

Free Indirect Discourse and *De Re* Pronouns

This paper examines some differences between Indirect Discourse (ID) and Free Indirect Discourse (FID) and argues that these differences are explained if the semantics of FID allows *de re* interpretations only of expressions that are inherently *de re* (such as the 1st person pronoun).

Background. FID is a literary technique that narrators use to convey the point of view of a character in a story. It is illustrated in (1), from which we may infer that John said, thinking of the speaker (i.e., the author of this abstract): “She will have a lot on her mind today”. This means that *I* in FID refers to the speaker, but the adverbial *today* refers to the day surrounding the time where the attitude holder locates himself (in this case, John’s “today” (= the speaker’s “yesterday”); see Banfield (1982), Doron (1991)). In the ID in (2), *I* refers to the speaker just like it does in FID, but *today* refers to the day surrounding the time where the speaker locates herself:

(1) I would have a lot on my mind today(, complained John yesterday on his way home).

(2) John complained yesterday on his way home that I would have a lot on my mind today.

To explain this contrast, we may say (following Doron 1991) that in FID, the embedded clause is interpreted relative to two contexts: the utterance context (tied to the speaker), and the embedded context (tied to the attitude holder). We may also stipulate that: (a) the utterance context fixes the value of *I* and the embedded context fixes the value of *today*; and (b) in ID, by contrast, the embedded clause is interpreted relative to one context only – the utterance context. This paper argues that such an explanation is insufficient. In order to explain additional contrasts between ID and FID (related to *de re* readings), the notion of “context” needs to be enriched, and include a variable assignment (in addition to a speaker/author, a world, a time, a location, etc.).

FID/ID contrasts regarding *de re* readings. As the following contrasts show, not all pronouns are interpreted *de re* in FID (but they may all be interpreted *de re* in ID). The 1st person pronoun (see (1)) is interpreted *de re* in FID, but the 3rd person pronoun is not.

Gender-identification errors: Consider the scenario in (3), and how it may be reported ((4)/(5)):

(3) Scenario: John sees Bill (a male individual), and mistakes him for Mary (a female individual). John says to himself: “Really, she looks great today”.

(4)a. *Really, he looked great today(, thought John). FID

b. Really, she looked great today(, thought John). FID

(5)a. John thought that he looked great that day. ID

b. #John thought that she looked great that day. ID

The fact that the FID in (4a) is bad suggests that *he* is not interpreted *de re*: Bill is a female according to John. By contrast, the ID in (5a) is good because *he* is interpreted *de re*.

Condition B/C effects: The second sentence in (6) is FID; the second sentence in (7) is ID:

(6) John looked at Mary, who was playing outside. Really, she seemed taller than Mary, he thought. He didn’t know that it was Mary he was looking at.

(7) John looked at Mary, who was playing outside. #He thought that she seemed taller than Mary. He didn’t know that it was Mary he was looking at.

In (6), *she* need not refer to Mary, thus avoiding a Condition C violation. In (7), *she* refers to Mary, and a Condition C violation arises. Once again, this suggests that in the ID in (7), *she* is interpreted *de re*, but in the FID in (6) it is not. (Note: Many speakers can treat *she* in (7) as an E-type pronoun. This strategy avoids the Condition C violation, but it requires additional text between the first and second sentences (e.g., “John looked at Mary, who was playing outside. A happy child stared at him. He thought that she was taller than Mary. He didn’t know...”)).

The paper shows that FID and ID also contrast in: (a) the availability of ‘double access’ readings of a present-under-past; and (b) the antecedent options of *it*. It is claimed that these contrasts, too, support the hypothesis that non-first-person pronouns are interpreted *de re* in ID

but not in FID. But such contrasts are unexpected under Doron’s proposal, unless we understand “context” to encode the way variables receive their values. The current proposal is, then, that a context determines not only an author/speaker, a time, a world, etc., but also a variable assignment (reflecting the author’s point of view). Thus, if the embedded clause in ID contains a free pronoun, it receives its value from the utterance context/assignment. But if the embedded clause in FID contains a free pronoun, it receives its value from the embedded context/assignment (which may differ from the utterance assignment). The FID operator manipulates contexts, but attitude verbs do not. More concretely, the current proposal is this:

(8) $c = \langle \text{author, (addressee,) time, world, location, \dots, assignment} \rangle$

(9) If α is a matrix clause, $\llbracket \alpha \rrbracket^{f,C}$ is defined only if $c = C$ (where C is the utterance context).

(10) For any contexts c and C , variable α , and index i , $\llbracket \alpha_i \rrbracket^{f,C}$ is defined only if i is in $\text{Dom}(\text{assignment}(c))$. When defined, $\llbracket \alpha_i \rrbracket^{f,C} = \text{assignment}(c)(i)$.

