

# Exclamatives in the functional typology of insubordination: Evidence from complement insubordinate constructions in Spanish



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## Abstract

Insubordination is defined as the phenomenon whereby a formally subordinate clause is conventionally used as a main or independent clause. Evans (2007) identifies three macro-functions of insubordination crosslinguistically – (i) indirection and interpersonal control, (ii) modal qualification, and (iii) signaling high levels of presupposed material in the insubordinate proposition – and places exclamation and evaluation in the second macro-function. More recent works propose a higher generalization, arguing that insubordinate constructions express interpersonal meanings, and Van linden and Van de Velde (2014) claim that these meanings “almost invariably go together with exclamative illocutionary force” (2014: 228). Using data from different varieties of Spanish, we show that a narrow definition of ‘exclamative’ allows to describe the properties of individual exclamative-evaluative constructions in Spanish more adequately. We argue that exclamative-evaluative constructions constitute a separate subset of insubordinate constructions, with their own formal and interpretive features. From a methodological point of view, we show that a constructional approach allows to operationalize the notion of insubordination and to set apart exclamative-evaluative insubordinate constructions from other formally similar constructions in the language. In addition, we show that the constructional status can be used as a test for insubordinate status, as an insubordinate construction pairs a ‘subordinate’ form with a non-compositional meaning.

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## 1. Introduction

Insubordination can be defined as the phenomenon whereby a formally subordinate or dependent clause is conventionally used as a main or independent clause (Evans, 2007).<sup>1</sup> Since the pioneering study by Evans (2007), there has been an increasing interest in insubordinate constructions in a wide array of languages.<sup>2</sup> In addition to

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<sup>1</sup> Insubordination can be understood in a synchronic (the main clause use of a formally subordinate clause) or a diachronic sense (the process whereby a subordinate clause becomes reanalyzed as an independent sentence, through the ellipsis of main clause material). In this paper, we will use the terms *insubordination* and *insubordinate construction* in a synchronic sense.

<sup>2</sup> There are studies on Romance (Lombardi Vallauri, 2004; Debaisieux, 2006; Gras, 2011, 2013, 2016; Patard, 2014; Gras and Sansiñena, 2015; Sansiñena, 2015; Sansiñena et al., 2015a, 2015b;) and Germanic languages (Lindström and Londen, 2008; Verstraete et al., 2012; Brinton, 2014; Wide, 2014; D’Hertefelt, 2015), as well as many non-Indo-European languages (Mithun, 2008; Robbeets, 2009; Cable, 2011 and the papers included in Evans and Watanabe, 2016).

describing the specific formal and interpretive features of insubordinate constructions, the literature also raises more general theoretical questions about grammatical insubordination. One of these questions is the functional load of insubordination. Regarding this issue, [Evans \(2007\)](#) proposes that insubordinate constructions can fulfill three main macro-functions: (i) expressing indirection in contexts that involve possible face threats (especially with directive speech acts like imperatives, but also with permissives, warnings and threats), (ii) expressing subjective modal meanings that qualify the contents of the clause, and (iii) expressing discourse relations (reiteration, contrast, etc.). More recent works propose a higher-level generalization, arguing that insubordinate constructions express interpersonal meanings ([Boogaart and Verheij, 2013](#); [Van linden and Van de Velde, 2014](#); [Sansiñena et al., 2015a](#); [Lombardi Vallauri, 2016](#)) and, in particular, [Van linden and Van de Velde \(2014\)](#), using a broad definition of exclamative, claim that these meanings “almost invariably go together with exclamative illocutionary force” (emphasis added) (2014: 228). By contrast, other works have focused on insubordination as a source of exclamative sentence types ([Gras, 2016](#); [Cristofaro, 2016](#); [Mithun, 2016](#)), adopting a narrow definition of exclamative. In this study, we argue that a narrow definition of exclamative is needed in order to properly describe the meaning import of specific insubordinate constructions and to understand the functional domains insubordination can express crosslinguistically.

The aim of this paper is to contribute to the general debate outlined above through the analysis of two constructions that express exclamative-evaluative meanings in different varieties of Spanish, namely general Spanish (1) and Chilean Spanish (2).

- (1) *Que tenga que ven-ir Tejerina a explic-ar-os las cosas...*<sup>3</sup>  
 COMP have.SBJV.PRS.3SG COMP come-INF Tejerina to explain-INF-2PL ART.F.PL things  
 ‘It’s outrageous that Tejerina should have come and explain to you how things work...’ Lit. That Tejerina should come to explain things to you...  
 (CREA Oral Magazines, *Hoy por hoy*, Spain)
- (2) [Comment on a picture of Miley Cyrus on Facebook]  
*Que eris fe-a y tont-a*  
 COMP be.IND.PRS.2SG ugly-F.SG and silly-F.SG  
 ‘You are so ugly and silly!’ Lit. That you are ugly and silly.  
 (Google)

Both constructions are good candidates to be considered instances of the phenomenon of insubordination, in that they carry a subordination marker (*que* ‘that’) and are not constituents of a broader syntactic unit. They also present form and content similarities with biclausal constructions, formed by an evaluative predicate and a complement clause (3) or by a grammaticalized perception verb and a complement clause (4)<sup>4</sup>:

- (3) *Es completamente inaceptable que teng-a que ven-ir Tejerina a explic-ar-os las cosas...*  
 be.IND.PRS.3SG completely unacceptable  
 COMP have.SBJV.PRS.3SG COMP come-INF Tejerina to explain-INF-2PL ART.F.PL things  
 ‘It’s completely unacceptable that Tejerina should have come and explain to you how things work.’
- (4) *Mir-a que eris fe-a y tont-a*  
 look-IND.PRS.3SG COMP be.IND.PRS.2SG ugly-F.SG and silly-F.SG  
 ‘You are so ugly and silly!’ Lit. Look that you are ugly and silly.

The construction in (1) above shows productivity in the Peninsular as well as in many Latin American varieties of Spanish, whereas the construction in (2) has only been attested in Chilean Spanish. The two constructions differ in their mood selection. The first one takes a subjunctive verb form and will thus be referred to as the subjunctive exclamative-evaluative construction (abbreviated henceforth as SEC), while the second one always selects

<sup>3</sup> The glosses provided for the Spanish originals comply to the Leipzig Glossing Rules. For reasons of space, glosses will only be provided for the structures under analysis.

<sup>4</sup> In these contexts, *mira* has been considered a mirative marker ([Sánchez López, 2014](#)), which would play a crucial role in the exclamative value of the complement clause.

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