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1. Introduction. The Catalan particle *pla*, which is specific to certain north-eastern dialects of Catalan, may display a focalizing role derived from its epistemic modal meaning. Particularly interesting are cases in which the presence of *pla* gives a negative meaning to the sentence. Constructions with *pla* offer an excellent opportunity to test the cartographic proposal on the complexity of the array of peripheral positions that may head a sentence (Cinque 1999; Rizzi 1997, 2001, 2007).

In its basic use, *pla* coappears with some certain quantifiers (*més*, “more”, *menys* “less” and *bé* “well”) to act as an epistemic modality adverb.¹ According to Lyons (1977: 792s) and Cinque (1999 §4.2), epistemic modality expresses the degree of confidence in the veracity of the propositions assigned by the speaker according to his or her knowledge of the situation (or the world). In (1) *pla* modifies the additive quantifier *més* ‘more’ and the subtractive *menys*:

- (1) a. Abans en teníem *pla més*.
before partitive (we) had *part.* more
‘We really had a lot before’
b. Treballem *pla menys*, ara.
(we) work *part.* less, now
‘We sure work a lot less now than we used to!’

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¹ The analysis of *pla* as an epistemic modal adverb matches the etymological origin of this word according to Catalan lexicographers (see Alcover-Moll 1975-1977, Coromines 1980-1985), who say that it is equivalent to *certament* ‘truly’ and *en bona veritat* ‘in good truth’.

In addition to modifying quantifiers as in (1), *pla* can act as a focal marker. We argue that this role of *pla* comes from its basic meaning as an epistemic modal adverb, which allows it to focalize a sentential constituent in order to either implicitly “overpass” a situation expressed in the preceding discourse or deny it. In section 2 we describe the properties of *pla* acting as a ponderative quantifier, which gives to the sentence a mirative meaning. We label this use of the particle *pla*₁. Section 3 studies the use of *pla* as a focus element related with the negative meaning of the sentence, which we label *pla*₂. Section 4 deals with the emphatic role of *pla* in reinforcing a bare quantifier, which we label *pla*₃. Finally, section 5, which concludes the article, emphasizes the idea that the three types of *pla* have a common function: their role of focus markers. More specifically, they are different instances of a quantifier which can be engaged in different functional positions thereby realizing different features.

2. *Pla* as a ponderative quantifier. To better understand the role of *pla*₁, consider the dialogue in (2).

- (2) a. Speaker A: Els articles d’aquest filòsof sempre valen la pena.
This philosopher’s articles are always worth reading.’
b. Speaker B: Els seus llibres *pla*, són interessants.
the his books *part.* are interesting
‘Now his books are even more interesting.’

Answer (2b) not only assigns the property of being interesting to the subject (*els seus llibres* ‘the books’) but also implies that the degree of interest that the books generate is superior to the interest generated by other entities referred to in the preceding discourse. Thus, a discourse cannot begin with a sentence such as (2b). Such a construction can only function as a rejoinder that is first licensed by a discursive context like that provided by (2a).

The particle *pla*₁ can be preceded by other phrases, such as the temporal phrase in (3).

- (3) Per Nadal *pla*, vam ser colla a taula.
by Christmas *part.* (we) were multitude at table
‘Now at *Christmas* we *really* had a lot of people at the table!’

The sentence is interpreted as meaning that on no other day were we as numerous as on Christmas Day. It does not imply that on other days there were not a lot of people—on the contrary. But in terms of the number of people who were present, the other occasions were inferior to Christmas Day.

That fact that *pla*₁ implies that no other discourse element can be assigned the property expressed by the predicate in the same degree as the peripheral phrase makes the sentences in (4) with quantitative quantifiers such as *força* ‘quite’ or *més* ‘more’ semantically anomalous.

- (4) a. *Els seus llibres *pla*, són força interessants.
the his books *part.* are quite interesting
b. *Per Nadal *pla*, vam ser més colla taula.
by Christmas *part.* (we) were more multitude at table

Nor can *pla*₁ appear in a sentence whose predicate does not express a gradable property, such as *mort* ‘dead’, as (5a), unless it is used ironically. Moreover, because of its ponderative character, *pla*₁ is not compatible with universal or distributive quantifiers (*tothom* ‘everybody’, *cadascú*, ‘everyone’ etc.), which do not presuppose the existence of other discursive entities and consequently do not allow a ponderation to be established.

