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1. Introduction

The scene exemplified in (1) typically entails the expression of the unprepared mind of the speaker, i.e. of the witness of the scene when he or she is telling the story to some interlocutors, after the event has taken place. Nothing in the setting and in the initial behaviour of the two people meeting in the park in front of the witness could have foreshadowed that one would attack the other.

- (1) I was sitting on a bench in Central Park, when two guys that looked alike and were dressed alike hugged each other right in front of me and they started talking friendly. One was blonde and the other was dark-haired. After some minutes, the blonde hits the dark-haired. (cf. Di Caro et al. 2025: 92)

The scene in (1) is told in the most neutral, and somehow unnatural, way, i.e. without the witness sharing their sense of surprise about the event. The story should at least be told with an exclamatory intonation (encoded in the written form by an exclamation mark). Most typically, the speaker would also add some adverbs or expressions that underline a sense of surprise such as *surprisingly*, *suddenly*, *it was a surprise that...*, *to my surprise*, *I couldn't believe that...*, *Could you believe that...*, and so on. This sense of surprise, which can refer to both positive feelings such as astonishment or wonder, and negative feelings such as irritation, regret or resentment, is referred to as mirativity in the literature (cf. DeLancey 1997; 2001; 2012; Aikhenvald 2012).¹ Mirativity can also be expressed through a wide range of syntactic means. Those dealt with in the present paper are exemplified in (2).²

The example in (2a) features a 1SG mirative *Ethical Dative* (cf. Masini 2012); the (2b) counterpart features a 2SG mirative *Conversational Dative* (Masini 2012); the negation within a rhetorical question in (2c) is referred to as *Snegs* (i.e. surprise negation sentence; cf. Greco 2019a; 2019b; 2020a;

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- 1 More generally, according to DeLancey (1997: 33) mirativity is a category pertaining to the “status of the proposition with respect to the speaker's overall knowledge structure”, marking both “statements based on inference and statements based on direct experience for which the speaker had no psychological representation” (DeLancey 1997: 35). For a wider list of mirative meanings we refer the interested reader to Aikhenvald (2012: 437).
- 2 In the regional Italian spoken in Sicily, under the influence of Sicilian, it is also possible to exploit the Left Periphery (Rizzi 1982) by means of mirative Focus Fronting (Cruschina 2012), as in *Uno schiaffo gli ha dato il biondo al moro!* ‘lit. a slap to-him gave the blond to the dark-haired’.

2020b);³ an *Infinitival Construction* (or InfCo) with functional GO is used in (2d); in the counterpart in (2e) the functional GO is in a *Pseudo-Coordination* (or PseCo; cf. Giusti et al. 2022) configuration, the same found in (2f) with functional TAKE (cf. Masini et al. 2019).

- (2) a. ... il biondo **mi dà** uno schiaffo al moro!
 the blond ED gives a slap to-the dark-haired
 b. ... il biondo **ti dà** uno schiaffo al moro!
 the blond CD gives a slap to-the dark-haired
 c. ... il biondo **non dà** uno schiaffo al moro?!
 the blond NEG gives a slap to-the dark-haired
 d. ... il biondo **va a dare** uno schiaffo al moro!
 the blond GO to give.INF a slap to-the dark-haired
 e. ... il biondo **va e dà** uno schiaffo al moro!
 the blond GO and gives a slap to-the dark-haired
 f. ... il biondo **prende e dà** uno schiaffo al moro!
 the blond TAKE and gives a slap to-the dark-haired
 ‘... the blond up and hit the dark-haired!’⁴

1.1 Some mirative markers can be stacked

Among the strategies of mirative marking we have considered, there are some that allow for two or more markers to co-occur, without this causing any redundancy or the semantics of the sentence being compromised. Consider those listed in (3):⁵

- 3 Surprise negation sentences (Snegs) are so called because they display peculiar features. Pragmatically, they are used in contexts in which the speaker is surprised about some event and wants to express their surprise. Syntactically, such sentences always display a negative marker, although being affirmative. Prosodically, they are characterized by a marked intonation which displays acoustic features of both interrogatives and exclamatives, which is indicated by the “?” marks (Greco 2020a: 776; see also (7) for a further example).
- 4 We provide a single English rendition for all the examples in (2). Naturally, it is possible to consider translations that better capture the mirative nuances of each mirative strategy. For example, a more accurate translation of (2b) could be ‘The blond up and hit the dark-haired. Could you believe that?’.
- 5 For reasons of space, we cannot show all the possible combinations of mirative markers, such as those with CD *ti* replacing ED *mi*, which are also acceptable. A complete overview



