

Expressives and argument extension*

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Abstract In this article, we discuss expressive adjectives (‘the damn keys’) and epithets (‘that bastard John’). In recent literature (see Potts 2005 and Gutzmann 2019), these expressions have received a parallel semantic treatment. However, EAs and epithets present a remarkable difference, namely, only the former exhibit *argument extension*, an apparent mismatch between syntax and semantics whereby EAs affect a syntactic constituent other than the one they directly modify. After a brief introduction and the presentation of the puzzle (sections 1 and 2), we advance a novel semantico-pragmatic approach to EAs that explains this difference (section 3). According to this view, EAs are *Isolated CIs*, roughly put, expressions that bear propositional expressive meaning (and no at-issue meaning), and do not interact with the surrounding at-issue material in terms of functional application. In section 4, we present data that lends additional support to our proposal (and represents a *prima facie* challenge for some alternative approaches). Finally, in section 5 we discuss the alternative approaches to argument extension in Potts 2005 and Gutzmann 2019, and show some of their shortcomings.

Keywords: expressive meaning, expressive adjectives, epithets, argument extension

1 Introduction

In this article, we discuss two kinds of terms among the varied fauna of expressive meanings, to wit, expressive adjectives (hereinafter EAs) and epithets, of which (1) and (2) are examples:

- (1) The dog ate the damn cake.
- (2) That bastard John ate the cake.

According to Potts (2005), EAs and epithets constitute a natural semantic class, since (i) neither EAs nor epithets carry at-issue meanings; (ii) both possess functional, non-propositional expressive meanings; and (iii) both combine with other phrases in

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the same way, namely they take an at-issue argument and yield that same argument plus a proposition at the expressive dimension.¹

Despite these similarities, EAs and epithets show a noteworthy difference: only the former exhibit *argument extension* (see [Gutzmann 2019](#)), an apparent mismatch between syntax and semantics whereby EAs affect a syntactic constituent other than the one they directly modify. In what follows, we advance a semantico-pragmatic view of EAs that, we shall argue, explains this contrast. Roughly put, we claim that, unlike epithets, which function in the standard way proposed by Potts, all EAs are *isolated CIs*, that is, expressions that bear no at-issue content but exhibit a propositional, saturated non-at-issue one.²

The article is structured as follows. In section 2, we briefly present Potts' view and the challenge it faces. In section 3, we put forward our proposed semantics for EAs, and show how it accounts for the difference between EAs and epithets regarding argument extension, as well as for some well-known facts about expressives. In section 4, we present some data about EAs (prima facie problematic for Potts' view) and show that the present theory is able to account for them. In section 5, we criticize two alternative approaches to argument extension (see [Potts 2005](#) and [Gutzmann 2019](#)).

2 Argument extension

In his seminal work on expressive meaning, [Potts \(2005\)](#) treats both EAs and epithets in a parallel fashion. In order to see this, consider the lexical entries he puts forward:

$$(3) \quad \textit{damn} \rightsquigarrow \lambda X. \mathbf{bad}(\cap X): \langle \langle \tau^a, t^a \rangle, t^c \rangle$$

$$(4) \quad \textit{bastard} \rightsquigarrow \mathbf{bastard}: \langle e^a, t^c \rangle$$

As (3) and (4) show, Potts assigns a functional, non-saturated expressive meaning to both EAs and epithets. Moreover, both kinds of expressions take an at-issue argument and yield a propositional meaning at the non-at-issue dimension, although EAs may take as input any argument of the form $\langle \tau^a, t^a \rangle$, while epithets can only take individual entities as input. Likewise, according to Potts both EAs and epithets combine with other expressions in the same way, namely, via the tree-admissibility rule **CI application** ([Potts 2005: 64](#)):

$$(5) \quad \llbracket \alpha: \langle \sigma^a, \tau^c \rangle \rrbracket (\llbracket \beta: \sigma^a \rrbracket) = \llbracket \beta: \sigma^a \rrbracket \bullet \llbracket \alpha(\beta): \tau^c \rrbracket$$

1 We should note that EAs and epithets differ, in Potts' view, in that the latter only admit entities as input, whereas the former may take either entities, properties or propositions. More on this below.

2 The idea that expressives fail to compose in any way with the surrounding at-issue material was explored in [Potts 2013](#). We circumscribe the thesis to EAs, and provide a different kind of argument, related to the contrast between EAs and epithets with regard to the phenomenon of argument extension.

which basically states that the expressive applies to the at-issue argument of its sister node and yields that same argument plus a non-at-issue proposition. Note that on this account expressives do not exhibit *upward compositionality*, that is, the semantic contribution of an expression containing an EA is not a function of its meaning and other constituents, but they do exhibit *downward compositionality*, i.e. the semantic contribution of an EA is a function from the meanings of the expressions it syntactically combines with (see Lauer 2011).

