Combining Grammar and Context in Expressive Meaning

Overview. The Japanese antihonorific suffix *yagar* attaches to the verb root and expresses antihonorification of the sentential subject (cf. Gutzmann and McCready 2014). The sentence in (1) without *yagar* expresses the at-issue proposition 'He came to the party'. The addition of *yagar* makes two additional non-at-issue contributions (in parentheses). First, it expresses a negative (antihonorific) attitude of the speaker toward the referent of the grammatical subject (henceforth, **M**(eaning)**1**). Second, it expresses a negative attitude of the speaker toward the proposition denoted by the sentence (henceforth, **M**(eaning)**2**). The non-at-issue nature of the two meanings of *yagar* can be shown by their failure to scope under attitude predicates or negation. The negation facts are discussed below; other tests for expressivity are detailed in the talk.

(1) kare-ga paati-ni {ki-ta/ki-**yagat**-ta}.
he-NOM party-DAT {came-PST/came-YAGAR-PST}
'He came to the party' (+'I can't stand him'(M1) +'His coming to the party is bad'(M2))

This talk provides a compositional semantics and pragmatics of *yagar*, arguing that M1 is an *expressive entailment* targeting the grammatical subject of the sentence. M2 we argue to be an *expressive implicature* derived from M1 by general pragmatic reasoning. Thus, *yagar* instantiates two types of meanings associated with expressives, giving it a new place in the typology of expressive meaning.

Meaning 1 is Subject-Oriented and Non-Defeasible. That Meaning 1 of *yagar* targets the *grammatical subject* is shown by active-passive pairs like the following (in both examples, Meaning 2 expresses the speaker's negative attitude toward the fact that the teacher praised the student):

(2) sensei-ga gakusei-o home-yagat-ta.
teacher-NOM student-O praise-YAGAR-PST
'The teacher praised the student.' (+ speaker dishonors the teacher)

(3) gakusei-ga sensei-ni home-rare-yagat-ta.
student-NOM teacher-O praise-PASS-YAGAR-PST
'The student was praised by the teacher.' (+ speaker dishonors the student)

The sentence in (2) entails an 'antihonorific' attitude on the part of the speaker toward the teacher; it is incompatible with a neutral attitude toward the teacher, but is compatible with a neutral attitude toward the student. The opposite holds of the passive version in (3), which entails an antihonorific attitude toward the student, but is compatible with a neutral attitude toward the teacher. These entailments are not contextually overridable; for example, a fellow student known to love the teacher could utter (3) but not (2) to express annoyance with their classmate while maintaining a respectful or positive posture toward the teacher.

Formal Analysis. To capture the basic facts about Meaning 1, we analyze *yagar* as a function from at-issue to mixed type predicates (McCready 2010). It combines with a predicate of type $\langle e, t\rangle$ and yields an object of mixed type $\langle e, t\rangle \blacklozenge \langle e, \varepsilon\rangle$ ('ε' an expressive type). The resulting verbal predicate applies to the subject argument to return a predicate expressing antihonorification of the subject, modeled using politeness register and attitudinal semantics (McCready 2014); full details are given in the talk.

(4) $[[yagar]] = \lambda P \lambda x.P(x) \blacklozenge \lambda P \lambda x.\textsc{antihon}(x) : \langle\langle e, t\rangle, \langle e, t\rangle\rangle^a \times \langle\langle e, t\rangle, \langle e, \varepsilon\rangle\rangle$

Subject orientation follows directly from the fact that *yagar* requires a type $\langle e, t\rangle$ complement. A transitive verb is of type $\langle e, et\rangle$, while the resulting VP (after composition with the object) is of type $\langle e, t\rangle$. Thus, *yagar* can only target the subject of an active transitive verb. In contrast, passivation converts a transitive verb into a $\langle e, t\rangle$ predicate, promoting the object to the open argument (subject) position, which allows it to be targeted by *yagar*, and disallows targeting of the logical subject.

