

Elena Castroviejo Miró
Universitat Pompeu Fabra

Wh-exclamatives as degree constructions

ACLC SEMINAR
Universiteit van Amsterdam
March 16 2007

Goals of the talk

- **Argue that *wh*-exclamatives in Catalan are degree constructions.**
- **Show the differences between exclamatives and declaratives.**
- **Spell out a proposal that accounts for the relevant data.**

Outline

- 1. Main claims**
- 2. The data**
- 3. Exclamatives as degree constructions**
- 4. Exclamatives vs. Declaratives**
- 5. Summary**
- 6. Open questions**

Outline

- 1. Main claims**
- 2. The data**
- 3. Exclamatives as degree constructions**
- 4. Exclamatives vs. Declaratives**
- 5. Summary**
- 6. Open questions**

Main claims

- **[Syntax]** Exclamatives are degree constructions. They must contain a DegP.
- **[Semantics]** The semantics of exclamatives stems from the semantics of degree.
- **[Pragmatics]** The descriptive content of an exclamative is taken for granted by the speaker and, hence, is not asserted. Exclamatives also include an implicated meaning: an attitude towards a degree.

Outline

1. Main claims
2. The data
3. Exclamatives as degree constructions
4. Exclamatives vs. Declaratives
5. Summary
6. Open questions

The data > Exclamatives in Catalan

- **Different types**
 - Introduced by a *wh*-word
 - Analogous to interrogatives
 - Only exclamatives
 - Introduced by a complementizer
 - DP-exclamatives

The data > Exclamatives in Catalan

- **Introduced by a *wh*-word**
 - **Analogous to interrogatives**

(1) *Com* és d'alt en Pau!
how is of-tall the Paul
'How tall Pau is!'

(2) *Com* és d'alt en Pau?
'How tall is Pau?'

The data > Exclamatives in Catalan

- **Introduced by a *wh*-word**
 - **Only exclamatives (i)**

(3) *Que* alt que és en Pau!
how tall that is the Paul
'How tall Pau is!'

(4) **Que* alt que és en Pau?

The data > Exclamatives in Catalan

- **Introduced by a *wh*-word**
 - **Only exclamatives (ii)**

(5) Quina pel·lícula tan/més entretinguda que vam veure!
what movie so/more entertaining that AUX.we to.see
'What an entertaining movie we saw!'

(6) *Quina pel·lícula tan entretinguda que vam veure?

The data > Exclamatives in Catalan

- **Introduced by a complementizer**

(7) Que n'és d'alt en Pau!
that CL-is of-tall the Paul
'How tall Pau is!'

The data > Exclamatives in Catalan

- **DP-exclamatives**

(8) Les coses que diu l'Andreu!
the things that says the-Andrew
'The things Andrew says!' E1

(9) *Lu* alt que és en Pau!
the tall that is the Paul
'How tall Pau is!'

E1

Italics here means that this construction is not accepted by the prescriptive grammar.

Elena; 26/02/2007

The data > Exclamatives in Catalan

- **My object of study**

- (Optional) for Basque and Catalan: subject-verb inversion (as in interrogatives)

(3) Que entretinguda que va ser la pel·lícula!
how entertaining that AUX.it to.be the movie
'How entertaining the movie was!'

