Exclamation and presupposition[*]

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The aim of this paper is to argue, contra the literature, that exclamative sentences aren't presupposition triggers. We try to apply to exclamative sentences the traditional tests which allow to check whether a content is presupposed or not, and show that they fail. We propose other tests, based on discourse relations, and show that they also fail. Nevertheless, exclamative sentences convey a specific content that is related to their declarative counterpart, and which is probably an implicature, comparable to what Potts analyses as an expressive content.

1. Introduction

The main goal of this paper is to determine whether or not exclamative sentences are presupposition triggers. The question seems simple, but in fact, it has to be divised in two subquestions: (i) do exclamatives sentences convey a presuppositional content? (ii) in the case of a positive answer, what is the content of this presupposition?
Our aim is to falsify the common idea that exclamative sentences are presupposition triggers, according to which a sentence such as (1a) presupposes the content of (1b).

(1)   a. Comme elle est belle !
           How beautiful she is !
        b. Elle est belle.
           She is beautiful

The difficulty comes from the fact that the famility test (according to which presuppositions resist to negation, question and embedding) is not operable in the case of exclamative sentences, and that consequently we need to imagine new tests to check whether a content is presupposed or not by a form.
Our study is based on French, but our results could easily be applied to English or other languages. The outline of the paper is the following: in §2, we define the subset of exclamatives which we will focus on. Then we will sum up the current analyses of exclamatives found in the literature (§3). They assume that

exclamatives are factives, and consequetly presupposition triggers. In § 4, we show what the empirical data which support such an hypothesis are. Because the family test doesn't apply to exclamative sentences, we propose other tests to check whether a content is presupposed or not (§5). These new tests are based on discourse. And finally, following Potts' work on multi-level semantics, we compare exclamative sentences with expressive contents and we show the advantages in analyzing the specific content associated with exclamative sentences as an implicature rather than a presupposition.

2. Exclamative sentences and exclamations

2.1 What is exclamation?

What do I call exclamation in this paper? Is it a sentence type (usually marked by an exclamation mark)? Or is it an utterance with a particular semantic content, which is either emphatic or expressive, and conveys a non canonicity judgement? The answer is very important since it is well known that there is no one to one relation between syntactic type and speech acts. A declarative sentence doesn't always convey an assertion, it can convey a question for instance. So, in the framework of this study, I have to distinguish between exclamative types and exclamations. An exclamative type is a linguistic form, associated with syntactic features. As for exclamations, they describe a type of semantic content or a type of speech act. Since I'm interested here in the relation between exclamation and presupposition, I have to focus on the syntactic type, and not on the speech act. Indeed, we must bear in mind that a presupposition is a semantic content which is, by definition, associated with a linguistic form, since it is the form that triggers the presupposition. So, the first point I have to clarify, is about the linguistic forms which I focus on.

2.2 A subset of exclamative sentences

For lack of space, I won't list every construction which is syntactically associated with the exclamative type. It would be all the more difficult to achieve since exclamatives haven't been much studied in formal syntax. To make sure the focus is on exclamative sentences only, and not on exclamations conveyed by a interrogative sentences for instance, I will work on a subset of exclamatives, built with a complementizer which cannot be used in other sentence types (in particular, which cannot be used in interrogative types). The French form *comme* (which can be compared to *how very* in English) can be used in exclamative sentences and is excluded from interrogative ones.

(2)   a.   Comme elle est belle ! (exclamation)
             How very beautiful she is !
        b. * Comme elle est belle? [1](question)

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[1] This utterance is grammatical as an echo question, with a metalinguistic flavour. But we don't consider echo questions here.

On the contrary, the other French form *combien* is ambiguous and can be used both as an interrogative word, or as an exclamative one (with a distinctive prosody).

(3)　　a. Combien je l'aime ! (exclamation)
　　　　b. Combien je l'aime? (question)
　　　　　How much I love her
(3')　　a. Combien ça coûte ! (exclamation)
　　　　a. Combien ça coûte? (question)
　　　　　How much it costs

I also avoid cases which can be analyzed as indirect speech acts, in which an exclamation is conveyed in the absence of an exclamative form. Examples (4) illustrate the case of interrogative sentences which convey an exclamation[2].