(3) a. (ED+GO)

il biondo **mi va** a dare uno schiaffo al moro!
the blonde ED GO to give.INF a slap to.the dark.haired

b. (NEG+GO)

il biondo **non va** a dare uno schiaffo al moro?!
the blonde NEG GO to give.INF a slap to.the dark.haired

c. (NEG+ED)

il biondo **non mi dà** uno schiaffo al moro?!
the blond NEG ED gives a slap to.the dark.haired

d. (NEG+ED+GO)

il biondo **non mi va** a dare uno schiaffo al moro?!
the blond NEG ED GO to give.INF a slap to.the dark.haired
'The blond up and hit the dark-haired!'

As is clear from the English rendition, all the combinations in (3) can be roughly translated into English in the same way. Note that each mirative marker may convey a different semantic nuance. However, the investigation of these nuances would require a further detailed study specifically tailored for this issue, perhaps investigated via neurolinguistic approaches. For this reason, this issue is left for future research.

The aim of the paper is to bring to light this fact and provide some possible syntactic explanation. The rest of the paper is organised as follows: in Section 2 we discuss the syntactic properties of each mirative strategy considered; in Section 3 we portray a general framework; in Section 4 we focus on the relevant features of different mirative settings. In Section 5, we draw the conclusions and offer some avenues for further research.

2. A featural geometry for mirativity

This section will tackle the issue of how mirative markers that originate from the most diverse categories can ultimately yield a mirative interpretation

of all the markers available for stacking falls beyond the scope of the present paper and is matter for future research. Note, however, that we can exclude the compatibility of mirative V1 TAKE in a PseCo configuration (cf. Di Caro – Molinari 2024) with mirative Focus Fronting (see fn. 2), since they are probably merged in the same Focus position in the Left Periphery of the sentence.

of the sentences at hand. Just to sum up, among the different strategies that Italian varieties employ we can find markers of verbal origin such as GO InfCo (2d), and functional TAKE (2f). Other elements include oblique (ED) clitics (2a) and negative polarity elements (2c). The relevant interpretation will hinge on the basic semantics of mirativity in a broad sense, which sees the existence of an expectation from the point of view of the speaker, which is then unmet.

As a starting point, we will consider oblique clitics. Romance obliques take on different functions, but they can be considered as possessors and wholes including parts, which enter a zonal relationship, as suggested in Manzini – Savoia (2015; 2017). This is quite straightforward in simple cases such as Italian *mi appartiene* (to-me belongs, ‘it belongs to me’), where the oblique clitic can be construed as a whole including a part (whatever object belongs to the person). We can thus associate oblique clitics with a +ZONAL feature.⁶ Mirative semantics, as we said, expresses the fact that the speaker’s expectations have been unmet, and, in keeping with a spatial stance, a departure from such expectations. Being this so, the +ZONAL feature of oblique clitics can be attributed to mirative obliques as well. This feature exists alongside a PERSON feature, which represents the speaker itself. Oblique case is instead responsible for the +ZONAL feature. Possession and partitivity (as in wholes including parts) are in fact, cross-linguistically speaking, often realised with either oblique case morphology or semantically equivalent analytic elements (such as *a/to/di/of*, and so forth).

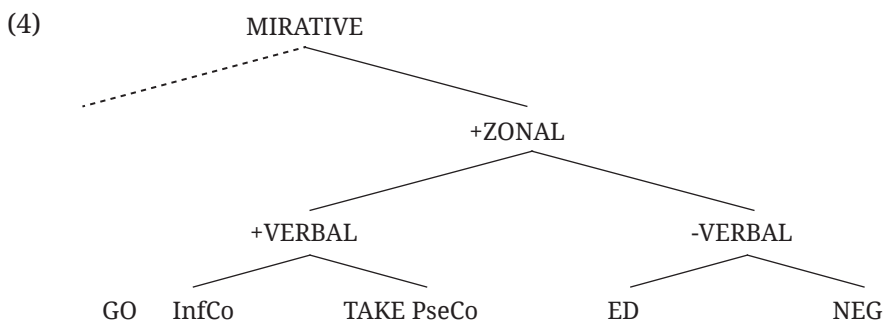
GO InfCo membership to elements with a +ZONAL feature comes as quite straightforward. GO denotes movement, and, generally, a departure from a starting point, so that we can also include GO InfCo to +ZONAL elements. This goes back to Ross (2016) who, capitalizing on Stefanowitsch (1999), conceptualizes mirative GO as expressing “motion away from [the speaker’s] expectation” (Ross 2016: 10).

