

Aspect, evidentiality, and mirativity

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Received 24 April 2015; received in revised form 25 November 2016; accepted 30 November 2016
Available online 18 December 2016



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Abstract

In many languages, including Turkish, Bulgarian or Norwegian, present perfect morphology is ambiguous between an aspectual interpretation and the expression of indirect evidentiality, more in particular inference or hearsay (Izvorski, 1997). In languages such as Washo (Hokan) or Hare (Athapaskan), morphemes that express indirect evidentiality can also be used to express mirativity (DeLancey, 2001; Aikhenvald, 2004, 2012). In Turkish, the present perfect can express all three semantic interpretations: present perfect (PPA), indirect evidentiality (IE), and mirativity (MIR). The question therefore arises what common element links these three interpretations and the particular pairings observed (PPA-IE, IE-MIR, PPA-IE-MIR). Previous accounts such as Bybee and Dahl (1989) and Izvorski (1997) only account for a single link in the triad: PPA-IE. We propose that a proper account of the relations between PPA, IE, and MIR requires that mirativity be redefined in terms of 'sudden discovery or realisation' (Adelaar, 1977, 2013; Mexas, 2016). This redefinition allows us to explain the link between PPA, IE, and MIR in terms of the temporal nature of the traditional aspectual classes: states, processes, accomplishments, and achievements (Vendler, 1967; Mourelatos, 1981). Indirect evidentiality can then be viewed as the evidential counterpart of an accomplishment in the aspectual sense, while the category of mirativity should be viewed as the mirror image of achievements. We will propose a formal semantic analysis that can capture this insight and account for the specific pairings observed. © 2016 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Present perfect; Aspect; (Indirect) evidentiality; Mirativity; Sudden realization; Verb classes; Stage; Formal semantics

1. Introduction

In languages such as Turkish, Bulgarian, or Norwegian, present perfect morphology is ambiguous between an aspectual interpretation and the expression of indirect evidentiality, more in particular inference or hearsay (Izvorski, 1997). In Washo (Hokan) and Hare (Athapaskan), morphemes expressing indirect evidentiality can also express mirativity (DeLancey, 2001; Aikhenvald, 2004, 2012). In Turkish, the present perfect can be interpreted with all three semantic interpretations: present perfect (PPA), indirect evidentiality (IE), and mirativity (MIR). These observations raise the question what common element links these three interpretations and the three particular combinations observed (PPA-IE, IE-MIR, PPA-IE-MIR) (Fig. 1).

Previous accounts such as Bybee and Dahl (1989) and Izvorski (1997) only account for a single link in the triad: PPA-IE. In section 2.2 below, we propose that a proper account of the relations between PPA, IE, and MIR requires that mirativity be redefined in terms of 'sudden discovery or realisation' (Adelaar, 1977, 2013; Mexas, 2016). In section 3, his redefinition will allow us to explain the link between the present perfect, indirect evidentiality, and mirativity in terms of the

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temporal nature of the traditional aspectual classes: states, processes, accomplishments, and achievements (Vendler, 1967; Mourelatos, 1981). We will propose that indirect evidentiality can be viewed as the evidential counterpart of an accomplishment in the aspectual sense, while the category of mirativity should be viewed as the mirror image of achievements. We propose a formal semantic analysis that accounts for this insight and account for the three observed combinations. Importantly, this semantic analysis should not be viewed as a scenario of semantic change, but as a theoretical description of the common semantic underpinnings shared by the grammatical categories of aspect, evidentiality, and mirativity.

2. The problem

2.1. From aspect to evidentiality and mirativity

Present perfect morphology is often used as a marker of evidentiality that indicates indirect evidence for the truth of a proposition in the form of *inference* or *hearsay*. This is illustrated in (1), from Izvorski (1997:222(1))¹:

- (1) a. Turkish
Gel-miş-im.
come-PERF-1SG
- b. Bulgarian
Az sam dosal.
I be-1SG.PRES come-P.PART
- c. Norwegian
Jeg har kommet.
I have-SG.PRES come-P.PART
'It is said that I have come.'
'I infer that I have come'

In addition, markers of evidentiality expressing inference and hearsay are often used as miratives, expressing surprise (Jacobsen, 1964; Slobin and Aksu, 1982; DeLancey, 1997, 2001). This can be illustrated with examples from Washo in (2)² and Hare in (3):

- (2) Washo (Hokan?, California, Nevada; Jacobsen, 1964:630)
métu = áʔyiʔi
frozen-EVID/MIR (our glosses added)
'It got frozen'
- (3) Hare (Athapaskan, Northwest Territories, DeLancey, 2001:375–378)
- a. júhye sa k'ínayeda lō (= DeLancey, 2001:(10))
hereabout bear SG.go.around.3SG.SUBJ.PERF EVID
'I see there was a bear walking around here.' (Inference/hearsay)
- b. heee, gúhde daweda! ch'ifi dachída lō (= DeLancey, 2001:(11))
hey, up.there SG.sit.3SG.IMPERF guy sitting EVID
'Hey, he's sitting up there! The guy is sitting up there!' (Mirative)

For Washo, Jacobsen (1964:630) observes that: "The prefinal suffix -áʔyiʔi? Mirative indicates that the speaker knows of the action described by the verb, not from having observed it occur, but only inferentially from observing its effects. It thus commonly conveys an emotion of surprise."

The Turkish morpheme *-miş* cannot only express the meaning of perfect aspect (1), but also the evidential meanings of inference and hearsay (4), as well as mirativity (4)³:

¹ The example in (1) is lifted *verbatim* with glosses and translations from Izvorski (1997).

² The example in (2) is lifted *verbatim* from Jacobsen (1964:630), no glosses are provided in the original.

³ The example in (3) is lifted *verbatim* with glosses and translations from Slobin and Aksu (1982). We refer the reader to this paper for the precise conditions that facilitate each of the three interpretations.

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