

Mirativity in Bantu: The Case of Gikūyū (E51) and Kiswahili (G42)*

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This paper argues for the recognition of mirativity in two Bantu languages: Gikūyū and Kiswahili. It shows that the two languages mark mirativity with lexical particles. Gikūyū has *kaĩ*, *githĩ*, *anga*, *ni*, and *otho*, while Kiswahili uses *kwani*, *mbona*, *kumbe*, and *si*. The paper demonstrates that these particles are used when there is evidence that contradicts a speaker's epistemic knowledge. The particles express attitudes such as surprise, disbelief towards knowledge that is unexpected or that which contradicts a speaker's present state of knowledge or expectation. Mirative marking in the two languages depends on the availability of some sort of evidence, which shows the connection between evidentiality and mirativity in the languages. It is also evident the mirative particles in Gikūyū and Kiswahili share features of exclamative and interrogative illocutionary forces. However, the particles do not encode typical exclamatives. The resultant questions are content, polar, or rhetorical questions. Because the mirative particles in these languages represent a speaker's belief or interpretation of the world, they are speaker-oriented miratives.

Key words: mirativity, evidentiality, surprise, exclamative, counter-expectation

1. Introduction

This paper argues for the recognition of mirativity as a grammatical and semantic category in two Bantu languages: Gikūyū (E51) and Kiswahili (G42). The grammatical category of mirativity had not received much attention before DeLancey's (1997) paper, which Aikhenvald (2003) described as seminal as far as the study of mirativity is concerned. Hill (2012), although he rejects DeLancey's mirative notion, acknowledges DeLancey's contribution toward the recognition of miratives as a semantic and grammatical category. DeLancey (1997:41) acknowledges that miratives are not widely known, but if they were recognized, they would be found in many languages. In fact, Dickinson (2000) speculates that mirativity is universal, a claim that is reiterated by Peterson (2017: 314), who says "[that] all languages have the linguistic resources for communicating mirative (surprise) meaning".

1.1. Mirative: a semantic-grammatical category. Miratives express new, unexpected, surprising information to a speaker since the new knowledge or information is not part of the hearer's overall knowledge (DeLancey 1997). Miratives mark sudden realization (Mexas 2016). Lastly, miratives make a proposition "newsworthy, unexpected, or surprising" (Hengeveld & Olbertz 2012: 488). Finally, according to Aikhenvald (2012:437), miratives have the following semantic values or subtypes: sudden discovery, revelation or realization; speaker's/ hearer's surprise, a speaker's /hearer's unprepared mind, a speaker's /hearer's counter-expectation to a speaker/hearer, and information that is new to a speaker/hearer.

Elsewhere, Lau & Rooryck (2017) posit that mirativity pertains to knowledge. This idea is antedated in DeLancey (1997:34), who notes that the presence of a mirative marker in a proposition indicates knowledge that is "new to the speaker, not yet integrated into his overall picture of the world". Hence, a mirative marker is the expression of reaction to such new knowledge, whether it is directly perceived or otherwise made available. The present discussion is guided by the description of mirativity by Aikhenvald (2012). It will guide the analyses of mirative qualities of the particles under study in Gikūyū and Kiswahili.

Mirative meanings may be realized morphologically by a verbal affix, a complex predicate, or a pronoun (Aikhenvald 2012). They may also be indicated by exclamative intonation, grammaticalized (non-)dedicated particles, (Simeonova 2015). Other languages mark mirativity with particles e.g. Lhasa Tibetan (DeLancey 1997; Hill 2012), and Spanish (López (2017); Escalona Torres (2020); English (Zeevat 2012). I posit that Gikūyū and Kiswahili use lexical particles for the expression of mirativity. Gikūyū uses: *githĩ*, *kaĩ*, *anga*, *otho*, and *ni* while Kiswahili uses *kwani*, *mbona*,

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kumbe, and *si*. It will become apparent that these particles are used to show surprise at new, and unexpected knowledge, or to indicate sudden realization, in the respective languages.

Mirativity is common in Tibeto-Burman languages, but not so common in Australia, South America and New Guinea (Aikhenvald 2012). However, there are many cross-linguistic studies of mirativity. Nevertheless, I will discuss just a few of these studies. López (2017) and Escalona Torres (2020) dealt with the semantic-pragmatic features of miratives in Spanish; Kim and Aleksova (2003) compared mirativity in Korean and Bulgarian. Dickinson (2000) described mirativity in Tsafiki. Adelaar (2013) investigated mirativity in Tarma Quechua; Shimada and Nagano (2017) argue for mirativity in Japanese, and Montaut (2006) argues for mirativity as an extension of the aorist in Hindi/Urdu. Mexas (2016) provides evidence of mirativity in languages from New Guinea (Duna and Kyaka Enga), South America (Quechua, Andean Spanish and Tsafiki), and from the Turkic language family (Dukhan, Noghay, and Uzbek).

Although DeLancey's work on miratives influenced many crosslinguistic studies of mirativity, there is not much work on mirativity in African languages. Lazard (1999:106) contends that the mirative as a "grammatical category is not so well established". This may explain why there are fewer studies of mirativity in African languages. Nevertheless, Dimmendaal (1996) reports that Lango (Nilotic, Uganda) has a particle that expresses surprise. However, he noted the neglect in the study of such particles in African languages. Nevertheless, Aikhenvald (2012) reports miratives in Shilluk, a Nilotic language; König (2013) in !Xun, a Khoesan language. Recently, some evidence of mirativity in Bantu was provided by Asiimwe & van der Wal's (2021) work on Rukiga, a Ugandan Bantu language. In addition, there are studies that have reported the presence of evidentiality, a category related to mirativity in Bantu (cf. Crane et al. (in press) and Crane (forthcoming). Botne (2020) presents an overview of evidentiality in different African languages, Bantu included. Such as these will help change the erroneous view that evidentiality is rare in African languages, including Bantu.

The scarcity of studies on mirativity in these languages may be blamed on the failure to recognize the category in the languages, hence the under-research of the category.

As a contribution to the exploration of mirativity in Bantu, this paper argues that the mirative category exists in Gĩkũyũ (Kikuyu) and Kiswahili. Gĩkũyũ is a Bantu language spoken in central Kenya and Kiswahili is a lingua franca in east and central Africa. The variety used is that spoken in Nairobi, Kenya. Hitherto this paper, the mirative category has not been claimed to exist in the two languages.

This paper proceeds as follows: Section 2 shows the connection between mirativity and evidentiality, while section 3 relates mirativity to illocutionary force. Section 4 describes Gĩkũyũ mirative particles and how they express mirativity, section 5 describes the expression of mirativity in Kiswahili, and section 6 summarizes and concludes the paper.

2. Miratives and Evidentials

Evidentials are grammatical categories that indicate the speaker's source of information (cf. de Haan 2012; Chafe & Nichols 1986; Aikhenvald 2004). As previously noted, miratives indicate a speaker's reaction to new knowledge. Quite often miratives are conflated together with evidentials, hearsay or inferential markers (cf. Watters 2004; Rett & Murray 2013; Rett 2021; Lazard 1999). Macaulay (2003) explored the meaning relationships involving inference, dubitativity, evidentiality, and mirativity in Menominee and Sheshatshiu, two Algonquian languages from North America. Such conflation of relationships is also evident in the mirative particles under discussion.

