

On the dialogic frames of mirative enunciations

The Argentine Spanish discourse marker *mirá* and the expression of surprise

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In this paper we will describe the meanings of surprise associated to different uses of the discourse marker *mirá* in Argentinian Spanish. Our aim is to contrast the subjective stances of surprise emerging in response to the different dialogic frames prompting mirative enunciations with *mirá*. From the Dialogic Approach to Argumentation and Polyphony, we intend to show how these stances of surprise can be explained as dialogically “caused” by the argumentative representation of: (a) a sudden discovery that brings out something new, (b) a sudden discovery related to something that contradicts a previous belief or assumption and (c) a sudden discovery of something that exceeds its ordinary magnitude or degree.

Keywords: mirativity, surprise, discourse marker *mirá*, dialogism, argumentation, stance

1. Introduction

In this paper we will analyze and describe from a dialogic perspective of polyphony and argumentation the mirative values associated to the discourse marker *mirá*; a marker that is common in colloquial Spanish of Argentina.¹ As it is well known, the concept of mirativity is related to the speaker’s expression of surprise and refers to the linguistic marking of an utterance conveying information which is new or unexpected to the speaker (De Lancey 1997, 2001, 2012).

1. This research has been carried out within the framework of the PICT Project 2942 “El enfoque dialógico de la argumentación y de la polifonía” (Dialogic Approach to Argumentation and Polyphony [translation]), financed by the Agency for Scientific and Technological Promotion (ANCYT), Argentina.

Spanish grammar does not systematically codify mirativity (contrary to what happens in those languages studied by Aikhenvald 2012, 473–474). However, this meaning may actually be expressed with a certain degree of grammaticalization, through particular lexical items—as is the case of some verbs, exclamatory words or discourse markers—or by means of an intonation of admiration. This has been well researched in studies about certain tenses, such as *imperfecto de sorpresa* (imperfect of surprise; Reyes 1994) or *pluscuamperfecto* (Spanish Past Perfect; Avellana 2013; Blestel 2014; Soto and Olguín 2010) as well as in studies of grammaticalized structures which contain unaccusative verbs (Kornfeld 2019). In the present study we would like to contribute to the discussion on mirativity in Spanish through the description of the different meanings of surprise associated to the discourse marker *mirá*, an issue not yet taken into account in the existing bibliography.

Our theoretical approach to mirative meaning is rooted in the Dialogic Approach to Argumentation and Polyphony (henceforth DAAP; García Negroni 2016, 2018, 2019; García Negroni and Libenson 2018, 2020), which integrates a dialogic perspective (Bakhtin 1981, 1984) into the field of argumentative and polyphonic semantics (Carel 2011; Carel and Ducrot 2005; Ducrot 1984, 2004). In studying the mirative meaning of *mirá*, the aim of this work consists in identifying and describing the argumentative representation of the dialogic “causes”—which we will call *mirative discourse frames*—that give rise to different subjective stances of surprise in utterances containing *mirá*. From our perspective, such mirative subjective stances are to be seen as dialogic responses (Bakhtin 1981, 1984) to a particular *mirative discourse frame* that each enunciation with *mirá* brings forth.² DAAP thus expands the notion of causal instructions defined by Ducrot (1984, 187) as clues related to the “*qualification de la parole par sa cause*” (the description of language through its cause [translation]); a definition that, according to its author, explains the reason why the enunciation is presented the way it does.

To put it concisely, according to our hypothesis, mirative enunciations with *mirá* can be explained as dialogically “caused” by the argumentative representation of (a) a sudden discovery that brings out something new (see (1)); (b) a sudden discovery related to something that contradicts a previous belief or assumption (see (2)); and (c) a sudden discovery of something that exceeds its ordinary magnitude or degree (see (3)).

2. The notion of *stance* that we adhere to differs considerably from that of other perspectives—as for instance Mushin’s (2001) idea of stance. Our view of stance does not refer to the epistemological positioning of the speaking subject but to the positioning which is manifested, within enunciation, as a dialogic-argumentative response towards a discourse frame that unchains it. The present dialogic notion of stance is philosophically anchored in the Bakhtinian perspective of discourse, according to which subjectivity is set up as an act of self’s response towards otherness.

- (1) **Rafael:** *Pero hablame un poco de vos. ¿Qué hacés? ¿De qué laborás?*

Juan Carlos: *Yo soy actor.*

Rafael (Disimula estar impresionado.): *Ah, mirá...*

Juan Carlos: *Sí. Trabajo mucho en cine. La última que hice es Esa maldita costilla. ¿No me viste ahí?*

(CREA, Campanella, J.J. y Castets, F., *El hijo de la novia*, Barcelona, RBA, 2002)

Rafael: Well, now tell me something about you. What do you do? What's your job?

Juan Carlos: I'm an actor.

Rafael: (Pretending not to be impressed at all) **Really?**

Juan Carlos: Yes, I work at the movies a lot. My last film was *Esa maldita Costilla (That bloody rib)*. Didn't you see me there?

(CREA, Campanella, J.J. y Castets, F., *El hijo de la novia (The bride's son)*, Barcelona, RBA, 2002) [translation]

- (2) *Junto a Graciela Lois, de Familiares de Detenidos-desaparecidos por razones políticas, puso un recurso de amparo que impidió esa maniobra y además la llevó de paseo a un programa de televisión donde se enfrentó con una abogada a la que le tiró del pelo mientras le decía a Lois por lo bajo: "¡Mirá vos, yo creí que tenía peluca!"*

(Corpus Davies. Argentina. Blog. *La lucha por los derechos humanos en la Argentina*—ADHILAC. Disponible en <http://adhilac.com.ar/?p=8106>)

Together with Graciela Lois, from the Disappeared or Detained for Political Reasons Organization, he presented an appeal that prevented the maneuver. Also he took her to a TV. program where he confronted a woman lawyer, to whom he pulled her while whispering to Lois: "Ha! I thought it was a wig!"

