Mirativity without contradiction or exclamation in Guaraní ra’e

The purpose of this talk is to provide a semantic analysis of the mirative evidential element ra’e of Guaraní (Tupian; Paraguay, Argentina, Bolivia and Brazil). Ra’e, described as “non-expected evidential marker” by Tonhauser (2006) and considered to be various types of past in earlier sources (“perfect or pluperfect” in Guasch 1956; “recent past” in Melià et al 1958, 69, 139; “past” in Gregores and Suárez 1967, 144), has inferential evidential, mirative, and [relative] past senses, cf. (1)-(3), often overlapping.

(1)  O-u Pablo ra’e.  2ACT-come Pablo RA’E  ‘Pablo came.’ [Infelicitous if the speaker saw Pablo’s arrival]

(2)  Rei-kove nipo ra’e!  2sg.ACT-live PART RA’E  ‘[So] you are [still] alive!’

(3)  A-topa aratirí o-trosa ra’e la tajy  1sg.ACT-find lightning 3ACT-crack RA’E DET tabebuia  ‘I found that lightning had cracked the tabebuia tree.’

We claim that ra’e is essentially a mirative operator. Mirativity is descriptively defined as indicating that a proposition is new or surprising (DeLancey 1997), and has been formalized (cf., e.g., Rett and Murray 2013) as containing exclamatory illocutionary force and contradicting a previous expectation. In such an approach, miratives are roughly what is seen in (4). We claim that the mirativity of Guaraní ra’e is better approximated by (5), which lacks exclamatory force, and simply encodes acquisition of the evidence that allows the speaker to believe a proposition. This is semi-formalized in two independent postulates in (6).

(4)  Gee, he came! [I expected him not to come.]

(5)  [I didn’t know this previously, but now] it turns out that he has a new car.

(6) a.  \( \lambda P.\lambda t.\exists t’<t. \text{ the speaker acquires evidence at } t \text{ that is sufficient to believe that } P(t’)=1 \)

b.  the speaker’s previous belief is not sufficient to assert \( P(t’) \)

Such formulation allows us to account for the fact that the speaker’s surprise can be anchored in a time other than the present, as in (7), which, in line with previous work on Bulgarian (Smirnova 2013) and Korean (Lee 2012) evidentials, could be called Evidence Acquisition Time (see also Fleck 2007 for an application of a similar notion to Matsés inferential evidentials).

(7)  A-sê-rô-guare trabajhó-há-gui la partido o-pá-ma ra’e  1sg.ACT-exit-when-PAST work-place-from the game 3ACT-end-already RA’E  ‘When I exited work, [it turned out] the game had already ended.’

(8)  [ the game ended ra’e ] = the speaker acquires evidence at \( t^* \) that the game ended at some time \( t’<t^* \), where \( t^* \) is set by the temporal adjunct when I exited.

In fact, ra’e is such that the evidence that changes the speaker’s belief has to be indirect. However close this makes ra’e to an indirect evidential, the mirative component of ra’e is necessary to explain the fact that it can’t be used as a pure narrative evidential, i.e. as neutral regarding the speaker’s attitude: whenever ra’e appears in sentences like (1), something is said about the speaker’s previous belief or expectation. We claim that what gives ra’e its inferential flavour is the requirement of non-simultaneity between the event itself and the acquisition of the evidence that the event occurred: a sentence of the form “\( p \) ra’e” always includes the claim that \( p \) is believed true before the reference time, but the evidence for its truth is only available at reference time. As such, though for unbounded eventualities (9) it appears that the evidence can be direct, the norm is that the direct evidence available is only for the result of an eventuality, with the eventuality itself only being inferred (10). In that vein, for cases such as (9), we contend that the eventuality at issue (i.e., that for which evidence is freshly acquired) is in the past, even if its continuation into the present is
identical. It is never possible to use ra’e to indicate an inference about an ongoing event that is not, like (9), stative or unbounded.

(9) rei-kove ra’e
    2sg.ACT-live RA ‘[It turns out that] you are (still) alive.’

(10) # re-ju ra’e
    2sg.ACT-come RA ‘[It turns out that] you are coming.’ (only ‘[It turns out that] you came.’)

Inferential evidentiality therefore goes hand in hand with mirativity as defined in (6). As for mirativity itself, the strength of the surprise and the existence of a contradiction with previous beliefs can be modulated independently in matrix clauses with the emphatic particles nipo (nimbo, mbo) and niko (ningo, ngo), which, marking a focalized constituent, have a role in constructing a set of (more likely) alternatives to the proposition from which the countered expectation arises.

Finally, we claim that the purely temporal reading of ra’e, apparent in (3), occurs where evidence can only be indirect and the evidential character of ra’e is thus redundant. This is the case with verbs such as topa “find”, which in themselves denote the acquisition of evidence, and when ra’e is under the scope of a conjectural, in counterfactuals, or in questions:

(11) a. O-i-ne oficina-pe ra’e
    3ACT-be-CONJ office-LOC RA ‘(S)he must have been at the office.’
b. O-i-ne oficina-pe
    3ACT-be-CONJ office-LOC
    ‘(S)he must be at the office.’

(12) a. Oi-kuaa-rire he’i mo’a ndéve ra’e
    3ACT-know-if.PAST 3ACT.say WOULD 2sg.DAT RA ‘If (s)he knew it, (s)he would have told it to you.’
b. Oi-kuaa-rire he’i mo’a ndéve
    3ACT-know-if.PAST 3ACT.say WOULD 2sg.DAT
    ‘If (s)he knew it, (s)he would tell it to you.’

(13) Moō-pa re-i ra’e?
    where-part 2sg-be RA ‘Where have you been?’ (cf. Moōpa rei ‘Where are you?’)


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