- (5) a. *Aquell conill *pla*, era mort.
that rabbit *part.* was dead
b. *Tothom *pla*, és boig.
everybody *part.* is crazy

All these facts allow us to claim that, when used as a focal operator, the epistemic modal adverb *pla*₁ behaves as a ponderative scalar quantifier. In other words, it places an element at a high point on a scale of degrees that is applied to a particular property, always according to the opinion of the speaker. This point is higher than the point that the speaker assigns to other entities or individuals in the discourse universe.

From the semantic-pragmatic point of view, constructions with *pla*₁ might be considered mirative (DeLancey 1997, 2001), the mirative meaning being derived from the ponderative meaning of the focus marker *pla*₁.² According to DeLancey (2001: 370), “the term *mirativity* refers to the linguistic marking of an utterance as conveying information which is new or unexpected to the speaker”. Our claim is that constructions with *pla*₁ convey unexpectedness. In sentence (2b), it is not “the high interest value of the books by the philosopher” that is unexpected. Rather, what is unexpected in (2b) is that the degree of interest generated by the philosopher’s books is higher than the degree of interest generated by other entities in the discourse universe previously under consideration (the philosopher’s articles). The unexpected or new information is the outcome or consequence of the mental comparison made by the speaker.³

Constructions with *pla*₁ share some semantic properties with other mirative constructions, such as exclamative sentences. The semantic properties of *factivity* and *widening* –which characterize exclamative sentences, according to Zanuttini & Portner (2003)– are also present in *pla*₁ constructions. That is, their propositional content is presupposed to be true (factivity), and the values for *x* expressed by the predicate make up a scale and the actual value for *x* is higher on the scale than expected (the widening or “scalar extent” property, Zanuttini & Portner 2003: 13s). Consequently, the presence of *pla*₁ is not compatible with a negative marker, as shown in (6).

- (6) *A l’estiu pla, no dormo.
in summer *part.* (I) not sleep

² I am especially indebted to G. Cinque, who attracted my attention towards the mirative reading of this construction.

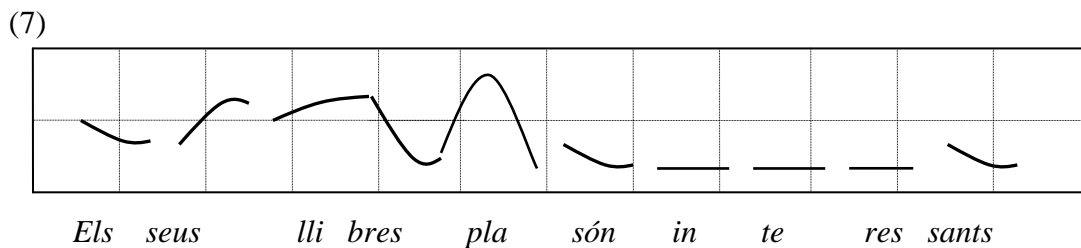
³ Thus, *pla*₁ has an implicative nature: It affects not only an explicit element in the sentence, but other contextual entities as well. In (i) *pla* places the entity *en Pere* ‘Peter’ at a high point on a hypothetical scale of diners.

- (i) En Pere pla, menjava.
The Peter *pla* ate
‘Peter ate even more.’

Menjar ‘to eat’ is interpreted here as a semantically gradable category. The sentence implies that another person or persons in the discursive or pragmatic context were below the point assigned to *en Pere* ‘Peter’ on the scale in terms of their ability to eat a lot. Thus, sentence (i) expresses the idea that the property of being a diner is also applied to other persons in the universe of the discourse, but always to a lesser degree than that assigned to *en Pere*.

