

# Non-speaker surprise ascription

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Much research on mirativity claims that surprise arises from the mismatch of the new information relative to speaker's expectation (e.g. DeLancey 1997, 2012, Peterson 2013, Rett & Murray 2013, AnderBois 2018). However, the speaker-orientation claim has not been subject to close scrutiny and is usually based on examples where the mirative marker occurs in the root clause. Recently, Aikhenvald (2012) and Hengeveld & Olbertz (2012) claimed that mirative markers in some languages can mark information surprising to the addressee or even a third party. This study investigates (A) whether non-speaker surprise ascription (NSSA) is available, and (B) when.

This study first reviews the empirical evidence for NSSA in previous studies. It is found that the alleged NSSA could potentially be explained by the speaker's adoption of addressee's perspective, especially in narration. As a result, the examples do not seem to constitute strong support of NSSA.

To answer (A), this study argues that NSSA can be more clearly observed when mirative elements occur in embedded clauses. Though surprise ascription of Cantonese mirative adverbs *gingjin* / *jyunloi* is speaker-oriented in root clauses (1), the adverbs in non-root clauses can ascribe surprise relative to the expectation of the matrix subject "Tim" (2) or the experiencer "Bill" (3), but not necessarily the speaker [John] or addressee.

(1) John: *Deikau gingjin / jyunloi hei jyun.*

Earth MIR / MIR be round

'[To John's surprise] The Earth is round.'

(2) John: *Tim faatgok [deikau gingjin / jyunloi hai jyun ].*

Tim realized Earth MIR / MIR be round

'Tim realized that [to ✓Tim's/✓John's surprise] the Earth is round.

(3) John: *Tim **mou** faatgok [deikau gingjin / jyunloi hai jyun ].*

Tim **not** realized Earth MIR / MIR be round

'Tim did not realize that [to \*Tim's/✓John's surprise] the Earth is round.

To answer (B), I propose that a crucial condition for ascribing surprise to X is that X should commit to the truth of the clause *p* where the mirative adverb occurs. It explains why the mirative adverb in root clauses (1) is ascribed only to the speaker because when uttering (1), the speaker commits to the truth of "the Earth being round". It correctly predicts that "Tim" in (2) but not (3) receives ascription as the higher (factive) predicate (e.g. "realized") guarantees that "Tim" in (2) but not (3) commits to the Earth being round.

- Selected References:**
- Aikhenvald, Y. 2012. The essence of mirativity. *Ling. Typology* 16(3). 435–485.
  - Hengeveld, K., & H. Olbertz. 2012. Didn't you know? Mirativity does exist!. *Ling. Typology* 16(3). 487–503.
  - Rett, J. & S. Murray. 2013. A semantic account of mirative evidentials. *SALT* 23.