who keep:PRS.3PL **altro che** what:M.SG that
*la santa ecclesia predica e ordina, sono*
DEF.F.SG holy:F.SG church preach:PRS.3SG and command:PRS.3SG be.PRS.3PL

*gustamento* *e* *corrompimento* *di* *quella*
spoil and corruption of that:F.SG
'so those people who keep anything **other than** what the holy church preaches and commands, are spoiling and corrupting it (the church)' (Jacopo della Lana, *Commento alla Commedia di Dante Alighieri*, 14th cent.)

Second, we coded whether [*altro che X*] occurred in *corrective* contexts, in *exclamative* contexts and in *dialogic* contexts since these three parameters (correction, exclamativity and dialogicity) have been argued in the literature to be connected to mirativity (Zeevat 2009, Unger 2019, Rett 2008, Traugott 2010) and may therefore have played a role in the emergence of the mirative functions at issue. Example (8) shows an instance of [*altro che X*] occurring in a context that can be classified as corrective, exclamative and dialogical, while (7) was classified as non-corrective, non-dialogical and non-exclamative:

(8) *Spero* *bene* *che* *Guido* *non* *mancherà* *di* *pagarmi* *gl'*
hope:PRS.1SG well that Guido NEG fail:FUT:3SG of pay:1SG.DAT DEF.PL
*interessi* *del* *mio* *capitale.* *Giovanni,* *sempre*
interest: M.PL of:DEF.M.SG my:M.SG capital:M.SG Giovanni still
*urlando,* *cercò* *di* *rassicurarlo:-* ***Altro che*** *gl'*
shouting try:PST.PFV.3SG of reassure:3SG. M.ACC **altro che** DEF.3PL
*interessi!* *Anche* *il* *doppio* *se* *le* *occorrerà*!
interest: M.PL even DEF.M.SG double if you need:FUT:3SG
'I hope Guido will not fail to pay me the interest on my capital. Giovanni, still shouting, tried to reassure him: - **Not (only)** the interest! Even double if you need it!' (Italo Svevo, La coscienza di Zeno, 20th cent.)

We then coded each occurrence also for the syntactic position occupied by [*altro che X*], with special attention to the utterance-initial and utterance-final positions, which provide important clues for the gradual independence and conventionalization of the construction. Example (9) shows an occurrence of the univerbized form *altroché,* which is completely syntactically independent and occurs in utterance-final position, within an exclamative context:

(9) *"nessuna pinificazione, per quanto attenta, potrà mai*
no planning however careful:F .SG can:FUT:3SG ever
*sostituire una bella botta di culo". Di quello*
replace:INF DEF:F.SG beautiful:F.SG lucky.break of that:M.SG
*abbiamo bisogno,* ***altroché!***
have:PRS.1PL need: M.SG **altroché**
'"no amount of planning, no matter how careful, can ever replace a good stroke of luck". That is what we need, **indeed**!' (ItTenTen20)

We also considered the type of relation between the (explicitly or implicitly mentioned) elements related by *altro che*. *Altro che* may indeed relate elements that are somehow opposed to each other (cf. (3)) or located at different degrees on a scale, as in examples (2) and (8). Table 2 summarizes the parameters that were employed in the diachronic analysis of [*altro che X*]:

**Table 2:** Summary of the parameters adopted for the analysis.

| Parameter | Values |
|---|---|
| *Altro* is argument of the verb | Yes/No |
| Corrective context | Yes/No |
| Exclamative context | Yes/No |
| Dialogic context | Monologue (M) |
| | Dialogue (D) |
| | Dialogic monologue (D/M) |
| Utterance-initial position | Yes/No |
| Type of relation between the two alternatives | Scalar/Opposite |

The analysis adopts a qualitative approach, due to the overall low frequency of the construction [*altro che X*]. Nonetheless, for each century we will provide both absolute numbers and relative frequencies of (i) the construction, (ii) the various functions identified and (iii) the contexts of use, where relevant and useful to make the diachronic picture clear. Our goal is to catch the different stages which characterized the diachronic path of [*altro che X*], following the proposals put forward by Heine (2002), Diewald (2002) and by Mauri & Giacalone Ramat (2012), among others, which emphasize the gradual nature of diachronic change and the central role played by bridging contexts in allowing for reanalysis (Heine 2002; cf. critical contexts in Diewald 2002 and double-compatibility contexts in Mauri & Giacalone Ramat 2012). As argued by Heine (2002), in bridging contexts the interpretation of

the element undergoing change is ambiguous between the original meaning and the new one, thus allowing for a reanalysis. The presence of ambiguous contexts, of course, is not a sufficient condition for the change to take place; indeed, frequency is a determining factor in realizing the change (Bybee 2006; Mauri & Giacalone Ramat 2012).

Finally, to examine in detail the mirative semantics of the [*altro che X*] construction in Contemporary Italian data, we relied not only on our native intuitions, but mostly on a variety of resources, of both written and spoken Italian: the LIP corpus (Lessico di frequenza dell'Italiano Parlato, De Mauro et al. 1993), the KIP module of the KIParla corpus (Mauri et al. 2019) and the Italian Web corpus (ItTenTen20) (Jakubíček 2013) were consulted.

# 3 The diachrony of [*altro che X*]: Successive stages

In this section, we will be concerned with the successive stages of the change undergone by [*altro che X*], which, starting from its original value of 'different from', gradually comes to acquire a mirative function. We will highlight the factors, mainly contextual in nature, that led to the emergence of new values and to the development of new syntactic behaviors.

## 3.1 The original value of [*altro che X*]: Diversity

From the 13th–14th century the construction [*altro che X*] appears with the meaning 'different from X'. With this function, the pronoun *altro* 'something different/other' is always an argument of the verb and relates elements that are opposed to each other (10) or placed at different degrees on a scale (11):

(10) *ma se lui* ***altro che*** *bene avvenisse oltre*
but if he **altro che** good happen:SBJV.PST:3SG beyond
*misura mi dorrebbe*
measure:F.SG 1SG.DAT grief:COND:3SG
'but if **other than** good [*bad*] happened to him, beyond measure it would grieve me' (Giovanni Boccaccio, *Filocolo*, 14th cent.)

(11) *vattene* *a* *casa* *tua,* *e* *non* *mi* *dare* *più*
go:IMP:2SG to house:F.SG your:F.SG and NEG 1SG.DAT give:INF more
*impaccio* *altrimenti* *io* *farò* ***altro che*** *parole* *con*
trouble:M.SG otherwise I do:FUT:1SG **altro che** word:F.PL with
*teco*
with.you
'go to thy house, and give me no more trouble; otherwise I will do **other than** words with thee' (Anonimo, *Leggenda di Lazzaro, Marta e Maddalena*, 14th cent.)

In example (10) *altro che bene* ('other than good') refers to something different from good, i.e., something bad that could happen, and which would grieve the speaker. This oppositional reading is triggered by the negative feeling (grief), which cannot be generated by anything other than some bad event. On the other hand, in example (11), *altro che parole* ('other than words') keeps a diversity meaning ('something different from words'), but the context is also compatible with the reinforcing interpretation 'more than words/worse than words'. Such a reinforcing interpretation is licensed by the fact that in the preceding sentence the speaker already warns the interlocutor with severe words, and thus, if that warning is not enough to make her intentions clear, she will be forced to get to a higher degree (i.e., 'different from/ more than words') and get physical. Warning with words and warning with more-than-words are certainly different but not opposite, they rather go in the same argumentative direction confirming the speaker's attitude, with the latter standing at a higher degree of "persuasion", thus reinforcing the speaker's intentions.

We find the construction [*altro che X*] with its original diversity meaning mainly in declarative (98%), monologal (67%) and non-corrective (>90%) contexts, independently of the semantic relation existing between the alternatives. In Table 3 and Figure 1, the frequencies of the 'diversity' [*altro che X*] construction are shown across the centuries: as we can see, the occurrences of [*altro che X*] with its original value gradually decrease through the centuries, reaching the 8% of the total occurrences in the 20th century.

**Table 3:** Absolute numbers and relative frequencies of Diversity [*altro che X*] across the centuries.

| | **XIII** | **XIV** | **XV** | **XVI** | **XVII** | **XVIII** | **XIX** | **XX** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Occurrences of [*altro che* X] with **Diversity function** | 3 | 38 | 42 | 78 | 16 | 10 | 31 | 5 |
| | 100% | 97% | 93% | 82% | 73% | 50% | 16% | 8% |
| TOT occurrences of [*altro che* X] in the century | 3 | 39 | 45 | 95 | 22 | 20 | 190 | 65 |

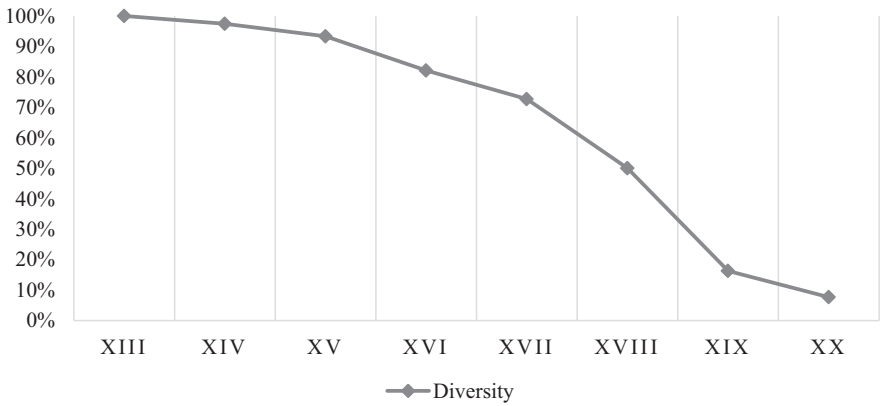


**Figure 1:** Diversity [*altro che X*] across the centuries, based on relative frequencies.

## 3.2 From diversity to correction, *via* dialogicity

Gradually, between the 14th and the 16th century, [*altro che X*] starts to be attested in dialogic contexts characterized by some correction, keeping its semantic and syntactic properties (i.e., it is still compatible with the meaning 'different/other from' and is attested as a verbal argument). In these occurrences, X is the correction of something wrong that was previously mentioned or was expected based on the previous context. As we noted in Section 3.1, also when it is used in corrective contexts, [*altro che X*] can relate elements that are opposite to each other (12) or located at different degrees on a scale (13):

(12) CLEAN. *Venivo* *per* *vedere* *se* *io* *trovavo* *Pasifilo*
come:PST.IPFV:1SG to see:INF if I find:PST.IPFV:1SG Pasifilo
*che* *io* *lo* *menassi* *a* *desinar* *meco*
so I 3SG.ACC take:SBJV.PST:1SG to eat:INF with:me
CAR. *O patrone,* *di'* *pure* *che* *tu* *passi* *di*
oh master say:IMP.2SG please that you pass:PRS:2SG of
*qui* *per* *vedere* ***altro che*** *Pasifilo*
here to see:INF **altro che** Pasifilo
'CLEAN. I came to see if I could find Pasifilo, so I would take him to eat with me [. . .]
CAR . Oh patron, say that you're passing this way to see something **other than** Pasifilo [. . .]' (Ludovico Ariosto, *I suppositi*, 16th cent.)

(13) CAL. *Oh, benedetto frate! Io pregherrò sempre Dio per lui.*
oh blessed friar I pray:FUT:1SG always God for him
LIG. *Oh, buono! Come se Idio facessi le grazie*
oh, good! as if God do:SBJV.PST:3SG DEF.F.PL grace:F.PL
*del male come del bene! el*
of:DEF.M.SG evil:M.SG as of:DEF.M.SG good DEF.M.SG
*frate vorrà* ***altro che*** *prieghi!*
friar:M.SG want:FUT:3SG **altro che** pray:M.PL
'CAL . Oh , blessed friar! I will always pray to God for him.
LIG . Oh , good! As if God would do the graces of evil, as of good! The friar will want **other/more than** prayers!' (Niccolò Machiavelli, *La mandragola*, 16th cent.)

As we can read from example (12), which is dialogic in nature, the speaker (Car.) corrects what was explicitly said in the previous turn by his interlocutor (Clean.) with a different (opposite) alternative. What the speaker (Car.) wants to say is that his interlocutor wants something different than seeing Pasifilo to eat with him (i.e., something that has to be kept secret). Example (13) shows an instance of correction between different degrees on a scale. As in example (12), the speaker (Lig.) corrects something that was explicitly said in the previous turn by his interlocutor. In the opinion of the speaker (Lig.), what the prior wants is something different from prayers, actually something more. The context reveals that [*altro che X*] is used by the speaker to express the idea that prayers are not enough for the friar, who wants indeed something more than just prayers (i.e., money or some other reward).

Typically, in corrective contexts the element being rejected and corrected is explicitly mentioned in the preceding discourse and is then repeated, constituting the X within the [*altro che X*] construction (see examples (12)-(13)). Crucially, however, already in the 16th century we find also "implicit" corrective contexts, namely those in which the element being corrected is something that is expected based on the previous context, but is not made explicit until the [*altro che X*] construction is used: in other words, in implicit corrective contexts the rejected element is mentioned for the first time only within the [*altro che X*] construction, as in (14). In this latter case, [*altro che X*] is employed with a counter-expectative function, thus setting the stage for the emergence of mirative values (Aikhenvald 2012):

(14) NIBBIO *Verso l' argenti cotesto è una*
through DEF.M.SG silver this:M.SG be:PRS.3SG INDEF:F.SG
*favola: ma* né i *cinquanta fiorini anche*
fable.F.SG but NEG DEF.M.PL fifty fiorini even
*puotono; e mi par che il*
can:PRS:3PL and 1SG.DAT seem:INF that DEF.M.SG

*beccarli* *vi* *faccia* *facile;* *che*
get:INF:3PL.ACC 2PL.DAT make:SBJV.PRS:3SG easy that
*tosto* *che* *dichiate* *al* *padre* *o*
rather that say:SUBJ.PRS:2PL to:DEF.M.SG father or
*al* *suocero*
to:DEF.M.SG father-in-law

ASTROLOGO *Deh!* *insegnami* *pur* ***altro che*** *di* *mungere*
deh teach:1SG.DAT please **altro che** to milk:INF
*le* *borse* *che* *gli* *è* *mio*
DEF.F.PL *purse*:F.PL REL 3SG.DAT be.PRS.3SG my:M.SG
*primo* *esercizio*
first exercise

'NIBBIO: Towards silver, this is a fable: but not even fifty florins can do it; and it seems to me that it will be easy for you to get them; as soon as you declare it to your father or your father-in-law. . .
ASTROLOGER: Oh! Teach me something other than emptying purses, which is my first exercise' (Ludovico Ariosto, *Il negromante*, 16th cent.)

As we can observe from this example, the argument 'to milk the purses', which can be interpreted as 'to spend money', is not explicitly expressed in the previous turn; the first speaker (Nibbio), however, talks in a general way about money and the value of this in relation to silver and therefore, even if what the interlocutor rejects is not explicitly expressed in the previous turn, it is closely related to it and is clearly accessible in the discourse frame.

Between the 17th and the 18th century two other types of construction emerge in corrective contexts, that make the diversity function of [*altro che X*] emphatic, by means of modifiers. [*Tutt'altro che X*] (lit. 'completely other than') expresses emphatic opposition and increases its frequency around the 17th century, with a peak, as we will see, in the 19th century:

(15) *et* *era* *solito* *dire* *che* *il* *concilio* fosse
and be.PST.IPFV:3SG used say:INF that DEF.M.SG concilium be:SBJV.PST:3SG
*utile* *sempre che* *si* *trattasse* *di* ***tutt'altro che***
useful:SG as long as IMPERS discuss:SBJV:PST:3SG of **tutt'altro che**
*dell'* *autorità* *del* *Papa*
of:DEF.M.SG authority of.DEF.M.SG Pope
'and [he] used to say that the council [of Trento] was useful as long as it discussed **completely different [things] from** the authority of the pope' (Sarpi, *Istoria del concilio tridentino,* 17th cent.)

[*Ben altro che X*] (lit. 'well other/more than') is employed to indicate not only something different, but something more: it is employed to reinforce, emphatically referring to a higher degree than the entity corrected by *altro che*:

(16) *Tal maestà ti impresse in volto [. . .] che vede*
such majesty 2SG.DAT imprint:PST.PFV:3SG in face:SG [. . .] that see:PRS.3SG
*ognun che questa sua divina opra a* ***ben altro che***
everyone that this.F.SG her divine work to **ben altro che**
*al pianto destina*
to:DEF.M.SG weeping:M.SG assign:PRS.3SG
'Such majesty imprinted in thy face [. . .] that every one sees that this divine work of his is destined for **much other/more than** weeping' (Cesare Cantù, *Margherita Pusterla*, 19th cent.)

The modifiers *tutto* ('completely') and *ben* ('well') emphasize the corrective intention underlying the use of [*altro che X*] and might[2] anticipate/accompany the emphasis that, during the same period, will be increasingly conveyed by the exclamatory context in which [*altro che X*] starts to appear with a mirative meaning (see Section 3.3).

In Table 4 and Figure 2 we can observe the correlation between the rise of corrective contexts and dialogicity: between the 14th and the 16th century, we indeed observe that the first occurrences of [*altro che X*] with a corrective intention are systematically attested in dialogic contexts, as shown by the complete coincidence of the two lines in Figure 2 up to the 15th century. It is only in the 16th century that we start to find corrective uses of [*altro che X*] outside dialogues, uses that will become increasingly frequent thereafter. This confirms, in our view, the crucial role played by dialogicity in the development of corrective constructions, such as the one under examination (cf. Traugott 2010 for the concept of dialogicity, and Mauri & Giacalone Ramat 2012 for a discussion of the role of dialogicity in the rise of adversative markers).

Corrective contexts are compatible with the original value of [*altro che X*] ('different from X'), but, at the same time, they are systematically characterized (i) by the same refutative illocution that we find in mirative rejection (cf. example (1)-(3)) and (ii) by the fact that the rejected element may become explicit for the first time within the [*altro che X*] construction (as in (14)). For this reason, we argue that corrective contexts, especially the implicit ones like (14), can be considered as bridging between a purely 'diversity' function of [*altro che X*] and the emergence of a rejective function, as will become clear in the next section.

2 A more in-depth study still needs to be conducted on these two structures, particularly regarding their emergence and evolution in relation to the mirative uses under examination.

**Table 4:** Absolute numbers and relative frequencies of corrective contexts and corrective-dialogic contexts in which [*altro che X*] is attested across the centuries.

| | XIII | XIV | XV | XVI | XVII | XVIII | XIX | XX |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Corrective contexts** | 0 | 2 | 4 | 17 | 6 | 9 | 153 | 52 |
| | 0% | 5% | 9% | 18% | 27% | 45% | 81% | 80% |
| **Dialogic-corrective contexts** | 0 | 2 | 4 | 10 | 4 | 6 | 22 | 13 |
| | 0% | 5% | 9% | 11% | 18% | 30% | 12% | 20% |
| **TOT occurrences of [*altro che* X] in the century** | 3 | 39 | 45 | 95 | 22 | 20 | 190 | 65 |

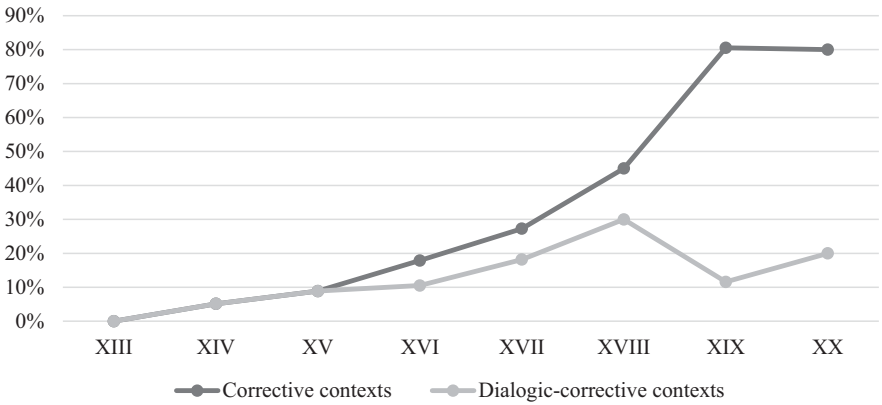


**Figure 2:** Correlation between the parameters of dialogicity and correction over the centuries.

## 3.3 From corrective diversity to mirative rejection, *via* exclamation

In the 16th century, we see an increase in contexts where [*altro che X*] occurs in utterance-initial position. Crucially, during the 16th and 17th centuries all the cases of utterance-initial [*altro che X*] are verbal arguments, which means that the construction is still syntactically dependent from the verb, although it starts to be fronted. It is only from the 18th century that utterance-initial [*altro che X*] ceases to be a verbal argument and starts to occur as a syntactically independent construction. Let us consider examples (17) and (18), both from the 16th century:

(17) *ella più abonda d' ogni loco al produr*
it more abound:PRS.3SG of any place:M.SG to:DEF.M.SG produce:INF
*atto e prescritto, sì che eterna abbondanza*
suite:PRTC.PST and prescribe:PRTC.PST so that eternal:F.SG abundance:F.SG
*la circonda, e di tutti i paesi fruttuosi*
3SG.ACC surround:PRS.3SG and of all:M.PL DEF.M.PL country:M.PL fruitful:M.PL
*più ricca è d' Adria l' arenosa sponda.*
more rich:F.SG be.PRS.3SG of Adria DEF.F.SG sandy:F.SG shore:F.SG
***Altro che*** *valli amene o colli ombrosi, sembrano*
**altro che** valley:F.PL pleasant:F.PL or hill:M.PL shady:M.PL seem:PRS.3PL
*d' Adria placida e tranquilla i palagi ricchissimi*
of Adria placid:F.SG and peaceful:F.SG DEF.M.PL palace:M.PL very.rich:M.PL
*e pomposi*
and pompous:M.PL
'It abounds more than any place suited and prescribed for production, so that eternal abundance surrounds it, and the sandy shore of the Adriatic is richer than all fruitful lands. **Other than** pleasant valleys or shady hills, seem the rich and pompous palaces of placid and peaceful Adria' (Franco Veronica, *Rime*, 16th cent.)

(18) ***Altro che*** *la tua Cinzia aveva io quivi!*
**altro che** DEF.F.SG your:F.SG Cinzia have:PST.IPFV:3SG I here
*Er' io un torso di pera diventato*
AUX:PST.IPFV:1SG I DEF.M.SG trunk:M.SG of pear:F.SG become:PRTC.PST:M.SG
'**Other than** your Cinzia I had here! I became a pear trunk' (Francesco Berni, *Rime*, 16th cent.)

In examples (17) and (18) we observe two contrastive contexts, in which the rejected element is a verbal argument that is fronted and is identified as the focal part of the sentence (Cruschina 2019). These syntactically marked occurrences are likely to have played a role in favoring the change from the stage described in the previous section, where [*altro che X*] is a verbal argument and occurs in corrective contexts, to the stage that we observe between the 17th and 18th centuries, where [*altro che X*] ceases to be used as a verbal argument and becomes a rejective, syntactically independent construction, frequently associated to utterance-initial position.

The occurrence of the construction [*altro che X*] in a syntactically marked position, as in (17) and (18), characterized by a corrective contrastive focus, may have favored its reanalysis as an independent rejection marker. Rejective [*altro che X*] indeed typically occurs in utterance-initial position and tends to be associated to

exclamative contexts, with mirative effects. The rejected item may be introduced for the first time through [*altro che X*], as in (19), or it may be explicitly introduced in previous discourse, as in (20):

(19) *"È questa l' Opera" esclamò quindi "ove*
be.PRS.3SG this:F.SG DEF.F.SG Opera exclaim:PST.PFV:3SG then where
*la Banti sarà conosciuta.* ***Altro che*** *Semiramidi,*
DEF.F.SG Banti AUX.FUT:3SG know:PTCP.PST:F **altro che** Semiramidi
***altro che*** *Galatee,* ***altro che*** *Meropi! Questo sarà il*
**altro che** Galatee **altro che** Meropi this:M.SG be:FUT.3SG DEF.M.SG
*tuo trionfo per tutti i secoli*
your:M.SG triumph:M.SG for all:M.PL DEF.M.PL century:M.PL
'"This is the opera," he exclaimed, "thanks to which Banti will be known. **Far from** Semiramids, **far from** Galatee, **far from** Meropi! This will be your triumph for all centuries [. . .]"' (Lorenzo Da Ponte, *Memorie*, 18th cent.)

(20) *[la fata] gli disse:- Dunque la mia*
[DEF.F.SG fairy F.SG 3SG.DAT say:PST.PFV:3SG so DET.F.SG my:F.SG
*medicina ti ha fatto bene davvero?*
medicine:F.SG 2SG.DAT AUX.IND.PRS.3SG do:PTCP.PST good really
***- Altro che*** *bene! Mi ha rimesso al*
**- altro che** good! 3SG.DAT AUX.IND.PRS.3SG bring:PRTC.PST to:DEF.M.SG
*mondo!. . .-*
world:M.SG
[the Fairy] said to him: – So my medicine has really done you good? – **Other/more than good**! It brought me back to life!. . . – (Gabriele D'Annunzio, *Forse che sì forse che no*, 19th cent.)

In example (19) we can observe that the speaker is surprised at the expectation that Semiramidi, Galatee and Meropi could be conceived as valid alternatives and rejects them. Probably, the speaker knows that in the common opinion these operas are considered the most beautiful of that century. However, having seen another opera, that is better than those most appreciated generates surprise in the speaker for the commonly shared assessment/belief. On the other hand, in example (20) we have a first speaker who asks his interlocutor if medicine has done him good 'for real', implying a certain disbelief. In response, the interlocutor, surprised by this disbelief, rejects the term 'good' as too limited and corrects it with a stronger statement that confirms and reinforces the interlocutor's assumption. Mirative rejection is thus present in both examples, but we may identify a difference, depending on the semantic relation between the elements related by *altro che* and on the

argumentative direction pursued by the speaker: we can see an *oppositive* rejection in (19), where the speaker aims to contrast an expectation, and a *reinforcing* rejection in (20), where the speaker aims to reinforce it.

Correction and mirativity have already been argued to be closely related in the literature, especially with respect to the explicitness of the corrected element. As noted by Zeevat (2009: 122), "it is tempting to think of the mirative markers as correction markers. And not entirely wrong because they can be used in this role". According to Zeevat, what distinguishes them is the degree of accessibility of the SoA to which the marker refers. The corrective marker, in fact, "requires a statement to be corrected, an adversative marker, something that is 'adverse' to it" (Zeevat 2009: 127). In contrast, the mirative marker refers to something that is not directly traceable in the preceding context, something that Zeevat calls a *weak presupposition*. According to him, "the expectation can be much weaker than the belief of the interlocutor (or the common ground, or a second speaker) and can even be vanishingly weak: a mere suggestion or what somebody might think" (Zeevat 2009: 122). Something similar is also observed by Cruschina (2019), who makes a distinction between *corrective focus* and *mirative focus*, distinguishing them by the fact that the former implies "a correction with respect to one or more alternatives already explicitly present in the context", while the latter is based on the idea that "the asserted proposition is considered less probable, and therefore more unexpected, than other alternatives, on the basis of the speakers' shared expectations and knowledge" (2019: 252, our translation).

Correction appears to entertain a crucial diachronic relationship with mirativity, particularly in the case of the [*altro che X*] construction. The use of [*altro che X*] with a diversity meaning in corrective contexts (cf. Section 3.2) is indeed the intermediate stage allowing for the development of the subsequent rejective functions. As also noted by Zeevat (2009: 129):

> It would seem that the different degree of toleration for weak antecedents can be much better understood as the outcome of a natural historical process, in which proper lexical presupposition triggers lose descriptive meaning in favor of a linking and distinguishing function, acquire more toleration for inaccessible antecedents, and lose their ability to force accommodation.

Correction and mirativity share the commonality that "a presupposed expectation is asserted to be false" (Zeevat 2009:122). From a diachronic perspective, although it is not easy to find clearcut chronological evidence in the data, the construction [*altro che X*] is likely to have started occurring in corrective contexts to reject an antecedent that was explicitly asserted in previous discourse (cf. (12–13)), soon acquiring the ability to reject an antecedent that was only accessible (implicitly) from the context (cf. (14)), ending up with rejecting an antecedent that coincides

with something that the interlocutor may have thought, i.e. an expectation (cf. (19)). We thus observe an increasing degree of intersubjectivity and counter-expectation, connected to the gradual loss of an explicit antecedent to be rejected, as is summarized in (21):

(21) *rejecting an antecedent that was explicitly asserted in previous discourse > rejecting an antecedent that is only accessible from the context > rejecting an antecedent that coincides with an expectation.*

This cline goes hand in hand with an increase of syntactic independence, whereby [*altro che X*] is attested in utterance-initial position and may even occupy a whole turn. In its mirative function, it cannot be identified as a verb argument anymore, but rather becomes an autonomous construction at full.

It is interesting to consider the relation between the rise of the mirative rejective function of [*altro che X*] and exclamative contexts. Such contexts typically make a certain degree of emphasis and surprise explicit and are therefore likely to have played a role in the emergence of mirativity. The correlation between mirative rejection uses (black line) and exclamativity (dark gray line) can be observed in Table 5 and Figure 3:

**Table 5:** Absolute numbers and relative frequencies of mirative rejective [*altro che X*] in exclamative contexts across the centuries.

| | **XIII** | **XIV** | **XV** | **XVI** | **XVII** | **XVIII** | **XIX** | **XX** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| [*altro che X*] in **exclamative contexts** | 0 | 4 | 3 | 9 | 0 | 4 | 43 | 29 |
| | 0% | 10% | 7% | 9% | 0% | 20% | 23% | 45% |
| [*altro che X*] wih **mirative rejection function** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 42 | 20 |
| | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 5% | 20% | 22% | 31% |
| TOT occurrences of [*altro che* X] in the century | 3 | 39 | 45 | 95 | 22 | 20 | 190 | 65 |

Once again, as for Figure 2, we can see the role played by context in triggering the change. The mirative function appears between the 17$^{th}$ and the 18$^{th}$ century, while the use of [*altro che X*] in exclamative contexts starts to be attested already between the 14$^{th}$ and the 16$^{th}$ century.

We may indeed hypothesize that a rise in frequency of the exclamative contexts maybe have supported the emergence of the new mirative rejective functions of [*altro che X*].

Some studies differentiate mirativity from exclamativity (see Olbertz 2009, Lau and Rooryck 2017). However, many studies see exclamativity as one of the main

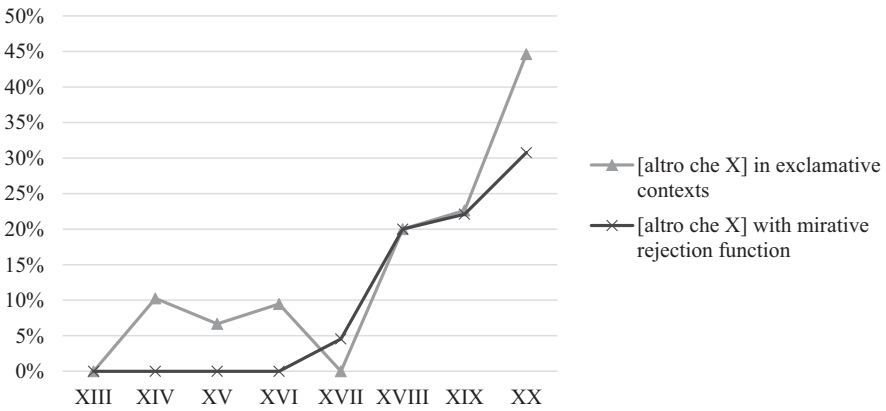


**Figure 3:** Correlation between mirative rejection function and exclamative contexts.

strategies to express surprise (Rett 2008, Sanchez Lopez 2014, Argine 2017, Unger 2019, Escalona Torres 2020). Furthermore, according to Unger (2019) "exclamations, exclamatives, and mirative utterances express the same range of pragmatic meanings" (Unger 2019: 2, note to text number 1), so that both mirative and exclamative statements are not used to convey propositional content but rather to express the impression that a given piece of information has left on us.