(4)　　a. Est-il beau, cet enfant !
　　　　　Is he beautiful, this child
　　　　b. Etions-nous bêtes en 68 !
　　　　　Were we silly in 68

The subject clitic inversion in (4) is a syntactic feature usually considered as characterizing interrogative sentences. Nevertheless, (4) a and b clearly convey exclamations and respectively mean that this child is very beautiful and that we were really very silly in sixty eight.

So, because I want to check whether a specific form, namely the exclamative clause type, triggers a semantic effect (a presupposition), I focus on exclamatives and not on exclamations. And to be more precise, I focus on a subset of this class. If I show that this subclass doesn't trigger any presupposition, thus, I will have shown that *a fortiori* the entire class of exclamative sentences can not be assumed to trigger presuppositions.

3. Current analyses on exclamatives

I will make a quick survey of the literature on the semantics of exclamative sentences. Let's start with Michaelis (2001), who works in the framework of Construction Grammar. She claims that "exclamatives and declaratives express propositions, but exclamatives are intended to be expressive whereas declarative are intended to be informative" (Ibid: 1040). And she adds that "Exclamatives, unlike declaratives, presuppose that the proposition expressed is mutually known by Speaker and Hearer". She proposes to illustrate this claim with example (5), and she assumes that "a speaker could not use (5) when the general ambient temperature is mutually known to be warm".

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[2] The punctuation mark disambiguates the interpretation. With the !, (4) has to be interpreted as an exclamation. But if you substitute ? to !, you have a perfectly well-formed question. And it is difficult to consider that the punctuation is a part of the syntactic type.

(5)   *It is so hot!*

I'm not sure that such a constraint of use of (5) is enough to characterize the content that it is hot as a presuppositional content. But her thesis is very clear: according to her, the main difference between declaratives and exclamatives is that exclamatives presuppose a certain content. Nevertheless a point still remains unclear: what is precisely the content of this presupposition? What is the presupposition associated with (5)? Is it the proposition (6a), in which there is no information on a high degree, or rather the proposition given in (6b)?

(6)   a. *It is hot.*
          b. *It is hot to a high degree.*

This issue crucially arises if one compares an exclamative sentence such as (7a), and its declarative counterpart (7b), in which the high degree marker has disappeared.

(7)   a. *Comme j'ai chaud !*
             How hot I am!
          b. *J'ai chaud.*
             I'm hot.

Furthermore, it seems difficult to assume that the content of an exclamation is mutually known by Speaker and Hearer in the case of exclamation such as (8). Does (8) presuppose that the hearer knows that he is an idiot?

(8)   a. *How very idiot you are!*
          b. *Comme tu es bête !*

Ginzburg and Sag (2001) have also proposed an analysis of exclamative sentences. In fact, they have directly imported Michaelis' ideas into the HPSG framework. According to them, the semantic effect of an exclamative construction is to associate an example like (9a) with a CONTENT value like (9b).

(9)   a. *How tall Kim is!*
          b. *There is an unusual degree such that Kim is tall at that degree.*

And finally, there is a similar analysis of the semantic of exclamatives in Zanuttini and Portner's work (2003), which is developed in a different syntactic background, the generative framework. They assume that "there are two fundamental syntactic components which identify a clause as exclamative: a factive and a wh-operator […]. Exclamatives contain a wh-operator-variable structure" (ibid:80), and they also "contain an abstract morpheme F in the CP domain."(ibid) The first point explains why there are so many similarities accross languages between interrogatives and exclamatives. Exclamatives denote a set of alternative propositions, a result of the operator-variable structure. And the abstract morpheme F is used to account for the fact that

exclamatives are factive, i.e. that their propositional content is presupposed. They recall that this property of factivity was pointed out by Grimshaw (1979).

In all of these studies it clearly appears that exclamatives are analyzed as presupposition triggers. Nevertheless, nothing very clear and convincing is said about the content of this presupposition and more seriously, that thesis is not confirmed by empirical supports. We will try, in the next part, to validate or invalidate this thesis, in applying to exclamatives the family test.

