

# Chapter 1

## EXPRESSIVITY IN SPANISH

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This chapter focuses on a set of expressive constructions in Spanish, with special reference to Rioplatense Spanish, a dialect spoken in Argentina. A Kaplanian perspective on meaning is adopted, according to which representational and expressive meanings are modeled in separated dimensions. The representational dimension is analyzed with the usual tools of possible world semantics, whereas expressive meanings are formally captured by relating linguistic expressions to sets of contexts, which ultimately provide *use-conditions* under which expressive correctness is evaluated. Syntax plays a crucial role in the derivation of *use-conditions*, whose calculus depends on different syntactic manipulations (e.g., expletivization or expressive agreement/movement) that connect grammar to contextual factors. Adjective expressives in prenominal position (e.g., *maldito* ‘damn’), mixed expressives in postnominal position (e.g., *un libro de mierda* ‘a shitty book’), epithets (e.g., *el idiota* ‘the idiot’), slurs (e.g., *Andrés es sudaca* ‘Andrés is South-American<sub>PEJORATIVE</sub>’), expressive intensifiers (e.g., the degree prefix *re-* or the size adjective *alto/a* ‘tall’ in prenominal position) and some aspects of the Rioplatense address and honorification systems are discussed, then, under this syntactic-semantic approach.

**Keywords:** expressivity, expressive adjectives, epithets, expressive intensifiers, address system, Rioplatense Spanish

### 1.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces a fragment of the grammar and the semantics of expressivity in Spanish, with special reference to Rioplatense Spanish. Before advancing into some of the many expressive constructions the language has, it would be useful to theoretically frame the forthcoming pages. Following the functionalist tradition from [Bühler 1934](#) to [Jakobson 1960](#), I assume that the myriad of phrases and sentences human languages produce serve to different communicational purposes. Representing the world we live in (or the world we could live in) is perhaps the most primitive language function (see [Foolen 2023](#) for an overview). In contemporary formal semantics the representational function of language is modeled with the tools of possible world semantics. For a Spanish sentence like *llueve* ‘it rains’, we model its meaning or *truth-conditions* as the set of worlds in which it rains. Now, consider the following tango line, in which the speaker expresses certain emotional state related to the fact that the addressee is a funny person:

- (1) *Pucha que sos divertido!*  
 EXPRESSIVE that are.2SG funny

‘Damn! You are funny!’

[*Garufa* (tango), 1928]

Truth-conditionally, this sentence is evidently equivalent to the following one, in which the expressive is absent:

- (2) *Sos divertido.*  
 are.2SG funny

‘You are funny.’

Put differently, the two sentences denote exactly the same set of worlds, those in which the addressee is funny. Yet, despite having the same truth conditions, they do not have the same *use-conditions*. Following now the formal tradition initiated by Kaplan 1999 (see also Potts 2005, McCready 2010, Predelli 2013, Gutzmann 2015, 2019), I will say that use-conditions are modeled as *sets of contexts*, not sets of worlds. For an example like (1), the use-conditions would roughly correspond to those *contexts* in which the speaker is in a certain emotional state with respect to the meaning of the proposition. One important observation, particularly stressed by Potts’ (2005) seminal work on conventional implicatures, is that truth-conditions and use-conditions do not interact to each other; i.e., they are computed in parallel meaning dimensions. A crucial test to diagnose meaning independence is provided by the interaction between truth-conditional operators and expressive elements. The observation is that expressives produce the illusory effect of scoping-out those operators, when, in reality, they are computed in another meaning dimension. The following three examples show that the expressive adjective *puto/a* in Spanish “scopes-out” over negation, conditionals and modals:

- (3) a. *No encuentro las putas llaves!*  
 not find.1SG the fucking keys  
 ‘I don’t find the fucking keys!’
- b. *Si no encontrás las putas llaves, voy a enloquecer.*  
 if not find.2SG the fucking keys, go.1SG to go-crazy.INF  
 ‘If you don’t find the fucking keys, I will go crazy.’
- c. *Andrés tiene que encontrar las putas llaves.*  
 Andrés has that find.INF the fucking keys  
 ‘Andrés has to find the fucking keys.’

Here, I will use Potts’ metalogical operator • to separate truth-conditions from use-conditions. Therefore, in our example (1), the denotation of the entire sentence can be represented as follows, where the material to the left of the bullet corresponds to the truth-conditional meaning and the material to the right, to use-conditions (HES = High Emotional State and  $s_c$  = the speaker of the context):

- (4)  $\llbracket \text{Pucha que sos divertido} \rrbracket = \text{the addressee of the context is funny} \bullet \text{HES}(s_c, p)$

Another distinctive property of expressives is that they are speaker-oriented, at least by default. In effect, in all the previous examples in (1) and (3), the emotional state that both *pucha* and *puta* contribute must be attributed to the speaker of the context. The following example shows this more transparently, since the expressive meaning is indubitably attributed to the speaker even in presence of another potential candidate (i.e., the subject of the attitude predicate):

- (5) *Ana cree que no voy a leer ese puto libro.*  
 Ana believes that not go.1SG to read.INF that fucking book  
 ‘Ana believes that I will not read that fucking book.’

Paradigmatic cases of expressive words included in Potts’ original taxonomy are expressive adjectives (e.g., *damn* or *fucking*) or epithets (e.g., *that bastard Chuck*), which typically introduce negative evaluations by the speaker, and honorifics, which, in contrast, are used to communicate the speaker’s respect for the argument of the honorific (e.g., the Spanish honorific *don/doña* as used in *doña Ana* ‘Mrs Ana’ or *don Juan* ‘Mr. Juan’). Mixed words, which encode both truth and use-conditional meaning, like individual or group slurs, are not part of this taxonomy for reasons having to do with the design of Potts’ logic. An extension of such logic is offered by McCready 2010 with the aim of precisely including such words. As McCready shows, mixed words pass Potts’ tests to detect parallel meaning dimensions. In this regard, group slurs pass both scoping-out and speaker-orientation tests. As illustration, consider the example in (6), in which the xenophobic meaning scopes out over the attitude predicate and is more naturally linked to the speaker than to Ana:

- (6) *Ana cree que el sudaca llegó tarde.*  
 Ana believes that the South-American.PEJ arrived late  
 ‘Ana believes that the South-American.PEJ arrived late.’

One way to model the meaning of *sudaca* is encoding both the truth- and use-conditional meanings in its lexical entry. Following McCready 2010, I use the symbol  $\blacklozenge$  for representing mixed types. A simplified lexical entry for *sudaca* is given in (7). Note that I assume that the expressive meaning of a group slur is a stereotype (Orlando & Saab 2020b,a), although this is not particularly important for the rest of this chapter.

- (7)  $\llbracket \text{sudaca} \rrbracket = \text{South-American}(x) \blacklozenge \text{South-American Stereotype}(x)$

In what follows, I will be concerned with the two types of expressive lexical items just introduced: (i) pure expressives of the *damn*-type and (ii) mixed types, clearly illustrated by slur words. Yet, as we will see, not every word or construction that I will characterize as expressive passes the expressive tests in a clear way. This could imply either that the relevant words are not expressive in the favored sense or that the relevant tests fail for independent reasons. In absence of clear diagnostics, one must rely on somewhat arbitrary intuitions regarding meaning dimensions.<sup>1</sup> At any

<sup>1</sup>In addition, even Potts’ tests are far from being uncontroversial, in the sense that for many they just diagnose semantic presuppositions (see Schlenker 2003, 2007, Sauerland 2007).

rate, I assume that the Spanish lexicon contains at least these two types of expressive morphemes/words, but, of course, there could be other types. Therefore, part of the empirical task is finding reasons to classify a given expressive word in one of the two types, not always an easy task, as we will see.

To summarize, beyond its obvious representational force, human languages are also extremely powerful devices for communicating features related to the speaker's profile. This profile refers to many aspects of the speaker's emotional states but also of her placement in context. Thus, many expressive words in natural language conventionally express something about the discourse participants, their emotions or attitudes and their contexts.

Now, beyond the obvious fact that all human languages have expressive words, we must also characterize their combinatorial properties in the syntax. In fact, it turns out that the syntax of expressivity shows some distinctive properties that set it apart from the syntax of the representational dimension of language. In [Saab 2022](#), I argue in detail that some expressive constructions require a kind of *syntactic recycling*, which essentially consists of merging material in “expletive” positions. This manipulation creates a *non-representational syntax*. The idea is that syntax provides different Merge positions, some of which are predicative and some of which are not, i.e., syntax also provides expletive positions. This recycling of certain words in non-predicative position straightforwardly accounts for the different distribution of some words, which work as mixed items in predicative position but as pure expressives in non-predicative ones (e.g. slurs vs. epithets). In addition, other expressive phenomena require the intervention of usual syntactic process of *Agree* or *movement*, which, as proposed in [Gutzmann 2019](#), are triggered by formal features related to the grammar of expressivity.

At any rate, the main aim of this chapter is descriptive, so in what follows, I will avoid in-depth theoretical discussions. As advanced, the description corresponds to a fragment of the grammar of Spanish in general, but with many references to a particular dialect spoken in the Río de la Plata area, in Argentina. Importantly, Rioplatense Spanish must not be confused with Argentinian Spanish, a term that, according to [Vidal de Battini 1964](#), covers at least five dialectal sub-areas. Here, and for obvious space restrictions, I will only cover fragments of the Rioplatense region, which as noted by Vidal de Battini, includes the Buenos Aires province, the city of Buenos Aires, the provinces of Santa Fe, Entre Ríos, La Pampa, areas of La Patagonia colonized by population coming from Buenos Aires, and, finally, important areas of Uruguay.

The chapter is structured in the following way. In section [1.2](#), I describe three strategies of expressive modification in the nominal domain, namely: (i) prenominal expressive adjectives (section [1.2.1](#)), (ii) postnominal expressive nominals (section [1.2.2](#)) and (iii) epithets (section [1.2.3](#)). In turn, in section [1.3](#), I focus on some complex strategies of expressive intensification, which involve interactions at the left periphery of CPs and DPs. The grammar of politeness is the theme of section [1.4](#), in which I briefly discuss the *vos/usted* address system in Rioplatense Spanish (section [1.4.1](#)) and the adnominal honorifics *don/doña* and *señor/a* (section [1.4.2](#)). In the concluding section, I offer a list of further expressive phenomena that should be added to the research agenda of the theory of expressivity.

## 1.2 Expressive modification in the nominal phrase

In this section, I address three types of expressive modifiers in the nominal domains, namely: (i) pre-nominal expressive adjectives (EAs), which essentially correspond to the well-studied pure expressives of the *damn*-type in English (e.g., *las putas llaves* ‘the fucking keys’), (ii) nominal expressives, like *un libro de mierda* ‘a shitty book’, which occur in postnominal position and have a mixed semantic behavior, and (iii) epithets, which exclusively modify pronominal indexes within the internal structure of DPs. The three types are clearly distinguished by their syntactic distribution and their semantic behavior.

