

Prominence in Pragmatics
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PROMINENT PROTAGONISTS

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(based on discussions with Regine Eckardt)

Introduction

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- Free Indirect Discourse (FID) widely recognized as a mode of presenting a protagonist's thoughts or utterances that is distinct from both *direct discourse* and *indirect discourse*.
 - (1) a. Mary smiled. Tomorrow she would reveal her true identity at the press conference.
 - b. Mary smiled. She thought: “Tomorrow I will reveal my true identity at the press conference”.
 - c. Mary smiled. She thought that on the following day she would reveal her true identity at the press conference.

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- Two lines of analysis in formally oriented literature.
- First line (Schlenker 2004, Sharvit 2008, Eckardt 2014; see also Banfield 1982 and Doron 1991): FID involves introduction of additional context c . Author of c = respective protagonist, time of c = reference time of ongoing story.
- Some indexical expression interpreted with respect to c , others with respect to speaker's/narrator's context C .
- Second line (Meier 2015): FID involves mixed quotation, i.e. the respective sentence is basically a quotation with some parts unquoted.

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- Focus in all analyses has been on capturing behavior of context-sensitive expressions.
- Very little research so far on factors that make available additional contexts or speech and thought acts to be (partially) quoted.
- Usually examples discussed consist of just two sentences and involve just one (thus maximally prominent) protagonist.
- Thus open question what the constraints are that make protagonists available as authors of contexts or (partially) quoted speech or thought acts.

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- Plausible starting hypothesis: Protagonists serving as speakers/thinkers in FID determined in much the same way as antecedents for personal pronouns are determined.
- Constraints on determination of speakers/thinkers turn out to be much stronger than ones involved in pronoun resolution, though.
- Conversely, protagonists *unavailable* as antecedents for German D-pronouns available as anchors for FID.

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- (1) a. Mary smiled. Tomorrow she would reveal her true identity at the press conference.
- b. Mary smiled. She thought: “Tomorrow I will reveal my true identity at the press conference”.
- c. Mary smile. She thought that on the following day she would reveal her true identity at the press conference.
- In FID, pronouns and tenses interpreted with respect to utterance context, while all other indexical expressions interpreted with respect to protagonist’s context/as if quoted.

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- Not only temporal or local adverbials, but evaluative expressions such as epithets, speech act particles (in German) or speech acts like exclamatives in FID interpreted with respect to protagonist's context/as if quoted.
- Only expressions that can not be so shifted in FID: personal pronouns and tenses.
 - (2) a. John felt uneasy. **He didn't** want to be in this room with all these arrogant idiots staring at **him**.
 - b. John felt uneasy. He thought: "I don't want to be in this room with all these arrogant idiots staring at me".

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- (3) a. Kate was very satisfied with the outcome of the negotiations. How smart **she was**! So much smarter than any of these amateurs.
- b. Kate was very satisfied with the outcome of the negotiations. She thought: “How smart I am! So much smarter than any of these amateurs.”

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- Eckardt (2014): Expressions cannot only be interpreted with respect to the speaker's/narrator's context C , but also with respect to the fictional context c of some prominent protagonist (see Schlenker 2004 and Sharvit 2008 for similar analyses).
- Author of c = respective protagonist. Time and place of c = Time and location of event or state introduced in narrative that coincides with speech or thought act of protagonist.
- Lexically specified that all context-sensitive expressions except pronouns and tenses are interpreted with respect to c whenever c is introduced in addition to C .
- In addition to that, when respective proposition is added to the Common Ground, it is added as a thought of the respective protagonist.

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- Mini-discourse in (1a) thus interpreted as in (1b):
 - (1) a. Mary smiled. Tomorrow she would reveal her true identity at the press conference.
 - b. There is an event e of Mary smiling that is located before the time of C and there is an event of Mary thinking that is located at the time of e and the content of e is that in all worlds that are compatible with what Mary thinks at the time of e , there is an event e' of Mary revealing her true identity that is located on the day following the day where the time of c is located, and the time of e is located before the time of C .

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- Meier (2015): Sentences exemplifying FID are in fact mixed quotations of implicitly given or accommodated speech or thought acts of some prominent protagonist.
- Second sentence like (1a) thus interpreted as in (1b):
 - (1) a. Mary smiled. Tomorrow she would reveal her true identity at the press conference.
b. Mary smiled. “Tomorrow” she would “reveal” her “true identity at the press conference”.
- That pronouns and tenses are unquoted is assumed to be a convention characterizing FID.

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- All analyses of FID focus on how to formally capture behaviour of context-sensitive expressions.
- Very little research on how protagonist's contexts are introduced/ how speech or thought acts (partially) quoted are determined.
- Open question: Is any individual that is capable of thinking/ speaking and to whom the relevant thought/utterance can in principle be ascribed sensibly available as an anchor for FID or are there any constraints?
- Default assumption: Speakers/thinkers are determined in basically the same way as the antecedents of pronouns.

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- One obvious difference: While pronouns can pick up individuals introduced in embedded contexts, FID impossible in such cases.
 - (4) a. If a farmer owns a donkey, he usually beats it.
 - b. ??If a farmer beats a donkey/Chiquita, it/she will usually kick the bastard tomorrow.
 - c. If a farmer beats a donkey/Chiquita, it/she usually thinks: “I will kick the bastard tomorrow”.

