

A Davidsonian truth-theorist might worry about context-dependence for two kinds of reason. On the one hand, it raises fundamental doubts about the Davidsonian project, which seems to involve isolating specifically semantic knowledge from any other knowledge or skill in a way reflected by the ideal of homophony. Indexicality forces a departure from this ideal, and so from the aspiration of deriving the truth conditions of an arbitrary utterance on the basis simply of axioms which could hope to represent purely semantic knowledge. In defense of Davidson, I argue that once his original idea for dealing with the familiar indexical expressions is suitably implemented, in terms of theorems expressing conditional truth-conditions, the contrast between semantic and non-semantic knowledge occurs in an appropriate place: between knowledge of the conditional truth conditions themselves (semantic), and knowledge of their antecedents (non-semantic). For example, a simplified version of a condition proposed by Travis (2006), designed to establish that there can be no correct truth conditional semantics, can be turned on its head, and used to establish a general method for bringing all forms of context-dependence within Davidson's framework (using quantification into the qualifier "on understanding U"). I argue that this will not work, and that we are committed to a piecemeal examination of various cases, of which I give some examples. One of these relates directly to Travis's argument concerning the context-dependence of "grunt". In addition, Davidsonians need to have a sharp eye for the distinction between pragmatic and semantic content, to be specified by a test akin to Grice's notion of cancelability; they should treat sentences like "It's raining" by the conditional truth-condition method; and they should treat possessives as semantically very unspecific. It is part of the thesis of the paper that this list of examples by no means exhausts the cases a Davidsonian needs to address.