OVERT EXPLETIVES IN IBERO-ROMANCE: A DIACHRONIC AND DIATOPIC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract. This paper examines the present-day characterisation and historical development of non-referential uses of the pronoun *ello/ele/ell* (ELLO) in certain Ibero-Romance varieties. Since overt expletives are predicted to be incompatible with referential null subjects, the appearance of ELLO in an apparently expletive position and function is typologically anomalous with respect to the null subject parameter as traditionally conceived. Recent treatment in the literature places ELLO in the C-domain, and exceptionally in SpecTP. However, existing accounts tend to assume a unified characterisation across varieties for what we claim is actually a heterogeneous phenomenon. Novel empirical data show that ELLO displays both expletive-like and discourse-oriented properties even within the same variety, targeting different structural positions cross-dialectally. Today's variation is argued to be an effect of ELLO reaching different stages of grammaticalisation across varieties, originating from its usage in impersonal epistemic contexts. We may therefore wish to revise our typology of expletives so as to encompass a more nuanced range of parametric values.

Keywords: overt expletives, syntax-pragmatics interface, null subject parameter, dialect syntax, pragmaticisation, Ibero-Romance varieties.

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the defining characteristics of null-subject languages (such as Catalan, European Portuguese and Spanish), which allow the omission of referential subjects in finite clauses, is the ban on expletive subjects (Rizzi 1982, 1986). Thus we can observe that the use of a 'dummy subject' is strictly prohibited in impersonal expletive constructions in standard Ibero-Romance varieties:

(1) *(*Ele) chove mais no Oeste do que no Este.*
ELLO rain.3sg more in.the west than in.the east
'It rains more in the West than the East.' (Standard European Portuguese)

(2) *(*Ello) está claro que no tiene ni idea de lo que está pasando.*
ELLO be.3sg clear that not have.3sg neg idea of what that be.3sg happen.ptcp
'It's obvious he has no idea what's going on.' (Standard Spanish)

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(3) *(*Ell) hi ha un forat a la galleda, Enric.*
ELLO there aux a hole in the bucket Henry
'There's a hole in my bucket, Henry.' (Standard Catalan)

By contrast, in non-null subject languages like English it is impossible to omit the expletive subject (variously 'it' and 'there' in the case of English):

(4) *(There) is a ban on smoking in this country.
(5) *(It) seems that we can't smoke in this restaurant.

As grammatical elements with neither argumental status[2] nor intrinsic or contextual reference, expletive subjects have traditionally been interpreted as an exclusively syntactic requirement to obligatorily fill the subject position in non-null subject languages, a theoretical assumption that motivated the Extended Projection Principle (EPP) of Chomsky (1982), which stipulates that every finite clause must have a subject.

As such, the appearance of the pronoun *ello/ele/ell* (henceforth ELLO) in a typically expletive position and function in certain non-standard Ibero-Romance varieties, as exemplified in (6)-(8), presents a potential challenge to our knowledge of Romance typology and understanding of the null subject parameter (Biberauer, Holmberg, Roberts and Sheehan 2010; Camacho 2013a):

(6) *Ello hay un tro de vaina buena y un tro de vaina mala.*
ELLO there.is a lot of good thing and a lot of bad thing
'There are many good things and many bad things.' (Dominican Spanish)
(7) *Ell sembla que en Joan està malalt, pobret!*
ELLO seem.3sg that the Joan is ill poor.thing
'It seems that Joan is poorly, the poor thing!' (Balearic Catalan)
(8) *Espero que ele chova rápido, se não tudo vai secar.*
hope.1sg that ELLO rain.subj.3sg quick if not everything go.3sg dry.infin
'I hope it'll rain soon, if it doesn't everything's going to dry out.' (European Portuguese)

Previous work (Silva-Villar 1998, Carrilho 2005, Martínez-Sanz 2011, Camacho 2013b, Muñoz Pérez 2014, i.a.) tends to assume a homogeneous characterisation (usually assigning ELLO to a projection in the C-domain, or additionally – particularly in the case of Dominican Spanish – to SpecTP) across all Ibero-Romance varieties exhibiting the non-referential use of ELLO, whereas I propose such usages actually constitute a heterogeneous phenomenon. In fact, closer inspection of the empirical facts show that present-day ELLO exhibits distinct characteristics and obtains in different structural positions depending on the variety. Here, we argue that the observed heterogeneous structural distribution across Ibero-Romance is an effect of ELLO reaching different stages of grammaticalisation in each

[2] Excepting the so-called 'quasi-argumental' atmospheric expletives, which are argued to have a theta-role. Despite the expletive subject's lack of argumental status (i.e. lack of a theta-role), it does, of course, occupy an argumental position (SpecTP).

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variety. As such, ELLO's present-day function and distribution is best understood in terms of its diachronic development.

