

¡Mira! The grammar-attention interface in the Spanish left periphery

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Background. Most of the current literature on Romance languages distinguishes between two classes of particles that can appear in the left periphery of the clause and that encode information at what can be called the ‘grammar-attention interface’: vocative particles (= encoding attention on the part of the hearer) and exclamative aka expressive particles (= encoding attention on the part of the speaker); see Espinal (2011, 2013), Stavrou (2014), and many others on this distinction.

Proposal. In this paper, we focus on a class of particles that is often left out of the picture in these discussions, but that nevertheless plays an important role at the grammar-attention interface too: hearer-oriented phatic particles like Spanish *fíjate*, *oye*, and *mira* call for attention on the part of the hearer and, in very broad terms, thereby ‘maintain the contact between speaker and hearer’ (see López Bobo 2002). We will claim that these particles are essentially of a mixed nature: while sharing important properties with vocative particles (*Data I*), they also must be distinguished from this class because phatics likewise display similarities with exclamative particles (*Data II*). Based on these observations, we will propose a unified account for all of these particle elements at the grammar-attention interface in the Spanish left periphery (*Analysis*).

Data I. The first set of data shows that phatics like *mira* display some similarities with vocative particles. To illustrate, we will focus on the verb-based particle *mira* (which is the imperative of *mirar* ‘to look’), but the following observations hold for other phatic particles too, with some minor qualifications. Vocative particles like *(h)ey* and *eh* in Spanish are claimed to directly specify a functional head Voc^0 , which carries a deictic [DX] feature (see Espinal 2013; and Hill 2007 on the general idea):

(1) $[\text{VocP } \{(h)ey/eh\} [\text{Voc}^0 \text{ N } [+DX]]]$

While the literature cited above points out that this relation can also be formally encoded by vocative case on the nominal expression in many Indo-European languages, in Spanish this relationship is not morphologically encoded but can still be detected by the fact that all nominal expressions co-occurring with vocative particles feature the deictic constraint that reference to the addressee is obligatory (2a). This results in the morphosyntactic reflex that nominal expressions usually cannot be preceded by a (in)definite determiner (2b; see Espinal 2013). Crucially, we observe the same constraint in the context of *mira* (2c) when it co-occurs with a nominal expression:

- (2) a. (H)ey tío, ¿cómo te va?
PART guy how you goes
‘Hey man! How are things going?’
b. * (H)ey el tío, ¿cómo te va?
PART the guy how you goes
c. Mira (*el) niño, tienes que beber la leche
look the boy, have-2SG that drink-INF the milk
‘Hey boy, you have to drink the milk.’

What is more, we even observe agreement patterns when *mira* is used with a nominal expression (the vocative) that refers to the addressee of the utterance (data from Sánchez López 2017):

- (3) a. Mira, Antonio, las cosas no funcionan así.
‘Look Antonio, things don’t work like this/in this way.’
b. Mirad, chicos, a casa no os podéis llevar eso.
‘Look boys, you cannot bring this to my house.’

We can thus conclude that *mira* and the vocative enter a close phrase-structural relationship, maybe analogous to what has been proposed for vocative particles and vocatives.

Data II. It has long been noted that exclamative particles like *oh* and *ah* have a freer syntactic distribution than vocative particles (e.g., Stavrou 2014). Most importantly, they are not only allowed in the left periphery, but also in other positions. The same is true of *mira* and other phatics (relevant data can be found in Sánchez López 2017). Another property that moves phatics conceptually closer to exclamative particles (and distinguishes them from vocative particles) is that they can co-occur with one another, and in these cases, no ordering restriction can be observed:

- (4) a. [...] **mira, oye**, a mí la verdad que me daría igual que fuera un sueco.
 ‘Look, hey, actually I would care if he was a Swedish man.’
 (CREA, oral, radio, 1991).
- b. [...] ¡No!, es cierto, **oye, mira**, yo lo que pienso es [...]
 ‘Don’t! It is true, hey, look, what I think is [...]
 (CREA, oral).

Given these properties of phatics like *mira*, we can conclude that their left peripheral occurrence has to be encoded in a different way than what has been proposed for vocative particles.

Analysis. In our analysis, we also take into account that vocative particles like *eh* can co-occur with left peripheral phatics (5a); and if they do, they feature the strong tendency to precede phatic particles (5b):

- (5) a. Eh, **oye**, a mí no me hables así.
 PART PART to me don’t me talk like.this.
 ‘Hey, OYE, don’t talk to me like that!’
- b. ?? **Oye**, eh, a mí no me hables así.

We adopt a cartographic approach to phrase structure and, more specifically, follow Hill (2007), Espinal (2013), and many others in their structural claim that vocative particles should be represented in a syntactic domain above ForceP. However, based on ordering facts like (5) and given the fact that only phatics and not also vocatives select for specific sentence types (e.g., *mira* is ruled out in interrogatives), we propose that phatics should be in a more local relationship to Force than vocatives so that they can appropriately check the relevant Force⁰/clause-type features. As shown in (4), phatics can also be stacked (with no particular ordering restrictions), and in this case no other phrase intervenes between these particles; the relevant projection PhatP is thus recursive, with only one position in the clausal left periphery:

- (6) [_{VocP} {(h)ey, eh} [_{Voc⁰ DP}] [_{ForceP} [*_{PhatP} {*mira*, *oye*} [_{Phat⁰ DP}]] [_{Force⁰} {decl, imp, int}...]]

According to (6), VocP is essentially a disjunct constituent like in many classic analyses, and addressee-oriented phatics like *mira* can optionally occur with a nominal expression (but do not have to), and in this case they specify DP directly, with formal reflexes shown in (2c) and (3) above.

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