

# Epithets and perspective shift: experimental evidence\*

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## 1. Introduction

It is often said that, provided a situation in which to evaluate reference, the literal meaning of words and phrases amounts to the objects they denote in that situation. For instance, *dog* refers to a set of dogs; *brown dogs* refers to the set of dogs that are brown, and so on. Yet, certain words and phrases may contribute another, more subjective sense to the greater linguistic context in which they occur. A prime example is the taboo intensive *damn* in (1a), which contributes the speaker's sentiment about the fact that the dog is on the couch (1b), roughly paraphrased in (1c).

- (1) a. The dog is on the damn couch!
- b. The dog is on the couch.
- c.  $\approx$  I'm upset by the fact that the dog is on the couch.

Here, *damn* contributes a meaning quite distinct from the propositional content of the sentence without *damn*, i.e., that which is associated with (1b). Instead, it expresses an emotional relationship the speaker has to the proposition expressed (1c).

Potts (2005) uses such cases as fodder for making a distinction between two types of information conveyed by an utterance. The first class of meanings is termed AT-ISSUE content, akin to the familiar propositional contribution of an utterance. The second class of meanings were initially recognized by Grice (1989) to be derived from conventional aspects of language. These CONVENTIONAL IMPLICATURES (CIs) are claimed to interact with at-issue content, though the two classes are semantically distinct (Potts, to appear).

The dual contribution of at-issue and CI content is perhaps most clearly illustrated by EXPRESSIVES. I focus here on one kind of expressive: EPITHETS, such as *that bastard*, *the jerk*, which add emotional charge to the descriptive content of the utterance. Although there is some variance in how the term *epithet* is used, I will follow Aoun & Choueiri (2000, 2), who characterize epithets as “definite noun phrases (DPs) which consist of either a definite article or a demonstrative with an NP. The NP contributes mainly affective meaning,

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### *Epithets and perspective shift*

which is typically negative: contempt, anger, irony, etc.”<sup>1</sup> One way to identify whether a noun is an epithet employs schema (2). A noun is an epithet if it can be substituted into the NP position of (2), in which D is a definite or demonstrative determiner.

- (2) D + (adjective +) NP + proper name
- a. the (slippery) bastard Jones
  - b. that (lovable) idiot Smith

In addition to referring to the individual (or sets of individuals) that they pick out, epithets indicate the emotional stance of the speaker with respect to the referent of the epithet. Supposing that in (3), the epithet *the idiot* refers to Marcus, then (3B) entails (3C) but not vice versa. Only the former conveys an additional dimension that relates speaker opinion to the utterance (Cruse, 1986; Löbner, 2002; Potts, 2005).

- (3) A. How did Marcus do in the school play?  
B. The idiot flubbed nearly all his lines.  
C. Marcus flubbed nearly all his lines.

Epithets are interesting, in part, because they clearly display some of the core, abstract properties associated with expressive meaning. The important properties cited by Potts (2007) for the present are listed below: expressives are said to be *non-displaceable* and *perspective independent*.

- (4) *Nondisplaceability*: Expressives predicate something of the utterance situation.
- (5) *Perspective dependence*: Expressive content is evaluated from a particular perspective. In general, the perspective is the speakers, but there can be deviations if conditions are right.

This paper examines properties (4) and (5) in hopes of better determining how the perspective of an epithet is calculated, and under what conditions it can shift away from the speaker’s perspective. I use the terms PERSPECTIVE and PERSPECTIVE SHIFT in a narrow sense throughout. By the perspective of an epithet, I mean the viewpoint to which the expressive content of the epithet can be attributed; by perspective shift, I mean to consider cases in which the perspective of an epithet reflects not the speaker’s, but another agent’s in discourse. For present purposes, I consider only cases in which a perspective shifts from the speaker, likely the default interpretation, and onto the previously mentioned subject of a attitude predicate. When the expressive content of an epithet reflects the subject’s perspective, I refer to such cases as *subject-oriented interpretations*. Cases in which the expressive content reflects the speaker’s perspective are called *speaker-oriented interpretations*. And though these terms of course apply to related phenomena – e.g., appositive clauses, expletive constructions, predicates of personal taste, etc. – in a familiar way, I will not be much concerned with those here.

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<sup>1</sup>As hinted by Aoun & Choueiri (2000), not all uses of epithets express negative affect; in fact, uses expressing positive affect are readily observed and systematic (Potts, 2007).

Growing interest in the topic has brought out many different – and sometimes conflicting – intuitions. I present data from a questionnaire, which tested whether unembedded epithets could reflect subject, and not speaker, perspective. The results suggest that indeed they can, given that certain contextual features are present. Consequently, current theories must be evaluated against how well they stand up against the data.

I compare two kinds of theories that achieve potential shifts in perspective very differently.

- (6) I. CONFIGURATIONAL: Shifting the orientation of an expressive away from the speaker's perspective is achieved by semantic binding of the expressive. Only semantic binders, such as attitude predications, within the object language standing in a particular configuration with the expressive may shift the expressive onto another perspective (Schlenker, 2003, 2007; Sauerland, 2007)
- II. CONTEXTUAL: Perspectival information encoded within an expressive is calculated with respect to the interaction of various contextual and pragmatic factors, which favor a speaker orientation for independent reasons. Embedding the expressive under an attitude predicate is not necessary to shift the perspective of the expressive onto another agent in the context, though it may facilitate it (Potts, 2007; Harris & Potts, 2009, to appear)

This paper advocates treating perspectival shift of expressive content in contextual terms, and attempts to disentangle the competing accounts (6I–II) both empirically and theoretically. First, the two accounts make different empirical predictions. The configurational approach (6I) does not expect perspective shifts when the expressive is not embedded. The contextual approach (6II) allows for perspective shifts in unembedded environments, while explaining why shifting the perspective away from the speaker's perspective is a dispreferred strategy. The results from these experiments bear directly on the issue of whether perspectival shifting is licensed in unembedded cases. Second, provided that an epithet may shift even when not embedded, repairing the configurational account would require either (i) positing hidden semantic binders which would otherwise be unlicensed or (ii) proposing a pragmatic account of shiftability for unembedded contexts. In reply to the first option, I will argue that positing covert semantic binders, while perhaps formally elegant, requires further motivation, and without which remains a stipulation. In reply to the second, I further argue that proposing an additional pragmatic principle obviates the need for semantic binding and amounts to conceding to the principle points of the contextual account.

A clarification is perhaps in order: in advocating a contextual account of perspective shift in *expressive meaning*, I am assuming that expressives and indexicals differ in non-trivial respects. That is, the contextualist proposal involves (i) a distinction between the context dependence of expressive meaning and the context dependence of indexicals, and (ii) an argument against treating the context dependence of expressive meaning in terms of semantic binding. Crucially, the proposal makes no new claims about how indexicals, properly construed, are dependent on context. Therefore, it is possible that *descriptive* content is indeed controlled by semantic operators as in, for instance, Percus (2000).

## 2. Expressives and perspective taking

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2.1 introduces data suggesting that expressive content must reflect speaker sentiment. Section 2.2 then discusses cases which counter-exemplify this general claim. In section 3, I present a pilot questionnaire which test whether unembedded epithets can receive non-speaker-oriented interpretations. In section 4, I evaluate how well current theories stand up to the results from this study. I propose that the contextual account best accounts for the experimental results, and discuss possible avenues to explore in fleshing out this broad hypothesis more concretely.

