

VAYA IN SPANISH: FROM A JUDGMENT MARKER TO A COMMITMENT MARKER*

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ABSTRACT In this paper we show the diachronic development of Spanish *vaya*, which goes from a form of the motion verb *ir* ‘to go’ to an epistemic verbal discourse marker (VDM) associated with the speaker’s judgment regarding a proposition (e.g. *¡Vaya!* ‘Wow!’ or *¡Vaya que es donoso!* ‘How funny you are!’), and then to a VERUM marker (Leonetti & Escandell-Vidal 2009, Gutzmann, Hartmann & Matthewson 2017) encoding the speaker’s strong commitment to the truth of a proposition (e.g. *¡Vaya si se casa!* ‘You bet he’s getting married!’). We argue that this shift is a clear case of a run-of-the-mill process of grammaticalization involving three stages and each change corresponds to a different position of *vaya* in the articulated Speech Act layer advocated by Manfred Krifka (2021). When *vaya* expresses a subjective epistemic attitude of the speaker, it is postulated in J(udgement)P(hrased), a position associated with epistemicity and evidentiality; when *vaya* expresses a strong commitment of the speaker to the truth of the proposition it precedes (i.e., a VERUM marker), it is postulated in the higher Com(mitment)P(hrased). All in all, this study argues that the grammaticalization path of *vaya* is not only unidirectional (against previous analysis like Octavio de Toledo y Huerta 2001 and Company Company 2008), but rather obligatorily implies a bottom-up reanalysis (Roberts & Roussou 2003).

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1 INTRODUCTION

In this paper we focus on the diachronic development of *vaya*, which goes from the first/third person singular form of the present subjunctive (or second person imperative) of the motion verb *ir* ‘to go’ to an epistemic verbal discourse marker (VDM) associated with the speaker’s judgment regarding a proposition and finally to a VERUM marker encoding the speaker’s strong commitment to the truth of a proposition. In this paper we focus on the three constructions (1)–(3), from the CORDE corpus (we follow the Leipzig Glossing Rules).¹

- (1) *Tengo tal olfato ¡vaya!* Isolated VDM *vaya*
 have.1SG such instinct VDM
 ‘I have such good instincts! Wow!’
- (2) *Tenga usted VDM vaya + subordinate clause [que TP]²*
 have.2SG you
buenos días, Señor Cuervo mi dueño. Vaya que estáis
 good days, Mr. Crow my lord VDM that be.2PL
donoso, mono, lindo en extremo.
 funny, cute, beautiful in extreme
 ‘Have a good day, Mr. Crow, my lord. How funny you are, cute,
 extremely beautiful!’

¹ We leave outside the scope of this paper the use of the VDM *vaya* as a prenominal modifier, as illustrated in (i) and (ii):

- (i) *¡Vaya un huerto!* — VDM *vaya* + un NP
 VDM an orchard
 ‘What an orchard!’
- (ii) *¡Vaya ojos que tienes!* — VDM *vaya* + NP
 VDM eyes that have.2SG!
 ‘What eyes you have!’

As argued in Espinal, Real Puigdollers & Villalba (2024), we consider *vaya* in these cases to be an expressive intensifier, a degree head with an expressive feature that triggers the movement of the NP it adjoins to a left periphery DP position, and from there the whole DP is moved to a higher left periphery Speech Act layer. By contrast, as argued below, *vaya* in (1), (2) and (3) is base-generated in the left periphery.

² This is an excerpt from a version of one of Aesop’s fables, *The Crow And The Fox* (Samaniego, *Fábulas*, 1781–1784, Spain, CORDE). In this excerpt, the fox spots the crow with the cheese in its beak, and attracted by its smell, it begins with flattery.

- (3) Antonio: *¿Qué me dices?* VDM *vaya* + subordinate clause [si TP]³
 what me say.2SG
 ¿D. Hermógenes se casa? Pipi: ¡*Vaya si se casa!*
 Mr. Hermógenes REFL marries VDM if REFL marries
 ‘Antonio: What are you talking about? Is Mr Hermógenes getting
 married? Pipi: You bet he’s getting married!’

In (1) and (2), *vaya* is no longer a verbal form but rather an epistemic VDM that conveys the speaker’s own evaluative perspective with respect to a proposition, accessible from the context, as in (1), or expressed by a subordinate clause as in (2). In (3), *vaya* appears in a VERUM construction (Leonetti & Escandell-Vidal 2009, Gutzmann et al. 2017), in which the speaker emphasizes her commitment to the truth of a proposition. We will argue that the shift from (1)–(2) to (3) involves a reanalysis of *vaya* and a movement up the left periphery of the sentence.

More precisely, we propose that the evolution of *vaya*, as observed in the examples above, is a clear case of a run-of-the-mill process of grammaticalization involving three stages (see Lehmann 2015 [1982], Heine, Claudi & Hünnemeyer 1991, Hopper & Traugott 2003 and Roberts & Roussou 2003 for different perspectives, and Smith 2011 for an overview). In the first stage, *vaya* undergoes a typical process of semantic bleaching that eliminates its motion meaning and its verbal syntax. This paves the way for a second stage where *vaya* develops into an epistemic VDM expressing the speaker’s private evaluation of a proposition (an instance of subjectification, in Traugott’s 1995 sense), and it is relocated to the left periphery of the sentence. In the third stage, *vaya* evolves into a VERUM lexical marker, and, we argue, appears even higher in the left periphery of the sentence.

Moreover, we show that this grammaticalization process fits in with the articulated Speech Act layer advocated by Manfred Krifka in several works (Krifka 2015a,b, 2021), where a J(udgement)P associated with epistemicity and evidentiality is dominated by a Com(mitment)P encoding the speaker’s commitments, and gives support to the hypothesis that grammaticalization is a bottom-up process involving the reanalysis of a lexical vocabulary item — a motion verb — into a functional one — a discourse marker (Roberts & Roussou 2003).