Moreover, because of its mirative meaning, sentences containing *pla* can be neither subordinated structures nor interrogative or imperative sentences.⁴

Often mirativity is expressed intonationally (see DeLancey 2001, Zanuttini & Portner 2003). This is the case of sentences that contain *pla*₁. The panel in (7) illustrates the typical intonation pattern of an utterance with *pla*₁: (2b) is produced in two separate intonational phrases. The first intonational phrase ends after the particle *pla*, which is prosodically focalized and produced with a prominent rising pitch accent. The second intonational phrase, which follows the focus *pla*, is produced with a very narrow and reduced pitch range, which prosodically indicates the post-focus material.



As far as its syntactic properties are concerned, *pla*₁ is always preceded by a topic phrase. Thus *pla*, as a scalar focal quantifier, separates out or highlights an element in order to express the idea that whatever the sentence predicates has to be applied to this element to a higher degree than other discourse (or conversational) elements. The phrase preceding *pla*₁ may be the dislocated subject, as in (2b), a left dislocated internal argument related to the partitive resumptive clitic *en*, as in (8a), a locative adjunct in the left periphery related to the locative resumptive clitic *hi*, as in (8b), or a peripheral or sentential adjunct, as in (8c).

- (8) a. De diners *pla*, *en* tenen.
of money *part. cl.* (they) have

⁴ Sometimes the sentence with *pla*₁ contains a causal clause headed by the conjunction *que*. In this case the predicate of the main clause may be silent, implicitly understood, as in (ib).

- (i) a. Speaker A: La xocolata és una temptació.
‘Chocolate is a temptation’
b. Speaker B: Els caramels *pla* (són una temptació), *que* n’hi ha de tantes classes.
The sweets *part.* (are a temptation) that *cl.* there has of so-many kinds
‘Sweets even more so, because there are so many kinds.’

- ‘At least they have plenty of *money*.’
- b. A la biblioteca *pla*, hi estudiem sovint.
 in the library *part.* cl. (we) study often
 ‘We study even more often in the library!’
- c. A Navarra *pla*, cuinen bé.
 in Navarra *part.* they cook well
 ‘Now in *Navarra* they *really* cook well.’

Assuming the articulation of the complementizer zone proposed by Rizzi (2001), *pla* occupies the specifier position of the functional head Focus. Very schematically, (9) represents the structure of (2b), where the DP *els seus llibres* ‘their books’ is in the specifier of Topic and is represented by a silent resumptive pronoun (*pro*) inside the clause. The focalizing role of *pla* is not contrastive, but rather shows a ponderative effect. Consequently, *pla*₁ can be considered a *ponderative focus* involving new information in the development of the discourse introduced by means of the syntactic device of left dislocation.

(9) [ForceP [TopP *els seus llibres* Top [FocP *pla* Foc [FinP [IP *pro* són interessants]]]]]

Pla in (9) is also related to Force, which gives a mirative meaning to the sentence. The uninterpretable feature in Force receives its value from the interpretable feature in Focus under Agree. This offers an explanation to the fact that sentences with *pla*₁ cannot be either subordinated or interrogative or imperative constructions.

3. *Pla* as a counterpresuppositional focus. Additionally, the adverb *pla* (which for convenience we have labeled *pla*₂) can display a *counterpresuppositional focus* reading which involves a correction of information brought in by preceding discourse (i.e. focus applied not to new information but rather to the background (see Gussenhoven 2007)). In this case, *pla* is followed by the complementizer *que* ‘that’ and the sentence receives a negative meaning, as in the first sentence of speaker B’s reply in (10b).

- (10) a. Speaker A: Segur que en Pere et farà un regal.
 sure that the Peter to-you will-do a present
 ‘I’m sure Peter will give you a present.’

- b. Speaker B: Ell pla que em regalarà res. Si ni deu saber que és el meu aniversari.
 he *part.* that to-me will-give nothing. If (he) not-even must know that (it) is my birthday
 ‘Like heck he’ll give me a present —he probably doesn’t even know that today is my birthday!’

In (10b) speaker B firmly denies the statement made by speaker A. As a consequence, speaker A’s belief (or supposition) that B will receive a present from Peter is cancelled.

