

Minor Speech Acts in a Basque Mirative Construction *

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Abstract: This paper presents a Basque construction that expresses a series of minor speech acts. Although diverse (preventatives, optatives, challenges...), all interpretations seem to share *lack of speaker control*. This construction finds striking parallels in European Spanish and Catalan. The identifying morphology of the construction is proposed to be mirative. Mirativity, or the grammatical marking of surprising, unexpected events (DeLancey 1997, 2001), is associated with lack of speaker control (Aikhenvald 2004, 2012). This paper proposes that minor speech acts are syntactic objects in Universal Grammar and that they may be reducible to a mirative construction.

1. Introduction

Force is presumed to be a primitive value (declarative, interrogative, imperative) of a projection in the left periphery of clause structure (Force Phrase, Rizzi 1997; Speech Act Mood Phrase, Cinque 1999). Do minor speech acts (henceforth MSA) have other values of Force? Say, the force of an exclamatory utterance, a challenge, a wish, or a promise. MSA are non-universal sentence types (Sadock & Zwicky 1985). With the exception of exclamatives (see Zanuttini & Portner 2003 and refs. therein), MSA have received little if any attention, to include typological surveys (König & Siemund 2009, Aikhenvald 2014), or Sadock & Zwicky's seminal paper. Whether MSA constitute a series of distinct clause types is yet to be determined.

This paper presents new data on the expression of MSA. A construction in Basque expresses a motley crew of MSA (1). These include, but are not limited to, imprecatives, wishes, challenges, guesses, preventatives, complaints, and diverse imperatives where the speaker lacks control over the situation or the addressee. This construction is found in European Spanish (2) with the full range of MSA of its Basque counterpart.¹ The same is apparently true of Catalan (Anna Pineda, p.c.). What other varieties of Spanish possess this construction and how it is inter-

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¹ The *Unabridged Basque Dictionary* equates *ea* (1) with *a ver si* (2). Bilinguals may react to the parallelism in (1-2) and (6-7) below with insecurity, as an idiosyncrasy of the Spanish spoken in the Basque Country. But the construction is found elsewhere in Spain. Also in contact with Basque and Catalan, French appears not to feature this construction. Neither does Italian. It could thus be an areal phenomenon in the Iberian Peninsula.

puted is a matter left for further research. Corpus data (CREA, Davies' corpus, see reference section) suggest it is attested across Latin America. For Peruvian Spanish, nonetheless, the range of MSA is rather limited (Mónica Cabrera, Gabriel Martínez Vera, Paola Cépeda, p.c.).²³

(1)	Ea	hil-tzen	zar-en!		<i>Basque</i>	
	MIR/WHETHER	die/kill-IMP	AUX-COMP			
	'(Careful) you could kill yourself!'				PREVENTATIVE	
	'(I hope you) die at once!'				or IMPRECATIVE	
(2)	a.	¡Cuidado!	¡A ver	si te	mat-as!	<i>Spanish</i>
		careful	MIR/TO SEE	if 2SG.REFL	die-2SG	
		'Careful! You could kill yourself!'				PREVENTATIVE
	b.	¡A ver	si te	muer-es	de una vez!	
		MIR/TO SEE	if 2SG.REFL	die-2SG	of one time	
		'(I hope you) die at once!'				IMPRECATIVE

This paper argues that (i) MSA, when grouped under the same construction, constitute a syntactic object in unrelated languages. This object is (ii) marked with mirative morphology. MSA may be (iii) reducible to a mirative construction, rather than individual values of force. In that sense, this paper argues that a force projection is not necessary to account for MSA; a mirative projection is called for instead. For exclamatives, Zanuttini & Portner (2003) argue against the need for a force projection on different grounds. This is not tantamount to saying that MSA cannot exist individually. In some cases, individual MSA constructions are (explicit) performative utterances (Sadock & Zwicky 1985). For example, "I bet you can't beat me!" is a challenge. In European Spanish, the *bet* predicate is optional. *Apostar* 'bet' selects the prepositional complementizer *a que* 'to that': (*Te apuesto*) *a que no me ganas*; literally, '(I bet you) to that you can't beat me!' The mirative construction in Basque and Spanish is performative in origin (§2). By contrast to MSA, universal sentence types may require a force projection in light of their illocutionary markers (Sadock & Zwicky 1985, Cinque 1999).

