

FIRST-PERSON INDEXICALITY AND REGISTERS OF INTERPRETATION

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“There are many words that have a kind of first-person indexicality as part of their meaning, either exclusively or as one option.”

(Barbara Partee, Implicit arguments, Lecture 5 at RGGU, Moscow, October 6, 2009)

Canonical and non-canonical communicative situations

According to Partee 1989, words with implicit arguments may have three readings: bound variable, discourse anaphora and deictic (i.e. directly referential, or indexical) reading. For example, Russian *edva li* ‘hardly’ has an implicit argument corresponding to the person in doubt, and in (1) it is directly referential – it refers to the speaker of the utterance:

(1) Ivan *edva li* vernetsja ‘John will *hardly* return’ = ‘the speaker doubts that John will return’.

That *edva li* has an implicit argument can be confirmed by the fact that a sentence beginning, e.g., with *Esli Ivan edva li vernetsja* sounds strange at the beginning of the dialogue; in fact, it definitely refers to the preceding context where the subject of doubt should be mentioned. Thus, *edva li* has an implicit argument – which by default refers to the speaker.

The implied speaker can play in the semantics of a word (or construction) the role of the subject of perception, subject of consciousness, subject of speech and reference point for deixis. Roman Jakobson, in his famous article on SHIFTERS (Jakobson 1957), united the two main spheres of subjective meanings, deixis (indexicality) and modality, into one. Instead of “shifters” I use the term “egocentrals”, coined by Bertrand Russell. (The term “indexicals” seems to be used nowadays in a broad sense as well, including both deixis and modality; but it cannot be so easily translated into Russian.) Later on I’ll divide egocentrals into primary and secondary ones.

The speaker can fulfill all the range of its functions only in the context of a CANONICAL communicative situation, when the speaker is provided with a synchronous addressee which is in the same place and in the field of vision of the speaker. In a non-canonical situation interpretation of linguistic entities may change. The notion of non-canonical speech situation was introduced in Lyons 1977, but Lyons had in mind what can be called WEAKLY non-canonical situations, when the speaker and the addressee have no common space (and field of vision) or no common moment of speech. A communicative situation is called STRONGLY non-canonical when both the addressee and the speaker **are not present** in the context of utterance.

There are two major types of strongly non-canonical communicative situations – NARRATIVE and HYPOTAXIS. In Fillmore 1975 it was shown how interpretation of the verb *come* changes in the context of narrative. The context of hypotaxis is easier to begin with.

In (2) the implicit argument corresponding to the person in doubt refers not to the speaker but to the subject of the matrix sentence:

(2) Masha s itaet, to Ivan *edva li* vernetsja ‘Masha thinks that John will *hardly* return’.

There are other examples of referential shift of the same type. In the context of a question speaker-oriented deixis can be transformed into addressee-oriented one.

(3) . – Na doroge *pokazalsja* vsadnik <v moem pole zrenija> ‘On the road *appeared* a rider <in my field of vision>;

b. – Nu to, on tak i ne *pokazalsja*? <v tvoem pole zrenija> ‘So he hadn’t yet appeared? <in your field of vision>.

(4) a. Vkusno <mne> ‘it is tasty <to me>;’

b. Vkusno <tebe>? ‘is it tasty <to you>?’

Formal description of first-person indexicality develops intensively. I mean Partee 1989, Condoravdi & Gawron 1996, Lasersohn 2005, Stephenson 2005, Moltmann 2005, Schlenker 2003 in the first place. My aim is not to give a formal semantic account of “speaker-implicating” words but just to show their diversity and demonstrate peculiarities of their behavior.

I'll speak separately about four different roles (in Fillmore's sense) that the speaker can play in the meaning of words or constructions: speaker as a subject of perception, as a subject of consciousness, as a subject of speech and as a subject (or origo) of deixis.

1. Speaker as a subject of perception

Sentence (1.1) (example from Apresjan 1986) describes a situation in which, apart from the road and the rider, some syntactically non expressed person is present – the observer of the event (note that *pokazat'sja* means, literally, 'to show oneself', so the perceiver is inherent in its lexical semantics):

(1.1) Na doroge *pokazalsja* vsadnik 'On the road *appeared* a rider'.

