

Pragmatic Compositionality, Syntactic Direction Principle,
and the Contextualism/Minimalism Debate

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Abstract

The aims of this paper are twofold: to present an argument in favour of a version of the contextualist account of meaning which is free from the syntactic constraint of the development of the logical form of the sentence (called here the Syntactic Direction Principle) and demonstrating that contextualism can be made compatible with semantic minimalism. First, I present the case for replacing the (i) explicit/implicit (said/implicated) distinction with a (ii) cognitively based distinction between primary and secondary meanings, orthogonal to the distinctions in (i). Next, I present how this distinction can be implemented in a contextualist, ‘syntactic constraint free’ account of Default Semantics (Jaszczolt 2005, 2009, forthcoming). The second aim is centred around the idea that contextualist accounts that adhere to the Syntactic Direction are ‘minimalist at heart’ in trying to depict intuitive utterance content and the syntactically triggered content at the same time, conflating both to a theoretical construct which does no good service for either aim in that it sits mid-way between minimal content and the intended, intuitive, primary content. It is concluded that contextualism has to exorcise the syntactic constraint in order to realise the professed objectives.

Keywords: contextualism, semantic minimalism, Default Semantics, pragmatic compositionality, truth-conditional pragmatics, merger representations

1. Introduction: Research Questions and Scope

The state of the art in the semantics/pragmatics boundary disputes allows for a wide array of orientations, from radical versions of contextualism, according to which there is considerable and syntactically unconstrained pragmatic input to the truth-conditional representation, culminating in the version on which core lexical meaning

is eradicated (meaning eliminativism, see e. g. Recanati 2004, 2005), all the way to semantic minimalism, on which this input is restricted to a small set of allocated slots in the sentence structure or even not allowed at all (see Borg 2004; Cappelen & Lepore 2005a, b; Bach 2006, 2007 for different versions). Various pertinent questions arise in the context of this plurality of orientations but the most important (interrelated) issues are arguably (i) the possibility of the co-existence of minimalism and contextualism and (ii) the content which a theory of meaning has to model. The first question engendered extensive debates in the literature (e. g. Saul 2002; Borg 2007; Jaszczolt forthcoming), while the latter has been taken more or less for granted within each respective theory, especially when it is dictated by the positive answer to question (i). In other words, one seems to have a choice. When one is a minimalist, one adopts minimal propositions as the object of study and applies truth conditions to this unit, or even, on one radical version, one can adopt sub-propositional units (propositional radicals) and exorcise truth conditions from semantics, dubbing their employment a mistake of propositionalism. When one is a contextualist, one adopts an enriched (developed, modulated, etc.) logical form of the sentence as the object of study and applies truth conditions to theorize about intuitive, intended meanings, as it is done in truth-conditional pragmatics.

In this paper I side with contextualists but propose a rather radical departure from the construal of the contextualists' object of analysis by rejecting the constraint that the main, explicit meaning (or 'what is said') constitute a development of the logical form of the sentence. Consider example (1). According to the standard contextualist proposal, its explicit content is something to the effect of (2).

- (1) Everybody is going to Egypt this spring.
- (2) All of the speaker's close friends and family are going to Egypt this spring.

(2) is a standard example of a developed logical form in that it contains a supplied domain of the universal quantifier, making the content of the uttered sentence more intuitively plausible. Truth conditions are then predicated of this extended and precisified content. To repeat, on this standard contextualist proposal only developments of the logical form of the sentence can constitute such precisifications, independently of the fact as to whether the main intended meaning corresponds to such a developed proposition or not. In other words, when the speaker chooses to

communicate the main intended content implicitly, such implicatures are left out as separate, additional thoughts, to be discussed along the lines established by the distinctions between explicatures and implicatures (Carston 1988) or what is said/what is implicated (Recanati 1989). I call this constraint a Syntactic Direction Principle. However, there is an alternative and arguably more intuitively plausible and cognitively defensible way of cutting the pie. On most standard scenarios, the speaker of (1) intends to achieve a certain goal such as informing the addressee that Egypt is a popular holiday destination in the spring of 2009 or that perhaps they should consider going for a holiday to Egypt themselves, as suggested in (3) and (4).