The outline of the paper is as follows. Section 2 introduces the origin of the construction in Basque and European Spanish, which facilitates its semantic description for readers who do not speak these languages. Section 3 presents a partial illustration of the meanings of the construction in relation to its performative origin. Section 4 introduces a comparable mirative construction in Quechua (Floyd 1996). Section 5 discusses semantic parallels with mirativity. Section 6 presents the analysis and directions for further research. Section 7 offers the conclusions.

² Key to the glosses: ABS 'absolutive case', AUX 'auxiliary verb', COMP 'complementizer', FUT 'future', GEN 'genitive', IMP 'imperfect aspect', IMPER 'imperative', IRR 'irrealis aspect', LOC 'locative case', NOM 'nominalizer', MIR 'mirative', PART 'participle', PER 'perfective aspect', PL 'plural', REFL 'reflexive', SG 'singular'.

³ There is no systematic translation for the mirative construction into English. 'Let's see' is a handy gloss for some of the MSA interpretations. But it falls short. 'Let's see' is also the chosen translation by Floyd (1996) and Weber (1989) for the Quechua mirative construction. Spanish speakers opt for *a ver* (§4).

2. Performative Origins of the Mirative Constructions

2.1. The *ea* Construction in Basque

The origin of (1) is recognizable in present day Basque in the purpose clause (3a) *ikus-teko (ea)* ‘in order to see (whether)’. This clause has a paratactic version where *ikusteko* is omitted and *ea* is obligatory (3b). The source of the data is a series of online corpora published by the University of the Basque Country (see reference section). Both examples are taken from the translation of J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter and the prisoner of Azkaban*.

- (3) a. Flitwick irakasleak banan-banan deitu zien gelara,
‘Prof. Flitwick called the students into the room one at a time’
ikus-teko ea gai zir-en anana bat-i dantza egin-araz-teko
see-IN.ORDER.TO whether able AUX-COMP pineapple one-to dance do-make-IN.ORD...
‘in order to see whether they would be able to make a pineapple dance’
- b. Longbottom, eskola hau buka-tze-an edabe honen tanta batzuk
Longbottom lesson this finish-NOM-when potion this.GEN drop some
ema-n-go dizkiogu zure apo-ari, ea zer gerta-tzen zaio-n
give-PER-IRR AUX your toad-to whether what happen-IMP AUX-COMP
‘Longbottom, at the end of this lesson we will feed a few drops of this potion to your toad and see what happens.’

The English original (3b) and (3’c below) may be coordinated clauses juxtaposed in asyndeton. For a Basque or Spanish speaker, though, (3’c) can feel like a paratactic purpose clause.

- (3’) a. We are going to wait in order to see what he does.
b. We are going to wait and see what he does.
c. We are going to wait, see what he does.

The origin of (1) is then a reference to a (imminent) future where something is going to happen, something beyond the control of the speaker. With particular reference to the paratactic version (3b) in the three Harry Potter books, the temporal reference is always an imminent future and the event of the purpose clause functions as an antecedent to a course of action. In (1) and (2), the reference is again to an imminent future, beyond the control of the speaker.

The purpose clause with *ikusteko* (3a) cannot function as a root clause, be that with the same or a different meaning. But paratactic clauses (3b), if repositioned as a root clause (4b), don’t look one bit different from the mirative construction (1). The same goes for (3a) if made paratactic dropping *ikusteko*, then repositioned as a root clause (4a). The difference lies in their meaning. They are no longer purpose clauses, but rather clauses that express a series of MSA (1), (4a) could be interpreted as a challenge MSA, (4b) as an optative where the speaker hopes that his or her wish is fulfilled. Yet the exs in (4) need not gain any particular MSA interpretation.