Evidentiality may be direct (visual, auditory, other sensory) or indirect (non-sensory e.g. reported (hearsay), inferred (reasoning) (cf. Willett 1988:57). Some languages mark these types morphologically. Watters (2004) contends that the before DeLancey's (1997) paper, miratives were "confused with evidential categories of hearsay or inference" (p.288). Watters adds that indirect (second hand) contextual information may overlap with inferential statements, blurring the distinction between miratives and inferential markers. However, Watters adds that this is not the case when the evidence is direct and first-hand since the source of knowledge is clear and inference have minimal role in necessitating the use of a mirative. Aikhenvald (2004: 195) points out a connection between mirativity and indirect evidentiality. She contends that inferred and reported evidentials may "acquire a mirative meaning", unlike "[a] firsthand or a visual evidential hardly ever does". Rett & Murray (2013) propose a mirative-evidential, which they say indicates indirect evidence in some contexts and mirativity in others. DeLancey (1997, 2001) cites instances whereby evidentials have mirative meanings, although he advocates for the separation of the two in DeLancey (2012). Shimada & Nagano (2017) posit that crosslinguistic evidence has shown that miratives differ from evidentials.

The controversy may explain why most studies on either miratives or evidentials will have something to say on both categories. Grunow-Hårsta (2007) explores the connection between evidentiality, mirativity and epistemic modalities in Magar, a Tibeto-Burman language. There are arguments against mirative being evidentials (cf. Hengeveld & Olbertz 2012; Simeonova 2015). Simeonova says that "even [...] works arguing that mirativity is a category separate from evidentiality, such as Aikhenvald (2012); DeLancey (2012), claim that mirativity is marked by evidentials" (p.6). She faults

the authors for not showing infelicitous examples of miratives caused by the absence of evidentials. Using Turkish and Bulgarian data she shows that mirativity is not necessarily indicated by evidentials. Further, Simeonova contends analyses that posit that mirative meaning derives from evidential morphemes “cannot be extended to languages without evidential morphemes or languages where such morphemes are only optional in mirative sentences (such as Bulgarian and Turkish)” (p.7). Kiswahili and *Gĩkũyũ* fall under such languages without clear evidential markers.

The position in this paper is that miratives differ from evidentials. Miratives are the ones that express surprise, which is their basic meaning (cf. Peterson 2013). On the other hand, evidentials indicate the source of given information (cf. Aikhenvald 2004). According to Aikhenvald (2012: 436), miratives and evidentials belong to different grammatical systems and they are also semantically different. Syntactically, when mirative markers co-occur with evidentials, they occupy different positions in verb structure. Due to space constraints, this distinction is not pursued in this paper, but it remains a future undertaking.

According to Aikhenvald (2004), a mirative is used after ‘some evidence’ becomes available, hence a reaction to this attained or new evidence, regardless of whether it is direct or indirect. A speaker’s evidence may be direct, that is, first-hand or sensory evidence e.g. visual, auditory, or indirect evidence, for example, hearsay or inferential evidence. For the former, a speaker is the source of the information, and that compels them to make the utterance. In the latter, the speaker bases their utterance on some kind of evidence from another source, e.g. hearsay (quotative), inferentially-deduced evidence, which involves a reasoned logical expectation in combination with other cues. For example, a padlock on a door may be evidence that there is no one in the house, a conclusion that is arrived at, based on visual evidence and some inferential reasoning¹.

The mirative particles discussed in this article are largely motivated by direct sources of evidence. Although they may have evidential nuances since they are employed as a reaction to some evidence that is accessible to a speaker, and therefore conflatable into mirative evidentials, the present work considers them as mirative particles that stem from available evidence. However, an investigation on the mirative-evidential connection in the two languages is required.

3. Miratives and Illocutionary force

Miratives are thought to have propositional qualities (cf. Hengeveld & Olbertz 2012; Celle et al. (2019). For example, AnderBois (2016) describes what he calls ‘illocutionary mirativity’ in Yucatec Maya. He shows that the language has a mirative suffix (*-ive*) that not only indicates mirativity, but it also attaches to declarative, imperative, exclamative, optative sentence types. This may be taken as evidence that the mirative suffix contains illocutionary qualities.

There is a broader connection between miratives and exclamatives (see Aikhenvald (2012) and Olbertz (2012)). Exclamatives share the feature of marking surprise with miratives, since they “convey the speaker’s surprise that some present situation is remarkable...” (König & Siemund 2007:316). Indeed, Escalona Torres (2020) reports that other than by miratives particles, Spanish expresses mirativity by way of intonation, exclamatory sentences, and focus fronting. Rett (2012) reports that in Cheyenne, a Native American language, a mirative in a wh-questions is ambiguous between an exclamative and a question. Aikhenvald (2012) suggests that miratives should be distinguished from exclamatives, a suggestion overlooked by Unger (2019), who conflates exclamativity and mirativity. Olbertz (2009), arguing from a Functional Discourse Grammar perspective, distinguishes the two entities, contra Hengeveld & Mackenzie (2008). She argues that a mirative is a semantic category and what Hengeveld & Mackenzie (2008) call ‘mirative illocution’ is in fact exclamative illocution in Ecuadorian Highland Spanish. Nonetheless, Olbertz’s conclusion does not refute the illocution property of miratives.

The mirative particles discussed in this paper show a connection between exclamative and interrogative illocutionary forces, that is, the particles have exclamative and interrogative nuances². This is not unique to *Gĩkũyũ* and Kiswahili. Mirative constructions can involve an exclamative intonation e.g., in English (cf. Rett & Murray 2013; Simeonova 2015). Asiimwe & van der Wal (2021) report that Rukiga, a Ugandan Bantu language, has a mirative-exclamative particle. It is not the case that mirativity and exclamation are intertwined. In Tarma Quechua, Adelaar (2013:99) describes a mirative as “a fact or occurrence that is objectively surprising [but lacks] exclamation of surprise”. It is undeniable that mirativity and exclamatives may share some qualities in some languages.

¹ Although evidentials are reported in Shilluk, a Nilotic language and in Lega, a Bantu language by Aikhenvald (2004:292), they are under researched in African languages. However, Botne (2020) provides an overview of evidentiality in African languages. Kihara (2018) argued that particle *atĩ* is a hearsay (evidential), complementiser, discourse filler marker, dubitative marker in *Gĩkũyũ*. Investigation of evidentiality in Bantu (and other African) language remains relevant.

² Unlike Michaelis (2001) who does not distinguish between exclamation and exclamative, Rett (2011) distinguishes between sentence exclamation and sentence exclamative. The former is formed from declaratives and the latter is formed from any other illocutionary type other than declaratives. If the distinction is applied to the present work, the mirative constructions fall under exclamatives.

Although a thorough description of exclaimatives in the languages under study is beyond the scope of this paper, in the discussion of the different mirative particles, I mention aspects relevant to exclaimatives whenever they arise in examples. A focused examination of exclaimatives based on the criteria such as those suggested by Michaelis & Lambrecht (1996; Michaelis 2001) remains a future undertaking. It will become apparent from the examples that the mirative constructions discussed have features inherent in exclaimatives e.g. surprise, upon discovery of some new unexpected knowledge.

As for the interrogative illocution, it will be shown that the mirative particles discussed in Gikūyū and Kiswahili characteristically result into intonational interrogative expressions. The Gikūyū mirative particles (except *otho*) result to polar-like question, while the Kiswahili ones are both polar and content questions.

