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On older Northern Basque exclamatives in *ala**

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Abstract – Most recent studies devoted to exclamatory sentences concentrate on those that display [+wh] element. But Older Northern Basque had a special type of exclamative sentences in which the operator *ala*, which sat in the left periphery of the sentence, took usually one, but sometimes several, implicitly quantified item(s) in its scope.**

1. Introduction

Etxepare's (2003) and Artiagoitia's (2006b) recent studies provide an excellent description of the basic structure of Basque exclamative sentences (henceforth ESs), essentially as used in the Southern dialects, and containing a [+wh] operator. The aim of this chapter is to provide a preliminary description of [-wh] ESs in *ala*, whose use was strictly limited to Northern Basque (whence the fact that they were not taken into account in the aforementioned papers),¹ and which fell into disuse at the turn of the century – except, marginally, in the easternmost, Souletin (*zuber(o)era*), varieties.

In section 2, I shall point out the main differences between ordinary [+wh] and [-wh] ESs; the next sections (3 and 4) will concentrate on the word order in *ala* [-wh] ESs, and section 5 will summarize the first results and identify some potential theoretical problems. In §6, data concerning the scope of *ala* will be provided, which will be discussed in section 7.1, in which the differences between [±wh] and [-wh] ESs will be given a second glance and, finally, §7.2 will compare exclamative *ala* to its other functions.

2. [+wh] and [-wh-] exclamative clauses

2.1. First illustrations

The two examples below show that the ordinary, [+wh-] type of exclamative sentences (ESs), with *zein*, could be paraphrased in Northern Basque (NB) by the [-wh] type, with *ala*, and that it was so from the 16th till the late 19th century.

* This paper, which I am very glad to dedicate to Patxi Goenaga, who first introduced Generative Grammar into Basque linguistics, is a report on ongoing research on Northern Basque exclamatives in the past centuries, undertaken as part of the programme 1.1, “Sentence typing”, of the Fédération Typologie et universaux linguistiques (TUL: FR 2559) of the French CNRS. I am also pleased to thank Aurelia Arkotxa, Battitu Coyos, Beñat Oyharçabal and Marie Pourquoié for discussions concerning the data.

** This text is a very slightly modified version of the chapter actually published in Patxi Goanaga's Festschrift: I hope all the typos left in the published book have now been corrected.

¹ Except for two examples left undiscussed in Etxepare (2003: 569), one of which is elliptical, and the other, drawn from a folksong.

(1) Lk 18,24²

LVC: *Quam* difficile, qui pecunias habent, in regnum Dei intrabunt!

KJV=CDR: *How* hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!

- a L 1571: *Zein*³ gaitz den
how difficult it-is-(e)n
onhasundunak Jainkoaren resumán sar ditezen!
wealthy-people God's kingdom-SG-in that-they enter
- b H 1740: *Ala*⁴ gaitz baida diru haiñitz
ala difficult *bai(t)*-it-is money much
dutenak sar ditezen Jainkoaren Erresuman!
those-who-have that-they enter God's kingdom-SG-in
- c D 1865: *Ala* nekhez sarthuko
ala with difficulty enter-PROS
baitire Jainkoaren erresuman aberatsak!
bai(t)-AUX God's kingdom-SG -in the-rich-PL

(2) Rom 11,33

LVC: *Quam* incomprehensibilia sunt iudicia eius, et investigabiles viæ eius!

CDR: How incomprehensible are his judgments, and how unsearchable his ways!

- a L 1571:⁵ *Ala* haren juiemenduak baitirade
ala his judgments *bai(t)*-they-are
komprehenendi ezin daitezkeen bezalakoak,
understand cannot AUX-en like/seeming
eta haren bideak erideiteko imposibleak!
and his ways to-find impossible-PL

² The following abbreviations will be used. ABL, ablative; AUX, Aux: auxiliary; D, dative; DO: direct object; E: ergative; ES: exclamative sentence; GEN: genitive; IMPER: imperative; INSTR, instrumental; NB, Northern Basque (i.e. the dialects spoken in France); NEG: negation; PL: plural; PROSP: prospective (aspect); PRTT, partitive; QUANT: quantifier; REL: relativising suffix; SG: singular; SUBJ, subjunctive mood; VC: verbal complex (lexical participle plus tensed auxiliary); V+I: inflected verb.

Besides, the references to the Biblical texts are given as usual. “LVC” refers to the Clementine version of the Latin Vulgate, and “CDR” to Challoner's (1749-52) revision of the “Douay-Rheims” Bible, which I use here, because it is a translation from the same LVC, used by all the Roman Catholic translators until the end of the 19th c. (i.e. of all the Basque translators except Leizarraga 1571).

Finally, needless to say, the full names of the authors and translators abbreviated in the text are given in the References.

