

Indexicality, context, and pretense: a speech-act theoretic account

François Recanati

► **To cite this version:**

François Recanati. Indexicality, context, and pretense: a speech-act theoretic account. Noel Burton-Roberts. *Advances in Pragmatics*, Palgrave-Macmillan, 2005. <ijn_00000645>

HAL Id: ijn_00000645

https://jeannicod.ccsd.cnrs.fr/ijn_00000645

Submitted on 3 Nov 2005

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Indexicality, context, and pretense : a speech-act theoretic account

François Recanati
Institut Jean Nicod

Indexicals — words like ‘I’, ‘here’, ‘now’, etc. — are expressions whose semantic value systematically depends upon the context of the speech act : ‘I’ refers to the agent of the speech act (the speaker), ‘here’ to the place of the speech act, etc. There is, however, something misleading in the definite description ‘*the* speech act’, which implies unicity. We know, since Austin, that a number of *distinct* acts are jointly performed in speaking : the phonetic act, the phatic act, the rhetic act, the locutionary act which includes them all, and the illocutionary act one additionally performs *in* performing the locutionary act. It is true that Austin also speaks of ‘the total speech act’, but if that is what we mean by ‘the speech act’, then it is misleading to talk of ‘*the* context of the speech act’, for there may be distinct contexts corresponding to the ‘ancillary acts’ one can distinguish within the total speech act.

In this chapter, I will argue that the notion of ‘context’ that has to be used in the study of indexicals is far from univocal. A first distinction has to be made between the real context of speech and the context in which the speech act is supposed to take place — only the latter notion being relevant when it comes to determining the semantic values of indexicals. Second, we need to draw a distinction between the context of the locutionary act and the context of the illocutionary act : contrary to a standard assumption of speech act theory, they can diverge, and their possible divergence explains a number of puzzling phenomena involving indexicals.

I. Indexicality and context

Indexicals, I said, are expressions whose semantic value systematically depends upon the context of the speech act. Before raising issues regarding what counts as the context, we must enrich this preliminary characterization of indexicals and make it more specific. Indexicals are expressions whose semantic value systematically depends upon the context *and whose linguistic meaning somehow encodes this dependency upon the context of speech*. Thus I do

not count as indexical in the strict sense expressions whose semantic value depends upon the context merely because they are *semantically under-specified* and function as ‘free variables’ to which a value must be contextually assigned. A good example of under-specification is the genitive construction, as in ‘John’s car’ : this phrase refers to a car bearing a certain relation *R* to John, which relation is determined in context, without being linguistically specified. (It may be the car John bought, or the car he dreamt of last night, or anything.) This is not indexicality strictly speaking. Whenever an expression is indexical in the strict sense, its linguistic meaning encodes a *token-reflexive rule* which tells us how, for each particular token of the expression, we can determine the content carried by that token as a function of the circumstances of utterance. Thus the meaning of ‘I’ is the rule that a token of that word refers to the producer of that token, the meaning of ‘today’ is the rule that a token of that word refers to the day on which the token is produced, the meaning of ‘we’ is a rule that a token of that word refers to a group that contains the speaker, and so on and so forth.

Whether a context-sensitive expression is indexical in the strict sense or merely semantically indeterminate, its content depends upon some feature of the context of utterance. Semantically indeterminate expressions are such that their content uniformly depends upon *the speaker’s intention* (or at least, the intention which it is reasonable, in context, to ascribe to the speaker). Thus when I use a genitive as in ‘John’s car’, the relation *R* between John and the car is determined in context as a function of the speaker’s intentions. In contrast, indexical expressions are such that *their content in each case depends upon a designated feature of the context of utterance*. That feature which, following Nunberg, I call the ‘index’, is specified by the token-reflexive rule associated with the indexical. For the first person pronouns ‘I’ and ‘we’ the index is the person producing the utterance. For ‘you’ it is the addressee. For the tenses and temporal adverbs like ‘today’, ‘tomorrow’ etc., it is the time of utterance. In each case, the reference of the indexical is determined as a function of the contextual index.

Note that its being indexical in the strict sense does not prevent an expression from *also* being semantically under-specified. ‘We’ is a case in point. As we have seen, the semantic value of ‘we’ is a group containing *the speaker* among its members. Here the speaker is the index (so ‘we’ has the same index as ‘I’) but we also need the speaker’s intentions to fix the relevant group which is not fully determined, but merely constrained, by the linguistic meaning of ‘we’. In this type of case, the contextual value of the expression depends both upon the designated index *and* the speaker’s intentions. In contrast, the meaning of ‘I’ or ‘tomorrow’ fully determines the content of the word as a function of the index : once the index is contextually identified, the referent is eo ipso identified.

