The latent affective meaning of demonstratives

Eric Acton and Christopher Potts
Stanford Linguistics

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Reporting in part on work with

Chris Davis

Florian Schwarz

Goals and the plan

Goals

- Use evidence from large corpora to argue that affective uses of demonstratives are a robust, cross-linguistically stable phenomenon.

- Trace this affectivity to Elbourne's semantics for demonstratives plus familiar pragmatic interactions.

Plan

1. Empirical characterization of affective demonstratives.

2. Corpus evidence for affectivity.

3. Review Elbourne's framework for demonstratives, pronouns, and definites.

4. Show how affectivity *emerges* from this semantics.

Empirical characterization

Robin Lakoff's (1974) *emotional deixis*

> Under this rubric I place a host of problematical uses, generally linked to the speaker's emotional involvement in the subject-matter of his utterance. Since emotional closeness often creates in the hearer a sense of participation, these forms are frequently described as used for 'vividness.' And since expressing emotion is – as I noted last year – a means of achieving camaraderie, very often these forms will be colloquial as well. <u>This</u> is used for several reasons, all linked to the achievement of 'closeness,' like spatio-temporal <u>this</u>, in a rather extended sense.

Liberman (2008, 2010) calls demonstratives with an emotive flavor *affective demonstratives.* He highlights the presumption of "shared familiarity" associated with their use, and he claims that they "draw us in" since their referents are treated "as 'assumed to be known' to the audience".

Celebrity spokesperson Sarah Palin

- And he also wants to erase those artificial lines between states

- Americans are craving that straight talk . . .

- the American workforce is the greatest in this world

- [Paul Revere] warned the British . . . by ringing those bells

- not having that proof for the American people

From the 2008 VP debate

"We should be helping them build schools to compete for those hearts and minds of the people in the region."

From the 2008 VP debate

"We should be helping them build schools to compete for those hearts and minds of the people in the region."

From the 2008 VP debate

"We should be helping them build schools to compete for those hearts and minds of the people in the region."

". . . but John McCain thought the answer is that tried and true Republican response, deregulate, deregulate."

Everyone else

1. Do you suppose this Gashel dude at Clackamas Walmart and this David dude at East Port Walmart are one and the same?
2. Thus this God talking to us
3. who does this Arsineh person think I am?
4. once in a lifetime crazy night in the life of this NC girl!
5. This Army Wife thing
6. aa huuuuuge crush on this Capricorn guy I met online
7. didn't this Douche bag have a gf?
8. and this Beyaya breezes in one night
9. Who the hell is this Mark Twain character?!
10. didn't Jesus, this Holy man I hear about every Sunday
11. I chose to continue emailing this Aussie Bloke after he stopped emaling her
12. still hanging with this Kurtis
13. OMG this lady was looking good last night

Old Blue Eyes

1956, Capitol Records
You and I are just like a couple o' tots
Runnin' along the meadow
Pickin' up lots o' forget-me-nots

Old Blue Eyes

1956, Capitol Records
You and I are just like a couple o' tots
Runnin' along the meadow
Pickin' up lots o' forget-me-nots

1972, Live at Royal Festival Hall
You and I, we are just like a couple o' tots
Runnin' along the meadow
Snatchin' up all those forget-a-me-nots

Affective *this*

1. This Henry Kissinger is really something!

2. There was this traveling salesman, and he . . .

3. This Fred Snooks turns out to have 24 cats.

4. [in front of a computer] These IBM ThinkPads are amazing!

5. In "Darkly Dreamy Dexter" author Jeff Lindsay introduces us to the protagonist Dexter Morgan, a police criminologist working in Miami. More specifically, he's a blood splatter analyst who just happens to be revolted by blood because of the mess that it makes. Oh, and he's also a lifetime serial killer who lives by a code that only allows him to target other criminals. Some complex guy, this Dexter Morgan, eh?

Syntactic optionality

The affectivity is strongest where

1. the determiner is clearly syntactically optional:

   a. Some complex guy, this Dexter Morgan, eh?
   b. This Henry Kissinger is really something!
   c. Snatchin' up all those forget-a-me-nots

2. or the determiner is competing with a much less marked form:

   a. There was this traveling salesman, and he . . .
   b. . . . the American workforce is the greatest in this world

3. or there is clearly no discourse antecedent in the usual sense:

   a. [Revere] warned the British . . . by ringing those bells
   b. We should be helping them build schools to compete for those hearts and minds of the people in the region.

Evaluativity

Bowdle and Ward (1995)

the predicate of a generic demonstrative is typically evaluative

1. These IBM ThinkPads are amazing.
2. #These IBM ThinkPads have plastic cases.

The generalization extends to proper names as well:

3. This Henry Kissinger is {really something/Secretary of State!}
4. Who is this William Young and where has he been? This wonderful work [. . .]
5. And who is this John Perkins, who claims that he could confound the best economists [. . .]