(Mark Davies's corpus. Argentina. Blog. *La lucha por los derechos humanos en la Argentina – (The fight for human rights in Argentina)* ADHILAC. Retrieved from <http://adhilac.com.ar/?p=8106>) [translation]

- (3) *Che, mirá qué increíble, se exalta Diana, y sin embargo es absolutamente creíble que Pepe Juárez y el Cabezón Iriarte aparezcan allí, a la sombra de la torre de agua, en la calle Almaguerte. Pero ella, dale con lo increíble.*

(CREA, Martínez, E., *La novela de Perón*, Madrid, Alianza, 1989)

Hey, **this is incredible!** says Diana quite startled. However, it is quite thinkable that Pepe Juárez and big-headed Iriarte would turn up there, under the shade of the water tower, on Almaguerte Street. But she kept going on about it being incredible.

(CREA, Martínez, E., *La novela de Perón (Perón's novel)*, Madrid, Alianza, 1989) [translation]

We propose a qualitative analysis related to the mirative values of the discourse marker *mirá* based on a corpus of authentic utterances taken from the *Corpus de Referencia del Español Actual* (CREA) and from Mark Davies's corpus (<https://www.corpusdelespanol.org/web-dial/>). All the examples obtained from these corpora belong to the Argentine variety of Spanish. They have been extracted from interviews in which colloquial Spanish was used (face-to-face interviews) or from written reproductions of colloquial spoken discourse (in the form of direct reported speech extracted from the news, and direct speech extracted from movies, works of fiction, blogs or internet forums).

In what follows we will first provide a brief account of the state of the art regarding the discourse marker *mirá* (§ 2). Secondly, we will introduce and describe our theoretical framework and our approach to mirative meaning in terms of the dialogic and argumentative relations that are established between mirative discourse frames and subjective stances of surprise (§ 3). We then propose an analysis of the different mirative values of enunciations with *mirá* (§ 4). Finally, in Section 5 we will present our concluding remarks.

2. On the discourse marker *mirá*: A brief state of the art

In the Spanish variety of Argentina, the use of the discourse marker *mirá*, accompanied by the second person singular pronoun *vos* (i.e., *mirá vos*), is the result of a grammaticalization of the imperative “voseante”³ of the verb *mirar* (to look). While the Peninsular Spanish form *mira* has been widely studied, the Argentine form *mirá (vos)* has not yet been explored. As pointed out by Martín Zorraquino and Portolés (1999), the grammaticalization of *mira* becomes apparent in the fact that the marker does not admit any complementation whatsoever, nor a negative or interrogative form, and only sporadically appears with a subject (*tú*). Pons Bordería (1998, 2008) adds that *mira* occurs fundamentally in replies and that it can be combined with *que* or *que si*, as in *mira que, mira que si*.

From the semantic-pragmatic perspective, *mira* has been usually described as a phatic word “related to maintaining and compelling the interlocutor’s attention” (Santos Río 2003).⁴ Indeed, Martín Zorraquino and Portolés (1999) define *mira* as a signal that focuses alterity, one that “seeks to draw the hearer’s attention to the speaker’s space” (1999, 4181). The authors point out that this value has been “dese-

3. While in Argentine Spanish, *mirá* is part of the *vos* paradigm (it carries the stress in the ultimate syllable), in Peninsular Spanish *mira* is part of *tú* paradigm (it carries the stress in the penultimate syllable).

4. All the translations of the quotations in Spanish in this article belong to us.

manticized” supposedly after the original meaning of the verb *mirar*: ‘direct one’s gaze to an object’.

Regarding the uses of *mira* as a mirative discourse marker (see Examples (1) to (3)), it must be noted that they are only briefly described in the existing literature. Along these lines, Martín Zorraquino and Portolés (1999), for example, mention that *mira* can acquire “a more self-reflective and somehow self-referential tone” when it comes after the speech member it affects. In order to illustrate this value, they propose an example in which *mira* “points both to the interlocutor and to the speaker himself” (1999, 4181), as follows:

(4) A: *Le ha tocado la lotería y se va a comprar un piso.*

B: *Mira*

A: He has won the lottery and is going to buy an apartment.

B: *Wow!*

[translation]

As can be seen in (4), the authors do not focus on the value of surprise that emerges in response to the discovery of something not known by B. Nor does Santos RÍo (2003), who never mentions this mirative meaning associated with certain uses of *mira*, even when he highlights the appreciative values that the expressions *mira que* and *mira si* can convey. To exemplify these values, Santos RÍo proposes the following among other examples:

(5) *Mira que es grande.*

Isn’t it big? [translation]

(6) *Mira si será bruto que ayer intentó arrancar ese clavo con los dientes.*

He is such a boor yesterday he tried to pull out that nail with his teeth.

[translation]

From a lexicographic perspective, Moliner (1994, 423) observes that *mirar* actually originates in the Latin deponent verb *miror, miraris, mirari, miratus sum*, meaning ‘to marvel, to wonder at, to admire, to stare in awe, astonishment or amazement, to be shocked’. According to the author, from this initial meaning, *mirar* came to mean ‘to contemplate’; from that it became ‘to turn one’s gaze to something in order to see it’ and, from that, ‘to check’, e.g. *No me miraron la maleta* (I didn’t get my bag checked [translation]). It is precisely from this path that its value as focus marker of alterity would result, as is commonly recorded in the literature. Moliner, though, also points out that there are other uses of *mira*, which reactivate the pathemic value of surprise in the Latin verb *mirari*. In this respect, the author stresses that *mira* can express “very different impressions: admiration, astonishment, disappointment, surprise, shock” (1994, 422); and, combined with *con* or with *que*, it is used as “an opener for exclamations

revealing a mix of astonishment and annoyance at something said or done by someone else: *¡Mira con lo que nos sale ahora! ¡Mira que tiene uno que aguantar!* (Look what he comes up with now! Look at what one has to put up with! [translation])” (1994, 422). In short, and as far as we know, Moliner is the only author to refer to the mirative value of the marker *mira*, which is clearly present in cases (1) to (3); a value to be discussed below.

