

Interjections And Emphatic Particles As Markers Of Mirativity In Uzbek And English Languages

Aliyeva Zebo Akram qizi

Doctoral (Phd) candidate at Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages, Uzbekistan

Received: 18 December 2025; **Accepted:** 09 January 2026; **Published:** 13 February 2026

Abstract: This study investigates the function of interjections and emphatic particles in conveying mirativity and subtle emotional expressions in speech. Interjections act as direct indicators of surprise, amazement, or related affective conditions, whereas emphatic particles strengthen the speaker's attitude and underscore the unforeseen nature of occurrences. Through an analysis of illustrative cases from Uzbek and English, the research underscores both shared features and distinctions across languages in the representation of mirativity.

Keywords: Mirativity, interjections, emphatic particles, surprise, astonishment, pragmatics, cross-linguistic comparison.

Introduction: S. DeLancey describes mirativity as encoding the speaker's unprepared state of mind, marking information that is novel, unanticipated, or contradictory to previous expectations. Thus, mirativity extends beyond mere surprise to represent a linguistic reflection of a cognitive shift occurring at the moment of utterance. Aikhenvald similarly characterizes mirative markers as grammatical or lexical elements that indicate sudden discovery, newfound awareness, or information received while speaking. F. Haan defined mirativity as a grammatical tendency that expresses the listener's surprise in response to new information, a message, or an unexpected event. According to Plungian, the distinction between mirativity and evidentiality is not direct but rather indirect. Typically, mirativity is expressed through introductory words with a strong modal character (Plungian, 2001). Mirativity can be conveyed in both Uzbek and English through interjections and exclamatory intonation, though the specific linguistic forms and their frequency of use vary between the languages. In Uzbek, affective interjections like *voy*, *obbo*, *dod*, *voydod*, *o'hho'*, *iye*, *eh*, *uh*, *oh* often serve as discourse-pragmatic markers. With suitable intonation, they can indicate surprise, sudden awareness, or unexpected information. For instance: *Voy! Sen ham shu yerda ekansan!* ("Oh! You are here

too!")

Here, "*voy*" together with exclamatory intonation communicates the speaker's unexpected realization. English likewise employs interjections such as *oh*, *wow*, *gosh*, *goodness*, *what!*, *really?*, *oh my God!* to express mirative meaning when reacting to new or surprising information:

Oh! You're here! Wow! I didn't expect that!

In these cases, *oh* and *wow* act as markers of sudden recognition or surprise, thereby carrying mirative force.

It should be noted, however, that interjections in both languages are multifunctional and do not inherently denote mirativity. For example, English "*oh*" can indicate disappointment (*Oh... I see.*), hesitation, or simple acknowledgment rather than surprise. Similarly, Uzbek "*eh*" may convey dissatisfaction or regret instead of unexpectedness. Consequently, mirative interpretation depends significantly on contextual and prosodic signals. From a comparative standpoint, in Uzbek language, there are typically a broader range of emotionally expressive interjections in daily conversation, frequently paired with marked intonation. English, on the other hand, often utilizes syntactic strategies—such as exclamative constructions like *What a surprise!* or *How strange!*—or prosodic emphasis, rather than a diverse set of interjectional forms. The semantic and pragmatic range of the Uzbek

interjection “oh” can be further elucidated through the theoretical lens of mirativity, as introduced by DeLancey (1997, 2001) and expanded upon by Aikhenvald (2004, 2012).

Look this framework which is applied in Uzbek language:

“Oh, naqadar go’zal manzara!”

“Oh, nelarni solding boshimga!”

“Oh urarman, ohlarim ursin seni!”

The interjection “oh” does not possess an inherent mirative meaning. Instead, a mirative reading emerges when it captures the speaker’s immediate cognitive or emotional response to newly apprehended information. In the initial example, “oh” acts as a marker of positive mirativity, expressing the speaker’s spontaneous admiration upon encountering an unexpectedly striking scene. This aligns with DeLancey’s concept of the “unprepared mind,” where the speaker confronts unforeseen information. Conversely, in the second and third examples, “oh” conveys sorrow, regret, or emotional agitation. Although these expressions are highly emotive, they do not constitute pure mirativity unless they involve an instant of sudden recognition. In these instances, the interjection mainly serves as an emotional intensifier rather than a prototypical mirative marker.

Consequently, from a theoretical standpoint, mirativity in Uzbek is not lexically anchored in particular interjections. It instead emerges from the interplay among: the speaker’s viewpoint, epistemic position, emotional response, and discourse setting. This observation reinforces Aikhenvald’s (2004) contention that mirativity may be conveyed through diverse grammatical or lexical devices, including interjections, yet its interpretation is ultimately shaped by pragmatic and cognitive considerations. Thus, the Uzbek interjection “oh” functions as a polyfunctional pragmatic marker whose mirative significance is contextually determined rather than intrinsically encoded.