4 Empirical supports

What is the empirical content of the claim that exclamatives trigger a presupposition? It is usually assumed that a presupposition is background belief, relating to an utterance (cf. Stalnaker 1978, 1998), that remains a necessary assumption whether the utterance is placed in the form of an assertion, denial, or question, and even if the utterance is embedded under an attitude verb such as *believe, doubt* etc. Presupposition can be contrasted with assertion, as a pre-condition to the assertion, or as the uncontroversial meaning in a dialogical perspective, or as a kind of content which survives under various embeddings (negation, question, embedding under attitude verbs…) in a semantic perspective. This corresponds to what Chierchia and Mc Connel-Ginet (1990) have called the family test. How to apply the family test to exclamatives?

4.1 Exclamatives and negation

The first observation is that it is generally impossible to introduce a negation inside an exclamative sentence. An utterance like (10b) sounds odd, and (10c) will be preferred.

(10) a. Comme Marie est belle !
       How Mary is beautiful
       How very beautiful Mary is!
     b. # Comme Marie n'est pas belle !
       How Mary is not beautiful
       How very beautiful Mary is not!
     c. Comme Marie est laide !
       How very ugly Mary is!

Nevertheless, it would be false to claim that negation is always excluded from exclamative sentences, because there are utterances like (11). What is highlighted as surprising here is the fact that she doesn't run fast, and at least not as fast as what could be expected. It doesn't imply that she is slow. Furthermore, it would be a paradox to say that she runs and that she is slow at the same time. The collocation of these two words leads to a contradiction.

(11) C'est fou. Regarde comme elle (ne) court pas vite.
       It's crazy. Look how she (NE) runs not quickly
       It's crazy. Look how slow she runs!

4.2 Exclamatives and questions

It is also very difficult to build a question out of an exclamative sentence. We can't embed under an interrogative particule such as *est-ce que* an utterance built with *comme* (cf (12a)). *Est-ce que* is an interrogative marker, closed to the do-support in English. In (12) b and c, the case is different because interrogative sentences can be formed, but the adverbs *si* and *tellement,* which correspond to *so* in English, are not used in the interrogative sentences with their exclamative meaning. They become anaphorical. What is questionned is not the fact that Mary is beautiful to a degree which is unusually high, but rather the fact that she is beautiful to a degree which is presented as high and which could be made precise in context. In fact, (12) b and c could be paraphrased by (12) b' or c', in which the contextual standard of comparison is made explicit. (12c) means *Does Pierre work as much as said,* and not *it is true that Pierre works more than everybody else.* Moreover, one observes that (12)b-c can't be asked out of the blue.

(12)   a. * Est-ce que comme Marie est belle ?
                EST-CE QUE *how very beautiful Mary is*
           b.   Est-ce que Marie est si belle ?
                EST-CE QUE *Mary is so beautiful*
           c.   Est-ce que Pierre travaille tellement ?
                EST-CE QUE *Peter works so much*
(12)   b'. Est-ce que Marie est si belle (qu'on le dit / que ça) ?
           c'. Est-ce que Pierre travaille tant que ça ?

So questionning an exclamative is problematic.

4.3 Exclamatives and embedding

To check whether the propositional content without the degree, which can be associated with an exclamative, is a presupposition, I have to verify that it survives to embeddings. So I need to find constructions which embed exclamatives. Let's have a look at such constructions.
There are adjectives which can embed exclamatives.

(13)   a. C'est troublant comme elle ressemble à Jean.
              It's amazing how she looks like Jean
           b. C'est étonnant comme il est bon pianiste.
              It's amazing how he is good as a piano player
              It's amazing how good he is as a piano player

But these constructions are in themselves presupposition triggers. *It's amazing P* presupposes P. Consequently this test can't be used to prove that exclamative sentences trigger a presupposition, which remains under embedding with an adjective. If we would use the test of embedding, we would have to find a non presuppositional adjective which embed exclamatives sentences. But it seems it doesn't exist.

Let's consider now factive verbs. Contrarily to what is sometimes assumed, some of them, but not all, can embed exclamatives.

(14)   a. Mary (knows / realized / guessed) how very cute he is.
            Marie (sait / a constaté / a deviné) comme il est mignon.
        b. Mary (*regrets / * thinks) how very cute he is.
          Marie (*regrette / * pense) comme il est mignon.