3. DAAP and mirative meaning

Ducrot’s (1984) theory of enunciation posits that there are four types of semantic instructions to account for the meaning of an utterance, namely: illocutionary, argumentative, polyphonic and causal. These last ones, concerning speech qualification according to “cause”, explain the difference in meaning between a declarative utterance such as *Peter is very intelligent* and an exclamative one as in *Peter is so intelligent!* Following Ducrot (1984, 186), in declarative utterances, enunciation appears “*comme résultant totalement de son choix, c’est-à-dire de la décision prise d’apporter une certaine information à propos d’un certain objet*” (as if it were the result of a choice, that is to say, as the result of the decision to provide certain information about an object in particular [translation]). In the exclamation, though, enunciation is presented as triggered by “*la représentation de cet objet: c’est l’intelligence même de Pierre qui semble forcer à dire Ce que Pierre est intelligent*” (the representation of such object: it is Peter’s intelligence itself that seems to have forced the enunciation ‘*Peter is so intelligent!*’ [translation]; Ducrot 1984, 186). According to the author, it is precisely these causal instructions what allow the explanation of the semantic value of interjections. In this light, for instance, an interjection such as *Yippee!* appears to be produced by the joy experienced at the time of enunciation. As Ducrot (1984, 186) states, “*la joie ‘éclate’ en elle*” (there is a burst of joy in the enunciation [translation]). For our part, we propose that every utterance provides as part of its meaning an image of the “cause” for its appearing in discourse. It is precisely to that image that enunciation dialogically and argumentatively responds with a particular subjective positioning or stance. In line with the principles of argumentative semantics (Carel 2011; Carel and Ducrot 2005)⁵, DAAP’s perspective affirms then that the image that the utterance pro-

5. From the very beginning, argumentative semantics (cf. Anscombe and Ducrot 1983; Anscombe 1995; Carel 2011; Carel and Ducrot 2005; García Negroni 2003; García Negroni and Libenson 2018, 2020, among others) has claimed that meaning should be described in terms of argumentative chains and not in terms of reference to reality or to previous cognitive categories. Initially conceived as a sequence “Argument-Conclusion” connected by means of a prototypi-

vides of its cause should be described in terms of argumentative chains, together with the dialogic bond between the cause and the subjective stance reflected and imprinted in the utterance itself.

It should be remembered here that, according to argumentative semantics (Carel 2011; Carel and Ducrot 2005), the argumentative sequences that display the meaning of an expression or an utterance are composed by two segments articulated through either a normative or a transgressive relation. In the first case, the segments of the chain are connected by means of the connector *therefore* (abbr. THF); in the second case, the two segments are articulated by means of the connector *however* (abbr. HW).

The reason why these two types of argumentative chains (normative and transgressive) are granted such a privileged role resides in the fact that the “segments in the chain do not possess a semantic reality in themselves which could be understood out of the chain” (Ducrot 2004, 365). Of a strictly discursive nature, these chains cannot be reduced to a relation between two independent properties; for this reason, they cannot be interpreted as logic inferences. In this light, in utterances like the following, neither the arguments (*it is late*) are the same, nor are the conclusions opposed (*the train must be at the station, the train is probably not at the station*), as it might seem:

- (7) *Es tarde, por lo tanto, el tren debe estar en la estación.*
It is late, therefore, the train must be at the station. [translation]
- (8) *Es tarde, por lo tanto, el tren no debe estar en la estación.*
It is late, therefore, the train is probably not at the station. [translation]

In (7) the argumentation brings an image of the train as the *train-that-arrives* and a representation of time as an entity that in its course *makes-things-to appear*. In (8), instead, the train at stake is the *train-that-departs* and time, an entity that *makes-things-to disappear*. This is clearly shown in the paraphrases (7a) and (8a) below:

- (7) a. *Es tarde, por lo tanto, el tren ya debe estar en la estación.*
It is late, therefore, the train is probably **already** at the station. [translation]

cal conclusive connector (i.e., *therefore*), the notion of argumentative chain has been redefined in terms of semantic interdependence between the two segments of the chain (Carel 2011; Carel and Ducrot 2005). As it will be shown, the semantic interdependence can be expressed not only in terms of a conclusive or normative argumentation, but also in terms of a transgressive relation by means of a prototypical concessive connector (i.e., *however*).

- (8) a. *Es tarde, por lo tanto, el tren ya no debe estar en la estación.*
It is late, therefore, the train is probably **no longer** at the station.

[translation]

Now, as Carel and Ducrot (2005) point out, the semantic interdependence between both members of the chain is maintained if the connector is changed (THF for HW) and the negative polarity is added. In this way, the representations of the *train-that-arrives* and of *time-that-makes-things-to appear* in the normative argumentation (7), are the same as the ones in the transgressive argumentation (9) below: even though it hasn't arrived yet, the train at stake is the *train-that-arrives* and not the one that must depart.

- (9) *Es tarde, sin embargo, el tren (todavía) no debe estar en la estación.*

It's late, however, the train is probably not at the station yet.

[translation]

Conversely, the same semantic interdependence can be observed between (8) and (10): both cases present an image of the *train-that-departs* (even though in (10) the train hasn't departed yet, the train at stake is the *train-that-departs*) and of a situation in which *time-that-makes-things-to disappear*.

- (10) *Es tarde, sin embargo, el tren (todavía) debe estar en la estación.*

It is late, however, the train must (still) be at the station.

[translation]

To sum up, as Ducrot (2004) states, argumentative chains—and not reference to previous ideas or reality—are the ones that allow, in (7)–(10), the specific train and time we are talking about to be identified. And, as it has been shown, those semantic representations can be built either through a normative argumentation in THF or through a transgressive argumentation in HW.

Another essential methodological distinction that we take from Ducrot (1984) is the one that refers to the existence of two different discursive subjects which should, by no means, be mistaken for the speaking subject: locutor L and locutor λ .⁶ Locutor L is the discursive character that, within the sense of the utterance itself, is held responsible for the enunciation. In turn, locutor λ is the being to whom all first-person indexicals are assigned and about whom something is said in the utterance. It is the representation—within discourse—of the locutor as an individual in the world. Thus, while in interjections, the burst of emotion is L's enunciation, in declaratives like *I am happy*, happiness is a feature attributed to λ as if it were a kind of rational judgment (and not a burst of joy). In short, related to causal instructions, the distinction L- λ brings to light semantic differences associated to the way in which the “causes of enunciation” are shown in each case.