### 1.2.1 Prenominal expressive adjectives

Many Spanish adjectives can occur pre- and postnominally. Here are some relevant examples:

- (8) a. *una artista famosa*  
an artist famous  
b. *una famosa artista*  
a famous artist  
‘a famous artist’
- (9) a. *las ovejas blancas*  
the sheep white  
b. *las blancas ovejas*  
the white sheep  
‘the white sheep’
- (10) a. *un hombre pobre*  
a man poor  
b. *un pobre hombre*  
a poor man  
‘a poor man’

As noted by [Demonte 2008](#) and others, adjective position in Spanish triggers many interpretative differences not always easy to describe. In her own words,

In Spanish, a language in which adjectives appear pre- and postnominally, there are systematic (although sometimes not easily describable) interpretative differences associated with the position of adjectives in the nominal domain.

[[Demonte 2008](#): 71]

In effect, the choice of the pre or postnominal position is not semantically innocuous. For instance, *blancas* is a restrictive modifier in (9a), with a typical intersective semantics (i.e., the semantic value of *ovejas blancas* results from the intersection of the set of sheep

and the set of white things). Yet, in prenominal position there is no intersective semantics; the adjective denotes a prototypical property of *sheep*, so *las blancas ovejas* denotes just the set of sheep, without any color restriction (see Bello [1847], 1988). In turn, *pobre* in (10a) is a restrictive adjective but a purely evaluative modifier in (10b) with an indubitable negative valence. Finally, the combination noun+adjective in (8a) results, again, in a restrictive semantics; in this case, the prenominal order triggers a mandatory specific interpretation for the entire indefinite DP (see Bosque 1996). It seems, then, that Spanish and Romance in general use the prenominal position for introducing non-at issue commentaries (e.g., *blancas ovejas*), purely evaluative meanings (e.g., *pobre hombre*), or certain specific discourse features (e.g., *famosa artista*). In other words, semantic restriction is confined to (certain) postnominal positions.

Consider now the following minimal pair:

- (11) a. *ese profesor puto*  
 that professor homosexual<sub>pejorative</sub>  
 ‘that f... professor’  
 b. *ese puto profesor*  
 that fucking professor  
 ‘that fucking professor’

The radical contrast between the pre and postnominal adjective position in the case of the adjective *puto* is easy to pinpoint: in (11a), it is used as a slur-word, but as a pure expressive adjective (EAs) in (11b). The English translation makes the difference evident. Other EAs in Spanish are *maldito* ‘damn’ (e.g., *el maldito profesor* ‘the damn professor’) and *bendito* ‘blessed’ (e.g., *el bendito profesor* lit. ‘the blessed professor’). Like EAs in English (e.g., *fucking*, *damn*, *bloody*), this use of the adjective *puto* does not contribute any meaning to the truth-conditional dimension, it only contributes the speaker’s dislike of the professor. I will represent this type of expressive meaning with the frowny face, as in (12) and, as far as I know, the few expressive adjectives that Spanish has in the prenominal domain only encode a negative valence:<sup>2</sup>

- (12) ☹(the professor)

The semantic behavior of expressive adjectives is somewhat unexpected from a compositional point of view. It does not result from the syntactic-semantic combination of *puto* and *profesor*, since it is the entire individual-denoting DP what is semantically modified. In fact, the semantic connection can be still much more flexible, as in (13), in which the speaker’s dislike is directed against the whole situation being denoted by this particular sentence and not, say, against the cake.

- (13) a. *El perro se comió la puta torta.*  
 the dog CL ate the fucking cake  
 ‘The dog ate the fucking cake.’  
 b. ☹(the dog ate the cake)

<sup>2</sup>This is not the case with postnominal expressives (see section 1.2.2) or epithets (cf. see section 1.2.3).



This is a paradigmatic illustration of the phenomenon of *argument extension*, i.e., the apparent mismatch between syntax and semantics whereby some expressives seem to affect a syntactic constituent other than the one they directly modify (Potts 2005: p. 166; see also Gutzmann 2019, Bross 2021, Lo Guercio & Orlando 2022). The fact that expressive adjectives show argument extension makes them completely different from the entire set of pre and postnominal adjectives in the examples in (8)-(10), in which semantic modification matches syntactic combination. Of course, as noted, there are also important differences in this set of adjectives, in which *pobre* is purely evaluative but *famosa* is descriptive. In the interests of brevity, let us focus just on the descriptive ones (DAs) of the *famosa*-type and their sharp differences with EAs of the *puto*-type.

According to Potts 2005, EAs in English do not have a distinctive syntax, so argument extension effects have to be considered as a true case of a compositional failure. Gutzmann 2019, instead, notices several syntactic differences between EAs and DAs in German and English and proposes a particular syntactic derivation for EAs based on a version of the *Agree* model (Wurmbrand 2012, 2014, Zeijlstra 2012). Regardless of particular solutions to the argument extension puzzle, Spanish EAs do have a particular syntactic distribution as well, even when they look *prima facie* regular prenominal adjectives, since, for instance, they show regular gender and number concord. First, and as already illustrated, EAs can only occur in prenominal position. As shown by the contrast in (11), *puto* is a purely expressive adjective in prenominal position, but a slur for homosexuals in postnominal position.<sup>3</sup> DAs, instead, do not lose their core meaning when occurring in prenominal position. The following pair of examples makes the point even clearer. In an example like (15b), *putos* in postnominal position is just absurd.

- (14) a. *una misteriosa carta*  
           a   mysterious letter  
       b. *una carta misteriosa*  
           a   letter mysterious

<sup>3</sup>Resnik 2013 claims that EAs can have postnominal uses and gives the following examples:

- (1) a. *De nuevo traje esa (maldita) moto (maldita).*  
       of new brought.3SG that (damn) motorcycle (damn)  
       ‘Once again, (s)he brought that (damn) motorcycle (damn).’  
       b. *No aguanto más este (puto) clima (puto).*  
       not tolerate.1SG more this (fucking) weather (fucking)  
       ‘I cannot tolerate this (fucking) weather (fucking) anymore.’

(Resnik 2013: 56)

I accept these postnominal uses, although they are less natural as pure expressives than the prenominal ones. In order to be properly interpreted as expressives, they require additional expressive strategies. For instance, they are much more natural with demonstrative articles, which, as is well-known, have expressive flavors. Yet, the most important difference between the pre and postnominal uses is that only the prenominal ones show argument extension. For instance, the sentence (13) is extremely infelicitous if the EA is in postnominal position, and the reason seems to be connected to the fact that an example like this is particularly felicitous in a context in which the expressive scopes over the entire proposition. Therefore, I tend to think that the postnominal uses Resnik notes are of a different sort, perhaps related to a metaphorical process involving an adjective in restrictive position.

- (15) a. *los putos libros*  
the fucking books  
b. # *los libros putos*  
the books f..

Second, while DAs in Spanish admit the superlative form in prenominal position, EAs do not:<sup>4</sup>

- (16) a. *el más fino vino del país*  
the most fine wine of.the country  
'the finest wine in the country'  
b. # *las más malditas llaves*  
the most damn keys

Third, DAs, but not EAs, admit degree modifiers:

- (17) a. *la muy/poco/demasiado astuta abogada*  
the very/little/too clever lawyer.F  
'the very/not too/ too clever lawyer'  
b. \* *las muy/poco/demasiado putas llaves*  
the very/little/too fucking keys  
'the very/not too/too fucking keys'

Yet, EAs, in particular *puto*, can be modified by expressive intensifiers (EIs) like *re-*, at least in Rioplatense Spanish (see section 1.3):<sup>5</sup>

- (18) a. *las re putas llaves*  
the EI fucking keys  
'the EI fucking keys'  
b. ?? *las re benditas/malditas llaves*  
the EI blessed/damn keys

Fourth, DAs, but not EAs, admit adverbial modification:

- (19) a. *el tristemente célebre autor de la novela*  
the sadly famous author of the novel  
'the sadly famous author of the novel'  
b. *el sorpresivamente largo título de su nuevo libro*  
the surprisingly long title of her new book  
'the surprisingly long title of her new book'

<sup>4</sup>Comparative forms are incompatible with all prenominal adjectives.

<sup>5</sup>Modification by the degree word *muy* 'very' is not impossible, but it requires to be reinterpreted as an intensifier. Thus, *muy* gives a felicitous result in cases like (17b) only under this intensification reading.



- (20) a. \* *las tristemente putas llaves*  
 the sadly        fucking keys  
 ‘the sadly fucking keys’  
 b. \* *el sorprendentemente puto auto*  
 the surprisingly    fucking car  
 ‘the surprisingly fucking car’

Fifth, EAs cannot be coordinated, while DAs can. Cases like (21b), which are better tolerated by some speakers and in some dialects, are, in reality, instances of fake coordination, in the sense that there is no coordination meanings at play (e.g., intersection), but, again, intensification of the expressive meaning:<sup>6</sup>

- (21) a. *el feroz y absurdo ataque a la libertad de expresión*  
 the fierce and absurd    attack to the liberty    of speech  
 ‘the fierce and absurd attack on freedom of speech’  
 b. # *las putas y malditas llaves*  
 the fucking and damn    keys

Finally, EAs, unlike DAs, cannot occur as predicates in copular sentences:

- (22) a. *La carta es misteriosa.*  
 the letter is mysterious  
 ‘The letter is mysterious.’  
 b. \* *La carta es maldita.*  
 the letter is damn  
 \*‘The letter is damn.’

The following table summarizes the different distribution of EAs and DAs in Spanish:

	DAs	EAs
can occur in the postnominal position	yes	no
compatible with the superlative form	yes	no
compatible with degree modification	yes	no
compatible with adverbial modification	yes	no
can be coordinated	yes	no
can be used predicatively	yes	no

Table 1: DAs vs. EAs.

These facts provide strong evidence that EAs and DAs significantly differ in their syntactic distribution. It seems that EAs are structurally poor and do not permit the typical syntactic combinations of regular adjectives. Next, we should wonder how this structural deficiency connects to the two characteristic properties of EAs, namely (i) its

<sup>6</sup>Gutzmann 2019 claims that coordination of EAs are ungrammatical in English and German. If correct, this is not a trivial difference, since it could indicate a different phrasal status in German/English, on the one hand, and Spanish, on the other (heads vs. phrases, respectively).

null semantic import at the truth-conditional level, and (ii) argument extension. But before advancing on the semantic side, let us provide some additional details on the syntactic analysis of EAs in Spanish.

