Mirativity in Ch’ol: The Clitic =ME

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Following Aikhenvald’s (2012) typology of mirative flavors, I propose the Ch’ol (Mayan) enclitic =ME is a non-parasitic mirative that expresses the speaker’s or addressee’s ‘unprepared mind’ in an assertion. Information does not a need to be new or recent. Miratives are typologically associated with evidential markers, especially when they are parasitic on evidentials. Evidentials may participate in ‘interrogative flips’ where they become addressee-oriented in interrogatives instead of speaker-oriented in languages such as Cheyenne, but associated parasitic miratives cannot participate in a similar flip (Rett & Murray 2013). However, a flip in non-parasitic miratives dependent on sentential mood is a rather contentious subject. I do not propose a mirative flip, but data shows a restriction of use dependent on sentential mood. In interrogatives such as (1), the ‘unprepared mind’ is consistently speaker-oriented.

(1) Context: A person passes by a charcoaled tree.
Bajche=ME tyi pujl-i jini tye’?
‘How ME PERF burn.PASS-IV DET tree
‘How did that tree burn!?’

On the other hand, in imperative constructions such as (2) the mirative =ME has overtones of precaution or warning. Moreover, in combinations with the previously proposed QUD operator enclitic =KU (cf. Fernández Guerrero 2018), =ME softens commands encoded in imperatives.

(2) Context: A mother warns her child he should obey her.
Jak’-be^n=OÞ=ME
‘Obey me!’

Following AnderBois’s (to appear) treatment of Yucatec Maya bakáan, I believe the asymmetry witnessed between declaratives and non-declaratives in regards to the use of the Ch’ol mirative has to do with the kinds of updates that these different sentential moods encode. Specifically, while the declarative has a ‘dual update’ of the Common Ground and the speaker’s individual speaker commitments, non-declaratives have one kind of update: a proposal to update the shared effective preferences EP\{spkr,addr\} for imperatives and a proposal to update the QUD\{spkr,addr\} for interrogatives. I depart from his analysis in that the mirative in Ch’ol does not encode ‘revelation’, but rather ‘unprepared mind.’ I use this distinction in mirative flavor to orient the mirative use on the speaker for interrogatives and on the addressee for imperatives.

Works Cited