6. The item *locutor* corresponds to the translation of *locuteur* in French.

In order to account for the meaning of cases like the ones presented in (1) to (3), we will address a specific group of causal instructions, namely, those concerning the mirative causes that explain the emergence of surprise enunciations introduced by *mirá*. But unlike Ducrot's theory, our framework characterizes those causal instructions dialogically (Bakhtin 1981, 1984).

We will thus argue that these subjective stances of surprise arise as a dialogic response by the locutor L to the *mirative discourse frame* that constitutes the argumentative representation of the "cause" of such enunciation. A *mirative discourse frame* (abbr. *MDF*) –we claim– can be described as a transgressive argumentative sequence articulated by HW and related to a specific type of discovery. The argumentative representation of the discovery explains, in each case, the stance of surprise manifested in the enunciation. Hence, we propose that the *MDF* always transgressively articulates the representation of both a time passage (from T_{-1} to T_0) and a change of state of the locutor λ . In other words, by virtue of a transgressive relation with HW, the *MDF* will connect the representation of λ 's not knowing, or believing or assuming something at T_{-1} with the representation of λ 's awareness at T_0 of something new, or something that contradicts a previous belief or assumption, or something that exceeds its ordinary magnitude or degree. In line with the suggestions from bibliography discussing the links between evidentiality and mirativity (cf. Aikhenvald 2012; De Lancey 1997, 2001, 2012), the semantic instructions of such utterances do not necessarily specify any particular type of evidence on which λ 's change of state in T_0 should be based.

As shown below, we will indicate the *MDF*—to be necessarily recovered as the "cause" of the mirative enunciation—by means of braces, and within the *MDF*, we will represent the non-specified evidence—that justifies λ 's changes of state from T_{-1} to T_0 —by means of parenthesis followed by a question mark (evidence?). From a methodological point of view, the relation that exists between the mirative enunciation (in italics) and the *MDF* which motivates it, is always of a causal type. For this reason, we express the argumentative bond between the enunciation and its "cause" (the *MDF* representing the discovery) using the dialogic connector HENCE.

{ λ 's lack of knowledge/unawareness/lack of assumption about something at T_{-1}
HW
 (evidence? *THF*) λ 's awareness of something new or different at T_0 }
 HENCE
L's mirative response

We will now move forward to introduce a qualitative analysis of three highly frequent types of mirative enunciations with the discourse marker *mirá* in the

colloquial Spanish of Argentina. As it has been said, the analysis is based on a corpus consisting of authentic utterances extracted from the *Corpus de Referencia del Español Actual* (CREA) and from Mark Davies's corpus (<https://www.corpusdelespanol.org/web-dial/>). From the total number of occurrences of *mirá* found in CREA from Argentina (137 cases out of 50 different documents), we have identified 35 instances of the mirative use of the marker. As regards to Mark Davies's corpus, we have randomly selected 1,500 occurrences out of a total number of 3,854. From those 1,500, 178 cases correspond to instances of the marker *mirá* loaded with the meaning of surprise.⁷ The value of the quantitative data here presented is simply indicative, but it allows us to demonstrate the existence and validity of the mirative uses of *mirá* not yet described in the existing specialized literature.

The general criterion adopted for the identification of mirative uses of *mirá* was based on the possibility of its being exchanged by paraphrases with a mirative value. This initial criterion was further complemented with another one related to the recurrence of certain prosodic patterns which were identified (falling voice contour; circumflex voice contour; considerable increase of the pitch level). These patterns result from a test in which a group of 10 informants read the examples aloud; the utterances obtained were further on instrumentally analyzed.⁸

In addition, the syntactic structures which characterized each use of *mirá* were also considered. Thus, three mirative values were identified: (a) expression of surprise caused by the discovery of something new; (b) expression of surprise caused by the sudden discovery of something that challenges previous beliefs or assumptions; (c) expression of surprise caused by the sudden discovery of something that exceeds its ordinary magnitude or degree.

The results and discussion that follow are intended to make a theoretical contribution to the description of mirative meaning in Spanish from a dialogic and argumentative perspective.

7. Considering that *mirá* has other semantic and pragmatic values in Spanish, we have left the non-mirative meanings of *mirá* out of this analysis, namely: the imperative of the perception verb *mirar* (56 cases from CREA; 755 from Mark Davies's corpus); the appellative uses with phatic function (39 cases from CREA; 466 from Mark Davies's corpus), and those cases in which the marker introduces warnings or hypotheses (7 cases from CREA; 101 from Mark Davies's corpus).

8. We would like to thank Adriana Caldiz for helping us in the description of the intonational features associated with different mirative uses of the discourse marker *mirá* through the use of PRAAT.

4. Results and discussion

According to our model, the mirative enunciations with *mirá* exhibit the combination of diverse linguistic features (intonation, syntactic structures, tenses), which enable us to identify the specific *MDF* on which utterances are dialogically rooted. In each case, the putative *MDF* explains the subjective stances of surprise shown by the enunciations with *mirá*.

4.1 *Mirá* and the expression of surprise at discovering something new: Mirative enunciations of astonishment

Let us now consider Example (1) again, together with Examples (11) and (12) below. In these cases, accompanied or not by the second person singular pronoun *vos*, the enunciation of the discourse marker *mirá* is syntactically autonomous. It is usually produced with a falling voice contour and exhibits a considerable lengthening of the vowel of the accented syllable.

(1) **Rafael:** *Pero hablame un poco de vos. ¿Qué hacés? ¿De qué laburás?*

Juan Carlos: *Yo soy actor.*

Rafael (Disimula estar impresionado.): *Ah, mirá...*

Juan Carlos: *Sí. Trabajo mucho en cine. La última que hice es Esa maldita costilla. ¿No me viste ahí?*

(CREA, Campanella, J.J. y Castets, F., *El hijo de la novia*, Barcelona, RBA, 2002)

Rafael: Well, now tell me something about you. What do you do? What's your job?

Juan Carlos: I'm an actor.

Rafael: (Pretending not to be impressed at all) **Really...?**

Juan Carlos: Yes, I work at the movies a lot. My last film was *Esa maldita Costilla* (*That bloody rib*). Didn't you see me there?