Following the theory of syntactic recycling in Saab 2022, I assume that they are syntactic expletives, i.e., syntactic objects merged in non-representational positions in the inflectional spine of the DP structure. This assumption is good for at least two reasons: (i) expletives do not contribute to truth-conditions, although some do have use-conditions, and (ii) expletives cannot be used predicatively (see (22b)). For concreteness, let us assume that EAs, as other expletives, are merged in the inflectional domain of the nominal spine, namely NumP, as shown below:

(23) *puto profesor*: [DP D [NumP *puto* [nP n [NP profesor ]]]]

DAs of many kinds are instead merged in the nP domain and are, therefore, relevant at the truth-conditional level. Prenominal adjectives as the ones introduced in (8)-(10) are also merged at the nP level. Evidence for this ordering comes from the fact that EAs precede this set of adjectives:<sup>7</sup>

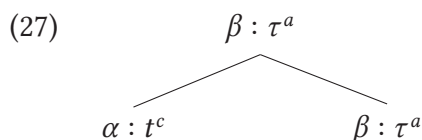
- (24) a. *Estoy cansado de escuchar de esa puta famosa artista.*  
am.1SG tired of hear.INF of that fucking famous artist  
'I'm tired of hearing about that fucking famous artist.'
- b. \**Estoy cansado de escuchar de esa famosa puta artista.*  
am.1SG tired of hear.INF of that fucking famous artist
- (25) a. *Tus malditas blancas ovejas no paran de pastar en mi terreno.*  
your damn white sheep not stop.INF of graze.INF in my land  
'Your fucking white sheep don't stop grazing on my land.'
- b. \**Tus blancas malditas ovejas no paran de pastar en mi terreno.*  
your white damn sheep not stop.INF of graze.INF in my land
- (26) a. *Ese bendito pobre hombre está sufriendo.*  
that blessed poor man is suffering  
'That blessed poor man is suffering.'
- b. \**Ese pobre bendito hombre está sufriendo.*  
that poor blessed man is suffering

<sup>7</sup>Yet, above EAs we can have intentional adjectives. Placing an EA above an intentional adjective is more deviant, but perhaps not totally degraded:

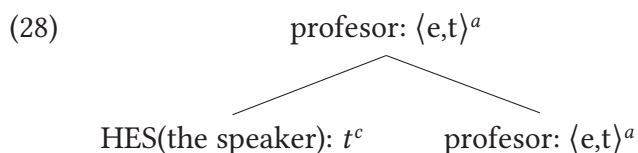
- (1) a. *el supuesto maldito asesino*  
the alleged damn murderer  
'the alleged damn murdered'
- b. ?? *el maldito supuesto asesino*  
the damn alleged murderer

This is expected, I think, since intentional adjectives must be located high in the functional spine, probably above NumP, in order to scope over the relevant extended projection of the nP.

This observation regarding the relative position of EAs in the nominal structure is still not enough to account for the argument extension effects attested in examples like (13). In order to address this problem, I will follow the proposal in [Lo Guercio & Orlando 2022](#) and assume that EAs introduce use-conditions through the rule of **Isolated CI**, as formulated in Potts ([Potts 2005: 66](#)):<sup>8</sup>



The rule passes the meaning of the expressive's sister unaltered and adds a conventional implicature, which in this case just communicate an heightened emotional state of the speaker. The crucial property of this rule is that there is no functional combination. For a case like (23), the result of applying Isolated CI to the structure is roughly as illustrated below (HES = heightened emotional state):



In [Lo Guercio & Orlando 2022](#), argument extension follows, then, from a set of pragmatic inferences enriching the basic, unspecific content that the expressive adds semantically.<sup>9</sup> Now, Lo Guercio & Orlando's solution solves the problem but at the cost of introducing a semantic axiom which is non-compositional in nature. The rule simply stipulates that a branching node in the syntax can have a non-branching semantics. A more parsimonious approach to the problem would introduce cyclic considerations for this particular syntactic-semantic derivation. For instance, it seems plausible to think of EAs as being introduced in another cycle of the syntactic derivation, i.e., EAs are late merged in the derivation. If this is the case, then, the Isolated CI rule would be the superficial reflex of a late merger derivation in the syntax. I cannot provide the details of such an approach here. See  $\rightarrow$  *Expressivity and syntax* by SAAB, this volume, for a more in-depth discussion and comparison with other proposals.

### 1.2.2 Postnominal expressive NPs/DPS

Spanish also makes productive use of postnominal expressive NPs/DPs, always introduced by the dummy preposition *de* 'of'. For convenience, I will call all these constructions *expressive nominals* (ENs). The following list illustrates typical examples in Rioplatense Spanish:

<sup>8</sup>I use Potts' rules and representations, but this is not crucial. For those readers unfamiliar with Potts' logic, the most important fact to have in mind is the introduction of a new semantic type for conventional implicatures, which is annotated as the superscript  $\sigma^c$  on standard semantic types. Truth-conditional types, introducing at-issue content, are, in turn, annotated with the superscript  $\sigma^a$ . Finally, as mentioned in the introduction, the bullet  $\bullet$  is used to separate the two meaning dimensions.

<sup>9</sup>In a sense, this view generalizes the analysis Potts makes for cases like *this is fantastic fucking news*, in which the expressive does not seem to take any functional argument at all.

- (29) a. *un departamento de mierda/porquería*  
 an apartment of shit/dirt  
 ‘a shit of an apartment’
- b. *un libro de puta madre*  
 a book of whore mother  
 ‘an awesome book’
- c. *ese formulario del orto*  
 that form of.the ass  
 ‘that fucking annoying application form’
- d. *un guitarrista del carajo*  
 a guitar-player of.the hell  
 ‘a hell of a guitar player’

There are two obvious differences with the reduced set of EAs discussed in the previous section. First, as already noticed, these modifiers are expressive NPs (e.g., *mierda*) or fossilized DPs (e.g., *el orto*) and, second, they occur postnominally. Beyond these initial and easily detectable differences, there is another set of properties that distinguish both types of expressives and raise important analytical questions. One crucial property of ENs is that, unlike EAs, they do not show argument extension. So, in a sentence like (30a), the EN can only be interpreted as modifying its preceding noun and not, say, the entire proposition:

- (30) a. *Leí un libro de puta madre.*  
 read.PST.1SG a book of whore mother  
 ‘I read a book of EN.’
- b. ☺(great book)
- c. # ☺(I read a great book.)

This difference between EAs and ENs correlates with their different semantic import. As noted, EAs do not add any semantic content to the truth-conditional dimension (i.e., *las putas llaves* denotes whatever *las llaves* denotes at the truth-conditional level). This is not the case when we consider the semantic contribution of ENs. In the following example, negation, a truth-conditional operator, clearly scopes over the EN:

- (31) *Ana no es una guitarrista de puta madre, es solo buena.*  
 Ana not is a guitar-player of whore mother, is just good  
 ‘Ana is not an awesome guitar player, she is just good.’

The example below, in addition to illustrate that the EN does not project over the *believe* predicate, also shows that its expressive meaning can be clearly detached of the speaker subjectivity. Put differently, the EN is not necessarily speaker-oriented (indeed, the speaker can disagree with respect to Ana’s evaluation of the relevant book):

- (32) *Ana cree que Paula compró un libro de mierda.*  
 Ana believes that Paula bought a book of shit  
 ‘Ana believes that Paula bought a shitty book.’

There is, however, the remaining issue whether, in addition to contribute to the truth-conditional level, ENs also add a subjective meaning in a parallel meaning dimension, i.e., are ENs mixed expressives? In many cases, illustrated here in examples like (30a), a certain speaker emotional disposition is also being communicated. If such disposition is *semantically* communicated, then we would have at least one good reason to classify some concrete instances of ENs as mixed or hybrid expressives. This is not the case in examples like (32), in which *mierda* seems to be used as a uni-dimensional evaluative. Yet, things are more complicated when other cases are considered. For instance, here is a real life example said by a person trying to send WhatsApp messages, who does not manage to do it in a normal way because of her long nails:

- (33) *Pará! Tardo en escribir con estas uñas del orto.*  
 stop delay.1SG in writing with these nails of.the ass  
 ‘Wait! It takes me a while to write with these fucking nails.’

Note that I translate this EN use as a pure EA in English, which seems to be the most adequate equivalent in this case. Not surprisingly, an argument extension reading expressing the speaker’s annoyance with her slow writing is not only plausible, but favored, as well. For these pure expressive uses, it seems reasonable to extend the analysis I suggested for EAs in the previous section and to propose that some EN uses are derived by late merging the expressive nominal expression. This late merge step triggers, then, a conventional implicature at a parallel dimension of meaning. For the remaining cases, I will remain neutral regarding the mixed or uni-dimensional nature of ENs; I only contend that those uses must be modeled as having truth-conditional content. To the best of my knowledge, ENs have not been discussed in the previous relevant literature, so any conclusion should be taken as provisional. At any rate, we can safely conclude that the following table reflects many of the essential distributional and semantic differences between EAs and ENs:<sup>10</sup>

	EAs	ENs
occur in postnominal position	no	yes
argument extension	yes	no
at-issue content	no	yes

Table 2: EAs vs. ENs (excluding pure expressive uses).

<sup>10</sup>The assimilation I made here among all the postnominal expressives must be taken carefully. Some, like *del orto*, are more like pure expressives. In addition, *del orto* or *de puta madre* are used in some peculiar idioms involving copular verbs. For instance, *estar del orto* lit. ‘to be of the ass’ or *estar de puta madre* lit. ‘to be of whose mother’ means that I am in a terrible mood or that I feel awesome, respectively. You can also use *de puta madre* as a predicative to indicate that something is awesome and that one is emotionally affected by that, like in *La cena estuvo de puta madre* lit. ‘The dinner was of whose mother’. Other bare NP expressives do not have these uses in the verbal domain. In the case of *de mierda*, predicative uses are marginal, like in *??el libro es de mierda* lit. ‘the book is of shit’. Evidently, further research is needed in the domain of ENs.

### 1.2.3 Epithets as expressive pronouns

Typically, epithets in Romance occur in two different syntactic environments. They can be used without any overt argument or with a (putative) argument preceded by the preposition *de* ‘of’:<sup>11</sup>

- (34) a. *El idiota llegó tarde.*  
 the idiot arrived late  
 ‘The idiot arrived late.’  
 b. *El idiota de Andrés llegó tarde.*  
 the idiot of Andrés arrived late  
 ‘That idiot Andrés arrived late.’

