CONTEXT AND CONTEXTUALIZATION

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1. Preliminaries

One of the widely used definitions of pragmatics (and not the most infelicitous one) is that it deals with the ways in which linguistic utterances become meaningful through their relation to context(s), ways which allow "narrowing down the communicative possibilities of the message as it exists in abstraction from context" (Leech 1975: 77). Consequently, 'context' has become a central notion of pragmatic thinking. Rather than giving an exhaustive overview of such thinking, this article will attempt to outline some of the theoretical problems that have arisen in the discussion of the text-context link, and develop criteria according to which 'theories of context' can be categorized and evaluated.

What is to be considered a 'context' and what the 'text' (or, more generally, the 'focal [semiotic] event' — see Goodwin & Duranti 1992) which it surrounds, is a question that cannot be decided on the basis of 'objective facts': observables do not neatly categorize themselves under these two labels. Instead, seeing something as a focal event and other things as its context is already an interpretation of the perceived stimuli in somebody's environment.

In order to underline the perceptual and interpretive character of 'focal events' and 'contexts', it has been proposed to conceive of them in terms of a figure-ground relationship (Goodwin & Duranti 1992: 10ff). 'Focal events' as figures are perceived as "well outlined, sharply defined, and well articulated", while contexts as grounds "appear far more amorphous, problematic, and less stable" (Goodwin & Duranti 1992).

Another metaphor well suited to highlight the interpretive aspect of the notion of 'context' is Husserl's 'horizon' (*Sinnhorizont*, cf. Gadamer 1972: 286ff.): while the meaning of any event or thing cannot be understood by someone who does not take into account its horizon properly, the horizon itself dissolves as soon as we attempt to describe or analyze it; for whoever tries to reach the horizon will only find himself in another situation which opens up yet another horizon as far out of reach as the original one.

Both the figure-ground and the horizon metaphor hold true for lay identification of 'focal events' against their background or context, just as well as for linguistic theories, which usually work out the details of the linguistic datum (the 'figure'), but gloss over the context (the 'ground') in which it is embedded and/or from which it receives its particular interpretation. Any attempt to turn a part of the 'ground' or 'horizon' into an explanandum will necessarily have to see this explanandum against another 'ground' or 'horizon' in which it is now embedded, and so on.

2. Context is more than deixis

Given this state of affairs, it comes as no surprise that pragmaticists who have worked out linguistic 'theories of context' are usually not interested in the structure or the content of contexts (provided they are not linguistic entities themselves), but rather in the ways in which they are used, invoked, inferred, presupposed, or construed by and in the production and understanding of linguistic utterances. More precisely, the term 'theories of context' should therefore be replaced by 'theories of text-context relationships'.

Such theories may be categorized along three dimensions: according to the aspects of context believed to be relevant for a pragmatic analysis of language (henceforth called the indexed features or phenomena), according to the aspects of language believed to be subject to a context-bound interpretation or meaning assignment (henceforth called indexicals), and finally, according to the type of relationship which is believed to hold between the first and the second. Although these three dimensions are theoretically independent from each other, certain triples of indexed features, indexicals and conceptualizations of the relationship between the two have established themselves in the history of the discipline. In

particular, the triple

- indexed feature = some feature of the physical surroundings here-and-now, such as speaker, hearer, time and place
- indexical = deictic element of a language ('denotational indexical')
- indexed/indexical-relationship = unidirectional (i.e. the context determines the meaning of the linguistic utterance)

has come to be associated with what could be called representational theories of language. The triple represents the most narrow theory (theories) of context in linguistics, but also the one(s) that have received most attention, for the following reasons:

(a) The relevance of context is confined to restricted areas of grammar from which it can be expelled by proper paraphrase; Schneider (1993) speaks of the 'semantization' of pragmatics in this case, consisting in a translation of relevant aspects of context into expressions of the object language, which is then subject to non-pragmatic, e.g. truth-value semantics.

(b) Only those linguistic utterances are seen to be in need of a pragmatic analysis which cannot be assigned referential meaning unless their context-of-occurrence is taken into account. Non-referential aspects of meaning are excluded; linguistic indexicals for these aspects of meaning are neglected.