2. SYNCHRONIC EVIDENCE FROM DIALECT DATA

The empirical data considered here were obtained from a variety of sources, principally consultation with native Ibero-Romance speakers and evidence collected from textual sources, the majority of which are available online.[3] Despite consulting speakers from a number of countries and regions, positive confirmation of the use of ELLO was only attested in the following varieties: Balearic Catalan, Dominican Spanish (from the region of El Cibao) and European Portuguese (from the region of Trás-os-Montes). Present-day usage of ELLO is thus relatively rare, being largely limited to rural, non-standard varieties. Nonetheless, the empirical data provide fairly definitive evidence that modern-day ELLO should not be considered problematic to current understanding of the null subject parameter and its typology.

2.1. Modern-day ELLO: an overt expletive subject?

According to generative assumptions, an expletive subject is a purely syntactic, meaningless element which serves as a last resort structural mechanism to fill the subject position (cf. §1). Whilst we observe that ELLO obtains in a range of typically expletive contexts (§2.1.1), we also see that it exhibits many discourse-related properties (§2.1.2), suggesting that it is not an expletive of the sort we observe in non-null subject varieties, and that if we wish to include Ibero-Romance ELLO within a cross-linguistic inventory of expletives, we must rethink and expand our typology (§2.1.3).

2.1.1. *Expletive characteristics*

ELLO is attested in existential (9), extraposition (10) and weather (11) impersonal constructions across all the Ibero-Romance varieties under investigation where the phenomenon is observed:[4]

(9) *Mamá, mamá! Ello hay un búho en el techo!* (Dom.Sp.)
mum mum ELLO there.is a owl on the roof
'Mum, mum! There's an owl on the roof!'

(10) *En Peeta no vol que la Katniss vagi sola, ja que ell es evident que no pot anar-hi.* (Cat.)
the Peeta not want.3sg that the Katniss go.subj.3sg alone since that ELLO is evident that not can.3sg go.infin-there
'Peeta doesn't want Katniss to go alone [to the games], since it is obvious she cannot go there.' (2015, blog)

[3] Internet forums, online newspapers, blogs, other forms of social media; internet-based corpora; online and offline documents and literary texts.

[4] In what follows, all examples are from native-speaker consultants, unless otherwise stated.

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(11) *Ele choveu toda a noite!* (E.Pg.)
ELLO rain.pst.3sg all the night
'It rained all night.' (Trás-os-Montes)

The element is also found in unaccusative structures in association with a postverbal UNDERGOER, where ELLO obtains in a preverbal position (12); as well as passive (13), impersonal-*se* (14) and impersonal copular expressions (15):

(12) *Ele até vinham de longe aí os carvoeiros*. (E.Pg.)
ELLO even came.3pl from far there the coal.miners
'The coal miners even came from far away.' (Porto de Vacas, Coimbra, CORDIAL-SIN)

(13) *Ayer hubo un motín. Ello fueron detenidos dos estudiantes.* (Dom.Sp.)
yesterday there.was a riot ELLO be.pst.3pl arrested two students
'Yesterday, there was a riot. Two students were arrested.'

(14) *Mas no mês de Junho, a gente já… Ele malha-se as favas*. (E.Pg.)
but in.the month of June the people already ELLO thresh.infin=se the beans
'But in June, we start to… We thresh the beans' (Cedros, Horta, CORDIAL-SIN)

(15) *Ele hoje é tudo cancerosos.* (E.Pg.)
ELLO today be.3sg everything cancerous
'These days everything gives you cancer.' (Fontinhas, Angra do Heroísmo, CORDIAL-SIN)

ELLO may also obtain with modals in raising constructions (cf. Cinque 2006), but only when its non-finite predicative complement is impersonal:

(16) *Ele deve ser tarde já.* (E.Pg.)
ELLO ought.3sg be.infin late already
'It must be late by now.' (Trás-os-Montes)

(17) **Ele deve acompanhá-lo para casa*. (E.Pg.)
ELLO ought.3sg accompany.infin=him to home
('She ought to take him home.') (Trás-os-Montes)

2.1.2. *Discourse-oriented properties*

Despite its expletive appearance, ELLO also demonstrates a number of properties related to discourse interpretation. We observe that the use of ELLO is never obligatory for the grammaticality of a sentence (though it does effect a change in interpretation); that there is a root/embedded asymmetry in the licensing of constructions with ELLO; and that ELLO is itself associated with a certain semantico-pragmatic value. Specifically, ELLO obtains in contexts related with assertion: that is, with root clauses (as illustrated by the examples above) and in the subordinated complements of *verba dicendi* (cf. Hooper and

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Thompson 1973; Aelbrecht, Haegeman and Nye 2012)[5]:

(18) *Dicen que ello hará mucho frío*
say.3pl that ELLO make.fut.3sg much cold
en este diciembre. (Dom.Sp.)
in this December
'They say it'll be very cold this December.'