(CREA, Campanella, J.J. y Castets, F., *El hijo de la novia*, Barcelona, RBA, 2002) [translation]

(11) – *Yo me acuerdo de las ardillas porque eso sí me había sorprendido, que eran unos animales muy listos, muy que corrían por las ramas de los árboles. –¿Sí? Yo pensaba que las ardillas eran de países... –¿Sí? No, hay muchas ardillas allí. –Mirá. No sabía.*

(CREA, Argentina, hombre de 69 años, ingeniero agrónomo)

- I remember the squirrels ‘cause that had really surprised me, quite smart creatures running along the tree branches. –Really? I thought squirrels came from other countries... –Did you? No, it’s full of squirrels there. –**Ha!** I didn’t know.

(CREA, Argentina, 69-year-old man, agronomist) [translation]

- (12) – *Pelis sobre matrimonios hay miles y de distintos tonos y temáticas, va una lista con una mezcla de todas.*
- *Mirá vos! ¡Recién me doy cuenta que sos la autora! Muy entretenido tu relato.*
(Corpus Davies. Argentina. Blog. *La Nación*, “¿Y no eras vos la que te querías casar?”. Disponible en <http://blogs.lanacion.com.ar/cine/criticas/y-no-eras-vos-la-que-te-querias-casar>)
 - Movies about marriages there are thousands, on quite different tones and topics. There goes a list with a mix of them.
 - **Oh!** I just notice that you are the author! Your story is really entertaining.
(Mark Davies’s corpus. Argentina. Blog. *La Nación*, “Wasn’t it you who wanted to get married?”). Retrieved from <http://blogs.lanacion.com.ar/cine/criticas/y-no-eras-vos-la-que-te-querias-casar>) [translation]

As can be ascertained in all these cases, the mirative response reflected in the enunciation somehow shows L’s astonishment. That is why cases (1), (11) and (12) admit rewordings into expressions or interjections such as

¡Ah! ¡Qué loco! / ¡Qué increíble! / ¡Sorprendente!

Oh! That’s crazy! / That’s incredible! / Amazing!

¡Guau! No lo sabía.

Wow! I didn’t know that.

though they cannot be paraphrased into expressions such as

**¡Guau! No me lo esperaba.*

*Wow! I’m really shocked! Never expected this!

Now then, where does this astonishment stem from? How can the “cause” leading to the emergence of such mirative enunciations be explained? It is our claim that making sense of these enunciations requires recovering their “cause” from the *MDF* triggering them. By means of a transgressive relation, such frame will connect λ ’s representation of not knowing X at a moment previous to enunciation (T_{-1}) with the representation of λ ’s awareness of X at T_0 . We will sketch the *MDF* that represents the discovery motivating the surprise as follows:

{ λ 's lack of knowledge or awareness of X at T_{-1}
HW
 (evidence? *THF*) λ 's awareness of X at T_0 }

And it is this *MDF* that the enunciation responds to dialogically by means of a subjective stance of astonishment (thus the dialogic connector *HENCE*).

HENCE

L's mirative response of astonishment at discovering something new

In other words, the dialogic relation between the utterance and the mirative "cause" of its enunciation can be glossed as follows:

{on λ 's sudden awareness of something that λ was not aware of}, *surprise with astonishment in L's enunciation*

Moreover, this argumentative representation of the dialogic relation between the utterance and its "cause" fosters the understanding of the mirative values that arise from enunciations of this kind. Thus, what is captured in cases (1), (11) and (12) is as follows:

- a. an argumentative representation of λ 's prior not knowing something at T_{-1} in terms of an innocent, non-problematic and not conscious not knowing. In other words, it is clear that it is not a matter of being guilty of not knowing that one should have been aware of. In fact, neither (1) nor (11) nor (12) would admit any instances of self-reproach as possible follow-ups, such as:

*¿Cómo pude no estar al tanto de X !

*How come I wasn't aware of X ? [translation]

*¿Qué horror!, ¿cómo no sabía X ?

*Good grief! How come I didn't know X ? [translation]

- b. an image of a current discovery as a novel finding, that is to say, one that sheds light on something that was not known, and
 c. an image of L , which is revealed through a subjective stance of admiration or astonishment towards λ 's discovery.

Let us now see the contrasts that can be established with the other types of mirative enunciations with *mirá*.

4.2 *Mirá* and the expression of surprise at discovering something that challenges λ 's previous belief or assumption: Mirative enunciations of counter-expectation

In this case the enunciation of the discourse marker *mirá* is typically followed by the second person singular pronoun *vos* (as if both words were a single unit) and by a sentence concerning the object of surprise. According to the reading test which was carried out, counter-expectation *mirá* is usually produced with a circumflex inflexion of the voice.⁹ When the phrase is part of an extended tone unit, *mirá* tends to be non-prominent. We may consider (2) and (13) as examples of this second type of mirative use.

- (2) *Junto a Graciela Lois, de Familiares de Detenidos-desaparecidos por razones políticas, puso un recurso de amparo que impidió esa maniobra y además la llevó de paseo a un programa de televisión donde se enfrentó con una abogada a la que le tiró de el pelo mientras le decía a Lois por lo bajo: "¡Mirá vos, yo creí que tenía peluca!"*

(Corpus Davies. Argentina. Blog. *La lucha por los derechos humanos en la Argentina* – ADHILAC. Disponible en <http://adhilac.com.ar/?p=8106>)

Together with Graciela Lois, from Missing or under arrest people for political reasons, he put in an appeal that prevented the maneuver. Besides he toured her around a television program where he confronted a woman lawyer, to whom he pulled a bunch of hair while whispering to Lois: "Ha! I thought it was a wig!"