Based on the diachronic data discussed in this section, we consider exclamativity as one of the possible strategies by which surprise can be expressed. In particular, the increasing use of [*altro che X*] in exclamative contexts, in which correction was frequently associated to some surprise, may have favored its reinterpretation as a mirative strategy.

## 3.4 From reinforcing rejection to mirative confirmation

A further step in the evolution of the [*altro che X*] construction took place during the 19th century, when rejective [*altro che*] starts to be attested without an X following it, assuming a conventionalized meaning (or 'formulaic' value, according to Calaresu 2018) and becoming a completely independent response strategy. This use, exemplified in (22) and (23), always occurs in exclamative contexts and can be analyzed as a mirative *confirmation* marker with the meaning of 'Sure! No doubt!'. The antecedent being rejected becomes very general and coincides with some uncertain belief or doubt by the interlocutor, which is replaced by a stronger belief, thus reinforcing the speaker's argumentative position and leading to a confirmation meaning.

(22) IL PREFETTO *Secondo lei, dunque, si può*
according.to 2.SG.POLITE then, IMPERS can:PRS.3SG
*prestar fede anche a ciò che dice*
land:INF faith also in what REL say:PRS.3SG
*la signora*
DEF.F.SG lady:F.SG
LAUDISI ***Altro che!*** *In tutto e per tutto come a ciò che*
**altro che** completely like in what
*dice lui*
say:PRS.3SG 3.SG
'IL PREFETTO: [. . .] In your opinion, then, can we believe also in what the lady says?
LAUDISI: **Of course!** Completely. Just like we believe in what he says!' (Luigi Pirandello, *Enrico IV*, 20th cent.)

(23) Zia Lena *E. . . lui lo sa?*
and he it know:PRS.3SG
L'ignota *Bruno?* ***Altroché!*** *Anche di questo "peggio" saranno*
Bruno? **altroché** even of this:M.SG worse AUX.FUT:3PL
*informati, non è vero?*
inform: PRTC.PST NEG be:PRS.3SG true
'Aunt Lena : And. . . him, does he know?
The Unknown: Bruno? **Indeed**! They'll know about this "worse" too, won't they? (Luigi Pirandello, *Come tu mi vuoi*, 20th century)

In examples (22) and (23), both dialogical in nature, the speaker is surprised at the addressee's doubt and provides immediate confirmation. The positive reinforcing value of [*altro che*] in (22) is further underlined by the adverbial locution *in tutto e per tutto* 'completely', which strengthens the speaker's agreement with what was cautiously suggested by their uncertain interlocutor. In example (23), we can observe the univerbation *altroché*, employed to emphatically provide a positive answer, conveying some surprise at the interlocutor's doubt. Crucially, in both cases the use of [*altro che*] as a mirative confirmation marker would not be acceptable if the speaker had not been surprised: if the speaker had added something like "I was indeed expecting your question", the use of the [*altro che*] / *altroché* construction would have been felt as contradictory.

From a syntactic perspective, it is interesting to observe that the confirmative construction [*altro che*] acquires a higher degree of syntactic autonomy and freedom. As we can see in example (24), [*altro che*] is indeed also attested in utterance-final position, a position that is typically associated to markers expressing concern or interest for the addressee's opinion (Degand 2014):

(24) *Ti pare che faremmo bene noi, se defraudassimo*
2SG.DAT seem:PRS.3SG that do:COND:1PL right we if defraud:SBJV.PST:1PL
*i poveri di quanto possono pretendere secondo*
DEF.M.PL poor:M.PL of what can:PRS.3PL demand:INF according.to
*il minimo dei patti stabiliti da*
DEF.M.SG minimum of:DEF.M.PL pact:M.PL establish:PRTC.PST:M.PL by
*tuo padre? Sian pur patti d' usura,*
your:M.SG father:M.SG be:SBJV.PRS:3PL even pact:M.PL of usury:F.SG
*li santifica adesso la carità! No no!*
them sanctify:PRS.3SG now DEF.F.SG charity:F.SG no no
*Pagheranno, pagheranno gli interessi,* ***altro che!***
pay:FUT.3PL pay:FUT.3PL DEF.M.PL interest:M.PL **altro che**
'Do you think it would be right for us, if we defrauded the poor of what they could demand according to the minimum of the pacts established by your father? Let them be usury pacts, charity sanctifies them now! No no! They'll pay, they'll pay the interest, more than that!' (Italo Svevo, *La coscienza di Zeno*, 20th cent.)

In cases like (24), it becomes evident that [*altro che*] has developed the function of an emphatic assertive marker, reinforcing what the speaker has just said. This should not be surprising since, as Calaresu (2018: 507, our translation) observes, the systematic use of words or combinations in replies often leads these to "develop autonomous, holophrastic discursive functions, disengaging themselves from the need for explicit ECHO(S) – the inferred presence of which, however, remains the key to understanding their residual anaphoric capacity". The process defined so far thus seems to be a case of *vertical grammaticalisation*, i.e. a process of progressive compacting of several conversational moves into a single turn and phrasal structure (Calaresu 2015: 43–44).

## 3.5 The history of [*altro che X*]: A summary

Table 6 and Figure 4 show the diachronic evolution of the construction [*altro che X*] over the centuries, summarizing the successive steps that have been described in detail in the previous sections.

**Table 6:** Occurrences of [*altro che X*] across the centuries: absolute numbers and relative frequencies of the various functions identified.

| | XIII | XIV | XV | XVI | XVII | XVIII | XIX | XX |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Diversity function** | 3 | 38 | 42 | 78 | 16 | 10 | 31 | 5 |
| | 100% | 97% | 93% | 82% | 73% | 50% | 16% | 8% |
| **Corrective diversity function** | 0 | 1 | 3 | 15 | 3 | 2 | 17 | 4 |
| | 0% | 3% | 7% | 16% | 14% | 10% | 9% | 6% |
| **Corrective emphatic diversity function** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 99 | 31 |
| | 0% | 0% | 0% | 2% | 9% | 20% | 52% | 48% |
| **Mirative rejection function** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 42 | 20 |
| | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 5% | 20% | 22% | 31% |
| **Mirative confirmation function** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 |
| | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 1% | 8% |
| **TOT occurrences of [*altro che* X] across the century** | **3** | **39** | **45** | **95** | **22** | **20** | **190** | **65** |

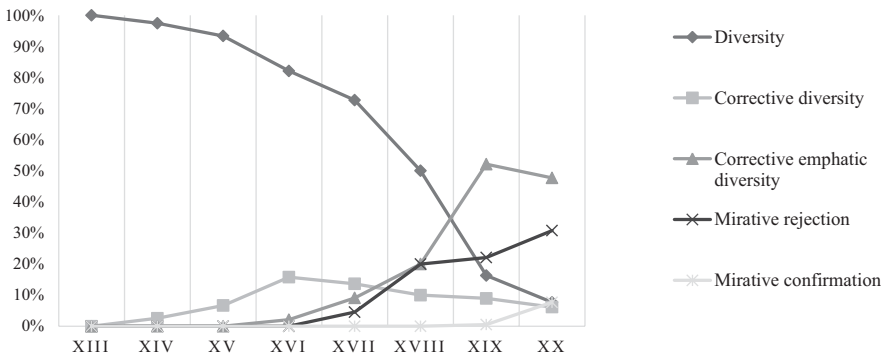


**Figure 4***:* Evolution of *[altro che X]* / [*altro che*] through the centuries: attested functions.

As we can observe from Figure 4, [*altro che X*] appears in the earliest phases (13th–14th century) with its original 'diversity' meaning (> 90%). Already in the 14th century (approx. 3%), with a peak frequency in the 16th century (approx. 16%),

[*altro che X*] appears in dialogic contexts characterized by a corrective intention ('corrective diversity' in Figure 4) and relates both opposing elements (cf. (10) and (12)) and elements found at different degrees of the same scale (cf. (11) and (13)).

Between the 17th–18th century, two constructions emerge (here referred to as cases of "corrective emphatic diversity", see Section 3.2), [*tutt'altro che X*] (cf. (15)) and [*ben altro che X*] (cf. (16)), which in the 20th century constitute the majority of the occurrences of [*altro che X*]. In both these constructions, [*altro che X*] is still a verbal argument and keeps a diversity meaning, but some emphasis is systematically conveyed. The frequency of these constructions increases right before the emergence of mirative rejective uses, and this may suggest that they played some role, but further investigation is needed to verify this hypothesis. For now, we limit ourselves to observing the sudden increase of these structures in conjunction with the emergence of the mirative uses of [*altro che X*], leaving open the question of a possible correlation between the two uses. What we know is that corrective contexts have played a crucial role in drawing the development of [*altro che X*] from a diversity meaning to a mirative rejective function.

The 17th century is characterized also by the first occurrences of [*altro che X*] as a syntactically independent construction. It is no longer a verbal argument, but rather behaves as an autonomous construction with a mirative rejective value, often in exclamatory contexts. Even with this new meaning, [*altro che X*] can relate both opposing elements and elements positioned at different degrees of the same scale, reinforcing the speaker's argumentative position. The reinforcing uses of rejective [*altro che X*] led in the 19th century to a further evolutionary step, one in which *altro che/altroché* does not need to be followed by X anymore and conventionalizes as a marker of mirative confirmation meaning 'Sure! (how could you have any doubt?)'.

As we already observed, the main factors that played a role in the evolutionary process of [*altro che X*] were primarily contextual in nature. We have indeed shown how the emergence of dialogic contexts preceded and favored the first occurrences of [*altro che X*] in corrective contexts: in these cases, the construction is used to explicitly express a corrective move in relation to some accessible antecedent. Moreover, corrective contexts were fundamental for the transition from a diversity meaning to the development of mirative rejection functions, and then to mirative confirmation. As Zeevat (2009) reminds us, corrective constructions are often used as mirative markers, and there exists a certain historical-evolutionary connection between correction, which rejects some explicit antecedent, and mirativity, which rejects an antecedent that is present in the common ground or in the interlocutor's mind, as an expectation. Finally, as we observed in Section 3.3, exclamatory contexts also seem to have played a role in the emergence of the mirative meanings of [*altro che X*].

# 4 Mirativity: The *locus* of surprise

In this Section, we will discuss the semantics of mirativity, specifically focusing on the *locus* of surprise in the case of the Italian construction [*altro che X*]. As we have already seen throughout this article, mirativity is intertwined with a series of other phenomena such as correction, exclamativity, and counter-expectation. In order to identify the exact mirative semantics of the construction under exam, let us first briefly summarize how these phenomena correlate with the development of the mirative values in the [*altro che X*] construction (Section 4.1), and then put forward our proposal (Section 4.2).

## 4.1 Looking for mirativity: Correction, exclamativity, counter-expectation

Mirativity has been associated in the literature to some inherent correction, as we have seen in detail in Section 3.3 (see Zeevat 2009, Cruschina 2019). As we can observe in Table 7 and in Figure 5, in the early centuries [*altro che X*] was used in most cases in non-corrective contexts as a verb argument with the meaning 'different from X'. Over time, starting from the 14th century, the construction began to appear in corrective contexts, where [*altro che X*] started to be used to correct something (an antecedent) that was previously mentioned by an interlocutor (real or fictive).

**Table 7:** Absolute numbers and relative frequencies of [*altro che X*] in corrective and non-corrective contexts across the centuries.

| | XIII | XIV | XV | XVI | XVII | XVIII | XIX | XX |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Occurrences of [*altro che* X] in **non-corrective contexts** | 3 | 37 | 41 | 78 | 16 | 11 | 37 | 13 |
| | 100% | 95% | 91% | 82% | 73% | 55% | 19% | 20% |
| Occurrences of [*altro che* X] in **corrective contexts** | 0 | 2 | 4 | 17 | 6 | 9 | 153 | 52 |
| | 0% | 5% | 9% | 18% | 27% | 45% | 81% | 80% |
| TOT occurrences of [*altro che* X] in the century | 3 | 39 | 45 | 95 | 22 | 20 | 190 | 65 |

Corrective contexts thus gradually increase in frequency and around the 18th century they overtake non-corrective contexts. The chart clearly shows the actual layering situation, in which [*altro che X*] is employed in both corrective and non-corrective contexts, although with a clear predominance of the former (approx. 80% of total occurrences). As we have already discussed, our study confirms Zeevat's

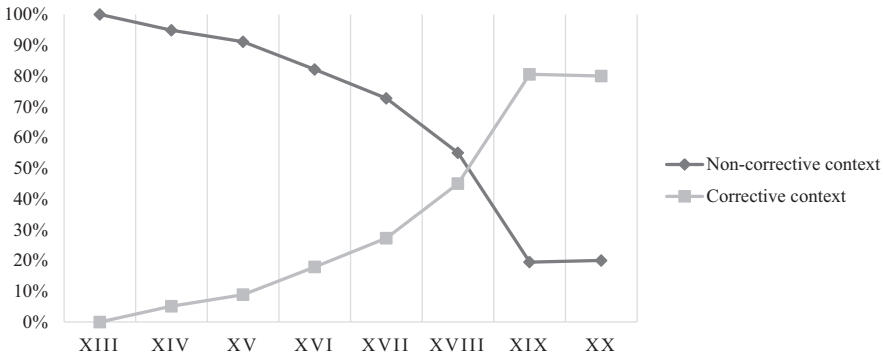


**Figure 5:** Corrective contexts over the centuries.

hypothesis (2009) recognizing a connection, also evolutive in nature, between the concept of correction and that of mirativity, distinguishing them according to the degree of accessibility of the refuted antecedent (see Section 3.3). We identified implicit corrective contexts, namely those lacking an explicit antecedent to be refuted, as bridging between the diversity meaning and the mirative rejective function of [*altro che X*].

Mirativity has also been discussed in relation to exclamative contexts (see Aikhenvald 2012 and Unger 2019). Exclamatory contexts are the minority of the contexts in which [*altro che X*] is employed with a purely diversity meaning, but they increase considerably in association with corrective functions, becoming the great majority with mirative functions and the totality for mirative confirmation (cf. Table 8 and Figure 6). As we already argued above, exclamation and mirativity are not overlapping concepts, but exclamation constitutes one of the strategies through which it is possible to express a state of surprise or unprepared-mind (especially for languages that do not possess morphological means to express it, see Rett 2008, Sanchez Lopez 2014, Argine 2017, Unger 2019, Escalona Torres 2020), and is therefore frequently associated to mirativity.

Finally, mirativity has been defined as bearing a counter-expectative meaning, being characterized by the sudden realization that some entity or situation holds, contrary to previous expectations (Aikhenvald 2012, Unger 2019). The rejective functions of [*altro che X*] explicitly refute some previous antecedent that was held as true, but we would not say that the speaker's surprise originates in the contrast between the expectation and the truth. When using [*altro che X*], the speaker's surprise rather seems to derive from the sudden realization that, at some point, somebody in the context (frequently the hearer) could *expect* the specific situation to hold true.

**Table 8:** Absolute numbers and relative frequencies of each function of [*altro che X*] in eclamative and non-exclamative contexts.

| | Exclamative contexts | Non-exclamative contexts |
|---|---|---|
| **Diversity** | 7 | 216 |
| | 3% | 97% |
| **Corrective diversity** | 20 | 25 |
| | 44% | 56% |
| **Mirative rejection** | 57 | 10 |
| | 85% | 15% |
| **Mirative confirmation** | 6 | 0 |
| | 100% | 0% |

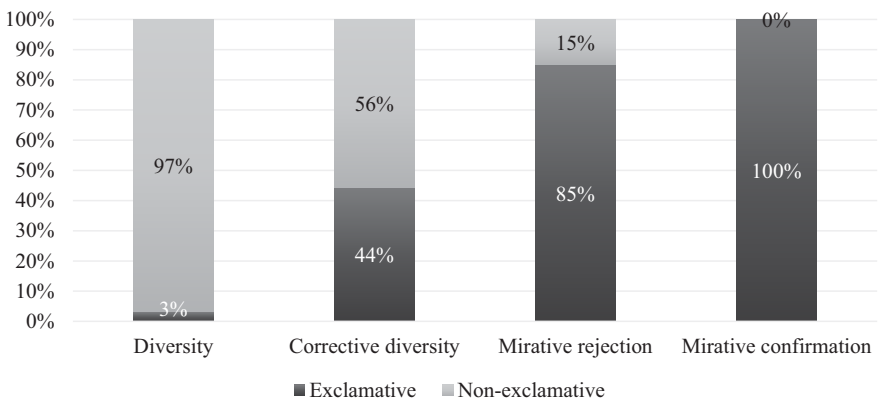


**Figure 6:** Functions of *[altro che X]* in exclamative and non-exclamative contexts.

A similar analysis is proposed by Martinez (2023: 6) on mirative English response particles *yeah-huh* and *nu-uh?*, which convey a "sense of surprise, disbelief, or rejection of the addressee's belief of the proposition they asserted." According to Martinez, "a felicitous use of *yeah-huh* and *nuh-uh* requires a discourse context in which the speaker did not expect the addressee to believe the asserted proposition".[3]

In other words, it is the very existence of some validity expectation regarding the antecedent (i.e. the belief that it may hold true) that clashes against the speak-

3 According to Martinez (2023: 7), the speaker's expectation is not necessarily that the addressee already believes $SoA_1$ to be true, but, minimally, that the addressee would accept it if it were asserted.

er's expectations. This can still be argued to be a counter-expectative meaning but based on a different type of contrast than the one described by Aikhenvald (2012). How can the mirative semantics of [*altro che X*] thus be described? What is the speaker's surprise generated by or, in other terms, what is the *locus* of surprise?

## 4.2 Second-level mirativity

Various types of mirativity have been proposed in the literature (see also Dessì Schmidt et al., this volume). So-called speaker-oriented mirativity occurs when a speaker has an expectation for $SoA_1$ and is surprised by the occurrence of $SoA_2$ that clashes with their initial expectation (Aikhenvald 2012), as in (25):

(25) *Riuscì* *a* *toglierlo* *in men che non si dica* *e*
manage:PST.PFV.3SG to remove:INF:1SG.ACC in no time and
*subito* *aprì* *la* *scatola [. . .].* *"Ma che. . .?!* ***Wow!"***
soon open:PST.PFV.3SG DEF.F.SG box:F.SG what the. . .?! **wow!**
*Commentò* *mentre* *tirava* *fuori* *dalla*
comment:PST.PFV:3SG while pull:PST.IPFV:3SG out from:DEF.F.SG
*confezione* *un* *paio* *di* *boxer* *leopardati*
box:F.SG DEF.M.SG pair of boxer leopardised:M.PL
'He managed to remove it in no time and immediately opened the box [. . .]. "What the. . .?! Wow!" he commented as he pulled a pair of leopardised boxer shorts out of the box.' (ItTenTen20)

Addressee-oriented mirativity (or *fictive mirativity*, Dessì Schmidt et al., this volume), on the other hand, is exploited rhetorically and is characterized by the fact that "the writer creates expectations in the reader, awakening curiosity by showing interest in the issue, by not readily providing an answer to the question. . ." (Boch et al. 2007: 112, translation of Tutin 2015). According to Tutin (2015), for example, speaking of the expression of mirativity within scientific writings, surprise is generated when the observed facts contradict the expectations explicitly or implicitly mentioned in the premise by the writer himself.

(26) **<u>This somewhat surprising result</u>** can be explained, in our view, with a definition. . .' (Tutin 2015: 2)

These scenarios are summarized in Table 9, and, within this picture, we can certainly state that [*altro che X*/*altroché*] is a speaker-oriented mirative strategy, in that the surprise is experienced by speaker.

**Table 9:** Speech act participants and the *locus* of surprise.

| Mirativity type | ***Speech Act Participant experiencing some* expectation for $SoA_1$** | ***Speech Act Participant experiencing some* surprise at $SoA_2$** |
|---|---|---|
| **Speaker-oriented** | *Speaker/Addressee* | *Speaker* |
| **Addressee-oriented** | *Speaker/Addressee* | *Addressee* |

Yet, the origin of the surprise in mirative [*altro che X*], namely the surprise trigger, is not the sudden realization that $SoA_2$ holds true instead of the expected $SoA_1$, but rather the sudden realization that there *was* some expectation regarding the validity of $SoA_1$. The *locus* of surprise is thus located at a different level, that is, the level of expectations. Furthermore, given the high dialogicity of the contexts in which [*altro che X*] occurs, it is not always straightforward to separate the speaker's expectations from the hearer's expectations, but we often deal with contextual expectations. Therefore, the elements identified in Table 9 (namely, speech act participant experiencing the expectation for $SoA_1$ and speech act participant experiencing surprise at $SoA_2$) are not enough to account for the type of mirativity we are dealing with. We need a different representation of mirativity, which keeps (i) the premises, namely the expectations, separate from the (ii) *locus* of surprise (i.e. the trigger or source of surprise), and further identifies (iii) the speech act participant experiencing surprise.

Depending on the surprise trigger, we can thus distinguish between *first-level mirativity*, in which surprise is originated by the sudden realization that $SoA_2$ holds true instead of the expected $SoA_1$, from *second-level mirativity*, in which surprise is generated by the sudden realization that there was some expectation that $SoA_1$ could hold true. The latter is the case for [*altro che X*]. In turn, first-level mirativity can be speaker-oriented or addressee-oriented, depending on the speech act participant experiencing surprise. This proposal is summarized in Table 10:

**Table 10:** Mirativity types: first and second-level mirativity.

| Mirativity type | Premise | *Surprise trigger* | Speech Act Participant experiencing surprise |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1° LEVEL** *Speaker-oriented* | Speakers/Addresses have an **expectation for $SoA_1$** | **Realization of $SoA_2$** | **Speaker** |
| **1° LEVEL** *Addressee-oriented* | Speakers/Addresses have an **expectation for $SoA_1$** | **Realization of $SoA_2$** | **Addressee** |
| **2° LEVEL** *Speaker-oriented* | Speakers/Addresses have an **expectation for $SoA_1$** | **Expectation for $SoA_1$** | **Speaker** |

What distinguishes [*altro che X*] (or *altroché*) from the cases of prototypical mirative strategies such as *Wow!* is precisely the source, or *locus*, of surprise. As we have been able to observe from the examples of mirative rejection (Section 3.3) and mirative confirmation (Section 3.4), the speaker's surprise is not generated by the acknowledgment of an unexpected $SoA_2$, but rather resides in the sudden realization of some expectation or doubt regarding the (non)validity of $SoA_1$ (cf. also Martinez 2023). In the case of mirative rejection, the speaker rejects a given SoA, for which there was some expectation of validity by the hearer or in the context, at the same time expressing surprise at the validity expectation itself. In other words, by using [*altro che X*] the speaker not only refutes X, but also conveys some surprise at the very fact that anybody could believe that X was valid, as exemplified in (27).

(27) *Il* *solo* *sospetto* *che* *potesse* *avere* *o*
DEF.M.SG mere:M.SG suspicion:M.SG that may:SBJV.PST:3SG have:INF or
*sviluppare* *tendenze* *omosessuali* *gli* *ha* *impedito*
develop:INF tendence:F.PL homosexual 3SG.DAT AUX.PRS.3SG prevent:PRTC.PST
*di* *proseguire* *il* *suo* *percorso* *vocazionale* *in* *seminario*.
to pursue:INF DEF.M.SG his:M.SG path:M.SG vocational:SG in seminary
*E* *vuoi* *sapere* *come* *è* *finita*? *Si*
and want:PRS.2SG know:INF how AUX.PRS.3SG end:PRTC.PST REFL
*è* *iscritto* *a* *giurisprudenza* *e* *ha*
AUX.PRS.3SG enrol:PRTC.PST in law school and AUX.PRS.3SG
*trovato* *la* *morosa.* ***Altro che*** omosessualità!
find:PRTC.PST DEF.F.SG girlfriend:F.SG. **Altro che** homosexuality
'The mere suspicion that he might have or develop homosexual tendencies prevented him from pursuing his vocational path in the seminary. And you want to know how it ended? He enrolled in law school and found a girlfriend. **Forget about homosexuality!**' (ItTenTen20)

In the case of mirative confirmation, the speaker is surprised by some doubt or request of confirmation raised by the interlocutor (or by the context), which questions the validity of X: the speaker thus confirms X and at the same time expresses surprise at the very fact that anybody could doubt that X was valid, as exemplified in (28): Mika Ahola is asked whether he still trains on the 450 motorbike and his answer not only confirms that he does, but also conveys some surprise at the fact that this was even questioned.

(28) PRECEDING CONTEXT:[4]
'Your name has always been linked to performance motorbikes. You have raced with TM 300 2-strokes, with VOR 530s. At the Enduro Indoor in Genoa you were one of the few to tackle logs and fords with the big 450. And you won. Do you still train on the 450?' Mika Ahola:

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Altroché***, | *sono* | *cresciuto* | *con* | *le* | *moto* | |
| of course | AUX.PRS.1SG | grow.up:PTCP.PST:M.SG | with | DEF.PL.F | motorbike | |
| *di* | *grande* | *cilindrata* | *e* | *mi* | *piace* | *riuscire* | *a* |
| of | big | piston:F.SG | and | 1SG.DAT | like:3SG | manage:INF | to |
| *dominarle* | *[. . .]"* | | | | | | |
| dominate:3PL.ACC | | | | | | | |

'**Altroché** (of course), I grew up with big bikes and I like to be able to dominate them [. . .]' (ItTenTen20)

On the one hand we have uses, such as the one exemplified in (27), in which the rejected element is presented as not valid and the whole structure seems to subtend an implicit question such as "how could you even think that X was valid?!". On the other hand, we also have occurrences like (28), in which X is confirmed by the speaker as certainly true, suggesting an implicit question such as "how could you doubt that X was valid?!". In both cases [*altro che X*] (or *altroché*) acts as an anaphoric marker of the incorrect/correct $SoA_1$, which was mentioned in the preceding context or is inferable from it, and is exploited by the speaker to emphatically express their distance with respect to some previous validity or invalidity expectation.

The anaphoric function of [*altro che X*] makes this construction intrinsically dialogical in Traugott's terms (Traugott 2010), because the speaker brings into play two points of view: their own point of view and that of an interlocutor (real or fictional). As we know, dialogical does not mean dialogual, and in argumentative contexts it is indeed frequent to observe *dialogical* monologues, where the speaker employs mirative rejective [*altro che X*] to introduce the rejected point of view and rhetorically oppose two different perspectives. The function of mirative confirmation is instead attested only in dialogues, where a speaker A explicitly expresses a doubt about X through a direct question addressed to speaker B, who then confirms X rejecting the doubt.

4 For particularly long examples such as this one and those following, we have included glosses only for the part directly related to *altro che*, while for the rest we have provided a translation as faithful as possible to the original.

Both mirative functions of [*altro che X*] thus express surprise at a mental state of knowledge, expectation, or doubt that the speaker/listener had at a certain moment. This type of surprise seems to have elements in common with the surprise generated by obviousness, that Cruschina (2019: 261) mentions in the context of *mirative focus.* According to him, "an answer with an obvious mirative focus still generates surprise, namely *surprise against expectations* that turn out to be unfulfilled by the interlocutor" (translation and emphasis is ours). Surprise generated by obviousness is treated in terms of prosodic analysis by Kraus (2018), who identifies the *Surprise-Redundancy Contour* (SRC) (Sag & Lieberman 1975, Kraus 2019) as an inherently mirative strategy and which is defined as "an utterance-level prosodic tune that carries pragmatic information about speaker's attitude" (Kraus 2019: 23). To best exemplify this type of strategy, let us consider the following example by Cruschina (2019: 261, es. (37)):

(29) A: *Chi sta suonando al pianoforte?*
who AUX.PRS.3SG play:GER to:DEF.M.SG piano:SG
B: ***Gianni*** *sta suonando! Perché lo chiedi? Lo*
Gianni AUX.PRS.3SG play:GER why it ask:PRS.2SG 3SG.ACC:M
*sanno tutti che in questa casa è*
know:PRS.3PL all:M.PL that in this:F.SG home:F.SG be.PRS.3SG
*l' unico a sapere suonare il pianoforte*
DEF:M.SG only:M.SG to know:INF play:INF DEF.M.SG piano:SG
'A: Who is playing on the piano?
B: **Gianni** is playing! Why do you ask? Everyone knows that in this house he is the only one who knows how to play the piano. . .'

We observe that the focal anteposition in the sentence "Gianni is playing!" is a strategy aimed at expressing surprise with respect to the question posed by speaker A. In fact, speaker B takes it for granted that everyone knows that Gianni is the only one present who can play the piano, and is therefore surprised at the doubt, or absence of knowledge, raised by speaker A. In other words, we may say that the *locus* of surprise does not lie in the acknowledgment of a SoA, but rather in the acknowledgment of some expectations (or lack of them) regarding the SoA. Therefore, we should consider the mirativity expressed in (29) as second-level mirativity (cf. Table 10).

The [*altro che X*] construction and the mirative focus exemplified in (29) indeed share the fact that the speaker's surprise is not generated by an unexpected $SoA_2$, but rather by a prior epistemic condition, in terms of beliefs and expectations, attributed to the interlocutor. Let us consider an example where the wrong expectation is not attributed to the interlocutor, but to the speaker themselves:

(30) *FORUM DISCUSSION TOPIC: "Apparently rare song"* (ItTenTen20)
'I found it [the song] watching youtube videos posted by a "forum friend", we're both members of another forum, and as soon as I listened to it I thought. . .'

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *"cavolo* | *ma* | *questa* | *la* | *conosco* | *bene,* | ***altro che*** | *rara!"* |
| man | but | this:F.SG | DEF:F.SG | know:PRS.1SG | good | **altro che** | rare:F.SG |

'Man, I know this one really well, **altro che** rare!'

Example (30) shows the message of a user in a forum having the subject 'Apparently rare song'. The user's aim is to find the title or the singer of a song, which they think is 'rare' but which, at the same time, they know very well. The speaker argues that as soon as they heard the song in a video, they suddenly realized that this song was not as rare as they expected: at this point, by saying '*altro che* rare!' they not only reject the fact that the song was rare, but they also express surprise at their previous wrong expectation, making explicit a "sudden discovery, sudden revelation or realisation [. . .] by the speaker" (Aikhenvald 2012: 437). This sudden revelation seems to be further reinforced by the presence of the formula *cavolo* ('man'), an expression frequently used in contemporary Italian to express surprise.

Based on the analysis described so far, we believe that [*altro che X*] can be counted among the mirative strategies in Italian. We observed that this construction indeed shares most of the properties normally associated with the expression of mirativity, namely correction, exclamativity and counter-expectation. Moreover, we contend that the scope of mirativity should be expanded to encompass what we propose to consider second-level mirativity. We propose that the elements triggering the speaker's surprise should not be confined solely to explicit statements or specific events unfolding in front of the participants in a conversation (first-level mirativity). Instead, surprise triggers also include the interlocutors' mental states, particularly concerning their expectations about shared knowledge and beliefs (second-level mirativity).

# 5 Conclusions

This study offers a comprehensive analysis of the mirative values of the Italian linguistic construction [*altro che X*], exploring its evolutionary trajectory and proposing an expansion of the notion of mirativity itself. Our investigation, based on the CODIT corpus of Italian, traces the development of [*altro che X*] from its original meaning 'different from X' to its contemporary mirative functions of rejection and confirmation.

