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Morpho-pragmatic Faithfulness Interacts with Phonological Markedness in Appalachian A-prefixing

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Abstract

This paper examines so-called a-prefixing in the speech of dialect speakers living in Appalachia. Building on existing empirical work, and leveraging results from a GoldVarb analysis, I posit the a-prefix realizes a morpho-pragmatic feature which expresses a range of related meanings, including surprise, unexpectedness, and newsworthiness. This range of meanings is encompassed in the linguistic category mirativity. The prefix is therefore suggested to spell out the feature [MIRATIVE]. Variable insertion of the a-prefix is blocked when the base does not meet certain phonological requirements. In particular, prefixing is blocked with forms beginning with a lax vowel (*'a-ask-ing'), and with forms possessing non-initial stress (*'a-discover-ing'). A formal, Optimality-Theoretic (OT) analysis of the interaction of morpheme insertion and phonological markedness is provided.

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1 Introduction

So-called a-prefixing involves variable insertion of "a-" (pronounced [ə]) with verbal -ing forms:

(1) a. Used to be the road full of people, girls and boys <u>a-going</u> to church. (1FTN 03/2007)[1]
    b. Yeah, Jennifer's, she's <u>going</u> to the Bahamas for Spring Break. (1FTN 03/2007)
(2) a. And that's changed, too, 'cause it's got worser in, uh, Mountain City since the time I was <u>a-growing up</u> and now, it's got a lot worser. (2FTN 09/2007)
    b. But hit's changed a whole lot since I's [I was] <u>growing up</u>. (2FTN 09/2007)

Wolfram and Christian's (1976) seminal study of the English spoken in two Central Appalachian communities (Monroe and Mercer Counties, West Virginia) describes a-prefixing as involving "…an interesting intersection of grammatical and phonological conditions that deter-mine its occurrence" (72). While these researchers observe syntactic, phonological, and lexical restrictions on a-prefixing, the process has received relatively little attention in the formal litera-ture.

In this paper I present a formal analysis of some of the interacting constraints on a-prefixing. In particular, I look at the pragmatic meaning encoded by the prefix, and how realiza-tion of this morpho-pragmatic marker is blocked by phonological markedness.

I begin with a sketch of two phonological restrictions on a-prefixing described in the litera-ture. In Section 3, I discuss the pragmatic properties of the prefix, and present results from a GoldVarb analysis probing these properties. Here the prefix is posited to map a pragmatic fea-ture, akin to surprise or unexpectedness. This feature is labeled [MIRATIVE]. Section 4 presents a formal anal-ysis of the interactions between morphology and phonology, situated within an Op-timality-Theo-retic grammar. I suggest that for some dialect speakers there are two ways to real-ize the progressive: a-V-ing and V-ing. The phonologically more marked a-prefixed progressive spells out the feature [MIRATIVE], while its less marked allomorph does not. The a-prefixed form has a restricted pho-nological distribution, and markedness can block its insertion. When markedness constraints are satisfied, faithfulness variably prefers insertion of the prefix. Finally, Section 5 offers a brief dis-cussion of the analysis, including its limitations.

2 Phonological Constraints on *A*-prefixing

Based on fieldwork, Wolfram and Christian (1976) report that *a*-prefixing occurs only with conso-nant-initial forms possessing initial stress. Here I present these two categorical constraints and also discuss subsequent empirical work that sheds light on their formulation.

The first constraint involves the character of the base-initial segment: only consonant-initial forms may be prefixed. Thus, Wolfram and Christian report that forms like those in (3) are not permitted (hypothetical banned examples from Wolfram and Christian 1976:72):

(3) a. *He was <u>a-eatin' the food</u>.
    b. *He was <u>a-askin'</u> a question.

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[1]Unless otherwise noted, data come from corpora described in Section 3. Each informant was assigned an ID, which includes the following information for each speaker: sex (F/M), residence (VA/TN), date interviewed (e.g., 1FTN 03/2007 is a female Tennessean interviewed in March, 2007).

