

## The semantics and pragmatics of three potential slurring terms

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In this essay I propose a lexical semantics with interlaced pragmatic elements for three potential slurring terms: *bitch*, *cunt*, and *nigger*. These controversial lexical items are worthy of attention because each can be used without the utterance being either intended or interpreted as a slur or even felt to be a slur. To specify the differing potentials of such terms I postulate a cocktail of interlaced semantic and pragmatic components. I first hinted that pragmatic components be included in lexicon entries in Allan 1986/2014: 170-4 and subsequently confirmed the idea and developed it substantially in Allan 2000, 2001, 2011, 2012. Something similar, at least in spirit, is proposed in Copestake & Briscoe 1992, Copestake & Lascarides 1997 and more recently in Carston 2002 (Ch.5) and Wilson & Carston 2007. What I am proposing in this new essay is that the triggers for the potentially diverse interpretations of the terms *bitch*, *cunt*, and *nigger* are specified in the lexicon for the various identifiable classes of contexts in which such words are used.

Keywords: camaraderie, context, conronym, dysphemism, orthophemism

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