

Transparency and the Context-sensitivity of Attitude Attributions

Cian Dorr
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Modal transparency schema (Kripke):

For all x , if x is N , then possibly ... x ... iff possibly ... N ...

↑
result of substituting 'N' for one or more occurrences of 'x'

↑
Sentence in which 'x' is not in an intensional context.

Attitude transparency schema:

For all x and y , if x is N , then y φ s that ... x ... iff y φ s that ... N ...

↑
propositional attitude verb:
'believes', 'knows', 'asserts', etc.

Standard argument against transparency:

- (1a) For all x , if $x = \text{Superman}$, then for all y , y believes that x flies iff y believes that Superman flies
- (1b) For all x , if $x = \text{Clark Kent}$, then for all y , y believes that x flies iff y believes that Clark Kent flies.
- (1c) ? So if there is any x such that $x = \text{Superman}$ and $x = \text{Clark Kent}$, then for all y , y believes that Superman flies iff y believes that Clark Kent flies.

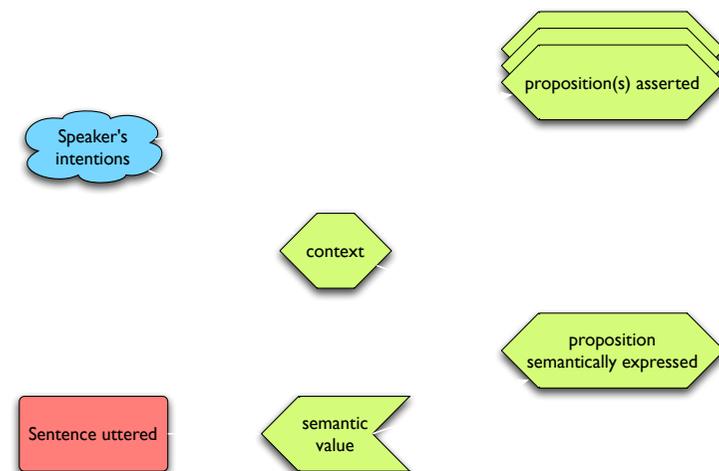
Attitude reports are context-sensitive

Sosa 1972: [C]onsider... the case of a prominent citizen of Metropolis who suffers from pyromania. Impelled by his pyromania, he disguises himself from time to time in order to start some fires, and becomes known to the community as "The Metropolis Pyromaniac". Now there are other arsonists in town, but the police always know the work of our pyromaniac by certain peculiarities of it. Eventually our man's wife begins to wonder whether anyone suspects that he has set any of those fires. But he is able to insist that no one does. In this he is right. At the same time, however, soon after the latest fire the chief of police is asked by the press whether anyone is suspected by the detective assigned to the case, and he is able to reply affirmatively. For the pyromaniac has left all the usual signs of his work and the detective suspects that he started the fire.

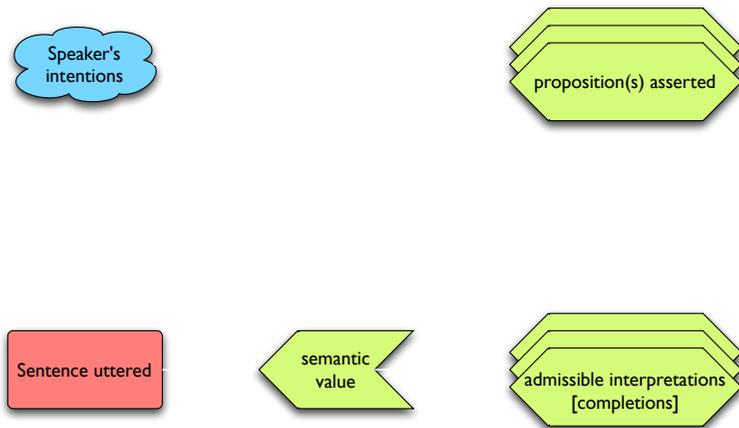
- (2a) No-one suspects that I set the fire.
- (2b) There is someone whom the detective suspects set the fire.
- (2c) ?? There is someone, distinct from me, whom the detective suspects set the fire.

- (3a) My favourite philosopher was believed to be an atheist by many of his early readers.
- (3b) My favourite philosopher was so successful in preserving his anonymity that only a few of his intimate friends had any idea that he had written any books.
- (3c) ?? My favourite philosopher was believed to be an atheist by many of his early readers, while only a few of his intimate friends had any idea that he had written any books.

Indexicalist model of context-sensitivity



Incompleteness model of context-sensitivity



What does it mean for an argument composed of context-sensitive sentences to be valid?

- (4a) The Eiffel Tower is tall.
- (4b) So everyone who sees the Eiffel Tower sees something tall.