Presumed uncontroversial

The content of the evaluative predication is assumed by the speaker to be uncontroversial.

Solidarity

> **1. The 'solidarity' types**
>
> These are perhaps the most curious semantically, since the distance marker <u>that</u> seems to establish emotional closeness between speaker and addressee.

Bowdle and Ward (1995)

Generic demonstratives "mark the kind being referred to as a relatively subordinate or homogeneous kind located among the speaker's and hearer's private shared knowledge"

Link to evaluativity

Not just shared sentiment, but *presumed* shared sentiment, should foster solidarity.

Familiarity

>   Its most natural use seems to be with
> proper names that the speaker expects the hearer to be familiar
> with. In one respect at least this use differs strikingly from
> <u>this</u> of normal discourse deixis: while <u>this</u> may be used in the
> latter only in case it was fully coreferential to something in
> prior discourse, in its emotional-deictic use <u>this</u> seems most
> normal when the relationship is inferential.

- A: Who are John Smith and John Smothers? (Wolter 2006)
- B: #Well, this John Smith is really something.

- Hearer-old but not necessarily discourse-old

Link to solidarity

This status entails shared information, so felicitously making this demand (rather than avoiding it) is a small gesture of solidarity.

Pailin: folksy or pseudo-folksy?

- "We feel like she talks like we do," says Susan Geary, a Richmond retiree who attended a McCain-Palin rally in Fairfax last month. "Like she's sitting in your kitchen." —Susan Geary, as quoted by Libby Copeland, Washington Post, Oct 1, 2008

- "Sarah won . . . She talked like real people to real people. She will fight for us." —Tori, Commentor on FoxNews.com, Oct 4, 2008.

- ". . . She spoke RIGHT TO ME!! She SO won this debate!" —Barbara, Commentor on FoxNews.com, Oct 2, 2008.

- "[In Palin's] straight-talking points, many of us saw a repeat of George W. Bush's pseudo-folksiness and fundamental dishonesty . . . " —RJ Eskow, HuffingtonPost.com, Oct 3, 2008.

- . . . it would not matter what she says as long as she says it "folksy" and with a wink. It is ridiculous. —shiningstar1, Commentor on HuffingtonPost.com, October 4, 2008.

Exclamativity

> A final fact of interest: emotional-deictic <u>this</u> and <u>that</u> are highly constrained in indirect discourse, like most exclamations, which also reflect the speaker's point of view.

1. What a hotel/street/view!
2. Boy, is it ever summertime!
3. I would absolutely visit India!

Fellow travelers

Many of the examples of affective *this* in the literature include exclamation points, as well as other markers of exclamativity.

Link to evaluativity

Exclamatives are inherently evaluative; even non-evaluative predicates take on evaluative components inside of them.

Affective demonstratives in Japanese

Commenting on the usual descriptions in terms of physical deixis, Naruoka (2003):

Conversational data, however, indicates that the usage described above is scarcely seen in informal conversation. Rather than solely referring to the characteristics of an object, most of the usage overtly expresses the following speaker's modality: 1) negative emotion or rejection, and 2) surprise. These emotions and attitudes are toward the object, the interlocutor, or the whole utterance or action that includes the object.

Japanese demonstratives

	pro. *-re*	det. *-no*	kind det. *-nna*
proximal *ko-*	*kore*	*kono*	*konna*
distant from speaker *so-*	sore	sono	sonna
distant from both *a-*	are	ano	anna
indefinite ('which') *do-*	dore	dono	donna

Table: The Japanese demonstrative paradigm.

In summary

1. Syntactically optional, or at least surprising
2. Lacking a traditional antecedent
3. Solidarity
4. Evaluativity
5. Familiarity
6. Exclamativity

We think 3 – 6 are present even without 1 – 2 . We will explain why 1 – 2 amplify the affectivity.