(Mark Davies's corpus. Argentina. Blog. *La lucha por los derechos humanos en la Argentina* – ADHILAC, Retrieved from <http://adhilac.com.ar/?p=8106>) [translation]

- (13) – *El transbordador espacial Endevo ¿Endevo se dice?*
 – *Endeavour.*
 – *¿Pero si es francés?*
 – *Endeavour.*
 – *Bueno, pero no importa. El transbordador espacial. ¡Endivor!*
 – *Que lleva a bordo Endeavour.*
 – *...que lleva a bordo el satélite argentino ese-a-ce-a, construido por la empresa rionegrina INVAP.*
 – *¡Mirá a los argentinos!*

(CREA, Argentina, Radio Rivadavia, *oral*, 10/12/98)

9. Caldiz (2015) posits that the circumflex tone is a recurrent feature in the Spanish of Buenos Aires (also known as River Plate Spanish). The tone is produced with a rising-falling voice contour and, according to this author, when reading aloud, it favors the reactivation of previously mentioned information.

- The space shuttle Endevo. Do you say Endevo?
- Endeavour.
- But isn't it French?
- Endeavour.
- All right, never mind. The space shuttle... Endivor
- that carries the Endeavour
- that carries the Argentine satellite S-A-C-A built by the Rio Negro company INVAP.
- **Look** at those Argies!

(CREA, Argentina, Radio Rivadavia, spoken, 10 Dec 98) [translation]

In these cases, unlike mirative enunciations in response to the discovery of something new (§ 4.1), surprise seems to result from a different *MDF*. By means of a transgressive relation with *HW*, here the frame will connect the representation of λ 's previous belief or assumption about *X* at T_{-1} with the representation of λ 's awareness of NOT *X* at T_0 , which contradicts the former belief or assumption. Hence, these cases admit admirative rewordings into the following expressions:

¿Quién lo hubiese dicho?!

Who would have thought that? [translation]

¡Guau! Realmente me sorprende / no me lo esperaba.

Wow! I'm really shocked! Never expected this! [translation]

but they cannot be paraphrased into expressions such as:

**¡Guau! No lo sabía.*

*Wow! I didn't know that.

In other words, the causal relation between the enunciation and the *MDF* triggering it can be glossed as follows:

{on λ 's sudden awareness of something that contradicts λ 's previous beliefs or assumptions}, *surprise with anger/joy/disbelief in L's enunciation*

Schematically, this can be noted as follows:

{ λ 's assumption/belief about *X* at T_{-1}

HW

(evidence? *THF*) λ 's awareness of NOT *X* at T_0 }

HENCE

L's mirative response of anger/joy/disbelief at a

frustrated expectation

4.3 *Mirá* and the expression of surprise at discovering something that exceeds its ordinary magnitude or degree: Mirative enunciations of high degree

In this last section we will address mirative enunciations that express a positioning of surprise as a reactive response towards something that exceeds an ordinary magnitude or degree, i.e. a degree that goes beyond an ordinary grade. These enunciations are materialized through utterances in which *mirá* is typically followed by an exclamatory intensifying structure. Following Alonso-Cortés's (1999) description of exclamatory sentences, we took into account the following intensifying structures with *mirá*: (a) Q-exclamation sentences carrying exclamatory operators (Q-words *qué, cómo, cuánto, cuál*); (b) exclamation sentences introduced by Spanish exclamatory articles *el, la, lo* followed by a subordinate clause (conjunction *que* + verb); (c) exclamation sentences operating as a direct object and introduced by the conjunction *que*; (d) exclamation sentences with the non-tonic exclamation adverb *si*. When the discourse marker *mirá* is followed by the structures just mentioned, it reinforces the intrinsic mirative meaning these exclamations are loaded with; exclamations in which, as asserted by Ducrot (1984, 186), the enunciation appears "*comme échappée à son auteur*" (as involuntarily 'escaped' from the producer's lips [translation]) and as if it was caused by the object of the enunciation itself. The acoustic analysis of the reading-aloud tests shows that this type of mirative enunciations tends to occur with a considerable increase of the pitch level. Usually, those extended tone units that begin with the particle *mirá* bear a falling voice movement.

a. *Mirá* + Q-exclamation sentence with an exclamatory operator (Q-words *qué, cómo, cuánto, cuál*)

- (3) *Che, mirá qué increíble, se exalta Diana, y sin embargo es absolutamente creíble que Pepe Juárez y el Cabezón Iriarte aparezcan allí, a la sombra de la torre de agua, en la calle Almafuerde. Pero ella, dale con lo increíble.*

(CREA, Martínez, E., *La novela de Perón*, Madrid, Alianza, 1989)

Hey. **This is incredible!** says Diana quite startled. However, it is quite thinkable that Pepe Juárez and Big-head Iriarte would turn up there, in the shade of the water tower, on Almafuerde Steet. But she goes on and on it being unbelievable.

(CREA, Martínez, E., *La novela de Perón*, Madrid, Alianza, 1989)

[translation]

(14) MARY: –¿Qué película?

VICENTE: –Zorba el griego... Era un tipo que bailaba por las montañas... ¡Parecía un pájaro!... ¡Me volvía loco!... ¡Seis veces la vi esa película!... Y por si eso fuera poco, ¡**mirá vos** qué idiota! (Va hacia el Tío y le toma la cara cariñoso.) ¡Si Dios nos mandó a un griego... démosle bola!

(CREA, Argentina, Rovner, Eduardo, *Y el mundo vendrá*, Buenos Aires, Corregidor, 1988)

MARY: “What movie?”

VICENTE: “Zorba the Greek... He was a guy that danced around the mountains... He was like a bird... He blew my mind!... Six times I saw that film! ... And, as if that was not enough, **what an idiot I am!** (Goes towards his uncle and cups his face affectionately). If God’s sent us a Greek... let’s pay attention to him!

(CREA, Argentina, Rovner, Eduardo, *Y el mundo vendrá*, Buenos Aires, Corregidor, 1988) [translation]

(15) *Mi primera impresión del producto fue, como siempre, sobre la parte externa, llámese marketing y packaging (mirá cómo estamos con el english, eh). Así que empecemos hablando de las promesas que hace y la imagen que quiere dar.*

(Corpus Davies. Argentina. Blog. *Pretty hate machine, Avon a new clinical AF33, mi opinión*. Disponible en <http://alesinchains.blogspot.com/2013/07/avon-anew-clinical-af33-mi-opinion.html>)

My first impression of the product was, as usual, caused by its look, call it marketing and packaging (**Wow, look** at my English!) So let’s start talking about what it promises and the image it wants to project.

