

A contrastive analysis of mirative markers derived from verbs of propositional attitude in Hungarian and Norwegian

Surprise as propositional attitude may be expressed by means of a complex sentence with a factive predicate whose complement proposition is presupposed, as in *It surprised her that nothing was stolen*, but surprise may also be expressed by means of markers of **mirativity** (by some regarded as a subcategory of evidentiality, by others not – cf. Aikhenvald’s 2004 monograph *Evidentiality*), both when the content is presented as part of the speech participants’ common ground, as in *Imagine having to sit in that position for hours!*, and also, probably more typically, when the propositional content of the utterance is asserted – in (i) a spontaneous verbal reaction of surprise at some stimulus, or in (ii) a report of something unexpected that the speaker experienced in the past, as in (i) *Wow, there are three dolphins out there!* or (ii) *Guess what, Jim has left his wife!*.

In languages that do not encode an attitude of surprise by means of inflection (‘mirative mood’), expressions that are functionally equivalent to mirative affixes are often fully or partially grammaticalized items historically derived from verbs that encode concepts related to imagination or reflection/pondering. This is true of the utterance-initial expressions *képzeld* (‘imagine’) in Hungarian and *tenk* in Norwegian, derived from the 2nd p.sg. imperative *képzeld* of the Hungarian verb *el-kép-zel* (verbal particle-‘picture’-denominal suffix) and from the imperative form *tenk* of the Norwegian verb *tenke* (‘think’), respectively. The present paper examines the degree of grammaticalization that these forms have undergone and the formal and functional similarities as well as differences between *képzeld* and *tenk* as mirative markers in spoken discourse. Special attention is given to their information-structural properties.

The parenthesized forms are optional in the Hungarian sentence (1), but *képzeld* is a more explicit marker of a spontaneous, and sometimes emphatic, surprise or unpreparedness reaction on the part of the speaker when the shorter form without *el, hogy* is used.

(1) *Képzeld-d* (el, hogy) *megette az egész tortát!*
 imagine-2nd p.sg.IMP (PART COMPL) PART-ate the whole cake-ACC

- i. ‘My God, he has eaten the whole cake!’
 (The form without *el, hogy*, is preferred for this reading, but it is not mandatory.)
- ii. ‘Imagine that he has eaten the whole cake.’ (i.e. conjure up a mental image of that scene)
 (This reading mandates the longer form *képzeld el, hogy* ...)

The shorter form *képzeld* is very close to having reached a stage of total separation from the verb and having taken on a new lexical role as mirative marker, the encoder of an attitude of surprise at the state of affairs described in the complement of *képzeld*. The kind of speech act associated with the longer form *képzeld el, hogy* ..., however, seems to vacillate between an act of encouraging the hearer to imagine a situation where the male referent has eaten the entire cake and an expression of surprise at the state of affairs described in the complement. We have no empirical evidence to support the assumption that *képzeld* alone and *képzeld el, hogy* have complementary patterns of distribution in Hungarian conversation, although we would claim that there are tendencies toward mutually exclusive semantic values for *képzeld* without complementizer and *képzeld* plus the verbal particle *el* and the complementizer *hogy*.

In Norwegian, (2a) with a left-detached particle *tenk* and a (main clause) declarative, (2b) where *tenk* is integrated in the sentence structure and is followed by a finite complement clause,

and (2c) where *tenk* is followed by an infinitival complement, all those syntactic differences have quite specific semantic consequences and pragmatic implications.

- (2) a. *Tenk, han har spist hele kaka!*
 ‘Gee, he has eaten the whole cake!’
 b. *Tenk at han har spist hele kaka!*
 ‘His having eaten the whole cake, that’s amazing, don’t you think!’
 c. *Tenk å spise en hel kake!*
 ‘Imagine eating a whole cake!’

Only the first of these mirative constructions, (2a), finds a counterpart in Hungarian. (1) and (2a) both communicate a singular thought about a uniquely identifiable man, represented in the complement of *képzeld/tenk*, as well as the speaker’s attitude of surprise at the state of affairs represented. (2b) also expresses a singular thought about a specific man but the finite clausal complement in (2b) conveys the speaker’s assumption that the truth-conditional content is mutually known information, the only new information being the communicated surprise at what is presented as a discourse-given fact. (2c) expresses a general thought. *Tenk* + infinitival clause complement communicates an attitude of surprise directed at whatever state of affairs satisfies the description in the complement. The **imperative** *tenk* of the verb *tenke* cannot take an infinitival clause as complement at all in present-day Norwegian, and the 3rd p. reflexive possessive *si* in (3) proves that the subject of *glemme* (‘forget’) is not 2nd p. and that *tenk* is therefore not the imperative of the cognitive verb but a separate lexical item, a mirative particle.

- (3) *Tenk å glemme fødselsdagen til kona si.*
 MIR to forget birthday-DEF to wife **3rd p.REFL**
 ‘Imagine forgetting **one’s** wife’s birthday!’

The mirative particle *tenk* occurs with a number of syntactically different complements, like nominal sentence fragments and yes/no interrogatives, to be illustrated in our paper presentation. All of these complements defy the lexical properties of the verb *tenke*.

Hungarian *képzeld* appears not to have reached a stage of grammaticalization which is as advanced and complete as the result of the process that *tenk* has undergone, and as mirative marker it only modifies propositions that are asserted to be true. In order to render one’s amazement at something mutually known, a mirative interjection like *nahát/nohát* may be used, but not *képzeld*. Still, mirative statements starting with *képzeld* display several formal and functional properties that are incompatible with the rules pertaining to the lexical verb *elképzel*, as we are going to demonstrate. The responses with *képzeld* in (4)-(6) are one example, and these mirative constructions correspond to nothing in Norwegian grammar.

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| (4) A: <i>Megtaláltad a kulcsot?</i> | (5) A: <i>Fájt?</i> | (6) A: <i>Éhes vagy?</i> |
| B: <i>Képzeld, meg.</i> | B: <i>Képzeld, nem.</i> | B: <i>Képzeld, nagyon.</i> |
| MIR yes | MIR no | MIR very |
| ‘A: Have you found the key?’ | ‘A: Did it hurt?’ | ‘A: Are you hungry?’ |
| ‘B: Actually, yes - believe it or not!’ | ‘B: Actually, no!’ | ‘B: Oh, extremely!’ |

B’s verbal reactions in (4)-(6) communicate information requested by A. B’s astonishment is the propositional attitude conveyed in (4) B. Accessible contextual premises will help A decide whether the use of *képzeld* in (5) B is primarily directed at B’s own surprise or at an anticipated surprise reaction attributed to A (when A has processed and understood the utterance). Finally, *képzeld* in (6) B has assumed the function of a marker of emphasis or intensification (agreeing with the degree adverb *nagyon*) which frequently accompanies markers of mirativity in many languages.