Corpus evidence for affectivity

For data and code, see my (Potts's) NASSLLI 2012 course website:

http://nasslli2012.christopherpotts.net/

IMDB user-supplied reviews

IMDB user-supplied reviews

Rating	Reviews	Words	Vocabulary	Mean words/review
1	124,587 (9%)	25,395,214	172,346	203.84
2	51,390 (4%)	11,755,132	119,245	228.74
3	58,051 (4%)	13,995,838	132,002	241.10
4	59,781 (4%)	14,963,866	138,355	250.31
5	80,487 (6%)	20,390,515	164,476	253.34
6	106,145 (8%)	27,420,036	194,195	258.33
7	157,005 (12%)	40,192,077	240,876	255.99
8	195,378 (14%)	48,723,444	267,901	249.38
9	170,531 (13%)	40,277,743	236,249	236.19
10	358,441 (26%)	73,948,447	330,784	206.31
Total	1,361,796	317,062,312	800,743	232.83

Counting and visualizing: IMDB

A Cat.	B Count	C Total	D Pr(w|r)	E Pr(r|w)
1	8,557	25,395,214	0.0003	0.10
2	4,627	11,755,132	0.0004	0.12
3	6,726	13,995,838	0.0005	0.14
4	7,171	14,963,866	0.0008	0.14
5	9,039	20,390,515	0.0004	0.13
6	10,101	27,420,036	0.0004	0.11
7	10,362	40,192,077	0.0003	0.08
8	10,064	48,723,444	0.0002	0.06
9	7,909	40,277,743	0.0002	0.06
10	13,570	73,948,447	0.0002	0.05

disappoint(ed/ing) (88,126 tokens)
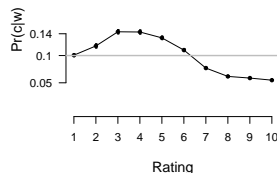
$$\Pr(w|r) \stackrel{def}{=} \mathrm{Count}(w,r)/\mathrm{Total}(r)$$

$$\Pr(r|w) \stackrel{def}{=} \frac{\Pr(w|r)}{\sum_{x \in R} \Pr(w|x)}$$

Author and reader perspectives
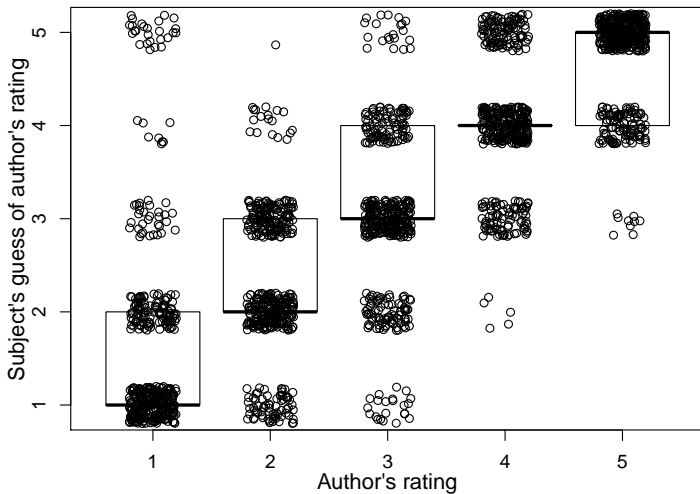
Experience Project confessions

Experience Project confessions

Confession:	I really hate being shy . . . I just want to be able to talk to someone about anything and everything and be myself. . . That's all I've ever wanted.
Reactions:	*hugs*: 1; *rock*: 1; *teehee*: 2; *understand*: 10; *just wow*: 0;
Author age	21
Author gender	female
Text group	friends
Confession:	I bought a case of beer, now I'm watching a South Park marathon while getting drunk :P
Reactions:	*hugs*: 2; *rock*: 3; *teehee*: 2, *understand*: 3, *just wow*: 0
Author age	25
Author gender	male
Text group	health

Table: Sample Experience Project confessions with associated metadata.

Experience Project confessions

	Texts	Words	Vocab	Mean words/text
Confessions	194,372	21,518,718	143,712	110.71
Comments	405,483	15,109,194	280,768	37.26

Table: The overall size of the corpus.

Understanding the meta-data: Experience Project

10 Reactions

you rock (3)   teehee (0)   I understand (6)   sorry, hugs (1)   wow, just wow (0)

Figure: EP reaction icons.

Counting and visualizing: Experience Project

	A Cat.	B Count	C Total	D $\Pr_{EP}(w|r)$	E $\Pr_{EP}(r|w)$
hugs	1167	18038374	0.00006	0.26
rock	520	14066087	0.00004	0.15
teehee	300	8167037	0.00004	0.15
understand	1488	20466744	0.00007	0.29
just wow	473	12550603	0.00004	0.15

