

Personal Pronouns as a (Non-)Uniform Class

1. The data: is there a uniform class of personal pronouns?

- **Reminder:** we started out in Session 1 with the following examples for 3rd person singular pronouns

- (1) a. referential anaphoric pronouns:
*John called. **He**'ll drop by later.*
- b. deictic (referential) pronouns:
*[speaker points at John:] **He** did it!*
- c. bound anaphoric pronouns:
*No actress resents **her** cat.*

⇒ Session 1: 3rd person pronouns as variables in a static and a dynamic system

⇒ Session 2: 3rd person pronouns as definite descriptions

- **Question:** How do 1st and 2nd person pronouns fit in this picture?

1.1 The referential uses of 1st/2nd vs. 3rd

- Singular personal pronouns do not constitute a single, uniform class: 1st and 2nd person pronouns differ from 3rd person pronouns in their referential uses in two major respects:

- (i) referential 1st and 2nd person pronouns refer “automatically” to an individual in the utterance context (cf. Kaplan 1978[1989]); 3rd person singular pronouns do not refer automatically in this sense, but in contrast are freer with respect to their possible referents

- (2) a. A to B: ***I** like sushi.* \rightsquigarrow A likes sushi.
- b. A to B: ***You** like sushi.* \rightsquigarrow B likes sushi.
- c. A to B: ***He/she** likes sushi.* \rightsquigarrow X (whoever A intends to refer to) likes sushi.

⇒ for 3rd person pronouns the speaker can freely choose his referent from the context— as long as it can be made clear, e.g. by a deictic gesture, who the speaker refers to

⇒ 1st and 2nd person singular pronouns are “pure indexicals”¹: they do not need a deictic gesture for the reference to be fixed to the speaker and addressee

- (ii) anaphorically used 3rd person pronouns are *pro-forms*, i.e. they can “stand in” and pick up the referents of full DPs; 1st and 2nd person pronouns cannot be employed in this way (cf. Benveniste 1971[1956])

- (3) a. ***Peter** likes **his** mother.*
- b. ***Peter** likes **my/your** mother.*

- (4) a. ***Peter** likes sushi. **He** also likes sake.*
- b. ***Peter** likes sushi. **I/you** also like sake.*

¹Benveniste (1971) uses the term “indicators” for 1st and 2nd person singular pronouns. The term “pure indexical” is Kaplan’s (1989), who distinguishes them from “demonstratives” that need a disambiguating ostension, e.g. deictic 3rd person singular pronouns.

- **Question:** Can we distinguish referential anaphoric uses and deictic uses for 1st and 2nd person pronouns in a principled manner?
 - (5) a. *I like sushi, and I also like sake.*
 - b. *You called and you told me that you were coming to the party!*

1.2 Bound uses of 1st and 2nd person pronouns

- At first glance, bound uses, i.e. examples where quantifying expressions bind first or second person pronouns, do not seem to exist.
 - (6) a. *Every man likes my/your mother.*
 - b. **Every man likes myself/yourself.*

⇒ This can be seen as a special case of “1st and 2nd person pronouns are not pro-forms”.

- But what about cases like (7)? Is the possessive *my* bound or referential (cf. Session 1)?

(7) *I like my mother.*

⇒ How can we test which one it is?

1.3 Summary of the findings

	pure indexical	pro-form	deictic	co-referential	bound
1st	yes	no		yes	no
2nd	yes	no		yes	no
3rd	no	yes	yes	yes	yes

Table 1: Differences between 1st and 2nd vs. 3rd person singular

- This comparison does not look too promising given the goal of finding a unified account for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd person pronouns

⇒ Benveniste 1971[1956] regards the difference between 1st/2nd and 3rd person pronouns as a categorical difference:

“In the formal class of pronouns, those said to be of the ‘third person’ are, by their function and by their nature, completely different from *I* and *you*.”
(Benveniste 1971[1956]:221)

- **But:** maybe recent developments provide the means for a unification after all

2. A traditional directly referential semantics for 1st and 2nd singular

2.1 Kaplan’s (1989) analysis of indexicality

- Kaplan (1989) proposes a formal account which captures the strict utterance dependence of 1st and 2nd person singular pronouns: he assumes that 1st and 2nd person pronouns always refer to the speaker and the addressee of a given utterance (cf. Benveniste 1971).