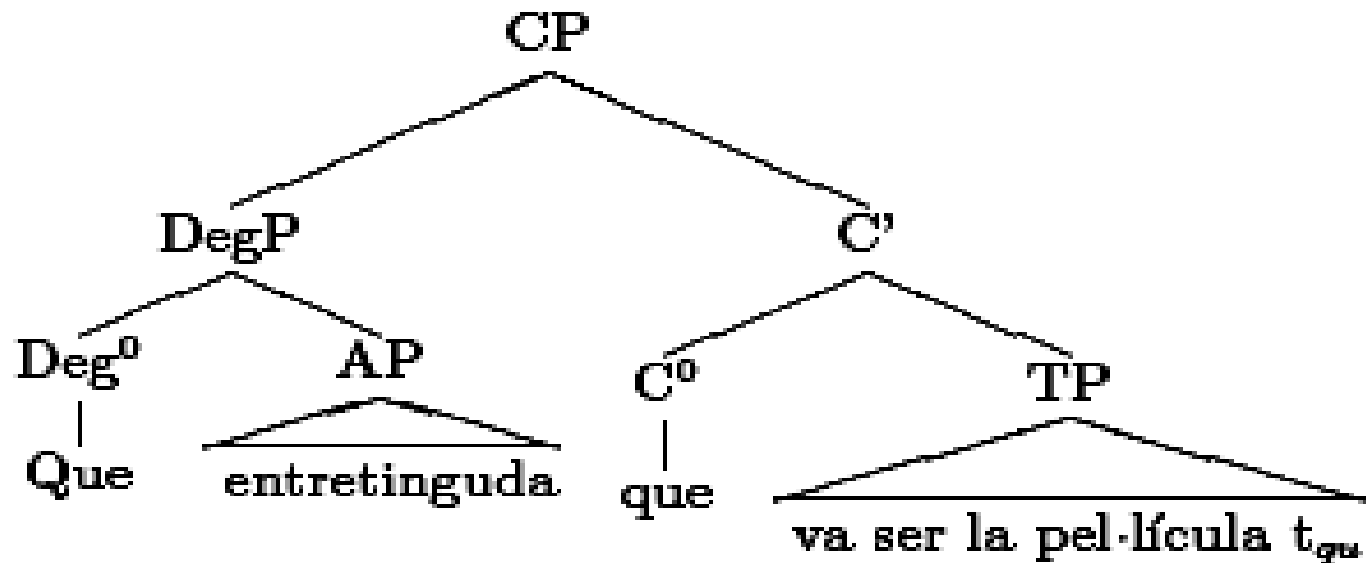
(5) Quina pel·lícula tan/més entretinguda que vam veure!
what movie so/more entertaining that AUX.we to.see
'What an entertaining movie we saw!'

The data > Exclamatives in Catalan

- **My object of study**
 - Introduced by a *wh*-word: *que* and *quin*.
 - (Optional) presence of complementizer *que*.
 - Subject-verb inversion (as in interrogatives).
 - Presence of a DegP headed by *queltanl més*.