Sentences with *pla*₂ have an echoic character. Hence, they cannot introduce a discourse, i.e. they correspond to a contrastive answer to some previous statement, and cannot appear in embedded domains. Specifically, the echoic elements in (10b) are the complementizer *que* ‘that’⁵ and the repeated or paraphrased elements from (10a): the future tense, the verb *regalar* ‘to give a present’ –parallel to the VP made up of the light verb *fer* ‘to do’ and the noun *regal* ‘present’–, the pronoun *ell* ‘he’ referring to *en Pere* ‘Peter’, and the clitic pronoun *em* ‘to me’ parallel to *et* ‘to you’.

The sentences with *pla*₂ are equivalent to a negative sentence, in spite of the absence of the negative polarity marker *no* ‘not’. The fact that negative polarity items such as *res* ‘anything’ in (10b), and *mai* ‘never’ or *ningú* ‘anybody’ in (11) are licensed in constructions with *pla*₂ confirms their negative character.

- (11) A Mart pla que hi ha estat mai ningú.
 on Mars *part.* that cl. has been never anyone
 ‘For sure nobody has ever been to Mars.’

Other effects of the negative meaning of the sentences with *pla*₂ are visible in (12):

- (12) a. Jo pla que em pensava que fos tan complicat aquest tema.
 I *part.* that myself thought that was so complicated this subject

⁵ On the echoic flavor of the complementizer *que* ‘that’ in Spanish, see Etxepare (1997) and Hernanz (2006), among others.

‘I had no idea this subject was so difficult.’

b. *Jo em pensava que fos tan complicat aquest tema.

I myself thought that was so complicated this subject

The subjunctive mood in (12a) shows that the subordinate clause is within the scope of an element with a negative, not affirmative, meaning. This explains why (12b) is ungrammatical.

We hypothesize that the adverbial *pla*₂ shares with *pla*₁ a fundamental feature [+focus] that enables them to be considered as two instances of a single quantifier. Actually, it would be highly unlikely for one lexical item to have opposite polarity values in the same dialect. Rather, these different values must be prompted by the concurrence of *pla* with other sentential elements. From this position, we claim that the negative meaning of *pla*₂ constructions derives from the presence of an abstract negative operator, that is, an element without phonological content, but nevertheless with semantic content. Because of this silent negative operator, *pla* appears to be a negative element. Only such a proposal that tries to unify the different meanings and behaviors of *pla* can account for the speed and facility with which children acquire it and learn to use it in a conversation.

The fact that negative polarity items and subjunctive mood are licensed in constructions with *pla*₂ is an effect of the presence of an abstract negative element in the clause domain. This abstract negative element (*NO*) is licensed by the presence of the quantifier *pla* in PolP specifier position (see Laka 1990, Holmberg 2007). The idea that *pla* reinforces the negation is not strange, being in its origin a modal adverb (see fn.1). We assume that *pla* moves to FocP because of its focus feature. Its contrastive focus meaning arises from its relationship with the abstract negation head. In (13) we schematically represent the structure of the first sentence in (10b).⁶

(13) [ForceP [TopP ell Top [FocP *pla*_i Foc [FinP que [PolP *t*_i *NO pro* em regalarà res]]]]]

⁶ See Hernanz (2006) for information on emphatic polarity particles which select *que* ‘that’ in Spanish and Catalan.

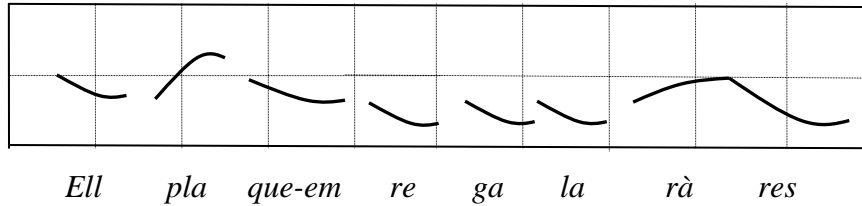
Note that the external negation (i.e. negation in CP zone) is unable to license a negative polarity item in Catalan, as shown in (14) and (15). The grammatical sentences in (14) contain both internal and external negation, whereas the ungrammatical constructions in (15) lack one negation element in the clause domain.