disappoint(ed|ing) -- 571 tokens
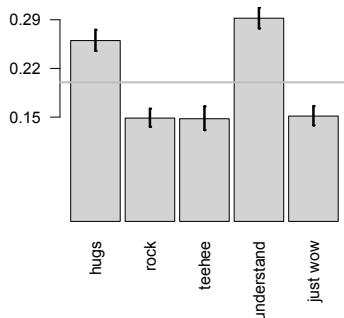
Scalars: Positive
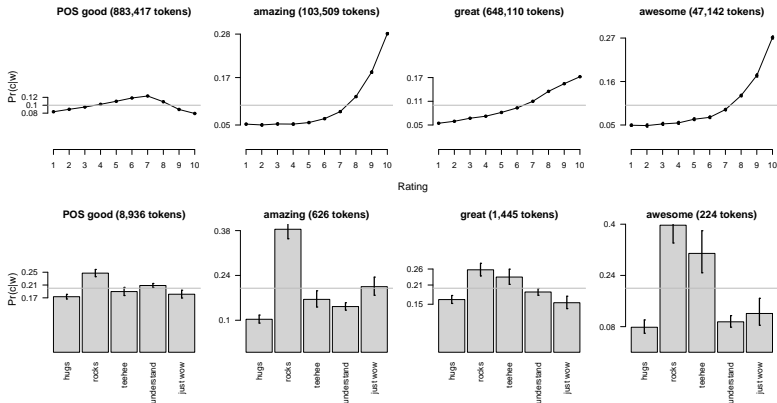
Scalars: Negative
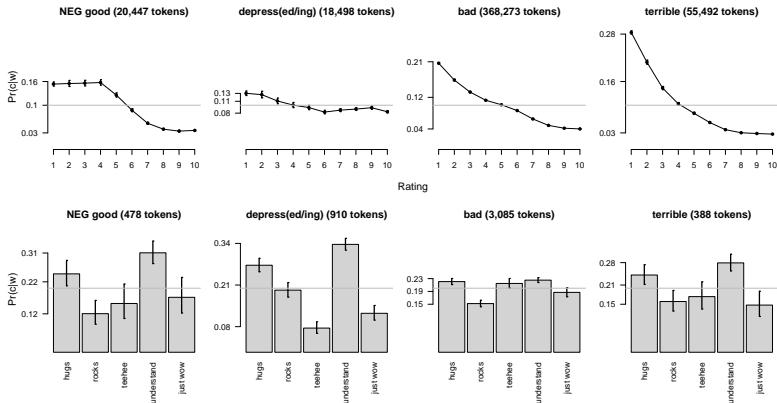
Intensives and non-intensives
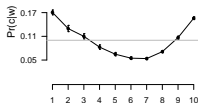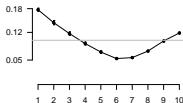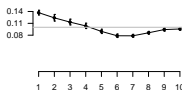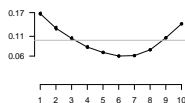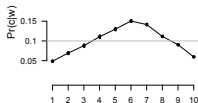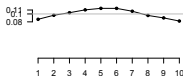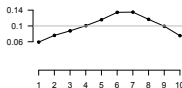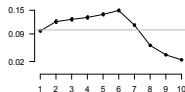
English proximal demonstratives: exclamativity

this – 3,998,308 tokens
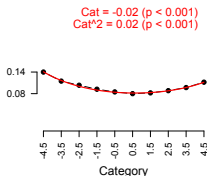
Cat = -0.02 (p < 0.001)
Cat^2 = 0.02 (p < 0.001)

thisDET – 131,606 tokens

Cat = 0.44 (p < 0.001)
Cat^2 = 0.08 (p < 0.001)

thisPRO – 39,826 tokens

Cat = 0.14 (p < 0.001)
Cat^2 = 0.02 (p < 0.001)

these – 280,363 tokens

Cat = -0.01 (p < 0.001)
Cat^2 = 0 (p < 0.001)

theseDET – 11,324 tokens

Cat = 0.18 (p < 0.001)
Cat^2 = 0.04 (p < 0.001)
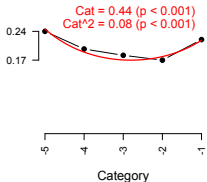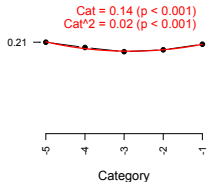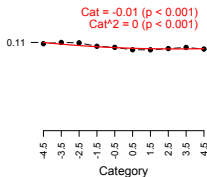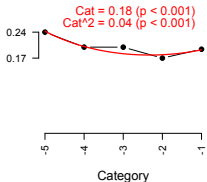
thesePRO – 1,702 tokens