(19) *Acho que ele há uma aranha no banho!* (E.Pg.)
think.1sg that ELLO there.is a spider in.the bathroom
'I think there's a spider in the bathroom!' (Trás-os-Montes)

In conditional constructions, there is a contrast in grammaticality between so-called 'premise' (20) and 'event' (21) conditionals:

(20) *Pois que prêstimo teem agora as talhas, se êle*
Pois what utility have.3pl now the tubs if ELLO
não há já vinhas? (E.Pg.)
not has still vineyards
'So what's the use of the tubs now, if there are no more vineyards?' (Alentejo; Ribeiro 1927: 28, apud Carrilho 2005: 212)

(21) **Vamos ter que esperar, que não sabemos se*
go.1pl have.infin that wait.infin that not know.1pl if
ele é fácil chegar à noite. (E.Pg.)
ELLO be.3sg easy arrive.infin at.the night
('We'll have to wait, as we don't know how easy it'll be to make our way there at night.') (Trás-os-Montes)

According to Haegeman (2003 and subsequent work), the difference in grammaticality between (20) and (21) pertains to the complexity of the C-domain, namely, the presence versus absence of a projection for Force in the respective embedded clauses. On her account, the Force projection encodes assertive illocutionary force, hence the acceptability of ELLO appears to be motivated by pragmatic factors (in formal terms, whether an embedded clause is ±ForceP), rather than the requirement to fill the subject position.

Likewise, the grammaticality of ELLO in interrogatives is determined by the illocutionary force of an utterance, rather than its clause type.[6] In Dominican Spanish and European Portuguese, polar interrogatives are compatible with ELLO only if i) ELLO obtains in a sentence-initial position (i.e. the subject and verb cannot be inverted),[7] and, at least in

[5] As judged by native speakers. Actual usage of ELLO in embedded clauses is unattested in natural speech data from Dominican Spanish.

[6] Cf. Coniglio and Zegrean (2012) for the conceptual/structural distinction between clause type and illocutionary force.

[7] Cf. Sp. *¿(Juan) ha cerrado (Juan) la puerta (Juan)?* / Pg. *(O João) cerrou (o João) a porta (o João)?* 'Has John closed the door?' (where the felicity of a given word order is determined by the sentence's focus domain).

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the case of European Portuguese, ii) the speaker believes that the hearer will confirm the expectation presupposed by the speaker's enquiry (i.e. it does not constitute a genuine question):

(22) *Ele há carne para comer esta noite?* (E.Pg.)
ELLO there.is meat for eat.infin this night
±'There's meat for dinner tonight, right?' (≠'Is there meat for dinner tonight?') (Trás-os-Montes)
(23) **Há ele carne para comer esta noite?*
there.is ELLO meat for eat.infin this night

Thus we see that (22) demonstrates the structure of an interrogative sentence, but its illocutionary force is closer to that of an assertion. All other 'true' interrogative sentences are ungrammatical with ELLO, including *wh*-questions (24), as are rhetorical questions (25):

(24) **¿Ello por qué vino sin su novia?* (Dom.Sp.)
ELLO why — come.pst.3sg without his girlfriend
'Why did he come without his girlfriend?'
(25) **Ele que raios fazes aqui?!* (E.Pg.)
ELLO what rays do.2sg here
('What on earth are you doing here?!')

As exemplified in the contrast between the sentences in (22) and (23), ELLO typically surfaces sentence-initially.

In Balearic Catalan ELLO constructions, ELLO's initial position is obligatory in all contexts, corresponding to a high projection in Rizzi (1997)'s Split CP, which we assume to be ForceP. As such, ELLO precedes focused DPs (26) and *wh*-constituents in exclamative constructions (27), but not scene-setting topics (28), which are assumed to be situated above ForceP (cf. Benincà and Poletto 2004):

(26) *Ell FLORS creixen al sostre, que estrany!* (Bal.Cat.)
ELLO flowers grow.3sg to.the roof what strange
'FLOWERS are growing on the roof, how strange!'
(27) *Ell què maca que us ha quedat la foto!* (Bal.Cat.)
ELLO what pretty that to.you has remained the photo
'That photo turned out so well!' (Balearic Catalan)
(28) **Ell respecte al temps, va ploure molt*
ELLO regarding to.the weather aux rain.infin much
ahir a la nit, ¿no? (Bal.Cat.)
yesterday at the nightno
('Re: the weather, it rained a lot last night, didn't it?')

However, it cannot precede wh-constituents in interrogatives (29)[8] nor can it precede complementizers, such as in subjunctive imperatives (30):

[8] Indeed, the use of ELLO is disallowed in all interrogative contexts in Balearic Catalan.