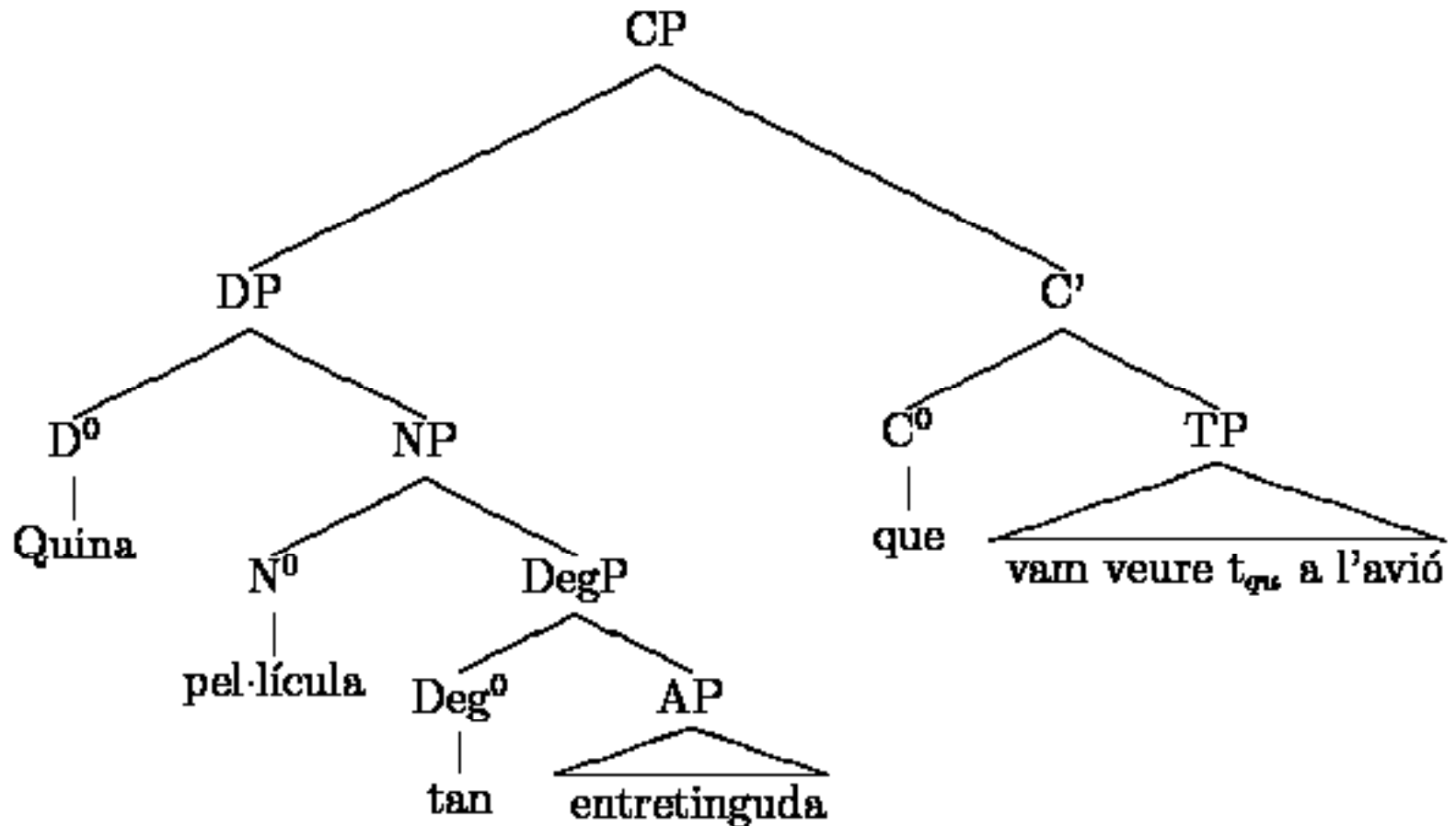
The data > Exclamatives in Catalan

(3) Que entretinguda que va ser la pel·lícula!



The data > Exclamatives in Catalan

(5) Quina pel·lícula tan entretinguda que vam veure!



The data > Puzzles

- ***Wh*-exclamatives resemble *wh*-interrogatives, because:**
 - They are both introduced by a *wh*-word.
 - They both involve subject-verb inversion in some languages (e.g., Catalan and Spanish).
 - They are both selected by *wh*-embedding predicates.

The data > Puzzles

- ***Wh*-exclamatives resemble *wh*-interrogatives, but:**
 - Not every *wh*-word that is available for an interrogative is available for an exclamative.
 - Exclamatives only embed in factive *wh*-embedding predicates.
 - Exclamatives do not make good questions.

The data > Puzzles

- **Additional restrictions on exclamatives**
 - They are only compatible with adverbs indicating high-degree.
 - They do not make good questions, but cannot be used assertorically, either.

The data > Puzzles > *wh*-words

- **Only a subset of the set of *wh*-words are available for exclamatives.**

(11) *Qui ha vingut!
who AUX come
'Who came!'

(12) *On ha anat la Maria!
where AUX gone the M.
'Where Mary has gone!'

The data > Puzzles > Factivity

- **Exclamatives can only embed in factive predicates (Elliott 1974, Grimshaw 1979, Zanuttini & Portner 2003)**

The data > Puzzles > Factivity

- **Factivity**: property attributed to a group of predicates that select for a propositional complement that is presupposed. (Kiparsky & Kiparsky 1970)

(13) It's amazing that Lawrence arrived on time → Lawrence arrived on time.

(14) I know that Lawrence arrived on time → Lawrence arrived on time.

The data > Puzzles > Factivity

- (15)a. It's **amazing** how very tall Pau is.
b. I **know** how very tall Pau is.

- (16)a. *I **wonder** how very tall Pau is.
b. *I **don't know** how very tall Pau is.

- (17)a. **She** doesn't know how very tall Pau is.
b. I **didn't** know how very tall Pau is.

The data > Puzzles > Questions

- **Exclamatives do not make good questions (Grimshaw 1979).**

(17)A: How tall is Pau? B: 2.10 meters.

(18)A: How tall Pau is! B: #2.10 meters.

The data > Puzzles > High degree

- **Exclamatives are only compatible with adverbs indicating high degree (Elliott 1971, 1974).**

(19) How very/extremely/unbelievably long he can stay underwater!

(20) *How relatively/reasonably/fairly long he can stay under water!

The data > Puzzles > Assertions

- **Exclamatives cannot be used assertorically and, hence, do not make good answers (Zanuttini & Portner 2003).**

(21)A: How tall is Pau?

(22)B1: Very tall.

(23)B2: #How tall he is!