Rather, their fieldwork indicates only C-initial bases may host the prefix:

(4) a. And well, when Roosevelt got in and put the whiskey back and now everybody is getting
         killed *a-drinking* government whiskey. (2FVA 03/1998)
     b. Oh, he's, he was a mess, I'll tell you. He'd come in church *a-singing*. (3FTN 03/2008)
     c. …I can see him right to this day *a-leaving* every morning to go be on the picket line,
         conditions was so bad with the coal companies at that time. (3MVA 10/1997)
     d. She was standing up on a box, *a-washing* the dishes. (1MVA 08/1998)
     e. I don't remember. . . just *a-hearing* 'em tell things that had happened. (4FTN 200?)

However, Feagin's (1979:115) data (from Anniston, Alabama) reveal a single counterexample:

(5) What time I ain't *a*-sewin', I'm ***a-ironin'***, or somethin' like that.

Montgomery (2009:17) also offers the following *a*-prefixed V-initial forms, from his 400,000-word
Corpus of Smoky Mountain English:

(6) a. I noticed two older girls *a-eating* something out of a little syrup bucket.
     b. Johnny run down the hill *a-aiming* to go to his uncles.
     c. I went on up and was *a-aiming* to get around above the tree and shoot.

    Throughout the literature, the only attested examples of prefixing with V-initial forms occur
with bases beginning with a tense vowel. There are no instances of the prefix with a lax-V-initial
form (e.g., 'ask' → *ə-æsk-ɪn). Therefore, I suggest the relevant descriptive generalization be
amended as follows: *a*-prefixing is prohibited before lax-V-initial bases. This generalization is for-
malized in Section 4.
    Wolfram and Christian (1976:72) additionally report *a*-prefixing occurs only with forms pos-
sessing initial stress. They note the prefix seems to be prohibited with forms such as those below
(hypothetical banned forms from Wolfram and Christian):

(7) a. *He was *a-discoverin'* a bear in the woods.
     b. *He was *a-retirin'* to his cage.

    Other investigators also report a-prefixing occurs only with forms possessing initial stress
(Hackenberg 1972, Feagin 1979, Wolfram 1980, Christian et al. 1988, McQuaid 2012). Montgom-
ery (2009:16), however, presents apparent counterexamples to the stress rule:

(8) a. There must be, you know, a reason, I mean for 'em *a-believing* in the signs [of the zodiac].
     b. They didn't think they was enough that they could function as a church, so I told 'em they
         could, got 'em *a-believing* they could.
     c. I can remember Dad *a-relating* the fire to me.

    Prefixation with 'believe' and 'relate' appear to counterexemplify Wolfram and Christian's
stress constraint. It is possible though that these forms do not, in fact, violate this constraint. As
discussed in more detail elsewhere (McQuaid 2012), both 'believe' and 'relate' may be realized
with an initial stressed syllable. For instance, schwa elision may render 'believe' as [ˈbliv]. Pre-
tonic schwa elision is common in casual speech in American English (cf. Davidson 2006). Of par-
ticular relevance, Hall (1942) reports that in the Smoky Mountains pre-tonic schwa in 'believe' is
typically elided or is "extremely reduced" (53). Similarly, word initial [ɹə] can be variably produced.
Such forms may be realized with either elision of the initial syllable ('religion' →[ˈlɪʤən]), or initial
secondary stress ('relations' → [ˌɹiˈleʃənz]), (Hall 1942:53).[2]

_____

    [2]Montgomery's corpus is comprised of 136 recorded interviews, which took place between 1939–1984.
Many of these interviews were recorded by Hall. Thus, Hall's phonetic descriptions of his speakers are relevant
to the speakers in Montgomery's corpus. For more information on Hall's fieldwork, see Montgomery 2004.