This study shows that the mirative uses of [*altro che X*] are the outcome of a single diachronic pathway, along which dialogic, corrective, and exclamatory contexts play a crucial role. This evolutionary process reflects a shift from the initial function of mere diversity to the expression of mirative rejection and confirmation. The mirative functions of [*altro che X*] are particularly prominent in dialogical contexts, where the construction allows the speaker to express surprise and distance with respect to previously held beliefs or expectations.

The paper further proposes an expanded interpretation of mirativity. We argued that mirativity should not only encompass surprise triggered by the sudden realization of a specific state of affairs, but it should also include surprise arising from *validity expectations* about a given state of affairs. This expansion may open the door to the identification of further second-level mirativity expressions, and to further explorations into the diachronic development of mirative expressions in other languages. In conclusion, the study of [*altro che X*] not only sheds light on a specific construction of the Italian language but also enriches our understanding of mirativity as a linguistic and cognitive phenomenon. By highlighting the role of expectations in triggering surprise, it invites a reevaluation of how mirativity is conceptualized and manifested across languages.

## List of abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | 1st person |
| 2 | 2nd person |
| 3 | 3rd person |
| AUX | auxiliary |
| CLIT | clitic |
| COND | conditional |
| DAT | dative |
| DEF | definite |
| F | feminine |
| IMP | imperative |
| IMPERS | impersonal |
| INDEF | indefinite |
| INF | infinitive |
| IPFV | imperfective |
| M | masculine |
| NEG | negation |
| PL | plural |
| PL | plural |
| PRS | present |
| PRTC | participle |

| | |
|---|---|
| PST | past |
| PFV | perfective |
| REFL | reflexive |
| SBJV | subjuntive |
| SG | singular |

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# 8 Mirativity as a semantic notion: The trajectory and status of Sicilian *bì*

**Abstract:** This paper deals with the concept of mirativity –the linguistic expression of surprise– in both synchronic and diachronic terms, by analyzing the case of a dedicated mirative marker in Sicilian, *bì* (roughly meaning 'oh!'). After pointing out some critical issues in the study of mirativity, the paper delves into the empirical analysis of present-day uses of *bì*, and reconstructs its evolution in the history of Sicilian. Stemming from the imperative of the verb 'to see', it has evolved from a full verb to a discourse marker (*vidì* > *vì* > *bì*), whose function is precisely to express surprise, and it has developed a further discourse-pragmatic function of correction. In a diachronic perspective, this evolution contributes to understanding the possible sources (attention-getting) and outcomes (correction) of mirativity. The case of *bì* suggests that mirativity can represent a semantic (coded) meaning, arising from and evolving into pragmatic (inferred) ones. Thus, in a synchronic perspective, mirativity may be understood as a semantic notion, i.e. a type of semantic meaning that languages can mark through dedicated linguistic means, not limited to the level of morphosyntax.

**Keywords:** mirativity, semantic categories, discourse markers, Sicilian

## 1 Introduction

This paper[1] discusses the notion of mirativity, in both synchronic and diachronic terms, by analyzing the case of Sicilian, a non-standard extreme southern Italoromance variety. Sicilian displays a discourse marker, *bì* (roughly corresponding to Eng. *oh!*), which is dedicated to mirative meanings,[2] which offers empirical evidence to reflect on the trajectories for the development of mirativity, and the status of the latter in the language system.

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**2** A first analysis of *bì* as a mirative marker was presented in Scivoletto (2023).

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Sicilian *bì* appears to be a peculiar form that has specialized to mark mirativity. Stemming from the imperative of the verb 'to see' (*vidi*), it has evolved from a full verb to a discourse marker, whose function is precisely to express surprise, and it has developed a further discourse-pragmatic function of correction. In a diachronic perspective, its overall evolution contributes to understanding possible sources and outcomes of mirativity in a Romance variety. In synchronic terms, the case of *bì* suggests that mirativity may represent the semantic meaning of dedicated linguistic items.

In the following section (§ 2), the methodology of data collection is described. This is shown to be relevant for the synchronic study of semantic and pragmatic meanings in discourse, in terms of both the language considered –a non-standard(ized) Italoromance variety– and the kind of linguistic data –spontaneous speech. Also, diachronic data have been selected in order to access language use in the past that is as naturalistic as possible.

Then (§ 3), the notion of mirativity is discussed. By underlining some key aspects in the relevant literature, it is possible to refine the research questions on the sources and status of mirativity. In particular, three issues emerge: evidentiality is not the only domain related to mirativity; whether the latter should be limited to grammatical (i.e. morphological) marking; the role of illocution with dedicated means for mirative meanings.

Sicilian *bì* is then described (§ 4). First, a range of mirative meanings and a pragmatic function of correction are observed in present-day data (§ 4.1). Second (§ 4.2), the evolution of *bì* is reconstructed: it stems from the imperative of the verb 'to see', already in the 14$^{th}$ century, and by the 19$^{th}$ century it is fully developed as a mirative marker, via an attention-getting function.

As a conclusion, mirativity is discussed as regards its trajectory and status (§ 5). As to diachrony, the evolution of *bì* sheds light to a thread that links mirativity to a source, i.e. the attention-getting function performed by the perception verb 'to see', and to an outcome, i.e. the corrective function. In synchronic terms, it is suggested to overcome a mere morphological approach and disentangle meaning from illocution: by accounting for a dedicated marker such as *bì*, we may ultimately understand mirativity as a semantic notion.

## 2 A note on methodology

The data for this study are drawn from wider research on discourse markers in Sicilian (Scivoletto 2022: 28–31). This methodology is crucial for studying how mirative meanings are performed in discourse, and also for investigating language use in a non-standard variety in a bilingual repertoire (Sicilian *vis à vis* Italian).

Present-day data come from recordings of talk (around 30 hours, involving 70 speakers), plus a collection of language use on social media. Spoken data consist of verbal interactions among speakers who are members of the same social network and speech community, and share the same cultural context. Speakers are mostly close friends or relatives to each other and to the researcher. This allowed for covert recordings which were formally authorized by the participants –via an informed consent form– after the speech event had taken place.

As a result, present-day data consist of actual spontaneous speech. This kind of data is key for two reasons. First, it enables the non-standard variety of the repertoire (Sicilian) to surface, also when the standard one (Italian) is preferential (see example 6). Second, a wide range of semantic and pragmatic meanings emerge that are crucial in managing talk-in-interaction. In particular, spontaneous interactions are typically filled with unexpected information or actions, triggering the expression of surprise (mirativity), and with disfluencies, causing speech mistakes that need rectification (correction).

Historical data are drawn from *ARTESIA*, a corpus of over one million tokens comprising more than seven hundred texts written in Old Sicilian, between the 14th and 16th century. As to Modern Sicilian, between the 17th and 19th century, reference is made to an original collection of texts that represent language use beyond the written mode, i.e. folk songs, satirical poems and drama mimicking speech, and so on (cf. Scivoletto 2022: 183–185).

While diachronic data refer to Sicilian in general, present-day data concern a particular geolinguistic area, metaphonetic south-eastern Sicilian. This Sicilian variety is recognized by traditional dialectology mainly by two peculiarities. First, it has morpho-phonological metaphony, so that stressed mid vowels diphthongize, if they are followed by close ones: e.g., *peri* 'foot' but *pieri* 'feet'. Second, it displays palatalization of Latin [pl] and [kl], which result in affricates, e.g. *ciùi* [ʧuj] 'more' –from Latin PLUS– and *ciavi* ['ʧavi] 'key' –from Latin CLAVE(M)– instead of *chiùi* [kjuj] and *chiavi* ['kjavi] as in the rest of Sicily. Data were collected in Modica, historical center of the area (population fifty-five thousand) that falls within the so-called strong areas or high linguistic mobility areas in Sicily (Ruffino 1990). In sociolinguistic terms, Sicily shows the typical repertoire of Italy, whereby Italian roofs the Italoromance local dialects (Berruto 2018), and bilingual discourse is common (Alfonzetti 2017).

## 3 Approaches to mirativity

In this section, the concept of mirativity is presented, discussing a number of crucial points that emerge from the different approaches. These issues will lead to refining the research question on the status and trajectories of mirativity (§ 5).

## 3.1 The grammatical marking of unexpected information

Originally, the concept made its way into typological studies thanks to Delancey (1997), who defines it as the grammatical marking of unexpected information. Mirativity is seen as a semantic category, which languages integrate into their grammar at different degrees (Delancey 1997: 49). As the term "unexpected information" suggests, the concept emerges in contrast to evidentiality, which deals with the source of information. The function of mirativity is identified, as it serves to "report information which is new or surprising to the speaker, regardless of [. . .] information source" (Delancey 1997: 33). Consider the following example from Turkish (Delancey 1997: 37, from Slobin & Aksu 1982):

(1) Turkish (Turkic)[3]
  a. *Kemal* *gel-di*
     Kemal come-PST
     'Kemal came'
  b. *Kemal* *gel-miş*
     Kemal come-MIR
     'Kemal came!'

In Turkish, the suffix *-di* marks the past, whereas *-miş* in (1b) has additional meanings. They include two evidential values, namely inference and hearsay, and a mirative one, surprise. Despite some functional overlap like in (1b), Turkish shows uses that allow for identifying mirativity regardless of the information source (Delancey 1997: 38):

(2) Turkish (Turkic)

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *kiz-iniz* | *fok* | *iyi* | *piyano* | *fal-iyor-muş* |
| daughter-your | very | good | piano | play-PRS-MIR |

'Your daughter plays the piano very well!'

In (2), the suffix *-miş* (undergoing vowel harmony) is used to express surprise. The speaker has attended a piano recital where the interlocutor's daughter performed. The illocutionary force is a compliment. Given such context, the only function of the suffix is marking surprise: the speaker has no inferential or hearsay knowledge of the girl's performance, he is just surprised of her ability. Expressing surprise

3 All glosses follow the Lepzig Glossing Rules. Exceptions are MIR, which stands for 'mirative', and A3, explained in example 5 (fn. 5).

implies something like "no matter how high my expectations might have been, what I have just heard exceeded them" (Delancey 1997: 38).

In sum, Delancey's approach has highlighted the relation between evidentiality and mirativity. However, evidentiality is not the only notion that relates to mirativity, especially in diachronic terms (see § 5.1). They are both intended as semantic notions, that languages can incorporate into their systems. Prime interest lies in languages that employ specific grammatical means, that is, morphology. In fact, this allows for identifying the semantic notion itself. The focus on grammatical marking by Delancey has been elaborated in another prominent and very influential work on mirativity, i.e. Aikhenvald (2012), discussed below.

## 3.2 The essence of mirativity

Strong emphasis is put on the grammatical marking of mirative meanings by Aikhenvald (2012), who extensively deals with mirativity from a typological perspective. A clear line is drawn, between grammar and lexicon. Grammatical marking can be realized through independent means, and this corresponds to proper mirativity, or through other means, corresponding to mirative strategies. Lexical marking is excluded from the analysis, precisely because it falls outside of grammar: verbs that mean 'to be surprised, to admire' like Tucano *mari*, or interjections like English *wow*, do not realize the category of mirativity, just as English *yesterday* or *last night* do not mark the category of tense (Aikhenvald 2012: 474–475).

However, the boundary between grammatical and lexical means is sometimes blurred, as in the case of particles in many languages, e.g. in Galo (Aikhenvald 2012: 458):

(3) Galo (Tibeto-Burman)

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *azèn=gə* | *Jesì* | *tɨ́ɨ* | *la(a)ka* |
| friend=GEN | urine | imbibe.IPFV | MIR |

'(The pig) is drinking his friend's urine, of all things!'

In (3), *la(a)ka* specifically expresses the surprise of the speaker. As it is the case with particles, this form corresponds to an autonomous structure in morphosyntactic and prosodic terms. Thus, it should fall within the notion of word (cf. Ježek 2016: 21–39), and be excluded from scrutiny. Nonetheless, another Tibeto-Burman language, Lisu, displays an entire paradigm –distinct from the evidential one– of particles with specific mirative meanings. Aikhenvald affirms: "This is the most elaborate expression of the mirative range of meanings by *grammatical* means which I have encountered so far" (2012: 462; emphasis added). So, are particles

lexical units lying outside of grammar, or are they part of it, just like inflectional morphemes? No clear answer is given by Aikhenvald, who dedicates a specific section on forms between mirative marking and mirative strategies. The title puts miratives in inverted commas, acknowledging an unsolved issue: "How many 'miratives'?". The last section of this paper (§ 5.2) will return to this matter.

Another crucial contribution by Aikhenvald is the category-value approach. Given that mirativity is a category, linguists should look for what its values are in the different languages. The category of tense may include values of present, past, or future: likewise, a subsystem of values should be identified with mirativity. Aikhenvald (2012: 437) lists five mirative meanings: (i) sudden discovery, sudden revelation or realization; (ii) surprise; (iii) unprepared mind; (iv) counterexpectation, (v) new information; all with respect to the speaker, the interlocutor, or the main character in a narrative. Such fine-grained distinctions may appear exaggerated if we think of Romance languages, which seem to lack a proper grammatical marking system,[4] but languages like Lisu provide good evidence.

Apart from empirical aspects, a category-value approach is key to Aikhenvald's perspective on grammar. Inasmuch as grammatical categories (e.g. tense or aspect) are identified by alternating values (e.g., present and past, or perfective and imperfective), mirativity should be analyzed accordingly. Applying to mirativity this approach, which originates in traditional morphosyntax, is consistent with focusing on morphological marking and discarding lexical units. This represents the idea of a semantic category as a semantically-based grammatical category. The last section of this paper (§ 5.2) will claim the view of mirativity as semantic notion, instead.

## 3.3 Problematizing mirativity

In a cognitive perspective, Peterson (2017) stresses a psychological basic understanding: mirativity concerns the psychological state of surprise. All languages have resources to express such state of surprise, so the linguist's task is to describe how languages linguistically convey these meanings (cf. Peterson 2017: 312). Peterson puts forth a comprehensive view of linguistic means for expressing surprise, making two basic distinctions (cf. Peterson 2017: 317–318). First, mirativity can be parasitic or non-parasitic. This distinction appears to be in partial overlap with the

**4** Mirativity in Romance has been studied mainly in terms of mirative strategies (among others, cf. Rodríguez 2015, Celle & Lansari 2015, De Wit 2017, Squartini 2018, Escalona 2020), or implicatures (Cruschina & Bianchi 2021), i.e. as semantic-pragmatic extensions or implied meaning of different other structures.

one between strategies and proper marking by Aikhenvald (2012). Second, both types include two subtypes. Parasitic mirativity relies either on other meanings (e.g., polysemy with evidential values) or structures (e.g. perfective constructions). Non-parasitic mirativity, i.e. surprise expressed by dedicated resources, is distinguished into propositional and illocutionary, as exemplified respectively in Mapudungun and Yucatec, as illustrated by Peterson (2017: 317–318):

(4) Mapudungun (isolated)
*Fey* *ti chi* *domo* *kalko-rke*
PROG ART woman witch-MIR
'This woman turned out to be a witch (surprisingly)'

(5) Yucatec (Mayan)[5]
*Táan* *bakáan* *k'áaxal* *ja'*
PROG MIR A3 fall.water
'Oh, it is raining'

The propositional type coincides with classic morphological marking, which has been extensively studied and documented (cf. already Aikhenvald 2012). The illocutionary type effectively brings attention to the case of particles or words, which does not fit a strictly grammatical perspective. The most well-known instance is English *wow*, which specifically marks the meaning of surprise (along with a pragmatic function of appreciation).

In conclusion, Peterson (2017) proposes a taxonomy of mirativity that includes the case of lexical units (regardless of the term used, either *particles* or *words*). The issue of whether these linguistic resources are illocutionary will be addressed at the end of this paper (§ 5.2), after presenting the case of Sicilian *bì*, a non-parasitic discourse marker with mirative meaning, in the following section.

## 4 A mirative marker in Sicilian: *bì*

The form *bì* is attested by the main lexicographic source for Sicilian (*Vocabolario Siciliano*, *VS*) as an interjection, and it is defined as an "exclamation of surprise or wonder" (*VS*: s.v. *bbì!*). A rough translation equivalent would be English *oh*.

The lexical source is the imperative form of the verb of visual perception, *vidi* 'see!'. The Sicilian case contributes to the exploration of the semantic-prag-

5 A3 indicates "3rd person Ergative/Nominative" (AnderBois 2016).

matic change affecting verbs of visual perception in Romance 'to see' or 'to look', and already in Latin 'to see' (Ghezzi & Molinelli 2015, Napoli 2022). In fact, many studies have been dedicated to these verbs or to forms derived from them (cf. at least Cuenca & Marín 2000, Waltereit 2002, Ghezzi & Molinelli 2015, Sánchez 2017, Karssenberg & al. 2018, García & Libenson 2022, Cardinaletti 2022, among others), also comparing more than two languages (Fagard 2010, Iliescu 2014, Van Olmen & Tantucci 2022), and with a special attention to the distinction between agentive and non-agentive visual perception (Fedriani & Ghezzi 2020).

In what follows, the discourse marker is presented in its present-day uses at first (§ 4.1), so that its evolution can be understood (§ 4.2).

## 4.1 Present-day uses of *bì*

In present-day Sicilian, *bì* has two different kinds of uses. The first is precisely a mirative meaning. The meaning of "surprise and wonder" attested by lexicography (*VS*) refers to a positive evaluation that is often associated with surprise (just like with Eng. *wow*). In this sense, the case of *bì* is exemplified below:[6]

(6) Chatting about Christmas
A: c'è il bambino piccolo, P., che ha fatto i disegni per tutt+ per tutti gli zii
'there is the little kid, P., who made some drawings for all the aunts and uncles'
B: *bì*::
'Oooh!'
C: simpatico P.!
'P. is so nice!'

In (6), speaker A is chatting with his family, and tells a story about a very young cousin, who gave some drawings to his aunts and uncles for Christmas. Speakers B

6 Speech is transcribed with a mixed orthographic-conversational system (cf. Scivoletto 2022: 186–187). Relevant to the examples in this paper, note that: italic and regular fonts indicate the two codes in bilingual discourse, respectively Sicilian and Italian; parts in Italian are rendered following standard orthography. Punctuation indicates main intonational patterns associated with clause combining (","), exclamation ("!") and questions ("?"). The symbol ":" refers to lengthening; "=" indicates latching; square brackets indicate overlapping; "/" renders pauses; "+" stands for self-interruption; "|" indicates a change in discourse planning. Language use on social media is reported exactly as it was originally typed. In historical data, "/" stands for the end of a line.

and C express their surprise and appreciation: B simply utters *bì*, while C comments 'P. is so nice!'.

When surprise and appraisal combine, *bì* displays a number of formal variants, often attested on (but not limited to) social media:

(7) Comments to three Facebook posts
  a. Pi ppi ppi ppi ppiii (Scritto non rende. L'audio richiedilo su Whatsapp)
     'Oh! (Typed text doesn't work. Ask for the voice message on WhatsApp)'
  b. Mbiiiiiii chi priuuuu
     'Oh, what a joy!'
  c. mbe mbe mbe!!!!a mancautu tu
     'Oh, all we needed was you!'

In (7), three independent comments are compared, which react to pictures posted on Facebook by three different young women. In all three, variants of *bì* convey surprise to express appreciation ('wow') about the beauty of the friend in the picture. Formally, the discourse marker shows graphic rendering of phonetic change: devoicing of the bilabial stop (*pì*, 7a) and its dissimilation (*mbì*, 7b), which can be accompanied by lowering of the vowel (*mbè*, 7c).[7]

However, Sicilian *bì* can mark surprise only, with no positive appraisal:

(8) Discussing a picture of a kid on a smartphone
  A: *però ri M. n'avi assai*=
     'but she has much of M.'
  B: =*ìu manc'u canuscissi* [*a ssa paṭṭṛi*]
     'I wouldn't even recognize his dad'
  A: =[*è veru*?] *no a ssa paṭṭṛi*, *a M. nâ facci*=
     'doesn't she? not his dad, M. in the face'
  C: =(xxx) *M.* (xxx) *facci*=
     'M. (xxx) face (xxx)'
  A: =*no*?
     'doesn't she?'

7 These sound changes are consistent with the first one affecting the discourse marker, i.e. de-spirantization [v] > [b], in the sense of a progressive strengthening of the consonant. As to the vowel change, this is consistent with the tendency in Sicilian to lower [i]: e.g. *se* 'yes' (from Latin sic; It. *sì*), or the emerging *mè*, phonetically advanced variant of *mì* (from *minchia*, dysphemism for 'penis' and stereotypical trait of Sicilian). These developments are generally due to the salience of discourse markers (cf. De Rooij 2000: 453).

C: =*M. quann*'[*era nica*]
'M., when she was little'
B: [*pop*+] *bì si štutàu*!
'not at al/ oh, it turned off!'

In (8), three women are looking at a picture on a smartphone, portraying the daughter of common friends. They are commenting on whether the kid resembles her father or more likely her mother, M. Suddenly, the screen goes black. Speaker B interrupts herself to say that she is surprised (*bì*) about the little glitch in the conversation (*si štutàu* 'it turned off'). Sicilian *bì* functions as a change-of-state token.[8] It is clear that no positive appraisal is expressed towards this inconvenience, and the speaker is marking merely her surprise. If evaluation is at stake, it would be a negative one, and surely not a sense of "wonder".[9] Note also that the mirative meaning can be expressed in reference not only to a discourse context, e.g. a previous turn by the interlocutor in (6), but also with respect to some aspect of the situation, e.g. the inconvenience in (8).

The second kind of uses is correction, as in the following example:

(9) Family chatting about the town in the old times
A: *a mmia u psicolugu, bì u psicolugu, u ddietolugu mi rissi* [. . .]
'my psychologist, well, not my psychologist, my dietician told me. . .'

The function in (9) serves to perform correction (cf. Gülich & Kotschi 1995): a piece of discourse was mistaken (*u psicolugu*, 'my psychologist'), so it is retrieved and marked by *bì* (*bì u psicolugu*) to allow for rectification (*u ddietolugu*, 'my dietician'). The corrective function in contexts including *bì* + *X* (with 'X' being the previous mistaken segment) is rendered in the English translation with *well, not* + *X*.

Thus, in addition to the mirative meaning, the discourse marker shows an additional function, correction. The latter is not a coded (semantic) meaning of *bì*, but rather an inferred (pragmatic) meaning that arises in the specific construct *bì* + mistaken segment. The distinction between coded, i.e. semantic, and inferred, i.e. pragmatic meaning (Ariel 2010, 2017) is key to this analysis, as it will be elaborated through the paper. The examples just presented have shown how the expression of surprise is the coded meaning of the discourse marker –i.e. 'what is said' by means of *bì*– while correction is an inferred meaning –what is meant by means of mirative *bì*, in specific contexts.

8 Also in this sense, *bì* is similar to *oh* in English (Heritage 1984).
9 A clear negative evaluation from the speaker can also be observed in historical data, e.g. (16).

Mirativity as meaning is not common in Romance languages, in which mirative implicatures are usual instead. Cruschina & Bianchi (2021) have shown how mirativity is performed by means of particular focus structures:

(10) Italian (Cruschina & Bianchi 2021: 87)
*Non ci posso credere! Due bottiglie ci siamo bevuti!*
'I can't believe it! We drank two bottles!'

This example illustrates the mirative conventional implicature associated, in many Romance languages, to focus fronting. In other words, the focus of the utterance (*due bottiglie*, 'two bottles') corresponds to the object of the verb: its fronting consists in placing the object in a non-canonical position, which is the beginning of the utterance. This triggers the mirative interpretation. As a matter of fact, focus fronting is found in (6): *simpatico P.!* ('P. is so nice!').

To conclude, it is possible to define the categorial status of *bì*. As already mentioned (§ 1), we can consider it as a discourse marker,[10] as it is a lexical unit[11] with syntactic and prosodic autonomy, performing functions on the discourse-pragmatic plane. This plane is a continuum of values ranging from a textual to an interpersonal pole.[12] In the case of *bì*, an interpersonal value, i.e. expressing the speaker's surprise, has developed as a coded (semantic) meaning. A textual value is correction, i.e. managing a mistake in one's speech, and has emerged as an inferred (pragmatic) meaning.

## 4.2 Diachronic reconstruction of *bì*

Diachronic data, gathered from texts in Old and Modern Sicilian, allow us to reconstruct how *bì* has stemmed from the imperative verb *vidi*, 'see!'. The form *vidi* starts to perform discourse-pragmatic functions, evolving from a full verb to a discourse

**10** The literature on discourse markers is huge. In my view (cf. Scivoletto 2022: 3–17), foundational references are Fischer (2006, 2014) for a synchronic understanding, and Heine (2013) for a diachronic overview.

**11** We can refer to a prototypical notion of a word (cf. Ježek 2016: 21–39), understood as a lexical element that corresponds to a stable association of form and function. This association includes a cluster of morphosyntactic and semantic properties. Lexical elements include words, along with smaller units, such as the so-called particles, and bigger ones, namely multi-word expressions.

**12** This bipartite view of discourse-pragmatic functions (cf. Beeching 2016; Scivoletto 2022: 9–12) is underpinned by Halliday's model of language functions (cf. Halliday 1970). Discourse markers, lacking referential meaning, do not perform the ideational function but rather serve the interpersonal and textual functions.

marker. As the item loses its categorial status of verb, it cannot inflect (hence, morphological fixedness) and it gets reduced in form (morpho-phonetic reduction). The overall diachronic path can be summarized as follows: *vidi* > *vì* > *bì*.

The use of *vidi* as a full imperative is attested since the most ancient texts in Old Sicilian:

(11) *Dialagu de sanctu Gregoriu* (1315; *ARTESIA*)
*Guàrdati fillu, non bibere de chillu flascone chi ammuchasti, ma lu divaca saiamenti, et vidi beni de chi è plinu*
'Watch out son, don't drink from the bottle that you hid, but pour it wisely, and see well what it is full of'

In (11), *vidi* is used in a series of four imperatives: *guàrdati* ('watch out', with an enclitic second person pronoun *ti*), *non bibere* (negator plus infinitive, for 'don't drink'), *divaca* and *vidi* ('pour' and 'see', whose endings differ according to different inflectional classes). Already at the beginning of the 14th century –as the same text shows– *vidi* can convey more than its coded meaning of visual perception:

(12) *Dialagu de sanctu Gregoriu* (1315; *ARTESIA*)
*Vidi, Petru, de quanta sanctitai fu kyllu episcupu, ky standu et sedendu pocti astutarj lu focu per sua sanctitati, sencza ayutu humanu*
'See, Petru, of how much holiness was that bishop, who by staying and sitting could extinguish the fire through his sanctity, without human help'

In (12), the interlocutor (directly addressed as Petru) is not asked to 'see' anything, that is, no visual perception is suggested. Rather, *vidi* serves to draw the attention of the reader towards the object of text (the holiness of the bishop). A classic metaphorical extension has taken place, whereby physical reality –'to see'– is mapped onto the mental one –'to understand'– so vision is intended as knowledge (cf. Sweetser 1990). This pragmatic (i.e. inferred) meaning is evident in the next example:

(13) *Testimonianza* by Giuliano de Fonte (1341; *ARTESIA*)
*Vidi, Peri, Bernardu Migiari meu cumpagnuni avi factu unu cuntractu [. . .]*
'See, Peri, my partner Bernardu Migiari has made a contract'

In (13), by the imperative *vidi*, the author is not prompting the interlocutor (again addressed directly by his name, Peri) to 'see' anything. It serves to attract the reader's attention to information to be reported ('my partner Bernardu Migiari has made a contract'). This discourse-pragmatic function is defined as attention-getting (cf. Fagard 2010, Ghezzi & Molinelli 2015).

The Sicilian imperative evolves into a discourse marker, inasmuch as the attention-getting inferred meaning is paired by formal changes, that is, by morphophonetic reduction, as an example from the 16th century shows:

(14) Poem by T. Bonfare (d. 1609; Galeano 1645: 321)
*Vì, chi cui vinci primu perdi poi*
'Consider that those who win first will lose later'

In this case as well, the author of the text is certainly not inviting the reader to 'see' that 'those who win first will lose later', but rather to 'consider' this information, and to keep in mind the warning. Example (14) shows that the evolution has affected the form, besides the function, of the imperative. First, and crucially, a reduced form emerges, *vì*, that is monosyllabic and graphically marked by an accent. Also, the item is detached from the rest of the utterance by means of a comma: the item shows syntactic independence, and its function lays outside the propositional nucleus of the utterance. We start to witness divergence between the imperative *vidi* and the discourse marker *vì*.

By the 18th century, the discourse marker appears to be fully conventionalized as a specific item:

(15) Poem by V. Gangi (d. 1816; Di Maria 1978: 62)
*Dd'ucchiuzzi ca lucenu, / Vih vih chi cosa rara!*
'Those little eyes that sparkle, / Oh, oh, what a rare thing!'

In (15), the item is marked by the grapheme ‹h›. In the Italoromance domain, the use of this grapheme is associated with interjections. Italian orthography includes primary interjections such as *ah*, *eh*, *oh*. Consistently, when secondary interjections or discourse markers[13] emerge, nowadays, they tend to be realized with the grapheme ‹h›, in order to be distinguished from their lexical sources, e.g. *beh* (from *be'*, reduced form of *bene* 'well'), or *mah* (from *ma* 'but').

Focusing on meaning, the case in (15) differs from the preceding one in (14). Rather than drawing the interlocutor's attention, *vih* serves stance-taking, with respect to the topic of discourse. In other words, the discourse marker is not functioning intersubjectively,[14] to drive the reader through discourse, but strongly subjectively, to perform

**13** On the classic distinction between primary and secondary interjections cf. Ameka (1992). A recent account of interjections within a comprehensive framework –the grammar of interactives– is provided by Heine (2023).
**14** The topic of (inter)subjectification –also considering the case of Sicilian *bì*– is discussed in Scivoletto (forth. a).

appraisal. In the same directive act in which the imperative 'see!' has been used, the stress moves from interlocutors (calling for their attention) to speakers themselves (expressing their stance).[15] The inferred meaning of attention-getting is evolving into a different meaning, namely mirativity. Example (15) represents precisely the mix of wonder and surprise conveyed by the discourse marker *bì* in present-day data (cf. *VS*), and in its phonetic variants *pì*, *mbì*, and *mbè* (§ 4.1, example 7).

A pure mirative meaning –that is, expressing surprise without positive appraisal– is attested in the 19th century:

(16) A FOLK TALE (PITRÈ 1873: 46)
*– "Figghiu mio, (dici) e sta chiavi?" – "Vih! comu mi lu scurdavi!"*
'«My son, he says, and what about this key?» – «Oh, how could I forget it!»'

In this example, we can recognize the mirative value that is found in present-day data. In (8), the speaker utters *bì* in reaction to an unexpected glitch in the conversation, i.e. the phone turning off (*bì si štutàu* 'oh, it turned off'). In a very similar way, in (16), when the character of the tale is asked for a key, he realizes that he forgot about it (*Vih! comu mi lu scurdavi!* 'Oh, how could I forget it!'). In both cases, the discourse marker expresses surprise with respect to an inconvenience. In reacting to an unexpected and unpleasant fact, surprise is not connected to any positive evaluation.

