

EXPRESSING SURPRISE AT THE CROSSROADS: MIRATIVITY, EXCLAMATIVITY AND (IN)SUBORDINATION IN ROMANCE LANGUAGES

KEYWORDS

Surprise, mirativity, exclamativity, (in)subordination, Romance languages

MEETING DESCRIPTION

Since DeLancey (1997), mirativity is defined as the linguistic category that apprehends the natural trend in languages to distinguish between information that forms part of the speaker's integrated picture about the world and information that does not belong to that picture. This linguistic category initially emerges inside the field of evidentiality. Aksu-Koç and Slobin (1986) noted that the perfect in Turkish (*-m̄ış*) may convey both indirect evidentiality (inferential and reportative) as well as direct perception denoting surprise. Later, DeLancey (1997) related Aksu-Koç's findings to certain facts in other languages. For instance, in Hare, the final particle *-lō* may convey both indirect evidentiality of a past event as well as direct evidence concerning a present, unexpected event. Similarly, some Tibetan languages codified a mirative distinction in their copular systems, related to the notions of volition and control, and to the person markedness. DeLancey linked these clues to the fact that in Korean the marking of new information is used just immediately after the speaker's accessing to knowledge.

According to Peterson (2013), the linguistic status of mirativity as a category seems justified in at least three senses. In psychological terms, surprise counts as a primary emotion; from a lexico-semantic perspective, surprise is precisely the primary meaning of different linguistic elements –both lexical elements such as the Spanish verb *sorprenderse* ('to get surprised'), and some other linguistic elements such as exclamative intonation; finally, in typological terms, the fact that different languages use different categories to convey mirativity does not invalidate its grammatical status, but emphasizes its crosslinguistic validity.

Following the path opened by DeLancey, Aikhenvald (2012) details the range of mirative meaning, among which she includes sudden discovery; surprise of the speaker; unprepared mind of the speaker; counter-expectation; and information new to the speaker, addressee or main character. As she did with evidentiality (Aikhenvald 2004), the author makes a distinction between grammatical mirativity –which may be codified in the grammar of a language through complex verbal constructions, particles or affixes, and special series of pronouns– and mirative strategies –extensions of non-mirative categories that may trigger mirative values, as happens with verb categories (tense, aspect and mood), evidentiality, person-marking systems, and interrogatives.

If the origins of mirativity are related to evidentiality, its consolidation as a category requires setting the boundaries with exclamativity, especially in Indo-European languages. According to some authors (Olbertz 2009; Hengeveld & Olbertz 2012), exclamativity is a type of utterance –that is, an illocutionary notion that conveys the speaker's assessment of a presupposed propositional content; by contrast, mirativity is a modal distinction not necessarily linked to the speaker, but related to the propositions that are asserted or questioned. However, according to some others (Rett 2011; Rett & Murray 2013), mirativity in European languages such as English is identified with exclamation – that is, an illocutionary operator that codifies exceeded expectations.

From an empirical point of view, many of the structures that count as mirative come from some other constructions which have been truncated, eroded and ultimately fixed, and that have expanded their contexts of use in order to play several interactive functions (Evans 2007; Mithun 2008; Gras 2011). In this way, different insubordinated clauses are placed in an intermediate space between mirativity and exclamativity (Mithun 2016; Cristofaro 2016; Gras & Sansiñena 2017). Similarly, interjections, that are usually considered a mirative, surprise-conveying category *par excellence*, sometimes come from lexical units evolving in certain specific, interactional contexts –as it happens with Spanish *mira* (Fernández Jaén 2012; Hanegreefs & González Melon 2015; Maldonado and De La Mora 2021; García Negroni and Libenson 2022)–, and they synchronically behave in a very peculiar way from a syntactic point of view, which deserves exploration in order to determine their status in grammar (Sánchez López 2017; Rodríguez Ramalle 2007; Figueras 2022). All these facts lead us to ask whether all these phenomena can enter into grammar and, if so, what conception of grammar do we need –for instance, a discourse grammar running parallel to sentence grammar (Kaltenböck, Heine & Kuteva 2011). Furthermore, the question about the interaction between synchrony and diachrony in the configuration of mirativity as a category in Romance seems also relevant.

The aim of this workshop is to determine the place of mirativity in Romance languages. Specifically, it means to answer the question whether mirativity can enter into grammar and, if so, what notion of grammar do we need. This premise leads us to explore the linguistic mechanisms triggering mirative expressions and the role that the symbiosis synchrony / diachrony plays in their development. More specifically, the following research questions are posed:

- What is the linguistic status of surprise in Romance? What place does mirativity occupy in Romance languages?
- Can mirativity be included in grammar in the case of Romance languages? And, if so, which notion of grammar do we need?
- To what extent does interactional contexts influence the development of mirative structures –those conveying surprise– in Romance?
- Is mirativity in Romance languages an example reflecting the solidarity synchrony / diachrony?

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