### 2.1 Speaker-orientation and scope

As mentioned, epithets are typically speaker oriented; (7) is inconsistent because use of the epithet *that jerk Conner* contradicts the previous sentence. That is, using epithets commits the speaker to an emotional stance, whether it be uttered in sincere rage or mock derision.

- (7) I am not sure whether Conner is a jerk. # Is that jerk Conner coming to the party tonight? (Potts, 2005)

Potts and others have also used examples like (7) to argue that expressive content is calculated *outside* of the scope of various kinds of embedding operators, including various presupposition plugs and attitude reports. This point is illustrated by a similar pair of examples (8), contrasting the agent of the attitude verb in the second sentence.

- (8) a. # I am not prejudiced against Caucasians. But if I were, you would be the worst honky I know.  
b. I am not prejudiced against Caucasians. But John, who is, thinks/claims that you are the worst honky he knows. (Schlenker, 2003)

The argument proposes that the infelicity of (8a) owes to the fact that the emotive content of the pejorative term *honky* scopes over irrealis mood. In other words, since (8a) already established that the speaker is not prejudiced against Caucasians, the negative connotation of *honky* conflicts with the speaker's stated emotional stance. In contrast, no such contradiction arises in (8b). This argument was meant to convince us that epithets are, in general, *scopeless*, their content calculated outside of the scope of other semantic operators.

Nevertheless, example (8b) displays another interesting property. Here, the term *honky* appears to reflect the opinion of the subject of the report, *John*, rather than the speaker. This suggests that two interpretations are available: one in which the emotive content reflects the *speaker's* attitude toward the referent of the epithet, and another in which it reflects the *subject's* attitude.

The choice of interpretation may be manipulated by inference, though it is highly constrained by the context. For instance, the epithet *that bastard Webster* in (9) from Kratzer (1999) can be interpreted as conveying either (a) *my father's* or (b) *my own* emo-

tional stance towards Webster.<sup>2</sup> While the context is highly biased towards the former interpretation (9a), the latter reading appears to be available once the appropriate context is presented (9b).

- (9) My father screamed that he would never allow me to marry that bastard Webster  
(Kratzer, 1999)
- a. but I truly love Webster, so we plan to go through with it anyway.  
(expressive content attributed to father)
  - b. and I'm glad, since my father only arranged the whole thing to tighten company relations with his beloved protege, who I personally could never stand. Somehow, he thought he was actually *punishing* me by canceling the marriage with Webster!  
(expressive content attributed to speaker)

## 2.2 Perspective shift

In earlier work, Potts claimed that conventional implicatures, including the emotive dimension associated with epithets, are in general scopeless (though see Potts (2007, to appear)). In a recent review, Amaral, Roberts & Smith (2008) challenge the general scopelessness of conventional implicature (see also Karttunen & Zaenen (2005) and Wang, Reese & McCready (2005)). Amaral et al. (2008) provide several contexts in which the associated attitudes “appear to take narrow scope relative to the embedding attitude predicate,” and suggest that cases of speaker-oriented scope can be better treated in terms of indexicality (similar appeals for an indexical treatment may be found in Schlenker (2007) and Sauerland (2007)).

- (10) [Context: We know that Bob loves to do yard work and is very proud of his lawn, but also that he has a son Monty who hates to do yard chores. So Bob could say (perhaps in response to his partner's suggestion that Monty be asked to mow the lawn while he is away on business):]  
Well, in fact Monty said to me this very morning that he hates to mow the friggin lawn.  
(Amaral et al., 2008)

What example (10) is supposed to show is that, like (8), the orientation of perspective can *shift* from the speaker to another discourse agent. Amaral et al. (2008, 736) write that this shift is “context-dependent and in general seems to be easier with embedded complements of attitude verbs than indirect speech.” That is, the CI takes *narrow* scope under the embedding attitude predicate – an interpretation which is otherwise unexpected if the CIs are necessarily scopeless.

Amaral et al. (2008) suggest that CIs prefer to take wide scope because they are in some way *indexical*. Their orientation shifts from speaker to subject in attitude reports because CIs are “anchored to the agent whose point of view is salient at the time of the

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<sup>2</sup>Kratzer (1999) noticed this shift in perspective, writing that in these cases the epithet may “be predicated of the reported situation, rather than the utterance situation.”

utterance.” Thus, the basic empirical claim is that while CIs may take wide scope by default, if they are embedded under a propositional attitude verb where the matrix subject’s point of view is made salient, the CI may be associated with the subject rather than the speaker.

Nevertheless, it is unclear what such examples actually show about the orientation of the expressive content or in what way expressive content is to be indexical. While *friggin* in (10) certainly does not convey Bob’s viewpoint, the example does not necessarily show that it directly conveys his son’s viewpoint either. Interestingly, this particular case may involve a “register clash” in that we might expect that Bob would not use the term “friggin” in his own speech. Similar cases might express the speaker’s representation of another agent’s attitude via partial quotation; in which case, these examples would share something in common with mixed quotation:<sup>3</sup>

(11) George says Tony is his ‘bestest friend’ (Geurts & Maier, 2005)

Here, the speaker would perhaps not approve of the *use* of ‘bestest’ as the proper superlative, yet she can *mention* George’s use of the term.<sup>4</sup> The point of view of the speaker, George, is in this case represented by directly quoting his terminology. Quotation of this kind distances the speaker’s commitment from the actual content of the quoted material. Thus, we know to attribute the quoted material exclusively to the matrix subject, not to the speaker (see section 4.4 for more discussion).

Perspective shifts, however, can also appear without quotation marks – orthographic or other – and do not require embedding attitude predicates. The following example, found on the Internet, contains an epithet *the Apple cronies* whose CI content should be attributed not to the author but rather to the holders of what the author considers to be a fallacious argument. As the article makes clear, the author does not believe that Apple employees are Steve Job’s cronies; rather, he sarcastically mentions the term in association with a kind of opinion that he intends to ridicule.

(12) [Context: While shopping at one of my local Apple stores the other day, I overheard an earnest conversation about safeguarding Mac computers against things like viruses and trojans. The customer and companion were new to Mac life and were convinced that they should be very worried about viruses. The Apple salesperson on the floor repeatedly assured them that they would not need extra antivirus protection for their Mac. The customer then argued that Symantec makes an antivirus program for Macs, therefore, it must truly be a credible threat, otherwise there would be no such products. Some antivirus products are even sold in Apple stores.]

I’ve heard similar arguments before: if companies like Symantec or McAfee make antivirus applications for the Mac, then Macs must truly be vulnerable somehow, somewhere. Steve Jobs and the rest of *the Apple cronies* must be lying.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>See Anand (2007) for the explicit connection between quotation and perspective shift.

<sup>4</sup>See, e.g., Recanati (2000) or Cappelen & Lepore (2007) for discussion on the various relations between use, mention, and quotation.

<sup>5</sup>Source: <http://news.digitaltrends.com/feature/79/antivirus-programs-for-mac-snake-oil-or-public-service-emphasis-added>.

The interesting point for Amaral et al.'s claim is that the epithet is not explicitly embedded, nor, in fact, are there any other salient agents in the immediate context to which to attribute the attitude. In fact, it's unclear whether the writer is attributing the exact attitude to any participant in the discourse, over and above a *stereotypical kind* of computer user. What's more, the epithet appears in the matrix subject of a main clause. And yet we would misunderstand the rhetorical force of the epithet if we resolved the CI to the speaker.

