Indexicals and Perspectival Items

PLIN0020 Advanced Semantic Theory

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Information

- Strike (Mon 25 November–Wed 4 December)

- Presentations

- Essay

Indexicals

Indexicals

Expressions whose referents are determined in relation to utterance context are called **indexicals** (especially in the philosophical tradition).

me	*you*	*we*
here	*there*	
now	*today*	*yesterday*
this	*that*	

Third person pronouns have demonstrative uses (except for *it*), which can be considered indexical.

More Number Marking

It's common to have sg-pl distinctions among 1st and 2nd person pronouns, even in languages that don't mark number on nouns (e.g. Mandarin Chinese, Japanese).

Some languages have more number categories, e.g. dual, and some mark inclusive vs. exclusive among non-singular 1st person pronouns.

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It's common to have sg-pl distinctions among 1st and 2nd person pronouns, even in languages that don't mark number on nouns (e.g. Mandarin Chinese, Japanese).

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E.g. nominative pronouns in Hawai'ian

		singular	dual	plural
1st	inclusive	—	*kāua*	*kākou*
	exclusive	*au*	*māua*	*mākou*
2nd		*'oe*	*'olua*	*'oukou*
3rd		*ia*	*lāua*	*lākou*

Augment-Minimal System

Bobaljik (2008), Cysouw (2011), Harbour (2016) propose to replace the SG-DL-PL system with the augment-minimal system, e.g. Ilocano pronouns:

		singular	dual	plural
1st	inclusive	—	*ta*	*tayo*
	exclusive	*co*	—	*mi*
2nd		*mo*	—	*yo*
3rd		*na*	—	*da*

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		minimal	augmented
1st	inclusive	*ta*	*tayo*
	exclusive	*co*	*mi*
2nd		*mo*	*yo*
3rd		*na*	*da*

Politeness Marking

Some languages have a distinction between informal and formal 2nd person pronouns.

Some European languages reuse plural 2nd person pronouns (e.g. *vous* in French, *vy* in Russian) or 3rd person pronouns (e.g. *lei* in Italian, *Sie* in German).

Some have both singular and plural formal pronouns, e.g. *usted-ustedes* in Spanish (both of which are grammaticlly 3rd person).

Hungarian has three levels (*maga* literally means 'self'):

	informal	formal	formal?
sg	*te*	*ön*	*maga*
pl	*ti*	*önök*	*maguk*

More Distinctions

Japanese, Vietnamese, Thai, etc. are languages with a lot of 1st/2nd person pronouns.

First-person pronominal forms

| | | Context | |
	Formal———————————————————		Informal
Women	watakushi	watashi	atashi
	(atakushi)		(atai)
Men	watakushi watashi	boku	ore
	(jibun) (washi)		

Figure 6.2. Shibamoto-Smith's (2004) inventory of Japanese 1st person pronouns (2004: 120)

'Imposters'

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In many languages there are grammatically 3rd person expressions like *yours truly, your faithful servant,* and *my lord* that refer to the speaker or addressee. These are called **imposters** (Collins & Postal 2012).

▸ Podobryaev (2017) claims that there are essential grammatical differences between imposters and *bona fide* 1st/2nd person pronouns.

▸ Christofaki (2018) claims that all personal pronouns in Japanese are imposters.

Indexical Shifting

Rigidity

Indexicals sometimes said to 'directly refer', because they don't seem to semantically interact with modal expressions, unlike definite descriptions.

(1) a. Paul likes **me**.
     b. Paul likes **the person who's speaking here now**.

vs.

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(1) a. Paul likes **me**.
    b. Paul likes **the person who's speaking here now**.

vs.

(2) a. If Paul likes **me**, I'll be happy.
    b. If Paul likes **the person who's speaking here now**, I'll be happy.

The definite description in (2b) has a reading that's about the person who is speaking in a hypothetical context.

Rigidity (cont.)

