Perspectival expressives
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ABSTRACT
Expressives, i.e. words such as “damn” or “bastard” are perspective-dependent: their content is always evaluated from a certain perspective. Because expressive content projects out of all environments, this perspective is normally the speaker’s. Perspective-dependence of expressives can be investigated by focusing on exceptions to this rule. Potts (2005) presents an influential theory of expressive content as a kind of conventional implicature. It is a definitional feature of expressive content on this account that it is always speaker-oriented. This claim has quickly come under criticism, and a variety of counter-examples have been offered (cf. Amaral et al. (2007), Lasersohn (2007), Potts (2007), among others). Harris and Potts (2009) consider examples of non-speaker-oriented expressives given in the literature, as well as experimental data, and argue for an explanation based on a mechanism of pragmatic perspective shift (as opposed to an approach based on semantic binding, as in, e.g., Schlenker (2007), Sauerland (2007)). The objective of this paper is to develop a theoretical understanding of such a mechanism. The approach suggested is based on a model of discourse pragmatics which focuses on commitment attribution as an element of hearers’ interpretation (based on Morency et al. (2008) and Lewis (1979)). At-issue commitments are distinguished from commitments de lingua (cf. Harris (2014, 2016)). It is a characteristic property of expressives as a lexical class that they are pragmatically “opaque” and always raise the issue of de lingua commitment. The orientation of expressive content cannot be strictly predicted, and thus a fully formal treatment is implausible, but the theory offered here accounts for all factors that influence non-speaker-oriented readings, as well as for the very strong bias towards speaker-oriented ones. A limited, testable prediction of the account is presented.

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1. Introduction

The topic of this paper is the pragmatics of expressives, i.e. highly charged (often taboo) words, such as the boldfaced expressions in the examples below.

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1 It is not easy to define the class of expressives clearly. My discussion, following the example of Potts (2005), will focus on the prototypical examples of negatively charged, vulgar epithets, such as “bastard” or “ashhole”, and expressive adjectives, such as “damn” or “fucking”- and only when they are used attributively (“that bastard Kaplan”); as Potts already observes, the same words used predicatively (“He is a bastard”) behave differently and convey at-issue content (this difference is certainly worth further consideration, but I will ignore it here). Other groups of words can be considered non-prototypical examples of the category of expressives: positively charged modifiers (“awesome”), ethnic slurs (“kike”), expressives used as intensifiers (“damn good”) etc. The observations and arguments made here, as well as in most of the existing literature on expressives, will apply to those groups to a greater or lesser extent, corresponding to the extent to which they share the relevant properties of prototypical examples. For instance, non-speaker oriented readings of ethnic slurs are much more difficult to obtain, and this seems somehow related to the fact that slurs are not purely expressive, but have a descriptive component as well (they have a specific group as their extension), cf. Hay (2013).
The most salient characteristic of expressives, and one which has attracted a lot of attention from linguists and semanticists in recent years (at least since Kaplan (1999)) is that they do not seem to contribute to the main, at-issue content of an utterance, but rather to express the speaker’s attitude towards an object or situation. I will have little to say about this property, or about the semantics of expressives as such, although I will suggest a novel way of understanding the exceptional utterance, but rather to express the speaker’s attitude towards an object or situation. I will have little to say about this. Following Lasersohn (2007), grounded in what I will call the assumption that there is a default, semantically motivated, speaker-oriented reading, which can be overridden by pragmatic factors. Thus, in this paper I will focus predominantly on the so-called non-speaker oriented uses - or readings - of expressives. An analysis of them will serve to develop a model of expressive perspective-dependence which accounts for properly speaker-oriented readings as well. This theoretical account represents a thoroughly pragmatic way of thinking about perspective in language, in contrast to strictly semantic approaches typically proposed for other kinds of perspective-dependent items, such as predicates of personal taste etc.

The structure of my argument is as follows. From a semantic point of view, to repeat, the most salient property of expressives is that they introduce content independent of the main content of the utterance. Potts (2005) presents an influential theory which accounts for this property by treating expressive content as a kind of conventional implicature. It is a definition of expressive content on this account that it is always speaker-oriented. This claim has quickly come under criticism, and a variety of counter-examples have been offered (cf. Amaral et al. (2007), Lasersohn (2007), Potts (2007), among others). Harris and Potts (2009) consider examples of non-speaker-oriented expressives given in the literature, as well as experimental data, and argue for an explanation based on a mechanism of pragmatic perspective shift (as opposed to an approach based on semantic binding, as in, e.g., Schlenker (2007), Sauerland (2007)). Taking their analysis as my starting point, I will propose a theoretical understanding of such a pragmatic perspectival mechanism.

I begin (in section 2) with an overview of the variety of situations in which non-speaker-oriented (henceforth NS) readings of expressives are possible; in section 3 I distinguish them from purported cases of (modal or temporal) displacement, which I argue are not genuine. This leads to the conclusion that expressive content is attributed to the most salient perspectival agent in the context. After a brief discussion of Potts’ and Schlenker’s indexical analyses (in section 4), I propose to reject the assumption that there is a default, semantically motivated, speaker-oriented reading, which can be overridden by pragmatic factors. Instead, I submit that expressives are inherently underspecified for their orientation (following a suggestion made already in Harris and Potts (2009)). Rather than look for conditions under which a different context variable can be fed into semantic composition, I propose to look at the process of interpretation, construed as commitment attribution. In section 5, I enumerate the factors that may influence the perspectival salience of a non-speaker agent (these include such diverse aspects as techniques and textual strategies like free indirect discourse or sarcasm, quotation, discourse coherence and inferences based on world-knowledge). It turns out that NS readings of expressives are available in a variety of contexts. There is, however, a strong bias towards speaker-orientation and I put forward a hypothesis regarding the source of this bias (following Lasersohn (2007)), grounded in what I will call the “pragmatic opacity” of expressives (their unavoidable markeness which always makes the manner of speaking - the choice of vocabulary - a prominent aspect of an utterance).

To account theoretically for these observations, I propose, in section 7, a model of discourse which keeps track, besides the set of propositions that form the common ground, of the individual commitments of discourse participants (cf. Farkas and Bruce (2010)). Following Morency et al. (2008), I understand commitment attribution as an essential element of hearers’ interpretation of what speakers are communicating. In this sense, commitment can be attributed to other agents besides the speaker, e.g. to the original speaker in an indirect report. The proposal of Morency et al. (2008) can be combined with the “scorekeeping” account of Lewis (1979) to yield an abstract model of hearers’ interpretation in discourse. In section 8, I extend this model further, by introducing “commitments de lingua” (based on Harris (2014, 2016)), which are attributed by interpreters as commitments to the appropriateness or applicability of a certain expression.

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2 The literature on (non-)speaker-orientation of appositives and other kinds of non-at-issue content is richer than this, and dates well before Potts (cf. the bibliography in Harris and Potts (2009)). My focus, however, is exclusively on expressives.

3 Harris and Potts offer little in terms of a theoretical description of this mechanism, as their article is focused on experimental material. Nevertheless, the notion of a pragmatic perspective shift has been picked up by other authors, e.g. AnderBois (2014), who employs it to explain away the exceptional behavior of reportative evidentials in some languages. Without a better idea of what a pragmatic perspective shift is, however, it is impossible to say whether expressives and reportative evidentials are indeed similar in any relevant respects.

4 Throughout this paper by “non-speaker agent” I understand an agent who is not the actual speaker - very often it will be a reported speaker.
I argue that this model of discourse pragmatics can account for all the factors that influence NS readings of expressives, as well as for the strong speaker bias. Moreover, taking all these strands together—the conditions of the perspective-dependence of expressives, their opacity, and the scorekeeping discourse model with commitment de lingua attribution—will contribute to a novel understanding of what sets expressives apart as a lexical class and how they convey their content. (In short, I claim that a characteristic of expressives is that they cannot fail to raise the issue of commitment to their appropriateness.)

However, the orientation of expressives remains a high level pragmatic phenomenon, and as such it cannot be predicted or subjected to a fully formal or compositional treatment. In Section 10 I conclude and briefly discuss the relation of my account with previous proposals.

2. Examples

Potts (2007) lists the following properties of expressives:

a. Independence
b. Nondisplaceability
c. Perspective dependence
d. Descriptive ineffability
e. Immediacy
f. Repeatability

The only properties that will be relevant to the following discussion are a., b., and c. “Independence” describes the fact that expressives contribute a dimension of meaning which is independent of the main content of the utterance in which they appear (as mentioned at the very beginning of this paper). They serve only as a kind of comment on or supplement to the main at-issue content and can be removed (or replaced with neutral, unmarked counterparts) without any change to truth conditions.5

“Nondisplaceability” means that expressives always predicate something of the context of the actual utterance—therefore, their content cannot be displaced even in contexts such as speech and attitude reports, modal or conditionalized statements, reports of past events etc.

“Perspective dependence” describes the fact that expressive content is always evaluated from a concrete perspective. In general, the perspective is the speaker’s, but under some conditions it can be someone else’s6 (this last point is the main topic of this paper).

Examples (1) and (2), repeated here, illustrate the properties of independence and nondisplaceability:

(1) We bought a new electric clothes dryer [...] Nowhere did it say that the damn thing didn’t come with an electric plug!
(2) If that bastard Kaplan got promoted, then the Regents acted foolishly.

In both cases the content of the expressive makes no contribution to the at-issue content of the sentence. What is conveyed is clearly a negative attitude or emotional state of the speaker, but this is only a comment, in a way, on what the main content of the utterance is. On the other hand, embedding of the expressive in a report and under negation in (1) or in an antecedent of a conditional in (2) makes no difference to what it communicates. Expressive content is not conditionalized, negated or evaluated with respect to the context of the original speech act, but should be interpreted with respect to the actual speech situation.

However, there is a certain tension between the two properties of Nondisplaceability and Perspective dependence. On the one hand, expressive content cannot be displaced in any of the standard ways (e.g. in reports or conditionals); on the other, it is evaluated from a perspective which in some cases may not be the speaker’s (as we will see in the following examples) which seems to imply some kind of displacement. Two points should be noted here. First, this is a false appearance, as the possibility of expressive content being dependent on a non-speaker perspective does not constitute an exception to its nondisplaceability: it is still true, as I will argue in Section 3, that expressive content cannot be shifted by modal or temporal operators, or by embedding in a report. Second, perspective dependence of expressive content is a pragmatic phenomenon that is largely independent from the kinds of semantic transformations that are excluded by the property of nondisplaceability. Therefore, expressive content can indeed be “shifted” in (broadly construed) reportative contexts, but this is a phenomenon of a different level than semantic embedding in a speech or attitude report (this distinction will be made much clearer in later sections).

As has been mentioned, the perspective from which expressive content is evaluated can be someone else’s than the speaker’s “under some conditions”. Identifying such conditions is not a straightforward task, however. A variety of examples of non-speaker-oriented expressives have been suggested in the literature. In what follows I list some of the most characteristic ones and give a tentative description of the conditions which contribute to a non-speaker perspective in each case.

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5 It is worth noting that being not-at-issue and having non-truth-conditional content are two distinct properties, even if this distinction is obscured in Potts’ original treatment of expressives. Gutzmann (2015) offers a refinement of Potts’ theory in which the two are disentangled. I will be interested only in the non-at-issueness of expressives, and not in the precise nature of their content.