Numerous questions regarding the data remain. How robust are such cases? Examples like (10) and (12) appear to require a rather substantial context with sharply contrasting perspectives to facilitate perspective shift. Provided that such cases are stable enough to test, what factors reliably signal that a perspective shift should be made? The remainder of this paper investigates perspective shifts in main clause contexts with epithets. The central goal of the following section is to establish whether there are contexts in which language users reliably attribute the expressive content of the epithet with a perspective associated with some other agent besides the speaker. The contexts explored here are those in which (i) the agent is portrayed as standing in a negative relation to the epithet's referent, and (ii) the epithet is syntactically unembedded.

In (13), for instance, the choice of positive (*high*) versus negative (*low*) evaluative adjective in the embedded clause of the first sentence leads to different interpretations of the epithet of the second sentence.

- (13) My friend Sheila said that her history professor gave her a really (high/low) grade.  
The jerk always favors long papers.
- i. 'high'  $\Rightarrow$  CI content of the epithet *jerk* is speaker-oriented
  - ii. 'low'  $\Rightarrow$  CI content of the epithet *jerk* may be speaker or subject-oriented

If the adjective is positive, a natural reading of the second sentence is one in which the speaker is jealous of Sheila's high grade – the context provides no motivation for Sheila's negative emotional stance towards her professor. If the adjective is negative, a subject reading of the epithet is more likely, perhaps because the negative stance of the attitude report may be seen to justify the perspective shift towards the subject's point of view. Note that in this case the epithet may also be interpreted as speaker-oriented so long as the speaker commiserates with the subject (see section 4.4 for more discussion). Thus, the prediction for these contexts is that when an epithet attributes a negative stance to the subject, epithets may be interpreted as either speaker or subject oriented, while in positive contexts, they are more likely to be interpreted as speaker-oriented.

Non-speaker-oriented interpretations of unembedded CI content are unexpected under a configurational account, as well as any account that predicts only speaker-oriented readings (e.g., Potts, 2005). In the first case, if CI content is indexical and must be semantically bound by a higher operator to receive an interpretation, then epithets in matrix clauses cannot be attributed to any agent other than the speaker. In the second case, if CI content invariably takes scope over at-issue content, then epithets should always be interpreted as reflecting the speaker's viewpoint. Thus, neither Potts (2005) nor the configurational approach (6I) necessarily predicts that the CI content can be attributed to the subject in unembedded contexts. Before suggesting how to best address this problem, however, I

present the results of an experimental study confirming that non-speaker-oriented readings are in fact available in unembedded environments.

### **3. Pilot questionnaire**

#### **3.1 Materials and methods**

The experiment tested whether a positive or negative ‘evaluative’ adjective would affect how the referent of an epithet like *the jerk* would be determined. Materials consisted of 8 pairs like (14), in which either a positive (*high*) or negative (*low*) evaluative adjective appeared (see Appendix for materials). In a following sentence, an epithet (*the jerk*) appeared which referred to the subject of the propositional attitude (*her history professor*).

Participants were instructed to judge who was responsible for the emotive content associated with the epithet – e.g., in (14) subjects determined who held the opinion that the history professor was a jerk. To make the speaker more salient, a basic discourse content was given in **bold**, explicitly introducing the speaker.

(14) **Suppose that you and I are talking, and I say:**

My friend Sheila said that her history professor gave her a really (high/low) grade.  
The jerk always favors long papers.

Whose opinion is it that Sheila’s history professor is a jerk?

- a. Mine
- b. Sheila’s
- c. Both mine and Sheila’s
- d. Neither mine nor Sheila’s

It was predicted that participants would attribute the emotive content of the epithet to the subject more often when the adjective in the preceding sentence was negative than when it was positive. In other words, b. or c. responses were expected to occur more frequently when the attitude holder was portrayed as evaluating the situation negatively than positively.

Questionnaires were divided into four randomized and counterbalanced lists, so that subjects saw one and only one condition from each item. Two other experiments, testing entirely different constructions, added a total of 40 experimental items to the questionnaire. Additionally, 10 genuine filler items were included for a total of 58 items per questionnaire.

#### **3.2 Participants**

Twenty undergraduates from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst participated in a questionnaire for course credit. All participants were enrolled in an introductory linguistics class in Fall 2008 and were contacted via email. Students had no exposure to the topics tested here, nor explicit knowledge of psycholinguistic tasks in general. Participants were simply instructed to read the questions carefully and answer according to their intuitions.



### 3.3 Data analysis

Figure 1 shows the distribution of total responses. Participants attributed the CI content of the epithet to the speaker in the vast majority of cases, regardless of condition. The speaker-oriented preference is expected under most accounts of CI scope taking, including both Potts (2005) and Amaral et al. (2008).

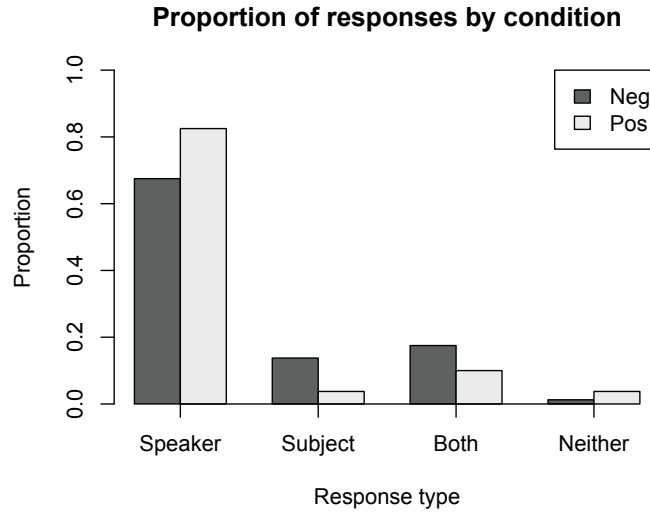


Figure 1: Distribution of responses

However, participants *did* interpret the CI content as subject oriented, i.e., with narrow scope, at least some of the time. The question is whether they did so more often for negative contexts, and whether certain items were more effective than others. These issues are addressed in turn.

First, a note about response coding is in order. The four responses (a – d) were coded according to whether the *speaker* or *subject* interpretation was possible. The coding thus consisted of two columns with binary values (Table 1).

	Response	Speaker	Subject
a.	Speaker only	1	0
b.	Subject only	0	1
c.	Both	1	1
d.	Neither	0	0

Table 1: Response coding

Since it was uncontroversial that the speaker-oriented reading was available, the analysis focuses on whether the subject-oriented reading was available. Thus, the analyses presented below take the second column (Subject) as the dependent variable for all statistical models.

## By Condition

Although the non-subject (speaker) orientation was preferred across the board, participants reported more subject-oriented interpretations in the Negative condition (31.25%) than in the Positive condition (13.75%). Thus, there was more variance of response in the Negative condition, as summarized in Table 2.

		Condition	
		Neg	Pos
Response	Subject (1)	25 (31.25%)	11 (13.75%)
	Non-Subject (0)	55 (68.75%)	69 (86.25%)

Table 2: Proportion of responses by condition

The data was modeled as a linear mixed effects logit regression (Baayen, Davidson & Bates, 2008; Jaeger, 2008), with participants and items as random effects in the R statistical computing software (R Development Core Team, 2008). The model was used to evaluate whether the availability of subject interpretations of expressive content was affected by the choice of positive or negative evaluative adjective. A model with a single categorical variable of `condition` was found to significantly predict whether the epithet could plausibly be attributed to the matrix subject, rather than to the speaker.<sup>6</sup> The model is provided in Figure 3.

