

Experiencers of the construction of “It feels ADJ to VERB” and (inter)subjectivity in the discourse

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Keywords: viewpoints, experiencer, (inter)subjectivity, discourse, context

Let us think about who the experiencer is in the following sentence.

(a) It feels good to be here.

It probably didn't take too much time to come up with the idea that it is the speaker, thanks to the deictic word "here". Now, let us think about the following sentence.

(b) It feels good to cry.

For this sentence, some people may still say the experiencer is the speaker, but others may say it is generic or otherwise. Since the experiencer is not explicit, it is open to discussion.

This study attempts to show how the construction of “It feels ADJ to VERB” is embedded in context and that different kinds of viewpoints and (inter)subjectivity are found in discourse by presenting several case studies.

First, I will display some major categories of the experiencers of the construction found in The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). The data genres include spoken, fiction, magazine, TV/movie subtitles, blogs, and other web pages. Second, I will demonstrate some notable patterns of discourse and expand on them to distinguish different types of viewpoints and (inter)subjectivity. Then, I will explore the theoretical application and extension of the findings.

Experiencers can be categorized as specific, generic, and imagined. Specific experiencers include 1st, 2nd, and 3rd person (singular and plural). The distinction between generic and imagined experiencers is that while generic experiencers are not a specified person, imagined experiencers tend to be the addressee in the speaker/writer's (S/W) scenario.

The notable discourse patterns are where the S/W states a feeling from the addressee's point of view whether based on real world context or in a S/W's scenario, and where the S/W gives the addressee a third person's viewpoint.

Different kinds of intersubjectivity can be found where the S/W shares their own stance on external situations, where the S/W gives a certain viewpoint to the addressee, and where the S/W assesses the addressee's feeling, in order to achieve overall discourse goals.

To conclude, and for the further discussion, I will explore the theoretical application of the findings above and propose that the ongoingness of a scene is a major key for the clarity of viewpoints and viewing arrangement.

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