However, EAs and epithets exhibit an important difference. On the one hand, EAs can scope out of their original syntactic location and affect other constituents of the sentence. To see the point, bear in mind the syntax for EAs assumed by Potts (2005: 164),³

(6) $[DP [D^0] [NP [AP \text{ expressive adjective}] [N]]]$

and consider the following examples (Potts 2005: 166):

(7) The damn republicans should be less partisans.

a. \ominus^{\cap} republicans

(8) We have to look after Sheila's damn dog.

a. \ominus Sheila's dog

(9) The damn machine didn't come with a plug.

a. \ominus The machine didn't come with a plug

In (7), the EA seems to modify its sister node, 'republicans'. However, in (8) the speaker can hardly be taken to hold a negative attitude towards dogs as a kind; the most natural reading, instead, is that she holds a negative attitude towards the particular dog denoted by the DP. Similarly, in (9) the EA intuitively affects the whole sentence.

Moreover, based on experimental evidence, Frazier, Dillon & Clifton (2015) claim that EAs may exhibit other kinds of non-local readings as well:⁴

(10) Damn! The dog ate the cake.

a. \ominus the dog

argument lowering

b. \ominus the cake

argument lowering

(11) The dog ate the damn cake.

a. \ominus the dog

right-to-left argument hopping

³ See Orlando & Saab 2020, Saab & Orlando 2021 and Saab & Carranza 2021 for discussion of the syntax of EAs and epithets.

⁴ Whether the cases of argument lowering and argument hopping presented below constitute genuine cases of argument extension is a controversial issue (see Gutzmann 2019; Bross 2021). More on this in section 5.

(12) The damn dog ate the cake.

a. ☹the cake

left-to-right argument hopping

As shown by the variety of examples above, EAs may display a broad range of non-local interpretations. By contrast, epithets always combine with their sister nodes, and hence the emotional attitude they express can only target the individuals denoted by them. In (2), for example, the speaker’s negative attitude can only target John:

(2) That bastard John ate the cake.

a. ☹John

Therefore, EAs and epithets behave differently regarding argument extension. Now, as Gutzmann notes (2019: 264-265), these facts raise an important question: if EAs and epithets function semantically in the same way, why is it only EAs that exhibit argument extension?⁵ In the next section, we will advance a semantico-pragmatic view of EAs that, we shall argue, accounts for the above mentioned puzzle.

3 The proposal

Let us start by introducing the idea of *Isolated CIs*, originally proposed by Potts. Isolated CIs are expressions that “do not interact with the at-issue material around them in a way that is representable in terms of function application.” (Potts 2005: 65) By way of illustration, consider (13) where, according to Potts, the EA carry a propositional, saturated non-at-issue content encoding a speaker’s emotion:

(13) That’s fantastic fucking news!

a. At-issue content: That’s fantastic news!

b. Non-at-issue content: The speaker is in a heightened emotional state.

Because of their semantics, Isolated CIs cannot combine with other expressions via **CI application**. In part for that reason, Potts introduces a new rule, **Isolated CIs** (Potts 2005: 66), that regulates the interaction of Isolated CIs with other constituents of the sentence:⁶

(14) $[[\alpha: t^c]]([\beta: \tau^a]) = [[\beta: \tau^a]]$

The rule passes the at-issue content of the adjacent expression upwards, while leaving the non-at-issue content of the expressive in place. In a case like (13), for example, the relevant part of the derivation looks as follows:

⁵ Thanks to Andrés Saab for bringing this issue to our attention. Gutzmann credits Heidi Harley (p.c.) for pointing out the same puzzling problem to him.

⁶ EAs are not the only reason for introducing the rule **Isolated CIs**. Potts also uses the rule in order to account, for example, for some appositive constructions.



Potts maintains that in a case like (13) the EA functions like an isolated CI. However, he contrasts these uses with examples like (1), where the EA is said to express a functional non-at-issue meaning that combines with the at-issue meaning of its sister node. Our main contention in this article is that there is no such contrast: *all* EAs are isolated CIs. Accordingly, an EA like ‘damn’ in (1), makes no contribution to the at-issue dimension, while it expresses a propositional (hence, saturated) non-at-issue meaning, namely, that the speaker is in a heightened emotional state. Thus, the corresponding lexical entry (in Potts’ logic \mathcal{L}_{CI}) should go as follows:

(16) $\text{Damn} \rightsquigarrow \mathbf{Damn:} t^c$

(17) $\llbracket \mathbf{Damn:} t^c \rrbracket^{\mathcal{M}_{i,g}} = \text{the speaker is in a heightened emotional state at } @^7$

Given the proposed denotation, EAs cannot combine with other constituents of the sentence via the rule **CI application**: they must do it through the rule **Isolated CI**. According to this, expressives exhibit neither upward nor downward compositionality: their non-at-issue meanings are not taken as arguments by any functional expression (they are left in place instead of being passed up in the tree) and they do not take other expressions’ meanings as arguments either (their non-at-issue meanings are saturated). Hence, in (1) the relevant part of the derivation looks as follows:



In other words, all EAs are syntactically integrated but semantically isolated, due to their lack of at-issue meaning and the saturated nature of their non-at-issue meaning. Thus, we contend that the most relevant contrast is not that between (allegedly) standard and isolated uses of EAs, but that between EAs and epithets, the latter being both syntactically and semantically integrated to the sentence. As we shall see below, this contrast is what ultimately explains why only EAs exhibit argument extension.

