

Article

From Peripheral Structure to Discourse Operator: *No Veas*

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Abstract: This work describes the cooptation/grammaticalization process developed by the expression *no veas*. The hypothesis it defends, endorsed by previous research, considers that in this process, this expression appears in different constructions, originally integrated in the clause or peripheral, and is involved in a process of fixation towards pragmatic markers. The parenthetical distribution is fundamental to this subjectification and constructionalization. In some cases, the cooptation process has not ended, and constructions can act as semi-fixed patterns. These constructions provide procedural content but, at the same time, allow lexical choice in part of their structure. In other cases, we are already dealing with fixed markers. The Spanish structure *no veas* can appear as a free verbal construction (“*No veas tanto la televisión*” (*don’t watch television so much*)), as a semi-free intensification construction (“*no veas lo enfadado que está*” (you wouldn’t believe how angry he is), “*está gritando que no veas*” (he’s shouting like you wouldn’t believe)), or as a discourse operator (“*El campo está lleno, no veas*” (the stadium’s full, unbelievable)). In the latter case, the structure appears peripheral and displays a high degree of mobility (it could be inserted at the beginning of the utterance or appear in an intermediate position, not just at the end) and functions as a modal operator of surprise (a mirative) or a comment with intensifying meaning.

Keywords: construction; cooptation; discourse operator



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1. Introduction

This paper focuses on the process of cooptation (Heine 2013) and grammaticalization (Traugott and Trousdale 2013) that certain Spanish constructions undergo to become theticals (Kaltenböck et al. 2011), with procedural content and a pragmatic marker behaviour. The hypothesis it defends, endorsed by previous research, considers that in this process, the syntactic constructions were originally integrated in the clause or peripheral and have undergone a process of fixation towards pragmatic markers (e.g., *ya te digo, si quieres, si cabe, como quieras, dímelo a mí, tú sabes, aunque sea...*). As pragmatic markers, the elements provide macrostructural indications related to the stance of the interlocutor, the enunciation of the speaker, his/her subjectivity, or the informative and argumentative structure of what is being said (Fuentes Rodríguez 2003, 2017, 2018, 2022a). At the same time, some of these structures and units, such as modal operators (such as *of course, surprisingly*), may appear as a response (Padilla Herrada 2021).

The above-mentioned constructions initiate a subjectivization process, which can culminate in the grammaticalization (for others, pragmaticalization, Dostie 2004; Diewald 2011) or cooptation (Heine et al. 2021) of the structures. Hence, they indicate the continuous activity of the linguistic system and the creativity of speakers to produce expressions showing their involvement in what is said.

We will show how in some cases, the cooptation process has not ended and, following the perspective of *Construction Grammar* (Goldberg 1995, 2003; Gras and Sansiñena 2015), constructions can act as semi-fixed patterns. These constructions provide procedural content but, at the same time, allow for lexical choice in some part(s) of their structure. Other cases (e.g., *si cabe, aunque sea...*) clearly act as pragmatic markers. In this paper, the process will be illustrated by the Spanish structure (*no veas*, lit. “don’t (you) see”),

which can appear as a free verbal construction (“*No veas tanto la televisión*” (don’t watch television so much)), as a semi-free intensification construction (“*no veas lo enfadado que está*” (you wouldn’t believe how angry he is), “*está gritando que no veas*” (he’s shouting like you wouldn’t believe)), or as a discourse operator¹ (“*El campo está lleno, no veas*” (the stadium’s full, unbelievable)). In the latter case, the structure is peripheral and syntactically mobile (it could be inserted at the beginning of the utterance or appear in an intermediate position, not just at the end) and functions as a modal operator of surprise (i.e., a “mirative”, De Lancey 2001; Simeonova 2015; Olbertz 2012), or a comment with intensifying value.

Our methodological approach is that of pragmatically oriented linguistics, based on a macrosyntactic study² (Fuentes Rodríguez 2017) of the behaviour of a construction in an utterance and its different discursive functions (Kaltenböck 2016). Likewise, we present the constructional variation from an evolutionary perspective, in which the extrapositional nature of an element as well as the acquisition of its procedural meanings indicate the successive steps of the process that lead from free distribution to pragmatic markers, passing through semi-free constructions.

There are other similar approaches, such as the one expressed by Heine et al. (2021), for whom the evolution towards theticals (elements with a metadiscursive function related to the speaker’s subjectivity and which appear separately in the clause; see Section 2.1) is considered cooptation because the element acts with a metatextual function, although this does not imply a grammatical change or a decategorization, but an extracausal function.³ Similarly, we consider that cooptation is a broader process, affecting more units than discourse markers, and that it can be combined with grammaticalization in a subsequent step. In addition, there are intermediate stages in which we find constructional theticals (Heine et al. 2021, p. 46). Hence, we consider it fundamental to analyse constructions such as *no veas* and their different discourse functions (macrosyntax) in discourse grammar. We differ from this position in that from our macrosyntactic approach, both parts, the clause and higher units, belong to the grammar.⁴

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Theoretical-Methodological Premises

This study advocates a discourse syntax (or macrosyntax) approach that sustains the existence of relationships, combinatorics, and constructions that function in an utterance and between utterances, beyond the strict level of clausal dependence. The central axis of this methodological position is to distinguish between the behaviour of an element within the clause (microsyntax) and its behaviour at higher levels (sentence or text, macrosyntax). Both are part of discursive grammar (Fuentes Rodríguez 2017, 2023, to appear). The concrete form under study, *no veas*, develops a behaviour both within the clause (microsyntax) and within the utterance (as a peripheral element). Because of its specific behaviour, it is necessary to take parameters into account such as (a) the presence of constructions (conventional pairing of form and function, Goldberg 1995), (b) the distribution at the margins of the utterance, (c) the inclusion of metadiscursive procedural content that supports the textual structure, and (d) the inclusion of the communicative perspective of the participants.