Hence, it is plausible that phonological processes rendered these forms (otherwise unsuitable bases) possible targets for prefixation. Given the availability of alternative explanations for prefixing with 'believe' and 'relate', there is insufficient evidence to motivate a reformulation of Wolfram and Christian's stress constraint. A formal account of the constraint is presented in Section 4.

3 Probing the Pragmatics of the *A*-Prefix

Beginning with observations from the literature, augmented by exploratory hypothesis testing using GoldVarb, this section probes the pragmatics of *a*-prefixed forms. The consensus among investigators is that the prefix expresses a distinctly affective, albeit elusive, meaning (Wolfram and Christian 1976, Feagin 1979, Christian et al. 1988, Wolfram 1988, Montgomery 2009). Starting with the notion that the prefix serves a pragmatic function, I hypothesize the morpheme is a morpho-pragmatic marker, or a morphological exponent of pragmatic meaning (cf. Dressler and Barbaresi 1994, Barbaresi 2006). In particular, I submit the prefix encodes a pragmatic meaning related to surprise.

The linguistic expression of surprise is referred to as mirativity (DeLancey 1997, 2001, Hengeveld and Olbertz 2012). Mirativity expresses a range of related meanings oriented towards the speaker, addressee, and/or sentential subject: i) sudden discovery/revelation/realization, ii) surprise, iii) unprepared mind, iv) counterexpectation, and v) new information (Aikhenvald 2012:437).

Among ways mirativity is expressed in English include lexical verbs (*amazed*, *surprised*) and related adverbs (*amazingly*, *surprisingly*), in addition to *wh*-exclamatives (*How tall she is!*), illocutionary particles (*Wow!*), and the use of intonational contours marking surprise (Peterson 2013). Languages that mark mirativity grammatically may use verb complexes, nominalized verbs, verbal affixes or particles, or by extending the use of evidential forms (Aikhenvald 2012, Peterson 2013).

To investigate whether the prefix maps something like mirativity, I examined interview data extracted from 2 corpora. These corpora are summarized in Table 1.[3] All speakers were lifelong residents of their respective communities, aged 50 or older, and working class.

To look at these data in a targeted way, I derived predictions from the mirativity literature, and then tested these predictions using GoldVarb.[4] Mirativity is described as having evidential and modal components (DeLancey 2001, Peterson 2013). As Peterson (2013) aptly notes, "…we can only be surprised about things that we either witness, or believe to be true; or conversely, we can't be surprised about states, events, or actions we have no awareness of or haven't witnessed" (10).

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[3]The Collaborative Project was funded by National Science Foundation awards to 4 PIs: #BCS-0617210 (Judy B. Bernstein), 2006–2008, #BCS-0616573 (Marcel Den Dikken), 2006–2010, #BCS-0617197 (Christina Tortora), 2006–2010, #BCS-0617133 (Raffaella Zanuttini), 2006–2008. Informant selection and interview methods are detailed in McQuaid (2012). The DHP was initiated by Dante historian and author, Kathy Shearer. From October 1997–October 1998, Shearer interviewed 42 residents. Transcripts and recordings are open to the public and are housed at the Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University (http://www.etsu.edu/cas/cass/archives/).

[4]The GoldVarb analysis was conducted to 1) examine the role of factors detailed in the literature (i.e., replication), and 2) probe the pragmatic meaning of the prefix. Only results related to the pragmatic meaning are discussed here. Other factors coded for were syntactic (clause type (declarative, interrogative); verb of temporal aspect (present, absent); negation (present, absent); base verb type (intransitive, transitive, CP-complement)); and the social factors sex (male, female), and residence (TN, VA)). Factors exhibiting total non-application (so-called 'knockouts') were initial segment (C- vs. V-initial) and base stress (initial vs. non-initial). For in-depth discussion of GoldVarb coding and analysis see McQuaid 2012.