³ In non-exclamatory contexts, *zein* is ‘which’, (a) as an full interrogative [+human] NP/DP: ‘who/which one?’, (b) as an interrogative modifier (*zein gizon/etxe* ‘which man/men≈house(s)’), and (c) as a full relative NP/DP (then possibly in the genitive case, whence its appearance within a DP or a PP, as in ...*gizon hura, zein(ar)en etxean...* / *zein(ar)en kontra...* ‘that man, in whose house... / against whom...’). In any case, whenever *zein* is only associated with an adjective, as in (1a), a PP or an adverb, it can only be understood as exclamative.

⁴ Other uses of *ala* are discussed in 7.2.

⁵ This verse also illustrates the fact that the 16th c. ESs built with *ala* were not necessarily elliptical, (i.e. with no inflected verb and no C° affix), as is unfortunately suggested by the selection of examples in the DGV (vol. I, entry *ala*).

- b H 1740: Ala haren juiamenduak baidire
 ala his judgments bai(t)-they-are
 ezin konprenituzkoak eta haren
 impossible to understand-PL and his
 bideak ezin ezagutuzkoak!
 ways impossible to-know-PL
- c D 1865: Zeinen⁶ diren ezin-nabarituzkoak haren
 how they-are-en incomprehensible-PL his
 erabakiak, eta ezin-ikhartuzkoak haren bideak!
 judgments and unsearchablePL his ways

2.2. The complementizers

The most visible difference between the two types of ESs is the selection of the C°-like affixes attached to the inflected verbs (IVs) : they are consistently *bai(t)-* [(*be(i)(t)*)- in the eastern varieties with *ala*], but *-(e)n* with *zein(en)* — in the examples above, *den* and *diren* are regular contractions of *da+-en*, *dira+-en*.

This difference in C° marking is all the more interesting as the [+wh] word *zein* ‘which’ (quite often left unmarked for number in the first half of the 18th c., e.g. in Haraneder (1740), and in the easternmost, Souletin, dialect) has always been associated with *bait-* in NB relative clauses, whether appositive or free and left-peripheral (in complex correlative sentences), but with *-(e)n* in embedded interrogatives.

Note by the way that a third affixal complementizer, *-(e)la* (normally used in ordinary completive clauses) was (and still is, just like *zein*) also used in ESs, but neither with *zein(en)* nor with *ala*: now the sentence is either introduced by the positive assertive particle *bai* ‘yes’ – or by nothing, as in (3), another rendering of (1) above:⁷

(3) A 1828: Rom 11,33

Gaitz dela onthasunak dituztenak
 difficult it-is-(e)la riches AUX-those-who-have
 sar ditzen Jainkoaren Erresuman!
 that-they enter God's kingdom
 (ditto)

⁶ *Zeinen* is a mere variant of *zein* in exclamatory contexts; it was mainly used in the easternmost dialects (*zuberoera* and “*mixain*”) — but Duvoisin, perhaps in an effort to create a Northern koinè, sometimes used quite profusely, e.g. in his (1856) Labourdin adaptation of Cardaberaz (1761): whereas the original Guipzcoan text has not a single example of exclamatory *zeinen* (I leave aside the relative/interrogative genitive ‘of which’), Duvoisin's texts contains 72 occurrences of this item – and only one occurrence of *zein*. This variant was very rarely used in the Southern dialects until the end of the 19th century (but see Azkue 1906, II, 427 and 1923-25, I, 28, 213-215), and is still used (under the form *zuinen*) in Souletin. I hope to be able to return to it in the near future, if only because Azkue's suggestion that *-en* is a “redundant morpheme” here does not seem obvious at all.

⁷ Although *bai* and *bai(t)-* are probably etymologically related (Lafon 1966), they cannot be confused, because *bai* introduces a sentence whose inflected verb is followed by *-(e)la*, whilst *bai(t)-* is itself prefixed to the inflected verb, the sentence being “introduced” (but see section 3) by *ala*.

2.3. Embeddability

In spite of the fact that *ala* ESs contain a C° affix which, in other contexts, allows embedding (as noted above), ESs with *ala* could *never* be embedded, whereas there are many instances of embedded *zein(en)* exclamatives. Admittedly, in many cases, it is difficult to tell an embedded exclamative from an embedded interrogative, in particular when (i) the matrix verb may subcategorise for a question, and (ii) the *wh-* word can function in both types of root sentences – for instance *zer*, ‘what/what sort of’, *nolako* ‘what sort of’, or *zenbat* ‘how much/how many’. Consider for instance (4):

(4) T 1666

Sogizu zure ... izatia zenbat den flako...
 See your state how (much) it-is-(e)n weak
 ‘Consider what a weak state you are in’, lit. ‘...how weak your state is.’

