

## Acquaintance content and Obviation

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# Jarmush 1984



- Cleveland. It's a beautiful city.
- Yes?
- Yeah.
- It's got a big, beautiful lake.  
You'll love it there.
- Have you been there?
- No, no.

(Stranger Than Paradise)

# Acquaintance and Experience

Acquaintance Inference (AI) (terms from Ninan 2014, also Wollheim 1980)

A firsthand experience requirement present in several subjective expressions (Stephenson 2007; Pearson 2013a; Klecha 2014; Ninan 2014; Kennedy and Willer 2016)

- AI cannot be explicitly denied

- (1)
  - a. PPT:  
The curry was **delicious**, #but I never tasted it.
  - b. PERCEPTION PREDICATE:  
The piano **sounded** out of tune, #but I've never heard it.
  - c. SUBJECTIVE ATTITUDE:  
I **consider** the dress blue and black, #but I've never seen it.

# Acquaintance and Obviation

- The AI isn't always present: it may disappear in the scope of some *obviators* (cf. Pearson 2013a; Klecha 2014; Ninan 2014)

- (2)
- a. The curry {might, must, will} be **delicious**, though I never tasted it.
  - b. I {might, #must, will} **consider** the dress blue and black, though I've never seen it.

## Today's talk: patterns of AI obviation and cross-constructural variation

- What is "this": form, dimension of meaning, ...?
- When and why does it go away?
- Verdict: different types of content regarding direct evidence
  - ① covert experiencers: a special evidential restriction
  - ② overt experiencers: a classical presupposition

# Roadmap

1 Acquaintance and directness

2 Obviation

3 First Stabs

4 A direct proposal

5 Conclusion

# The basics

- (3)
- a. PPT:  
The curry was **delicious**, #but I never tasted it.
  - b. PERCEPTION PSYCH PREDICATE:  
The piano **sounded** out of tune, #but I've never heard it.
  - c. SUBJECTIVE ATTITUDE:  
I **consider** the dress blue and black, #but I've never seen it.
  - d. OVERT PSYCH PREDICATE:  
I **like** (eating) dragonfruit, #but I've never tried it.

# {Auto, exo}centricity

- PPTs have been argued to be evaluated relative to a covert *judge* (Lasersohn 2005):
  - autocentric: judge is the speaker
  - exocentric: judge is not the speaker

(4) The cat food is tasty.

- Let us confine ourselves at present only to autocentric (speaker-oriented) readings

# Complications

- (5)
- a. FREEDOM OF EXPERIENCE-TYPE  
It is **beautiful**, but I've never {seen, heard, ridden, ...} it.
  - b. TYPE-TOKEN AMBIGUITIES  
This (Massaman) curry is **delicious**, but I haven't tasted  
 $it_{\{\#Massaman, preparation\}}$ .
  - c. ANAPHORIC REFERENCE  
P: Yesterday, I drew a clown waving and grinning. Maybe I can show you.  
N: No thanks. That's **scary**!



# Complications

- (6) P: Yesterday, I drew a clown waving and grinning.
- a. N: No thanks. #That drawing is **scary**!
  - b. N: No thanks. That {image, concept} is **scary**!

# Complications

- Sample size issues:

- (7)
- INCOMPLETE EXPERIENCE:  
✓I only watched { the trailer / the first five minutes }. This movie is **boring**.
  - NO EXPERIENCE:  
#The new Allen movie is **boring**. I haven't watched it, but all his movies are the same.

# AI varies with directness of experience

- (8) That curry is **tasty**.
- reading a recipe* #
  - looking at a picture* #
  - see other patrons ordering/eating it* ??
  - reading reviews* ?

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# AI Obviation

- (9) That curry {looks, sounds} **tasty**.  
    *reading a recipe* ✓  
    *looking at a picture* ✓  
    *see other patrons ordering/eating it* ✓  
    *reading reviews* ✓

# AI Obviation

- AI can disappear in scope of *obviators* (cf. Pearson 2013a; Klecha 2014; Ninan 2014)

(10) The cake .....delicious, but I never tasted it.

- EPISTEMIC MODAL AUXILIARIES:  
✓ **must/might** have been
- EPISTEMIC ADVERBS:  
✓ **probably/possibly/maybe** was
- PREDICATES OF EVIDENCE/CLARITY:  
✓ **obviously/certainly/apparently** was
- FUTURATE OPERATORS:  
✓ **will/is going to** be

- These all convey indirect evidence in some sense

# AI Obviation

- Grammatical markers of indirect evidentiality follow the pattern

## (11) Turkish (Turkic: Turkey)

### a. BARE FORM:

#Durian güzel, ama hiç dene-me-di-m.  
durian good, but ever try-NEG-PST-1SG  
Intended: 'Durian is good, but I've never tried it'.