The interrogative property of such mirative constructions resonate with a remark by Celle et al. (2019:117) that, “verbal reactions to surprising situations or surprising information often include interrogative structures rather than exclaimatives ... In such contexts, interrogatives combine requests for information and the expression of surprise (possibly associated with other emotions)”. They further note, “surprise conveyed by questions mainly arises in reaction to a surprising discourse entity” (Celle et al. 2019: 133). The mirative examples presented that are interrogative conform to Celle et al.’s interpretation. What we see in Gikūyū (and later in Kiswahili) is not unique to these two languages. In English and French, surprise can be detected through disfluencies and the use of expressive patterns such as exclamative sentences, verbless sentences, and interrogative sentences (Celle 2018). Furthermore, polar questions are characterised by sentence-initial particles (cf. Sadock & Zwicky 1985:181), and as will become evident, some mirative particles in Gikūyū and Kiswahili that are associated with yes-no questions are sentence-initial.

The interrogative qualities of the miratives discussed e.g., *mbona*-mirative requires a reason answer, *kwani*-mirative, yes-no answer, and both *kumbe*, and *si-* have a yes-no answer. The proposed mirative particles are of course not the prototypical means of forming content questions in the two languages. Kiswahili forms questions in three ways: by intonation where a stressed mid or slightly raised penultimate syllable is followed a stressed final syllable with a high falling tone, by use of interrogative roots *-ni* and *-pi*, and the use of enclitics *=je*, *=ni* and *=pi* suffixed to a verb with application of intonation (cf. Ashton 1944).

A word on mirative particles and interjection in Gikūyū and Kiswahili is in order. While it is widely known that interjections indicate surprise, they are not themselves mirative particles. Michaelis (2001) opines that exclaimatives encode surprise, and surprise entails judgement by the speaker of a non-canonical [expected] situation. In their expression of surprise, exclamative may use [optionally] interjections. Interjections, like exclaimatives, are indicators of surprise since they also involve speaker judgement of an unexpected situation. I illustrate this with a Kiswahili example.³

- (1) a. (Ala!) Mbona u-na-ni-kanyang-a?
 (INT) MIR 2SM-PRS-1OM-step.on.me-FV
 ‘Why are you stepping on me?’
- b. Speaker A: Si-endi kazi-ini leo.
 ISM.NEG₁-go-NEG₂ work-LOC today
 ‘I am not going to work today.’
- Speaker B: *Mbona?*
 MIR
 ‘Why?’

In (1a), *Ala*, is an optional interjection that shows annoyance or impatience. The mirative particle *mbona* is obligatory. The presence/absence of the interjection does not change the meaning of the sentence. To use *Ala!* alone does not communicate much beyond show of surprise, since it is not a proposition. For example, adding a question marker to **Ala?* does not make it interrogative. However, the same question marker added to *mbona* makes it a question requires an answer.

³ Most of the data was collected between 2019 and 2022, and are mostly usage-based. I wish to thank David Maina Kamau and Shadrack Kirimi, who I consulted most of the time concerning Kiswahili data. Both teachers of Kiswahili. I thank Catherine Gichuhi for answering my questions on the interpretation of Gikūyū data. The Gikūyū data is from the Kiambu (Kikabete) dialect. Quite a number of examples were collected as a part of naturally occurring (spontaneous) conversations in which the author either participated or overheard. Other data were elicited from speakers of both Gikūyū and Kiswahili. There is data from published sources and corpora from the internet, and social media. The author is a native Gikūyū speaker and has good knowledge of Kiswahili, and therefore his introspective analyses was also used. Otherwise, all published examples are appropriately referenced. The data without context are from the author’s knowledge of the two languages, in consultation with other speakers.

Example (1b) can be used to argue that interjections lack propositional qualities themselves, unlike mirative particles. Recall we said that above that mirative constructions carry nuances of interrogatives. Michaelis (2001:1035) differentiates interjections from exclamatives on the basis that interjections do not encode a “recoverable proposition content”, a feature shared by both exclamative and declarative propositions. I borrow Michaelis’ thinking but substitute declarative for interrogative. The fact that an interjection cannot bear a question, and a mirative particle can, is in itself distinguishing the quality of these two items. Not forgetting that while an interjection is optional, a mirative particle is not. In that case, while it is agreeable that interjections indicate surprise, their usage is not equal to that of mirative particles. Indeed, while an interjection may reinforce an exclamative, it does not “advance a discourse informationally” (Collins 2005: 4). This is the case of interjection *Ala!* in (1). It is alright to say that particle *mbona* ‘informationally advances the discourse’ hence its obligatoriness.

The facts in Kiswahili, are not wholly transferable to Gĩkũyũ mirative constructions. Whereas interjections can optionally occur with all the mirative particles, the particles cannot be turned into interrogatives. A notable fact is the presence of *ne* (*nĩ*), commonly called a focus marker in Gĩkũyũ linguistics, but which also has an assertive function in sentences. This assertion function is a property of declaratives and therefore comparable to Michaelis’ (2001) criterion. In sum, interjections, though indicators of surprise, are not considered as mirative markers in this paper.

4. Mirativity in Gĩkũyũ

As previously noted, Gĩkũyũ uses lexical mirative particles. The particles are *kaĩ* /*kae/ githĩ /githe/*, *anga, /anga/*, *otho /otho/*, and *ni /ni/*. These particles do not have English equivalents (Barlow 1960:269). Each of these particles is discussed below.

4.1. The particle *kaĩ*. Although *kaĩ* pervades Gĩkũyũ grammar, little about its syntax, semantics or pragmatics is understood (although see Thuo’s (2009) Relevance theoretic analysis of *kaĩ*). Barlow (1960:207) lists *kaĩ* as an interjection translated as “why!”, “how!”, “what!” I noted earlier that optionality is a property of interjections. As for particle *kaĩ*, it is not optional and its inclusion semantically surpasses the meaning of an ordinary interjection. Consequently, Barlow’s assertion is questionable. Particle *kaĩ* has more interrogative nuance than exclamative, meaning that the illocutionary force associated with it is explicitly interrogative, but with a surprise flavour.

Bennett et al. (1985: 266) notes that *kaĩ* introduces “a note of surprise”. It is the surprise quality that has a mirative value. Example (2), an adapted dialogue (Conversation VII) from Bennett et al. (1985), showing a typical context of *kaĩ*’s usage. The morphemic translations are mine.

- (2)
- | | | |
|-----------|---|------------------------|
| Speaker A | Nĩ kĩĩ ũ-r-endi-a | Wangũ? |
| | FM-Q 1SM-PRS-sell-FV | Wangu |
| | ‘What are you selling, Wangũ?’ | |
| Speaker B | Nĩ nyũngũ ci-a | Gĩkũyũ ndĩ-r-endi-a. |
| | FM 10.pots 10-ASSOC | Gĩkũyũ 1SM-PRS-sell-FV |
| | ‘I am selling Kikuyu pots.’ | |
| Speaker A | Kaĩ ũ-ũmb-ag-a | nyũngũ? |
| | MIR 1SM-mould-HAB-FV | 10.pots |
| | ‘So you make pots!’ | |
| Speaker B | Nĩ hĩndĩ ndĩ-ra-mbĩrĩri-a | kw-ĩrut-a kũ-ũmb-a. |
| | AM time 1SM-PRS-start-FV | 15-learn 15-mould-FV |
| | ‘I have just started to learn to make pottery.’ | |

[Bennett et al. 1985:272]

In this conversation, speaker A meets speaker B (Wangũ) in the market and asks her what she is selling. Wangũ replies that she sells earthen pots (Kikuyu pots) to the surprise of B, who uses *kaĩ* to indicate the surprise at the new information (s/he was unaware that Wangũ sells earthen pots). Wangũ says that she had not started selling pots long ago, which could be the reason that A is not aware of what she sells. Therefore, Wangũ’s utterance brings with it new, unanticipated, unexpected information which warrants the use of the particle. Bennett and co-workers’ have the line (*Kaĩ*

ũmbaga nyũngũ?) as a question, but their translation is not; they have it as, ‘So you make pots!’ As for the source of evidence, it is Wangũ who has supplied this new information, which confirms the speaker’s disbelief or uncertain state of knowledge, or better still confirmation of new knowledge that Wangũ sells pots.