Obviously, this person is the speaker. This supposition is confirmed by the deviance of (1.2) with the 1st person subject, who is the object of perception:

(1.2) *Na doroge *pokazalsja* ja '*On the road *appeared* I'.

In a hypotactic context (requiring a non-canonical register of interpretation) the 1st person subject of *pokazat'sja* is normal – in fact, now it is not the speaker who is the observer of the event, but the subject of the matrix sentence.

(1.3) Ivan videl, to v kakoj-to moment na doroge *pokazalsja* ja. 'Ivan saw that at some moment I *appeared* on the road'.

A kind of PROJECTION takes place: from speech-register to non-speech-register, and correspondingly, from direct reference to anaphora.

A projection from direct reference to anaphora can take place also in narrative. Though it should be acknowledged that in some contexts the subject of perception cannot be pointed at with certainty:

(1.4) Ja ponjal, to sprava *pokazalsja* korabl', potomu to vse brosilis' k pravomu bortu. 'I realized that a ship *appeared* on the right, because everybody rushed to the right board'.

The first example of a word presupposing the speaker in the role of the observer was the English verb *to lurk* (Russian *maja it'*), described in Fillmore 1968. But it was Apresjan's example with the verb *pokazat'sja* that became a real source of inspiration.

Other examples of verbs (and verb usages) with an implicit argument for the subject of perception: *vozniknut'*, *pojavit'sja*, *is eznut'*, *propast'*; *prostupit'*, *vystupat'*, *vygljadyvat'*, *vysovyvat'sja*, *progljadyvat'*, *proskol'znut'*, *promel'knut'*, *mel'kat'*; *paxnut'*, *vonjat'*, *zvu at'*, *poslyšat'sja*, *razdat'sja*, *donosit'sja* (*Zvu it kolokol, i donositsja penie iz sobora*), *svetit'sja*, *blestet'*, *mercat'*; *razverznut'sja*, *raskinut'sja*, *rasstilat'sja*; *vysit'sja*, *tor at'*; *rejat'* (Bulygina 1982: 29); *belet'*, *ernet'* (Apresjan 1986). There are about 3500 existential verbs mentioned in the dictionary 2007, many of them with an implicit argument for the subject of perception. The verb *toporš it'sja* is not included in the list, though it might have been there:

(1.5)

Many verbs have a valence for an implicit observer in grammatically derived diatheses, cf. *obnaruzit'* with the explicit subject of perception and *obnaruzit'sja* with the implicit one.

See also: *vydelit'sja*, *vyiskat'sja*, *vrazit'sja*, *vyjavit'sja*, *zadevat'sja*, *zapropastit'sja*, *zape atlet'sja*, *zaslonit'sja*, *zaterjat'sja*, *izobrazit'sja*, *najtis'*, *obnažit'sja*, *obozna it'sja*, *otobrazit'sja*, *poterjat'sja*, *projasnit'sja*, *razyskat'sja*, *skryt'sja*, *utait'sja*; *progljadyvat'sja*, *prosmatrvat'sja*, *razli at'sja*, *smotret'sja*, *ulavlivat'sja*, *usmatrvat'sja*; *oš uš at'sja*, *po uvstvovat'sja*, *uvstvovat'sja*.

A derived diathesis with the implicit observer can be unmarked:

(1.6) a. Ja *obnaruzil* u mal' ika nezaurjadnuju èrudiciju 'I *discovered* a remarkable erudition of the boy' [the subject of perception is explicit];

b. Mal' ik *obnaruzil* nezaurjadnuju èrudiciju. 'The boy *showed* a remarkable erudition' [the subject of perception is implicit].

The Genitive of negation couldn't have been fully explained if there had been no notion of observer at our disposal. In fact, after Babby 1980 (see also Babyonyshev & Brun 2002) the Genitive subject of negated verbs in Russian was explained by existential, i.e. non referential semantics of the verb. Genitive subject of locative verbs (as in *Koli ne bylo doma*), which presuppose the existence and thus have a referential subject, was treated by Babby as an exception. In Paducheva 1992 it was claimed that not only existential but also perceptual verbs can account for the Genitive subject (*Koli v dome ne obnaruzhilos*'), and Genitive subject in locative contexts was explained by the fact that GenNeg construction adds an implicit observer to the concept of the situation (and/or perceptual semantics to a locative verb).

