

Language, Norms and Identity

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What is a perspective? Some past views:

- ▶ Indexical: Kaplan (1989); Oshima (2006)
- ▶ Centered worlds: Lewis (1979); Perry (1979); Stalnaker (2008, 2014)
- ▶ Logophoric center: Sells (1987); Oshima (2002); Schlenker (2003)
- ▶ Expressive content: perspective/attitude holder (Potts, 2007)
- ▶ Frames / structures / scripts: Camp (2013, 2017)

Different phenomena, different formalisms (if any), different content.

Plan

Language,
Norms and
Identity

Elin McCready

Introduction

Honorifics and
formality

Appropriate
language

Perspectives

Social
appropriateness

Limitations:
publicity

References

Goal: a notion of perspective that unifies some of these, hopefully in a satisfying way. Method: start with expressives.

- ▶ Honorifics: relatively well-defined kind of expressive content
- ▶ Appropriateness more generally: formality and expression
- ▶ Expressives as self-ascriptive
- ▶ Expressives + register + norms: a way to read people's ideologies and attitudes from their linguistic behavior
- ▶ Social meaning extension
- ▶ Public perspectives ~ agential identities

What are honorifics?

Language,
Norms and
Identity

Elin McCready

Introduction

Honorifics and
formality

Appropriate
language

Perspectives

Social
appropriateness

Limitations:
publicity

References

A definition: expressions which exhibit respect for the hearer(s) or for an argument of the sentence.

- ▶ Pragmatically important, commonly found: (Asia) Japanese, Korean, Thai, Javanese, ...
- ▶ But very little work on them in formal semantics until recently.

Two main semantic questions of this domain:

- ▶ How do honorifics work? What are their denotations?
- ▶ What elements of context do they interact with and modify?

These can be answered via a theory of register and how it's reflected in lexical content.

Semantics: desiderata

Language,
Norms and
Identity

Elin McCready

Introduction

Honorifics and
formality

Appropriate
language

Perspectives

Social
appropriateness

Limitations:
publicity

References

Honorific denotations must reference societal role and the current discourse context, specifically the relationships between conversational agents,

- ▶ A theory is given in McCready (2019).
- ▶ Basic idea: contextual register which must appropriately match 'registers' carried by honorific items.

Toward an adequate formal approach

Language,
Norms and
Identity

Elin McCready

Introduction

Honorifics and
formality

Appropriate
language

Perspectives

Social
appropriateness

Limitations:
publicity

References

Iwasaki and Ingkaphirom Horie (1995): politeness behavior operates along three dimensions.

1. psychological distance: the perceived interpersonal closeness of the discourse participants,
2. social distance: determined by the societal roles of the participants,
3. formality: determined by the situation of utterance together with the purposes and topic of the conversation.

Domains

Language,
Norms and
Identity

Elin McCready

Introduction

Honorifics and
formality

Appropriate
language

Perspectives

Social
appropriateness

Limitations:
publicity

References

The domain associated with the semantics of honorifics is a 3-tuple of intervals of the form $[0,1]$.

(1) **Politeness domains.**

$$\mathcal{D}_\varepsilon =_{df} \langle P, S, F \rangle, X \sqsubseteq [0, 1] \text{ for } X \in \{P, S, F\}.$$

Follows Potts and Kawahara (2004) and Potts (2007) in using real-numbered intervals but differs in three respects:

1. Multidimensional domain for honorifics
2. Dimensions inhabit the space between 0 and 1 rather than $[-1,1]$ (no negative degrees of (e.g.) social distance)
3. None of the dimensions correlate with emotivity.

Register and context

Language,
Norms and
Identity

Elin McCready

Introduction

Honorifics and
formality

Appropriate
language

Perspectives

Social
appropriateness

Limitations:
publicity

References

What honorifics can be appropriately used is determined via a *register* made available by the context.