The utterance in (3) is from a naturally (spontaneously) occurring conversation that illustrates the use of particle *kaĩ*.

[Context: There is someone washing clothes outside. The speaker of (3) steps out and notices that the clothes are on the ground, most likely because the drying line has broken. He utters (3) and gets the reply in (4).]

(3) Kaĩ mũ-kanda w-a-tuĩk-a?
MIR 3-rope 3SM-PRS-break-FV
‘Is it that the drying line has broken?’

(4) Īĩ nĩ w-a-tuĩk- a.
Yes AM 3SM-PRS-break-FV
‘Yes, it has broken.’

The speaker of (3) can see the clothes on the ground, a type of direct visual evidence coupled with the presupposition that the drying line must have broken. The evidence is confirmed by the answer he gets in (4). The question shows surprise at this unexpected turn of events, especially because the Speaker of 3 had tightened the drying lines earlier on. Example (3) is not seeking information from the hearer as both of them can see the clothes on the ground. Mirative *kaĩ* shows “a surprised speaker” (Aikhenvald 2012: 441), who has witnessed “an event which the speaker has seen and which was unexpected to him/her” (ibid. p. 446). As such, the surprise results from the speaker’s new epistemic state. As indicated in section 3, particle *kaĩ*, though bearing interrogative quality is not the bona fide question word in the utterance in (5) below, which also contains a wh-word. Indeed, *kaĩ* does not sit in the prototypical position for wh- words in Gĩkũyũ.

[Context: The speaker of (5a) did not find the lotion in the usual place, he utters (5a), and gets the answer in (5b)].

(5) a. Kaĩ maguta wũ-igĩ-ite kũ?
MIR 9.lotion 1SM-keep-PFV where
‘Where is the lotion?’

b. Mee hau igũrũ rĩa metha
9.be there up of 9.table
‘It is up there on the table./It is on the table.’

The expectation of speaker of (5a) to find the lotion in the usual place it is kept prompted the utterance. We previously saw particle *kaĩ* indicating interrogative illocution. However, in (5a) other than *kaĩ* there is another question word *kũ* ‘where’, meaning that the utterance has two interrogative words, which is an unlikely situation, since the locational wh- word *kũ* ‘where’ would be used with a supposed question particle that is difficult to even translate in order to show what it seeks. Particle *kaĩ* suffices to show an unmet expectation (‘finding the lotion in its usual place’), and wh-particle *kũ* indicates the interrogative illocutionary force of the utterance. Particle *kaĩ* in (5a) can also be expressing frustration and exasperation. Another example where *kaĩ* co-occurs with a wh-word (*atĩa* ‘how’) is (6). The wh-question word is not an information seeking particle in this context. Together, *kaĩ* and *atĩa* bring out a surprise interpretation. It could be the case that the seller does not usually stock ‘beautiful bananas’, but today they have. This may be labelled a mirative-interrogative. This example compacts Celle et al.’s (2019: 117) claim that verbal reactions to surprising information often resort to interrogatives, and such interrogatives may request for information as well as indicate surprise at the situation in question. This is exactly what (6) presents.

(6) Kaĩ ũmũthĩ ũ-kĩrĩ na m-eeru ma-thaka atĩa?
MIR today 1SM-have with 6.bananas 6-beautiful how
‘What beautiful bananas you have today!’

[Githiora, 2009:6]

In section 3, we explained how mirative particles bear an exclamative connotation. Indeed, it is not always the case that *kaĩ* makes an utterance have an interrogative illocution as previous examples have shown. On the one hand, example (7a) expresses an exclamative nuance roughly equivalent to ‘is-it-that-you-can’t-see-he-has-struck-me!’ It shows some kind of disbelief that the addressee seems not to realize that the speaker has been hit.

On the other hand, example (7b) expresses both exclamation and surprise especially because of the clause final enclitic =ĩ. According to Bennett (1986: 67), enclitic =ĩ “marks emphasis or excitement on the part of the speaker”. When the enclitic is used together with *kaĩ* it expresses surprise, admiration, disgust, etc. (Barlow 1960:13). In examples such as (7b) the mirative and exclamative properties are merged in a single sentence. The enclitic together with *kaĩ* are responsible for the exclamative interpretation which is unattainable with *kaĩ* alone e.g. **Kaĩ nĩ njega!* ‘How beautiful they are!’

- (7) a. *Kaĩ a-ta-a-n-ing-a!* [Barlow 1960:210, fn 1]
 MIR 1SM-PST-1OM-hit-FV
 ‘Did he not strike me!’
- b. *Kaĩ nĩ njega=ĩ!* [Barlow 1960:13]
 MIR AM good=ENCL
 ‘How beautiful they are!’
- c. **Kaĩ nĩ njega atĩa=ĩ!*
 MIR AM good how=ENCL
 ‘How beautiful they are!’

The enclitic does not attach to wh-words e.g. (7c) to create a wh- exclamative as found in English. This may be an indication that the sentence already has another illocutionary force (exclamative) and cannot take another one. On the degree of the scalarity criterion pertaining exclamatives described by Michaelis (2001), (7b) exhibits a scale; the entity being described ‘exceeds’ an expected scale of beauty, and it turns out to be ‘exceedingly beautiful’, beyond the speaker’s expectation.

What we see in Gĩkũyũ (and later in Kiswahili) is not unique to these two languages. Exclamative and interrogative sentences are known to express surprise in English and French (Celle 2018). In both Gĩkũyũ and Kiswahili, there are mirative constructions that take interrogative form. Interrogatives with mirative meaning are used as indirect speech acts in surprise situations. According to Celle (2018), such questions do not seek any information unknown to the speaker (see (3)). As was noted in section (3), Gĩkũyũ mirative particles express yes-no questions. This is illustrated by (8).

[Context: The speaker of (8a) boards a bus and once she is seated, she notices that she knows the passenger she is sitting next to. She utters (8a) and gets the response in (8b).

- (8) a. *Kaĩ a-rĩ we nyina wa Mwangi?*
 MIR 1SM-COP 2SG.PP mother 1-ASSOC Mwangi
 ‘Oh, it is you, mother of Mwangi?’
- b. *ĩĩ nĩ nĩ.*
 yes COP 1SG.PP
 ‘Yes, it is me.’

The speaker of (8a) is surprised on discovering/learning that the person seated next to her is familiar yet she had not expected to find someone she knows in the bus. It is some kind of sudden discovery for the speaker. Of course, her utterance does not require an informative answer since the two people know each other and the hearer simply confirms it is she. (8a) is a polar question that does not require an informative answer. The speaker has direct visual evidence, and therefore the force of the question is diluted.

Related to *kaĩ* in (8a) is a “perceptive” marker *-kwun* or *kun* in Korean, which Aikhenvald (2012: 457) citing Sohn (1994:353–354) notes that it carries “the sense of simultaneous confirmation and exclamation at the speech time”. Martin (1992: 670), also cited by Aikhenvald, observed that the marker “shows a sudden realization, confirmation, interest, delight, surprise, astonishment, or insistence”. In Gĩkũyũ, *kaĩ* in (8a) indicates sudden realization and even delight.