A particularly interesting group of forms included within the category of discourse markers expresses procedural content linked to the formulation of the speech act (such as *frankly*), the subjectivity of the speaker (*surprisingly*), or the indications that (s)he gives to the receiver on how to interpret the message. Hence, they relate to the functions of focalization (*just*) and argumentation (*at least*). The syntax of these elements does not totally coincide with that of other connectors. Therefore, they have been called *discourse operators* (Fuentes Rodríguez 2003, 2018, 2020a). These elements function within the utterance itself and do not establish links with previous utterances, like *connectors* do. They are mobile within the utterance, occupy initial, medial, or final positions, and are not integrated into the clausal syntax. Consequently, their behaviour corresponds to that of the theticals of Kaltenböck et al. (2011), characterised as:

Theticals are elements which the speaker (or writer) presents as separate from sentence grammar in order to signal what Dik (1997, p. 396) called a “higher level orientation function”. They allow the speaker to “step out” of the confines of the linearity of communication to some extent by creating a kind of second plane of communication, not unlike “asides” on stage. This plane can be inserted spontaneously virtually anywhere and therefore lends itself particularly well to situation specific, metacommunicative information. But the plane needs to be signaled to the listener as such prosodically by separate tone units, pauses, etc., and by the suspension or loosening of constructional constraints and ensuing mobility. (Kaltenböck et al. 2011, p. 883)

In order to understand their behaviour, the authors assert that a specific method, i.e., *thetical grammar*, is required.⁵ The characteristics of theticals coincide with those indicated above.

(a) They are syntactically independent. (b) They are set off prosodically from the rest of an utterance. (c) Their meaning is “non-restrictive”. (d) They tend to be positionally mobile. (e) Their internal structure is built on principles of SG but can be elliptic. (Kaltenböck et al. 2011, p. 857)

From our perspective, connectors and operators are two paradigms of elements and not a single class of discourse markers.

2.2. Evolutionary Process

The origin of discourse markers in general, be they connectors or operators, has been the subject of great interest and debate as, given their extra-clausal function, they do not adapt to the processes established for grammaticalization (Lehmann 1985, 2002). In fact, some authors observed that they did not suffer from semantic bleaching, as mere grammatical morphemes do; rather, they terminated with a procedural content and with a different function, in the periphery of the utterance, outside the clausal nucleus. The process in which they are involved does not lead to the total loss of semantic content and syntactic freedom but to the appearance of a new form, with another function in discourse. In order to define this process, authors have proposed terms such as *pragmaticalization* (evolution of an element that adopts pragmatic content) (Dostie 2004; Claridge and Arnovick 2010), or *discursisation* (Diewald 2011). Claridge and Arnovick define it as

the process by which a lexico-grammatical sequence or word form, in a given context, loses its propositional meaning in favour of an essentially metacommunicative, discourse interactional meaning and/or (an already pragmatic element) continues to develop further pragmatic functions or forms. (Claridge and Arnovick 2010, p. 187)

Company (2004), for her part, insists, along with researchers such as Traugott, on adopting a wider view of the process of change that includes these units. Traugott (2003, p. 645) explains grammaticalization as “the process whereby lexical material in highly constrained pragmatic and morphosyntactic context is assigned grammatical function, and once grammatical, is assigned increasingly grammatical, operator-like function”.

This process has also been said to involve a stage of fixation of the construction or constructionalization (Traugott and Trousdale 2010, 2013). Evans (2007), for instance, includes constructionalization in the evolution that gives rise to in subordinate clauses. This process involves the following steps:

A: Subordination: subordinate construction; B: Ellipsis: ellipsis of main clause;
C: Conventionalized ellipsis: restriction of interpretation of ellipsed material;
D: Reanalysis as main clause structure: Conventionalised main clause use of formally subordinate clauses. (Evans 2007, p. 370)

The last step is the conventionalization of the construction or “constructionalisation”: “The construction now has a specific meaning of its own and it may not be possible to

restore any ellipsed material” (Evans 2007, p. 374). This process is justified because the construction acquires new discursive functions that involve a step towards the procedural one. These new functions include:

- Indirection and interpersonal control: requests and commands, hints, warnings, and admonitions
- Modal functions of various types: epistemic and evidential meanings; deontic meanings (especially hortatives and obligation); exclamations; and evaluations
- Signalling presupposed material: negation (i.e., negative clauses have subordinate form), contrastive focus, reiteration, disagreement with assertions by previous speaker (Evans 2009, pp. 9–10)

Heine (2013, pp. 1205–6) refers to this process as cooptation, via which constructions lose their syntactic dependence of the verb, reduce their lexical content to the point of converting it into a procedural instruction, and acquire combinatorial freedom: “units such as clauses, phrases, or words are taken from the domain of sentence grammar and deployed for purposes of discourse organisation”. However, cooptation does not mean that the element has been grammaticalized. They are two processes, and grammaticalization can follow cooptation.

