The development of mirative markers

Organizers
Eric Mélac (eric.melac@umpv.fr), Université de Montpellier Paul-Valéry
Graeme Trousdale (graeme.trousdale@ed.ac.uk), University of Edinburgh

Mirativity – defined as the grammatical marking of unexpected information (DeLancey 1997) – is a widely discussed yet persistently controversial notion in linguistic theory (Hill 2012; Lazard 1999; AnderBois 2016; Zeisler 2018). One of the main criticisms of the notion is that the semantic space it covers is difficult to delimit, with the term being used for a range of partly distinct meanings and often extended to related notions such as newly acquired information, an unprepared mind, or surprise (see, e.g., Adelaar 2013; Aikhenvald 2012; Hengeveld & Olbertz 2012: 488). The debate has consequently focused on several interrelated questions: how mirativity should be defined; whether it constitutes an independent grammatical category or a subtype of evidentiality; how it varies cross-linguistically; and whether it should be analyzed primarily in semantic or pragmatic terms (Cruschina & Bianchi 2021; Peterson 2017; Rett & Murray 2013).

This workshop seeks to contribute to these debates by shifting the focus from the synchronic characterization of mirativity to the diachronic processes through which such markers emerge and become conventionalized. Mirative meanings may be expressed or implied by a wide range of constructions, including inflectional suffixes (e.g. Ladakhi *-tshug (-sug)*, Mansi *-n/-m/-ima*), interjections (e.g. French *Oh*), prosody (e.g. nuclear accent placement in questions in Estonian), focus fronting (e.g. in Spanish), and a variety of other forms that do not fit readily into traditional syntactic classifications (e.g. Dutch sentence-initial *Maar*, English parentheticals like *Turns out*) (Zeisler 2004, 2018; Mélac, in press; Skribnik & Janda 2012; Asu, Heete & Lippus 2024; Cruschina 2017; Foolen 1993; Serrano-Losada 2017a, 2017b). Tracking the historical development of mirative expressions such as these helps to elucidate some of the central synchronic issues, and to provide new insights into the development of grammatical formatives.

The *World Lexicon of Grammaticalization* identifies three major diachronic sources for mirative markers: adversative connectives (Merlan 1982; Foolen 1993), inferred evidentials (Aikhenvald 2012; Olbertz 2012), and perfect aspect markers (Perry 2000; Olbertz 2012) (Kuteva et al. 2019: 44–46, 156–159, 319–320). As the authors note, however, the processes involved in the emergence of mirative markers cannot generally be "described exhaustively in terms of grammaticalization" (Kuteva et al. 2018: 46), since they may also involve cooptation (Heine 2016), insubordination (Evans & Watanabe 2007), context-induced reanalysis, and pragmatic or semantic extension. The emergence of mirativity therefore provides an especially useful domain for investigating how different mechanisms of language change interact in the development of new grammatical expressions.

We therefore invite contributions presenting diachronic evidence on the emergence and development of mirative markers across diverse languages, as well as theoretically oriented contributions addressing the broader mechanisms involved in the diachrony of mirativity.

Particular questions to be addressed, either through individual case studies or at a more abstract comparative level, include:

- How does a diachronic approach help us to understand how mirativity should be defined? What are its semantic boundaries, and how does it overlap with neighbouring notions such as evidentiality, exclamation, emphasis, or surprise?

- What are the diachronic sources of mirative expressions across the world's languages, and to what extent can recurrent sources and pathways be identified?

- How can we develop reliable diagnostics for identifying semantic extensions into the mirative domain, particularly in historical data where pragmatic and semantic interpretations may be difficult to disentangle?

- When can a mirative interpretation be considered conventionalized rather than merely pragmatically inferred? What types of diachronic evidence can demonstrate the emergence of a conventionalized mirative meaning?

- What mechanisms and factors drive the emergence and conventionalization of mirative expressions? What roles do processes such as grammaticalization, cooptation, insubordination, or reanalysis play?

- In which constructional types does mirativity tend to emerge, and what historical pathways may account for cross-linguistic similarities and differences in these patterns?

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