

Mirative markers in Romance exclamative sentences

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Unless otherwise noted, all Catalan examples are from the *Corpus Informatitzat de la Llengua Catalana* (CTILC).

- (1) a. **Ma que** és bonic això!
MRK MRK is nice this
'How pretty this is!'
- b. **Si (que)** n'és, de bo!
MRK MRK CL.PART=is of good
'How good it is!'
- c. **[M]ira si** en fa, d'anys, que viu en aquesta escala!
MRK MRK CL.PART makes of=years that lives in this.F stairs
'How many years (s)he lives in this building!'

Unless otherwise noted, all Spanish examples are from the *Corpus del Español del siglo XXI* (CORPESXXI).

- (2)
- a. ¡**Vaya que** era difícil saber cómo sentirse frente a esa ley!
MRK MRK was difficult know how feel=REFL front to this law
'How difficult it was knowing how to feel regarding this law!'
 - b. Creo en ellos. ¡**Vaya si** creo!
believe.1SG in them MRK MRK believe.1SG
'I believe in them. How I believe!'
 - c. ¡**vaya!**, ¡cómo ha cambiado la vida últimamente!
MRK how has changed the life lately
'Wow, how live has changed lately!'

- Which is the meaning contribution of these markers to exclamations?
- Where are these markers placed in the left periphery of sentence?
- What do these markers tell us for the difference between exclamativity and mirativity?
- What do these markers tell us about the theoretical debate on the syntax-pragmatics interaction?

- Each marker adds a specific content in building an exclamation.
- These markers are placed hierarchically in the standard left-periphery of sentence, and in the Speech Act Layer by Krifka (2021).
- These markers help us show that exclamativity and mirativity are different phenomena.
- These markers give support to cartographic approaches to the syntax-pragmatics interaction.

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Mirativity is not concerned with the source of the information, but rather with its unexpected status regarding the speaker's epistemic state (Delancey 1997, 2001). Romance languages display a wide range of mirative markers (MIR), mostly based on 2nd person imperative forms of perception verbs (Ghezzi & Molinelli 2014, Cardinaletti 2022, Tanghe 2016, Espinal & Villalba to appear):

- Cat.: *goita* (from *guaitar* 'look'), *mira/ma* (from *mirar* 'look')
- Italian: *guarda* (from *guardare* 'look')
- Occitan: *guarda* (from *guardar* 'look').
- Portuguese: *olha* (from *olhar* 'look').
- Spanish: *mira* (from *mira* 'look').
- Sicilian: *bì* (from *vidi* 'see')

Mirative markers are less commonly based on movement verbs: Spanish *vaya* (from *ir* 'to go') or *anda* (from *andar* 'to walk').

- (3) a. **Mira** que són dolents!
MIR MRK be.3PL bad
'How bad they are!'
- b. Tu, **goita** les pentinetes del monyo! **Ma!**
you MIR the combs of.the bun MIR
'Boy, what bun's combs! Wow!'
- (4) a. ¡**Mira** que eres tonto!
MIR MRK be.2SG silly
'How silly you are!'
- b. Se lo ha comido todo. ¡**Vaya!**
REFL it has eaten everything MIR
'She ate everything. Wow!'

This sample does not exhaust the list of mirative markers: following Norrick (2009), we can include some interjections:

- (5) a. **Manoi**, que és grossa! I com pesa, la mala bèstia!
MIR MRK is big and how weighs the bad beast
'Oh boy, how big she is! ... And how heavy, the ugly brute!'
- b. **Òndia**, tu, quin xou!
MIR you what show
'Wow, what a show, man!'
- c. –I fan pagar per veure-la. –**Idò**!
and make.3PL pay.INF for see.INF-her MIR
'–And they even make you pay for seeing her. –Wow!'

- (6)
- a. **Pucha**, Michelle, qué pena que esto haya
MIR Michelle what sadness that this have.SBJV.3SG
pasado
happened
'Shit, Michelle, how bad that this happened'
 - b. **Carajo** que es bruta la muy puñetera.
MIR que is rough the very annoying
'Wow, how rough that nuisance of a woman is!'
 - c. — ¡**Ala!** ¡Qué belleza!
MIR what beauty
'Wow! What a beauty!'