One last example shows that, already by the 19th century, the discourse marker has undergone betacism, that is, the labiodental fricative has turned into a bilabial stop:

(17) A FOLK TALE (GUASTELLA 1976 [1884]: 186)
*E i nuòssci mali, Signuri, quali su? Sunn'assai? ci rìssiru cianciennu i viddani. Bih! bih! bih!. . . cci rispusi 'u Signuri, i vuòssci mali su' quant'i pùlici n' 'o misi r'austu*
'«And our troubles, Lord, what are they? Are they many?» the peasants asked, weeping. «Oh, oh, oh. . .» the Lord replied, «your troubles are like fleas in the month of August»'

During the 19th century, the mirative discourse marker has become widespread, and its uses are indeed frequent in both literary works and anthropological works of the time.[16]

**15** The same kind of subjectification –i.e. meaning centered on the hearer shifting to focus on the speaker– has been described for another Sicilian discourse marker stemming from an imperative: *arà*, from the imperative of the exchange verb 'give!' (cf. Scivoletto 2022: 96–112, Scivoletto forth. a).
**16** Occurrences of *vih* (and variants like *bih*) with mirative value are found in the poems by Meli (1814), and they are numerous in the poems by Martoglio (1924). As to demo-anthropological

Regarding the second function of the discourse marker, in historical data there is no evidence of corrective uses. This might be a consequence of the written mode, even though the texts from the 19th century faithfully render spoken language use (either for stylistic needs, in the case of poetry, or for documentary purposes, in the case of demo-anthropological works). In fact, this specific value is closely tied to disfluencies in speech, and therefore it would hardly be recorded in writing. However, the mere lack of attestations is not sufficient to interpret this function as a more recent development.

Negative chronological evidence serves more as confirmation, after a theoretical diachronic interpretation that is based on the synchronic polysemy of present-day uses. Through the classic method of internal semantic reconstruction, it is possible to project backward the relationship between two coexisting senses, that is, to understand them in a diachronic relationship (Traugott 1986; Sweetser 1990).

Correction appears to be a later outcome of mirative uses. In fact, mirative *bì* functions as a change-of-state token (Heritage 1984): something unexpected has just happened, so speakers express their surprise. In this sense, correction can be seen as a specialized use of surprise, which is performed in reaction to a special kind of change-of-state, one that concerns the text rather than factual events. In other words: the speaker expresses a surprised reaction with respect to a mistake that has just occurred in speech, so to signal the mistake and allow for self-rectification. The diachronic link between the older (mirative) and the newer (corrective) value is confirmed by the presence of bridging contexts: in such instances, the two interpretations (the older and the newer senses) overlap, showing precisely the kind of contexts whereby the new function emerges out of the older one. An example of bridiging context beween mirativity and correction is drawn from present-day data and provided in (18):

(18) Chatting about the town in the old times
A: *c'era na / nu parrucchieri mi pari | bì, u fotografu*
'there was a. . . a hairdresser I think. Oh, a photographer'

The speaker is trying to remember about a shop that used to be in specific place in town. As soon as she states that it was a hairdresser's salon (*nu parrucchieri mi pari*, 'a hairdresser, I think'), she realizes her mistake and utters *bì* ('oh!'), and then she rectifies it (*u fotografu*, 'a photographer'). In this occurrence, mirativity overlaps with correction: on the one hand, by means of the discourse marker, the speaker expresses

works, examples are found in the folk tales collected by Pitrè (1873, 1875) and by Avolio (1875), as well as in the works by Guastella (1882, 1976 [1884]).

surprise, caused by a mistake in her own speech; on the other hand, the overall function of her utterance is to rectify the mistake. It is precisely from this kind of contexts that a specialized corrective function emerges, as it was observed in (9).

The specialization of corrective uses as in (9) is proved by formal features, that is, the scope of the discourse marker (Scivoletto forth. b) and its prosodic and syntactic independence. In mirative uses, *bì* is autonomous in syntactic and prosodic terms, as it occurs in complete isolation, constituting a whole turn in a conversation. Also, with its mirative meaning, it has scope over "whole chunks of discourse" (Traugott & Dasher 2002: 6) that precede it. On the other hand, in corrective uses, *bì* is syntactically and prosodically dependent on the element it marks (e.g. *bì u psicolugu*, 'oh, not my psychologist'). Consistently, it has scope over the specific element (e.g. *u psicolugu*) that needs rectification, and it has no autonomous prosodic contour but it is rather attached to the item that follows.

In sum, we can outline the diachronic path that led to from *vidi* to *bì* in Table 1:

**Table 1:** Evolution of Sicilian *bì*.

| **Stage** | **I** | **II** | **III** | **IV** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Form** | *vidi* | *vì* | *vih / bih* | [bɪ][17] |
| **Semantic (coded) meaning** | 'to see' | | mirativity | |
| **Pragmatic (inferred) meaning** | | attention-getting | | correction |

The diachronic thread develops around four relevant stages, synthesized as follows.[18]

*Stage I*. The evolution starts from the full imperative of the verb 'to see', *vidi*. Alongside its coded meaning of visual perception, an inferred meaning emerges since the 14th century, attention-getting.

*Stage II*. By the 17th century, a form emerges that is morpho-phonologically reduced (*vidi* > *vi*) and graphically marked (with a graphic accent, *vì*, or ‹h›, *vih*). This form is used not according to its coded meaning of visual perception, but rather as atten-

17 The form at Stage IV is reported in phonetic transcription, in order to represent the fact that it lacks historical written attestations, and is found in present-day speech.

18 The phonetic variants (*pì*, *mbì*, and *mbè*) are not represented in Table 1, because they do not constitute a further stage in the functional evolution of the discourse marker. They are precisely formal variants of the mirative discourse marker.

tion-getting, i.e. to draw and guide the attention of the interlocutor. The reduced form with pragmatic meaning diverges from the original imperative.

*Stage III*. By the 19th century, this divergence leads to the rise of a discourse marker with a coded meaning of mirativity, i.e. the expression of surprise. The function has been subjectified: the discourse marker is not used to draw the attention of the interlocutor and direct it to a topic of discourse; rather, it serves to express the speaker's subjective stance towards a given context of discourse or situation. Formally, the discourse marker presents betacism. Functionally, it can be linked (but not necessarily) to positive appraisal in pragmatic terms.

*Stage IV*. Finally, in present-day data, the discourse marker shows an inferred meaning of correction, when used as *bì* + *X* (with 'X' being the previous mistaken segment that needs rectification). The expression of surprise, as a change-of-state token, has specialized into a peculiar kind of change-of-state: after a mistake occurring in one own's speech, speakers express their surprise, implying that correction is needed.

# 5 Concluding remarks

The analysis of this mirative marker in Sicilian provides empirical data to address the research questions posed at the beginning of this paper (§ 1) and refined in the light of previous studies (§ 3). These concluding remarks concern the diachronic and synchronic understanding of mirativity: some final observations are thus provided, first about its trajectories (§ 5.1), and then about the view of mirativity as a semantic notion (§ 5.2).

## 5.1 The diachronic trajectories: Mirativity from attention-getting to correction

Studies on mirativity, especially in a typological perspective, have been interested in mirativity as a category, focusing on languages that integrate this kind of meanings into their grammatical –i.e. morphosyntactic– system. Also, since Delancey (1997), mirativity has been researched for its tight relationship with evidentiality (cf. at least Lazard 1999, Friedman 2012, Aikhenvald 2015, Ifantidou & Tsavdaridou 2023). The distinction between the two has required specific arguments to be claimed (Hengeveld & Olbertz 2012).

This paper offers an empirical case of mirativity that is independent from evidentiality, and at the same time shows the diachronic thread that links this kind of meaning to neighboring functions, that is, to sources and outcomes. Table 1 (§ 4.2) illustrates how mirativity appears as the coded meaning of the discourse marker *bì*, at Stage 3 of its evolution: the preceding and following stages correspond to the functional source and outcome. The expression of surprise stems from attention-getting, and leads to correction.

Note that both attention-getting as the source and correction as the outcome are not coded meanings of the discourse marker: they are instead inferred meanings. At the beginning (Stage 1), a pragmatic meaning of attention-getting starts emerging from the use of the imperative 'see!' (12, 13), by means of a metaphorical extension of vision into knowledge. Then (Stage 2), the inference gets gradually generalized (cf. Traugott & Dasher 2002) and the form gets reduced from *vidi* to *vì*: the verb is evolving into a discourse marker (14). Later on (Stage 3), the discourse marker appears fully developed and distinct from its lexical source (15, 16). Its meaning is precisely the expression of surprise, which results from a process of subjectification: in directive acts, the meaning is first centered on the interlocutors, in order to drive their attention in discourse, and then it tends to center on the speakers themselves, to express personal stance and surprise in particular. Eventually (Stage 4), the mirative marker is used in peculiar contexts (*bì* + *X*, where 'X' is a mistaken segment from own one's preceding talk), in which surprise is employed to let the hearer infer the need for rectification (10), i.e. the corrective function.

In sum, this diachronic analysis is framed within a model of semantic change that is based on three principles: we can usefully distinguish semantic and pragmatic meanings, so that the latter can be observed as causes or motivations for innovations, and we can better understand change by taking into account the tendencies of (inter)subjectification.

## 5.2 The synchronic status: Mirativity as a semantic notion

As to the synchronic status of mirativity, two main issues have emerged from the literature (§ 3) thanks to which we could refine the research questions at the beginning of this paper. These are now discussed, in the light of the analysis of Sicilian *bì*. This discourse marker has proven to be a case of non-parasitic mirativity in the sense of Peterson (2017), because it is a dedicated item to express surprise. As a discourse marker, it is precisely a particle, i.e. an independent lexical unit. Whether lexical units can be intended as mirative markers is the first issue under discussion.

The first issue concerns, in fact, what kind of items can mark mirativity. As is implicit in Delancey (1997) and explicit in Aikhenvald (2012), typological linguistics

has focused on grammatical marking, i.e. morphological encoding. Lexical marking is excluded from scrutiny. In line with this assumption, many studies in functional perspectives have taken into consideration mirative strategies –rather than markers– inasmuch as this kind of meaning is often realized by means of other structures (cf. fn. 4), or they just refer to mirative meanings, avoiding implications about what is meant by 'grammar'. It seems difficult for researchers to identify mirativity and treat it systematically, if it lies outside the most traditional level of analysis, morphology. In fact, when Aikhenvald describes mirative particles (2012: 458–462), she leaves us with the open question "how many 'miratives'?", and ultimately with a wide uncharted territory of language use. If not mirative markers, how could we deal with dedicated particles, such as Sicilian *bì*? The same difficulty in dealing with non-morphological mirativity can be seen in the model proposed by Peterson (2017), which accounts for the case of particles by treating them at the level of illocution: what is outside the traditional idea of grammar tends to be put into the "pragmatic wastebasket" (Bar-Hillel 1971).

Dedicated mirative items cannot be defined as illocutionary resources. By definition, speech acts are constituted by the locutionary level, which corresponds to the linguistic realization of the act, and the illocutionary one, which includes different types, namely specific forces. In the case of dedicated items such as *bì*, the expression of surprise lies at the locutionary level, because it corresponds to the actual linguistic realization (a discourse marker) of a speech act with any illocutionary force. Let's recall the present-day uses of *bì*. In fact, the Sicilian discourse marker has one meaning (mirativity) that performs (or contributes to performing) different illocutions. Usually, these are expressives (Searle 1976) or behabitives (Austin 1975). For example, in (6) *bì* codes the speaker's surprise in reaction to the topic of discussion (the kid making presents for his uncles and aunts), and it is used to perform the illocutionary force of applauding (Austin 1975: 159) or praising (Searle & Vanderveken 1985: 211). In (8), the coded meaning is mirative again (surprise, or unprepared mind, in reaction to the screen turning off), but the expressive illocutionary force is different, as it is rather to grumble (Austin 1975: 159) or complain (Searle & Vanderveken 1985: 211). In sum, mirativity can be identified as a coded meaning, rather than a pragmatic inferred one, and it is observed in terms of semantics, not pragmatics, i.e. at the illocutionary level of a speech act. Mirativity as meaning brings us to the second and last issue to consider.

Mirativity as meaning leads to two slightly different theoretical understandings: the semantic category or the semantic notion. The definition of mirativity as a semantic category comes from Delancey (1997) and is fully elaborated by Aikhenvald (2012). As was already argued (§ 3.2), a range of meanings (discovery, surprise, unprepared mind, counterexpectation, new information) are values in a category, which is expressed in the grammar of a language (category-value approach).

Thus, a semantic category is rather a semantically-based grammatical category. This concept of semantic category is consistent with the exclusion of lexical units, and with the difficulty in dealing with the case of particles. In contrast, a different perspective can be suggested, regarding mirativity as a semantic notion rather than category. It can be a type of coded meaning, that is, the specific semantic notion of surprise. In this sense, it is not necessary to distinguish a range of meanings according to a category-value approach. Mirativity can be dealt with, generally, as the linguistic expression of surprise. Especially interesting are the cases of languages that display dedicated items (non-parasitic mirativity, in the terms of Peterson 2017). Different subtypes of surprise may still be usefully researched, and not only to describe languages with special and complex paradigms such as Lisu (Aikhenvald 2012). A proper partition of mirative meanings may seem superfluous for Romance, and also for languages that show dedicated particles, such as *bì* in Sicilian.[19] Yet, distinguishing different subtypes of surprise may contribute to recognizing the limits of this semantic notion and its relation with neighboring notions and categories.[20]

Understanding mirativity as a semantic notion relies on the opportunity to discern coded and inferred meanings, and it means to overcome a narrow conception of grammar as morphosyntax and the grammar-lexicon divide, by embracing a broader view on grammar together with a pragmatic approach to linguistic research.

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**19** Outside Romance, similar to Sicilian *bì* seems the case of the particle *ba* in Greek (Katsiveli 2020) and in the Balkan sprachbund (Alvanoudi 2022).

**20** I wish to thank an anonymous reviewer for bringing this point to my attention.

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# Part 4: **The limits of mirativity**

Cristina Sánchez López

# 9 Old nominal exclamatives in a new light

**Abstract:** This article describes the main formal, semantic and pragmatic properties of two nominal exclamative constructions in Old Spanish (12th to the 16th century) with expressive value: On the one hand, nominal bare exclamatives like *¡Graciosa niña!* 'Funny girl', and definite nominal phrases with an adjective like *¡Mezquina yo!* 'Unfortunate I!'; on the other hand, interjective and adjective phrases with a prepositional complement like *¡Ay de mí!* 'Oh of me' and *¡Pobre de mí!* 'Poor of me!'. The analysis is based on a corpus study of medieval Spanish data and combines with the presentation of the Latin precedents. It is proposed that these constructions constitute an evocative speech act in one case and an evocative speech act of lamentation in the other. Both the origin and the syntax of the construction <adjective + *de* + DP> are revisited. New perspectives for the interaction between exclamativity and mirativity are discussed since these structures count as exclamatives, but they do not express surprise, so they represent a new insight to further elaborate the foci of both categories.

**Keywords:** Exclamative, mirative, interjective phrases, Old Spanish, evocative speech acts, bare nouns

## 1 Introduction

Interjections aside, nominal exclamatives without *wh*-words are the smallest and simplest piece that can constitute an exclamatory utterance. Three main formal schemas of nominal exclamatives can be distinguished in Spanish. In the first one, a bare noun (that is, a noun without a determiner) is optionally modified by an adjective (1); in the second one, a definite determiner phrase or a personal pronoun is directly modified by an adjective or an interjection (2a); in the third one, a determiner phrase or a pronoun is related to an adjective or interjection by a preposition (2b):

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(1) *¡Cielos!;* *¡Graciosa niña!;* *¡Templanza heroica!*
'Heaven!'; 'Funny girl!'; 'Temperance heroic!'

(2) a. *¡Mezquina yo!;* *¡Hideputa el pelón!*
'Unfortunate I!'; 'Motherfucker the bald-headed!'
b. *¡Ay de mí!;* *¡Mezquina de mí!;* *¡Pobre de Florencia!*
'Oh, of me!'; Bitter of me!'; 'Poor of Florence!'

These constructions pose a challenge for syntactic and semantic analysis for several reasons. These structures count as exclamative utterances, but they do not express surprise or unexpected information, which is the main ingredient of mirativity. That is why they represent a new insight to further elaborate the foci of both categories.

On the one hand, the constructions in (1) and (2) can be clearly identified as exclamative utterances with a marked syntax and some specific illocutionary properties. They are undoubtedly expressive utterances, expressing the speaker's emotion with respect to some entity, object, or person. However, its place in the picture of exclamative constructions is far from obvious. They are not sentential exclamative expressions but phrasal exclamative expressions and they thus lack a propositional content. This fact opposes them to the most studied exclamative sentences. According to Bosque (2017: 7), an expression may be signalled as "primary exclamative" by some lexical and/or syntactic clue, whereas only intonation and the proper interpretation of the exclamative illocutionary force associated with it are the linguistic markers of exclamative import for "secondary exclamatives". According to this, nominal exclamatives in (1) are "secondary", because they lack lexical or syntactic exclamative marks. They are bare nominal phrases and differ from nominal *wh*-exclamatives in that they lack words expressing degree or quantity (i.e., *¡Qué graciosa niña!* 'What a funny girl'). The fact that exclamative bare nominal phrases like the ones in (1) occupy a peripheral place in the general picture of exclamatives can be the reason why they have not received much attention. As far as I know, the semantic and pragmatic properties that allow them to be interpreted as expressive speech act remain unexplored.

Nominal exclamatives in (2) are "primary" because they contain some syntactic or lexical exclamative mark. Word order acts as a specific syntactic exclamative clue in (2a), whereas (2b) contain an interjection, which is a lexical unit associated with a number of emotional reactions and, therefore, a lexical mark of exclamative force. Interjections have received much attention in the literature (see, for example, Edeso 2009 about Spanish and the references therein) but this is not the case for interjective phrases, that is, phrases headed by interjections (cf. Rodríguez Ramalle 2007; RAE-ASALE 2009: §32.8). The relationship between interjective

phrases like *¡ay de mí!* 'woe is me' and phrases headed by an adjective like *¡pobre de mí!* 'poor me' was pointed out by Cuervo (1886–1994: s.v. *ay*), Meyer-Lübke (1900: §324) Lapesa (1962) and Tudorică (1967), but, in my opinion, it deserves an updated and more detailed look in the light of new data.[1]

On the other hand, mirativity is generally assumed to be a semantic category whose domain can be defined as expectation of knowledge or status of knowledge. The range of semantic values this idea subsumes has been characterized differently as: "Surprise due to new or unassimilated information" (DeLancey 2012: 533), the "speaker's unprepared mind, unexpected new information, and concomitant surprise" (Aikhenvald 2004: 195; see also Delancey 1997, 2001 and Aikhenvald 2012). Although mirativity has been related to exclamativity, it is far from obvious which place it occupies in the picture of the exclamative modality. Nominal exclamatives pose an extra challenge to this issue because they do not seem to express surprise.

This article describes the main formal, semantic and pragmatic properties of constructions like the ones in (1) and (2) in Old Spanish. The main objective is to shed some light on the place these constructions occupy in the set of exclamative utterances. The constructions under analysis are characteristic of the oral language, since they arise in the context of the interaction between speaker and hearer or are part of the expressive speaker's speech. This work is based on Old Spanish data from the 12th to the 16th century, obtained from the *Corpus of Historical Dictionary of Spanish* (*CDH*) and the *Diachronic Corpus of Spanish* (*CORDE*). A historical perspective is adopted here to bring together the formal study of these structures and the analysis of their pragmatic properties, which are relevant for understanding the negotiation between speaker and hearer in the context of the speech act.

I propose that the nominal exclamatives in (1) and (2) do not express surprise but perform an expressive speech act that consists in the naming of the entity that moves the speaker's mind. Specifically, nominal exclamatives like (1) perform an evocative speech act that consists of evoking the image of an entity to make it present in the mind of the speaker and the addressee, whereas exclamatives like (2) perform a speech act of lamentation or commiseration. I provide a formal analysis that captures the differences between these constructions.

The structure of the article is as follows. First, nominal exclamatives with bare nouns like (1) are described and analyzed in Section 2. Then, nominal exclamatives with a definite nominal phrase or a personal pronoun like (2) are described and

**1** See Lapesa (1962) and Tudorică (1967) for a review of previous work on the relationship between the constructions in (2b) and the definite phrases with attributive value of the type *el bueno of Minaya* (Lit. 'the good of Minaya') 'the good guy Minaya'.

analyzed in Section 3, focusing on the comparison between the formal schemas with and without a preposition. I describe and analyze the examples like (2a) in Section 3.1 and the examples like (2b) in Section 3.2. The article ends with some reflections about the semantic category of mirativity and the limits of surprise in Section 4.

## 2 Exclamative bare nouns

The most prominent property of exclamatives of the type in (1) is that they are noun phrases not introduced by a determiner, that is, they are bare nouns. In view of this property, I will henceforth call them *exclamative bare nouns*. Exclamative bare nouns can be optionally modified by an adjective, which appears in prenominal position in most cases. The meaning of the adjective determines whether the exclamative expresses joy or lamentation. The adjectives in (3a) and (3b) have a negative meaning and the utterances express a regret; those in (3c) and (3d) have a positive meaning and the utterance expresses joy or happiness. The sequence in (3d) combines both possibilities; finally, the adjective *gentil* 'gentle' in (3e) has an ironic meaning.

(3) a. *Ay **grant perdida** ay que grant & como ueno con el grant conorte*
'Oh, <u>great loss</u>, oh how great and how I come with such great grief!'
(*Poridat de poridades*, c1250, *CORDE*)

b. *¡Oh qué mal día amaneció este! ¡Oh **desdichados mancebos**!*
'Oh, what a bad day this dawned! Oh, wretched young men!'
(F. de Rojas, *La Celestina,* c1499-1502, *CORDE*)

c. *¡Oh **buena casa** y venturosa!*
'O good and happy home!'
(F. Delicado, *La lozana andaluza*, 1528, *CORDE*)

d. *¡Linda noche, lindo rato, linda cena y lindo amor! / ¡Fea noche, amargo rato, mala cena y peor amor!*
'Nice night, nice time, nice supper, and nice love! / Bad night, bitter time, bad supper and worse love!'
(M. de Cervantes, *La cueva de Salamanca,* 1615, *CORDE*)

e. *¡Gentil manera de cédula de matrimonio!*
'Gentle way of marriage certificate!'
(M. de Cervantes, *La guarda cuidadosa,* 1615, *CORDE*)

The adjectives in the examples above are not restrictive but evaluative. Some examples of exclamative bare nouns contain restrictive complements, especially in the texts from the 16th century onwards. The restrictive complement can be a relational adjective in postnominal position, such as *astroso* 'related to the stars' in (4a), *inaudito* 'unknown' in (4b), but also a prepositional complement like *de mujer prudente* 'of wise woman' in (4b) or a restrictive relative phrase like *que tal oyen* 'that hear that' in (4c). These restrictive modifiers are not evaluative; this explains the contrast between the postnominal position of the non-evaluative adjectives in (4a) and (4b) and the prenominal position of the evaluative adjectives in the examples in (3) above:

(4) a. ***¡Mundo astroso!*** */ ¡Que a un traidor y a un malicioso / nunca falta que le den!*
'World of stars! That a traitor and a malicious person / never fails to be given!'
(B. Torres Naharro, *Comedia Tinellaria,* 1517, *CDH*)

b. *¡Oh* ***recato inaudito*** *de mujer prudente!*
'O unheard-of modesty of a prudent woman!'
(M. de Cervantes, *La cueva de Salamanca,* 1615, *CORDE*)

c. *¡****Oídos*** *que tal oyen!*
'Ears that hear that!'
(M. de Cervantes, *La guarda cuidadosa,* 1615, *CORDE*)

Exclamative bare nouns are often accompanied by an appositive complement. Thus, the nominal exclamative in (5a) is modified by an adjectival phrase and that in (5b) by a superlative phrase. Sometimes, these complements provide the reasons why the entity mentioned can move the speaker's mind.

(5) a. *¡Oh notable mujer, oh bienes mundanos, indignos de ser poseídos de tan alto corazón!*
'O remarkable woman, o worldly goods, unworthy to be possessed of so high a heart!'
(F. de Rojas, *La Celestina,* c1499-1502, *CORDE*)

b. *¡Oh platera, la más limpia que tiene, tuvo o tendrá el calendario de las fregonas!*
'O silversmith woman, the cleanest that has, had, or will have the maid's calendar.'
(M. de Cervantes, *La guarda cuidadosa,* 1615, *CORDE*)

There are several aspects of these exclamatives that deserve attention, such as what they mean, what their exclamatory force consists of and what their syntax is. I will review these aspects separately.

Regarding meaning, it is important to underline that these exclamations have no propositional content: They do not describe an event, or a fact, or a situation, or even one that consists of the mere ascription of a property to an entity, since in many cases they are reduced to a noun without any adjectival modifier. Thus, these exclamative utterances are reduced to the mere mention of an entity, optionally adding some outstanding positive or negative quality of it. Certainly, the presence of an evaluative adjective in prenominal position adds a subjective assessment of some quality of the mentioned entity. However, the basic semantics of the construction does not consist in the evaluation of such a quality since the presence of the adjective denoting such a quality is optional. My proposal is that the basic meaning of these constructions corresponds to that of a noun phrase mentioning an entity.

The next question is what the expressive speech act that is performed with it consists of. I propose that they perform expressive speech acts, which consist of expressing an emotional reaction of the speaker by mentioning the entity that provokes it. Concretely, I propose that exclamative bare nouns convey an *evocative* force. They make the image of the entity that arouses the speaker's emotional reaction appear in the listener's mind. They are related to the figure that classical rhetoric calls *evidentia*, which places a vision in the eyes of the reader or listener, describing an object in a vivid and detailed way by enumerating its sensible particularities. In the words of Quintilian, quoted by Lausberg (1960: 225): "[By evidence] credibilis rerum imago, quae velut in rem praesentem perducere audientes videntur" [the evidence makes the hearer become an eyewitness by evoking in his mind a credible image of things, which seems as if the hearers make it a present thing].

The absence of a determiner relates exclamative bare nouns to vocatives,[2] but unlike vocatives they are not used to call such entities, but to evoke them, i.e. to make their images present in the reader's mind and introduce them into the domain of discourse in a deliberately marked way. Vocatives appeal to an addressee, which

**2** Vocatives are non-determined phrases in Spanish. They reject the presence of a determiner although they can be considered referential expressions with which the speaker appeals to the addressee. Like exclamative bare nouns, they may contain adjectival modifiers, usually in prenominal position (i), but tend to reject other restrictive modifiers (ii):

(i) *Amable colega, ¿puede usted ayudarme con esto?*
'Kind colleague, can you help me with this?'

(ii) **Colega {extranjero / con gafas}, ¿puede usted ayudarme con esto?*
Lit. 'Colleague {foreign / with glasses}, can you help me with this?'

See González López (2022: 89–232) for extensive discussion about this matter.

is usually a human being, or an entity treated as a person; exclamative bare nouns evoke either people or inanimate beings. While the vocative expects or pretends to expect a response, the evocative is a complete closed expression, which only expects the image of an object, often associated with its salient properties, to take shape.

Despite these differences, exclamative bare nouns share a very relevant property with vocatives, which is that both can be considered expressions whose reference is identified by the context of enunciation. In a similar way to how the vocative refers to the addressee, the exclamative bare noun refers to a certain entity that is placed in the focus of attention of the speaker and the hearer or listener. This entity is accessible to the speaker (and hearer or listener) in the discourse or in the context of enunciation or is presented as if it were. In brief, the absence of a determiner may be due to the performative value of the sequence because, similarly to a vocative, the evocative takes its reference from the anchoring to the moment of enunciation.

This view is consistent with Vairel-Carron's (1975) description of the Latin *exclamativus accusativus*, which can be considered the direct antecedent of Old Spanish exclamative bare nouns. The Latin *exclamativus accusativus* is an exclamative nominal phrase in accusative case with a noun (6a) optionally accompanied by an adjective. The adjective could precede (6b) or follow (6c) the noun, and both possibilities could even cooccur in the same phrase (6d). The Latin *exclamativus accusativus* is marked in most cases by interjections such as *heu* 'ah', *o* 'oh', *eu* 'bravo', *edepol* 'by Pollux', *hercle* 'by Hercules':

(6) Classic Latin
  a. *O audaciam!*
     'O Audacity!'
     (Terencio, *Phormio*, PERSEUS)
  b. *O perditum latronem!*
     'Oh, vicious thief!'
     (Cicerón, *Atico*, PERSEUS)
  c. *Edepol mortales malos!*
     'By Pollux, evil mortals!'
     (Plauto, *Bacchides*, PERSEUS)
  d. *Eu, hercle mortalem catum, / malum crudumque et callidum et subdolum!*
     'By Hercules, deadly trickster, wicked and cruel, and crafty!'
     (Plauto, *Poenulus*, PERSEUS)

According to Vairel-Carron (1975: 62), the Latin *exclamativus accusativus* performs the "pure and simple naming of an object that the immediate reality – concrete

or discursive – imposes on the speaker". The Latin *exclamativus accusativus* was optionally combined with demonstratives of proximity (*hic, haec, hoc* 'this') and demonstrative quantifiers (*tantus/a/um* 'so many'). When the *exclamativus accusativus* contained a demonstrative, it did not admit adjectives nor interjections, but could combine with the particle *-ne* 'perhaps':

(7) Classic Latin
  a. *Hanci vitam! Hoscin mores! Hanc dementiam!*
     'This life! These customs! This madness!'
     (Terencio, *Adelphoe*, PERSEUS)
  b. *Tantamne patientiam, di boni! Tantam moderationem, tantam in iniuria tranquilitatem et modestiam!*
     'So much patience, blessed gods! So much moderation, so much calm and modesty in the face of insults!'
     (Cicerón, *Philipicae*, PERSEUS)

Crucially, the Latin *exclamativus accusativus* differed from nominal wh-exclamatives, which were constructed with nominative case, as the contrasts in (8) and (9) show:

(8) Classic Latin — *Exclamativus accusativus*
  a. *Lepidum*$_{ac}$ *hominem*$_{ac}$*!*
     'Nice man!'
  b. *Tantam*$_{ac}$ *patientiam*$_{ac}$*!*
     'So much patience!'

(9) Classic Latin — Nominal *wh*-exclamatives
  a. *Quam lepidus*$_{nom}$ *homo*$_{nom}$*!*
     'What a nice man!'
  b. *Quantus*$_{nom}$ *homo*$_{nom}$*!*
     'What a man!'

Exclamative bare nouns were not constructed with demonstratives of proximity in Old Spanish, but exclamative bare nouns with demonstrative quantifiers were frequent in the studied period. Some examples of this pattern, which disappeared in the 16th century (see Octavio de Toledo & Sánchez López 2009: §10), are shown in (10):

(10) a. *¡**Tanta** buena arma e **tanto** buen caballo corredor, / **tanta** vuena capa e mantos e pelliçones!*

'So many good weapons and so many good running horses, so many good capes and cloaks and pelisses!'
(*Poema de Mio Cid*, c1140, *CDH*)

b. *todos andauan alegres, diziendo:* ***¡Tan buen día!***
'They all went about rejoicing, saying: Such a good day!'
(*Libro de Apolonio*, c1240, *CDH*)

c. *Doña Endrina le dixo: "¡Ay,* ***viejas tan perdidas****!"*
'Doña Endrina told him: 'Oh, old women so lost!'
(J. Ruiz, *Libro de buen amor*, 1330-1343, *CDH*)

*Tanto/a/os/as* 'so many' and *tan* 'so' are demonstratives which express quantity and degree, respectively. They are indexical or deictic elements that point to a quantity or degree that is present in the domain of discourse. The presence of such as demonstratives can be considered a strong argument for the contextual anchoring of exclamative bare nouns and distinguishes them from *wh*-word exclamatives such as those in (11), which express a high quantity without pointing it out in the universe of the discourse.