Another interesting case is that of demonstratives like ‘this’ or ‘this car’. If we treat them as indexical expressions, as one typically does, what will be the contextual index ? The index here is standardly considered to be the *demonstratum*, i.e. the entity to which the speaker using the demonstrative draws the hearer’s attention by means of a pointing gesture or by any other means.¹ There is an ongoing debate regarding the determination of the demonstratum itself : is it determined by the speaker’s intentions, or is it determined by objective factors such as which entity of the relevant sort first intersects the straight line emanating from the speaker’s pointing finger ? I side with the ‘intentionists’ in this debate : I take the index to be what *the speaker* demonstrates, i.e. the entity such that the speaker makes manifest to the hearer his or her intention to bring it to the hearer’s attention by means of the hearer’s recognition of this intention (where ‘this’ reflexively refers to the whole, complex intention, as in standard Gricean analyses). On this view, the speaker’s demonstrative intention *is* the crucial aspect of the context on which the reference of a demonstrative depends — it is (constitutive of) the index.

*

So far I have talked of ‘features of the context’, including among such features both the speaker’s intentions and more objective aspects of the situation of utterance such as who speaks, when, where, and so forth. Now what is a ‘context’ ? For a situation to count as a context, an utterance must take place in that situation. That means that there must be an agent *a* and a language *L* such that *a* utters an expression *e* of *L*, thereby performing, or attempting to perform, what Austin calls a ‘locutionary act’ ; an act which requires on the part of the agent certain beliefs and intentions. A context, in that sense, is not an abstract object — a sequence of features — as Kaplanian ‘contexts’ are. It’s a concrete situation with a particular individual in it endowed with complex mental states (e.g. beliefs and intentions). ‘Improper’ contexts in Kaplan’s sense – e.g. contexts in which the agent does not exist at the time of the context – are obviously ruled out, but so are ‘proper’ kaplanian contexts in which no utterance is made or no language exists or the agent is unable to think or talk.

¹ See Nunberg 1993 for the distinction between the demonstratum (*qua* index) and the actual referent. One may also equate the index with the demonstrated *place* (in such a way that ‘this car’ refers to the car at the indicated place) (Lyons 1975, Recanati 2004).

According to David Lewis, it is often the case that « the truth of a sentence in a context depends upon the truth of some related sentence when some feature of the original context is shifted » (1998 : 27). There is context-shift, for Lewis, whenever we can isolate a sentential operator O such that the truth of any complex sentence consisting of that operator O applied to some sentence p is systematically related to the truth of p when some feature of the original context (the context of the complex sentence) has been shifted. The contextual features which may be shifted in this sense are few in number, Lewis says : he mentions the time, the place, and the world of the context, plus the standards of precision in force in the context. The first three features can be shifted because temporal, spatial and modal operators are such that the truth of any complex sentence Op consisting of one such operator O applied to some sentence p is systematically related to the truth of p when the time, place or world of the original context (the context in which Op is uttered) has been shifted. Thus ‘There have been dogs’ is true now if ‘there are dogs’ is true at some time before now ; ‘somewhere the sun is shining’ is true here if ‘the sun is shining’ is true somewhere ; and so on and so forth.

Before considering the standards of precision, which Lewis takes to be the fourth (and ultimate) shiftable feature of the context in what he admits is a ‘short list’, let me say why I think it is misleading to talk of *context*-shift in connection with the phenomenon discussed by Lewis. Lewis describes a feature-shifting process that takes place in the course of evaluating the complex sentence Op : starting from the initial situation s in which the complex sentence itself is being evaluated, we shift some feature of s and evaluate the embedded sentence p with respect to the distinct situation s' resulting from the shift induced by O . I have two reasons for denying that the shift here is a *context* shift. First, I am not certain that the initial situation s — that in which the complex sentence Op itself is evaluated — has to or can be equated with the ‘context’ of Op ; so I am not certain that the situation that serves as input to the shift qualifies as context. Second, and more importantly, I am certain that the output situation s' — that which results from the shift — does not, or not necessarily, qualify as context. So I agree that a shift takes place in the course of evaluating the complex sentence Op , but I take the shift in question to affect what Kaplan calls the circumstance of evaluation (and what Lewis himself calls the ‘index’) rather than the context of utterance.