The paper is structured as follows. In section 2, we lay out our theoretical assumptions about syntactic change and the syntactic structure of sentences corresponding to propositions, judgments and commitments. In section 3, we show the grammaticalization of the original verb form into a judgment

³ This is an excerpt from the comedy *La comedia nueva*, written by Leandro Fernández de Moratín in 1792. The same example is discussed in section 5.

marker at the left periphery of a sentence. In section 4, we describe a further grammaticalization step whereby the judgment marker *vaya* becomes a VERUM marker and moves to a higher functional position in the left periphery. This is followed in section 5 by a discussion of the empirical and theoretical consequences of this analysis. Finally, section 6 summarizes and discusses the results obtained from our analysis and concludes the paper.

2 SYNTACTIC CHANGE AND THE LEFT PERIPHERY

The analysis that we propose for the evolution of *vaya* is framed within grammaticalization theory (Heine et al. 1991). We therefore understand grammaticalization as a process whereby a lexical item becomes a grammatical one or a functional item reinforces its grammatical status (Kuryłowicz 1965, Lehmann 2015 [1982]). This framework has been very successful in explaining the emergence of auxiliary verbs from lexical ones, or the development of pronominal clitics from demonstratives (Lehmann 2015 [1982], Roberts & Roussou 1999, 2003, Hopper & Traugott 2003). Yet, as different scholars have shown (Traugott 1995, 2003, 2015, Company Company 2004, Ghezzi & Molinelli 2014, Tanghe 2016a,b), a very productive grammaticalization path can also be discerned in the creation of VDMs from verbs, given that the creation of VDMs is characterized by the processes typically associated with grammaticalization like semantic bleaching and morphophonological weakening (Sweetser 1988, Hopper 1991). This is very clear in the case of the VDM *vaya*, which is grammaticalized from the first/third person singular form of the subjunctive present of the verb *ir* ‘to go’, but lacks any argument of the original verb as well as any potential eventive interpretation. The contrast can be seen clearly by comparing (4) with (5).

- (4) *¿Ahora, que ha que está durmiendo una hora?*
 now that have.3SG that be.3SG sleeping one hour
Vaya usted, y vuelva temprano.
 go.IMP.3SG you and come.back.IMP.3SG soon
 ‘Now, how is it that you have been sleeping for an hour? Go out and come back soon.’
 [Agustín Moreto, *El parecido en la Corte*, 1652, Spain, CORDE]
- (5) *Canta. Luisa: ¡Vaya, vaya, vaya, todos tus sucesos son de*
 sing Luisa VDM VDM VDM all your feats are of
Sancho Panza!
 Sancho Panza
 ‘Luisa, singing: “Well, well, well! All your feats are like those of Sancho Panza.”’
 [Agustín Moreto, *Baile de los oficios*, 1663, Spain, CORDE]

Whereas the form *vaya* in (4) is a clear imperative verbal form with the expected motion meaning of the verb *ir* ‘to go’, the repeated *vaya* form in (4) is totally disconnected from a motion verbal frame, and it functions as a VDM by means of which the speaker judges the content of the following proposition. Hence, VDMs are no longer the predicates of propositions and acquire a functional status as evidential, epistemic markers, at the periphery of a sentential domain.⁴

In parallel to this process, *vaya* loses its person, number and tense features, and becomes an invariant form that combines with sentence connectors (*pero ¡vaya!* ‘but, well!’, *pues ¡vaya!* ‘so, well!’) and interjections (*¡ah! ¡vaya!* ‘Oh! Well!’; *¡uf! ¡vaya!* ‘Phew! Well!’). This clearly suggests that *vaya* has undergone a diachronic change from a verbal lexical head to a functional category at the left periphery of a sentence (see Demonte & Fernández-Soriano 2009, 2014, 2022 for Spanish evidential VDM *dizque* and Sánchez López 2017 for mirative VDM *mira*). In the same vein, *vaya* does not restrict logical and argumentative relations between propositions but rather encodes the attitude of the speaker regarding a salient proposition, which is a clear example of Traugott’s concept of subjectification (Traugott 1989, 1995, 2003, Davidse, Vandelanotte & Cuyckens 2010, Van Olmen, Cuyckens & Ghesquière 2016). In other words, the new meaning conveyed by the VDM *vaya* is linked to the expression of the speaker’s subjective belief, state, or attitude toward what is being said.⁵

We thus suggest that *vaya* instantiates a reanalysis from a lexical verb V to a functional category within the left periphery of the sentence, where it mainly relates propositions accessible from discourse with some layer of the speech act representing the subjective epistemic attitudes and evidential perspectives of the speaker. Following Krifka’s analysis of assertive and interrogative speech acts (Krifka 2015a,b, 2021), we adopt a framework that assumes

4 A main tenet of the grammaticalization framework is *unidirectionality*, namely, the hypothesis that the reversal of the process is not possible (Lehmann 2015 [1982], Traugott & Dasher 2001, Hopper & Traugott 2003, Heine 2003). In the case we are discussing, that amounts to saying that once *vaya* loses its verbal status and becomes a VDM, this new element can only undergo further grammaticalization, but cannot be reanalysed as a new lexical item. The unidirectionality hypothesis has been contested in general terms (Campbell 2000, Janda 2000, Newmeyer 2000, Norde 2000, Trousdale & Norde 2013), but also for the particular case of Spanish VDM by Company Company (2004). Nevertheless, as we will discuss in section 5, our study of *vaya* clearly supports the unidirectionality hypothesis, which we couch in what Roberts & Roussou (2003: 202) term “successive upward reanalysis”. Similar ideas about upwards grammaticalization paths are discussed in van Gelderen (2004, 2009).

5 A further step is *intersubjectification*, which refers to meanings that become centred on the hearer/addressee point of view, as in the case of Spanish VDM *vamos* lit. go.1PL.IND.PRES ‘let’s go’. See Traugott (2003, 2010), Davidse et al. (2010), Nuyts (2012), Brems, Ghesquière & van de Velde (2012).

an articulation of the left periphery at the syntax-pragmatics (see [Espinal et al. 2024](#)) of exclamative sentences. Following Krifka, the left periphery of a sentence contains three functional projections that encode pragmatic values, namely (i) subjective epistemic and evidential attitudes (Judgment Phrase: JP), (ii) the public stance of the speaker with respect to the truth value of the proposition (Commitment Phrase: ComP) and (iii) the relation of the proposition to the common ground, that is, the type of Speech Act (Speech Act Phrase: ActP).

