

## Mirativity in Bulgarian and Turkish: a semantic account

Vesela Simeonova, University of Ottawa

The goal of this paper is to offer a semantics of the phenomenon of MIRATIVITY, the phenomenon of linguistically marking unexpected information (DeLancey, 1997), as shown in (1) (Rett and Murray, 2013: 3b), where mirativity is marked by the exclamation mark.

(1) (Wow,) John arrived on time!

Mirativity has received much interest in the typological literature (e.g., Aikhenvald, 2012 and references therein) in relation to the question of its relation to EVIDENTIALITY, the expression of the source of evidence for the proposition (Aikhenvald, 2004): mirativity is expressed by an evidential marker for **indirect** information, even though the surprising event is often **directly** observed, as shown for Turkish, based on Slobin and Aksu (1982):

(2) Kemal gel-**miş**  
Kemal come-IND.EVID.  
Reading 1: ‘I have indirect evidence that Kemal came.’  
Reading 2: ‘I am surprised that Kemal came.’ (can be said while seeing Kemal)

The question whether mirativity should be considered part of evidentiality or not has been under debate in the typological literature since DeLancey (1997), but it is also relevant for theorists, with recent proposals positing a formal relation between mirativity and evidentiality (Rett and Murray, 2013; Peterson, 2013).

The current paper contributes to this discussion by presenting novel data from Turkish and Bulgarian, showing that the evidential morpheme is only optional in mirative contexts, but obligatory in non-mirative indirect contexts. I argue that the morpheme serves not as the marker of mirativity, but as an optional intensifier of the surprise, much like the optional use of Wh-phrases in mirative sentences (‘What big eyes you have!’ vs. ‘You have big eyes!’).

I propose a semantics for mirativity that is independent from evidential morphology, but based instead on intonational focus, which is shown to be always present in mirative sentences. The focus-sensitive mirative operator proposed here acts as a comparative between the various salient alternatives generated by focus. I propose that being surprised at the true alternative is derived from the idea that some other, more favored (expected to a higher degree) alternative, i.e. higher on a contextually determined scale of expectations, is false:

(3)  $[[\text{MIR}]]_s^c = \lambda f_{\langle s,t \rangle} . \lambda w . [f(w) = 1 \wedge \exists g_{\langle s,t \rangle} \text{ s.t. } E_s^c(g) > E_s^c(f) \wedge g(w) = 0]$

A related proposal is Zanuttini and Portner (2003) on exclamatives, which also involves alternatives, but they are generated by a Wh-operator. The first argument of the current paper regards evidential morphology and Wh-phrases as intensifiers and not as part of the basic semantics of mirativity. This contrast between intensified and non-intensified mirative cannot be achieved in a Wh-based account, but is captured in the focus-based proposal presented here at no cost of extra machinery. The idea that mirativity is related to focus has been suggested by Zeevat (2013) for particles like *only*, *even* in English. More generally, the idea that expectations and focus are related is found in Beaver and Clark (2009).

This proposal could be extendable to other languages where evidential morphology is

optional in mirative sentences, and could help inform the syntax of mirativity (Varley, 2014).

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