



EGG 2018: Perspective sensitivity (week 1)

Session 3: An analysis of perspective sensitivity and its predictions

Sarah Zobel

August 1, 2018



Yesterday's class

- ▶ Indexicals and pronouns depend on the context differently, which is modelled via two different interpretational parameters:
 - ▶ **Indexicals**: dependence on the rather rigid context parameter c
 - ▶ **Pronouns**: dependence on the very variable assignment function g
- ▶ **Comparison**: the type of context dependence of perspective-sensitive locatives vs. that of pronouns and indexicals
- ▶ **Conclusion**: perspective-sensitive items have their own brand of context dependence

Today: look at a semantic proposal to capture perspective sensitivity and explore its predictions

⇒ the sketch in Bylinina et al. 2015



Roadmap

Intro

Bylinina et al.'s (2015) sketch of Partee's suggestion

More data: Perspective sensitivity and direct dissent

Summary



Remember: analyses of context dependence with pronouns and indexicals

- ▶ **Pronouns**: dependent on the **variable assignment g** , which can be manipulated by semantics
- ▶ **Indexicals**: dependent on the **context parameter c** , which cannot be manipulated by semantics (as freely/in all languages)

General strategy: encode different types of context-dependence via different interpretational parameters

⇒ interpretational parameters make the non-linguistic circumstances of communication accessible



Step 1: adding a parameter for the perspectival centre

- ▶ Bylinina et al. (2015) – following Partee's (1989) suggestion – (kinda) include g in their context parameter c .
- ▶ They do not assume an assignment function, but assume that the sequence of individuals encoded by g is part of c (= their s_c).
- ▶ They are not concerned with idexicals, so c is not really the Kaplanian context.
- ▶ They state, however, that c could be enriched with the elements in Kaplan's c (their fn. 4).

Step 1: add **another element** P_c to c for the perspectival centre

$$(1) \quad c = \langle P_c, s_c \rangle \quad (\text{with } s_c = \langle x_1, \dots, x_n \rangle)$$



Step 2: make perspective-sensitive items depend on P_c

Step 2: propose P_c -dependent extensions for *left* and *local*

- (2) $\llbracket \text{left} \rrbracket^c = \lambda x_e. \lambda y_e. y$'s location is left of x 's location relative to P_c
- (3) $\llbracket \text{local} \rrbracket^c = \lambda x_e. x$ is in the vicinity of P_c

In contrast: pronouns depend on the values in s_c , which are accessed via indexed projection functions

- (4) $\llbracket \text{he}_i \rrbracket^c = \pi^i(s_c)$



Step 3: make P_C and s_C semantically accessible in different ways

To capture the different variable interpretations of pronouns and perspective-sensitive items, s_C and P_C are made accessible to different operators:

- ▶ To capture binding with pronouns: the **abstraction operator** Λ_i

$$(5) \quad \llbracket \Lambda_i \text{ XP} \rrbracket^c = \lambda x_e. \llbracket \text{XP} \rrbracket^{\langle P_C, s_C[i \rightarrow x] \rangle} \quad (\rightarrow \textit{Predicate Abstraction})$$



Step 3: make P_c and s_c semantically accessible in different ways

To capture the different variable interpretations of pronouns and perspective-sensitive items, s_c and P_c are made accessible to different operators:

- ▶ To capture binding with pronouns: the **abstraction operator** Λ_i

$$(5) \quad \llbracket \Lambda_i \text{ XP} \rrbracket^c = \lambda x_e. \llbracket \text{XP} \rrbracket^{\langle P_c, s_c[i \rightarrow x] \rangle} \quad (\rightarrow \textit{Predicate Abstraction})$$

- ▶ To capture non-speaker perspective: the **shifting operator** Π_i

$$(6) \quad \llbracket \Pi_i \text{ XP} \rrbracket^c = \llbracket \text{XP} \rrbracket^{\langle \pi^i(s_c), s_c \rangle}$$

Note! Π shifts the original P_c to another “contextually salient” individual via s_c . Once Π applied, the first element in c “behaves pronominally”.



Checking the extent of what is captured

How does the above proposal capture the following properties of and observations about perspective sensitivity?

- (7) a. $\llbracket \text{left} \rrbracket^c = \lambda x_e. \lambda y_e. y\text{'s loc is left of } x\text{'s location relative to } P_c$
 b. $\llbracket \text{local} \rrbracket^c = \lambda x_e. x \text{ is in the vicinity of } P_c$

(8) $\llbracket \text{he}_i \rrbracket^c = \pi^i(s_c)$

- (9) a. $\llbracket \Lambda_i \text{XP} \rrbracket^c = \lambda x_e. \llbracket \text{XP} \rrbracket^{\langle P_c, s_c[i \rightarrow x] \rangle}$
 b. $\llbracket \Pi_i \text{XP} \rrbracket^c = \llbracket \text{XP} \rrbracket^{\langle \pi^i(s_c), s_c \rangle}$

1. Default speaker-orientation
2. Shiftability
3. Bound uses of perspective-sensitive items
4. Shift-together-locally
5. Syntactic restrictions: expressions that may introduce perspectival centres



Roadmap

Intro

Bylinina et al.'s (2015) sketch of Partee's suggestion

More data: Perspective sensitivity and direct dissent

Summary



Background: the target of dissent

- ▶ **Properties of P_c :**
 - ▶ P_c is part of the extension of *local* and *left*.
 - ▶ P_c is set contextually – depending in part on the containing utterance.
 - ▶ **Observation:** negation and direct dissent target the (at-issue) content of an utterance (e.g., Tonhauser 2012; but: Snider 2017)
- (10) A: Mary is unfortunately sitting on the bed.
 B: No, that's not true / she isn't.



