

EXCLAMATIVES AND CATALAN “DÉU N’HI DO”

INTRODUCTION: “Déu n’hi do” (DND) is an interjection in Catalan, resulting from the grammaticalization of the sentence “Déu n’hi do” (“that God gave it to him/her”). DND takes only exclamatives (either nominal, clausal or elliptical) or questions (see (1-4)). My goal is to provide a formal analysis of this particle and to relate it to the semantics of exclamatives.

BACKGROUND: Sancho (2003) argues that the basic function of DND “is that of emphasis or intensification”. He also notes that DND can be followed by an exclamative and he claims that in such cases, DND “only reinforces constructions which are emphatic by themselves”. I argue both against the claim that DND is an intensifier and that DND is semantically redundant when it appears followed by an exclamative.

My analysis will assume Zanuttini and Portner (2003)’s analysis of exclamatives. They claim that exclamatives syntactically contain a wh operator-variable structure (therefore, like wh-questions, they denote a set of alternative propositions) and an abstract factive morpheme F. These two properties create a pragmatic effect of widening of the domain of quantification, so that the standard set of true propositions is expanded to a wider domain, which includes extreme parts of the scale under consideration. Widening is formally defined as follows: for any clause containing widening, widen the initial domain of quantification, D1, to a new domain of quantification, D2, such that: (i) $[[S]]_{w,D2,<} - [S]_{w,D1,<} \neq \emptyset$ and (ii) $\forall x \forall y [(x \in D1 \& y \in (D2-D1)) \rightarrow x < y]$. The factive morpheme will introduce the following presupposition: $\forall p \in [[s]]_{w,D2,<} - [S]_{w,D1,<} : p$ is true.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EXCLAMATIVES AND DND CLAUSES:

A. Embeddability: DND-clauses pattern like declaratives, and not like exclamatives or questions, and can embed under all verbs that take propositions. Thus, DND-clauses may embed under “believe” and “think”, while exclamatives or questions cannot, as (5) shows.

B. Answerhood: DND-clauses can answer questions, but exclamatives cannot, as (6) shows.

C. Extreme widening: DND attenuates the meaning of exclamative, conveying that the maximum has not been reached. This lack of extreme widening can be reinforced in DND-clauses, but not in exclamatives, as (7) shows. A consequence of this weakening is that, unlike exclamatives, DND-clauses cannot be used as a polite sentence, as (8) shows.

ANALYSIS OF DND:

1. Semantic type: DND takes the denotation of an exclamative or a question (type $\langle\langle st \rangle t \rangle$) and returns a proposition (type $\langle st \rangle$). This explains both differences (A) and (B): since DND-clauses denote propositions, they can answer questions and embed under “think” and believe”.

2. DND lexical meaning: DND presupposes that there is another domain of quantification, D3, which is a proper subset of D2 and a proper superset of D1, as formally defined in (i). The assertion of a DND clause is given in (ii): all the propositions added to the denotation when the assignment function is evaluated with respect to D3 (the middle domain) are true. There is a further component of meaning, a scalar conversational implicature, given in (iii): all the propositions added to the denotation when the assignment function is evaluated with respect to D2 are false. That is, there is no extreme widening, which explains difference (C). Being a conversational implicature, it can be cancelled, as in (9), or reinforced, as in (3).

(i) $[[DND-CP]]^g(w_0)$ is defined iff:

$$(a) [[CP]]^{g,d3/c} - [[CP]]^{g,d1/c} \neq \emptyset \quad (b) [[CP]]^{g,d2/c} - [[CP]]^{g,d3/c} \neq \emptyset$$
$$(c) \forall x \forall y \forall z [(x \in D1 \& y \in (D3-D1)) \& z \in (D3-D2)) \rightarrow x < y < z]$$

(ii) $[[DND-CP]]^g = \lambda w_0. \forall p \in [[CP]]^{g,d3/c} - [[CP]]^{g,d1/c} : p(w_0) = 1$

(iii) $\forall p \in [[CP]]^{g,d2/c} - [[CP]]^{g,d3/c} : p(w_0) = 0$

CONCLUSION: The Catalan particle “Déu n’hi do” interacts with exclamatives in an interesting way. It turns a set of propositions, denoted by the exclamative or question it embeds, into a proposition and introduces a further domain of quantification.

DATA

- (1) **Déu n'hi do** que bé que sona¹
'DND how good that sounds'
"DND how good it sounds"
- (2) **Déu n'hi do** (de) els vots que ha obtingut
'DND of the votes that has obtained'
"DND the votes he obtained"
- (3) Estic molt d'acord amb tu: no sé si del tot, però **Déu n'hi do!**
'am very of agree with you: no know if totally, but DND!
"I agree with you: I don't know whether I agree completely, but DND!"
- (4) **Déu n'hi do** qui va ballar amb qui
'DND who danced with who'
"DND who danced with who"
- (5) a. Crec que **Déu n'hi do** que guapo que és el seu novio
'belive that DND how cute that is his/her boyfriend'
"I believe that DND how cute his/her boyfriend is"
b. * Crec que guapo que és el seu novio
'believe how cute that is his/her boyfriend'
"I believe how (very) cute his/her boyfriend is"
c. * Crec com és de guapo el seu novio
'believe how is of cute his/her boyfriend'
"I believe how cute his/her boyfriend is"
- (6) A: Heu retirat moltes escenes?
"Have you removed many scenes"
B: **Déu n'hi do**
B': # Quantes escenes hem retirat!
"How many scene we have removed!"
- (7) a. ??Que alt que és! Tanmateix, no és extremadament alt
"How tall he is! However, he's not extremely tall"
b. **Déu n'hi do** que alt que és! Tanmateix, no és extremadament alt
"DND how tall he is! However, he's not extremely tall"
- (8) a. Quin sopar més bo!
"What a nice dinner!"
b. **Déu n'hi do** quin sopar més bo! (# as a polite sentence)
"DND what a nice dinner!"
- (9) **Déu n'hi do** quanta gent hi havia a la festa. De fet, hi era tothom
"DND how many people there were at the party. Actually, everyone was there"

SELECTED REFERENCES:

- Sancho, P. 2003. "Anàlisi contrastiva interdialectal de la fraseologia: El cas de déu-n'hi-do, ausa(d)es/a gosa(d)es i espaiet". In *Catalan Review*, 17(2), 151-17.
- Zanuttini, R. and P. Portner. 2003. "Exclamative clauses: at the syntax-semantics interface". *Language* 79: 39-81.

¹ The structure "que Adj que V" ('how Adj he/she/it V') in (1), (5a), (7a) and (7b) is unambiguously exclamative in Catalan, unlike its counterpart in English in embedded contexts. The structure "com V de Adj" ('how V of Adj') in (5c) is ambiguous between the interrogative and the exclamative reading.