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Source: *Foundations of Language*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (Aug., 1966), pp. 219-227

Published by: [Springer](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25000226>

Accessed: 25-01-2016 17:07 UTC

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DEICTIC CATEGORIES IN THE SEMANTICS OF 'COME'*

The ways in which speakers of English understand expressions containing the verb COME can only be made intelligible, it seems to me, by considering the role of deictic categories in connection with a semantic notion which will here be called *supposition*.

I. SOME INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

It appears that while the sentences I WILL COME HERE AGAIN TONIGHT and I WILL COME THERE AGAIN TONIGHT are both acceptable, of the two sentences I WILL GO HERE AGAIN TONIGHT and I WILL GO THERE AGAIN TONIGHT, only the latter one is. It will be suggested that these observations are systematically related to the unacceptability of the sentences I AM THERE and I AM NOT HERE.¹

The sentence I WILL COME THERE TONIGHT is appropriate either if you, the person I'm speaking to, are there now, or if you will be there tonight; a sentence like I WILL COME TO THE SHOP TONIGHT, on the other hand, is appropriate if you are at the shop now, if you will be at the shop tonight, or if I am at the shop now. Notice that the interpretation involving my present location is possible when the location adverbial is neutral, such as TO THE SHOP, but not when it is the deictic adverb THERE.

The sentence YOU WILL COME TO THE SHOP TONIGHT is appropriate if I am at the shop now, if you are at the shop now, or if I will be at the shop tonight (when you come). The sentence YOU WILL COME THERE AGAIN TONIGHT, however, permits only the interpretations that you are now or that I will be there tonight when you come. The interpretation that I am there now is ruled out.

The alternation between first and second person is to be noted: one of the possibilities with I WILL COME TO THE SHOP TONIGHT is that you will be at the

* The work for this paper was supported in part by National Science Foundation Grant #GN-174. The author is indebted to D. T. Langendoen for several helpful suggestions dealing with the formulation of the rules.

¹ There are, of course, contexts in which a sentence like I'LL GO HERE is not inappropriate (e.g., when pointing on a map), but these are contexts in which it would be just as appropriate to say I'LL GO THERE; that is, they are contexts in which the *demonstrative value* of the words HERE and THERE is brought into play, but in which the opposition between HERE and THERE is neutralized. Similarly, when identifying oneself in a group photograph, one may say THERE'S ME, but HERE'S ME would be just as appropriate.

shop; one of the possibilities with *YOU WILL COME TO THE SHOP TONIGHT* is that I will be at the shop. When the subject of *COME* is other than first or second person, the conditions of appropriateness permit reference to either first or second person. Thus, *HE WILL COME TO THE SHOP TONIGHT* is appropriate when either you or I will be at the shop tonight.

The full range of possibilities with *HE WILL COME TO THE SHOP TONIGHT* includes my and your future presence in the shop, as well as my or your presence in the shop at the time of the utterance. With *HE WILL COME THERE TONIGHT*, however, the interpretation involving my present location is ruled out. *I am not now there*.

Several of these observations have been shown to involve relations between the character of the subject of the verb *COME* on the one hand and my or your location on the other hand. It follows that complications appear when the subject of *COME* is the so-called first-person plural pronoun. This can be seen in a sentence like *WE WILL COME TO THE SHOP TONIGHT*. This sentence is appropriate if *WE* is *inclusive* and you and I are at the shop now, or if *WE* is *exclusive* and either I am at the shop now, you are at the shop now, or you will be at the shop tonight. It follows from all this that with the sentence *WE WILL COME THERE TONIGHT*, *WE* has to be exclusive, and the assumption is either that you are there now or that you will be there tonight when we come.

II. DEIXIS

In stating these observations, repeated reference was made to the *deictic* properties of *person*, *place*, and *time*. *Deixis* is the name given to those aspects of language whose interpretation is relative to the occasion of utterance: to the time of utterance, and to times before and after the time of utterance; to the location of the speaker at the time of utterance; and to the identity of the speaker and the intended audience. An extended theory of deixis would take in several other aspects of the speaker's spatial, temporal, and social orientation.²

Person deixis involves the category *Participant* (i.e., participant in the communication act), the two sub-categories of which are *Speaker* and *Hearer*. Syntactic regularities involving the alternation of the two Participant categories have been pointed out by Katz and Postal.³ An automatic alternation between these two categories needs to be assumed for the syntactic

² The notion of deixis might be extended, for example, to include the so-called 'honorific systems' found in many East Asian languages, systems of categories by which the speaker reveals his relation of respect or his judgment of his social worth relative to the hearer or to the object of his speech.