	Collaborative Project	**Dante History Project**
# Speakers (male, female)	8 (1 male, 7 female)	5 (3 male, 2 female)
Residence	Mountain City, TN (n = 6); Rogersville, TN (n =2)	Dante, VA
Dates of interviews	2006-2007; 1early 2000s	1997-1998
Total words in corpus	57,683	68,387
Total verbal *-ing* tokens	261	586
# Prefixed tokens (%)	76 (29.1)	143 (24.4)
TOTAL # words	126,070	
TOTAL verbal *-ing* forms	847	
TOTAL *a*-prefixed forms	219	
% *a*-prefixed forms	25.9	

Table 1: Summary of corpora.

Thus, sentences were coded for factors related to i) quality/nature of evidence and ii) speaker certainty. Additionally, sentences were coded for elements construed to be "anti-mirative": overt expressions of lack of evidence and/or doubt. The following 3 factors related to the mirativity hypothesis were dichotomously coded as independent factors and analyzed in GoldVarb:

(9) **Elements coded for in GoldVarb analysis:**
   i) Embedding of verbal *-ing* form under direct perception verbs (e.g., *see*, *hear*)
   ii) Necessity modal (e.g., *must*, *should*, *supposed to be*)
   iii) "Anti-mirative" elements: overt expressions contradicting certainty, direct evidence, or both certainty and direct evidence

Below are examples of each of these factors, extracted from the corpora:

Embedding under direct perception verb
(10) a. And they was a picket line come up and I'd **seen** him <u>*a*-sitting</u> on the porch. (2MVA 02/1998)
   b. You **see** that hook <u>*a*-hanging</u> on that old coal house yonder? (1MVA 08/1998)
   c. I **heared** a baby <u>*a*-screaming</u>, and I thought what in the world. (2FTN 09/2007)

Necessity modal
(11) a. Throwed his hat over in the pond and left it. 'cause he known everybody **[WOULD]** be <u>*a*-looking</u> for us. (1FTN 03/2007)
   b. He got out one day and his grandma **supposed to be** <u>*a*- keeping</u> him and they called meand said that Gary was gone. (1FTN 03/2007)
   c. Which you don't have to watch, you **can** just be <u>*a*-walking</u> through and you can look out and see 'em. (2FTN 09/2007)

"Anti-mirative" elements
(12) a. I **don't know** whether he's still <u>living</u> or not. (2MVA 02/1998)
   b. Cox was <u>*a*-running</u> on the Democrat ticket, and I **forget** who was <u>running</u> on the Republican ticket. (1FVA 10/1997)
   c. No, I **didn't see** them <u>baking</u> the bread. (3MVA 10/1997)

If the *a*-prefix marks something like mirativity, we would expect the form to be favored when embedded under a verb of perception or with a necessity modal, and disfavored in the presence of an anti-mirative element. Tables 2 and 3 present distributional frequencies of *a*-prefixing for factors related to the mirativity hypothesis, and significant results from the GoldVarb analysis, respectively.

	a-prefix N(%)	No *a*-prefix N(%)	TOTAL N (%TO-TAL)
Perception Verb			
Yes	16 (57.1)	12 (42.9)	28 (3.3)
No	203 (24.8)	616 (75.2)	819 (96.7)
Necessity Modal			
Yes	24 (36.4)	42 (63.6)	66 (7.8)
No	195 (25.0)	586 (75.0)	781 (92.2)
Anti-mirative			
Yes	2 (7.7)	24 (92.3)	26 (3.1)
No	217 (26.4)	604 (73.6)	821 (96.9)

Table 2: Distribution of *a*-prefix by factor group (mirativity hypothesis).

