



Some ideas
(and some questions)
about exclamation marks

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Outline of the presentation

- Why exclamative sentences and exclamatives involve intriguing interface issues
- A unitary semantics for the exclamative speech act: The propositional content the speaker is committed to qualifies as unexpected/exceptional
- *The solution of (some of) the interface issues: exclamatives come up with different logical forms, each of which compatible with the semantics of the exclamative speech act*
- Different types of scalar exclamatives
- Some unsolved comparative puzzles

Exclamatives in German (Roguska 2007)

◆ wh-exclamatives

1. *Wen* sie *nicht alles* eingeladen hat! (verb-final)
2. *Wen* hat sie nicht alles eingeladen (verb-second)

◆ non-wh-exclamatives

3. Du bist *aber* gross geworden! (V-2)
4. Bist du *aber* gross geworden! (V-1)
5. Dass man solche Kinder schon heiraten lässt! (C-exclamatives)
6. Die Leute, die du kennst! (NP-exclamatives)

Exclamatives in Dutch (Bennis 2000)

1. Wat staan er in de kast toch (een) mooie boeken!

How many nice books are in the shelves

2. Wat een mooie boeken staan er in de kast!

What a nice books are in the shelves

3. Wat staan er een mooie boeken in de kast!

What are nice books in the shelves

Exclamatives in Hungarian (Liptak 2005)

- ◆ Two types of wh-phrases in Hungarian:

flexible and non-flexible
- ◆ Non-flexible wh-phrases obligatorily trigger verb-inversion

(= FocP)
- ◆ Flexible wh-phrases do not necessarily trigger verb-inversion

(= the position of amount phrases such as Many-N)

Exclamatives come up in different syntactic formats (Rett 2011)

1. Exclamative sentences

John bakes delicious desserts!

2. Inversion exclamatives

Does John bake delicious desserts!

3. Wh-exclamatives

What delicious desserts John bakes!

4. Nominal exclamatives

The delicious desserts that John baked!

The semantics of speech acts (Krifka 2012)

The exclamative speech act

1. $\lambda i \exists i' [i' \leq i [\text{EXCL}(i)(H)(Q)(S)]]$

“The speech act ‘exclamation’ consists in the transition from i' to i such that the speaker engages at i in the EXPRESSION that a subset of the propositions p ($p \in \text{answ}_1^w$, p assertable at i) to which he is committed is such that its intersection with the set of normal propositions ‘normp’ is empty”

2. $\text{answ}_1^w = \cap \{p \mid p \in Q \wedge p(w)\}$ (weak exhaustivity)

3. $\text{answ}_2^w = \{w' \mid \text{answ}_1^{w'} = \text{answ}_1^w\}$ (strong exhaustivity)

4. $\{p \mid p(w)=1 \wedge \exists w' p=\text{answ}_1^{w'}(Q)\}$ (PPA: positive partial answer)

“S engages in the EXPRESSION that a partial answer to Q consists of one or more unexpected propositions”

A potential counterargument (Portner & Zanuttini 2005, Marandin 2008)

1. What a delicious dinner you made!

“Is it reasonable to assume that a speaker really presupposes low expectations as to the cooking skills of her guest?”

Scalar interpretation provides the answer:

“What the speaker considers exceptional/unexpected is the existence of a degree d' at which the dinner was delicious, by far exceeding the ‘reference degree’ d which is commonly assumed to define a good dinner”

Speech acts, clause-types and logical forms

The ingredients of the puzzle:

1. No direct mapping between clause-types and speech acts (this is a well-known general fact)
2. No direct mapping between clause-type and logical form (inversion exclamatives, wh-exclamatives, nominal exclamatives seem to exhibit the very same degree interpretation)
3. Why does the exclamative speech act come up in such a large variety of syntactic formats?

Which are the essential ingredients of exclamatives?

- Ginzburg & Sag 2000: (a) the content of exclamatives is a fact (rather than a proposition) and (b) exclamative words contribute an existential quantification on degrees and a restriction: the degree is “unusual” (cf. also Rett 2011)
- (a) is not correct (cf. also Marandin 2008): its effects can be derived from the proposed semantics of the exclamative speech act
- (b) is correct but is in fact a research program: quantification over degrees comes up in quite different formats that have to be investigated in more detail

VERY vs. MUCH

Marandin 2008 p. 448:

“Thus, high degree is the core of the content of exclamative quantification. It is common to distinguish between the high degree associated with *very* and that associated with *much* (Kennedy & McNally 2005). *Very* involves a restriction of the comparison class: a very beautiful boy is a beautiful boy among the beautiful boys. On the other hand, *much* involves a degree “greater by a large amount than” the standard used for the quantification: a much desired change is a change desired to a degree d such that d is far above the standard of desirability” (*underlining is mine*).

Quantification over standard degrees (1)

1. Comme il regrette sa décision !
2. Il est si grand! / Il est si petit!
3. Il a une telle audace ! / (Ehi,) ha un'audacia!