Sentences with no true uniform completions:

- (5a) Mary is ready, and everyone who is ready can come on the trip, but Mary can't come on the trip.
- (5b) Everyone outclassed everyone.

Uniformity also places demands on the interpretation of different expressions

- (6a) The Eiffel Tower is both tall and short.
- (6b) I saw every van Gogh painting last time I was in the museum, and some weren't there.

Judicious choices of words help hearers guess at nonuniform interpretations:

- (7a) ? All of the children were ready, but not all of them were ready, and to go on the trip you had to be ready.
- (7b) All of the children were ready, but not all of them were prepared, and to go on the trip you had to be prepared.

- (8a) Batman is strong but Batman is not strong.
- (8b) Bruce Wayne is strong but Batman is not strong.

How this affects attitude reports:

- (9a) The police believe that I set the fires, but they don't believe that I set the fires.
- (9b) The police believe that he set those fires, but [although he is me] they don't believe that I set those fires.

Does this have true *uniform* completions? — No. — 'He is someone the police believe to have set the fires, but I am not someone the police believe to have set the fires.'

Standard argument against transparency:

- (1a) For all x, if x = Superman, then for all y, y believes that Superman flies iff y believes that x flies.
- (1b) For all x, if x = Clark Kent, then for all y, y believes that Clark Kent flies iff y believes that x flies.
- (1c) ? So, if there is any x such that x = Superman and x = Clark Kent, then for all y, y believes that Superman flies iff y believes that Clark Kent flies.

Merely stylistic differences

- (10a) Lois believes that Superman flies but doesn't believe that Clark Kent flies.
- (10b) Superman is believed by Lois to fly, but Clark Kent isn't believed by Lois to fly.
- (10c) Superman is someone Lois believes to fly, but Clark Kent isn't someone Lois believes to fly.

Compositionality Principle:

Every admissible interpretation of a sentence is determined by an assignment of a syntactic structure to the sentence, together with an assignment of admissible semantic values to its syntactic constituents, according to invariant rules.

Upshot: every context-sensitive sentence has at least one context-sensitive constituent

Options:

- (i) Attitude verbs are context-sensitive "Russellian" approach
- (ii) Complement clauses are context-sensitive "Fregean" approach
- ~~(iii) Posit unpronounced syntactic constituent(s) as the locus of context-sensitivity. "Hidden indexical theory"~~
- ~~(iv) Reject compositionality. "Unarticulated constituents", "Free enrichment".~~

Theoretical economy

Where "Fregeans" must find context-sensitivity:

Mary thinks that Vladimir is a spy.

For some x, Mary thinks that x is a spy.

Vladimir is thought by Mary PRO to be a spy.

The Ellipsis Principle

Non-uniform interpretations are available only when the relevant constituents are actually repeated, not elided.

(11a) My house is bigger than this but isn't bigger than this.

(11b)* My house is bigger than this but isn't.

(12a) The police believe that I set the fires but don't believe that *I* set the fires.

(12b) The police believe that I set the fires but not that *I* set the fires.

(12c)? The police believe that I set the fires but they don't *believe* it.

(13a) This car is mine, and it isn't [mine].

(13b) Bruce Wayne is very strong, but Batman isn't [very strong].

(13c) Giorgone was so called because of his size, but Bellini wasn't [so called because of his size].

(13d) He is believed to have set the fires, but I am not [believed to have set the fires].

More counterexamples to the Ellipsis Principle (?):

- The marks on the wall were put there by my kids, but the stain on the carpet wasn't.
- People who are anxious get to be that way because of their upbringing, but people who are depressed don't.

Attitude reports with multiple referring terms

Q: What does it take to bear this ___ **A:** There doesn't need to be a relation to other propositions? *unique relation...*

Russellian account: this corresponds to a strange relation that Lois doesn't bear to the singular proposition.

(14) Lois doesn't know that Clark Kent is at least as strong as Superman.

Fregean account: these correspond to different constituents in the proposition asserted

Q: Does the proposition asserted count as a *uniform* interpretation of (14)?

Embedded attitude reports

Russellian account: these correspond to different relations in the proposition asserted.

(15) Lois doesn't know that everyone knows that I am the strongest superhero.

Fregean account (?): in the proposition(s) asserted, this corresponds not just to a <person, set of MOPs> but to a set of MOPs of such ordered pairs....

Semantics and simple sentences

This conjunct has true uniform interpretations corresponding to those of 'few people believe that I fly'.

(15) Although 'Superman flies' semantically expresses the proposition that I fly, almost no-one is in a position to use it to assert that I fly.

Q: Can the Russellian escape this problem by positing context-sensitivity in 'semantically expresses' correlative to that in 'asserts'?

A: Doubtful. Besides the singular proposition, what other candidates are there to be the unique proposition semantically expressed?