Particle *kaĩ* is also used when one asks a rhetorical (self-addressed) question that is surprising to oneself. For example, in a context where one cannot find their phone, although not directed to any particular person, one can say:

- (9) *Kaĩ nj-ig-ir-e thimũ kũ?*
 MIR 1SM-keep-PFV-FV 9.phone where
 ‘Where did I keep the phone?’/‘where could I have kept my phone?’

The utterance may be addressed to a hearer or even self-addressed, hence not requiring an answer. This example coincides with a remark by Celle (2018:211) that unresolvable and rhetorical questions have mirative qualities.

Before introducing the next mirative particle, *githĩ*, example (10) shows how *kaĩ* and *githĩ* are supplement each other.

[Context: Speaker B is washing peoples' hands. She (mis-)heard speaker A say that he had already washed his hands. She pours the water, prompting speaker A to utter (10a) and B responds with (10b).]

(10) a. Kaĩ w-a-it-a maaĩ i-te-thamb-ĩt-e m-oko?
 MIR 1SM-PRS-pour-FV 9.water 1SM-NEG-wash-PFV-FV 4-hands
 ‘You have poured the water before I washed my hands.’

b. Na githĩ ndw- a-ug-a ne wĩ-thamb-ĩt-e?
 and MIR 1SM-PST-say-FV AM 1SM-wash-PFV-FV
 ‘Have you not said that you have (already) washed your hands?’

The speaker of (10a) wonders why the hearer poured the water before washing his (the speaker's) hands. To show the surprise, the speaker uses *kaĩ* in (10a), while the hearer in her rejoinder, also indicating surprise, uses *githĩ* in (10b) to show her surprise to the proposition in (10a), since she thought she heard the speaker say he had already washed his hands. Both the speaker indicate their surprise to the unexpected events using *kaĩ* and *githĩ*, respectively. Note that the hearer cannot use *kaĩ* in her reply to (10a), which is evidence that these two particles are semantically similar.

4.2. The particle *githĩ*. Barlow (1960:206-207) considers *githĩ* an interjection without an English equivalent. According to Barlow, *githĩ* is used “interrogatively only” in sentences bearing the meaning: “Indeed...?”, “Is it (or is it not) the fact that...?”; “Can it be that...?”. He adds that it is also used “as an exclamation of strong interest or surprise” e.g., “Indeed”, “Really?(!)”, “Is that so?(!)”, “You don’t say so!”. Barlow concludes that *githĩ* gives a question more emphasis because it is forceful, which coincides with Bennett and co-workers’ (1985: 234) claim that *githĩ* as an ‘emphatic particle’ used in closed questions⁴.

The present discussion assigns *githĩ* a mirative function though it shares features with interrogative and exclamative illocutions. However, *githĩ* is not an interjection in the ordinary sense. Recall the Kiswahili example in (1), which showed that an interjection is optional but a mirative particle is not. It also showed that a mirative particle may carry illocution force but not an interjection. In Gĩkũyũ, the interjection in (11) is also optional. The mirative particle *githĩ* contains interrogative illocution, and it therefore becomes *Githĩ?*, which has some sort of question tag interpretation, ‘is it not so?’ Hence, just like in (1), the mirative particle bears an illocutionary force and it is not optional, while the interjection is optional and cannot bear any illocution.

(11) (Haiya!) Githĩ nĩ ũ-ũk-ir-e?
 (INT) MIR AM 1SM-come-PFV-FV
 ‘Alas, so you came?/So you are here?’

Example (12a) extends the use of *githĩ* as a surprise marker.

[Context: mechanic are working on car. The speaker realizes that he has the wrong spanner and utters (12a). The hearer replies with (12b)]

(12) a. Kaĩ w-a-nenger-a ĩ- rĩkũ?
 MIR 1SM-PRS-1OM.give-FV 9-which.one
 ‘Which one (spanner) have you given me?’

 b. Githĩ ti-we w-o-oy-a?
 MIR NEG-2G.PP 1SM.REL-PST-pick-FV
 ‘Are you not the one who has picked it?/is it not you who has picked it?’

⁴ Particle *githĩ* is considered impolite when a child uses it to address a grown up e.g. a parent. It has a ‘are-you-so-damn-that-you-can’t-tell?’ connotation. Therefore most young speakers avoid it when speaking to grown-ups.

The hearer's reply in (12b) uses *githĩ* to express wonder, astonishment, and surprise at the speaker's utterance in (12a) in which he is complaining about the spanner yet he is the one who picked it himself. Again as in (10), the two particles are used by to indicate the same thing: surprise, non-expectedness, which shows that *githĩ* differs from *kaĩ* in some subtle ways. Mainly, the former is used when it is backed by some assumed evidence. For example in (12b), the speaker had seen the utterer of (12a) pick the spanner himself, and in (10b), the speaker had (mis-) heard that the speaker of (10b) say something to the effect that he had already washed his hands, and therefore he need not do it again.

In (13) the speaker has made a sudden discovery that the child is not asleep but she is playing a game on her phone. The discovery surprises the mother since the child had gone to bed earlier, and the mother did not expect to find the child awake. To express such sudden discovery and counter-expectation, the speaker uses the mirative *githĩ*.

[Context: a parent realizes that a child who went to sleep is playing with a phone in bed.]

- (13) Githĩ ũ-hen-iri-e w-a-thiĩ toro na no thiimũ ũ-ra-thak-a
MIR 1SM-1OM-lie-ASP-FV 1SM-PST-go 9.bed and STILL 9.PHONE 1SM-PRS-play-FV

na-yo?

with-it

'So you lied to me that you have gone to sleep and you are still playing with the phone?'

Example (14a) is repeated from (8a), to buttress the idea that *kaĩ* and *githĩ* share characteristics, hence interchangeable (14b). Both express sudden realizations, i.e., meeting a familiar person in an expected place. Nonetheless, they have distinct syntactic requirements.

- (14) a. Kaĩ a-rĩ we, nyina wa Mwangi?
MIR 1SM-COP 2SG.PP mother 1-ASSOC Mwangi
'Oh, it is you, mother of Mwangi?'

- b. Githĩ nĩ we, nyina wa Mwangi!
MIR 1SM-COP 2SG.PP mother of Mwangi
'Oh it is you, mother of Mwangi/ So it is you mother of Mwangi?'

Particle *kaĩ* occurs with copula *-rĩ*, but not with *nĩ* (except for exclamatives e.g. in (7)) or with the assertive /declarative *nĩ* e.g., **kaĩ nĩ we, nyina wa Mwangi?* On the other hand, *githĩ* is compatible with *nĩ*, but not with *-rĩ* e.g., **Githĩ a-rĩ we nyina wa Mwangi* (except when *-rĩ* has a possessive meaning 'have' e.g. (15b) below). Probably particle *kaĩ* is incompatible with *nĩ* because *kaĩ* has an interrogative force that contradicts the assertive force of *nĩ*. In contrast, *githĩ* is compatible with *nĩ* (and the same was seen with *kaĩ* in an exclamative utterance e.g., (7b)). Speculatively said, this may be evidence of the exclamative qualities of *githĩ*.

Example (15) is yet another example that illustrates the connection between *kaĩ* and *githĩ*.

[Context: The speaker sees someone holding car keys, and utters (15a), although (15b) is also applicable, albeit the semantic differences.]

- (15) a. Kaĩ w-ĩ-na ngari?
MIR 1SM-COP-with 9.car
'Is it that you have a car?/You mean that you have a car?'

- b. Githĩ w-ĩ-na ngari?
MIR 1SM-COP-with 9.car
'So you have a car!'