As the translations show, English also has the two uses, with the difference that the argument of the epithet is transparently a DP, not a PP. According to Potts 2005, epithets modify full overt DPs or empty pronouns under exactly the same underlying structure. Semantically, epithets introduce conventional implicatures CI Application (see section 1.2.1). Concretely, they take an *e* denoting expression at the truth-conditional dimension and return the same meaning at that level adding a conventional implicature in which the target of the epithet is evaluated by the speaker (see (35)).<sup>12</sup>

- (35)  $\llbracket \text{el idiota de Andrés} \rrbracket = \text{Andrés} \bullet \text{Idiot}(\text{Andrés})$

Since Potts also proposes that EAs and their arguments are interpreted by CI Application, epithets and EAs form a natural class. Yet, epithets, unlike EAs, do not trigger argument extension (Gutzmann 2019, Lo Guercio & Orlando 2022, Lo Guercio & Saab 2024). The following minimal pair shows two things: (i) both epithets and EAs scope out and are speaker-oriented, but (ii) only EAs trigger argument extension. In effect, in (36a) *idiota* can only affect Pablo as the target of the speaker’s attitude, whereas in (36b), the EA can target the embedded proposition, which is indeed the favored reading in this case.

- (36) a. *Ana cree que nadie tolera al idiota de Pablo.*  
 Ana believes that no-one tolerates DOM.the idiot of Pablo  
 ‘Ana believes that no one tolerates that idiot Pablo.’  
 b. *Ana cree que nadie quiere comer la puta torta.*  
 Ana believes that no-one wants eat.INF. the fucking cake  
 ‘Ana believes that no one wants to eat the fucking cake.’

<sup>11</sup>Most epithets are associated to negative valences. They can correspond to mere individual insults mostly related to intellectual or physical properties (e.g., *el boludo de Andrés* ‘that asshole Andrés’, *el panzón de Andrés* ‘that paunchy Andrés’), but also to group insults corresponding to stereotypes of nationality, sexual orientation or social class, among many other social dimensions (e.g., *ese sudaca de Andrés* ‘that South-American<sub>pejorative</sub> Andrés’, *ese puto de Andrés* ‘that f... Andrés’, *ese villero de Andrés* ‘that SOCIAL-CLASS EPITHET Andrés’ and so on). Yet, unlike EAs, there are also positive epithets like *ese ángel de Andrés* ‘that angel Andrés’ or *ese genio de Andrés* ‘that genius Andrés’.

<sup>12</sup>In this section, I will not address the syntax of binominals structures like (34b), which are discussed in some detail in  $\rightarrow$  *Expressivity and Syntax* by SAAB, this volume.



In sum, with respect to scoping-out and speaker-orientation, epithets behave like EAs. Yet, both types differ with respect to the crucial property of argument extension. Recall that, according to [Lo Guercio & Orlando 2022](#), the meaning of a [EA+noun] combination is derived through Isolated CI plus a set of pragmatic inferences. And I suggested that Isolated CI can be the superficial reflex of the fact the EAs are late merged during the syntactic derivation. In this respect, epithets, instead, behave more like ENs in that they semantically combine with their semantic argument. Yet, they are not mixed terms and do not add any content to the truth-conditional level. The basic differences between ENs, EAs, and epithets are reflected in the following table.

	EAs	ENs	Epithets
occur in the postnominal position	no	yes	no
argument extension	yes	no	no
truth-conditional content	no	yes	no

Table 3: Epithets, EAs and ENs

Beyond this first descriptive approximation, epithets are particularly complex both in their syntactic distribution and semantic contribution. A first problem is that a simple sequence as *Det+epithet* can be ambiguous. To make the ambiguity clear let us consider the case of slur words like *puto/a* ‘f..’ in examples like (37), which can also be used as epithets, as illustrated in (38):

- (37) a. *Andrés es puto.*  
 Andrés is homosexual<sub>pejorative</sub>  
 ‘Andrés is a f..’
- b. *Ana es puta.*  
 Ana is prostitute<sub>pejorative</sub>  
 ‘Ana is a b..’
- (38) a. *el puto de Andrés...*  
 the EPITHET of Andrés  
 ‘that f.. Andrés..’
- b. *la puta de Ana...*  
 the EPITHET of Ana  
 ‘that b.. Ana ...’

In the examples in (37), the slurs are mixed terms. At the truth-conditional level, these terms denote sets (of homosexuals or prostitutes). This meaning is absent in the epithetic uses in (38), which only preserve the expressive dimension. As already noted, [Orlando & Saab 2020b](#) model such meanings as stereotypes (see section 1.1). These observations serve to the purposes of framing the ambiguity of cases like the following ones, first noted in [Orlando & Saab 2020a](#):

- (39) a. *El puto llegó tarde.*  
 the EPITHET/SLUR arrived late  
 ‘The epithet/slur arrived late.’

- b. *La puta*                    *llegó*    *tarde*.  
 the EPITHET/SLUR arrived late  
 ‘The epithet/slur arrived late.’

The two readings are quite intuitive: either the subject DP is interpreted as an epithet or as a slur. Under the reading as an epithet, the subject DP in both examples has no classificatory force and is read as a mere insult. Orlando and Saab (2020, 2021) propose that the ambiguity has a structural source. Concretely, under the epithet reading, the expressive word occurs in expletive position, Spec,NumP, modifying a pronominal index, i.e., epithets have a underlying pronominal syntax. Slurs, instead, are the head of the nominal projection, as expected for any predicative noun.

- (40) a. *el puto* as slur: [DP D [NumP [nP n [NP *puto* ]]]]  
 b. *el puto* as epithet: [DP D [NumP *puto* [nP index ]]]

There is, then, an interesting similarity between epithets and EAs in the sense of the theory of syntactic recycling introduced in section 1.1, namely: they are recycled in structural positions in which their content cannot be truth-conditionally relevant. Now, epithets combine functionally with individual denoting expressions; concretely, with pronouns. In effect, as Dubinsky & Hamilton 1998 have shown for English, epithets behave as antilogophoric pronouns and, as such, are no subject to Principle-C of binding theory. An antilogophoric context is one in which the attributive content of the epithet is not evaluated by its antecedent or, put differently, the antecedent of the epithet cannot be the perspective-bearer (cf. Dubinsky & Hamilton 1998: 689). If this is on the right track, we predict that in an antilogophoric environment in which Principle-C is also active, only the epithetic reading must be available. This is borne out in Spanish: in the following example, *el puto* can only have an epithetic interpretation, in which there is no set denotation at the truth-conditional level. The reading under which the relevant nominal phrase denotes the set of homosexuals is inaccessible. This is because under the slur reading the relevant DP is an R-expression, not a pronoun, and consequently, ruled out by Principle-C of binding theory, since the antecedent *Andrés* or *él* in the matrix clause incorrectly binds the DP containing the slur:

- (41) Aun cuando yo pueda perdonarlo, Andrés<sub>i</sub>/él<sub>i</sub> me demostró que \*Andrés<sub>i</sub>/el puto<sub>i</sub> no se lo merece.  
 ‘Even though I can forgive him, Andrés<sub>i</sub> showed me that \*Andrés<sub>i</sub> / the epithet<sub>i</sub> doesn’t deserve it.’

This is not the unique distributional difference between slurs and epithets. Let me briefly comment on other five relevant properties that disambiguate the two structures under consideration.

First, epithets admit (certain) degree modification. For instance, *muy* ‘very’ can modify epithets, but not slurs, which are pure nominal heads. For this reason, the adding of a degree modifier like in (42) blocks the slur reading completely:

- (42) *El muy puto*            *llegó*    *tarde*.  
 the very EPITHET arrived late

‘That complete *f...* arrived late.’

Second, evaluative binominal constructions of the DET+EPITHET+*of*+DP there is no chance to interpret the expressive word as a slur, showing that in these syntactic environments, the epithet cannot be considered the nominal head of the entire DP (see Saab 2022):<sup>13</sup>

- (43) *el puto de Andrés*  
 the EPITHET of Andrés  
 ‘that *f...* Andrés’

Third, only slurs, which are the head of their extended nominal projection, can be subject to nominal ellipsis of the usual type, in which the entire NP or nP is elided. This is not the case with epithets, which can never be part of a NP-ellipsis derivation (( ... ) = ellipsis site):

- (44) a. *el puto de al lado y el <puto> de arriba*  
 the SLUR of to.the side and the <SLUR> of upstairs  
 ‘the *f...* next door and the one living upstairs...’  
 b. \* *el puto de Andrés y el <puto> de Pablo*  
 the EPITHET of Andrés and the <EPITHET> of Pablo

Note, in addition, that in (44a) the presence of a restrictive modifier in the antecedent and in the elliptical structure prevents the epithetic reading. This is part of a general pattern. As shown below, restrictive adjectives can only be combined with slurs, not with epithets, which are not set-denoting expressions and cannot, consequently, be restricted by other intersective modifiers:

- (45) a. *el puto inteligente de arriba*  
 the SLUR intelligent of upstairs  
 ‘the intelligent *f...* living upstairs’  
 b. \* *el puto inteligente de Andrés*  
 the EPITHET intelligent of Andrés

Finally, according to the analysis in (40b), epithets are nominal phrases merged in the extended projection of a pronominal index; consequently, they are not the nominal heads of the relevant DPs. This was confirmed by the ban of nominal ellipsis, illustrated in (44). Now, another crucial piece of evidence in favor of this analytical option comes from the fact that epithets, besides initial appearances, are not true agreement or concord controllers. This is confirmed by epithets that mismatch in gender features with the determiner:

<sup>13</sup>Unless the entire DP is interpreted as a possessive construction, in which case the head of the construction is a slur and the *of*-phrase can only be interpreted as introducing the possessor. As shown in Saab 2008, this possessive / epithet ambiguity has a structural source.

- (46) a. *el gallina*  
 the.M.SG chicken.F.SG  
 ‘the EPITHET’
- b. *el bestia*  
 the.M.SG beast.F.SG  
 ‘the EPITHET’
- c. *el cabeza*  
 the.M.SG head.F.SG  
 ‘the EPITHET’

None of these examples can be interpreted with the regular truth-conditional meaning of the nouns *gallina*, *bestia* or *cabeza*, i.e., they are pure epithets. Now, note that according to the analysis in terms of syntactic recycling proposed here, there is no concord mismatch in any of the relevant examples, because the epithet is not the concord controller, but the empty pronominal is.

The following table summarizes the set of distributional differences between slurs and epithets discussed so far:

	Epithets	Slurs
Antilogophoric effects	yes	no
Principle-C effects	no	yes
(Some) degree modification	yes	no
Compatible in binominals	yes	no
Compatible with NP-ellipsis	no	yes
Restrictive modification	no	yes
Agreement/concord controller	no	yes

Table 4: Epithets vs. slurs.