	Factor weight	**%**	**N**
Complement of perception verb			
Yes	.79	3.3	28
No	.49	96.7	819
Range	*30*		
Modal Present			
Yes	.64	7.8	66
No	.49	92.9	781
Range	*15*		
Anti-mirative present			
No	.51	96.9	821
Yes	.20	3.1	26
Range	*31*		
Verb Type			
Intransitive	.56	48.6	412
Transitive	.50	39.6	335
CP-complement	.26	11.8	100
Range	*30*		
Sex			
Female	.56	50.2	425
Male	.44	49.8	422
Range	*12*		
Input			.24
Log likelihood			-458.864
Total Chi-square	23.834		
Chi-square per cell	1.083		

Table 3: Significant factors in GoldVarb analysis.

Focusing only on factors related to the mirativity hypothesis, the prefix occurs more frequently with perception verbs and necessity modals. The GoldVarb results indicate both of these factors favor prefixing. Furthermore, the prefix occurs less frequently with "anti-mirative" elements, and GoldVarb results suggest this factor disfavors prefixing. Taken together, the foregoing results are consistent with the mirativity hypothesis. Thus, the *a*-prefix plausibly maps a pragmatic feature like [MIRATIVE].

4 Analysis

In the previous section, I presented evidence consistent with the a-prefix serving as a morphological marking of the pragmatic feature [MIRATIVE]. Earlier, in Section 2, descriptive generalizations of the phonological restrictions the prefix places upon possible bases were formulated. The current section offers an Optimality-Theoretic account of a-prefixing. I analyze blocking of prefix insertion by phonological properties of the base as an interaction between morpho-pragmatic faithfulness and phonological markedness.

One interesting question is why there should there be two forms of the progressive (*a*-V-*ing* and V-*ing*)? More directly, why do these speakers *a*-prefix at all, given that there appears to be no phonological motivation for inserting the form? In fact, insertion of the prefix results in a net increase in phonological markedness. Insertion of [ə-] minimally violates ONSET, as well as a constraint of the *STRUC family.[5]

Building on results presented in the previous section, I suggest the prefix gets inserted because morphological faithfulness prefers it. That is, the prefixed progressive maps a superset of the features mapped by the non-prefixed (and less phonologically marked) progressive. In particular, the prefix provides an overt exponent for the morpho-pragmatic feature [MIRATIVE]. Under this analysis, a-prefixing is an instance of listed allomorphy and the allomorphs are in a special-general relationship:

(13) a. **Special morph** (preferred by morphological faithfulness, restricted phonological distribution): [ə]-V-[ɪn]
      b. **Elsewhere morph** (unrestricted phonological distribution): V-[ɪn]

The analysis presented below is couched within a version of OT, Optimal Interleaving (OI, Wolf 2008, 2015), which assumes insertion of morphemes occurs within the phonological component. In OI, the output of the syntax is a simply a set feature bundles. Morphological faithfulness constraints compel faithful input-output mapping of these features.

I posit the following faithfulness constraint, demanding realization of the morpho-pragmatic feature [MIRATIVE]: MAX-M[MIR] (In the input-output mapping, do not delete the feature [MIRATIVE]).

When the feature [MIR] is present the input, and phonological restrictions are satisfied, insertion of the prefix variably occurs. Variable insertion necessitates positing something along the lines of stochastic ranking of MAX-M{MIR} and some constraint exerting dispreference for the prefixed form (ONSET is a credible choice). Variable prefixation with a phonologically immaculate base is shown in the tableaux below (P is a phonological cover constraint, standing in for constraints introduced later):

(14) A-prefix inserted due to F >> M

INPUT: √*jump* - [MIR, INT]	P	MAX-M{MIR}	ONSET
{MIR} 'jump' {INT} a. ☞ ə dʒʌmp ɪn			*
'jump' {INT} b. dʒʌmp ɪn		*!	

(15) A-prefixing blocked due to M >> F

INPUT: √*jump* - [MIR, INT]	P	ONSET	MAX-M{MIR}
{MIR} 'jump' {INT} a. ə dʒʌmp ɪn		*!	