- ▶ For honorifics, contexts to simply indicate the formality of the current discourse situation.
- ▶ Contexts \mathcal{C} have the form $\langle P, S, F \rangle$ as in (9). [temporary]
- ▶ \mathcal{C} can be thought of as one element (parameter) of a larger discourse context.

'Global registers' \mathcal{R}

Language,
Norms and
Identity

Elin McCready

Introduction

Honorifics and
formality

Appropriate
language

Perspectives

Social
appropriateness

Limitations:
publicity

References

Auxiliary definitions:

- ▶ min and max are functions picking out the lower and upper bounds of intervals $[i, j]$, respectively.
- ▶ $min(C) =_{df} min(\pi_1(C)) + min(\pi_2(C)) + min(\pi_3(C))$
- ▶ $max(C)$ is the corresponding function for the upper bounds of the intervals in C

(2) **Global register.**

$$\mathcal{R} =_{df} \left[\frac{min(C)}{3}, \frac{max(C)}{3} \right], \text{ for } C = \langle P, S, F \rangle.$$

Appropriateness

Language,
Norms and
Identity

Elin McCready

Introduction

Honorifics and
formality

Appropriate
language

Perspectives

Social
appropriateness

Limitations:
publicity

References

Honorifics denote subintervals of \mathcal{R} , higher intervals for more formal expressions, and lower intervals for less formal ones.

- ▶ Gutzmann (2015): use-conditional judgements to involve two values, '✓' (appropriate) and '×' (inappropriate).

Then:

(3) **Appropriateness for honorifics.**

$$\text{Utter}(S) \text{ in } \mathcal{C} = \begin{cases} \checkmark & \text{if } \text{Hon}(S) \cap \mathcal{R} \neq \emptyset \\ \times & \text{else} \end{cases}$$

Honorific levels

Language,
Norms and
Identity

Elin McCready

Introduction

Honorifics and
formality

Appropriate
language

Perspectives

Social
appropriateness

Limitations:
publicity

References

How to derive a sentence's honorific level?

- ▶ Each honorific in a sentence should contribute to its level.
- ▶ Since denotations are expressive, we need not worry about interactions with semantic operators (Potts, 2007).
- ▶ Thus: average all expressions used in the sentence, with the proviso that their denotations also be compatible

(4) **Honorific level of a sentence.**

$$\text{Hon}(S) = \begin{cases} \left[\frac{\min(1) + \dots + \min(n)}{n}, \frac{\max(1) + \dots + \max(n)}{n} \right] & \text{if } \text{Hon}_1 \sqcap \dots \sqcap \text{Hon}_n \neq \emptyset \\ \text{else } \times & \end{cases}$$

The combination of register and level enforces use of appropriately formal expressions.

Sample denotation: utterance honorific

Language,
Norms and
Identity

Elin McCready

Introduction

Honorifics and
formality

Appropriate
language

Perspectives

Social
appropriateness

Limitations:
publicity

References

- (5) Kishida-wa kanemochi desu
Kishida-Top rich.person Cop.Hon
'Kishida is rich' + the speaker is being formal

desu is taken to denote a predicative copula with a honorific specification.

- (6) $[[desu]] = \lambda P \lambda x [P(x)] \blacklozenge (\mathcal{R} = [.6, .1]) : \langle \langle e, t \rangle, \langle e, t \rangle \rangle \times t^s$

Composition yields (where we have \langle at-issue, not-at-issue \rangle):

- (7) $\langle rich(k), \{\mathcal{R} = [.6, .1]\} \rangle$

Supposing a formal context $C = [.7, 1]$, (5) can be appropriately used.

Appropriate language: general version

Language,
Norms and
Identity

Elin McCready

Introduction

Honorifics and
formality

Appropriate
language

Perspectives

Social
appropriateness

Limitations:
publicity

References

So far: simple model of registers for specific expressive domain.

- ▶ Register =_{df} index of (in)formality
- ▶ Register is reflected directly in honorific lexical content and corresponding notion of appropriateness

Q: Is every expression that has formality-based context restrictions reasonably characterized as lexically honorific?