Functional TAKE conveys, in its prototypical sense, the fact that something has been removed from its original place, either metaphorically or literally. In either case, the act of removing implies a spatial semantics. Being this so, functional TAKE contains a +ZONAL feature as well.

6 An anonymous reviewer asks how to accommodate zonal features to mirative semantics since the relationship seems less straightforward than that with possession. As in possession, where the clitic is construed as a whole including a part (possessor & possessum), a mirative oblique clitic is assumed to consist of a speaker and their respective expectation, which can be logically expressed as ‘to speaker $\exists$ expectation’.

Lastly, we have negative polarity items. These express an opposition with respect to affirmations (but do see Giannakidou 2011). Simply put, a speaker covertly affirms to have a precise expectation.⁷ The (un)expected event is contained within TP, as in (2c), *dà uno schiaffo al moro* ‘(pro) slaps the dark-haired guy’). The role of the negation here is that of conveying a spatial opposition between what the speaker expected and the type of event that ultimately took place, which is realised in TP.

The fact that all these elements can realise mirativity is due to what we can call a ‘featural’ syncretism. They all contain a +ZONAL feature, which allows them to convey a mirative semantics. We describe this with a feature-geometric analysis,⁸ partly inspired by Harley – Ritter’s (2002) analysis of features in pronouns. The tree in (4) is intentionally fragmentary, in that it does not contain all possible mirative markers: we only include the ones that are analysed in the present work. This is represented by the dashed branch in the upper-left section of the tree. We then divided the +ZONAL branch into two main sub-branches, that is the +VERBAL sub-branch, and the -VERBAL sub-branch. This is done to distinguish markers of verbal origin from markers that originate elsewhere.

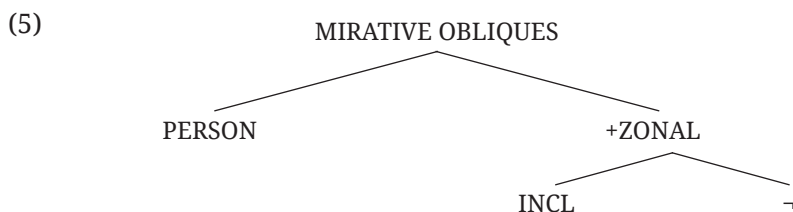


7 Obviously, negative polarity items can have different interpretations, but in their prototypical function they are operators reversing the meaning of the affirmation, whence the spatial opposition. Even the example ‘Has J not arrived?’ refers to the possibility of an unmet expectation, i.e., that J should have arrived, which is being reversed by contextual information.

8 We opted for a feature-geometric analysis in that it is apt to illustrate both the features that underlie mirativity, and the different grammatical categories through which it can be externalized.

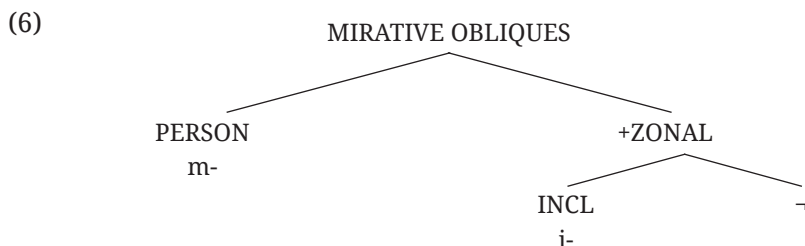


One issue with regard to oblique clitics pertains to the direction of movement with respect to the speaker. Regardless of whether the oblique clitic represents possession (as in *mi dà*, ‘gives to-me’), or advantage as in EDs (*mi compro una borsa*, ‘to-me I buy a purse’) this is a semantics that represents moving towards the person encoded by the person feature in the clitic. For possession, this means including something within a person’s possessions; for EDs, this means a sort of advantage reaching the person; for mirative EDs, what we have is an expectation being included within the speaker’s ‘space’. Of course, not all oblique clitics have the same semantics, or obey the same constraints. Mirative oblique clitics, for instance, cannot be realized with a PP (*a me*). Their semantics include, as we anticipated, the speaker’s expectations, and the expression of surprise, which is not necessarily found in prototypical EDs (*I bought myself a purse*). When it comes to mirativity, in fact, its basic semantics relates to moving away from the speaker (as opposed to what happens in advantage EDs). While we still have a zonal relation in which 1st person features represent the speaker and oblique case represents the inclusion of an expectation within the speaker, what changes is the direction of the expectation towards the event included in TP. If the expectation is unmet, we are thus moving away from what the speaker expects. In this sense, oblique clitics in miratives require a further featural specification when compared to prototypical EDs. In all cases, 1st person features represent an owner/beneficiary/speaker. Oblique case represents owning an object, an expectation, or benefitting from something. Miratives have the added requirement of having to express that the speaker’s expectation is unmet. This is important especially when the oblique clitic is the only mirative marker present in the sentence.