Attitude verbs. According to the semantics of *think* along the lines of Stechow 1982, and our notion of “context”, (5a) has the following interpretation (the embedded *past* is interpreted as a zero-tense – a Sequence of Tense effect; ‘8’ is a vacuous abstractor over variables of type ‘e’):

(11) When defined, $\llbracket \text{John } past_1 \text{ think-@ } [8 \ 2 \ 3 \ [he_6 \ past_2 \ look-w_3 \ great]] \rrbracket^{f,C} = 1$ iff there is a suitable individual-concept k (e.g., $[\lambda x \in D_e . \lambda t \in D_t . \lambda w \in D_s . \text{the unique } y \text{ } x \text{ sees in } w \text{ at } t]$) s.t. $k(\text{John})(\llbracket past_1 \rrbracket^{f,C})(\text{world}(c)) = \llbracket he_6 \rrbracket^{f,C}$, and for all individual-time-world triples $\langle x, t, w \rangle$ compatible with what John believes in world(c) at $\llbracket past_1 \rrbracket^{f,C}$, $k(x)(t)(w)$ looks great in w at t . $\llbracket he_6 \rrbracket^{f,C}$ is a male in c , and since $c=C$, $\llbracket he_6 \rrbracket^{f,C} = \text{assignment}(C)(6)$ (=Bill in scenario (3)).

FID. A FID clause is prefixed by a (silent) FID-operator, which has the following semantics:

(12) For any $x \in D_e$, $t \in D_t$, $w \in D_s$, and any function f from contexts to functions of type $\langle e, \langle i, \langle s, t \rangle \rangle \rangle$, $\llbracket FID \rrbracket^{f,C}(x)(t)(w)(f)$ is defined only if all contexts c' compatible with what x believes in w at t are compatible with C relative to $\langle x, t, w \rangle$. When defined, $\llbracket FID \rrbracket^{f,C}(x)(t)(w)(f) = 1$ iff for all contexts c' compatible with what x believes in w at t , $f(c')(\text{author}(c'))(\text{time}(c'))(\text{world}(c')) = 1$.

(13) c' is compatible with C relative to $\langle x, t, w \rangle$ iff: for every j in $\text{Dom}(\text{assignment}(c'))$ there is a suitable individual concept, k_j , such that: (i) $\text{assignment}(C)(j) = k_j(x)(t)(w)$; and (ii) $\text{assignment}(c')(j) = k_j(\text{author}(c'))(\text{time}(c'))(\text{world}(c'))$.

The embedded clause in FID is of same type as the embedded clause in ID: $\langle e, \langle i, \langle s, t \rangle \rangle \rangle$. So in order for *FID* to combine with that clause, (14) is invoked, and (4a) is interpreted as in (15).

(14) If α is a branching node whose daughters are β and γ , and $[\lambda c' . \llbracket \gamma \rrbracket^{f,C}]$ is in the domain of $\llbracket \beta \rrbracket^{f,C}$, then $\llbracket \alpha \rrbracket^{f,C} = \llbracket \beta \rrbracket^{f,C}([\lambda c' . \llbracket \gamma \rrbracket^{f,C}])$.

(15) When defined, $\llbracket [[[FID\text{-}John] \ ST] \ SW] [8 \ 2 \ 3 \ [he_6 \ past_2 \ look-w_3 \ great]] \rrbracket^{f,C} = 1$ iff for all contexts c' compatible with what John believes at time(story) in world(story), $k_6(\text{author}(c'))(\text{time}(c'))(\text{world}(c'))$ looks great in world(c') at time(c') (where $\llbracket he_6 \rrbracket^{f,C} = k_6(\text{author}(c'))(\text{time}(c'))(\text{world}(c'))$; and $\llbracket he_6 \rrbracket^{f,C} = k_6(\text{John})(\text{time}(\text{story}))(\text{world}(\text{story})) = \text{Bill}$).

$\llbracket he_6 \rrbracket^{f,C}$ is a male in c' . Since John thinks he sees a female, (4a) comes out bad in scenario (3).

I vs. today. *I* is inherently *de re* (due to its presupposition). By contrast, *today*, like *he/she*, is not:

(16) $\llbracket I_j \rrbracket^{f,C}$ is defined only if $\text{assignment}(C)(j) = \text{author}(C)$. When defined, $\llbracket I_j \rrbracket^{f,C} = \text{assignment}(c)(j)$.

(17) $\llbracket today \rrbracket^{f,C}$ is the day surrounding time(c).

Thus, *I* refers to the speaker in ID and FID, but *today* refers to the speaker’s “today” only in ID.

Conclusion. No expression is interpreted *de re* in FID, unless it is inherently *de re* (like *I*). This result has the additional advantage that it derives Doron’s observation (see also Schlenker 2003 and Banfield 1982) that definite descriptions in FID are interpreted strictly *de dicto*.

References: Banfield, A. (1982), *Unspeakable Sentences*, Routledge; Doron, E. (1991), ‘Point of view as a factor of content’, *SALT1*, Cornell; Schlenker, P. (2003), ‘Context of thought and context of utterance’, to appear in *Language and Mind*; von Stechow, A. (1982), ‘Structured propositions’, ms.