- (3) Egypt seems to be a popular holiday destination among the people the speaker knows.
- (4) The interlocutors should consider going on holiday to Egypt this spring.¹

In the process of the past several decades, since the arrival of Speech Act Theory (e.g. Austin 1962) and the advances in the Gricean paradigm (e.g. Grice 1975), we have grown accustomed to delimiting (i.a) the *said* or (ii.a) the *illocutions* and separating them from the (i.b) *implicated* and (ii.b) *perlocutions* or from secondary illocutionary forces in the case of indirect acts, respectively. However, when the main, most salient, intended meaning is conveyed in such an indirect form, it is at least arguable that this meaning should obtain a fair treatment and be allocated a prominent place in any contextualist theory of meaning. Consequently, in what follows, I suggest that adhering to the Syntactic Direction Principle be exorcised from contextualism as it is incompatible with speakers' intuitions concerning what is said, also called here the *primary meaning* of the utterance. Put simply, the way of cutting the semantics/pragmatics pie I am proposing is orthogonal to the contextualist schema of what is said/explicature vs. implicature distinction. Instead, it is founded on an empirically corroborated principle of cognitive salience of primary and secondary meanings. Primary meanings are composed through the merger of information coming

¹ These propositional contents are simplified in that they don't contain a full presentation of the temporality of the eventualities, neither do they present the resolution of all indexicals (cf. 'this spring'). For full semantic representations in my Default Semantics (called merger representations) see e.g. Jaszczolt 2005, 2009.

from various sources, including, but not as a necessary component of the final output, the lexicon and structure of the uttered sentence. In other words, once the Syntactic Direction Principle is rejected as lacking psychological reality, the way is open to construing primary meaning freely as ranging from (a) minimal sentence content, through, on other occasions, (b) enriched sentence content, to (c) what is understood in contextualism as implicatures proper.

This proposal is not merely an open hypothesis; there has been a fair amount of empirical evidence that acts in its favour. There is ample evidence in experimental pragmatics literature that (c) is most common in conversation, amounting to between 60 and 80 per cent of choices of the strategy when counted in a distribution across the most typically used speech acts (Nicolle and Clark 1999; Pitts 2005; Sysoeva and Jaszczolt 2007). However, once we accept that implicit communication is an overwhelmingly frequent fact, a theoretical problem arises. When we construe primary meanings as those assumptions which are the subject of the main informative intention, independently of whether they constitute a development of the logical form of the sentence, we need a principle or heuristic according to which they are processed. The search for this heuristic has constituted one of the main aims of Default Semantics which is such a suitably radical contextualist theory. In this paper I follow the revised version of Default Semantics (henceforth DS, Jaszczolt 2009, forthcoming) in identifying (i) the sources of information that contribute to such primary meanings, as well as (ii) the types of processes through which these meanings are constructed and recovered. I also point out that this new way of cutting the semantics/pragmatics pie allows for the co-existence of semantic minimalism and contextualism in that truth conditions are employed on two different levels of utterance processing: once for a particular contributing source, called word meaning and sentence structure (WS), and again, for the overall merger of information from various sources (merger representation Σ). Section 2 of the paper spells out the principles of this merger; Section 3 summarizes the argument against the Syntactic Direction; Section 4 introduces the methodological principle of pragmatic compositionality on which the merger is founded; Section 5 points out the compatibility of minimalism with contextualism on this construal; and Section 6 contains a very brief exemplification of the application of this framework, to propositional attitude reports and tense-time mismatches, pointing out the benefits of

pragmatic compositionality and primary meanings construed as free from the Syntactic Direction.

2. Linguistic Content: Primary Meaning vis-à-vis the Said/Implicit Distinction

Radical pragmatics of the late 1970s triggered the progressive growth, so to speak, of semantic content, which culminated in the employment of truth conditions to the analysis of the intuitive meaning of the utterance, as long as this meaning was founded on the structure of the uttered sentence, i.e. constituted the development of its logical form. The trigger for this progression was Grice's (1978) remark that disambiguation and reference assignment produce information that contributes to what is said, and main landmarks are the Atlas-Kempson thesis of the underdetermination of English negation, followed by the contextualists' proposals of a level of explicit, truth-conditional content that corresponds to the intuitive truth conditions and constitutes free enrichment of the logical form of the sentence (see Recanati 2005), accompanied at that stage, in the 1980s, by multiple accounts of various linguistic expressions and structures as semantically underdetermined rather than ambiguous, to mention sentential connectives, number terms, quantifiers (with underspecified domain), definite descriptions, and so on. Coining the term 'truth-conditional pragmatics' (Recanati 2002) provided a radical label to the orientation, also opening up the discussion as to whether this enrichment (or, more generally, modulation) is arrived at via the same pragmatic (inferential) processes as those responsible for the generation of implicatures, or rather is a generically different, automatic and subdoxastic process that produces the first level which is consciously available to the interlocutors (see Recanati 2004, 2007a; Carston 2007 for a discussion). Looking at the development of contextualism from this perspective, i.e. stressing the free, 'top-down' nature of the additions to the logical form, one feels compelled to ask whether it is not necessary to take one more step in the direction of radical contextualism, namely question the construal of this intuitive content as the 'development' of the logical form of the sentence. Since the enrichment itself is free, top-down, not generated by the syntactic structure, perhaps the overall intuitive content would fare better as the object of study of contextualism when freed from the constraint that it be development of the sentence structure? Empirical evidence is ample, as was pointed out in Section 1. To use another pertinent example, asked about

the primary, main, intended meaning of (5) and (6), native speakers overwhelmingly respond with (5B) and (6B₁₋₂) respectively rather than with (5A) and (6A).²