³ Jerrold Katz and Paul M. Postal, *An Integrated Theory of Linguistic Description*, M.I.T. Press, 1964, pp. 114f.

statement of the relation between questions and potential answers to them.⁴ For CAN HE GO? the set of potential answers includes YES, HE CAN and NO, HE CAN'T, but for HAVE YOU FINISHED? we get YES, I HAVE and NO, I HAVEN'T and the like; for SHOULD I DO IT? we get YES, YOU SHOULD and NO, YOU SHOULDN'T, etc. More extended relations involving person categories in general have been treated by Jespersen under the general heading of 'shifting'.⁵ With the person categories, these 'shifting' patterns are found in the relation between direct and indirect discourse. In this case the relation is less linguistically determined than that between questions and answers, because the variations depend on the second teller's relation to the original speaker and hearer, the sex of the original speaker and hearer, and so on.

Place deixis differs from language to language, it appears, only in having either two or three categories. English has two: near the speaker at the time of speaking – Proximal – as in HERE and THIS, and away from the speaker at the time of speaking – Distal – as in THERE and THAT. In many other languages, as for example Spanish and Japanese, a three-way distinction obtains: Proximal, Medial, and Distal.⁶

Since the Speaker category of Person deixis refers to the speaker of the utterance, and since the Proximal category of Place deixis refers to the position of the speaker at the time of the utterance, it might be suggested that we are dealing here with a single deictic feature. That, in fact, was the position taken by Brugmann.⁷ In his interpretation, identifications were assumed between what is here called the Speaker category of Person deixis and the Proximal category of Place deixis; between the Hearer category of Person deixis and the Medial category of Place deixis; and between the 'third person' (in our terms, 'non-participant') category and the Distal category of Place deixis. (The three categories in Brugmann's scheme were termed *ich-deixis*, *du-deixis*, and *jener-deixis*.)

When these categories are related to categories of Time deixis, their distinctness becomes clear. Even in the present tense, the categories of Hearer and Distal (or Medial) do not coincide, since it is acceptable and synthetic to say YOU ARE HERE. When the tense is other than present, the categories of Speaker and Proximal fail to coincide, since it is acceptable to say I WAS

⁴ We are speaking here of questions in the usual sense, i.e., questions and answers involving two speakers, not 'rhetorical questions'.

⁵ See, for example, Otto Jespersen, *The Philosophy of Grammar*, 1924 (reprinted by The Norton Library, 1965), especially pp. 219, 292, 295.

⁶ It is probably necessary to point out that deictic expressions like HERE and THERE, THIS and THAT, are to be distinguished from non-deictic terms like NEAR and FAR, ABOVE and BELOW, PUSH and PULL, etc., where the positional relation is not with respect to the speaker at the time of speaking, but with respect to the objects named by the nouns these words are in construction with, and at the time indicated by the sentences in which they occur.

⁷ Karl Brugmann, *Die Demonstrativpronomina der indogermanischen Sprachen*, 1904.

THERE OR I WILL BE IN THAT HOUSE. And even in the present tense, the distinction between 'true present time' and 'general time' is necessary, since while I AM THERE is contradictory, I LIVE THERE is not.

Categories of Time deixis are found not only in the tense systems of a language, but also in a number of time-deictic words like NOW and AGO. The 'shifting' patterns for Time deixis are typically unique for tenses, but not for time-deictic words. That is, the non-deictic equivalent of WAS is HAD BEEN, but the non-deictic equivalent of AGO is either BEFORE OR EARLIER.