6 Note that Potts’s (2005) original theory did not account for this possibility, as mentioned in the Introduction.
[4] [Context: We know that Bob loves to do yard work and is very proud of his lawn, but also that he has a son Monty who hates to do yard chores. So Bob could say:]

Well, in fact Monty said to me this very morning that he hates to mow the friggin lawn.

(Amaral et al., 2007)

In this example a NS reading of the expressive ‘friggin’ is at least possible, if not preferable: the context makes it clear that the speaker has nothing against mowing the lawn, and therefore it is likely that in using the expressive he is not voicing his own attitude but reflecting Monty’s. (A speaker-oriented reading is not excluded, however: the attitude expressed by ‘friggin’ need not have yard work as its object - Bob could be venting his anger at Monty’s laziness; see Section 3).

(3) My father screamed that he would never allow me to marry that bastard Webster.

(Amaral et al., 2007)

This example, repeated from the Introduction, is similar to (4) in that an expressive appears within a speech report, but a NS reading is more visibly preferable here. It is unlikely that the speaker, who apparently intends to marry Webster, would call him a bastard. (Note also that an interpretation in which the expressive does not manifest an attitude towards Webster, but anger or frustration with the situation as a whole, does not seem available.)

(5) I was struck by the willingness of almost everybody in the room - the senators as eagerly as the witnesses—to exchange their civil liberties for an illusory state of perfect security. They seemed to think that democracy was just a fancy word for corporate capitalism and that the society would be a lot better off if it stopped its futile and unremunerative dithering about constitutional rights. Why humor people, especially poor people, by listening to their idiotic theories of social justice?

Lewis Lapham, Harper’s Magazine, July 1995; (Harris and Potts, 2009)

(6) While shopping at one of my local Apple stores the other day, I overheard an earnest conversation about safeguarding Mac computers against things like viruses and trojans. The customer and companion were new to Mac life and were convinced that they should be very worried about viruses. The Apple salesperson on the floor repeatedly assured them that they would not need extra antivirus protection for their Mac. The customer then argued that Symantec makes an antivirus program for Macs, therefore, it must truly be a credible threat, otherwise there would be no such products. Some antivirus products are even sold in Apple stores. I’ve heard similar arguments before: if companies like Symantec or McAfee make antivirus applications for the Mac, then Macs must truly be vulnerable somehow, somewhere. Steve Jobs and the rest of the Apple cronies must be lying.

www.digitaltrends.com/features/antivirus-programs-for-mac-snake-oil-or-public-service/; (Harris and Potts, 2009)

Examples (5) and (6) are similar in that the sentences in which expressives occur can plausibly be interpreted as instances of free indirect discourse: a narrative technique which reports the content of a protagonist speech or thought without explicit embedding. (FID interpretation is based on clues such as the question form in (5) or the epistemic modal and the introductory “I’ve heard similar arguments before” in (6)). Moreover, both examples are from journalistic texts, and their readers may expect that such language as “idiotic” or “cronies” will not be used by the author in his own voice. The main topic of both passages, however, are in fact the attitudes and utterances of other people than the author (senators in (5) and Apple customers in (6)), which also facilitates a NS reading of the expressive. In addition, in both examples the author adopts a clearly ironic tone.

(7) A CPJ report on Venezuela tells us how problems have ‘escalated’ in Venezuela under Chavez, i.e. the physical attacks against journalists under previous presidents have ‘escalated’ to Chavez calling the opposition, which includes the media, names. This is very, very serious, but I don’t think another coup attempt is called for until Chavez resorts to dramatic irony or sarcasm. But if that vicious bastard uses litotes, then there’s no other rational choice than an immediate invasion.

stommel.tamu.edu/~baum/ethel/20020814,thel-archive.html#80150281; (Potts, 2007)

This example is similar to (5) and (6) in that it also comes from a (quasi-) journalistic text (a blog post) and deals in the first place with what someone said or wrote (the authors of the CPJ report) — even more so, as the author brings attention

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7 Accessed on October 6, 2016.
8 The epistemic modal is a clue for an FID-interpretation insofar as it reflects the epistemic state of the “protagonist”, the customer in this instance, rather than that of the narrator. See Eckardt (2015) for a comprehensive account of the factors influencing the interpretation of free indirect discourse. In non-literary texts clues of this kind may not be as strong indicators of FID, but in both these examples the very content of target sentences supports such an interpretation: clearly, they do not express the opinions of the respective authors themselves.
9 This web address was unavailable at time of writing.
specifically to how they said it. Instead of the use of free indirect discourse or other narrative techniques, what facilitates a NS reading of the expressive in this case is the heavy use of sarcasm.

Note that while in (4) both speaker- and non-speaker-oriented readings of the expressive seemed possible, in (3)–(7) a NS reading seems strictly preferable. The last two examples are closer to (4) in this respect.

(8) My classmate Sheila said that her history professor gave her a really low grade. The jerk always favors long papers.
(9) My roommate Glen said that his uncle tells the absolute lamest jokes. The stooge can never get through a single one of them without giggling.

These are two chosen items (which I find the most characteristic) from an experiment reported in Harris and Potts (2009). The respondents were presented with a passage like one of these (other items shared the same structure) and asked whose opinion they thought it was that the professor is a jerk, or that Glen’s uncle is a stooge etc. They had three options to choose from: the speaker’s opinion, the subject’s (Sheila’s, roommate’s etc.) or both. Harris and Potts disregarded “Both” answers as they were too difficult to interpret, but even so the results of this experiment showed that NS readings are systematically available, with percentages of “Subject” answers in the low two digits for most items and up to almost 40% in (9) (there were a few with 0% as well, however – the experimental data itself suggests no answer as to why some items scored higher than others). Moreover, all items came in pairs — one element of the pair just like the two examples above, while the other one different only in the “polarity”, so to say, of the description in the first sentence (e.g. Sheila received a high grade, or Glen’s uncle tells the funniest jokes). If the situation described was a positive one for the subject — so there was no reason for them to be irritated or upset — respondents never chose subject-oriented interpretations over speaker-oriented ones. This suggests that NS readings of expressives are available only if they somehow “match” the situation. We have already seen the flipside of this in (3), where the use of the expressive “bastard” seemed at odds with the speaker’s plausibly assumed positive attitude towards Webster, thereby making a NS reading much more plausible (if not strictly forcing it).

The list of examples included here is meant to illustrate the relevant kinds of situations in which expressives can have a NS reading. The first thing to observe is that NS readings are possible both within attitude or speech reports (in (4) and (3), and perhaps (5) and (6)10), and outside of them (in (7)–(9)). However, in each of the instances discussed here, the context is in some sense “reportative”, i.e. it has to do with what someone other than the speaker said (or thought). Not only is a speech event mentioned in the immediate context of the clause containing an expressive, but it is the main theme of the particular piece of discourse. Moreover, in many of the examples attention is drawn not only to what was said, but how it was said (note e.g. the use of “screamed” in (3), the irony (5) and (6) or the mocking tone of (7)). (It does not mean, however, that NS uses of expressives always purport to repeat actual words used by the other agent - I will come back to this point in Section 4, when arguing against a quotational analysis.)

I will discuss what factors contribute to NS readings in more detail in Section 5. Two general points worth noting already are that those factors are clearly located above the sentence level (having to do primarily with the rhetorical nature of the discourse); and that choosing between speaker- and non-speaker-oriented readings is an inferential process based on a variety of clues and cues.

3. Apparent displacement

In all the examples discussed in Section 2, an expressive may be interpreted as expressing an attitude or emotion of another salient agent rather than the actual speaker. Some other examples may be found in the literature which purport to show that expressive content can in general, even if rarely, be evaluated with respect to a non-actual, e.g. hypothetical, context (involving the same speaker, but a different time or world). Consider the following conditionals:

(10) I consider John a saint. But if he ever screws me over, I’ll crush the bastard like a bug! (Lasersohn, 2007)
(11) [After trying several computers, which fail.] Ok, if this one works, I’ll give it my first born child. But if it fails, I’m gonna smash the damn thing on the ground. (Anand, 2007)

It has been argued, by Lasersohn and Anand among others, that in examples like these, the expressives do not convey actual attitudes of the speaker, but rather express how the speaker would feel if the hypothetical situation were to come true. If this is indeed the case, examples like (10) and (11) constitute a challenge to the Nondisplaceability of expressives, and cannot be captured merely by Perspective dependence (the conditionalization of expressive content that purportedly takes place here has nothing to do with another salient agent).

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10 On the assumption that sentences in free indirect discourse are attitude reports, which is not uncontroversial.
There is another, more plausible, way of interpreting such examples, however. The speaker of (10)\textsuperscript{11} may in fact be convinced that John is a saint, but this need not mean that her attitude, manifested in the use of the expressive, is merely hypothetical - that she only imagines being angry at John in the conditional scenario. One can very well be actually angry at an imagined situation - we should not confuse psychology with semantics. The very thought that John could someday betray her may be the cause of the agent's attitude, which is expressed through the use of "bastard". Similarly, in (11), the speaker's attitude seems to be generic in a sense: she is actually, not merely hypothetically, upset because computers fail and she imagines the new one might too.

This point may be obscured if we attach too much weight to the fact that in Potts’s semantics of expressive adjectives ("damn thing") and epithets ("bastard") their content is taken to reflect an attitude towards the object of which they are predicated or to which they refer. This is, however, only a simplification (of which Potts is himself aware). Take the following example:

(12) I lost my damn keys again!

The speaker of (12) is not, of course, angry \textit{at the keys} as such. This is a consequence of the Independence of expressive content: because it belongs to a separate dimension of meaning, it may be interpreted as a comment on the whole situation described in an utterance.\textsuperscript{12} But Independence is conceptually connected with Nondisplaceability: if expressive content is independent of the main truth-conditional, descriptive content of an utterance, the attitude expressed may be independent of whether the situation described (e.g. the computer failing) is taken to be actual, hypothetical or past. The two kinds of content - expressive and descriptive - belong to distinct dimensions and do not interact directly.

Besides hypothetical contexts, Anand (2007) discusses also two examples which are supposed to show that expressive content can be temporally displaced.

(13) Churchill thought Gandhi was the most degenerate \textit{wog} in all of India.

(14) My wife often reminds me that I even once screamed at my daughter that I would never allow her to marry that \textit{bastard} Webster. But time has taught me how wrong I was, and I'm incredibly happy to claim that \textit{bastard}, who I know now is far from a \textit{bastard}, as my son-in-law today.

Neither of these is easy to interpret, however. In the case of (13) it seems that both readings are available: on a speaker-oriented reading, the expressive reflects the actual speaker's present attitude towards Gandhi or, more likely, towards Indians in general; on a NS reading - which in fact seems less salient, if at all available\textsuperscript{13} - it is only Churchill's attitude. In the latter case, the attitude may indeed be interpreted as past, as something that Churchill used to feel and expressed with the use of "wog". But the apparent temporal displacement of expressive content on this reading is secondary to its attribution to a non-speaker agent. Expressive content, as had been said earlier, supplements or "comments" on at-issue content: in this case, on a NS reading, the at-issue content in question is the content of Churchill's thought about Gandhi. With respect to this thought, expressive content is not temporally displaced. We should interpret it as if it was Churchill thinking (to himself or better yet out loud): "Gandhi is the most degenerate \textit{wog} in all of India" - expressing both an at-issue thought, and an accompanying (actual and present) attitude - and this whole event is located in the past. Such an explanation, if even necessary, is perfectly compatible with my pragmatic view of NS readings and does not involve any semantic displacement.