Fuck

Language,
Norms and
Identity

Elin McCready

Introduction

Honorifics and
formality

Appropriate
language

Perspectives

Social
appropriateness

Limitations:
publicity

References

Generally inappropriate to curse / slur people in meetings / award ceremonies / funerals / courtroom.

- ▶ But presumably expressive adjectives and slurs aren't honorific.
- ▶ It would be weird to say (imo) that they have lexically specified register content as honorifics do.

How can we make sense of the apparent fact that such terms do have appropriate contexts of use?

Expressives and contexts

Language,
Norms and
Identity

Elin McCready

Introduction

Honorifics and
formality

Appropriate
language

Perspectives

Social
appropriateness

Limitations:
publicity

References

Expressive content is often understood in terms of use-conditions, which in turn are understood in terms of contexts (Predelli, 2013; Gutzmann, 2015):

(8) $[[E]]$ is appropriate iff $C_{@} \in \{C' \mid E \text{ holds in } C'\}$

or

(9) $[[E]]$ is appropriate iff $C_{@} \in \{C' \mid 1(C')$ takes E to hold in $C'\}$

Some aspect of use-conditions for expressives/slurs could be farmed out into honorific-style registers. (Note: example of EAs in order to avoid the complications of slurs for now)

(10) $[[fuck]] = \{C : 1(C) \text{ is in an emotionally excited state } E \text{ in } C \text{ and } 1(C) \text{ takes it that } \mathcal{R} \cap [0, .2] \neq \emptyset\}$

My intuition: this is not the way to go.

- ▶ Better: replace lexical specification with derivation from norms.
- ▶ We will see how to do this shortly.

Dilemma: speaker orientation

Language,
Norms and
Identity

Elin McCready

Introduction

Honorifics and
formality

Appropriate
language

Perspectives

Social
appropriateness

Limitations:
publicity

References

Complicated issue: should we have a belief statement (or similar) in previous lexical entry?

- ▶ If not: same problem of specifying register in EAs
 - ▶ If we think EAs shouldn't directly specify register, then this is an issue
- ▶ If so: expressive content must be propositional(ish), already an undesirable feature of this style of analysis
 - ▶ Formally speaking: sets of worlds \sim sets of contexts

Is the quasi-belief statement actually doing anything for us?

- ▶ What's the empirical difference between me asserting p and asserting 'I believe p ' given knowledge/belief norms of assertion (Brown and Cappelen, 2011)?

Claim: we can address this dilemma via self-ascription.

Background: self-ascription

Language,
Norms and
Identity

Elin McCready

Introduction

Honorifics and
formality

Appropriate
language

Perspectives

Social
appropriateness

Limitations:
publicity

References

Analyzing propositional attitudes as relations between individuals and propositions leaves something out.

(11) Shigeo believes that he is in Tokyo.

(12) Shigeo believes that Shigeo is in Tokyo.

- ▶ The proposition $in(t, s)$ is the same in both cases, but the first has a reading where Shigeo takes himself to be in Tokyo, while the second does not.
- ▶ This can be captured by self-ascription of properties (Lewis, 1979; Perry, 1979): $Bel(s, \lambda x[in(t, x)])$

Centered worlds

Language,
Norms and
Identity

Elin McCready

Introduction

Honorifics and
formality

Appropriate
language

Perspectives

Social
appropriateness

Limitations:
publicity

References

Alternative: centered worlds, worlds paired with 'centers,' in recent versions agents of Kaplanian contexts (Kaplan, 1989).

(13) $\varphi = 1$ iff $\langle C_{@}, w_{@} \rangle \in \{ \langle C', w' \rangle : \varphi \text{ is true at } \langle C', w' \rangle \}$
(Stalnaker, 2014)

- ▶ Intuition: one self-locates in a context of utterance.
 - ▶ (or rather: in an equivalence class of epistemically indistinguishable contexts)

This method of handling self-location can be used to make sense of expressive denotations.