	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	p value
(Intercept)	-1.77	0.43	-4.1	< 0.001
Neg	0.67	0.23	3.00	< 0.01

Table 3: Linear mixed effects model: This linear mixed effects logistic regression tests whether the Neg condition significantly increased the likelihood of a Subject response over scores observed in the Pos condition.

The above linear mixed effects logit model tests suggests that the Neg condition correlated with an increased likelihood of a Subject response,  $p < 0.01$ . The model intuitively corresponds to the proportion of scores, in which over twice as many Subject responses were observed in the Neg condition as compared to the Pos condition. This provides initial evidence that perspectival calculation is dependent on some features of the context, which this study successfully manipulated. Random effects did not significantly vary with the manipulation and are omitted for convenience.

<sup>6</sup>It may be claimed that the ‘neither’ responses should not be interpreted, as it is unclear whether subjects understood the sentence or the task. To address this concern, an additional logit model over data culled of the ‘neither’ responses was performed, and essentially the same results obtained, although at a higher significance level of  $\alpha = 0.05$ .

In addition, a chi-squared test of goodness-of-fit was computed and found that the above model better fit the data than the unsaturated (intercept) model,  $\chi^2(1, N = 20) = 7.17, p < 0.01$ . In other words, adding the Neg condition as a factor to the model explained variance in the data significantly better than a model without it.

An alternate view of the data counts only subject-oriented responses as non-speaker-oriented interpretations, since the “both” response includes the speaker as well as the subject. Separating these “speaker-only” responses from the “both” responses biases against the hypothesis that the Negative context condition will be associated with increased non-speaker-oriented readings.

		Neg	(%)	Pos	(%)
Response	Subject only (1)	11	(14%)	3	(4%)
	Not subject (0)	69	(86%)	77	(96%)

Table 4: Proportion of responses by condition – counting only subject responses as non-speaker-oriented interpretations

Nevertheless, recoding the responses does not alter the basic pattern: the number of subject only responses increased significantly from 3 responses (4%) in Positive contexts to 11 responses (14%) in Negative contexts,  $p < 0.05$ .

### By Items

Not all items were equally amenable to a subject interpretation. While some items approached chance interpretation (item 3), others remained stably speaker-oriented (items 5 and 6). The remaining items were interpreted as subject-oriented between 20 - 30% of the time. The complete distribution of responses by item is shown in Table 5 below. No significant differences between items were found when items were included as a predictor in the statistical model.

		Items							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Response	Not Subject	14	16	11	16	18	19	15	15
	Subject	6	4	9	4	2	1	5	5
	Subject (%)	30	20	45	20	10	5	25	25

Table 5: Proportion of responses by item

## 3.4 Discussion

As predicted, the interpretation of expressive content was affected by the polarity of the evaluative context. Although there was a persistent bias towards speaker-orientation in both

positive and negative contexts, participants reported more subject-oriented interpretations in negative contexts than in positive contexts. This pattern suggests that expressive content can – under the right circumstances – be interpreted as reflecting subject sentiment, and that an expressive need not be embedded for this kind of perspective shift to occur.

While the results from the pilot are encouraging, the manipulation nevertheless yielded a low overall percentage of subject-oriented readings (< 14%), perhaps suggesting that participants were often hesitant to override the default subject-oriented interpretations in these scenarios.

#### **4. Context and the calculation of perspective**

While the experimental work presented above is preliminary, some tentative conclusions may be drawn from the results, if only to shape future research in the area. Theories of expressive meaning must account for two patterns in the data. The first concerns interpretation and has two components: (a) expressives *typically* reflect speaker commitment, but (b) not *exclusively so*. The second concerns the syntactic embedding of the epithet: non-speaker-oriented meaning is accessible even when the expressive is unembedded. Both patterns are, at least *prima facie*, problematic for configurational accounts. For semantic binding itself does not explain the preference towards speaker commitment, nor does it predict that unembedded expressions should receive a non-speaker-oriented interpretation.

This much is clear: expressives are context-dependent. In the next section, I present various ways in which context dependence could be formalized, mapping the configurational and contextual approaches to encoding perspective information in expressives onto the varieties of context dependence, discussed by Recanati (2007). I will claim that the configurational account must endorse a view of narrow indexicality, while the contextual account is underdetermined between broad indexicality and a process of pragmatic enrichment which Recanati terms *modulation*.

##### **4.1 The varieties of context dependence**

Context dependence comes in many forms. We may say that an expression is context dependent, broadly speaking, when its meaning is affected by the context in which it is used. Indexical expressions are prime examples of context dependent items. In his work on the topic, Kaplan (1989) defends the idea that demonstratives and other indexical expressions *directly* refer to their referents without the mediation of Fregean *Sinn*, i.e., the sense of an expression, the aspect of an expression which gives it its “cognitive significance.” Such items refer to specific entities in a context via a conventional rule, which determines how the particular item is to be interpreted on any occasion of use. For instance, take the 1st person pronoun ‘I’ in the following English sentence (15).

(15) I am speaking now.

Sentence (15) is certainly true of the speaker at the time of its utterance, but it is probably not true of the hearer at the same time. Even if it were true of the hearer, (15) would be misunderstood if ‘I’ were taken to designate the addressee of this utterance.

Kaplan argued that stating a formal rule for these expressions demanded a split between two kinds of meanings: *content* and *character*.

Briefly, content is the familiar meaning associated with expressions; contents are functions from circumstances (worlds, or world-time pairs) to extensions. In other words, contents are Carnapian intensions. Character, in contrast, conventionally determines contents in contexts of use. In a given context, the character of an expression yields the content of the expression. In other words, characters can be understood as functions from contexts to contents.

What exactly are contexts? Although the question has been at the center of much recent controversy, Kaplan's (1989) basic answer was that contexts include at least an author, a world, and a time (and possibly a location). We represent the major parts of contexts as follows: a context  $C$  contains  $c_a, c_w, c_t$ . Some other context  $C'$  may contain other arrangements of author, world, and time components, e.g. a different author  $c'_a$  or a different time  $c'_t$ . As such, contexts are often represented as *tuples* of values  $\langle c_a, c_w, c_t \rangle$ , though there is some question about whether contexts should be thought of as  $n$ -tuples of (shiftable) indices (Lewis, 1980), or as situations (Kratzer, 2009). I remain agnostic about the issue here.

It is easy to see that indexical expressions are interpreted differently in different contexts, yet share some aspect of meaning. In (16), Heidi and Max say different things. Heidi says that *she* is blond, while Max says that *he* is blond. The utterances occur in different contexts: the first is one in which Heidi is the speaker  $C_H$ , the second is one in which Max is the speaker  $C_M$ .

- (16)    a. Heidi: I am blond.  
         b. Max: I am blond.

That is, (16) expresses a different content when uttered in context  $C_H$  than when uttered in context  $C_M$ . Yet, some aspect of the meaning of 'I' remains constant in any context, in that it is used to refer to the author  $c_a$  of that context. Kaplan (1989) argued that the aspect of meaning which remains constant could be identified as the character: once the context is fixed, we know how to interpret the indexical pronoun.

Kaplan's (1989) treatment of context dependence for indexicals and demonstratives has been extremely influential. Nevertheless, the term "indexical" continues to be used in a variety of ways. In some cases, "indexical" is used to cover any kind of context dependence. In others, it is used as a kind of linguistic element whose meaning is determined by a particular rule of interpretation.