Let me start with my doubts regarding the input situation. I grant that a context always includes a time, a place and a world feature (simply because any utterance is bound to take place somewhere, at a particular time, and in a particular world). I also grant that a temporal, spatial or modal operator O shifts the time, place or world of the initial situation s in which the complex sentence Op is being evaluated, and thereby determines the (distinct) situation s'

in which the sentence p it operates on has to be evaluated in the course of evaluating Op . What I deny is that the initial situation s in which the complex sentence is evaluated has to be identified with the context in which that complex sentence is uttered and interpreted. Or, to put it another way : I deny that the time, place and world with respect to which the complex sentence is evaluated — the time, place and world which the operator systematically shifts — is the time, place, and world of the context of utterance. It need not be : there is a principled difference between, say, the place of the context of utterance, and the place with respect to which the uttered sentence is evaluated. Take ‘it’s raining’. To evaluate that sentence we need a place ; but that need not be the place of the context (i.e. the place where ‘it’s raining’ is uttered). It may be any place which the speaker is currently considering and talking about. Similarly, the time and world with respect to which we evaluate a sentence need not be the time and world of the context in which that sentence is uttered. This is undoubtedly the most common and the simplest case, but this is only a particular case nevertheless. The place, time and world with respect to which we evaluate a sentence are features of *the situation talked about in uttering that sentence* ; and the situation talked about need not be identical to the situation of utterance.

The situation *resulting from* the shift is not a context either ; or at least, it need not be one (nor does Lewis claim that it does). It need not contain a speaker, an utterance, nor a language. Of course, it *may* possess such features : nothing prevents the sentence p in the scope of the circumstance-shifting operator from describing a situation in which someone says something. Thus in the sentence ‘Someday, someone will stand up and say something’ the operator ‘someday it will be the case that’ takes us to a shifted situation s' that is located in the future, and which happens to be a situation of utterance : a situation in which someone says something. Even in that sort of case, however, the output situation cannot serve to fix the value of the indexicals that occur in the sentence p which is to be evaluated with respect to that situation. The values of the indexicals that occur in the embedded sentence p are fixed by the context in which the complex sentence Op is uttered. Thus if the complex sentence is ‘Someday, someone will stand up and say something about the clothes I am wearing today’, the values of the indexicals ‘I’ and ‘today’ (as well as that of the present progressive) will not be determined by the features of the future situation in which someone stands up and says something. ‘I’ will not refer to the person who speaks in that situation, and ‘today’ will not refer to day of that situation ; nor will the present progressive refer to the time of that situation (even though the time of the original situation has been shifted). Rather, ‘I’ will refer to the speaker in the original context of utterance (that in which the complex sentence is uttered),

and ‘today’ and the present tense will have their values determined as a function of the time of that same context.

The only case in which it seems that something like a context-shift occurs is the last one mentioned by Lewis : the ‘standards of precision’. Let’s assume that we start with a context in which certain standards of precision are in force — say, loose standards. In such a context ‘hexagonal’ has a certain content, in virtue of which it truly applies to France. This is distinct from the content the same word has in a context in which stricter standard of precision are in force (as is shown by the fact that, under those stricter standards, ‘hexagonal’ does *not* apply to France). We may construe the standards of precision as an aspect of the *language* spoken in the context : in the first context the language spoken is loose, in the second context it is strict. Now, as Lewis points out, an expression like ‘strictly speaking’ works by turning a context in which a loose language is spoken into a context in which a strict language is spoken. As a result, « ‘Strictly speaking, France is not hexagonal’ is true even under low standards of precision iff ‘France is not hexagonal’ is true under stricter standards » (Lewis 1998 : 27).

*

As I have just said, I agree that the context shifts in the standards of precision cases discussed by Lewis: we started with a context in which a loose language was spoken, and wind up in a context in which a strict language is spoken. The words that are uttered after ‘strictly speaking’ are interpreted according to the rules of the strict language, in force in the shifted context. This is analogous to what happens in the following example :

As the French say, *on n’est pas sortis de l’auberge*.

Here we start with a context in which English is spoken, but, after the phrase ‘as the French say’, the language feature of the context shifts from English to French.

Lewis says the context-shift effected by ‘strictly speaking’ is a matter of rules : like temporal or modal operators, the operator ‘strictly speaking’ has a certain context-shift potential determined by the semantic rules of the language. I disagree. As against Lewis, I favour a pragmatic (rather than semantic) account of the shift in this type of case.

