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The sense of much that we say depends on the context in which it is said. Here is a simple example. The officer in charge of finding out what happened during the Defense Secretary’s speech to the Student Union has called upon one of the informers (whom the police, with usual foresight, had placed among the audience). The informer selects a photograph from the pile in front of him and says to the officer:

(1) She was throwing tomatoes.

The are several ways in which this utterance depends on the context in which it is made. For a start let us note two of these.

(i) The pronoun *she* refers to the professor of mathematics whose photograph the informer has just chosen.

(ii) The past tense *was throwing* indicates some time preceding the time $t_0$ at which (1) is being made.

Thus (1) is true iff the person of the picture was engaged in an act of tomato throwing at some time before $t_0$. This illustrates the familiar fact that reference and truth may depend on such contextual factors as the time of the utterance and what deictic acts accompany it (pointing at an individual, staring at her, selecting a picture of her, and so forth). Evidently the interpretation of (1) requires context in other ways as well. For (1) to count as true it is not enough that the mathematics professor of the picture

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threw tomatoes at some arbitrary time previous to $t_0$; she must have been throwing tomatoes on the particular occasion which the officer has been charged to investigate. It is to that event that the past tense was throwing must be understood to refer. And it is the context in which (1) is used which determines that it is that event to which the tense refers, and no other.

But let us return to the dependencies noted under (i) and (ii). These are instances of context sensitivity that are by now quite well understood. They received ample attention within the tradition of model-theoretic semantics, as it was established by Montague, Scott, Kaplan, Lewis and others in the late sixties and early seventies.\(^1\) Typically, those studies recognized, the truth of an utterance depends on facts such as the time and place at which it is made, the identity of speaker and addressee, and accompanying demonstrative acts. Moreover, it was observed, much, perhaps all, such context-dependence can be located in particular context-sensitive, or ‘indexical’, linguistic elements, like pronouns, demonstratives, tenses and certain adverbs of space and time (e.g. here, over there, yesterday, a week ago, or a week later). And it appeared that a precise analysis of these dependencies could be given by recasting truth and reference (with respect to a given model) as functions taking the relevant contextual factors as arguments.

This work has been fruitful and influential. But it has ignored an aspect of context sensitivity which is crucial to the way language works. It is an aspect that affects both spoken and written language, but is of particular importance in connection with extended written passages, or texts. It is this. Not only do the utterances we produce, orally or in writing, often depend on context for their interpretation; they also do much to determine what the context is. The interaction between context and utterance is two-, not one-way.

In fact, the dependence of context on utterance is nearly as pervasive as its converse. To see this, note how easy it is to convert an example in which the relevant contextual parameters are determined by extra-linguistic factors into one where they are fixed by the preceding text. Compare for instance the case of (1) with the following bit of prose:

(2) On the 25th February the Defense Secretary addressed the Union. As expected the occasion was marked by serious disturbances and the Secretary, unable to finish his speech, left in a condition that called for a bath and a serious spot of