The two mirative particles in (15) indicate surprise at inferred information, which to the speakers it is "new and non-assimilated information" in the sense of Bergqvist & Kittilä (2020:2). The speaker of (15a) had only seen the car keys, but not the car itself. His conclusion is based on visual evidence coupled with cognitive inference. Particle *githĩ* cannot replace *kaĩ* in (15a), since *githĩ* is less speculative than *kaĩ*. The speaker of (15b) could have just seen the car keys, though s/he is more convinced that the hearer has a car, unlike the speaker of (15a), who holds a probable thought. Thus, there is less doubt in (15b) compared to (15a). Based on the interpretations of the two utterances, *githĩ* is used when there is less doubt (when there is ample first-hand evidence) and therefore with a higher level of knowledge, hence less doubt, compared to

Utterance (19) is a response by the speaker to an utterance that he thought was verbally discourteous, rude, derisive or slanderous, much to his surprise, and disgust⁵. The explanation that suffices for (19) is that the realization that the hearer has insulted the speaker is treated as unexpected, or gone beyond expectation.

- (19) Ona nĩ ũ-kũ-n-jinũr-ag-a ni!
 even AM 2SM-PRS-1OM-slander-PROG-FV MIR
 ‘Even you were going to slander me’ / ‘Indeed, you are even rude to me!’

The examples in (18) and (19) are all about exceeded expectations, and this characteristic agrees with a remark by Rett (2021:198), that a mirative is a “natural-language expression of exceeded expectation”, and mirative *ni* indicates these exceeded expectations.

4.5. Particle *otho*. The particle *otho* [ɔthɔ] is used to indicate sudden realization or sudden recall of something at the time of speech. I am not aware of an English equivalent; it has a ‘by-the-way’ meaning. For example the speaker of (20) has just remembered /recalled that she had a meeting engagement in the day, which she had forgotten about and she was making other plans.

- (20) Otho ũmũthĩ nĩ kwa mũcemanio.
 MIR today AM of 3-meeting
 ‘Oh, today is the meeting day.’ / ‘Today is the day for the meeting.’

The difference between *otho* and the other miratives is that it is not prompted by some auditory or visual evidence; it is all mental. Use of *otho* is not sanctioned by any of the evidential types by Willett (1988), which are active in the use of the other mirative particles. However, it may be triggered by some stimuli, which in turn triggers memory. We can therefore say that the mental realization associated with *otho* is indirect evidence, though it may be sensory, and it may be prompted by some form of sensory evidence e.g. auditory or visual, or otherwise.

To this point, it is shown that Gĩkũyũ lexically indicates mirativity with particles. The proposed Gĩkũyũ mirative particles namely: *kaĩ*, *githĩ*, *anga*, *ni* and *otho*. Except *otho*, all the other particles have inherent interrogative nuances in them. However, they do not seek content information as content questions do. The particles are used after some direct evidence becomes available, except for particle *otho*, which exclusively results from sudden mental realization or memory. Gĩkũyũ mirative particles show close relationship with evidentiality and illocutionary force, specifically exclamative and interrogative illocutions, which is variously shown to be a common cross-linguistic phenomena.

5. Mirativity in Kiswahili

Kiswahili mirative particles discussed are: *kumbe*, *si*, *mbona*, and *kwani*. I will discuss the functions and nature of each particle in the following sections.

5.1. The particle *kumbe*. Particle *kumbe* is used to indicate exclamation showing that the speaker, did not have the knowledge of a situation until the time of the utterance.⁶ When the speaker learns or attains the new knowledge or information, then mirative *kumbe* is applicable, as a form of sudden realization. *Kumbe* is used to mention an event that contradicts with another one in a speaker’s knowledge (Mdee, et al. 2011). Mohammed (2001:119) brands this particle an interjection that “expresses slight astonishment or surprise at the occurrence of the reverse of what was anticipated”. The

⁵ Barlow (1960: 194) illustrates the emphasis property of *ni* in the examples below. (i) has an emphatic import that is different from that in (ii).

- (i) Nĩ ndĩ-mu-on-ir-e ni!
 AM 1SM-1OM-see-PFV-FV EMPH
 ‘Indeed I saw him!’
 (ii) Nĩ ũ-cio ni ũ-tet-ag-a.
 FM 1-DEM MIR 1SM-grumble-HAB-FV
 ‘That is one who grumbles.’

Example (ii) indicates surprise upon realizing/learning who it is that grumbles, which is the mirative usage, It is something like: ‘Oh! It is that one, who grumbles?’, a meaning that hitherto that moment of discovery was inaccessible to the speaker.

⁶ This particle is also found in Gĩkũyũ and in many other Kenyan languages, with the same meaning and usage. It must be a borrowing from Kiswahili. I ignored discussing it in Gĩkũyũ to discuss it in Kiswahili.

inherent ‘contradiction’ and ‘astonishment’ in *kumbe* is a form of counter-expectation, which is a functional characteristic of miratives. Example (21) is adapted from Mohammed (2001:118). The interlinear morphemes are added.

- (21) Kumbe u-me-kuj-a. Mimi ni-li-fikir-i hu-ta-kuj-a kabisa.
 MIR 1SM-PRS-come-FV 1SG.PP SM-PST-think-FV NEG-FUT-come-FV completely
 ‘Lo! You have come. I thought you would not come at all.’ [Mohammed 2001:118]

In (21) the speaker uses *kumbe* to indicate astonishment at the realization that someone, who they least expected would come, has come. Mohammed glosses *kumbe* as interjection *Lo!*, an interjection which is close to ‘Alas!’ in English, although elsewhere he describes *Lo!* singly as “an exclamation of intense feeling, pleasant or unpleasant” (ibid. p.119). Whereas *kumbe* has qualities of an interjection, it has other features beyond those of an interjection. It is much more than an interjection because it means more than an ordinary interjection does. This supports the claim that *kumbe* has mirative qualities which go beyond the surprise quality of an ordinary interjection.

5.2. The particle *si*. Kiswahili normally uses *si* as a phrasal negative copula (22a), although the same morpheme is used in clausal negation, especially in Nairobi Kiswahili. See (22b), an utterance made at a Master’s thesis defence. The candidate was asked a question, but he kept quiet prompting one of the panellist to make the utterance. In (22b) the negation particle *si* is suggested to also have a mirative function.⁷ The properties of *si* seem unclear to some. For example, Bearth (1997) in his discussion of inferential properties of Kiswahili negation *si* simply marks it as (!), without a morphemic label to it. The speaker of (22b) expects the hearer to respond to the teacher talking to him, because the student was quiet. The speaker used particle *si* to indicate his surprise at the student’s delay in answering the question asked.

- (22) a. Juma si mw-izi/ mbaya.
 Juma NEG.COP 1-thief / 1.bad
 ‘Juma is not a thief.’/ ‘Juma is not bad’.
- b. Si u-na-ongeleshwa na mw-alimu?!
 MIR 1SM-PRS-being.talked.to by 2-teacher
 ‘You are being talked to by the teacher.’/ ‘Isn’t the teacher talking to you?!’

An additional example to illustrate particle *si* is (23).⁸

[Context: As it was common during the Covid-19 pandemic, people entering into premises were required to sanitize themselves before going in or out. The utterance in (23) was made by such customer after having sanitised themselves.]

- (23) Na si hiyo sanitizer i-na-nuki-a!
 and MIR.NEG that sanitizer it-PRS-smell.good-FV
 ‘That sanitizer smelling good!’ / ‘Isn’t that sanitizer smelling good!’