(5) Child: Can I go punting?
Mother: You are too small.

(5A) The child is too small to go punting.

(5B) The child can't go punting.

(6) Situation: A little boy cuts his finger and cries.
Mother: You are not going to die. (from Bach 1994)

(6A) The boy is not going to die from the cut.

(6B₁) There is nothing to worry about.

(6B₂) It's not a big deal.

The question then arises, why should we construe the main object of concern of contextualist semantics as a developed logical form if this is not what the speakers normally mean and intend, neither is it what the addressees normally recover? Why not abandon this reliance on the syntactic structure of the sentence in construing the object for intuitive truth conditions? This is what DS (Jaszczolt 2005, 2009, forthcoming) proposes, modelling the primary meaning as the output of the interaction of various sources of information. These sources have been clearly identified and empirically corroborated in the theory and are presented in Fig. 1.

² See references to experiments in Section 1.

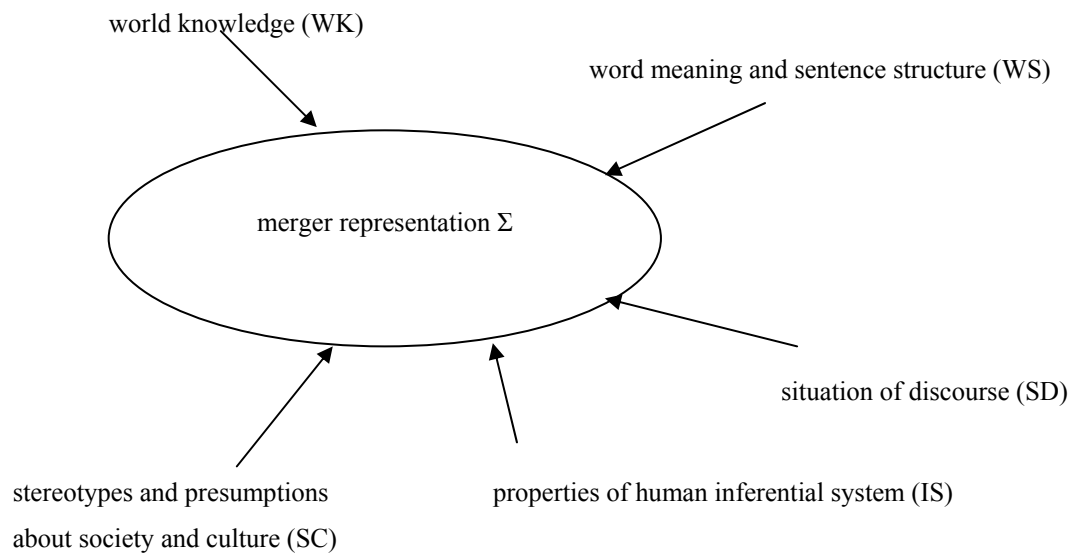
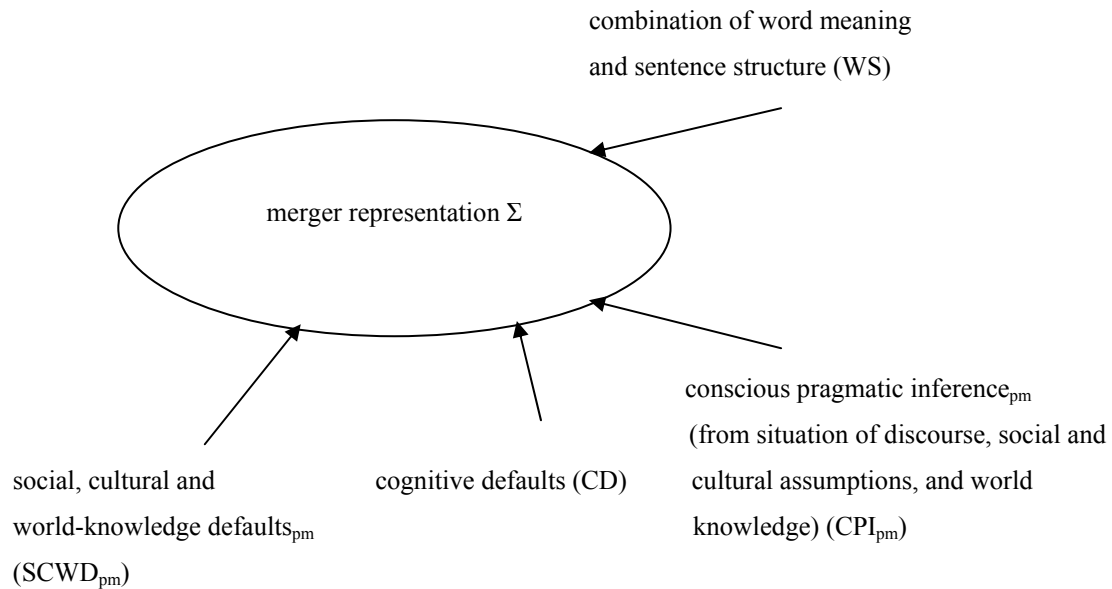