Traugott has also studied constructionalization in numerous works. Both underline the need to explain why the process is not equivalent to the one undergone by other elements with semantic content, such as auxiliary verbs or morphemes (e.g., the suffix-*mente* for adverbs): the element loses lexical content, combinatorial freedom, and functions as a morpheme. Here, the change moves towards a new element with procedural and functional content in the discourse (“Zero syntax, ten in pragmatics” Company 2006).

The key is in the fact that the construction displaces its semantics towards intersubjectivity (modality, enunciation, persuasion), so towards how the speaker organises the discourse. López-Couso (2010, p. 129) defines subjectification as key to grammaticalization: “the semantic-pragmatic mechanism through which meanings shift from the objective description of the external situation to the expression of the speaker’s internal perspective or attitude towards that is said”. This is a gradual process (Traugott and Trousdale 2010),⁶ which explains the different stages we can find and the constructive diversity that coexists in the discourse (layering). “The steps coincide in semantic bleaching, persistence, subjectification, decategorialisation, divergence and coalescence”, as Claridge and Arnovick (2010, p. 185) argue.⁷

2.3. Constructionalization

In our research on discourse operators, it was observed that, besides being involved in a process of constructionalization, they share their extrapositional, and thus syntactically marginal, position.⁸ Extrapositionality, in our opinion, is necessary to speak of the cooptation of a structure so that it functions as an element with procedural content (thetical). This already implies a fixation at the macrosyntactic level (metatextual, for others). There are intermediate stages in this process of constructionalization. This has been illustrated for specific items before (Fuentes Rodríguez 2014, 2020a, 2021a, 2021b, 2022b) and will be tested for *no veas* in this paper. The form *no veas* has also been observed to undergo the abovementioned fixation process and has passed through three stages, the second of which is the object of our study:

(1) Free construction: combinatorial freedom, function within the clause, and designative content. (“no veas la television”, (don’t watch television).)

(2) Peripheral function and extrapositionality: the element acquires a function outside the clause, as part of the utterance. It refers to the speaker and his or her metadiscursive activity. A determining factor in this process is that it acquires the mark of extrapositionality, appearing as an independent intonational unit placed between pauses at the left or right periphery. (*To be honest*, he prefers to live in London).

(3) The fixation of the construction as a discourse operator (*frankly, of course*): the element, now as a unit, functions within the utterance and indicates a procedural content of

modality, enunciation, focalization, or thematization, or establishes scaled argumentative indications. In this stage of fixation, the expression acts as a single element, does not permit any change in its structure, and is extrapositional. Moreover, it acquires mobility and can be found in the medial, initial, or final position in the utterance, between pauses. We consider, then, that there has been a shift to another macrosyntactic category, that of the operators. In this integral sense of discursive grammar (Fuentes Rodríguez 2023 to appear), we can consider that there is a grammatical change.

Other studies have confirmed the process indicated above (Fuentes Rodríguez 2014, 2021a, 2022b, *para colmo, no es por nada, . . .*, among others) and allowed us to explain the genesis of the paradigm of discourse operators. These elements functioning at the level of discourse grammar or macrosyntax (Fuentes Rodríguez 2017)⁹ constantly undergo a process of renewal and illustrate ongoing language change going from the lexical to the grammatical level.

Construction Grammar (Goldberg 1995) provides us with interesting resources, above all to explain the whole process situated in step 2. It is in these intermediate phases that we witness fixation, to different degrees, along the process. The process is going to be analysed through the Spanish form *no veas*.

2.4. Materials

The study was carried out based on a search in (1) CORPES XXI, a Spanish corpus from the Real Academia Española (<https://www.rae.es/banco-de-datos/corpes-xxi>, accessed 20 December 2022) of the 21st century, and (2) the MEsA corpus, on digital discourse, compiled by C. Fuentes and her team (www.grupoapl.es/materiales-corpus/corpus-mesa, accessed on 20 December 2022). It comprises material obtained from social networks, the extension of which is indicated in the Table 1:

Table 1. MEsA corpus.

| | |
|-----------|---------------|
| Blogs | 452,499 words |
| Facebook | 293,743 words |
| Forums | 365,566 words |
| Instagram | 322,638 words |
| Websites | 537,588 words |
| Twitter | 720,584 words |
| WhatsApp | 495,769 words |
| YouTube | 398,635 words |

For the analysis of both corpora, we proceeded as follows: we carried out a lexical search for the string *no veas* in the whole corpus,¹⁰ including the variable *no veas tú*. We analysed their contexts of appearance, delimiting their distribution (peripheral or integrated in the clause) and their function in the utterance or at its margins (also as an independent element in statements or reactive interventions). We also defined their content, lexical in the cases of free constructions or procedural when acting as a pragmatic marker or semi-free construction (see Table 2).

Table 2. Results in the corpora.

| Functions | CORPES (297) | MEsA (41) |
|----------------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| Clausal verb | 43 (14.47%) | 12 (29.26%) |
| <i>No veas</i> + intensification | 165 (55.55%) | 14 (34.14%) |
| <i>Que no veas</i> | 60 (20.20%) | 6 (14.63%) |
| Discourse operator | 29 (9.76%) | 9 (21.95%) |

3. No Veas: Results and Discussion

Verbs of perception, such as *ver*, have been studied from a syntactic–semantic perspective, as they are involved in many different constructions (Horno Chéliz 2002; Alfaraz 2008). Some authors have even focused on the procedural forms they give rise to (García Miguel 2005; Montolío Durán and Unamuno 2001; Gallardo and Marín Jordá 2005; Tanghe and Jansegers 2014; Fuentes Rodríguez 2020b; Gras Manzano 2020; González Sanz 2020). Nevertheless, few studies have cited the form *no veas*. Indeed, it does not appear in dictionaries, such as the one by Briz et al. (2008, under construction) or Fuentes Rodríguez (2018).