Recanati (2007, 1) distinguishes these different uses of indexicality by the terms "broad" and "narrow" indexicality, respectively. I quote Recanati's discussion of *broad indexicality* at length:

In the broad sense, indexical expressions are expressions whose semantic content depends on the context. Only a particular occurrence of such an expression carries semantic content. Independent of context, the expression type possess a conventional significance, or 'linguistic meaning', that falls short of determining the expression's content.

In other words, broad indexicals contribute underspecified meaning to the semantic content of an expression.

A *narrow indexical* is just like a broad indexical, save that its “linguistic meaning additionally *encodes* this dependency upon the context of speech.” Such expressions are accompanied by so-called *token-reflexive* rules that conventionally determine the content within a given context.

Expressions of both broad and narrow indexical type trigger *saturation*, a “contextual process of completion or value assignment through which the semantic content of the expression is determined.” Saturation is a necessary process. Without it, the semantic content of an expression containing an indexical, broad or narrow, is underdetermined.

The varieties of context dependence are not exhausted by indexicality of the broad or narrow sort, whose meanings must be resolved before the expression in which they occur may be evaluated. Indeed, Recanati (2007) further posits an additional kind of context dependence, *modulation*, which modifies an already semantically complete content. As such, modulation is not mandatory; it is invoked to pragmatically coerce the meanings of words in order to better understand their meanings in a context.

I take these three kinds of context dependency for granted.<sup>7</sup> They may be other forms of context dependence (for instance, as in Lasnik (2005, 2008)). The next task is to determine with which of these three kinds of context dependence, if any, our accounts in (6) are consistent. The basic picture I adopt is illustrated in Figure 2 in which the configurational approach could only treat expressive content as indexical in the narrow sense, while the configurational account may treat expressive content either as broadly indexical or as an instance of modulated meaning.

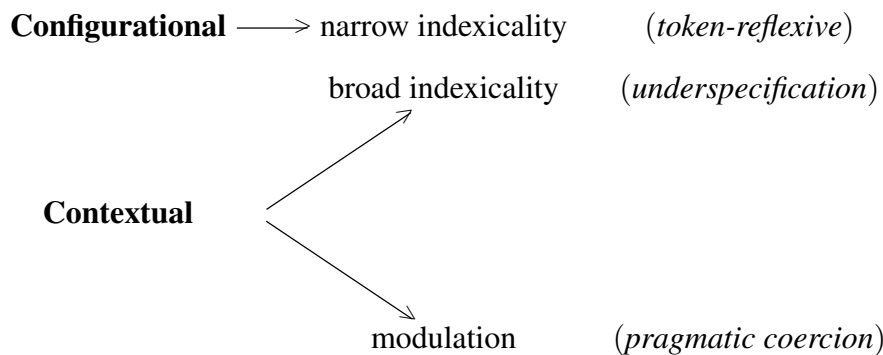


Figure 2: Configuration vs. Contextual accounts and the kinds of context dependence

The remainder of the paper concentrates on fleshing out these three proposals and evaluating their plausibility. Fortunately, the indexical variants of the configurational and contextual accounts have already been proposed in some detail. To my knowledge, a modulation variant of the contextual account has not been presented elsewhere.

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<sup>7</sup>Though see Huang (2007) for a clear overview of alternative proposals for pragmatic enrichment.

I doubt that all proponents of a configurational approach to indexicality would endorse extending this treatment to expressive meaning. I therefore concentrate on Schlenker (2007) who explicitly proposes to cover expressive meanings in this way (for a similar proposal, see Sauerland (2007), whose treatment I do not discuss). Before discussing these accounts, I provide some background on the standard analysis of attitude predicates.

Following Hintikka (1969), the standard treatment of attitude predicates relates the attitude holder to a proposition. For instance, to formalize the semantics of *believe*, we might define an accessibility relation  $\mathcal{B}$  between possible worlds  $w$ , and  $w'$  such that  $w\mathcal{B}_aw'$  holds just in case world  $w'$  is compatible with agent  $a$ 's belief state in  $w$ . The complement to the attitude predication provides a set of worlds. If these worlds are compatible with John's beliefs in the utterance world, then the belief predication holds of John. For instance, if we were to take (17), the complement *he<sub>i</sub> is a hero* would provide a set of worlds in which the individual denoted by  $he_i$  is a hero.

- Thus, attitude predicates are standardly treated as shifting a *world* variable, not an entire context. Combined with Kaplan's (1989) treatment of demonstratives, the analysis correctly prohibits the indexical *I* in (18) from being interpreted *de se*, i.e., in which *I* is interpreted as *John*.<sup>8</sup>

- Similar observations led Kaplan (1989) to posit a prohibition on operations that shift or quantify over contexts, as in *in some contexts* (19). *Monstrous operators*, as they are called, would allow an interpretation of an indexical in some context other than the context of utterance.

- <sup>8</sup>An additional issue to be raised is the extent to which attitude predicates, e.g., *believe*, *think*, *etc.*, and verbs of saying, e.g., *say*, *claimed*, *etc.* are alike. Although differences between them are often ignored in the literature, such a practice is perhaps mistaken (see Karttunen (1974) and Forbes (1997) for some discussion).

If the monster in (19) were to shift the context of evaluation, the indexicals *I* and *now* could refer to an individual *i* and a time *t*, respectively, for which *i* was not tired at this very moment, but at some other time *t*. In which case, the indexicals would not refer *directly* to the individuals they denote, at least in some specialized contexts. Kaplan's (1989) response is simply to deny the existence of such context shifting operators in the object language, save as quotations.

Kaplan's (1989) strategy has recently been the object of much scrutiny. Schlenker (2003, to appear), Anand & Nevins (2004) and others have observed that while – in English – the indexical *I* (18) must refer to the speaker, not the attitude holder, this pattern is violated in other languages. In particular, Schlenker (2003) shows that certain indexicals embedded under attitude verbs in Amharic may reflect the attitude holder and not the speaker. Schlenker (2003) proposes that attitude verbs may indeed be monstrous: they quantify over *contexts*, not worlds.<sup>9</sup> In order to account for the different behaviors of indexicals in languages such as English and Amharic, he posits two classes of context variables: a shiftable context variable *c* and a non-shiftable context *c\** that picks out the actual speech context. He then locates the difference between English and Amharic in the lexical specification of the indexical: Amharic indexicals are shiftable, resolved with either context *c* or *c\**, but English indexicals are not, taking only the actual speech context *c\**.

The point is that if attitude predicates quantify over contexts, they may serve to shift the context in which the indexical is evaluated. Schlenker (2003, 69) takes great pains to show that *only* attitude predicates may shift contexts in his framework. Thus, non-attitude predicates are not predicted to associate with a context shift in any language. Indeed, Amharic and English are alike in this regard: under a factive verb like *found*, the indexical must be interpreted with respect to *c\**, the actual speech context.

However, our main concern is the calculation of perspectival information with respect to epithets, a concern which has gone largely unaddressed in the above section. That is, how does Schlenker's (2003) framework inform perspective shifting in *epithets*? I now turn to Schlenker's (2007) answer, which treats expressive meaning as involving a (narrowly) indexical component.

