

Introduction & a taste of relativism

An opinionated guide to predicates of personal taste

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Introduction

Predicates of Personal Taste (PPTs)

describe subjective judgment (in the eye of beholder)

- tasty
- delicious
- fun
- ...

Other predicates (OPs)

describe objective properties

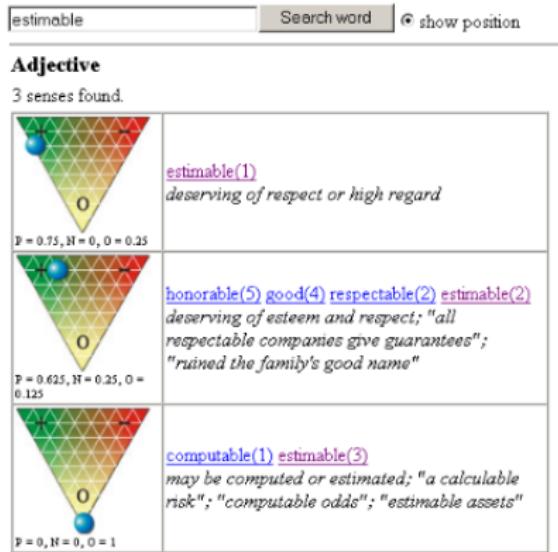
- nuclear
- local
- deciduous
- ...

Why PPts?

- Opinion-sensitivity of natural language complicates the notion of truth
 - compositionally
 - conceptually
- Straddle the divide between semantics and pragmatics

What is subjective judgment?

- Theoretical literature: categorical distinction between two fundamentally different classes
- Much computational literature on sentiment analysis (Baccianella et al. 2010): subjectivity-objectivity is scalar



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(c) Andrea Esuli 2005 - andrea.esuli@isti.cnr.it

What semantic domains involve PPTs?

- Much of the formal semantic literature concentrates on *fun* and *tasty*
- There are many semantic domains with elements that involve subjective judgment (Kölbel 2003; Martin and White 2005; Jackendoff 2007; Anand 2009):
 - PROWESS: passable, acceptable
 - APPRECIATION: beautiful, handsome, ungrammatical
 - AFFECT: pleasant, scary, exhilarating
 - BENEFIT: dangerous, safe
 - ESTEEM: wise, foolish, historic
 - NORMATIVE: good, bad
 - VALUE: important, desirable, valuable
 - PROBABILITY: likely, improbable

What are PPTs?

- No settled procedure of identifying a PPT (cf. Lasersohn 2005; Cappelen and Hawthorne 2009; Egan 2010; Moltmann 2010; Pearson 2013; Bylinina 2017)
- A set of diagnostics that identify a distinguished linguistic profile – syntactically, semantically, pragmatically

Subjective attitudes

- PPTs but not OPs occur under *find* (Stephenson 2007; Sæbø 2009; Kennedy and Willer 2016; Coppock 2018)
 - (1) John finds it {tasty, delicious; #deciduous, #biannual}.
 - Plain doxastic attitudes are not sensitive to the distinction
- (2) John thinks that it is ✓{tasty, delicious; #deciduous, #biannual}

Experiencer PPs

- PPTs take overt taster PPs (*to/for*)

- (3) a. This tea is delicious **to Natasha.**
b. This city is beautiful **to Pranav.**

- OPs don't

- (4) a. #This tree is deciduous **to Natasha.**
b. # This summer school is biannual **to Pranav.**

- Not the same as the comparison class *for*

- (5) a. expensive *for* a tent
b. tall *for* a building

Firsthand experience

- PPTs require firsthand experience with the stimulus (Pearson 2013; Ninan 2014; Kennedy and Willer 2016; Bylinina 2017, Anand and Korotkova forth.)

- (6) a. Pittsburgh is beautiful, # but I've never been there.
 b. Matcha is delicious, # but I've never tried it.

- OPs do not

- (7) a. This vase is fragile, ✓ but I've never broken it.
 b. This tree is deciduous, ✓ but I've seen it in the fall.

- An instance of the general sensitivity of natural language to direct evidence; more on Day 4

(Dis)agreement

- Disagreements over tastiness seen as matters of opinion

(8) NATASHA. Candied grasshoppers are **delicious**.
PRANAV. ✓No, they are gross.