However, *no veas* is cited as a discourse marker in the work of García Miguel (2005):

In fact, we must consider many of the intransitive uses we register with *ver*, *mirar*, *oir* and a number of other verbs of perception as discourse markers. It involves formulas such as *ya veo*, *ya ves*, *ya veremos*, *¿ves?*, *¿viste?*, *no veas*, *vamos a ver*, *mira*, *oiga*, . . . which guide the development of oral discourse and speaker–hearer interaction. (García Miguel 2005, p. 185)

This structure, composed of negation + verb, in the second person, referring to the addressee, operates in Spanish as a clausal nucleus, a free structure with a complete, meaningful exhortative content, in contexts such as the following (context 1):

1. User 23 (man): No seas tan cotilla y *no veas* el Facebook (Corpus MEsA, FB 2017 June MAS 01¹¹).

“User 23 (man): Don’t be such a gossip and don’t look at Facebook”

At the opposite end of the continuum, we find the form *no veas* used as an element that is already attached (context 3 as specified in Section 2.3), forming an independent prosodic group, being syntactically mobile, without a function within the clause, and having procedural content.

2. *No veas*, por poco no acabamos con el betadine de todo el hospital. (CORPES XXI,¹² Aranda Ruiz, P. 2003, *La otra ciudad*).

“Unbelievable,¹³ we were this close to running out of betadine in the hospital”.

The most interesting ones are the intermediate steps (point 2 in Section 2.3), where different steps of the process of change can be directly observed.

The analysis of both corpora reveals that the process of fixation is not yet complete and that there is a coexistence of different stages (layering) of constructionalization.

3.1. [No Veas + Intensification]

Another context in which *no veas* adopts a unique, procedural content is related to intensification. In this case, it is integrated into the clausal structure: “*no veas* lo que se preocupa. *No veas* lo serio que está. *No veas* la de gente/la cantidad de gente, la gente que ha venido” (you wouldn’t believe how he worries. You wouldn’t believe how serious he is. You wouldn’t believe how many people there are, the people who have come). It corresponds to the construction: [*no veas* + defined nominal group, + *cómo/qué/cuánto* . . .]. The verb complement, an object of the action *ver*, changes from being an object/stimulus of the visual perception to being a focalized and intensified reality. This semantic extension illustrates an initial process of abstraction, necessary in the process of fixation. In this use, *no veas* appears in the following settings:

(A) *no veas* + nominal group with a definite article: it expresses intensification (quantification) of and focalization on the referent expressed by the noun:

3. Y Noé se lo creyó, y se puso a construir un barco en medio del desierto. *No veas* el cachondeo de los vecinos (Expedientes X. La Biblia». *El club de la Comedia* 2001)

“And Noah believed him, and started building a boat in the middle of the desert. You wouldn’t believe how (hard) the neighbours started to joke around.”

(B) With a substantiated relative clause:

4. ¿Dónde estábamos? . . . Sí, conque un día dan el anuncio de que el rey va a hacer una gran fiesta para buscarle una novia al príncipe, que ya le tocaba casarse. . . ya estaba madurito para la cosa. . . y nada. Y *no veas* la que arman la madrastra y sus hijas. Esta es la nuestra, dicen. (2001 Sanchis Sinisterra, J. *Sangre lunar*)

"Where were we? Yes, one day they announce that the king is going to have a great party to find a bride for the prince, it was time he got married. . . he was getting too old for that. . . and nothing. You wouldn't believe the fuss from the stepmother and her daughters. She is ours, they say".

On some occasions, it elides the intensified structure because it can be inferred from the context. Thus, we can make a supposition in relation to the following fragment found in (5): "*No veas* ayer lo que le hizo (pasó) a tu hermano" (you wouldn't believe what he did to your brother yesterday), always presupposing something very strange, unimaginable, surprising, or unexpected.

5. .-*No veas* ayer tu hermano, en los futbolines. (2003 Aranda Ruiz, P. *La otra ciudad*)
 "You wouldn't believe your brother yesterday playing table football"

In this regard, we can observe the mirative, almost exclamative nature of *no veas*. Olbertz (2012) has argued that both concepts, namely mirativity and exclamation, are generally very closely connected but concludes that in the case of exclamation, we are looking at an illocutionary value, a modality that affects the whole sentence and expresses an emotion on behalf of the speaker:

Exclamative: the speaker expresses his/her affective stance about the propositional content evoked by the communicated content, implicating that some property or relation contained in the proposition obtains to a high degree. (Olbertz 2012, p. 91)

Compared to this, miratives point to the unexpected element of the situation: "Mir(ative) indicates that the propositional content does not coincide with the expectations of its source, i.e., the speaker or another person." (Olbertz 2012, p. 94). So Olbertz (2012, p. 95) concludes:

there are at least three reasons for assuming that mirative and exclamative are different concepts: first, unlike exclamative illocution, mirative propositional contents can have negative polarity; secondly, mirative propositional contents can occur in non-restrictive relative clauses, which exclamative illocution cannot; finally, mirative propositional contents may occur within acts with declarative or interrogative illocution, which proves that they cannot be an illocution themselves.