The speaker noticed the pleasant scent of the sanitizer she had just used. This was contrary to what she was used to, hence surprising and unexpected of sanitizers. In that case, particle *si* in the utterance expresses this unexpected experience,

⁷ Negation markers may also have a mirative quality in other languages. For instance, in Menominee, a Native American language, a negation particle *kat* marks mirativity (cf. Macaulay 2003).

⁸ An additional example illustrating particle *si* as a mirative marker is from a Kiswahili play, *Mama ee* by Mwachofi (1987) originally in Bearth (1997:17), later in Bearth (2020:941). Bearth (1997) indicates *si* as ‘!’ in his examples. The English translation is from Bearth (1997:17) and Bearth (2020:941), but the interlinear morpheme translations are mine.

- Si li-me-pachikwa mimba na George?
 MIR 5-PRS-insert 14.pregnancy COM George
 ‘! she-has-let-herself-make-pregnant by George,’ [Bearth (1997:17)
 ‘Cant-you-see-that-she-has-allowed-herself-to-get pregnant by George?’ [Bearth 2020:941]

Bearth writes that the speaker uses *si* “to lament his son’s failure to close the inferential gap [that the sister is pregnant] at once” (Bearth 1997:17) cited in Bearth (2020:941). Hence the father uses *si* to indicate his surprise at his son’s inability to see that his sister is pregnant. Although Bearth indicated *si* as a particle (PART), I gloss it as a mirative (MIR).

which is can be paraphrased to ‘Isn’t that sanitizer smelling good!’ This is possible because particle *si* also has a negative sense, although it is the mirative sense that the particles marks here.

The examples in (24) illustrate the combined usage of *si* and *kwani*. The data was extracted from a Facebook post.⁹

[Context: In a supermarket, a shopper wanted to buy flour, but the packet didn’t have a price tag. He asked a supermarket attendant to check the price for him and he is told that the price is 159 shillings, but when gets to the cashier he is told that it is 177 shillings.]

When I got to the counter and the math had been done I see an alien figure on the teller’s computer. I ask, “madam, hesabu yangu ni tofauti na yako” [madam my calculation differs with yours]. She opens her price list. I go through it. I shockingly respond, “**kwani** hiyo unga ni pesa ngapi?? **si** nimeambiwa ni ksh. 159/=?... (Emphases are mine).

- (24) a. Kwani hiyo unga ni pesa ngapi?
MIR that 9.flour COP 9.money how much
‘How much is the packet of flour?’
- b. Si ni-me-ambiwa ni 159 shillings?
MIR 1SG.SM-PRS-been.told COP 159 shillings
‘But I was told it costs 159 shillings!’/
‘Wasn’t I told that that it costs 159 shillings?!’

The speaker says that he ‘shockingly responded’, he used (24a) as his reply where particle *kwani*, captures the (surprise) shock. The speaker is disappointed that the price differs with one he was earlier told, hence the use of particle *si* in (24b). Bearth (1997: 14) opines that “*si* marks an inference triggered by what the speaker considers to be immediate evidence available to himself and to the hearer”. This explains its use in (24b) by the speaker who wonders why the cashier doesn’t have the same information as himself. In sum, particle *si* negates or contradicts the speech participant’s existing knowledge (the price of flour he was told, which differs with that of the cashier’s). The higher price, which is new information, was unexpected and therefore comes as shock or surprise. Recall that Aikhenvald (2012: 441) asserts that miratives indicate a surprised speaker. This is an example of such a speaker, and the surprise is expressed by *kwani* and *si*.

5.3. The particle *mbona*. Ashton (1944:154) writes that “**Mbona** conveys an element of surprise and implies that matters are different from what the speaker expects” (original emphasis). For Wilson (1970:78) *mbona* is used when a speaker is “greatly astonished” or to indicate “impatience”. According to Loogman (1965:298), the particle “conveys a gentle reproach that an expectation has not been fulfilled”. These observations are affirmations that *mbona*, although bearing an interrogative property, has a mirative function. This suggestion that has not been previously thought of. The descriptions by Ashton, Loogman, and Wilson capture the inherent mirative property in *mbona*. The particle’s mirative function associated with surprise is described below.

[Context: The speaker of saw the hearer on a Sunday, a day for attending mass in church. It is unusual for the hearer to miss mass.]

- (25) Mbona hu-ja-end-a kanisa-ni leo?
MIR NEG.1SM.NEG-PRS-go-FV church-LOC today
‘Why have you not gone to church today?’

The speaker is surprised to see the hearer at home on a Sunday at that time, which was unexpected since the hearer was supposed to be in church. The speaker uses the particle to register his surprise at what he considered unusual. The utterance is not after the reason, since *kwa nini* ‘why’ would suffice. On the contrary, the particle *mbona* indicates that the speaker’s expectations have been contradicted by what he has seen and inferred from the context. Since the speaker’s expectation is contradicted, the particle *mbona* is used to indicate surprise at the counter-expectation, and even if a reason is given, it will not have been the sole purpose for using the particle.

⁹ This was a Facebook post by Fedora (31st March, 2022) <https://www.facebook.com/KevinVikensWanjala>.

The narrative excerpt in (26)¹⁰ contains the particle *mbona*, which indicates a contrary expectation. That is, shoes come in pairs, but here is a case of a single shoe. Note that there is no question mark on the text.

- (26) A-li-simama na a-ka-ki-angalia na ki-li-m-pendeza na a-li-sema
 1SM-PST-stop and 1SM-PST-7OM-look and 7SM-PST1OM-please and 1SM-PST-said
 ‘He stood and he looked at it, and it pleased him and he said,
 “ki-atu hi-ki ni ki-zuri lakini mbona ki-po ki-moja tu.” A-li-tafuta
 7-shoe this COP 7-good but MIR 7-be 7-one only. 1SM-PST-search
 “this shoe is good but why is it only one” He searched
 ki-atu ch-engine [sic] pembezo-ni mwa ile njia ha-ku-ki-ona
 7-shoe 7-other sides-LOC of that 9.path NEG-PST-7OM-find
 for the other shoes by the side of the path ; he did not find it.’

From the examples, we see that particle *mbona* expresses unfilled expectation, or more plainly, it is a speaker’s reaction to new and unexpected realization or discovery, which are characteristic properties of mirative markers.

5.4. The particle *kwani*. The particle *kwani* has several functions in Kiswahili discourse and grammar. There are those who take the particle as a derivative of the question compound *kwa nini* ‘why?’, e.g., Hurskainen (2009:4 fn. 1) and Loogman (1965:297). The suggestions might be overgeneralizations of the fact that Kiswahili has a tendency of shortening question words into interrogative enclitics, e.g. *-pi*, *-ni*, etc. (see Ashton 1944:153). There is evidence that *kwani* and *kwa nini* are two distinct units with distinct semantic and grammatical functions in Kiswahili. The former is posited here as a mirative marker that expresses mirative properties such as surprise and counter-expectation. Indeed, Wamitila (2016: 472) posits that *kwani* has emphatic, conjunctive, and exclamative functions in sentences. These functions are illustrated below.

Example (27) shows the function of *kwani* as a subordinate conjunction of reason. I contend that the subordinate conjunction is the most likely derivative from *kwa nini* since it also seeks a reason for something, as seen in (27).

- (27) Si-ku-mu-on-a kwani a-li-tok-a mapema.
 1SM.NEG-PST-1OM-see-FV because 1SM-PST-left-FV early
 ‘I did not see him because he left early.’

The interrogative use of *kwa nini* is shown in (28), where it seeks the reason or an explanation for the hearer’s lateness. This example does not have any of the mirative properties; it is more of a content or information seeking question.