- Such disagreement is **faultless** (Kölbel 2003; also Moltmann 2012 and Stojanovic 2007)
 - Each party can be right: no contradiction
 - No conversational crisis ensues
- Disagreement with OPs is different

(9) NATASHA. The Cathedral of Learning is in Pittsburgh.
PRANAV. No it isn't.

(Dis)agreement, cont'd

- Faultlessness goes away with overt tasters

(10) PPTs with overt tasters

NATASHA. Candied grasshoppers are **delicious for me.**

PRANAV. # No, they are gross.

- Such dialogues can be construed as disagreements about one's private experience and are generally infelicitous with subjective expressions (Korotkova 2016)

Silence & (Non)agreement

- Reactions to statements (Beltrama forth.)

(11) Silence to OP claim ~ agreement

NATASHA. Candied grasshoppers are sold here.

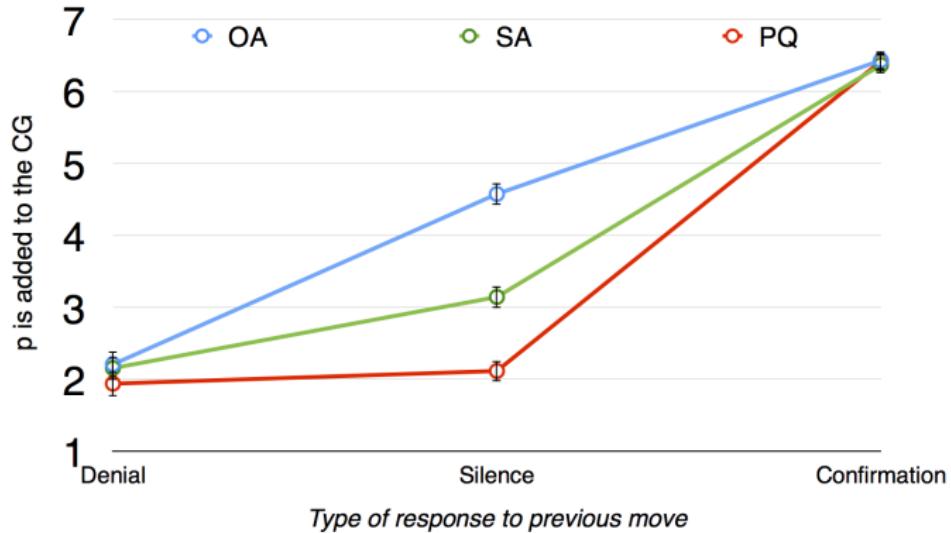
PRANAV. [Keeps listening] ~ Ok.

(12) Silence to PPT claim ~ disagreement

NATASHA. Candied grasshoppers delicious.

PRANAV. [Keeps listening] ~ No.

Silence & (Non)agreement, cont'd



(Beltrama forth)

The nature of the taster

- An intuitive way of construing subjectivity
 - **indexical contextualism:** The taster is the speaker (*I*)
- Indexicals and PPTs diverge in conversations

(13) Disagreement with indexicals

NATASHA. I'm in Pittsburgh.

PRANAV. # No, I'm not.

- Natural language has multiple ways of referring to the self
- Helpful analogy: fluidity of *we*

(14) We will finish the paper this afternoon, then we will go for a walk. (Weatherson and Egan 2011: 5)

The nature of the taster, cont'd

- Main contenders (see MacFarlane 2014; Lasersohn 2017 for thorough overview)
 - **Contextualism:** from the context of utterance (Bhatt and Pancheva 1998; Anand 2009; Moltmann 2010; Schaffer 2011; Pearson 2013; Zakkou 2015)
 - **Relativism:** from the context of assessment/index (Lasersohn 2005, 2017; Stephenson 2007; MacFarlane 2014)
 - **Expressivism / non-factualism:** expressing an attitude rather than a proposition whose truth can be evaluated; influential for epistemics (Yalcin 2007, 2011), less popular for PPTs
- Similar behavior: the knower of epistemic modals (*might*, *must*)

Class outlook

Overall goal

a focused examination of the PPT-OP distinction + a guide into the literature (cf. von Fintel and Gillies 2008 on epistemics)

- Distinguished linguistic profile of PPTs
 - Grammatical distribution
 - Conversational dynamics
- Sources of their speciality
 - Semantics?
 - Pragmatics?
 - Epistemology of taste?
- Theoretical landscape
 - Contextualism-relativism debate in a nutshell
 - Adjudicating theories of taste based on novel empirical discoveries

Roadmap

- Day 1 Judge relativism (Lasersohn 2005; Stephenson 2007)
- Day 2 Contextualism (Pearson 2013), genericity,
assessment-sensitivity (MacFarlane 2014)
- Day 3 Interpretation in intensional environments (Sæbø
2009)
- Day 4 Firsthand experience (Pearson 2013; Ninan 2014,
Anand and Korotkova forth.)