The pragmatic account I have in mind relies on a distinction I have already alluded to between two sorts of contextual feature. Some features of the context essentially depend upon

the speaker's intentions. Thus whom the speaker is addressing, or to what he is referring when he uses a demonstrative, or how his words are to be taken (strictly or loosely, say), all this to a large extent depends upon the speaker's intentions. When an aspect of the context depends upon the speaker's intention in this way, it is possible to shift that feature of the context by making one's intention to do so sufficiently explicit. This, I claim, is what happens with 'strictly speaking'. By using that expression one indicates one's intention to speak strictly in the bit of discourse that follows. Expressing that intention is enough to actually determine how one's words ought to be taken, for the following reason : how the speaker's words are to be taken is an aspect of what the speaker means, and speaker's meaning works by getting itself to be recognized, i.e. by letting the hearer know what the speaker's communicative intentions are. The speaker's communicative intentions have the distinctive property that their recognition leads to, or possibly constitutes, their fulfillment, as many authors in the Gricean tradition have suggested. So, to make John my addressee, I have simply to make clear that it is him I intend to address. Thus I may say, 'You, John...', or I may look at him while speaking, or use whatever means are available for making my intention sufficiently manifest. In this way I may easily shift the addressee feature of the context. (Imagine I start by addressing a crowd. At some point in my discourse I may shift the addressee feature of the context by making sufficiently explicit that, from now on, I am addressing John.) This is similar to the shift in standards of precision described by Lewis, and in both cases what makes it possible to shift the context is not a semantic rule assigning a specific context-shift potential to some expression, but simply the fact that one is making one's intention manifest, in an area where the speaker's intentions are the crucial factor.

When an aspect of the context does *not* depend upon the speaker's intention, but is fixed by some objective fact, one simply cannot shift that feature of the context by making explicit one's intention to do so. Who the speaker is or when the utterance takes place is an objective fact independent of the speaker's intentions. Such features of the context of utterance cannot be shifted at will. Thus the word 'I', in the mouth of S, will of necessity refer to S, who happens to be the speaker, even if the speaker intends to refer to Napoleon, and makes manifest his intention to do so (Barwise and Perry 1983 : 148). This is different from a demonstrative like 'that country' whose reference depends upon what the speaker intends to refer to. Here the relevant aspect of context – the speaker's reference – is up to the speaker and can be fixed by him at will ('that country, I mean France...'). The speaker can *stipulate* what his words 'that country' refer to ; but the speaker cannot stipulate that *x* is the speaker, or that *t* is the time of utterance. This is simply not in his power.

II. Shifting the context through pretense

I have just said that only features of the context which are ‘up to the speaker’ can be shifted by expressing one’s intention to do so. The other features of the context are given as a matter of objective fact and cannot be shifted. Thus the speaker has no way, in speaking, to shift the reference of ‘I’, or of ‘today’.

This conclusion must be qualified, however. The objective features of the context of utterance are indeed ‘given’ and, to that extent, they cannot be shifted. But what the speaker can do is *pretend that the context is different from what it is*. If the pretense is mutually manifest, it will be part of what the speaker means that the sentence is uttered in a context different from the actual context *c*. In such a situation a context shift does occur : there are two contexts, the actual context *c* in which the sentence is produced, and the pretend context *c'* in which the utterance presents itself as being produced.

Such a dual context situation, based on pretense, is very common in the literary realm. Thus a novelist can write:

It's been three years since we left the Earth. A couple of weeks after the Last Day, we lost track of the other spaceships. I still don't know what happened to my twin brother Henry. If he is alive, he probably thinks I died in the collision.

Let's imagine that this is the first paragraph of a novel. What is the context for those sentences? Clearly, two sorts of 'context' are relevant here. First, there is the actual context of utterance: the novelist writes those sentences at the beginning of her novel. But that is not the 'context' in the ordinary sense, that is, what determines the reference of indexicals. The word 'I', in the third sentence, does not denote the person who, in the actual context, issues the sentence (the novelist); rather, it purports to denote a character *in* the novel: the narrator, distinguished from the actual author. In a perfectly good sense, then, the context for those sentences is not the actual context, but an imaginary context. In that imaginary context, the speaker is on board of a spaceship, he or she has a twin brother called 'Henry', there has been a collision, etc.²

² This example and the paragraph about it are borrowed from Recanati 2000 : 171.