Genitive in (1.7a) is clearly a mistake (the utterance was overheard as said to the mobile by a woman who couldn't answer on the spot the question of her client: the conversation took place in a bank and she had no computer at her disposal), but in (1.b) Genitive is at place, for it presupposes the observer at the institute of the speaker:

- (1.7) a. *Menja net v office 'I [Gen] am not in the office';
 b. Menja zavtra ne budet v institute 'I [Gen] won't be in the institute tomorrow' [example by Anna Zalizniak].

An implicit first-person-subject may not be equal to the explicit one. With no explicit subject the verb means 'hear', the speaker being the implied subject of perception, see (1.8); explicit subject changes the meaning of the verb – it means uncertain perception, see (1.9):

- (1.8) = 'one could hear clattering of the wheels';
 (1.9) ≈ 'I heard you say something, if I'm not mistaken'.

Probably, what we have in (1.8) is not just implicit first-person-subject of perception but what in Moltmann 2005 is presented as generic *one*: "Generic *one* expresses (contextually restricted) quantification over individuals insofar as the relevant agent identifies with them".

2. Speaker as a subject of consciousness

Semantic decomposition of the verb *voobražat* 'imagine' in one of its meanings (suggested by no other than G.Frege, see 1977) resorts to an implied subject of consciousness:

voobražat, to 'X imagines that P' = 'X believes that some P favorable for him takes place; the speaker doesn't believe that P'.

The implied (and syntactically non-expressible) subject of the opposite belief is the speaker:

- (2.1) Ee muž *voobražat* sebja geniem 'Her husband *imagines* himself to be a genius' = 'Her husband *believes* himself to be a genius; the speaker doesn't think so'.

But in a hypotactic context the role of the subject of the opposite belief is played by the subject of the matrix clause – the same rule of projection is at work as in the case of *pokazat'sja*:

- (2.2) Marija znaet, to ee muž *voobražat* sebja geniem 'Maria knows that her husband *imagines* himself to be a genius' \supset Maria doesn't think so.

The subject of consciousness is not the same beast as the subject of perception, i.e. the observer. Only the implied observer generates anomaly in the context of the 1st person subject, as in example (1.2), where it makes the subject and the object of perception coincide. In fact, the observer is necessarily an EXTERNAL observer, and this is the semantic source of anomaly. The subject of consciousness has no definite location and no restriction of the similar kind. For example, the adverb *neozhidanno* = 'contrary to one's expectations', 'unexpectedly' presupposes the subject of consciousness, and identity of the subject and object of consciousness is not excluded in the context of *neozhidanno*:

- (2.3)

Still the rules of projection for the implied subject of consciousness are the same as for the subject of perception:

(2.4) ,
 [= ‘ , ’].

Many stative predicatives imply, by default, the implied 1st person subject of consciousness: *bol’no, veselo, vidno, možno, vidimo, zametno, interesno, žutko, goretno, dosadno, priyatno, xorošo, važno, bezrazli no, ljubopytno, legko, tošno, nelovko, zabavno, interesno, žarko, dušno, obidno, radostno, sku no, grustno, strašno, trudno, legko, jasno, poxože; plevat’, len’, žal’, žalko, xorošo, oxota, neoxota*; impersonal verbs, such as *xo etsja, pridetsja, ostaetsja*, and many others; ‘it is nice to hear from you’ [= ‘nice for me’]. Many adjectives have a valence for the subject of consciousness which is by default filled by the speaker: *priemlemyj; nepostižimyj, nerazrešimyj; važnyj, glavnyj; neponjatnyj, strannyj*.

Epistemic modality implies the subject of consciousness: *He may be in Boston now* means ‘that he is in Boston doesn’t contradict to what I, as a speaker, know’.

Predicates of taste and evaluation also belong to the class of linguistic entities implying the 1st person subject of consciousness; cf. Stephenson 2007, Moltmann 2006 on problems of relative truth and faultless disagreement connected with these predicates.

