

# Subjective Judgments in Dialog

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## Subjective judgments

Predicates of personal taste (PPT)    **lecker**,    **wunderbar**,    **schön**,    **dämlich**, ...  
'tasty'    'wonderful'    'beautiful'    'stupid'

Empirical predicates    **chinesisch**,    **rot**,    **zwei Tonnen schwer**, ...  
'Chinese'    'red'    'weighing two tons'

PPTs allow for to "faultless disagreement"

→ contextualist vs. relativist approaches

Focus in this talk:    What happens in the process of information exchange  
when participants "faultlessly disagree"?

How do subjective statements affect the common ground?

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## The quoting effect

(1) (Sue coming home packed with parcels and bags ...):

a. Sue: **Guck mal, Chuck hat mir eine chinesische Vase geschenkt.**

'Look, Chuck gave me a Chinese vase.'

Bob: **Ich helf dir gleich. Stell die chinesische Vase schon mal auf das Büffet.**

'I'll help you in a minute. Put the Chinese vase on the sideboard.'

b. Sue: **Guck mal, Chuck hat mir eine wunderbare Vase geschenkt.**

'Look, Chuck gave me a wonderful vase.'

Bob: **Ich helf dir gleich. Stell die wunderbare Vase schon mal auf das Büffet.**

'I'll help you in a minute. Put the wonderful vase on the sideboard.'

Bob's answer in (a)    a bit long-winded

in (b)    **appears like quoting**

→ Why should backgrounded material in a nominal description evoke  
the impression of quoting?

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## Plan

1. Basic features of PPTs in dialog
2. The attitude of *finden* ('find'),  
as compared to *glauben* ('believe')
3. The role of the *finden* attitude in a theory of conversation
4. Kant on judgments of taste (aesthetic judgements)

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## The quoting effect again (1)

(1) Sue: Guck mal, Chuck hat mir eine <sup>a.</sup>chinesische / <sup>b.</sup>wunderbare Vase geschenkt.  
'Look, Chuck gave me a Chinese / wonderful vase.'

Bob: Ich helf dir gleich. Stell die chinesische / wunderbare Vase auf das Büffet.  
'I'll help you in a minute. Put the Chinese / wonderful vase on the sideboard.'

- a. give(C, S, a-vase) & chinese (the-vase) part of the assertion  
b. give(C, S, a-vase) • wonderful (the-vase) CI (Potts 2005)

- a. implicit acceptance  
b. implicit rejection CI: speaker commitment – across turns!  
→ quoting effect

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## The quoting effect again (2)

(1) c. Sue: Guck mal, Chuck hat mir eine Vase geschenkt. Sie ist wunderbar.  
'Look, Chuck gave me a vase. It is wonderful.'

Bob: Ich helf dir gleich. Stell die wunderbare Vase auf das Büffet.  
'I'll help you in a minute. Put the wonderful vase on the sideboard.'

Bob to Tom: Sue findet die Vase wunderbar.  
'Sue finds the vase wonderful.'

(1b) and (1c): Update of the common ground with

**wonderful (the-vase)as-judged-by-Sue**

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## Direct rejection

(2)  
Sue: Guck mal, Chuck hat mir eine chinesische / wunderbare Vase geschenkt.  
'Look, Chuck gave me a Chinese vase.'

chinese  
Bob: Die ist nie im Leben aus China.  
'It's not from China.'

Bob': Ich glaube nicht, dass diese Vase aus China ist. # finden  
'I don't believe that this vase is from China.'

wonderful  
Bob: Die Vase ist scheußlich.  
'This vase is ugly.'

Bob: Ich finde die Vase scheußlich. # glauben  
'I find this vase ugly.'

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## The attitude of *finden* ('find') (1)

- (3) a. Ich finde die Vase wunderbar / Lakritze lecker / den Goldfisch süß.  
'I find the vase wonderful / Licorice tasty / the goldfish cute.'  
b. # Ich finde die Vase chinesisch / Lakritze enthält Zucker / den Goldfisch tot.  
'I find / consider the vase Chinese / Licorice to contain sugar / the gold-fish dead.'