Out of context, *sogizu... zenbat* can be interpreted as suggesting to the hearer either to properly evaluate the degree of his/her weakness, or to come to realise what (unexpectedly) high degree of frailty s/he is in. In the first case, we have an embedded question, and, in the second one, an embedded exclamative – deprived of its emotiveness, of course.⁸

But there is no such ambiguity even with *zein* (the short form),⁹ because its distribution as an interrogative and as an exclamative *wh-* word is partially different: on the one hand, interrogative *zein*, if not standing on its own, modifies an NP (‘which N?’), the whole expression being unable to carry a number mark: *zein gizon* ‘which man/men?’; moreover, it cannot be separated from the NP it modifies, cf. (5):

(5) Zein gizon ikusi duzu? / dituzu?
 a which man seen you-have-him you-have-them
 b *Zein ikusi duzu / dituzu gizon?
 ‘Which man/men have you seen?’

On the other hand, exclamative *zein* “modifies” an adverb or AdvP, a PP, or, more usually, an Adjective(P) or an NP which must itself be modified by an adjective; in the last two cases (i.e. with Adj(P)s and modified NPs), number marking is optional, and in every case, *zein* can be at a distance from the word or phrase its exclamative force applies to, as (6):¹⁰

(6)a Zein on(a) den!
 how good(-SG) is-(e)n
 b Zein den on(a)
 how is-(e)n good(-SG)

⁸ As for surprise, often taken to be a normal ingredient of (root) exclamative clauses, it is not necessarily present, as many of the examples provided here show.

⁹ There is none with *zeinen*, which (if not interpreted as an interrogative or relative pronoun in the genitive case marked by *-en*), is purely exclamative (see fn. 7 above).

¹⁰ In the Souletin dialect, there is no number agreement between a subject and a predicative adjective, either in assertive sentences, interrogative sentences, or in exclamatives. But in the Labourdin varieties, although number agreement is the general rule in assertive copular sentences, it is merely optional in exclamatives (see the *DGV*, vol. 1, under *ala*).

‘How good he/she/it is!’

Moreover, certain matrix verbs which do not subcategorize for indirect questions do take *zein(en)* + *-(e)n* complement clauses. Here is an illustration provided by the amplification of the Latin original of Thomas a Kempis' *Imitation* by Chourio and Maister, who add *gozatu* ‘enjoy’ to the matrix verb *ikusi* ‘see’:

(7) *Imit.*, 3,21,3 T: O, quando ad plenum dabitur vacare mihi, et videre *quam* suavis es, Domine Deus meus?

‘When shall freedom be fully given me to see how sweet you are, O my Lord God?’

a C 1720: (Noiz ethorriko da momento dohatsu hura zeñetan ...

ez baitut izanen bertze egitekorik lekat)

ikhustea eta *gustatzea* zeñ [eztia
seeing and enjoying how sweet-SG

eta gozoa] zaren...
and savoury-SG you-are-(e)n

Lit. ‘(When will that happy moment come when I won't have anything to do but to see and enjoy how sweet and delicious you are...’

b M 1757 –(O nuiz eman izanen zait, ene Jinko Jauna,)

zuñen¹¹ ezti ziren, osoki ikhustia eta *gozatzia*?
how sweet you-are-(e)n fully seeing and enjoying

Lit. ‘(O, when shall it be given to me, my Lord,) to fully see and enjoy how sweet you are?’

If *ikusi* ‘see’ had been used alone, the Basque sentence¹² would have been ambiguous or vague, i.e. it would have been impossible to distinguish between an interrogative and an exclamative interpretation of the complement clause, since, in either case, what is at stake is a matter of *degree*.

Let us now concentrate on *ala* ESs (we shall return to the contrast between the *zein...* *-(e)n* and the *ala ... bai(t)-* types in section 6).

3. Word order (I): *Ala* did not have to be clause-initial

Let us first examine word order in the ESs under investigation. (For reasons of space and homogeneity, I will concentrate on 18th century texts.)

As a rule, *ala* occupies the initial position in the sentence, cf. (1b,c) and (2a,b) above. However, there is nothing compulsory about it: there are statistically rarer, and consequently stylistically marked, sentences, in which some material can precede it (even leaving aside vocative DPs). More specifically, *ala* can be preceded by a topicalised phrase (or clause). Here are some examples.

¹¹ *Zuñen* and *zoinen* are typical Eastern variants of *zeinen* (see footnote 6).

¹² But the Latin original is, as far as I know, unambiguous, given the nature of *quam*.

(i) A subject DP can be topicalised to the left of *ala*:

(8) H 1750, ch. 21

[_{TOP} (Perfekzione dibino) guziak elkharrekin yuntatuak],
perfection divine all-PL together united

ala harmonia guziz eder bat egiten

ala harmony very beautiful one do

Lit. 'All of them [=divine perfections] once put together, what a perfect harmony they make!'