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(29) **Ell quin temps fa avui?* (Bal.Cat.)
ELLO what weather do.3sg today
('What's the weather like today?')
(30) **Ell que siguis feliç!* (Bal.Cat.)
ELLO that be.subj.2sg happy
('May you be happy!')

The difference in the felicity of the use of ELLO with *wh*-constituents in exclamatives and interrogatives would suggest that ELLO has properties related to the logophoric AGENT (first person/speaker) but not the logophoric PATIENT (second person/addressee) (cf. Speas and Tenny 2003, Giorgi 2010, Sigurðsson 2010 for the syntactic encoding of pragmatic features in the left periphery). Similarly, the impossibility of ELLO in (30) seems to be a structural rather than semantico-pragmatic restriction, since other types of imperative (e.g. *Ell anam al cinema!*, 'let's go to the cinema!'; *Ell dóna'm el pa!,* 'pass me the bread!') are licit in Balearic Catalan.

In the case of Dominican Spanish, ELLO always occurs sentence-initally (31), but, when tested, is shown to be unable to precede any left-peripheral constituents, such as in (32):

(31) *Ello nació un niño el otro día en el pueblo*
ELLO be.born.3sg a child the other day in the village
de la tía Maite, ¿no lo sabías? (Dom.Sp.)
of the aunt Maite not it know.imp.2sg
'There was a baby was born in aunt Maite's village the other day, didn't you know?'
(32) **¡Ello qué bonita te ha quedado la foto!* (Dom.Sp.)
ELLO what pretty to.you aux remained the photo
'That photo turned out so well!'

In European Portuguese, ELLO appears to surface in one of two positions, first-merging in either a high C-projection (EvalP, below ForceP but above EpisP) or a lower projection at the TP/CP border (Fin).[9] In the higher position, ELLO follows (33) but cannot precede (34) the complementizer:

[9] We speculate that ELLO's lower position is Fin for the following reasons: ELLO can satisfy the EPP from this position (cf. Rizzi and Shlonsky 2006), reflecting its origin as a pronominal (referential) subject; Fin has been claimed to be the locus of the correlation between assertion and finiteness (cf. Nikolaeva 2007); Fin is also associated with deixis, substantiating the intuition that ELLO is associated with pragmatics, and, despite certain appearances (cf. the discussion below on ELLO in Dominican Spanish), is not totally 'neutral' in usage. Pertinently, Kayne (2008) argues that expletive 'there' is actually a locative (cf. Paduan *ghe*, Italian *ci* (both 'there') with existentials; also the locative clitic in Catalan ***hi*** *ha* lit. 'there has'; *ha**y*** 'it.has.**there**' in present tense Spanish) where the relevant feature is not location but deixis (for a related argument on the association between the lower portion of the CP and 'there' expletives, cf. Sigurðsson 2004). The deictic value of Fin would then facilitate ELLO's gain of discourse-oriented properties over time. Furthermore, it would then explain why European Portuguese ELLO is most commonly attested in existentials, copulas and other presentationals, and can co-occur with a preverbal subject (which would occupy the projection immediately below, viz. SpecTP); notably, European Portuguese is the only Ibero-Romance variety

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(33) *Que ele no fondo não são pessoas más.* (E.Pg.)
that ELLO in.the depth not be.3pl persons bad
'Deep down they're not bad people.'

(34) **Ele que no fondo não são pessoas más.* (E.Pg.)
that ELLO in.the depth not be.3pl persons bad
('Deep down they're not bad people.')

It can also precede epistemic higher adverbs (here, irrealis)[10]:

(35) *Ele talvez haja melhores opções...* (E.Pg.)
ELLO perhaps there.is.subj better options
'Maybe there are better options...'

Thus, the structural position of the higher-merging ELLO in European Portuguese would be:

(36) [ForceP *que* [EvalP ELLO [EvidP *aparentemente* [EpisP *talvez*…
comp ELLO *apparently* perhaps

However, since ELLO may also occur below topicalised (36) and focused (37) phrases, it is necessary to postulate a second position in which ELLO may first-merge at the TP/CP border:

(37) *As jarras, essas que repartem nas festas, ele há*
the jugs those that share.out.3pl in.the parties ELLO there.is
umas na despensa, verdade? (E.Pg.)
some in.the pantry truth
'The jugs, those ones they give out at village parties, there are some of them in the pantry, right?'

(38) *TODA A NOITE ele choveu!* (E.Pg.)
all the night ELLO rain.pst.3sg
'It rained all night!'

