Expressive Speech Acts and Predicates of Personal Taste

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Contents

• Tools: Structure vs. Use
• Sentence-Types as Tools
• Is “Expressive” a Category of Structure or of Use?
• Characterizing Use: Expressive Speech Act
• Characterizing Structure: Semantics of PoPTs
• Relating Structure to Use
• Theoretical Support: Austin’s Thesis
• Empirical Support: Google Results
Contents

• Tools: Structure vs. Use
  • Sentence-Types as Tools
  • Is “Expressive” a Category of Structure or of Use?
  • Characterizing Use: Expressive Speech Act
  • Characterizing Structure: Semantics of PoPTs
  • Relating Structure to Use
  • Theoretical Support: Austin’s Thesis
  • Empirical Support: Google Results
Sentence-Types as *Tools*

Distinguish the *structure* of the tool from its *use*.

**Structure**
- Top: metal.
- Bottom: wood.
- Weight: 10 lb.
- Back side: fork
- Front side: flat

**Use**
- Put a nail in.
- Take a nail out.
- Break open a piggy-bank.
- Hit someone on the head.
Contents

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• Empirical Support: Google Results
Sentence-Types as *Tools*

→ Sentences-types are structured objects.

→ A sentence-type, like any tool, can be *used* to perform many different tasks.

→ Presumably, on any particular occasion we *use* the sentence-type that we do, at least in part, because it has the *structure* that it has.
Sentence-Types as *Tools*

**Example:** Did John do well on the exam

→ We normally categorize this as an “Interrogative”.
→ However, it is not the sentence which asks a question, but the speakers who use it for that purpose.

→ The very same sentence-type can be used for other purposes, e.g. to express amazement:
- “Wow, did John do well on the exam!”
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→ Sam is in a certain mental state – he is feeling pain.
→ He is *expressing* (or *displaying*) this state, in part, by using language –
→ He utters a token of the expression-type: “ouch!”
Expressive Expression-types?

→ It is perhaps tempting to say that “ouch” is an expressive expression-type.

Kaplan (2005: 15-16) –

“I claim that ‘ouch’ is an expressive that is used to express the fact that the agent is in pain. […] The semantic information in the word ‘ouch’ is represented by the set of contexts at which the agent is in pain.”
Distinguishing Structure from Use

→ Bill is certainly *not* expressing pain.

→ It is not “ouch” which is expressive.

→ It is Sam who used “ouch” expressively.
The Expressive Speech Act

→ “ouch”, due to its semantics, is an appropriate tool to use to *display* pain.

→ But it is speakers who display pain, not expression-types.

→ “ouch”, with the same semantics, can be used for other purposes.

→ Sam could have displayed pain by other means. For instance with “it hurt!” or simply a shout.
Contents

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• Relating Structure to Use
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Characterizing the Expressive Speech Act

→ **Speaker’s Perspective** – It is only one’s *own* mental state that one can display.

→ **Non-Displaceability** – It is only the mental state one is *presently* in that one can display.

→ **Performativity** – One is expressing *in* uttering an appropriate expression-type in the appropriate circumstances.
What happens if we take “Expressive” to be a category of structure, instead of a category of use?

The Problem of Embedding Contexts
The Problem of Embedding Expressives

Potts (2007: 170-173) –

1. Sue believes that that bastard Kresge should be fired.

2. My father screamed that he would never allow me to marry that bastard Kresge.

→“[in 1] the speaker is committed to the characterization of Kresge as a bastard.”

→“[in 2] ‘that bastard’ indicates a negative emotion of the speaker’s father.”
The Problem of Embedding Expressives

Pott’s Solution:

→ Add a **Judge Index** to the semantic representation of **expressives**.

→ The **judge** is usually set to the speaker, yet it could be set to any individual, as necessary.

However, this extra theoretical machinery is not required if we do not consider “bastard” to be inherently “an expressive”. 
The Problem of Embedding Expressives

1. Sue believes that that bastard Kresge should be fired.
2. My father screamed that he would never allow me marry that bastard Kresge.

→ So “bastard” is not inherently expressive.
→ The speaker in (1) is using “bastard” expressively.
→ The speaker in (2) is not.
Contents

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• Characterizing Structure: Semantics of PoPTs
• Relating Structure to Use
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Predicates of Personal Taste

The expression-types I now wish to focus on are known in the literature as PoPTs (e.g. Lasersohn 2005).

Some PoPTs:

fun, boring, interesting, tasty, good, bad, great, awful, wonderful, terrible, hurt, annoying
Semantic characterization of PoPTs:

→ **Subjectivity** – PoPTs denote some *subjective* attitude or mental state.

→ **Evaluative** – PoPTs are *evaluative* predicates.

→ **Positive or Negative** – Each PoPT may be classified most generally as *positive* or *negative*. 
Relating structure to use

As **subjective** – **evaluative** predicates, sentence-types containing PoPTs may serve as excellent tools for *expressing*.
But observe the following contrast:

??Hey! It’s good for me to see you!

??Kissing is fun for me/us!