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those polar (6a) or pronominal (6b, Saltarelli 1988, Zubiri & Zubiri 2000, de Rijk 2008).⁴ IQs are a locus of mirative marking in Basque. Mirative *ote* can co-occur with *ea*.⁵

- (6) a. Jakin nahi dut (ea) joan-go (ote) naiz-en
know want AUX MIR/whether go.PER-IRR MIR aux-COMP
'I want to know whether I will go'
- b. Jakin nahi dut (ea) nor joan-go (ote) d-en
know want AUX MIR/whether who go.PER-IRR MIR aux-COMP
'I want to know who will go'

In spoken European Spanish, *a ver* also occurs in IQs (7).⁶

- (7) Me pregunt-o (a ver) si vale para algo.
1SG.REFL ask.1SG to see/whether? if work.3SG for something
'I wonder [to see] if it works at all/it has any use at all.'

Such parallelisms between Basque (1, 6) and European Spanish (2, 7) can be misinterpreted as linguistic interference from Basque into Spanish (or vice versa). Yet, beyond the Basque Country, Spanish features these uses too. They are attested in European Spanish and Latin American corpus data (see *Habla Culta* or Educated Spoken Register in Davies' corpus). How (2) and (7) are interpreted across dialects of Spanish is a matter left for further research.

3. Semantic Description of the Mirative Construction

No English construction would lump together the diverse MSA readings found in the mirative constructions of Basque (8), Spanish or Catalan (see Alcázar, to appear). Perusing the forthcoming exs. could seem counterintuitive or puzzling. That said, it seems possible to bring these readings together in a generalization: the speaker is not in control of a situation, or the addressee, relative to a (near) future action. This is reminiscent of the performative origin of the construction.

In the interest of brevity, these exs. are made up (corpus exs. would be too lengthy). Other readings were illustrated above and not repeated here: imprecative, preventative (1), challenge (5a); optatives (5b) are arguably diverse (8a, 8b). Contingent on the contexts they appear in, most of the exs. in (8) allow for multiple readings. The precise labeling of these meanings is not without a sense of relativity either: it is an approximation. Labels notwithstanding, this collection of readings finds its expression in the mirative construction.

⁴ In corpus data, nonetheless, *ea* marks polar IQs. This is systematic in the translation of three books of the Harry Potter series, for example.

⁵ In corpus data, *ea* collocates with dread, angst, fear or avoidance (*Anne Frank's Diary*), something often described for *ote* (e.g., de Rijk 2008). Collocation with *ote* enhances these and other interpretations of Basque miratives.

⁶ (7) suggests, paradoxically, that *ea* may have not been a disjunctive conjunction ('whether') in origin, the de facto assumption in Basque grammars. Still, disjunctive conjunctions are the origin of miratives in Basque (§5).

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- (8) a. Ea ondo atera-tzen zaizu-n! OPTATIVE [GOOD WISHES]
 MIR well turn.out[take.out]-IMP AUX-COMP
'(I hope) it goes well for you'
- b. Pena, ea zorte hobea dugu-n! OPTATIVE [WORRY]
 pity MIR luck better AUX-comp
'Pity, let's see if we get better luck!'
- c. Ea asma-tzen duzu-n! GUESS/RIDDLE
 MIR guess-IMP AUX-COMP
'Can you guess it?'
- d. Ea uz-ten didazu-n! PERMISSION REQUEST
 MIR let-IMP AUX-COMP
'Will you let me?'
- e. Ea (i)noiz amai-tu-ko duzu-n! COMPLAINT/IGNORED IMPERATIVE
 MIR when/never finish-PER-IRR AUX-COMP [NO CONTROL OVER ADDRESSEE]
'Finish already!'
- f. Ea begira-tzen duzu-n! COUNTERFACTUAL IMPERATIVE
 MIR look-IMP AUX-COMP [ADDRESSEE CANNOT COMPLY]
'Look (you fool)!' [Somebody runs a stop]
- g. Ea ondo porta-tzen zarete-n! IMPERATIVE/PLEA
 MIR well behave-IMP AUX-COMP [NO CONTROL OVER ADDRESSEE]
'You (kids) be good' [I am not around]
- h. Ea isil-tzen zare-n! STRONG/VIOLENT IMPERATIVE
 MIR shut.up-IMP AUX-COMP [NO CONTROL OVER ADDRESSEE]
'Won't you be quiet?' [Addressee may have been ignoring strong commands]
- i. Ea argal-tzen zar-en! SUGGESTION/ADVICE
 MIR get.slimmer-IMP AUX-COMP or IMPRECATIVE
'Won't you (try to) lose weight?' [NO CONTROL OVER ADDRESSEE]
- j. Ea argal-tzen naiz-en! OPTATIVE [PROMISE SPEAKER
 MIR get.slimmer-IMP AUX-COMP MAY NOT BE ABLE TO KEEP]
'I should (try to) lose weight.'