Cat = -0.06 (p = 0.002)
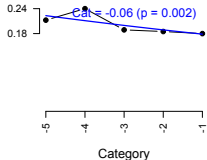
Coefficient comparisons
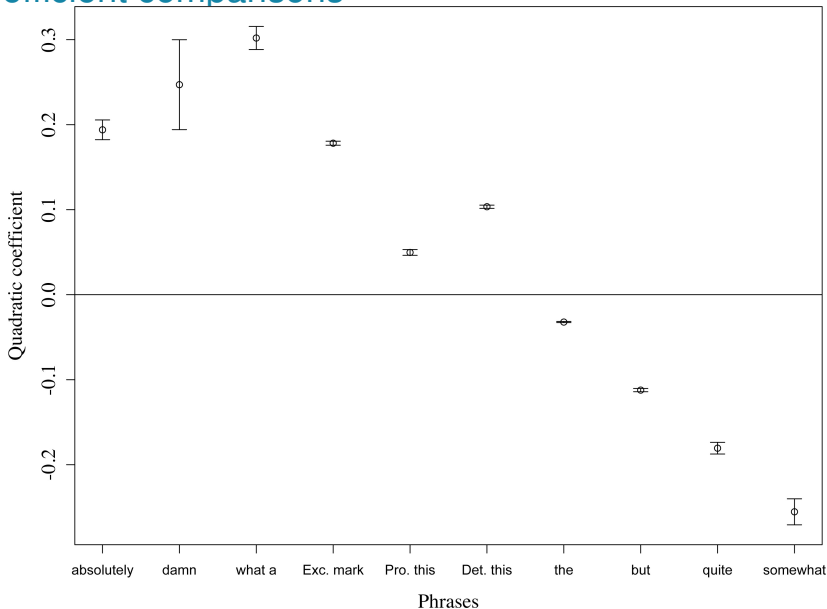
English proximal demonstratives: solidarity
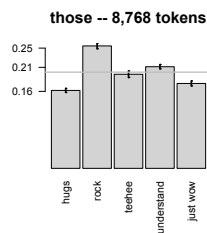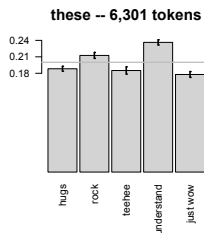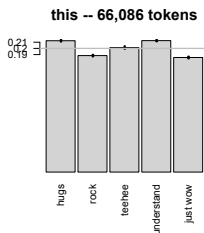
'I understand' is always elevated. Plural forms trade in 'Sorry, hugs' for 'Your rock'. Conjecture: plural forms are often oppositional

English distal demonstratives (very tentative)

These are harder to isolate because of the many senses of *that*, which are one of the worst confusion points for modern part-of-speech taggers and parsers. Thus, the picture is messy and not to be trusted at present, unfortunately.
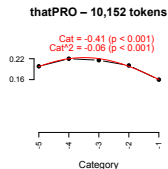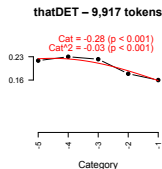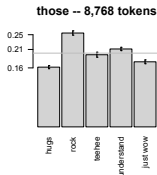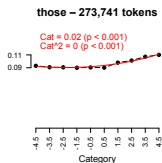
German and Japanese (and English again)
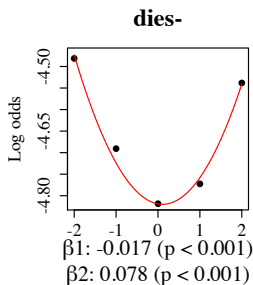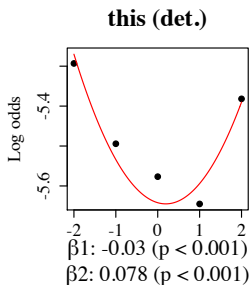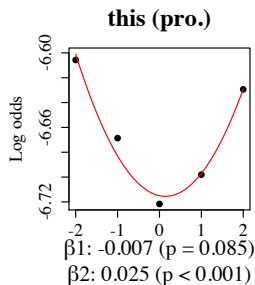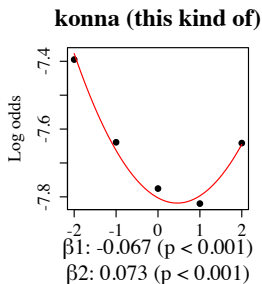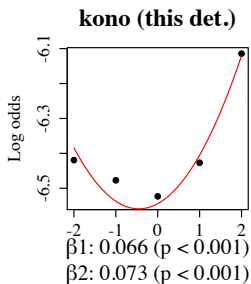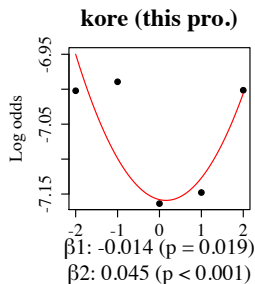
First-person pronouns

1st sing. – 5227110 tokens

Rating coef. = -0.01 (p = 0.04)
Rating^2 coef. = 0.02 (p < 0.001)
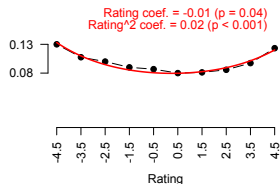
1st sing. -- 1,485,439 tokens
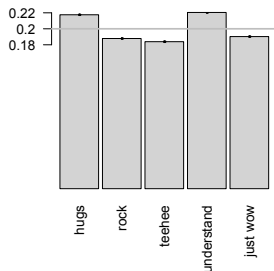
"Across multiple studies, we have found that use of first person singular is associated with negative affective states [. . .]" (Chung & Pennebaker)

In summary

- The exclamativity/evaluativity insight of Lakoff and Bowdle and Ward predicts the U-shapes we see for demonstratives (and perhaps the dominance of 'You rock' for plural forms).