(ii) A temporal adverbial clause can be found in the initial position:

(9) C 1720: Im. 2,8,3

[Jesus ez denean zure adiskide izanen], ala

Jesus NEG when-he-is your friend be-prosp *ala*

zu triste eta larri egonen baitzare!

you sad and worried remain-PROSP *bai(t)*-AUX

Lit.: 'When Jesus is [lit. will not be] not your friend, how sad and worried you'll find yourself!'¹³

(iii) A left-peripheral free relative can also precedes *ala*:

(10) M 1757: Im. 1,20,4

O nurk ere khien belitzake¹⁴ arranküra

Oh who-E ever remove *bai(t)*-AUX anxiety

banuak oro, [...] ¹⁵, ala beiliro harek

vain-PL all *ala bai(t)*-AUX that-one-E

bake eta phausü handi bat goza!

peace and rest great one enjoy

Lit. 'Oh, Whoever would cut off all vain anxiety [...], what (a) great peace and rest he would enjoy!'

Th: O, qui omnem vanam sollicitudinem amputaret, [...] *quam* magnam pacem et quietem possideret.

4. Word order (II): To the right of *ala*

4.1 The eastern varieties

In eastern, Souletin, texts, the verbal complex (with *bait-/beit-* prefixed to the tensed verb) *always* immediately follows *ala*.¹⁶ In general, the adjectival predicate which is the scope of *ala* immediately follows the VC, but there are (stylistically) marked exceptions, as in (11).

¹³ There is no ES in the Latin original: *Et si Jesus non fuerit tibi præ omnibus amicus, eris nimis tristis, et desolatus.*

¹⁴ The prefix *be-* is a rare but attested variant of *bei(t)-*, the normal C° prefix of inflected verbs in NB's free relatives, but never a variant of *ba-* 'if'.

¹⁵ The omitted passage is very long: *ETA salbamentüko eta zelüko gaizetan baizik gogua ezartzen eliANAK, Jinkuatan bere esparantxa oro phausatzen lialarik*, lit. 'and (he who [-*anak*]) would only set his mind on heavenly things, putting all his trust in God'.

- (11) M 1757: *Im.* 1,22,6 Ala beita [gizonen flakezia] handi...!
 ala bai(t)-is men's frailty-SG great
 Lit. 'How is men's frailty great!'
 Th: O *quanta* fragilitas humana...

4.2. Word order in the Labourdin dialect

The same word order is possible in the western, Labourdin, varieties of NB.

- (12)a H 1750: p. 341 Ala baitzare ona!
 ala bai(t)-you-are good-SG
 'How good you are!'
- b B 1784: p. 149 Ala bai dire¹⁷ urrikaltzeko, kontzientzia
 ala bai(t)-they-are to be pitied conscience
 erregelatu gabe, Juje ikharagarriaren aitzinean
 put-in-order without judge frightening-SG-GEN before
 agertzen direnak!
 appear AUX-those-who
 'How they are to be pitied, those who appear before the frightening judge without having
 put their conscience in order!'

However, this word-order is in fact fairly rare;¹⁸ thus, there not a single ES of this type, out of a sum total of 36 full, non elliptical, *ala* ESs in C 1720, none out of 9 in H 1749, and only 5 out of 87 in La 1775/77 – with three of the five in which the lexical participle can be seen as the focus of the exclamation, as in (23) further on in the text. This restriction left aside, it seems that the order of the items that followed *ala* was (apparently) not fixed at all, as shown by the following examples, in which the focused element, i.e. the word or phrase which is interpreted as receiving the highest possible value, is in bold case.

4.2.1. The first excerpts display an *adjectival predicate* independent of the subject or object DP:

- (13) *Ala* – (short) subject DP – **adjectival predicate** – V+Aux
 C 1720: *Im.* 1,18,2 Ala [hekien tentazioneak] **luzeak**
 ala their tentation-PL long-PL
 izatu baitire eta dorpheak...!¹⁹
 been bai(t)-they-are and heavy-PL
 Lit. 'How long and grave their temptations were!'
 Th: *quam longas, et graves tentationes pertulerunt.*

- (14) *Ala* – (long) subject DP – V+Aux – **adjectival pred.**

¹⁶ The same generalisation is also true of the late 19th c. translation of the *Imitation*, cf. I 1883.

¹⁷ Note the spelling: n o final -t for *bait-*, and a space between the two words.

¹⁸ Which is the reason why two examples are provided as (12a,b).

¹⁹ See §6.1 for a brief discussion concerning coordinated items in the scope of *ala*.

C 1720: *Im.* 1,18,2 Ala [desertuko aitek
 ala desert-GEN fathers-E

eraman duten bizitzea] izatu baita
 spent AUX-REL life-SG been *bai(t)*-is

[**probrea eta mortifikatua**]!

poor-SG and mortified-SG

Lit. ‘Oh, how the life that the desert's fathers spent was poor and mortified!’

Th: O quam strictam et abdicatam vitam sancti Patres in eremo duxerunt!

(15) *Ala* – **adjectival pred.** – V+I – (short) Subject DP – ...

C 1720: *Im.* 2,11,3 Ala **indartsua** baita
 ala strong-SG *bai(t)*-is

[_{DP} Jesusen amudioa] [_{PP} garbia denean]!
 Jesus-GEN love-SG pure-SG when-it-is

Lit. ‘Oh how powerful is Jesus' love when it is pure!’