### b. EVIDENTIAL *miş*:

✓Durian güzel-**miş**, ama hiç dene-me-di-m.  
durian good-**IND**, but ever try-NEG-PST-1SG  
'Durian is good, *I hear/infer*, but I've never tried it'.

## Additional avenues of obviation

- (12)
- a. EMPHATIC CERTAINTY  
I {know, am certain} that the cake is tasty, but I haven't tried it.
  - b. HEDGES  
I {assume, think} that the cake is tasty, but I haven't tried it.



# Exocentric AI

- Exocentric cases show the same patterns of AI and obviation

- (13) EXOCENTRIC AI:  
The cat food recipe the algorithm just formulated is tasty, #but no cat has ever tried it yet.
- (14) EXOCENTRIC AI OBVIATION:  
The cat food recipe the algorithm just formulated  
.....tasty, ✓but no cat has ever tried it yet.
- ✓**must/might** be
  - ✓**probably/possibly/maybe** is
  - ✓**obviously/certainly/apparently** is
  - ✓**will/is going to** be

## Main puzzles

Why is obviation possible but not explicit denial?

# Overt Judges

- PPTs admit overt judges: *to/for* PPs

(15) The cake was tasty {to, for} {me, John}.

- Experiencer PPs taken as evidence for a dyadic treatment (a.o. Bhatt and Pancheva 1998; Stephenson 2007; Stojanovic 2007; Pearson 2013a)
- Prediction: overt judges should behave the same wrt obviation

# Overt Judges

- They don't!

(16) The cake .....delicious to me, but I never tasted it.

- #must/✓might** have been
- #probably/possibly/maybe** was
- #obviously/certainly/apparently** was
- FUTURATE OPERATORS:  
**✓will/is going to** be

# Overt experiencers

- Overt judges pattern like overt experiencers:

- (17) a. PSYCH PREDICATES:  
The cake { **#must/✓might** have, **#probably/possibly**,  
**#obviously/apparently** } delighted me, but I never tasted it.
- b. SUBJECTIVE ATTITUDES: I { **#must/✓might** have,  
**#probably/possibly**, **#obviously/apparently** } found the cake  
delicious, but I never tasted it.

# Perception predicates

- Perception predicates pattern with PPTs vis à vis overt perceivers:

(18) The dinosaur { **must/might** have, **probably/possibly, obviously/ apparently** } looked cool (#to me), but I never saw it.

# A summary

	<i>must</i>	<i>might</i>	<i>possibly</i>	<i>apparently</i>	<i>will</i>
tasty	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
looked	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
tasty to me	#	✓	#	#	✓
looked to me	#	✓	#	#	✓
delighted me	#	✓	#	#	✓
found it tasty	#	✓	#	#	✓

- the bottom four have the signature of classic presupposition projection
- the top two are more liberal
- *might* and *will* likely ✓ because of future-orientation
- we will stick to *must* hereafter

## Main puzzles

Why is obviation possible for PPTs but not explicit denial?

Why do 'covert' judges differ from overt ones wrt obviation by *must*?



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# Some reasonable explanations

- Possible sources of the PPT AI
  - from their reference to judges/experiencers
  - from their dispositional genericity
  - a basic experience presupposition
  - as an anti-presupposition with *must*

# Some reasonable explanations

...from their reference to judges/experiencers

- But overt experiencers show a different signature

# Some reasonable explanations

...from their dispositional genericity (Anand 2009; Moltmann 2010, 2012; Pearson 2013b)

- But these too are different

(19) Even though your son hasn't smiled yet, based on his age, he **obviously** { #does / ✓can }.

# Some reasonable explanations

...a basic experience presupposition

(20)  $\llbracket \text{tasty-to} \rrbracket^{c,w} = \lambda x. \lambda o : \text{\textcolor{red}{x has tried o in w.}} \ 1 \text{ iff } o \text{ is tasty to } x \text{ in } w$

- But this would never be obviated by *must*; we only get projection out of negation (Ninan 2014)

- (21)
- |    |                                 |       |
|----|---------------------------------|-------|
| a. | The cake was tasty.             |       |
| b. | The cake wasn't tasty.          |       |
| c. | If the cake was tasty, then ... | no AI |
| d. | The cake must be tasty.         | no AI |

## Some reasonable explanations

...an anti-presupposition with *must*

- but why are PPTs alone special in this regard?