Judge-relativism

Background: Kaplan (1977/1989)

(15) $\llbracket \phi \rrbracket^{c,i}$

(16) Index: circumstances of evaluation
 $c = \langle w, t, \dots \rangle$

(17) Context: utterance situation
 $c = \langle \text{author}, \text{hearer}, \text{location}, \dots, \text{world} \rangle$

MEANING

- Truth/extension
- Content/intension: a function from indices to truth values
- Character: a function from contexts to contents

Indexicals

Indexicals are directly referential:

- (18) a. $\llbracket \text{I} \rrbracket^{c,i,g} = \text{AUTHOR}(c)$
b. But $\llbracket \text{the speaker} \rrbracket^{c,i,g} = \iota x [x \text{ is a speaker in } \text{WORLD}(i)]$
c. $\llbracket \text{you} \rrbracket^{c,i,g} = \text{HEARER}(c)$
d. But $\llbracket \text{the addressee} \rrbracket^{c,i,g} = \iota x [x \text{ is an addressee in } \text{WORLD}(i)]$
e. $\llbracket \text{here} \rrbracket^{c,i,g} = \text{LOCATION}(c)$

NB: ignoring bound readings (Partee 1989; Cable 2005; Kratzer 2009; Wurmbrand 2015; Podobryaev 2017)

Indexicals, cont'd

Defining properties (Schlenker 2011, Schlenker forth.)

- Utterance-sensitivity

- (19) a. Natasha: I am a vegetarian.
 'I' = Natasha

 b. Pranav: I am a vegetarian.
 'I' = Pranav

- Insensitivity to quantification

- (20) a. Natasha: At some point, I was tired.
'I' = Natasha

b. Natasha: At some point, the speaker was tired.
'the speaker' can be Natasha but does not have to be
(cf. Schlenker 2011: 1570)

Judge parameter: Lasersohn (2005)

- PPTs express the same content
- Truth depends on the circumstances of evaluation and varies with individuals
- Indices are minimally triples (cf. also Anand and Nevins (2004); Anand (2006) on individual coordinates of the index for indexical shift)

(21) Judge-enriched index (centered world)

$$i = \langle w, t, j \dots \rangle$$

- The PPT-OP distinction is **semantic**

(22) $\llbracket \text{deciduous} \rrbracket^{c, \langle w, t, j \rangle} = \lambda x. x \text{ is deciduous in } w \text{ at } t$

(23) $\llbracket \text{fun} \rrbracket^{c, \langle w, t, j \rangle} = \lambda x. x \text{ is fun for } j \text{ in } w \text{ at } t$

Accounting for disagreement

- Truth is relative to a judge
- With different judges (the speaker and the addressee) truth may vary
- No contradictions arises (both can be true at the same time)

(24) NASSLLI is fun. $\hookrightarrow \text{fun}'(n)$
 $[\![\text{fun}'(n)]\!]^{c,\langle w,t,j\rangle} = 1$ iff n is fun for j in w at t

(25) NASSLLI is biannual. $\hookrightarrow \text{biannual}'(n)$
 $[\![\text{biannual}'(n)]\!]^{c,\langle w,t,j\rangle} = 1$ iff n is biannual in w at t

Stephenson (2007)

Central idea: modification and extension of (Lasersohn 2005) to unify PPTs and epistemics

The mechanics

Key components

- The judge is a parameter of evaluation, as per Lasersohn (2005)
- PPTs are diadic: the taster is an argument (cf. Bylinina 2017)
- The taster can be a special pronoun PRO_j or a null referential pronoun
- Judge-dependence of PPTs arises only with PRO_j

$$(26) \quad [\![\text{tasty}]\!]^{c,\langle w,t,j \rangle} = [\![\text{tastes good}]\!]^{c,\langle w,t,j \rangle} = [\lambda x_e. [\lambda y_e. y \text{ tastes good to } x \text{ in } w \text{ at } t]]$$