(11) a. ***Cuánto*** *fiz yo e* ***cuán grand*** *es el nuestro poder*
'How much I did and how big our power is'.
(Alfonso X, *General Estoria I*, c1275, *CDH*)

b. *¡Dios,* ***qué buen vassallo****, si oviesse buen señor!*
'God, what a good servant, if he would have a good sir!'
(*Poema de Mio Cid*, c1140, *CDH*)

Similarly, exclamative bare nouns differ from nominal exclamative with *wh*-exclamatives. Consider the contrast between the example in (4a), repeated as (12a) and (12b), as well as the text of (12c), where the two types of exclamatives immediately follow each other:

(12) a. *¡Mundo astroso!*
'World of stars!'
(B. Torres Naharro, *Comedia Tinellaria,* 1517, *CDH*)

b. *¡Qué mundo malo!*
'What a bad world!'
(J. Ruiz, *Libro de buen amor*, 1330-1343, *CDH*)
*Ay gran Perdida, ay que grant*
'Oh, great loss, oh how great!'
(*Poridat de poridades. Escorial L.III.2*, c1250, *CORDE*)

Contrary to nominal *wh*-exclamatives, exclamative bare nouns do not have a grammatical mark of exclamative modality. In addition, nominal *wh*-exclamatives and exclamative bare nouns differ crucially in what is the focus of the exclamative force. In nominal *wh*-exclamatives, the focus of the exclamative force lies in the quantity or in the degree of some quality, whereas in the exclamative bare nouns the focus lies on the entity itself. It has been proposed (Portner & Zanuttini 2004, among others) that nominal *wh*-exclamatives hide a propositional content consisting in the predication of a graded or quantified property to an entity. My proposal is that exclamative bare nouns lack this content since the adjective is not an obligatory element.

In short, exclamative bare nouns are characterized by constituting a nominal phrase without a determiner, whose exclamatory force consists of naming the entity that moves the speaker's mind. Although they may contain an evaluative adjective that highlights some outstanding property of that entity, the exclamatory force does not lie in the ascription of this property to the entity alluded to, but in evoking the image of the entity itself. The absence of a determiner, which brings these exclamatives closer to vocatives, is possible because the exclamative bare noun refers to an object accessible to speaker and listener in the context of enunciation. However, unlike vocatives, exclamative bare nouns have an evocative illocutionary force, which consists of bringing to the mind of speaker and hearer the image of the entity that triggers his emotional reaction.

## 3 Complain exclamatives of the type <XP (*de*) DP>

Let us now turn to the exclamative constructions illustrated in (2), repeated here for convenience:

(2)' a. *¡Mezquina yo!;* *¡Hideputa el pelón!*
'Unfortunate I!'; 'Motherfucker the bald-headed!'
b. *¡Ay de mí!;* *¡Mezquina de mí!;* *¡Pobre de Florencia!*
'Oh, of me!'; Bitter of me!'; 'Poor of Florence!'

These exclamatives differ from exclamative bare nouns in several semantic and formal properties. From the semantic point of view, the nominal exclamative phrases in (2) express a complain and because of that I will refer to them as *complain nominal exclamatives*. They serve almost exclusively to express grief, lamentation, or commiseration, which is manifested in the obligatory presence of an expressive or evaluative element with negative content. This expressive element is usually an interjection expressing a negative emotion, such as *ay* 'oh, woe, alas',

*guay* 'oh, woe, alas', whereas the evaluative element is an adjective that expresses a property or a state that leads to commiseration or pity. Some of the more frequent are listed in (13):

(13)

| | |
|---|---|
| *amargo* 'bitter'; | *maldito* 'damned' |
| *cautivo* 'captive' | *malogrado* 'failed' |
| *cuitado* 'sorrowful' | *malquisto* 'damned, cursed' |
| *guayoso* 'complainant' | *mezquino* 'miserable, stingy' |
| *desdichado* 'wretched' | *pecador* 'sinner' |
| *lacerado* 'lacerated' | *pobre* 'poor' |
| *lastimado* 'hurt' | *traidor* 'traitor' |
| *lóbrego* 'dismal' | |

From the formal point of view, the complain exclamative phrases in (2) differ from exclamative bare nouns in that they contain a definite noun phrase, that is, the entity that triggers the speaker's emotion is denotated by a definite referential expression, not a bare noun. The definite determiner phrase can be a personal pronoun (*yo* 'I', *mí* 'me'), a proper noun (*Florencia*) or a noun preceded by a determiner (*el pelón* 'the bald-headed').

Complain nominal exclamatives can, in turn, be divided into two sub-types which differ in the way the determiner phrase and the expressive or evaluative element which is predicated of it are formally related. In the first type, exemplified in (2a), the two elements are joined directly without any formal mark of relationship between them. In the second type, exemplified in (2b), the preposition *de* 'of' relates the two elements. In the following we will look at the properties of both subtypes separately.

## 3.1 The type <*interjection/adjective* + DP>

Complain nominal exclamatives consisting of an interjection followed by a personal pronoun are documented in older texts, but they were always rare. The earliest ones correspond to the combination of the interjection *ay* 'oh, alas' (and its formal variants *a, aï, ai*) plus the first-person pronoun in the oblique case *mí* 'me' (or its formal variants *me, mi*; both *me* and *mi* were tonic forms corresponding to the Current Spanish *mí* used after a preposition, like in *para mí* 'for me').

(14) a. *E diz:* ***a mi****, que callé*
'And he says: Oh me, who kept silent!'
(Almerich, *Fazienda de ultramar*, c1200, *CDH*)

b. *Yua se quexando por su mugier. & dezie.* ***Ay mi*** *que fare de donna deyphile mi mugier*
'He was complaining about his wife and said: Oh my, what shall I do with my wife D.?'
(Alfonso X, *General Estoria II*, c1275, *CDH*)

c. ***Ay mi****. O son agora las mi orgullias*
'Oh me, where is my pride now?'
(Alfonso X, *General Estoria II,* c1275, *CDH*)

d. *Dixle;* ***Ay mi****.* ***Ay mi****.* ***Ay mi****. sennor dios.*
'He said to him: Oh me, oh me, oh me, oh me, Lord God.'
(Alfonso X, *General Estoria IV*, c1280, *CDH*)

Exclamations of this type were often accompanied by an adjective; the most usual was *mezquino* 'wretched, unfortunate', as in (15). Some examples of exclamatives with an adjective without an explicit pronoun are documented in early texts, such as those of (16a) and (16b), where the adjective *mezquino* 'unfortunate' refers to the speaker and (16c), where *mezquinos* refers to the first plural person. However, I have not found in the corpus exclamatives without an interjection in which an adjective combines with a personal pronoun in the oblique case, such a **mezquino mí* or **cuitado mí*:[3]

(15) a. ***Mesquino ¡aï mí****! Nasqui en ora dura*
Wretched, oh me! I was born in a hard hour.
(G. de Berceo, *Milagros de Nuestra Señora,* c1246-1252, *CDH*)

b. *começo a llorar muy grieuemient diziendo* ***uay mi mesquina*** *me dexas mio sennor*
'She began to cry very severely saying: Oh, unlucky me, you leave me, my lord'.
(Alfonso X, *General Estoria IV*, c1280, *CORDE*)

**3** Compare with the Latin exclamative accusatives in (i), where a pronoun in accusative was modified by an evaluative adjective, in indistinct order (Flickinger 1918, Vairel-Carron 1975):

(i) Classic Latin

a. *Heu* ***me miserum****! Misere perii*
'Oh, poor me! I die miserably'
(Plauto, *Aulularia*, *PERSEUS*)

b. ***Lepidum te****!*
'Funny you!'
(Plauto, *Bacchides*, *PERSEUS*)

(16) a. *¡**Mesquino**, dixo, que por mal fuy nasçido!*
'Unfortunate, he said, because I was born by misfortune!'
(*Libro de Apolonio*, c1240, *CDH*)

b. ***Coitado** ¿si escaparé?*
Sorrowful, will I be able to escape?
(J. Ruiz, *Libro de buen amor*, 1330-1343, *CDH*)

c. *dizién: "¡Aï **mezquinos**, pueblos desemparados, si nos veremos nunqa d'esti mal terminados!"*
'They said: 'Oh unfortunate, helpless peoples, will we ever be free from this evil?'
(G. de Berceo, *Vida de san Millán*, c1230, *CDH*)

The pattern illustrated in (14) and (15), that is, the pattern with an interjection followed by a personal pronoun in oblique case, did not survive beyond the 13th century. It was replaced by the pattern <interjection + *de* + oblique pronoun> like *ay de mí* 'oh me, alas', in which the pronoun maintains the etymological oblique case and the preposition *de* 'of' is inserted as a formal link (see Section 2.3). The construction <interjection + nominative pronoun + adjective> is occasionally documented in texts from the 15 and 16 centuries, but disappeared early:[4]

(17) a. *¡**Ay yo** desconsolada triste!, que aún es vivo aquel traidor de Julián*
'Alas I bereaved sad! because that traitor Julian is alive!'
(P. de Corral, *Crónica del rey don Rodrigo*, c1430, *CDH*)

**4** The combination of an interjection with a personal pronoun in nominative case was always very rare in Old Spanish and is ungrammatical in Current Spanish, where only the pattern <interjection + *de* + oblique pronoun> has been preserved, as shown in (i). The preposition is obligatory not only with first and second singular person pronouns, which distinguish formally nominative and oblique case (i), but also with the rest of the personal pronouns, which do not mark overtly the distinction between nominative and oblique case (ii):

(i) a. **Ay yo;* **Ay tú*
Oh $I_{nom}$ Oh $you_{nom.sg}$

b. *Ay de mí;* *Ay de ti*
Oh, of $me_{obl}$; Oh $you_{obl.sg}$

(ii) a. **Ay él* **Ay nosotros;* **Ay vosotros;* **Ay ellos.*
Oh $he_{nom/obl}$; Oh $we_{nom/obl}$; Oh $you_{nom/obl.pl}$; Oh $they_{nom/obl}$

b. *Ay de él;* *Ay de nosotros;* *Ay de vosotros;* *Ay de ellos.*
Oh, of $he_{nom/obl}$; Oh, of $we_{nom/obl}$; Oh of $you_{nom/obl.pl}$; Oh, of $they_{nom/obl}$

b. *¡**Ay yo** mezquina!, que del gran miedo que hove toda me resfrié!*
'Alas I unfortunate! I caught a cold because I was so scared.'
(P. de Corral, *Crónica del rey don Rodrigo*, c1430, *CDH*)

c. *¿Qué dizes, airado amador? ¿E non respondes? ¡**Ay yo**, mezquina!*
'What do you say, furious lover? Don't you answer? Alas I unfortunate!'
(L. García de Salazar, *Historia de las bienandanzas e fortunas*, 1471–1476, *CDH*)

d. *¡**Ay yo**, triste, descalabrado!*
'Alas I, sad, ¡loser!
(*Farsa llamada alarquina*, c1550, *CDH*)

On the other hand, the order <adjective + nominative pronoun> was not only more frequent in Old Spanish but has also been preserved until now:

(18) a. *Dixo assi O **mesquino yo** & en fuerte punto nascido: yo comi a mio fijo*
'He said so: 'Oh, sinful I, & I was born at an evil hour, for I ate my son.'
(Alfonso X, *General Estoria II*, c. 1275, *CORDE*)

b. *¡**Cuitado yo**! ¿Qué faré, que non la puedo catar?*
'Unfortunate I! What will I do because I can't taste it?'
(J. Ruiz, *Libro de buen amor*, 1330–1343, *CDH*)

c. *¡Oh **malventurado yo**, y qué pérdida tan grande!*
'O wretched me, and what a great loss!'
(F. de Rojas, *La Celestina,* c1499-1502, *CORDE*)

d. *¡Ay, ay, ay, ay, ay, **triste yo**! / que mi gala y loçanía, / y jouenil mancebía, tan presto se consumió*
'O, o, o, o, sad I! Because my gala and youthfulness so quickly wasted away'
(L. Fernández, *Diálogo para cantar*, 1514, *CDH*)

To sum up, during the period under analysis, complain nominal exclamatives without a preposition could alternate between two different patterns: With a pronoun in the oblique case and with a pronoun in the nominative case. Complain nominal exclamatives with a pronoun in the oblique case were in a minority. Although they can be considered direct heirs of the Latin exclamative accusatives (i.e., Latin *lepidum me* 'poor me'), they are rarely documented during the 13th century, only with interjections (*ay me* 'oh me' vs. **pobre mí* 'poor me') and disappear from the 14th century onwards.

Complain nominal exclamatives with a pronoun in the nominative case are documented from the oldest texts with adjectives and interjections in two possible orders: <interjection + adjective + pronoun> (*ay mezquina yo* 'oh unfortunate

I') and <interjection + pronoun + adjective> (*ay yo mezquina* 'oh I unfortunate'). The first pattern is older and more general, while the second is later and is documented only sporadically in the 15th and 16th centuries and has not been preserved in Current Spanish.

Both patterns correspond to nominal phrases that express the speaker's sorry, regrets or complaints about the entity denoted by the pronoun or definite nominal phrase. In most cases, the entity inspiring the complain is the speaker themselves, who feels commiseration or sorrow about their own situation. The syntactic relationship between the expressive or evaluative element (the interjection or evaluative adjective) and the determiner phrase is that of an apposition. The focus of exclamative force cannot be the ascription of some property or state to the entity denoted by the pronoun or definite determiner phrase, since the evaluative adjective is optional, but in the entity itself.

## 3.2 The type <interjection/adjective + *de* + DP>

The construction with the pattern <interjection + *de* + DP> is documented since the 13th century. These exclamatives were used to express regret or commiseration for a current or past situation.[5] The interjection provides the expressive or emotional content of the speaker towards the entity denoted by the nominal expression. The most frequent interjection is *ay* (19a) and (19b), but some examples with the interjection *guay* are also documented (19c). The determiner phrase is a pronoun, optionally modified by an apposition or an explanatory relative clause describing the reasons that move the speaker's mood to express commiseration or threat (19b) and (19c):

(19) a. *¡**Ay de mí**!*
'Woe to (lit. of) me'
(J. Ruiz, *Libro de buen amor*, 1330-1343, CDH)

b. *¡**Ay de uos**, ensennadores de la ley e phariseos ypocritas! que cerrades el regno de los cielos ante los ombres.*
'Woe to (lit. of) you, teachers of the law of the Pharisees, hypocrites, who shut up the kingdom of heaven before men!'
(*Evangelio de San Mateo*, c1260, CDH)

5 In Current Spanish interjective phrases can also express threats or warnings about future adverse situations, especially when combined with conditional sentences:

(i) *Ay de ti si no trabajas*
'Woe to you if you don't work.'

c. ***¡Guay de ti**, Mantua! que estás / tan vezina de Cremona / que te he duelo*
'Woe to (lit. of) you, Mantua, who are so close to Cremona that I feel sorry for you'.
(J. del Encina, *Traducción de las bucólicas de Virgilio*, 1496, *CORDE*)

There are few examples where the term of the preposition is a bare noun (20). Most often, the term of the preposition is a definite determiner phrase, headed by a definite article (21a) and (21b), a demonstrative (21c) or a possessive (21d). The determiner phrase can contain some restrictive modifiers, such as prepositional phrases or relative clauses, and may receive either a generic or a specific reading:

(20) *¡Ay de prennadas e de nodriças en aquellos dias!*
'Woe to (lit. of) pregnant women and wet nurses in those days!'
(*El Nuevo Testamento según el manuscrito escurialense I-j-6*, c1260, *CDH*)

(21) a. *Ay de los pastores que esparzen & despiesçan la grey del mio pasto.*
'Woe to (lit. of) the shepherds who scatter and lose the flock of my pastures.
(Alfonso X, *General Estoria IV*, c1280, *CDH*)
b. *¡guay de las frutas et de los árvoles et de las bestias salvajes que las comen!*
'Woe to the fruits and the trees and the wild beasts that eat them.'
(*Calila e Dimna*, 1251, *CORDE*)
c. *mas ¡ay daquel ombre por quien sera traydo el Fiio del ombre!*
'But woe to (lit. of) that man by whom the son of the man shall be betrayed!'
(*El Nuevo Testamento según el manuscrito escurialense I-j-6,* c1260, *CDH*)
d. *Pues, ¡guayas de mi casa!*
So, woe to (lit. of) my house!'
(F. Delicado, *La lozana andaluza*, 1528, *CORDE*)

It is also possible that the complement of the preposition is a free relative clause, equivalent to a determiner phrase. Although in these cases the subordinate clause usually carries the verb in the indicative, it usually has a generic reference, as seen in the following examples:

(22) a. *E ¡guay del que sabe e non le aprovecha el saber! E ¡guay del que vee e fazese ciego!*
'And woe to (lit. of) him who knows and does not profit by his knowledge, and woe to (lit. of) him who sees and is blinded!'
(*Bocados de oro*, c1250, *CORDE*)

b. *¡Guay de quien tal oye como yo!*
'Woe betide (lit. of) anyone who hears what I hear!'
(F. de Rojas, *La Celestina,* c1499-1502, *CORDE*)

The preposition *por* 'by' was used sometimes instead of *de* 'of', especially in biblical texts of the 15th century. Other fixed interjective expressions used the preposition *con* 'with', like *pese a tal* and *cuerpo de Dios*:

(23) a. *E dixe: ¡**guay por** mi, que so tajado!*
'And I said: Woe is (lit. of) me, for I have been cut off!'
(*Biblia ladinada*, c1400, *CORDE*)
b. ***Pese a tal con** la puta sin sonaderas!*
'Darn it all' (lit. 'with the bitch no rattlesnake!')
(F. Delicado, *La lozana andaluza*, 1528, *CORDE*)
c. *¡**Cuerpo de Dios con** los villanos!*
'Darn it all (lit. body of god) with the villains!'
(M. de Cervantes, *El retablo de las maravillas,* 1615, *CORDE*)

Complain nominal exclamatives with an adjective (i.e., *¡triste de mí!* 'Sad of me') have been documented since the 13th century, but they are much less frequent than those headed by an interjection. They will have a remarkable development from the 15th century onwards, particularly in the 16th and 17th centuries. The determiner phrase was, in most cases, a first-person pronoun (24); it was followed in frequency by cases of second person pronoun, singular or plural (25). Proper names (26a) and free relative clauses (26b) were possible, although less frequent.

(24) a. *¡Ah cuitada de mí! ¡En qué lazo me he metido!*
'Woe is me! (lit. 'sorrowful of me) What a mess I've got myself into!'
(F. de Rojas, *La Celestina,* c1499-1502, *CORDE*)
b. *Pecador de mí –dije yo–, por eso tiene tan poco cuidado de mantenerte*
'Sinner (lit. of) me –I said–, that's why he takes so little care to keep you.'
(*Lazarillo de Tormes,* a1554, *CDH*)

(25) a. *¡Ay maldita de ti! ¿Qué ovo este omne contigo?*
'Oh damn (lit. of) you! What did this man have with you?'
(*Sendebar,* c1253, *CDH*)
b. *Malquisto de vos*
'Cursed (lit. of) you!'
(J. Rodríguez del Padrón, *Siervo libre de amor*, 1440, *CORDE*)

(26) a. *ay mesiello de alexandre que mucho semeia la tu salida deste mundo a su uenida*
'Oh, poor of Alexandre, how much your departure from this world resembles his coming!'
(*Poridat de poridades*, c1250, *CDH*)
b. *¡Desdichadas de aquéllas que andan en la vida libre!*
'Wretched are (lit. of) those who walk in free life!'
(M. de Cervantes, *El vizcaíno fingido,* 1615, *CDH*)

The constructions *cuitado de mí* and *cuitado yo* coexisted –as shown in (27)– but the former was more frequent in the period analyzed here. Table 1 contains the occurrences of some exclamative phrases with the adjectives *cuitado* 'sorrowful', *mezquino* 'miserable, stingy' and *pecador* 'sinner' with and without a preposition. The data in the table clearly show that the option with preposition and pronoun in oblique case was mor frequent that the option without the preposition and pronoun in nominative case:

(27) **¡Ay mezquina de mí!. . . ¡Oh mezquina yo!** ¡Alza la cabeza!
'Oh unfortunate of me!. . . Oh, unfortunate I! Lift your head!'
(F. de Rojas, *La Celestina,* c1499-1502, *CORDE*)

**Table 1:** Number of occurrences in CORDE from 1200 and 1600.

| **Adjective + P + Pronoun$_{OBL}$** | | **Adjective + Pronoun$_{NOM}$** | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Cuitado de mí* | 52 | 4 | *Cuitado yo* |
| *Pecador de mí* | 42 | 2 | *Pecador yo* |
| *Mezquino de mí* | 25 | 27* | *Mezquino yo* |

(*17 cases belong to *Comedia* by Juan Rodríguez Froilán, 1554)

Summing up, in the earliest stages –12 and 13 centuries– the construction with interjection followed by a pronoun in the oblique case without preposition –*¡a mi!*, cf. examples in (14)– coexisted with the construction with interjection followed by a prepositional phrase whose complement was a noun –*¡ay de preñadas!,* cf. examples in (20). Adjectives were combined with personal pronouns in the nominative case, often with an interjection but without a preposition: *¡Ay yo mezquina!,* cf. examples in (18). The use of the prepositional constructions *¡ay de mí!* –cf. examples in (19)– and *¡pobre de mí!* –cf. examples in (19) and (24)– generalized since the 13th and, especially, the 14th centuries.

Let us now turn to the syntactic analysis of the structures of the type <interjection/adjective + *de* + DP>. The most relevant formal aspect is the presence of the preposition. Lapesa (1962: 169) considers that complain phrases with *de* come from the Latin *genitivus exclamativus*: "Certain Latin exclamations [which] sometimes carry in genitive the noun that represents the object causing the emotion, whether of joy or of pain". According to Quetglas (1979: 181), the *genitivus exclamativus*, exemplified in (28), was taken from Classical Greek and never generalized in Classical Latin, but was incorporated into late Latin, especially in ecclesiastical texts, from where it was able to pass into Romance:

(28) a. *Foederis heu taciti*
'Oh, secret pact!'
(Propercio, *Elegías*, PERSEUS)
b. *O magnae caritatis, o perfectae sinceritatis*
'Oh, great charity, Oh perfect sincerity!'
(Clemente, *Ad Corinthios*, PERSEUS)

However, this historical explanation has some limits. Firstly, the Latin *genitivus exclamativus* was very rare compared to *accusativus exclamativus*. Secondly, the *genitivus exclamativus* was used in ecclesiastical Latin, so it is difficult to explain its transfer to the spoken language. Finally, the existence of examples with pronouns in the oblique case without prepositions casts doubt on whether the preposition was a mark inherited from Latin.

Tudorică (1967: 631–632) follows Meyer-Lübke arguing that the preposition *de* 'of' is not an heir of the Latin genitive but "c'est plutôt le *de* qui introduit le nom de l'objet touché par l'action: malheur par rapport à moi" [it is rather the *de* that introduces the name of the object affected by the action: Misfortune in relation to me] (Meyer-Lübke 1900: 376). In classical Latin, the genitive of relation had the same function as that of indicating the object as the cause/origin of the sentiment of some verbs of the *misereor* 'commiserate, feel sorry for someone' type. This could be the reason for the substitution of the genitive of relation by an ablative of origin, optionally preceded by the preposition *de* 'of': Latin *miserere sociorum*$_{gen}$ 'feel sorry for the husbands' > Latin *miserere (de) nobis*$_{abl}$ 'feel sorry for us'. Tudorică (1967: 632) draws attention to the emotional similarity between the Latin verb *miserere* and the Latin interjection *vae* 'ay' and proposes that the prepositional regime may have extended from the former to the later. The fact that it is not documented in the classical Latin language does not mean, according to her, that it did not occur in the popular language, from which it would have been transmitted to the Iberian Peninsula and Dacia. The Spanish construction *pobre de mí* 'poor me' (and its Romanian equivalent *săraca de mine!*) would have been formed, according to her, as an ana-

logical construction subsequent to the interjective, in which the adjective acquires a value similar to that of the interjection. This idea was entertained already by Cuervo (1886–1994: s.v. *ay*), who notes that some adjectives "se usan interjectivamente solos o acompañados de una interjección" [are used like interjections, alone or accompanied by an interjection].

Assuming some of the ideas presented in the last paragraph, I propose that the preposition is introduced to formally mark the syntactic dependency between the expressive (interjection) or evaluative (adjective) element and the pronoun or definite nominal phrase. The oblique case is expected under this configuration. The result is an interjective phrase in which the complement of the preposition is the element that triggers the emotional reaction expressed with it. I assume the analysis of interjective phrases by RAE-ASALE (2009: §32.8c), according to which "the interjections *ay* and *ah* form interjective phrases with the preposition *de.* The noun phrase which forms the term of the first one designates the one who is the object of the threat, but also the person or thing for whom one feels pity". This analysis, which is in the line with that of Cuervo and with proposals about the quasi-interjective nature of adjectives used in this construction, is represented in (31). I propose that this analysis can be extended to the exclamatives with the form <adjective + *de* + pronoun/DP>, considering –with Cuervo (1893) and Tudorică (1967)– that the evaluative adjective behaves like a quasi-interjective element as shown in (30):

(29) [$_{\text{InterjPhrase}}$ *Ay* [$_{\text{PP}}$ *de* [$_{\text{DP}}$ *mí*]]]]

(30) [$_{\text{InterjPhrase}}$ {*Pobre / mezquino / cuitado. . .*} [$_{\text{PP}}$ *de* [$_{\text{DP}}$ *mí*]]]]

Several arguments support the analysis in (30). First, adjectives in these constructions reject any complement or modifier so that the construction is reduced to the mere expression of the bare adjective. The following contrast shows that the adjectives *cuitado* 'worried' (31a), *triste* 'sad' (32a) and *mezquina* 'unfortunate' (33a) can combine with some complements and degree modifiers; I have not found examples like (31b), (32b) and (33b) in the corpus analyzed and they are ungrammatical in Current Spanish as well:

(31) a. *El rey cuando non falló esta fija entre las otras fue* ***muy cuitado por ella***
'When the king did not find this daughter among the others, he was very worried about her'
(Alfonso X, *General Estoria I*, c1275, *CDH*)

b. **¡Muy cuitado por ella de mí!*

(32) a. *Espantáronse todos porque* ***tan triste*** *venié*
'They were all amazed because he came so sadly'
(*Libro de Apolonio*, c1240, *CDH*)
b. **¡Tan triste de mí!*

(33) a. *Nota* ***cuán mezquina*** *es la carne*
'Note how mean the flesh is.'
(Benedicto XIII, *Libro de las consolaciones*, a1417, *CDH*)
b. **¡Cuán mezquina de mí!*

Second, the construction has a semantic bias, since it is specialized to express commiseration or pity and is not compatible with adjectives expressing joy or congratulations, as observed Lapesa (1962: 170). This specialization will not receive a satisfactory explanation if one considers that the focus of illocutionary exclamative force lies in the ascription of a property to a subject, since nothing should exclude those cases in which a positive or happy property is predicated. Contrarily, specialization makes sense if we consider that the construction is interjective and only admits those adjectives whose meaning enables them to convey a negative emotion like that conveyed by the interjection *ay* 'oh'.

Third, the analysis of exclamatives of this type as an interjective phrase allows us to maintain their basically nominal and non-verbal nature. In this analysis, both the adjective and the interjection are elements expressing the speaker's emotional reaction, whose trigger is not a sentence with propositional content but a nominal entity.

Finally, it is possible to consider that the bare adjectives in the prepositional complain nominal exclamatives are quasi-interjective elements despite their nominal morphology. Indeed, proper interjections, such as *ay, guay* among others, lack inflection; however, improper interjections that come from the affixation of lexical categories such as verbs, adjectives or nouns can maintain a certain morphological variation while they occupy functional positions related to illocutive force (see Sánchez López 2019 and references therein).

In sum, the complain nominal exclamatives are interjective phrases headed by an expressive element, which can be an interjection or an evaluative adjective with a quasi-interjective value. The analysis in (29) and (30) explains satisfactorily, in my opinion, the fact that these constructions have exclamative illocutionary force even though they lack propositional content. The fact that they are headed by an interjective element explains that they perform expressive speech acts consisting in the manifestation of the sorrow or commiseration that the speaker feels towards the entity denoted by the determiner phrase.

# 4 Final remarks on exclamative nominal phrases and the limits of surprise

Two Old Spanish exclamative constructions have been analyzed in this paper and they challenge any theory of exclamative modality: Exclamative bare nouns and complain nominal exclamatives. It has been proposed that exclamative bare nouns and complain exclamative nominal phrases have a particular syntactic structure related with some specific semantic and illocutionary properties. Both share three more relevant properties: a) They lack a propositional content since its main nature is nominal; b) they perform expressive speech acts triggered by an entity, denoted by a bare noun and by a determiner phrase respectively, and c) the exclamative illocutive force conveys a specific speech act related to that entity, which is an evocative speech act in one case and an speech act of lamentation in the other, so that in both cases the focus of the exclamative force is the very entity denoted by the bare noun or the determiner phrase.

There has been much discussion as to the basis for the emotional reaction that triggers expressive exclamative speech acts. Surprise at the unexpected or supervening may explain some cases, especially when the propositional content is new to the speaker. But it would be wrong to think that all exclamative utterances are associated with a probabilistic calculus according to which the propositional content is less expected than others and thus more surprising. This is especially true for nominal exclamatives. As Bosque (2017: 3) observes, the person who exclaims *¡Bonita mañana!* 'Nice morning!' did not necessarily expect it to rain in the morning and, perhaps, only wants to express a positive and happy emotion about a perhaps foreseeable event. As emotional reactions can also be based on negative evaluations (i.e., *¡Tiempo tan desapacible!* 'Such unpleasant weather!') it is difficult to find the pattern on which the speaker's emotion is constructed (see also Sánchez López, in press).

In this article, two new semantic contents associated with the exclamative modality have been proposed: The evocative force of bare exclamative nouns and the expression of the complain interjective phrases. It remains open to discussion whether these values could increase the list of those associated with the semantic category of mirativity or whether, on the contrary, it is possible to speak, as it seems, of purely exclamative contents independent of the mirative one.

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Sarah Dessì Schmid, Lydia Momma & Evelyn Wiesinger

# 10 Mirativity in Romance: Speaker-oriented vs. hearer-oriented expressions of unexpectedness

**Abstract:** This article argues for a more differentiated analysis of mirativity in terms of speaker- and/or hearer-oriented "unexpectedness". We propose a new typology of mirative strategies, which emerges from an investigation of the expression of mirativity in Romance languages. We present initial results from a pilot study conducted in 2023 as part of a larger research project on cross-linguistic tendencies in Romance mirative linguistic devices, which range from lexical to (partially) grammaticalised forms. The analysis focuses on selected Spanish and Italian corpus examples and presents an application of the suggested typology.

**Keywords:** mirativity, unexpectedness, speaker-hearer interaction, rhetorical uses, Romance languages

## 1 Introduction

In recent decades, mirativity has received increasing attention in both functional-typological and formally oriented linguistic studies.[1] Within the former framework it is defined, for example, as "a more or less spontaneous reaction to a new, salient, often surprising event" (Aikhenvald 2004: 197); according to the formal perspective mirative markers linguistically encode a violation or an exceeding of the speaker's expectations of a recently learned at-issue proposition *p* (cf. Rett & Murray 2013).[2]

Previous accounts of mirativity have mostly considered the status of unexpectedness from the epistemic stance of the speaker. For example, DeLancey (1997: 38) defines the concept of mirativity as "conveying information which is new or unexpected to the speaker" (see also Aikhenvald 2004: 197; Celle et al. 2017). However, several studies within both research strands have suggested that a more differen-

1 We would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper.

2 Speakers' expectations are defined as a set of *p*s that include "the propositions [an individual] x knows and believes about the past, present and future. They are those propositions assigned a prior probability above some standard of credence" (Rett & Murray 2013: 465–466).

