

## Deixis and Indexicality (beyond) here and now

Lyon, October 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024

2024 will mark the 90 years of Karl Bühler's *Theory of Language*, a groundbreaking publication for the study of deictic phenomena as well as for pragmatic theories of language and communication. Bühler, of course, was neither the first modern linguist to use the concept of deixis, nor to investigate the meaning of deictic signs. Most prominently, Peirce's distinction between symbols, icons and indices laid the foundation for another considerable tradition of research, centred on the concept of indexicality. Soon, the receptions of Bühler's and Peirce's works began to intermingle, often via additional notions such as token-reflexivity or via a general re-conceptualization (e.g., Jakobson's concept of "shifters"). Deictic, indexical and token-reflexive markers and signals raise considerable questions for all fields of linguistics:

- from the point of view of the history and epistemology of linguistics, the domain of deixis and indexicality bears witness of multiple conceptual transfers between philosophy, logic, psychology and the study of ordinary language, with Bühler (a trained psychologist working on language and engaging in theoretical discussions with philosophers), but arguably also even before today's concepts were coined and above all after that, when the reception of Peirce's work as well as Reichenbach's, Jakobson's, Kaplan's and to some extent also Quine's work gave new impetus to the field. What can we learn from these historical transfers and possibly also from the misunderstandings that may have taken place between various disciplines?

- in semantic theory, deixis and indexicality raise major concerns for all models centred on conceptual meanings equivalent to predicates; they represent the nexus of contextual reference and of discourse relations; the relationship between deixis, indexicality and anaphora also deserves particular attention from this point of view. The rise of artificial grammars and above all the new possibilities of AI-driven, non-referential text generation further raise the stakes of indexical semantics, arguably making indexicality a crucial line of separation between referential and non-referential language, even though AIs master many features of discourse structuration that are traditionally placed in the vicinity of indexicality, e.g. anaphora. Where does semantic theory stand now when it comes to theorizing indexical devices of discourse structuration? Where is it going to?

- in pragmatics, deixis and indexicality are not only interfaces with semantics; they are also crucial notions for the apprehension of interactional mechanisms and the constitution of meaning in dialogue. These mechanisms include the construction of reference and joint attention, but they can go further: if we consider the use of certain vocabulary or certain linguistic procedures as "indices", deixis and indexicality could become cover terms for a great share of communicative behaviours conveying procedural meaning (as opposed to conceptual meaning). Should it be so? If yes, which is the semantico-pragmatic typology of indexical and deictic meanings requested to efficiently capture the variety of phenomena at stake? Or should we assume that there are interfaces between symbolic vs. deictic meaning, conceptual vs. procedural meaning, and plausibly even truth-conditional vs. use-conditional meaning as different, yet compatible levels of analysis?

- in grammaticalization theory, deictic or indexical markers have now become a classical target of investigation, even though the study of deictic grammaticalization has tended to focus on canonical demonstratives (articles and demonstratives of time and space), possibly at the expense of other demonstrative markers (even though deictics of manner have attracted more attention recently). New studies have also put forward the notion of "indexicalization" as a more general procedure describing semantic change in grammaticalization: even though this usage is compatible with the Peircean concept of indexicality, and arguably also with Reichenbachian token-reflexivity, is it still in line with the usual assimilation of indexicality and deixis? It may also be interesting to ask whether demonstratives, for all their variety, really occupy the whole field of deictic grammaticalization. Any research on grammaticalization of non-demonstrative markers into demonstrative ones would also be of particular interest in the light of the postulated unidirectionality of grammaticalization.

- in the same spirit, it should be noted that articles, adverbials of time and space and personal markers have long been central categories in the study of deixis / indexicality (it was already the case in Bühler's monograph): what about other parts of speech and what about languages using a set of lexical classes that is highly different from Standard Average European (SAE)?
- across these various levels of analysis, there arises the question of the deictic meaning of certain functional categories, especially the traditional inflectional categories of SAE languages and their functional equivalents in typologically diverse languages: are all tenses deictic, as postulated at least since Reichenbach or Jakobson? What about mood and modality? The deictic nature of epistemicity (be it modal or evidential) seems a rather consensual matter, but deicticity is likely to intervene in the realm of deontic meaning, too: is it also the case for all types of modality? Or is the deictic heterogeneity of "modals" actually an argument against the existence of modality as a proper class? Are there deictic aspects? Are there deictic categories in the nominal phrase aside from the issues of definiteness, specificity and anaphoricity?

All these questions, and others, will be dealt with from October 3<sup>rd</sup> to October 5<sup>th</sup> 2024 in Lyon (France), during a conference organized by the *Linguistics Research Center - Corpus, Discourse and Societies*. The conference is likely to start around 14.00 CET on October 3<sup>rd</sup> and to end ca. 13.00 on October 5<sup>th</sup>. Talks should last 20 to 25 minutes, excluding questions, and will be held in English. More detailed indications on the schedule will be provided upon acceptance.

The conference is open to all scholars from the fields of descriptive and theoretical linguistics, semantic theory and pragmatics without any restriction of theoretical framework. Any contribution dealing with some of the questions raised above in any language are welcome. Contributions investigating other aspects of deictic or indexical meaning and their theory can also be submitted and will be examined.

Submissions should include a provisional title and an abstract of ½ to 1½ pages (excluding references). They must be sent to  **pierre-yves.modicom (@) univ-lyon3.fr**  by February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Acceptance will be notified on March 11<sup>th</sup>.

## Selected references

### Classics

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*More recent literature*

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