(8) *Central idea:* The situation or world that is used to evaluate the truth or falsity of a given sentence, i.e. the “circumstance of evaluation”, has to be distinguished from the context of utterance.

- To distinguish context-dependence from dependence on a circumstance of evaluation, he distinguishes three levels of meaning: the “character”, the “content”, and the “denotation” of an expression.
 - **Character:** a function from contexts to the content of an expression
 - **Content:** a function from circumstances of evaluation (e.g. a world or situation of evaluation) to the denotation of an expression; that is, the content can be equated with the intension of an expression
 - **Denotation:** the extension of an expression
- A Kaplanian context is a list of aspects of a “possible occasion of use” which contains a speaker, a time, a location, a world, and sometimes an addressee.²

$$(9) \quad \textit{Kaplanian context parameter: } c = \langle c_S, c_T, c_L, c_W, c_A \rangle$$

⇒ to evaluate a character with respect to a context, a context parameter can be added to the interpretation function, or explicit context variables can be introduced into the meta-language

⇒ by explicitly introducing variables of the relevant sorts, the difference can be illustrated in an intuitive manner:^{3,4}

- (10) a. *Character:*

$$\llbracket \textit{dog} \rrbracket^g = \lambda c. \lambda s. \lambda x. x \text{ is a dog in } s \text{ relative to } c$$
- b. *Content/Intension:*

$$\llbracket \textit{dog} \rrbracket^g(c^*) = \lambda s. \lambda x. x \text{ is a dog in } s \text{ (relative to } c^*) \quad (\approx \llbracket \textit{dog} \rrbracket^{c^*,g})$$
- c. *Denotation/Extension:*

$$\llbracket \textit{dog} \rrbracket^g(c^*)(s^*) = \lambda x. x \text{ is a dog in } s^* \text{ (relative to } c^*) \quad (\approx \llbracket \textit{dog} \rrbracket^{s^*,c^*,g})$$

⇒ the content of the noun *dog* does not vary with different utterance contexts; it has a “stable character”

- **Proposal:** 1st and 2nd person singular pronouns are “directly referential expressions”, i.e. their referents are fully determined by their characters from the utterance context

$$(11) \quad \begin{array}{ll} \text{a.} & \llbracket \textit{I} \rrbracket^g = \lambda c. c_S \quad \text{(traditional: } \llbracket \textit{I} \rrbracket^{c^*,g} = c_S^*) \\ \text{b.} & \llbracket \textit{you} \rrbracket^g = \lambda c. c_A \quad \text{(traditional: } \llbracket \textit{you} \rrbracket^{c^*,g} = c_A^*) \end{array}$$

⇒ the content, or rather denotation, contributed by *I* and *you* varies with different utterance contexts, but is stable for each individual context (cf. *dog* above)

- (12) a. *I smoke.*
 b.
$$\llbracket \textit{smoke} \rrbracket^g(c^*)(s^*)(\llbracket \textit{I} \rrbracket^g(c^*)) =$$

$$[\lambda c. \lambda s. \lambda x. x \text{ smokes in } s \text{ (relative to } c)](c^*)(s^*)(c_S^*) =$$
 1 iff c_S^* smokes in s^* (relative to c^*)

²Kaplan’s (1989) original proposal does not include an addressee “coordinate”.

³Here, a notational difficulty arises. Kaplan (1989) assumes different interpretation functions for contents and denotations, and defines equalities between the two levels of meaning. Characters are never explicitly given. A more modern system that uses λ -notation and different domains of variables for contexts, worlds/situations, and individuals, already differs in many respects from Kaplan’s original proposal. The main point which is glossed over in the following formal representations is the difference between systems with explicit context and world variables and systems with context and world parameters on the interpretation function. See e.g. Percus (2011).

⁴The expressions c^* and s^* are used to denote the utterance context and utterance situation. Note that s^* has to be (part of) c_W^* .