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tiated analysis of "unexpectedness" in terms of the hearer-speaker interaction is needed (e.g. Beltrama & Hanink 2019; Cruschina & Bianchi 2021) or have pointed to the possible strategic and rhetorical uses of mirativity (Celle et al. 2017). So far, these isolated observations have not been considered in relation to each other, nor have they been used to establish a fine-grained typology of the expression of unexpectedness. They have not, moreover, been comparatively tested over a broader range of markers expressing or triggering mirativity in different languages.

In the Romance languages, mirativity is not expressed autonomously, i.e. there are no (more or less) grammatical markers that express mirativity exclusively or even prototypically and even the lexical markers are in the vast majority of cases polyfunctional, i.e. they function simultaneously as markers of mirativity and of other seemingly associated semantic-functional categories. Nevertheless, not only are Romance languages perfectly able to express mirativity, but to do so they have at their disposal a very wide range of linguistic means – with varying degrees of grammaticality and/or lexicality. Such means interact, moreover, with so-called illocutionary moods, particularly exclamation and interrogation.

In this paper, we briefly report the state of the art of research on mirativity (§2), then suggest a new typology of different mirative strategies that is based on different types of speaker- and/or hearer-orientation (§3). This forms part of a larger research project[3] which has the main goal of modelling a typology that makes possible a more differentiated analysis of (un)expectedness through investigation of the specific characteristics of mirativity expression in Romance languages and varieties. In §4, we present an analysis of some data from a pilot study conducted in 2023 within this project demonstrating the application of the suggested typology. We focus on selected Spanish and Italian linguistic devices expressing mirativity, which differ greatly in both their synchronic form and their diachronic development, i.e. the Spanish expressive intensifier *ostras* lit. 'host' and the Italian polyfunctional verbal periphrasis *andare a* 'go to' + infinitive. Examples of uses of these linguistic devices were extracted from the *Val.Es.Co* corpora for spoken Spanish in Valencia and the *KIParla* and *PAISÀ* corpora for (spoken) Italian and were manually coded for mirative uses. We conclude (§5) by outlining a research hypothesis which will be investigated in the larger research project.

**3** Our research project investigates different kinds of Romance mirative markers in synchrony and diachrony through corpus analysis and experimental methods. It forms part of an interdisciplinary research group working on related subjects at the University of Tübingen, which also covers Germanic and Slavic languages.

## 2 State of the art (and the major aims of our contribution)

As stated above, in Romance, mirativity "hooks up" to other grammatical and pragmatic categories and can be expressed via a wide array of linguistic devices, which may vary considerably even across the varieties of one language. These include, among others:

- focus fronting, e.g. It. *Ma domani **al mare** andate?* 'You're actually going to the beach tomorrow?' (lit. 'But tomorrow to the beach you are going?') (Cruschina & Bianchi 2021);
- futures and conditionals, e.g. Sp. *¡**Será** caradura el tío!* 'The guy's got some nerve!' (lit. 'He will be hard-faced the guy!') (Squartini 2004, 2018; Escandell-Vidal & Leonetti 2019);
- verbal periphrases with motion verbs of 'going' or 'coming', e.g. Fr. *Esther **est allée s'imaginer** que tu l'aimais.* '(Incredible that) Esther thought (lit. was going to imagine) that you were in love with her!' (Tellier 2015);
- evidential and modal constructions, e.g. It. *Non ci **posso credere**!* 'Incredible!' (lit. 'I can't believe it!') (Rodríguez Rosique 2020);
- verbs of perception and of saying, e.g. It. *(Ma) **guarda** (tu)!* 'Well I never!' (lit. '(But) look (you)!'); Sp. *¡No me **digas**!* 'You don't say!' (lit. 'Don't tell me!') (Sánchez López 2017);
- interjections, e.g. Sp. *¡**Guau**!*, *¡**Ay**!*,
- taboo expressions or expressive intensifiers, e.g. It. ***Madonna!*** 'Good god!' (lit. 'Madonna!'); Fr. ***Ciel**!* 'Good heavens!' (lit. 'Heaven!'); Argent. Sp. *¡**Me jodés** (que…)!* 'You're kidding me (that…)!' (lit. 'You fuck me (that…)!') (Kornfeld 2020);
- and, possibly, hedges or mitigators and focus particles, e.g. Sp. ***tipo*** 'like' (lit. 'type') (see Beltrama & Hanink 2019 on English *like*).

Many of these linguistic devices also interact with exclamative and/or interrogative illocutionary moods, which may have overtones of surprise, new information and/or unexpected information (see Eckardt 2014; Peterson 2017; and for Romance, Villalba 2008; Olbertz 2009; Tirado 2016; Bosque 2017; Squartini 2018: 204).

In addition to a wide formal diversity in the expression of mirativity having been identified, it has also been suggested that more differentiated analyses be carried out on the range of possible values of what is being referred to as "mirativity" or "unexpectedness" – not only in Romance, but also in other languages.

In Aikhenvald's (2012: 437) typological approach, these values may include "sudden discovery/revelation/realization", "surprise", "unprepared mind", "counter-expectation" or "new information". For example, regarding mirative uses of the

discursive dative in Hebrew, Siegal & Boneh (2016) suggest distinguishing between newly incoming propositions that are "not expected to occur" and those that are "expected not to occur". With regard to mirative strategies in Romance, García Negroni & Libenson (2022: 1018) argue that *mirá* (lit. 'look') can be used in colloquial Argentinian Spanish to express various subjective stances on the speaker's side, such as a sudden discovery that "brings out something new", "something that exceeds its ordinary magnitude or degree" or that is "related to something that contradicts a previous belief or assumption".

Recent studies on individual mirative strategies in Romance and non-Romance languages have also started to call into question some of the "default" values that have commonly been associated with "mirativity", namely the exclusive link to the speaker's epistemic stance (in terms of their attitude of surprise, unexpectedness or astonishment) and the so-called "recency restriction", which is related to the "recent" or "sudden" discovery of new or unexpected information on the part of the speaker: mirative markers are only considered acceptable when the speaker has recently learned the at-issue proposition *p* (cf. Rett 2011; Rett & Murray 2013: 456, 459). The idea is that the experience of surprise and the linguistic expression of it by the speaker must coincide.

In this regard, Rett & Murray (2013: 464) also argue that not only (temporal) immediacy but also salience or relevance play a role in mirative marking. Building on Nikolaeva's (1999) and Koev's (2011) studies on evidentiality, they suggest that the recency restriction in mirative marking may also have to be characterised aspectually, i.e. "in terms of the relationship between the speech event and the 'target state' of the learning event". For example, Cruschina & Bianchi (2021) argue that mirative focus fronting in Italian and the verbal periphrasis GO + infinitive in Sicilian might not be subject at all to the recency restriction, since their use does not necessarily involve information that is newly discovered by the speaker.

A second issue concerns the observation, already mentioned by Aikhenvald (2012: 448), that mirative strategies may also be used to "mark information as 'surprising' and 'new' to the addressee", "both to the speaker and to the addressee" (Aikhenvald 2012: 452) or as reflecting "the point of view of the protagonist" in a narrative (Aikhenvald 2012: 442; see also Hengeveld & Olbertz 2012). In this regard, Cruschina & Bianchi (2021: 86) propose that the effect of surprise related to the use of Italian focus fronting and the Sicilian GO + infinitive periphrasis might in fact "not [be] exclusively anchored to the speaker's perspective, but [. . .] also involve [. . .] the interlocutor(s) in the attempt to arrive at a joint evaluative commitment". Further, studies on Romance periphrastic (e.g. French *aller* 'go' + infinitive) and "pseudo-coordinated" constructions with motion or transfer verbs (e.g. Spanish *ir/venir/agarrar* 'go/come/take' *y* 'and' + infinitive) suggest that these may be used to express unexpectedness from the point of view of a story protagonist, who is not

necessarily the speaker nor the hearer in the strict sense (e.g. Kornfeld 2019 and Bravo 2020: 163 for Spanish, and Celle & Lansari 2015 for French).

A third (and at least partially related) issue concerns the possibility of strategic, narrative or rhetorical uses (cf. Celle & Lansari 2017), in which the speaker may rely on mirative strategies in order to create "special discourse effects" (Aikhenvald 2012: 474), such as highlighting focal points in a narrative or important information for the hearer (Aikhenvald 2012: 457, 474). For example, Cruschina & Bianchi (2021) state that the Sicilian periphrastic construction GO + infinitive is essentially used in narratives to foreground an unexpected or surprising event that happened in the past. Similarly, the Spanish "pseudo-coordinated" *ir y* 'go and' + infinitive construction and the periphrastic *venir/salir* 'come/go out' + gerund constructions have been associated with the expression of a sudden or extraordinary turn in the expected flow of a narrative (cf. Bravo 2020: 163; Garachana Camarero 2018: 138).

So far, the aforementioned observations concern only isolated mirative strategies in Romance and non-Romance languages and have not been tested with a broader range of linguistic devices in specific languages or language families. However, they clearly suggest the need for a more differentiated analysis of mirativity that integrates the findings up to now into a larger model of different types of mirative strategies. Furthermore, it is far from clear whether and how the three aspects outlined above are related to each other and are grounded in the use of specific linguistic devices and their formal and semantic sources. Therefore, our next step is to investigate the specific characteristics of mirative strategies in Romance and draw up the first draft of such a typology.

## 3 Typology proposal

The central element of the proposed typology is a more differentiated analysis of (un)expectedness that distinguishes different scenarios of speaker- and/or hearer-orientation, which relates to the authenticity and spontaneity of the speaker's use of a mirative strategy and is also useful for the interpretation of rhetorical-strategic uses. For now, we suggest distinguishing (at least) three different types of mirative scenarios, which may need to be refined later on.

The first scenario, which we refer to as **"speaker-oriented" unexpectedness**, includes the "classic" scenarios that have mostly been associated with mirativity in the existing literature. In these the expression of unexpectedness is described in terms of the epistemic stance of the speaker at the moment of discovering, for example, new information (i.e. *p* was not among the speaker's expectations and was thus "not expected to occur", see (1) or information that exceeds or contra-

dicts previous expectations (i.e. *p* was among the speaker's expectations but was "expected not to occur", see (2)); cf. Siegal & Boneh 2016). In this function, we find, for example, in the Romance languages mirative markers based on interjections, verbs of perception/saying and expressive intensifiers/taboo expressions:

(1) Sp. A: *Le ha tocado la lotería y se va a comprar un piso.* B: ***Mira***
A: 'He has won the lottery and is going to buy an apartment.' B: 'Wow! (lit. Look)' (Martín Zorraquino & Portolés 1999, cited in García Negroni & Libenson 2022: 333)

(2) It. *Eccola lì la torre gigante!* ***Ammazzala****, com'è alta!*
'Here is the enormous tower! Wow (lit. Kill her), how high it is!' (G. Deledda, *Il sigillo d'amore*, 1926, cited in D'Achille & Thornton 2020: 174)

We can establish a second scenario in terms of **"speaker-and-hearer-oriented unexpectedness"**. Here, the surprise is expressed by the speaker, who in addition attempts to make the hearer co-experience and, possibly, confirm the unexpectedness or extraordinariness. This may be interpreted in terms of a lower commitment on the part of the speaker (cf. for example, Beltrama & Hanink 2019 on the mirative use of the English mitigator *like*) and/or in terms of the search for a joint evaluative commitment (cf. Cruschina & Bianchi 2021: 86). In Romance, "speaker-and-hearer-oriented unexpectedness" may be expressed with, for example, hedges, such as Italian *tipo* 'like' (see (3)), and interjections, such as French *hein* 'eh' (see (4)):

(3) It. *I due lo seguirono e si ritrovarono dentro quello che sembrava veramente l'interno di una cassaforte: [. . .] – È,* ***tipo, incredibile****. . . mormoró Tommy*. (M. Polidoro, *La libreria dei misteri*, 2020)
'The two followed him and found themselves inside what effectively looked like the inside of a safe: [. . .]. - It's, like (lit. type), incredible. . . whispered Tommy.'

(4) Fr. spk4 spk2: [1] *ah la la mm mm* [2] *vous m'en parlez cinquante-deux coups de couteau*
spk4 spk1: [1] *enfin bon c'est vraiment euh* [2] ***incroyable hein*** (CFPP2000)
spk4 spk2: 'ah la la mm mm, you're talking about fifty-two stab wounds'
spk4 spk1: 'well it's really uh, incredible, right?'

A third scenario – which will need further refinement – involves **rhetorically exploited and thus predominantly "hearer-oriented" unexpectedness**. The "hearer-oriented" scenario concerns cases in which the surprise is not actually

experienced by the speaker and in which the recency restriction does not hold because the information is not newly discovered. Instead the speaker merely presents the information as new and surprising to the hearer: unexpectedness is therefore exaggerated, simulated or temporally transferred in narration for rhetorical-strategical reasons, e.g. to manipulate the hearer (out of politeness or in irony) or to involve them in the past experience of unexpectedness. In Romance, the latter strategy has so far mostly been associated with more or less grammaticalised linguistic devices, such as verbal periphrases. For example, in (5) and (6) the speaker first builds up the narrative on the basis of common expectations of the outcome of a situation (that a good restaurant has good food in (5) and that plants that survive the winter will also survive the summer in (6)). In a second step, the speaker contradicts the hearer's expectations, simulating his or her own previous surprise by presenting information on the past as unexpected in the current conversational context. The aim of this rhetorical strategy is to increase the shared involvement in the current communicative situation.[4]

(5) Sicilian It. *Arrivammu dda, nn'u ristoranti, e mi* ***vannu a dunanu*** *na pizza accusì ladia!*
'We arrived there, at the restaurant, and they gave (lit. they go to they give) me such a bad pizza!' (Cruschina 2013: 279)

(6) It. *La mia [pianta] aveva circa 5 anni ed era sopravvissuta anche agli ultimi inverni rigidi e* ***mi va a morire*** *d'estate.*
'Mine [my plant] was about 5 years old and had survived even the last few harsh winters and surprisingly it died (lit. to me it goes to die) in summer.' (https://forum.giardinaggio.it/threads/la-mimosa-si-e-seccata.174045/)

In the following section, we will discuss the preliminary results of our corpus studies on selected mirative strategies in Romance, which will illustrate the application of the proposed typology.

**4** Moreover, both examples contain a 1st person singular dative pronoun, which is a 'true' dative pronoun in (5) and an ethical dative pronoun in (6). The latter contributes to the expression of the affective involvement of the speaker with the event, but may also be omitted in mirative contexts.

# 4 Preliminary results from pilot studies

A more differentiated analysis of mirativity, as we have suggested, needs to be based on a large amount of corpus data providing the wide range of contextual information required to identify the different types of speaker- and/or hearer-orientated scenarios. We are currently collecting these data within our larger research project, a comparative investigation of selected (European) Spanish, French and Italian mirative strategies from a synchronic and a diachronic perspective (see footnote 3). So far we have only analysed a small set of data and in this section we present the initial results from these ongoing pilot studies that are aimed at applying our typology to linguistic devices expressing mirativity as proposed in Section 3. In this section, we will focus on selected examples from present-day Spanish and give a short overview of Italian in comparison with other Romance varieties and languages.

For Spanish, we examine the colloquial interjection *ostras*; according to Corominas (1954) and the *Diccionario de la lengua española* (RAE 2022), this is a euphemistic form based on the religious taboo expression *hostias*, lit. 'host' (communion wafer), which can be used to express disgust, surprise or astonishment.[5] For Italian, we will look at the motion-based verbal periphrasis *andare a* + infinitive, lit. 'go to do,' a polyfunctional form that can express aspectual as well as temporal values and is considered to have a lower degree of grammaticalisation than comparable GO-periphrases in other Romance languages (such as French *aller* + infinitive and Spanish *ir a* + infinitive).[6] As has been affirmed for French and Spanish motion-related constructions (e.g. Kornfeld 2019 and Bravo 2020: 163 for Spanish, and Celle & Lansari 2015 for French), Italian *andare a* + infinitive also may take on mirative functions in combination with specific infinitives.

Examples of these linguistic devices were extracted from the *Val.Es.Co* corpus for colloquial spoken European Spanish in Valencia (~250,000 tokens, more than 30 different conversations), and from the *KIParla* and *PAISÀ* corpora for Italian (*KIParla*: 972,758 tokens, more than 200 speakers; *PAISÀ* ~250M tokens from different text types). These were then manually coded for language/variety, their semantic and formal sources, and their co-occurrences with different types of illocutionary mood.

5 Of course, we will also take into account the form *hostias* in future research, but for our pilot study we focused on the less frequent and less polyfunctional form *ostras*.

6 On this topic see Dessì Schmid & Momma 2024.

## 4.1 Spanish: *ostras*

From the *Val.Es.Co* corpus we retrieved 32 occurrences of Spanish *ostras*, the analysis of which revealed the following quantitative distribution:

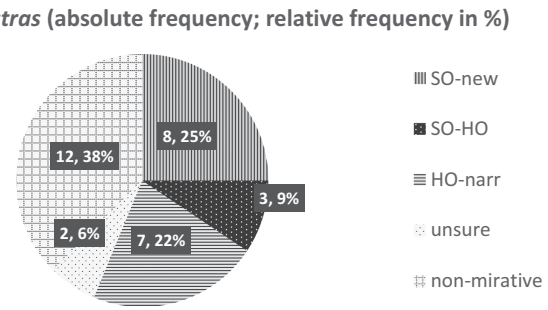


**Figure 1:** European Spanish *ostras* absolute and relative frequencies (in %) in *Val.Es.Co*. SO-new: speaker-oriented mirative scenarios; SO-HO: speaker- and hearer-oriented mirative scenario; HO-narr: hearer-oriented narrative mirative scenarios.

As can be seen in Figure 1, more than half of all occurrences (56%) of *ostras* in the *Val.Es.Co* corpus were mirative uses, 38% were "non-mirative" (e.g. expressing disgust or other emotions), while 6% were classified as "unsure" due to insufficient contextual information.

The 18 mirative uses of *ostras* included eight (25%) that can be associated with "classic" speaker-oriented mirative scenarios (SO-new), such as in (7), where the speaker expresses their surprise on the immediate discovery of new information, namely the fact that a friend was asked for his ID at the age of 25:

(7) *Val.Es.Co*, 2011.PT.S3
A[7]: *[pero con veinticin]co años o por a[hí le pedían] DNI → y cuando se lo daba→/ [ahora] ya no pero co→- con venti→- ↑!* (ENTRE RISAS)→! (RISAS)/ (RISAS) *¿((¿qué?))?*
C: *¿¿y le pe[dían ((el DNI))?]?*
C: *¿[¿síí?]?*
B: *uy→*
C: (RISAS)
B: (RISAS)

7 The letters in the Spanish examples designate the different speakers participating in the conversation.

B: *¡º(¡**ostras**!)º! y le pedían el DNI con vienticinco [sic] años*
A: 'but at the age of 25 or so they asked him for ID and when he gave it to them, now, not any more but at twenty-'
C: 'and they asked him for ID?'
C: 'yes?'

B: 'uy→'
C: (LAUGHS)
B: (LAUGHS)
B: 'bloody hell! and they asked him for ID at the age of twenty-five'

In three cases (9%), the speakers use *ostras* in contexts of unexpectedness to express not only their own surprise but also to seek confirmation from the hearer. This speaker- and hearer-oriented scenario (SO-HO) is particularly evident when *ostras* is combined with *qué fuerte* lit. 'how strong' and hearer-oriented signals such as *¿¿eh??*, as in (8).[8]

(8) *Val.Es.Co*, 2020.PT.34
B: *porque las han hecho (( ))*
C: *¿¿en la Mosqueta??*
B: ***ostras** [la Mosqueta] **qué fuerte ¿¿eh??***
B: 'because they made them'
C: 'in the Mosqueta[9]?'
B: 'wow, the Mosqueta, cool (lit. how strong), eh?'

In the seven remaining mirative uses (22%), we find *ostras* in narrative scenarios that are clearly hearer-oriented (HO-narr). In none of these examples does the recency restriction hold, since the speakers do not discover new information by themselves but aim to involve the hearer in previously experienced unexpectedness or exceeded expectations for rhetorical purposes. These experiences were not necessarily the speakers' own at an earlier point in time, but may also concern other discourse protagonists. In (9), the speaker is talking about their own surprise when a piece of furniture moved during an earthquake. In (10) however, the speaker talks about other people being surprised by his success in a football game. In six out of the seven HO-narr examples, *ostras* is used in reported direct speech, which is usually introduced by a reporting verb (mostly *decir* 'say') in the past tense (in (10)) or in the narrative present tense (in (9)):

8 Further studies are needed to determine the exact functional distribution for all the elements.
9 Mosqueta is a restaurant in Valencia.

(9) *Val.Es.Co*, 1995.PT.6
C: *hace poquito [me pareció] hubo un temblor aquí en Valencia*↑ [. . .]
A: *yo cuando estaba en mi casa estaba secándome el pelo// yy- estaba apoyada encima de de un banquito de de esos del cuarto de de aseo/ y digo ¡¡**ostras** esto se mueve!*↑*!/ o sea pero es que fue un minuto*↑
C: 'a little while ago, it seemed to me that there was a tremor here in Valencia'
A: 'When I was at home, I was drying my hair and I was leaning on one of those little benches in the bathroom and I say 'bloody hell, this is moving!' But it was only for a minute'

(10) *Val.Es.Co*, 2011.PT.(10).S4
*metí un golazo del medio del campo y metí otro golazo de cabeza y me dijeron todos*→*¡((**ostras**)) no sabíamos que eras tan bueno!*
'I scored a great goal from the middle of the field and I scored another great header goal and they all said to me 'Wow, we didn't know you were so good!''

In only one case in the corpus data (see (11) below) *ostras* is not introduced by a reporting verb. Nonetheless, it can be interpreted as a rhetorical-narrative strategy aimed at involving the hearer in the state of unexpectedness that is presented as having been experienced earlier by the speaker upon discovery of the techniques used in film production:

(11) *Val.Es.Co*, 1995.PT.6
*luego estuve en*→ *en Los Ángeles// en Hollywood y todo eso/ y fui a los estudios Universales*↑ *y a la Warner Bros que vi*↑ *donde se hacen las películas*↓ *que nos engañan/ ¡¡**ostras**!! tú- tú piensas*↓ *en la película de Tiburón*↓ *que es un océano*↑ *que es el mar*↓ *¡¡¿el mar?!! es un lago*↑ *como esta habitación*↓ *un poquito más grande*↑
'then I was in Los Angeles, in Hollywood, and all that, and I went to Universal Studios and Warner Bros that I saw where they make the movies that fool us, wow! You think in the movie 'Jaws' that it is an ocean, that it is the sea, the sea?! It is a lake like this room, a little bigger'

To sum up, the analysis of the uses of *ostras* in the *Val.Es.Co* corpus shows that in more than half of its occurrences this expressive interjection is in fact used in mirative scenarios. Although the epistemic stance of speaker-oriented unexpectedness consequent to the recent discovery of new or unexpected information can be attributed to the majority of all mirative occurrences (SO-new and SO-HO, 61%), in some cases the speaker also aims to involve the hearer in their own epistemic state of surprise (SO-HO, 17%). Moreover, in 39% of the mirative examples, *ostras*

is used in contexts in which the recency restriction does not hold and where it can be classified as a narrative strategy for involving the hearer in previously experienced unexpectedness (on the part of the speaker or someone else) for rhetorical purposes, albeit almost exclusively in reported direct speech (HO-narr).

## 4.2 Italian: *andare a* + infinitive

For Italian, we will look briefly at the motion-based verbal periphrasis *andare a* + infinitive, lit. 'go to do,' and show how this polyfunctional construction may be used to express mirativity. This is a viable hypothesis, since various motion-related constructions in other Romance varieties and languages have also been associated with mirative functions. This is the case for the Sicilian periphrastic GO + infinitive construction (Cruschina & Bianchi 2021), which may be used in narratives to foreground an unexpected or surprising event that happened in the past (see (5) above). It has been claimed that the Spanish periphrastic *ir/venir a* 'go/come to' + infinitive and *venir/salir* 'come/go out' + gerund constructions, and "pseudo-coordinated" *ir/venir/agarrar y* 'go/come/take and' + infinitive constructions are possible means of expressing notions of mirativity (cf. Kornfeld 2019; Bravo 2020: 163; Garachana Camarero 2018: 138; Rodríguez Rosique 2023), as shown in (12), (13) and (14) below. Likewise, some uses of the French periphrastic *aller/venir* 'go/come' + infinitive constructions have been associated with mirative functions (see Celle & Lansari 2015: 289), which are dealt with under the label *allure extraordinaire* 'extraordinary aspect' by Bres & Labeau (2013a; 2013b; 2018) following Damourette & Pichon (1911–1935: 429), such as in (15) and (16) below.[10]

As can be seen in the following examples, the Spanish and French constructions are found in both speaker- (SO-new) and speaker-and-hearer-oriented (SO-HO) contexts of unexpectedness (in (12), (14) and (16)), usually with an undertone of negative evaluation on the part of the speaker. Moreover, they are also attested in merely hearer-oriented (and not necessarily negative) narrative contexts (HO-narr), in which the inflected verb appears in a past tense or a narrative present tense form ((13) and (15)):

(12) *No* ***irás a creer*** *eso, Carlos* (Rodríguez Rosique 2023: 264)
'Do you really believe that (lit. You will not be going to believe that), Carlos?!'

**10** In fact, Bres & Levie (2018) do not follow Celle & Lansari (2015) in equating the concept of *allure extraordinaire* with mirativity, although they acknowledge a certain overlap between them.

(13) *de repente* ***va y caen*** *chorros de agua* (Bravo 2020: 165)
'suddenly it is pouring with rain (lit. it goes and fall streams of water)'

(14) *Y ahora me* ***vienes diciendo*** *que no quieres venir.* (Garachana Camarero 2018: 138)
'And now you tell me (lit. come telling me) that you don't want to come.'

(15) *Corinne me surprendra toujours : elle a rien fichu en prépa. . . et elle* ***est allée intégrer*** *HEC !* (Bres & Labeau 2013c : 166)
'Corinne never ceases to surprise me: she didn't do a scrap of work in the preparatory classes. . . and she got into (lit. was going to get into) HEC [a prestigious business school]!'

(16) *Et vous* ***venez prétendre*** *que vous êtes des amis. . .* (Bres & Labeau 2013b: 85)
'And you claim (lit. come to claim) that you are [my] friends. . .'

It is obviously an arduous task carrying out corpus studies on potential mirative uses of motion-related constructions due to their highly polyfunctional nature in the Romance languages. In our pilot study on Italian *andare a* + infinitive, we extracted a large number of occurrences, all of which had to be carefully classified, i.e. manually and taking into account the broader context. So far, we have analysed 492 examples from the *KIParla* and *PAISÀ* corpora, in more than half of which (255 occurrences, i.e. 52%), the construction is used with a lexical function (with *andare* as a full motion verb or having an idiomatic meaning) or is ambiguous (79 occurrences, 16%). When *andare a* + infinitive is used as an actual verbal periphrasis, it appears most often in its aspectual or temporal function (155 occurrences, 31.5%), but also – although very rarely – in a mirative function (3 occurrences, 1%), which is often closely connected with the aspectual value of resultativity. All of these cases seem to belong to one particular mirative scenario, the HO-narrative, as example (17) illustrates:

(17) KiPTO, PTB007
TOI021[11]: *allora nella foga di caricare le valigie è stato passato questo baracchino. mio zio non se n'è accorto. mentre m mio papà le passava il baracchino non ha fatto caso, le è caduto in m dalle mani e questa minestra. . . mi ricordo questo episodio che poi ci abbiamo negli anni ci abbiamo riso sopra comunque*

**11** The different letter-number combinations indicate the different speakers in the conversation.

TOR004: *e però all'epoca*
TOI021: *eh eh sì perchè eravamo senza la minestra e e questa minestra* ***è andata a finire*** *tutta tra tra la panchina dei binari ecco e tutta la gente lì anche che si è sporcata tutta per cui. c'era tanta gente*
TOI021: 'then in the flurry of loading the suitcases this soup container was passed. my uncle didn't notice it. while my dad was handing her the soup container, (he) wasn't paying attention. it fell in. . . out of his hands, and this soup. . . I remember this episode, that after we have over the years we have laughed about it anyway'
TOR004: 'but back then'
TOI021: 'eh eh yes because we had no soup, and this soup (incredibly) ended up all over the platform okay and so all the people there also got all dirty. there were a lot of people'
(Transcription: http://130.136.148.2/bonito/conversation_files_3/PTB007.html; Audio: http://130.136.148.2/bonito/audio_player_3.html?&code=PTB007&begin=892&end=90)

(17) is an extract from a semi-structured interview (conducted in 2019 in Turin) with two participants where one communication partner tells a story that happened to her family in which a container of soup was spilled because someone wasn't paying attention when handing it to someone else. The fact that the soup ended up over all the people nearby surprised them at the time. This is presented as an unexpected turn in the story and is intended to involve the other communication partner in the experience of unexpectedness in the past. Compared with the rhetorical-narrative use of the Spanish intensifier *ostras* (cf. §4.1), the periphrastic construction in this function does not need to be introduced with a reporting verb.

# 5 Outlook

Our pilot study was based on a limited data set, but it nonetheless showed that the distinction between speaker orientation, speaker-hearer orientation and hearer orientation stands as a useful basis for establishing a more fine-grained typology and for analysing mirative marking in Romance. The data collected so far confirm that (un)expectedness is not only related to the speaker and allow us also to discard the so-called recency restriction as a defining feature of mirativity. We are aware that we are just beginning a lengthy task that requires further corpus analyses as well as experimental data, e.g. from acceptability judgments and elicitation tasks, in order to verify and further elaborate the suggested types and possible subtypes.

Based on preliminary results from previous studies and from our own pilot study, we hypothesise that Romance mirative linguistic devices display cross-linguistic tendencies and propose further investigation of this issue in the future within the larger research project. For example, we assume that expressives such as Italian *amazza(la)!* or Spanish *¡ostras!* tend to be used as pragmaticalised mirative markers for expressing speaker-oriented unexpectedness, but may also be used (mainly after a reporting verb) to involve the hearer in the recent or previous narratively presented discovery of unexpected or new information on the part of different discourse participants (and therefore not necessarily the speaker). By contrast, less lexical constructions, such as Italian *andare a* + infinitive, seem to be used to involve the hearer in narratively presented scenarios of unexpectedness (and do not need to be introduced by a reporting verb). It remains to be discovered from further analyses whether the Italian construction could also be used in speaker- and speaker-and-hearer-oriented mirative contexts, as in Spanish and French, and how the different mirative functions are quantitatively distributed in all of these constructions. This will allow us to assess whether there are cross-linguistic correlations between the formal and semantic sources of the linguistic devices and the specific speaker-hearer-scenarios of the suggested typology in which those devices are predominantly used for marking mirativity in Romance.

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Hans-Jörg Döhla

# 11 When evidentiality and mirativity meet: The case of *ra'e* in Paraguayan Guarani and Paraguayan Spanish

**Abstract:** In this article, I describe and analyze the uses of the polysemic marker *ra'e* in Paraguayan Guarani (PG) and Paraguayan Spanish (PS), where it has been borrowed from PG. In PG, *ra'e* is used for marking the recent past, inferred evidentiality and the mirative. Pertinent examples are provided from own field work data. Whereas the recent past and inferential evidentiality can be found as the only functions of *ra'e* within a sentence, the function of mirativity is always intertwined with the recent past and/or inferential evidentiality. All those functions mentioned can also be found in the uses of *ra'e* in PS as represented in the Paraguayan yellow press. However, additional functions of *ra'e* can be found in PS, e.g. affirmative meaning.

