

Formal and semantic-discursive properties of mirative expressions (*it's*) *no wonder*: A synchronic-diachronic approach

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This paper studies from a synchronic-diachronic perspective the formal and semantic-discursive properties of the qualifying expressions (*it's*) *no wonder*. They are associated with a general discourse schema expressing both *speaker attitude* and *discourse organization*: the speaker assesses a proposition (P) as ‘non-surprising’ (Delancey 1997) by assigning *no wonder* to it as a mirative qualifier (MQ), and motivates this evaluation by an explicit justification (J). The overall rhetorical structure can be viewed as the opposite of concession, which denies expectation (Mann & Thompson 1988): *no wonder* precisely emphasizes the *expected* relation between justification and proposition.

In Present-day English, the *thetical* adverbial uses of *no wonder* predominate. Their different positions are not in free variation but correlate with two distinct subtypes of the general discourse schema. On the one hand, there is the disjunct *no wonder* that typically precedes P (1), with J either preceding (1a) or following P (1b). On the other hand, there is anaphoric *no wonder*, which inherently follows P, and which is followed by J (2).

- (1) a. J + MQ(P), e.g. You never did have a heart, Sophie. *No wonder* your first husband had an affair! (WB)
b. MQ(P) + J, e.g. *No wonder* they can't touch him. Over the years he 's had connections up to Downing Street level. (WB)
- (2) P + anaMQ + J, e.g. PC-based apps have given way to Web-based services *and no wonder*: They do a much better job. (WB)

Historically, these two adverbial subtypes are related to different *non-thetical* multi-clausal constructions predating them. These are, respectively, extraposition, which typically fixes MQ before P (*It's no wonder your first husband... . It's no wonder they can't...*), and paratactic sentences in which MQ is a separate assertion which refers back to P and announces J (*PC-based apps have given way... . And it's no wonder for they do ...*).

We will characterize the distinct properties of the disjunct and extraposition patterns on the one hand and the anaphoric adverbial and paratactic patterns on the other in current written (400 tokens from WordbanksOnline) and spoken usage (175 tokens). For the spoken data, we will examine the hypothesis that the anaphoric MQ is prosodically more independent, while in the other patterns the MQ is bound to P (cf. Kaltenböck 2008). The distinct structural relations found between MQ, P and J in the two subtypes will also be systematically charted. Regarding rhetorical structure, we hypothesize that sequence (1a) emphasizes the ‘expectedness’ of a straightforward reason (J) - conclusion (P) relation, while in (1b) and (2) the ‘predictability’ of J from P (2) may be rhetorically exploited to end on a strong point or striking revelation.

These synchronic findings will be fed back into our diachronic reconstruction of the *no wonder* expressions (cf. Matthijs et al. 2012). We will assess the relative explanatory power for them of Thetical versus Sentence Grammar (Kaltenböck et al. 2011) and primary versus secondary discourse status (Boye & Harder 2012), and also consider the role of persisting rhetorical strategies (Waltereit 2012).

References

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