We thus interpret the utterance compositionally in the following terms: the CP (TP or NegP) is the layer that corresponds to the proposition that the different layers above interact with. First, the proposition is modified by JP, which incorporates the attitude or epistemic state of the speaker by means of the operator $J-$. Second, this modified proposition may be further modified by ComP, which incorporates the (degrees of) commitment of the speaker regarding the proposition by means of the operator \vdash . Finally, the illocutionary force of the utterance incorporated in ActP applies to the modified proposition to yield the resulting assertive speech act.

In the remainder of this article, we argue that the grammaticalization of *vaya* involves a path from its original verbal position to two of the layers in the periphery of the sentence: first to JP (judgment VDM), and later to the higher ComP (commitment VDM).

3 STAGE I: SEMANTIC BLEACHING OF *VAYA* BEFORE THE 17TH CENTURY

In this section and the following, we describe the diachronic development of *vaya*, from the first/third person singular form of the subjunctive present of the motion verb *ir* ‘to go’ to an epistemic VDM. The analysis is based on the CORDE corpus, a search of which yielded 21,323 tokens of *vaya*.⁶

The use of the verbal form *vaya* with its motion meaning is well documented in the earlier stages of Spanish (12th century), as exemplified in (6) and (7).

⁶ CORDE is neither lemmatized nor tagged. The 21,323 examples were obtained by searching for the forms *vaya* and *Vaya*. A qualitative analysis of these examples was performed in order to assign each token one of six tags according to its use in context: 1) *vaya* as the motion verb *to go*; 2) *vaya* as an auxiliary in aspectual periphrases like *ir + a + infinitive* ‘to be going to’ or *ir + gerund* ‘be + gerund’; 3) *vaya* with a secondary predication; 4) *vaya* as a presentational verb; 5) *vaya* as a VDM used in isolation; and 6) different structures containing the VDM *vaya* followed by a nominal phrase (*vaya* + indefinite DP, *vaya* + definite DP, and *vaya* + NP).

- (6) *et si fuere con quereylla, vaya al*
 and if be.SBJ.IMPERF.3SG with lawsuit go.IMP.3SG to-the
palacio.
 palace
 ‘And if he brought a lawsuit, go to the palace.’
 [Anónimo, *Fuero de Viguera y Val de Funes*, ca. 1130, Spain, CORDE]
- (7) *allá vaya Álbar Álvarez e Álbar Salvadórez, sin*
 there go.SBJ.3SG Álbar Álvarez and Álbar Salvadórez without
falla,
 fail
 ‘So there go Álbar Álvarez and Álbar Salvadórez without fail.’
 [Anónimo, *Poema de Mio Cid*, ca. 1140, Spain, CORDE]

Thereafter the form begins to lose its motion reading in periphrastic and predicative uses, as in (8) and (9), both from the 13th century.

- (8) *sy de aquel mal guaresçiere, que luego vaya tomar*
 if of that illness heal.SBJ.3SG that then go.SBJ.3SG take
penitencia de sus pecados del mismo quel ha confesado
 penance of their sins of.the same that.he has confessed
 ‘If someone recovers from that illness, he must then confess his sins.’
 [Alfonso X, *Setenario*, ca. 1252–1270, Spain, CORDE]
- (9) *vaya toda vía esforçándose e cresçiendo en ello para*
 go.SBJ.3SG all way striving and growing in that to
ganar conplidamente el amor de Dios
 earn fully the love of God
 ‘[Someone] must still strive and grow in that [goal] to fully earn
 God’s love.’
 [Alfonso X, *Setenario*, ca. 1252–1270, Spain, CORDE]

While *vaya* is still a verb, its original motion meaning has become weaker, more abstract than physical.

These uses coexist with cases where the motion meaning is even more difficult to grasp, and include repetitions and discourse markers, as we see in (10) and (11), in this case from the 16th century.

- (10) *A los eclesiásticos Pues vaya la clerecía, vaya,*
 to the ecclesiastics then go.SBJ.3SG the clergy go.SBJ.3SG
vaya, no se excuse, a aliviarte, reina mía
 go.SBJ.3SG not REFL apologize to relieve.you queen my

'To the clergymen, then go to the clergy. Do not apologize, be at ease, my dear.'

[Fray Ambrosio Montesino, *Cancionero*, 1508, Spain, CORDE]

- (11) *El hijo del bueno* vaya: vaya: y vaya hasta
 the son of.the good go.SBJ.3SG go.SBJ.3SG and go.SBJ.3SG until
que muera o bien aya
 that die.SBJ.3SG or goodness have.SBJ.3SG

'May the son of the good man go: go, go, until he finds death or goodness.'

[Pedro Vallés, *Libro de refranes*, 1549, Spain, CORDE]

Moreover, by the end of the 16th century, a verbal use has appeared that lacks any clear motion interpretation, as exemplified in (12) and (13).

- (12) *A. Ea dexemos esso, vaya el cuento. P. Pocos dias*
 PART leave.1PL that go.SBJ.3SG the story few days
ha, ...
 ago

'Let's leave that. Here is the story. Some days ago ...'

[Juan de Luna, 1619, *Diálogos familiares en lengua española*, Spain, CORDE]

- (13) *Pues vaya un cuentecito: cierto francés ...*
 then go.SBJ.3SG a story.DIM certain French

'Here is a small story. A certain Frenchman ...'

[José Francisco de Isla, *Cartas de Juan de la Encina*, 1732, Spain, CORDE]

Note that these uses are presentational, lacking any motion meaning whatsoever.

Finally, in the 16th century, we begin to find cases like (14) where *vaya* has lost not only its motion meaning, but its verbal nature as well, becoming a VDM.