Notice that the view preserves some of Potts’ good results. It is well-known, for example, that EAs cannot appear in predicative position:

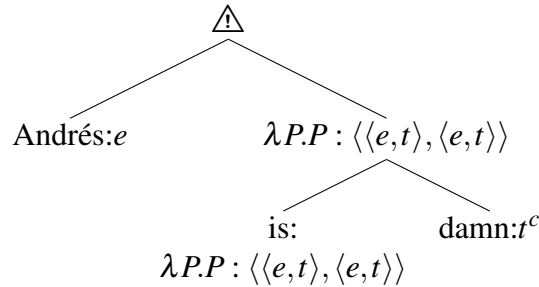
(19) #Andrés is damn.

We can explain this fact as a crash in the semantic derivation:

⁷ We use @ as a constant representing the actual world.

Argument extension

(20)

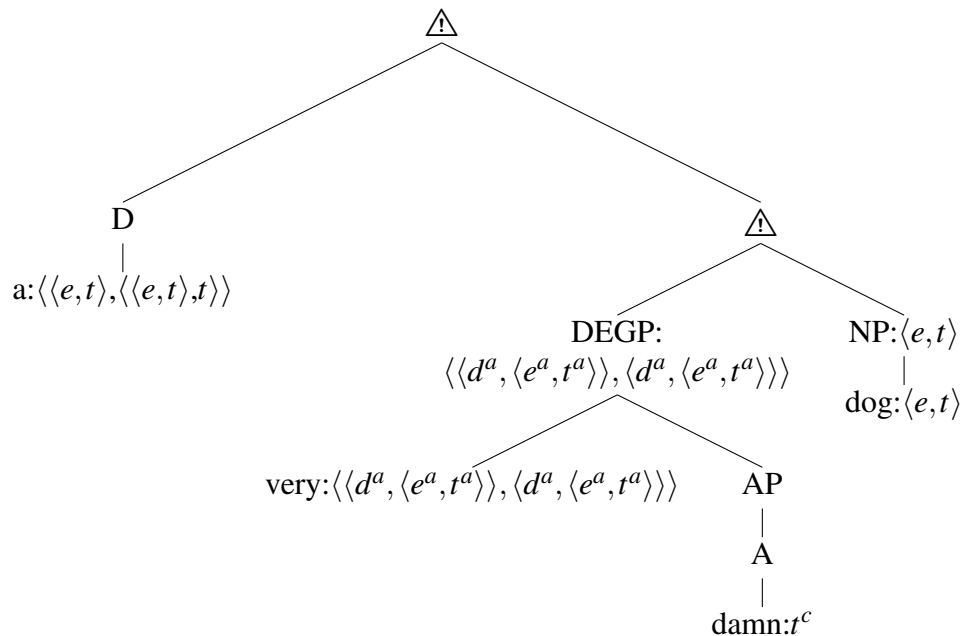


It is also known that EAs cannot combine with degree modifiers:

(21) #A very damn dog ate the cake.

This is also expected in the current view due, again, to a type mismatch:

(22)



However, the main advantage of the theory is that it provides a principled explanation of the difference between EAs and epithets regarding argument extension. As we saw above, the kinds of denotations of EAs and epithets differ from each other substantially. On the one hand, EAs are semantically isolated, that is, their expressive meanings are non-functional, and moreover, their content is unspecific with regard to the target of the attitude attributed to the speaker. These two facts pave the way for the audience to draw pragmatic inferences regarding the intended target of the expressive. Argument extension results from those inferences. Thus, in the current view, the occurrence of ‘damn’ in (1) encodes only the information that the speaker is in a heightened emotional state. However, in virtue of that information plus some linguistic and non-linguistic contextual clues (e.g., that the speaker actually liked the

cake), the hearer may pragmatically infer that the target of the speaker's attitude is, in this case, the dog. On the other hand, epithets are *semantically integrated*, that is, they have functional expressive meanings that combine with the meanings of the constituents they modify via the rule **CI application**. In their case, the target of the speaker's attitude is thus always provided by the semantics, and further pragmatic inferences come about on top of that. In other words, argument extension is not possible.

Let us make a few additional comments about the proposal. First, note that Potts' examples of Isolated CIs also trigger argument extension, just like the allegedly semantically integrated uses of EAs (and unlike epithets). Consider, for example, (23) (a slightly modified version of (13)):

- (23) Andrés cooked a fantastic fucking dinner!
 a. ☺the dinner/☺Andrés/☺Andrés cooked a fantastic dinner

In this case, given some appropriate context, the audience could plausibly interpret that the speaker has a positive attitude towards the dinner, Andrés or the fact that Andrés cooked a fantastic dinner. This is not conclusive evidence, but it is certainly suggestive that standard uses of EAs (like (1)) are more similar to isolated CIs than to epithets regarding argument extension.