Mirative markers are not restricted to exclamative sentences, but occur in declaratives or interrogatives as well (Olbertz 2012, Sánchez López 2017):

- (7) a. **Ma**, noi! Sí, que hi vinc!
MIR boy yes that loc come.1SG
'Wow, boy! Sure I am coming!'
- b. Per què no dorms, **òndia**!
for what not sleep.2SG MIR
'Why don't you sleep, wow!'
- (8) a. ¿Es que has trazado una raya? ¡**Vaya**!
is that have.2SG draw.PTCP a line MIR
'Did you draw a line? Wow!'
- b. Ah, **vaya**, ahora resulta que estamos jugando.
MIR MIR now results that stay.1PL play.GER
'Wow! Wow! So it's like we are playing now.'

On the other hand, it is not clear that exclamative sentences must involve the surprise meaning associated with mirativity (Chernilovskaya 2014):

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

Here, the emotional content encoded by the exclamative cannot be one of surprise, as it would enter into contradiction with the continuation.

In fact, Mandarin Chinese marks this distinction formally (Badan & Cheng 2015, Wang 2023)

- (10) a. Lǐsì **zhème/nàme** gāo a! [surprise exclamative]
Lisi this.ME/that.ME tall SFP
'How tall Lisi is!'
- b. Lǐsì **duōme** gāo a! [non-surprise exclamative]
Lisi much.ME tall SFP
'How very tall Lisi is!'

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Exclamative sentences must include a degree operator creating the necessary domain extension which surpasses the speaker's expectations (Zanuttini & Portner 2003, Castroviejo 2006, Rett 2011). This is also the case for Romance *that*-exclamatives:

- (11) a. ¡**Que** n'és, de car! (Cat., Villalba 2003)
MRK CL.PART=is of expensive
'How expensive it is!'
- b. **Que** cette histoire est obscure! (French, Gérard-Naef 1980)
MRK this story is dark
'How dark this story is!'

Crucially, unlike their Germanic correlates (see Truckenbrodt 2013, Trotzke & Villalba 2021), Romance *that*-exclamatives must involve a degree quantification:

- (12) Trotzke & Villalba (2021)
- a. #**Que** ha mort! (Cat.)
MRK has die.PTCP
'So suprising that he died!'
 - b. **Dass** er gestorben ist! (German)
that he die.PTCP has
'So suprising that he died!'

We can follow the original idea from Villalba (2003) and developed by Sánchez López (2020) that a null degree operator is doing the job in these sentences in a similar way to the particle *si*:

- (13) a. ¡**Si** que n'és, de car! Cat., Villalba (2003)
DEG MRK CL.PART=is of expensive
- b. **Si** c'est gentil! Fr., Le Goffic (1993)
DEG it=is nice
'How nice it is!'
- c. ¡**Si** será Juan tonto! Sp., Bosque (2017)
DEG be.FUT.3SG Juan dumb
'Juan is so dumb!'

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Not everybody agrees that an exclamative sentence-type exists (Rosengren 1997, 2011, d'Avis 2013, 2016), but the marker *que* typically identifies exclamative sentences:

- (14) a. ¡**Que** n'és, de car! (Cat., Villalba 2003)
 that CL.PART=is of expensive
 'How expensive it is!'
- b. **Que** cette histoire est obscure! (Fr., Gérard-Naef 1980)
 that this story is dark
 'How dark this story is!'
- c. **Dat** hij die boeken kan lezen! (Dutch, Bennis 1998)
 that he those books can read.INF
 'Wow, he can read those books!'

As remarked by Villalba (2017) and Corr (2018), Corr & Munaro (2022), *que* is the default force marker (FM) in Ibero-Romance, where it may encode interrogative (Prieto & Rigau 2007), optative (Sánchez López 2017) and exclamative sentence-types Villalba (2003, 2023):

- (15) a. **Que** vindràs?
 FM come.FUT.2SG
 'Will you come!'
- b. **Que** plogui!
 FM rain.SBJC.3SG
 'May it rain!'