We express this in (5). Only person and case features are realised via morphological material. PERSON belongs to the rightmost branch in virtue of being realised in the root via *m-*. Both INCL and ¬ are contained within

+ZONAL.⁹ This is so because $\neg$, which negates the speaker's expectation(s), is understood as an operator placing the event in TP to the opposite side of what the speaker expects, which is then again interpreted in a zonal sense.



The idea is then that mirative oblique clitics are featurally more complex than their non-mirative counterparts. This more complex featural geometry couples with the fact that the event in TP exists alongside the unmet expectation, which is found above CP (cf. Section 3).

3. A syntactic account

The availability of many different mirative strategies and their stackability are topics that have been mostly overlooked in generative works on Italian. In particular, the studies on the relevant topic mostly account for one strategy only, without attempting to provide a general picture of the possibilities of stackability of Italian mirative markers.¹⁰

9 An anonymous reviewer argues that the +ZONAL feature is not a sufficient condition for a mirative marker, as in that case all movement verbs should be able to act as mirative markers. We agree with the reviewer, and we further notice that the mirative markers investigated here represent the unmarked candidate for their class (see also Cardinaletti – Giusti 2001; 2003 for the observation that only the “unmarked” motion verbs GO and COME enter Multiple Agreement Constructions in some Southern Italian dialects, American English, and Swedish). *Andare* ‘go’ represents the unmarked itive verbs (differently from, e.g., *partire* ‘leave’, *viaggiare* ‘travel’ etc.), while *prendere* ‘take’ is the unmarked form in its semantic sphere (contrary to, e.g., *raccogliere* ‘pick’, *catturare* ‘catch’ etc.). Finally, *mi* ‘to me’ is unmarked with respect to the speaker, who is the bearer of expectations (the same goes with *ti* ‘to you’, where the bearer of expectations is the hearer). In our account of mirativity, +ZONAL is thus not a sufficient but a necessary feature for mirative markers.

10 Since it is not clear to what extent the CD and the periphrasis with functional TAKE are stackable with other mirative markers, the analysis proposed in this section does not

The syntax of these mirativity markers in Italian has been only partially tackled in previous works, most notably in Greco (2019a; 2019b; 2020a; 2020b) who analyses the structural properties of *Snegs*. The core of his analysis lies in the merging position of negation: when it is merged in the TP, when the *v**P-phase is still active, it negates the propositional content of the *v*P. This derives its canonical reading. Whenever negation is merged in the Left Periphery, when the *v**P-phase is already closed, it cannot reverse the truth-value of the proposition and gets its “expletive” mirative reading. More recently, Tsiakmakis – Espinal (2022) re-interpret Greco’s proposal under the assumption that there are no expletive elements in syntax. They provide a structural representation of a *Snegs* (containing an ED) applying Krifka’s (2020) “cartographic” approach to Speech Acts, which locates several speaker-related projections in the CP domain, while the asserted proposition is contained in the TP. They place negation as right adjoined to the left peripheral head JP, which is the place where the speaker’s expectations are represented. In this way, negation is not expletive at all, as its function is that of reversing the speaker’s expectation (which produces the mirative reading). What is contained in the TP is thus the content that is deemed surprising by the speaker. The representation of Tsiakmakis – Espinal’s proposal is given in (7).