(c) The relevant indexed elements are looked upon as real world objects 'out there', to which deictic structures refer. As a consequence, context features are regarded as existent prior to and independent of speakers' linguistic activities in or relative to them. (The incompatibility of such a point of view with the above-mentioned gestalt approach to context will be noted; a critique may be found in Hanks 1990).[1]

One way to show that this approach to context is restrictive is to enumerate linguistic structures other than deictic expressions in their denotational function, which nevertheless index entities outside the 'focal event'. What immediately comes to mind here are systems of honorifics which, in many languages, relate

to participants' social roles; here, we may include structurally simple systems such as forms of address or the *tu/vous* pronominal distinction, but also elaborate systems such as those of Japanese or Javanese, which affect major parts of the grammar and lexicon. In this case of what is sometimes misleadingly called 'social deixis',[2] it is not a denotatum in the 'real world out there' which is indexed, but rather a perceived social relationship between the speaker and the addressee, or the referent, or all three. But, of course, not only honorifics are chosen relative to social (role) relationships. Variationist and interactional sociolinguists as well as linguistic anthropologists have accumulated evidence for the claim that variation permeates grammar, from phonetics up to turn-taking; this variation (including its 'ideological' underpinning as part of a 'habitus' in the sense of Bourdieu) is partly an index of speakers' and recipients' social categories, and of the social relationship that holds between them. The selection of a variety from a repertoire — be it a style, register, dialect, vernacular, or language — is subject to the same complex of context variables.

Another large area of linguistic structure which eschews the narrow reading of context-dependence may be subsumed under the heading of 'subjectivity'. (The term alludes to Benveniste's 'subjectivité dans le langage' of 1958. Present-day terms would be 'empathy', 'perspective' or 'point of view'). Contrary to the narrow reading of context in which speakers enter only to the degree that they fix the 'origo' for denotational action, the impact of the speaking subject under this view extends to how his or her life-world, likings and dislikings, identification with persons or events referred to, etc., is reflected in and indexed by syntax and morphology, lexicon and prosody. This is particularly clear in the case of what Jakobson (1971) has called 'evidentials', i.e. grammatical (morphological) means by which a speaker signals his or her commitment to the truth of a statement (cf., e.g., the Turkish 'dubitative' verbal affixes). In addition, work by Kuno (1987: 203ff) and others has demonstrated how the selection of certain syntactic constructions (such as passives, subordination, sentence mood) and lexical items (certain reciprocal verbs, certain verbs of motion, etc.) can be explained by reference to the speaker's empathy. The function of prosody, particularly intonation, to display the speaker's point of view has been acknowledged since the beginnings of modern linguistics (cf., among many others, Voloshinov 1976 [1926]). Only recently has it been shown that this expression of subjectivity in language is not individualistic and unstructured, but follows recurrent,

conventionalized patterns.[3]

In addition to the speaker's 'point of view', grammatical structure also depends on and reflects the recipient's point of view; pragmatic distinctions between 'given' and 'new' information or 'thematic' and 'rhematic' constructions which have been shown to be central for word order and other syntactic phenomena such as left- and right-dislocations, capitalize on precisely this aspect of context.

Finally, syntax is an index to co-participants' shared background knowledge. Fillmore, Kay & O'Connor (1988) have demonstrated this link in their analysis of the conjunction 'let alone' (e.g. 'I wouldn't hire Smith, let alone Jones'), which construes a scalar model of interpretation in which the second proposition expresses the answer to a factual or hypothetical question, but the first proposition establishes some point of comparison, which by presupposed common knowledge is superior to the second. Without the knowledge that Smith is quite an alcoholic, and Jones even more so, the conjunction could not be understood correctly. The same argument can be made for other parts of syntax.

Dependence on shared knowledge is also found in the structure of the lexicon, where single lexical items point to others to which they are bound by cultural convention and with which they form a semantic field (Trier 1934). In the famous mini-story *The baby cried. The mommy picked it up* discussed by Sacks (1972), an adequate understanding is only possible when 'mommy'/'baby', but also 'mommy'/'pick up' and 'baby'/'cried' are seen as parts of a frame-like whole, such that mentioning one of them activates the other, or the first ('category-member') activates the second ('category-bound activity'), respectively. The effectiveness and elegance of the working of such a 'membership categorization device' depends on knowledge about the set-up of a 'family'; in a culture in which only grandparents take care of the children, its interpretation would be quite different from what it is in a Western cultural context.[4]

