



The Semantics of Evaluativity (Oxford Studies in Theoretical Linguistics)

Jessica Rett

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This book focuses on the semantic phenomenon of evaluativity and its consequences across constructions. Evaluativity has traditionally been associated exclusively with the positive construction, a term for sentences with a gradable adjective but with no overt degree morphology. *John is tall* is evaluative because it entails that John is tall relative to a contextually valued standard. *John is taller than Sue* and *John is as tall as Sue* are not evaluative because both could be used even if John and Sue were short.

Previous accounts of evaluativity have assumed that it is not part of the inherent meaning of adjectives, but is contributed by a null morpheme. Jessica Rett argues against this analysis, proposing that no null morpheme is required. Instead, evaluativity is explained on the basis of assumptions that speakers and hearers make about the relationship between the simplicity of a situation and the simplicity of the language used to describe that situation.

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