Just as before with adjectives, because these verbs are factive, they can't be used to check whether the exclamative clause type in itself triggers a presupposition. Furthermore, the fact that not all factive verbs can embed an exclamative sentence is rather an argument against the idea that exclamative sentences trigger presupposition.
Another verb embeds exclamatives: *to imagine* in negative i.e. *tu n'imagines pas comme*. But I'm not sure that the test is appropriate, because it's not easy to distinguish between the context of the putative presupposition and the content of *tu n'imagines pas* which is in itself expressive.

(15)   a. Tu n'imagines pas comme Jean est riche.
            You don't imagine how Jean is rich
        b.?? Tu imagines comme Jean est riche.
            You imagine how Jean is rich
        c. Jean est riche.
          Jean is rich.

(15c) stems from the semantics of the matrix verb, the lexicalization *Tu n'imagines pas*. Let's observe that the positive construction (15b) doesn't exist, which is evidence of lexicalisation. My feeling is that (15a) means *Jean is very rich, richer than what you can imagine*, which entails *Jean is rich*. Is the content *Jean is rich* a presupposition triggered by the embedded exclamative, or an implication derived from the assertive content of the matrix clause *Tu n'imagines pas comme...?*

There are another class of verbs which embed exclamatives: the report verbs, such as *say, tell, write…*

(16)   a. Jean vous dira peut-être un jour comme il a souffert.
            Jean will tell you maybe one day how much he suffered.
         b. Jean ne vous dira pas comme il souffre.
             Jean won't tell you how much he is suffering.
(17)   Jean a écrit à Marie comme il souffre.
        Jean wrote to Mary how much he is suffering.

Report verbs are presupposition plugs: the presupposition may be projected from the embedded sentences to the top level, but it is not always the case. It may stay under the report verb. In the sentences above, the putative presupposition triggered by the exclamative was always projected at the top level. All sentences entail that Jean is suffering or suffered. Therefore, in report context, exclamatives don't behave as presupposition triggers.

The last class of verbs compatible with embedded exclamatives is the class of perception verbs. We have to distinguish among these verbs two subclasses: (i) The non agentive verbs, such as *entendre* (*hear*) or *voir* (*see*) which are factive verbs. Thus, they can't be used to test whether or not exclamatives are the presupposition triggers. And (ii) the class of agentive verbs such as *regarder (look), écouter (listen),* which are incompatible with a *that* clause, but compatible with embedded interrogatives and exclamatives.

(18)   a. * Jeanne a regardé que son mari souffrait.
         b.   Jeanne a regardé si son mari souffrait.
         c.   Jeanne a regardé comme son mari souffrait.

These verbs are not factive verbs, and so, they could be useful to test the thesis of the factivity of exclamatives. It is clear that sentences (19) entails the truth of the embedded clause, but this fact can probably be explained without assuming that the exclamative construction in itself is presupposing.

(19)   a. Ecoute comme la musique est belle.
            Listen how beautiful the music is.
         b. Vois / Regarde comme son mari souffre.
            See how (much) her husband suffers
         c. Sens comme ce parfum est frais.
            Smell how fresh this perfume is.

In the above examples, the matrix verb, or the matrix verb with the exclamative complementizer, seems to be a presupposition trigger. Consequently, these contexts can't be used for checking whether the exclamative clause type in itself triggers a presupposition or not.
It seems that flavour of presupposition may arise when these verbs embed an interrogative sentence, with the complementizer *si*. It would be an argument against the idea that the exclamative form in itself triggers a presupposition. Sentences (20) are ambiguous between a simply interrogative interpretation and an exclamative one. But they may be interpreted as meaning that the music is very beautiful, that her husband suffered a lot and that this perfume is very fresh.

(20)   a. Ecoute si la musique est belle.
            Listen whether the music is beautiful
         b. Vois si son mari souffre.
            See whether her husband suffered
         c. Sens si ce parfum est frais.
            Smell how fresh this perfume is

Let's also note that in examples (19) and (20), the verb in the matrix clause is an imperative verb. And it is well-known that imperative forms require contextual conditions which legitimate them. It seems more difficult to embed an exclamative in a declarative sentence with these perception verbs, unless perhaps for (21b).

(21)   a. ?? Nous écoutons comme la musique est belle.
            We listen how beautiful the music is.
         b. Marie voit comme son mari souffre.
            Mary is seeing how (much) her husband suffers.
         c. ?? Marie sent comme ce parfum est frais.
            Marie smells how fresh this perfume is.