### 1.3 Expressive intensification

Expressive content is massively attested in the realm of gradable constructions. For instance, the speakers of different languages have at their disposal strategies to intensify degrees of gradable expressions and, at the same time, linking this intensification to some sort of emotion. Following [Gutzmann & Turgay 2015](#), I call this type of elements *expressive intensifiers* (EI). In English, for instance, EIs like *fucking* or *goddamn* serve to the end of boosting degrees:

- (47) Rufus is {fucking, goddamn} tall. (Morzycki 2011, 401, ex. (1))

As shown in [Morzycki 2011](#), in English expressive intensifiers can co-occur with degree words:

- (48) Rufus is {really, pretty, incredibly, too} {fucking, goddamn} tall.

(Morzycki 2011, 402, ex. (2a))

This does not generalize to all languages that also have EIS. In this respect, Gutzmann & Turgay 2015 note that, unlike English, EIS do not co-occur with degree words in German:

- (49) a. \* *Die Party ist **sau sehr** cool.*  
           the party is EI very cool  
       b. \* *Die Party ist **sehr sau** cool.*  
           the party is very EI cool

(Gutzmann & Turgay 2015, 193, ex. (24))

In this section, I focus on two types of EIS in Rioplatense Spanish, namely: (i) the prefix *re-*, and (ii) the prenominal adjective *alto/a* ‘tall’, as used by the youngest generations of this dialect. There is good evidence to conclude that these constructions exploit expressive features encoded at the left periphery of DPs.

### 1.3.1 Rioplatense *re-*

#### 1.3.1.1 Adjectival *re-*

In Rioplatense Spanish, the prefix *re-* is the most used EI and, unlike other kinds of EIS in the language, it has many perplexing properties both in terms of syntactic distribution and semantic behavior (see Kornfeld 2010, 2012a,b, Kornfeld & Kuguel 2013). In these sections, I briefly discuss some of these properties. When attached to adjectives, like in (50a), *re-* seems to work as the German EIS in the sense that: (i) it is semantically hybrid (a truth-conditionally degree modifier and an expressive intensifier) (cf. (50b)), and (ii) it cannot co-occur with other degree words like *muy* ‘very’ in any imaginable ordering (cf. (51)) or comparatives (cf. (52b)):

- (50) a. *Ana es re astuta.*  
           Ana is EI clever  
           ‘Ana is EI clever.’  
       b. Informally: the degree of Ana’s cleverness is above the standard ♦ the speaker is emotional about this degree

- (51) a. \* *Ana es re muy astuta.*  
           Ana is EI very clever  
       b. \* *Ana es muy re astuta.*  
           Ana is very EI clever

- (52) a. *Ana es más astuta que Paula.*  
           Ana is more clever than Paula  
           ‘Ana is cleverer than Paula.’  
       b. \* *Ana es más re astuta que Paula.*  
           Ana is more EI clever than Paula

The complex *re+astuta* in these examples can have also attributive uses in the nominal domain, both in pre- and postnominal position:

- (53) a. *una re astuta abogada*  
 a.F.SG EI clever.F.SG lawyer.F.SG  
 ‘a EI clever (female) lawyer’  
 b. *una abogada re astuta*  
 a.F.SG lawyer.F.SG EI clever.F.SG  
 ‘a EI clever (female) lawyer’

Crucially, in a pronominal exclamative, in which a *wh*-degree phrase moves to the left periphery of DPs, the *re-* construction cannot be in the pronominal position:

- (54) a. \*? *Qué re astuta abogada!*  
 what EI clever.F.SG lawyer.F.SG  
 b. *Qué abogada re astuta!*  
 what lawyer.F.SG EI clever.F.SG  
 ‘What a EI clever (female) lawyer!’

Note that the ungrammaticality of (54a) is not due to the adjective position, but to the presence of the EI, since if *re-* is eliminated in (54a), the result is perfectly grammatical.

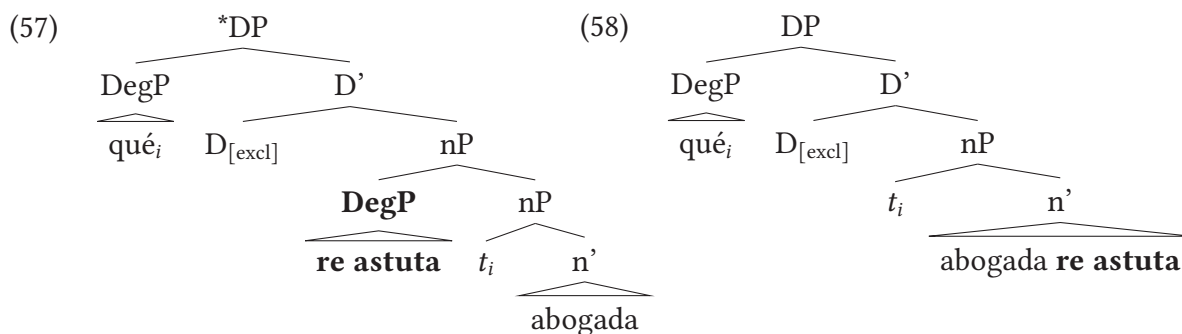
- (55) *Qué astuta abogada!*  
 what clever.F.SG lawyer.F.SG  
 ‘What a clever (female) lawyer!’

The facts in (54) suggest that in pronominal position, the entire *re-* phrase blocks *qué wh*-movement to the left periphery of the DP. This is a typical minimality effect, probably induced by the fact that *qué* and *re-* are degree expressions of the same type (Rizzi 1990). In fact, the same holds with *muy*:

- (56) a. \*? *Qué muy astuta abogada!*  
 what very clever.F.SG lawyer.F.SG  
 b. *Qué abogada muy astuta!*  
 what lawyer.F.SG very clever.F.SG  
 ‘What a very clever (female) lawyer!’

Let us, then, assume that *re-* heads a DegP and that *qué wh*-movement is prevented by minimality, whenever the DegP headed by *re-* is in the way of *wh*-movement. The following trees represent the two scenarios in (54):





### 1.3.1.2 Adnominal *re-*

Now, the intensifier *re-* also has adnominal uses. Unlike English or German, which allow adnominal degree modification but in a restricted set of nominal environments, almost any noun, if not all, admits *re-* modification:

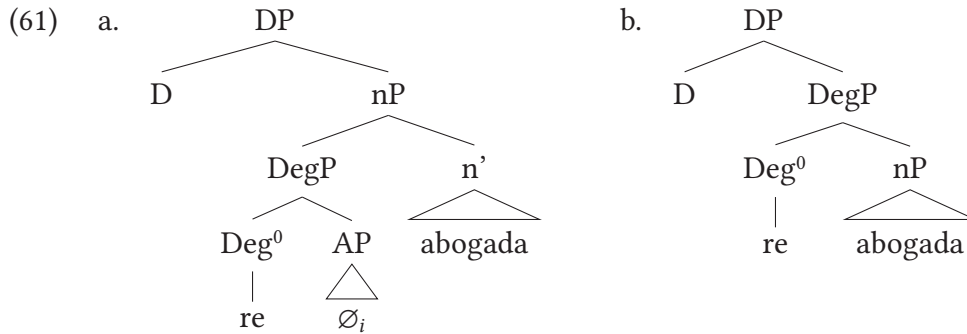
- (59)
- a. *re fiesta*  
EI party  
'EI party' (i.e., a great party)
  - b. *re viento*  
re wind.M.SG  
'EI wind' (i.e., too much wind)
  - c. *re libertad*  
EI freedom  
'EI freedom' (i.e., too much freedom)
  - d. *re hombre*  
EI man  
'EI man' (i.e., a great/awesome man)
  - e. *re auto*  
EI car  
'EI car' (i.e., a great car)

Like in the adjectival use, adnominal *re-* also resists combination with a *wh*-exclamative (see also Kornfeld 2012b), a fact that leads to the conclusion that *re-* has a degree status in the adnominal uses, as well:

- (60)
- a. \*? *qué re fiesta!*  
what EI party
  - b. \*? *qué re abogada!*  
what EI lawyer
  - c. \*? *qué re guitarra!*  
what EI guitar

Following Morzycki 2009, but, in particular, the extension of Morzycki's theory in Gutzmann & Turgay 2015, I will assume that adnominal *re-* heads a DegP. Now, since

its enormous flexibility to combine with almost any type of noun (even with those for which is impossible to detect any gradable property), it is perhaps plausible that at least some adnominal uses project an indexical adjectival property, along the lines suggested in (61a). Compare with the tree in (61b):



I will not take any stance with respect to these or other possible analytical alternatives. In principle, the degree nature of adnominal *re-* is the crucial feature and any of the structures above would account for the patterns in (60). Instead, I will focus on the nature of the D head involved in the structure, of which I have said nothing so far. Kornfeld 2012b notes that the combination *re+nP* resists combination with “true” definite articles. For instance, definite DPs with *re-* are out in environments that are clearly definite. Consider the following examples from Kornfeld 2012b:

- (62) a. \* *El re auto de Juan nos dejó mudos.*  
 the.DEF.SG EI car of Juan CL.ACC.1PL left speechless
- b. \* *Invitó también a su re amigo.*  
 invited.3SG too DOM DET.POSS EI friend
- c. \* *El re calor nos mató.*  
 the EI heat CL.ACC.1PL killed.3SG

In clitic-left or -right dislocation constructions, which force the definite interpretation of the dislocated constituent, the addition of *re-* is ungrammatical too:

- (63) a. \* *Lo escribió, el re artículo.*  
 CL.ACC.3SG wrote.3SG the EI paper
- b. \* *El re artículo, lo escribió.*  
 the EI paper CL.ACC.3SG wrote.3SG

Yet, if instead of a topic, the relevant DP is focused, like in the following exclamative context, the result is perfect:

- (64) *El re ARTÍCULO escribió!*  
 the EI paper wrote.3SG  
 Intended: ‘Extraordinary paper he wrote!’

Other more neutral examples are also licit to the extent the obtained interpretation is indefinite. In the following two cases, *la re guitarra* o *el re artículo* are naturally paraphrased as ‘an extraordinary guitar/article’:

- (65) a. *Me voy a comprar la re guitarra para que mueras de*  
 CL.DAT.1SG go.1SG to buy.INF the EI guitar for that die.SUBJ.2SG of  
*envidia.*  
 envy  
 ‘I’m going to buy the EI guitar so you can die of envy.’
- b. *No escribí el re artículo, solo uno aceptable.*  
 not wrote.1SG the EI paper just one acceptable  
 ‘I did not write the EI paper, just an acceptable one.’

