

Projected Meaning in English and French: The Embedded Exclamative

This study offers a reanalysis of embedded exclamative constructions as mirative items. Through a quantitative study of the verbs that licence these constructions in English and French, it is demonstrated that the conventionalized meaning of an exclamative is not overruled by a matrix clause but rather projected by it.

Matrix exclamative constructions are generally accepted to include instances such as (1-2). These prototypical exclamatives are fronted by interrogative words and are distinguishable from the interrogatives by the absence of subject-auxiliary inversion. Pragmatically, they are characterised by their conveying of presupposed content, subjectivity, high degree, and mirativity (denoting surprise or exceeded expectations) (cf. Michaelis & Lambrecht 1996; Michaelis 2001 Rett 2008, 2011; Krawczak & Glynn 2015; Unger 2019).

- (1) *Phew, what a relief.* (WB sunnow)
- (2) *Tu reviens, je te dis : « Tu l'as aimé. Quel pauvre type c'était. »* (FranText, LEDUC Violette, *La Batârde*, 1964)
- (3) *People are starting to realise what a good all-round player he is.* (WB sunnow)
- (4) *Sa manière de rire seulement des yeux quand elle lui dit combien elle se sent protégée auprès de lui, et combien elle jouit.* (FranText, KRISTEVA Julia, *Les Samouraïs*, 1990)

In English, reference grammars and many initial accounts of the exclamative clause type assume that an exclamative clause can be embedded in much the same way as the interrogative (cf. Elliot 1974: 233; Grimshaw 1979: 281; Quirk et al. 1985: 1055; Trotta 2000; Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 991; Zanuttini & Portner 2003; Collins 2005: 3). However, many have disputed the fact that constructions such as (3-4) can be defined as exclamative (Michaelis & Lambrecht 1996: 241-242; Rett 2008; Chernilovskaya 2014). This is based on the idea that the exclamative must encode a certain illocutionary force. Rett (2008: 603) holds that “illocutionary force is a property of an utterance as a whole, not of subcomponents of utterances”.

The current study builds upon a recent initial corpus study of English *what* and *how* (Author) which has suggested that most embedded exclamatives are a case of projection. Halliday & Matthiessen (2004: 443) write that through projection “one clause is set up as the representation of the linguistic “content” of another — either the content of a ‘verbal’ clause of saying [i.e. a locution] or the content of a ‘mental’ clause of sensing [i.e. an idea]”. This suggests that an exclamative embedded under verbs of saying (*say, tell, etc.*) or verbs of mental processes (*know, imagine, remember, etc.*) are actually “projected through the primary clause, which instates it as (a) a locution or (b) an idea.” (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004: 377). As such it would retain the same semantico-pragmatic meaning as an independent construction. English and French are known for their relative proximity (Kerfelec 2009: 22) and as such it is hypothesised that French embedded exclamative constructions behave in the same way.

The data for this study are drawn from the Wordbanks British books and Frantext RL-1950 subcorpora. Embedded *what* and *how* constructions are compared with French *quel* and *combien* respectively in terms of the criteria normally associated with their matrix counterparts. These parameters include form (word order, punctuation, ellipsis) and meaning (presupposed content, subjectivity, high degree, surprise). The verbs that are found to licence embedded exclamative constructions (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004) support the aforementioned hypothesis.

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