

Mirativity and non-finite verb

Category: either oral or poster

Mirativity (admirativity) as a category separate from evidentiality, dealing not with the sources of information, but with the grade of assimilation of this information in the speakers worldview, was defined as marking “the status of the proposition with respect to the speaker’s overall knowledge structure” (Delancey 1997: 33), “experience for which the speaker had no psychological preparation” (p. 35); compare J. Nichols: “...IMMEDIATE meaning: ... a more or less spontaneous reaction to a new, salient, often surprising event just as it happens” (Chafe – Nichols 1986: 248).

G. Lazard argued that mirativity is not a grammatical category of its own, but one of the values of a more abstract category of “mediative” (including hearsay, inference and unexpected observation): “A survey of different types of grammaticalization of evidentiality and related notions shows that mirativity as such is only rarely and dubiously grammaticalized” (Lazard 1999: 91).

Mirativity was discussed as a category of finite verbs/predicates; my data from Buryat (a Northern Mongolic language) attests oppositions in mirativity also within the system of non-finite verbs/predicates, and quite independent from the notion of information source. Buryat non-finite predication in adverbial clauses (consisting of converbial constructions, participial constructions with case affixes, postpositions, and particles) demonstrates the oppositions “neutral vs. evaluated or worldview-marked”, and within the latter “due, normal course of events vs. unexpected turn of events”.

Buryat has a rich converbial system consisting of about 20 forms; one of them (=mgAšAA) denotes specifically an unusual manner in which the action of the finite verb is performed (example 1). But there is at least one more pair of “worldview-marked” forms: temporal converbs in =hAn=/Poss/ (succession; possessive affixes are obligatory) and =tAr (delimitative simultaneity and succession) are opposed as succession markers for “expected” and “unexpected” course of events (examples 2-3).

Buryat temporal constructions altogether, predominantly participial with postpositions, demonstrate mirativity oppositions consequently within all three main semantic types (posteriority, anteriority, simultaneity): all three contain a small group of “worldview-marked” constructions that presuppose either the due course of events (“exactly as it should be”) or an unexpected turn of events (examples 2-6).

Causal constructions contain this opposition, too: of 16 specialized causal constructions six denote evaluated causal relations (quantitative and qualitative, i.e. positive like “thanks to” and negative evaluation); two are “worldview-marked” (expected and unexpected course of events, 7b, c), the rest are neutral (7a). And, of course, “unexpected” causal relations are specifically expressed in concessive constructions.

This data can be seen as an argument for the separate status of mirativity and against its interpretation as special use of evidentiality; it also suggests a closer look on possibilities of grammatical coding of norms, expectations, and deviations from them.

Chafe W. - Nichols, J. (ed.) 1986: *Evidentiality: The Linguistic Coding of Epistemology*. - Advances in Discourse Processes XX. Norwood, New Jersey.

DeLancey S. 1997: Mirativity: New vs Assimilated Knowledge as a Semantic and Grammatical Category. *Linguistic Typology* 1.1: 33-52.

Lazard, G. 1999: Mirativity, evidentiality, mediativity, or other? *Linguistic Typology* 3.1: 91-109.

Examples

Converbs:

- (1) *Ši bai=mgašaa iinyee=gee haa=dag gü=š?*
 you stand=Conv cow=Refl milk=PrtUs Q=2sg
 'Do you milk your cow standing?'
- (2a) *Tere xiin udaan übde=že bai=han=aa naha bara=š=oo*
 this man long be:ill=Conv Aux=Conv=Refl die=Intens=Past:3sg
 'This man died after being ill for a long time' (expected course of events);
- (2b) **Tere xiin udaan übde=že bai=tar=aa naha bara=š=oo*
 this man long be:ill=Conv Aux=Conv=Refl die=Intens=Past:3sg
 ungrammatical: the converb in =tar presupposes an unexpected turn of events;
- (3a) *Xaluun haixan üder=nüüd xodo bai=han=aa olybon*
 warm good day=Pl a while be=Conv=Refl cold
una=han bai=gaa
 fall=Prt be=Past:3sg
 'For a while the weather (lit. days) was warm and beautiful, and then it got cold' (in autumn, a normal course of events);
- (3b) *Xaluun haixan üder=nüüd xodo bai=tar=aa olybon*
 warm good day=Pl a while be=Conv=Refl cold
una=han bai=gaa
 fall=Prt be=Past:3sg
 'For a while the weather was warm and beautiful, and then it got cold' (in spring, an unexpected turn of events).

Participial constructions with postpositions:

- (4a) *Edyel=x=in=gee urda gar=aa uгаа!*
 eat=PrtFut=Gen=Refl before hand=Refl wash:Imp
 'Wash your hands before eating!' (a normal course of events);
- (4b) **Edyel=x=hee urid gar=aa uгаа!*
 eat=PrtFut=Abl before hand=Refl wash:Imp
 ungrammatical: the construction presupposes an unexpected turn of events;
- (5a) *Üüde tonšo=xo=hoo=mni urid taila=žarxi=ba*
 door knock=PrtFut=Abl=1sg before open=Intens=Past:3sg
 'The door opened before I knocked' (unexpected turn of events);
- (5b) **Üüde tonšo=x=i=mni urda taila=žarxi=ba*
 door knock=PrtFut=Gen=1sg before open=Intens=Past:3sg
 ungrammatical: the construction presupposes a normal course of events;
- (6) *Oro=gti, - geže Danzan gaaha=yaa aman=d=aa zuu=han*
 come:in=Imp conj D. cigarette=Refl mouth=Loc=Refl hold=Prt
zand=aa duugar=ba
 Postp=Refl say=Past:3sg
 'Come in, - said Danzan, (still) holding his cigarette in mouth' (against expectations).
- (7a) *Haisa šokolad edi=hen=de=ny dosoo=ny übde=še=be*
 well chocolate eat=PrtPast=Loc=3sg belly=3sg ache=Intens=Past:3sg
 'Because he ate quite a lot of chocolate he got a bellyache' (neutral, internal cause);
- (7b) *Haisa šokolad edi=hen xada=ny dosoo=ny übde=še=be*
 well chocolate eat=PrtPast Ptl=3sg belly=3sg ache=Intens=Past:3sg
 ibid, presupposition that the consequence is natural;
- (7c) *Haisa šokolad edi=hen aad dosoo=ny übde=še=be*
 well chocolate eat=PrtPast Ptl belly=3sg ache=Intens=Past:3sg
 ibid, presupposition that the consequence is unnatural / was unexpected.