For Simeonova (2015, p. 1):

Mirativity has been defined as encoding the speaker's surprise, unprepared mind, discovery of state of affairs that is unexpected, Slobin and Aksu (1982); De Lancey (1997, 2012); Aikhenvald (2012). Mirative sentences can involve one of the following: exclamative intonation (1), some lexical expression (2), grammaticalised dedicated particle (3), or grammaticalised non-dedicated particle (4).

De Lancey (2001, p. 4) admits that mirativity, evidentiality, and modality are marked cases, and can exchange forms. Simeonova (2015, p. 4) differentiates the evidential from the mirative in the sense that "in the evidential case, the proposition is contained in the set of expectations of the speaker, while in the mirative one it is not".

The form *no veas* alludes precisely to the unexpected, either from a qualitative or a quantitative perspective. It can be assumed that there is also a certain exclamative value behind it because the speaker is clearly involved in what is said; it is an expression of his or her subjectivity (6–8 below). Furthermore, we could include it in an illocutionary question act: "¿No veas la que armaron?" (You can't believe what they've done). In this case, it could be admitted when it is a citative question: "¿has dicho no veas la que armaron?" (Did you say don't believe what they did?).

However, semantically speaking, *no veas* implies something unexpected, spectacular, remarkable, be it in a positive or negative sense. It can refer to something unexplainable, grandiose, or unbearable. The context determines the polarity and direction of the argumentation. It involves an argumentative intensification as well as an assessment

(C) The clearest example is when *no veas* appears with a marker of intensification, with *qué, cómo, cuánto*, in general exclamative contexts:

6. De albañil trabaja desde que llegó de Tetuán, y allí no había tocado ni un ladrillo, pero... ¡*no veas* tú cómo se queda con todas las coplas! Y, además... ¡qué tipazo tiene!, ¡qué tipazo! (2001 Naveros, M. *Al calor del día*)
 “He’s worked as a bricklayer since he got from Tetuán, and he hadn’t even touched a brick there, but... *You wouldn’t believe* how he gets with all the coplas! And, what’s more... What a body! What a body!”
7. Fran me dará varias palmadas fuertes en la espalda (hace pesas, me hundirá los omoplatos) y mientras tratará de animarme con un *No veas* cuánto lo siento tío, esto es ley de vida, no se libra nadie. (Cebrián, M. 2004, “*Aluminosis*”. *El malestar al alcance de todos*)
 “Fran will give me a number of hard pats on the back (he does weights, he’ll sink my shoulder blades) and meanwhile he’ll try and encourage me with a *You wouldn’t believe* how sorry I am mate, this is the law of life, nobody escapes.”
8. *No veas* qué saque tiene la elementa, lo que había cocinado no dio para los tres. Tuve que improvisar una ensalada y unos aperitivos. (Cebrián, M. 2004, “*Tempus fugit*”. *El malestar al alcance de todos*)
 “*You wouldn’t believe* what an appetite she has, what I had cooked wasn’t enough for the three of us. I had to make a salad and some snacks all of the sudden.”

Of these collocations, *cuánto* most clearly leans towards quantitative intensification. It places quantity at the highest point on the argumentative scale. With *cómo* or *qué*, the intensification is situated on the higher part of the assessment. *No veas* focalises the assessment and, in turn, intensifies these intensifiers. In example (6), *no veas* highlights the mode or type of service the woman had. The speaker is surprised when hearing the coplas and when seeing the amount of food eaten by the women (*qué saque tiene* (what an appetite she has)). In these contexts with exclamatives, *no veas* acts as a focuser with interactive value, calling upon the attention of the receiver of the messages. Can this be defined as mirativity, or does it only refer to the speaker?

Let us compare “what an appetite this rascal has!” (*¡qué saque tiene la elementa!*) with “you wouldn’t believe what an appetite this rascal has” (*no veas qué saque tiene la elementa*). In both cases *qué* acts as an intensifier and expresses surprise on behalf of the speaker. The utterance with *no veas* involves, furthermore, the recipient, encourages him/her to be surprised, and as such, wants to share modality.

Furthermore, when *no veas* intensifies an action, it is followed by *si*:

9. Mi madre me dijo que lo mejor era llevar siempre los churros al aire en un cordel, que metidos en esa bolsa de papel se recocían, y ya *no veas* si la bolsa era de plástico (2019 Pérez Andújar, J. *La noche fenomenal*)
 “My mother told me it was best to always carry the churros exposed to the air tied in a string, in a bag they became soggy, and then if it were a plastic bag then *you wouldn’t believe it*.”

The utterance “If it were a plastic bag” (*Si la bolsa era de plástico*) refers to a hypothetical circumstance. If this circumstance is given, “*you wouldn’t believe* (it is remarkable) how soggy they became if the bag was plastic” (*no veas* lo recocidos que se ponían si la bolsa era de plástico). From this, it can be concluded that *no veas* acts as an intensification of content that is implied, not expressed.

Moreover, *no veas* can intensify a process expressed by a gerund (10). The speaker expresses his/her surprise related to the degree of suffering when working in the fog.

10. – *No veas* currando ahí con la calina que hace ¿no Rai? (Soler, A. 2018, A. *Sur*)
 “Unbelievable working there in this fog, right, Rai?”

In another context (11), the predication comes first as a topic, and the intensification by *no veas* is postponed, as if it were a coda. It then appears peripherally, between pauses, as a modal commentary.