Example (14) does not show temporal displacement either, although it is even more difficult to interpret unambiguously. First of all, we should note that the word "bastard" appears three times in this discourse, and the three occurrences differ in their syntactic and semantic properties (the first one being a modifier of "Webster", the second one used referentially, and the third one, predicatively). This variation seems to have an important rhetorical effect in qualifying the attitude that the speaker intends to communicate. The latter two occurrences, in the second sentence, clearly do not express the speaker's negative attitude towards Webster, whether a past or a present one. It seems that the general content of the discourse and its rather jovial tone (note that the whole utterance seems felicitous only if we imagine it spoken with a particular intonational contour on the occurrences of "bastard", suggesting a joking or distancing intention\textsuperscript{14}) contributes to a "neutralization" of sorts of the expressives, which may naturally extend also to the first occurrence of "bastard".\textsuperscript{15} (That such neutralization is possible is in itself an interesting observation, but one that has no relevance to the issue of Nondisplaceability.) Alternatively, the first

\textsuperscript{11} NB, not all speakers accept this example as felicitous (based on personal conversations).

\textsuperscript{12} This kind of independence may be more difficult to see with epithets rather than expressive adjectives: the use of, say, "bastard" seems much more directly associated with a negative attitude towards a particular person. Note, however, that "bastard" is also typically insulting to the person so called - and the insult is clearly not "displaced" in (10).

\textsuperscript{13} Hay (2013) claims that unlike other pejoratives, such as "bastard", racist (or homophobic, etc.) slurs can never have an exclusively non-speaker oriented reading.

\textsuperscript{14} Or, on the other hand, we can just as well imagine it spoken with the kind of intonation that would make clear that all occurrences of "bastard" are to be treated seriously and as expressive of the speaker's actual attitude. We would then imagine him not to be happy with having Webster as his son-in-law at all, and the whole speech as rather grimly sarcastic. In any case, the availability of such imagined scenarios and the different readings we could obtain in them show that Perspective dependence of expressives is a phenomenon that has little to do with simple syntactic or semantic operations.

\textsuperscript{15} That is nothing unusual: "bastard", as almost any other epithet, can be and often is used jokingly or endearingly, as in close friends addressing one another with "You old bastard". This fact indicates, again, that what psychological state is really expressed by an utterance of an expressive cannot be directly read off from its linguistic properties.
occurrence of “bastard”, embedded in a past-tense report, can be explained in the same way as the use of “wog” in (13): what
the speaker screamed once was “I will never allow you to marry that bastard Webster” and this speech event as a whole is
located in the past.

Therefore, even if Anand is right that the speaker of (14) successfully avoids expressing a present negative attitude towards
Webster with his uses of “bastard” while also communicating that he did hold such an attitude in the past, this is achieved by
much more complex means than just temporal displacement. This is shown also by the fact that if we took just the first
sentence of this discourse in isolation, the most salient reading would still be one in which the speaker expresses his present
and actual negative attitude towards Webster.

I conclude from this brief discussion (and the lack of better counter-examples in the quite rich literature on expressives)
that Nondisplaceability of expressive content holds as claimed by Potts. Non-speaker orientation of expressives in some
contexts should therefore be construed as a phenomenon of a different kind.

4. Alternative analyses: indexicality and quotation

Perspective dependence of expressive content naturally invites an indexical analysis, and several authors follow this path.
Potts (2007), for instance, introduces a judge parameter for expressives, modeled on Lasersohn’s treatment of predicates of
personal taste.

Furthermore, the existence of “shifting indexicals” in some languages suggests that we might have to do with a similar
phenomenon in the case of expressives. Accordingly, Schlenker (2007) suggests an analysis of shifts in the orientation of
expressives based on his “monstrous” theory of shifting indexicals (Schlenker, 2003).

Standard indexicals are evaluated with respect to the context of the actual utterance, but shiftable indexicals can be
evaluated with respect to a different context — typically, it is the context of a reported speech act. In Schlenker’s formalism,
context variables are explicitly represented in the object language and indexicals may take them as arguments. Expressives
(those among them that may have NS readings) are like shiftable indexicals in that they may take as argument a context
variable different than the actual context c*. It may be, again, the context of the reported speech act, but — crucially — it is
possible, according to Schlenker, that “under ill-understood conditions, a context variable other than c* may be left free in
the Logical Form”, assuming that “the discourse situation provides it with a salient variable”.

Schlenker admits that his proposal is incomplete insofar as the conditions under which a different context variable can be
used are “ill-understood”. Thus, his semantic account cannot predict or explain NS readings of expressives outside of attitude
and speech reports. What is even more problematic, however, is that readings of expressives within reports are equally
unpredictable. They may be oriented at the subject of the report rather than the speaker, but only in some cases; typically,
they retain their speaker-orientation. An indexical analysis does not offer any explanation in this respect, either.

Potts’ analysis, while formally different than Schlenker’s, develops the same general idea: a judge parameter in the context
accounts for the orientation of expressive content; by default the judge is the speaker, but in some circumstances the
parameter can be set to another salient agent. Nothing in the compositional semantic setup, however, helps to predict or
explain when and why the parameter can shift.

Indexical analyses of expressive orientation of this sort are not only explanatorily idle. While I will not pursue this
argument here, it is worth noting they may also be descriptively inadequate. For the distribution of non-speaker oriented
expressives is very different from that of either shiftable indexicals or predicates of taste and other perspective-sensitive
items. In languages which have shiftable indexicals, they are typically subject to clear regularities, and a given indexical
may shift obligatorily, optionally or not at all depending on e.g. the type of verb under which it is embedded. The same is not
ture of expressives, of course, which usually do not shift at all (hence the very issue of NS readings), and when they do, they
do not seem to obey any such regularities. The same goes for perspective-sensitive items such as predicates of taste, which also
shift their orientation according to definite patterns, not shared by expressives. The orientation of a predicate of taste, but not
of an expressive, in a report is typically set to the reported speaker/thinker.

(15) a. Jim said that he ate some tasty Brussels sprouts again.
    b. Jim said that he ate some damn Brussels sprouts again.

In (15a) “tasty” is naturally interpreted as expressing Jim’s tastes, while “damn” in (15b) expresses the speaker’s attitude
(whatever reasons she may have to be upset about Jim eating Brussels sprouts). Other readings, a speaker-oriented in (15a)
and a non-speaker oriented in (15b) are perhaps not impossible, but in a null context much less salient. In any case, the
difference between the behavior of a predicate of taste and an expressive is clear.

17 Note also that (in)definiteness makes a difference in the orientation of predicates of taste (contrast (15a) with “Jim said that he ate the tasty Brussels sprouts again”), but not in the case of expressives.
18 Cf. Bylinina et al. (2014) who develop a very broad account of perspective-sensitivity, under which they include such categories as predicates of taste, epistemic modals, evidentials, locative and socio-cultural expressions, and others. Their theory is generally Schlenkerian (i.e. monstrous), but, importantly, expressives are not included in it.
An indexical account of “shifting expressives” seems inadequate. Before I move on to offer my own alternative, it is worth mentioning one more possible analysis, which is much closer in spirit to what I will offer. Anand (2007) suggests that non-speaker oriented expressives can be treated as cases of covert quotation. This would account straightforwardly for the fact that shifts of expressive content to non-speaker agents are possible (while other kinds of shift or displacement are not) in contexts when not only what was said by someone else is salient, but also how it was said, in particular, the precise words used.

In speech, it seems indeed plausible to expect that a non-speaker oriented expressive will often occur with an intonational contour characteristic of sub-clausal quotation - this is how we can imagine Bob speaking when reading example (4) (and likewise in (3)). In writing, however, in the absence of actual quotation marks, we would have to assume (as Anand admits) that quotation is signaled in some other way, for a quotational analysis to even get off the ground. This is already problematic. Embedding under a speech report may of course facilitate interpretation of some expression as a quotation, but as we have seen embedding is neither necessary nor sufficient for NS readings of expressions (and in any case not everything, by far, that is embedded in a speech report is quoted, of course). When both intonational cues and overt punctuation are absent, and without other devices such as reportative interjections “in these very words” or “and I quote”, one would be hard pressed to identify any specific signals of quotation. In effect, Anand is forced to claim discourse coherence as one such possible signal. While discourse coherence certainly plays an important role in NS readings of expressives (more on this in Section 5), saying that covert quotation should be assumed whenever an expressive does not seem to express the speaker’s attitude seems plainly circular and does not explain anything. Of which Anand is well aware himself, writing: “Admittedly, this leaves us trading one mystery for another, since it is hard to comprehend the territory of partial quotation without reliable overt effects.”

Perhaps some improvements are possible here, given that the field of applications of quotation theory has seen rapid developments in recent years. But can covert quotation, even granting that it may be reasonably assumed whenever needed, actually explain the kinds of examples of non-speaker oriented expressives that we have seen in Section 2? As mentioned already, it would be plausible enough to treat “friggin” in (4) and “bastard” in 3, where the expressives appear in a speech report, as quoted. In (5) and (6) expressives occur in sentences that are preferably interpreted as free indirect discourse. Free indirect discourse, in turn, has been construed as a kind of quotation. Example (5) is slightly more problematic insofar as given the context it seems improbable that anyone in the meeting described by Lewis Lapham, whether one of the senators or a witness, actually uttered the words “Why humor people, especially poor people, by listening to their idiotic theories of social justice?”, or any words sufficiently similar to treat this sentence as a genuine quote. It is true that speakers and writers sometimes use quotation (with the proper intonational contour or actual quotation marks) in a sarcastic or mocking way, without any presumption of faithfulness - often indirectly describing an attitude of another agent in this way, rather than repeating their words (in some varieties of English this use of quotation has been conventionalized in the so-called quotative “like”). An explanation such as this, however, undermines the very purpose of a quotational analysis, which was supposed to account for uses of expressives which seem to express the attitude of another agent in virtue of the fact that they repeat their actual words (in fact the only positive argument that Anand gives for a quotational analysis is based on an assumption of reportative faithfulness of NS oriented expressives). And now it turns out that we would need to resort to another mechanism - let’s call it “ironic attribution” - to explain how quotation can do the job we assigned to it. It seems more sensible to drop the technical device of (covert quotation) and focus on the mechanisms of attribution as such (which I will indeed do in the later sections of this paper).

The difficulties of the quotational analysis are only more pronounced with respect to examples (7)–(9), which are repeated below.

(7) A CPJ report on Venezuela tells us how problems have ‘escalated’ in Venezuela under Chavez, i.e. the physical attacks against journalists under previous presidents have ‘escalated’ to Chavez calling the opposition, which includes the media, names. This is very, very serious, but I don’t think another coup attempt is called for until Chavez resorts to dramatic irony or sarcasm. But if that vicious bastard uses litotes, then there’s no other rational choice than an immediate invasion.