Th: O, quantum potest amor Jesu purus!

(16) *Ala* – (long) Subject – DO – **adjectival pred.** – V(+Aux)...

C 1720: *Im.* 4,11,6 Ala [haiñ maiz garbitasun Jainkoa
 ala so often purity God-SG

errezibitzen dutenek] eskuak **garbi**
 receive AUX-REL-E(those-who) hand-PL clean
 behar baitituzte, ahoa **xahu**, bihotza
 must (have) *bai(t)*-AUX mouth-SG pure heart-SG

notha gabe!

spotless

Lit.: ‘Oh, how those who so often receive the God of all purities should have [their] hands clean, their mouth[s] immaculate, their heart[s] spotless!’

Th: O, *quam* mundæ debent esse manus illæ, *quam* purum os, quam sanctum corpus, *quam* immaculatum cor Sacerdotis, ad quem toties ingreditur Auctor puritatis.

4.2.2. Adverbs and PPs can of course also be the focus of exclamation:

(17)a *Ala* – Subject – **adverb (phrase)** – V+Aux

C 1720: *Im.* 3,45,3 Ala [birjina saindu batek] **zuhurki**
 ala virgin saint one-E wisely

erran baitzuen...

said *bai(t)*-AUX

Lit: Oh, how a holy virgin said wisely...!

Th: O, quam bene sapuit illa anima sancta, quæ dixit:...

(17)b *Ala* – **Adv(P)** – V+Aux – Subject DP

H 1749: p. 241 Ala **ederki** mintzo baita
 ala beautifully speak *bai(t)*-AUX

Aphezpiku handi hura!

bishop great that

Lit. ‘How beautifully speaks that great bishop!’

FS: O qu'il dit bien, ce grand Evesque!

- (18) Adv – *ala* – **PP** – V+I – Subject DP

La 1775: ch. 5 Ordean *ala* [_{PP} **arrazoin**
however *ala* reason

handirekin] baidio S. Gregoriok...
great-with *bai(t)*-AUX Saint Gregory-E

Lit.: ‘But with what great reason St. Gregory says...!’

In rarer cases, it is a simple (predicative) NP²⁰ that is focussed on:

- (19) *Ala* (long) Subject DP – **nominal predicate** – V+I ...

C 1720: *Im.* 3,26,4 *Ala* [iatea, edatea, eta
ala eating drinking and
bertze gorputzaren beharrak] **karga** baitzaizko
other body-SG-GEN needs load *bai(t)*-are-to-him
zu maite zaituen arima bati.
you love AUX-REL soul one-D

Lit.: ‘Oh, how eating, drinking, and other bodily needs are burdensome [“a load”] to a soul that loves you.’

Th: Ecce cibus, potus, vestis ac cætera utensilia ad corporis sustentaculum pertinentia, serventi spiritui sunt onerosa.

4.2.3. In the next series, the focus of *ala* is inside a longer phrase. It can thus be within a direct object DP – in (10), the focus is an adjective, and in (21), a quantifier –, or contained in a VP (22):

- (20) *Ala* – Subject DP – [DO ... **attributive adjective**] – V+I

C 1720: *Im.* 3,10,1 *ala* zuk [ontasun eta gozotasun
ala you-E wealth and sweetness
handia] gorde baituzu zure beldur direnentzat...!
big-SG kept *bai(t)*-AUX you-GEN afraid for-those-who-are

Lit.: ‘Oh how great is the abundance and gentleness which you keep for those who fear you!’

Th.: O, quam magna est multitudo dulcedinis tuæ [...], quam abscondisti timentibus te.

- (21) *Ala* – [DO **quantifier**] – V+I – Subject DP

C 1720: *Im.* 4,10,5 *ala* [Jainkoaren amudio, eta
ala God-GEN love
debozione **gut**] baitute [_{DP} haiñ errexxi
devotion little *bai(t)*-they-have so easily
komunione saindutik gibelatzen direnek]!
communion saint-from refrain AUX-REL-E(those-who)

²⁰ Or perhaps a DP, since it is impossible to decide whether the final *-a* of *karga* is only the last phoneme of the root noun, or an amalgam of the latter plus the singular marking.

[Jainkoak bere artharen azpian daduzkanak]!

God-E his care-SG-GEN under those-whom-he-holds

‘How little they need to be pitied, those that God keeps in his care!’, lit. ‘How they are not to be pitied...’

On the other hand, there is no example of the negation preceding *ala*; in other words, *ala* must precede Laka's (1991) Σ head and projection (which hosts the negative morpheme *ez*) – but that is to be expected, if both an exclamative morpheme and a negative morpheme occur in the same (simple) sentence, cf. Villalba (2005).

