

MIRATIVE QUESTIONS ABOUT QUOTES IN SPANISH

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1. GOAL. I analyze some peculiar Spanish questions with the interrogative element “cómo” ‘how’ (with an atypical semantic value) and with an echoic character by relating them to other similar uses of this element and to other quotative structures.

2. DATA. Spanish has questions asking for an explanation for what has been said: if speaker A says (1a), speaker B can immediately ask (1b):

- (1) a. A: No me interesa.
not to.me causes.interest_{3Sing}
b. B: ¿Cómo que no te interesa?
how that not to.you causes.interest_{3Sing}?

(1b) reproduces what has been said as an indirect quotation (notice the deictic adaptation) and it is built with an interrogative element, “cómo” ‘how’, which does not convey the typical value ‘in which manner’: it conveys in these cases a meaning similar to ‘what explanation do you have for’, with a component of surprise (i.e. “mirativity”, in typological terms; DeLancey 1997). This semantic value of “cómo” is the one found in other Spanish questions, such as (2):

- (2) ¿Cómo María no se lo contó?
how Mary not to.him it_{accusative} told_{3Sing}

(2), which is non-quotative, could be paraphrased as ‘explain to me the surprising fact that Mary did not tell him that’. (2) exhibits no subject-verb inversion and a perfect compatibility with negation, so “cómo”, with this use, behaves differently from typical Spanish interrogative elements. According to Escandell (1999), if the previous utterance is reproduced as a direct quote, a question like (1) has no “que”:

- (3) a. A: No me interesa.
b. B: ¿Cómo “no me interesa”?
how “not to.me causes.interest_{3Sing}”?

However, this distribution between “cómo” and “cómo que” cannot be sustained: both (4b), with a direct quote and “que”, and (4c), with an indirect quote and no “que”, are possible:

- (4) a. A: No me interesa.
b. B: ¿Cómo que “no me interesa”?
how that “not to.me causes.interest_{3Sing}”?
c. B: ¿Cómo, no te interesa?
how not to.you causes.interest_{3Sing}?

Versions with “que”, (1b) and (4b), convey the notion that the illocutionary act as such has shocked the utterer, so s/he asks for an explanation of the act while reproducing it. Versions without “que”, (3b) and (4c), convey a shock derived from the content of what has been said.

This is not the only case in which the co-appearance of “que” with a direct quote is possible. Crucially, cases like (5) have in common with the abovementioned examples (except (2)) the fact that the utterer expresses his/her attitude towards the quoted illocutionary acts:

- (5) Que “a ti qué te importa”, que “yo ya sé lo que me hago”,
that “to you what to.you matters”, that “I already know_{1Sing} what myself do_{1Sing}”,
que “no te enteras de nada”, que “yo ya soy mayorcito”...
that “not to.you realize_{2Sing} of anything”, that “I already am big.enough”...

The utterer of (5) assesses in negative terms what has been said to him/her: s/he has felt

somewhat aggressed (the accumulation of illocutionary acts, like an avalanche, seems to be important for this assessment). Note that the quotes in (5) could appear as indirect ones.

3. ANALYSIS. “Cómo” should be analyzed in the same manner as it can be considering a sentence like (2): taking into account Rizzi (2001) about “come mai” ‘how come’ and Tsai (2008) about the Chinese “how” with a causal value, it seems that “cómo” is generated at (and not moved to) a projection different from that relevant for typical interrogative elements; that relevant for “why” equivalents in some languages. In addition, it seems necessary to add to this analysis a projection related with the factive character of this interrogative element and the mirativity that it conveys (such a projection could be “Evaluative/Factive”, in terms similar to those of Ambar (2003) for exclamative sentences and Munaro & Obenauer (1999) for some other marked interrogatives).

“Cómo” appears in a syntactic layer (a “left periphery”, SC) of its own, autonomous from any other: this independence is necessary because these are interrogative sentences that can contain other illocutionary forces. The direct or indirect quotes, with or without “que”, are under the scope of this layer. Indeed, the modality of the quoted utterance and that of the quotative sentence do not have to coincide, (6a), and the complementizer “si” ‘if’ has to appear when there is a yes-no question, as it is necessary when these are embedded, (6b):

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|-----|----|----|--|----|---|
| (6) | a. | A: | No he ido.
not have _{1Sing} gone | B: | ¿(Cómo) (que) no has ido?
(how) (that) not have _{2Sing} gone? |
| | b. | A: | ¿Has ido?
have _{2Sing} gone? | B: | ¿(Cómo) (que) *(si) he ido?
(how) (that) *(if) have _{1Sing} gone? |

Since “que” is usually incompatible with direct quotes, it is clear that some atypical properties are at stake. Specifically, I propose that quotative sentences with “que” involve a specific Speech Act Phrase (Speas & Tenny 2003). In the spirit of Etxepare (2010) and in coherence with the semantic difference between (1b)-(4b) and (3b)-(4c), I propose that cases with “que” incorporate the quote as a complete speech act, while the quotes without “que” do not include this syntactic-pragmatic level.

Thus, I propose that, if the quoted utterance appears under the scope of mirativity (in the high SC), “que” (in the embedded Speech Act Phrase) is compatible both with direct and indirect quotes; the faithful reproduction provided by a direct quote is coherent with the mirative value, i.e. with the emotivity implicit in the fact that the speech act was shocking for the speaker.

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