

From movement verb to evaluative intensifier: The evolution of Spanish *vaya*

Basic data. Besides its main use as a form of the movement verb *ir* ‘to go’, the Spanish form *vaya* ‘go’ is found in several idiosyncratic constructions that have received much attention in the literature [1]–[4], as examples of change from a verbal form to a discourse marker, an intensifier or an interjection. In this communication, we analyze the rising of the evaluative construction formed with *vaya* plus an indefinite NP (all examples are extracted from the *Corpus Diacrónico del Español*, CORDE <https://corpus.rae.es/cordenet.html>):

- (1) a. Sí: con mi amo viene aquí; ¡mas **vaya una peleona!** [1630]
‘Yes: she comes with my master; yet, what a fighter!’
b. Tiene un huerto... **¡vaya un huerto!** Con sus árboles frutales, parras,... [1816–7]
‘He owns an orchard... What an orchard! With fruit trees, vines,...

[2], [4] suggest that this construction is simply a derivation from the interjectional use in (2), involving a change from a propositional modifier to a NP modifier:

- (2) **¡Vaya!** Sea como fuere; venga el bollo mantecada. [1545-1565]
‘Wow! Whatever, let’s have the lard cake.’

While we do agree that the construction in (2) does have a *pragmatic* role in the creation of (1), we will argue that it cannot explain the particular selection properties of *vaya*, so we will defend that its *syntactic* source is rather the presentational construction in (3), which is a desemantization of the original movement construction:

- (3) a. ALIRA Ea, **vaya un baile.** FELISTO ¿Cuál? ALIRA El canario. [1613]
‘ALIRA Come on, let’s have a dance. FELISTO Which one? ALIRA The Canary one.
b. Ayala [...] que todos vean que tengo razón para lo que hago. Callejo. ¿Sí?, pues **vaya este argumento.**
Es así que de regalos de boda...[1767]
‘Ayala [...] so everybody sees that I am right in what I am doing. Callejo Are you? so let’s go with this argument. It is the case that wedding presents...’

Hence, our proposal integrates the interjectional use in (2) with the presentational construction in (3), which we hypothesize it gives rise to the evaluative construction exemplified in (1).

Diachronic analysis. The use of *vaya* as an improper interjection (2) is firstly attested in the 15th century, becomes more common in the 17th-18th centuries (138 and 305 cases, resp.), and boosts in the 19th-20th centuries (1095 and 929 cases, resp.). Therefore, it precedes and coexists with the presentational one (3), which appears in the 16th century, reaches its peak in the 17th-18th centuries (100 and 104 cases, resp.), and declines during the 19th (80 cases), and 20th (23 cases) centuries. Crucially, the evaluative use under study (1) is scarcely attested in the 17th-18th centuries (4 and 9 cases, resp.), but boosts in the 19th-20th centuries (447 and 459 cases, resp.). Hence, the rising of the evaluative use clearly correlates with the decline of the presentational use.

We can take, thus, 17th-18th centuries as the initial stage of the process, where the coexistence of the interjectional and presentational constructions creates the conditions for moving to a bridging context [5]-[6]. This paves the way for ambiguous cases, and subjectification [3],[7]: the presentational construction incorporates the speaker’s attitude toward the situation denoted by the proposition.

- (4) a. y así, en vez de una flor, **vaya un consejo.** [1847]
‘and so, instead of a flower, here it goes an advice’
b. –Hay riesgos, ¿pero qué importa? –¡Hay riesgos!, **¡vaya un reproche!** [1854]
‘–There are risks, but who cares? –There are risks! What a reproach!’

(4a) could be understood as evaluative, but the context favors the presentational reading, for a contrast is offered between a flower and some advice. In (4b), instead, the reaction of the speaker to the previous words

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