- The solidarity insight of Lakoff predicts the dominance of 'I understand' as reader reactions in the EP data.

- These correlations are striking. Now we want to know *why* they hold.

- Treating affectivity as an arbitrary lexical fact would not square well with its generality and systematicity.

- Can we derive it from the semantics?

Elbourne's framework

Our theoretical claim, in brief

- English demonstratives, in virtue of their semantics as indexicals, depend upon shared knowledge, experience, and perspective between interlocutors, in a way that the determiner *the* does not.

- Consequently, demonstratives have special status among definite determiners in terms of their social significance, in that they are especially well equipped for:

  1. Fostering and tacitly insisting upon (i.e., presuming) a sense of solidarity and common ground between interlocutors. This common ground effect constitutes their core social force.
  2. Dialing up an utterance's emotionality.

Elbourne (2008) on demonstratives

- *This* and *that* are definite articles.
- Definites bear existence and uniqueness presuppositions.
- Demonstrative-DPs are a sort of hybrid of *the*-DPs and pronouns.
- Like the former, they incorporate the descriptive content of a constituent NP.
- Like the latter, they are linked to contextually salient entities (indexes).

Elbourne's framework

- Elbourne adopts a situation semantics framework, where "a situation consists of one or more individuals having one or more properties or standing in one or more relations at a particular spatiotemporal location"

- Individual concepts are functions from situations to individuals.

- Definite DPs are a subclass of individual concepts.

- Given a situation *s*, a definite DP picks out the individual *x* in *s* that uniquely satisfies the property/ies associated with the DP in the context of utterance.

- If no such individual exists, the DP is has no semantic value in *s*.

Semantics for the definite article

- ⟦*the*⟧ takes a property *P* (as expressed by an NP) and returns an individual concept.

- The resulting individual concept maps any given situation *s* to the individual uniquely satisfying *P* in *s*. If there is no such individual, the *the*-DP has no semantic value in *s*.

  ‣ ⟦*the*⟧ picks out the unique dog in a situation *s*, if there is a unique dog in *s*

- **Note**: the only property that figures into the determination of what's being talked about with a *the*-DP is the property expressed by the NP.

Pronouns: Framework for indexicals

Indexicals involve four components (Nunberg 1993):

- An index: a contextually salient object that serves as the basis of interpreting the indexical

- A relational component, specifying the relation that must hold between the index and the interpretation (most often, the identity relation)

- A classificatory component: things like φ features that must hold of the interpretation (e.g, *he* must be male).

- An interpretation: the individual or definite description contributed to the proposition expressed.

Semantics for pronouns I

- Pronouns are definite determiners much like *the*, when abstracting away from context.

- ⟦*he*⟧ takes a property *P* and returns an individual concept (with the restriction that the interpretation must be male).

- The difference is that the *P* is given by composing the index *i* and the relational component *R* (usually an identity relation) rather than by an NP.

  ▸ The Straightforward Case: Pointing at Benedict XVI, I say: "He was born in Germany."

- Here, the index and the interpretation are identical. Thus the property contributed by *R*(*i*) is the property of being Pope Benedict XVI. That is, *he*, as used in this context, maps a situation *s* to the unique individual who is Pope Benedict XVI in *s*.

Semantics for pronouns II

- The relational component is not always trivial. Consider "descriptive indexicals":

  - The Descriptive Case: Pointing at Benedict XVI, I say: "He is usually Italian."

- Here, the index is still Benedict XVI. But the intended relation is probably something like "holds the office currently held by i."

- So $R(i)$ = "holds the office currently held by B. XVI" = "is Pope".

- So $[\![he]\!]$, given a situation s, picks out the (unique) Pope in s.

- **Upshot**: as with *the*-DPs, only one property figures into the determination of what's being talked about with a pronoun (aside from φ features) — namely, the property expressed by the composition of i and R.