Solution: self-location

Language,
Norms and
Identity

Elin McCready

Introduction

Honorifics and
formality

Appropriate
language

Perspectives

Social
appropriateness

Limitations:
publicity

References

We can extricate ourselves from the expressive-belief dilemma by letting self-location do the work.

(14) E is appropriate iff $\langle C_{@}, w_{@} \rangle \in \{ \langle C', w' \rangle : E \text{ holds in } \langle C', w' \rangle \}$

Now (given standard postulates on epistemics) the speaker must self-locate themselves in a context and world where (use of) E is appropriate.

- ▶ Self-location cuts the knot of the question of whether we must explicitly specify a perspective/subject;
- ▶ the perspective is that of the subject, as identified from the center.

Example: Fuck

Language,
Norms and
Identity

Elin McCready

Exclamative *fuck* (McCready, 2008) in a classical expressive semantics: Predelli 2013; Gutzmann 2015

Introduction

Honorifics and
formality

Appropriate
language

Perspectives

Social
appropriateness

Limitations:
publicity

References

(15) $[[fuck]] = \{C : 1(C) \text{ is in an emotionally excited state } E \text{ in } C\}$ (where E is resolved to positive or negative using default mechanisms as in McCready 2012)

On new semantics:

(16) *Fuck* is appropriate iff $\langle C@, w@ \rangle \in \{\langle C', w' \rangle : 1(C') \text{ is in an emotionally excited state } E \text{ in } \langle C', w' \rangle\}$

Perspectives: first look

Language,
Norms and
Identity

Elin McCready

Introduction

Honorifics and
formality

Appropriate
language

Perspectives

Social
appropriateness

Limitations:
publicity

References

With this move, several aspects of perspective already incorporated.

- ▶ Deictics and directions (via Kaplanian contexts)
- ▶ Self-location (via centered worlds)
- ▶ Perspectivalism in expressive interpretation: perspective dependence of Potts (2007); Harris and Potts (2010)

This is a first step toward a more general picture.

Social intrusion

Language,
Norms and
Identity

Elin McCready

Introduction

Honorifics and
formality

Appropriate
language

Perspectives

Social
appropriateness

Limitations:
publicity

References

On appropriateness: it's generally inappropriate to curse / slur people in meetings / award ceremonies / funerals / courtroom, so there must be other restrictions.

(17) Fact: social norms lead to inappropriateness of EAs in many contexts

Idea: derive register effects from social norms:

(18) Don't use term T in formal (high- \mathcal{R}) contexts. (notation: McCready 2019)

(19) Don't use terms of type \mathcal{T} in formal (high- \mathcal{R}) contexts.

Social intrusion: fuck

Language,
Norms and
Identity

Elin McCready

Introduction

Honorifics and
formality

Appropriate
language

Perspectives

Social
appropriateness

Limitations:
publicity

References

Why are expressive adjectives / interjections, specifically, inappropriate in high-register contexts?

- ▶ Option 1: they have a register specification, which makes them unusable
- ▶ Option 2: it's inappropriate to express strong emotions in high-register contexts (culturally based explanation)
- ▶ Option 3: EAs require inference about speaker to recover valence (McCready, 2012), which in turn assumes a mutual understanding that's face-violating in high-register contexts

Norms and content

Language,
Norms and
Identity

Elin McCready

Introduction

Honorifics and
formality

Appropriate
language

Perspectives

Social
appropriateness

Limitations:
publicity

References

Similar to other kinds of derivations using norms:

- ▶ Register: role honorifics
 - ▶ Terms like *sensei* have an honorific quality, though they are not properly speaking honorific
 - ▶ McCready (2019) analyzed these in terms of default reasoning: *sensei* associated with a high-status social role, thus high register
 - ▶ Output of this introduced into 'broad' sentential content
- ▶ Slur intentions in an invocational semantics (Davis and McCready, 2020)
 - ▶ Slurs 'invoke' complex of stereotypes and historical facts
 - ▶ Assumptions about intent of slur use depend on identity of *S* and *H* in terms of group membership

A bigger picture

Language,
Norms and
Identity

Elin McCready

Introduction

Honorifics and
formality

Appropriate
language

Perspectives

Social
appropriateness

Limitations:
publicity

References

Idea: these things can be brought together into a more universal understanding of expressivity.