5. Intermediate summary

The foregoing examples clearly show that *ala* had to sit in the left periphery of the sentence. In a cartographic approach à la Rizzi (1997), the difference between the examples provided in section 3 and those given in section 4 in which *ala* is neither adjacent to the verb complex nor to the phrase its scopes over clearly reveals a difference between the status of the elements that precede it and those that follow it: when they precede *ala*, the topicalised phrases are contrastive (i.e. they evoke a set of alternative topics, whence, alternative propositions), whereas they are not when they follow it. It ensues that *ala* must be the head of a functional phrase which either separates two types of fronted or base-generated topics, or sits below the iterable TopPs of Rizzi (*op. cit.*). If the latter is true, this might suggest that *ala* occupied the Quantifier (head) position which has independently been shown to follow the TopPs and precede the Focus or Interrogative [+wh] head and projection.²⁴ But this approach would in turn imply that the non-contrastive phrases to be found between *ala* and the item its scopes over are “simply” scrambled over the Spec,FocusP position where the phrase *ala* takes under its scope is expected to appear.²⁵ A further difficulty is due to the difference between the Souletin compulsory adjacency between *ala* and the verb complex, and the absence thereof in the Labourdin dialect, a difficulty enhanced by the status and properties of the C°-like morpheme *bai(t)*- prefixed to the inflected verb: Does it always sit in the same position, obligatorily attracting the verb complex in Souletin, but not in Labourdin – and why is there such a difference? – or is it lexically associated with the inflected verb?

6. On the scopal properties of *ala*

6.1. The scope of ALA can be (within) an embedded clause

Consider the following examples (not the only ones of the type!), in which it is the wh- item contained in an embedded clause (an “indefinite free relative”, cf. Caponigro (2004)) – that is the proper scope of *ala*:

²⁴ See e.g. Rebuschi & Lipták (2005).

²⁵ Even if the quantifiers *hagitx* ‘much’ and *gut* ‘little’ in ex. (22) are not adjoined to the VP or vP, but are the heads of a Quantifier Phrase which takes the VP/vP as its complement, such a functional head is (most probably) lower than the Finiteness Phrase of Rizzi (1997), so that (22) is not relevant for the present discussion.

(25) La 1777: ch. 8

Ala haur prodigoaren parabolak baidu
 ala child prodigal parable-SG-E bai(t)-AUX
 [zertaz egin gure admirazionea]!
 what-INSTR do our admiration-SG
 ‘What good reason [lit.: ‘of what’] the prodigal son's parable has to impel our admiration!’

(26) La 1775: ch. 100

Ala ikhas baidezakete Dabiten eskolan,
 ala learn bai(t)-they-can David's school-at
 [zertarainokoan behar duten hedatu
 as-far-as-what must AUX-(e)n expand
 bere umeen alderako amudioa]!
 their children-gen towards love-sg
 Lit.: ‘How [well] they will learn at David's school how far they must extend their love for
 their children!’

Interestingly, the *wh*- item can itself be embedded in a completive clause, as in (27):

(27) La 1775: ch. 108

Ala erakutsterat ematen baidu
 ala to-show give bai(t)-AUX
 [gizonak ez duela [zeren behinere
 man-SG-E NEG has-C° of-what ever
 kondatu bere indarreen gainea]....]!
 to-count his (own) forces-GEN on
 ‘How little reason this shows man has to count on his own strength!’ –lit. ‘How this shows that
 man does not have *of what* to rely on his own strength!’

Needless to say, if there *is* movement in the English translations of (25) and (27), there is none in the Basque sentences: not only does *ala* take *zertaz* and *zeren* (and *zertarainokan* in (26)) under its scope, it also simultaneously indicates the scope that these latter words must take at the interpretive level.²⁶

6.2. ALA can have scope over two items

There are two subcases.

6.2.1. In the first one, *ala* can be factorised to the left of a phrase duplicated under coordination, even to the left of two coordinated clauses. (28) illustrates the coordination of two adjectival phrases (separated from *ala* by the subject DP):

²⁶ Re: (26), I am not certain that a more literal translation, like ‘[How far]_i they will learn [...] they must extend their love towards their children *t_i*’ makes any sense at all in English.

(28) Mi 1778: ch. 5 (p. 13)

Ala zure [lehenbiziko urratsak] [haltoak
 ala your first steps elevated-PL
 eta nobleak] baitire!
 and noble-PL bait-are

‘How elevated and noble your first footsteps are!’

(21) above was a first example of clause coordination under the scope of *ala*, but there, the second VC was ellipitd; in (29) and (30), there is no such ellipsis:

(29) *Ala* – [[*bait*- clause] & [*bait*- clause]]

La 1775: ch. 113

Ala [[**handia** baida egiaren indarra] ETA [**errexki**
 ala big-SG *bai(t)*-is truth-SG-GEN strength-SG and easily
 garaitzen baiditu hari yazarri nahi diotenak]]!
 vanquish *bai(t)*-AUX to-it attack want those-who-AUX-to-him

‘How great is the strength of truth, and [how] easily it overcomes those whowant to assail it!’