Outline

1. Main claims
2. The data
3. **Exclamatives as degree constructions**
4. Exclamatives vs. Declaratives
5. Summary
6. Open questions

Exclamatives as degree constructions

- **Exclamatives can only be introduced by:**
 - ***Wh*-words that are degree/amount quantifiers at the same time.**

(24) [_{DegP} Que entretinguda] que va ser la pel·lícula!
 - ***Wh*-phrases that can include a DegP headed by *tan/més*.**

(25) [_{DP} Quina pel·lícula [_{DegP} tan/més entretinguda]] que vam veure!

Exclamatives as degree constructions

- **Analogy with comparatives and result clause constructions**

(26) Quina pel·lícula **tan/més entretinguda** que vam veure!

(27) La pel·lícula va ser **tan entretinguda** que tothom va aplaudir.

‘The movie was so entertaining that everybody applauded.’

(28) La pel·lícula va ser **més entretinguda** que mai.

‘The movie was more entertaining than ever.’

Exclamatives as degree constructions

- **Assumptions about the degree operator in an exclamative clause**

- *Que* ('how') and *tan* ('so') are semantically the same except for the fact that the former contains [+wh].
- *Tan* is responsible for the fact that exclamatives indicate high degree:

(29) a. En Pau no és **tan** alt.

'Pau is not so tall.'

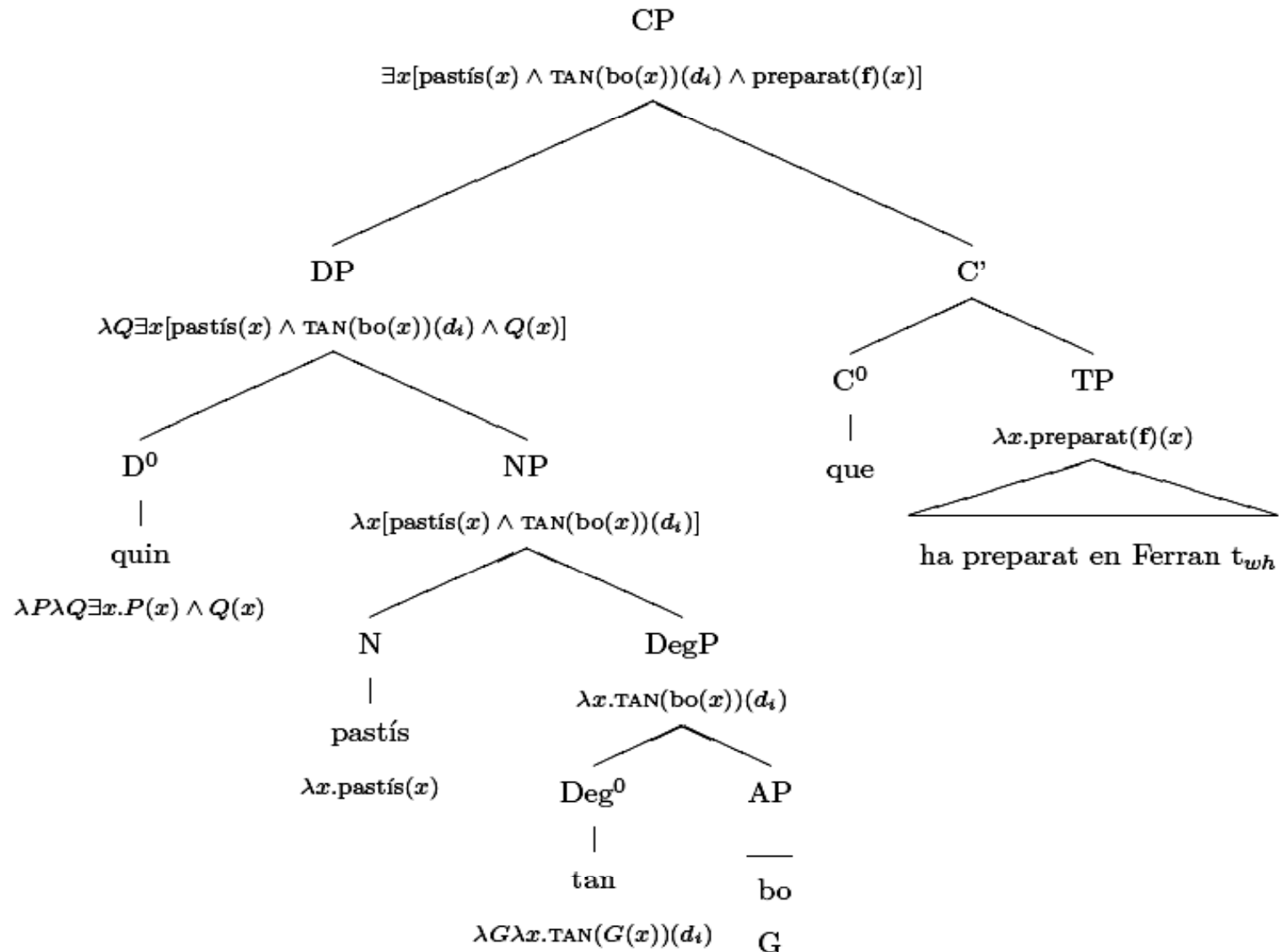
b. Aquest noi **tan** alt vol ser jugador de bàsquet.