[5]*STRUC refers to a family of constraints that sweepingly prohibits phonological structure. McCarthy (2002) notes this markedness constraint is introduced in Prince and Smolensky (1993:Chapter 3, n. 13, citing personal communication from Cheryl Zoll) (p. 47, fn. 33).

'jump' {INT}	(grey)		
b. ☞ dʒʌmp ɪn			*

I turn now to cases in which phonological requirements are not met, and *a*-prefixing is categorically blocked. Section 2 showed the prefix is prohibited before bases beginning with a lax vowel (e.g., *[ə-æsk-ɪn]). Because the prefix is itself a lax vowel, [ə-], I submit the relevant markedness constraint is a member of the obligatory contour principle (OCP, Leben 1973) family. Specifically, I suggest the constraint is OCP-V[LAX], which penalizes lax vowel sequences. The invariant ranking OCP-V[LAX] >> MAX-M{MIR} yields categorical non-occurrence of the prefix with lax-V-initial bases.

Note that in other corners of the grammar lax-V sequences are actually preferred. In English, the choice between the indefinite determiner pair 'a/an' is an instance of optimizing phonologically conditioned allomorphy: selecting 'a' with C-initial forms avoids violation of NO-CODA, and use of 'an' with V-initial forms avoids violation of ONSET. However, in the speakers studied here, the determiner 'a' is freely used with lax-V initial forms:

(16) a. And I believe T had **a appointment** [əˈpɔɪntmənt], too. (3FTN 03/2008)
      b. …they wouldn't sit down long enough to peel **a apple** [ˈæpəł]. (2FTN 09/2007)
      c. We had **a undertaker** [ˌʌndəɹˈteɪkəɹ] over here. (1MVA 08/1998)
      d. All of them are classified gassy anymore, but you know, to, to have enough to have **an explosion** you got to have something like five percent to have **a explosion** [ɛkˈsploʒən]. (3MVA 10/1997).

Given the forms in (16), some constraint preferring 'a' (over 'an') with V-initial forms must (variably) outrank OCP-V[LAX]. A form such as 'an apple' involves parsing the nasal coda of the determiner as the onset of the noun: [ə.næ.pəł]. In contrast the mapping for 'a apple' [ə.æ.pəł] involves no such reparsing. For convenience, I will assume a constraint penalizing reparsing dominates OCP-V[LAX]. Note that 'an cat' is never produced. The harmonic bounding of 'an cat' is possibly due to its gratuitous violation of NO-CODA (with no concomitant reduction in either markedness or faithfulness). That is, though 'a apple' violates OCP-V[LAX] (and accrues 2 violations of ONSET), the form avoids violation of NO REPARSE.

The tableaux below illustrate a constraint ranking that yields both blocking of the a-prefix with lax-V-initial bases, as well as selection of the determiner 'a' with nouns beginning with a lax V.[6] Here, prefix insertion is blocked due to the ranking OCP-V[LAX] >> MAX-M{MIR}. Selection of 'a apple', is determined by the ranking NO REPARSE >> OCP-V[LAX]. Deletion of the determiner is blocked by a morphological MAX constraint.

(17) A-prefix insertion blocked by M>>F; selection of 'a' with V-initial form due to NO REPARSE

Input: √*ask* - [MIR, PROG]	MAX-DET	NO REPARSE	OCP-V[LAX]	MAX-M{MIR}
'ask'{INT} a.☞ æsk-ɪn	(grey)	(grey)		*
{MIR} 'ask' {INT} b. ə-æsk-ɪn	(grey)	(grey)	*!	
Input: √*apple*, [DET]^{-def}				
[DET]^{-def} 'apple' a. ☞ ə æpəł			*	(grey)
[DET]^{-def} 'apple' b. ən æpəł		*!		(grey)
'apple' c. æpəł	*!			(grey)

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[6]Note that I show here the weak forms of 'a/an' (ə/ən), not the strong forms (eɪ/æn) (Ladefoged 2001:91–93).