(8) My classmate Sheila said that her history professor gave her a really low grade. The jerk always favors long papers.

(9) My roommate Glen said that his uncle tells the absolute lamest jokes. The stooge can never get through a single one of them without giggling.

In (8) and (9), from Harris and Potts’ experiment, one could appeal only to discourse coherence as an indication that the expressives are covertly quoted - the items were presented to participants in writing (no special intonation), the expressives

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19 It should be noted that this is just a brief suggestion on Anand’s part; nothing like a comprehensive quotational analysis of non-speaker oriented expressives has been offered by anyone.

20 On a more general note, it should be observed that when confronted with apparent incoherence in a discourse, an interpreter typically has a variety of ways of repairing it. Why one of them - in this case a quotational reading - should be preferred to any other possibilities (e.g. reevaluating previous assumptions about the speaker’s attitudes) would in itself require explanation.

21 See Maier (2015). This is not uncontroversial; for a criticism of a quotational analysis of free indirect discourse, see Eckardt (2015).
are not embedded in a report, and the sentences containing them are not plausibly interpreted as free indirect discourse (as they are not in the past tense). Indeed, as has been mentioned, in corresponding items where context suggested that the subject had no reason to hold a negative attitude (Sheila got a good grade, Glen loved his uncle’s jokes), where, that is, a NS reading of the expressive would make the discourse incoherent, such readings were unavailable. This is not enough, however, to argue that in the items cited here, where such readings were possible, their availability can be accounted for by a requirement of discourse coherence inducing an interpretation with covert quotation. There is nothing incoherent in the discourse on a speaker oriented reading (and the participants gave more “Speaker” than “Subject” answers in all items, including (9)).

Finally, there is (7), perhaps the most interesting among the examples discussed here. It is also the most problematic for a quotational analysis. If the phrase “that vicious bastard” (or just the expressive “bastard”) was overtly enclosed in quotation marks, it would change the interpretation of the discourse, as it now would seem to imply that those words were actually used by the authors of the report on Venezuela - not only is this implausible, but it would defeat the very purpose of the sarcastic remark. It would be even worse if the whole sentence containing this phrase was put in quotation marks. The word “bastard” clearly is intended to reflect the CPJ authors’ attitude towards president Chavez, but there is no pretense here that this is what they actually said (even in a mockingly exaggerated way as in (5)).

The merit of a quotational analysis suggested by Anand is that it draws attention to the fact that non-speaker oriented uses of expressives are in a sense mimetic: they reflect another agent’s attitude through a pretense of echoing their words. But assuming that this mimetic effect is achieved through “invisible” quotation marks is descriptively inadequate and explanatorily futile.

Based on an analysis of examples such as those discussed in Section 2, and in light of the insufficiency of a semantic, indexical approach - and we can now add a quotational approach as well - Harris and Potts (2009) propose a mechanism of pragmatic perspective shift to account for the variations in orientation of expressive content. They go even further in suggesting that expressives may be treated as essentially underspecified for their orientation (in this case, one cannot properly speak of “shift”, as there is no parameter to be shifted, but I will continue using this term in a loose manner). I will follow this suggestion. Accordingly, I will not have any more to say about the semantics of expressive contents or about how the shifts of orientation can be incorporated in a compositional formalism. Instead, I will describe a high-level pragmatic mechanism of interpretation of expressives.

5. Factors

What I propose, then, is the following: expressive content is attributed, on pragmatic grounds, to the most salient perspectival agent in the given context - most often it is the speaker, but in examples like the ones discussed above it may be someone else. The strong bias towards speaker-oriented reading is perfectly natural (as the speaker is most typically the most salient perspectival agent), but it is not entirely trivial and its significance will be discussed in Section 6. The notion of a “perspectival agent” is intentionally vague (so is the notion of salience that applies here) - as the examples in Section 2 show the relevant agent (besides the actual speaker) may be any person, whether actual or generic (as in (6)), or even a group of people (as in 7), mentioned in the discourse, whose attitudes, emotions or opinions are relevant to its topic. More specifically, what makes an agent a salient candidate for the attribution of expressive content is that the way in which those attitudes, emotions and opinions are expressed is relevant to the discourse.

I will now briefly discuss the factors that can influence a non-speaker agent’s salience in discourse. The remarks here will repeat to some extent the comments made already in Section 2, but putting them together will help to prepare the ground for the arguments of the following sections.

- In free indirect discourse (examples (5) and (6)) the most salient perspectival agent is the subject (protagonist), not the speaker (narrator) (a fortiori, in direct quotation, the most salient agent is the original speaker, not the reporter). It is one of the strongest and most systematic factors influencing the interpretation of expressives (Eckardt (2015) claims that protagonist-oriented reading of expressives are obligatory in FID). However, its predictive power is largely diminished by the fact that whether a given stretch of discourse is to be interpreted as FID is not in itself a clear-cut question - a matter of “cues and clues” rather than definite conditions (and a NS reading of an expressive can on its own contribute to interpreting a given sentence as FID).
- The non-speaker agent must be mentioned in the immediate context and the “polarity” of their attitude must match the content of the expressive, e.g. negative expressive content can be attributed to an agent who has reasons to be angry about some situation. This is a strong negative factor: if the context suggests that the potentially salient agent holds an attitude contrary to the “polarity” of the expressive, a NS reading is blocked (as mentioned with respect to Harris and Potts’

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22 A ‘perspectival agent’ is simply a participant of or an individual mentioned in the discourse, whose attitudes are somehow relevant. This is a similar notion to such linguistic concepts as origo, source or anchor, but is intended as a very thin one - it need not have any specific syntactic or semantic representation.

23 This is not necessarily true in standard indirect discourse, where the content of the original utterance is “filtered” through the perspective of the actual speaker.
experimental items (8) and (9)). On the other hand, a NS reading is facilitated if the content of the expressive does not match what is known about the speaker's own attitude, as in (4) - and especially (3), where the assumption that the speaker does not hold a negative attitude towards the man she wants to marry seems sufficient to account for a NS reading.

- Outside of free indirect discourse, a concrete reference to a speech event (whether actual, pretended or generic) or an explicit mention of an agent's attitudes seems to be necessary to obtain a NS reading (it is present in all the examples in Section 2). That is, the concrete speech or attitude of the non-speaker agent must be somehow a part of the topic of a given stretch of discourse. An unambiguous claim to such effect cannot of course be made, as it is not possible to exclude the existence of examples in which a NS reading is available even without such mention, but in any case it is certainly a strong factor.

- Textual conventions and rhetorical techniques are also a factor. Sarcasm and irony serve to distance a speaker from both the form and content of her words, thereby increasing the plausibility of a NS reading of any strongly marked vocabulary (as is most evident in (7), but also in (5) and (6)). In examples such as (5) a NS reading (and a free indirect discourse reading more generally) can be facilitated by the fact that readers of the magazine would not expect an author to use such expressions as “idiotic” to refer to the public's opinions.

- NS readings may be facilitated if the speaker draws attention to the manner of speaking of the other agent (“My father screamed ...” in (3), their choice of vocabulary (ridiculing the use of “escalated” in (7)), or some characteristic feature or pattern of their speech (“I've heard similar arguments” in (6)). This is not necessary, however (cf. (4), (8)).

- Speaking more generally, discourse coherence as well as inferences based on the preceding discourse, knowledge about the speaker's and the agent's attitudes, and world-knowledge are important to the interpretation of expressive content. A NS reading is available only if the context provides sufficient clues which make a non-speaker agent's attitudes thematic in the discourse, and is blocked if it would undermine its coherence. (this is most clearly seen in Harris and Potts’ experimental results)²⁴

- On the other hand, embedding in a speech or attitude report does not seem to be a strong factor in itself.²⁵ A report, of course, makes the speech or attitude of another agent a salient topic of discourse, and facilitates a NS reading in this way; it may also draw the attention to the specific words that have been used. Nevertheless, it is clearly insufficient, as expressives in reports are normally interpreted as speaker-oriented even so (as in (1)). Moreover, reportative faithfulness is not, pace Anand, necessary for NS readings (cf. (5), (7), and the discussion in Section 4).

The most important conclusion from this discussion is that the interpretation of expressives, when a NS reading is available, is an inferential process – the hearer or reader must take into account a variety of contextual clues and otherwise known facts to obtain the proper reading. The theoretical framework developed in the later parts of this paper will account for this aspect.

6. Opacity

Most, if not all, expressives share a distinctive feature which may, for lack of a better term, be called “pragmatic opacity”. When used, they call attention to the concrete way in which the speaker expresses herself - above and beyond the content of the utterance itself. That is, they are opaque in the sense that in their case the expression used is at least as prominent and salient for interpretation as the content conveyed by it.

This feature is related to the fact that expressives typically convey only supplemental content, and the descriptive, at-issue content of the utterances in which they appear could equally well be expressed if the marked vocabulary was omitted or replaced with neutral counterparts. However, this is not yet distinctive of expressives - other kinds of expressions conveying non-at-issue, supplemental and “disposable” content can be considered (e.g. modal particles, appositives).

What is distinctive of expressives is that they are in a sense "risky", as they are very often words and phrases which in certain contexts may be socially inappropriate or cause offense.²⁶ Whether or not this is an essential feature of expressives as such is difficult to say without a comprehensive survey. (In particular, this feature may be less pronounced in the case of positive expressives, such as “awesome” or “brilliant”. Still, however, when used in their expressive function, such words are very colloquial and may be inappropriate in some social situations.) But it seems at least to be true of a substantial part of expressive vocabulary, and certainly of the most typical examples discussed in the literature.

On the other hand, it should be noted that the use of expressives can typically be challenged only meta-linguistically, and not directly. Consider the following examples:

(16) A: I'm not going to mow the friggin lawn.
   a. B: #The lawn is not friggin. / #You don't hate mowing the lawn.

²⁴ What the experiments also show, however, is that the clues do not have to be particularly abundant to obtain NS readings.
²⁵ Although one may speculate that it should have some influence on NS readings, Harris and Potts (2009) report an experiment which shows that embedding under reports facilitates NS readings of appositives, which also show a strong bias for speaker orientation. Whether this finding can be extrapolated to the case of expressives cannot be said, however, and Harris and Potts did not test for it.
²⁶ I am following here a suggestion of Lasersohn (2007).
b. B: Watch your language, son! That's not a word we use.

(17) I'm not a “chink”, I’m Chinese.

As shown by the infelicitous answers in (16a), it is neither possible to deny directly that an expressive adjective can be applied to a given object, or even to challenge the attitude it expresses. A meta-linguistic, indirect challenge, which targets the manner of expression rather than the content expressed is more natural. In (17), the use of scare-quotes or a similar device (or appropriate intonation in speech) seems necessary to distinguish between the truth-conditional part of the content of “chink” (=Chinese) which is taken to be true and the expressive part which is rejected.

Note also that the actual content of expressives is often in a sense indeterminate, as they do not contribute much more than an outer manifestation of an emotional state (and therefore expressives are often juxtaposed with gestures, facial expressions etc.). Potts (2007) lists “Ineffability” as one of the properties of expressives - speakers are usually unable to explicate their precise content,27 but “indeterminacy” in the sense I mean here is something slightly different: the content of an expressive is typically just something like a ‘thumbs up’ or more often ‘thumbs down’, and if there are differences between such words as, say, “jerk” and “asshole”, or “damn” and “fucking”, they are at most differences of intensity. What specific attitude or emotion the speaker is manifesting in his use of any of those words is not encoded in their content (in the way in which it is encoded in descriptive words denoting attitudes and emotions such as “angry”, “annoyed”, or “upset”).