The few examples given here may be sufficient to show that the relevance of contextual factors for the understanding of linguistic structures is not restricted to the case of deixis. When we move from grammar and lexicon to a broader (and indeed, 'pragmatic') conception of language as social action, this relevance becomes even less disputable.[5] It is here that the 'semantization' of pragmatics has failed in particularly obvious ways: early attempts to describe the meaning of 'speech acts' by relating them to underlying 'performative verbs' are generally

dismissed as misleading and inadequate today. The meaning of an utterance qua social activity (*Handlung*) cannot be reduced to a speaker's mental state ('intention') to perform such an activity; nor can it be dealt with by the semantic description of a 'performative' verb which seems to correspond to this mental state. Instead, it is the joint achievement of both the speaker and his or her recipients, to make an utterance meaningful in its context-of-occurrence. In Voloshinov's words, such an activity is not simply fitted into, the result of, or caused by its context: it 'resolves' it (1976: 100; also cf. his materialistic notion of dialogue).

The most radical alternative to the 'semanticizing' approach to context has been formulated by ethnomethodologists (Garfinkel 1967), who assume any linguistic (or other) activity's indexicality to be "obstinately unavoidable and irremediable", whatever "remedial actions" investigators may engage in (Garfinkel & Sacks 1970: 349). Although lay members — or professionals — may, for some reason and for some purpose, 'formulate' parts of an interaction, i.e., they may 'say-in-so-many-words-what-we-are-doing', these 'accounts' themselves display indexical features; in this way, context becomes relevant at different hierarchical levels of (meta-)linguistic action, but it can never be expelled from it. Accounts are always informed by their occasions of use.

3. Which contexts do we need to consider?

If we are willing to accept a wide notion of context, it is useful to distinguish types of indexed entities in order to come to grips with the complexity of the sign/context interface.[6]

In a pre-theoretical, but intuitively plausible way, five dimensions of context suggest themselves:

(a) linguistic contexts (sometimes called co-texts),

(b)   non-linguistic sense-data in the surroundings of the linguistic activity (the situation in a physical sense),

(c) features of the social situation,

(d)   features of participants' common background knowledge other than (a)-(c), and

(e) the channel of communication (the medium).

Links between a linguistic sign and its co-textual features have been thoroughly studied as means for establishing textual cohesion (cf. Halliday & Hasan 1976); here, anaphoric and cataphoric pro-forms play a decisive role.[7] (The longstanding linguistic interest in these textual functions may be a consequence of the fact that the linguistic means employed for them overlap considerably with those used for deixis).[8] But note that textual cohesion can also be established by syntactic (parenthesis, left- and right dislocation, pronoun dropping, repetition, etc.) and prosodic (particularly intonational) means.[9]

While cohesion is a matter of grammatical means, and conversational sequencing a matter of act(ivitie)s and their linking (and while the way in which Halliday et al. on the one hand, and conversation analysts on the other conceive of the text-context link is very different), intra-textual links between focal events and their co-texts are established in both cases. Research in conversation analysis has shown that conversational activities ('moves') prestructure (to different degrees) the following conversational slot with respect to speaker as well as activity selection. 'Adjacency pairs' represent a particularly strong kind of sequential link; other activities (e.g., first parts in 'action chains') leave more alternatives for the sequentially next activity open. They are related to each other by a system of 'preference organization'.[10]

In the case of cohesion, as well as conversational sequencing, 'focal events' are related to their co-texts by a relationship of (immediate or mediate) adjacency on the same hierarchical level of text structure. What represents a co-text for a given linguistic sign may also be located on a superordinate level of linguistic structure, however. This is the case when utterances are parts of larger speech activities, speech events, or genres. These 'larger events' will then provide the context for the 'focal event', which is embedded in them. For instance, an utterance may be co-textually embedded as an 'orientation' to a 'story'. In this case, the superordinated co-text informs the organization and interpretation of the subordinated one, just as the latter contributes and, in a way, helps to 'achieve' the first.