- (7) a. E non mi è scesa dal treno Maria?!
and not to-me is got off.the train Mary
‘Mary got off the train!’
- b. [ActP [Act ASSERT] [ComP [Com -] [JP [J non-J-] [FocP mi è scesa dal treno Maria [Foc ∅] [TP ~~mi è scesa dal treno Maria~~]]]]]

Our proposal is generally in line with Tsiakmakis – Espinal’s (2022) model. However, we propose a slightly different formalisation, as their account treats the ED like an ordinary clitic. This leads to both an empirical and a logical problem. The former is the fact that treating the ED as an ordinary clitic does not explain why the ED cannot cliticise with other clitics, as in (8). The option (8b), with the direct and the oblique pronouns encliticised onto the infinitive, is possible for speakers from Northern Italy, but it is perceived as weird by speakers from Southern Italy (hence the ‘?’

tackle these two strategies. A complete model also integrating them is left for future research.

at the beginning). In any case, even for speakers from Southern Italy, (8b) sounds definitely better than (8c) and (8d). Furthermore, the ED cannot appear lower than the other clitics (8e).¹¹

- (8) Context: I am telling a friend that my brother took a bath in the dirty water that was left after his dog's bath.
- a. Non mi [ci si] va a lavare?!
NEG ED STRUM= REFL= GO.3SG to wash.INF
- b. ?Non mi va a lavar[cisi]?!
NEG ED GO.3SG to wash.INF+STRUM=REFL=
- d. *Non [mi si] va a lavar[ci]?!
NEG ED REFL= GO.3SG to wash.INF-STRUM=
- 'He up and took a bath in it (= the dirty water)!'
- e. *Non [ci si] va a lavar[mi]?!
NEG STRUM= REFL= GO.3SG to wash.INF-ED=

The logical problem of treating the ED as part of the propositional content of the sentence is that it leads to a semantic contradiction. The content of the TP is what is deemed surprising by the speaker, but the ED is

11 An anonymous reviewer wonders how the examples in (i)–(iii) would be analyzed under the present account. In fact, these are cases of imperatives (hence requiring the activation of the higher part of the syntactic tree) and feature a non-mirative use of what we define here as mirative strategies (ED in (i)–(ii), and GO in (iii)).

- (i) Cammina-mi da solo forza!
walk.IMPER.2SG-ED= by yourself come-on
'Come on, walk by yourself!'
- (ii) Vinci-mi il primo premio!
win.IMPER.2SG-ED= the first prize
'Win the first prize!'
- (iii) Vai / Vieni a prendere la colazione.
go.IMPER.2SG come.IMPER.2SG to take.INF the breakfast
'Go/Come to take your breakfast.'

The examples (i)–(ii) are instances of benefactive use of the ED (see Section 2), where *mi* expresses the idea that the action expressed by the predicate would be beneficial (i.e., would have positive effects) for the speaker as well. As for (iii), it features a literal use of GO and COME as motion verbs. However, being non-mirative sentences, (i)–(iii) fall outside the scope of the present paper.

itself a mirative strategy. This would lead to a situation in which the speaker commits to the surprising content of a proposition that is itself marked as surprising. This would thus cancel out the mirative reading.

To obviate the two problems just outlined, we propose that the ED is adjoined to the tensed verb at a later stage (as it does not enter the thematic relations instantiated by the lexical verb). At the same time, ED must be contained within the TP as it can appear in a low position, i.e., in enclisis on the infinitive form of the lexical verb (9).

- (9) Non va a mangiar-mi l' ultima fetta di torta?!
 NEG GO.3SG to eat.INF-ED.1SG the last slice of cake
 '(S)he ate the last slice of cake!'

As mentioned in Section 2, the kind of relation that the ED encodes is one of inclusion between the speaker and their expectations, contrary to what happens with the other mirative markers taken into account here. Recall that it can be used as the only mirative strategy (as in (2a)) still achieving the relevant mirative interpretation of the sentence. Where does the surprise effect of the ED (i.e., the negation of expectations discussed in (5) and (6)) come from? We contend that the surprise effect in this case arises from a mismatch between the appearance of the ED and the thematic grid of the verb. In fact, the ED can appear with any verb, and the mirative interpretation is generally achieved with those predicates that neither select an indirect object nor a benefactive.¹² The appearance of the ED in a predicate that does not select it thus derives its mirative interpretation. The fact that it is not selected by the predicate sets the ED apart from the other clitics, despite occurring TP-internally. Before providing a general and complete picture of the mirative strategies, we also need to account for the presence of the mirative GO *a*InfCo construction.

12 This explains why the ED does not have a mirative reading when appearing with predicates that select it, as in (i)-(ii).

- (i) Mi ha dato il libro!
 to-me has given the book
 'He gave me the book (#to my surprise)!'
- (ii) Mi ha comprato una borsa!
 to-me has bought a purse
 #'(S)he bought a purse (to my surprise)!'