The first thing the linguist must ask on the topic of deixis is whether the interpretation of deictic categories belongs properly to semantic theory or whether it involves one necessarily in the referential aspect of language. It does seem that there are certain kinds of purely semantic judgments involving deictic categories, for example, 'analyticity' and 'contradiction'. A semantic theory of English can reasonably be expected to show that the sentences I AM THERE and I AM NOT HERE are contradictory: the predication on the Speaker in 'true present time' of the Distal category of Place deixis, or the denial of the Proximal category, is to be read as contradictory. The sentences imply that I am in a place where I am not. The sentence I AM HERE, on the other hand, representing a uniting of the Speaker and Proximal categories in 'true present time', is analytic.⁸

III. SUPPOSITION RULES

The relevance of the three kinds of deictic categories to the analysis of the word COME requires an understanding of a type of semantic rule which may be called 'supposition rule'.⁹ By means of a supposition rule, semantic fea-

⁸ As Bar-Hillel has shown, the sense in which sentences with deictic elements can be called analytic, meaningful, etc., is different from that in which non-deictic sentences can be so judged. In the case of a sentence like SQUARES HAVE CORNERS, the proposition as it stands is analytic; for a sentence like I AM HERE, however, it is not the sentence in isolation – the proposition – which is necessarily true, but every utterance of it. On these questions, see Yehoshua Bar-Hillel, 'Indexical Expressions', *Mind* 63 (1954) 359–79. (Incidentally, it should not be particularly disturbing that so common and useful a sentence as I'M HERE is analytic. The sentence, as a linguistic form, is seldom intended to convey any information on its own; it is used mainly to exploit the direction-finding capabilities of a pair of human ears.)

⁹ The relation between sentences and their 'suppositions' must be distinguished from various other kinds of semantic relations between sentences. The relation of entailment has been defined by Katz and others in terms of the analyticity of conditional sentences. Thus, MY PARENTS WERE BORN IN SWEDEN 'entails' MY FATHER WAS BORN IN SWEDEN if the conditional sentence IF MY PARENTS WERE BORN IN SWEDEN THEN MY FATHER WAS BORN IN SWEDEN is true. A second type of relation between sentences, described by Katz and Postal, is that between a question and its presuppositions. This is revealed most directly by relating interrogative words to indefinite words, in such a way that the presupposition of a question is in fact a part of the underlying structure of the question. Thus, the question WHERE DID HE GO? presupposes (and has as a part of its underlying structure) the sentence HE WENT

tures associated with certain morphemes in sentences of certain structure are interpreted by constructing new sentences from the original sentences; the claim is made that our understanding of the original sentences includes the semantic interpretation of the newly created sentences among their 'suppositions'. In the sense intended, we might say that the sentence *HE EVEN SPEAKS ARABIC* informs us that *HE SPEAKS ARABIC* and adds the supposition that *IT IS UNEXPECTED THAT HE SPEAKS ARABIC*. Some sentences bring into play a whole array of suppositions in their interpretation. Take, for example, a counterfactual concessive sentence like *EVEN IF HE WERE HERE, SHE WOULD BE HAVING A GOOD TIME*. The sentence can be 'factored' into the three suppositions, (i) It is expected that his being here would result in her not having a good time, (ii) He is not here, and (iii) She is having a good time.¹⁰

Supposition rules are formulatable in quasi-transformational ways. A supposition rule that applies to sentences containing English *GO* is given as Rule 1. The rule means that whatever the subject or tense of the verb *GO* may be (note that the subject and the auxiliary are not involved in the stating of the rule), the place to which one *GOES* is a place where I am not. One of the rules for *COME* is given as Rule 2. The place to which one *COMES* is a place where I am or where you are. The category [+Participant] includes Speaker and Hearer.¹¹

Rule 1:

Original	S	VP	V
	[X - [$\begin{bmatrix} \text{Motion} \\ \text{Distal} \end{bmatrix}$	- Y - Location] - Z]
Supposition	S NP	Neg Aux	VP Cop
	[[+Speaker] [not] [Present] [[be] Location]]	

SOMEWHERE; and the question *WHO DID THAT?* presupposes that *SOMEONE DID SOMETHING*. (See Katz and Postal, op. cit.)

¹⁰ For further examples of suppositions, see my mistitled paper 'Entailment Rules in a Semantic Theory', *The Ohio State University Research Foundation Project on Linguistic Analysis, Report No. 10*, 1965, pp. 60-82.

¹¹ The redundancies in the arrangement of Person-deixis categories in English are as given in the following diagram:

+Participant				
+Speaker -Hearer		+Speaker +Hearer	-Speaker +Hearer	
Singular <i>I</i>	Plural <i>we</i> (exclusive)	Plural <i>we</i> (inclusive)	Singular <i>you</i>	Plural <i>you</i>

Thus, suppositions stating the category of a nominal as [+Participant] may be interpreted as identifying either Speaker or Hearer. (The term 'Participant' is used rather than 'Person' because the latter term includes the non-deictic notion of 'third person'.)