Why are these utterances so odd in these contexts?
Sentence-types containing PoPTs

We need to *structurally* distinguish two kinds of sentence-types containing PoPTs:

I. **No Overt Evaluator**
   - It’s fun.
   - That’s tasty.
   - It hurt.

II. **Overt Evaluator**
   - It’s fun for x.
   - That’s tasty to x.
   - It hurt x.
Contents

• Tools: Structure vs. Use
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• Relating Structure to Use
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  • Empirical Support: Google Results
Relating *Structure* to *Use*

**Expressive Speech Act**

→ One can *express* only one’s *own* psychological state.

→ Therefore, when *expressing*, it is otiose to refer to oneself, and a sentence-type with no overt evaluator is a natural choice.
Reportive Speech Act

→ One may report on the psychological state of anyone, including oneself, and a sentence-type which makes overt reference to an evaluator may be necessary.

A: Why does Sam collect comics?
B: Because it’s fun for him.
Relating *Structure to Use*

- It is *not* my claim that the sentence-type “it’s fun” is expressive.

- Sentence-types are not expressive; speakers are.

- The sentence-type “it’s fun” is an appropriate tool to use to express.

- It is also an appropriate tool to use in an embedded context, in which it is obvious who the evaluator is: “John said it’s fun.”
Contents

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- Empirical Support: Google Results
Austin’s Thesis:
No Modification without Aberration

Sam: “I ate lunch”

→ It is obvious Sam did so deliberately.

→ In fact it is so obvious that, under normal circumstances, it would be odd to say:

• “?? I ate lunch deliberately”

→ It serves no end to say that I did it deliberately.
Austin’s Thesis: No Modification without Aberration

Sam: “It was so much fun!”

→ Assuming Sam said so expressively, it is obvious it is Sam who thinks it was so much fun.

→ In fact it is so obvious that, under normal circumstances, it would be odd to say:

• “?? It was so much fun for me!”

→ It serves no end to say that it was fun for me.
Contents

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Method and Predictions

Assuming that interjections, such as “damn”, “wow”, “God”, etc. are used by speakers to *express*, I predict that when sentences containing PoPTs follow such interjections, then a sentence-type *without* reference to an evaluator will be chosen.

1. Damn, it’s fun!
2. ??Damn, it’s fun for me!
It’s fun for me.  → 1,030,000 results

Google Results

853,000

Damn, it's fun
Damn, it's fun for me

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That was interesting for me. → 1,900,000 results
That hurt me! → 3,990,000 results

God damn it! That hurt! God damn it! That hurt me!
It is **tasty to me!** \(\rightarrow\) 10,900 results

**Google Results**

Yum/mmm, it is tasty! Yum/mmm, it is tasty to me!
Tai’m li. → 67,000 results
(It’s) tasty to me.

Google Results

8,530

Wy, eyza taim!
Wow, how tasty!

Wy, eyza taim li!
Wow, how tasty to me
Other Speech Acts

There are other speech acts involving PoPTs, such as warning or entreat ing.

→ When one warns you that “it will hurt”, it is obvious it is the hearer who could be hurt.

→ When one entreats you: “it will be fun”, it is obvious that it is the hearer who could have fun.

→ Prediction: when these speech acts are performed, a sentence-type which does not include reference to the hearer will be chosen.
It’s gonna **hurt you!** → 320,000

Google Results

- **Watch out, it's gonna hurt!**
- **Watch out, it's gonna hurt you!**

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It will be fun for you! → 142,000

Google results

You should do it! It will be fun!

You should do it! It will be fun for you!
I thank you! → 141,000,000

Google results

108,000

Oh my gosh, thank you oh my gosh, I thank you so so so much!
“Kissing is fun for me”.

→ The speaker is reflectively reporting.

→ We make a choice as to which sentence-type to use based on the speech-act we wish to perform.
Thank You!
It’s dangerous for you! ➔ 94,500

Google results

Watch out, it's dangerous!

watch out, it's dangerous for you!

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The Great Dilemma: Faultless Disagreement

Suppose the girl replies: “No, kissing is not fun!”

Then, according to Lasersohn 2005:
I. The girl is expressly contradicting the boy.
II. Each speaker is expressing a true statement.
Lasersohn’s Solution

→ Add a judge index.

I. Speakers are *contradicting* each other –
   → *Judge* is not part of the semantic content.

II. Each speaker is expressing a *true* statement –
   → Truth value is assessed relative to a contextual *judge*.

Who is the judge?
→ “we normally tend to use ourselves as the judge”
   - Lasersohn (2005: 670)
The judge can be made overt

1. The roller coaster is fun.
2. The roller coaster is fun for Mary.

→“[fun for Mary] (The roller coaster) [...] will be true as long as fun (The roller coaster) is true relative to Mary.”

→“The contents [...] are identical.”

- Lasersohn (2005: 677)
The judge can be made overt

3. The roller coaster is fun proMary.
4. The roller coaster is fun for Mary.

→ “Overt PPs [...] have the same effect as null referential arguments” - Stephenson 2007:503
→ “The sentence in (3) is completely parallel to (4)”
    - Stephenson 2007:519
The judge can be made overt

5. The roller coaster is fun proMary.
6. The roller coaster is fun for me.

→“In principle there is nothing to stop [predicates of personal taste] from taking overt arguments”
- Stephenson 2007: 503, 519