

Towards a holistic account of expressives' utterance contribution: Evidence from theoretical and experimental investigations

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In our daily life, we mainly communicate with others using descriptive meanings, that is, content that gives us factual information about referents and situations (Löbner, 2013). However, not everything that surrounds us can be factually described, for example, when it comes to emotions, feelings and attitudes. Expressives and their expressive meaning convey this type of information (Kaplan, 1999). It is widely acknowledged that expressive meaning contributes to utterance meaning in a different manner, or dimension (Potts, 2007) but, how should we account for the meaning of expressives in discourse?

Previous studies have addressed this question taking different approaches, such as multidimensional semantics (Gutzmann, 2015), Gricean views that consider expressive meanings as conventional implicatures derived from the lexical item (Potts, 2005, 2007) or post-Gricean accounts like Relevance Theory that fit expressive meaning into procedural meanings (as opposed to descriptive meaning as conceptual meaning) (Blakemore, 2015; Wharton, 2016). All these approaches have in common that they place expressive meanings separated from descriptive meanings, which places the debate at the centre of the semantics/pragmatics interface.

In this talk, I will address this question by using results from both theoretical and experimental explorations. Both explorations will be carried out following a novel typology of expressives (classified as modifiers, ascriptives, referentials and exclamatives; cf. [anonymised]) developed in the larger project in which this study is included, which overcomes the limitations to what counts as an 'expressive' of previous approaches (e.g., Potts, 2007; Hom, 2012; Gutzmann, 2013; Hess, 2018) and provides a holistic alternative to the study of expressives.

Firstly, I will present a theoretical analysis that applies the radical contextualist framework of Default Semantics (DS) to the utterance contribution of expressives. In DS, the primary content of an utterance is its most salient meaning (Jaszczolt, 2005). This will allow us to explore expressives' contribution by going beyond the semantics/pragmatics boundary and by offering a more psychologically real picture of how expressives and their meaning(s) are intended and

received in conversation. Secondly, I will present the results of a questionnaire-based experiment carried out with 40 native speakers of British English, again following the holistic typology used for the theoretical investigation.

The talk summarises the results from both theoretical and experimental investigations, and how theoretical and experimental data can complement and contrast each other. In turn, these results provide empirical as well as theoretical evidence that shed light on the behaviour of expressives in communication, while being framed in a novel holistic approach to this linguistic phenomenon.

References

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