

Conveying emphasis for intensity: Lexical and syntactic strategies

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Abstract

Emphasis is a widely investigated notion in linguistics. In this article, we focus on *emphasis for intensity*, a general linguistic strategy whereby linguistic objects are given prominence by virtue of being selected from the upper range of a scale. We consider two linguistic domains where emphasis for intensity can be observed: the lexical domain, where it is conveyed via a variety of intensifiers, and the domain of syntax, where it can be conveyed via different types of non-canonical word order. While distinct in many respects, such families of constructions can be seen as conveying a unified effect, raising a number of issues concerning how the relation between emphasis and scalarity is best captured across languages and constructions.

1 EMPHASIS FOR INTENSITY AS A DISTINCT LINGUISTIC CATEGORY

The term ‘emphasis’ identifies the process whereby a linguistic element is given particular prominence, value, or importance in a context. Much linguistic research has focused on the different mechanisms whereby emphasis is conveyed across languages and constructions, with linguists extensively investigating situations in which emphasis is achieved *contrastively*—that is, when an element is highlighted in virtue of being contrasted to and singled out from a set of alternatives (Krifka, 2008; Repp, 2010; Rooth, 1992), for instance via non-canonical word order (e.g., Bierwisch, 1966; Kiefer, 1967; Ross, 2004):

(1) It was Atibaia that I visited. (Atibaia ≠ {São Paulo, Rio,...}) (Ross, 2004, p. 547)

In this paper, we address a different type of linguistic emphasis, which we call “emphasis for intensity.”¹ We suggest that emphasis for intensity differs from contrastive emphasis in that it gives

prominence to linguistic elements not by directly contrasting them to alternatives but by selecting them from the highest range of a scale. (2) and (3) provide examples from English and German:

- | | |
|--|---------------------------|
| (2) Mark is extremely tall! | Scale = tallness of x |
| (3) Geschneit hat es gestern in Barcelona geschneit! | Scale = likelihood of p |
| snowed has it yesterday in Barcelona | |
| 'Yesterday, it has snowed in Barcelona! (Can you believe it?)' | |

Our overview paper is divided into two parts. Sections 2 and 3 present the main lexical and syntactic strategies whereby emphasis for intensity can be conveyed. Section 4 highlights the common core shared by these constructions, outlining several open issues and discussing potential connections to the study of emphasis across linguistic subfields—including phonetics.

2 EMPHASIS FOR INTENSITY BY LEXICAL MEANS

Intensifiers represent a natural class of expressions that convey emphasis by compositionally selecting for elements situated in the upper range of a scale. We distinguish between intensifiers targeting a scale encoded in the denotation of a predicate (Section 2.1) vs. a scale encoded in the speaker's emotive/epistemic attitude towards the proposition (Section 2.2).

2.1 Scales in the denotation

Consider the following examples:

- | | |
|---|-------------------------|
| (4) Mark is extremely tall. | |
| (5) I'll make the tuna salad, you make the SALAD -salad. | (Ghameshi et al., 2004) |
| (6) Absolutely all the townspeople are asleep. | (Lasersohn 1999) |

At first glance, the items in boldface affect the adjacent predicate in different ways, boosting the degree to which a property holds (4), signaling its closeness to a prototype (5), or making its interpretation more precise (6). While distinct, such modifiers similarly force a contraction of the denotation of the modified predicate, eliminating elements that would have been part of it otherwise. This is shown by the fact that, for all three constructions, an asymmetric entailment relation holds between intensified and non-intensified form: if an individual belongs to the denotation of the intensified form, it will necessarily belong to the non-intensified form, but not vice versa:

- | | |
|---|--|
| (7) a. Mark is extremely tall \Rightarrow Mark is tall. | |
| b. You made a SALAD -salad. \Rightarrow You made a salad. | |
| c. Absolutely all the townspeople are asleep. \Rightarrow All the townspeople are asleep. | |
| (8) a. Mark is tall $\not\Rightarrow$ Mark is extremely tall. | |
| b. You made a salad. $\not\Rightarrow$ You made a SALAD -salad. | |
| c. All the townspeople are asleep $\not\Rightarrow$ Absolutely all the townspeople are asleep. | |

A further commonality shared by these examples is that the contraction of the denotation is obtained by ranking its elements along a particular dimension, such that the elements ranked lowest are eliminated and those ranked highest are retained. It is precisely this mechanism, we suggest, that gives the retained elements special prominence, generating emphasis; what makes these constructions different from each other, instead, is that they target different types of ordering.

