Spanish evaluative nouns denote extreme degrees
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Evaluative nouns (ENs; *idiota* ‘idiot’, *desastre* ‘mess’) do not only assign a property, but also express a value judgment. This correlates with a special behavior that makes them closer to adjectives than other nouns. For instance, they have degree readings with size adjectives and other nominal degree modifiers (1).

1. a. Juan es un idiota enorme. ‘Juan is a huge idiot.’
   b. Juan es un completo desastre. ‘Juan is a complete mess.’

These facts raise the question of what makes ENs evaluative. A degree analysis (Bolinger, 1972; Matushansky, 2002; Espinal, 2013) encounters a few problems: the controversial status of nominal gradability (e.g., Constantinescu, 2011); and the fact that gradability by itself does not involve subjectivity and value judgment. In this talk I pursue a degree analysis, with some nuances. In particular, I argue that ENs denote extreme degrees of properties, which accounts for their occurrence in some evaluative constructions (see (2)), and include an expressive component of meaning, which accounts for their subjectivity and the difficulty of targeting the value judgment by logical operators (see (4)).

**Data**
ENs are close to adjectives (Morzycki, 2009; Constantinescu, 2011; Sassoon, 2013). This can be observed in their occurrence in adjectival contexts like interrogatives with *cómo de* ‘how much of’ (2a), comparatives (2b), the *A/N of an N* construction (2c), or verb-less exclamatives (2d), and even degree modifiers such as *muy* ‘very’ (2e) (Milner, 1978; Suñer Gratacós, 1990; Hernanz and Suñer Gratacós, 1999; Hernanz, 2001; Villalba and Bartra-Kaufmann, 2010; Espinal, 2013; a.o.).

2. a. ¿Cómo de {genio / desastre / alto / guapo / ??medico} es Juan?
   ‘How (much of a(n)) {genius / mess / tall / handsome / doctor} is Juan?’
   b. Juan es más un {?idiota / ?desastre / *médico} que Pablo.
   ‘Juan is more of a(n) {idiot / mess / doctor} than Pablo
   c. el {idiota / #médico / ??alto / tonto} de Juan ‘that {idiot / doctor / tall / dumb} of Juan’
   d. {Un idiota / Un desastre / *Un médico / ??Alto / Tontísimo / Fantástico}, este chico!
   ‘An idiot / A mess / A doctor / Tall / Very dumb / Fantastic, this guy!’
   e. Juan siempre ha sido muy desastre en el colegio.
   Lit. ‘Juan has always been very mess at school.’

Extreme adjectives (*wonderful*; see Cruse, 1986; Morzycki, 2012) share a series of characteristics with ENs, including occurring with extreme degree modifiers (3a), acceptable in equatives (3b), being able to be intensified via prosodic prominence (3c), and entailing their non-extreme counterparts (3d).

3. a. Juan es un {sencillo / soberano} {idiota / desastre / #médico}.
   ‘Juan is a {downright (lit. simple) / full-on} {idiot / mess / doctor}.’
   b. Juan es tan {desastre / ??médico} como Pablo.
   ‘Juan is as much of a {mess / ??doctor} as pablo.’
   c. Juan es un {idiota / desastre / ??médico}. J. is a(n) {idiot / meeeess / doooctor}.’
   d. Es un genio/desastre. ‘He’s a genius/mess’ ⇒ Es listo/desordenado. ‘He’s smart/sloppy.’

In addition, ENs involve an emotional attitude from the speaker towards the referent of the expression. Evidence for this comes, e.g., from the impossibility of denying the emotional attitude (4a), and some instances of non-displaceability (4b–c) (Potts, 2007; Gutzmann, 2013).
   A: Juan is an idiot. B1: #No, you’re not mad at him B2: No, he’s really nice
   b. Juan fue un idiota anoche al llegar tarde. #Pero ahora me cae bien.
   Juan was an idiot last night when he arrived late. #But now I like him.
   c. ?? Quizás Juan es un idiota. ‘Maybe Juan is an idiot.’

Analysis The data in (2c–d) shows that being gradable is not enough for an adjective to appear in those constructions. They need to involve some extremeness, and I argue this is also true for ENs. Example (3) provides more evidence for this. Intuitively, in order to be an idiot, someone has to be dumb to a degree above any expectation. To account for this, I adapt Morzycki’s (2012) analysis of extreme adjectives. According to it, different contexts provide different subsets of scales as relevant, and extremeness consists in going off the salient scale, to a point where no further distinctions between degrees are made. Formally, the denotation of ENs includes the requirement that the degree $d$ of the property exceed the highest degree in the contextually-provided set of degrees $C$ for the property denoted by the neutral adjective (cf. Morzycki, 2012). *Idiota* (5) thus denotes the property of being dumb to a degree that exceeds the greatest degree in the salient set of degrees in the context. Besides denoting an extreme property, ENs express an emotional attitude of the speaker towards the referent as well, and are thus of a mixed type (Potts 2005; McCready 2010; Gutzmann 2011). The denotation includes the dependency of the expressive content on the truth of the TC component. For *idiota*, the function $\text{neg-att}$ returns true iff the contextual judge $(c_j)$ has a negative attitude towards the individual $x$ (6). ‘$\circ$’ separates the two dimensions of meaning.

\begin{align}
(5) \quad [\text{idiot}_{c_j}] &= \lambda d \lambda x [d > \max(C) \land \text{dumb}(x)(d)] \\
(6) \quad [\text{idiot}_{c_j}] &= \lambda d \lambda x [d > \max(C) \land \text{dumb}(x)(d)] \circ \lambda x [[\text{idiot}_{TC}](x)(d) = 1 \rightarrow \text{neg-att}(c_j)(x)]
\end{align}

Consequences The analysis presented here contributes to the understanding of scalarity across categories and its relation to subjectivity. 1) A degree analysis of ENs means assuming a DegP in the extended NP (see Matushansky, 2002; Morzycki, 2009; de Vries, 2010). This is consistent with the modifiers in (3a, 1b). 2) ENs are subjective and, as such, can be embedded under subjective attitude verbs and give rise to faultless disagreement (Lasersohn, 2005; Stephenson, 2007, a.o.). The subjectivity of ENs is captured by including the measure function used by an evaluative adjective in their semantics, which is itself judge dependent (*dumb*). Speaker or judge dependence also enters the picture from the expressive component. In this sense, ENs are subjective from both dimensions of meaning (6).

Extension Other nouns isolated by the tests in (2) are nouns such as *matasanos* ‘quack’ or derived nouns such as *politicastra* ‘politician.PEJ’. A closer look at these predicates would show that they include a somewhat different expressive contribution (the negative attitude is directed towards the whole class of individuals, doctors and politicians in this case, and not to the specific individual the noun is predicated of), but are not gradable, helping thus to establish a typology of evaluative nouns in Spanish.