Secondly, our view predicts EAs to make a wide range of interpretations available, including those in (7)-(9) and in (10)-(12). In fact, our theory predicts that EAs may also affect some further utterance-external contents (see section 4). However, the claim that a multiplicity of readings is in principle available must not be confused with the idea that 'anything goes', that is, that any reading is equally plausible in any context. Our view is fully compatible with the interpretation of EAs being highly restricted by the linguistic and non-linguistic context on the basis of pragmatic considerations.

One such consideration concerns the placement of the EA in the sentence. According to Frazier et al.'s (2015) empirical study, EAs are more likely to be interpreted as modifying the DP they occur in. This is perfectly compatible with our account: since EAs are semantically isolated, their location makes no difference to semantic interpretation. Thus, the hearer may wonder why the speaker placed the EA where she did, given that she could have inserted it in a different place. At this point, she may rely on iconic pragmatic reasoning and interpret the actual proximity of the EA to a given DP as a defeasible indication that the speaker wanted the EA to be interpreted as affecting that constituent.⁸ Frazier et. al. also point out that causality has a role in the interpretation of EAs: when an EA appears in the direct object, it is more likely to be interpreted as targeting its denotation if the event

⁸ To be sure, pragmatic reasoning guided by iconic considerations is not uncommon, the most obvious case being the use of the Sub-Maxim of Manner 'be orderly' in cases of conjunction buttressing.

described by the verb is beyond the subject’s control. By contrast, when the subject can be considered to be in control of the event described, she tends to become the target of the negative attitude. Our view of EAs as semantically isolated expressives is perfectly compatible with this observation as well, since the determination of the target of the speaker’s attitude is left up to pragmatic considerations. One such consideration may be whether the corresponding subject is an agent or not, and whether it is judged to be responsible for the action described or not.

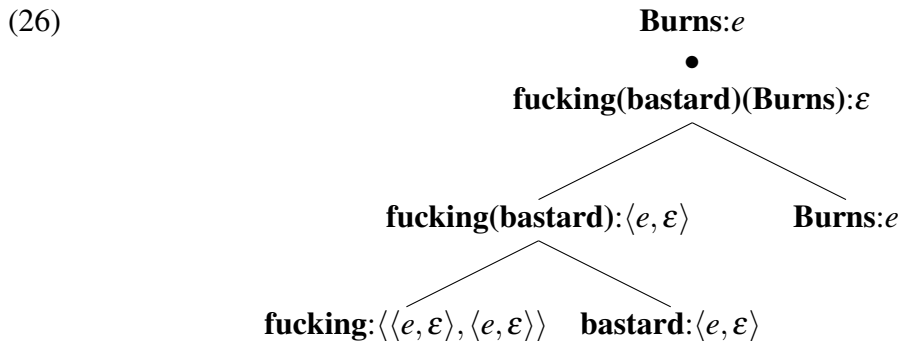
Thirdly, we should note that some uses of EAs like (24) and (25) may seem to challenge our approach:

(24) That fucking bastard Burns got promoted.

Scenario: the speaker is having an emotional breakdown caused by a range of utterance-external circumstances (including the fact that they had to quit their job).

(25) I was a fucking great detective who loved her fucking job. (‘Dexter’, Showtime, S6E4) (discussed in [Esipova 2021](#))

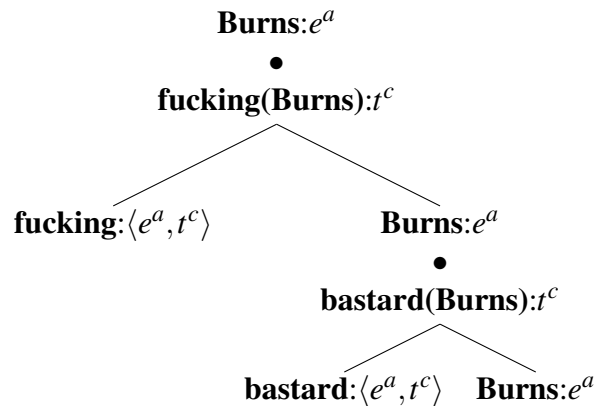
Both [Gutzmann \(2011\)](#) and [Potts \(2007a,b\)](#) analyze ‘fucking’ in (24) as carrying functional expressive meaning. Gutzmann claims that ‘fucking’ works as an expressive modifier that takes as argument the expressive meaning of ‘bastard’.⁹ The structure below reflects this intuition:



Potts, in turn, contends that both ‘bastard’ and ‘fucking’ modify ‘Burns’, as shown below,

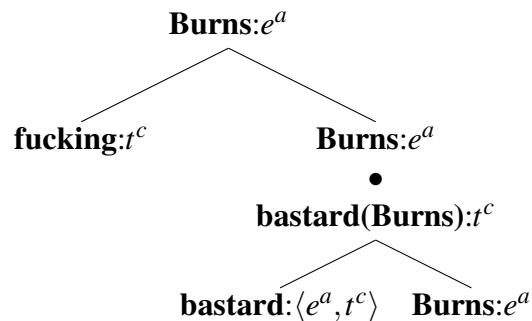
⁹ This requires a substantial modification of Potts’ original system, in particular, the new system introduces the expressive type ε and a new tree-admissibility condition that allows expressive types as inputs.