- (14) *Coladilla: [...] ha de venir su hija a traer dos*
 must of come your daughter to bring two
reales y el bollo mantecada para entrambos.
 reales and the bun larded for both

Monsserrate: ¡Vaya! Sea como fuere; venga el
 VDM be.SBJ.3PL as be.SBJ.3PL come.SBJ.3PL the
bollo mantecada.
 bun larded

‘Coladilla: “[...] your daughter should come to bring two *reales* [a type of coin] and the shortbread bun for both of us.” Montserrat: “Well!/Go ahead! Be that as it may, let’s have the shortbread bun.”’
 [Lope de Rueda, *Pasos*, 1545–1565, Spain, CORDE]

Here, *vaya* is no longer a verbal head; rather, it encodes the speaker’s reaction to the situation, which she accepts, albeit with different degrees of reluctance (Octavio de Toledo y Huerta 2001). Hence, the meaning of *vaya* is that of an epistemic VDM.⁷

To sum up, the verbal form *vaya* shows a progressive loss of its motion semantics, which is completed in the 16th century, when we find clear examples that the former verb has become a VDM with a purely pragmatic meaning, namely the speaker’s evaluation of the proposition modified by the VDM. We detail the rise of this new element in the following section.

4 STAGE II: VAYA AS A JUDGMENT MARKER

We have shown in the previous section that the process of grammaticalization of *vaya* from a verb of motion into a VDM lasts until the 16th century, where a new pragmatic meaning is acquired, namely the expression of the private judgment of the speaker. This change can be clearly seen in the dialogue in (15), from 1599.

⁷ According to Ortiz Cruz (2011), the first documentation of *vaya* as a VDM must be traced back much earlier, namely to a 13th century text attributed to Gonzalo de Berceo, which is reproduced in (i).

- (i) *Paráronlo en bragas, tolliéronli la saya, todos por una*
 stopped.him in trousers, took-off.3PL.to.him the shirt all by one
boca, li dizién: “¡Vaya, vaya!”
 mouth CL.3SG.DAT said go.IMP.3SG go.IMP.3SG

‘They stopped him suddenly and took off their shirts, and told him all in one voice
 “Go, go!”’

[Gonzalo de Berceo, *El duelo de la Virgen*, 1236–1246, Spain, CORDE]

We suggest that *vaya* in this example is not necessarily a VDM but can simply be understood as an imperative form of the verb *ir* ‘to go’, repeated for emphasis. Moreover, a VDM with an epistemic meaning like the one described in (i) would be quite awkward in this context: what kind of attitude is it encoding here? Finally, we consider it extremely unlikely that a clear-cut VDM would be found in the first half of the 13th century, but not a single case in the 14th and 15th centuries, until the incontestable cases documented from the second half of the 16th century. This three hundred year gap is difficult to explain, even given the limitations of written corpora.

- (15) *Conde Astolfo: Clarino, ten esta escala. Pinabelo, ¿Estás*
 Count Astolfo Clarino, take this ladder. Pinabelo, are.2sg
durmiendo? [...] Tened presto, que ha sentido Lucinda gente
 sleeping? have ready that has heard Lucinda people
en la sala. Vaya, téngase. Turbino: (¡Cielos! Hombre
 in the room VDM have.IMP.3SG.SELF Turbino heavens man
en el balcón de mi hermana! ¡Matarele!)
 in the balcony of my sister will.FUT.1SG.him!
 ‘Count Astolfo: “Clarino, take this ladder; Pinabelo, are you
 sleeping? [...] Be ready, for Lucinda has heard people in the room
 [...] Whoa! Wait!” Turbino: “(Heavens! There is a man on my
 sister’s balcony! I will kill him!)”’
 [Lope de Vega Carpio, *El amigo por fuerza*, 1599, Spain, CORDE]

Here, the VDM *vaya* is used to encode the speaker’s surprise and concern about the preceding proposition, namely that there is somebody in Lucinda’s room.

A similar case is found in (16) and (17) (the latter repeated from (5)), both from the 17th century.

- (16) *Rojas: ¿Qué he de hacer? Paciencia, ¡vaya!*
 what have to do patience VDM
 ‘Rojas: “What am I supposed to do? Patience, I think.”’
 [Agustín de Rojas Villadrando, *El viaje entretenido*,
 1603, Spain, CORDE]
- (17) *Canta. Luisa: ¡Vaya, vaya, vaya, todos tus sucesos son de*
 sing Luisa VDM VDM VDM all your feats are of
Sancho Panza!
 Sancho Panza
 ‘Luisa, singing: “Well, well, well! All your feats are like those of
 Sancho Panza.”’
 [Agustín Moreto, *Baile de los oficios*, 1663, Spain, CORDE]

In (16), the speaker uses the VDM *vaya* to express his resignation about the situation, which is judged negatively, whereas in (17) the VDM is used to convey the speaker’s acceptance of the following proposition. Hence, in these examples, even though the VDM *vaya* appears isolated, just like other interjections, its role is to encode the speaker’s reaction to something that has been said or that has taken place, namely a proposition.

- (18) *Que la fe se agravie de delitos sensuales de la carne,*
that the faith REFL offend of crimes sensual.PL of the flesh,
[...] ¡vaya!, *pero de los delitos de la olla [...], no*
VDM but of the crimes of the pot [...], not
lo puedo sufrir [...].
CL.3SG.ACC.M can.1SG stand

'If faith is offended by the sensual sins of the flesh, fine! But not by the sins of the cooking pot, I cannot bear it!'

[Antonio Enríquez Gómez, *La inquisición de Lucifer y visita de todos los diablos*, 1642–1643, Spain, CORDE]

In this example, *vaya* encodes the attitude of the speaker toward a preceding proposition that is contrasted with another one denoting a worse alternative: one alternative is accepted as the lesser of two evils. Hence, this example shows that regardless of its isolated use, the VDM *vaya* must modify a proposition, be it implicit (but salient in the context) or explicit.

A confirmation of this analysis follows from the appearance of the explicit proposition in non-contrastive contexts, as in (19).

- (19) *Plasenc.: ¡Vaya que los extranjeros tienen preciosas*
VDM that the foreigners have.3PL beautiful.F.PL
ideas!
ideas

'Plasenc[ia]: "Well, don't foreigners have lovely ideas!"'