We would expect ELLO's distributional variation in the left-periphery to equate to differences in its interpretation, a prediction which is confirmed by native speakers, who corroborate the characterisation of ELLO's meaning contribution as put forward in previous work (Carrilho 2005, 2008; Hinzelin 2006; Hinzelin and Kaiser 2006; i.a.). Thus, in Balearic Catalan, ELLO has an exclamatory, 'intensifying' value (Veny 1989; Bartra-Kaufmann 2011; Nicolau Dols p.c.); that is, a fairly general interpretation similar to that of an interjection. In European Portuguese, however, ELLO's meaning contribution is fairly specific, implying speaker commitment to or belief in the truth of the proposition (cf. the EvaluationP of Cinque 1999, Ambar 2003, Speas and Tenny 2003), a characterisation also

not to encode a locative with its present tense *haver* existential (viz. *há* 'it.has'), which might then account for the observed greater prominence of ELLO in this variety.

[10] Cf. Cinque (1999)'s four highest functional heads:
(i) [$_{Mood}$Speech Act [$_{Mood}$Evaluative [$_{Mood}$Evidential [$_{Mod}$Epistemic ...

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offered in Carrilho (2005)[11]. In the case of Dominican Spanish, there are both examples of ELLO in unequivocally pragmatic uses, such as (39), in which ELLO is employed to reinforce the contrastive interpretation, as well as examples in which ELLO's discourse value is less clear-cut (40):

(39) *Ello hay una parade frente a la Secretaría*. (Dom.Sp.)
ELLO there.is a bus.stop opposite to the secretariat
'There's a bus stop opposite the secretariat' [speaker corrects herself over location of bus stop]. (2006, conversation)

(40) *Ello hay tres películas de un espía llamado Jason Bourne*
ELLO there.is three films of a spy called Jason Bourne
no sé como se llaman si alguien me da
not know.1sg how se call.3sg if somebody to.me give.3sg
el nombre o sube se lo agradecería (Dom.Sp.)
the name or upload.3sg se it thank.cond.3sg
'There are three films about a spy called Jason Bourne, I don't know what they're called, if anybody can give me the name or upload them, I'd be grateful' (2014, Facebook)

Nonetheless, taking into account that ELLO is only productive in a subset of impersonal expressions in present tense root contexts (largely *ello hay*, 'there is'), and it displays a restricted sentential distribution, we can assume that ELLO does indeed involve some sort of discourse-related value even in Dominican Spanish, where ELLO's emphatic interpretation is to be understood as the reinforcement of the speaker's commitment to/belief in the truth of the proposition,[12] through the lexicalisation of (assertive) Force. In sum, the general impression we take from the use of ELLO in Ibero-Romance is that ELLO turns an assertion into a strong assertion (cf. Krifka 2014 for a formal semantic representation of the change of commitment states via assertion).[13]

2.1.3. *Parametric implications*

Since ELLO displays a number of pragmatic characteristics that would place it within the category of main clause phenomena (cf. Aelbrecht *et al.* 2012), the element cannot be

[11] Carrilho (2005, 2008) and Uriagereka (2005) refer to ELLO's 'evidential' value, but I prefer the term 'epistemic', given that ELLO does not encode information source but rather the speaker's evaluation of the truth of their statement.

[12] To this regard, Henríquez-Ureña (1939: 228) states that 'es probable que *ello* tenga valor enfático [...] y que agregue el matiz que darían fórmulas adverbiales como *realmente, en verdad*' ('it is likely that *ello* has an emphatic value [...] and that it adds the nuance that would correspond to adverbs such as *really, in truth*').

[13] Alternatively, the encoding of the speaker's assertion of their belief in the utterance's proposition could be interpreted as a weakening of assertion in that the speaker is emphasizing subjective rather than objective truth (cf. Munaro 2010: 153, fn.29).

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equated to the semantically-void subject expletives of the type we observe in non-null subject languages like English or French. In this sense, the Ibero-Romance overt expletive does not pose a serious challenge to the strong empirical generalisation across null-subject languages regarding the ban against overt expletive subjects of the non-null subject kind. However, if we do wish to consider ELLO as a type of overt expletive – which, given its many expletive characteristics, would not seem an unreasonable conclusion to draw – we must reconsider our typology of expletives to encompass a wider range of values or parametric settings which reflect greater nuances in the empirical data (for expanded typologies and further discussion on this point, cf. Biberauer *et al.* 2010, Biberauer and Cognola 2014).

3. ORIGIN OF ELLO

As we have stated, the variation between varieties permitting ELLO instantiates the different stages of grammaticalisation reached by ELLO in each variety. If we view grammaticalisation as 'reanalysis 'upwards' along the functional structure' (Roberts and Roussou 2003: 71), we can infer that the grammaticalisation process is most advanced in Balearic Catalan, in which ELLO lexicalises a high C-projection; less advanced in Dominican Spanish, in which ELLO remains in a low peripheral position (at the TP/CP border); whereas European Portuguese appears to provide us with evidence of linguistic change in progress, since ELLO would seem to occupy two positions: one low at the TP/CP border (Fin) and another, higher position in C. Previous work proposes that the present-day phenomenon of ELLO derives from a previous impersonal use of the pronoun (Henríquez-Ureña 1939; Bartra-Kaufmann 2011; Gupton and Lowman 2013), without explaining how ELLO could surface in an impersonal expletive construction in a null-subject language in the first place.