Fig. 1: Sources of information contributing to a merger representation Σ on the 2009 version of DS

Further, the composition of primary meaning can be represented not only via the sources from which contributing information is drawn but also through the types of processes that interact in producing the overall primary meaning. The sources translate into the types of processes and labelling of these processes is essential in producing a semantic representation of primary meaning. The processes are summarized in Fig. 2. The subscripts $_{pm}$ and $_{sm}$ stand for 'pertaining to primary meaning' and 'pertaining to secondary meaning' respectively.

Primary meaning:



Secondary meanings:

- Social, cultural and world-knowledge defaults_{sm} (SCWD_{sm})
- conscious pragmatic inference_{sm} (CPI_{sm})

Fig. 2: Utterance interpretation according to the *processing model* of the 2009 version of DS

The sources and processes used in this paper come from the revised version of the theory (Jaszczolt 2009) and will not be elaborated on here. Instead, I will only present and exemplify briefly how the mapping between the sources and the processes works. For example, world knowledge (WK) and stereotypes and presumptions about society and culture (SC) correspond to two kinds of processes: (i) automatic, default interpretations of the SCWD kind, as in example (7), or to (ii) interpretations reached through conscious inference (CPI), as in example (8). \hookrightarrow_{PM} stands for ‘conveys the primary meaning’.

(7) A Botticelli was stolen from the Uffizi last week.

→PM A painting by Botticelli was stolen from the Uffizi Gallery in Florence last week.

(8) Larry's account of the history of negation is truly magnificent.

→PM Larry Horn's account of the history of negation is truly magnificent.

In general, the sources can be mapped onto the processes according to the schema in (9).

(9)

(i) world knowledge (WK) → automatic, default interpretations of SCWD kind;

(ii) world knowledge (WK) → consciously, inferentially reached interpretations (CPI);

(iii) stereotypes and presumptions about society and culture (SC) → automatic, default interpretations of SCWD kind;

(iv) stereotypes and presumptions about society and culture (SC) → consciously, inferentially reached interpretations (CPI);

(v) situation of discourse (SD) → consciously, inferentially reached interpretations (CPI);

(vi) properties of human inferential system (IS) → the type of default interpretations which pertain to the structure and operations of the brain, called cognitive defaults (CD).

Next, word meaning and sentence structure (WS) is a label with dual functioning: both as a source and as a type of processing. This is adopted due to the assumption of modularity held in DS. In other words, WS is responsible for the logical form of the uttered sentence. I discuss this source in more depth in Section 4.

As we can see from (9), there is not always a one-to-one correspondence between the source and the type of process. This is an expected and entirely unproblematic outcome. For example, world knowledge, such as internalized and entrenched bits information that water freezes in sub-zero Celsius temperatures and evaporates in temperatures above the boiling point at 100 degrees Celsius can be accessed automatically and lead to the SCWD outcome as in (i) or, for instance for school children who have to consult this piece of information consciously and effortfully, lead to the CPI outcome as in (ii) in (9) above. On the other hand, there is a one-to-one correspondence between source IS and a process that produces CD as summarized in (vi).