[Ramón de la Cruz, *Las damas finas*, 1762, Spain, CORDE]

Here, the modified proposition follows *vaya*, but the role of the VDM remains the same: it expresses the judgment of the speaker regarding a proposition. Therefore, we have a move from an isolated use of *vaya* where the proposition is implicit, but inferable from the discourse (15)–(17), to a contrastive construction where the proposition is explicit and precedes the VDM (18), and finally to a construction where the proposition follows the VDM (19).

Yet, in all cases, the VDM *vaya* is doing the same job: encoding the private judgment of the speaker regarding a proposition. Consequently, we propose that *vaya* is externally merged in the layer devoted to the speaker's judgments, namely JP. We show this schematically in (20) and (21), where *p* stands for proposition.

- (20) [_{ActP} [_{Act'} [_{Act} !]] [_{ComP} [_{Com'} [_{Com°} †]] [_{JP} *vaya* [_{J'} [_{J°} J-]] [_{CP} C [_{TP} *p*]]]]]]]]]]

- (21) [_{ActP} [_{Act'} [_{Act} !]] [_{ComP} [_{Com'} [_{Com°} †]] [_{JP} *vaya* [_{J'} [_{J°} J-]] [_{CP} que [_{TP} es buena]]]]]]]]]]

Note that we take both cases of VDM *vaya* to be exclamation speech acts (hence the exclamative operator ! in ActP). Unfortunately, this issue is outside the scope of the present article, but we refer the reader to [Espinal et al. \(2024\)](#) for arguments.

To sum up, the evolution of *vaya* so far involves two main changes. On the one hand, it loses its verbal status and becomes a judgment VDM encoding the attitude of the speaker. On the other hand, instead of being generated within the core of the sentence *vaya* is base-generated in the left periphery (JP), where it can modify the proposition. Henceforth, the change in grammatical role from verb to VDM matches its change in location from TP to JP.

5 STAGE III. VAYA AS A COMMITMENT MARKER

In this section we deal with a new construction, *vaya + que + sentence*, that is widely documented in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, although its current use in Castilian Spanish appears to be limited, and a parallel construction, *vaya + si + sentence* and its variant *vaya + que + si + sentence*, which appears to be the preferred one in contemporary Castilian Spanish from the 19th century onwards.⁸ Consider examples (22) to (24).

- (22) (a) *¡Vaya que esta noche estás tremendo!*
 VDM that this night are.2SG amazing
 ‘How amazing you are tonight!’
 [Ramón de la Cruz, *La devoción engañosa*, 1764, Spain, CORDE]
- (b) *¡Vaya que estamos para malograr el tiempo!*
 VDM that are.2PL to damage the time
 ‘As if we could waste our time!’
 [Ramón de la Cruz, *El reverso del sarao*, 1766, Spain, CORDE]
- (23) (a) *Antonio: ¿Qué me dices? ¿D. Hermógenes se casa?*
 what CL.1SG.DAT say.2SG Mr. Hermógenes REFL
Pipí: ¡Vaya si se casa!
 marry.3SG VDM if REFL marry

⁸ As pointed out by a reviewer, this construction reminds us of constructions introduced by functional heads or particles with a reportative function. In the particular case of Spanish main clauses with a reportative evidentiality meaning optionally include a root complementizer, as illustrated in (i). See [Etxepare \(2010\)](#) for a syntactic and semantic analysis of this construction.

- (i) *Oye, que el Barça ha ganado la Champions.*
 listen that the Barça has won the Champions
 ‘Listen, the Barça team has won the Champions League.’
 (adapted from [Etxepare 2010](#): 604, ex. (1b))

'Antonio: "What are you saying? Is Mr. Hermógenes getting married?" Pipí: "You bet he's getting married!"'

[Leandro Fernández de Moratín, *La comedia nueva*, 1792, Spain, CORDE]

- (b) *Usted hará furor. — ¡Vaya si haré! Se morirá el público de risa*
 you do.FUT.3SG excitement VDM if do.FUT.1SG REFL
 die.FUT.3SG the audience of laugh

"'You'll be a sensation!" "Of course, I will! The audience will split their sides laughing!"'

[Mariano José Larra, *Yo quiero ser cómico*, 1833, Spain, CORDE]

- (24) (a) — *¡Y el Sistema peligra, señores! — ¡Vaya que si peligra!*
 and the system is.in.danger gentlemen VDM that
 if is.in.danger

"'And the System is in danger!" "Indeed it is!"'

[Benito Pérez Galdós, *7 de julio*, 1876, Spain, CORDE]

- (b) *Tenía él tomado el carro para sí, vaya que si lo tenía.*
 have.PST.3SG he taken the car for himself, VDM that
 if CL.3SG.ACC have.PST.3SG

'He took the car for himself, he certainly had.'

[Fernando, Royuela, *La pasión según las fieras*, Spain, CORPES, 2003]

What is common in all these examples is that *vaya* is used to emphasize the truth of the proposition it precedes. The speaker uses *vaya*, in any of the three combinations illustrated here, to explicitly mark that (s)he wants to ensure that $\neg p$ is not inferred. With this in mind, the goal of this section is to argue that, by the time *vaya* reaches this meaning diachronically, it corresponds to the expression of a VERUM operator (Höhle 1992, Romero & Han 2002, Escandell-Vidal & Leonetti 2009) and sits in the specifier position of a Commitment Phrase (Krifka 2019, 2021), as represented in (25).

- (25) [_{ActP} [_{Act'} [_{Act} !]] [_{ComP} *vaya* [_{Com'} [_{Com^o} †]] [_{JP} [_{J'} [_{J^o}]-]] [_{CP} C [_{TP} *p*]]]]]]]]]

We align with an approach to the semantics of VERUM according to which a VERUM utterance is infelicitous out of the blue and should address the question under discussion (Gutzmann & Castroviejo Miró 2011). We also align with the most recent proposal in the literature on VERUM according to which VERUM

focus is VERUM and must be dissociated from focus. In this sense *vaya* in (22) to (24) contributes not to the truth-conditions of a proposition, but to the illocutionary force of the corresponding utterance (see also the not-at-issue layer, Potts 2005; the expressive layer, Potts 2007; and the use-conditional layer, Gutzmann 2015), by means of which the speaker publicly commits in a given world i to p ($S \vdash_i p$).