Similarly for other modal contexts:

(3) a. **I** could have been Dutch.
    b. **The person who's speaking here now** could have been Dutch.

(4) a. John thinks that **I** am Dutch.
    b. John thinks that **the person who's speaking here now** is Dutch.

Rigidity (cont.)

Similarly for other modal contexts:

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    b. **The person who's speaking here now** could have been Dutch.

(4) a. John thinks that **I** am Dutch.
    b. John thinks that **the person who's speaking here now** is Dutch.

The only context where indexicals can be interpreted relative to other contexts than the current one is quotations.

(5) Hans said, "I am Dutch".

Languages with Indexical Shift

But that's about English. In other languages, sentences like (6) have a different reading, e.g. Amharic.

(6) John jɨəgna n-**ññ**   yɨl-all
    John hero   be-1sg says
    'John says that {I am, he is} a hero.' (Schlenker 2003: 68)

You might think that this is ambiguous between indirect vs. direct speech (quotation). But:

(7) John jɨəgna **ləmɨn** n-**ññ**   yɨl-all?
    John hero   why   cop.pres-**1s** says-3sm
    'Why does John say that {I am, he is} a hero?'
                                        (Anand 2006)

The *wh*-phrase can modify the embedded sentence. Quotations don't allow this!

Indexical Shift in Uyghur

Uyghur is a language where indexical shifting is obligatory in finite complement clauses (data from Shklovsky & Sudo 2014).

(8) Ahmet [**men** ket-**tim**] didi.
    Ahmet [I   left-1sg] said
    'Ahmet said that **he** left.'
    (unavailable) 'Ahmet said that **I** left.'

(9) Tursun Muhemmet-ke [xet   jaz-**ding**] didi.
    Tursun Muhemmet-dat [letter wrote-2sg] said
    'Tursun told Muhemmet that he (=Muhemmet) wrote a letter.'
    (unavailable) 'Tursun told Muhemmet that you wrote a letter.'

Indexical Shifting with Long-Distance Phenomena

Wh-extraction + indexical shifting:

(10) Tursun [**men kim**-ni   kör-**dim**] didi?
     Tursun [I   who-acc saw-1sg] said
     'Who did Tursun say that he saw?'

Negative words like *hichkim* 'anybody' must co-occur with negation. They can co-occur with indexical shifting.

(11) Tursun [**men hichkim**-ni   kör-**dim**] di-**mi**-di?
     Tursun [I   anybody-acc saw-1sg] say-NEG-past.3
     'Tursun didn't say that he saw anybody?'

Nominalized Clauses

One interesting fact about Uyghur indexical shifting is that it doesn't happen in a nominalized clause.

(12) Ahmet [**mening** kit-ken-lik-**im**-ni   ] didi
Ahmet [my   leave-REL-NML-1sg-acc] said
'Ahmet said that I left.'

(13) Tursun Muhemmet-ke   [xet   jaz-ghan-liq-**ing**-ni]
Tursun Muhemmet-DAt [letter write-REL-2sg-acc]
didi
said
Tursun told Muhemmet that you wrote a letter.'

Nominalized complements are just like English, suggesting that the semantics of indexicals and attitude predicates like *say* are the same as in English.

Partial Shifting

Another notable feature of Uyghur indexical shifting is that accusative subjects never shift.

(14) Tursun [**men** ket-**tim**] didi
Tursun [I.nom left-1sg] said
'Tursun said that he left.'

(15) Tursun [**meni** ket-**ti**] didi
Tursun [me.acc left-3] said
'Tursun said that I left.'

Note also that the verb in (15) agrees in 3rd person (because in the embedded context, the first person would be Tursun!).

Theoretical Idea

Using a variety of dignostics, Shklovsky & Sudo (2014) argue that the ACC subject is structurally lower than the embedding verb but higher than the NOM subject.