2.2 Potential problems for such an account: shifted indexicals and logophoric pronouns

- For 1st and 2nd person singular pronouns in English (and German), it is well-known that when they are reported in indirect speech, they have to be replaced with different expressions to refer to the same individual as in the original utterance.

- (13) a. Peter to Mary: *I like you.*
 b. Susan reporting to Paul: #*Peter said to Mary that I like you.*
 Susan reporting to Paul: *Peter said to Mary that he likes her.*

- (14) a. Peter to Mary: *Susan likes Paul.*
 b. Susan reporting to Paul: *Peter said to Mary that I like you.*
 Susan reporting to Paul: #*Peter said to Mary that she likes him.*

- This is another instance of the English pronouns' observed strict context dependence. Assumption made in Kaplan's analysis: the context parameter of the interpretation function cannot be shifted from the context of utterance.

- (15) *Fixity Thesis*: The semantic value of an indexical is fixed solely by the context of the actual speech act, and cannot be affected by any logical operators.
 (Schlenker 2003:29)

⇒ Kaplan assumed operators that shift contexts do not exist; he called them “monsters”

⇒ **Question:** Which level in (10) should operators maximally be able to apply to?

- As famously discussed in Schlenker (2003), not all languages are like English in this respect. Two kinds of pronouns have been observed across languages that point towards the existence of “monsters”:

- *Logophoric pronouns*: 3rd person pronouns that are restricted to reportive contexts and that necessarily refer to the reported speaker/attitude holder
 Attested in: e.g. Ewe, Bafut (cf. Schlenker 2003)

- (16) **John** wà?àtǝ mǝ **yu** ká khi. (Ewe)
 John thinks that self FUT burn
 ‘John thinks that he is going to get burnt.’ (cf. Schlenker 2003:60)

⇒ there are expressions, i.e. attitudes, that differentiate between characters of expressions: the attitude holder referred to by the logophoric pronoun can be seen as the “speaker” of the attitude context

- *Shifted indexicals*: 1st and 2nd person singular pronouns in indirect speech/ attitude reports that refer to the reported speaker and addressee, respectively
 Attested in: e.g. Amharic, Navajo, Slave, Zazaki (cf. Schlenker 2003, Anand and Nevins 2004, Anand 2006)

- (17) **jon** jegna ne-ññ yil-all. (Amharic)
 John hero be.PF-1SO 3M.say-AUX.3M
 ‘John says that he is a hero.’ (cf. Schlenker 2003:68)

- (18) **Rojda** ne va kE **mi** kes paci kErd. (Zazaki)
 Rojda not said that I anyone kiss did
 ‘Rojda did not say that she kissed anyone.’ (Anand and Nevins 2004:22)

⇒ shifted indexicals refute the Fixity Thesis as a universal property of indexicals

- **However:** logophoric pronouns and shifted indexicals only have consequences for the semantics of the embedding expressions that may induce a context shift

⇒ verbs of saying/attitude verbs quantify over contexts

⇒ Kaplan’s semantics for 1st and 2nd person pronouns is not challenged

- Schlenker (2003) argues for context-dependent person features that may or may not depend on the utterance context or the context variable bound by the quantifier
- Anand and Nevins (2004) introduce context shifting operators that apply to the embedded proposition before the proposition is taken as an argument by the verbs

- Proposal for the context shift observed in Zazaki (Anand and Nevins 2004)

- (19) a. $\llbracket \text{say OP}_\forall \alpha \rrbracket^{c^*,k} = \lambda x_e. \forall k' \text{ compatible with what } x \text{ says in } k, (\llbracket \text{OP}_\forall \alpha \rrbracket^{c^*,k'})$
 b. $\llbracket \text{OP}_\forall \alpha \rrbracket^{c^*,k} = \llbracket \alpha \rrbracket^{k,k}$
 (Anand and Nevins 2004: 27)

⇒ Anand and Nevins (2004) need to assume:

- the parameters on the interpretation function are ordered (first the context, then the circumstance of evaluation)
- circumstances of evaluation have the same list structure as contexts, cf. (9)

⇒ for Zazaki, OP_\forall shifts all contextual coordinates; for some languages, e.g. Slave, shifters that shift single coordinates seem to be needed (cf. Anand and Nevins 2004)

- **Conclusion:** While logophoric pronouns and shifted 1st and 2nd person singular pronouns are problems for Kaplan’s overall account, his proposal to model 1st and 2nd person singular pronouns as directly referring to the speaker and addressee of the a given context, i.e. as context coordinates, remains untouched.⁵
- Are there other problematic cases for Kaplan’s proposal in (11)?