## **Expressive presuppositions**

In a commentary on Potts (2007), Schlenker (2007) proposes that expressives are shiftable indexicals, that contribute “self-fulfilling” presuppositions to the common ground – i.e., a set of propositions and attitudes that speakers of a discourse take to be accessible by other agents in the discourse. Thus, according to his treatment of indexicals, expressives come in two varieties: standard and shiftable. The standard indexicals are evaluated with respect to the actual speech act, while shiftable indexicals may be evaluated with respect to any context, including that of the reported speech act. In addition, Schlenker (2007) argues that, in subject oriented readings of expressives, the context variable that resolves the indexical is left free. Thus, expressives are normally evaluated with respect to the actual

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<sup>9</sup>Though see von Stechow (2003) for criticism of Schlenker's claim that attitude predicates are monsters in this framework.



speech situation  $c^*$ , but when embedded, and only when embedded, they may be shifted so that they are evaluated with respect to the reported speech act.<sup>10</sup>

Under this brand of narrow indexicality, it's not clear why expressives could take the context variable from these attitude predicates in particular; nor is it clear why shifting the context is so limited, even when the predicate is of the right type. However, as noted already by Potts (2007, 176), no approach in which the indexical associated with an expressive can be *entirely* controlled by the overt embedding attitude verb. For, as the results from the above experiment suggests, the context must be accessible to unembedded expressives, as well.

Proponents of the narrow indexical approach to perspective shift may wish to posit an additional operator to semantically bind the syntactically unembedded epithet. Such an analysis is not without precedent. For instance, in her analysis of Navajo direct discourse complements, Speas (1999) suggests that a covert speech operator optionally incorporates into a verb of saying. Like Amharic (Schlenker, 2003), 1st and 2nd person pronouns in Navajo may be resolved to discourse agents other than the speaker and addressee, respectively, when embedded under verbs of saying (see also Hollabrandse (2000) for discussion).

Speas's (1999) account could be extended so that these silent operators, instead of the attitude predicates themselves, shift the context of evaluation. Therefore, these silent speech act operators could appear above unembedded epithets in Cinque's (1997) 'evaluative' position, shifting the perspectival information of the epithet away from the speaker and onto another discourse agent.

However, as Speas (1999) observes, epithets in Navajo *do not* shift in direct discourse contexts where the 1st person pronoun is attributed to the matrix subject. This means that even if an evaluative head shifts the resolution of the indexical, it need not affect the perspective associated with the epithet. Most, if not all, of the approaches to perspective shift that rely on binding mechanism state that parameters of the context must shift together (for instance, Anand & Nevins (2004) and Schlenker (to appear); see also Kratzer (2009) for discussion). Shifting entire contexts means that once the context changes in embedded cases, it should not be able to shift back to the speaker's perspective; once the context has shifted for the indexical, it could have no way of shifting back to the speaker's perspective for the epithet. If so, then the Navajo data could be considered evidence for treating indexicals and expressives as independent.

A further conceptual problem faced by narrow indexicality accounts is that they require an additional principle to explain why, even when the necessary conditions for perspectival shift obtain, the subject reading is still favored. Sauerland (2007) offers one such principle in passing: "the individual strong emotional content is attributed to must be unambiguously recoverable unless it is the speaker of the utterance." Whatever the reason may be, these accounts do not, as of yet, explain the distribution of perspective shift without also adopting a pragmatic principle explaining the preference towards the speaker. And, as I argue below, a principle that explains why the subject reading is favored is all that is

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<sup>10</sup>Although Schlenker (2007) does not directly claim that expressives, as shiftable indexicals, could only be shifted to a different context under an attitude predicate, the result is immediate from his earlier work (Schlenker, 2003).

required to sufficiently capture perspectival shift in expressives. Since such accounts do not need to posit context shifting mechanisms, I propose that such mechanisms are redundant in the analysis of perspectival information in expressive meaning.

### 4.3 Perspective shift as broadly indexical

In a contextualist account, I have claimed, the way in which expressive meaning is dependent on context could be developed in a variety of ways. In this section, I present Potts's (2007) account, which I categorize as 'broadly indexical.' Recall that for an element to be broadly indexical, in Recanati's (2007) terms, some aspect of its semantic content remains underspecified unless saturated by some feature provided by the context. Potts (2007, 175) proposes an account of perspectival shift in expressives in which a contextual judge is hardwired "directly into the denotation of expressive." The contextual judge contributes an underspecified aspect of the expressive's meaning – although it aligns with the speaker of a context,  $c_a$ , as a default, it can also be shifted to another perspective if the conditions are right.

The contextual judge was proposed independently by Lasnik (2005) in the analysis of so-called predicates of personal taste (POTs). What are POTs? They are difficult to categorize; although the typical POT is a gradable adjective (Glanzberg, 2007), there are no clear, established tests to distinguish POTs from similar predicates (Lasnik, 2008). I follow Lasnik (2005, 2008) in eschewing a formal characterization in favor of an intuitive understanding, noting only that POTs are predicates which appear to allow interpersonal variation in the assignment of degrees. That is, POTs admit a degree structure, which is assigned on a subjective, rather than objective, basis. In (20), for example, the predicate *fun* applies differently to different judges: roller coasters may be fun for *me*, but they are not necessarily fun for *the addressee*, or anyone else in the discourse.

(20) Roller coasters are fun

Lasnik (2005) presents two basic options for how to encode the judge parameter. The first way, adopted by Potts (2007), encodes the judge parameter into the content of the POT (21a). In the second, advocated by Lasnik (2005), the judge parameter enters via pragmatic contexts to resolve an individual index expressed within the meaning of the POT (21b). In either case, the context has to be revised to include a parameter for a particular kind of individual: in the first case, it is the judge of the context, and in the second it is merely an individual who may or may not be associated with the judge of the context.

(21) Two analysis of POTs

- a.  $\llbracket \text{fun} \rrbracket^{w,t,c} = \text{the set of things that are fun for } c_J \text{ in world } w \text{ at time } t.$
- b.  $\llbracket \text{fun} \rrbracket^{w,t,i,c} = \text{the set of things that are fun for individual } i \text{ in world } w \text{ at time } t.$

On either account, POTs are judged differently in different contexts depending on the value of  $c_J$ . Potts (2007, 184) defines a context and the notion of an *expressive index* as follows:

- (38) A context is a tuple  $c = \langle c_A, c_T, c_W, c_J, c_E \rangle$ , where  $c_A$  is the agent (speaker) of  $c$ ,  $c_T$  is the time of  $c$ ,  $c_W$  is the world of  $c$ ,  $c_J$  is the judge of  $c$ , and  $c_E$  is a set of expressive indices.
- (37) An *expressive index* is a triple  $\langle a\mathbf{I}b \rangle$ , where  $a, b \in D_e$  and  $\mathbf{I} \sqsubseteq [-1, 1]$

Potts (2007) allows a limited form of context shift that operates on expressive elements in the context,  $c_E$ . His idea is that expressives are performative by nature: uttering an expressive is an expressive act which serves to situate an emotional relationship between the judge and the referent of the expressive (represented by the expressive index). In short, expressives *change the expressive dimension of the content*, without affecting the descriptive content of the expression containing the expressive element.

As such, expressives obligatorily shift the expressive dimension of a context. Yet, we still do not have a firm grasp on the conditions under which the contextual judge can change, thereby reflecting the shift in perspective of emotive attitude expressed by the expressive. In his reply to Potts (2007), Lasersohn (2007) offers the following explanation for why expressives tend to “project” out of embedded contexts:

Because expressive are so emotionally charged, and because their use can carry a significant social risk, I suspect that speakers are especially cautious about using them in embedded contexts where there is a chance of their content “leaking” – except of course, if the speaker does agree with the content of the expressive and is willing to make this agreement public.