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- But even in non-embedded contexts protagonists locally prominent enough to be picked up by personal pronouns not automatically available as speakers/thinkers in FID.
 - (5) a. Mary went towards the entrance of the building. Suddenly a huge guy in a black coat came around the corner. Mary smacked his face without a word of warning. (?)Ouch, how that hurt!/He stared at her in disbelief.
 - b. Mary went towards the entrance of the building. Suddenly a huge guy in a black coat came around the corner. He smacked her face without a word of warning. Ouch, how that hurt!/She stared at him in disbelief.

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- (5) a. Mary went towards the entrance of the building. Suddenly a huge guy in a black coat came around the corner. She smacked his face without a word of warning. (?)Ouch, how that hurt!/He stared at her in disbelief.
- b. Mary went towards the entrance of the building. Suddenly a huge guy in a black coat came around the corner. He smacked her face without a word of warning. Ouch, how that hurt!/She stared at him in disbelief.
- Mary in contrast to individual introduced by indefinite available as thinker, although DPs referring to them occupy same position, have same grammatical function and thematic role in sentence preceding exclamative in (5a) and (5b).
 - Maybe individuals introduced by indefinites generally unavailable as speakers/thinkers in FID?

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- (6) a. A woman in an elegant business suit went towards the entrance of the building. Suddenly a huge guy in a black coat came around the corner. She smacked his face without a word of warning. (?)Ouch, how that hurt!/He stared at her in disbelief.
- b. A woman in an elegant business suit went towards the entrance of the building. Suddenly a huge guy in a black coat came around the corner. He smacked her face without a word of warning. Ouch, how that hurt!/She stared at him in disbelief.
- Variant in (6b) maybe less natural than variant in (5b), but still clear contrast between (6a) and (6b).

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- Crucial factors thus rather seem to be that (a) Mary/woman has been introduced in the opening sentence of the mini-text, (b) other individual has been introduced in a sentence containing two expressions that can plausibly be interpreted with respect to Mary's/woman's perspective: *Suddenly* and *came*.
- Reader therefore invited to take Mary's perspective, not perspective of other individual.
- Switch to other individual's perspective thus unexpected and consequently costly in (5b) and (6b).

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- (7) a. Mary had never liked George. The dumb jerk always thought he knew everything better!
- b. Mary had never liked George. (?)The mean old bat always tried to make him look like an idiot!
- Contrast between (7a) and (7b) expected: Mary not only more prominent than George in terms of linear position and grammatical function, but also external argument of an experience verb.

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(8) George entered the restaurant. Mary was sitting at a table in the corner with her best friend. She had never liked George. The mean old bat always tried to make him look like an idiot!

- By adding context in (8), however, George becomes available as thinker.
- Crucial factors: (a) George introduced as first protagonist in opening sentence. (b) Second sentence can easily be interpreted as if the state it introduces is perceived by George.

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- At the same time, however, Mary remains available as thinker:
 - (9) George entered the restaurant. Mary was sitting at a table in the corner with her best friend. She had never liked George. The dumb jerk always thought he knew everything better!
- Reason: Mary still available as local perspective holder because of being external argument of experiencer verb in third sentence.

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- On the one hand, individuals introduced as first protagonists in opening sentences of narrative texts (preferably via proper names) automatically available as speakers/thinkers in FID.
- Other individuals only available if explicitly marked as local perspective holders – for example, by being external arguments of experience verbs.
- Prediction: Second protagonist in (6a) should become available as thinker if sentence is inserted establishing him as potential local perspective holder.

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- (10) a. A woman in an elegant business suit went towards the entrance of the building. Suddenly a huge guy in a black coat came around the corner. She smacked his face without a word of warning. He stared at her with tears in his eyes, unable to believe what had just happened. Ouch, how that hurt!

Interim Conclusion

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- Process whereby potential thinkers in FID are determined far more constrained than process whereby personal pronouns are determined.
- First, FID generally unavailable in embedded contexts.
- Second, even in unembedded contexts only protagonists either functioning as discourse topics or having been marked as local perspective holders available as speakers/thinkers in FID.

D-pronouns

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- Behaviour of German D-pronouns further evidence for correlation between discourse topicality and availability as speaker/thinker in FID.
- Bosch and Umbach (2006): D-pronouns avoid discourse topics.
- In Hinterwimmer and Bosch (to appear) many counterexamples against this claim: Whenever there is clear evidence for speaker's/ narrator's perspective being salient, D-pronouns can pick up discourse topics.

D-pronouns

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- (11) Als Peter_i abends nach Hause kam, war die Wohnung wieder in einem fürchterlichen Zustand.
When Peter_i came home in the evening, the flat was in a terrible state again.
- a. {^{??}Der_i/Er_i} musste erst mal drei Stunden putzen.
He {^{}DPro_i/PPro_i} first had to clean up for three hours.*
- b. {^{*}Der_i/Er_i} hatte doch gestern erst aufgeräumt.
He {^{}DPro_i/PPro_i} had only tidied up yesterday, after all.*
- c. {Der_i/Er_i} kann sich einfach nicht gegen seinen Mitbewohner durchsetzen.
He {DPro_i/PPro_i} is simply unable to stand his ground against his flatmate.

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- Discourse topics thus default perspective-holders both with respect to the interpretation of D-pronouns and with respect to FID.
- Default can be overwritten both by making the speaker's/narrator's perspective highly salient or by clearly marking another protagonist as a local perspective holder.

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