(Mark Davies’s corpus. Argentina. Blog. *Pretty hate machine, Avon a new clinical AF33, my opinion*. Retrieved from <http://alesinchains.blogspot.com/2013/07/avon-anew-clinical-af33-mi-opinion.html>) [translation]

b. *Mirá* + exclamation sentence introduced by Spanish exclamatory article *el, la, lo* + subordinate clause (conjunction *que* + verb)

(16) – *Qué mal está Carlos, mirá el papelón que está haciendo con esta pelotuda, así no llega a ninguna parte –murmuraban preocupados los fanáticos que se acercaban a la mansión de la calle Echeverría el día de la citación del fiscal, ansiosos por mostrar su solidaridad.*

(CREA, Wornat, O., *Menem-Bolocco*, Buenos Aires, Ediciones B, 2001)

Carlos is in such a bad shape! **Look** at how pathetic he looks with that bitch! This way he’ll get nowhere –murmured by his worried supporters,

anxious to show solidarity, while reaching the Etcheverría Street mansion on the day of the prosecutor's summons.

(CREA, Wornat, O., *Menem-Bolocco*, Buenos Aires, Ediciones B, 2001) [translation]

- (17) *Ella siempre soñaba con un pueblo en la montaña, muchas veces repetía ese sueño. Y casada y todo, su destino de vacaciones siempre decide que sea el mismo, un pueblo en la montaña, contó Eugenia. Además, manifestó que ella, más tarde, se entera quiénes y de dónde es su familia biológica, sus padres. Ellos eran de Metán - San José de Metán, en el sureste de Salta -, de ese pueblito muy parecido al que ella soñaba. Así que, ¡mirá lo que son los genes! Se lleva todo en la sangre...*

(Corpus Davies. Argentina. Blog. *La sangre es más espesa que el agua*. Disponible en <http://radiopuntocero.com/2013/07/29/la-sangre-es-mas-espesa-que-el-agua/>)

She used to dream of a little village in the mountains; many times the dream was repeated. And even married, she always chooses the same holiday site, a village in the mountains, said Eugenia. Besides, she said that it was later that she found out where her biological family, her parents, came from. They were from Metán –San José de Metán, in south-east Salta–, a village which looked like the one in her dreams. **Can you believe** the force of the genes! It's all in your blood...

(Mark Davies's corpus. Argentina. Blog. *Blood is thicker than water*. Retrieved from <http://radiopuntocero.com/2013/07/29/la-sangre-es-mas-espesa-que-el-agua/>) [translation]

- c. *Mirá* + exclamation sentences introduced by the subordinating conjunction *que*

- (18) *Fuerza negro! Mirá que hay h de p en el mundo. Sabiendo el problema que tuviste y el esfuerzo para recuperarte, reconociéndote siguieron aprovechándose de tu situación. Seguí adelante con toda tu garra. Un abrazo!!!*

(Corpus Davies. Argentina. General. *Vuelven a asaltar al "Negro" Cáceres*. Perfil.com. Disponible en <http://442.perfil.com/2013-08-21-233681-devuelta-asaltan-al-%C2%B4negro-caceres/>)

Cheer up, my friend! **There are** so many fucking SOB in this world! They know pretty well about the problem you had and the effort you went through to recover. Even so, they still tried to take advantage of your situation. Keep on with all your willpower. A big hug to you!!!

(Mark Davies's corpus. Argentina. General. *"Negro" Cáceres is mugged once again*. Perfil.com. Retrieved from <http://442.perfil.com/2013-08-21-233681-devuelta-asaltan-al-%C2%B4negro-caceres/>) [translation]

d. *Mirá* + exclamation sentence with the non-tonic exclamation adverb *si*¹⁰

- (19) *Tengo siete Martín Fierro ganados por mí, once en total. Y pienso: “Mirá si serán boludos”. Los periodistas deportivos de mi generación me han subvalorado, pero a la mayoría me los fumé en pipa, dijo con astucia e ironía.*

(Corpus Davies. Argentina. Blog. Alejandro Fantino: “*Me gusta mucho la guita, eso lo tengo recontra claro*”. Disponible en <https://lasombradespectaculo.wordpress.com/2012/11/14/me-gusta-mucho-la-guita-eso-lo-tengo-recontra-claro/>)

‘I’ve got seven Martin Fierro awards I won myself, eleven in all. And I say, “Jerks!” The sports journalists of my generation underestimated me, but I got the upper hand on most of them, he scoffed with irony.

(Mark Davies’s Corpus. Argentina. Blog. Alejandro Fantino: “*I do love dough, that I’m dead sure about*”. Retrieved from <https://lasombradespectaculo.wordpress.com/2012/11/14/me-gusta-mucho-la-guita-eso-lo-tengo-recontra-claro/>) [translation]

Unlike the cases analyzed in 4.1. and 4.2., the transgressive *MDF* that must be recovered as the “cause” of the mirative enunciation does not set *lack of knowledge of X at T₋₁* against *awareness of X at T₀* (as in 4.1.); or *belief/assumption about X at T₋₁* against *awareness of NOT X at T₀* (as in 4.2.). Instead, the *MDF* contrasts *assumptions of an average/normal degree of X at T₋₁* with *experiencing an extreme degree of X at T₀*, which is shown as follows:

{an ordinary degree of X is assumed in the normal course of events at T₋₁
HW
 (evidence? *THF*) λ’s experiencing of an extreme degree of X at T₀}
 HENCE
*L’s mirative enunciation of delighted surprise or
 annoyance at the discovery of the extreme degree*

In other words, and, as is revealed in the following rewording, the transgression to the normal course of events in this case relates to discovering the extraordinary.

{on λ’s sudden awareness that X occurs beyond the normal ordinary degree},
L’s mirative enunciation is one of pleasure/annoyance/anger at the extraordinary occurrence.

10. In these cases, *si* does not operate as a subordinating conjunction, rather, it functions as an intensifier adverbial (Alarcos Llorach 1999, 479). Rendering account of the emphatic nature of this use of *si*, and in line with Alarcos Llorach (1999, 478), Montolío (1999, 3683) suggests the possibility of its being replaced by another emphatic element such as *qué*.