(30) B 1784: p. 251 Ala ordean, Jauna, [[**guti ezagutua**,
 ala however Lord little known-SH

guti maitatua bai zare] ETA [**guti ohoratua**
 little loved-SG *bai(t)*-you-are and little honoured-SG
 bai zare]] hanbat maite ditutzunez!]]
bai(t)-you-are so much love by-those who-AUX

Lit.: ‘However, oh Lord, how little known, little loved you are, and [how] little honoured you are, by those whom you love so much!’

6.2.2. In the second subcase, the focused items are two distinct arguments of the same verb:

(31) La 1777: ch. 38 Ala [ene fede **gutia**k]

ala my faith little-SG-E

erakutsten baidu [...] [ene fidantzia **eskasa**]
 show *bai(t)*-AUX my confidence scarcity

‘How my little/want of faith shows what little/want of trust I have!’

Such an example is particularly interesting, because it helps to further distinguish between [+wh] and [-wh] ESs, as will be presently discussed in the next subsection.

7. Concluding remarks

7.1. More on [+/-wh] exclamative sentences

As explained in §5, the position of *ala* in the left periphery of ESs clearly follows that of (contrastive) topics. The contribution of section 6 has been to corroborate the hypothesis (postulated all along in the preceding sections) that *ala* must be analysed as an operator.

But a question remains: What exactly does that operator bind? Up to now, I have simply noted that some element had to be within its scope, but that is too rough a characterisation.

Recall now the latest example, (31), in which *ala* takes scope over two elements that form a pair: *ene fede gutiak* (the subject, in the ergative case), and *fidantzia eskasa*, the direct object, in the absolutive case. Such a sentence raises the question of whether Basque, like other natural languages (e.g. Japanese: Ono 2004,²⁷ but also [classical] Greek and Latin, see below) generally allowed or allows multiple wh- exclamatives. The answer is positive.²⁸ First consider (32):

(32) James 6,5

LVC – ecce *quantus* ignis *quam* magnam silvam incendit!²⁹

CDR – Behold how small a fire kindleth a great wood.

If the CDR translation (like the King James (1611) version), only displays one wh-item³⁰ – and if the earliest Basque translations (L 1571 and H 1740) also do, several fairly recent Basque translations also use two wh- words, as shown in (33), in Northern Basque, and (34) in the central, Guipuzcoan, dialect.³¹

(33) a D 1865: James 6,5 Hara **zein** phindar xumeak,
 look what spark small-SG-E
 zein oihan handia duen erretzen!
 what wood big-SG AUX-(e)n burn

b Etch 1992: *ibid.* Begira **zer** su ttipiak **zer**
 watch what fire small-SG-E what
 oihan handia sutan emaiten duen!
 wood big-SG fire-on give/put AUX-(e)n

(34) a U 1859: *ibid.* Begira **nola** su piska batek,
 watch how fire little one-SG-E
 ze³² baso andiari erazekitzen dion!
 what wood big-SG-D set-fire-to AUX-(e)n

b O 1931: *ibid.* Ara **zein** sutatik
 look what fire-ABL

²⁷ Ono's (2004b) claim that multiple [+wh] ESs are restricted to wh- *in situ* languages is clearly falsified by Latin, Greek, and Basque, but that is altogether irrelevant to the present discussion.

²⁸ Unfortunately, the earliest example I have found only dates back to the 19th c.

²⁹ Likewise, the Greek text displays two (so-called) “relative adjectives”:

(i) idou *oligon* pûr *hêlikên* húlên anaptei!
 behold how-little fire how-great wood kindles

³⁰ But the *early* (1380) version of the NT by J. Wycliffe reads: *Lo! how much fire kindleth how great a wood!* and the original Douay-Rheims (1582) text proposes: *Behold how much fire what a great wood it kindleth!*

³¹ Thanks to Beñat Oyharçabal, p.c., for confirming that, although stylistically marked, (33a,b) are fine in contemporary NB. Let's add that, unsurprisingly, multiple wh-questions (Etxepare & Ortiz de Urbina, 2003) and multiple wh- free (cor)relatives (Rebuschi 2001) are also possible in Basque.

³² *Ze* is a variant of *zer*, both in interrogative and in exclamatory sentences.

| | | |
|-------------|------|-----------------------|
| zein | oian | garrez! ³³ |
| what | wood | flame-PL-INSTR |

The difference between *ala* ESs and [+wh] ones should now be clear: *zein* (and other [+wh] words, like *zer*, *nolako*...) are words which sit in the specifier of the Degree head that can be associated with any lexical item that denotes a scalar property³⁴ – and may locally move across the copula as shown in (6), either alone or pied-piping the modified element, if any.³⁵ If two (exclamative) wh- words appear in the same sentence, as predicted by Ono (2004a), we get the same effect of a single pair as in certain types of multiple wh- questions. But that also is the only possible reading of the pair (*fede gutiak*, *fidantzia eskasa*) in (31). It thus appears natural to consider that these modified NPs or DPs each contain a null degree variable, unselectively or simultaneously bound by *ala*.³⁶

7.2. Exclamative ALA and other uses of the word

The data provided in this short paper raise at least as many problems as they illustrate a hitherto little described phenomenon. To conclude this contribution, I would like to examine yet another question, namely, the relationship between exclamative *ala* and other functions of the “same word”.³⁷ The most usual use of *ala* is that of a disjunction, ‘or’, as in (35).