- ▶ Consider the set of terms a speaker thinks can be used in a use-conditionally appropriate way.
- ▶ Appropriateness depends on (a) content and (b) what a speaker thinks is OK to do.
- ▶ Given those terms, we can learn a lot about the speaker:
 - ▶ Suppose that we know about norms: then we can extract the speaker's attitudes.
 - ▶ Suppose that we know about norms and context: then we can extract the speaker's beliefs about norms.

Social meanings

Language,
Norms and
Identity

Elin McCready

Introduction

Honorifics and
formality

Appropriate
language

Perspectives

Social
appropriateness

Limitations:
publicity

References

We can say something similar about social meanings.

- ▶ Irreducibly involve the social world (not: via conventions on meaning)
- ▶ Honorifics and slurs in this sense are social meanings
- ▶ Many other types: sociolinguistic indices, etc
- ▶ 3rd Wave sociolinguistics: variation and 'choice' can be understood in terms of social personas tied to such indices (Eckert, 2008)

Formal model of sociolinguistic variation

Language,
Norms and
Identity

Elin McCready

Introduction

Honorifics and
formality

Appropriate
language

Perspectives

Social
appropriateness

Limitations:
publicity

References

Burnett (2018): Social Meaning Games, a variant of signaling games (Lewis, 1969).

- ▶ Basic idea: signaler chooses a signal compatible with a social persona they want to project; hearer assigns utilities based on recovery of that persona and their evaluation of it.
- ▶ Key point: the persona can be *chosen* by the speaker, who should pick one that the hearer will like!
- ▶ Henderson and McCready (2024): extend this model to dogwhistles, which are used to show a controversial persona to those who'll approve and hide it from those who won't.

Ideologies

Language,
Norms and
Identity

Elin McCready

Introduction

Honorifics and
formality

Appropriate
language

Perspectives

Social
appropriateness

Limitations:
publicity

References

Why would a hearer approve or disapprove of some persona?

- ▶ Homophily (Chun, 2021): the distance of that persona from their own – the more similar, the more approval
- ▶ Distance can be measured for some personas based on their associated ideologies (Henderson and McCready, 2024):
 - ▶ definable as pairs $\langle \rho, \mathcal{B} \rangle$: affect-assigning functions and sets of ideological beliefs
- ▶ We can think of this (dis)approval as a kind of appropriateness metric again!

Upshot: social personas also can (sometimes!) be evaluated for appropriateness: in turn, a notion of ‘social register’.

Register-appropriateness for personas

Language,
Norms and
Identity

Elin McCready

Introduction

Honorifics and
formality

Appropriate
language

Perspectives

Social
appropriateness

Limitations:
publicity

References

Proposal: appropriateness for personas can be derived from valuation functions.

- ▶ Proposal 1: A persona is (in)appropriate if it is (not) positively valued by its audience.
 - ▶ Since receivers assign values to personas, a speaker is irrational to send a signal inducing recovery of a dispreferred persona.
 - ▶ Result: appropriateness just involves approval.
- ▶ Weird (?) consequence: presenting with a persona linked to a racist ideology (eg: via use of a racial slur) can be an appropriate act given one is speaking to racists.

Clearly, this can't be the only available version of appropriateness for personas.

Persona approval and norms

Language,
Norms and
Identity

Elin McCready

Introduction

Honorifics and
formality

Appropriate
language

Perspectives

Social
appropriateness

Limitations:
publicity

References

A second version: consider norm-based valuations.