11. 8 February 2017 21:30:25: M1: Es la canción más estúpida del mundo pero me encanta!!! “It’s the most stupid song in the world but I love it!!!”;
 8 February 2017 21:30:30: M1: <audio omitido> “audio omitted”;
 8 February 2017 21:30:47: M1: Estoy viendo Tarde para la ira “I’m watching The Fury of a Patient Man”;
 8 February 2017 21:31:23: H1: que cansion es esa “What song’s that”;
 8 February 2017 21:31:28: H1: tarde para la epicidad “late for epicness”;
 8 February 2017 21:36:05: M1: Al actor no le gusta mucho Dani Rovira no “The actor doesn’t like Dani Rovira much”;
 8 February 2017 21:36:16: M1: Porque lo que le dijo en los Goya *no veas* “Because you wouldn’t believe what he said to him at the Goyas”;
 8 February 2017 21:36:23: M1: No estaba mucho para el humor “He wasn’t really in the mood for humour” (Corpus MEsA, WA 2017 ene–jun).

We have even collected a number of examples where *no veas* appears without any complement. The intensifying meaning can be inferred from the context:

12. La vida es lo que es, precaria y penosa se la mire por donde se la mire. Y si encima, se tienen pájaros en la cabeza o más ideas y pensamientos de los necesarios, entonces ni te cuento. Luego viene la muerte, y *no veas*. No te voy a meter miedo pero sentado aquí, a tu lado, se oye silbar el filo de la güadaña, lo que indica que estás más maduro de lo que quisieras. (Díez, L.M. 2002, *El oscurecer (Un encuentro)*)
 “Life is what it is, uncertain and painful whatever way you look at it. And if on top of it if they’ve got their heads in the clouds or more ideas or thoughts than necessary, then forget it. Then comes death, and you wouldn’t believe it. I’m not going to scare you but sitting here, by your side, you can hear the whistle of the blade of the scythe, which means you’re older than you’d like.”

In fragment (13), the use of *no veas*, inserted in a parenthetical utterance, also presupposes an intensified content:

13. –Eso mismo pensé yo, Vicky; pero me dije: “Susi, hija, ya que has pagado el gimnasio y te has comprado los calentadores y la malla (que *no veas* tú para encontrarla de mi talla), no te vas a echar atrás ahora por un simple ‘estiramiento del muslo’”. (2005 Bodega Estévez, L. ... [et al.]: *La maruja liberá*)
 “That’s what I thought, Vicky; but I told myself: “Susi, babe, now that you’ve paid for the gym and you’ve bought the legwarmers and leggings (and now you wouldn’t believe it to find my size), you’re not going to back out because of a simple ‘muscle strain’”.”

It is equivalent to “you wouldn’t believe how difficult it was to find it, what I had to do to find it” (que no veas tú lo difícil que ha sido encontrarla, lo que tuve que hacer para encontrarla). In this context, the second-person pronoun is made explicit, as an additional means of intensification.

3.2. [Que No Veas]

Besides *no veas*, another intensifying construction is the one that appears as an intensifying coda (que no veas) after the verb or nominal group. *Que no veas* intensifies the action or referent expressed by the noun, while at the same time indicating a subjective burden by the speaker. The intensification has an expressive meaning:

14. Porque con los zapatos que te compraste, te huelen los pies en la noche *que no veas*. (Salcedo, H. 2002, *Obras en un acto*)

"Because with the shoes you bought, *you wouldn't believe* how your feet smell at night".

In *Te huelen los pies que no veas* (you wouldn't believe how your feet smell), the construction *que no veas* acts as a complement of intensification of the action: *te huelen muchísimo* (they smell so much). The original structure could be a consecutive sentence in which (elided) quantification has been replaced by the point of reference presented by *that [que]*: "your feet smell (so much) that you wouldn't believe [how unbearable] it is [te huelen los pies (tanto) que no veas (lo insoportable que es)]".

This degree of intensification of the verbal action is found in other cases of *que no veas*, as a complement of an action.

15. Contigo ha tenido ella siempre mucha confianza y te quiere *que no veas*, yo creo que tanto como nosotras; por eso pensé que a lo mejor sabías algo. (Salvador Caja, G. 2002, *El eje del compás*)

"She has always had a lot of trust in you and *you wouldn't believe* how much she loves you, I think as much as us, that's why I thought maybe you'd know something."

16. - Y lo mío ha sido mucho más difícil, no sé si lo sabes..(. . .) Que el que iba a por ti era gordo, pero los míos corrían *que no veas*. Mira si he corrido, que me he secado con la carrera. (Casavella, F. 2002, *Los juegos feroces*)

"And mine has been much more difficult, I don't know if you know..(. . .) The one who went for you was fat, but *you wouldn't believe* how mine ran. Did I run or what, I dried out running"

In example (15), the utterance "it's unbelievable how much he loves you" (*te quiere que no veas*) is equivalent to "he loves you so much" (*te quiere muchísimo*); in (16), "it's unbelievable how they ran" (*corrían que no veas*) is equivalent to "they ran very fast" (*corrían mucho*).

However, with other verbs, intensification does not just consist of an elevated degree of quantification (corresponding to *mucho* "a lot"). In other contexts, it involves a particular mode, as in *ponerse que no veas* (to get/become like you wouldn't believe) (17). It implies the use of "act like a frenzied person, become angry" (*ponerse como un energúmeno, enfadarse*). In example (17), rather than indicating the emotional state the person acquires, it indicates an intensified evaluation.

