



Surprise Ascription of Mirative Adverbs in Chinese

Linguistics Seminars

Date: March 17, 2020 (Tuesday)

Time: 16:30 - 18:15

*** Seminar will be conducted via ZOOM**

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Abstract

Mirativity refers to the grammatical encoding of the meaning of surprise. In Cantonese and Mandarin, surprise is often expressed by mirative adverbs, such as *gingjin/jingran* 竟然 and *jyunloi/yuanlai* 原來. Mirative meaning constitutes a kind of not-at-issue meaning, on a par with expressives, parentheticals, etc. (Potts 2002, 2005). Previous studies often assume without systematic examination that surprise arising from mirative expressions is relative to the speaker's expectation (i.e. speaker-oriented). In this talk, I will argue that while Chinese mirative adverbs often ascribe surprise to the speaker, it is possible, sometimes even obligatory, for these adverbs to ascribe surprise to non-speakers. Evidence will be drawn from the interpretation of mirative adverbs in the complement clause of various attitude predicates. Conditions for speaker- vs. non-speaker-oriented interpretations will be discussed. The findings provide new empirical support to Harris & Potts's (2009) suggestion that not-at-issue meanings are not always speaker-oriented.

Speaker

Prof. Lawrence Cheung received his M.Phil. in Linguistics and M.Sc. in Computer Science from the Chinese University of Hong Kong and his Ph.D. in Linguistics from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) in 2008. Before joining the Department, he was involved in a research study on machine learning approach to computational parsing in English and Chinese. His research interests include syntax, semantics, syntactic typology, and natural language processing. His current research topics include the syntax-phonology interface issues of right dislocation in Chinese, the negative *wh*-construction across languages, *wh*-placeholders in Chinese, corpus annotation and tagging, and unlexicalized syntactic parsing, and Chinese morphology recognition.

ALL ARE WELCOME

Enquiries

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