In particular, predicates such as *tall* are considered *linguistically gradable*: their denotation comes inherently ordered based on the degree to which each individual instantiates the property.²

Intensifiers directly rely on this ordering to induce a partition in the denotation, retaining—and emphasizing—only the elements that instantiate the property to the highest degree.³ Intensification, however, can also apply to expressions that are not linguistically gradable. We consider two examples: reduplication and precisification. What makes these cases different is that intensification does not license a reading in which the relevant property holds “to a high degree.”

- (9) I’ll make the tuna salad, you make the **SALAD**-salad. \neq *a salad* to a high degree
 (10) **Absolutely** all the townspeople are asleep \neq *all* to a high degree

Yet the modifiers above still convey emphasis by inducing a similar ordering-based partition of the denotation. Concerning reduplication in (9), expressions such as *salad* are *not* typically considered as linguistically gradable (see Morzycki, 2009, for further discussion on the encoding of gradability in the nominal domain; see Sassoon, 2013, for a different proposal). Yet these forms can be construed as *conceptually gradable* (Sassoon, 2017; De Vries, 2018): their denotation can be ordered, for instance, according to how close the objects in the denotation are to a prototypical instance of the category (i.e., a “green salad”; Ghomeshi, Jackendoff, Rosen, & Russell, 2004). On this account, reduplication focuses the denotation of the target expression “on a more sharply delimited, more specialized, range,” which excludes canonical, unremarkable examples from consideration (Ghomeshi et al., 2004, p. 308). By doing so, it induces a structurally similar contribution to *extremely* above. A similar effect can be ascribed to *absolutely* in (7), where this expression has been claimed to operate as a *slack regulator* (Lasersohn, 1999)—a type of modifier that can apply to a variety of linguistic objects such as number words (Krifka, 2009; Sauerland & Stateva, 2007; Solt, 2014); modals (Klecha, 2018); adjectives (Aparicio, 2017; Kennedy, 2007); and quantifiers (Burnett, 2014). Slack regulators precisify the meaning of the modified expression: while it is acceptable to say that *all townspeople* are asleep in a context in which a small handful are awake, *absolutely* reduces the tolerance for these exceptions, forcing a stricter interpretation of the expression. Crucially, this effect can be modeled via a structurally similar mechanism to the ones we have seen above. Specifically, precisification also involves an ordering-based partition between objects within a denotation, with the ranking grounded in how close each object is to the strict denotation of the expressions (i.e., to those elements that would be part of the denotation even under the strictest interpretation; see Lasersohn, 1999, Section 3, p. 526). Using *absolutely* only retains the objects that are closest to this endpoint, ruling out those that are further away; this process, similar to what we have seen with degree intensification and reduplication, provides a natural mechanism whereby the retained elements come across as having special value, inducing emphasis.

2.2 Attitudinal scales

Consider the following:

- (11) You should **totally** click on that link! (Beltrama 2016)
 (12) Chris is **SO** next in line. (Potts 2005)

Next-in-line and *click-on-a-link* evoke all-or-nothing properties. Yet we suggest that *totally* and *so* still select for the higher portion of a target scale and thus retain an intensifying core in these cases as well. What makes them different from the cases in Section 2.1 is that the ordering is rooted in the speaker's attitude, rather than in the denotation of the predicate—i.e., in how excited, certain, or surprised the speaker is about what they are saying.

Concerning *totally* in (11), Beltrama (2018) argues that the scale is grounded in the speaker's commitment towards adding the anchor proposition to the common ground of the conversation—

here, the proposition that clicking on that link is indeed advisable (see Romero & Han, 2004, for a similar proposal for *really* as a Verum operator). In other cases, the scale is linked to the emotional involvement of the speaker. For instance, Irwin (2014) suggests that “drama *so*” in (12) expresses an emotive, rather than knowledge-based, commitment of the speaker towards the proposition, proposing “whole-heartedly” as a gloss. Similar proposals have been suggested for the suffix *-ass* in AAE (Irwin, 2015) and *-issimo* in Italian (Beltrama & Bochnak, 2015); the special class of expressive intensifiers in German (Gutzmann & Turgay, 2014); interjections (e.g., *oh*); or other particle elements expressing surprise (Kraus, 2018).

