DEIXES AND ITS SEMANTIC AND PRAGMATIC FEATURES

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Abstract:
This article the semantics and pragmatics of deixis and evaluate its traditional categories and discuss current problems relating to deixis, including demonstratives, reference, anaphora and subjectivity. Here is given the results of some survey the scholarship concerning the deixis occurring in literary texts and describe the kinds of contexts which deixis may be 'read' against.

Key words: Deixes, semantics, pragmatics, anaphora, reference.

Introduction

There are certain elements of the above epigraphs which pose problem regarding their interpretation. In the Vaughan extract, the pronouns you and I and the spatial adverb Here suggest not only the subjectivity of the utterer, but a shared domain with the reader or addressee. Our interpretation of the shop door note would depend on a knowledge of when the note was written. Without this knowledge the recipient cannot tell whether he or she is likely to be waiting under a minute or nearly half an hour. What governs the interpretation of these utterances – and what causes the problems, is deixis.

Phenomenon of deixis

The linguistic phenomenon of deixis is a fundamental element of discourse. A Greek word meaning 'pointing', deixis has been adapted by linguists to refer to the encoding of the spatio-temporal context and the subjective experience of the encoder in an utterance. Initially used of a small body of words and expressions which link the encoder with the situation of utterance, deixis has been extended to cover a broad range of language fragments. A problem of delimitation arises because any utterance is the result of a relationship between the encoder, the language-system and the context in which the utterance takes place. Unless the meaning of deixis is contained, a pragmatic anarchy arises whereby it ceases to be a distinct phenomenon.

Deixis is that phenomenon whereby the tripartite relationship between the linguistic system, the encoder's subjectivity and contextual factors is foregrounded grammatically or lexically. There is both a semantic and a pragmatic element to deixis (i.e. deixis depends upon usage), although the relationship between these elements is complex. [1. 253] The above definition both expands the conception of deixis as a limited, if heterogeneous, body of words and expressions, and delimits later implications by including only the personal and demonstrative pronouns, certain adverbs, various aspects of tense, referring expressions and anaphora under certain conditions. Deixis functions pragmatically, but it is also controlled by semantic determination.

Pragmatical functions of diexes

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The confusion over the status of deixis surfaces in arguments about pronominalization. Lyons points out that pronouns are traditionally thought of as noun substitutes, and their function in discourse is essentially that of cohesion. But pronouns are actually referring expressions and are equivalent to nominals, not nouns. This makes pronouns more implicitly deictic for a number of reasons to be explained later.

The modern use of the term deixis can be attributed to Buhler. In his pioneering work he sets out a theory for what he called the "deictic field of language". Deictic terms and elements and by this we mean deictics used deictically - most deictics can also function no deictically relate to a 'zero-point' which is set by the encoder in relation to the spatial and temporal nature of the utterance. [3.136] Buhler relates other kinds of deictic phenomena to this core conception. Using the example of a signpost in the middle of the countryside he states: ••.

Now, the concrete speech event differs from the wooden arm standing motionless in the countryside in one important aspect, namely that it is an event. But still further, it is a complex human action, and in this action, the sender has not only like the signpost a fixed position in the terrain, but also plays a role, the role of sender as opposed to the role of receiver. For Buhler, the deictic field covers the complexity of the speech event related to the situation of the encoder and the combined spatio-temporal co-ordinates. Citing the Greek grammarians, he sees the personal pronouns as essentially roles and as such they lie at the heart of the deictic field of natural language.

Semantic features of dieaxes

Deictic terms 4 are not devoid of semantic meaning, but rather they form a link between truth-conditional semantics and context-dependent pragmatics. Efforts have been made, in formal logic, to accommodate the fact that most human communication has a deictic aspect. [4.152]

Predicate logic, on the other hand, does not take the natural role of deixis into account; yet linguists and philosophers such as Grice, Kaplan and Montague work with the assumption that the truth-value of a sentence can be assessed only in relation to a set of reference points. These points, such as who is speaking, where and when, are the deictic points of reference. Yet we must not confuse deixis with mere context-dependency. Morris's semiotic divisions of syntax, semantics and pragmatics relate usefully to deixis in this respect. Morris saw syntax as essentially the formal relation of signs to other signs, semantics as the relation of signs to objects and to the world, and pragmatics as the relation of signs to interpreters and users. It can be seen that deixis compounds the sign distinctions.

Deictics 'jump the system' inasmuch as they are grammaticalizations or lexicalizations of context which must be pragmatically processed. The increasingly pragmatic and Wittgensteinian view of language-in-use has to a great extent offset the semantics of language-as-system expounded by de Saussure, Chomsky and later generative semanticists; but as I have stressed, care must be taken not to overstate the pragmatic element in any utterance, because language, and most are, however, various ways of viewing the function of that context.

The main concepts of the function of context in any utterance I see as:

i)   contexts are purely extralinguistic, but affect the range of possible meanings;

ii)   contexts are actually brought about by the utterance that is, utterances change the context

iii)   context is grammatically encoded in certain linguistic elements and terms.

The complex relationship between syntactic form, context and pragmatic function is most evident in those elements and terms which constitute deixis. Sentences encode

functions of possible contexts to transform them into utterances (where an utterance is the sentence with its full contextual possibilities). [6.172]

Deixis is the element by which this encoding takes place. Further, sentences only express propositions by virtue of specific contexts and specific encoders within the deictic field. These specific contexts fill in the parameters for which the deictic terms and elements stand as variables, although the 'accessing' of these contexts is complex in all kinds of utterance. Here, pragmatics is seen as logically prior to semantics, with deixis seen as a variable. But deixis actually encodes that context to a

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