Let us first consider the contrast in (26).

- (26) (a) *Me caso con Corinna el lunes.*
REFL marry.1SG with Corinna the Monday.
'I'm marrying Corinna on Monday.'
- (b) *¡Vaya si me caso con Corinna el lunes!*
VDM if REFL marry.1SG with Corinna the Monday
'You bet I'm marrying Corinna on Monday!'

Example (26a) conveys the proposition that the utterer will marry Corinna next Monday. By contrast, (26b) conveys the idea that, in a context condition that introduces alternative propositions or that introduces some doubts with respect to the speaker's marriage with Corinna, the lexical VERUM operator *vaya* is a strategy available in Spanish to emphasize the speaker's commitment with respect to p . This means that the two sentences in (26) share the same truth-conditions. The only difference between them is that only by means of (26b) does the speaker express his public commitment with respect to the proposition under discussion. This contrast is further supported by the continuations illustrated in (27).

- (27) (a) *Me caso con Corinna el lunes, pero no estoy*
REFL marry with Corinna the Monday but not be.1SG
seguro.
sure
'I'm supposed to marry Corinna on Monday, but I'm not sure.'
- (b) *¡Vaya si me caso con Corinna el lunes! #Pero*
VDM if REFL marry.1SG with Corinna the Monday but
no estoy seguro.
not be.1SG sure.
'You bet I'm marrying Corinna on Monday! #But I'm not sure.'

While (27a) allows an extension in which the speaker expresses doubts about the preceding proposition, this same extension produces deviance in (27b), because *vaya* is a lexical operator of VERUM.

A second argument in support of our hypothesis comes from the fact that *vaya* may alternate with other lexical strategies available in Spanish for the expression of VERUM. Consider the data in (28) from Escandell-Vidal & Leonetti (2009: exs. (10) and (12)).

- (28) *Julia no fue a la reunión.*
 Julia not go.PST.3SG to the meeting
 ‘Julia didn’t attend the meeting.’
- (a) *Sí que fue a la reunión.*
 yes that go.PST.3SG to the meeting
- (b) *Claro que fue a la reunión.*
 clear that go.PST.3SG to the meeting
- (c) *Por supuesto que fue a la reunión.*
 of assumed that go.PST.3SG to the meeting
- (d) *¡Vaya si fue a la reunión!*
 VDM if go.PST.3SG to the meeting
 ‘Of course, she attended the meeting!’

Additionally, the construction *vaya + si + sentence* is used in the corpus to emphasize the truth of the propositional content of the subsequent sentence. This is evident in contemporary Spanish because this construction can be a felicitous answer to a question introduced by *verdad que* (lit. ‘truth that’), in which the person asking the question holds the belief that the proposition over which the question is built is true, as exemplified in (29).

- (29) A: *¿Verdad que te gustó la escuela de verano?*
 truth that CL.2SG.DAT liked the school of summer
 ‘You liked summer school, didn’t you?’
- B: *¡Vaya si me gustó!*
 VDM if CL.1SG.DAT liked
 ‘Indeed I did like it.’

Example (23b) above — repeated as (30) below — further shows that the *vaya + si* construction emphasizes a proposition that may be already part of the common ground, as the first participant in the conversation asserts the same propositional content.

- (30) *Usted hará furor. — ¡Vaya si haré! Se*
 you do.FUT.3SG excitement VDM if do.FUT.1SG REFL
morirá el público de risa
 die.FUT.3SG the audience of laugh

“‘You’ll be a sensation!’ “Of course, I will! The audience will split their sides laughing!’”

[Mariano José Larra, *Yo quiero ser cómico*, 1833, Spain, CORDE]

The idea that a *vaya* + *si* construction allows the speaker to express a strong commitment with the truth is further supported in examples such as (31) below, in which the speaker adds the expression *cien y cien veces* (lit. ‘hundred and hundred times’), to assure the hearer that the proposition ‘I approve of the wedding’ is true.

(31) — *¿Conque aprueba usted la boda? Remigio*
with.that approve.3SG you the wedding, Remigio?
“‘So you approve of the wedding, Remigio?’”

— *¡Vaya si la apruebo! Cien y cien*
VDM if CL.ACC.F approve.1SG hundred and hundred
veces...
times

“‘Of course I do! A hundred times!’”

[Manuel Bretón de los Herreros, *El pelo de la dehesa*,
1840, Spain, CORDE]

Accordingly, *vaya* + *si* constructions are expected to combine with sentences that include additional commitment markers, like the expression *seguro que* ‘sure that’, as the 19th century example in (32) shows.

(32) *Seguro que D. Narices era un perro privilegiado. ¡Vaya si lo*
sure that Mr. Nosey was a dog privileged VDM if it
era!
be.PST.3SG

‘Mr. Nosey was certainly a lucky dog! He surely was!’

[Teodoro Baró, *Cuentos del hogar*, 1883, Spain, CORDE]

A third argument in support of the hypothesis that *vaya* in the structures under study is a lexical VERUM operator by means of which the speaker publicly commits to the truth of *p* comes from the fact that by means of *vaya* the speaker emphasizes the truth of *p*, never the truth of $\neg p$. Consider once again example (23a), which we repeat as (33) for the sake of convenience.

(33) *Antonio: ¿Qué me dices? ¡D. Hermógenes se*
what CL.1SG.DAT say.2SG Mr. Hermógenes REFL
casa? Pipí: ¡Vaya si se casa!
marry.3SG VDM if REFL marry

'Antonio: "What are you saying? Is Mr. Hermógenes getting married?" Pipí: "You bet he's getting married!"'

[Leandro Fernández de Moratín, *La comedia nueva*,
1792, Spain, CORDE]

Note that an alternative reply to Antonio's question could be (34a), but not (34b). The ill-formedness of the latter example shows that *vaya* is a VERUM operator rather than a FALSUM operator (Repp 2013).

- (34) (a) *No, no se casa.*
not not REFL marry.3SG
'No, he isn't getting married.'
- (b) #*¡Vaya si no se casa!*
VDM if not REFL marry
'Of course he isn't getting married!'