Attitude-level intensifiers raise two analytical issues. First, what is the nature of the elements that are ordered? Whereas degree intensification, reduplication, and precisification can be seen as operating on individual-level objects within the denotation of the predicate, attitudes typically involve fully composed, proposition-level objects. Crucially, this difference correlates with a compositional one: attitude-level intensifiers typically take scope over the entire descriptive content of the utterance: for example, they cannot be targeted by logical operators or challenged via direct denials and are otherwise inert to elements that contribute to the at-issue dimension. The example below illustrates this situation by comparing *totally* and *extremely*: (14a–b) show that attitude-level uses of *totally* cannot be used in the scope of a negator and are not challengeable with denials; the intensifier can instead appear in such environments when the scale involves individuals within the denotation (in (13a–b)).

(13) Scale in the denotation

- a. Mark is tall, although not extremely tall.
- b. A: Mark is extremely tall.
B: No! He’s just tall

(14) Attitude scale:

- a. # You shouldn’t *totally* click on that link. (Intended: ‘I’m not certain you should click’)
- b. A: You should *totally* click on that link.
B: No! # I should click on that link, but you can’t be certain about giving this advice!

This compositional fact is typically captured by suggesting that attitude-level intensifiers, contrary to those seen in Section 2.1, apply to proposition-level (e.g., Irwin, 2014, for *so*; Romero & Han, 2004, for *really*) or speech-act level objects (Beltrama, 2018); that they are anchored to a particular perspective (typically, the speaker’s); and that they affect the felicity conditions of the utterance, as opposed to its propositional content.

A second issue concerns the relationship between attitude intensifiers and other examples of modifiers that similarly operate on the epistemic or emotive attitude of the speaker:

- (15) a. The **damn** Republicans are aggressively cutting taxes. (Potts 2005)
b. Marlene is **literally** the tallest girl I’ve ever seen. (Israel 2002)

Expressives such as *damn* in (15a) have been claimed to signal a high degree of emotional involvement on the part of the speaker, with the specific type, polarity, and intensity of the emotion depending on the specific lexical item and the contextual setting (Kaplan, 1999; Potts, 2007a). By the same token, the use of *literally* in (15b) has been claimed to modulate the speaker’s commitment towards the particular word choice that he used (Israel, 2002) and thus bears resemblance to the effect of *totally* in (11). While these forms have not been explicitly described in terms of intensification, the modifiers can be modeled via a similar mechanism to the ones outlined above. For example, Potts (2003) analyzes expressives as modifying a numerical index that tracks the interlocutors’ emotive involvement (Potts, 2003; see also McCready, 2010; Gutzmann, 2015); in more recent work,

Greenberg and Wolf (Forthcoming) similarly propose an analysis of Hebrew particle *legamrey* in terms of intensification selecting for assertions ranking high on a commitment scale.

In sum, this section has suggested that emphasis for intensity can be conveyed by a variety of lexical modifiers, which can target a variety of scales and linguistic objects. We now focus on how emphasis for intensity can be communicated via syntactic means.

3 EMPHASIS FOR INTENSITY BY WORD ORDER CHOICES

It is well known that information structure (“contrastive emphasis,” see Section 1) affects the grammatical composition of the clause. Specifically, it has an influence on the linear arrangement of clausal constituents, at least in languages featuring flexible word order (e.g., Féry & Ishihara, 2016; Krifka & Musan, 2012). In this section, we review a body of cross-linguistic phenomena suggesting that information structural categories might not be sufficient to account for the interpretation of certain word orders. Rather, we propose that such word orders are better understood as having the function of boosting the semantic value of parts of the proposition or of the whole proposition along a particular scale, similar to the contribution of the modifiers discussed above.

