

Indexically anchored onto the deictic center of discourse: Grammar, sociocultural interaction, and ‘emancipatory pragmatics’

Wataru Koyama*

*The Graduate School of Intercultural Communication, Rikkyo (St. Paul's) University, 3-34-1 Nishi Ikebukuro,
Toshima-ku, Tokyo 171-8501, Japan*

Received 16 January 2007; received in revised form 1 September 2008; accepted 2 September 2008

Abstract

This paper tries to articulate an indexical theory of pragmatics that can consistently cover not only (1) referential and (2) non-referential, social-indexical practices, but also (3) linguistic structure, or its metalinguistic (cross-linguistic) matrices, comprised of indexically anchored grammatical categories and distinctive features. Noting that all of the three domains (1)–(3), can be shown to be indexically organized and anchored onto the deictic center of communicative event, that is, on sociocultural, social-indexical interaction, I shall focus on articulating the deictically centered indexical organization of linguistic structure, or grammar. In so doing, I shall argue that not only social-indexical pragmatics, but also referential pragmatics and even grammar are anchored onto the deictic center of discursive interaction, which is, first and foremost, a sociocultural event. Consequently, theories of ‘language’, including both pragmatics and linguistics, must be ‘liberated’ from the reference- or semantics-centric perspectives; instead, they should start from ‘the bottom up’, from the deictic center of sociocultural interaction, i.e., ‘discourse’.

© 2008 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Deictic center; Discourse; Distinctive feature; Indexicality; Grammar; Reference; ‘Emancipatory pragmatics’

1. Introduction

Many theories of pragmatics still seem to be propositionally centered, in the sense that they primarily focus on propositional, informational ‘coherence’, ‘relevance’, etc., and try to account for non-propositional, social-indexical aspects of pragmatics on the basis of propositional ‘meanings’ plus some inferential or implicatural mechanisms. In part, this may be related to the contingent historical trajectory of modern pragmatics, which has moved from grammar (linguistics), that is, a denotational code for referential practices, to discourse (cf. [Koyama, 2005](#)). That is, as the aspect of discourse that is most directly related to grammar is, obviously, referential (i.e., propositional) pragmatics, rather than non-referential, social-indexical pragmatics, the primary focus of pragmatics was, and still remains (to a significant extent), on referential pragmatics. Nonetheless, since pragmatics concerns, first and foremost, discursive interactions, which are always socioculturally contextualized and contextualizing (cf. [Mey, 2001](#); [Silverstein, 1992](#)),

* Tel.: +81 3 3985 4512; fax: +81 3 3985 4512.

E-mail address: koyama@rikkyo.ac.jp.

and which necessarily involve communicative-event participants, e.g., incumbents of the *social roles* (communicative roles) such as ‘speaker’ and ‘hearer’ (cf. Hanks, 1996; Irvine, 1996; Koyama, 1997a, 1999b), the primary focus of pragmatics should be on non-referential, social-indexical pragmatics, concerning *not* ‘what is said’, as in referential pragmatics, but ‘what is done’, i.e., the communicative practices that ‘index’ the sociocultural power-relations and identities of the communicative-event participants, such as the incumbents of the social roles ‘speaker’, ‘hearer’, etc. Further, given that referential pragmatics, i.e., referring and predicating practices, cannot take place without communicative-event participants, who are socioculturally, communicatively ‘constructed’ social beings, and given that grammar is a denotational code which ‘exists’ insofar as it is indexed (‘used’) in referential pragmatics, it logically follows that not just social-indexical pragmatics, but also referential pragmatics and even grammar ‘ontologically’ presuppose, and thus are indexically related to, sociocultural, discursive interactions, at the center of which we find the deictic center, or *origo* (cf. Hanks, 1990, 1992; cf. also Bühler, 1934; Jakobson, 1960).

In this paper, I shall focus on showing how grammar is, in a systematic fashion, indexically anchored onto the *origo*, the deictic center of discursive interaction, so as to support the more general thesis that everything concerning language, be it social-indexical pragmatics, referential pragmatics, or grammar, is systematically related to the *origo*, the deictic center of sociocultural interaction, which provides a socio-ontological condition of possibility for, and underlies, referential pragmatics and grammar. In such a way, I shall try to contribute to the project of ‘emancipatory pragmatics’, or the project of emancipating pragmatics from the narrow focus of traditional linguistics and pragmatics on syntactic–semantics and referential pragmatics. Connecting with earlier traditions in ‘emancipatory linguistics’ (see, e.g. Mey, 1978, 1979, 1984, 1985, 1994; Signorini, 1998), my endeavor is to turn pragmatics in the direction of a socioculturally oriented, social-indexical pragmatics, which is, I contend, the ‘foundation’ of language and linguistic studies, be they linguistics or pragmatics (cf. Koyama, 1997a).

2. The indexical anchoring of linguistics onto pragmatics

Let us start with a terminological clarification. First of all, as the recent literature has made us see more clearly (cf. Duranti and Goodwin, 1992; Mey, 2001:196–199 *et passim*), indexicality is a key notion in pragmatics, including *both* referential pragmatics, pertaining to ‘what is said’ (referring and predicating practices), and non-referential (social-indexical, interactional) pragmatics, pertaining to ‘what is done’, such as indexings of group identities and power-relations of communicative-event participants. As defined by Peirce, indexicality is a relational notion; it is the kind of relationship between a signifying event, i.e., communicative, discursive event, on the one hand, and a signified ‘object’, which may be an event, state of affairs, entity, social identity, social category, etc., on the other, that is characterized by contextual *contiguity* or *connectedness*, as opposed to (contextually perceived) ‘similarity’ (degrees of sameness; ‘iconicity’) or (potentially) decontextualized ‘convention’ (stipulation, intension, conceptual stereotype, semantics; ‘symbolicity’). For example, one may say that, insofar as pointing gestures typically fail to refer to things if the former are not contiguous, in terms of contact or directionally, with the latter, their mode of reference is predominantly indexical. Similarly, if a certain style of speaking, gesturing, eating, or any other kind of practice, is perceived to indicate the sociocultural identity or status of the one who performs it, a practice showing that style is an indexical sign, insofar as (1) what is signified (signaled) is the identity or status of *the performer* (social actor), who is obviously contiguous with the action, and (2) the perceiver of the signifying practice must have been in contact, directly or indirectly, with the event(s) in which the linkage between the fashion of practice and the social category has been established.

Thus, indexicality obtains both in referential and social-indexical practices. Also note that, in both cases, the signifying event takes place at the *hic et nunc* of communicative interaction, whereas what is signified, especially ‘what is said’, may not be located ‘here and now’, but may be located ‘there and then’, i.e., outside the immediate surrounds of the deictic center of the signifying event of communication, for example, in the past, future, ‘there’, or faraway, construed relative to the ‘here and now’ (*origo*) of the signifying event. So, although what is signified may or may not be located in the domain of ‘here and now’, it is always located *in relation to* the signifying event, which takes place here and now, and at the center of which we find the deictic center (*origo*); and the mode of this ‘relation’ is indexicality (contiguity), which may be characterized, in spatiotemporal or social-positional terms, as ‘proximal’, ‘distal’, ‘proximalad’ (assimilating and converging), ‘distad’ (distancing and diverging), and so on. The universe of indexical relations, or indexicalization, is anchored onto the deictic centers of discursive

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/933819>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/933819>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)