A final component of co-text which brings us to the fringes of the linguistic dimension of context is given by the intertextual relationship between texts produced on different occasions. Following Bakhtin (1986), it is more and

more recognized that texts often (or, in some theories, always) respond to prior texts, and, at the same time, anticipate subsequent ones. (Indeed, some linguists have proposed to see context as yet another collection of texts indexed by the focal text). While Bakhtin's notion of intertextuality includes sequentiality in the sense of conversation analysis, the more interesting aspect of intertextuality refers to distant text relationships across situations. Here, texts may relate to actual other texts by referring to or quoting them; or they may index prior traditions of formal structures in text production, as in the case of re-uses or adaptations, changes or amalgamations of one or various genres (cf. Briggs & Baumann 1992).[11]

The second dimension of context is given by the physical surroundings of the speech situation, i.e. the 'things' and 'events' in the co-participants' sensual (particularly visual) reach. Everything that can be 'pointed'[12] to, including time, may become an indexed feature of a deictic expression. The second dimension of context therefore seems to be directly linked to the 'narrow' construal of context. There is, however, an alternative tradition to this rather static approach to the situational environment of speech: Malinowski (1923) first drew linguist-ethnographers' attention to a language that does not have the dignity of many written texts — i.e., being detached from the social activities of everyday life — but which is part of a stream of verbal and non-verbal activities, both of which are intertwined and depend on each other for their interpretation. His famous description of the Trobriand islanders coming back from a fishing expedition into the lagoon gives an example of such 'language in action' (where the 'in' refers both literally and idiomatically to 'action'). Here, the verbal components of the situation as it develops in time are certainly not autonomous; and their relationship to the 'context-of-situation' is far more intricate than could be analyzed on the basis of deixis alone. In fact, the verbal components are often only secondary — less essential to, less constitutive of the action than the non-verbal ones. Nevertheless, they may take on decisive importance at some points. Bühler (1934: 154ff), who elaborated on this (what he calls) 'empractic' use of language from a more linguistic perspective in his analysis of 'situational ellipsis' (presumably without knowing Malinowski's work), aptly calls them 'diacritics' on non-verbal activities.

Bühler's and Malinowski's work underlines (without making it explicit) the ambiguous role the human body plays both as a context for a focal event (located between the linguistic text and the physical surroundings) and as a carrier for

contextualizing semiotic events (cf. Goodwin & Duranti 1992 for further discussion).

As a third dimension of context, the social situation was mentioned. It includes the constellation of participants, their social roles and the social activity they are engaged in. The analysis of the different 'alignments' a co-participant may establish with a particular linguistic utterance (i.e., his or her 'participant role') is one of the main topics in Goffman's work. For Goffman, a 'social situation' is 'an environment of mutual monitoring possibilities' within a 'gathering' (1964: 135). Within such a social situation, it is not enough to distinguish 'speaker' and 'hearer', as used to be done in the traditional, cybernetically based models of communication. Instead, Goffman distinguishes, on the production side, between an 'animator' who is the 'sound box' for the message, an 'author' who is responsible for its wording, and a 'principal', 'a party to whose position the words attest' (Goffman 1979). On the reception side, the 'addressed recipient' and 'unaddressed recipients' are ratified participants to an encounter, while 'overhearers' ('bystanders') and 'eavesdroppers' are non-ratified listeners of other people's encounters.[13] Which participant role a person is in provides a context for how this person is permitted to act.

While Goffman's approach is restricted to the realm of what he calls the 'interaction order', other ethnographers and linguists (e.g. in the tradition of the ethnography of speaking/communication) would include participants' interactional and social roles and the type of 'speech event' (e.g., medical consultation, birthday party, telephone enquiry) into a definition of the social situation as well. Interactional roles may be a function of the 'speech event'; for instance, a 'medical consultation' requires participants to take over, at least temporarily, the roles of 'doctor' and 'patient'. Other (aspects of one's) social roles, which tend to be transsituationally more stable and which are not *eo ipso* bound to the type of speech event co-participants are engaged in, are social class or caste, ethnic affiliation, gender or age.

The fourth dimension of context — that of participants' common background knowledge — is of particular complexity. Research on this dimension may be located in the tradition of phenomenological approaches to the structure of the lifeworld, the essential structural principles of which have been outlined in Alfred Schütz' work (cf. Schütz & Luckmann 1976); it has also been elaborated in the tradition of formal pragmatics and presupposition theory (Sperber & Wilson

1986), and more recently, there have been attempts to formalize knowledge in artificial intelligence (cf. e.g. Reichman 1984; Putnam 1988).