They then propose that there is an operator that triggers indexical shift that occurs between them (which might be the complementizer).
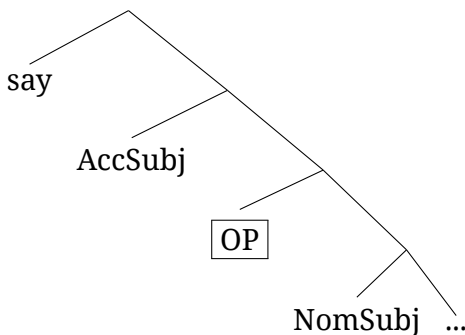
Towards Capturing the Distribution

Shklovsky & Sudo claim:

‣ English doesn't have the operator.
  ⇒ No indexical shifting

‣ Nominalized clauses in Uyghur cannot contain the operator.
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‣ In Amharic and Zazaki, finite clauses may but don't need to contain the operator.
  ⇒ Optional indexical shifting

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Universals (unexplained): No languages seem to use the operator in a non-finite clause, or in a finite but non-attitude clause (e.g. *it is possible that…, if …*).

More on Variation

There is some further variation among indexical shifting languages.

Sudo (2012) observes that Uyghur indexical shifting happens under all sorts of attitude predicates: *de-* 'say', *maxtan-* 'brag', *aghrin-* 'complain', *bil-* 'think/know', *oyla-* 'think', *ümid qil-* 'hope', *xejal qil-* 'dream', *angla-* 'hear'.

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In Amharic and Zazaki, indexical shifting happens only under the verb *say/tell*.

In both Uyghur and Amharic, indexical shifting happens under the version of *say/tell* that is bleached in meaning and practically functions as a complementizer. It is observed under, e.g. *believe say that…*, which just means *believe that….*

More on Variation

Another locus of variation among indexical shifting languages is which indexicals shift (and where).

In Uyghur 2nd person pronouns shift, but only when there's an addressee argument of the embedding predicate. E.g. doesn't shift under *think* and is ungrammatical.

Hear is an interesting case: shifted 1st person refers to the original hearer, and 2nd person is ungrammatical.

(16) Ahmet Aygül-din [qaysi imtihan-din öt-**tim** dep] angladi.
Ahmet Aygül-from [which text-from passed-1sg C] heard
'Which test did Ahmet hear from Aygül that he passed?'

(17) *Ahmet Aygül-din [qaysi imtihan-din öt-**ting** dep] angladi.
Ahmet Aygül-from [which text-from passed-2sg C] heard
(intended) 'Which test did Ahmet hear from Aygül that she passed?'

Indeixcal Adverbials

In Uyghur, locative indexicals like *here* do not seem to shift, and the judgments about temporal indexicals like *today* and *yesterday* are not stable.

There are some Zazaki data that suggest that indexical adverbials shift.

(18) Waxto kɛ ma Diyarbekir-de bime, Heseni mɨ-ra
When that we Diyarbekir-at were, Hesen.obl me-at
va [kɛ o_{i/j} **ita** ame dina].
said [that he here came world]

'When we were in Diyarbekir, Heseni told me he_{i/j} was born {here, Diyarbekir}.' (Anand 2006)

Shifty Agreement

Podobyaev (2014) observes that in Misha Tatar, overt indexicals do not shift, but null indexicals (optionally) do.

(19) Alsu [**min** kaja   kitte-m diep] ar'tɤ?
     Alsu [I   where left-1sg C   ] said
     'Which place did Alsu say that I went?'
     (unavailable) 'Which place did Alsu say that she went?'

(20) Alsu [kaja   kitte-m diep] ar'tɤ?
     Alsu [where left-1sg C   ] said
     'Which place did Alsu say that I went?'
     'Which place did Alsu say that she went?'

(from Podobryaev 2014)

Perspective Sensitive Items

Perspective Sensitivity

The truth/falsity of sentences containing expressions like *left* and *right* is dependent on the 'perspective' one takes.

(21) Paul is standing to the left of the tree.