Consequently, a question remains open: if a presupposition arises from sentences (19) and (20), is it triggered by the embedded exclamative sentence or by the matrix clause? More arguments are needed to answer that question.

5. Presupposition in dialogue

I'm trying to test the idea that exclamatives are presupposition triggers, and, since the usual tests (negation, questionning, embedding in attitude contexts) can't be used with exclamatives, we have to search for other tests. Let's observe what happens with exclamative sentences in discourse, because, as shown by Ducrot (1972) among others, presupposition contents don't have the same properties in discourse as assertive contents. For instance, they can't be used as a premise in a reasoning.

5.1 Redundancy

It is usually assumed that a presuppositional content can't be re-asserted by an addressee, in a dialogical sequence. If an exclamative sentence triggers the presupposition of its declarative counterpart, then (22) should be inappropriate, exactly like in (23). Yet (22) is perfectly felicitous.

(22)   A: Ce qu'il est fort ce type !
            How strong he is, this guy!
         B: Oui. Il est fort.
            Yes, he is strong.
(23)   A: Le fils de Jean est venu.
            John's son came.
         B: # Oui. Jean a un fils.
            Yes. Jean has a son.

In (22), B can continue the dialogue, in asserting the content of the putative presupposition. This contrasts with (23), which involves the presupposition trigger *the*. B can't answer 'yes' and continue in asserting the content of the presupposition. Something similar happens in monologues.

(24)   a. Comme Marie est belle! Elle est (vraiment) belle.
            How beautiful Mary is! She is (really) beautiful.
         b. # Le fils de Marie est venu. Marie a un fils.
            Mary's son came. Mary has a son.
         c. # Jean regrette qu'il ait plu. Il a plu.
            Jean regrets that it rained. It rained.

(24) b and c can become felicitous, if the speaker adds 'because' between the two sentences. In this case, the presuppositional content is not asserted, but re-presupposed, re-actived.

(25)   b. Le fils de Marie est venu. Parce que Marie a un fils.
            Mary's son came. Because Mary has a son.
        c. Jean regrette qu'il ait plu. Parce qu'il a plu.
            Jean regrets that it rained. Because it rained.

5.2 The *Wait a minute* test

The use of the discourse connective *parce que* is reminiscent to the *wait a minute* test, proposed by von Fintel (2004). Again, examples (26)-(27) show a contrast between the putative presupposition triggered by exclamative sentences and more classical presuppositions. (26)B doesn't sound very natural, and (26)B' would be better.

(26)   A: Comme il est fort ce type!
            How strong he is, this guy!
        B: # Parce qu'il est fort?
            Hey wait a minute. I had no idea he was strong.
        B': Tu le trouves fort, toi?
            Do you find he's strong?
(27)   A: Le fils de Marie est malade.
            Mary's son is ill.
         B: Parce que Marie a un fils?
            Hey wait a minute. I had no idea that Mary has a son.

5.3 Ducrot's "loi d'enchaînement"

It has been observed that a discourse connective can't establish a link between a non assertive content and a new content. In (28a)[3], the connective *en effet* can't be used to establish a link between the presupposition triggered by the definite description (*ses enfants*), and the second sentence. Contrarily, the link is possible in (28b), when the content is asserted and not presupposed.

(28)   a. Marie est sortie avec ses enfants. # En effet, elle a toujours rêvé d'être mère.
            Marie is out with her children. As a matter of fact, she always dreamt being a mother.
        b. Marie a des enfants. En effet, elle a toujours rêvé d'être mère.
            Marie has children. As a matter of fact, she always dreamt being a mother.

Moreover, examples below show that after an exclamative sentence, the speaker can't use a discourse connective to establish a link between the putative presupposition triggered by the exclamative sentence and the second uterrance.

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[3] Examples borrowed with slight modification to Jayez's courses, available at http://pagesperso-orange.fr/jjayez/cours-French.htm.

(29)   a. Pierre est (très) travailleur. Donc, il réussira.
          Pierre is hard-working. Then he will succeed.
        b. # Comme Pierre est travailleur! Donc il réussira.
           How hard-working Pierre is. Then he will succeed.
        c. Comme Pierre est travailleur! Il réussira.
          How hard-working Pierre is. He will succeed.

