

The Interaction between Presupposition and Focus : Classical Greek Embedded Exclamatives

In Generative Grammar, exclamatives are claimed to be presupposed propositions (Abels 2010). In this paper, I would like to show that this is borne out in Classical Greek, and explore the question as to why, when embedded, they can be focused, and what this fact tells us about the semantics of excl. and the way they are interpreted.¹

I provide two arguments for the exclamatives being presupposed in Greek.

The first one is that they can be embedded only under factive predicates.

The second requires more elaboration. Morphologically, excl. are headed by items (*hoîos*, *hósos*, *hōs*) which belong to the *hós*-relative pronoun paradigm. This paradigm has a specific behaviour, which appears clearly in Free Relatives.

1) *Hós*-paradigm is used when the identification of the referent is possible [1]. Otherwise, *hóstis* must be used [2].

2) The alternation between *hós* and *hóstis* (alternatively the direct interrogative *tís*) also occurs after veridical question-embedding predicates (*oîda*/*know*-class with respect to the *erōtáō*/*wonder*-class). *Tís* or *hóstis* must be licensed by a non veridical operator (Giannakidou 1998). *Hós* shows up in veridical contexts. How does this distinction apply to excl. ?

Recall that *hoîos*, *hósos*, *hōs* belong to the *hós* paradigm. Therefore, they are ambiguous between a relative and an excl. interpretation in such a situation. This ambiguity can be dispelled by the context or the internal syntax. For example *hōs* ‘how’ has only the exclamative interpretation when it bears on an adjective [3].

The analysis in 1) and 2) carries over to *hoîos*, *hósos*, *hōs* employed as relatives. When employed in excl. things are somewhat different. Excl. are insensitive to the environment, be it veridical or not. When a non veridical operator is present, the excl. has always scope over it. I show this by focusing on the genuine embedded excl. (much as *what a* excl. in English). It is overt in [4] where the excl. precedes the interrogative *tí*, but can be covert as well [5]. This suggests that excl. are presuppositional while *hós*-relatives are only veridical.

The presuppositional character of the excl. demonstrated, I move on to the core problem. That embedded excl. are sometimes focused can be shown easily by examples where they are involved in a contrastive focus construction, or when there is a prolepsis, which information structure I take to be [Top(SN)+Foc(Subordinate clause)] [6]. This means that a presupposed element is presented as carrying the information of the sentence. The heading item conveys the information that the clause is presupposed and that maximality is attained on a scale (Milner’s 1978 high degree) (*hósos* : degree of quantity, *hoîos* : degree of an underspecified quality, *hōs* : degree of a quality/property specified by an adjective, an adverb, a predicate).

Yet, this does not suffice to yield the excl. interpretation of the embedded clause. Whereas incompleteness and intonation are enough for direct excl. (Rys 2003), something more is needed for embedded excl. I argue that the excl. interpretation originates from the clash between the presupposed feature and the focused status. It makes the hearer grasp the emotional/surprise content which is the hallmark of the exclamation according to most theories (Villalba 2008).

Counterexpectation is also the matrix of Zanuttini and Portner’s (2003) proposal. But Greek provides a different foundation for the phenomenon. Z&P claimed that excl. have the same semantics as interrogatives, and that the excl. interpretation comes from a widening operation. I argued that exclamatives are propositions rather than set of propositions (Karttunen semantics for questions assumed by Z&P). Greek has a split paradigm for interrogatives and excl. This ensures us that the keys for the interpretation are encoded morphologically and syntactically, and do not rest upon the sole pragmatic inferences.

¹ My corpus is made up of 3 dialogues of Plato, 20 speeches of Demosthenes and Xenophon’s *Anabasis* and *Cyropaedia*. I also surveyed Lysias’ and Isocrates’ speeches.

EXAMPLES

Perseus Website translations

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/collection?collection=Perseus:collection:Greco-Roman>

- [1] Ἔστι νόμος ὃς κελεύει τοὺς σιτοπώλας συνωνεῖσθαι τὸν σῖτον.
is law *hōs* orders the corn-dealers to.buy.together the corn
'There is a law which orders the corn-dealers to buy up the corn.' (Lysias, 22, 6)
- [2] Τῶν ὠφελειῶν τῶν κατεργασθησομένων
the benefits the realize- PART.PL.PASS.FUT
οὐκ ἔστιν ὅστις οὐκ οἰήσεται μεθέξειν.
not is *hōstis* not think-3SG.FUT to.take.part
'When the benefits shall have been realized in fact, everyone without fail will look to have his portion.' (Isocrates.5.131)
- [3] Ἐγὼ ὁρῶ μὲν ὥς χαλεπὸν τὰ βέλτιστα λέγειν ἐστί.
I see ptc *hōs*/how difficult the best-things to.say is
'I see how difficult it is to recommend the wisest course.' (Dem. 16.2)
- [4] Τοὺς μὲν ἀσθενοῦντας οἶα ὑβρίζει τί δεῖ λέγειν ;
the ptc weakened *hoīos*-ACC.N.PL/what-kind-of-thing maltreat.3SG why must say
'Why should I recount how violent he is toward the weak ?' (Perseus modified)
(X.Cyr.5.2.28)
- [5] Οἶσθα εἰς οἷόν τινα κίνδυνον ἔρχη ὑποθήσων τὴν ψυχὴν ;
know-2SG to *hoīos*-ACC.M.SG/what a danger go-2SG stake-PART.PL.FUT the soul
'Are you aware upon what sort of hazard you are going to stake your soul ?' (Pl.Prot.313a)
- [6] Διηγοῦντο τὰ τῶν πολεμίων ὥς ἔχοι,
tell-PST.3PL the the enemies *hōs*/how were
ἐπαίρειν βουλόμενοι μάλιστα στρατεύεσθαι αὐτόν.
to.excite want-PART.PL.PRS the.most to.campaign him
'They also gave him an account of how bad the situation of the enemies was, for they wished above all things to incite him to push the campaign.' (Perseus modified) (X.Cyr.4.2.4)

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