For typical instances of expressives (such as the ones occurring in the examples discussed throughout this paper), those three properties go together: social “riskiness”, indeterminacy of content, and only meta-linguistic challengeability.28 While each of them may perhaps be shared by other kinds of expressions, together they seem to set expressives apart from the rest of the vocabulary. What does the combination of those properties tell us about the pragmatics of expressives? One way to think about it is to construe a speaker using an expressive as taking license to use a piece of strongly marked vocabulary and thereby depart from a standard of “linguistic decorum.” This departure by itself suggests that the speaker has, or takes herself to have, some reason for it, e.g. she is in a heightened emotional state (upset or angry, or in the rarer case of positive expressives, excited) or that the object, person or situation targeted by the expressive is despicable or outrageous. However, this “signal”, as I say, is neither a statement of fact (and so cannot be directly debated or challenged) nor a description of a psychological state (hence the indeterminacy).

The license-taking picture of expressives connects the above-mentioned properties of expressives to what I called their pragmatic opacity. Using an expressive is, typically, a breach of linguistic decorum (riskiness - and thus it specifically draws attention to the way the speaker speaks (opacity)); the expressive does not convey descriptive content that could be directly challenged, and so its meaning is not determinate or easily articulated or paraphrased (indeterminacy), but rather manifests, or signals, the speaker’s attitude or emotions through their choice of vocabulary. Its use can therefore only be challenged meta-linguistically, by, as it were, revoking or questioning the “license” that the speaker grants herself to resort to such strong language, but not directly negated (non-challengeability). This way of thinking about the pragmatics of expressives also accounts for the Independence property, as discussed at the beginning of Section 2: the use of expressives is not a matter of what is said, but rather of how it is said; expressive content can only be “supplemental” because it belongs to a different dimension of what is communicated.

This account of the pragmatics of expressives is admittedly very abstract (it will take on more substance when I apply, after Harris (2014, 2016), the notion of commitments de lingua in Section 8), but it provides background for a more concrete point that I wish to make at this moment: the opacity of expressives, understood along these lines, accounts for the strong pragmatic bias towards speaker-orientation. Even when the speaker is not taken to be fully committed to the descriptive content of some part of her utterance (because it is negated, conditionized, reported after someone else, or temporally displaced etc.), she is naturally responsible for the way she expresses it — for the choice of words, simply speaking. And given that expressives are so strongly charged, this responsibility is especially prominent and difficult to displace. That this is the reason why expressive content cannot be “plugged”, and tends to escape all embeddings and displacements, is suggested by Lasersohn (2007): “Because expressives are so emotionally charged, and because their use can carry a significant social risk, I suspect that speakers are especially cautious about using them in embedded contexts where there is a chance of their content “leaking” — except, of course, if the speaker does agree with the content of the expressive and is willing to make this agreement public.” An advantage of the understanding of expressive use offered by the license-taking picture is that the “leaking” mechanism described by Lasersohn is not a marginal or secondary feature, but one of the central properties of expressives as a class of vocabulary, connected to their other important characteristics such as Independence and Immediacy.29

On the other hand, the pragmatic opacity of expressives may also explain the availability of non-speaker oriented readings under such conditions as listed in Section 5: precisely because they bring attention to the manner of expression, rather than

27 Although, as noted by Geurts (2007) this does not seem to be an exclusive property of expressives, and the content of “the” or “green” is equally difficult to articulate. It is, however, determinate, unlike the content of “damn” or “bastard.”

28 That expressives can be challenged only meta-linguistically need not be considered to be a primitive or simple property. Indeed, it seems that many different factors contribute to it (including their syntactic characteristics, their non-at-issueness, and the general difficulty of challenging someone’s emotions). Nonetheless, it is a characteristic and robust property.

29 Potts (2007) defines Immediacy as follows: “Like performatives, expressives achieve their intended act simply by being uttered; they do not offer content so much as inflict it.” In other words, unlike descriptive or assertoric content, expressive content is not negotiable.
just the content expressed, in suitable circumstances they may be interpreted as reflecting a manner that is not the speaker’s. That is, a NS oriented expressive may indicate (rather than directly express) an attitude of an agent other than the speaker by suggesting that they have or would have manifested that attitude through the use of strongly marked vocabulary. The responsibility for the “risky” piece of vocabulary is not taken by the speaker, then, but attributed to the other agent.

Before I move on, it is worth emphasizing that my understanding of “riskiness” and its relation to what I call opacity is importantly different from one suggested by Harris and Potts (2009) (with regard to appositives; this thought is applied to expressives as well by Harris (2012)). They mention riskiness in the context of strategies that speakers may employ to signal an intended non-speaker-oriented reading of an expression. The risk appears where there is a strong bias towards a speaker-oriented default interpretation. One way to override the bias may be to use a marked construction. (In the case of speech reports, for instance, the use of claim instead of say may signal the reporting speaker’s unwillingness to take responsibility for the content of the report, etc.) Riskiness in this context is a matter of strategies that may or may not be successful - the audience may fail to recognize the speaker’s intentions. It results from the strength of the speaker default. On my account, however, it is in a way the opposite - the riskiness of expressives is the cause of speaker default. But the risk I refer to does not concern the possibility of being misunderstood. It is a matter of the social cost of using taboo expressions, not of the uncertainty of specific communicative strategies. Riskiness in this sense is an extra-linguistic, or perhaps a meta-linguistic matter; and it is attached to every use of expressives, whether the speaker is expressing their own attitudes or not. This difference is part of the reason why I do not focus on markedness (as one of the tools speakers may use to communicate their intentions), but on opacity, which is an aspect of the expressions in question that speakers and hearers need to deal with in one way or another. Putting things simply, because expressives are risky (in my sense) and pragmatically opaque, a speaker who uses them while intending a non-speaker-oriented interpretation must rely on marked and risky (in Harris and Potts’ sense) strategies, (which involve exploiting the factors discussed in Section 5).

In the following sections I will show how a conception of commitment attribution in discourse can capture shifts of expressives construed in this way (where those shifts will be understood specifically as attributions of non-at-issue, non-propositional commitments de lingua).

7. Commitment attribution in discourse

The account of interpretation of expressives, with respect to their speaker or non-speaker orientation, which I propose here is based on the concept of commitment attribution. In this section I will explain this concept in general, and in particular in relation to interpretation of reports and different dimensions of meaning. I will also argue that the interpretation of some discourses may involve attributing commitments to non-speaker agents, even outside of overt reports. In the next section I will show how this model of commitment attribution can account for NS readings of expressives.

Various authors, including Farkas and Bruce (2010), AnderBois et al. (2015), Malamud and Stephenson (2015), and for a variety of purposes, propose models of discourse which keep track of individual commitments of speakers separately from the common ground (e.g. as proposals which need to be accepted by the interlocutor in order to enter the CG). Commitment in this sense is an abstract element of a discourse model - a proposition indexed to a speaker, perhaps - which can be an object of various kinds of operations, and interact with the elements of CG in complex ways.

I will not be interested here in the conceptions of common ground or common ground updates, and so I will not discuss these theories in detail. The one aspect that is important in the present context, is that on these accounts, interpreting a speaker’s utterance is (partly) a matter of tracking what the speaker commits herself to in making it. This aspect is even more pronounced in a different approach to understanding discourse proposed by Morency et al. (2008). Morency, Oswald and de Saussure (henceforth MOS) develop a “cognitive pragmatics” of interpretation, which focuses on commitment attribution as an essential element of the hearer’s uptake of speaker’s utterances.

One can think of “commitment”, in the sense which interests me here, as an element of a Lewisian conversational scoreboard (Lewis, 1979). Participants of a conversation keep and update “score” on (besides common presuppositions, salience of potential referents, standards of precision etc.) what each of them has committed to. Commitment attribution, in other words, is a way of keeping track of participants’ conversational moves. Paradigmatically, in interpreting a speaker’s assertion that p, a hearer updates the score by attributing to the speaker a commitment to p. This will then have an effect on what further conversational moves are permitted (e.g. the speaker cannot felicitously deny that p in his next utterance).
MOS are particularly interested in the way in which commitments are attributed in the interpretation of speech reports. (Their main focus is on the interpretation of explicit and implicit aspects of meaning, but that is not a relevant question for my purposes here.) The most interesting point about the account developed by MOS, in the present context, is that it provides for the possibility of attributing commitments to non-speaker agents, in particular to authors of reported speech acts.\footnote{Faller (2016) proposes a similar notion of non-speaker commitment in her analysis of “reportative exceptionality”.} Consider the following examples:

\begin{enumerate}[(18)]
\item a. Laszlo said that he would come.
\item ?? In my opinion, Laszlo said that he would come. \footnote{Note that the demonstrative in “That’s not true” can refer to either proposition: that Frank said so and so, or that there is a game.}
\end{enumerate}

In (18b) the expression “in my opinion” targets the speaker’s commitment (e.g. weakening it). If what is at issue in the conversation (the “question under discussion”) is what exactly Laszlo said, this is a perfectly felicitous utterance. However, there are natural contexts in which it would be infelicitous: when what is at issue is whether Laszlo will come or not (e.g. in answer to a question “Is Laszlo coming?”, where (18a) is a natural response). MOS propose to understand this as a situation in which hearer’s interpretation of (18a) or (18b) is focused on attributing a commitment to Laszlo, rather than to the speaker (the speaker after all does not commit herself to anything on the topic of whether Laszlo will come or not).