There is a degree d' that qualifies as high/low w.r.t. a “reference degree” d along a property-related scale (the extent d' to which he regrets his decision, the degree d' of his tallness or courage) and it is the existence of this high/low degree d' that makes the sentence unexpected/exceptional

In 2. and 3. this logical form depends on the presence of a gradable term (adjective or noun), in 1. it is a function of the semantics of the complementizer

Quantification over standard degrees (2)

Mots exclamationnels de degré (MED): combien, que, comme, ce que, qu'est-ce que, si, tant, tellement, tel

- Les MED requièrent que l'adjectif ou le GA qu'ils modifient instaurent une relation d'inégalité entre le degré de possession de la propriété et le degré de référence (seuil ou standard) (Marandin 2010). Monotonicity plays a role:

1. Qu'est-ce qu'il était peu préparé pour cet emploi!

- Un mot exclamationnel de degré : (a) sélectionne un adjectif au positif ou modifié dont la sémantique est descriptible comme : $\lambda x. \exists d[d > d_R \wedge G(d)(x)]$; (b) retourne un GA dont la sémantique est descriptible comme : $\lambda x. \exists d[d >> d_R \wedge G(d)(x)]$ (Marandin 2010)

2. John is tall: (a) John owns the property of being tall at the (contextually given) degree d ;
(b) There exists a degree d at which John owns the property of being tall

Degree interpretations and syntax

1. Combien | que de rêves fous tu fais !
2. Quanti sogni strani CHE fai!
3. Che sogni strani CHE fai!
4. Quel chapeau qu'il portait ce soir-là!
5. *Quale cappello CHE portava!
6. *Molti musei / *tanti musei CHE hai visitato!

Quantification over exceptional degrees

1. Quanti sogni strani CHE fai! (que de rêves fous tu fais!)

2. Che sogni (strani) CHE fai!

1'. x is a y-membered set of dreams

2'. x is d-crazy set of dreams

There is an exceptional degree d' that measures the cardinality of the dreams in 1. and the craziness of the dreams in 2., and it is the existence of d' that makes these sentences unexpected/exceptional

Bipartition between two sorts of degree-quantification as a tool for the analysis of comparative variation in wh-exclamatives

- a. How (very) short your children are!
- b. How (very) few papers you've written!
- c. What mean neighbors you have!
- d. *Who that lovely woman married! (. . . He's so acerbic!) (OK in Italian)
- e. *Where she goes out partying! (. . . It's so seedy!) (OK in Italian)
- f. *When she gets out of bed in the morning! (. . . I eat lunch at that hour!) (??Italian)
- g. *Why she dropped out of college! (. . . Her cat isn't that lonely!) (*Italian)

A clausal analysis of nominal exclamatives

1. Le persone CHE hai incontrato!

the persons that (you) have met

2. [_{DegP} Deg [_{CP} CHE hai incontrato quante persone]]

3. [_{DegP} quante/che persone [Deg [_{CP} che hai incontrato
~~quante/che persone~~]]]

4. [_{DegP} le persone [Deg [_{CP} che hai incontrato [_{DP} le
~~persone~~]]]]

E-degree-quantification as a long-distance dependency

1. Se hai visitato tanti/molti musei!
2. *Se hai visitato quanti musei / che musei / i musei
3. The function k applies to propositions of the form in (i) and gives back propositions of the form in (ii), whereby $*d_1$ is an exceptional degree:

(i) $\langle d_1 \rangle \wedge \lambda d P x$; ii) $\langle *d_1 \rangle \wedge \lambda d P x$
4. *Quanto è profondamente credente! / *Ce qu'il est profondément croyant!
5. Se è profondamente credente! / S'il est profondément croyant!

E-degree-quantification as a local dependency

1. Quanti studenti / che studenti / gli studenti CHE hai incontrato!

2. *Tanti studenti / molti studenti CHE hai incontrato!

3. (a) Quanti/che/gli selects a degree-complement. It does so by inducing a measurement-operator on its complement:

(i) M-OP $\rightarrow \lambda d \lambda x. \mu(x) = d$, where μ , a measurement function, is valued contextually. So, we get either: (Quantitative) $\lambda d \exists x. x$ is a d -membered set of students; or (Qualitative) $\lambda d \exists x. x$ is a d -ADJ set of students

(b) Quanti/che/gli turns the degrees quantified over into E-degrees

The semantics of the definite determiner: Some consequences

HYP1: E-degree quantification gives rise to local or long-distance dependencies according to whether the E-degree feature is morphosyntactically realized on the head of the exclamative phrase or on the complementizer (= C-system)

HYP2: The definite determiner (and, perhaps marginally, the universal determiner) is OPTIONALLY endowed with an E-degree feature which must be licensed through a local dependency

Che alto CHE è! VS. *Che alto (che) è?

Maximality and degree-maximality

1. If the E-deg feature is not selected, THE is simply a maximality-operator: it selects the largest element within a set
 - (i) Ho incontrato gli studenti (I met the students)
 - (ii) I met ιx . x is a student

2. If the E-deg feature is selected, THE is a deg-max-operator: it selects the highest degree within a set of degrees
 - (i) Gli studenti CHE ho incontrato! (The students that I met!)
 - (ii) (QUANT) There is a unique E-degree d such that the set of students I met is d-membered; (QUAL) There is a unique E-degree d such that the set of students I met is d-ADJ (for instance: d-intelligent)

So... some ideas...

1. There are exclamatives (Rett's exclamative sentences) that do not involve degree-quantification or scalarity
2. Scalar exclamatives come up in distinct syntactic formats according to whether they involve standard-degree-quantification or E-degree-quantification
3. The availability of wh-exclamatives is sensitive to the divide between S-deg-quantification and E-deg-quantification. This arguably provides interesting criteria of parameterization
4. So-called nominal exclamatives are in fact clausal structures involving a degree interpretation of the maximality operator

... and many open comparative issues

1. Is syntactic variability reducible to the ways in which scalar interpretations can be syntactically encoded?
2. Which are the other parameters of variation: a broad typological database is required! Cf. for instance the data from Hungarian, Dutch, German...
3. French vs. Italian

Which evidence for Exceptional Degree quantification in French exclamatives?

4. English vs. Italian

Can Bill (*really) bake desserts (*well)! Se Gianni (davvero) fa (bene) i dolci!

Thanks for your
attention!