In essence, speakers tend not to use expressives in embedded contexts unless they are willing to be associated with the emotive viewpoint established by the expressive.

I believe that Lasersohn’s (2007) intuition is on the right track, subject to some important modifications. Broadly speaking, Lasersohn’s central idea is that the speaker-orientation of expressives is dominant because it is a stable interpretive strategy. His proposal rests on the claim, *pace* Potts (2005), that expressives pattern along with presuppositions. Just as the presupposition that France is a monarchy can “leak” out of an opaque context (22a), Lasersohn (2007, 228) argues that expressive content can fail to be contained in similar contexts (22b).

- (22)    a. John thinks the king of France is bald  
          b. Sue believes that that bastard Kresge should be fired

However, this idea would have to be extended to cover the experimental stimuli. Since the epithets appeared outside the scope of an embedding predicate, at least ostensibly so, there is no need to worry that the emotive content could unintentionally leak. Perhaps the stable interpretive strategy which enforces a speaker interpretation precludes this concern. It seems to me that Lasersohn’s (2007) approach would predict a vast predominance of some variety of speaker-oriented interpretation – either “speaker only” or “both” response. This is in partial accordance with the experimental results. Yet, a subject

only response appeared as a viable option, which was successfully manipulated by context.<sup>11</sup> Further research is required to determine whether subject only and both interpretations have a different status, and it may be crucial to determine the viability of Lasersohn's proposal.

The experimental results reported above provide initial evidence that slight, but crucial, changes in the context warrant different interpretations of the expressive orientation. What is missing from the accounts discussed above are clear principles that determine which contextual factors influence the availability of non-speaker-oriented readings of expressive content and how these factors succeed in doing so. The next section explores the possibility that perspective shift of expressive content is primarily a pragmatic phenomenon by which hearers violate the stable interpretive strategy in order to make the use of the expressive better cohere with the presumed intention of the speaker. Doing so requires very strong cues from the speaker, and as such presents a significant risk for misinterpretation.

#### **4.4 Perspective shift as modulation**

Lastly, I consider perspectival shift as a form of modulation. The term *modulation* can be seen as a cover term for various kinds of processes resulting in pragmatic enrichment or implicature. Modulation, also called “free enrichment” (Recanati, 2004a; Huang, 2007), consists of at least two subtypes: strengthening and expansion. Strengthening enriches a fully saturated proposition with a conceptual constituent so that the enriched proposition now logically entails the original proposition. The proposition in (23a) is enriched to (23b) by adding a temporal adjunct locating the event in time. As such, the enriched proposition entails the minimal proposition from which it was built.

##### **(23) Strengthening**

- a. John has showered (minimal proposition)
- b. John has showered [today] (strengthened proposition)

Expansion is just like strengthening, save that the enriched proposition does not logically entail the minimal proposition (Bach, 1987; Recanati, 2004b). One such example, from Huang (2007), is illustrated by the pairs in (24).

##### **(24) Expansion**

- a. I have nothing to wear (minimal proposition)
- b. I have nothing [suitable] to wear [to John's wedding] (expanded proposition)

However, in the case of perspectival information, it is unclear with what the proposition could be ‘enriched’ to convey a shift of expressive orientation. Now, it could be that it is, in fact, the judge parameter  $c_J$  which is added to the proposition. Different perspectives are augmented by different contextual judges. The default judge may be the speaker:

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<sup>11</sup>See also Harris & Potts (2009) for an experiment on appositives in which *subject only* responses predominated in both embedded and unembedded contexts.

in order to properly understand the utterance, the contextual judge must be retrieved from the context. This view would imply that expressives do not come specified for a judge. Rather, an appropriate judge is added to the representation according to what the hearer believes the speaker intended. However, this view makes the wrong predictions for the ways in which an expressive could be defeasible.

Example (25) illustrates an important contrast between potential defeasibility in POTs and expressives. While the inference that roller coasters are fun for the speaker may be canceled in (25a), the inference that the speaker holds Ed in disregard cannot be canceled in (25b).

- (25)    a. ?Roller coasters may be fun, but they're not for me.  
          b. #Ed may be a jerk, but I don't think he is.

The above pair casts doubt on whether adding a contextual judge as an enrichment of the original proposition will help us in determining the locus of perspectival information. That is, (25b) suggests that perspectival information is encoded into the semantics of the expressive, rather than inserted into the semantics by a post-semantic process.<sup>12</sup>

I think that a more promising route incorporates conversational implicature into the calculation of expressive orientation. It could be argued that modulation may potentially include certain kinds of Gricean conversational implicature (Grice, 1989).<sup>13</sup> In particular, perspective shift could be the result of repairing a Quality implicature (as suggested on separate occasions by Lyn Frazier and Chris Kennedy, personal communication).

Although the basics of Grice's (1989) pragmatic agenda are well-known and widely accepted, I provide some of the necessary background here. In an effort to identify the principles guiding conversation, Grice proposed the cooperative principle which states that discourse participants are expected to be *cooperative* and *rational*.

- (26)    **Cooperative principle:** "Make your contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged."

Grice further developed the ways in which participants could be rational in terms of four conversational maxims. The maxims are principles to which participants should adhere if they intend to be cooperative. The most relevant, and arguably most basic, maxim is the Maxim of Quality:

- (27)    **Maxim of Quality:** Try to make your contribution one that is true.

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<sup>12</sup>A better example might have been (1), which both uses a real epithet (that jerk) and which explicitly introduces another perspective as a potential judge. Nevertheless, the disregard cannot be (easily) canceled, unless it is anchored to another perspective by partial quotation.

(1)    # You can complain about that jerk Ed, but I don't think he's a jerk.

<sup>13</sup>I am aware that I am playing fast and loose with Recanati's framework. It's not at all clear that he would count implicature as a species of modulation.

### *Epithets and perspective shift*

Grice, however, realized that the maxims could nevertheless be *flouted*, in which a speaker violates a maxim with the intention that this violation will be apparent to other participants. The intriguing part of flouting is that so doing does not necessarily violate the Cooperative Principle. That is, the hearer may realize that the speaker has violated a maxim, for instance, Quality, *without* concluding that the speaker is uncooperative. Rather, the hearer must find another meaning for the utterance that better coheres with what the hearer imagines the speaker would have intended.

- (28) A cooperative speaker S utters *x*, which standardly means *p* in the context of utterance *c*, to hearer H.
- a. If *p* could be (is likely to be) literally true in *c*, then H assumes that S cooperatively intended *p* by his use of *x* in *c*.
  - b. Otherwise, H infers that S did not intend *p* by *x*, and
    - i. H reasons that a cooperative speaker does not contribute false or misleading statements to the discourse, and
    - ii. H, therefore, reasons that S did not intend *p* by *x* in *c*, and, as such, did not intend to convey the literal meaning *p* of *x* in *c*, but rather a meaning *q* derivable from *p* in *c*.

What could *q*, the non-literal but intended, meaning of *x* be in the case of expressive meaning? Some options include (i) an ironic rendering of the expressive, (ii) a partial quotation of the expressive, or (iii) commiserative use of the expressive. These different options provide different possible emotive associations between the speaker and the expressive. In the case of irony, the speaker provides strong cues to *dissociate* himself from the literal meaning of the expressive. If the literal, or at least standard, meaning of the expressive is taken to be speaker-oriented, then, in effect, the speaker does not endorse the relationship posed by the expressive. Such a use is most clearly evinced by example (12).