3.1. ELLO: an epistemic origin

The earliest attested case of a construction with a non-referential usage of ELLO in the corpora used here (Mark Davies' *Corpus de Español* and the Real Academia Española's *Corpus diacrónica de español*) dates back to the 15th century[14]:

(41)	*La*	*historia*	*tripartita*	*dize*	*lo*	*mismo:*	*empero*	*cuenta*	*que*
	the	history	tripartite	say.3sg	the	same	although	tell.3sg	that
	jhesu		*cristo*	*mismo*	*hablo*		*al*	*emperador* [...];	
	Jesus		Christ	himself	speak.pst.3sg		to.the	emperor	

[14] Searches of diachronic Portuguese corpora result in very few historical examples of ELLO, for which reason the following analysis is restricted to the more amply-attested Spanish historical data.

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ello es verdad que aparecio el dicho señal: y que lo
ELLO be.3sg truth that appear.pst.3sg the said sign and that it
tuuo despues por bandera.
take.pst.3sg after as creed
'The Historia Tripartita says the same: although it states that Jesus Christ himself spoke to the emperor [...]; it is true that the said sign appeared; and that it was thereafter take as creed.' (1498, Ampiés, *Tratado de Roma*)

We can compare the above-mentioned example with the contemporary, non-referential use of ELLO:

(42) *Pero, Rey mío, todo ello es bueno para poner debajo tus pies*.
But king my all ELLO be.3sg good for put.infin under your feet
'But, my King, all [of] that is good to have at your feet.' (1548, Mal Lara, *Recibimiento*)

The occurrence of ELLO in epistemic constructions is attested earlier than its appearance in other impersonal contexts: in the corpora, the constructions *ello es cierto/verdad que* ('it is true that') are observed from the 15th and 16th centuries onwards, whereas analogous impersonal extraposition constructions (that is, those without epistemic value, such as *ello es necesario/visto/fácil que*, 'it is necessary/seen/easy that') do not appear until the 17th and 18th centuries. It does not seem coincidental that today's ELLO is very similar in meaning to the earliest and most commonly attested diachronic uses of ELLO. Moreover, existential structures with *hay* (without ELLO) are much more frequent in the corpora generally than the constructions *es verdad/cierto que* (also without ELLO), for which reason one would assume that the corresponding structures formed with ELLO would reflect the frequency (or lack thereof) of their non-ELLO counterparts. Instead, however, the construction *ello hay* only emerges in the same period as the extraposition structures with non-epistemic ELLO and is equally rarely attested.

3.2. Development

We propose that the biclausal structure *ello es verdad que* derives from the reanalysis of an independent clause *ello es verdad* (an innovation in itself, composed of the referential subject *ello* and the predicate *es verdad)* and a second independent clause introduced by the complementizer *que*: their juxtaposition establishes a paratactic relation between the two clauses, which is then reanalysed as a subordinating relation. The diachronic changes proposed are summarised as follows:

(43) a. Existence of two separate structures, where *ello* is referential:
[ello$_{REF}$ es verdad]; [es verdad que...]
(*[ello$_{REF/NON\text{-}REF}$ es verdad que...])

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b. Existence of two independent structures, [ello$_{REF}$ es verdad], [que...], which can co-occur in a pragmatic but not syntactic relation;
[ello$_{REF}$ es verdad] [que...]
c. *Reanalysis* of the pragmatic relation as a subordinating relation:
[ello es verdad] [que...]; [[ello es verdad][que...]]
d. Existence of three separate structures, where ELLO in the impersonal construction is no longer referential:
[ello$_{REF}$ es verdad]; [es verdad que...]; [ello$_{NON\text{-}REF}$ es verdad que...]