- ▶ Proposal 2: A persona is norm-(in)appropriate if it is (not) positively valuated by an audience consisting of the social group whose norms are currently relevant.
 - ▶ H&M: group valuation just sums across individual values for all group members
 - ▶ Local norm-context = current interlocutors (~ Proposal 1), global norm-context = whole society, etc.
- ▶ With this we get a more flexible notion of appropriateness.
- ▶ A slur might be locally norm-appropriate but still globally norm-inappropriate.

Similar problems, again, to determining agent/group for judgements about epistemic modals etc.

Social appropriateness

Language,
Norms and
Identity

Elin McCready

Introduction

Honorifics and
formality

Appropriate
language

Perspectives

Social
appropriateness

Limitations:
publicity

References

All this can lead to a notion of appropriateness for social indices.

- ▶ A social index si is socially appropriate in those contexts in which it is norm-appropriate.
 - ▶ $app = Term \mapsto \mathcal{P}(\mathcal{C}) : app(T) = \{C : \text{using } T \text{ is appropriate in } C\}$ (where \mathcal{C} is the set of Kaplanian contexts)
 - ▶ Then: use of $si \rightsquigarrow app(si) = \{C \mid \text{using } si \text{ is norm-appropriate in } C\}$
 - ▶ A kind of analogue to denotations for nondenotational content.
- ▶ Comment: this also works for vanilla content, yielding speech communities/communities of practice (Quaranto, 2022)
- ▶ Comment 2: defeasible! compare expressives, where genuine contradiction arises

The output of this norm-based inference is the same type of object as Gutzmann/Predelli-style expressive denotations.

- ▶ All based on metalinguistic considerations about usage in given speech communities, as defined by norms of speech
- ▶ Upshot: a kind of bridge between social and expressive meanings!

A way opens to give a general definition of appropriateness that can account for distribution of such meanings in a principled way.

More formally: norm

Language,
Norms and
Identity

Elin McCready

Introduction

Honorifics and
formality

Appropriate
language

Perspectives

Social
appropriateness

Limitations:
publicity

References

Norm of ~~assertion~~ non-truth-oriented language use:

(20) **NTOL.**

Use of S is appropriate iff $\langle C@, w@ \rangle \in \{ \langle C', w' \rangle : \text{all expressions } E \text{ with use-conditional denotations in } S \text{ are norm-appropriately used at } \langle C', w' \rangle \}$

Is it 'non-truth-oriented language'? Or just expressives and social meanings?

- ▶ Literature, small talk, other: spells, rituals, ...
- ▶ More generally: how to think about norms of use for TC content as well? What language are we speaking?
- ▶ I have the sense that the definition generalizes, but more investigation needed.

Norms 2

Language, Norms and Identity

Elin McCready

Introduction

Honorifics and
formality

Appropriate
language

Perspectives

Social
appropriateness

Limitations:
publicity

References

Contexts come with norms, as above: which norms are in play depend on what contexts we take ourselves to be in.

- ▶ Some of this can be read off our speech.
- ▶ One's choice of use-conditional expressions says a lot about what norms one takes to be in force.
 - ▶ Formal honorifics: formal contexts
 - ▶ Expressive adjectives: casual and 'rough' contexts
 - ▶ Slurs: contexts where racism is appropriate – or reappropriation (TBC)
- ▶ One can also use UC items to try to manipulate the context we jointly self-locate in.

Norms: derivation

Language,
Norms and
Identity

Elin McCready

Introduction

Honorifics and
formality

Appropriate
language

Perspectives

Social
appropriateness

Limitations:
publicity

References

What does it look like to extract self-locating information from the combination of norm and language use?

(21) Fuck! It's so hot today!