Crucially, the use of the “definite” article is perfect in obligatory indefinite environments, for instance, as complements of existential sentences, which, as is well-known, are incompatible with definite complements.<sup>14</sup> Changing the definite for the indefinite is perfectly possible as well, although the change in meaning is subtle or very hard to determine. Of course, without *re-*, only the use of the indefinite is felicitous, as shown by the contrast between (66b) and (66c):

- (66) a. *Hay la/una re fiesta hoy.*  
 there.is the/a EI party today  
 ‘There is the/a EI party today.’ (i.e., There is an extraordinary party today.)
- b. *Hay una fiesta hoy.*  
 there.is a party today  
 ‘There is a party today.’
- c. \**Hay la fiesta hoy.*  
 there.is the party today

If the complement of the existential is headed by a bare [-count] noun, then the indefinite is also deviant without *re-*:

- (67) a. *Hay el/un re viento.*  
 there.is the/a EI wind  
 ‘There is the EI wind.’ (i.e., There is too much wind.)
- b. \**Hay el/un viento.*  
 there.is the/a wind

Note now that, whenever the definite article is stressed or the indefinite is accompanied with exclamative intonation, the result is perfectly grammatical in all cases and the reading we obtain is expressive intensification, as expected:

- (68) a. *Hay LA fiesta hoy.*  
 there.is the party today  
 ‘There is THE party today.’ (i.e., There is an extraordinary party today.)

<sup>14</sup>I am grateful to Matías Verdecchia for pointing out this fact to me.

- b. *Hay EL viento.*  
 there.is the wind  
 ‘There is THE wind.’ (i.e., too much wind)
- (69) a. *Hay una fiesta hoy...!*  
 there.is the party today  
 ‘There is a party today!’ (i.e., There is an extraordinary party today.)
- b. *Hay un viento...!*  
 there.is the wind  
 ‘It’s too windy!’

Similarly, meteorological predicates like *hace calor/frío* can be quantified with *re-* even when their internal bare nouns are not referential. Both the use of the indefinite or the definite article are possible here, but only if *re-* is added to the structure:

- (70) a. *Hace el/un re calor/frío.*  
 make.3SG the/a EI heat/cold  
 ‘It’s really/very hot/cold.’
- b. \**Hace el/un calor/frío.*  
 make.3SG the/a heat/cold  
 ‘It’s really/very hot/cold.’

Again, if the definite is stressed or the indefinite is accompanied with a particular rising intonation, typical of certain exclamative sentences, the sentences in (70b) become felicitous:

- (71) a. *Hace EL calor acá.*  
 make.3SG the heat here  
 ‘It’s really hot here.’
- b. *Hace un frío...!*  
 make.3SG a cold  
 ‘It’s very cold!’

This set of facts point out to the conclusion that Spanish has both spurious indefinite and definite articles (see, among many others, Kornfeld 2010, Di Tullio 2004), which are typically associated to expressive constructions of different sorts (e.g., exclamation, intensification or both). This is not an isolated property of the Spanish grammar. As advanced, Gutzmann & Turgay 2015 noticed a very similar EI construction in colloquial German (and see Zhang 2020 for similar facts in Mandarin). These intensifiers have two crucial properties, which serve to distinguish them from regular degree modifiers, namely (i) they have adnominal uses (72), which are fully ungrammatical with non-expressive degree modifiers, and (ii) they can occur preceding the definite article, a possibility also banned for regular degree modifiers. In this regard, contrast *totale* and *sau* with the non-expressive degree modifier *sehr* ‘very’:

- (72) a. *Du hast gestern die totale / \*sehr Party verpasst.*  
 you have yesterday the EI / very party missed  
 ‘Yesterday, you missed the EI party.’
- b. *Du hast gestern sau / \*sehr die coole Party verpasst.*  
 you have yesterday EI / very the cool party missed  
 ‘Yesterday, you missed EI/\*very a cool party.’
- (Gutzmann & Turgay 2015: 189, exs. (12)-(13))

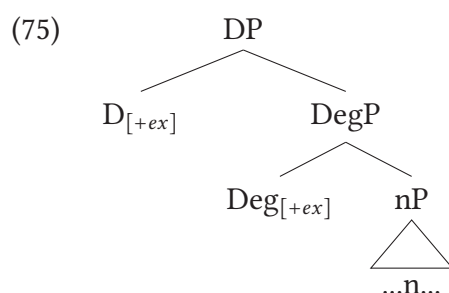
In the adnominal uses, the EI can also precede the definite article, as in the examples in (73), but the interpretation is indefinite:

- (73) a. *total die Schrottkarre*  
 EI the junker  
 ‘EI a junker’
- b. *total die Villa*  
 EI the villa  
 ‘EI a villa’
- (Gutzmann & Turgay 2015: 207, exs. (67b) and (68b))

Gutzmann & Turgay 2015 and Gutzmann 2019 propose that these facts are accounted for if D syntactically composes with the EI via movement of the EI. Such a movement is motivated because the D head encodes a formal [expressive] feature. In contrast, Spanish does not have overt movement of *re-* to the D position:

- (74) a. \**re el auto*  
 EI the car
- b. \**re la fiesta*  
 EI the party

Yet, in view of the facts previously discussed in this section, I would like to suggest that Spanish *re-* also involves certain expressive activity at the left periphery of DPs through the presence of an exclamative or expressive feature in the D head itself. I would indeed use Gutzmann & Turgay’s strong [expressive] feature, annotated as [+ex]. I claim that whenever *re-* has also an [+ex] feature, *Agree* between D and Deg alone licenses the D head; otherwise, focus or intonation would license D at PF (e.g., *EL auto*, *un auto...!*):



In Colloquial German, this *Agree* relation requires, in addition, a step of movement, probably triggered by an [EPP] feature on D or, as proposed by Gutzmann & Turgay, a weak variant of [ex], annotated as [\*ex] (see [Gutzmann & Turgay 2015: 219](#)).

### 1.3.2 Rioplatense *alto/a*

The youth generations of Rioplatense use the size adjective *alto* ‘tall’ to intensify certain dimensions of nominal head. The adjective shows the regular gender and number concord patterns and is necessarily prenominal:<sup>15</sup>

- (76) a. *alta fiesta*  
tall.F.SG party.F.SG  
‘EI party’  
b. *altas fiestas*  
tall.F.PL party.F.PL  
‘EI parties’  
c. *#fiesta alta*  
party.F.SG tall.F.SG  
d. *#fiestas altas*  
party.F.PL tall.F.PL
- (77) a. *alto auto*  
tall.M.SG car.M.SG  
‘EI car’  
b. *altos autos*  
tall.M.PL car.M.PL  
‘EI cars’  
c. *#auto alto*  
car.M.SG tall.M.SG  
d. *#autos altos*  
car.M.PL tall.M.PL

In these two cases, *alto* intensifies the degree of a property, in a way such that the examples can be paraphrased as *extremely good party* or *extremely good car*. In other cases, the adjective intensifies a quantity like in the following examples:

- (78) a. *alto ruido*  
tall.M.SG noise.M.SG  
‘EI noise’ (i.e., too much noise)

<sup>15</sup>For space reasons, in this section, I only discuss the adjective *alto/a* ‘tall’, but it is worth-mentioning that, in many respects, it forms a natural class with a reduced set of other adjectives not always shared by the same speakers for idiolectal or crono-lectal reasons. This set includes adjectives like *terrible* ‘terrible’, *tremendo* ‘tremendous’, *zarpado* ‘awesome, a lot of’, *reverendo* lit. ‘reverend’, etc. The most detailed analysis of this class of adjectives can be found in a series of papers by Gabriela Resnik (see [Resnik 2013, 2016, 2022](#)).



- b. *alto viento*  
tall.M.SG wind.M.SG  
'EI wind' (i.e., too much wind)

Beyond the concord facts in (76)-(77), there are some other indications that *alto* is a true adjective and *re-* is a degree adverb; for instance, *re-* can modify *alto* as other degree modifiers like *muy* 'very', although the result is a bit marginal.<sup>16</sup>

- (79) ? *re/muy alta fiesta*  
EI/very tall.F.SG party.F.SG  
'EI party'

It also perfectly combines with *wh-*exclamatives, like other similar adjectives:<sup>17</sup>

- (80) a. *qué alta fiesta!*  
what tall party  
'what a great party!'  
b. *qué gran fiesta!*  
what great party  
'what a great party!'

This leads me to the conclusion that *alto/a* does not project a DegP in the syntax, but a mere adjectival projection.

Another important difference with *re-* is that, although combination with the definite article is also unnatural, *alto/a* does not force the indefinite reading of the definite article, even in existential contexts:

- (81) \* *Hubo la alta fiesta.*  
there.was the.DEF tall party  
(82) \* *Ahí, venden el alto auto.*  
there sells the.DEF tall car

If the article is absent, the sentences become felicitous, as expected. Now, as noted by Resnik 2013, *alto/a* also licenses singular bare [+count] NPs in argument position, a totally unexpected pattern in Spanish (see Resnik 2013: 58).

- (83) a. *Ana escribió alto artículo.*  
Ana wrote tall paper  
'Ana wrote TALL paper.' (i.e., a great/extraordinary paper)

<sup>16</sup>A clarification is in order regarding these judgments. As Resnik 2013 argues, it could be the case that for some speakers the combination between *alto/a* and certain degree modifiers feels a bit degraded given the relative character of the adjective, which tends to be interpreted as indicating the maximal degree of a certain property. Yet, this is different from the strong ungrammaticality between *re-* and other degree modifiers discussed in the previous section (cf. (51)), in which the incompatibility is due to the complementary distribution of two degree expressions. This is an important difference, since I do not think that *alto/a* and other related adjectives are degree expressions.

<sup>17</sup>Here, again, we do not share Resnik's judgment, although I do not deny that some speakers could feel the combination a bit redundant, perhaps for the reasons adduced in the previous footnote.

- b. \* *Ana escribió artículo.*  
 Ana wrote paper

Compare with (84), in which the ban of bare singular [+count] nouns in argument position is observed:

- (84) \* *Ana leyó viejo artículo.*  
 Ana read old paper

Even when *alto/a* does not behave as a DegP in the syntax, it has some important similarities with wh-exclamatives. For instance, Resnik also observes that the nominal phrases including *alto/a* are naturally fronted in indubitable exclamative environments, in which subject inversion, as in other focus extractions, is mandatory:

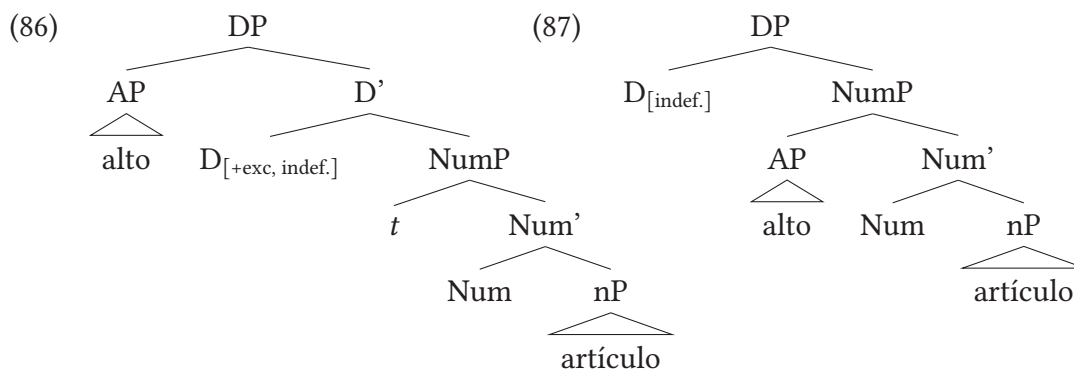
- (85) a. *Alto ASADO cocinó Juan!*  
 tall barbacoa cooked Juan  
 ‘What a barbacoa did Juan cook!’  
 b. *Alta FIESTA organizó Ana!*  
 tall party organized Ana  
 ‘What a party did Ana organize!’

