The development of mirative *no wonder*-constructions

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In this paper we are concerned with the development of grammaticalized uses of expressions with *no wonder*, which qualify propositions miratively (Chafe 1986) as being very 'unsurprising'. As is the case with other negation + noun-strings, *no wonder* occurs in Present-Day English in comment clauses (Brinton 2008) and adverbials. The clauses can take complementizers *that*, *why*, *if* as in (1).

(1) Just think of all the vested interests in competitions. *It's no wonder* that/ why /if scandal so often clouds sport.

The adverbials can qualify clauses they have structurally in their scope (2), but they can also qualify propositions that are 'presupposed' by clausal ellipsis (Halliday & Hasan 1976: 216), and on which subordinate clauses depend that explain why the proposition is unsurprising (3).

(2) The relatives were very annoyed, *no wonder*, and it caused friction in the family. (WB)
(3) That Martin Hobbs is a bundle of nerves. And *no wonder* [presupposed 'he is a bundle of nerves'] with the life he's led. (WB)

Much of this variation, which we will systematically describe on the basis of a 500 token sample from Wordbanks*Online*, seems motivated by the cohesive and argumentative relations *no wonder* construes and which often have both backward and forward pointing dimensions.

With regard to their diachronic development, we start from the hypothesis that the clausal and adverbial expressions resulted from largely distinct paths, with the adverbials not necessarily deriving via ellipsis from the clausal constructions. (Such distinct paths were also found for the development of clausal and adverbial qualifiers with *no question* by Davidse & De Wolf forthc.)

A preliminary look at data from the OED and historical corpora reveals that subjectless matrices such as *(no) wonder is* and 'extraposition' constructions with matrices like *it is no/ not any/ small/ a/ great wonder* are attested from the early 11th century on. On the basis of exhaustive extractions from the Helsinki corpus and the Corpus of Late Modern English, we will reconstruct how the positive and negative polarity values of these matrices developed and crystallized, as well as their different complementizers (*that*, *if*, *though*, *why*). The emergence of parenthetical comment clause will also be traced. We expect a history of multiple local changes, extensions but also disappearances (e.g. of complementizer *though*).

Adverbial uses appeared at the beginning of the 15th c. In contrast with the clausal structures, adverbial uses are found with negative polarity value only, which can be expressed by *no/ small/ little* or *what*:

(4) And others (harder still) he paid in kind. Dryden alone (*what wonder*?) came not nigh (CLMETEV, 1710-1780)

Our hypothesis is that the adverbials emerged mainly via analogy with the set of adverbials instantiating the schema negation + noun, which were already entrenched in Early Modern English. These included the French loan *saunz doute*, *no doubt*, *without doubt*, *out of doubt* and *no way*.

If these hypotheses are confirmed, the motivation behind the different development of comment clauses and adverbials might lie in the more intricate and more 'persistent' (Breban 2009) grammatical relations defining a complex sentence as source construction. By contrast, the schematic structure of an adverbial modifying a clause can more readily be adopted by a functionally suitable unit. While the adverbials do not appear to derive directly from the clausal structures by ellipsis, more indirect semantic and pragmatic interactions between the two can be assumed.

References

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