The InfCo featuring the connecting element *a* (*a*InfCo) in Italian has been the object of investigation in seminal work by Rizzi (1982) and Cinque (2001; 2006). Such a construction featuring the functional V1 GO has been investigated in Cardinaletti – Giusti (2001; 2003; 2020) (for a recent overview, see Giusti – Cardinaletti 2022). The aforementioned approaches to (GO) *a*InfCos agree on the monoclausal nature of such constructions, although Rizzi (1982) talks about monoclausality only in the presence of clitic climbing (but see Manzini – Savoia 2005; Manzini – Lorusso 2022, a. o., for a generalised biclausal analysis of such constructions). In particular, Cinque (2006: 33) argues that restructuring verbs are functional heads that enter monoclausal constructions: he analyses the andative *venire* ‘come’ (parallel to the andative *andare* ‘go’) as a functional verb merged in the TP-internal projection AndativeP, as in (10a) (from Cinque 2006: 13). The analogous behaviour of *venire* ‘come’ and *andare* ‘go’ (in such a context) can be seen in the parallel example (10b) showing that *andare* occupies the same position of *venire* ‘come’ in (10a).

- (10) a. [_{CP} io [_{AndativeP} ti verrò [_{VP} a parlare di questi problemi.]]]]
I you come.FUT.1SG to talk.INF of these problems
‘I will come to talk to you about these problems.’
b. [_{CP} Io [_{AndativeP} le andrò [_{VP} a parlare di questi problemi.]]]]
I her go.FUT.1SG to talk.INF of these problems
‘I will go to talk to her about these problems.’

The case in (10b) is that of GO retaining its andative semantics. In the mirative GO *a*InfCo, however, there is evidence that GO is higher than its base position in AndativeP as it can precede other andative verbs like *partire* ‘to leave’ (cf. (11a))¹³. Moreover, mirative GO is higher than Asp_{terminative}, one of the highest TP projections according to Cinque’s (2006: 89) hierarchy, exemplified in (11b) by the verb *finire* ‘to finish’. Since GO does not affect the *Aktionsart*

13 That of the acceptability of a lexical motion verb preceded by functional (mirative) GO is a question that certainly deserves further investigation. In fact, it seems that there is some intergenerational variation so that older speakers tend to refuse sentences like (10a) (this is why the example is marked by ?), while younger speakers, whose Italian feature a more grammaticalised GO, tend to accept it more often. This may be also a matter of diatopic variation. For some speakers, because of the contact effect of some Italo-Romance varieties such as Sicilian, where functional GO is very productive, (10a) may be more acceptable than for others.

of the event expressed by the lexical verb but still bears the relevant Tense features (that locate the event in time), we propose that it originates in a high position of the split TP, simplistically labeled F-TP (to generically indicate a functional projection in the TP) in (11c). Furthermore, the higher position of functional GO is in line with the process of grammaticalisation described by Roberts – Roussou (2003) as a shift upwards in the functional hierarchy.

- (11) a. ?Gianni è andato a partire per Ibiza senza dire niente!
 John is gone to leave.INF for Ibiza without say.INF nothing
 ‘John up and left for Ibiza without saying anything!’
 b. Maria è andata a finire la serie TV senza di me!
 Mary is gone to finish.INF the TV-series without of me
 ‘Mary up and finished the TV series without me!’
 c. [_{F-TP} è andata [_{TP} [_{TerminativeP} a finire_i [_{VP} t_i la serie TV]]]]

This straightforwardly leads to two theoretical advantages. First, mirative GO is still in the TP, which explains why it bears the Tense of the event. Second, conceiving of F-TP as a sort of left edge position in the TP guarantees that mirative GO in that position is accessible to the higher CP domain, hence relating the semantics of GO to the speaker-related projections. The resulting representation with NEG, ED, and GO is given in (12) in a quite simplified way (leaving out the FocP posited in Tsiakmakis – Espinal 2022).

- (12) [_{ActP} [_{Act} ASSERT] [_{CompP} [_{Comp} t-] [_{JP} [_J non-J-] [_{F-TP} mi è andata [_{TP} a scendere dal treno Maria]]

Given the account sketched in (12), two issues still remain to be tackled: (i) the fact that mirative ED and GO are TP-internal but they do not contribute to the propositional content of the sentence inside the TP itself, and (ii) the absence of redundancy despite the presence of multiple stacked strategies.