Background: the target of dissent

- ▶ **Properties of P_c :**
 - ▶ P_c is part of the extension of *local* and *left*.
 - ▶ P_c is set contextually – depending in part on the containing utterance.
- ▶ **Observation:** negation and direct dissent target the (at-issue) content of an utterance (e.g., Tonhauser 2012; but: Snider 2017)
 - (10) A: Mary is unfortunately sitting on the bed.
B: No, that's not true / she isn't.
- ▶ **Important:** Expressions for which parts of their semantics is contextually supplied do not change value in denials.
 - (11) A: I am sitting on her bed.
B: No, that's not true.
 - (12) A: Every student actively contributed.
B: No, that's not true.



Prediction: locatives and dissent – I

Observation: similar behavior for *local* and *left*

- (13) A: Mary is visiting a local school.
B: No, that's not true.

- ▶ B can negate 'Mary is visiting a school that is local for A/Mary'.
- ▶ B cannot negate 'Mary is visiting a school that is local for B'.

- (14) A: Mary is sitting to the left of the tree.
B: No, that's not true.

- ▶ B can negate 'Mary is sitting to the left of the tree relative to A'.
- ▶ B cannot negate 'Mary is sitting to the left of the tree relative to B'.



Prediction: locatives and dissent – II

Assumption about denial: a denial by S takes the at-issue content p expressed by the previous utterance and signals that S commits to $\neg p$ and refuses to make p common ground
(see Farkas & Bruce 2010)

Bylinina et al.'s semantics:

P_c is set contextually to A and is part of the content of *local*
 \Rightarrow the relevant perspective is fixed at the level of content

- (15) $\llbracket \text{Mary is visiting a local school} \rrbracket^{\langle A, s_c \rangle} = 1$ iff
 $\exists x[\text{school}(x) \ \& \ \text{in-vicinity-for}(A)(x) \ \& \ \text{visit}(x)(\text{Mary})]$



Prediction: locatives and dissent – II

Assumption about denial: a denial by S takes the at-issue content p expressed by the previous utterance and signals that S commits to $\neg p$ and refuses to make p common ground
(see Farkas & Bruce 2010)

Bylinina et al.'s semantics:

P_c is set contextually to A and is part of the content of *local*
 \Rightarrow the relevant perspective is fixed at the level of content

$$(15) \quad \llbracket \text{Mary is visiting a local school} \rrbracket^{(A, s_c)} = 1 \text{ iff} \\ \exists x [\text{school}(x) \ \& \ \text{in-vicinity-for}(A)(x) \ \& \ \text{visit}(x)(\text{Mary})]$$

So: Bylinina et al.'s account can capture intuitions that dissent negates “contextually resolved content” (= content for which the perspectival centre has been fixed) for locatives.



What about aesthetic predicates and predicates of personal taste?

What does B deny in (16) and (17)?

(16) [**Context:** A and B discuss which box to use for C's present.]

A: The blue box is pretty.

B: No, that's not true / it isn't.

(17) [**Context:** A and B each just downed a shot of rakija.]

A: This rakija is tasty.

B: No, that's not true / it isn't.



Summary

- ▶ **General strategy to model context dependence:** interpretational parameters
- ▶ **Bylinina et al. 2015 sketching Partee 1989:**
 - ▶ introduction of a new element that is part of the context parameter c
 - ▶ uniquely encodes the current perspectival centre
 - ▶ the semantics of perspective-sensitive items depends on this parameter
- ▶ The account captures most properties of perspective-sensitive items that distinguish them from pronouns.
- ▶ **New data:** direct dissent
 - ⇒ diverging intuitions for locatives vs. aesthetic / personal taste predicates
 - ⇒ two types of perspective sensitivity?



Literatur

- Bylinina, Lisa, Eric McCreedy & Yasutada Sudo. 2015. Notes on perspective-sensitivity. In: Arkadiev, Peter et al. (eds.) *Donum Semanticum*. 67–79.
- Farkas, Donka F. & Kim B. Bruce. 2010. On reacting to assertions and polar questions. *Journal of Semantics* 27. 81–118.
- Lasersohn, Peter. 2017. *Subjectivity and Perspective in Truth-Theoretic Semantics*. OUP.
- Partee, Barbara. 1989. Binding implicit variables in quantified contexts. *Proceedings of CLS* 25: 342–356.
- Snider, Todd. 2017. At-issueness \neq anaphoric availability. *Proceedings of the Linguistic Society of America* 2, 39:1–15. <https://doi.org/10.3765/plsa.v2i0.4089>.
- Tonhauser, Judith. 2012. Diagnosing (not-)at-issue content. In: *The semantics of under-represented languages in the Americas* (SULA), vol. 6, 239–254.