As Ducrot pointed out many years ago, we need something like the author/narrator distinction to deal with a number of cases of language use in which the actual utterer is not the person whom the utterance itself presents as the speaker ; and we need similar distinctions for the other features of the context (Ducrot 1980 : 35-36, 1984 : 193-203). A simple case of that sort involves a spokesperson reading a speech for someone else, say the President of the company. The word 'I' in the speech will refer to the President, even if the utterer is the spokesperson. Don't object that the President has written the speech, for that need not be the case. The speech may well have been written by the President's aide, and the President need not even have seen and endorsed it. What counts is only that the utterance, as part of its meaning, presents itself as issued by the President. The President is the speaker (hence the referent of 'I'), not because he is the utterer in the actual world, but because he is the utterer in all the worlds compatible with the ongoing pretense.

What must be qualified, then, is the idea that the context is 'given' when it comes to the objective, non-intentional features listed above, such as who the speaker is or when the utterance is made. It turns out that those features themselves are determined by the meaning of the utterance (or of the discourse), which meaning to a large extent depends upon the speaker's intentions. Since they depend upon the speaker's intentions (insofar as the latter are made manifest in the overt manner characteristic of Gricean communication) those features can be shifted through pretense. What the author does in his novel, any language user can do in ordinary discourse.

*

The most significant area in which the utterer/speaker distinction can be fruitfully applied is that of direct speech reports. According to the traditional analysis, in an utterance like

(1) ... and then John said, 'I'm fed up with all this !' And he walked away.

the sentence 'I'm fed up with all this' is not used, but mentioned. As a result, the words do not carry their normal semantic values, and in particular 'I' does not refer to the speaker (Bill, say). What is being referred to is the sentence 'I'm fed up with all this', which contains the word 'I' ; but the word itself does not refer, nor does the sentence in which it occurs say anything in this context. Only the complex, embedding sentence says something : it identifies what John said and states a relation between John and the sentence 'I'm fed up with this'.

Like Ducrot (1984 : 197-199), I take this view to be deeply misguided. The sentence ‘I’m fed up with all this’ is actually used (which is not to say that it is not ‘mentioned’ as well). As for the word ‘I’, it keeps its normal semantic function, that of referring to the speaker. But the speaker is not Bill. To be sure, it is Bill who utters ‘I’m fed up with all this’ in the course of reporting John’s speech. But in uttering this sentence Bill is overtly *playing John’s part* : he temporarily pretends that he is John at the time of the reported speech, and utters the sentence ‘I’m fed up with all this’ accordingly (Clark and Gerrig 1990). The pretense is constitutive of the meaning of the utterance, which presents itself as uttered by John at that time. This is enough to confer to John the status of ‘speaker’, and to the time of the reported speech the status of ‘time of utterance’. In this framework we can maintain that, in the quoted sentence, ‘I’ refers to the speaker, namely John, and the present tense refers to the time of utterance. (1) therefore displays a context shift : the complex sentence is interpreted against a context in which Bill, the utterer, is the speaker and t^* is the actual time of utterance, but the quoted material within the complex sentence is interpreted with respect to a shifted context in which John is the speaker and the time of utterance is some time t such that $t < t^*$, namely the time of the reported speech act.³

Another type of example possibly amenable to treatment in terms of context-shift are examples involving delayed communication, such as

I am dead, my dear children, and you are rich

Imagine that a billionaire recorded that message in order for it to be listened to after his death. The billionaire arguably pretends to be speaking from the grave ; it is with respect to that imaginary context that the utterance is meant to be interpreted. Or consider the following example, analysed in Recanati 1995 :

I have your letter in front of me me, and what you’re reading is my point-by-point response

³ This approach to quotation and direct speech has been pursued by a number of authors, to whom I refer the interested reader (see in particular Clark and Gerrig 1990, Clark 1996, Recanati 2001).

Once again, this is a situation of delayed communication : the speaker is writing his response to the letter in front of him much before the addressee can read the response in question. Still, the two conjuncts are in the present tense, and if we take seriously the idea that the present tense refers to the time of utterance, this suggests that the utterance is meant to be interpreted with respect to an imaginary context in which the act of communication is instantaneous rather than delayed. In other words, the writer speaks as if he was talking to the addressee in a normal, face-to-face communication situation.