In the first stage, there are two structures – the biclausal epistemic impersonal *es verdad que* (44, 45) and a separate, monoclausal epistemic expression involving a referential use of *ello* (46) – which are found in complementary distribution:

(44) *Es verdad que tienen algún indio, mas el negocio*
be3.sg truth that have.3pl some Indian but the business
consiste en el christiano.
consist.3sg in the Christian
'It is true that they speak some Indian, but business is conducted in Spanish.' (C15, Colón)

(45) *Que entré, es verdad; mas compré con oro*
that enter.pst.1sg be.3sg truth but buy.pst.1sg with gold
y pasos la entrada
and figs the entry
'That I entered is true; but I bought my entry with gold and figs' (1598, Vega, *La niña de plata*)

(46) *Quisieron pues los sabios en la invención destas cosas de los*
want.pst.3pl thus the wise in the invention of.these things of the
infiernos apartar a los hombres de las maldades:
hells separate.infin to the men from the evils
lo cual si así fuese creído, como ello
the which if thus be.impf.subjc.3sg believe.pstp.ptcp as ello
es verdad, en todas las edades hubiera habido pocos
be.3sg truth in all the ages there.would have.pstp.ptcp few
malos.
bad
'The wise thus sought in the invention of these demonic concepts to keep men from evil: which if it were thus believed – as it is true –, there would have been few bad men through the ages.' (1554, Pérez de Moya, *Philosofía secreta*)

We do not observe any constructions with non-referential ELLO during this first phase. In the second, however, we begin to observe biclausal constructions in which the connection between the two clauses is ambiguous:

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(47) *Un sabio dijo que la memoria es el pulso del amor* […].
a wise say.pst.3sg that the memory be.3sg the pulse of.the love
Y así es ello verdad, que a poco amor hay poca
and thus be.3sg ello truth that to little love there.is little
memoria; y a mucho, mucha; y a ninguno, ninguna.
memory and to much much and to none none
'A wise man said that memory is the pulse of love […]. And thus is it true, that of little love there is little memory; and of much love, much memory; and of no love, no memory.' (1595, de los Ángeles, *Diálogos de la conquista*)

It is not possible to establish in such cases whether the link between the matrix epistemic clause and the associated clause headed by the complementizer *que* is a syntactic or simply a pragmatic one: the pronoun *ello* could either refer to the previous sentence ('*un sabio dijo*...'), or it could lack referential value: in other words, it would operate as an impersonal subject. It is assumed that, at some point, speakers must reanalyse the pragmatic relation as a subordinate one, even though on the surface the sentence does not undergo any visible changes. A relevant question here is whether the complementizer *que* can indeed head an independent clause during this period of the language; evidence in favour of this possibility is presented below, illustrating the use of *que* in more autonomous contexts (48), including matrix clauses (49):

(48) *No hay que cansarte; que no quiero ser tu dama*.
not there.is that tire.infin=you that not want.1sg be.infin your lady
'There's no need to exhaust yourself: I don't want to be your lady.' (1628, Ruiz de Alarcón y Mendoza, *El desdichado en fingir*)

(49) *Allí, digo, en el Cielo, se consumará del todo este*
there say.1sg in the sky se consummate.fut.3sg of.the all this
Sacramento [...]. *Que esas esperanzas alentaban tanto*
sacrament that these hopes inspire.impf.3sf as.much
al Apóstol en otra parte: Unde etiam expectamus...
to.the Apostle in other part: Unde etiam expectamus...
'There, I say, in Heaven, will this Sacrament be wholly consummated […]. These hopes equally inspired the Apostle in another matter: Unde etiam expectamus...' (1606, Paravicino y Arteaga, *Oraciones evangélicas*)

We continue to find ambiguous and non-ambiguous uses of non-referential *ello* in the corpora until the end of the 17th century, from which point on we can only find examples of these type of constructions in which *ello* is unambiguously non-referential (50-52). We can thus conclude that the process of reanalysis is complete:

(50) *Ello es cierto que honores afferent secum dolores, que es*
ELLO be.3sg true that honores afferent secum dolores that be.3sg
decir: los cargos traen consigo muchos trabajos.
say.infin the positions bring.3pl with.them many works
'It is true that honores afferunt secum dolores, that is: positions of importance bring with them a lot of work.' (1569, Lizárraga, *La descripción de las indias*)

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(51) *Ello es cierto que por más que el padre le amonestó,*
ELLO be.3sg true that how much that the father him admonish.pst.3sg
un libro jamás abrió ni oyó un maestro jamás.
a book never open.pst.3sg nor hear.pst.3sg a teacher never
'It is true that however much his father admonished him, he never opened a book nor did he ever listen to a teacher.' (1855, Zorrilla, *Margarita la tornera*)

(52) *Ello es verdad que estos señores cometen sus demasías, pero*
ELLO be.3sg true that these gentlemen commit.3pl their excesses but
¡qué demonio! También saben repararlas.
what devil also know.3pl repair.infin=them
'It is true that these men can be insolent, but by Jove!, they also know how to make up for it.' (1878-9, Carrillo, *Los caballeros del amor*)

4. EXTENSION

From the 17th century onwards, the innovation *ello es verdad que* is able to extend by analogy (cf. Harris and Campbell 1995, Hopper and Traugott 2003, Narrog and Heine 2011) to formally similar constructions, namely: impersonal extraposition structures without epistemic value (53, 54) and existential constructions with *haber* (55), whose commonality is their prototypical expletive status which in standard null-subject languages would obligatorily disallow a dummy subject:

