# Mistaken-belief expressions: a stance-stacking laboratory

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The notion of stance-stacking draws attention to the fact that stance (Englebretson, 2007) is (a) often expressed through multiple markers simultaneously, and that (b) the resulting stance interpretations cannot always be straightforwardly derived from its constituent parts. A stance marker may take on a new meaning in the context of another stance maker, non-attitudinal elements may gain a stance interpretation when combined with a stance-signaling device, and contextual or multimodal features can dramatically affect the meaning of a stance construction.

In this paper we argue that mistaken-belief expressions present an ideal linguistic environment for studying stance-stacking. These expression types combine the ascription of a belief to some entity (x believes that $p$) with a speaker-oriented meaning 'I know that $p$ is untrue'. Consider example (1), from the Australian Aboriginal language Ungarinyin.

(1) Context: Talking about birds who mistake little stones for food:
    birr-niyangarri-karra burr-ma-ø mangarri
    3PL-good-MODAL 3PL-do-PRS food
    'They think those are good food' [but they are stones] (Spronck, 2015)

We demonstrate that the Ungarinyin mistaken-belief construction illustrated in (1) is a prime example of stance-stacking since it involves elements which either acquire or change a stance meaning when combined with (other) stance markers.

We compare the Ungarinyin data to data from two unrelated languages that, have dedicated mistaken-belief constructions as well, but use radically different strategies: Burmese and the African Bantu language Kikuyu. All data reported are drawn from original fieldwork by the authors.

Our observations lead us to conclude that stance-stacking can result in conventionalized effects, and we point to similarities between the three languages compared. We suggest that our observations help shed light on the relation between convention and emergence in the interpretation of stance-stacking.

## References

Englebretson, Robert (Ed.). (2007). *Stancetaking in Discourse.* Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Spronck, Stef. (2015). Refracting views: How to construct complex perspective in reported speech and thought in Ungarinyin. *STUF–LanguageTypology Universals*, 68(2), 165–185.