

Quantified indirect speech, pre-semantic uses of context and the pragmatics/semantics boundary

Graham Katz

Lewis 1980 noted that the propositional content of an utterance can depend on a wide range of factors: who is speaking, who he is addressing, when the utterance is made and where. It also depends on what item is being pointed to, what standards of accuracy are being used for predicates, what predicates and relations have been made salient, and (for that matter) what language is being spoken. The range of expressions whose contribution to the content of an utterance is context dependent is illustrated in (1)

In this paper we will be taking up recent debate that has surrounded the issue of which aspects of this context dependence can be said to be semantic, in that they contribute to the propositional content of an expression and which are purely pragmatic. We can characterize three positions concerning the semantics/pragmatics debate:

Radical Contextualism/Relevance Theory All of interpretation is context-sensitive and essentially pragmatic (Sperber and Wilson 1986; Recanati 2002; Recanati 2004)

Moderate Contextualism Much of interpretation context sensitive (Stanley 2000; Stanley and Szabo 2000; Stanley 2002) (the context-dependence of (0a)-0d or(0e) is semantic)

Semantic Minimalism Almost nothing is semantically context sensitive (only (0a)) (Capelen and Lepore 2005)

Much of this debate has focussed on the status of “unarticulated constituents”: Aspects of the proposition conveyed by an utterance which are (or are not) aspects of the linguistic representation (Stanley 2000; Stanley 2002; Recanati 1995; Recanati 2002). In this paper we argue, following Perry 1998 that the propositional content of an expression is sensitive two sorts of context dependence and that quantified speech reports are diagnostic for this difference. We are moderate contextualists, but argue for a more well-articulated notion of context (going beyond Kaplan’s distinction between content and character).

It is clear that reports of the utterances in (2) such as that given in (3) (with truth conditions as given in (4) are licit reports, with the overt pronoun bound by the quantificational subject. Clearly non-overt location arguments can be bound as well, as in the report of (5), (6). As illustrated in (7) and (8), however, not all non-overt anaphoric elements can be bound in this way.

Perry distinguished three ways in which context contributes to the meaning of an utterance: presemantic, semantic, and post-semantic. In an utterance of the “I’ve got the /fluw/” the determination that this is a statement about a disease (and not a fireplace) is a presemantic use of context, that it is the speaker who is sick is a semantic use, and that what is being said is (perhaps) that he won’t be coming in to work today is a post-semantic use. We argue that the fact that we cannot report the utterances in (7) as in (8) tells us that the use of context here is either pre-semantic or pragmatic. The issues raised here interact in interesting ways with the details of *de se* (Lewis 1979) and *de nonc* (von Stechow 1995) interpretation.

- (1) a. Indexicals: *I, you, this, here, now, yesterday, ...*
 b. Contextuals: *local, nearby, right of, enemy, ...*
 c. Anaphoric Expressions *he, she, them, before that, then, did it, ...*
 d. Null-anaporic: ϕ (complement of *remember, notice, finish, earlier, taller, ...*)
 e. Vagues: *tall, (a) heap, late, know, ...*
 f. Lexical Items: *red, stop, jump, fly, build, ...*
 g. Proper names: *Peter, John, Jose, ...*
 h. Logical: *if, and, because, ...*
- (2) a. Student A: “I have the flu”
 b. Student B: “I have a cold”
 c. Student C: “I have a fever”
- (3) Every student said that he was sick.
- (4) (3) is true in c iff $\forall x [\text{student}(x) \rightarrow \exists e, U [\text{say}(e, x, U) \ \& \ [U(c_e) \rightarrow \text{sick}(\text{time}(c_e), \text{agent}(c_e))]]]$
- (5) a. Weather station A: “It is 30 degrees Fahrenheit”
 b. Weather station B: “It is minus three Celcius”
 c. Weather station C: “It is 265 degrees Kelvin”
- (6) Every weather station reported that it was below freezing
- (7) a. A: “I told Mary to take out the trash, but she forgot.”
 b. B: “I told Mary to pick up the kids, but she forgot.”
 c. C: “I told Mary to buy game tickets, but she forgot.”
- (8) Everyone claimed that Mary forgot.

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