Moreover, it has to be observed that when we talk about SCWD and CPI, we have to bear in mind that these processes are instantiated at both levels: that of the primary meaning (pm) and that of the secondary meanings (sm), as was summarized in Fig. 2. It also has to be pointed out that in the current state of experimental pragmatics we are not in a position to discriminate between what counts as effortful processing (CPI) on one hand and what counts as automatic utilization of knowledge of culture and society (SCWD) on the other. However, although this empirical question is as yet unresolved, this fact does not diminish the need for postulating such a theoretical distinction. It is well acknowledged in the literature (see e.g. Recanati 2004) that interlocutors do make use of shortcuts through inference in communication and that some of these shortcuts go all the way to being automatic, subconscious processes of an associative nature. This is what in DS we call default interpretations, to be understood as salient and strong probabilities of the correct interpretation, which are sometimes prevented or cancelled by the context. In short, although the question as to which cases count as conscious inferential processing and which as automatic employment of background social and cultural knowledge will remain unresolved until more experimental evidence about utterance processing becomes available, it is fairly uncontroversial that these two categories should be recognised.

Having identified the processes and their corresponding sources, we are in a position to start constructing semantic representations in DS. These semantic representations (merger representations or Σ s) are constructed according to the processing model. Accordingly, the components of Σ will be indexed with a subscript

standing for the type of processing. Examples of such representations are given in Sections 6.1-6.2 where some selected applications of the theory are discussed.

3. Against the Syntactic Direction Principle: An Interim Summary

To summarize the argument so far, I have suggested that a contextualist theory of meaning should model the meaning which is primarily intended by the speaker and recovered by the addressee.³ Quite frequently this meaning is free from the restrictions imposed by the structure of the sentence. In other words, speakers frequently communicate their main message indirectly, implicitly.⁴ This is an undeniable fact of conversation and as such should not be ignored. Neither should it be downplayed by choosing to model that content which is closely related to the content of the uttered sentence. The latter is exactly what contextualist accounts subscribe to at present. *What is said* and *explicature* are theoretical terms defined as developments of the logical form of the sentence and as such constitute the main object of modelling and study on these accounts. I have pointed out in the preceding two sections that such a construal, distinguishing the developments of the logical form from implicatures (meanings with their own, independent logical forms), cuts across a more important and cognitively adequate distinction, that between primary and secondary intended meanings, and therefore is defunct. It is based on a faulty, or rather psychologically unimplementable, principle. In this vein I suggested rejecting the principle of founding the main object of semantic modelling on the syntactic principle, calling this questionable principle of contextualism a Syntactic Direction Principle.

The main corollary of the argument is simple: either one construes the object of analysis as guided by the syntactic form of the expressions and sides with minimalism, or one construes the object of study as intuitive primary meaning and employs truth conditions to model it, irrespective of the role played in it by syntactic form. On its part, minimalism consistently adheres to the Syntactic Direction by (i) adopting the sentence as the core object and (ii) modelling the pragmatic additions to the core as dictated by syntactic slots or rejecting such additions altogether. On the contrary, on its part, contextualism should reject any restriction posed by the Syntactic

³ *Nota bene*, understood as Model Speaker and Model Addressee in DS, respectively.

⁴ See Section 1 for empirical evidence and average ratios.

Direction and focus on the strongest assumptions intended by the speaker (or, depending on the adopted perspective, recovered by the addressee as those intended by the speaker⁵). However, while it concedes that the enrichment is ‘top-down’ and not syntactically triggered, it fails to go all the way and take up the consequences of the fact that primary meanings may not, and in the majority of cases do not, constitute a development of the logical form. Just as enrichment is free, so is ‘overriding’ of the WS source (word meaning and sentence structure). Despite this empirical fact, most current versions of contextualism sit mid-way, not able to give up the Syntactic Direction, while the rationale for maintaining it is very feeble indeed in that it does not come from the psychologically plausible object of speaker’s intentions.

I have also indicated that a contextualist account which is unrestricted by the Syntactic Direction Principle is already in place in the form of DS. It identifies the sources of information about such primary and secondary meanings, as well as the processes which interact in constructing it. But there are more issues to be resolved at this stage. When the dominance of WS is abandoned and all sources and processes are treated on a par, we have to either abandon the methodological requirement of compositionality or revise the principles on which this composition operates. DS, as a contextualist truth-conditional approach, opts for the latter. The next section is devoted to this issue of the composition of such pragmatics-rich meaning.

4. Pragmatic Compositionality as a Methodological Directive

A compositional account of intensional contexts such as propositional attitude reports, modal expressions, or some constructions with temporal adverbials is arguably one of the greatest challenges that have been facing formal semantics for many decades. It has been recently argued that compositionality need not be sought on the level of syntactic structure. Instead, it can be construed as a property of representations of utterances, or what is said, understood in the contextualist way (Recanati 2004) or even as pertaining to metaphysical reality upon which linguistic representations supervene⁶, also supervening on the compositional structure of the world (Schiffer 1991, 1994, 2003). This paper follows the pragmatic construal of compositionality

⁵ See Saul 2002 and footnote 3 above.