# Pearson (2013b): A combination

## Core proposal (simplified)

- ① An **experience presupposition**
- ② First-person genericity (Bhatt and Pancheva 1998; Anand 2009; and especially Moltmann 2010, 2012)

(22)  $\llbracket \text{tasty-to} \rrbracket^{c,w} = \lambda x. \lambda o : \text{\textbf{x has tried o in w.}}$  1 iff *o* is tasty to *x* in *w*

- PPTs: inherently generic i-level predicates (Chierchia 1995)

- (23)
- a. This is tasty.
  - b.  $[ \text{This}_i [ \text{GEN } t_i \text{ is tasty } ]$

## Pearson (2013b): A combination

- GEN: binds the judge and is restricted by quantificational domain restriction *Dom*

(24)  $[\forall \langle x, w' \rangle : x \in Dom] [\text{the cake is tasty-to } x \text{ in } w']$

- the PPT's presupposition projects universally yielding the following presupposition

(25)  $[\forall \langle x, w' \rangle : x \in Dom] [x \text{ has tried } o \text{ in } w']$



# Pearson(2013): A combination

## ① Exocentric AI explained:

- The AI does not depend on who is the judge: the presupposition is generic
- Default: the speaker  $\in Dom$
- The speaker can be irrelevant in classic exocentric cases, so the speaker  $\notin Dom$

## ② Obviation explained (based on *must*, extrapolated to other cases):

- The speaker can be irrelevant if the speaker hasn't tried *o* so the speaker  $\notin Dom$
- *must*: a signal of indirectness (von Stechow and Gillies 2010; Lassiter 2016)
- Because the speaker is irrelevant, obviation is felicitous

# Problems

- ① Reasoning for *must* carries over to explicit denials (cf. Ninan 2014)
  - Incorrect prediction: the speaker's irrelevance should license denials

- ② Speaker's irrelevance

- Incorrect prediction: the speaker, when not in *Dom*, is necessarily irrelevant and is not committing to a judgment on *o* if/when they do try it

(26) Just look at it! The cake { is, must be } delicious, #but I am going to find it disgusting.

- ③ Genericity

- Incorrect prediction: dispositional generics show more constrained obviation than PPTs.

(27) Even though your son hasn't smiled yet, based on his age, he **obviously** { #does / ✓can }.

# A potential problem

- As it stands, the proposal predicts that use of *must* signals lack of direct evidence for a generic claim about taste
- But isn't trying something precisely that kind evidence?
- And yet, this doesn't seem to track the data:

(28) Based on my tasting it, people #(must) find the cake tasty.

- In order to make precise claims, we really need a fine-grained account of *must's* contributions

The bottom line

Pearson's (2013b) account overpredicts obviation environments

# Ninan (2014)

An epistemologically grounded norm of assertion

In order to know the truth of *o is tasty*, the speaker must have prior experience with *o*.

- ① Assertions of unmarked propositions
  - assume such knowledge
  - trigger the AI
- ② Assertions of marked (modalized, hedged, ...) propositions
  - are not subject to this convention
  - allow obviation

# Problems: Exocentric readings

- The pragmatic approach is rooted in the **speaker's** knowledge
- but the judge can be *exocentric*
- incorrect prediction: no AI for those

(29) The cat food recipe the algorithm just formulated is tasty, #but no cat has ever tried it yet.

## The bottom line

Pearson's (2013b) account overpredicts obviation environments

Ninan's (2014) account underpredicts AI environments

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# The intuition

- AI related to degree of (in)directness
- but having a directness presupposition is no better than the experience presupposition
- Idea: have a formal object that encodes directness; this object can be manipulated

# The account I

## Core proposal

- PPTs comment on direct evidential grounds of a proposition
- Obviators update the parameter of evaluation PPTs depend on

# The account II

- Framework for directness: von Fintel and Gillies's (2010) kernels

- (30)
- kernel* of propositions  $K$  encodes direct knowledge
  - the proposition  $\bigcap K$  is the set worlds compatible with what is known directly and indirectly
  - kernels are provided via an interpretive coordinate (cf. Yalcin's (2007) information states; also Hacquard 2006)
  - evaluation indices: minimally 4-tuples:  $\langle \text{world, time, kernel, judge} \rangle$