(27)



(one may account for the intensifying reading of the EA in terms of his theory of expressive indices (see Potts 2007a,b)). These analyses of (24) pose a challenge for our view, since, if they are correct, the EA will not have a propositional expressive meaning. However, we are in a condition to provide an alternative analysis in accordance with the present view, which is reflected by the structure below:

(28)



That is, we claim that in (24) the epithet combines with its sister node via **CI application** and yields the same argument plus an expressive proposition. In contrast to Potts, however, this node then combines with the EA via **Isolated CIs** (and not **CI application** again) and yields an at-issue meaning. The EA is interpreted as also targeting ‘Burns’ for pragmatic reasons; the epithet semantically establishes that the speaker holds a negative attitude towards Burns, so when it comes to interpreting the EA the hearer already has a strong bias towards interpreting it as applying to the same individual.¹⁰

4 Novel data

We have argued that EAs convey an unspecific propositional content to the effect that the speaker is in a heightened emotional state, so that the hearer must infer

¹⁰ We account for similar cases like ‘The damn fucking dog ate the case’, where there are two consecutive EAs, by resorting to two consecutive applications of the rule **Isolated CIs**.

the actual target of that emotion by virtue of a pragmatic reasoning. This view thus predicts the availability of a wide range of readings for EAs. We have already seen that EAs may affect different constituents of the sentence in which they occur, and even the very sentence itself. However, nothing in our theory prevents the EA from being interpreted as oriented towards contents that are beyond the at-issue dimension of the sentence. In this section, we show that this prediction is borne out: EAs cannot only target asserted contents but also conversational implicatures (like that in (29)), presuppositions (like those in (30)-(31)), and some mutually manifest contents in the conversational background (like those in (32) and (25)). Crucially, the data discussed below presents a challenge for Gutzmann's and Potts' views (see section 5), according to which the EA must primarily target the content conveyed by a constituent of the sentence in which it occurs (although it may also target further contents by means of pragmatic reasoning).

Let us start by discussing conversational implicatures. Consider the following example:

Scenario: the speaker went to the bank to try to get a credit for his business.
His business partner waited for him in the car.

- (29) A: Did we get the money?
B: Start the damn car.
a. +> The bank did not grant us the money.
b. ☹The bank did not grant us the money/# ☹the car

Intuitively, the negative attitude expressed by the speaker in (29) is directed towards neither the car nor the addressee, but towards the fact that the bank did not grant them the money or, alternatively, towards the bank itself. However, the proposition that the bank did not grant them the money is not part of the at-issue content of the sentence, but a conversational implicature thereof. Our view allows for a straightforward explanation of this reading in terms of a pragmatic inference concerning the target of the speaker's negative attitude, which is left unspecified by the EA.

In addition to conversational implicatures, EAs may also target presuppositions:

- (30) Luckily, the president stopped wasting our damn money on that war.
a. Asserted content: the president is not wasting our money on that war
b. Presupposed content: the president was wasting our money on that war
c. # ☹The president/# ☹our money/# ☹the president is not wasting our money on that war
d. ☹The president was wasting our money on that war.
- (31) Luckily, it was not John who stole the damn money.

- a. Asserted content: John did not steal the money
- b. Presupposed content: Someone stole the money
- c. # ☹the money/# ☹John/# ☹John did not steal the money.
- d. ☹Someone stole the money

Intuitively, the preferred interpretation of the sentences above is one where the corresponding EA targets a presupposed content.¹¹ Again, our view is well-equipped to explain the availability of these readings: these are just cases where the presupposed content is the best candidate to be the target of the speaker's attitude.

Finally, EAs can target some contents that are mutually salient in the conversation, although they are neither asserted, presupposed nor implicated:

Scenario: the addressee owes money to the speaker.

- (32) I want my damn money.
- a. Asserted content: the speaker wants his money
 - b. Mutually salient content: the addressee has not paid his debt yet
 - c. # ☹the money # ☹the speaker wants his money
 - d. ☹The addressee has not paid his debt yet

Scenario: the speaker is having an emotional breakdown caused by a range of utterance-external circumstances (including the fact that they had to quit their job).