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

- (16)
- a. Que bo **que** és! (Cat.)
how good MRK is
'How good it is!'
 - b. Che belo **che** sei! (It.)
what beautiful MRK are
'How beautiful you are!'
 - c. ¡Menudas/Las cosas **que** come! (Sp.)
small.F.PL/the.F.PL things MRK eats
'The things she eats!'

Hernanz & Rigau (2006): *che/que* is the realization of a Focus head.

- (17) a. ¡Qué bien (que) baila!
 what well that dances
 'How well (s)he dances!'
- b. [_{FocP} qué bien [_{Foc'} [_{Foc} que] [_{FinP} ...t...]]]
- (18) a. ¡Listo que es Juan!
 smart that is Juan
 'Juan is so smart!'
- b. [_{FocP} listo [_{Foc'} [_{Foc} que] [_{FinP} ...t...]]]

I will argue that this marker is the same Force marker we find in that-exclamatives (Medeiros Junior & Sieiro 2021, Villalba 2016, 2023, You 2013). For example, Villalba (2016) shows that both *that*-exclamatives and *wh*-exclamatives with *que* appear regularly in Catalan texts in the same period, namely the second half of the 19th century, suggesting they are the emergence of an exclamative Force marker.

More on this in a moment. . .

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Krifka (2021):

- Judge Phrase (JP) encodes subjective epistemic and evidential attitudes.
- Commitment Phrase (ComP) encodes the commitment of the speaker with respect to the truth value of the proposition.
- Speech Act Phrase (ActP) encodes the relation of the proposition to the common ground, namely its illocutionary force.

(19) [ActP [Act] [ComP [Com] [JP [J] [ForceP [TopP [FocP [FinP [TP
]]]]]]]]]

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Mirative markers set the evidential/epistemic value of the proposition, in this case, one of surprise. Hence, they will generate in the layer devoted to the speaker's epistemic states, namely JP (see Espinal et al. 2024 for a similar proposal for Spanish *vaya*):

(20) [ActP [Act !] [ComP [Com $\vdash$] [JP ma [J] [ForceP que bo [Force' que
[TP és ~~que bo~~]]]]]]

(21) [ActP [Act !] [ComP [Com $\vdash$] [JP ma [J] [ForceP OP/si [Force' que
[TP és ~~OP/si~~ bo]]]]]]

The commitment operator $\vdash$ encodes the strong commitment of the speaker towards the attitude expressed, and the illocutionary operator ! in ActP converts the proposition into an exclamation (see Villalba 2024).

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

- (22) Tu, goita les pentinetes del monyo! **Ma!** Cat.
you look the combs of.the bun MIR
'Look at the bun's combs! Wow!'
- (23) Maria ha dimenticato le chiavi! **Toh!** It. Munaro (2019)
Maria has forgotten the keys MIR
'Maria has forgotten the keys! Wow!'
- (24) ¿Es que has trazado una raya? ¡**Vaya!** Sp.
is that have.2SG draw.PTCP a line MIR
'Did you draw a line? Wow!'

How do we analyze final mirative markers?

Espinal et al. (2024): the mirative marker modifies a propositional anaphor bound by the previous proposition.

- (25) ¿Es que has trazado una raya? ¡**Vaya!** Sp.
is that have.2SG draw.PTCP a line MIR
'Did you draw a line? Wow!'
- (26) [ActP [ForceP ¿Es que has trazado una raya?]₁] [ActP [JP ¡**Vaya!**
[ForceP pro₁]]]

Slocum (2016), González López (2022), González López & Schmid (2023) distinguish two kinds of vocatives:

- initial vocatives with a call role precede mirative markers:

(27) **Tu**, goita les pentinetes del monyo! **Ma!** Ca., CTILC
you MIR the.F.PL combs of.the bun MIR
'Look at the bun's combs! Wow!'