Therefore, I would like to suggest that *alta/o* has the option to move to the Spec,DP position of a sort of expressive D head, perhaps the same [+excl] D that triggers internal wh-movement. This movement blocks the phonetic realization of the indefinite exclamative D head, as in regular wh-exclamatives (compare English *What a nice book!* with Spanish *Qué (\*un) lindo libro!*) and induces the emotive reading these constructions have.<sup>18</sup> Under this analysis, *alto/a* can remain in situ as in (86) or move to Spec,DP as in (87).

<sup>18</sup>Laura Kornfeld (pers. comm.) points out to me that in some Argentinian variants, it is possible to get expressive intensification by merely leaving the exclamative *qué* in situ. Interestingly, since in this case *qué* does not move to Spec,DP, the indefinite article is overtly realized. Here is a public Instagram post from an Argentinian user:

- (1) *el viernes hacemos una QUÉ fiesta.*  
 the Friday make.1PL a WHAT party  
 ‘This Friday, we organize an EI party.’  
 ([https://www.instagram.com/virgijones/p/C0QDDzHOkHy/?img\\_index=1](https://www.instagram.com/virgijones/p/C0QDDzHOkHy/?img_index=1))

I take this phenomenon as robust evidence in favor of the analysis in terms of fronting for *alto/a* and *qué* suggested in the text.



The most salient differences between *re-* and *alto/a* can be seen in the following table:

	adnominal <i>re-</i>	<i>alto/a</i>
prenominal	yes	yes
projects or heads a DegP	yes	no
induces minimality	yes	no
can move to Spec,DP	no	yes
indefinite reading of the definite article	yes	no

Table 5: Adnominal *re-* vs. *alto/a*

## 1.4 Expressivity and politeness/honorification

So far, I have discussed a series of phenomena that require a sort of multidimensional approach to meaning. I have followed the spirit of Kaplan 1999's original proposal as modeled by Potts 2005, according to which expressive meanings are calculated as propositions in a parallel dimension of meaning in which use conditions are computed. Expressive adjectives, epithets and certain intensifiers, and the grammar in which they all participate, can be conceived of under this multidimensional view.<sup>19</sup> Certain address systems and the different grammars of honorification attested in many languages are also amenable to a multidimensional approach. In this section, I first briefly discuss the *voseo* system of Rioplatense Spanish and, then, I focus on the adnominal honorifics *don/doña* and *señor/a*, which show some striking similarities with the behavior of epithets and EAs.

<sup>19</sup>And under other multidimensional alternatives, of course. For instance, another prominent multidimensional approach uses expressive indexes, which relate individuals through different degrees of expressivity, instead of conventional implicatures, which are propositional in nature. One version of this type of expressivity theory can be found in Potts 2007. In McCready 2019, there is an in-depth development along these lines for register and honorification. At any rate, both under the propositional or the expressive index approach, honorific, register and address systems in general can be modeled as expressives in the favored sense of multidimensional semantics.

### 1.4.1 The Rioplatense *voseo* system

Peninsular Spanish has four second person pronouns, two in the plural and two in the singular, distinguished for many social parameters affecting the speaker-addressee relation. Their use-conditions are extremely complex and I will not attempt to model the proper content of the relevant distinctions. For the purposes of this brief description, I will use labels as FORMAL / INFORMAL and the like.

- |      |                                   |      |  |
|------|-----------------------------------|------|--|
| (88) | a. <i>tú</i><br>you.2SG.INFORMAL  | (89) | a. <i>vosotros</i><br>you.2PL.INFORMAL |
|      | b. <i>usted</i><br>you.2SG.FORMAL |      | b. <i>ustedes</i><br>you.2PL.FORMAL    |

In the Rioplatense variety spoken in Buenos Aires, the informal *vos* is used instead of the more generalized form *tú*. Finally, as in most American dialects, if not all, the Peninsular *vosotros* is lost and, consequently, the expressive opposition is lost, as well.

- |      |                                   |      |                           |
|------|-----------------------------------|------|---------------------------|
| (90) | a. <i>vos</i><br>you.2SG.INFORMAL | (91) | <i>ustedes</i><br>you.2PL |
|      | b. <i>usted</i><br>you.2SG.FORMAL |      |                           |

As for the formal *usted*, it historically derived from the third-person nominal construction *vuestra merced* ‘your grace’ and shows, then, third-person inflection in the entire paradigm (e.g., *usted/ella canta* ‘you<sub>formal</sub>/she sings’, *la vi a usted/ella* ‘I CL.ACC.F.3SG saw 2SG.FORMAL/her’, and so on). According to Collins & Ordóñez 2021, *usted* is an imposter in the sense of Collins & Postal 2012. This view amounts to analyzing *usted* as a non-pronominal third-person DP, whose internal structure contains a second-person pronoun:

- (92) [DP D [ TÚ *usted*]] (Collins & Ordóñez 2021: 2)

One piece of evidence in favor of an imposter analysis comes from the fact that in Peninsular Spanish, *usted* does not trigger clitic doubling. If this is correct, *usted* could not be treated as a true pronoun, since strong pronouns do trigger clitic doubling in all dialects. Yet, the prediction is not borne out in Rioplatense Spanish, where clitic doubling with *usted* is mandatory, an indubitable indication of its pronominal nature.<sup>20</sup>

- |      |   |
|------|---|
| (93) | a. <i>Ana lo</i> <span style="margin-left: 100px;"><i>respeto a usted.</i></span> |
|      | Ana CL.ACC.M.3SG.FORMAL respects DOM you.FORMAL                                   |
|      | ‘Ana respects you <sub>FORMAL</sub> .’  |
|      | b. * <i>Ana respeto a usted.</i>  |
|      | Ana respects DOM you.FORMAL   |

<sup>20</sup>I will gloss the inflectional features of *usted* as 3SG and add FORMAL to the gloss to distinguish *usted* and its pronominal variants (e.g., *lo, los, las, las*) both from *vos* and from third-person pronouns.

Regardless of this dialectal difference, to which I will come back, in both dialects the contrast between *tú/usted* or *vos/usted* is expressive since it passes all the relevant expressive diagnostics. I illustrate this only with Rioplatense Spanish, but the same facts hold in Peninsular Spanish. In effect, in the following examples, the formal/informal distinction that each pronoun introduces is (i) speaker-oriented (for instance, in (94a) it is the speaker who is in an (in)formal relation with respect to the addressee, not the matrix subject), and (ii) it scopes out over different truth-conditional operators:

- (94) a. *Ana cree que vos/usted no venís/viene a la fiesta.*  
 Ana believes that 2SG.INFORMAL/3SG.FORMAL not come.2SG/comes to the party  
 ‘Ana believes that you<sub>INFORMAL/FORMAL</sub> do/does not come to the party.’
- b. *Ana no te/lo vio a vos/usted.*  
 Ana not CL.ACC.2SG.INFORMAL/CL.ACC.M.3SG.FORMAL saw DOM 2SG.INFORMAL/3SG.FORMAL  
 ‘Ana did not see you<sub>INFORMAL/FORMAL</sub>.’
- c. *Te/lo vio Ana a vos/usted?*  
 CL.ACC.2SG.INFORMAL/CL.ACC.M.3SG.FORMAL saw Ana DOM 2SG.INFORMAL/3SG.FORMAL  
 ‘Did Ana see you<sub>INFORMAL/FORMAL</sub>?’
- d. *Si vos/usted estás/está solo, sería bueno visitar-te/lo.*  
 if 2SG.INFORMAL/3SG.FORMAL are/is alone, would.be good visit.INF=CL.ACC.2SG.INFORMAL/CL.ACC.M.3SG.FORMAL  
 ‘If you<sub>INFORMAL/FORMAL</sub> are/is alone, it would be good to visit you<sub>INFORMAL/FORMAL</sub>.’

The next question is how this contrast in the address system is encoded. In principle, one could take both items as mixed expressives, as in McCready 2019:<sup>21</sup>

- (95) a.  $\llbracket \text{usted} \rrbracket = g(i) \blacklozenge \text{Formal}(s_c, a_c)$   
 b.  $\llbracket \text{vos} \rrbracket = g(i) \blacklozenge \text{Informal}(s_c, a_c)$

Alternatively, we can follow the spirit in Potts 2007, for whom the [+/-formal] features are  $\phi$ -features which combine with the pronominal index through functional application for expressive types (in the system in Potts 2005 the relevant axiom would be CI Application):

- (96) a.  $\llbracket \text{Formal}(\text{usted}) \rrbracket = g(i) \bullet \text{Formal}(s_c, a_c)$   
 b.  $\llbracket \text{Informal}(\text{vos}) \rrbracket = g(i) \bullet \text{Informal}(s_c, a_c)$

<sup>21</sup>Although as observed in footnote 19, she adopts an expressive index approach to register and honorification.

As far as I can tell, it is not easy to adjudicate between these two types of approaches. Empirical evidence shows that *vos* and *usted* mismatch in  $\phi$ -features. As is well-known, switching from a form to another in the same discourse leads to deficient contexts. Consider, for instance, the following example in which the same speaker switches from *usted* to *vos*:

- (97) *Usted es nuevo acá. De dónde sos?*  
 you.3SG.FORMAL is new here. of where are.2SG.INFORMAL  
 ‘You<sub>FORMAL</sub> are new here. Where are you<sub>INFORMAL</sub> from?’

A discourse like this introduces some inconsistencies in the address system which are easy to pinpoint, namely, the speaker is being formal and informal with respect to the addressee. Now, there are cases in which the mismatch leads to ungrammaticality. For instance, *usted* cannot be the antecedent of an embedded *vos* subject which it c-commands, and viceversa:

- (98) a. \* *Usted me dijo que (vos) estás cansado.*  
 you.3SG.FORMAL CL.DAT.1SG said that (you.2SG.INFORMAL) are tired  
 Intended: ‘You<sub>FORMAL</sub> told me that (you<sub>INFORMAL</sub>) are tired.’  
 b. \* *Vos me dijiste que (usted) está cansado.*  
 you.2SG.INFORMAL CL.DAT.1SG said that (you.3SG.FORMAL) is tired  
 Intended: ‘You<sub>INFORMAL</sub> told me that (you<sub>FORMAL</sub>) are tired.’