- (25) I was a fucking great detective who loved her fucking job.
- a. # ☹the speaker/# ☹the job/# ☹The speaker was a detective who loved her job.
 - b. ☹the speaker had to quit her job

In (32), for example, the fact that the addressee has not paid his debt yet is neither conversationally implicated nor presupposed. However, the EA intuitively takes scope over that content. Again, this case is unproblematic for our proposal, on which this kind of reading is expected to be available in the right contexts. Likewise, we see that the EA in example (25) may also target an utterance external content, in line

¹¹ One may think that the EA in (30) modifies 'the president'. However, it should be noticed that this reading is inferred from the presuppositional reading. This can be seen by noting that asserting the at-issue content of the sentence alone makes such interpretation of the EA much harder to get:

- (i) Luckily, the president is not wasting our damn money on that war.
 - a. # ☹the president

with our view that EAs possess unspecific expressive contents. Hence, we see that the EA in example (25) works, regarding its expressive meaning, like the other EAs we have been so far discussing.

Once again, we see a contrast between EAs and epithets in this regard: it is not possible to interpret epithets as *primarily* targeting implicated, presupposed or utterance-external contents, that is, as targeting some of those contents without also targeting the content of some sentential constituent. The view we advanced in the previous section also offers a straightforward and plausible explanation of the contrast between EAs and epithets concerning this point.

5 Alternative approaches to argument extension

There are at least two alternative ways of accounting for argument extension. On the one hand, one could maintain that a single sentence containing an EA like (1) can carry different meanings; on the other hand, one could argue that the various interpretations of an EA correspond to different syntactic constructions. Potts’s (2005) remarks on this issue suggest something in line with the former view, while Gutzmann (2019) argues explicitly for a version of the latter.

Potts assumes that the syntax of EAs is the same as that of descriptive adjectives. Based on this, he suggests that the phenomenon of argument extension does not take place via syntactic processes since, if that were the case, descriptive adjectives should exhibit the same kind of behavior as EAs and they clearly do not. In turn, he contends that EAs may take arguments of different types depending on the case. In other words, he claims that EAs are polymorphic, a fact reflected in their lexical entries:

$$(3) \textit{damn} \rightsquigarrow \lambda X.\mathbf{bad}(\cap X): \langle \langle \tau^a, t^a \rangle, t^c \rangle$$

In effect, according to (3) ‘damn’ may take any at-issue argument of the form $\langle \tau^a, t^a \rangle$, where τ^a is a variable that may be replaced by any at-issue type. For example, ‘damn’ may have sometimes type $\langle \langle e^a, t^a \rangle, t^c \rangle$, as in (7), where it takes an at-issue property as argument, yet other times type $\langle t^a, t^c \rangle$, as in (9), where it takes an at-issue proposition as argument. Now, Potts maintains that “the treatment of sentences as pairs of trees, one of them a semantic parsetree, lets us model this *essential semantic fact* (it is a question about function–argument structure) without messing with the syntax at all. We simply allow that in these cases, the syntactic and semantic parsetrees have different shapes.” (Potts 2005: 166-167) [our emphasis] Thus, ultimately Potts maintains that sentences containing EAs have a uniform syntax but EAs can be associated with different meanings depending on the case.

Potts’ view has some disadvantages. Firstly, it does not offer a principled explanation of the difference between EAs and epithets concerning argument extension.

If argument extension is essentially a semantic fact, as claimed in the passage cited above, and EAs and epithets work semantically in the same way, why is it only the former that exhibit non-local readings? Secondly, Potts' view cannot account for the facts discussed in the previous section: there we saw that sometimes an EA may primarily target a content external to the at-issue contents included in the sentence it occurs in; the difference between the syntactic and semantic parsetrees to which Potts resorts does not account for that. Thirdly, although Potts' different-meanings strategy is not problematic per se (polymorphy is widespread in natural languages, where various constructions can operate on a range of syntactic categories or semantic types) it is somewhat costly methodologically speaking, since he needs to postulate that EAs have different denotations in different cases: on the one hand, they may be isolated; on the other hand, they may possess functional expressive meanings, and even then they may take either propositions, properties or individuals as arguments. By contrast, our view can account for all these uses with a single lexical entry plus pragmatics.¹²

For his part, Gutzmann (2019) accounts for argument extension by resorting to syntactic ambiguity. Roughly put, he maintains that expressivity is a syntactic feature (like case, gender, etc.) which constrains the interpretation of EAs. According to this view, EAs carry an uninterpretable expressive feature *uEx* that enters into an \uparrow *Agree* relation (in the sense of Zeijlstra 2012) with the closest matching interpretable feature that c-commands it (in this framework, agreement is triggered exclusively by interpretability, i.e. it is indifferent to (un)valuedness). According to Gutzmann, many of the non-local readings of EAs result from the various possible placements of the interpretable expressive feature *iEx*. Put differently, these cases of argument extension actually come down to syntactic ambiguity.