- lower vocatives used for maintaining contact between speaker and listener appear after mirative markers:

(28) a. Ma, **chica**, quina falla més bonica.
MIR girl what bonfire so pretty
'Wow, girl, what a pretty bonfire!'
b. Goita, **noi bufó**, quina pila de caça!
MIR boy cute which.F pile of game
'Wow, cute boy, what a stock of game!'

Degree operators and Force markers appear after low vocatives:

- (29) a. Ma **tu**, quina criatura!
MIR you which child
'Wow, man, what a child!'
- b. Un vestit? **noia**, si que anirem mudats!...
a dress girl MIR DEG go.FUT.1PL well.dress.PTPC
'A dress? Girl, how well dressed we will be!'
- (30) a. Pero **Isabel**, qué tonterías se te ocurren.
but Isabel what nonsenses REFL you.DAT(CL) happen
'Come on, Isabel, what nonsense are you coming up with.'
- b. Bueno, **hombre**, vaya genio...
well man what temper
'Ok, man, what a bad temper...'

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

- (31) [Voc(call)P Noia [ActP [Act !] [ComP [Com $\vdash$] [JP [J goita]
[Voc(addr)P tu [ForceP que bo [Force' que [TP és]]]]]]]]

The Catalan mirative marker *manoi* 'wow' is a lexicalization of the mirative particle *ma* in JP and the low vocative *noi* 'boy' in Voc(addr)P:

(32) **Ma**, **noi**, quina remorassa!

MIR boy which big.noise
'Oh, boy, what a big noise!'

(33) [Voc(call)P [ActP [Act !] [ComP [Com ⊢] [JP [J **ma**] [Voc(addr)P
noi [ForceP quina remorassa [Force' [TP]]]]]]]]]

When *manoi* is reanalyzed as a mirative marker, it precedes low vocatives:

(34) **Manoi**, **Pip**, **company**! quin savi no sou! (Cat.)

MIR Pip mate which thinker not are.2SG
'Wow, Pip, mate, what a thinker you are!'

(35) [Voc(call)P [ActP [Act !] [ComP [Com ⊢] [JP [J **manoi**] [Voc(addr)P
Pip company [ForceP quin savi [Force' [TP no sou]]]]]]]]]

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Degree operators and sentence-type markers appear in ForceP, so we can maintain the marker *che/que* in the head of Force in all exclamative types (against Hernanz & Rigau 2006):

- (36) [ActP [Act !] [ComP [Com $\vdash$] ...]]
- a. [JP [J ma] [ForceP que bo [Force' que [TP és]]]]
 - b. [JP [J ma] [ForceP OP/si [Force' que [TP és bo]]]]
 - c. [JP [J ma] [ForceP OP/si [Force' que [TP n'és de bo]]]]

- Dislocates cannot appear between mirative markers and *che/que*, only vocatives can (see below):

(37) It. Reggio Emilia, Munaro 2019

- a. **Mo deg** che a to surela a gh'ò regalè un
MIR that to your sister 1SG.CL her=have given an
bel leber!
interesting book
'I have given an interesting book to your sister indeed!'
- b. ***Mo deg** a to surela ch'a gh'ò regalè un
MIR to your sister that=1SG.CL her=have given an
bel leber!
interesting book

- Dislocates cannot appear between mirative markers and *che/que*, only vocatives can (see below):

- (38) a. **Mira**, Joan/*en Joan, que és maco!
MIR John/the John FM is cute
'John, look how cute he is!'/*'How cute John is!'
- b. Joan/En Joan, **mira** que és maco!
John/the John MIR FM is cute
'John, look how cute he is!'/ 'How cute John is!'
- (39) a. ¡**Vaya**, Juan, que es listo!
MIR John FM are/is smart
'Wow, John, how smart he is!'/* 'Wow, how smart John is!'
- b. ¡Juan, **vaya** que es listo!
John MIR FM is smart
'John, wow, how smart he is!'/ 'Wow, how smart John is!'