- (14) a. *No que no em regalarà res.*
 not that not to-me will-give anything
 ‘No, she/he really will not give me anything.’
- b. *No que no em regalarà res?* (Tarragonese Catalan)
 ‘Isn’t it true that she/he will give me nothing?’
- c. *No que no que no em regalarà res?* (Tarragonese Catalan)
 not that not that not to-me will-give anyone
 ‘Isn’t it true that it is true that she/he will give me nothing?’
- (15) a. **No que em regalarà res.*
 not that to-me will-give anything
- b. **No que em regalarà res?* (cf. *No que em regalarà alguna cosa?*)
 not that to-me will-give anything (cf. ‘She/he will give me something, right?’)
- c. **No que no que em regalarà res?*
 not that not that to-me will-give anyone

Sentence (14a) is an emphatic negative construction with a negative adverb *no* ‘not’ followed by *que* ‘that’ in CP domain, and a negative polarity item *res* ‘anything’ licensed by the internal negation *no* ‘not’ in the IP domain. As shown in (15a), the negative polarity item *res* ‘anything’ cannot be licensed by the external negation. Sentence (14b) is a confirmative question belonging to the Catalan dialect spoken in the Tarragona area. Again, external negation is unable to license *res* ‘anything’, although *no* + *que* can head a confirmative question, as shown in (15b) (see Hernanz & Rigau 2006 and Prieto & Rigau 2007). Question (14c) is a reinforced confirmative question. In this case, the speaker is almost sure that she/he will not receive any presents. As shown in (15c), the presence of two external negative adverbs is not enough to license *res* ‘anything’. Therefore, we conclude that sentences with *pla*₂ have to have an abstract negation in the IP zone.

The prosodic properties of (10b) have been schematically represented in (16).

(16)



This utterance is produced with a single intonational phrase and its contour is typical of a Catalan broad focus statement. The first pitch accent is associated with the particle *pla*, which is the second metrically strong position in the utterance. Notice that the stressed pronoun *Ell* is unaccented due to the fact that it is located in prefocal position. After that, the intonational curve has a descending pitch movement, which rises slightly in the penultimate stressed syllable and falls during the utterance-final stress or nucleus.

4. *Pla* as a contingency focus. There is still another construction with *pla*, in which it appears without the conjunction *que* and has an emphatic meaning. We label it *pla*₃. One of the most relevant properties of the adverb *pla*₃ is its role in reinforcing the slightly emphatic meaning that the indefinite quantifiers *algú* ‘someone’, *quelcom* or *alguna cosa* ‘something’ acquire in contexts such as (17) (see Cinque 1990: §1.4.3; Quer 1992-93). As claimed for *pla*₁ and *pla*₂, *pla*₃ is not possible in embedded domains.

- (17) a. Speaker A: Em fa por que no sapiguen trobar la casa.
to-e makes afraid that (they) not know to find the house
‘I am afraid that they won’t be able to find the house.’
- b. Speaker B: No pateixis. Algú *pla* els orientarà.
not worry. someone *part.* them will-help
‘Don’t worry. Someone is sure to help them.’

In the majority of Catalan dialects, the second sentence of speaker B’s response in (17) appears without *pla*. In fact, *algú* ‘someone’ in (17) is used here as a bare (i.e.

non-referential) quantifier. According to Cinque (1990:15), bare quantifiers behave as intrinsic operators. They appear preferably –but not obligatorily– in sentences in future or conditional tense or with a probability modal tense or conditional mood. No resumptive pronouns may appear inside such sentences (see (18a)).

In fact, *pla* in (17b) is the phonological realization of the operator character of the indefinite quantifier *algú*. It is important to note that here *pla*, in spite of its emphatic value, does not play the role of a scalar quantifier. Rather, it marks a contrast between what the sentence (17a) claims –that probably they will not be able to find the house– and the belief or supposition of interlocutor B (namely, the belief that they will manage well enough because someone will help them). In (17b) *pla* can be analyzed as an instance of “contingency focus”. According to Gussenhoven (2004:14), the contingency focus defines attendant circumstances. The information is presented as potentially relevant. This emphatic use of *pla* derives entirely from its essential nature as an epistemic modal adverb (see § 1).