Autocentric perspective: the taster is the judge, typically the speaker

- (27) a. $\llbracket \text{PRO}_j \rrbracket^{c,\langle w,t,j \rangle} = j$
- b. $\llbracket [\text{This puerh}] [\text{is tasty PRO}_j] \rrbracket^{c,\langle w,t,j \rangle}$
 $= \llbracket \text{tasty} \rrbracket^{c,\langle w,t,j \rangle} (\llbracket \text{PRO}_j \rrbracket^{c,\langle w,t,j \rangle}) (\llbracket \text{this puerh} \rrbracket^{c,\langle w,t,j \rangle})$
 $= 1 \text{ iff this puerh tastes good to } j \text{ in } w \text{ at } t$

Bare PPTs, cont'd

- PPTs allow non-autocentric perspective

(28) Rotting flesh is delicious (to a vulture).

(adapted from Egan et al. 2005)

- The availability of such readings is determined by pragmatics
- In Stephenson's (2007) system, they arise when the taster is a pronominal *pro*

(29) a. $\llbracket pro_x \rrbracket^{c,\langle w,t,j \rangle} = \text{salient individual in } c$

b. $\llbracket [\text{This puerh}] [\text{is tasty } pro_{Pranav}] \rrbracket^{c,\langle w,t,j \rangle}$
 $= \llbracket \text{tasty} \rrbracket^{c,\langle w,t,j \rangle} (\llbracket pro_{Pr} \rrbracket^{c,\langle w,t,j \rangle}) (\llbracket \text{this puerh} \rrbracket^{c,\langle w,t,j \rangle})$
 $= 1 \text{ iff this puerh tastes good to Pranav in } w \text{ at } t$

Overt tasters

- PPTs can take overt experiencer arguments

- (30)
- a. delicious for me
 - b. beautiful to Jane

- Often used as evidence for a diadic treatment across the board

- (31)
- a. $\llbracket \text{for} \rrbracket^{c,\langle j,w,t \rangle} = [\lambda y_e.y]$
 - b. $\llbracket [\text{This puerh}] [\text{is tasty for Pranav}] \rrbracket^{c,\langle w,t,j \rangle}$
 $= \llbracket \text{tasty} \rrbracket^{c,\langle w,t,j \rangle} (\llbracket \text{for Pranav} \rrbracket^{c,\langle w,t,j \rangle}) (\llbracket \text{this puerh} \rrbracket^{c,\langle w,t,j \rangle})$
 $= 1 \text{ iff this puerh tastes good to Pranav in } w \text{ at } t$

Attitude reports

- The taster in embedded cases is the attitude subject

(32) Pranav thinks that this puerh is delicious.

- This property: another argument against indexical contextualism

Attitude reports, cont'd

- Attitude verbs quantify over centered worlds (cf. Lewis 1979)

- (33) a. $\text{Dox}_{w,t,x} = \{\langle w', t', y \rangle : \text{is compatible with what } x \text{ believes in } w \text{ at } t \text{ that they are } y \text{ in } w' \text{ at } t'\}$
- b. $\llbracket \text{ think } \rrbracket^{c,\langle w,t,j \rangle} = \lambda p. \lambda z. \forall \langle w', t', y \rangle \in \text{Dox}_{w,t,x} : p(w')(t')(x)$

- Judges are updated with the index

- (34) a. $[\text{ Pranav} [\text{ thinks} [[\text{this puerh}] [\text{ is delicious PRO}_j]]]]$
- b. $\llbracket (34\text{a}) \rrbracket^{c,\langle w,t,j \rangle} = \llbracket \text{ thinks } \rrbracket^{c,\langle w,t,j \rangle} \lambda w''. \lambda t''. \lambda j''. \llbracket \text{ this puerh is delicious PRO}_j \rrbracket^{c,\langle w'', t'', j'' \rangle} \llbracket \text{ Pranav} \rrbracket^{c,\langle w,t,j \rangle}$
 $= 1 \text{ iff } \forall \langle w', t', x \rangle \in \text{Dox}_{w,t,Pranav} : \text{the puerh is delicious to } x \text{ in } w' \text{ at } t'$

Attitude reports, cont'd

- No need for judges to explain the shift in attitudes
- Worlds will shift due to intensional quantification
- Worlds and judges have to be bundled together due to the behavior of adjectives and independent constraints on worlds
(Anand and Korotkova 2017)

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