However, we also find examples with the sequence *vaya + si + no + sentence* (lit. 'go if not'), which appear to be counterexamples to our analysis. Consider (35a,b).

- (35) (a) *De aquí se van las dos derechito a la cantina,*
of here REFL go.3PL the two right.DIM to the.F bar
porque a la doña Pola vaya si no le gusta
because at the mrs Pola VDM if not CL.3SG.DAT like.3SG
echar-se los tragos. ¡Yo ya me la
take-REFL the swallows I already REFL CL.3SG.ACC.F
tengo bien controlada!
have well controlled
'From here the two of them go straight to the bar, because Doña Pola sure does like to drink! I already have my eye on her!'
[María del Carmen Escobar, *Mujeres al desnudo: obra en tres actos*, 2004, Guatemala, CORPES]
- (b) — *Vaya si no es madrugador – afirmé –. Tres*
VDM if not is get.up.early assure.PST.1SG Three
horas es una ventaja que en los pies de ese hombre
hours is a advantage that in the feet of that man
pueden tener otro significado; no lo
can.3PL have other meaning not CL.3SG.ACC.M
alcanzaremos, él nos esperará.
reach he us wait.FUT.3SG
'"He sure is an early bird," I said. "A three-hour advantage can

mean something else with that man's feet: we won't catch up with him; rather, he'll wait for us."

[Robin Rosell, «...; Y tú, luna, en el valle de Ajalón». *Para que lloren conmigo*, 2003, Guatemala, CORPES]

Note that the translations provide evidence for the claim that *vaya* in these seemingly negative sentences is still a commitment modifier. These examples illustrate an expletive use of *no* (see Escandell-Vidal & Leonetti 2009, footnote 19), since *no* does not reverse the truth conditions of the expressed proposition, that is, it does not convey the truth of $\neg p$. The intuition that we would like to pursue for this type of examples is close to that postulated for surprise negative sentences in Italian (Greco 2017, 2019a,b, Greco, Canal, Bambini & Moro 2020, Tsiakmakis & Espinal 2022).⁹ That is, the negative marker in this type of examples denotes the set of propositions that do not belong to the speaker's epistemic base, that is, the propositions that denote unexpected events (with respect to the speaker's epistemic universe) and potentially trigger surprise in the speaker. Following Krifka's (2021) hypothesis on the contents of judgement (i.e. J-) and Tsiakmakis & Espinal's (2022) hypothesis on expletive Italian *non* denoting the complement set of the set of propositions included in the speaker's universe, we postulate the structure in (36) for (35b).

- (36) [_{ActP} [_{Act°} !] [_{ComP} *vaya* [_{Com°} †] [_{JP} [_{J°} *si_no* J-] [_{CP} [_{C°} *st*] [_{NegP} [_{Neg°} *no*] [_{TP} *es madrugador*]]]]]]

Henceforth, these examples receive a principled explanation from our hypothesis that *vaya* is a lexical VERUM operator (sitting in Spec,ComP) by means of which the speaker commits to the truth of *p*.

To sum up, in this section we have shown that the final evolution of *vaya* involves a change of status from a judgment VDM, encoding the attitude of the speaker towards a proposition, to a commitment VDM whereby the speaker expresses a strong commitment to the truth of the proposition, so it becomes a specialized VERUM operator.

⁹ The specific Italian construction that has been argued to display expletive negation, namely Surprise Negative Sentences, is illustrated in (i).

- (i) *E non mi è scesa dal treno Maria?!*
and not CL.to.me is got off-the train Mary
'Mary got off the train!' (Greco 2019a: 18, ex. (31))

6 A FINAL DIACHRONIC PICTURE

All in all, the evolution of VDM *vaya* in our corpus can be summarized as follows. First, isolated VDM *vaya* appears as an epistemic discourse marker during the 16th–17th centuries and spreads during the 18th century, when it becomes fully grammaticalized. By then, its frequency in CORDE with respect to all instances of *vaya* in each century has risen from 3.19% in the 17th century to 25.12% in the 18th. Later, during the 19th century, *vaya* is a fully functioning expressive marker (it accounts for 23.79% of all instances). See Table 1.

Century	15 th	16 th	17 th	18 th	19 th	20 th
Isolated <i>vaya</i>						
%	0.94	0.22	3.19	25.12	23.79	15.02
Number of tokens	7	10	118	317	1097	935
<i>vaya</i> + <i>que</i>						
%	0	0	0.05	5.63	4.34	0.76
Number of tokens	0	0	2	71	200	47
<i>vaya</i> + <i>que</i> VERUM						
%	0	0	0.05	0.55	0.54	0.29
Number of tokens	0	0	2	7	25	61
<i>vaya</i> + <i>si</i> VERUM						
%	0	0	0	0.16	4.42	2.5
Number of tokens	0	0	0	2	204	155
Total all <i>vaya</i> tokens	742	4462	3697	1262	4612	6224

Table 1 Summary of percentages (proportion relative to all *vaya* tokens per century) and total number of tokens of isolated VDM *vaya*, VDM *vaya* + *que*, VDM *vaya* + *que* expressing VERUM and VDM *vaya* + *si* in CORDE, by century.

Though much less frequent, instances of VDM *vaya* + *que* mirror the distribution of isolated *vaya* chronologically rising from the 0.05% during the 17th century (2/3697) to 5.63% during the 18th century (71/1262) and 4.34% (200/4612) during the 19th, finally falling during the 20th century to 0.76% (47/6224). In our analysis, we have separated instances of *vaya* + *que* expressing subjective judgments with respect to *p* from *vaya* + *que* expressing commitment to the truth of *p*. Our results show that the *vaya* + *que* construction expressing VERUM appears to be relatively marginal in the corpus: it appears

during the 17th century (0.05%, 2/3697) and increases only slightly during the 18th (0.55%, 7/1262), 19th (0.54%, 25/4612), and 20th centuries (0.29%, 61/6224). During the 18th century both *vaya + que* and *vaya + si* could convey VERUM, showing the frequencies of 0.55 and 0.16, respectively.