It is important to reiterate that the construction need not be interpreted as an MSA. Sometimes it is possible to interpret it as the *speaker wanting to know what is going to happen next*. Say, my sister wants me to do something, but I am watching a drama on TV. I answer (9).

- (9) Ea zer gertazen d-en SPEAKER WAITS FOR AN UNCER-
 MIR what happen-IMP AUX-COMP TAIN OUTCOME TO RESOLVE
'Let me see what happens' [watching TV]

4. A Mirative Construction in Quechua

Beyond the strict parallelism of the mirative construction in Basque, European Spanish and Catalan, there is a comparable construction in Quechua (Floyd 1996). The Quechua construction expresses a subset of the MSA illustrated in (8) and earlier examples. Two of these are riddles and challenges (10). Floyd (1996) describes mirative uses of the Quechua reportative evidential *shi* in this particular construction (10a: p. 917, beginning of exs. 11-13; 10b: p. 924, ex. 17).

- | | | | |
|------|----|---|-----------------------------------|
| (10) | a. | Ima-lla- shi ayka-lla- shi ?
what-LIM-REP how.much-LIM-REP
<i>'What is it? What is it?'</i> | FORMULAIC RIDDLE
WANKA QUECHUA |
| | b. | Maa , mayan-ninchik- shi waala-shrun
hmm which-12P-REP dawn-12FUT
<i>'Let's see which of us lasts till morning'</i> | CHALLENGE
WANKA QUECHUA |

Cusihuamán (1976) describes *-ma* in Cuzco Quechua as a mirative enclitic, and includes an example of a formulaic riddle (10).⁷ This one has double mirative marking (*-s < shi*).

- | | | |
|------|---|-----------------------------------|
| (11) | Ima- s-ma -ri, ima- s-ma -ri
what-REP-MIR-RESP what-REP-MIR-RESP
<i>'What is it? What is it?'</i> | FORMULAIC RIDDLE
CUZCO QUECHUA |
|------|---|-----------------------------------|

Scholars translate (10, 11) into Spanish with *a ver* (Rodolfo Cerrón Palomino p.c. in Andrade-Ciudad 2007). The construction has other known uses. Cerrón Palomino mentions situations like somebody knocking on the door unexpectedly and wondering whom this person could be. The second “challenge” example in Floyd (1996) reads like (8b), an optative expressing angst and worry.

The Quechua construction shares parallelisms with (1, 3) and (2, 7). Mirative uses of reportative *-shi* were first discussed in relation to IQs (Weber 1983: 93-4, exs. 315-18, 320; and Weber 1989: 332; ex. 1372; p. 437, ex. 1753). Floyd (1996) assumes some identity relation between the two. The second is that Adelaar (1977: 100), in his illustration of this construction, may have used a (paratactic?) purpose clause with the same identifying morphology.

The Quechua construction has been discussed in relation to mirativity because of two exceptional properties. First, it has redundant mirative marking in that the tense marker is ‘sudden discovery’ (Adelaar 1977 via Aikhenvald 2004)—note also the redundancy in (11). Second, the temporal reference of mirativity is understood to be the (near) future and the experiencer can be the addressee. The addressee may be surprised upon learning the answer to the riddle. Miratives are associated with utterance time; rarely, the past (Dickinson 2000, Aikhenvald 2004, 2012). Like (1) and (2), the temporal reference of the Quechua construction is (imminent) future. The final outcome of the challenge or the riddle is beyond the speaker’s control.

⁷ Original gloss: ‘Adivina, Adivinador. Adivina, Adivinador’; Spanish formulaic riddle, Lit. ‘Guess it, Guesser’.