3. Problematic case I – deferred reference

3.1 Nunberg’s (1993) three-component account of indexicality

- Nunberg (1993) observes that sometimes occurrences of 1st and 2nd person singular do not refer to the speaker or the addressee, but to individuals that the speaker or the addressee stand in some relation to.

- (20) The condemned prisoner:
I am traditionally allowed to order whatever I like for my last meal.
 (Nunberg 1993:20f)

⇒ (20) is understood as: “The condemned prisoner is traditionally allowed to order whatever he likes for his last meal.”

⇒ **Rationale:** (20) does not convey that there is a tradition for the current speaker regarding his last meal; there is a tradition for condemned prisoners and their last meals that applies to the speaker because he is a condemned prisoner at the time of utterance

⁵For a recent overview on indexicality and related problems see Schlenker (2011); Percus (2011) discusses different compositional treatments of indexical expressions.

(21) Chess teacher giving an introductory lesson to a student who has just played a particular risky move:
According to all the textbooks, you often get in trouble with that move.
 (Nunberg 1993:21)

⇒ (21) is understood as: “According to all the textbooks, the person who plays that move often gets in trouble with that move.”

⇒ **Rationale:** (21) does not convey that textbooks make a claim about the current addressee regarding that particular move

- Similar examples can also be found for deictic 3rd person pronouns and demonstratives.
- Nunberg proposes that all types of indexical expressions (e.g. personal pronouns and demonstratives) are made up from three subparts that interact to determine the referent of a given indexical expression.

– **Deictic component:** picks an entity from the context, the “index”

– **Relational component:** constrains the type of relation that the index and the referent have to stand in

– **Classificatory component:** contains morphosyntactic and semantic featural information, e.g. animacy, number, gender . . . , which further constrains the choice of final referent

⇒ these components operate on a strictly pragmatic level to determine the semantic contribution of a pronoun; they are not themselves contributed to the truth-conditional content of the sentence

- Nunberg argues that his account captures what is understood in (20):

- (22)
- a. *Index:* the speaker of the utterance
 - b. *Relation:* “*x* and *y* share the property of being a condemned prisoner”
 (Constraint: the speaker “instantiates” the interpretation)
 - c. *Featural information:* e.g. animated, singular, . . .

3.2 Inspired by Nunberg: 1st and 2nd person singular pronouns as definite descriptions

- Elbourne (2008) proposes a syntacticized version of Nunberg’s account which analyzes deictic 3rd person singular pronouns and demonstratives as definite descriptions; this proposal fits in with his other work (cf. Elbourne 2005, 2013).

⇒ **Note:** Elbourne does not apply his formalization of Nunberg to account for 1st and 2nd person pronouns in his 2008 paper

⇒ Given his inspiration, however, we can straightforwardly extend Elbourne’s proposal to 1st and 2nd person pronouns as proposed in Nunberg (1993)

- Elbourne introduces the complex syntactic representation in (23):

(23) [*pronoun* [R₁ i₂]]
 R . . . models the contextually determined relation; type: $\langle e, \langle e, st \rangle \rangle$
 i . . . models the index; type: e
 (cf. Elbourne 2008:421)