Things are not so simple, though, since some of the non-local readings attested for EAs are unexpected on Gutzmann's view. More specifically, right-to-left and left-to-right argument hopping, as well as argument lowering, should be in principle unavailable, since the c-commanding condition above mentioned is not satisfied in those cases. Gutzmann's solution consists in arguing that both argument hopping and argument lowering readings are in fact pragmatically inferred. More specifically, he argues that (i) an EA in pre-sentential position cannot primarily take scope over the subject/object DP (argument lowering), and (ii) an EA in subject/object position cannot primarily affect the alternative object/subject (right-to-left and left-to-right argument hopping). Finally, Gutzmann contends that (iii) an EA belonging in an embedded clause cannot affect neither the matrix clause nor its subject, a fact that

¹² Note that Potts' view does not offer any principled semantic or syntactic criterion for establishing when the EA is predicted to be interpreted as modifying this or that constituent of the sentence (or when it is to be interpreted as an isolated CI). In order to explain these facts, one would need to resort anyway to the kind of pragmatic considerations we have been discussing so far.

allegedly lends support to his view, for it is well known that CPs are barriers for agreement. Now, if sound, Gutzmann's arguments would represent a challenge for our theory, since they seem to show that many of the readings we predict are in fact unavailable. In what follows, we consider Gutzmann's arguments.¹³

Let us start by discussing point (iii). In order to show that an EA belonging in an embedded sentence cannot range over the matrix clause nor its subject, Gutzmann (2019: 113) presents the following example:

- (33) Peter said that the dog ate the damn cake.
a. ☹The cake/☹The dog ate the cake
b. # ☹Peter/# ☹Peter said that the dog ate the damn cake

Admittedly, these judgments seem intuitive for many contexts. However, it is possible to find scenarios where a slightly modified example admits a reading of the EA that affects the subject of the matrix clause:

Scenario: Peter ate a birthday cake that was meant for the speaker and then lied about it and blamed the dog. The speaker found out that Peter was lying.

- (34) Peter said that the damn dog ate my cake. I can't believe that guy.
a. ☹Peter/ ☹Peter said that the dog ate my cake

Intuitively, both readings in (34a) are felicitous: in the imagined scenario, one can easily interpret that the speaker is angry with Peter because he ate the cake and/or because he blamed the dog. Moreover, this cannot be derived as a conversational implicature from any of the readings that Gutzmann accepts as possible, namely, '☹the cake', '☹the dog' and '☹the dog ate the cake.'

To emphasize the point, we provide another example where an EA may scope out of an embedded clause:

- (35) Peter didn't remember that today is our damn anniversary.
a. ☹Peter didn't remember that today is our anniversary/ ☹Peter

Again, both readings in (35a) are intuitively felicitous. Thus, on closer inspection, we see that EAs can in fact scope out of embedded sentences.

Gutzmann also discusses cases of argument hopping where an EA in subject/object position is interpreted as modifying the alternative object/subject DP, as in (11a) and (12a):

- (11) The dog has eaten the damn cake.
a. ☹the dog

¹³ See also Bross (2021) for an empirical study discussing argument hopping.

- (12) The damn dog has eaten the cake.
 a. ☹the cake

Regarding these cases, he attempts to show that both the right-to-left and the left-to-right argument hopping interpretations are actually inferred from the sentential one as conversational implicatures, that is:

- (36) Yesterday, the dog ate the damn cake.
 a. ☹The dog ate the cake (argument extension)
 b. +> ☹the dog (implicature)
- (37) Yesterday, the damn dog ate the cake.
 a. ☹The dog ate the cake (argument extension)
 b. +> ☹the cake (implicature)

He purports to show this by noting that the left-to-right and right-to-left interpretations become unavailable (even in scenarios that would otherwise favor them) once we block the sentential reading of the EA:

Scenario: somebody dislikes the dog and has a vicious plan which involves the dog eating the cake so that the dog gets into trouble.

- (38) Luckily, the damn dog ate the cake.
 a. ☹the dog
- (39) Luckily, the dog ate the damn cake.
 a. # ☹the dog

Scenario: the cake is really big and the speaker has been eating from it for the last three days and wants to be done with it.

- (40) Luckily, the dog has eaten the damn cake.
 a. ☹the cake
- (41) Luckily, the damn dog has eaten the cake.
 a. # ☹the cake

However, on closer inspection, we see, again, that it is actually possible to come up with examples of both left-to-right and right-to-left argument hopping, *pace* Gutzmann (see also [Bross 2021](#)). Let us start by providing some examples of left-to-right argument hopping:

Scenario: the CEO of the company, a racist, is talking to one of his associates.

- (42) Luckily, the Muslim will not work in my damn company.

Argument extension

- a. # ⊖my company/# ⊖the Muslim will not work in my company
- b. ⊖the Muslim

Scenario: Bill, an arrogant bully, wants to make his high school classmate feel bad about being bad at sports.

- (43) Luckily, you are not on my damn team.
- a. # ⊖you are not on my team/# ⊖my team
 - b. ⊖the addressee

In (42) and (43), the sentence-level interpretation is inappropriate (it is blocked by the sentential adverb 'luckily') while the EA can be naturally interpreted as modifying the subject (in fact, one could felicitously place the EA on the subject in those contexts).¹⁴ Let us turn now to examples of right-to-left argument hopping:

Scenario: the speaker had an awful childhood, and she strongly associates all those bad memories with the house she used to live in.