⁶ ‘Supervenience’ is understood as dependence in the sense of definitional characteristics, but see also Jaszczolt 2009.

and extends it to the sources of information identified in DS. The idea is this: just as we can impose a methodological requirement of compositional structure on the source WS, so can we impose it on the entire merger representation Σ .

To elaborate, just as in formal dynamic semantics, so in DS, compositionality is a *methodological* principle. In Dynamic Predicate Logic,

‘...it is always possible to satisfy compositionality by simply adjusting the syntactic and/or semantic tools one uses, unless that is, the latter are constrained on independent grounds.’

Groenendijk and Stokhof (1991: 93).

Analogously, in DS, compositionality is an initial requirement on the formal analysis of primary meaning in terms of Σ s. It is also, of course, a property of one of the contributing types of information, namely WS. However, as is well known, a fully compositional treatment on the level of WS necessitates an appeal to constituents of the logical form which cannot be found in the sentence alone. Instead of ‘patching up’ the compositional treatment in this neo-Fregean way, DS proposes to seek compositionality for such problematic constructions on the level of the merger representations. I exemplify the principle of such pragmatic compositionality in Sections 6.1-6.2.

5. Contextualist Intuitions vis-à-vis the Minimalist Enterprise

This dual concept of compositionality, ascribed to the level of structures (WS) as well as to the level of merger representations of primary meanings (Σ), paves the way to a reconciliation of the contextualist and the minimalist enterprises. It seems that the two programs can happily coexist in that while minimalism seeks to provide a semantic theory of sentence-based meaning without ascribing psychological reality or conscious awareness to this object of semantic analysis (*pace* Borg’s 2004 remarks on modularity), contextualism is a program in *semanticizing utterance interpretation*; its object of study is construed as orthogonal to the object of study of minimalists. In terms of DS, minimalists search for a semantic theory of WS, while contextualists are

preoccupied with various construals of the intuitive content: either, as in DS, as a salient, main intended meaning represented in Σ , or, as in other contextualist accounts, as explicit meaning/what is said guided by the Syntactic Direction Principle (cf. e.g. Carston 2002 and Recanati 2004 respectively). However, it is not difficult to observe that while contextualism about syntactically unconstrained primary meanings is clearly compatible with minimalism, contextualism restricted by the Syntactic Direction conflates the two programs in that it is still, so to speak, ‘minimalist at heart’: it adheres to the structure of the sentence instead of going the whole hog to primary, intended meanings. We can even risk calling it a ‘contextualist variant of minimalism’. As such, it is not independent of minimalism in construing its object of study. Moreover, it tries to kill two birds with one stone in attempting to model the ‘structural core’ and at the same time the ‘intuitive sense’. We can thus conclude, in view of the analysis in Sections 1 and 2, examples mentioned there, as well as the empirical evidence reported there, that it is trying to reconcile the reconcilable and is therefore defunct.

6. Selected Applications

The Fregean principle of compositionality poses problems for those constructions in which interpretation in a model would have to involve more than straightforward extensions of predicates and referents of individual constants. In other words, it poses problems for intensional constructs such as propositional attitude reports and sentences with temporal adverbials. Further, if we adopt the contextualist stance on which truth conditions are to apply to the intuitively plausible, intended content, the principle is also problematic for a much wider range of context in which there is a mismatch between the content arrived at compositionally through the grammar of the sentence and the intuitive content which one *would like to assume to be arrived at compositionally*. The utility of pragmatic compositionality is precisely most diaphanous in intensional contexts and in the contexts of grammar-meaning mismatches such as, for example, a context-dependent, non-default use of tenses. Therefore the applications I present in this section concern propositional attitude reports and an example of tense-time mismatch. These constructions demonstrate how compositionality of the structure obtained via WS need not be mirrored in the

compositionality of the intuitive truth-conditional content in a contextualist account and that the first need not be transparent to the latter.⁷

6.1. Propositional Attitude Reports

Stephen Schiffer (1992) tentatively proposes that, in order to obtain the intuitively plausible truth conditions and block unwanted substitutivity, the belief report in (10) would have to have the logical form in (10a), where m is a mode of presentation under which the belief is held, and Φ^*m stands for a contextually given type of this mode of presentation.

(10) Ralph believes that Fido is a dog.

