Presupposing expressive meaning: the case of Hebrew *xatixat*

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The Hebrew form *xatixat* 'piece.of' has a function that mimics taboo words modifying a predicate, such as *damn* in the phrase *damn linguist*. Thus, the speakers of (1a-b) are understood to have a negative attitude towards the predicates *linguist* and *smolan*, respectively.

(1) a. He's a damn linguist
    b. hu   xatixat   smolan
       he (is) (a) piece.of leftist
       'He's a (damn) leftist'

Yet *xatixat* differs from words like *damn* in two ways. First, it lacks immediacy, the property of altering the context of interpretation simply by being uttered (Potts 2007). Second, it's limited with regards to the predicates it can modify (Linzen 2009).

I account for these facts under Potts' (2007) Expressive Dimension framework, proposing that *xatixat* modifies an expressive index introduced by its complement (Gutzmann 2011), but cannot introduce a new expressive index. This amounts to a presupposition that the contextual judge has a negative attitude towards the denotation of the complement.

Consequently, the negative interpretation in (1b) is due to presupposition accomodation, and the unavailability of many emotionally-neutral predicates as complements of *xatixat* is due to presupposition failure. The lack of immediacy falls out from the fact that no new expressive index is introduced.

References: • Gutzmann, D. (2011): Expressive Modifiers and Mixed Expressives. Empirical Issues in Syntax and Semantics 8, 123-141. • Linzen, T. (2009): Corpus of blog postings collected from the Israblog website. Tel Aviv University. • Potts, C. (2007): The Expressive Dimension. Theoretical Linguistics 33, 165-198.