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Projected Meaning in English and French The Embedded Exclamative

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This study offers a reanalysis of embedded exclamative constructions as mirative items. Through a quantitative study of the verbs that licence them in English and French, it is demonstrated that the conventionalized meaning of an exclamative is not over-ruled 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 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. Krawczak/Glynn 2015; Michaelis/Lambrecht 1996; Michaelis 2001; Rett 2008, 2011; Unger 2019).

- (1) Phew, what a relief. (WB brbooks)
- (2) Tu reviens , je te dis : « Tu l' as aimé . Quel pauvre type c' était . » (FranText, LEDUC Violette, *La Batârde*, 1964)
- (3) Jesus, Coll, I never realized what a Puritan you are. (WB brbooks)
- (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 Samourais*, 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. Collins 2005, p. 3; Elliot 1974, p. 233; Grimshaw 1979, p. 281; Huddleston/Pullum 2002, p. 991; Trotta 2000; Zanuttini/Portner 2003). However, many have disputed the fact that constructions such as (3-4) can be defined as exclamative (Chernilovskaya 2014; Michaelis & Lambrecht 1996, pp. 241-242; Rett 2008) This is based on the idea that the exclamative must encode a certain illocutionary force. Rett (2008, pp. 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* (Troughton/Ghesquière 2022) which suggests that most embedded exclamatives are a case of projection. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004, p. 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, p. 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, p. 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 WordBanksOnline British books (HarperCollins 2009) and Frantext RL-1950 (ATILF) subcorpora. Randomized samples of 100 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 (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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