- ▶ NTOL + $[[fuck]] \implies$ indicating $1(C)$ is in valence-unspecified emotionally excited state E is norm-appropriate

If $1(C)$ self-locates in $\langle C_{(\otimes)}, w_{(\otimes)} \rangle$ s.t. (21) is norm-appropriate:

1. Speaker must be in E
2. Norm must be st. it's appropriate to indicate E and to assume closeness (or, if not, speaker is assuming a nonlocal norm)

Extraction

Language,
Norms and
Identity

Elin McCready

Introduction

Honorifics and
formality

Appropriate
language

Perspectives

Social
appropriateness

Limitations:
publicity

References

So far: look to actual linguistic behavior to extract attitudes

- ▶ These attitudes: about self-presentation, and about current norms
- ▶ But also we can use counterfactual reasoning: what would (the speaker likely take to) be appropriate speech now?
 - ▶ A kind of entailment for norm-appropriateness? (compare Brandom 2010)
 - ▶ 'If he's willing to say *fucking*, he's likely also willing to say *damn*: maximization (cf. Schlenker 2012)?
- ▶ It's also (always?) probabilistic: e.g. in Burnett's SMGs, messages are usually compatible with multiple personas (the 'Eckert-Montague field' of a message).

Perspectives via expression

Language,
Norms and
Identity

Elin McCready

Introduction

Honorifics and
formality

Appropriate
language

Perspectives

Social
appropriateness

Limitations:
publicity

References

The upshot is a path to formalize perspectives (Camp, 2013, 2017): the ideologies, norms and attitudes that are projected (perhaps counterfactually) by an agent's speech practices.

- ▶ But is it satisfying?
- ▶ Camp's perspectives are meant to model ways of structuring experience, scripts, framings and so on.
- ▶ But these are in general purely cognitive elements.
- ▶ Conversely, everything here is public: it's all a question of what we can read off people's linguistic behavior (and inferences about that behavior, possibly counterfactual).

Is this a satisfying notion of perspective?

- ▶ Claim: yes, as long as we are thinking about 'public perspectives'!

Agential identity

Language,
Norms and
Identity

Elin McCready

Introduction

Honorifics and
formality

Appropriate
language

Perspectives

Social
appropriateness

Limitations:
publicity

References

Agential identity: 'self-identities [...] available to others' (Dembroff and Saint-Croix, 2019)

- ▶ Two components:
 - ▶ self-identification with identity i , and
 - ▶ making that self-identification available to others (via behaviors or other perceptible features)
- ▶ Here: availability is linguistic, where self-identification conditions the application of norms.
- ▶ Question for future work: What is the connection with self-ascription, and how can it be spelled out? Case-specific or general?

Language, identity, expression

Language, Norms and Identity

Elin McCready

Introduction

Honorifics and
formality

Appropriate
language

Perspectives

Social
appropriateness

Limitations:
publicity

References

Idea: public perspectives derived from norms and language use can be equated with cognitive correspondents of (some!) agential identities.

- ▶ Limitation: only those agential identities which involve social blueprints for language use (Haslanger, 2016) and corresponding sets of relevant norms (Jenkins, 2018) are candidates here.

We end up with a – linguistically based!! – bridge between agential/social identities, norms, and language use.

Summary and directions

Language,
Norms and
Identity

Elin McCready

Introduction

Honorifics and
formality

Appropriate
language

Perspectives

Social
appropriateness

Limitations:
publicity

References

This talk has given a view of perspectives that unifies several things perspectives have been taken to do

▶ Method:

1. (expressive) denotations as involving self-location in Kaplanian contexts
2. derivation of such denotations from norms and (standardly non-denotational) social meaning

Future work (sampling):

- ▶ How general is this view? What must be added to account for full range of perspectival phenomena?
- ▶ How does this view of 'public perspective' relate to more private-information perspectives?
- ▶ Other applications: perspectival disclosure, dynamic norm change, meta-conversational information....

Language,
Norms and
Identity

Elin McCready

Introduction

Honorifics and
formality

Appropriate
language

Perspectives

Social
appropriateness

Limitations:
publicity

References

Thank You!!!

Language, Norms and Identity

Elin McCready

Introduction

Honorifics and
formality

Appropriate
language

Perspectives

Social
appropriateness

Limitations:
publicity

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