Semantics for demonstratives

- Demonstratives are a hybrid of *the* and pronouns.
- They are definite determiners, but they take into account both:

    - the descriptive content of a sister NP (null if the demonstrative is a pronoun); and
    - the descriptive contribution of an index and its relation.
    - Example: In a pet store, I point to a particular puppy and say: "That puppy looks a bit like Peter Lorre, but adorable."

- Here, we get a contribution from the NP *puppy*, which tells us that the interpretation must be a young dog, and from the index/relation which tells us that it must be identical to the individual being pointed to.
- Note that saying "The puppy. . . " instead would be odd — the NP alone isn't enough.

In summary

Definite determiners pick out the one and only thing in a situation
that satisfies the properties expressed by:

the	an NP	
pronouns		Relation(index)
demonstratives	an NP	Relation(index)

Deriving the affectivity

The tile game v1.0: The setup

1. There is a room with a wall covered with tiles of many colors, each tile being monochromatic. There are green ones, red ones, purple ones, etc. We've never seen the array of tiles before.

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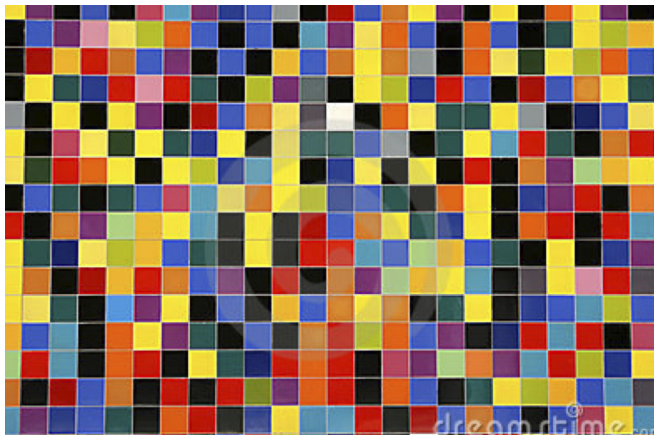
Now close your eyes . . .

The tile game v1.0: Dynamics explained

- "The red one" picks out the one and only tile that:

  ▸ is red

- "That red one" picks out the one and only tile that:

  ▸ is red; and
  ▸ is linked to an index that

    ▸ is part of the speaker and hearers shared perspective/ experience
    ▸ is related to the interpretation in a way that can be reliably discerned by the hearer

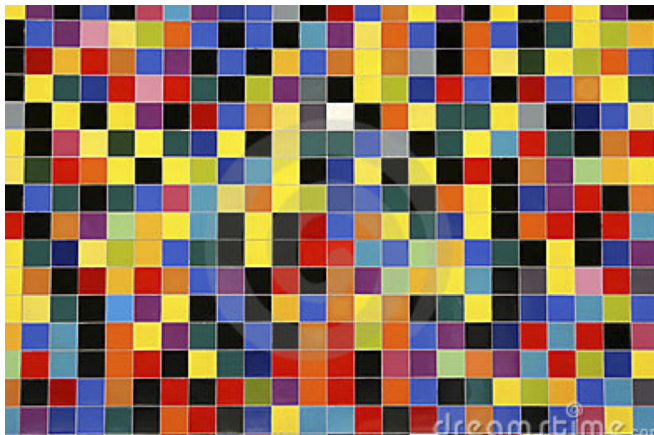Since we have essentially no common ground concerning the array of tiles, you'd have every right to be frustrated with me as a partner if I described the tile of interest as "that red one."

The tile game v2.0: The setup

Same as before, only this time theres a pre-game phase during
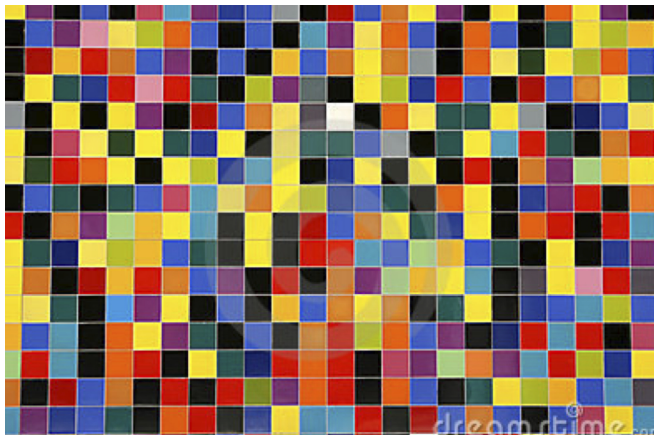which we can examine the board together to get our bearings.
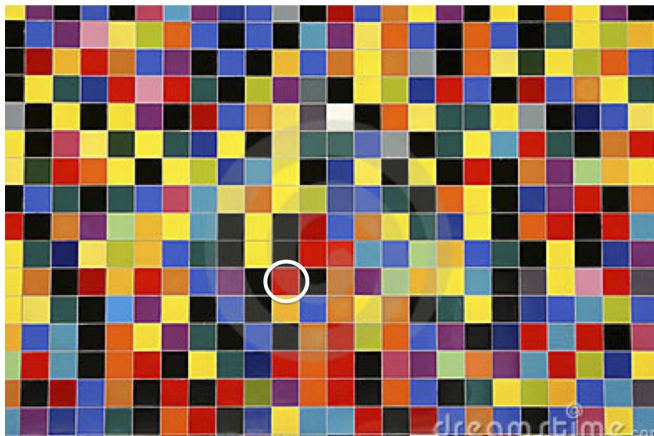
The tile game v2.0: The setup