In scorekeeping terms, we can say that the hearer keeps a score not only on the speaker, but also on other salient agents. This may also have an effect on what further conversational moves are available. Consider another example (this one does not come from Morency et al. (2008), but perhaps better illustrates their point):

\begin{enumerate}[(19)]
\item a. Frank said there’s a game tomorrow.
\item b. That’s not true. He didn’t say that.
\item c. You’re wrong. He didn’t say that.
\item d. That’s not true. There’s no game.
\item e. # You’re wrong. There’s no game.
\end{enumerate}

The answers in (19a) and (19b) challenge the speaker’s commitment to the effect that Frank said so and so, but the answers in (19c) and (19d) challenge Frank’s commitment to the effect that there is a game tomorrow.\footnote{It can also be seen from (19) that a complete interpretation of a report like this one involves attributing (distinct) commitments to both agents: the reporter and the reported.} This is shown by the contrast between the second item in each pair (19b and 19d): the answer “You’re wrong” may only target the speaker’s commitment (“That’s not true” targets the content rather than the commitment, so it is more flexible in this way), and it is infelicitous in (19d) because it is another commitment that is the object of the challenge — Frank’s.\footnote{(21b) is not as bad as (17d) is. This is possibly due to the fact that in an unembedded report the actual speaker seems to be at least partly committed to what is reported. Attribution of a commitment to the actual speaker, however, is defeasible, as (19d) shows.}

The consequence of the account offered by MOS which is most useful to my present purposes is the possibility of attributing commitments to non-speaker agents even outside of explicit reports, provided a suitable context. This is one way in which (20) can be interpreted:

\begin{enumerate}[(20)]
\item A: What did Laszlo say?
\item B: He’s coming.
\end{enumerate}

To whom is the commitment to the effect that Laszlo is coming attributed? Let us apply the tests from (18b) and (19d):

\begin{enumerate}[(21)]
\item a. ?? B: In my opinion, he’s coming.
\item b. ?? C: You’re wrong. He’s not coming.
\end{enumerate}

Both these utterances are problematic, and require a special interpretation to be felicitous, indicating that the commitment attributed in interpretation of B’s answer in 20 is Laszlo’s. (21a) is not a natural answer to the question “What did Laszlo say?”, unless the speaker intends to convey that what Laszlo said was unclear or ambiguous. In that case, an interpreter cannot attribute any commitment to the reported speaker, and must rely on the reporter’s conjecture. By contrast, the simple answer in (20) may be interpreted by attributing to Laszlo a commitment to the effect that he is coming. (21b), taken as a continuation of the mini-dialog in (20), is also strange, and it seems to imply, again, that what exactly Laszlo said is unclear or controversial - in this way it shows indirectly that the simple answer “He’s coming” in (20) can be interpreted by attributing a commitment to Laszlo; (21b) challenges the propriety of this attribution.\footnote{This example shows that non-speaker commitment attribution can be facilitated in a more robust context which gives clearer clues as to the speaker’s own commitment. The second sentence is preferably interpreted by attributing the.

\footnote{Faller (2016) proposes a similar notion of non-speaker commitment in her analysis of “reportative exceptionality”.}
commitment to its content to Frank. If the speaker was committed to it, the continuation in the third sentence could not be felicitous.

(22) I wasn’t there, but Frank said the party was pretty wild last night. Jerry kept buying rounds for everybody, and Karen danced on the bar in her underwear. I don’t really believe that last bit, though.

Another important lesson that I wish to draw from the discussion by MOS is that commitment attribution can relate to different aspects or dimensions of meaning. MOS are interested in the way in which implicatures contained in the original utterance can be explicitated (or not) in the report, but for my purposes the more important point is that this account allows for attribution of commitment to at-issue content and commitment to expressive content to be separated. The most typical example of this is when a reported at-issue commitment is attributed to the original speaker, but the expressive commitment is attributed to the speaker (even though it pertains to an object or situation introduced within the report) - this is the case of standard, speaker-oriented readings of expressives, as in (23):

(23) A: What did your daughter say?
   B: She said she’s going to marry that bastard Webster!

Interpreting B’s report requires attributing the commitment to the proposition that his daughter is going to marry Webster to the girl, but the expressive commitment, i.e. the negative attitude, to B (along, of course, with the descriptive commitment to the effect that his daughter said so and so). It is the daughter who says she is going to marry Webster, but her father who calls him a bastard.

A non-speaker oriented reading, on the other hand, involves an interpretation that assigns both expressive and at-issue commitment to another agent (as in (4), repeated here).

(4) Well, in fact Monty said to me this very morning that he hates to mow the friggin lawn.

Finally, it seems also possible that the at-issue commitment can be attributed to the speaker, but the expressive commitment to someone else – this may be what happens in a NS reading in (7), but it is more clear in (24), a modified version of (4).

(24) Bob: Well, it seems Monty hates to mow the “friggin” lawn.

In (24) the speaker Bob is committed to the statement that (it seems that) Monty hates to mow the lawn, but not to whatever is expressed by the use of “friggin”. The intended interpretation attributes the expressive commitment to Monty. Scare-quotes (or in speech, a corresponding intonational contour) can be used to signal this sort of separation of at-issue and expressive commitment - in fact, it seems that one of the main functions of scare quotes is to separate a part of content, or an aspect of utterance, to which the speaker commits from a part to which he does not. (This is not, of course, limited to expressive commitment or expressive content, as not only expressives can be scare-quoted, but pertains more generally to what I will call commitments de lingua. I will come back to this point.)

In the next section I will further explore the independence of attribution of expressive and at-issue commitments within this model of discourse interpretation as scorekeeping. Concluding the discussion so far, it should be emphasized (as MOS also do) that attribution of commitments to non-speaker agents is a high-level pragmatic effect of interpretation of utterances, which involves inferences based on a variety of factors, including the syntax of reports, the use of scare-quoting or free indirect discourse, questions under discussion, discourse coherence etc. (which, of course, is in line with what has been said earlier about inferring the orientation of expressive content, i.e. attribution of expressive commitment).

8. Commitments de lingua

Harris (2014) discusses a notion of speaker’s commitment to appropriateness of expressions with respect to so-called transparent free relatives (TFR). In the following paragraphs I will briefly summarize Harris’ analysis of TFRs, and thereafter I will show how this way of conceptualizing speaker and non-speaker commitments can be applied to the case of expressives. For this purpose I will also borrow the term “commitment de lingua” from Harris’ more recent paper.

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38 That expressives give rise to commitments which are separate from at issue commitments is a consequence of the semantics of expressive content proposed by Potts (2005), and more generally follows from the property of Independence. I do not discuss semantics of expressives in any way here, but the existence of expressive commitment should be uncontroversial. I will have more to say about its nature in the next section.
Attribution of commitments *de lingua* connects the scorekeeping model of discourse described in Section 7 and the "license-taking picture" of the use of expressives proposed in Section 6.

Here are some examples of TFRs from Harris (2014):

(25) Speaking Wednesday with conservative radio host Rush Limbaugh, Ted Cruz said that by promoting *what he called amnesty for immigrants in the U.S. illegally*, Senate Democrats are indeed hoping to get a lot more Democratic voters — but not among immigrants who did things the right way, like his father.

NPR: 20 May, 2013

(26) But Cummings was not so happy about a media buildup to the hearing with *what he called unfounded accusations aimed at smearing public officials*.

NPR: May 09, 2013

(27) John gave Mary *what he calls a beergarita*.

The boldfaced phrases in these examples are - to use the very same construction - what Harris calls transparent free relatives. They consist of a *pivot or nucleus* (e.g. "a beergarita" in (27)) enveloped in a free relative, with an underspecified or non-sortal use of "what". TFRs are interesting from a syntactic and semantic point of view, but Harris focuses on their pragmatics. The primary uses of TFRs are to introduce a potentially unfamiliar term (as in (27)), to provide an expert or authoritative source for an assessment or term (as in the first sentence of this paragraph), or to attribute an attitude or assessment to a particular agent. This last use, best seen in (26), and Harris' discussion of it, are the most interesting in the present setting.

In a context such as (26), the TFR raises an important issue of interpretation: put in intuitive terms, it raises the question who and why is responsible for the particular choice of words. The sentence "The man you called Laszlo said he's coming", or to attribute an attitude or associations may be attributed to another agent.

The category of commitment *de lingua* (from Harris (2014)), i.e. commitment to the appropriateness or adequateness of a particular expression, captures this aspect of interpretation of TFRs. Commitments *de lingua* may be thought of as an element of a set of background commitments facilitating or even enabling successful communication. These background commitments are basic presumptions of a language game, e.g. that participants speak a mutually understandable language and agree to follow conversational rules (relative to the goals of the exchange), that expressions have conventional interpretations - and that, once uttered, a speaker commits herself to the appropriateness of the expressions used. Because these presumptions are so basic, commitment to them rarely becomes an issue. Sometimes, however, speakers use expressions which they do not want to commit themselves to ("amnesty" or "unfounded accusations"), or they feel the need to mark their novelty or unfamiliarity ("beergarita") - constructions such as TFRs can then help to manage the attribution of commitments.

TFRs as such are not directly relevant to the topic of this paper, but commitments *de lingua* are. First, let us note that TFRs are not the only construction that can be used to raise - and/or help to resolve - the issue of commitment to the applicability of a certain expression. Other constructions and phrases can be used in a similar way, such as "so-called X", "as Y calls it", "in Z's words". In particular, this seems to be one of the main functions of scare quotes (as mentioned in Section 7) - in scare-quoting an expression a speaker (or rather writer) signals she does not undertake, or at least not fully, a *de lingua* commitment to it.

As I will understand it, commitment *de lingua* is a very general category (a speaker is by default committed to the appropriateness of all expressions she uses), which only rarely becomes salient in the interpretation of speakers' utterances. Most linguistic communication occurs without raising the issue of attribution of commitment *de lingua* - and with respect to most words and phrases it does not arise, unless it is in a very special context. Normally, a speaker's commitment to the use of a certain expression is a non-issue: a sentence like "Laszlo said he's coming" does not, in normal circumstances, raise any questions as to who and why is responsible for the particular choice of words. The sentence "The man you called 'Laszlo' said he's coming", however, would raise the question of whether the speaker is willing to commit to 'Laszlo' being the name of the person in question, and why not. Commitment *de lingua* is a very broad category also insofar as why the applicability of a certain expression becomes salient in a given context may depend on a variety of reasons: it may be a novel term or one used in a technical or special sense, it may be a piece of jargon, slang or idiolect, or it may have strong evaluative or emotional connotations.

Against the background of these remarks on commitments *de lingua*, I propose that what has been provisionally called "expressive commitment" in the previous section is a special case of commitment *de lingua*. In particular, expressives are special in that they *always* give rise to the issue of commitment *de lingua*. This is another way of articulating the idea of "pragmatic opacity" of expressives (see Section 6): because expressives are so strongly charged and "risky", the question of

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(Harris, 2016) is an unpublished conference presentation, but its abstract is available online. It further elaborates the analysis of TFRs. I only refer to it to borrow the term "commitment *de lingua*", which I find particularly convenient, and which does not appear in Harris's earlier work. The incorporation of commitments *de lingua* in the scorekeeping model and their application to perspective shifts of expressives are entirely my own interpretation and adaptation. Any shortcomings that the reader may find here are therefore my sole responsibility.

At this point I go beyond the material and discussions present in Harris (2014, 2016).
the appropriateness of their use is always salient. Most expressions in a language are “transparent” in this sense - commitment to their use remains a mostly trivial, background assumption of a language game. It is not the case with expressives, as I have argued: they draw attention to the very mode of a speaker’s expression; it is an essential feature of their use. In this way, they signal that the speaker has a reason to depart from a standard of linguistic decorum, and therefore can be interpreted as expressing a negative attitude, a heightened emotional state etc.

It should be underlined here that the notions of pragmatic opacity and of commitment de lingua, while closely connected, belong to different levels of analysis. Fundamentally, opacity is a property of expressions, while commitments are properties of speakers. Pragmatic opacity, by definition, raises the issue of a de lingua commitment, as it concerns expressions that are marked or in some way stand out, focusing the recipients attention on how and not only what is said. This issue can be resolved by attributing the relevant commitment to the speaker - or to someone else. In the process of attribution, a hearer will typically try to infer the reason for the use of an opaque expression (a quotation, an introduction of a novel term etc.) On the other hand, speakers can employ a variety of devices to make any expression opaque, depending on contextual needs, like the constructions and phrases mentioned above. But some expressions may be unavoidably opaque independently of a speaker’s communicative strategy. This, I have argued, is the case of expressives - it results from their social riskiness, their taboo status and their high emotional load.