Finally, *vaya + si* is grammaticalized during the 19th century for the expression of VERUM, with a frequency similar to that of *vaya + que* for the expression of judgment (4.42% and 4.39%, respectively). In the 20th century *vaya + si* remains for the expression of VERUM, while in our corpus *vaya + que* for the expression of judgment almost disappears. This chronological evolution is depicted graphically in Figure 1.

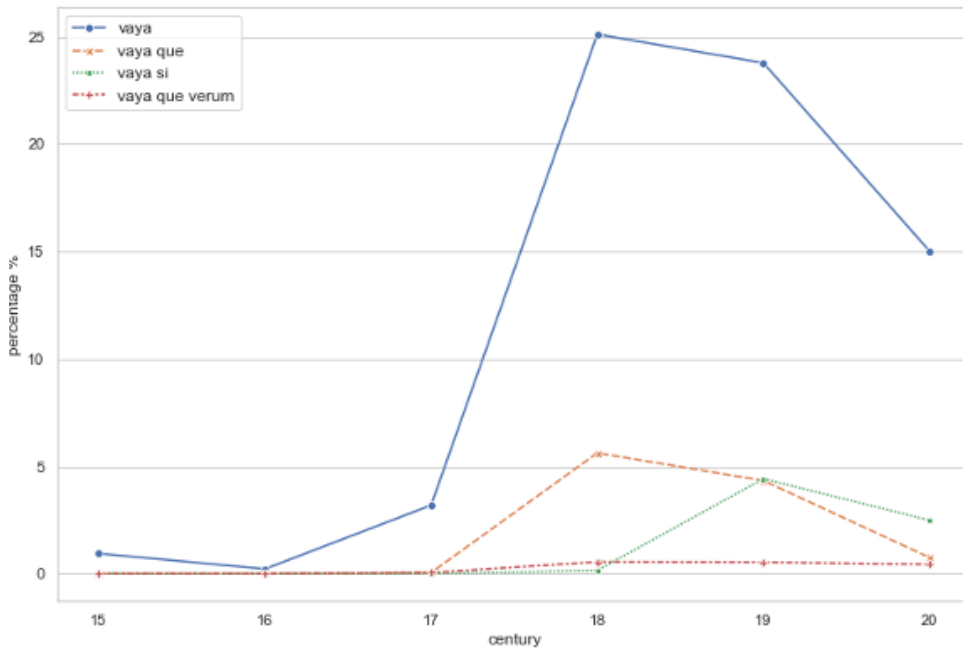


Figure 1 Distribution of *vaya* as VDM by century as a percentage of all tokens of *vaya*

Figure 2 clearly shows that during the 19th century the use of *vaya + si* increases in frequency, overtaking the *vaya + que* construction, and ending up in the 20th century as the most frequent of the three forms.

All in all, the evolution of the VDM *vaya* in the constructions studied displays a coherent pattern of grammaticalization: it changes from a lexical motion verb to a desemanticized verbal form, which is grammaticalized first as a judgment VDM and later as a commitment VDM. We have hypothesized

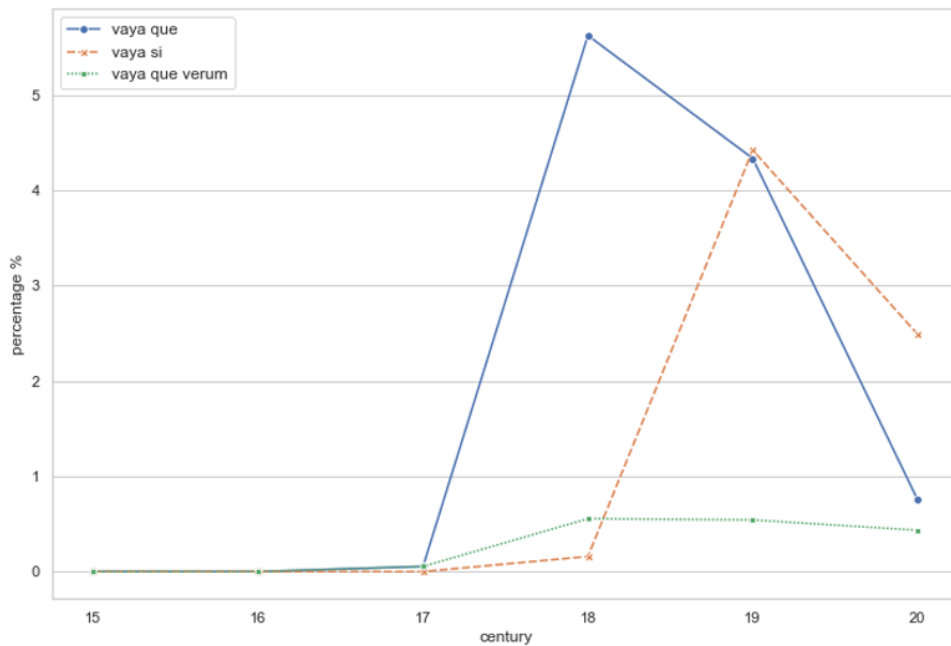


Figure 2 Chronological distribution of *vaya* + *si*, *vaya* + *que* expressing judgment, and *vaya* + *que* expressing verum as VDM in percentage

that this grammaticalization path can be mirrored at the syntactic level where speech act layers are represented: as a VDM conveying a private judgment of the speaker, the original verb is postulated to be placed in the left periphery of sentence, at Spec,JP; as a VDM conveying a VERUM modification, *vaya* is postulated to be moved further up in the left periphery to Spec,ComP.

One important conclusion of this study is that the grammaticalization path postulated here for *vaya* is not only unidirectional (cf. Octavio de Toledo y Huerta 2001, Company Company 2004, 2008), but rather obligatorily implies a bottom-up reanalysis (Roberts & Roussou 2003).

CORPORA

REAL ACADEMIA ESPAÑOLA. Banco de datos (CORDE) [online]. Corpus diacrónico del español. <http://www.rae.es>

REAL ACADEMIA ESPAÑOLA. Banco de datos (CORPES XXI) [online].
Corpus del Español del Siglo XXI (CORPES). <http://www.rae.es>

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