
Semantic change and expressive meaning

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The distinction between descriptive and expressive aspects of language is frequently illustrated with expressions that reveal or display the **affective** attitude of the speaker (e.g., adjectives like *damn*, *fricking* or intensifiers like *so*, *totally* or nominals like *cur*). Modal particles such as those in German (e.g., *ja*, *wohl*) have also been brought under the umbrella of expressive content; these have been argued to make reference to the **doxastic** attitudes of interlocutors towards propositional content. In this talk, I examine variation in and the evolution of linguistic items that express the **preferential** attitudes of the speaker with respect to the state of the discourse and/or its unfolding in time. I focus on a set of cross-clausally occurring utterance-final particles in Indo-Aryan languages (e.g. Marathi, Hindi) whose meanings conventionally make reference to the speaker's preference about **how** the propositional content associated with the sentence radical be committed to by the interlocutors. Specifically, the use of these particles automatically commits the speaker to a preference that the content of the embedded clause become an independent/dependent commitment of the addressee. I investigate the reflexes of these particles in the history of New Indo-Aryan languages and trace their emergence from expressions that target and modify descriptive content.