Let us start from (i). NEG, being merged in the left periphery, is not part of the TP, hence is straightforwardly excluded from the propositional content of the sentence. Mirative ED and GO are also excluded from it, although being merged TP-internally. We contend that their behaviour is in line with expressives (e.g., *damn* in English), i.e., those elements triggering conventional implicatures (CIs; see Potts 2005). The key features of CIs and elements triggering them are given in what follows:

- CIs “are speaker-oriented comments on a semantic core (at-issue entailments)” (Potts 2005: 11), alternatively defined as “comments upon an asserted core” (*ibid.*: 57). This is trivially true for the surprise effect triggered by mirative ED and GO, which comment on the propositional content of the TP which is asserted.
- CIs cannot be negotiated or cancelled. Indeed, completing the utterance in (11b) by adding *ma non sono sorpreso* ‘but I am not surprised’ would be infelicitous. The same result would be obtained if the hearer answered *Non è vero, non sei sorpreso!* ‘It’s not true, you are not surprised!’.
- Elements triggering CIs are integrated as regular modifiers into the syntactic structure. This holds for mirative ED (which can even appear in enclisis on the infinitive, as in (9)) and GO as well, as they are parentheticals neither prosodically nor syntactically.

Given their integration into the syntactic structure, mirative ED and GO must then provide some clues to allow the hearer to individuate them as elements triggering CIs. We contend that this clue is provided by the mismatch between their appearance and the properties of predicate. As anticipated before, mirative ED is not included in the thematic grid of the verbs it co-occurs with: this discrepancy easily allows the hearer to recognize it as a CI-triggering element. The same holds for mirative GO, which forms periphrases with verbs that are incompatible with its andative semantics (see (11a,b)).¹⁴ This mismatch is a clue pointing towards the interpretation of mirative GO as an element triggering a CI.

The discussion laid out so far provides an answer to issue (ii). At a first glance, the stacked mirative markers contradict Chomsky’s (1995) Principle of Full Interpretation: if every instance of mirative marker were to be interpreted this would lead to a perceived redundancy. However, this is not the case. The pragmatic component just introduced with CIs provides a way out to this puzzle. In fact, since mirative elements contribute to the non-at-issue content, it is expected that they can co-occur. This leads to the consideration that mirativity is not a semantic feature associated to

14 Note that, just like the ED loses its mirative interpretation in predicates where it is selected (see fn.12), GO cannot be interpreted as a mirative marker when entering periphrases where the V2 is compatible with its andative semantics (i).

(i) Gianni è andato a prendere il gelato!

Gianni is gone to take.INF the ice.cream

‘Gianni went to get ice-cream (#to my surprise)!’

every mirative marker, but it is rather a pragmatic inference (see also Michelioudakis 2016) arising as a by-product of the manipulation of the speaker's expectations. Having no interpretable feature associated with them in syntax, the stacked mirative markers are prevented from being redundantly interpreted. The problem of Full Interpretability is thus only apparent. The only possible interpretive effect that one could get is a major emphasis of the surprise effect when more markers are stacked. This, again, arises from more general pragmatic principles.

4. Identifying founding features in mirative settings

Let us now focus on the mirative setting as a whole, including the relation between the speaker and the subjects involved in the mirative act. The scenario proposed in (1) can be analysed by identifying some features that may affect the mirative output of the reported speech. In (1), the degree of emotional involvement of the speaker is low, since they are witnessing an event involving two people they had never seen before. Moreover, the witness is not physically affected by the outcome of the mirative event. We can then notate this with the feature [-emotional involvement]. The act of slapping in the event can be coded by a [+agentivity] feature, since that mirative event requires an agent theta-role (not an experiencer). Furthermore, the event is carried out by a [+animate], [+human] agent, and there is no coreference between the speaker and the mirative agent ([-coreference]). Finally, the mirative event can be noted as [-positive] as regards the feelings related to the surprise effect (see Section 1).¹⁵

In Di Caro (2023), more mirative scenarios are considered. In one of them (cf. (13)), the speaker is furious because the horse they bet on during a historic race fell right at the last turn while leading, costing them a great amount of money. In the qualitative interviews that preceded the questionnaire, most informants pointed out that the mirative strategy they would choose to describe this event would be different according to the subject of the falling being human. In another case proposed (cf. (14)), the speaker's best friend notices, with great joy, that her beloved aunt from Canada managed to resolve her visa issues at the last minute and be present for her niece's thesis defence.

15 On the contrary, for example, the blonde suddenly hugging the dark-haired person, being the two perfect strangers, would be labelled as [+positive], since acts of sudden kindness generally cause positive feelings in the observer.