There is an obvious overlap with the previous dimensions. What has been mentioned before in a text may become an indexed feature of the co-text of a later utterance; at the same time, it is part of the situation-specific common background knowledge participants may rely on in the production and interpretation of future activities. Similarly, social roles can only become visibly relevant for an interaction because their attributes, including rules of linguistic conduct, are part of participants' shared knowledge, etc. Thus, underlining the knowledge aspect is sometimes just another perspective on context which focuses, not so much on objective facts as indexed objects, but rather on (inter-)subjective interpretations and typifications. Seen from this perspective, a useful distinction is one that relies on the reach or domain (*Gültigkeitsbereich*) of a particular piece of knowledge.[14] Knowledge is accumulated between participants during a particular interactive episode; this very specific knowledge may be partly forgotten after the episode, or it may be partly transferred to a stock of knowledge which accumulates between these same participants in the course of their 'history of interaction'. A larger *Gültigkeitsbereich* is involved when knowledge which is characteristic to a certain profession (reflected, for instance, in a professional code or 'register'), a neighborhood, a 'subculture', etc. becomes a relevant context of interaction. Finally, knowledge on how to behave properly within a given (ideal) community which is shared by all its members may be invoked for the understanding of a 'focal event'. Here, we reach the maximal domain within which knowledge is shared among participants, i.e. that of common 'culture'.

In the latter domain, looking at participants' background knowledge is not simply a different way of looking at the same indexed elements, but covers an additional range of phenomena. The 'culture' perspective is a central component of the Firth/Halliday tradition of linguistic research, but also of the ethnography of speaking/communication and other branches of anthropological linguistics.[15] Attempts have been made to formalize restricted components of this knowledge, using notions of 'schema', 'script', or 'frame'.

The final dimension of context is that of the channel or medium in which the interaction takes place. For many, including the 'Western' cultures, the technology that has had most impact on language is writing (cf. Ong 1982). The influence of modern or recent technologies — such as telephone, telegram, e-mail,

automatic answering machines — is only beginning to be investigated.

4. The nature of the contextual link

Enumerating types of contexts is more of an illustrative or heuristic endeavour than a theoretically rewarding or satisfying one. This is so because there is some justification in the claim that basically everything can become a 'context' for a linguistic 'focal event'. The more interesting question surely is *how* this 'becoming-a-context-for-something' is accomplished. It is precisely this question which has been moved into the forefront of pragmatic thinking recently.

The remainder of this article will therefore look at some theoretical problems concerning the link between indexed features of the context and their corresponding linguistic indexicals.

Here, we encounter two very different traditions. The first approach to the text/context link which was associated with the 'narrow approach' to context mentioned above, is characteristic of much structuralist thinking about the issue. It leaves the focal event distinct from context (and therefore autonomous). In addition to traditional linguistic work on deixis, Halliday's & Hasan's work on cohesion, Goffman's early work on the 'social situation' and early work within the ethnography of speaking/communication are typical representatives. The second approach, which will be sketched in this section, argues that every focal event conveys presuppositions about its context and thus 'contextualizes' its locus of occurrence. Typical representatives of this approach are ethnomethodology and conversation analysis, but also modern ethnography (micro-ethnography, interactional sociolinguistics) and linguistic anthropology (performance studies), neo-Gricean theories of presupposition and implicature and some research in AI.

4.1. The creativity of contextualization

Contrary to the narrow and structuralist approach to context, theories of contextualization see the relationship between 'focal event' and context as a reflexive, dialectic one. This means that it is not only the 'focal event' that receives its adequate interpretation from a given context; so, too, do the indexicals which make relevant, invoke, actualize, maintain, etc. contextual frames. The

latter point is underlined in Gumperz' work on 'contextualization' (Gumperz 1982, 1992a, 1992b; Auer & Di Luzio (eds.) 1992); coparticipants, so Gumperz argues, not only engage in fitting their utterances into contexts existing prior to and independent from their verbal and non-verbal activities; a major task in making interaction work consists in additionally making these contexts jointly available through what he calls 'contextualization cues'. In this perspective, which draws on prior work in 'context analysis' (e.g. by Bateson 1956[16] and by Goffman 1974), understanding consists of the semantic interpretation of lexico-grammatical structure together with the (culture-bound) interpretation of these contextualization cues, which are usually non-representational signs (prosody, gesture, choice of register, variety or style, etc.).