(10a) $(\exists m) (\Phi^*m \ \& \ \text{Bel}(\text{Ralph}, \langle \text{Fido}, \text{doghood} \rangle, m))$

In short, a constituent m would have to be added to the logical form in order to preserve the compositionality of meaning. Schiffer ultimately rejects this approach (the hidden-indexical theory), together with rejecting semantic compositionality. Nevertheless, his ideas can be put to a good use when (10a) is reconstructed, with some necessary alterations, in the framework of DS. It seems that when we make the constituent m optional and ‘kick it up’, so to speak, from the DS-theoretic level of WS to the level of merger representations Σ , the requirement of (pragmatic) compositionality can be fulfilled there without counterintuitive consequences for the logical form. In order to provide merger representations for the various readings of (10) we can use here the idea of the so-called *variadic function*, meaning the variable adicity of the belief predicate, combined with the ascription of the selection of the adicity to the source of information (CD or CPI). The idea has its origin in a remark in Barwise (1989: 241, fn 23) and was applied to various predicates such as ‘rain’ or ‘eat’ by Recanati (2002, 2007b). This variability of the adicity is not traceable to syntax but instead depends on pragmatic conditions. Applied to propositional

⁷ For a discussion on ‘intuitive truth conditions’ see Recanati 2004 and Borg 2004.

attitudes, it seems to yield desired results.⁸ For example, the *de dicto* reading of (10) is represented as in Fig. 3. On this reading, CPI 1 is responsible for construing the belief as *de dicto*, as well as for the not directly-referential use of *Fido*.⁹ The subscripts following square brackets stand for the source of contributing information. The language is an amended and extended language of DRT (Kamp and Reyle 1993), applied here for a different purpose, namely to model (contextualist) primary meanings.

⁸ I developed this application to belief reports in Jaszczolt 2005 and 2007.

⁹ See Kaplan 1989 for a discussion.

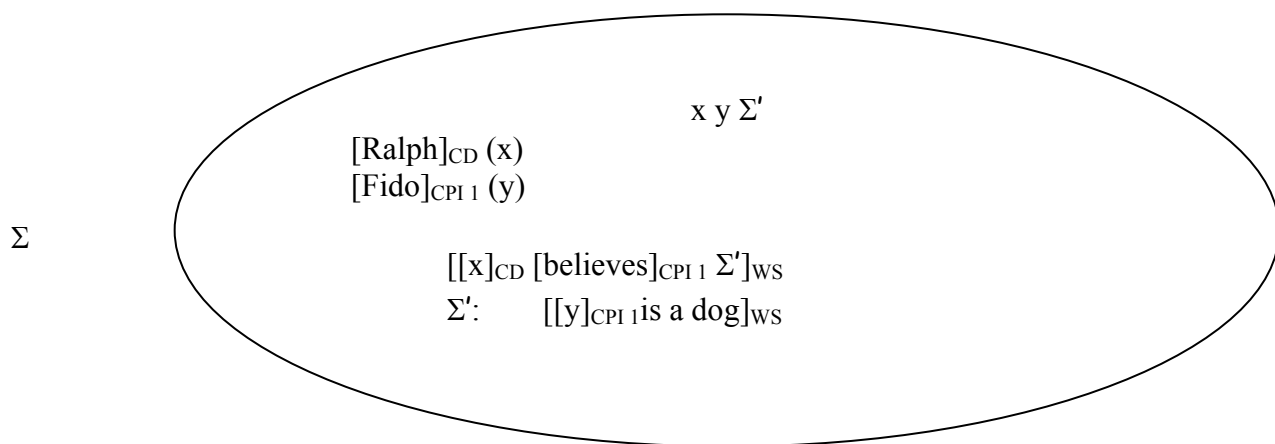


Fig. 3: Merger representation of the reading *de dicto proper* of (10)

The remaining two readings distinguished in DS are represented analogously by varying the type of process ([Fido]_{CD} for *de re*) and varying the discourse referent (say, [Fifi]_{CPI 1} for *de dicto with a referential mistake*).¹⁰

6.2. Temporal Reference in Tense-Time Mismatches

It is well attested in various genetically unrelated languages that tense, if at all present in the grammatical system of that language, is not a sure guide to the temporality of the state of affairs represented in the sentence. Analogously, it is well attested that languages in which tense (and sometimes also aspect, as in Thai) is optional, have no difficulty with conveying temporality even when no overt markers such as temporal adverbials are present. A compositional theory of discourse meaning faces a considerable task to explain and model the meaning of such utterances, accommodating the fact that some temporal orientations will be perceived as more salient than others, or even, *ceteris paribus*, as conversational defaults.