Words implying the subject of consciousness, as well as those implying the observer, can be called secondary egocentrals, for they easily shift their reference, undergoing projection rules in the context of hypotaxis or narrative.

3. Speaker as a subject of speech

The speaker plays the role of the subject of speech in the semantics of parenthetical verbs and sentences, such as , ; some of them imply not only the speaker but also the addressee. They are at place in a speech discourse (and also in a first-person narrative or in fragments of a narrative texts belonging to the narrator), but excluded in the hypotactic context:

(3.1) . ;
 .*

In a narrative some parentheticals with a similar meaning are acceptable; the implied subject is then personified in a character, who expresses his opinion in his inner speech. But this character is now the subject of consciousness, rather than the subject of speech:

(3.2) (. .).

The implied subject of speech plays an important role in the semantics of illocutionary modality, but this is not at issue here. In general, the subject of speech doesn’t project and, thus, subject of speech implying words belong to primary egocentrals.

4. Speaker as a subject of deixis

With strictly deictic words, such as *segodnja* ‘today’, hypotactic projection doesn’t work as well.

(4.1) On *v era* skazal mne, to *segodnja* zanjat ‘He told me *yesterday* that he is busy *today*’.

In (4.1) the word *segodnja* cannot mean ‘yesterday’, which would have been the case if hypotactic projection had been possible, i.e. if the subject of the higher clause could be the bearer of the present tense. The only possible “subject” for deictic *segodnja* in hypotactic position is the speaker.

In the article by Ph.Schlenker called “A plea for monsters” (2003) the following idea was suggested. Normally, pure indexicals, of which “I” is the clearest example, always get their reference from the speech act context, no matter how deeply they are embedded under verbs like *believe* or *say* (not counting direct quotation). A “monster” would be something that is normally a pure indexical, but it can sometimes get its value from the subject of a higher verb. Amharic “I” seems to be a monster; a sentence translated as *John said that I won* is ambiguous: it can be interpreted either as ‘John said that I won’ or as ‘John said that he won’.

For Russian *ja* such anaphoric use is possible only as an often made mistake of colloquial speech; here is a widely cited example:

(4.2) _____ , _____ (_____) _____ .

Similar examples from other languages can be found in Jespersen's "Philosophy of grammar".

But for Russian *sejchas* 'now' a shifted, namely, projective interpretation is accepted as a norm – albeit not in a hypotactic context but in narrative; see the example from 1986:

(4.3) _____ , _____ .

Sentence (4.3) has two interpretations:

(i) when interpreted in the speech register sentence (4.3) is embedded in a speech act that has a speaker (distinct from the sentence's subject), and *sejchas* receives DEICTIC interpretation – it denotes the time of the speech act (i.e. the present moment of the speaker);

(ii) when interpreted in the narrative register *sejchas* has ANAPHORIC interpretation; it denotes the ongoing moment in the development of events; there is only one subject, who verbalizes his own inner state.

In the hypotactic context anaphoric interpretation of *sejchas* is impossible. In fact, in (4.4a) the interpretation of *sejchas* is unambiguously deictic, and (4.4b), where this interpretation is pragmatically excluded, is an impossible sentence:

(4.4) a. _____ ;

b. * _____ .

Schlenker's opposition of pure indexicals and shiftable indexicals corresponds to the opposition of primary and secondary egocentrals in 1996. Words presupposing the implied speaker as a subject of perception or consciousness are secondary egocentrals; words implying the speaker as a subject of speech or deixis are primary egocentrals – their implied speaker normally resists projection (though in some languages some exceptions are possible, and the difference between the two non-canonical registers of interpretation should be taken into consideration).

Now to conclude, it should be mentioned that the following two notions should be set apart. One is the speaker as an IMPLICIT ARGUMENT in the meaning of words or constructions (this speaker can play the role of the observer, subject of consciousness, subject of speech or subject of deixis). Another is the speaker as a PARTICIPANT OF THE SPEECH ACT, which the implicit argument may refer to in the context of a canonical speech situation.*

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* I am grateful to Barbara Partee for her immeasurable help: it's due to Barbara that I got access to literature on truth-functional semantics and could overcome at least some of its technical difficulties.

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