17. Lo que me ha dejado hundida ha sido lo del libro. No tenías que haberlo aceptado, Mariate, pero a ver qué podía hacer yo, porque él también se ha puesto *que no veas*, (Antolín, E. 2005, *Final feliz*)

"What really got me down is the thing about the book. You didn't have to accept it, Mariate, but it would have been difficult for me to do anything, because he's also become like *you wouldn't believe*".

With nouns, *no veas que* is frequent in indefinite noun phrases. *Que no veas* completes the indefinite referent: "de tal modo, tan grande, tan intensa *que no veas*" (in such a way, so big, so intense that you wouldn't believe).

18. Tenías razón (una vez más, y ¿cuándo no la tienes?, me pregunto), esto del ordenador portátil es una gozada, yo al menos le he cogido un gusto *que no veas* (Aramburu, F. 2006, *"Informe desde Creta"*)

"You were right (again, and when aren't you? I ask myself), all this with the laptop is fantastic, I for once enjoy it *like you wouldn't believe*."

We also find it with *cada*, intensifying "santa soquetiza":

19. - Él fue mi maestro porque cuando yo era chico en la escuela me ponían cada santa soquetiza *que no veas*. (Esquivel, L. 2001, *Tan veloz como el deseo*)

"He was my teacher because when I was little at school they punched the hell out of me *like you wouldn't believe*."

3.3. [No Veas] as an Independent Element

Finally, *no veas* can appear as a peripheral (exclamative) comment, that constitutes an independent utterance. Rather than being integrated into the clause, it appears between pauses. It establishes an exclamative assertion of surprise by the speaker, anteposed or postposed to the content it wants to highlight, and explicitly includes the receiver of the message in the communicative act. As such, it is the equivalent of: “I call the attention of the receiver regarding what has been said + I find it surprising, astonishing + I intensify or evaluate something as unexpected”.

It can refer to an utterance that follows (when *no veas* is in the initial position) or precedes (when placed in the final position). It can be a response to an intensified comment or an evaluation at an elevated degree (20).

20. es que esto de justificarse por todo es que me mata
por todo/por todo
sí
no veas (2002 CORALES *La ventana: entrevista a Luz Casal*, 29/11/02)
“it is that this thing of justifying yourself for everything kills me
for everything/for everything
yes
unbelievable.”

In example (20), *no veas*, being a modal operator, constitutes a turn in itself. In example (21), the modal discourse operator *no veas* is followed by the argument that justifies the evaluation.

21. -Cómo ha ido la mañana -preguntó uno.
-*No veas*, por poco no acabamos con el betadine de todo el hospital. (Aranda Ruiz, P. 2003, *La otra ciudad*)
“-How did the morning go—someone asked
-*Unbelievable*, we were this close to running out of betadine in the hospital”.

In the final position, *no veas* acts as a peripheral complement in the coda and as such, expresses an intensifying modal comment on what precedes (Fuentes Rodríguez 2012):

22. Es una señora y de guapa, *no veas*. (. . .) Es guapa de verdad. . . ¡ (Paz Pasamar, P. 2004, *Historias Bélicas*)
“She’s a lady and *you wouldn’t believe* how beautiful.(. . .) She’s really beautiful”.
23. El jefe les había echado una bulla, *no veas*, Ricardo, un broncazo de tres pares de cojones. (Correa, J.L. 2004, *Muerte en abril*)
“The boss had a right go at them, *unbelievable*, Ricardo, a real good telling off.”
24. sí fue un flechazo/*no veas* (2009 PRESEGAL SCOM_M22_019)
“It was love at first sight/*unbelievable.*”
25. -No, soy de Soria. Fría de cojones, chaval. *No veas*. (Villacís, J. 2016, *El hombre de la maleta vacía*)
“No, I’m from Soria. Fucking cold, lad. *Unbelievable.*”

In (25), *no veas* intensifies the preceding expression, *de cojones*, with a final comment being an independent utterance.

In (26), *no veas* is anteposed to *hay que ser cabrones*, to which it adds a meaning of intensified evaluation.

26. -Es que *no veas*, hay que ser cabrones para ofrecerle cuatro duros a la viuda, que en realidad le corresponden, a cambio del silencio. . . con el cuerpo de Gumersindo aún caliente, joder. (Mestre, J. 2011, *Komatsu PC-340*)
“*Unbelievable*, they’ve got to be right bastards to offer the widow a pittance, which is what she’s owed, really, in exchange for silence. . . with Gumersindo’s still warm body, damn.”

The operator *no veas* can also be followed by another exclamative statement, and as such, comments on what is surprising or astonishing. This is the case with *vaya tela de nombre que es Bartolo* in (27).

27. – *No veas, Bartolo, vaya tela de nombre.* (Soler, A. 2018, *Sur*)
 “Unbelievable, Bartolo, what a name”

In these contexts, which are quite frequent in our corpus, *no veas* expresses surprise and has a mirative function, wanting to draw the attention of the recipient and to share the emotion. From a prosodic point of view, with this function, *no veas* appears in the left or right periphery of the turn.

28. Cuando el Viejo les estaba sacando los ojos con el destornillador chillaban como bestias. Y *no veas*, al final les decíamos: “A cantar, a cantar”, y cantaban por peteneras. (Lejarza, M. and Rueda, F. 2019, *Yo confieso*)
 “When the old man was taking out their eyes with the screwdriver they screeched like wild animals. And *you wouldn’t believe it*, at the end we told them: “Sing, sing”, and they sang flamenco”

In final position, as in (29), *no veas* can express a conclusion. It is placed after the part of the discourse that is responsible for the exclamation and act of surprise.