- (28) Kwa nini u-me-chelew-a?
 why 1SM-PRS-be.late-FV
 ‘Why are you late?’ [Ashton 1944:154]

To test whether *kwani* is derived from *kwa nini*, we adapt Ashton’s example in (28) presented as example (29).

- (29) Kwani u-me-chelew-a?
 MIR 1SM-PRS-be.late-FV
 ‘Is it that you are late?’

The meaning of (28) differs from that of (29). The question compound *kwa nini* seeks the cause or reason for the lateness, unlike particle *kwani* in (29), which seeks for a confirmation of the state of affairs. *Kwani* shows some disbelief or an unconfirmed inference in the speaker’s cognitive state. The hearer might be behaving in a manner to suggest that they are late, and (29) could be used to confirm or disconfirm such a suspicion. Thus, *kwa nini* and *kwani* are semantically different.

Syntactically, *kwa nini* can occur with copula *ni*, e.g., *ni* may be added in sentence initial in (28) to read, *Ni kwa nini u-me-chelewa* ‘why are you late?’. On the contrary, this is impossible with *kwani* in (29), e.g. **Ni kwani u-me-chelewa!* ‘Is it that you are late? Furthermore, since Kiswahili allows wh- questions in situ and ex situ positions, the particle *kwani* cannot be moved to the in-situ position e.g., **Umechelewa kwani!* ‘Is it that you are late?’.

¹⁰ Adapted from https://corpora.uni-leipzig.de/en/res?corpusId=swa_community_2017&word=mbona (Riwaya za Abunuwasi, collected on 27/06/2009) [accessed on 12 January 2022]

Lastly, we can consider a sentence such as (30). It contains the particle *kwani* and a question word, *wapi* ‘where?’. The example is applicable in a context where the speaker expected to find some people somewhere but, he does not find them, and wonders where they could be.

If indeed the particle *kwani* is a derivative of *kwa nini*, then there would be no problem substituting *kwani* with *kwa nini* in (30), e.g., **kwa nini wako wapi?* ‘*Why are they where?’, which turns out ungrammatical. However, as it is, with both *kwani* and *wapi* in the same clause, example (30) is grammatical.

- (30) Kwani wa-ko wapi?
 MIR 2SM-be where
 ‘Where are they?’/‘Where could they be?’

Above is some evidence that *kwani* is not a derivative from *kwa nini*, and it is not a contracted wh- word, and therefore, it cannot be a syntactic substitute of *kwa nini* in questions. However, we can speculate that *kwani* is a grammaticalized question word that has attained a specialized function of indicating mirativity. Support for the grammaticalization claim is found in the fact that like other mirative particles it has interrogative nuances. As earlier argued for *mbona* in (1), *kwani* can also singly bear interrogative illocution e.g., *Kwani?* ‘So (what)?’

The exclamative function of *kwani* leads to the surprise interpretation of (31a).

[Context: The speaker meets a friend and his family in a neighbourhood that he least expected to meet them, since he didn’t know they had moved from where he knew they lived, hence the utterance in (31a)].

- (31) a. Kwani m-li-hami-a huku?
 MIR 2SM-PST-moved-FV here
 ‘So you moved here?!’
- b. Ee, tu-li-hami-a huku mw-aka jana.
 Yes, 2SM-PST-moved-FV here 3-year yesterday
 ‘Yes, we moved here last year.’

The speaker of (31a) is not asking for the reason (if *kwani* was a reason question) the hearer moved to the neighbourhood, and this is evident in the hearer’s response in (31b). On the contrary, the speaker is surprised to meet the hearer in a neighbourhood that he least expected to meet him. Before this encounter, the speaker knew that the hearer lived in a different neighbourhood, and therefore meeting him with the family was unexpected and surprising to the speaker. The speaker sought confirmation from the hearer in order to reconcile old information (his friend’s previously known residence) and new information (whether they had moved to a new residence), which is given in the hearer’s response.

Kwani in (31a) is posted as a mirative, because it expresses speaker’s surprise at the recently discovered new knowledge, which contradicts previously known knowledge. Miratives are generally known to indicate a state or event that a speaker did not anticipate or expect. The interpretation of (31a) fits in with what a mirative encompasses according to Aikhenvald (2004:195). She says that a mirative “covers speaker’s ‘unprepared mind’, unexpected new information, and concomitant surprise”. The speaker uses *kwani* to express his surprise as a result of the new and unexpected information to his unprepared mind. This follows from his meeting with an acquaintance at an unfamiliar and unexpected neighbourhood, and this new knowledge contradicts his previously known information.

This section concludes the discussion of suggested mirative markers in Kiswahili. These particles exhibit a close connection with the interrogative and exclamative illocutions. Although the particles express some interrogative nuance, they are not content-seeking questions. Their usage is triggered by some kind of evidence that warrants a surprise reaction. The particle *si* has an additional function of negation, but when used a mirative, the negation function is less pronounced. *Mbona* is associated with seeking an explanation for a state of affairs, and *kwani*, commonly thought to be a derivative of the wh-compound *kwa nini*, is shown to differ from *kwa nini*, semantically and syntactically. It is these differences support the claim of *kwani*’s mirative quality

6. Summary and conclusion

This paper set out to argue for the recognition of mirative markers in two Bantu languages: Gĩkũyũ and Kiswahili. To the best of my knowledge, I am not aware of any work that has suggested that these two languages have miratives. The paper has demonstrated that both languages use lexical particles to express mirativity. Gĩkũyũ uses *kaĩ*, *githĩ*, *anga*, *ni*, and *otho*, and Kiswahili has *kumbe*, *si*, *mbona*, and *kwani*. The mirative particles used in the languages show a speaker’s psychological unpreparedness for the new information or knowledge that becomes apparent to them. The discussion claims

that these particles are used when there is evidence that contradicts a speaker's epistemic knowledge. Consequently, a speaker uses the particles to express attitudes such as surprise, disbelief towards any new, or unexpected knowledge that is not yet integrated with existing one. Such knowledge will contradict a speaker's existing state of knowledge, hence the surprise. At other times, the particles are used confirm new information for eventual integration in a speaker's knowledge.

Since the miratives used in the languages discussed represent a speaker's belief or a speaker's interpretation of the world, they can be described as speaker-oriented miratives. In both languages, the proposed mirative particles are triggered by some form of evidence (visual, inferential, or otherwise) which shows a connection between mirativity and evidentiality. They also have exclamative and interrogative qualities, although they lack definite exclamative or interrogative illocutions *per se*. In both languages the mirative particles share features with interjections, although they are not interjections themselves.

Future research may consider a pragmatic analysis of these particles. Such a study will shed more light on aspects of utterance comprehension and interpretation in Gikũyũ and Kiswahili. In addition, there is a need to investigate exclamatives in Bantu. Such a study will show the characteristics of exclamatives in the languages vis-à-vis the expression of mirativity. Finally, an investigation of the particles from the perspective of epistemic modality, mirativity and evidentiality would be a profitable exploration.

ABBREVIATIONS

AM-	assertive marker
ASSOC	associative
COM	comitative
COP	copula
EMPH	emphatic
ENCL	enclitic
FM	focus marker
FUT	future
INT	interjection
FV	final vowel
HAB	habitual
MIR	mirative
NEG	negative
OM	object marker
PART	particle
PFV	perfective
PROG	progressive
PP	personal pronoun
PRS	present
PST	past
Q	question word
REL	relative
SG	singular
SM	subject marker

Numerals refer to noun classes, and persons when followed by SG/PL. In Gikũyũ orthography /ĩ/ and /ũ/ are in IPA /e/ and /o/, respectively.

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