- The values of the free variables R_1 and i_2 are specified contextually by the variable assignment g . The meaning of the subtree $[R_1 i_2]$ is $g(1)(g(2))$, which is of type $\langle e, st \rangle$. To increase readability, I will write R for $g(1)$ and i for $g(2)$.
- The pronouns themselves are interpreted as definite determiners, which take the result of the subtree $[R_1 i_2]$ as its argument.⁶

$$(24) \quad \llbracket \text{the}_{\sigma_n} \rrbracket^{c,g} = \llbracket I_{\sigma_n} \rrbracket^{c,g} = \llbracket \text{you}_{\sigma_n} \rrbracket^{c,g} = \llbracket \text{he/she/it}_{\sigma_n} \rrbracket^{c,g} = \lambda f_{\langle e, st \rangle} . \iota x [f(x)(g(\sigma_n))]$$

$$(25) \quad \llbracket [\text{pronoun}_{\sigma_n} [R_1 i_2]] \rrbracket^{c,g} = \llbracket \text{pronoun}_{\sigma_n} \rrbracket^{c,g} (\llbracket R_1 \rrbracket^{c,g} (\llbracket i_2 \rrbracket^{c,g})) = \\ \lambda f_{\langle e, st \rangle} . \iota x [f(x)(g(\sigma_n))] (R(i)) = \\ \iota x [R(i)(x)(g(\sigma_n))]$$

⇒ Note that this has the consequence that the lexical items I and you do not denote c_S and c_A anymore, although c_S and c_A feature in the analysis as the values for i

- Depending on the contextually determined value for R , the semantic value assigned to a pronoun corresponds to a deferred reference reading or to a standard referential reading:
 - **Referential reading:** R is the identity relation $[\lambda y . \lambda x . \lambda s . y = x \text{ in } s]$
 - **Deferred reference reading:** R is a contextually given non-identity relation

⇒ Referential reading of I and you :

$$(26) \quad \text{a.} \quad \llbracket [I_{\sigma_n} [R_1 i_2]] \rrbracket^{c,g} = \\ \iota x [\lambda y . \lambda x . \lambda s . y = x \text{ in } s](i)(x)(g(\sigma_n)) \\ \iota x [i = x \text{ in } g(\sigma_n)] \quad i = c_S$$

$$\text{b.} \quad \llbracket [you_{\sigma_n} [R_1 i_2]] \rrbracket^{c,g} = \\ \iota x [\lambda y . \lambda x . \lambda s . y = x \text{ in } s](i)(x)(g(\sigma_n)) \\ \iota x [i = x \text{ in } g(\sigma_n)] \quad i = c_A$$

⇒ Deferred reference reading of (20):

$$(27) \quad \text{a.} \quad i = c_S$$

$$\text{b.} \quad R = \lambda x . \lambda y . y \text{ has the property of being a condemned prisoner in } g(\sigma_n) \text{ that } x \text{ has in } s^*$$

$$(28) \quad \iota y [y \text{ has the property of being a condemned prisoner in } g(\sigma_n) \text{ that } c_S \text{ has in } s^*]$$

⇒ if *traditionally* is analyzed as an adverb of quantification, like *always*, the expression in (28) provides the situation variable σ_n that can be bound (cf. von Stechow 2004[1996])

- Elbourne does not explicitly formalize the classificatory component. But: ϕ -features could be assumed to trigger a presupposition on the final semantic value of a pronoun (cf. Heim and Kratzer 1998); relevant for 1st and 2nd person singular:

$$(29) \quad \llbracket \text{SG} \rrbracket^{c,g} = \lambda x : x \text{ is atomic. } x$$

⁶Elbourne's (2008: 421) proposal for 3rd person pronouns as variants of the definite determiner is adopted for first and second person singular pronouns, and the formal system is adapted to fit the system introduced in Session 2.

- **Conclusion:** Elbourne’s formalization of Nunberg’s three component account allows for a unified analysis of the standard referential uses and the deferred reference uses of 1st and 2nd person singular pronouns.

⇒ the account even assimilates 1st and 2nd person pronouns with 3rd person pronouns by analyzing them as denoting definite descriptions

4. Problematic cases II – “fake indexicals”

- In some rare cases exemplified below, bound readings of 1st and 2nd person singular pronouns do in fact occur (cf. Rullmann 2004, Heim 2005, Kratzer 2009).