Many theorists of context share this basic assumption, but make a difference between more and less contextualizing indexicals, or between 'relatively presupposing' and 'relatively creative' indexicals (Silverstein 1976, 1979). A typical instance of the first kind would be local deictics (presupposing an object 'out there' to which they refer), a typical instance of the second kind would be inclusive vs. exclusive first person plural pronouns (creating a grouping of participants which has no necessary counterpart in the 'world out there'). It is a matter of debate if an indexical can be exclusively presupposing and completely uncreative; local deictics, for instance, surely also create (in addition to presupposing) an indexed object in drawing participants' attention to something, the presence of which they may not have been aware of before.

It should be underlined that the distinction between more or less presupposing/creative contexts is not coextensive with that between 'micro' and 'macro' contexts (cf. Knorr-Cetina 1981).

4.2. The vagueness of contextualization

Another important theoretical issue concerns the extent to which the identification of indexed objects is determined by their corresponding indexicals. There is good reason to believe that indexicals underspecify the contexts they point to, at least in the typical case. From research on deixis, the denotational vagueness of local or temporal expressions such as *here* or *then* is well known. Other indexicals hardly fare better; this is particularly true for 'contextualization cues' in the sense of J. Gumperz. For instance, although interactants are, for all practical purposes,

able to understand the contribution of a certain pitch contour or gesture to ongoing talk, they would hardly give the same paraphrase of this understanding, when asked. The link between indexical and indexed entitity must therefore be conceived of as ambiguous and context-specific in itself. In addition, more than one (type of) indexical(s) may have to be processed at the same time, which may support each other (be 'redundant') or not (be 'contradictory').

4.3. The negotiability of context

At a given point in time, more than one context may be 'in play'. This may either be due to the hierarchical embedding of various contexts into each other, or to the different indexed dimensions of reality they represent, such that contextual frames may be invoked and remain valid at the same time (e.g., the frame of 'story-telling' and of 'classroom interaction', or of 'story-telling' and 'boasting'). It may also be the case that at a given point in time, more than one context is alternatively available, and that participants switch to and fro between these multiple contexts (cf. Goodwin & Goodwin 1992). A realistic assumption of how human interaction works would be that contexts are never completely shared by participants (Rommetveit 1988). This corresponds with the ethnomethodological claim that any (members' or scientists') attempt at explicating what a given utterance 'actually' means by contextualizing it, will be in itself an endless(ly context-bound) task: "Not only does no concept of context-in-general exist, but every use of 'context' without exception is itself essentially indexical" (Garfinkel 1967: 10; cf. his 'etc-principle').

4.4. The groundedness of context in interactional work

However much a context may be presupposing, its relevance for a given 'focal event' is not a matter of course but must be established in one way or another. Given the in-principle ambiguity of the separation between focal events and their context(s), co-participants in an interaction are constantly engaged in making sure that they orient to the same (yet changing) context(s), in which their acting will become meaningful. Valid contexts must therefore be seen as negotiated/achieved interactional facts.

Methodologically, this groundedness of context in interactional work

requires analysts to validate their claims to the relevance of contexts by showing that such interactional work has in fact been done. Contexts, then, are no 'free goods' available to analysts in all sizes for the interpretation of a given text.[17]

4.5. The culturality of contextualization

Contextualization as the retrieval of frame-like knowledge through contextualization 'cues' is based on shared practices within a relevant social group; relevant cues are acquired in childhood or through frequent contact through a shared history of interaction.

4.6. Indexicality - iconicity - symbolization

An unresolved theoretical problem is the exact semiotic relationship between indexical and indexed phenomena. By their very nature, indexicals 'point' to the contexts they invoke or identify; in Peirce's terms, they do so by virtue of a relationship of contiguity. However, few indexicals are pure 'indices' in Peirce's sense; usually, there is an admixture of symbolic elements (qua convention) or iconic elements (qua similarity). Again, this is well known from deixis (cf. the symbolic part of the *here/there* opposition within local deixis); yet, it extends to indexicals in the wider approach to context just as well. It is an intriguing question to ask how much iconicity and how much symbolic conventionality enters into 'contextualization cues', for example.

4.7. Using contexts

'Putting something into context' (contextualizing it), 'putting something out of context' (decontextualizing it) and 'putting something into a different context' (recontextualizing it, cf. Bauman & Briggs 1990) are both everyday and scientific activities.[18] They point to the fact that participants may be engaged in processes of contextual transformation in which 'focal events' are separated from their original locus of occurrence and their indexicals thereby cut off from the elements they had originally indexed. These events are then in need of a new context in order to become once more, but differently, meaningful. A classic example for such recontextualization is 'reported speech'; but note that the availability of

speech recording as a commodity of everyday life and of the media has multiplied recontextualization resources in modern societies.