- (35) La 777: ch. 49 Pilatusek [...] galdegin zioten zein nahi zuten
 Pilate-E asked AUX which they-wanted
 libra ziozoten bietarik, *ala* Jesus, zeinaren
 that-he-free-for you[SUBJ] of-the-two either Jesus whose
 saindutasuna ezagutua baitzen, [...] *ala* Barrabas [...]
 sanctity known-SG REL-was or Barabbas
 ‘Pilate asked them which one they wanted him to let free, either Jesus, whose sanctity was
 known [...], or Barabbas [...].’

However, the connection between these two functions is not obvious at all, but there exists another option: *ala* can appear in certain interrogative contexts. Before giving examples (none from the 18th and 19th centuries), the *DGV* (vol. I: 578) provides the following two passages:

³³ I must confess that if the two wh- elements and the general meaning of the sentence is clear, the details of the rest of its structure is unclear to me.

³⁴ Scalarity is one of the main ingredients of ESs, cf. e.g. Zanuttini & Portner (2003) and the references therein.

³⁵ As (19) shows, even simple nouns or NPs, provided they are scalar or gradable, can be the object of the exclamatory force of *ala*. Thus the same text also provides two examples with *ala gusta bait-zitzaion*, ‘what a cost it was to him’.

³⁶ Artiagoitia's (2006a) recent proposal that (gradable) adjectives sit in a functional head (of degree) that takes the NP as its complement does not seem a priori incompatible with the analysis I am suggesting.

³⁷ We can easily dismiss two independent hypotheses. The first one is that exclamative *ala*, although often preceded by the interjection *oi*, would be connected to the votive expression *oxala* ‘would to God (that...)’. Note that *oxala* (etymologically linked to an Arabic expression pronounced *ojalá* in Spanish today), is always associated with a finite verb in the hypothetical mood (with the C° proclitic *ba*-, and the typical *l*- prefix when the arguments are all 3rd p.), two properties that have nothing to do with ESs. The second one is that *ala* might be related to the completive suffix *-(e)la/- (a)la* depending on the dialect (cf. ex. (3)); but precisely, only the form *-(e)la* is used in NB, the group of dialects which use exclamatory *ala*, the C° suffix *-(a)la* only being used in Peninsular Basque.

“Quand, après une première question, *ala* ‘ou bien’ en précède une seconde plus précise, il signifie: ‘sans doute, peut-être’.” [Lafitte (1962, § 225)]

“Liçarrague se sert de *ala* pour rendre la nuance exprimée en latin par *numquid*: question à laquelle on suppose que l'interlocuteur répondra par la négative.” [Lafon, *Notes O*]³⁸

Let us add that if *ala* does sometimes translate *numquid*, as in Jn 4,12 (H 1740 and D 1865 also have *ala* here), there is another Latin word, *an* (which as a rule corresponds to Greek *ê*) which also triggers the appearance of *ala* (see e.g. 1 Cor 6,2, 6, 16, 19; 1 Cor 9,4, 6...).

Moreover, as the DGV acknowledges, *ala* can also appear as a subordinator after an expletive use of *zer* ‘what’, as in (36):³⁹

(36) Lafitte (1964, *ibid.*)

| | | | | | | |
|------|---------|----------|------------|-------------|---------|-------------|
| Zer | uste | duzu | ala | ohoren | ondotik | gabiltzala? |
| what | opinion | you-have | <i>ala</i> | honours-GEN | behind | that-we-go |

Lafitte translates: ‘Que croyez vous? Que nous courons après les honneurs peut-être?’, but one complex sentence should suffice: ‘Do you think we're chasing after honours?’. Whether *zer* here is a scope-marking particle or not, and without providing a clear syntactic analysis of these facts, we can at least safely say that the three functions of *ala*, exclamative, disjunctive and interrogative, have one common property: they associate alternatives. More specifically, if the disjunctive use of *ala* by definition offers a choice between alternatives, which are thus explicitly identified, the other two uses *implicate the exclusion* of those alternatives – although differently: whilst exclamatives are factive (another typical ingredient of ESs), so that the implicature of exclusion of the alternatives is conventional, the implicature associated with interrogative *ala* is merely conversational, because it can be cancelled.

Needless to say, it remains to be seen if or how these semantic and/or pragmatic facts can be deduced from the overall syntactic structures of the sentences in which the three *ala* types appear.

³⁸ The reference to Lafitte's *Grammaire basque* [...] is correct, but I have not found the relevant passage in Lafon ([1955] 1999).

³⁹ Unfortunately, I have not found any such examples in texts written before the 20th century.

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