The same holds when there is a mismatch in the form of reflexive anaphors:

- (99) a. \* *Usted te critica (a vos mismo).*  
 you.3SG.FORMAL CL.REFL.2SG.INFORMAL criticizes DOM you.2SG.INFORMAL self  
 Intended: ‘You<sub>FORMAL</sub> criticizes yourself<sub>INFORMAL</sub>.’  
 b. \* *Vos se criticás (a usted mismo).*  
 you.2SG.INFORMAL CL.REFL.M.3SG.FORMAL criticize.2SG DOM you.3SG.FORMAL self  
 Intended: ‘You<sub>INFORMAL</sub> criticize yourself<sub>FORMAL</sub>.’

These facts cannot be explained just because of an inconsistency in register. The sentences are strongly ungrammatical, showing that the problem is a failure in the agreement system. Since the *vos/usted* opposition is formally encoded in terms of person  $\phi$ -features, even when both forms signal the addressee, one could be tempted to reduce the ungrammaticality of the relevant examples to a person mismatch. The problem is that the [3P] feature in *usted* does not introduce any presupposition of a true third-person (i.e., a non-participant presupposition), so it does not look entirely implausible to

see a sort of syncretism here, between *usted* and a true third-person singular pronoun. Under this analysis, the [3SG] feature would realize both a non-participant semantic feature and an honorific feature, in which case an analysis along the lines of (96) could have some plausibility. But even if this is correct, I do not see clear arguments to reject the mixed lexical entries in (95).

In sum, there is no robust evidence for treating the second-singular person pronouns in the Spanish paradigm as mixed terms or as containing a (in)formality operator scoping over a pronominal index. The picture is even more complex when one considers other Rioplatense address systems. For instance, Bertolotti 2011 has shown that some Uruguayan systems show a three or four-way distinctions. For such complex systems, the brief comments made in this section are clearly insufficient and I think that they might be a good case for an expressive index approach, along the lines of McCready 2019.

#### 1.4.2 Adominal honorifics

Honorifics like *don/doña* are triggers of conventional implicatures in a non-at-issue meaning dimension. Consider the following examples (Saab 2021a and  $\leftrightarrow$  *Expressivity and syntax* by SAAB, this volume):

- (100) a. *Don Luis llegó tarde.*  
 HON.M Luis arrived late  
 ‘Mr. Luis arrived late.’  
 b. *Doña María llegó tarde.*  
 HON.F Maria arrived late  
 ‘Mrs. María arrived late.’

Like epithets, the honorific *don/doña* in modern Spanish is a pure expressive in Potts’ (2005) sense, i.e., functions that take an entity as argument and return the same entity at the at-issue level and a conventionally implicated proposition in a parallel meaning dimension. Evidence that this is the case is provided by standard scoping-out and speaker-orientation tests. In effect, as the following examples show, this honorific scopes out over truth-conditional operators and the meaning it projects is (at least, by default) speaker-oriented:

- (101) a. *Ana cree que don Luis no viene a la fiesta.*  
 Ana believes that HON.M Luis not comes to the party  
 ‘Ana believes that Mr. Luis does not come to the party.’  
 b. *Ana no vio a don Luis.*  
 Ana not saw DOM HON.M Luis  
 ‘Ana did not see Mr. Luis.’  
 c. *Vio Ana a don Luis?*  
 saw Ana DOM HON.M Luis  
 ‘Did Ana see Mr. Luis?’



- d. *Si don Luis está solo, sería bueno visitarlo.*  
 if HON.M Luis is alone, would.be good visit.INF=HIM  
 ‘If Mr. Luis is alone, it would be good to visit him.’

Now, note that the behavior of *don/doña* is similar to the behavior of epithets discussed in section 1.2.3 with respect to two properties: (i) it only combines with individual denoting phrases, concretely, proper names, and (ii) it does not induce any type of argument extension, i.e., the target of the speaker’s respect is always the individual denoted by the sister of the honorific. The first property explains why the following sentences are ungrammatical as a semantic type mismatch, i.e., *médico* or *abogada* denote in  $\langle e, t \rangle$  and cannot serve as arguments of the honorific operator:

- (102) a. \**Llegó el don médico.*  
 arrived the HON.M doctor  
 b. \**La doña abogada envió el expediente a tiempo.*  
 the HON.FEM lawyer.F sent the expedient to time

That there is no argument extension is clear from the set of the examples in (101), in which the honorific indubitably modifies the proper name it combines with.

Now, in the realm of honorification, Spanish also makes use of the noun *señor(a)*, which typically combines with common nouns (103) and adds the conventional implicature that the speaker respects the relevant lawyer:

- (103) *La señora abogada llegó temprano.*  
 the Mrs lawyer.F arrived early  
 ‘The HON attorney arrived early.’

*Señor(a)* is also a Pottsian expressive, as shown by the fact that it exhibits typical scoping-out and speaker-orientation properties:

- (104) a. *Ana cree que el señor abogado no viene a la fiesta.*  
 Ana believes that the HON.M lawyer not come to the party.  
 ‘Ana believes that the HON lawyer does not come to the party.’  
 b. *Ana no vio al señor abogado.*  
 Ana not saw DOM.DET HON.MASC lawyer  
 ‘Ana did not see the HON lawyer.’  
 c. *Vio Ana al señor abogado?*  
 saw Ana DOM.DET HON.M lawyer  
 ‘Did Ana see the HON lawyer?’  
 d. *Si el señor abogado está solo, sería bueno visitarlo.*  
 if the HON.M lawyer is alone, would.be good visit.INF=HIM  
 ‘If the HON lawyer is alone, it would be good to visit him.’

In effect, all the sentences above express that the speaker respects the relevant lawyer, despite the fact that the expressive is embedded under an attitude verb, negation,

a question or the antecedent of a conditional. In the light of these facts, one may be tempted to provide an analysis for *señor(a)* similar to the one we proposed for *don/doña*. However, this analysis would miss an important point, namely that *señor(a)*, unlike *don/doña*, exhibits argument extension. Thus, the intuitive reading of (103) is not that the speaker respects the set of lawyers, but that she respects the particular lawyer denoted by the entire DP. Put differently, *señor(a)* is interpreted in a place different from the one in which it occurs. Evidently, compared to EAs, this type of argument extension is much more restricted in the sense that the speaker's respect is directed towards the individual denoted by the entire DP in which the honorific is included. It cannot be associated to the entire proposition or to another individual in the environment. The impossibility of other argument extension patterns seem to follow from pragmatic reasons, probably related to the proper content of the honorific, whose target is always an individual and not a proposition (one does not respect propositions), and the Gricean maxim of manner (see Lo Guercio & Saab 2024 for a more detailed discussion).

## 1.5 Summary and further aspects of expressivity in Spanish

Throughout this chapter, I have discussed many expressive phenomena in Spanish. Following the most accepted taxonomy in multidimensional approaches to expressivity, I have characterized expressives as pure (e.g., EAs like *maldito* or epithets like *idiota*) or mixed (e.g., slurs like *sudaca* or expressive intensifiers like *re-*), depending on whether in addition to communicate expressive meanings, they also contribute to truth-conditions. Yet, against mainstream multidimensional approaches, I have argued that the pure or mixed nature of expressives does not depend only on lexical properties; syntax also plays a crucial role by dividing the phrase structure between representational and non-representational positions. On this view, EAs and epithets are pure by virtue of being externally merged in expletive, non-representational positions.

Other facts introduced in the previous sections lead to more provisional conclusions. The expressive status of postnominal ENs (see section 1.2.2) or of the *vos/usted* opposition (see section 1.4) needs further research to determine their mixed or pure expressive nature, among other relevant open issues. As usual, I have addressed only a minimal fragment of the grammar of expressivity in (Rioplatense) Spanish. Many other facts not discussed here should shed further light on many of the issues left open. Let me just mention a brief list of interesting phenomena that deserve to be in the research agenda of the theory of expressivity.

- I have said nothing about expressive morphology. Spanish is rich in expressive affixation. Kornfeld 2010, for instance, has detected many interesting differences at the phrasal and word levels in the domain of expressive intensification.
- The syntax and semantics of vocatives are extremely informative when it comes to adjudicating among different theories of expressivity. Some words lose their predicative import when used as vocatives (e.g., *Flaco, vení!* lit. 'Skinny, come!', in which *flaco* is just an informal vocative), a fact that seems to favor the recycling theory in Saab 2022. Other vocatives keep their truth-conditional force, but are

ornamented with an honorific, expressive flavor (e.g., *Profesor, por favor, venga* ‘Professor, please, come.’).

- Several facts favor the idea that at least some forms of expressivity must be calculated not in the semantics, but at PF. For instance, [Bohrn 2018](#) has studied the so-called *vesre talk* in Rioplatense Spanish, a colloquial strategy of syllable inversion that affects register. A speaker who says *feca* instead of *café* ‘coffee’ is communicating that she is in a highly informal context. Related to this, I have argued that it could be the case that for various biased words, use-conditions must be deduced entirely at PF (see [Saab 2021b](#)).
- Rioplatense Spanish, as many other languages, has many reduplicated structures with different expressive flavors (e.g., *Es re re astuta* lit. ‘Is EI EI clever’, but also *es ASTUTA ASTUTA* lit. ‘is CLEVER CLEVER’, i.e., she is REALLY clever). Rioplatense Spanish also has a type of anti-adjacent emphatic verbal duplication in which two copies of the same verb are licensed only if an XP intervenes between the two copies (e.g., *Está rico, está!* lit. ‘Is delicious, is’).
- Perhaps, the so-called inclusive language in Spanish would require an approach along the lines proposed by [Corver 2016](#), according to whom many forms of expressivity require deviation of rules of grammar ( $\leftrightarrow$  *Expressivity and syntax* by SAAB, this volume). In a version of the inclusive language, a new gender morpheme is added to the gender system (e.g., given the standard gender opposition *niño/niña* ‘boy/girl’, the speaker adds the form *niñe*, which is neutral with respect to gender specification or indicates that the referent has a non-binary identity). Of course, there are not native speakers of this gender system, but the phenomenon is extended, in particular in Buenos Aires. The reactions this way of speaking produces are clearly expressive both in terms of its social impact and in terms of perceptual reactions.

Again, this list is far from being exhaustive but it should be enough to illustrate the vast diversity of expressive phenomena in Spanish and the types of open research projects that are still waiting development in the realm of the theory of expressivity.

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