A third type of example for which the notion of context-shift seems appropriate involves the so-called historical present and related phenomena. The historical present is a narrative device by means of which we 'presentify' the scene we are reporting, as in this passage :

I had no resources but to request to be shown into a private room: and *here I am waiting, while all sorts of doubts and fears are troubling my mind* (C. Brontë)

By using the present tense in reporting a past scene, the speaker or writer gives the reader or hearer the impression that the scene described is presently happening before them. Arguably, that effect is achieved by shifting the context, i.e. by speaking as if the act of speech was simultaneous with the scene described (Schlenker 2004). Similarly, there are 'presentifying' uses of the spatial indexical 'here', characterized by the fact that one speaks as if the speech was occurring at the very place one is talking about. The following passage, quoted by Predelli from a guidebook (Predelli 1998 : 407), is an example :

If an entire neighborhood could qualify as an outdoor museum, the Mount Washington district would probably charge admission. *Here*, just northwest of downtown, are several picture-book expressions of desert culture within a few blocks.

III. Two types of context and two types of pretense

The notion of context-shifting pretense itself is not univocal. Consider examples like the following :

- (2) *John to Bill* : Okay, I am stupid and I don't understand the matter. Why do you ask me for advice, then ?

Here, presumably, John is echoing Bill's words – perhaps exaggerating them – in the first part of the utterance. The sentence 'I am stupid and I don't understand the matter' is not asserted by John, not even in a concessive manner. What the sentence expresses is something that John puts in the mouth of his addressee, Bill. It is Bill who is supposed to think or say that John is stupid and does not understand the matter ; and his so saying or thinking provides John with a reason for asking the question in the second part of the utterance : 'Why do you ask me for advice, then' ? In a nutshell, the first part of the utterance *displays Bill's assertion*, in an echoic manner. In saying what he says, John is playing Bill's part.

We may describe that sort of case by saying that the speaker engages in a form of pretense and assumes Bill's point of view — puts himself in Bill's shoes. But note how different this sort of pretense is from that illustrated by direct speech reports such as (1). In (2) the indexical 'I' refers to John, not to the person whose view is being expressed or assumed (Bill). Bill himself, if he were to express the view in question, would not say 'I am stupid and I don't understand the matter', but 'You are stupid and do not understand the matter'. So John does not pretend that Bill is *uttering* the sentence, in this example (as opposed to the previous one). It follows that Bill is not 'the speaker', i.e. the person who is presented as uttering the sentence. John, the actual utterer, is the speaker in this example. Still a form of pretense is at work, for John, qua speaker, does not express his own point of view but that of Bill.

A similar phenomenon occurs in irony. In irony the speaker says something without actually asserting what she says or 'makes as if to say' (Grice). The point of view expressed by the utterance is not that of the speaker, but that of another (actual or potential) agent whom the speaker attempts to ridicule by displaying his view in a context in which it is likely to seem dramatically inappropriate (Sperber and Wilson 1981 : 308-310). For example, just after having shown great ingenuity in solving the difficult problem at hand, John can say to Bill : 'Remember, I am stupid and I don't understand the matter'. In saying this John attempts to ridicule Bill : he expresses his view (the view Bill is supposed to have voiced at an earlier point in the conversation) at a time when it is pretty clear that that view dramatically conflicts with the facts. By showing how inept the view is, given the circumstances, the speaker often manages to convey the opposite of that view – but that is not definitive of irony : it is merely a likely consequence of the basic mechanism, involving 'pretense' (Clark and Gerrig 1984) or 'echoic mention' (Sperber and Wilson 1981).

Let us use the label 'displayed assertion' for the type of case I have illustrated : the cases in which the utterer does not pretend that someone else is uttering the sentence but

where, nevertheless, a form of pretense is at work because the speaker expresses the view of someone else rather than his own. In such cases, as we have seen, the reference of 'I' does not shift : in (2), 'I' refers to John, who utters the sentence, rather than to Bill, whose view is being expressed. Tenses also take their normal, unshifted values in such cases. So imagine John is reporting his exchange with Bill, several months later. He can say :

- (3) He kept disparaging my contributions. I was stupid, I did not understand the matter. He would be better off if I stopped helping... — I wasn't discouraged, and I managed to solve the problem.

In (3) we find sentences which express John's point of view ('he kept disparaging my contributions', 'I wasn't discouraged, and I managed to solve the problem') and sentences which express Bill's point of view ('I was stupid, I did not understand the matter', 'he would be better off if I stopped helping'). Even in the latter, however, the pronouns and the tenses take features of the actual context of utterance as indices : the referent of 'I' (the speaker) is John, the referent of 'he' is Bill, and the time of the exchange between John and Bill is presented as past, that is, as anterior to the time of utterance of (3). All this suggests that the context of utterance does not shift in this type of case.