Rule 2:

Original	S	Aux	VP V
	[NP - X - [Time] [[Motion Proximal] - Y - Location]]
Supposition	S NP	Aux	VP Cop
	[[+Participant] [Present] [[be] Location]]
Restriction	When NP and Time of <i>Orig</i> are α - <i>Speaker</i> , β - <i>Hearer</i> and <i>Present</i> , then +Participant of <i>Supp</i> must be specified as $-\alpha$ - <i>Speaker</i> , $-\beta$ - <i>Hearer</i> .		

Interpreting¹² Rules 1 and 2, we can say that one of the suppositions of a sentence like WHEN DID YOU COME TO THE SHOP? is that I, the speaker, am in the shop. The sentence WHEN DID YOU GO TO THE SHOP? supposes that I, the speaker, am not now in the shop. We can say that the sentence WHEN DID YOU GO HERE? is (derivatively) contradictory, since the sentence it supposes – namely I AM NOT HERE – is, by the definition of contradiction indicated above, contradictory.

Rule 1 refers always to my present location, Rule 2 refers to my or your present location, but when we consider all possible interpretations of a sentence like HE CAME THERE IN 1929, we realize that something else relevant is my or your location in 1929, when ‘he came there’. An additional supposition rule is needed, it would seem, for referring, not to the participants’ location at the time of utterance, but to the participants’ location at the time identified in the sentence. Such a rule is Rule 3.

Rule 3:

Original	S NP	Aux	Adv
	[[α - <i>Speaker</i> , β - <i>Hearer</i> ; $-\text{Participant}$] - X - [Time] [Time]		
	1	2	
		VP V	
		[[Motion Proximal] - Y - Location]]	
Supposition	S NP	Aux	Adv
	[[$-\alpha$ - <i>Speaker</i> , $-\beta$ - <i>Hearer</i> ; + <i>Participant</i>] [Time] [Time]		
	1	2	
		VP Cop	
		[[be] Location]]	

¹² For interpreting these rules, it is necessary to assume that semantic information on ‘time’ (as distinct from the grammatical information on ‘tense’) is available in the structure of the auxiliary. It must also be agreed that certain differences between Location phrases are superficial automatic consequences of their construction with verbs of motion or verbs

With rules 1 and 2, the time of the supposition is the present; with Rule 3, the time of the supposition is the time specified by the verbal auxiliary. The subject of the supposition for Rule 1 is the speaker; the subject of the supposition for Rule 2 is the speaker or the hearer.¹³ The subject of the supposition for Rule 3 is a function of the Person categories associated with the original sentence. In particular, if the subject of the original sentence is YOU ([−Speaker, +Hearer]), the subject of the supposition is I ([+Speaker, −Hearer]); if the subject of the original sentence is I, the subject of the supposition is YOU. And if the subject of the original sentence is neither YOU nor I but 'third person' ([−Participant]), the subject of the supposition is [+Participant] (either YOU or I).

Interpreting Rule 3 we find that a sentence like I CAME THERE YESTERDAY MORNING supposes that YOU WERE THERE YESTERDAY MORNING; the sentence YOU CAME THERE YESTERDAY MORNING supposes that I WAS THERE YESTERDAY MORNING. With a third-person subject, a sentence with COME has suppositions (by Rule 3) with either YOU or I as subject. Thus, WILL HE COME THERE TOMORROW NIGHT? supposes either that I will be there tomorrow night, or that you will be there tomorrow night. The sentence is ambiguous, in other words, in a somewhat novel sense of ambiguity – namely, in that it supposes either of two things. We express this in the supposition rule by indicating for the subject of the supposition only the feature [+Participant]; the Speaker and Hearer categories are unspecified.