It is fair to refer to the Quechua construction as a mirative construction because (i) it may be explicitly marked mirative, (ii) it may be marked with a reportative evidential interpreted as mirative, and (iii) it may bear a mirative tense mark. In the case of Spanish, *a ver* does not serve an evidential or tense function. It is not, in origin, a mirative marker. But *a ver* mirrors the distribution of the abovementioned morphology in Quechua. The identifying morphology of the construction in Basque has not been described as mirative previously. Only the *Unabridged Basque Dictionary* and Zubiri & Zubiri (2000) mention matrix clause uses of *ea* (i.e., 1, 5, 8), while the other grammars consulted did not record these, likely daily, uses of the language. Neither source identifies the grammatical function or purpose of these morphemes. The origin is misidentified as an IQ, rather than the paratactic purpose clause that selects an IQ complement clause.

5. Mirativity and Lack of Speaker Control

Mirativity expresses the speaker's surprise, counter-expectation and even resistance to accept a new reality (DeLancey 1997, 2001, Aikhenvald 2004). Traditionally, mirativity was considered an interpretation or epistemic extension of indirect evidence—reportatives and inferentials (Turkish, Slobin & Asku 1982; Balkan languages, Friedmann 1986). One example was the use of reportative *-shi* or *-s* in Quechua (10, 11). While such analyses were correct, there is now evidence of dedicated mirative markers, unrelated to evidentials (see Aikhenvald 2012). These findings reinforce DeLancey's claim that mirativity is a separate, independent category from evidentiality. The representation of such category as a syntactic projection, a Mirative Phrase, enables an initial analysis of (1), (2) and (10, 11) as constructions that contain, or realize a Mirative Phrase.

In the reference work of DeLancey (1997, 2001, 2012), the semantics of mirativity is tied to the phenomenon of grammatical control in egophoric systems. It is difficult to present a succinct overview of grammatical control and egophoricity. The reader is referred to DeLancey's work on Sino-Tibetan languages and references therein (see also Hale 1980, Hargreaves 1990). The main point in relation to mirativity is that the normal use of certain person morphemes that convey notions of agentivity, intentionality, volition, control or awareness is, if reversed, interpreted as a marker of mirativity (i.e., lack of agentivity, awareness, etc.). This semantic element is found beyond egophoric systems: "mirative overtones are often interconnected with the speaker's lack of control and lack of awareness of what is going on" (Aikhenvald 2004: 208). Consider evidentiality and mirativity in Tabo: "Unlike the two miratives, evidentials in Tabo do not display any straightforward correlations with controlled vs. non-controlled or intentional vs. unintentional actions" (Aikhenvald 2012: 453). *Lack of speaker control* is present in (1) and (2), and in their origin as purpose clauses.

In Basque, *ea* and *ote* have a mirative function in other domains as well. For example, *ote* optionally marks particular readings of rhetorical questions (see Alcázar, to appear: ex. 4). In these uses, which can be generalized under the label disagreement, the speaker disagrees with the addressee (12a, 12b), with a third party not present (12a, 12b), or with self (12c). Future temporal reference is possible, but infrequent. Temporal reference is to the preceding discourse or

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the past. The speaker cannot control the perspective or point of view of another person, or the speaker cannot change a reality that was unexpected or regrettable.

- (12) a. Gezur(r)-a esan dut ala?
 lie-ABS.SG say.PART AUX MIR (EXCLUSIVE OR)
 ‘Did I lie? [Of course I didn’t!]’
- b. Zer egin ote dut ba? Ezer ere ez!
 What do.PART MIR AUX MIR (IF) nothing also NEG
 ‘What did I do? Nothing!’
- c. Nola-tan esan ote dut hori?
 how-LOC say.PART MIR AUX that
 ‘How could I say something like that?’

Basque miratives are homophonous with (correlative) disjunctive conjunctions. de Rijk (2008) proposes a Late Latin etymology for *ote* as *aut ne* ‘or not’. According to the *Unabridged Basque Dictionary*, *ea* is used in some dialects in questions. The dictionary equates these with Spanish questions marked with *acaso* ‘perhaps’, a fitting translation for rhetorical questions that express disagreement.