Still, we cannot straightforwardly conclude that no context-shift takes place, for there are plenty of indexicals (e.g. the demonstratives, 'today' and 'tomorrow', 'here' and 'now') whose value is likely to shift when they occur in a displayed assertion. This sort of shift is very common in 'free indirect speech' (a form of displayed assertion to be found in certain literary narratives). What follows is a made up example :

- (4) The butler came back with the answer. Tomorrow, Lady B. would see me with pleasure ; but she was too busy now.

Let us assume (4) is uttered in a context *c*, with John as speaker and *t** as time of utterance. The first person pronoun 'me' in (4) refers to John, and the past tense to a time anterior to *t**, as expected. But 'tomorrow' refers to the day following the day of the reported speech act, rather than to the day following the day on which (4) is uttered. Similarly, 'now' refers to the time of the reported speech act, not to the time of utterance.

Schlenker says that what shifts in such cases is not the context of utterance but the *context of thought* (Schlenker 2004). Even though John is the speaker (the agent of the context of utterance), the thinker (the agent of the context of thought) is Bill ; and a similar distinction can be made with respect to the other features of the context : the time of thought is distinct from the time of utterance, etc. In our example, however, Bill need not really think, or have thought, the thought that is in question (to the effect that John is stupid and does not understand the matter). We can imagine that Bill was insincere, and perhaps overtly so, when he said, or implied, that John was stupid and incompetent. Still John can use (3) to describe the situation. So the notion of ‘context of thought’ is not quite appropriate. Of course, there are many cases in which a sentence in free indirect speech pictures a *thought act* rather than a speech act. But in all cases the act on display is an act of *assertion* or *judgment* or more broadly an expression of attitude⁴ (whether sincere or insincere, public or private). The act of assertion is precisely what the speaker does *not* perform when she says that *p* ironically ; rather, she plays someone else’s part and *mimics* an act of assertion accomplished by that person. She does so not by pretending that that person is speaking — if that were the case, ‘I’ would refer to that person under the pretense – but by herself endorsing the function of speaker and saying that *p*, while (i) not taking responsibility for what is being said, and (ii) implicitly ascribing that responsibility to someone else, namely the person whose act of assertion is being mimicked.

I conclude that the distinction we need is a distinction between the *locutionary context* (the context of utterance, whose agent is John), and the *illocutionary context* (the context of assertion, whose agent is Bill).⁵ In the traditional framework of speech act theory, there is no room for such a distinction. An illocutionary act is taken to be performed *in* performing a locutionary act (Austin 1975), in such a way that there is a single context, and two possibilities. Either the agent of the locutionary act (the speaker) performs the illocutionary act (e.g. seriously asserts the proposition he is expressing) or he does not. If he does, the speaker is the agent of the assertion, the time of speech is the time of the assertion, and so on. So there is a single context, and two acts (the locutionary act and the illocutionary act) performed in that context. If the speaker does not perform the illocutionary act, then, again,

⁴ Among the ‘expressions of attitude’ I include expressions of affective attitudes (as in exclamations, curses, etc.)

⁵ I use ‘illocution’ in an extended sense, to cover thought acts as well as speech acts.

there is a single context, but this time there is a single act performed in that context : the locutionary act.

To account for displayed assertion, a revision of the standard framework has been suggested (Ducrot 1980 : 33-56, Recanati 1981/1987 : 233-35). Remember that the ‘context of utterance’ in the sense that is relevant to the analysis of indexicals is determined by the meaning of the utterance : the utterance, in virtue of its meaning, presents itself as uttered by x , at time t , etc. The speaker (i.e. the reference of ‘I’, distinguished from the actual utterer) is the person the utterance presents as uttering it. We can extend this idea and say that it is also part of the meaning of the utterance that a certain illocutionary act (e.g. the act of asserting that John is stupid) is performed : but instead of saying, as traditional speech act theory does, that an utterance presents a certain illocutionary act as being performed *by this very utterance* (hence in the context of utterance), we can say that the utterance presents a certain illocutionary act as performed by y at time t' and place l' in possible world w' . That is, we drop the assumption that the context of assertion can only be the context of utterance. Normally, of course, the two contexts will coincide ; but, in view of utterances like (2)-(4), one should make room for the possibility of a divergence between them. When the two contexts coincide, the speaker who performs the locutionary act will be said to have performed also the corresponding illocutionary act. Not so when the two contexts do not coincide, as in irony or free indirect speech. In such cases the illocutionary act is not actually performed, but is merely displayed, represented.