Expressives are pragmatically opaque and therefore they always raise the issue of commitment de lingua. Nevertheless, it remains a general background assumption of most acts of communication that the speaker is by default fully responsible for the choice of vocabulary. And so, the issue of commitment de lingua with respect to expressives is by default resolved by attributing this commitment to the speaker, and interpreting the speaker as expressing an attitude or emotion which would provide a reason for such a “risky” commitment.

However, as argued in Section 3 Through 6 and illustrated by the examples discussed in Section 2, the default interpretation need not always be the only or the most adequate one, and readings of expressives which attribute the commitment de lingua to a non-speaker agent are possible - provided that the speech or attitude of the other agent are salient enough in the context. In such a case, the presumption that the speaker is responsible for all the expressions she uses is lifted because the expressive (de lingua) commitments of another agent are more prominent.

Note that it is also possible to explicitly “manage” the orientation of expressives with the use of such devices as TFRs or scare quotes. The following variations of (5) are naturally interpreted by attributing the de lingua commitment to “idiotic” to the senators (and the attribution is more explicit than in the original example41):

(28) a. Why should the senators listen to what they called people’s idiotic theories of social justice?

b. Why should the senators listen to people’s “idiotic” theories of social justice?

If speaker and non-speaker oriented readings of expressives are construed in terms of attribution of commitments de lingua, they can be easily incorporated in the score-keeping model of discourse described in the previous section: in this abstract model, hearers/interpreters keep track not only of speakers’ at-issue commitments, and at-issue commitments of third parties, but also of commitments de lingua. With regard to “standard”, unmarked expressions, these commitments are trivial: keeping track of the fact that a speaker used the words “There is a cat on the mat” (in an assertion) adds nothing, except for special contexts, to registering that she said that there was a cat on the mat. In the case of expressives, however, attributing the commitment de lingua is an important part of interpretation, because of expressives’ opacity. And in special cases, this commitment de lingua may be attributed to a non-speaker agent.

Why should participants of a language game keep track of expressive commitments in particular, if commitments de lingua concerning unmarked, “ordinary” expressions are trivial and transparent and need not be elements of a conversational scoreboard? In virtue of the basic “kinematics”, as Lewis calls it, of linguistic scorekeeping. What should be an element of the score is that which is new and has impact on what further moves in the game are available - in other words, that which is not a shared and obviously presumed background of communication. At-issue commitments associated with assertions are a paradigmatic example - the very point of making an assertion is to introduce new information, which constrains what further moves in the exchange are available. Another example are standards of precision: if Tom is taller than Jerry, and Jerry has been already described as “tall” in a conversation, its participants need to register that this sets a standard of precision for “tall” such that it is no longer possible to deny that Tom is tall, too.42

There is, however, no need - not in typical circumstances anyway - to register the fact that a speaker has used the word “cat” to refer to a cat. It is already a background presumption of an ordinary exchange in English that this expression is so used - the very fact that it has been used just now does not constrain further moves in any new way (although the at-issue content which it served to express may and normally does have such an effect). The issue of commitment de lingua is not raised by

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41 However, both these variations seem to strongly imply that the word “idiotic” was actually used by the senators. The actual example does not have this implication, attributing the expressive commitment but not the expressive use: FID appears as a very subtle rhetorical technique here, perhaps due to its association with fictional, or fictionalized, discourse.

42 Other phenomena could be construed in this way. Consider modal subordination, as in “A wolf might walk in. It would eat you first.” The first assertion introduces a new, modalized, context; the second refers to an object that only exists there. To keep up with interpretation, a hearer must keep track of a special “score” for that context.
expressions like that. It may, by contrast, be raised by expressions which are novel or used in an atypical way (such as “beergarita” in Harris’ example) - if nothing else, they introduce a new way of referring to some objects (or expressing some content), which therefore can be registered on the conversational scoreboard. In the case of expressives, as I have argued, the issue of commitment de lingua is always (or typically) raised - it is an important property of expressives as such - because their applicability is never presumed in the common ground. It cannot be a background assumption that Kaplan can be referred to with “bastard” (cf. (2)) or my keys with “damn keys” (12) in the way which it is a background assumption that a cat can be referred to with “cat”. The use of an expressive constitutes therefore a new move in the language game, which should be registered.

In virtue of this, the scorekeeping/commitment attribution model captures the perspective-dependence of expressives. The applicability or appropriateness of unmarked expressions is not in any way, in normal circumstances, a matter of perspective (it is not a matter of perspective that the word “cat” is used the way it is), because it is a shared background presumption of a language game. Expressive commitments are not shared in the same way, not by default at least - the use of an expressive constitutes new information which is registered on the discursive scoreboard. This element of the score does not, of course, pertain only to the fact that such and such a word has been used - but it registers the speaker’s commitment to its appropriateness. It registers, therefore, a perspective that a speaker takes on a given object or situation - a perspective which is constituted by a negative attitude, an emotional state etc. - because it is this perspective that may, for the speaker, justify the use of an expressive. And if, to repeat, the expressive commitment is in a suitable context attributed to another agent than the speaker, it registers the other agent’s perspective.43

It is important to note at this point that what is attributed to a non-speaker perspectival agent is a commitment to the appropriateness of an expression, and not necessarily the actual use of that expression. The difference is slight and in most instances negligible, but the language of commitment makes it possible to account for examples like (5) and (7), where the expressives are not plausibly interpreted as actually uttered by the reported speakers. What the author of (5), for instance, implies is something along the following lines: the attitude towards “the people’s theories of social justice” which the senators manifestly held is the kind of attitude (of, say, disdain and hostility - as opposed to justified disagreement) that would be a reason for calling something “idiotic” (for undertaking that expressive commitment). It is the commitment, and not an utterance of specific words, that is attributed.44

Let me illustrate the conceptual mechanism described in the last paragraphs with a simple constructed example. Consider the following two fragments of a conversation.

(29) A: I just talked to John this morning. He said that that bastard Kaplan got promoted. If it’s true, then I can’t believe the Regents’ foolishness.
B: Oh, come on, what do you have against Kaplan?
(30) A: John has been really upset about how things are going in the department lately. He went on a whole rant this morning about how none of the Regents’ decisions made sense. The budget cuts are too hasty, the new hires don’t work out, that bastard Kaplan got promoted, and so on. He just wouldn’t shut up.
B: Oh, wow, did he actually call Kaplan a bastard? I didn’t know he disliked him so much.

In both (29) and (30) speaker A utters the expressive-containing clause “that bastard Kaplan got promoted”. This linguistic form conveys two commitments: an at-issue, assertoric commitment to the proposition that Kaplan got promoted, and a non-at-issue, expressive commitment de lingua to the appropriateness of the expression “bastard”. Both commitments need to be properly attributed by the hearer for the discourse to make sense. In both versions of the conversation, the assertoric commitment is attributed to a non-speaker agent, John. Even though only in (29) the clause in question is syntactically embedded in a report, in (30) it is also clear enough that A’s third sentence describes the contents of John’s “rant”. The actual speaker does not have to be (fully) committed to this content, as is made clear by the hypothetical third sentence in (29). (There is also no need to assume that in (30), A shares John’s evaluations of budget cuts and hiring policy).

Things are more complex with the commitment de lingua. (29) represents the standard situation: even though the expressive occurs embedded in a speech report, it is the actual speaker and not John that remains the most salient perspectival agent here (it is A’s reactions and attitudes that are topical in the conversation). Attribution of expressive commitment is thus resolved as per default, giving a speaker-oriented reading. Moreover, because A is assumed to be speaking seriously and honestly, the use of the expressive (the fact that A takes license to use such a “risky” expression) is an unambiguous indication of a negative attitude towards Kaplan. All this is confirmed by the felicity of B’s response in (29): B naturally understands that it is A, and not John, who deems it appropriate to call Kaplan a bastard and interprets it as an expression of A’s negative attitude towards him.

In (30) the expressive “bastard” occurs in a clause that is not only superficially identical to the one in (29), but also conveys the same non-speaker assertoric commitment. And yet, it’s interpretation is different. The broader context in A’s utterance in

43 That is, the non-speaker perspectival agent’s commitments become part of the scoreboard, because as any other element of the score they may be relevant to the ways in which the conversation may further develop (cf. (29) and (30) below).
44 Observe that if we were to follow Anand’s suggestion and develop a quotational analysis of NS readings of expressives, we would have to make this distinction between attributing utterances and attributing commitments anyway to explain mock-quotations, as discussed at the end of Section 4.
(30) makes John, and not A, the most salient perspectival agent: it is John’s opinions of and emotional reactions to how things are going in the department, and most importantly his “rant” - the way he himself expressed those opinions and emotions - that is the main topic of this conversation. Therefore, when the issue of commitment de lingua is raised by A’s utterance of “bastard”, the automatic default interpretation which would attribute this commitment to the actual speaker can be overridden, leading to a non-speaker oriented reading. In effect, as witnessed by the felicity of B’s surprised response in (30) the commitment to the appropriateness of “bastard”, and an attitude that could ground it, are attributed to John.

Comparison of both versions of the conversation also provides an answer to the question, why scorekeepers should keep track of non-speaker agents’ commitments de lingua. Insofar as attribution of expressive commitment registers another agent’s perspective, i.e. their attitude or emotion, it may have an impact on the state of the language game and its further developments - if, that is, the context is such that the attitudes, emotions or ways of expression of another agent are salient or topical in the discourse (and I have argued that they are in all instances of NS readings). In particular, it may be important to register the fact that it is not the speaker who is committed to the appropriateness of an expressive - it is in general important for successful communication not to misinterpret a speaker’s attitudes. This very point is manifest in B’s responses in (29) and (30) - if they were switched, each would become strange and infelicitous, as one of them concerns the expressive commitment and attitude of the speaker A, and the other the commitment and attitude of John. It is important, then, to keep track of expressive commitments across agents in the conversational scoreboard.

Nevertheless, expressive commitment, while it is an element of the conversational score, is not at-issue commitment, and therefore it cannot be displaced through standard embedding (as shown again by (29)). Using a charged expression to talk about a merely hypothetical, reported or temporally distant situation or object does not by itself make the use of this expression as such less salient or non-committal.

To sum up, the theoretical framework I propose here to account for the perspective-dependence of expressives consists of the following elements:

- Participants of a language game (parties of a conversation or interpreters of a discourse) keep track of speakers’ commitments in a Lewisian scorekeeping framework.
- Commitments can also be attributed to non-speaker agents.
- At-issue commitments can be attributed separately from commitments de lingua, which are commitments to the appropriateness of a certain expression.
- While commitments pertaining to the use of unmarked expressions are trivial and rarely salient, expressives always raise the issue of commitment de lingua due to their pragmatic opacity (which in turn is a function of several factors, including their “riskiness” and non-challengeability). A salient commitment de lingua introduces a particular perspective: the emotions or attitudes of an agent.
- Commitment de lingua associated with the use of an expressive is by default attributed to the actual speaker - it cannot be displaced because the speaker is normally responsible for all expressions used.
- Non-speaker readings of expressives consist in attributions of commitments de lingua to another agent, which is possible if the context makes the speech or attitude of another agent sufficiently salient - to which a variety of factors may contribute.
- Non-speaker readings of expressives are possible in broadly reportative contexts, which does not necessarily require the expressive to be actually embedded in an overt report (or to be a quotation).