6. Analysis

This paper proposes to view the constructions in (1), (2), (10) and (11) as mirative constructions on account of three arguments. First, mirative semantics expresses lack of speaker control across languages. Second, the Quechua construction has mirative markings in a dedicated mirative morpheme, a mirative tense morpheme, and a reportative evidential interpreted as mirative. The identifying morphology of the Basque construction has mirative uses in other domains. These include certain readings of rhetorical questions, IQs, purpose clauses and, in the case of *ote*, exclamative and declarative clauses. Because Spanish and Catalan do not possess grammatical markings of mirativity (or evidentiality interpreted as mirative), arguably, the identifying morphemes in the constructions in question have not been identifiable as mirative before.

Mirativity is now considered a grammatical category independent of evidentiality. This paper proposes to represent a Mirative Phrase in the left periphery, in the spirit of the cartographic approach of Cinque (1999). If Universal Grammar features a Mirative Phrase in syntax, it is possible to account for unrelated languages to share a construction that expresses the same set of MSA, or a subset of them. While the origin of the construction seems to be the same in Basque, Spanish and, possibly, Quechua, its identifying morphemes have diverse sources, and they need not have a mirative function in origin. Independent, parallel development in each language is possible under a Universal Grammar approach. That said, the languages examined in these paper have been in contact for centuries and they continue to be spoken in geographically adjacent areas with large bilingual populations. Hence, at the time of writing, the mirative construction is

seen as an areal phenomenon. Further research into languages with mirative and evidential systems may help shed light on whether the mirative construction is an areal phenomenon or not.

The series of MSA expressed in the mirative construction in (1) and (2), or a proper subset of them in Peruvian Spanish and Quechua, can be approached as a collective if a Mirative Phrase is entertained. Lack of speaker control and the identifying morphology of the constructions can be accounted for under this analysis. Since the MSA are not coded individually, they seem to arise via pragmatic interpretation that respects the syntactically encoded notion of lack of speaker control. Imperative meanings where the speaker has control, for example, are not possible readings. If this analysis is correct, specification of individual and diverse force values for a force projection are not necessary to explain the MSA readings of the mirative construction. This conclusion is similar to that reached by Zanuttini & Portner (2003) for exclamatives.

Data not discussed in this paper is relevant for the study of the relative position of Mirative Phrase in syntactic structure. Several Italian dialects present *wh*-movement and/or identifying morphology for rhetorical questions (and other special questions) that in Basque are optionally marked with mirative morphology. Several movement/positional tests locate this projection, presumably Mirative Phrase, above a force projection (see Alcázar, forthcoming, and refs. therein), at what appears to be the edge of syntactic structure.⁸

7. Conclusion

This paper has presented data from Basque where a diverse series of MSA are expressed by the same construction. Its interpretations run parallel to what appears to be the same type of construction in European Spanish and Catalan. A paratactic purpose clause, headed by the verb *see* (in order to see whether/if), is the origin of the construction in Basque and European Spanish. Quechua has a comparable construction that is marked with mirative morphology, and perhaps the same origin. The identifying morphology of these constructions, which have diverse origins and functions, are also found, in parallel, in IQs in Basque, European Spanish and Quechua.

This paper has proposed that the construction is mirative by analogy with the morphology found in Basque and Quechua, and lack of speaker control associated with the grammatical category of mirativity across languages. A Mirative Phrase has been argued to be a necessary basis for this parallelism and the semantics of MSA.

⁸ The study of force is related to the study of deixis in syntax. The *context of utterance* (speaker, addressee, time, place, world) has been recently represented in syntax (Bianchi 2003, Sigurðsson 2004, Giorgi 2010). This is due to phenomena such as egophoricity, logophoricity, indexical shift or Basque allocutive agreement (for detailed descriptions of these, see Alcázar & Saltarelli 2014). In semantics, structure-sensitive interpretation of deictics is the empirical basis for monster operators (Schlenker 1999, Anand & Nevins 2004, Anand 2006), that is operators that manipulate context variables (which should not exist). Some have included illocutionary force in the context in the form of a verbal projection (a vP) that types the sentence (all: Tenny & Speas 2003; imperatives only: Alcázar & Saltarelli 2014). Mirativity may relate to a syntactic context. Mirativity has indexical properties in that it may refer to speaker/addressee surprise or counter-expectation. The temporal reference of miratives across languages is utterance time.

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