While this idea has been implicitly hinted at in much work at the syntax–semantics interface (e.g., emphatic negation in the context of syntactic locality or syntactic concord; see Giannakidou, 1998), Cruschina (2012) has been the first to explicitly mention intensification aspects of word order choices from a formal syntactic perspective. He observes that certain marked word order options in Sicilian, usually accounted for in terms of information structure, can also yield a mirative interpretation and can thus be regarded as instances of so-called “mirative fronting” (Cruschina’s term). For Sicilian, Cruschina (2012, p. 58) distinguishes between cases of postverbal focus (“neutral focus”) such as (16a) and cases of focal movement to the left periphery (16b):

- (16) Chi scrivisti?
 ‘What did you write?’
- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| a. Scissi n’ articulu. | [–emphatic] [declarative] |
| write.PAST.1S anarticle | |
| b. N’ articulu scissi! | [+emphatic] [exclamative] |
| anarticle write.PAST.1S | |
| ‘I wrote an article.’ | |

Concerning these constructions, Cruschina (2012, p. 119) claims that “mirativity defines a specific type of exclamation, namely, exclamative sentences expressing surprise and unexpectedness, and not exclamatives in general, [...] Mirative Fronting is triggered by a speaker-related mirative operator.” One of Cruschina’s main diagnostics for the differences between these different focus types is that fronting patterns like (16b) above are root phenomena and that they thus never occur in embedded syntactic contexts that lack their own illocutionary force. This pattern also holds across the different examples that we present below. However, before we turn to these data, we would like to point out, contrary to what Cruschina indicates above, that we do not believe that exclamatives in general are in any way less related to the expression of surprise and unexpectedness than mirative fronting. In fact, exclamatives are the syntactic prime example of expressing surprise. Accordingly, fronting patterns as (16b) above can be interpreted along the lines of exclamatives. Crucially, however, we will suggest that this is only one possible interpretation of such emphatic frontings, and that the notion of “mirativity” is thus too narrow to account for all the cases that can be observed in the domain of marked word order. “Emphasis for intensity” as introduced in Sections 1 and 2, by contrast, has appropriate conceptual range to capture all relevant data because the scalar meaning

contribution does not have to refer to a scale of likelihood; rather, the scale associated with such frontings is flexible just as in the cases we observed in Section 2.2 above.

The effect of signaling that the asserted propositional content is unexpected or surprising to the speaker can also be yielded by syntax/information-structure mismatches. For example, Hartmann and Zimmermann (2007, p. 385) have pointed out that cases of partial focus fronting in Hausa are judged by their informants as conveying more excitement and surprise about the respective event/situation. The context in (17) indicates that the information focus is made up by the entire sentence (“What happened”). Nevertheless, only a subpart of the focus (*dabboobi-n jeejii*, together with the focus-sensitive particle *nee*) is fronted to the left periphery:

- (17) Mèeneenèe ya fàaru? ‘What happened?’
 Dabboobi-n jeejii nee mutàanee su-kà kaamàa.
 animals-of bush PART men 3PL-REL.PERF catch
 ‘(The) men caught wild animals.’

This effect of partial (or subpart of) focus fronting has been observed for further languages, and it has been pointed out in this context that “[n]ative speakers sometimes characterize SFF [subpart-of-focus-]constructions as being more ‘emphatic’ than their narrow focus counterparts, but this emphasis affects the predicate as a whole and never the fronted part of the predicate alone” (Fanselow & Lenertová, 2011, p. 179). Interestingly, partial focus fronting can also be licensed by a degree component of the whole verbal predicate involved (see Trotzke & Wittenberg, 2017).⁴

The mirative effect of certain word order strategies has recently been investigated experimentally for both German (Trotzke, 2017a) and Italian (Bianchi, Bocci, & Cruschina, 2015) and, in these studies, has been compared to information structural uses like contrastive or corrective focus. For German, Trotzke (2017a) shows that fronting constructions in German are most natural in contexts in which the speaker aims at expressing surprise. Specifically, this is the only context type in which fronted word orders are rated as natural as non-fronted ones; in all other tested contexts (i.e., contrastive or corrective focus), the non-fronted configurations are rated higher than the fronted word order choices. However, and crucial for our claim in this article, the study has also observed that mirativity is not the only flavor of emphasis for intensity associated with marked word order options. For example, emphatic fronting can also be used by the speaker to convey a negative evaluation of what the interlocutor just said, as shown in the following exchange:

- (18) A: Wie hat denn der HSV im Turnier gespielt?
 ‘How did HSV in the tournament?’
 [HSV = soccer team from Hamburg; known for being very unsuccessful recently]
 B: VERLOREN haben sie (natürlich)!
 lost have they of.course
 ‘They lost, of course! What else?’