Although every (verbal/social) activity is indexical, speech activities, text-types or genres may be classified according to their relative degree of contextualization. It is possible to construe relatively self-contained and relatively de-contextualized texts in which the situational aspects of context are neutralized. Such 'displaced' (vs. 'situated', cf. Auer 1988) forms of language (text, genre, discourse) can be distinguished in oral language (where, among other things, they play a central role in the construction of narrative genres), but the possibility of achieving gradual decontextualization and 'displacement' must also be seen and analyzed as a precondition for the emergence of literacy.

Notes

1.   For a thorough critique of the narrow approach to context, the reader is referred to Schneider (1993) and Silverstein (1976, 1992). According to Silverstein, the privileged position of the narrow construal of context in linguistics is related to (and even a consequence of) the semiotically based 'limits of [speakers'] awareness' which biases their metalinguistic abilities towards 'referential, segmental and maximally creative' features of language.

2.   The term is misleading if the notion of deixis is restricted to denotational or referential indexicals.

3.   Cf. recently: Günthner (1996); Uhmann (1996); Selting (1994) on the prosody of 'indignation', 'ridiculing', 'expressive assessments' and similar 'emotional' aspects of language.

4.   Cf. Bilmes (1993) for lexical and grammatical implicature from an ethnomethodological point of view.

5.   As an early transition from the semanticizing to the pragmatic point of view, note Benveniste's notion of *énonciation* (1970).

6.   Various proposals have been made to list the different components of those aspects of 'context' that may be relevant for language. Dell Hymes' SPEAKING acronym has been one of the most influential ones (Hymes 1972); other influential ones are given by Halliday (e.g. Halliday & Hasan 1985), Blom & Gumperz (1972), more recently also by Goodwin & Duranti (1992) and Auer (1992). The selection and discussion of context types is necessarily restricted here to the most fundamental ones.

7.   Of course, it is well known that anaphoric and cataphoric links between full forms and pro-forms are not always based on referential 'continuity'.

8.   For a discussion of the difference between deixis and anaphora, cf. Ehlich (1982). It should be noted that the parallel treatment of anaphora and cataphora is indicative of a planar, non-linear (and basically literate) visualization of language as a non-temporal, textual form.

9.   For the latter, cf. e.g. Couper-Kuhlen (1983).

10.   For an overview, cf. Atkinson & Heritage (eds.) (1984: 53-165) and Levinson (1983: 332-364).

11.   For further reading on the link between intertextuality and the construction of discourses, cf. Fairclough (1992).

12.   To speak of 'pointing' in this case obviously requires a rather loose usage of the term, including metaphorical extensions not present in everyday language. Since Bühler (1934), 'pointing' gestures such as the voice of the speaker, eye-movements or body orientation are accepted parts of deixis.

13.   Follow-up work on these distinctions can be found in Charles Goodwin (1984), Marjorie H. Goodwin (1990) and Levinson (1988).

14.   Cf. Kjolseth's (1972) distinction between 'background', 'foreground', 'emergent grounds' and 'transcendent grounds'.

15.   Apart from earlier treatments in the Humboldtian tradition, it is once more Malinowski whose 'ethnographic view of language' was a breakthrough towards the view on language that takes culture seriously. (Cf. "language is essentially rooted in the reality of the culture, the tribal life and customs of a people, and that it cannot be explained without constant reference to these broader contexts of verbal utterance" 1926: 305). See Halliday & Hasan (1985) for an overview of this tradition; for anthropological approaches to cultural contexts, see Geertz (1973). Important contributions in modern linguistic anthropology towards a better understanding of cultural contexts and their relation to linguistic structure have derived from the interest in cross-cultural communication, particularly in the work of J. Gumperz (e.g. 1982, and (ed.) 1982).

16.   For a summary of this tradition of research and its importance for the analysis of 'non-verbal' communication, cf. Kendon (1990, Ch. 2).

17.   Cf. Sacks (1976), and with reference to 'ethnicity' as a context Moerman (1968). Divergent points of view have been stated in Labov & Fanshel (1977: 73, 30, 352) and Oevermann et al. (1976).

18.   Cf. Schegloff (1992) who, however, starts from a very impoverished notion of context.

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