'This boy so tall wants to be a basketball player.'

Exclamatives as degree constructions

- *Tan* is a degree word that establishes a \succcurlyeq relation between a standard degree (d_S) and a reference degree (d_R), such that:
 - d_R is the result of applying to an individual a gradable adjective interpreted as a measure function $\langle e, d \rangle$. Ex. **tall**(kareem) = 2.15 m.
 - d_S is a standard taken from context and it is necessarily high.
- $[[\text{TAN}(d_R)(d_S)]] = 1$ iff $d_R \succcurlyeq d_S$
- $T(\text{tan}) = \lambda G \langle e, d \rangle \lambda x \text{TAN}(G(x))(d_i)$

(30) Quin pastís tan bo que ha preparat en Ferran!
 'What a good cake Ferran made!'



Exclamatives as degree constructions

- Truth conditions for an exclamative clause:

[[Quin pastís tan bo que ha preparat en Ferran!]] = 1 iff $\exists x[\mathbf{cake}(x) \ \& \ \mathbf{TAN}(\mathbf{good}(x))(d_i) \ \& \ \mathbf{prepared}(f)(x)]$

Exclamatives as degree constructions

- Factivity

- Degree modification in questions is interpreted **contrastively**:

(31) [A conversation between two basketball managers]

A: All the players in this team are *very* tall.

B: Right, but how *very* tall is Pau?

A: I don't know how *very* tall he is, but you're going to like him.

(32) B wonders how *very* tall Pau is.

Exclamatives as degree constructions

- For degree modification to be interpreted **evaluatively**, the speaker must be **committed** to the content of the clause (i).
 - Exclamatives involve the evaluation of a degree.
 - In an exclamative the speaker is committed to the content of the clause → they cannot be used as questions.

Exclamatives as degree constructions

- For degree modification to be interpreted **evaluatively**, the speaker must be **committed** to the content of the clause (ii).
 - Factive predicates make sure the speaker is committed to the content of the clause → they may introduce exclamatives.
 - Non-factive *wh*-embedding predicates do not commit the speaker to the content of the clause → they cannot introduce exclamatives.

Exclamatives as degree constructions

• Adjective modification

- Adjectives must be modified by deadjectival adverbs.

(33)a. Que fastigosament ric que és en Bill!
how disgustingly rich that is the Bill

'How disgustingly rich Bill is!'

b. Que extremadament alt que és en Pau!
how extremely tall that is the Paul

'How extremely tall Pau is!'

- Disgustingly < disgusting
- Extremely < extreme

Exclamatives as degree constructions

- **Adjective modification**

- Some predicates may be interpreted as collocations: *fastigosament ric*, *highly appropriate*, etc.
- These adjectives may describe degrees of ADJ-ness.
 - The degree to which Pau is tall is described as **extreme**.

Exclamatives as degree constructions

- **Adjective modification**
 - **Average-degree denoting adverbs within exclamatives trigger a contradiction.**
 - (34)[[Que alt que és en Pau!]] = 1 iff Pau is at least as tall as a standard degree that is high.
 - (35)*extremadament alt*: the degree of tallness is described as extreme.
 - (36)*raonablement alt*: the degree of tallness is described as reasonable.

Exclamatives as degree constructions

- **Adjective modification**

- ✓ – (34)+(35) → Pau is at least as tall as a standard degree that is **high** & the degree of tallness is described as **extreme**.
- ! – (34)+(36) → Pau is at least as tall as a standard degree that is **high** & the degree of tallness is described as **reasonable**.

Exclamatives as degree constructions

- **Interesting consequences so far:**
 - We can derive why only a few *wh*-words occur in exclamatives.
 - We explain that exclamatives involve high degree.
 - We understand why only factive verbs may introduce exclamatives.