One reason for choosing the word THERE in the sentences just used for illustrating Rule 3 has been the desire to restrict the number of possible interpretations. Notice that in each case, the contradictory sentence I AM THERE would have been indicated by Rule 2. If a neutral location adverbial replaces THERE, the multiple-supposition sense of ambiguity can be further illustrated. Thus, in association with the sentence YOU WILL COME TO THE BANK TOMORROW MORNING are the suppositions that I am at the bank now, or that you are at the bank now, provided by Rule 2; or that I will be at the bank tomorrow morning, by Rule 3. The sentence I WILL COME TO THE BANK TOMORROW MORNING supposes either that I am at the bank now or that you

of location. That is, the underlying structure of the Location phrase in the two sentences I AM AT THE SHOP and I CAME TO THE SHOP is the same, the selection of TO vs. AT determined by the type of verb in construction with it. This decision seems to be called for on independent grounds: some adverbs have the same form in both senses, and since the categories Motion and Location are necessarily associated with verbs anyway, the distinction between Direction Adverb and Location Adverb can profitably be made consequent on the verbal distinction.

¹³ The qualifications on Rule 2 are intended to rule out the true-present uses of COME where the subject is a participant and the place to which the subject is COMING is the place where that same participant now is. Thus, I AM COMING TO YOUR OFFICE is incompatible with I AM IN YOUR OFFICE, and YOU ARE COMING THERE is anomalous.

are at the bank now, by Rule 2; or that you will be at the bank tomorrow morning, by Rule 3. With a third person subject and a neutral location phrase, the number of possible suppositions is four, first because both Rules 2 and 3 are applicable, second because the category [+Participant] specified by each of these rules, provides two possibilities. Thus a sentence like *HE CAME TO THE BANK EARLY* supposes ambiguously that I am at the bank now, that you are at the bank now, that I was at the bank when he came, or that you were at the bank when he came. And these are, it would seem, just the situations in which the sentence would be appropriate.

The distinction between the inclusive and the exclusive senses of the first person plural¹⁴ is shown in the operation of the supposition rules for *COME* by having one sense of *WE* contain the features [+Speaker, +Hearer], the other [+Speaker, -Hearer]. Where the Hearer is excluded, a sentence like *WE WILL COME TO THE BANK* may be interpreted by Rule 3 to suppose that you will be at the bank when we come. In the sense where *WE* is marked for both Speaker and Hearer, Rule 3 changes [+Speaker, +Hearer] to [-Speaker, -Hearer] – and that particular combination is undefined in the theory. It follows that a sentence like *WE WILL COME THERE* can only be interpreted exclusively (by Rule 3), the supposition being that you will be there.

IV. CONCLUSION

In summary, it does appear that deixis comprises an isolable area of study, as is seen by the fact that semantic notions such as analyticity, syntheticity, and contradiction are differently interpreted with deictic than with non-deictic expressions, and by the fact that all three of the deictic categories figure in the formulation of these notions. The notion of supposition rule, especially as revealed in the interpretation of expressions with *COME* introduces novel senses of 'ambiguity' and 'contradiction'. Now we can say that a sentence is (derivatively) contradictory because one of its suppositions is a contradiction, or that a sentence is (derivatively) ambiguous because semantic rules provide for it more than one supposition. The characteristics of *COME* and *GO* as revealed in these rules fit, in the author's speech, the pair *BRING* and *TAKE* as well¹⁵, but apparently no other words in the language.

¹⁴ Syntactically the distinction must be recognized in formal statements of the relation between questions and potential answers. Answers to *CAN WE DO IT?* include *YES, WE CAN* and *NO, WE CAN'T* where *WE* is inclusive, *YES, YOU CAN* and *NO, YOU CAN'T* where *WE* is exclusive.

¹⁵ There appears to be a great deal of idiolectal variation in this respect, if my informants are to be trusted. For example, there are many who would accept *LET'S BRING THESE OVER THERE* who would not accept *LET'S COME OVER THERE*; I would accept neither. This may be the place to recognize that there are non-deictic uses of all of these words, but they all fit the sense of 'idiomatic' expressions. Thus I would interpret *HE IS FREE TO COME AND GO AS HE PLEASES*; *DO YOU GO TO SCHOOL HERE?*, etc., etc.

It will be obvious to speakers of many other languages that the suppositional semantics of COME, especially as formulated in Rule 3, is characteristic of English and differs – especially in the alternation of Participant categories – from that of translations of COME in many other languages. I would like to insist that the introduction of these suppositions in the form of explicit semantic rules is to be preferred to saying merely that when speakers of English use the word COME they frequently “take the other fellow’s point of view.” This is true, of course, but I prefer to regard it as a statement of English structure rather than as a statement about the personality of speakers of this language.

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