

# Attempts to appropriate slurs and Grice's First Maxim of Quality

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From the perspective of linguistics and the philosophy of language, one of the most interesting features of slurs is appropriation (also called reclamation or reappropriation). Appropriation is a process by which, for at least some users of a language, a slur comes to lose its negative aspect – cashed out in different ways by different theorists. Sometimes appropriated slurs even come to have a positive usage – by, for example, creating solidarity, fighting systems of oppression, or mocking bigots. We focus on one particular question involving the appropriation of slurs: What goes on when a speaker attempts to appropriate a theretofore unappropriated slur? We argue that we can make sense of this act using a Gricean picture – relying on a violation of something like Grice's First Maxim of Quality. However, since on many accounts of slurs, their negative aspect is not truth-conditional, a more general version of that maxim must be at play. So, our project has an upshot both for theorizing about slurs – that attempts to appropriate can be made sense of from a Gricean perspective – and for theorizing about Grice's framework – that we have further evidence for generalizing Grice's First Maxim of Quality beyond the realm of information exchange.