- (44) Luckily, the damn fire destroyed that house.
- a. # ⊖the fire destroyed that house./# ⊖the fire
 - b. ⊖that house

Scenario: the speaker is building a new house in the woods and the termites were causing problems.

- (45) Luckily, the damn poison killed the termites.
- a. # ⊖the poison/# ⊖the poison killed the termites
 - b. ⊖the termites

Once again, the examples are felicitous, and, intuitively, the EA can be interpreted as targeting the object denoted by the direct object (in fact, we could felicitously place the EA in the direct object). However, in all three cases, a sentential reading of the EA is hard to get. From the previous discussion, we conclude that Gutzmann's contention that left-to-right and right-to-left interpretations of EAs are always conversational implicatures is incorrect.

Finally, Gutzmann contends that argument lowering readings are also pragmatically inferred. In order to do so, he notes that it is infelicitous to use a pre-sentential EA when you block the sentential reading, even if the context favors an interpretation with scope over the subject or the object (which is unexpected if one assumes that EAs admit such interpretations):

¹⁴ Although one would have to change the example a little in order to introduce the EA in the subject in example (43), e.g. 'Luckily, your damn brother is not on my team.'

(46) # Damn! Luckily, the dog ate the cake.

We concur with Gutzmann’s judgment about (46). However, the data are compatible with an alternative analysis, in line with our view. Concretely, we maintain that the infelicity of (46) is due to the fact that pre-sentential ‘damn’ can only scope over propositions (but not over individuals), and hence must be distinguished from the intra-sentential ‘damn’, which, as we have already seen, may range over individuals and properties as well. More specifically, we contend that the pre-sentential ‘damn’ has type $\langle t^a, t^c \rangle$, while the latter functions as argued in section 3. The idea that pre-sentential ‘damn’ must range over propositions is further supported by two observations. First, as Rett (2021) notes, pre-sentential ‘damn’ cannot precede clauses that do not have a propositional denotation, like interrogatives (47) or imperatives (48), unless it ranges over a single salient proposition associated with them (e.g. an existential presupposition or a highlighted alternative):

(47) Damn, who did Jane meet?

a. # \odot {Jane met *John*, Jane met *Mary*, ... }

b. \odot Jane met someone

(48) Damn! Shut the door!

a. # $\odot \lambda x$. addressee(x). x shuts the door¹⁵

b. \odot The door was open

Second, pre-sentential ‘damn’ admits the addition of a pronoun that receives a propositional denotation, while the intra-sentential ‘damn’ does not:

(49) a. Damn it, the dog ate the cake.

b. * The damn it dog ate the cake.

Although this is not conclusive evidence, it provides a plausible alternative explanation for the impossibility of argument lowering, in line with our proposal.

6 Conclusion

In this paper, we have defended a semantico-pragmatic view of EAs according to which they should be clearly distinguished from epithets. From a semantic point of view, EAs have only propositional non-at-issue or expressive meaning (more specifically, they express that the corresponding speaker is in an unspecific heightened emotional state), and no at-issue meaning whatsoever. In addition, we claimed that they combine with other expressions by means of, not **CI application**, but the rule **Isolated CIs** (Potts 2005). By contrast, epithets possess functional non-at-issue

¹⁵ We assume that imperative clauses denote properties.

meaning and must always combine with their sister node via the rule **CI application**. Put differently, epithets are both syntactically and semantically integrated to the sentence in which they belong, while EAs are syntactically integrated but semantically isolated.

The proposal articulates the semantic analysis of EAs with a pragmatic account of the phenomenon of argument extension, namely the remarkable fact that EAs (but not epithets) can range over a sentential component not in their syntactic vicinity (including the entire sentence in which they belong), and even over utterance-external contents like implicatures, presuppositions and some mutually salient meanings. According to this view, argument extension is explained in terms of the possibility of pragmatically inferring what the individual or the situation targeted by the speaker's emotional attitude is in a certain context. We have argued that such semantico-pragmatic differences between EAs and epithets facilitate a principled explanation for their contrasting behavior concerning argument extension.

In the last two sections, we present evidence that EAs can primarily target contents beyond the at-issue dimension of the utterance, a fact that is compatible with our view but unexpected in alternative approaches (Potts 2005; Gutzmann 2019), and we discuss the shortcomings of alternative accounts of argument extension that resort to ambiguity (Potts 2005) or that posit dubious syntactic restrictions (Gutzmann 2019). Thus, we offer two main reasons in favor of our account: one methodological and the other empirical. From a methodological viewpoint, we offer a simpler and more uniform semantics for EAs, which has the further advantage of accounting for argument extension without resorting to ambiguity or positing any syntactic restrictions. From an empirical point of view, (i) we argue that our view is better positioned to account for utterance-external cases of argument extension, and (ii) we offer a principled explanation for the difference between EAs and epithets regarding argument extension.

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