Finally, a constraint is required to account for the non-occurrence of the prefix with bases possessing an initial unstressed syllable ('support', *[ə-səˈpɔɹtɪn]). I will assume this constraint is *LAPSE, which militates against sequences of unstressed syllables (Green and Kenstowicz 1995).[7]

(18) A-prefix insertion blocked by M >> F

INPUT: √*support* - [MIR, INT]	*LAPSE	MAX-M{MIR}
{MIR} 'support' {INT} a. ə səˈpɔɹt ɪn	*!	
'support' {INT} b. ☞ səˈpɔɹt ɪn		*

This section offered a formal analysis of *a*-prefixing. Relative to non-prefixed forms, [ə]-V-[ɪn] forms were argued to map an added feature, [MIRATIVE]. When phonological restrictions of the prefix are met, the prefixed form is variably inserted. However, when a form begins with a lax vowel or possesses non-initial stress, prefix insertion is blocked. It is worth noting that the constraints that categorically block *a*-prefix insertion share a common property: both involve identity avoidance. Thus, there may be a unifying functional explanation for identity avoidance in a-prefixing. Identity avoidance keeps the word-initial position (a privileged position in phonology and psycholinguistics) pristine, in just those cases where insertion of the prefix would cause it to be obscured.

5 Conclusion

This paper presented an Optimality-Theoretic analysis of interacting morpho-pragmatic and phonological constraints on *a*-prefixing. First, two categorical phonological restrictions, as originally formulated by Wolfram and Christian (1976), were reviewed. Taking into account all data available from the literature, descriptive generalizations of these restrictions were formulated.

Second, taking as a starting point the consensus that the prefix expresses a distinctly affective meaning, I hypothesized that the relevant meaning is surprise. Based on the literature on mirativity (the linguistic encoding of surprise), I predicted that if the prefix is a mirative marker, it should be favored in contexts congruent with mirative meanings (speaker evidence for a proposition and/or speaker confidence in its veridicality), but disfavored in contexts incongruous with mirativity (doubt in or lack of evidence for a proposition). Results from a GoldVarb analysis are consistent with the mirativity hypothesis.

Finally, an OT analysis of a-prefixing was presented. It was suggested there are two allomorphs of the progressive for these dialect speakers, the a-prefixed form and non-prefixed V-*ing*. The prefixed form provides an overt exponent for the feature [MIRATIVE], which is not realized by its allomorph. The two progressive forms are in a special-general relationship. Prefixed *a*-V-*ing* is variably realized when phonological restrictions are satisfied, and V-*ing* is the default form, realized in all other contexts. It was observed that the same configuration avoided in a-prefixing is preferred in indefinite article allomorphy.

There are several limitations of the present analysis that must be noted. First, while results of the GoldVarb analysis are consistent with the prefix marking mirativity, these results are not probative. Competing hypotheses for why the prefix is favored with perception verbs and modals, and disfavored in environments that involve overt expressions of doubt or lack of knowledge, must be investigated. Second, because linguists have moved away from GoldVarb for well-motivated reasons (cf. Johnson 2009), any hypotheses should be tested with an appropriate alternative statistical method. Third, phonetic studies are warranted to determine whether a-prefixing with forms such as 'believe' and 'relate' involve processes (e.g., schwa elision) that render these bases possible targets. Should a form such as 'believe' host the prefix only if schwa elision occurs, this would be evidence for interleaving of morphological and phonological processes in a-prefixing. Finally, a complete formal analysis of a-prefixing will need to account for quantitative patterns in prefixing. Specifically, an analysis must account for variability in a-prefixing, as influenced by the rich intersection of not

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[7]Another potential way of analyzing this restriction would be to appeal to an alignment constraint requiring the right edge of the prefix attach to the left edge of a stressed syllable (e.g., ALIGN-[ə-]MIR, R, ó, L).

only linguistic, but also social factors (including speaker sex and age), as well as considerations of style (formal vs. informal).

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