29. Lo escayolaron y me lo llevé al circuito. Luego para volver, *no veas*. Con la escayola el Trompa no podía conducir, se lo tuvo que bajar el que venía conmigo de mecánico. (Corazón Rural, A. 2019, *Jot Down*)
 “They put it in a plaster cast and I took him to the circuit. Later to come back, *you wouldn’t believe it*. The Trunk couldn’t drive with the cast, the one I had brought with me as a mechanic had to get it out.”

This syntactic mobility is typical of discourse operators. In addition, note that the form of *no veas* is not completely fixed, given that in some cases it appears with *tú* (*no veas tú*) as a more intensified variant. The comment appears in postposition, and *no veas* functions as a pragmatic marker that values and intensifies the already intensified, with anaphoric reference to what is mentioned before it.

30. ¿qué pasa? que mucha gente se iba/a a Lugo//y de vez en cuando/y cuando venían sobre todo los hombres/ya venían cargaditos ya/*no veas tú* ya traían el vino no sé cuántas mmm copas ya. (2009 PRESEGAL SCOM_M22_019)
 “What’s happening? lots of people were going/to Lugo//and from time to time/and when above all the men/were now loaded up/*you wouldn’t believe it* they were bringing the wine I don’t know how many glasses.”

4. Conclusions

The analysis of the construction *no veas* has illustrated the recurrent process of discourse operator creation. This evolution can be described in terms of constructionalisation, which begins from a free combination of lexical elements and evolves towards a more fixed unit. This unit develops procedural content expressing intersubjectivity, including several discursive, modal, and argumentative meanings. The element is mobile and affects the entire utterance. It appears as a peripheral, extrapositional, and prosodically independent element. More specifically, *no veas* has evolved from an exhortative structure to develop an intensified mirative meaning. It directly involves the addressee, who is required to share a modal reaction of surprise.

First, in the construction [*No veas* + defined NP, + *cómo/qué/cuánto*. . .], *no veas* is still integrated into the utterance. It acquires a mirative value and intensifies content. Second, [*que no veas*] appears in the coda of the utterance and acts as a complement with intensifying functions. Both are semi-fixed constructions, which constitute an intermediate stage in the evolutive process towards discourse operators. In this last phase indeed, *no veas* operates as a single unit, appears between pauses in the periphery of the turn, and expresses mirative-intensifying procedural content.

As we have seen with *no veas*, it is necessary to take into account syntactic, semantic, and prosodic aspects in order to describe the different steps in the process of creating discourse markers. We therefore argue in favour of a macrosyntactic approach. From this perspective, it is very helpful to take into account the different types of constructions (free, semi-free, and fixed) as well as the concept of extrapositionality, which is key in the development of discourse operators.

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Notes

¹ For a description of what in this paper is considered a discourse operator, see Section 2.1 below.

² The microsyntax-macrosyntax distinction was established by Berrendonner (1990, 2002, 2003) and Blanche-Benveniste (2002, 2003), and corresponds to the clause syntax-discourse syntax separation. The authors advocate a discourse grammar along the same line as Kaltenböck et al. (2011), who include two parts in it: thetical grammar and sentence grammar. Both constitute discourse grammar. An approach from both postures can be seen in the 2016 monographic edition of *Modèles Linguistiques*.

³ See “grammatical changes typically associated to cooptation” in Heine et al. (2021, p. 28).

⁴ For Heine et al. (2021, p. 37) “grammaticalization neither preceded nor coincided with cooptation; rather, it must have set in subsequently”. However, the following paradox arises for the authors: “Decategorialization applies only to the internal structure of DMs whereas their external structure is shaped by cooptation, which somehow has the opposite effects of decategorialization” (p. 38). From our point of view, the problem lies in limiting grammar to the clause. The shift from functioning inside the clause to outside the clause is considered grammatical by these authors (p. 28).

⁵ Fraser (1996) also separated “discourse markers” from pragmatic markers, although he considered the former to be a subtype of the latter.

⁶ This is followed by proposals such as the one by Haspelmath (2001, p. 16539), “since grammaticalisation is generally regarded as a gradual diachronic process, it is expected that the resulting words from a gradient from full content words to clear function words”.

⁷ Claridge and Arnovick (2010, p. 185) recognise, however, differences: “Pragmatic items are not paradigmatised in so far as they do not join in grammatical paradigm (Cf. Brinton 1996) “(…) pragmatic items exhibit scope extension and positional freedom, whereas grammatical items show scope condensation and largely fixed syntactic positions””.

⁸ Thus, Stein and Wright (1995), Adamson (2000), and even Traugott and Dasher (2002), affirm the relationship between “subjectification” and “leftmost position in the phrase”. Nuyts (2012) links subjectivity and intersubjectivity to a dimension of individual or shared responsibility. For Company (2004, p. 2) evolution to *discourse marker* goes through “impoverishment or syntactic cancelation”, and isolation between pauses is a frequent feature in the formation of new discourse markers.

⁹ For Heine this illustrates thetical, rather than traditional sentence grammar.

¹⁰ In CORPES XXI, data have not been filtered by textual type, although most cases correspond to fiction and journalistic texts. The examples from CORPES that represent digital discourse only occupy 2.47% of the total. In the Table 2 we have indicated the absolute frequencies.

¹¹ FB: Facebook.

¹² Given that the majority of the examples come from CORPES XXI, in what follows we will only explicitly provide the reference of the texts involved in the Corpus MEsA.

¹³ Literally “don’t see (look at)”.

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