→ *finden* does not combine with empirical sentences

(cf. also Julia Staffel's master thesis, cf. Lasersohn 2009 for *consider*)

- (4) a. # Ich glaube, die Vase ist wunderbar.  
b. Ich glaube, Lakritze ist lecker. ⇒ speaker never tried licorice  
c. ?? Ich glaube, der Goldfisch ist süß. ⇒ the gold-fish contains sugar.  
'I believe the vase is wonderful /  
Licorice is tasty / the goldfish is sweet.'

→ *glauben* does not combine with subjective sentences

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### The attitude of *finden* ('find') (2)

- (5) a. *Ich finde / glaube, das Katzenfutter ist lecker.*  
'I find the cat food tasty / believe that the cat food is tasty.'

*finden* ⇒ the speaker tried the cat food (Huitink: "direct experience")  
*glauben* ⇒ the speaker has (external) evidence that the cat food is tasty

- b. *Ich glaube / finde, Rauchen ist ungesund.*  
'I believe that / find / consider smoking (is) unhealthy.'

*finden* turns an empirical sentence into a subjective judgement

- c. *Ich glaube / finde, Ben ist groß (für sein Alter).*  
'I believe that / find / consider Ben (is) tall (for his age).'

*finden* introduces a subjective cut-off point.

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### The attitude of *finden* ('find') (3)

- (6) \* *Ich finde, Lakritze schmeckt mir / Sue gut.*  
'I find / consider licorice tasty for me / Sue.'

→ *finden*: no explicit experiencer argument licensed  
the embedded proposition must depend on an **implicit judge**

- (7) a. Sue: *Ich glaube, Lakritze schmeckt gut.* 'I believe that licorice is tasty.'  
Bob: *Du irrst dich.* 'You are wrong.'

- b. Sue: *Ich finde, Lakritze schmeckt gut.* 'I find licorice tasty.'  
Bob: # *Du irrst dich.* 'You are wrong.'  
Bob': *Ich finde Lakritze schmeckt schlecht.* 'I find licorice terrible.'

→ *finden*: no genuine disagreement – disagreement is **harmless**

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### The attitude of *finden* ('find') (4)

	<i>finden</i>	<i>glauben</i>
embedded sentences	subjective	empirical
genuine disagreement	no	yes
harmless disagreement	yes	no

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### Subjective judgments in the common ground (1)

CG = {p ∈  $\wp(W)$  | p is a mutual **belief** of the discourse participants}

How do subjective judgments enter the CG?

(i) **Principle of the prevailing opinion (PPO)**

If participants agree on a subjective judgement, then it turns into a mutual belief

(cf. Stephenson 2007 for a similar though technically different idea)

(ii) **Retreat to privacy**

If participants disagree on a subjective judgement then they may turn it into a *finden*-claim, thereby making their disagreement harmless.

Harmless disagreement settles the issue.

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## Subjective judgments in the common ground (2)

Issue: Is licorice tasty?

A: <b>Licorice is tasty.</b>	proposal	tasty(L)	
<hr/>			
B: <b>Yes, it's tasty.</b>	acceptance	tasty(L) ⇒ bel(A, tasty(L)) & bel(B, tasty(L)) ⇒ tasty(L) ∈ CG	
<hr/>			
B': <b>No, it's terrible.</b>	rejection	¬ tasty(L)	genuine disagreement!
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A: <b>Anyway, I find licorice tasty.</b>	retreat to privacy	find(A, tasty(L))	
B: <b>I don't.</b>		find(B, ¬ tasty(L))	
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harmless disagreement, → issue settled			

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## Kant on judgments of taste

Kant (1790) Kritik der Urteilskraft (cf. also Zangwill 2007, SEP)

empirical judgments	objective	universal	genuine disagreement
judgments of taste ("das Schöne")	subjective	universal	
judgments of niceness and nastiness ("das Angenehme")	subjective	private	

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## Conclusion

"The vase is wonderful"  
"Licorice is tasty"      subjective + universal      → genuine disagreement

by retreat to privacy:

"I find the vase wonderful"  
"I find licorice is tasty"      subjective + private      → harmless disagreement

Subjective sentences

- come with a universal claim and thus trigger genuine disagreement
- may be turned into a private claim allowing for harmless ("faultless?") disagreement

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