In Uzbek introductory terms like nahot(ki), tavba, obbo, vojabo, hatto, hattoki utilize as discourse-pragmatic elements that trigger mirative interpretations. These items often indicate disbelief, admiration, frustration, or emotional assessment, commonly reflecting an abrupt shift in awareness.

For example: “Tavba! Bunaqa chiroyli qizni umrim bino bo’lib ko’rmaganman! Qalamda tortilgandek qoshlari, yonib turgan qop-qora xumor ko’zlar, sutday oppoq yuz, ingizcha iyagidagi mitti xoli, angishvonadek og’zi -hammasi ataylab chizib qo’yilgan suratga o’xshaydi. (O’tkir Hoshimov, “Ikki eshik orasi”. P. 79)

In this instance, “tavba” conveys admiration alongside astonishment. The mirative sense emerges from the speaker’s unanticipated recognition of beauty.

In English, comparable meanings are expressed through lexical expressions such as:

Really?, Is it possible that...?, Can it be that...?, Even..., What a...!, How...!

For example: “Really? Is that Kamol?” “Can it really be him?”

“What a beautiful girl!”

In Uzbek emphatic particles like -ku, -ya, -a are used to express a contrast between expectation and reality. These particles reinforce statements and often imply that the information contradicts earlier assumptions.

Example: -Ana shu-da! O’zingiz ham bilar ekansiz-ku! Orif aka o’sha do’q ohangda tutaqib davom etdi. (Asqad Muxtor, “Chinor”. P. 109)

The particle -ku underscores mutual knowledge while subtly indicating surprise or mild reproach. The mirative effect arises from the implied contrast between what was presumed and what is now understood.

Consistent with Aikhenvald (2004), languages that lack dedicated mirative morphology often rely on lexical and discourse strategies. Uzbek shows partial pragmatic conventionalization of mirative markers (e.g., nahotki), while English exhibits greater reliance on syntactic and intonational methods.

In summary, interjections in both Uzbek and English operate as lexical-pragmatic tools that can express mirativity. Their mirative meaning, however, is not grammatically inherent but arises from the interplay of semantics, pragmatics, and intonation within discourse. Mirative expressions in Uzbek and English can both employ lexical markers, discourse particles, and prosodic features. Nevertheless, the two languages exhibit notable differences in their structural implementation and level of grammaticalization. Both Uzbek and English lack a fully grammaticalized mirative category similar to the evidential systems present in certain languages. However, Uzbek displays a more extensive inventory of discourse particles and lexicalized markers that directly signal speaker surprise or disbelief. English, in contrast, disperses mirative meaning across syntax, prosody, and pragmatic inference.

In both languages, mirativity ultimately arises from: speaker perspective, epistemic stance, emotional assessment, and the factor of unexpectedness. Therefore, mirativity is most accurately understood as a pragmatic-cognitive category manifested through language-specific structural means, rather than as a

universally grammaticalized category.

REFERENCES

1. DeLancey, S. On the origins of mirativity // Studies in Language. — 1977. — Vol. 1, No. 1. — P. 33.
2. DeLancey, Scott. Towards a Typology of Evidentiality and Mirativity. — In: Evidentiality: The Linguistic Encoding of Epistemology, ed. by Wallace Chafe & Johanna Nichols. — Amsterdam / Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2001. — P. 370.
3. Aikhenvald, Alexandra Y. Evidentiality. — Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. — Pp. 195–216.
4. de Haan, Ferdinand. The Cognitive Basis of Visual Evidentials // Conceptual and Discourse Factors in Linguistic Structure, edited by Alan Cienki, Barbara J. Luka & Michael B. Smith. — Stanford: CSLI Publications, 2001 — Pp. 91–106.
5. Plungian, V. A. (2001). Mirativity: Linguistic realization of the speaker's surprise. Linguistic Typology, 5(1), 33–76.
6. Aikhenvald, A. Y. (2012). The essence of mirativity. Linguistic Typology, 16(3), 435–485. DOI:10.1515/lingty-2012-0017
7. <https://share.google/aimode/hqvldwXFPMhB6z37s>
8. <https://share.google/aimode/ql11P0UdxQgsRHIIH>
9. <https://share.google/aimode/XRPHe7aS7zpsw673b>
10. <https://share.google/aimode/Ty7vuUoHNXPtRYxjN>