Meaning 2 is a Defeasible Pragmatic Inference. The most obvious way to model Meaning 2 is to simply add an additional conjunct to the expressive dimension of the denotation:

(5) $[[yagar]] = \lambda P\lambda x.P(x) \blacklozenge \lambda P\lambda x.\text{ANTIHON}(x) \wedge \underline{\text{bad}_s(P(x))} : \langle\langle e,t\rangle,\langle e,t\rangle\rangle^a \times \langle\langle e,t\rangle,\langle e,\varepsilon\rangle\rangle$

This works for simple cases: the suffix denigrates the entity filling the subject position, and expresses a negative attitude toward the proposition resulting from the application of verbal predicate P to subject x. But this simple solution cannot work, as can be seen from examples with negation.

(6) kare-ga paati-ni ki-yagara-**nakat**-ta.
he-NOM party-DAT {come-ANTIHON-NEG-PST}
'He did**n't** come to the party' (+'I can't stand him'+'His **not** coming to the party is bad')

Morphosyntactically, negation appears higher than *yagar*. Standard approaches to semantic composition with expressive content implement strict independence between at-issue and expressive content (Potts 2005, McCready 2010, Gutzmann 2014, and others adopting their basic assumptions). Subsequent semantic operators do not apply to the expressive content, as they are assumed to operate in the at-issue dimension only. Given this, in (6) the negation applying after *yagar-* in the at-issue dimension converts $P(x)$ to $\neg P(x)$. Negation cannot apply in the expressive dimension, where bad_r has already applied to $P(x)$. This leads to the wrong prediction that, since negation applies only to the at-issue content, M2 should apply to the subject's coming to the party, rather than his not coming. But this interpretation is both incoherent and nonexistent. We conclude that the view instantiated by (5) cannot be correct. Though M1 is not altered by semantic operators, M2 must interact with them in some way if the correct interpretations are to be derived.

Solution. We argue that M2 should be treated as an *expressive implicature*, while M1 is an *expressive entailment*. The subject-oriented expressive entailment (M1) triggers the proposition-oriented meaning (M2) as a defeasible implicature. This treatment is independently motivated by examples like (7) where *yagar* appears in the antecedent of a conditional (leaving irrelevant expressive content unglossed):

(7) Tarou-ga ki-yagat-tara ore-wa ika-nai yo.
Taro-NOM come-ANTIHON-COND I-TOP go-NEG PT
'If Taro comes, I won't go.' (+ 'I can't stand Taro')

As expected, M1 entails a negative attitude toward Taro. If M2 were derived in the compositional semantics as an expressive entailment, then the content $bad_s(come(Taro))$ would project from the antecedent unmodified. As a result, the conditional antecedent would already be satisfied, resulting in infelicity of the entire conditional due to Gricean Quantity, under the natural assumption that expressive attitudes are factive.

If on the other hand M2 is a conversational implicature, then we expect contextual variation in the proposition targeted; indeed, the existence of the attitude itself may fail to be inferred, as in (7). In the case of (6), the negative attitude could target either $P(x)$ or $\neg P(x)$; since the first is incoherent, selecting it results in an implausible meaning, and consequently the negated proposition is a better choice. The problem arising from a conventional derivation is thus eliminated, providing further support for the proposed analysis.

Implications. Potts (2005, 2007) discusses expressive adjectives like *damn*, which, despite modifying nominals syntactically, are quite free in what they modify semantically: in (8), the author is expressing a 'heightened emotional state' (Potts 2005) with respect to something sentence-external. Such phenomena can be treated via free variables with referents retrieved from context, or via inference, as in our proposal.

(8) the girl in the article is my damn wife but legally I cant name drop (Google)

On the other hand, there are expressives such as honorifics which are associated with grammatically determined referents (Harada 1976, Potts and Kawahara 2004, McCready 2014, Watanabe et al. 2014). To our knowledge, *yagar* is the first-discussed linguistic object which instantiates both these strategies for expressive modification simultaneously, thereby filling a new place in the paradigm of expressive composition.