# The account III

- The semantics for PPTs:

- (31) a.  $\llbracket \text{tasty} \rrbracket^{c, \langle w, t, K, j \rangle} = \lambda o :$   
 **$K$  directly settles whether  $o$  is tasty for  $j$  in  $w$  at  $t$ .** 1 iff  $o$  is  
 tasty for  $j$  in  $w$  at  $t$
- b.  $X$  directly settles whether  $p$  iff  $\exists q \in X [q \subseteq p \vee q \subseteq \neg p]$

- AI arises both in affirmative and negative sentences
- Exocentric AI explained:
  - $K$  and  $j$  are not semantically connected
  - but direct settlement & world-knowledge align them (in the root case)

# The account IV: Obviation explained

Obviators signal the lack of direct knowledge by eliminating the direct vs. indirect restriction

- (32) a.  $\llbracket \text{must } \alpha \rrbracket^{c, \langle w, t, K, j \rangle} = \llbracket \text{must} \rrbracket^{c, \langle w, t, K, j \rangle} (\llbracket \alpha \rrbracket^{c, \langle w, t, \bigcap K, j \rangle})$
- b. Given the semantics for PPTs:  
 $\llbracket \text{must} [\text{the curry is tasty}] \rrbracket^{c, \langle w, t, K, j \rangle}$  is defined  
 iff  $\{\bigcap K\}$  directly settles whether the curry is tasty
- c. vF&G's semantics for *must*:  
 $\llbracket \text{must} \rrbracket^{c, \langle w, t, K, j \rangle}$   
 $= \lambda p : K \text{ does not directly settle whether } p. \bigcap K \subseteq p$

# Overt judges

Obviation facts support a disjoint treatment of bare vs. “overt” uses (cf. Lasersohn 2005; MacFarlane 2014)

- Extending the proposal: overt judges depend on the DP’s kernel

(33)  $\llbracket \text{tasty to } \alpha \rrbracket^{c,i} = \lambda o : \text{the kernel of } \llbracket \alpha \rrbracket^{c,i} \text{ in } w \text{ at } t \text{ directly settles whether } o \text{ is tasty to } j \text{ in } w \text{ at } t. \text{ 1 iff } o \text{ is tasty to } j \text{ in } w \text{ at } t$

- 1 Unmarked cases: the same as bare uses (modulo the judge)
- 2 Modification with obviators:
  - indirect markers do not update the kernel coordinate of the judge DP
  - contradictory requirements

(34)  $\llbracket \text{must [the curry is tasty to Mo]} \rrbracket^{c, \langle w, t, K, j \rangle}$  is defined  
 [imposed by *must*] iff K **does not** directly **settle** whether the curry is tasty to Mo  $\wedge$   
 [imposed by PPT] iff K directly **settles** whether the curry is tasty to Mo

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- ① Discussion of previous approaches to the AI
- ② Differentiating types of acquaintance content
- ③ Proposal rooted in the research on (in)directness

Extension 1 obviation is a diagnostic of indirectness rather than modality (contra Klecha 2014)

Extension 2 attitudes are taken to be obviators (cf. Yalcin 2007)

- ④ Future work
  - interaction with *bona fide* markers of direct evidentiality
  - relation to other expressions with similar restrictions, e.g. English copy-raising constructions (Asudeh and Toivonen 2012; Rett, Hyams, and Winans 2013) and expressions dealing with internal states across languages



## Parallel: Other expressions with similar restrictions

**Egophoric agreement** (Zu 2015; Coppock and Wechsler forth.; Floyd, Norcliffe, and Roque forth.) and **experiencer predicates** (Kuroda 1973; Speas and Tenny 2003; Tenny 2006)

- Bare uses impose a first-person constraint
- Indirect markers obviate it

(35) Japanese experiencer predicates

a. BARE USES:

**watashi**-wa / \*anata-wa / \*kare-wa sabishii desu.

**I**-TOP / you-TOP / he-TOP lonely COP.PRES

'**I am** / \*you are / \*he is lonely.' (Tenny 2006: 247; ex.2)

b. OBVIATION:

kare wa sabishii **rashii**

he TOP lonely **IND.EV**

'He seems to be lonely.'

# Problems of our own

- We derive obviation by collapsing the information in the kernel. This should render the following synonymous, contrary to fact

- (36)    a.    I'm certain that it's raining.
- b.    I'm certain that it must be raining.

# Thank you!

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