**Keywords:** recent past, inferred evidentiality, mirativity, Guarani, Paraguayan Spanish

## 1 Introduction

For the last 25 years evidential and mirative structures have been studied in the languages of the world, focusing primarily on those languages –many of them in North, Central and South America– which exhibit morphological devices designed specifically to express these concepts. Romance languages, which do not have explicit verbal markers with this function, have only been considered lately within a broader concept of evidentiality and mirativity, which takes into consideration that the expression of the source of information as well as the emotion of surprise can be listed among basic human communicative acts. In this context, particularly Spanish varieties of the Americas have developed a number of verbalization strategies due to internal change and the impact of indigenous languages. In this article, I describe and analyze the uses of polysemic marker *ra'e* in Paraguayan Guarani (PG)[1] and Paraguayan Spanish (PS) where it has been borrowed from PG. In order to do so, on the one hand, I examine my own field work data on PG. On the other

1 Guarani words usually have their stress on the final syllable. Any deviation from this general pattern is indicated diacritially by the use of the tilde.

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hand, I focus on a data collection of PS taken from the Paraguayan yellow press (PYP), which has adopted the rich system of PG evidential markers, *ra'e* being one of them. Both corpora are described in detail in Section 5. As opposed to grammars of PG and other studies, the qualitative analyses presented here only rely on data the context of which is known in order to give a precise account of the uses of *ra'e* and its clear-cut values as found in my own field work on PG and in the PS corpus based on the PYP (see Sections 6 and 7). The main aim of this article concerns the question whether the different functions of *ra'e* found in the literature can be found isolated from each other or whether they rather act together simultaneously.

Before doing so, a brief outline of the Paraguayan linguistic panorama is presented in Section 2 in order to determine the nature of PG and PS in a broader context and, thus, to provide the necessary background information for the languages exhibited in the two corpora. This is followed by a description of the functions of PG *ra'e* (in Section 3) as found in grammars and pertinent studies also considering the historical perspective, leading to Section 4, where the state of the art of the three main functions, i.e. marking the recent past, inferred evidentiality and the mirative, are displayed in order to provide an account of the terminology and concepts used in this contribution. Finally, the conclusions in Section 8 will summarize the observations and findings regarding the uses of *ra'e* in PG and PS.

## 2 The linguistic panorama of Paraguay

The linguistic panorama of Paraguay is of a rather complex nature. Diachronic, diatopic, diastratic and diaphasic variation have to be taken into consideration regarding the indigenous language Guarani and the language of the colonizers, i.e. Spanish. At the same time, various forms of oral and written expression characterized by different ways and proportions of mixing the two languages have to be taken account of. Thus, it can be said that intensive language contact is one of the main driving factors that has been shaping the constructicon[2] of Paraguayan Guarani and Paraguayan Spanish for centuries. This language contact ecology is not only manifested by the coofficial status of the two languages within the Republic of Paraguay. Additionally, Guarani is the language which plays a key role in the social construction of Paraguayan identity regardless of the social, educational or ethnic backgrounds of most of the speakers. Moreover, Guarani is the language of emotional expression, folklore and music. The general diglossic status of Paraguay is not as clear-cut as some publications may suggest (e.g. Fishman 1967), but –in my

2 We use this term in the same way as the German *Konstruktikon* (Ziem 2014).

view– rather permeable, depending heavily on the social context of the individual communicative act.

Naturally, it is the indigenous language as represented by all its ethnic or tribal varieties which was spoken by the native population long before the arrival of the Spaniards in the 16th c. and which is still in use today. Besides general contact between colonizers and the native population, the first intensive contact scenario with a particular ecology is to be found in the Jesuit missions (Spanish *reducciones*), where (mostly Spanish) priests were living together with indigenous people for proselytization purposes. Within these insular ecologies of primarily missionary labor the local Guarani language was studied thoroughly by the missionaries, leading to a considerable number of grammars, dictionaries and translations of religious texts. The language of this corpus, which came to an abrupt end towards the end of the 18th c. after the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1768, is labelled "Classical", "Jesuit" or "Missionary" Guarani. However, so far, it is not clear if this Classical Guarani represents one concrete variety of Ethnic Guarani or if it has to be considered a more *koiné*-like linguistic form, particularly elaborated for the use with indigenous people of varying ethnic backgrounds.[3] Nevertheless, this Missionary corpus provides valuable data points for the history of Tupi-Guarani in Paraguay and Brazil (see Section 3).

PG has developed from the local spoken variety of Guarani in close contact with the Spanish language imported by the Spaniards, thus, exhibiting influence from the latter (Döhla 2022). On the other hand side, spoken Spanish of the region, i.e. today's PS, has experienced and is experiencing –besides certain internal developments regarding the lexicon in general and semantics in particular– influence from (Paraguayan) Guarani in all linguistic subsystems (Krivoshein de Canese and Corvalán 1987).

This basic and simplified linguistic panorama presented so far is blurred by the actual use of the two languages and the communicative behavior of the bilingual speakers. Both are characterized by the large-scale simultaneous use of PG and PS within one and the same speech act (Estigarribia 2021: 665–667). This mixed speech production is determined by the language proficiency of the interlocutors, the (immediate) situational and social context as well as the medium of communication. A lot has been written about this mixing routine displayed by Paraguayan bilingual speakers (Zajícová 2009a), who use two terms to refer to the mixing process and its results according to the point of view of the speakers, namely *Jopara*

**3** This latter aspect, i.e. the supraregional use of some indigenous languages, has been important in the context of colonization and, especially, proselytization in the Americas since the 16th c., leading to the Spanish term *lengua general* (Portuguese *língua geral*) in order to refer to these languages (see Anchieta 1595). Other *lenguas generales* in the Americas are Nahuatl, Quechua or Aymara.

and *Jehe'a*. *Jopara –jo-* being the prefix of reciprocity– is a certain type of mixture where the individual elements of the mixture are still disjunct and, thus, discernible (see Figure 1) like in a field with "mixed crops", a stew or a salad. Here, the individual parts are mixed within the same limited space, but can still be perceived individually. On the other hand, the term *Jehe'a* can also be translated as 'mixture' (with *je-* being the prefix of reflexivity), but in this case it is a type of mixture where the mixing process results in a new product with the original individual elements blended together.

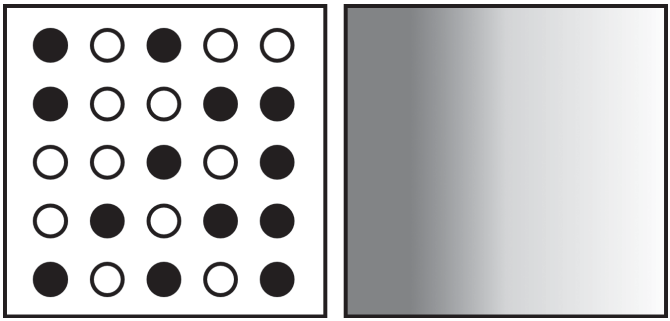

**Figure 1:** The perception of the results of language mixing in Paraguay: *Jopara* (left) vs. *Jehe'a* (right).

Whereas *Jopara* is more widely used by scholars (Boidin 2006; Lustig 1998), *Jehe'a* is a less accepted term, but used quite often by native consultants during my own field work on PG when characterizing spontaneously the linguistic output of code-switching and mixing (see Auer 1999 for the terminology). The general attitude of the native speakers towards *Jopara*/*Jehe'a* is not as positive as towards a more monolingual Guarani (Penner 2001) because "mixing" means a shift away from the puristic ideal of a Guaraní without overt Spanish influence. In this context, the elaboration and preservation of this ideal version of Guarani, called *Guaraníete*, as reaction to the increasing influence of PS on PG, should be mentioned. This academic form of Guarani, supported, promoted and developed by the Guarani Language Academy (founded in 2012 and officially approved by the president of Paraguay in 2024), avoids overt Spanish borrowings, replacing them by purely Guarani terminology by means of derivation, composition and/or principles of semantic change, making these newly created terms difficult to understand for the bilingual core population.

Thus, a Guarani-Spanish continuum of linguistic expression can be detected, bordered by monolingual Spanish and monolingual Guarani[4] speech behavior which represents the former linguistic opposition between rural and urban areas respectively. However, during the last decades rural exodus has entailed an increasing bilingual population in the urban centers and suburban areas.[5] As a result of this large-scale language mixing behavior there is diamesic and diaphasic variation, i.e. there are different types and proportions of language mixing depending on the context of usage as represented in Table 1:

**Table 1:** Diamesic and diaphasic varieties in bilingual language use in Paraguay (Zajícová 2009b: 28–35).

| | **Popular style** | **Middle (average) style** | **Cultured/purist style** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Written language** | *Jopara Spanish* (**yellow press**) | *Jopara Guarani* (**marandu press**) | *Standard Spanish* (**general press**) |
| | | | *Written Guaraníete* (**school textbook**) |
| **Spoken language** | *Jopara Guarani* (**interview**) | *Jopara Guarani* (**interview**) | *Spoken Guaraníete* (**formal conversations**) |

In the case of Jopara Guarani the matrix language is PG, but code-switching with PS is a daily routine. In the oral register, speakers may use insertions, alternations and congruent lexicalization (see Muysken 2000 for the terminology) as well as mixed-language type speech structure to varying degrees (Döhla forthcoming), but with hardly more than 20% of Spanish elements according to my own field work. In contrast, the Jopara Guarani of the *marandu* ('news') press usually takes the vocabulary of political and economic discourse from Spanish while leaving most of the rest in Guarani, thus displaying a more clear-cut mixture of the two languages.

The structural counterpart of Jopara Guarani is Jopara Spanish with PS as the matrix language and about 5% of PG elements (Zajícová 2009b) used as written language in the context of the PYP (see Section 5.2). This Jopara Spanish as well as the Jopara Guarani represent the colloquial speech behavior of the urban and suburban population of Paraguay. Standard Spanish and Guaraníete are rather limited to the general press in the first case and school/academic textbooks as well

**4** Monolingual Guarani speakers may not only be found among speakers of Ethnic Guarani but also among speakers of PG, even younger generations, especially if they come from rural areas.
**5** See https://www.ecuadorchequea.com/moreno-en-paraguay-todos-los-ciudadanos-todos-absolutamente-todos-hablan-guarani/.

as formal conversations in the second.[6] The corpus of the present contribution is composed of PS written data taken from the PYP (Jopara Spanish) and PG spoken data collected through my own field work (see Section 5). The functions of the PG marker *ra'e,* which can also be found in the PYP written in PS, are described in the following section.

## 3 The functions of *ra'e* in Modern PG (and Classical Guarani)

This section will briefly highlight the functions of PG *ra'e* as presented in a selection of grammars and studies. The functional range of *ra'e* is summed up aptly by Carol and Avellana (2019), who consider two 20th c. grammars and one textbook (Gregores and Suárez 1967: 144; Guasch 1956: 125; Melià et al. 1958: 69, 139) as well as two 21st c. studies and one grammar (Dietrich 2010; Krivoshein de Canese and Acosta Alcaraz 2007; Tonhauser 2006), so that only Estigarribia (2020) has to be added as the most recent and very extensive grammar with up to date linguistic terminology. According to Carol and Avellana (2019: 12), the three main functions are as follows:

1. temporality: *Ra'e* marks past actions, usually immediate past, but also past perfect, often in questions (Guasch 1956: 125; Melià et al. 1958: 69, 139);
2. evidentiality: *Ra'e* also marks indirect evidentials, especially inferential evidentials (Dietrich 2010: 71; Estigarribia 2020: 229);
3. mirativity: *Ra'e* is used to express mirative function; "conocimiento que adquiere el hablante o su sorpresa al enterarse [. . .] de la realización de una acción" 'knowledge acquired by the speaker or his surprise when learning it' (Krivoshein de Canese and Acosta Alcaraz 2001: 101) / "non-expected evidential marker" (Tonhauser 2006: xii).

Estigarribia (2020: 227) unites all these concepts in his description of the mirative function of *ra'e*: "*Ra'e* indicates a recent realization through inference, often with an indication of surprise or counterexpectation". This functional accumulation in *ra'e* does not surprise at all considering the above presented outlines of the features.

The position of *ra'e* within a sentence generally is to be found after the verb or behind the nucleus of the predication, i.e. in final position of the sentence (Carol

6 Modern poetry is also composed in Guaraníete.

and Avellana 2019: 12; Melià et al. 1960: 67, n. 1). Even though some authors occasionally attach *ra'e* graphically to the verbal compound, especially in older publications, *ra'e* is not written as a bound morpheme.

The functions of *ra'e* exhibited in modern literature are not the product of recent grammaticalization processes, i.e. functional extensions in this case, since all functions can already be found in 16th and 17th c. missionary grammars on Old Tupi and Classical Guarani.[7] In this way, Montoya (1640: 69) attests the use of *ra'e* to refer to events of the recent past in interrogative clauses:

> *Raé ? es particula que sirue al preterito perfecto [. . .]: vsase en oraciones de preterito breues, vt Ohórae? fuesse ya? en oraciones largas se acompaña con otras interrogaciones.*
> '*ra'e* is a particle which is used as present perfect [. . .]: it is used in short sentences of the past, as *oho ra'e?* 'have they gone yet?' in long sentences it is accompanied by other [particles of] interrogation.'

Furthermore, the evidential meaning of *ra'e*, i.e. the fact of not having experienced an event personally, is also pointed out by Ruiz de Montoya (1640: 20):

> *Vsase en este preterito para preguntas, y respuestas, desta particula (Raé) que difiere de ,Racó, en que este [. . .] afirma lo que se vio, o oyò, Rae, afirma lo que le han dicho que passò, vt ohó paraé? fuesse? responde, ohó raé, fuesse, pero no lo vio yr.*
> 'In this past [context], this particle *ra'e* is used for questions and answers, which differs from *rako* in that the latter one affirms what one saw or heard, *ra'e* affirms what one has been told that happened, as *ohópa ra'e?*[8] 'have they gone yet?', the answer: *oho ra'e* 'they have gone, but I did not see them leave.'

The evidential, more specifically, "reported" reading is also confirmed by Anchieta (1595: 57v), referring to Old Tupi spoken along the Brazilian coastline:

> *Raê, he somente da terceira pessoa significa, diz que, dizem que*
> '*ra'e* is only used in the third person, it means 'it is said', 'they say'"[9]

7 More research on Old Tupi and Classical Guarani as the starting point of any historical and diachronic study is needed. In this context, an Old Tupi and Classical Guarani grammar still has to be written, as well as a comprehensive grammar of PG or grammatical dictionary with the full range of uses for each marker. The historical grammar should also include variational aspects and a comparative perspective towards Modern PG and Ethnic Guarani varieties. Therefore, specifying the actual linguistic affiliation of Old Tupi and Classical Guarani seems a difficult task at this point.

8 *-pa* is an interrogative suffix in this context.

9 It is interesting to observe that Anchieta does not interpret *ra'e* as a grammatical morpheme but as an invariable verbal form of the third person, in the same way as e.g. PG *ndaje* 'it is said, they say'.

Moreover, Anchieta (1595: 57v) also mentions the occasional use of *ra'e* in a sense which we would call "mirative" in modern linguistic terminology:

> *As vezes se vsa delle como marauilhandose ou caindo na conta*
> 'sometimes it [= *ra'e*] is used when you are wondering about something or you have miscalculated something'

Here, Anchieta refers explicitly to the expression of "surprise" and "counterexpectation", where the speaker's (or the speaker's brain's) calculation[10] regarding a certain state of affairs creates this emotional effect in the speaker and, thus, in their utterance.

These historical examples of the 16th and 17th c. clearly demonstrate the existence of the three main functions of *ra'e* in Tupi-Guarani languages before the intensive contact with Spanish (and Portuguese) started in the 17th c., thus excluding the contact scenario with Spanish as any kind of trigger for the polysemy of *ra'e*. Besides, *ra'e* can also be found in Ethnic Guarani varieties such as Mbya (see Dolzani 2016).

# 4 The individual functions of *ra'e* in detail: Perfect, evidentiality and mirativity

As exhibited in Section 3, *ra'e* is a polysemic marker which comprises the following functions: Recent past, indirect evidential (inference) and mirative. In what is to follow, I provide an account of the terminology and my understanding of the concepts used in this contribution. As we will see in 4.1.–4.3., the concepts behind the three functions are related by the metonymic relationship of contiguity.

## 4.1 Perfect

Even though this contribution does not focus on verbal tense or aspect, the category of perfect[11] is a recurrent concept, since *ra'e* also shares this meaning. In this study, we take the same position as Comrie (1985: 33), who argues that "[t]he most natural uses of the perfect are in fact where the time reference of the sen-

**10** In fact, the brain constantly predicts future events and state of affairs based on its long and short time experience. That way the brain can save processing energy during perception but also may influence our perception.

**11** *Recent past* or *immediate past* are used as synonyms of "perfect" in this article.

tence incorporates both the present moment and the time of the previous situation referred to in the sentence which has continuing current relevance". Thus, "[t]he perfect describes an event as in the past relative to the moment of speech, but nevertheless relevant in the present, i.e., most typically an event which is finished but which has lasting consequences perceptible at the time of speech" (DeLancey 2001: 378). Particularly these lasting consequences seem to serve as an indirect source of information and, thus, as a bridging context for perfect constructions to grammaticalize into indirect evidential markers (DeLancey 2001: 378). The perfect construction (see also Haßler 2016: 119–125; Lindstedt 2000; Ritz 2012) in the form of a complex predicate (finite present tense auxiliary + past participle of the main verb) is somewhat unique cross-linguistically and typical for Standard Average European (SAE) (see Haspelmath 2001 and van der Auwera 2011). Other languages have other means of expression as for example in Guarani the postverbal unbound morpheme *ra'e*.

## 4.2 Evidentiality

Human cooperative communicative interaction is based on a number of different actions and procedures, especially social, psychological and cognitive ones (see Tomasello 2008). Grice (1975) combined several of them postulating his maxims of conversation which are followed by interlocutors, in most cases, unconsciously by complying with the principle of cooperation. Within the Gricean four maxims regarding the nature of a verbal contribution within a given dialogue, i.e. quantity, quality, relevance and modality, the maxim of quality requires that a contribution should be true. This way, one should not say what one believes is false and for which there is a lack of adequate evidence (Grice 1975: 46). In fact, if we take a moment's reflection we realize that we generally assume that the contribution of our interlocutor is true. But even then, depending on the contents conveyed by the other speaker, we are curious, or even sometimes obliged,[12] to know the source of information in order to validate the truthfulness of the piece of information. Out of this, Haßler (2016: 355) formulates the following maxims:

1. (Nur) die eigene Erfahrung ist zuverlässig.
2. Unnötige Risiken sind zu vermeiden, zum Beispiel die Übernahme von Verantwortung für Information, über deren Inhalt man nicht absolut sicher ist.

**12** There are certainly contexts in which any further transmission of the newly learnt piece of information depends heavily on the validity and credibility of its source since legal actions or other kinds of distress might follow false accusations.

3. Man darf nicht leichtgläubig sein.
4. Verantwortung ist nur für etwas zu übernehmen, was sicher ist."

'1. (Only) your own experience is reliable.
2. Unnecessary risks have to be avoided, e.g. taking over the responsibility for a piece of information the contents of which you are not absolutely certain.
3. You should not be credulous.
4. Only take responsibility for something that is certain.'

In general, it can be said that the demand for reliable information is a universal of human cooperative communicative interaction. Moreover, all language communities have developed linguistic strategies which allow the speaker to indicate the source of information, hence, "verstehen [wir] im Folgenden unter Evidentialität *jede* sprachliche Markierung, mit der ein Sprecher auf die Herkunft seines mitgeteilten Wissens verweist" 'in what is to follow, we understand under the term evidentiality *any* linguistic marking by means of which a speaker refers to the source of the knowledge conveyed by them' (Volkmann 2005: 86). This broad conception departs from a more onomasiological point of view with "evidentiality" as a semantic concept, thus, also comprising full-sentence constructions like *I saw this with my own eyes*, *I have heard this from X* or *X told me that* or *according to X* etc. By contrast, most linguists dealing with evidentiality (Aikhenvald 2006: 320; Anderson 1986: 274–275; Boas 1938: 132–133) share a more narrow conception of the term linking it to "a special grammatical category" (Anderson 1986: 274) or even "a verbal grammatical category in its own right, and it does not bear any straightforward relationship to truth, the validity of a statement, or the speaker's responsibility" (Aikhenvald 2006: 320). Therefore, in the case of the expression of evidentiality by means of verbal inflection, clitics and free syntactic elements, the evidential meaning is the primary meaning of the marker and "evidentials are not themselves the main predication of the clause, but are rather a specification added to a factual claim about something else" (Anderson 1986: 275). Especially the cases studied by Boas (1938) and Aikhenvald (2004) are concerned with languages where the evidential-only element is obligatory, just as Roman Jakobson put it once: "Languages differ essentially in what they *must* convey and not in what they *may* convey" (Jakobson 1959: 236). This is specified by Boas (1938: 132–133) regarding evidential marking:

> [Grammar] determines those aspects of each experience that *must* be expressed. [. . .] while for us definiteness, number, and time are obligatory aspects, we find, in another language, [. . .] source of information –whether seen, heard, or inferred– as obligatory aspects. Instead of saying "The man killed the bull", I should have to say "This man (or men) kill (indefinite tense) as seen by me that bull (or bulls)". In some languages the aspects that *must* be expressed are very numerous, in others very few.

The following inflectional evidential paradigm serves as example for obligatory overt marking of evidentiality by means of verbal suffixes only exhibiting the evidential meaning:

(1) a. Tariana (Arawakan; Amazon, Brazil)
*Juse* *ɨrida* *di-manika-**ka***
José football 3SG.NF-play-**REC.P.VIS**
'José has played football (we saw it)'
Aikhenvald (2004: 2; slightly adapted)[13]

b. Tariana (Arawakan; Amazon, Brazil)
*Juse* *ɨrida* *di-manika-**mahka***
José football 3SG.NF-play- **REC.P.NONVIS**
'José has played football (we heard it)'
Aikhenvald (2004: 2; slightly adapted)

c. Tariana (Arawakan; Amazon, Brazil)
*Juse* *ɨrida* *di-manika-**nihka***
José football 3SG.NF-play- **REC.P.INFR**
'José has played football (we infer it from visual evidence)'
Aikhenvald (2004: 2; slightly adapted)

d. Tariana (Arawakan; Amazon, Brazil)
*Juse* *ɨrida* *di-manika-**sika***
José football 3SG.NF-play- **REC.P.ASSUM**
'José has played football (we assume this on the basis of what we already know)'
Aikhenvald (2004: 2; slightly adapted)

e. Tariana (Arawakan; Amazon, Brazil)
*Juse* *ɨrida* *di-manika-**pidaka***
José football 3SG.NF-play- **REC.P.REP**
'José has played football (we were told)'
Aikhenvald (2004: 2; slightly adapted)

(1c), for example, could be uttered in a context where José's soccer shoes are dirty or not in their regular spot so that family members may infer from visual evidence that José has played football. (1d) alludes to the case where José maybe always plays football the same day of the week so that at a certain time of that day it can be assumed that he has played football before the moment of speech. Besides the

**13** Aikhenvald uses the following glosses which are not found in the *Leipzig Glossing Rules*: ASSUM assumed, INFR inferred, NONVIS non-visual, REC.P recent past, REP reported, VIS visual.

privative inflectional, and thus functional, evidential marking the actual propositional content is always expressed by the same linguistic constructions *Juse irida di-manika-*.

However, the obligatoriness found in Tariana cannot be stated for all languages with evidential markers, as for example the Tupi-Guarani language family. Hence, besides exhibiting different degrees of obligatoriness (obligatory vs. optional vs. non-existent) and different degrees of grammaticalization (fully grammaticalized with exclusively evidential meaning vs. polyfunctional markers) the markers within one language may refer to different types of evidentiality as presented in Figure 2:

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | { | | | { | Visual | |
| | { | Direct | — **Attested** | { | Auditory | |
| | { | | | { | Other sensory | |
| | { | | | | | |
| Types of | { | | { | { | Second-hand | } (hear- say) |
| Evidence | { | | { **Reported** | { | Third-hand | } |
| | { | | { | { | Folklore | |
| | { | Indirect | { | | | |
| | { | | { **Inferring** | { | Results | |
| | { | | { | { | Reasoning | |

**Figure 2:** Types of evidence by Willet (1988: 57) (see also Frawley 1992: 413).

Apart from the basic cognitive distinction between direct, perceived (firsthand) and indirect, reported (nonfirsthand) evidence we can distinguish information self-building (via sensory perception and inference, undertaken by the individual, i.e the *ego*) from information takeover (via the channel of verbal communication, transmitted by somebody else, i.e. the *alter*).

As already mentioned, the indication of evidentiality is not obligatory in most languages and the type of marking varies considerably across languages. If a language features morphological marking, the morpheme, free or bound, does not necessarily only have the evidential meaning. On the contrary, in most cases, these morphemes are polyfunctional. According to Kuteva et al. (2019), evidential markers often develop from constructions expressing 'hear; know; ANDATIVE, see' (> direct evidential), 'MIRATIVE; PERFECT' (> inferred evidential), 'say' (> quotative and reported evidential). Moreover, evidentiality shares conceptual features with epistemic modality, thus, both concepts may appear intermingled in one and the same morphological marker (see Cornillie 2009).

## 4.3 Mirativity

The "evidential vogue" (Aikhenvald 2003: 19) which has resulted in a high number of publications dealing with the subject, from a theoretical and/or language-specific perspective, was soon followed by the "mirative vogue"[14] (Squartini 2018: 196), initiated by the publications of DeLancey (1997, 2001), who states that "the term 'mirativity' refers to the linguistic marking of an utterance as conveying information which is new or unexpected to the speaker" (DeLancey 2001: 369–370). This broad definition centers on the human emotion of "surprise", which, according to Peterson (2017: 313), "is an overly simplistic approach". It is rather a combination of concepts which all qualify as "mirative". Hence, Aikhenvald (2012: 473) specifies the mirative values expressed in the languages of the world as follows: (i) Sudden discovery, sudden revelation or realization; (ii) surprise; (iii) unprepared mind; (iv) counterexpectation; (v) new information, while "[e]ach of these can be defined with respect to (a) the speaker, (b) the audience (or addressee), or (c) the main character." Rather than expressing only one of the aforementioned values, literature on mirativity suggests that morphological devices ("a verbal affix, a complex predicate, or a pronoun", Aikhenvald 2012: 435) with mirative sense usually share at least two of the values. Moreover, the bundle of concepts behind mirativity markers includes e.g. remote past and evidentiality, leading DeLancey (2001: 370) to the statement that "my primary purpose in this paper is to discuss reasons for treating mirativity as an independent phenomenon distinct from evidentiality, though I do this without denying that there is good evidence for a close relationship between the two categories". This opinion goes back to DeLancey (1997: 35–36), where he concludes that "[mirativity] marks both statements based on inference and statements based on direct experience for which the speaker had no psychological preparation [. . .]. What these apparently disparate data sources have in common [. . .] is that the proposition is one which is new to the speaker, not yet integrated into his overall picture of the world". In this context, the semantic bridge between the human emotion of "surprise" (triggered by an update regarding the calculation of future events and expectations by the brain), an event of the recent past (i.e. a recent discovery) and the direct or indirect perception of new information is certainly obvious (see Section 3).

Again, as in the case of evidentiality, there are languages which exhibit the obligatory marking of mirativity in those cases where it applies to the concept the speaker intends to express and which, at the same time, provide mirative-only markers, such as in Tariana:

**14** Within the French linguistic tradition the terms *médiatif* (Guentchéva 1996) and *mediativity* (Lazard 1999) are used to refer to a general grammatical category comprising indirective evidentiality and mirativity (Peterson 2017).

(2) Tariana (Arawakan; Amazon, Brazil)
***harame-mhe*** ***pi-a-sika***
be.scared-APPEAR.MIR 2SG-AUX.MIR-RECPST.ASSUMED
*hanu-yakale-nuku*
big-CLF.village-TOP.NON.A/S
'You have been scared of the big city' [assumed by the speaker, based on deduction, and to the speaker's surprise]
(Aikhenvald 2012: 445)

As can be seen by comparing (2) with (1a–e) the mirative marker *-mhe* differs from the evidential markers and is used independently of them. However, in a cross-linguistic perspective "[m]irativity is not normally the default meaning of a grammatical category; rather, it is frequently a secondary or tertiary meaning of some grammatical marker" (Kuteva et al. 2019: 44). This finding already led DeLancey (1997, 2001) to speak of mirative as a semantic space. Aikhenvald (2012: 462) uses the parallel terminology to her "evidential strategies" speaking of "mirative strategies" as "extensions of essentially non-mirative categories which acquire mirative meanings within a given context".[15]

The main pathways of grammaticalization of polyfuntional markers comprising the semantic category of mirativity are three according to Kuteva et al. (2019). First, in alphabetical source>target order, there is the ADVERSATIVE > MIRATIVE grammaticalization by means of 'but' as e.g.

(3) Standard Italian
*Ma questa macchina è veloce!*
'But this car is fast!'
(Kuteva et al. 2019: 44)

(4) Standard French
*Mais . . . tu marches!*[16]
'But . . . you are walking!'
(Kuteva et al. 2019: 45)

**15** Peterson (2017: 318) uses the –in my view– infelicitous terms of "parasitic" (through meaning or structure) vs. "non-parasitic" (propositional or illocutionary) mirativity. In the first case of "parasitic meanings", for example, there are other well established terms such as *polyfunctional* or *polyseme* (via semantic change, i.e. functional extension, i.e. grammaticalization processes).
**16** This is the title of a children's book by Didier Dufresne.

Other instances presented by Kuteva et al. (2019: 44–46) are English *but*, Bulgarian *ama*/*no*, Dutch *maar*, Turkish *ama*, Greek *ma*, Lebanese Arabic *bäs*, Mangarrayi *gana* and Korean *-ntey*. All examples presented have, more or less, in common that the moment of discovery of the new fact, which the speaker is hitherto unaware of, unprepared for and/or which they do not expect at that moment, and the moment of the utterance (triggered by the emotion of surprise) are sequentially contiguous. In this contextual use of 'but' the moment of discovery precedes more or less directly the moment of speech. This differs from other types of adversative surprise exclamations where not only the immediate context, i.e. the present dialogue, but aspects of shared situational knowledge of the interlocutors (former dialogues) or encyclopedic world knowledge are relevant for the adversative reaction, as e.g. in *she is poor but happy* or *Mary loves cakes but she is rather slim* (Kuteva et al. 2019: 44), where the counter-expectation of the conventional implicatures "to be poor means to be unhappy" and "if you like cake you are not expected to be slim" is uttered. Only a broad conception of mirativity as a semantic concept can cover the latter examples under the mirative umbrella. Therefore, it is certainly adequate to make a distinction between "mirative-as-[immediate]surprise" and "mirativity-as-talking-about-surprise" (Peterson 2017: 313).