¹⁰ A contextualist account free from the Syntactic Direction must recognise the reading on which referential mistake is committed by the speaker – à la Donnellan's (1966) scenario for definite descriptions. I discussed this three-way distinction in many places in the past twenty years or so and will not repeat the argument here (see e.g. Jaszczolt 1999).

DS has no difficulty with representing the tense-time mismatches in English. Sentence (11) exemplifies a tense-time mismatch when uttered in a situation where a Simple Present form ('goes') is juxtaposed with a future-oriented adverbial ('on Monday') which contextually saliently refers to 'next Monday'. This use is sometimes functionally referred to, after Dowty (1979), as 'tenseless future' and constitutes one of several possible grammatical means of referring to a future eventuality in English which are ranked on the scale of epistemic detachment, incorporating the degree of planning and predictability, and so forth.

(11) Peter goes to a meeting on Monday.

The merger representation Σ is given in Fig. 4. It is easy to see that in the DS framework the assumption of pragmatic compositionality takes care of the grammar-sense mismatch by allowing for the interaction with WS (here: grammatical tense) of information from such sources as CPI (here: inference from the topic of discourse, such as, say, planning Peter's schedule for next week). In short, while by CD 'goes' has present-time reference (*modulo* aspectual considerations), in (11), it acquires future-time reference due to the contribution from CPI_{pm} as indicated in $[ACC_{\Delta}^{tf} \vdash \Sigma]_{WS, CPI_{pm}}$. ' $ACC_{\Delta}^n \vdash \Sigma$ ' stands for a modal operator of epistemic possibility: 'it is acceptable that it is the case that Σ ' to the degree Δ triggered by expression n ' and is loosely modelled on Grice's (2001) sentential operator $Acc \vdash p$.

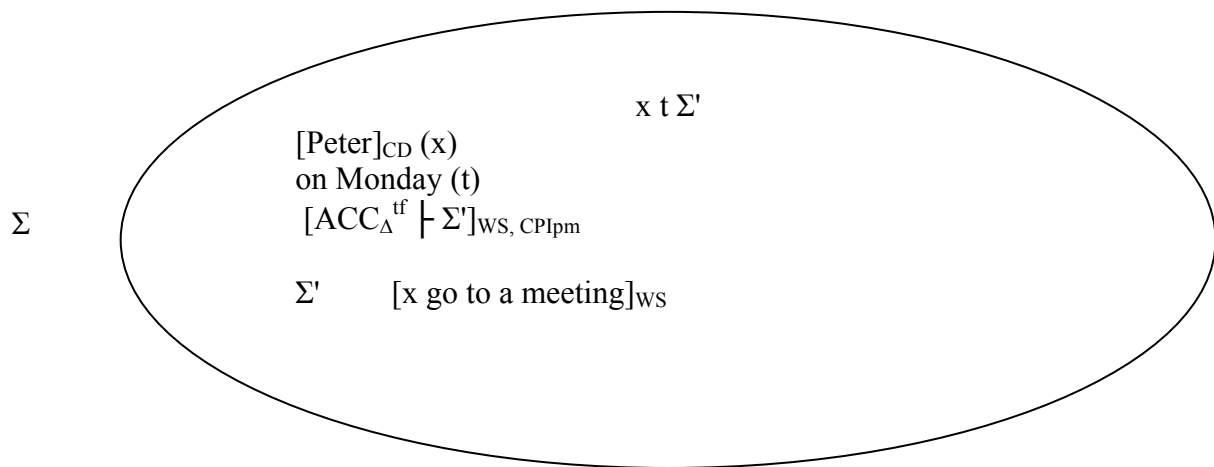


Fig. 4: Merger representation for (11), ‘tenseless’ future’

The analysis of Simple Present used as ‘past of narration’ proceeds analogously.

7. Conclusions

Shifting the methodological requirement of compositionality from the level of sentences to the level of utterances is not only compatible with the contextualist stance but also helps justify the latter by offering an analysis of many problematic types of expressions, exemplified here by propositional attitude reports and tense-time mismatches. At the same time, it was pointed out that contextualism, when construed radically as freed from the Syntactic Direction Principle and modelled by merger representations Σ , is fully compatible with the objectives of semantic minimalism, in that the latter can be understood as an independent analysis of one of the contributing sources, namely WS. This compatibility is attained thanks to the radical construal, namely the departure from the Syntactic Direction which currently leaves other contextualist approaches sitting mid-way between modelling primary intended meaning and modelling the hybrid of the logical form and pragmatic enrichment/modulation. The next question that arises is which version of minimalism

should support WS: a propositionalist one or a non-propositionalist one à la Bach, but this is a topic for a separate investigation.

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