Crucially, the answer in (18B) fits smoothly into a context where the speaker continues by saying: “Why are you asking so stupidly?” That is, since in this case the question by Speaker A forces Speaker B to state the obvious, this use often has a reprimand character.

Already from these data, we can conclude that the respective use of emphatic fronting—either mirative or reprimand in the sense above—is determined by the context and is thus not encoded within the grammatical system. Crucially, what both interpretations have in common is that the speaker evokes a scale that is based not on truthfulness but on likelihood, identifying either the lowest (= mirative use) or highest (= reprimand use) point on it. Trotzke (2017b, p. 34) has therefore proposed that the following two presuppositions hold for the emphasis operator (*Emp*), which

replaces Cruschina's (2012) mirative operator mentioned above. These presuppositions are formulated using the tools that were previously employed by Krifka (1995) and Eckardt (2001) to model what they have called “emphatic focus”: “ $p <_c q$ ” stands for “ p is less likely than q , given the information in the common ground c ,” and focus alternatives are formalized according to Rooth (1985); i.e., “ o ” is the ordinary semantic value and “ f ” labels the focus semantic value:

- (19) **Emp** ($\llbracket S \rrbracket^o, \llbracket S \rrbracket^f$) in context c
 Assertion: $\llbracket S \rrbracket^o$
 (i) Presupposition: $\forall p \in \llbracket S \rrbracket^f \setminus \llbracket S \rrbracket^o: \llbracket S \rrbracket^o <_c p$
 OR
 (ii) Presupposition: $\forall p \in \llbracket S \rrbracket^f \setminus \llbracket S \rrbracket^o: \llbracket S \rrbracket^o >_c p$

Presupposition (ii) expresses that p is more likely than all alternatives q in the common ground c and thus accounts for uses as given in (18). Presupposition (i) is the version of emphatic focus proposed by Krifka (1995) and Eckardt (2001) and thus accounts for the mirative use.

Crucially, and in contrast to previous literature on emphatic focus, we observe that emphasis for intensity at the clausal level can be found not only in assertive speech acts but also in non-assertive ones, thus indicating that it is a general linguistic strategy, just as it has proven to be at the lexical level (Section 2). Look at the following effects that we find in marked polar questions with emphatic word order in both Italian (20a) and German (20b); see Bianchi and Cruschina (2016) and Trotzke (2017b):

- (20) a. Ma domani al mare andate?
 but tomorrow to-the seaside go.2.PL
 b. Ans MEER fährst du morgen?
 to-the seasidego you tomorrow
 ‘You are going to the seaside tomorrow? (I can’t believe it!)’

For those cases, Bianchi, Bocci, and Cruschina (2016) have argued that the respective operator responsible for the emphatic interpretive effect should be below illocutionary force. In particular, if we assume that yes–no questions denote a set consisting of the proposition p and its complement $\{p, \neg p\}$, then the emphatic effect in (20) can be interpreted with reference to the focus alternatives of the proposition p , and not with respect to its complement, as Bianchi et al. (2016) argue. Specifically, the examples above express that there are more likely alternatives of the form “Addressee goes to x tomorrow.” These data suggest that emphasis for intensity in the domain of word order is not located at the level of illocutionary force but can be found across speech acts and clause types, and that the previous notions of emphatic focus and emphatic assertion are thus too narrow to account for all the relevant data involved.