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See Espinal et al. (2024), Espinal & Villalba (to appear)

- (40) a. **mira** tu quines coses,
MIR you which.F.PL things
'Watch out what kind of things!'
- b. i **mira**, doncs, si som assenyats de ser pescadors.
and MIR thus DEG are sensible of be fishermen
'and thus how sensible we are being fishermen.'
- (41) a. **Ma** tu quina criatura!
MIR you what child
'Wow, man, what a sucker!'
- b. ¡Pos **ma** que la fea bona!
so MIR FM CL.F.3SG made good.F
'So, what a mess she made!'

(42) Cardinaletti (2022)

- a. **Guarda** che cosa stupida ha fatto!
MIR what thing stupid has made
'What a stupid thing (s)he did!'
- b. *Che cosa stupida ha fatto **guarda**!
what thing stupid has made MIR
'What a stupid thing (s)he did!'

Similarly with *mira*.

(43) Central Venetan Munaro (2019)

- a. **Ciò!** Che roba bela che la se ga comprà!
MIR what thing nice FM she herself has bought
- b. Che roba bela che la se ga comprà, **ciò!**
what thing nice FM she herself has bought MIR
'She bought herself a really nice thing!'

Similarly with *ma* and *vaya*.

Mirative markers show reduplication quite generally:

- *vaya vaya* = 776
- *mira mira* = 47
- *caramba caramba* = 22

Sicilian, apud Scivoletto (2023):

- (44) Dd'ucchiuzzi ca lucenu,/ **Vih vih** chi cosa rara!
those=eyes that glitter wow wow what thing strange
['Quegli occhietti che brillano/ oh, oh, che cosa rara!']
'Those eyes glittering, wow, wow, what a strange thing!'

However, unlike expressives (Potts 2007), they do not allow for recursion freely. For instance, in CORPES XXI, *vaya* does not combine with other miratives, and *mira* or *caramba* may follow some markers quite marginally, as normalized frequencies show:

- anda mira: 3 ($F_{norm}=0$)
- hostia mira: 4 ($F_{norm}=0$)
- oh mira: 1 ($F_{norm}=0$)
- ay mira: 17 ($F_{norm}=0.04$)
- ah mira: 20 ($F_{norm}=0.04$)

(45) Munaro (2019)

- a. **Ah/Eh/Ih/Oh/Uh, eccome/altroché/accidenti/caspita**

MIR

MIR

se Gianni ha passato l'esame!

if Gianni has passed the=exam

'Gianni has passed the exam indeed!'

- b. ***Eccome/Altroché/Accidenti/Caspita** se Gianni ha

MIR

if Gianni has

passato l'esame, **ah/eh/ih/oh/uh!**

passed the=exam MIR

Microvariation: that/if-exclamatives

- (46) a. (**Mira**) que ets animal!
MIR that is.2SG animal
'What a beast you are!'
- b. (**Ma**,) si en tragina de morral aquest noi!
MIR DEG CL.PART carries of bag this boy
'How much weight this boy carries!'
- (47) a. *_i(**Mira**) que eres linda!
MIR that are-2sg pretty
'Wow, you are so pretty!'
- b. *(**Pucha**) que eres malagradecida...
MIR that be.2SG
'Fuck, how ungrateful you are...'
- c. *_i(**Carajo**) si me costó trabajo [...]
MIR DEG SELF costed work
'Damn how hard it was!'

(48) Emilian dialects Munaro (2019)

- a. **Vaca** s' l'èra elegant!
MIR if he=was elegant
'How elegant he was!'
- b. **Deg** c' l'èra elegant!
MIR that he=was elegant
'How elegant he was!'

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- The markers that have been associated with exclamative sentence-type and exclamations in Romance have a specialized pragmatic role in building the meaning of an exclamation speech act.
- Their role is encoded transparently in syntax:
 - Mirative markers encode the surprise attitude of the speaker towards a proposition, and they appear in the Judge Phrase position.
 - Degree operators, which create the necessary domain extension on which the attitude of the speaker is built, occupy the specifier of ForceP.
 - Sentence-type markers appear in the head of ForceP.
- The compositional approach to exclamativity proposed in this talk can be taken as evidence for a rich syntax-pragmatics interface along the lines of the Cartographic Program.

Thanks for you attention!

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