So, *a priori*, one could believe that exclamatives are similar to other presupposition triggers. But it is important to observe that without any discourse connection as illustrated in (29c), the discourse is well-formed. With presupposed contents, the situation is different: the discourse is bad both with and without the discourse connective. Let's see the example (30), in which the presupposition trigger is the factive verb *regretter*.

(30)   a. Il a plu. Donc il ne sera pas nécessaire d'arroser.
           It rained. Therefore it won't be necessary to water (the lawn).
        b. # Jean regrette qu'il ait plu. Donc il ne sera pas nécessaire d'arroser.
          Jean regrets that it rained. Therefore, it won't be necessary to water (the lawn).
        c. # Jean regrette qu'il ait plu. Il ne sera pas nécessaire d'arroser.
           John regrets that it rained. It won't be necessary to water (the lawn).

Consequently, there is a contrast between exclamatives and presupposition triggers.

5.4 Questioning whether the presupposition is a shared belief

Another contrast is illustrated by (31). In the first part of her discourse, the speaker utters p. And she pursues by questioning the addressee about q. She asks what the Addressee thinks about q. Thus, the Speaker tests a possible disagreement between herself and the Addressee about q. This type of discourse is unfelicitous, if p presupposes q, as shown by (31b). But it is felicitous, when p is an exclamative sentence. So it corroborates the idea that an exclamative sentences aren't presupposition triggers.

(31)   a. Comme Marie est belle! Tu ne la trouves pas belle, toi?
           How beautiful Mary is. Don't you find her beautiful?
        b. # Jean regrette qu'il pleuve. Tu ne (penses / trouves) pas qu'il pleut, toi?
          Jean regrets that it's raining. Don't you thing it is raining.

5.5 Ability to convey an answer

Unlike declaratives and presupposed contents, exclamatives can't be used as answers:

(32)   A: How tall is Tony's child?
        B: # How very tall he is!
(33)   A: Est-ce que tu as déjà fumé?

Have you ever smoked?
B: J'ai arrêté à 20 ans.
   I quit when I was 20.

To sum up, there are very few empirical basis to check or corroborate the idea that the exclamative clause type, in itself, conveys a presupposition. Moreover, there are true differences between exclamatives and classical presupposition triggers in dialogue. Nevertheless, it seems that there is a semantic relation between an exclamative and the content of the corresponding declarative. How analyze the semantic content of exclamatives?

6. Exclamatives and expressive content

My aim isn't to claim that there is no semantic relationship between (34a) and (34b), but just to show that (34b) is not presupposed by (34a). The crucial question is then: what is the nature of the inference from an exclamative its declarative counterpart?

(34)   a. Comme elle est belle !
            How beautiful she is !
        b. Elle est belle.
            She is beautiful.

6.1 Types of content

It is established that an utterance conveys different kinds of content, and that, besides assertion and presupposition, an utterance can be associated with implicatures for instance. Grice (1975) claimed that implicatures contribute a separate dimension of meaning. He distinguishes between conventional and conversational implicatures, and focuses on the study of conversational implicatures[4]. It is well-known that conversational implicatures are pragmatic, while conventional implicatures are not, and stem entirely from idiosyncratic lexical features.
The distinction between presuppositions and conventional implicatures is not easy to do, but Potts has recently investigated the issue and he observes several properties which can be used to sort them out. According to him, both contents are background contents, but there are features which characterize presuppositions and aren't checked by implicatures.
Let's begin with the truth value gap. When S presupposes P, if P is false, S is

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[4] Contra Atlas & Levinson (1981), Geurts has shown that conversational implicatures don't project in the same way as conventional implicatures.

(i)   a. Fred kisses some girls.

           b. Fred doesn't kiss every girls.

(i')   Fred must kiss some girls.

(i")   Marie believes that Fred kisses some girls.

(i"')   Marie doubts that Fred kisses some girls.

(ib) is an implicature from (ia), but not an implicature from (i'), not an implicature from (i'') and not an implicature from (i''').

neither true, nor false. There is a truth value gap: (35) is neither true, nor false. In contrast, when S conventionally implicates P, if P is false, the truth value of S doesn't change. (36) is true, even if Chirac isn't a friend of mine.

(35) The king of France is bald.
(36) Chirac, a friend of mine, is now a simple citizen.