As a last point, let us hasten to add that the representation in (19) might still be too restrictive to capture all the emphatic cases where a fronted linguistic object is given prominence by virtue of being selected from the upper range of a scale. For instance, some languages that feature discourse particles in *wh*-questions display emphatic word orders where the discourse particles leave their original positions and show up in the left periphery in V2 configurations (see Bayer & Trotzke, 2015 for German and Trotzke & Monforte, 2019 for Basque examples). Crucially, discourse particles are functional categories that cannot be contrasted and, for that matter, cannot be contrastively stressed (i.e., there are no semantic focus alternatives to the respective particle). Accordingly, it would not make sense to postulate that the particle is fronted to the left periphery for reasons of (contrastive) focus:

- (21) a. Wie nur habe ich den Schlüssel verlieren können?
 how PART have I the key lose could
 'How on earth could I lose the key?'
 b. Non ote utzi dut egunkaria?
 where PART leave AUX newspaper
 'Where did I leave the newspaper?'

What these word order options instead express is that the respective lexical interpretation of these particles is intensified, in a similar vein to what we have seen for the other phenomena discussed above. In (21a), for instance, fronting of the particle results in intensifying the “Can't-find-the-value” interpretation of *nur* (Obenauer, 2004), where the speaker, if we postulate a scale for this specific particle interpretation, expresses a higher degree of frustration/desperation by choosing the marked fronting construction (see Dörre & Trotzke, 2019, on the semantic details). In other words, in these cases, the meaning of the discourse particle is given prominence by virtue of being selected from the upper range of a scale that corresponds to the interpretive domain (above: frustration/desperation in the context of “Can't-find-the-value”) that is lexically encoded by the particle.

Before considering the relationship between these syntactic manifestations of emphasis for intensity and the lexical cases presented above more closely, let us take stock of the phenomena illustrated in the current section. The emerging picture is one in which emphatic word orders in different languages do not only express the common information structural meanings (e.g., information focus and contrastive or corrective focus); rather, they can also convey a type of emphasis that is linked to high values on different types of likelihood scales. Moreover, this type of emphasis is not exclusively found in (declarative) assertions but can also be observed in non-assertive speech acts such as certain types of questions. This indicates that syntactic manifestations of emphasis for intensity are not necessarily conveyed by operators that should be encoded at the level of illocutionary force. In this respect, the representation and encoding of emphasis for intensity differ from exclamative operators like the ones that have been proposed, e.g., by Grosz (2012) or Rett (2011). These approaches, with their operators *EX* (Grosz) and *E-FORCE* (Rett), have defined illocutionary force operators for the speech act of an exclamation, where these operators are functions from propositions to expressive speech acts. With these considerations in mind, let us now turn to consider the broader picture.

4 CONCLUSION: EMPHASIS FOR INTENSITY IN A BROADER PICTURE

We have discussed lexical and syntactic strategies whereby emphasis for intensity can be conveyed. Such constructions contribute a similar core effect: they select for linguistic elements located in the upper range of an ordering, imbuing them with special prominence. Based on our overview, the emerging picture is one in which emphasis for intensity presents two parameters of variation: the nature of the target ordering (i.e., lexical, context-based, or attitudinal) and the nature of the target linguistic elements (individuals, propositions, or speech acts), where the value of these parameters can be affected by either semantic factors (e.g., whether the modified element is a gradable predicate, see Section 2) or syntactic ones (e.g., the size and scope of the fronted constituents, see Section 3). Going forward, much remains to be explored concerning how such different emphatic effects should be modeled and how they relate to one another conceptually and linguistically. We would like to conclude by outlining three observations that we see as relevant to further research on this topic.

First, let us return to the distinction between denotation-based and attitude-based scales. While this distinction represents a major axis of differentiation among lexical strategies, syntactic strategies

all seem to fall in the latter category (i.e., they modulate how excited, surprised, or committed the speaker is). Relatedly, mirative frontings do not interact with the descriptive content of the utterance, similar to the intensifiers discussed in Section 2.2. This point has also been made, among others, by Frey (2010) and Bianchi et al. (2016), who argue that the relevant emphatic effect can be characterized as a conventional implicature in the sense of Potts (2007b). This is illustrated in the following example, modified for our purposes (see Frey, 2010, pp. 1422–1424):

- (22) A: Wie hat denn Bayern im Turnier gespielt?
 'How did Bayern Munich do in the tournament?'
 [Bayern Munich = most successful soccer team from Germany]
 B: VERLOREN haben sie VERLOREN!
 lost have they
 'They lost.'
 B': # However, to my mind the fact that Bayern lost is not surprising/remarkable.'
 A': OK, but what's so surprising/strange about Bayern losing a game?