The case of partial quotation is less clear. By using a partial quotation, the speaker clearly indicates that the use of the expressive originates in another context and should be attributed to another speaker (Anand, 2007). However, by placing the expressive in a partial quotation does not determine whether or not the speaker endorses that use. Other contextual factors must be present in order to determine whether the speaker fully dissociates herself from it.

Lastly, the speaker may intend to commiserate with the attitude expressed by the expressive. Here, the speaker endorses the use of the expressive, while indicating that its source may be found elsewhere. In this case, the speaker takes another agent's perspective as her own, perhaps because she lacks the necessary epistemic basis with which to independently establish an opinion on the matter. To illustrate the three options about, let us reconsider example (13) in light of this analysis.

- (29) a. My friend Sheila said that her history professor gave her a really high grade.  
(speaker-oriented)
- b. My friend Sheila said that her history professor gave her a really low grade.  
(subject-oriented)

The jerk always favors long papers.

One reading of the speaker-oriented case (29a) is one in which the speaker uses the epithet *the jerk* to express jealousy – Sheila is now interpreted as a competitor with the speaker. Since there is no reason given in the short context to assume that Sheila stands in a negative emotive relationship with her professor, a subject reading is ruled out. Consequently, *the jerk* is strongly biased towards a speaker-oriented interpretation.

The subject-oriented interpretation of the expressive in (29b) may be captured in at least two ways. In the first, the speaker may be *partially quoting* Sheila. To achieve the effect of partial quotation, the speaker might use a variety of cues, such as intonation and gesture to make it clear that the use of the epithet is borrowed from another source, in this case Sheila. It is not clear whether the speaker endorses Sheila’s view of her professor, as well. It at least allows for the possibility of a purely subject-oriented reading.

In the second case, the speaker *commiserates* with Sheila: he thinks that the professor is a jerk because he believes what Sheila does about the professor. Note that this interpretation may correspond to the *both* responses observed in the experiment. Here, evidential information is crucial: if Sheila is the speaker’s only source of knowledge about the professor, then her opinion will significantly determine his own.

Note that the stable interpretative strategy discussed above is not necessarily violated in the case of commiseration. The speaker *is* committed to expressing the negative stance towards the epithet, but the context allows the hearer to infer that the source of the opinion derives from elsewhere.

	Strategy	Perspective
i.	Dissociative	Non-speaker
ii.	Quotative	Underspecified
iii.	Commiserative	Subject and Speaker

Table 6: Comparing non-standard communicative strategies

The three non-standard communicative strategies discussed above are summarized in Table 6. First, the speaker can choose to dissociate herself from controversial content, in which case she signals that the expressive dimension in the epithet is non-speaker-oriented. As discussed in Harris & Potts (to appear), dissociation might be signalled in a variety of ways, along both intonational (e.g., contrastive focus, the adoption of a different pitch range, etc.) and gestural (e.g., eye-rolls, head-shakes, etc.) dimensions. These ways usually employ sarcasm to distance the speaker from the literal meaning of what she says.

Second, the speaker might use quotation to communicate that the source of the content originates elsewhere. While the speaker still dissociates herself from the content of what she says in this strategy, she does not use sarcasm to do so, and thereby leaves

open the possibility that she endorses the content, whether descriptive or expressive, of the quoted material. Thus, the quotative strategy is underspecified with respect to perspectival information.

Third, the speaker may signal that she endorses the expressive content because she commiserates with the source from which it originated. Such cases are likely to involve an evidential component, as the speaker has become acquainted with the referent through the attitude holder. In this way, the speaker's perspective is identified with the attitude holder's perspective (see Simons, 2007 for discussion).

I have only briefly sketched a view of perspective shift of expressive meaning, motivated by resolving a violation of the Maxim of Quality. Yet the discussion has brought out many important features of these contexts. Crucially, we see that these situations involve many complex inferences, such as evidential information, commiseration with the subject, etc. It also allows us to explain select violations of the stable strategy discussed by Lasersohn (2007), and to directly associate some violations with particular interpretations, e.g., irony (and perhaps partial quotation) to purely subject-orientation interpretations, and commiseration with the Both responses.

I will conclude with the suggestion that a whole range of strategies are available, the choice of which depends on what kind of contextual evidence is present. In particular, two important dimensions are at play: (i) the source of the speaker's knowledge about the referent and (ii) whether relevant aspects of the subject's viewpoint is shared by the speaker.

Lastly, it is not clear whether attributing perspectival shift to modulation is necessary inconsistent with an underspecification approach. Rather, it may be that trying to recover *what was intended* from *what was said* drives an interpretation of expressive perspective which deviates from the stable interpretive strategy. Only when the hearer encounters evidence that the stable strategy will fail to deliver the intended meaning is the hearer drawn away from directly associating speaker perspective with the expressive content.

## **5. Conclusion**

This paper explored the possibility of non-speaker-oriented interpretations of expressive meaning, focusing particularly on epithets. In order to systematically explore the question, a pilot questionnaire study was presented. The results from this experiment suggest that epithets may indeed be interpreted as non-speaker oriented, even in unembedded environments, if the right kind of inferences can be drawn from the context.

Two competing accounts were compared and evaluated against the data. The first approach, a configurational account, attributed non-speaker interpretations to semantic binding from a higher predicate. As non-speaker interpretations are available outside the scope of attitude predicates, the configurational account, as it stands, was deemed insufficient. Attempts to modify this account were explored and ultimately rejected as redundant in light of the second account.

The second approach, a contextual account, attributed non-speaker-oriented readings of perspective to more pragmatic factors. I explored two, potentially compatible, ways to further articulate how the contextual approach cashed out context dependence (Recanati,



2007), including an underspecified judge parameter (Potts, 2007) and a broadly Gricean account of inferring perspectival orientation.

This paper addressed a variety of ways in which a linguistic element could be dependent on its context. I argued that (i) expressive meaning, at least for epithets, is dependent upon the context in ways distinct from genuine indexicals, and (ii) the former kind of context-dependence was to be treated in contextualist terms. The account did not articulate the way in which genuine indexicals depend on the context; it is quite likely that true indexicals are best treated in configurational terms. Clearly, research into the calculation of perspectival information is far from exhausted. Nevertheless, I hope that these initial comments will instigate further investigation into the topic.

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**1. Appendix: Pilot Study Materials**

Materials from the questionnaire pilot, in which a single word (Positive/Negative) in the context was manipulated.

1. My friend Sheila said that her history professor gave her a really (high/low) grade. The jerk always favors long papers.
2. My neighbor Maria said that her husband got an (amazing/awful) new job. The clown wasn't on the job market for more than a week.
3. My roommate Glen said that his uncle tells the (funniest/lamest) jokes. The stooge can never get through a single one of them without giggling.
4. My sister Trudy said that her blind date showed up wearing the most (expensive/tasteless) suit. The idiot spent a lot of money to impress her.
5. My buddy Steve said that his son plays the drums very (well/badly). The twerp refuses to take music lessons.
6. My co-worker Miranda said that our boss gave her a very (generous/stingy) raise. The sleaze ball has always treated the pretty ones better.
7. My brother Ken said that his math tutor gave him some (great/terrible) advice. The jerk is always nicer when he's paid in advance.
8. My friend Mike said his housemate threw a (fantastic/horrible) party last weekend. The cretin always invites a lot of people.