This use of *pla* is compatible with negative sentences, but not with the quantifiers *qualsevol* ‘anyone/someone’ or *cadascú* ‘each one’, as shown in (18).⁷

- (18) a. Alguna cosa *pla* no devem haver fet bé.
 some thing *part.* not (we) have to have done rightly
 ‘Well there must have been something we didn’t do right.’
 b. **Qualsevol pla* l’ajudarà.
 someone *part.* him (he) will-help

With regard to the syntactic structure of these sentences, we assume that the bare quantifier *algú* in (17b) moves to the left-periphery, thus binding a variable, while *pla* is

⁷ *Pla*₃ can also coappear with a strong pronoun, as in (i). On the quantifier-like nature of strong pronouns in Catalan, see Rigau (1988).

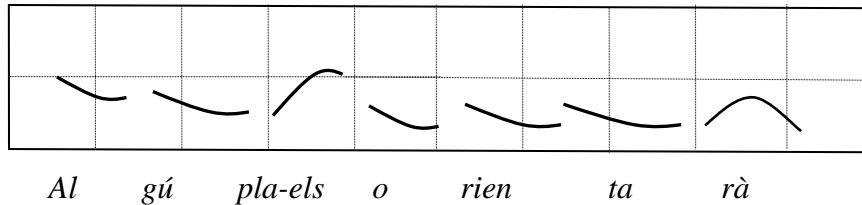
- (i) Semblava que no se’n sortiria, però ell *pla* es va espavilar.
 (it) seemed that not himself cl. would-succeed, but he *part.* himself
 managed.
 ‘It looked like he wouldn’t get out of the fix, but he really got his act together.’

in the Focus head, as shown in (19). As it occupies a head position, we can approach *pla*₃ as the clitic variant of *pla*₁ and *pla*₂, which occupy specifier positions and are therefore “weak” in Cardinaletti & Starke ‘s (1999) sense.

(19) [ForceP [FocP *algú*_i *pla*] [FinP [IP *t*_i *els orientarà*]]]]

Prosodically, sentences with *pla*₃ are also produced with a single intonational phrase and their contour is typical of a Catalan broad focus statement. The panel in (20) represents the intonation of the second sentence in (17b).

(20)



Interestingly, the first stressed syllable of the utterance in (19) is also deaccented and the first pitch accent is associated with the focused particle *pla*. After the particle, the intonational curve has a falling pitch curve, which rises slightly during the utterance-final stressed syllable.

5. Conclusion. Our analysis of *pla* shows that an epistemic modal adverb, i.e. an adverb which is concerned with the speaker’s deductions or opinions, may be “recycled” as a focal adverb appearing in a functional position (in Focus) in the left periphery of the sentence⁸. In addition *pla* may be engaged with other functional categories –such as ForceP (in *pla*₁ constructions) and PolP (in *pla*₂ constructions)– thereby realizing different features. From Focus position, *pla* can endow the sentence with a mirative character because of its ponderative meaning (*pla*₁), can act as a counterpresuppositional focus when related to an abstract negative polarity adverb (*pla*₂), and can accompany a bare quantifier (*pla*₃). According to the cartographic program, the analysis of *pla* involves two zones of the sentence structure: the higher CP zone and the zone immediately below it where evaluative, evidential and epistemic

⁸ This is a very general process which is also observable in other languages. For instance, in the case of German, all modal particles have an adverbial counterpart (see Cardinaletti 2007).

operators are present (see Cinque 2006: 123). The latter zone implies the existence of a proposition.

This paper has also explored the behaviour of *pla* in both the conceptual-intentional interface and the prosodic interface in the sentences that contain this word, i.e. its semantic and pragmatic implications and the intonation associated with these constructions. Such an analysis of a restricted dialectal phenomenon constitutes a study in microsyntax. This type of analysis is appropriate and advisable, not only because it is important to understand languages and their dialects thoroughly, but also because it opens the way for future studies on comparative syntax.

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