The distinction between the two contexts enables us to account for the different behaviour of the pronouns and the tenses on the one hand, and the remaining indexicals on the other hand (Schlenker 2004). The latter can have their value determined by features of the illocutionary context, while tenses and pronouns strictly depend upon the (locutionary) context of utterance.

IV. Conclusion

In this chapter I have distinguished between three types of cases involving a shift of context affecting the semantic values of indexicals. Certain features of the context (the ‘intentional’ features) can be shifted at will. What can be shifted in this way includes — inter alia — the addressee feature of the context, the language feature of the context (including the standards of precision), or the demonstrata. Other features of the context can be shifted through pretense. Following a number of authors, I have distinguished two types of context-shifting

pretense. The first type of context-shifting pretense is illustrated by direct speech reports, delayed communication, the historical present, and the presentifying uses of 'here' which are the spatial counterpart of the historical present. The second type of context-shifting pretense is illustrated by various sorts of displayed assertion (nonquotational echoes, irony, free indirect speech).

I have argued that the distinction between two types of context-shifting pretense corresponds to the distinction between the locutionary act and the illocutionary act. If I am right, speech act theory must be amended so as to make room for a correlative distinction between the locutionary context and the illocutionary context. This distinction makes sense once we realize that the context (whether locutionary or illocutionary) is not a brute reality but, rather, an aspect of the meaning of the utterance. As Ducrot often suggested, the meaning of an utterance is *a picture of the speech act it is used to perform*. In line with the complexity involved in the Austinian notion of speech act, that picture is best construed as twofold : it is both a picture of the locutionary act and a picture of the illocutionary act, each act being presented as taking place in a context that need not be the same in both cases.

References

- Austin, J. 1975: *How to Do Things with Words*. 2nd ed., Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Barwise, J. and J. Perry 1983: *Situations and Attitudes*. Cambridge Mass: MIT Press/Bradford Books.
- Clark, H. 1996: *Using Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- and R. Gerrig 1984: "On the Pretense Theory of Irony". *Journal of Experimental Psychology : General*, 113, pp. 121-126.
- and R. Gerrig 1990: "Quotations as Demonstrations". *Language*, 66, pp. 764-805.
- Ducrot, O. 1980 : « Analyse de texte et linguistique de l'énonciation ». In O. Ducrot et al., *Les Mots du Discours*, Paris : Minuit, pp. 7-56.
- 1984: "Esquisse d'une théorie polyphonique de l'énonciation". In O. Ducrot, *Le Dire et le Dit*, Paris: Minuit, pp. 171-233.
- Grice, P. 1957: "Meaning". *Philosophical Review*, 66, pp. 377-388.
- Kaplan, D. 1989: "Demonstratives". In J. Almog, H. Wettstein and J. Perry (eds.), *Themes from Kaplan*, New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 481-563.
- Lewis, D. 1983: "Scorekeeping in a Language Game". In his *Philosophical Papers, vol.1*, New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 233-249.

- 1998: "Index, Context, and Content". In his *Papers in Philosophical Logic*, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, pp. 21-44.
- Lyons, J. 1975 : « Deixis as the source of reference ». In E. Keenan (ed.), *Formal Semantics of Natural Language*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 61-83.
- Nunberg, G. 1993: "Indexicality and Deixis". *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 16, pp. 1-43.
- Predelli, S. 1998: "Utterance, Interpretation, and the Logic of Indexicals". *Mind and Language*, 13, pp. 400-414.
- Recanati, F. 1981/1987: *Meaning and Force*, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1987 (Eng. trans. of *Les Énoncés performatifs*. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1981).
- 1995: "Le présent épistolaire : une perspective cognitive". *L'Information grammaticale* 66, pp. 38-44.
- 2000: *Oratio Obliqua, Oratio Recta: An Essay on Metarepresentation*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press/Bradford Books.
- 2001 : « Open Quotation ». *Mind* 110, pp. 637-687
- 2004 : « Deixis and Anaphora ». In S. Szabo (ed.), *Semantics vs Pragmatics*, New York : Oxford University Press, p. 286-316.
- Schlenker, P. 2004 : « Context of Thought and Context of Utterance : A Note on Free Indirect Discourse and the Historical Present ». *Mind and Language* 19, pp. 279-304.
- Sperber, D. and D. Wilson 1981: "Irony and the use-mention distinction". In P. Cole (ed.), *Radical Pragmatics*, New York: Academic Press, pp. 295-318.