And Potts shows expressives, such as quality nouns, insults (cf a.o. Milner, 1978) typically convey expressive contents, which are analyzed as conventional implicatures.

(37)   a. This foolish John passed the test.
         b. assertion: *John passed the test*
         c. conventional implicature: *John is foolish*

It clearly appears that (37b) isn't a presupposition of (37a), because the speaker, when she utters (37a), only commits herself, and not the addressee to the fact that John is foolish.
My thesis is that exclamative sentences convey an expressive content, associated with an implicature, but not with a presupposition.

6.2 Exclamatives and expressive contents

Conventional implicatures convey a content which is presented as a belief of the speaker, and not as a mutual or a shared belief. The speaker assumes alone the content of this implicature, she doesn't call for the addressee to share the content of what she says, contrarily to what happens with an assertive content. It is really different with presuppositions: presuppositions are presented as shared and uncontroversial contents. To sum up, presuppositions are background mutual belief, whereas conventional implicatures are background speaker oriented belief. The feature of being speaker-oriented emerges when the sentence is embedded in an indirect speech report.

(38)   *John a dit que cet imbécile de Paul a réussi.*
         John said that this foolish Paul succeeded.

The most natural interpretation of (38) is that John said that Paul succeeded and that the speaker added that Paul is a foolish. This content is an expressive one, which only commits the speaker. It is even possible that the speaker knows very well that she, alone, judges Paul as an imbecile.

Potts lists the properties which characterize expressive contents. It appears exclamative sentences clearly have at least two of them: repeatibility and non displaceability. One can observe that the repetition of an exclamative sentence doesn't produce redundancy, but conveys a strenghtening of the emotive content.

(39)   Comme elle est belle, comme elle est belle !
         How beautiful she is, how beautiful she is!

(40) illustrates the property of non displaceability. Even with the past tense in the exclamative, the exclamative sentence says something of the utterance situation: the consciouness of this feeling has to be actual or present. It is why (40a) sounds odd. This is different when a declarative sentence replaces the exclamative sentence. (40b) is a possible discourse, without contradiction.

(40) a. # Comme il faisait chaud! Je n'en ai pas le souvenir, mais c'est écrit dans mon journal.
      How hot it was. I don't remember, but it is written in my diary.
    b. Il faisait très chaud. Je n'en ai pas le souvenir, mais c'est écrit dans mon journal.

Finally, it seems that the addressee can reply to an exclamative sentence with the declarative question *Tu trouves?*, which is particularly adequate after the uttering of an emotive content, which isn't shared by the addressee.

(41)   A: Comme il fait froid !
         'How cold it is !'
     B: Tu trouves? / # Tu crois?
        Do you think it? / Do you believe it?
(42)   A: La maison a deux étages.
       The house has three floors.
     B: # Tu trouves ? / Tu crois.
       Do you think it? / Do you believe it?

Exclamative sentences convey a content which includes the meaning of a high degree. Let's recall that issues about degrees are also relevant in the study of comparison. Whether or not comparative structures are presupposition triggers has been debated in the literature. Thus, the question I have investigated here reminds us of the debates about comparison and presupposition. Are (43) b and c inferences from (43a)? Are they presuppositions triggered by the comparative structure *more… than?* It seems that there are a bunch of arguments in favor of a negative answer (cf Corblin (2005)).

(43)   a.Sue est plus belle que Marie.
       Sue is more beautiful than Mary.
     b. Marie est belle.
      Mary is beautiful.
     c. Sue est belle.
      Sue is beautiful.

7 Conclusion

My conclusion is a negative one: exclamatives aren't presupposition triggers. And I add a suggestion: exclamatives are a kind of expressives, they convey a

content which is presented as committing the speaker and herself only. This content has not to become a joint commitment. The conversation can pursue without any agreement of discourse participants on this content.

It is well-known that presuppositions resist to negation, but what resists to negation is not necessary presupposed. The fact that the addressee can't reply to exclamative sentence "No, you're wrong" doesn't signal that exclamatives trigger a presupposition, but just that they convey a type of content which is speaker-only oriented, and thus which isn't under discussion, under debate. The reason why it isn't under debate is that it is subjective, and presented as such. It is a property of subjective judgements to be unfalsifiable. If I say I feel that P, I can change my mind, but nobody can prove me that I don't feel what I feel.

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