Let us call such expressions **perspective sensitive items**.

Other (potential) perspective sensitive items:

▸ Predicates of personal state, e.*g.* *tasty*
▸ Socio-cultural expressions, e.*g.* *foreigner*
▸ Epistemic modals and evidentials, e.*g.* *might*

Context Sensitivity

Perspective sensitive items are context-sensitive, just like indexicals, but whose perspective one takes is only very loosely determined.

E.g. the perspective does not need to be the speaker's.

(22) a. Please flip over the card on the left.
     b. Paul threw a ball at me. The ball curved to the left.

'Come' and 'Go'

Come and *go* are perspective sensitive.

(23) a. Natasha is coming to the party now.
    b. Natasha is going to the party now.

'Come' and 'Go'

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(23) a. Natasha is coming to the party now.
    b. Natasha is going to the party now.

Roughly, if something is moving towards the perspectival center (PC), *come*; otherwise, *go*.

Complication: The goal location can be something that the is associated with PC, rather than their physical location (in English; but not in Brazilian Portuguese).

(24) Chomsky is coming to Tokyo.

But consider:

(25) The police/My brother came to my sister's place and asked a lot of questions about me.

Who's PC?

PC can be the addressee:

(26) Context: I'm in London, Skyping with Natasha, who's in Moscow.
    a. Chomsky is coming to Russia next week.
    b. Chomsky is going to Russia next week.

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PC can be in a past location:

(27) I was in Paris last week.
    a. Lisa came to see me.
    b.#Lisa went to see me.

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PC can be in a past location:

(27) I was in Paris last week.
    a. Lisa came to see me.
    b.#Lisa went to see me.

If in the future, *go* is also an option.

(28) I am going to a conference in Amsterdam next month.
    a. Sam is coming to the same conference.
    b. Sam is going to the same conference.

Shifting

We can see the above examples as shifting with respect to tense.

In fact, shifting happens in attitude contexts too.

(29) a. Paul came to my office, and told me that Andrew was coming to his place next week.
   b. Paul came to my office, and asked me if I'm coming to his party.

The speaker is PC for the first come *come*, and Paul for the second.

Recall that indexicals don't shift in English, so this is likely to be a different phenomenon (though very similar in certain respects).

More Shifting

We've seen that *come* and *go* shift under tense and attitude predicates.

Other shifting contexts:

▸ Conditionals

   (30) a. If anyone comes to Moscow, Sasha will take them to VDNKh.
       b. If anyone goes to Moscow, Sasha will take them to VDNKh.

▸ Shifting to the subject

   (31) a. Sasha recommends VDNKh to anyone who comes to Moscow.
       b. Sasha recommends VDNKh to anyone who goes to Moscow.

Crosslinguistic Variation

Slavic languages use the prefix *pri-* with a motion verb to mean something close to *come,* but the conditions of its use are not the same as *come.* Cf. *arrive.* I don't know any detailed description of their uses.

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Some languages lexically distinguish movement to the speaker vs. movement to the addressee, e.g. Palauan (Nakazawa 2007).

> *me*   if goal = speaker's location
> *eko*   if goal = addressee's location
> *mo*   if neither ($\approx$ go)

No information about the shifting behavior of these items.

Movement towards the Addressee

In English, German, Italian, Catalan, Fukuoka Japanese, etc. if the speaker is moving to the addressee, *come* must be used.

(32) I'll {come, #go} to your office later to talk to you.

In Standard Japanese, Korean, Spanish, Uyghur, etc. *go* must be used.

In English, German, Japanese, Korean, etc. when a third person is moving towards the addressee, *come* is at least possible.

(33) Natasha is coming to your office later.

In Mandarin Chinese, Thai, Shibe, etc. this must be *go* (Nakazawa 2007).

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For more information about *come* and *go* and other related items, see my handout (`https://www.ucl.ac.uk/~ucjtudo/Rutgers/seminar.pdf`) and references there.