

Pronouns in Free Indirect Discourse

One of the puzzling facts about Free Indirect Discourse is that 1st and 2nd person pronouns are interpreted relative to the speaker, whereas time adverbials such as ‘today’ are interpreted relative to the attitude holder:

- (1) He should talk to me today(, thought John a week ago).
John’s thought: “I should talk to this person today”
(‘this person’ = the speaker)

This may lead us to conclude that pronouns are interpreted ‘de re’ in FID, but other expressions are not.

I argue, instead, that the ‘de re’ option is usually not available for pronouns either (at least not in the standard sense of ‘de re’). This claim is based on contrasts between FID and Indirect Discourse regarding: (a) the availability of “double access” readings, (b) the use of ‘he’/’she’ in scenarios involving gender-identification errors, (c) Condition B effects, and (d) the antecedent options for ‘it’. I propose that the FID operator (unlike attitude verbs) takes as its internal argument a function from contexts to intensions (where ‘context’ is understood as <speaker, (addressee,) time, world, assignment>). This has the effect that all expressions in FID are interpreted relative to the attitude holder. 1st and 2nd person pronouns satisfy an additional condition that ties them to the speaker.