Therefore, the mirative effect that accounts for this high degree can be paraphrased as follows:

¡Sorprendente! ¡Guau! ¡Increíble! ¡No se puede creer!
 Amazing! Wow! Incredible! Can't believe it! [translation]

rather than:

**No lo sabía*
 *I didn't know [translation]

**¿Quién lo hubiese dicho?!*
 *Who would have thought? [translation]

The effects on meaning arising from the dialogic and argumentative link between these kinds of mirative enunciation of high degree and their "cause" involve:

- a. a representation of what is assumed by λ at T_{-1} as an idea agreed on to be the normal course of events,
- b. an image of the current discovery as one that transgresses the normal course of events beyond its usual degree, and
- c. an image of L, which is revealed through a subjective stance of surprise (blended with admiration/anger/joy/disbelief) in response to an extraordinary occurrence.

On occasion, high degree mirative enunciations with *mirá* may appear in consecutive structures that "occur in an exclamatory verbal environment and present a verb form generally associated to the future or conditional of surprise" (Álvarez 1999, 3751).

- (20) *En la provincia de Buenos Aires, primó el descontento y la gente eligió' al que le podía ganar'. Mirá si será dañina la eterna dualidad que propone el kirchnerismo que para ser alternativa, sólo basta con ser oposición, analizó.*
 (Corpus Davies. Argentina. General. *Informe Acá*. "Ahora tenemos que seguir laburando por la gente". Disponible en <http://informateaca.com/ahora-tenemos-que-seguir-laburando-por-la-gente-afirman-desde-la-juventud-radical/>)

What prevailed in the Province of Buenos Aires was people's discontent. People chose the most plausible wood-be winner. **How very harmful is** this eternal kirchnerist duality, so much so that to be a reasonable alternative it's enough to be just the opposition, he questioned.

(Mark Davies's corpus. Argentina. General. *Get informed here. Now we've got to on working for the sake of the people*. Retrieved from <http://informateaca.com/ahora-tenemos-que-seguir-laburando-por-la-gente-afirman-desde-la-juventud-radical/>) [translation]

- (21) *Mirá si tendrá razón Fayt que recién publicaron la nota y ya están todos los kichneristas agrediendo e insultando. Que el triunfo sea tan contundente que no les quede ganas de seguir ofendiendo. Vamos Fayt todavía!*

(Corpus Davies. Argentina. General. *Fayt pidió al FpV que hagan una “auto-crítica” o “se callen”*. Disponible en <http://www.dariodemocracia.com/notas/2013/8/28/pidio-hagan-autocritica-callen-64285.asp>)

How right must Fayt be that the news has just been published and all the Kirchnerists are insulting and attacking. Let the success be so huge as to do away with their desire to keep on giving offence. Come on Fayt!

(Mark Davies’s corpus. Argentina. General. *Fayt asked the FpV to either make a bit of self-criticism or shut up*”. Retrieved from <http://www.dariodemocracia.com/notas/2013/8/28/pidio-hagan-autocritica-callen-64285.asp>) [translation]

In these cases, the subsequent sentence allows the highlighting of the extreme degree in which the object of surprise is manifested. Here, the subjective stance in response to the discovery of the extreme degree does not appear as if had “escaped” from the producer’s lips, as it happens in cases (14) to (18). As will be shown in paraphrases (20’) and (21’), this new stance is presented as the result of some kind of thoughtful reasoning. In fact, the subsequent explanatory sentence justifies the enunciation when presenting the evidence of the discovery shown as the actual “cause” of the high degree mirative enunciation.

- (20’) *¡Mirá si será dañina la eterna dualidad que propone el kirchnerismo! Y no exagero cuando digo que es dañina. La prueba es que ellos piensan que para ser alternativa solo basta con ser oposición.*

How very harmful is this eternal kirchnerist duality. And I’m not exaggerating when I say harmful. Proof of this is that they think that to be an alternative it’s enough to be just the opposition. [translation]

- (21’) *¡Mirá si tendrá razón Fayt! Y no exagero cuando digo que tiene mucha razón. La prueba es que recién publicaron la nota y ya están todos los kichneristas agrediendo e insultando.*

How right is Fayt! And I’m not exaggerating when I say he’s right. A proof of this is that the news has just appeared and all the Kirchnerists are insulting and attacking [translation]

To sum up, when *mirá* is followed by consecutive structures with the future of surprise (*mirá si* + future of surprise + *que...*), the enunciation prompts the interlocutor not only to find the argument that justifies the mirative stance of high degree, but also to adopt the same reaction of surprise.

5. Conclusion

This paper has intended to characterize the meaning of mirative enunciations with the discourse marker *mirá* in the Argentine variety of colloquial Spanish. This is an area of research that has received little or no attention, as current investigations have addressed mainly the quality of peninsular Spanish *mira* as a focus marker of alterity. As for our study, we have proposed an analysis of the dialogic and argumentative relations that must be identified in order to explain the various effects of surprise carried out by enunciations with *mirá*. These enunciations establish dialogic links with the representations shown as the “causes” or *MDF* sparking off the enunciations. In turn, those links must be recovered in order to account for the specific meaning of each type of mirative enunciation. In the light of DAAP we have thus argued that the various subjective stances of surprise reflected in the utterance can be explained argumentatively as dialogic responses to such *MDF*.

But in addition to analyzing the responsive subjective stances, our study allows:

- a. To explain in argumentative terms the various transgressive relations that are established between two moments: T_{-1} and T_0 , which justify the different surprise reactions reflected in mirative enunciations with *mirá*.
- b. To account for the various discourse representations of λ 's changes of state, the locutor as an individual in the world, which are shown at T_{-1} (*lack of knowledge of X, assumption of X, assumption of an average degree of X*) and at T_0 (*awareness of X, awareness of not X, experiencing an extraordinary degree of X*).
- c. To identify the representation of L's feelings in the light of the prosody accompanying these mirative enunciations.
- d. To describe the subjective stance of surprise in terms of an argumentative relation between the enunciation and the *MDF* triggering it.

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