(53) *Ello es menester que sepamos para qué tanto*
ELLO be.3sg necessary that know.subj.1pl for what so.much
somos.
be.1pl
'It is necessary for us to know what our purpose is.' (1608, Salas Barbadillo, *La peregrinación sabia*)

(54) *Ello parece que nuestros amigos los Franceses no son*
ELLO seem.3sg that our friends the French not be.3pl
los más delicados del mundo sobre este artículo,
the most delicate of.the world about this article
cuando esta material se toma por asunto de risa.
when this material se take.3sg for matter of laughter
'It seems that our friends the French are not the most delicate in the world in this regard, when they take this subject as something to laugh about.' (1742, Feijoo, *Cartas*)

(55) *Ello hay premio y castigo, con nosotros asiste*
ELLO there.is prize and punishment with us follow.suit.3sg
el enemigo:
the enemy

echémoslo de casa, que este no es juego.

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throw.out.1pl.subj=him from home that this not be.3sg game
'There is reward and punishment, the enemy follows suit with us: let's deal them a bad hand and throw them out, this isn't a game' (1632, Enríquez Gómez, *El siglo pitagórico y vida de don Gregorio Guadaña*)

We propose that this extension is enabled through a process of pragmatic inference, defined as 'an inference which generates meaning from the use of a linguistic form in a particular context' (Nicolle 2011: 401). Here, using the impersonal construction *es verdad que* implies the *speaker*'s commitment to veracity; that is, despite the structure being impersonal and non-epistemic, its usage produces a necessarily epistemic interpretation. Thus the juxtaposition of ELLO with the epistemic context facilitates a metonymic process[15] of semantic transfer (of epistemic value), or *subjectification* (cf. Traugott 1995, Langacker 2006). In other words, the speaker's subjective attitude is grammaticalised in the pronoun *ello*, a change associated in the generative framework with the encoding of first-person features in the extremes of the left-periphery (Speas and Tenny 2003, Giorgi 2010, Sigurðsson 2010). We can observe the use of ELLO in an early discourse function in the following historical example:

(56) *Pero, ¡aquí está el busilis!: ¡Quántos gramáticos se encuentran que no llegan ni con cien leguas a la dignidad de éstos y que les sobrepujan en muchos millares en lo que toca a arrogancia y amor propio!*
***Ello es cierto y muy cierto que** todos debieran ser doctos lo*
ELLO be.3sg true and very true that all ought.3pl be.infin taught lo
más que pudiesen [...]
more that can.3sg
'But here's the rub! How many grammarians are to be encountered who do not come within even ten leagues of the dignity of those others and who surpass them by the thousands in the arena of arrogance and vanity! **It is very clearly the case that** they should all be as learned as possible' (Forner, 1776, *Los gramáticos*)

It is the analysis of ELLO as an epistemic/pragmatic element that allows us to explain present-day uses of ELLO which would otherwise be surprising or even inexplicable, such as the following:

(57) *Mas esse já conhecem, ele já?* (E.Pg.)
but that already know.3pl ele already
'But you already know that, don't you?' (Outeiro, Bragança; Carrilho 2005: 134)

In using *ele já*, the speaker establishes an expectation that the hearer will confirm the truth of the proposition of the speaker's question. Question tags often involve words relating to truth (cf. Portuguese/Spanish *verdad(e)?* 'truth?', Italian *(nev)vero?* '(not.)true'?, German *nicht wahr*? 'not true?', English *right*?); as such, the attestation of ELLO in question tags is a logical extension of ELLO's function if indeed it has epistemic value.

[15] Hopper and Traugott (2003: 87−92) discusses metonymy as a mechanism of language change.

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5. CONCLUSIONS

Pace previous work, we propose that ELLO cannot surface in multiple projections synchronically, but that it obtains in (one, or at most, as in the case of European Portuguese, two) dedicated structural positions according to variety. More precisely, ELLO occupies a high C-position (ForceP) in Balearic Catalan, a lower position (Fin) in Dominican Spanish, and can obtain in both a higher (EvalP) and a lower (Fin) position in European Portuguese. The variation observed is an effect of the different stages of grammaticalisation reached by the element ELLO in each Ibero-Romance variety, and may necessitate a reconsideration of expletive typology to account for a wider range of values cross-linguistically. The diachronic evidence suggests that the so-called overt expletive ELLO has its origin in impersonal epistemic contexts, a hypothesis which would explain the development of the element from its beginning as a pronominal referential subject, through to its transformation into a pragmatic marker of epistemic value, and finally to its current state, in which ELLO displays hetereogeneous characteristics in the Ibero-Romance varieties in which its use is permitted.

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