9. A tentative prediction

The predictive power of my theoretical account of perspective shifts with expressives is limited. However, this is fully to be expected, for the factors that can influence an interpretation of an expressive and lead to a speaker- or non-speaker-oriented reading are too diverse, elusive, and belong to too many different levels to be fully captured in a predictive theory. All of the nuance and complexity of language and communication is involved. Nevertheless, some aspects of this issue are amenable to empirical testing. Harris and Potts (2009) have shown experimentally that an expressive signaling an emotion which appears to match what a reader can already know or guess about the attitudes of a non-speaker subject of a piece of discourse is more likely to evoke a reading oriented at that subject. This is in line with what I am claiming about expressives, opacity and de lingua commitments. The use of an expressive raises the issue of de lingua commitment; by default the commitment is attributed to the actual speaker, but there may be stronger reasons to attribute it to someone else, who is a more salient perspectival agent. A brief story about, for instance, someone being upset with their professor - combined with a lack of any indication that the speaker is also negatively disposed towards the professor - may provide such reasons. However, considering the close connection between use of expressives and expression of attitudes and emotions, this is a rather trivial effect.

Accordingly, I want to suggest a different test that could corroborate or falsify my account. It is based on contrasts between de dicto and de re readings of definite descriptions in speech reports. As an example, consider the following scenario:

(31) Thomas has gotten a cat, who is unusually large, with an oddly shaped head and long brownish hair. And so, Thomas believes that his new pet is a dog. He complains:
T: The dog doesn’t bark.
If someone were to report Thomas’ complaints, they could do it in one of the two following ways:

(32) a. Thomas keeps complaining that the cat doesn’t bark.
   b. Thomas keeps complaining that the dog doesn’t bark.

For a hearer who is aware of the situation (the real nature of Thomas’ pet and his confusion) and of the speaker’s awareness of it, the definite descriptions in the two reports elicit different readings (although both are easily available). In (32a) the description has to be read de re: it is in the speaker’s and hearer’s belief (and, we assume, in actual reality) that Thomas’ pet is a cat, but not in Thomas’ own belief. In (32b), by contrast, the only reading available is de dicto: the hearer knows that Thomas’ pet is not a dog, and the speaker does not imply that; the description is clearly to be understood as one actually used by the confused Thomas.

The distinction between de re and de dicto readings of speech reports can naturally be construed in terms of attribution of de lingua commitments.45 The appropriateness of a definite description as a means of referring to a given object may be an object of a salient commitment de lingua - as it is in our example. Thomas is committed to “dog” being an appropriate term for his pet; everyone else is committed to “cat” being the proper word. Accordingly, to make sense of the two reports in (32), a hearer must accurately attribute the de lingua commitments. In the de re case (32a), the commitment to the appropriateness of “the cat” can be safely attributed to the speaker; in the de dicto case (32b), it should be attributed to a non-speaker agent: Thomas.46

Let us now add an expressive into the mix. If perspective shifting of expressives is adequately characterized by the mechanism of de lingua commitment attribution, we should expect the orientation of an expressive nested in a definite description to follow the ‘orientation’ of the definite description as such, as the expressive is a part of the object of the relevant commitment. With this in mind, consider the following variants of the two reports:

(33) a. Thomas keeps complaining that the damn cat doesn’t bark.
   b. Thomas keeps complaining that the damn dog doesn’t bark.

The prediction of my account of perspectival expressives is this: while in the de re case (33a) the expressive “damn” has as its most salient (or only) reading the default speaker-oriented one, in the de dicto case (33b) a non-speaker-oriented reading is preferable. That is, in (33a) the expressive is naturally interpreted as conveying the speaker’s attitude, possibly expressing their frustration with Thomas. In (33b), by contrast, the expressive is interpreted as something that Thomas said, and therefore as expressing his attitude, e.g. his frustration with the non-barking pet.

That such a contrast exists in (33) and that such readings are available and preferable for the two reports respectively, seems intuitively obvious to this author. However, this intuition cannot be taken as universal. In fact, the scenario I present here is based on a similar example (in German) by Sauerland (2007), who uses it to make the opposite point, claiming that the de dicto variants with an expressive in the description are unacceptable, because the expressive forces a de re reading, which clashes with what is assumed about reality in the scenario.47 Thus, the intuitions concerning this kind of situation are ambiguous. But the issue is clear and testable. Without developing an actual experimental design here, I propose that it could be investigated in a study similar to the one concerning expressives performed by Harris and Potts (2009) (see Section 2). Participants could be presented with a scenario like the Thomas story, together with one of the two ways of reporting his complaint, and asked whose attitude the expressive conveys. The prediction of my account is that de dicto variants like (33b) would elicit a significantly higher proportion of Subject-oriented responses. (Additionally, the perceived felicity of the de dicto reports should also be tested, to accommodate the possibility that more speakers share Sauerland’s intuitions.) If a result like this was shown - as I expect it would - it would corroborate my account of perspectival commitment attribution. If it was not, it would cast serious doubt on my theory.

10. Conclusion

At the beginning of my discussion I mentioned three distinctive properties of expressives, which I borrowed from Potts (2007) and which defined the object and scope of my discussion: Independence, Nondisplaceability and most importantly Perspective-dependence. Let me briefly sum up how the framework developed in the last section helps us understand each of them.

45 This is not meant as an explanation of any of the linguistic or philosophical issues concerning the de re/de dicto opposition, but merely a description. See, however, Brandom (1994) who develops a comprehensive account of de re/de dicto in speech and attitude reports based on “substitutional commitments”, which are a more robust version of de lingua commitments.

46 Further variations are possible here, if we don’t assume that the speaker knows the actual species of Thomas’ pet. The hearer must then decide between two readings, attributing the relevant commitment to different agents.

47 This is supposed to be predicted by a syntactic account of the “unpluggability” (i.e. projective tendency) of expressives. Note however that Sauerland does not claim that this is an adequate account, as it cannot accommodate shiftability (his examples for this are of the same types as ones discussed earlier in this article).
• Independence follows straightforwardly from the distinction between at-issue assertoric commitment and commitment *de lingua*: these are different dimensions of content communicated in an utterance (and therefore the conversational scoreboard keeps track of them separately). Expressives express what they do in virtue not simply of what is said, but how.

• Once the independence of at-issue and expressive dimensions is recognized. Nondisplaceability is a natural consequence: the use of a marked expression has the same significance whether it appears within the scope of a negation or an attitude report, in a conditional or a question etc. Commitments *de lingua* are operative on a different level than semantic composition.

• Perspective-dependence was, of course, at the center of my discussion throughout this paper, but it bears repeating what the gist of the account offered is. There are two distinct but tightly connected aspects to the perspectivity of expressives. On the one hand, expressives convey emotions and attitudes, which are of course elements of a subjective perspective of an agent. On the other hand, because they are risky and opaque, in the sense I discussed, the appropriateness of an expressive is never *common ground* in discourse, but something that is the responsibility, as it were, of a particular agent. An account in terms of commitments *de lingua* shows how these two aspects are connected: the subjective perspective conveyed by expressives is the perspective of the agent responsible for their use, and the reason for it. (And sometimes, it may not be the actual speaker’s.)

What I have proposed in this paper is a thoroughly pragmatic account of non-speaker readings and, more broadly, perspectival nature of expressives. As such it is an alternative to the semantic accounts proposed by Potts (2007), Schlenker (2007) or Anand (2007), which I discussed in Section 4. Its claim to superiority is based both on empirical adequacy and conceptual soundness. 48 With regard to the former, I have clearly distinguished instances of genuine non-speaker readings of expressives from merely apparent cases of displacement (see Section 3), given examples of NS readings that cannot be covered by a quotational analysis, because they do not presuppose reportative faithfulness, and indicated differences in distribution of “shifts” between expressives and other kinds of perspective-sensitive items (Section 4). With regard to the latter, I have given theoretical justification for all these differences and distinctions, provided a coherent way of conceptualizing the perspectival moment of both speaker and non-speaker oriented readings of expressives as well as their import in a broader discursive context. Finally, I have articulated an empirically testable prediction resulting from my account and suggested an experiment which could serve to corroborate or falsify it. In short, the account I propose sheds crucial light on the “ill-understood conditions”, “some circumstances” and “mysteries” of previous proposals.

In doing so, it also connects more directly the perspectival aspect of expressive content with other properties of expressives, especially Independence and what I have dubbed pragmatic opacity. The latter is an important feature of expressives that has not, as far as I know, been explicitly conceptualized before. While this was not at the center of my discussion here, the concept of opacity can provide a better understanding of what sets expressives apart from the rest of the lexicon and of the manner in which they communicate their content. For it emerges as the crucial characteristic of expressives within the scorekeeping model of discourse: they always raise the issue of commitment *de lingua*. (Therefore it should perhaps be emphasized that by calling my account “pragmatic” I do not say that it concerns only contextual or conversational aspects of the use of expressives, or anything along these lines - quite the contrary, what is most important here are their lexical, conventional properties.)

Admittedly, the predictive force of my account is limited. But this, I claim, is as it should be, for the phenomena under discussion here do not admit of the kind of exact and predictively potent treatment that formal semantic theories offer (as I have argued in Section 4: even if they were descriptively adequate, Potts’ or Schlenker’s formal representations of NS readings would do nothing to explain them or the conditions under which they are possible). This much has already been argued by Harris and Potts (2009), but my contribution goes beyond that in offering a way of conceptualizing the pragmatic mechanisms involved in perspectivity of expressives.

Harris and Potts conclude their article, writing: “The bias [leading to default speaker-oriented readings] looks significant enough that we should seek a theoretical understanding of it, perhaps by looking away from categorical generalizations and towards those that are based in speaker and hearer expectations and the relative pragmatic stability that they create”. 49 My account answers to this postulate by offering precisely this sort of theoretical understanding – explaining both the bias for speaker-oriented readings and the possibility of non-speaker-oriented ones in terms of hearer expectations, and the relative pragmatic instability resulting from speakers’ use of opaque, risky expressions.

The value of this account may extend beyond the relatively narrow issue of perspective-dependence of expressives insofar as other phenomena can be fruitfully considered in terms of the mechanisms of attribution of commitments *de lingua*. I have mentioned two such topics in the course of my argument: scare-quoting and the so-called quotative “like”. Another possible application is the case of slurs (pejoratives targeting members of social groups defined by their race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation etc.): their derogatory meaning can be construed as a function of the speaker’s *de lingua* commitment to using the slur instead of a neutral and respectful alternative expression (see Hess (in prep.) for a detailed account along these lines).

48 Although a substantial comparison is impossible, because none of those accounts goes beyond very brief suggestions. This is, unfortunately, true especially of Anand’s proposal, which is closest in spirit, as it seems, to my analysis, but offers no details.

49 In this quote, Harris and Potts refer more specifically to appositives, although they seem to assume throughout the article that appositives and expressives can be treated jointly. I make no claims about appositives.
More generally speaking, the model presented here offers a way of thinking about perspective in language and perspective-sensitive expressions that is not concerned only with manipulation of indices and contextual parameters, but rather with who, how, and why uses those expressions.

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