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Determining (away) indexical shift

In cases of indexical shift, so-called indexical pronouns like 'I', 'you', 'here' and 'now' which occur in the scope of some intensional predicate refer to the Speaker, Addressee, Location, and Time, respectively, of the intensional event described by that predicate, rather than to the utterance event. Thus, in a language like Zazaki (Iranian), the sentence "Ali said that I am sick" can have the reading that Ali said that *Ali* was sick (Anand and Nevins, 2004). In this talk, I will argue that shifty indexicals are structurally distinct from rigid/unshiftable ones and that this distinction aligns exactly with the weak vs. strong distinction independently postulated amongst pronouns to explain variation wrt. person restrictions (Cardinaletti and Starke, 1999; Déchaine and Wiltschko, 2002; Gruber, 2013). Concretely, I will propose, that shifty indexicals (like clitics and agreement markers) are structurally deficient weak pronouns. They are ϕPs and lack a D layer (Stegovec, 2020) which is a locus for contextual anchoring (Gruber, 2013; Raynaud, 2020). Such indexicals may thus be contextually manipulated when they are merged in the scope of an attitude predicate, understood in terms of Agree between a contextual probe and corresponding goal. Rigid indexicals, in contrast, pattern with strong pronouns: they are DPs and are contextually anchored internal to the DP rendering them inert for further contextual manipulation.

I show that such a proposal elegantly accounts for apparent exceptions to the Shift Together constraint on indexical shift (the restriction that, in an intensional environment where two or more shiftable indexicals occur, no indexical may shift to the exclusion of another; i.e. either all must shift, or none may shift, cf. Anand, 2006; Deal, 2020, a.o.) in Tamil (McFadden and Sundaresan, 2022) and supported by additional evidence (Sundaresan, 2018) from Korean, Slovenian (Stegovec and Kaufmann, 2015), Late Egyptian (Kammerzell and Peust, 2002) & Mishar Tatar (Podobryaev, 2014). In such languages, indexicals simply occur in both strong and weak shapes. When a weak indexical co-occurs with a strong one in a local intensional domain, the former shifts to the exclusion of the latter yielding what looks like a Shift Together exception. This analysis also lends insight into a curious (hitherto undiscussed) typological gap in indexical shifting: while there are languages with (weak/strong) indexical doublets where the shifty indexical is covert while the rigid indexical is overt, the reverse is never the case. Reframing the shifty vs. rigid contrast in terms of weak vs. strong, respectively, allows us to explain this gap by analogy if not principle: weak pronouns tend to be silent, while strong ones do not. More broadly, such a proposal, if correct, unifies, for the first time, independently observed morphosyntactic distinctions between strong and weak pronouns with the shiftability of indexicals in an intensional domain. Non-trivially, it also entails that indexical shift must itself have a syntactic component.

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