(22) shows that emphasis for intensity at the clausal level falls into the category of non-descriptive content: the emphatic meaning cannot be taken back by the speaker (22B') and can be challenged by the hearer (22A') independently from the descriptive content. It thus appears that emphasis for intensity is typically uniformly conveyed via operators that are part of the non-descriptive content across grammatical domains, raising the issue of whether the non-descriptive nature of emphasis for intensity is merely an accident of the compositional properties of the operators through which it is expressed or whether it is grounded in the very act of expressing emotions and/or attitudes, along the lines of Jakobson's (1960, p. 354) observation that “the emotive function, laid bare in the interjections, flavors to some extent all our utterances, on their phonic, grammatical, and lexical level.”

Second, different flavors of emphasis for intensity can be conveyed by the same lexical items: for instance, *totally* and *so* in (23) seem to be targeting the gradability of *tall* and *full*, as opposed to an attitude of the speaker:

- (23) a. Chris is **so** tall.
 b. The glass is **totally** full.

The versatility of these intensifiers raises the question as to whether their different uses should be captured as having related-yet-distinct meanings or whether they should be derived as variants from the same logical core. Both solutions have been proposed, with the former approach typically adopted when the two flavors of intensification present different compositional properties (Irwin, 2014; Beltrama, 2018 for *so* and *totally*); the latter when they do not (Beltrama & Bochnak, 2015 on *šemu* in Washo; McNabb, 2012 on *mamaš* in Hebrew). A similar overlap has been observed for mirative constructions, for which the surprise-marking contribution is often associated with a heightened emotive status on the part of the speaker and a high degree of a relevant property (Rett, 2011; Zanuttini & Portner, 2003). These examples raise the issue of whether the distinction between the different types of scales involved in emphasis for intensity always tracks a genuine distinction in the lexical meaning of the constructions that convey this effect, or whether it is also partially determined by independent contextual or cognitive factors that operate above and beyond the linguistic structure.

Finally, note that emphasis for intensity can also be conveyed by phonetic strategies such as “emphatic prolongation” (Jakobson, 1960, p. 354):

- (24) John is biiiiiiiiig!

An exhaustive discussion of the phonetic manifestation of emphasis for intensity would go far beyond the scope of this article; yet it is worth observing that some of the phenomena discussed here feature systematic phonetic correlates, such as lengthening of the onset duration of fricatives or the accented vowel (see Trotzke & Turco, 2015 on *wh*-questions in German). Accordingly, we suggest that there is much to gain from further exploring the differences and the similarities between the strategies whereby emphasis for intensity can be conveyed, as well as from zeroing in on the possible ways in which emphasis and scalarity can be linked to one another in different realms of linguistic analysis, including phonetics and phonology. We hope that the overview presented in this article can serve as a starting point towards this direction.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ We borrow this term from phonetics, where it refers to distinct features of emotive speech (see Coleman, 1914; Hirst, 1986; Niebuhr, 2010). See Section 4 for further discussion.
- ² See Morzycki (2016) for an overview of diagnostics for linguistic gradability across constructions.
- ³ Gradability has been modeled by introducing *degrees* as a primitive in the semantic ontology (Cresswell 1977; von Stechow, 1984; Heim 2000; Kennedy & McNally 2005; Fox & Hackl 2006; Kennedy, 2007; Beck 2011); but see Klein (1980) and Doetjes, Constantinescu, and Soukova (2011) for a different approach.
- ⁴ We are not aware of any literature that has claimed that some fronting patterns in English yield and/or prefer mirative interpretations; maybe this is due to the fact that English, unlike German and many Romance languages, expresses marked discourse interpretations primarily via intonation and not by word order choices. However, since more and more languages have recently been claimed to feature mirative fronting (see Authier & Haegeman, 2019 on mirative focus fronting in French), we are not ready to categorically exclude this possibility.

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