Now close your eyes again ...

The tile game v2.0: The setup

It's that red one!

The tile game v2.0: The setup

Bieber here we come!

Comparing *the* and *that*

- Only the demonstrative is an indexical. In turn, the use of
  demonstratives presumes and evokes common ground
  between speaker and hearer.
- In using a demonstrative, a speaker *A*, talking to hearer *B*:
  - ‣ requires of *B* that she bring to mind the experiences and
    viewpoints she shares with *A* in determining what index
    and relation *A* has in mind and, in turn, what *A* is talking
    about; and
  - ‣ indicates to *B* that she is confident that their common
    ground is sufficient for *B* to make these determinations.
- In this way, demonstratives doubly encourage a sense of
  familiarity and solidarity between speaker and hearer.

But what about pronouns?

- Recall that in resolving the interpretation of pronouns a hearer must rely solely on the index and its associated relation. That is, the hearer must rely completely on context.

- Back to our tile example: "#(It's) it!"

- This is very odd (for many reasons, perhaps), and would probably only work if we had talked about or assigned special status to one and only one tile beforehand.

- In short, pronouns are far less referentially flexible than demonstratives

- That said, they can have a quite powerful solidarity effects in discourse-new uses, for example, if they go through:

  ▸ At Steve's house after a meeting with Chris:
  Eric: "He did it again!"
  Steve: "Oh, no! Another noogie?"

Super affectivity via implicature

Looking on this display, I say: "Look at that red one!"
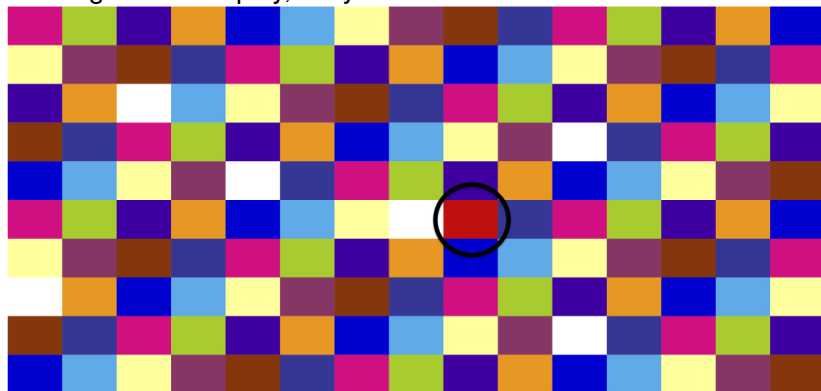
You ask yourself, "Why opt for that? This seems like a violation of Grice's Manner Maxim. The semantically simpler *the red one* would've been sufficient — there's only one red tile. Why go to the trouble of *that*?

Answer: evoking common ground

- My opting for a form that is needlessly complex for securing reference must be relevant.

- I do so because I want to evoke our shared experiences and perspectives and/or dial up the emotionality of what I say. Consider also:

    ▸ "this weather"
    ▸ "that Sarah Palin"

- This is especially bizarre because the descriptive content of the NP alone should uniquely identify the referent — essentially no context is needed (compare with "the red one").

- Thus, we understand this to be an emphatic attempt at fostering solidarity and common ground, or giving the phrase an emotional punch.

Conclusion

- The literature contained an existing characterization of demonstratives as sometimes/often conveying affectivity: solidarity, evaluativity, familiarity, exclamativity.

- These accounts predict the mixed reactions to Palin's speech: if you feel solidarity with her, her language solidifies that feeling; if you lack solidarity with her, then her speech is seems presumptuous.

- These accounts also predict more or less exactly the patterns we see in large corpora, which in turn serve as proxies, in Bonnie Webber's sense, for the phenomena, affording deeper insights.

- We also argued that the affectivity emerges from the semantics — indeed, from the existing semantics of Elbourne, once we work through its full pragmatic consequences.

- In a sense, the expressivity emerges from the indexicality.

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