Exclamatives as degree constructions

- We realize that exclamatives are incompatible with the discourse function of asking questions.
- We still need to answer:
 - Why can't exclamatives be used as assertions?

Outline

1. Main claims
2. The data
3. Exclamatives as degree constructions
4. **Exclamatives vs. Declaratives**
5. Summary
6. Open questions

Exclamatives vs. Declaratives

- **Distribution (i)**

- **Exclamatives cannot be used assertorically (i.e., to add information that the addressee doesn't already know.)**

(37) A: How tall is Pau?

B1: Very tall.

B2: #How tall he is!

(38) a. I've got some news/Listen to this/You're going to love this: Pau is very tall!

b. I've got some news news/Listen to this/You're going to love this: #How tall Pau is!

Exclamatives vs. Declaratives

- **Distribution (ii)**
 - Exclamatives, like declaratives, can appear in contexts where the speaker believes the addressee is qualified to make a similar utterance (Gunlogson 2005).

Exclamatives vs. Declaratives

- **Distribution (iii)**

(39)[Two people looking at the window]

- a. It's a wonderful day for a walk.
- b. What a wonderful day for a walk!

(40)[Two people watching a Barça game]

- a. Rijkaard is a wonderful coach, **right?**
- b. What a wonderful coach Rijkaard is!, **right?**

Exclamatives vs. Declaratives

- **Proposal (i)**
 - Exclamatives contain two kinds of meaning: a **descriptive content** and an **implicated** meaning.
 - The descriptive content is taken for granted by the speaker, so what is **contributed to discourse** is the implicated meaning.

Exclamatives vs. Declaratives

- **Proposal (ii)**
 - The implicated meaning is an **attitude towards a degree** (cf. Katz 2005).
 - Implicated meaning does not have assertive power.

Exclamatives vs. Declaratives

(41) Quin pastís tan bo que ha preparat en Ferran!
'What a good cake Ferran made!'

- **Descriptive content:** $\exists x[\text{cake}(x) \ \& \ \text{TAN}(\text{good}(x))(d_i) \ \& \ \text{prepared}(\text{f})(x)]$
- **Discourse contribution:** the speaker experiences an attitude towards $\wedge[\text{TAN}(\text{bo}(x))(d_i)]$

Outline

1. Main claims
2. The data
3. Exclamatives as degree constructions
4. Exclamatives vs. Declaratives
5. **Summary**
6. Open questions

Summary

- Exclamatives are a special kind of **degree construction**, because they contain a **degree operator**, but they cannot be used assertorically like comparative and result clause constructions.
- *Tan* requires that the standard degree that is met be **high**, and additional adjective modification cannot contradict this.
- Exclamatives cannot update the common ground by introducing new information, but by implicating that the speaker experiences an **attitude towards a degree**.

Outline

1. Main claims
2. The data
3. Exclamatives as degree constructions
4. Exclamatives vs. Declaratives
5. Summary
6. Open questions

Open questions

- What is exactly the semantic or pragmatic contribution of the *wh*-element?
- How can we extend this degree-based analysis to languages whose exclamationatives do not include **overt degree morphology**?

References

- Elliott, D. (1971) “Toward a grammar of exclamations”. *Ohio State Working Papers in Linguistics*, 8: viii-110.
- Elliott, D. (1974) “Toward a grammar of exclamatives”. *Foundations of Language* 11: 231-246.
- Grimshaw, J. (1979) “Complement selection and the lexicon”. *Linguistic Inquiry* 10 (2) :279-326.
- Gunlogson, C. (2005) “Modeling who knows what”. *Sinn und Bedeutung* 10, Berlin (ZAS).
- Katz, G. (2005) “Attitudes Toward Degrees”. E. Maier, C. Bary and J. Huitink (eds.) *Proceedings of Sinn und Bedeutung* 9.
- Kiparsky, P. & C. Kiparsky (1970) “Fact”. M. Bierwisch & K. E. Heidolph (eds.) *Progress in Linguistics*. Den Hag. Pp.:143-173.
- Zanuttini, R. & P. Portner (2003) “Exclamative clauses: at the syntax-semantics interface”. *Language* 79: 39-81.

Dank u wel!

Moltes gràcies!

<http://mutis.upf.es/glif/pub/elena/index.htm>
elena.castroviejo@upf.edu