The second pathway of grammaticalization is INFERRED EVIDENTIAL > MIRATIVE, as e.g. in[17]

(5) Colombian Spanish
*. . . yo, que incluso algunas veces limpié la taza que otro había chapoteado para que quien usara el baño después de mí no fuera a pensar que el descarado había sido yo; yo, por Dios, dizque a limpiar baños.*
'. . . me, who even sometimes wiped the toilet bowl that someone else had splattered so that whoever used the bathroom after me wouldn't think that the shameless one had been me; I, for God's sake, dizque to clean bathrooms.' (Kuteva et al. 2019: 158)

**17** Aikhenvald (2012: 469–470), where the example is taken from in Kuteva et al. (2019: 470), specifies the context of the utterance as follows: "To his disgust, the speaker has been given a job cleaning bathrooms. He lists a number of ways in which he is unsuitable for the job because he is oversensitive to cleanliness. He expresses his disbelief at finding himself in this position. This is where he uses *dizque*. In this example, *dizque* does not mark reported speech. Rather, it indicates that the speaker has no control over the situation. In Travis's [2006: 1292] words, "it also expresses an element of surprise, as though he has all of a sudden found himself in this terrible situation"". The example ultimately goes back to Jorge Franco's novel *Paraíso Travel* (2001: 71) and, thus, does not represent naturalistic speech production, but simulated orality (see Lacaze 2020).

*Dizque* is known in Spanish varieties of Latin America as an indicator of reported speech (Kany 1951: 244–250). Nevertheless, it has developed further meanings including inferred evidentiality and, from there, mirativity in Colombian Spanish.

The third pathway of grammaticalization described by Kuteva et al. (2019) is PERFECT > MIRATIVE with 'PERFECT' as 'RECENT or IMMEDIATE PAST' (see Section 4.1). In this context, DeLancey (2001: 379) points out that "[a] past event will typically qualify for mirative marking only if the speaker has only recently become aware of it, which implies that the speaker has only indirect or secondary evidence of it".[18] One of the examples provided comes from Rural Ecuadorian Quechua, where the verbal suffix *-shka-*, actually a recent past marker, may also express reported evidentiality (hearsay) and mirativity:

(6) Rural Ecuadorian Quechua
*kipi* *llashak-mi* *ka-shka-ø*
bundle heavy-AFF be-PRF-3SG
'the bundle turns out to be heavy'
(Muysken 1977: 60)[19]

In (6), both the recent past and reported evidentiality readings are not possible, because they do not make any sense in a situation of immediate experience. In the English translation the present tense must be used. Muysken (1977: 60) uses the felicitous term "sudden discovery tense" to refer to these meanings of *-shka-* ("Adelaar, personal communication"). Additionally, the close contact between Ecuatorian Spanish and Quichua has resulted in the use of the *pretérito perfecto compuesto* 'present perfect' in the same contexts and with the same conceptual meanings:

(7) a. Ecuadorian Highland Spanish
*Rico* ***ha_sido****.*
good be.**PRF**.3SG
b. Quichua
*Alli-mi* *ga-**shka**-ø.*
good-AFF be-**PRF**-3SG
'It is good (indeed)'
(Muysken 1985: 391)

**18** As already mentioned in Section 4.2, there are also cases where PERFECT constructions grammaticalize to INFERRED EVIDENTIALS.

**19** In my view, there is no reason to substitute Muysken's translation of the sentence by 'the bundle is heavy indeed' (Olbertz 2012: 83).

Besides its use by speakers from bilingual ecologies, it can also be found in the Spanish variety of the Ecuadorian capital Quito, where the population is more monolingual:

(8) Quito Spanish
*¿y el hijo de la señora Anita no ha estado aquí?*
'and Mrs. Anita's son is not here?'
(Bustamante 1991: 203)

In (8), the meaning of "surprise" and "counterexpectation" is quite obvious, again translated by means of the English present tense.

Apart from the use of the present perfect, i.e. *el pretérito perfecto compuesto*, productive uses of the pluperfect (*el pretérito pluscuamperfecto*) or simply *había sido* ('had been') are also found in American Spanish varieties, including PS (Avellana 2013; Carol and Avellana 2019), initially triggered by the influence of indigenous languages, but then also spreading to other varieties. However, this contribution does not enter this research field even though it is an absolute desideratum. The reasons for this are to be found in the space limitations of the paper. The data sources for PG and PS presented in Section 5 exhibit 20 and 52 examples respectively. In the case of PG, it has to be mentioned that *había sido* is also used in PG even though it is actually the replicated PS version of PG *ra'e*. *Había sido* and *ra'e* also appear next to each other in my PG data.

Finally, it can be stated that it is difficult to obtain a typological overview of the overt marking of mirativity because of the diverging terminology used by linguists (including the possibility that, in older studies, mirativity as such may not be recognized). Moreover, the examples are usually presented without the given context, so that it is difficult to reenact the train of thought of the speaker while uttering their counterexpectation or surprise. But even if the context is provided by the original author of a pertinent example, together with a suitable explanation and maybe even some terminological proposals, it is well possible that, "down the road" of the transmission of the example from author to author, aspects of the original argumentation fall by the wayside. In this respect, any further cross-linguistic typological research must also rest on original publications as far as their examples and their theoretical modelling are concerned. The next milestone to be expected in the near future will be Peterson (forthcoming).

# 5 The corpora

The particular interest for the uses of *ra'e* in PG and PS has risen over the years from my own field work on PG as well as working together with Anja Hennemann (formerly University of Potsdam) on PS evidential markers in general. In the latter context, a corpus of written PS as displayed within the PYP has been elaborated. Both the oral field work corpus and the PYP corpus provide examples for the uses of *ra'e* in PG and PS. In the following two sub-sections the nature of these corpora will be outlined with all due brevity.

## 5.1 The PS corpus of the Paraguayan yellow press

While working together with Anja Hennemann, the overall research topic was "evidentiality" in PS (see Döhla and Hennemann 2019 and 2024), thus, leading us to journalistic texts, more specifically, the PYP as a rich source for all kinds of expressions linked to the functional-semantic category of "evidentiality" (see Section 4.2) given the situation that the journalist (= the speaker) is reporting on events they have investigated and which, in the majority of cases, they have not experienced personally, i.e. not by direct perception.

In general, the yellow press as a journalistic genre is heavily linked to those daily or weekly press publications –in print or online– consisting mainly of sensational news (Spencer 2007: 121), trivial entertainment and social gossip regarding local events or personalities as well as commonly known celebrities. In this respect, the PYP follows worldwide principles. However, what can be considered a particular, if not unique, feature of the PYP is the fact that the language used in the reports does not correspond to Standard Spanish, which would be expected for press releases in general, but to Jopara Spanish. The matrix language of Jopara Spanish is PS with all its peculiarities which, altogether, contribute to the label "Paraguayan". This PS-PG mixture reflects the speech behavior of the urban and suburban population and clearly defines them as the target group due to the choice of the code, i.e. Jopara Spanish, and the contents of the reports, thus, excluding potential readers who only know Standard Spanish, for example.

PG elements within Jopara Spanish of the PYP constitute ca. 5% of the words (Zajícová 2009b), limited mostly to direct speech parts, individual identity and culture related lexical items with high frequency and, most importantly, different types of free or bound markers the use of which is closely related to the particular genre of journalistic texts:

– *voi* ‘(of) course’ (affirmative);
– *ndaje* ‘it is said’;
– *ra’e* ‘it turned out that’;
– *avei* ‘also’;
– Guarani verbs: *he’i* ‘s:he says’, *omombe’u* ‘s:he tells’, *osyryry* ‘goes, arrives’;
– and *-mi*, elatives on *-ite*, or the perfective nominal tense on *-kue* (‘ex-‘).

(Zajícová 2009b: 29–30; Döhla and Hennemann (accepted))

Among the collected reports of the PYP[20] which, so far, total ca. 240’000 words (2017–2019) the following evidential markers can be found ordered by frequency:

**Table 2:** Frequency of evidential markers within the 240,000-word PYP corpus (2017–2019) by Döhla and Hennemann (for the functional range of the individual markers see Döhla and Hennemann 2024).

| Marker | function | Σn |
|---|---|---|
| *ndaje* | indirect evidence | 1001 |
| *he’i* | indirect evidence | 519 |
| *ra’e* | indirect evidence | 26 |
| *ndajeko* | indirect evidence | 22 |
| *kuri* | direct evidence | 5 |

Considering the nature of journalistic writing it is not surprising to find the highest frequency for those markers expressing indirect evidentiality, i.e. a strategy used by journalists to abdicate direct responsibility for the provided information. *Ra’e* totals only 26 occurrences. However, in many cases we are able to “control the context” in the sense that the context of use can be derivated from the contents of the news article, a fact which is decisive for the interpretation of the concrete function of polysemic *ra’e* and which is often neglected in grammars on PG, for example, where individual sentences are presented without providing the given context which determines the individual reading of *ra’e*. This “controlled” environment is even more given in the field work corpus on PG.

**20** The articles are taken from the following online sites of the PYP: *Hoy* (hoy.com.py), *Crónica* (cronica.com.py) and *Diario Popular* (popular.com.py).

## 5.2 The PG corpus by own field work

My field work on PG was conducted in the capital of Paraguay, Asunción, in 2012 with the result of 22h 11min of audio recordings comprising 18 consultants (distinguishing three age groups, two genders and two educational profiles). These were selected by Lino Trinidad Sanabria following the main criterion of high proficiency in Guarani. Nevertheless, the general communicative practice of mixing PG and PS could be observed among the majority of consultants to varying degrees and proportions (see Döhla forthcoming).

The main reason for conducting field work in Paraguay was studying differential object marking (see Döhla 2021). Thus, the interviews were designed accordingly from casual free dialogue all the way to a more formalized interview style with the following elements:

a) free speech (conversation);
b) free speech (story-telling from first and third person perspectives);
c) verbalization of the picture story of the three hunters (designed by me; total of forty images; two run-throughs);
d) questionnaire with 80+ minimal sentence pairs.

Especially the use of the picture story as a semi-free elicitation method considerably helped obtaining the desired transitive sentences with overt lexical direct objects for the study of the nature of differential object marking in PG. The point of view of this corpus material is the one that the consultant (= the speaker) is telling a story they do not know in a situation of immediate experience and direct visual perception of the images. While this is true in the first run-through, the second time they are telling the story (still with the help of the images), they are already familiar with the story. So far, the transcription of the recordings of the picture story has resulted in a parallel corpus of 16,004 words, which contains a total of 45 occurrences of *ra'e*.

The story itself starts with three hunters, each one of them wanting to hunt a different kind of animal with a different kind of weapon. In order to do so, they separate and each one cuts his own path, experiencing his own adventure while encountering people and animals. Within the whole story there are two scenes which intend to confuse the consultant, hence, creating the situation where a contrastive focus construction –as expected by me– could be used to express the adjustment of the speaker's assumption, more or less as a surprise. The first one is to be found in the story of the hunter who sets out to find a jaguar and shoot it with his rifle. On the way, he encounters a girl looking for her cat, which the hunter hasn't seen yet. Continuing his search he finally spots an animal behind some bushes looking like a jaguar or leopard (see Figure 3).

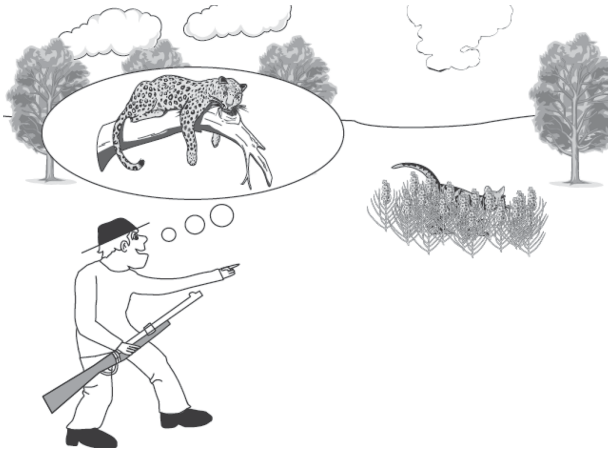

**Figure 3:** Image 21, the rifleman is spotting an animal behind the bushes that looks like a jaguar.

So he shoots the animal and, as it turns out, it was not the jaguar he has shot but the girl's cat, as represented in Figure 4:

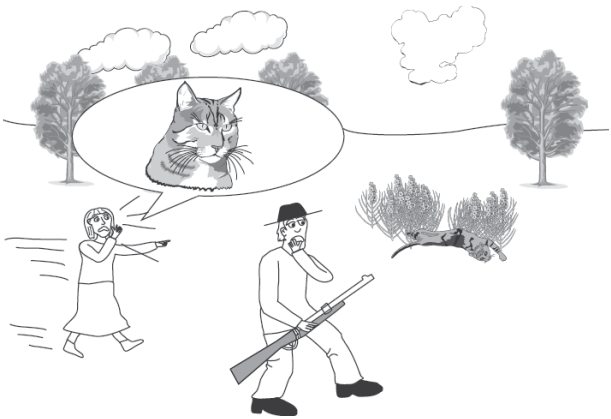

**Figure 4:** Image 23, the girl is coming closer while running and pointing to her dead cat. The rifleman is shocked.

When seeing this scene the storyteller realizes that –against their assumption triggered by image 21 in Figure 3– it was not a jaguar hiding behind the bushes but the girl's cat.

The second scene takes place within the story of the hunter who is searching a wild boar in order to hunt it with his bow and arrow. Again, the hunter is spotting an animal behind the bushes thinking that it is the wild boar he has been looking for (see Figure 5).

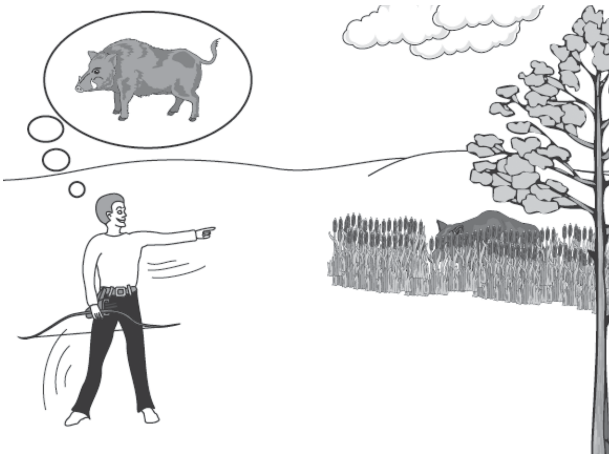

**Figure 5:** Image 31, the bowman is spotting an animal behind the bushes looking like a wild boar from the distance.

The animal rushes out of the bushes heading for the bowman and attacking him. Even then, even though realizing that it is not a wild boar we are dealing with here, the consultants are not quite sure which kind of animal it is and keep on guessing, opting for "wolf" in the majority of cases. However, this self-inferred assumption is corrected by image 36 (Figure 6) where the presumed owner of the dog suddenly shows up interfering in the fight between his dog and the bowman.

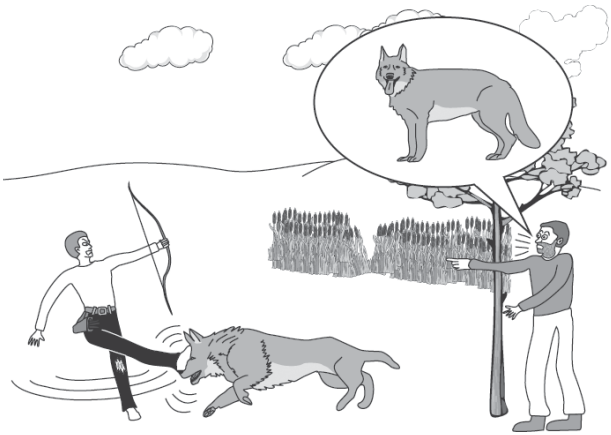

**Figure 6:** Image 36, the owner of the dog appears seeing his dog being kicked by the bowman (who got bitten before).

Both scenes serve as trigger points for the use of contrastive focus constructions and other linguistic means in order to express surprise, recent discovery of a new fact and counterexpectation, as we can see in Section 6, where concrete examples are presented. But before doing so, the next section offers a general view on the linguistic features and the respective terminology relevant to this study.

## 6 *Ra'e* in PG field work data

As can be seen in Sections 3 and 4, the functions of recent past, evidentiality and mirativity appear somewhat intermingled as far as their conceptualization is concerned. This is also the concrete case regarding PG *ra'e*. The main goal of the qualitative data analysis of this section is to find examples where one of the aforementioned functions is at least predominant, leaving the other two on the side or even excluding them.

The first example presented here appears in the story of the hunter who sets out to shoot a monkey. After quite a few hustles he manages to approach the monkey without the animal noticing it and, finally, to shoot it with his blowgun, so that the monkey falls dead from the tree (see Figure 7).

**Figure 7:** Image 13, The blowgunner has killed the monkey. The monkey has fallen dead from the tree. The blowgunner is happy.

One consultant describes the scene in Figure 7 as follows:

(9) Paraguayan Guarani (own fieldwork)

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Ko'ága* | *katu* | *Ko* | *karaja* | *oú-ma* | *yvý-pe,* |
| now | just | DEM | monkey | 3.come-already | ground-LOC |
| *o-ha'ã* | *ra'e* | *[i]chupe* | | | |
| 3-shoot | RA'E | him | | | |

'Now the monkey has already fallen down on the ground, he has shot him.'
(GUA_LR_2m–_01_13)

The scene in the context of the sequence of events only permits an interpretation of *ra'e* as an indicator of an event of the "recent past", the effect of which is still relevant at the given moment of the utterance, since the image shows the dead monkey on the ground and the actual shooting has happened in the previous image 12. There is no evidential sense involved here, because the hunter as well as the consultant, i.e. the speaker, know exactly what is happening so that any inferential meaning can be excluded. The same applies to the mirative sense. The hunter's intention and volitional action is pretty clear from the beginning of the substory and there are no divergent actions involved which might lead to an event which could be perceived as a surprise or against the current set of expectations.

A similar line of argumentation can be put forward in example (10), but with inferential evidential meaning as the intended one and the temporal and mirative as the ones that can be excluded. The scene takes place after the accidental killing of the girl's cat by the one of the hunters:

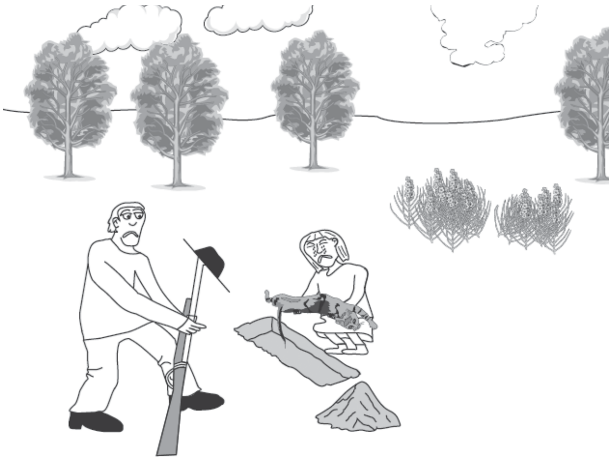

**Figure 8:** The girl is putting her cat in the grave. The rifleman has taken off his hat.

After digging a hole in order to bury the cat, the girl is about to put her cat in the grave while the hunter has taken off his hat standing there in a somewhat solemn and respectful way (see Figure 8). In order to describe the scene, one consultant utters the following sentence (interpreting the hole in the ground as a well):

(10) Paraguayan Guarani (own fieldwork)
*o-ñembo'e* *i-mini* *hese* *ra'e*
3-pray POSS.3-little for.3 RA'E
*ha* *o-moĩ* *la* *yvykua-pe*
and 3-put DEF well-LOC
*la* *kuñakarai* *la* *Hymba*
DEF woman DEF POSS.3.animal
'He prays a little for her, it seems, and the woman puts her animal into the well.'
(GUA_LV_2m+_01_27)

*Ra'e* in (10) refers to the first part of the sentence, i.e. *oñembo'e imini hese* 'he prayed a little for her'. Since the speaker is describing the current scene, a past, even recent past, is not possible. At the same time, there is no reason to be surprised because nothing has happened so far that would be contradicted or so by the act of praying. The use of *ra'e* in sentence final position in (10) is rather connected to the fact that the consultant was led to the insight that the man is praying due to their own inferential interpretation. But this process of interpretation can certainly be considered a very recent action or immediate discovery, because the utterance followed a few seconds after the current image had been made visible by turning over the page from the previous image.

Finally, there are also mirative readings of *ra'e* detectable in my field work data. These, for example, can be found in the context of the two scenes described in Section 5.2, which exhibit the adequate setting for a surprise effect, which is also uttered by a number of consultants using *ra'e*. However, the mirative use seems to be connected to at least one other meaning of *ra'e* as can be seen in this first example, which is uttered while verbalizing image 36 (see Figure 6):

(11) Paraguayan Guarani (own fieldwork)

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *ou* | *Peteĩ* | *karai* | *ha* | *o-llama* | *[i]chupe* | *porque* | *upé[v]a* |
| 3.come | One | man | and | 3-call | him | because | this.one |
| *hymba* | *jaguar* | *ra'e* | *ha* | *o-continua* | *o-pyvoi* | *hese* | |
| POSS.3.animal | dog | RA'E | and | 3-continue | 3-kick | for.3 | |
| *la* | *karai* | *la* | *jaguar-pe* | | | | |
| DEF | man | DEF | dog-OBJ | | | | |

'a man is coming and calls him [= the dog] because this is his animal dog and the man is continuing to kick the dog'
(GUA_LVT_2m+_02_36)

In (11), the scope of *ra'e* is the causal subordinate clause *porque upéva hymba jaguar ra'e* 'because this is his animal dog'. This way, the speaker expresses his surprise regarding the update of his knowledge about the animal that has darted out of the bushes attacking the hunter: The appearance of the owner of the animal indicates the intimate relationship between the animal and the owner and rectifies the speaker's hitherto assumption that the animal is a wolf, a wild boar, a bear or a leopard. The new information, i.e. that we have been dealing with a German shepherd-like dog, is built up in the speaker's consciousness in an indirect way and leads to a surprise effect. Thus, in this case, *ra'e* has a mirative as well as an indirect evidential meaning. Both concepts seem to be indispensably linked together.

In the next mirative example (12), all three functions of *ra'e* merge together with the mirative as the triggering concept for the use of *ra'e*. Thus, one consultant utters the following sentence while describing the events displayed in image 23 (see Figure 4):

(12) Paraguayan Guarani (own fieldwork)

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *"ha'e* | *voi-ngo* | *ndeve* | *kuri,* | *Che* | | |
| be | certain-EMPH | 2 | EVID | POSS.1 | | |
| *mbarakaja"* | *imba'e* | *la* | *mbarakaja* | *Hína* | *ra'e* | |
| cat | POSS.3-thing | DEF | cat | IPFV.CONT | RA'E | |

'"It is certain (I said) to you, I know, my cat." Hers has been the cat.'
(GUA_BlRo_2f–_01_23)

*Ra'e* in (12), with scope over *imba'e la mbarakaja hína* 'hers is the cat', is an exclamation of surprise and counterexpectation after the recent discovery that the girl has identified the dead animal as her cat. The surprise is underlined by focus

fronting of *imba'e* 'her cat'. The animal has always been the girl's cat –even though the hunter was not aware of this fact at the moment when he shot the cat. The animal, even though dead, still is the girl's cat in the present scene displayed in the image. This past and still ongoing relationship between the girl and the cat is also expressed by *ra'e*, that is why I have translated the copula in English by 'has been'. At the same time, the sudden appearance of the girl who identifies her cat serves as indirect evidential for the hunter and for the speaker to rectify their knowledge regarding the nature of the shot animal. Both the hunter and the speaker perceive the information as against their previously gained expectations. Thus, all three functions of *ra'e* are gathered in this example. The prevalence of the concept of surprise and counterexpectation are also supported by the intonation, which is represented by a high exclamative pitch.

## 7 *Ra'e* in the PS of the PYP

As mentioned in Section 5.1, there are only 26 insertions of *ra'e* in our 240,000-word corpus of the PYP. In general, their uses can be systemized according to the functions of PG *ra'e* presented in Section 3. The first example exhibits an event that started in the remote past at a certain location, but which has happened again and again and is still happening today –in this case the occurrence of strange incidences in a somewhat enchanted outdoor place. A woman which has been living in the neighborhood for 30 years at the moment of the interview talks about the strange things happening there ever since:

(13) Paraguayan Spanish (yellow press)
*Desde hace años luego ra'e pasan situaciones muy extrañas en el lugar.*
'For years then, very strange situations have been happening in the place.'
http://www.cronica.com.py/2019/02/04/placita-fantasmal-una-hamaca-se-mueve-haenoite-asusta-al-rollete/

The context of the news article does neither permit a mirative nor an inferential evidential reading according to my understandings of the concepts (see Section 4), particularly, because the woman is a direct witness of the happenings, and there is no recent unexpected discovery with surprise effect. Therefore, the only reading possible is the one of present perfect continuous.

The second example is the following one:

(14) Paraguayan Spanish (yellow press)
*Paraguay creyó que fue finalista* ***ra'e***
*QUÉ PELADA. Nuestra representante en Miss Supernational 2016 escuchó "Paraguay" y se adelantó.* ***Había sido*** *dijeron "Polonia"*
'Paraguay thought that it had been finalist (**by inference**)
WHAT A SETBACK. Our representative in Miss Supernational 2016 heard "Paraguay" and stepped forward. **As it turned out** they said "Poland"'
http://www.cronica.com.py/2016/12/07/paraguay-creyo-fue-finalista-rae/

Here, *ra'e* is found in the headline of an article about the embarrassing moment when, in the finale of the Miss Supernational 2016, the Paraguayan candidate thought that she had won the contest because that was exactly what she had perceived during the announcement. She even made a step forward. However, she was wrong and the winner was from Poland. In this example, *ra'e* has inferential evidential meaning. The mirative sense is expressed by *había sido* a couple of lines later. As pointed out above, the study of *había sido* is not part of this contribution due to the limited space available. However, at this point, it has to be mentioned that *había sido* has 52 occurrences in our 240,000- word corpus, i.e. the PS construction, a replication from the PG *ra'e*, enjoys a higher degree of productivity than inserted *ra'e* in PS. Moreover, *había sido* has developed further meanings and uses and may also be placed at the beginning of the sentence it refers to or can even stand alone as some type of exclamation or "eye-catcher" in the context of the yellow press.

The following examples all share the mirative sense, but always linked to the concept of "recent discovery":

(15) Paraguayan Spanish (yellow press)
*SEGÚN ESTUDIO. Ndaje muchos amigos se hacen el "aguante" de onda ra'e.*
'According to study. It is said that, surprisingly, many friends become casual "comforters".'
http://www.cronica.com.py/2018/10/06/socios-kaure-dice-paraguayito/

(16) Paraguayan Spanish (yellow press)
*Una mujer fue denunciada por sus patrones al ser pillada de que los estaba "esquilmando" sistemáticamente ra'e.*
'A woman was reported by her bosses when she was caught "fleecing" them systematically [, surprisingly].'
http://www.cronica.com.py/2019/01/17/empleada-le-pelo-ahora-quiere-devolver-cuotitas/

(17) Paraguayan Spanish (yellow press)
*MISTERIO FUE REVELADO "Dama de blanco" de Isla Timbó tuvo ra'e una hija*
'MYSTERY WAS REVEALED. (It turned out) "woman in white" from Isla Timbó had a daughter'
http://www.cronica.com.py/2019/02/21/misterio-fue-revelado-dama-blanco-isla-timbo-tuvo-rae-una-hija/

As can be seen in examples (15–17), the position of inserted *ra'e* in PS is immediately post-verbal or sentence-final. It never appears in sentence-initial position as opposed to *había sido*. However, there are examples where *ra'e* is separated graphically from the preceding sentence by a comma, thus, making it stand alone without being linked to the actual sentence, as in (18), again a headline:

(18) Paraguayan Spanish (yellow press)
NO HAY CLASE SOCIAL PARA USAR MICROS CHUCHIS, RA'E
*Crónica fue testigo de que mucha gente opta por el servicio diferencial.*
'There is no social class for using extravagant minibuses, right?
Crónica witnessed that many people decide on the differential service.'
http://www.cronica.com.py/2017/07/20/no-hay-clase-social-para-usar-micros-chuchis-rae/

Here, *ra'e* is used as an affirmative (Melià et al. 1960: 68) tag with the meaning 'right?; isn't it?', Spanish '¿cierto?; ¿verdad?'. The same meaning can be attributed to *ra'e* in the following example, even though there is no graphic separation between *ra'e* and the preceding sentence:

(19) Paraguayan Spanish (yellow press)
*Todo tipo de cosas pueden llegar a pasar en el interior de un bus ra'e*, [. . .]
'All kinds of things may happen in the interior of a bus, right?'
http://www.cronica.com.py/2015/09/25/segurida-kaucho-disparo-a-pasajero/

While this meaning is not documented in the literature considered in Section 3, interestingly, Spanish *cierto* 'right' is the first translation of *ra'e* found in Ruiz de Montoya's *Tesoro de la lengva gvarani*. The many examples provided in the *Tesoro* cover all the functions mentioned in modern literature (see Section 3), but also the following one:

(20) Classical Guaraní
*Iesu X. ñ[ande] y[ara] Profeta eté raé,*[21] *realmente que Christo fue verdadero Profeta.*
'Jesus Christ, our Lord, was certainly (or truly) the real Prophet.'
Ruiz de Montoya (1639: 335v)

In (20), *ra'e* has an affirmative reading which can also be found among the uses of *ra'e* in the yellow press as we have seen in (18) and (19).

While reading through the PYP articles which contain *ra'e*, one gets the impression that the journalist makes use of *ra'e* (and *había sido*) to attract the reader's attention because of its surprise or even affirmative conceptual element. This is why *ra'e* often appears in headlines, suggesting the reader to continue to read the whole article. This pragmatic use of *ra'e* seems to have developed within PS.

## 8 Preliminary conclusions and further investigation

Mirativity, and also evidentiality, constitute concepts which are expressed in all languages of the world following the communicative needs of the speakers. However, the devices used differ considerably. While languages like Tariana seem to have inflectional mirative-only markers at hand, polyfunctional constructions including mirative and/or evidential meaning seem to be more widespread in the languages of the world. Finally, any language can express these concepts by means of semantically unambiguous, propositional complex constructions.

In the case of PG *ra'e*, and parallel to markers of other languages, I agree with DeLancey (2001: 378) that "we seem to be dealing here with originally perfect or perfective constructions, which have acquired a reading combining inferential evidential status and mirativity". As we have seen in the course of this study, while the temporal and evidential meanings of *ra'e* may be found as the exclusive meanings of *ra'e* in a given utterance, the mirative sense is indispensably linked conceptually to the sense of recent discovery and, thus, to both, the fact that the source of information is indirect and that the information building or takeover has happened in the immediate past, sequentially before the act of surprise. Within this causal chain of action with a mirative effect at its end, temporal contiguity seems to be the

21 *Ñande jara* means 'our (inclusive) Lord' and *eté* ascribes authenticity to the predicative noun *prophet*.

crucial factor for this final effect to qualify as mirative. Thus, the event taken place in the recent past, the perception by indirect evidence as well as the emotional reaction caused in the speaker are perceived as contiguous and connected procedures rather than disjunct events. This is also the reason why the attested grammaticalization pathways leading to mirative readings of certain markers often depart from recent past and/or evidential structures.

Moreover, the type of corpus data demonstrates that the choice of data is an important factor in functional analyses of linguistic structures. As in the case of the data used in this study, the fact of knowing and, hence, considering the context of a single utterance or sentence is imperative for the interpretation of the concrete use of polyfunctional constructions, the semantic concepts of which are intertwined.

Thus, as we have seen in the analysis of the uses of *ra'e* in my PS corpora (section 7) further investigations are needed to corroborate the uses of *ra'e* which are not attested in the PG grammars mentioned in Section 3. This way, it has to be investigated if these additional uses are PS internal changes or if they can be traced back to Classical Guarani. In order to do so, more diachronic and synchronic data analyses have to be made and, particularly, speakers' opinions have to be considered, a method which I will set about from 2025 onwards.

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