- (30) a. I’m the only one around here who can take care of **my** children. (Kratzer 2009:188)
 b. *entailment under bound reading:* no one else can take care of their children
- (31) a. Only **you_F** eat what **you** cook. (Kratzer 2009:188)
 b. *entailment under bound reading:* no one else eats what they cook

⇒ the subscript *F* indicates focus

- The following revised picture arises:

	pure indexical	pro-form	deictic	co-referential	bound
1st	yes	no		yes	yes (restricted)
2nd	yes	no		yes	yes (restricted)
3rd	no	yes	yes	yes	yes

Table 2: Differences between 1st and 2nd vs. 3rd person singular (revised)

- Kratzer proposes that bound uses of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd person pronouns need to be modelled separately from their other uses:

$$(32) \quad \llbracket [n]_N \rrbracket^{g,c} = g(n)$$

⇒ bound pronouns enter the syntax with a minimal, lexically specified pronominal “base” consisting of a nominal numerical feature (i.e. a referential index) and possibly some ϕ -features

⇒ the full morphosyntactic feature make-up is built up in the course of the syntactic derivation by a feature sharing mechanism between the binding expression and the bound expression

- (33) Feature Transmission under Binding:
 The ϕ -feature set of a bound DP unifies with the ϕ -feature set of the verbal functional head that hosts its binder.
 (Kratzer 2009)

- In sum, Kratzer (2009) proposes a three-way distinction for singular personal pronouns regarding their semantic contribution:

- 1st, 2nd singular – deictic: directly-referential (similar to Kaplan 1989[1978])
- 3rd singular – deictic, co-referential, donkey pronouns: definite descriptions
- 1st, 2nd, 3rd singular – bound: variables

⇒ Kratzer’s proposal employs all types of analyses for pronominal meaning that we have seen so far

- **Question:** Given Elbourne’s analysis of 1st and 2nd person singular pronouns as definite descriptions, could the fake indexical cases also be given an analysis as definite descriptions?

⇒ Sauerland (2007) argues for bound pronouns as definite descriptions that “share” their descriptive contents with their binders.⁷

- (34) a. Only I_F did my homework. John_F didn’t.
- current speaker
- b. Only [[—] the —] did [[—] the —] homework.
- 1st person
- John
- c. [[—]_F the —] did [[—] the —] homework.
- 3rd person

⇒ this parallelism between (34-b) and (34-c) suffices to derive VP-ellipsis for (34-a)

⇒ for cases like those discussed in Kratzer (2009), it has to be assumed that the focus alternatives of the first sentence in (34-a) also share the structure in (34-b) and (34-c)

⇒ alternatively, one could try to substitute the descriptive content *current speaker* with the proposal based on Elbourne (2008) above: [R₁ i₂]

5. But wait! What about donkey pronouns?

- 3rd person singular pronouns have uses as donkey pronouns in which they are analyzed as definite descriptions.

(35) *Every farmer who owns a donkey grooms it.*

- Given Elbourne’s (2008) and Sauerland’s (2007) accounts of 1st and 2nd person pronouns as definite descriptions, one would assume that they occur as donkey pronouns, as well.
- **Question:** Do 1st and 2nd person donkey pronouns exist? What about (36)?

- (36) a. *If a speaker says a sentence, I usually mean it.*
 b. *Every speaker who offends an addressee will apologize to you later.*

⇒ How could one improve on these examples to make a donkey reading available?

⇒ **Note:** on a Kaplanian view on 1st and 2nd person pronouns, donkey uses are not expected to arise

⁷Sauerland argues for structure sharing of the descriptive content for two or more expressions in a binding relation.

	pure indexical	pro-form	deictic	co-referential	bound	donkey
1st	yes	no		yes	yes (restricted)	no
2nd	yes	no		yes	yes (restricted)	no
3rd	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

Table 3: Differences between 1st and 2nd vs. 3rd person singular (final)

6. Summary

- Following Kaplan, 1st and 2nd person pronouns have been analyzed as directly referential. This is captured by making them denote Kaplanian context coordinates.
- **Good news:**
 - Nunberg’s proposal to account for the deferred reference data leads to an analysis of 1st and 2nd person pronouns as definite descriptions via a formalization in Elbourne (2008).
 - And if Sauerland’s (2007) account for “fake indexicals” is adopted, they can also be treated as definite descriptions.
- **Bad news:** The definite description analysis of 1st and 2nd person pronouns predicts that there is a donkey use for these pronouns; 1st and 2nd person donkey pronouns do not seem to exist, though

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