In this scenario, implying a [+positive] surprise, the relevant features are [-emotional involvement], since the speaker is passively witnessing the fact, and [-agentivity], since the act of noticing regards an experiencer. In this latter case, some informants agreed on the fact that some mirative strategies would sound unsuitable or even excessive.

- (13) a. Il cavallo è andato a cadere proprio all' ultima curva!
 the horse is gone to fall.INF right at.the last turn
 'Unexpectedly, my friend saw her aunt Adelaide among her relatives.'
- b. *Il cavallo prende e cade proprio all' ultima curva!
 the horse TAKE and fall.INF right at.the last turn
 'The horse went and fell right at the last turn!'
- (14) a. La mia amica non vede sua zia Adelaide tra i
 the my friend NEG sees her aunt Adelaide among the
 parenti?!
 relatives
- b. *La mia amica non va a vedere sua zia Adelaide tra
 the my friend NEG GO to see.INF her aunt Adelaide among
 i parenti?!
 the relatives
 'Unexpectedly, my friend saw her aunt Adelaide among her relatives.'

Let us consider now a further scenario characterised by the coreference between the speaker and the mirative agent ([+coreference]). The speaker is the active protagonist of the event: during the very last minute of a local football tournament final match, the protagonist, a top scorer in the tournament, has the chance to score the easiest of goals and equalise the match, since the goalkeeper has left their goal unattended, and the defenders are too distant. They only have to tap the ball into the net but they fail to score, and the ball goes out, very close to the goalpost. Such a scenario, which is [+negative] as the speaker expresses regret, could justify more than others the presence of a CD, in order for the speaker to engage the interlocutor and share their bad feelings about the missed opportunity. Moreover, it could most likely resort to mirative GO, since movement is included in the event.

All this considered, it might be possible that different mirative settings, i.e. settings with differing mirative features, can show a preference for some strategies or the ban of specific mirative marker combinations. This is definitely an intriguing avenue for further research on mirativity.

5. Conclusions and open questions for future research

In this paper we have highlighted a phenomenon regarding mirativity in Italian that has gone unnoticed, namely the possibility for different mirative markers to co-occur. In Section 2 we have resorted to a zonal (i.e. spatial) interpretation *à la* Manzini – Savoia (2015; 2017) to account for the mirative properties of each element presented in Section 1. By means of a ‘featural’ syncretism of the different markers, each of which contains a +ZONAL feature, the mirative semantics is obtained. On the basis of this, we have sketched a feature geometry *à la* Harley – Ritter (2002) for mirative markers.

In Section 3 we have proposed a syntactic analysis according to which the mirative effects of the markers analysed do not depend on their semantic encoding in the functional heads of sentence spine (cf. Cinque 2006). Starting from Tsiakmakis – Espinal’s (2022) proposal (in turn based on Krifka’s 2020 Speech Act framework), we have provided a general picture to account for the co-occurrence of the different mirative markers. In particular, we have adopted Tsiakmakis – Espinal’s (2022) proposal that NEG is left-adjoined to JP, which is the projection containing the set of propositions in the speaker’s universe. Mirative GO was shown to be higher than the highest TP projections, hence we have proposed that it sits in a left edge TP position that we have tentatively labelled F-TP. Mirative ED was also shown to be TP-internal, left adjoined to the tensed verb (or enclitic on the infinitive). The fact that mirative ED and GO do not contribute to the at-issue content was derived from their nature as elements triggering Conventional Implicatures (CIs). Given this picture, we have argued that mirativity is not a syntactic feature. It rather stems as a pragmatic inference that arises as a by-product of the syntactic manipulation of the speaker’s expectations. For this reason, no redundancy arises when stacking multiple markers (as there are no mirative features to be interpreted, and because CI-triggering elements contribute to the non-at-issue content).

In Section 4 we have considered the possibility to explore different mirative settings that could, in principle, allow for a given set of mirative

markers and disallow others. It is also noteworthy that the mirative scenario we have mainly focussed our discussion on in this paper lends itself to the combination of several mirative markers in Standard Italian, but in regional Italians this richness of forms is seldom achieved. This may in part depend on the contact effect with the other local Italo-Romance varieties that present differing mirative repertoires. In Sicilian, for instance, the extensive use of the Ethical Dative with different classes of verbs, such as consumption verbs, has disfavoured ED as a mirative strategy (cf. Di Caro et al. in prep.).

A look at the diatopic variation regarding mirative strategies in Italy would then be of great help to understand the phenomenon of mirative stackability more in depth.

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