“Context” is sometimes used widely to describe whatever might affect the interpretation of an utterance.

In such usage, (a) anything in the linguistic text or speech action, and (b) any part of the environment might be part of the context.

Mostly what becomes a part of the context in this conception is something that is noticed by the participants…or at least, can be noticed. Any such item is eligible to be a part of the context. (Hidden thoughts and secrets that only one person knows can’t be part of the context).
TYPES OF CONTEXT:

a. “common ground” (see text Ch. 4, pp. 215-219):
   - social “commonplaces”
   - a jointly developed slate of discourse commitments
   - a mutually developed public view of what they are talking about
   - information generated as the conversation evolves

b. “conversational background” (Ch. 5, pp. 296-302 on modal base, role of w):
   - what the relevant facts are
   - what is known
   - what is polite
   - what the authorities allow
   - what someone’s goals are
TYPES OF CONTEXT (cont’d):

c. “salient features of the (non-linguistic) environment”:
    compare ‘an open area’ when said in a city, a farm, a forest
    (and generally, any feature of the environment that determines
    “what counts” as exemplifying a predicate such as ‘tall’ or ‘brown’
or ‘young’, etc.)
    that there is something unusual and easily noticed
    the genders/ages/social stature of the conversationalists
    physical situation of speaker/audience with respect to one another

d. “features of the speech situation”:
    time of speech (see text Ch. 5, pp. 279-289 on role of \(i\))
    who is speaking/who is addressee (audience)
    where conversation is taking place
TYPES OF CONTEXT (cont’d)

e. “mixing environment and speech situation”
   where speaker/addressee is looking
   where speaker/addressee is pointing
   perspective from which information is being presented
   [and how all this interacts with deictic words]

f. how conversational policies are being followed (or not)
   conventional and conversational implicatures (Ch. 4.5 pp. 239-255)

g. “presuppositions” (Ch. 6, pp. 349-365)

h. “speech act information”
   a whole new dimension of evaluation (see Ch. 4.4, pp. 220-239)
GENERALLY:

These contextual features play a role in determining the “meaning” or “information” that is conveyed in a conversation (or text). But these are not relevant to the ‘literal meaning’ of the sentence. And therefore they might be thought to not be a part of semantics proper, and instead a part of “pragmatics”.

However, there are many attempts to include much of this under the purview of semantics, by extending semantic methods. We’ve already seen how information about possible situations (<w,i>) can be employed so characterize some of these features of “context”.
THE MULTIPLE COORDINATE APPROACH

This was initially introduced (Bar-Hillel, Montague, …) to handle *indexicals*, and that is still the main accepted use.

**INDEXICALS:** *I, here, you, now, then* (sometimes, anyway), *yesterday, that and those* (as demonstratives), *she/he/her/it/*… (as deictic pronouns)

**THE IDEA IS:** extend the notion of “semantic value in M, w, i, g” to “semantic value in M, w, i, c, g”. The new index *c* is the *context*.

**DO THIS BY:** keeping the notion of a *possible situation* (<w,i>) and invoking a set of possible contexts, C. Then *c∈C.*
For any $c$,

a. $V(I)(c)\ (<w,i>) = \text{sp}(c)$ \ [the speaker in $c$]

b. $V(you)(c)\ (<w,i>) = \text{adr}(c)$ \ [the addressee in $c$]

c. $V(\text{here}_n)(c)\ (<w,i>) = \text{loc}_n(c)$ \ [the location of the speech act in $c$]

d. $V(\text{there}_n)(c)\ (<w,i>) = \text{demloc}_n(c)$ \ [the location being demonstrated in $c$]

If $\alpha$ is a constant $\llbracket \alpha \rrbracket^{M,w,i,c,g} = V(\alpha)(c)(<w,i>)$

b. If $\alpha$ is a trace or pronoun, $\llbracket \alpha \rrbracket^{M,w,i,c,g} = g(\alpha)$

c. If $\Delta = [\text{NP Pred}]$, then $\llbracket \Delta \rrbracket^{M,w,i,c,g} = 1$ iff $\llbracket \text{NP} \rrbracket^{M,w,i,c,g} \in \llbracket \text{Pred} \rrbracket^{M,w,i,c,g}$

d. If $\Delta = [S_1 \text{ conj } S_2]$, then $\llbracket \Delta \rrbracket^{M,w,i,c,g} = V(\text{conj})(c)(<w,I>)(\llbracket S_1 \rrbracket^{M,w,i,c,g}, \llbracket S_2 \rrbracket^{M,w,i,c,g})$

e. If $\Delta = [\text{that } S]$, then $\llbracket \Delta \rrbracket^{M,w,i,c,g} = \{<w´,i´> : \llbracket S \rrbracket^{M,w,i,c,g} \}$

f. If $\Delta = [\text{must } S]$, then $\llbracket \Delta \rrbracket^{M,w,i,c,g} = 1$ iff for all $<w´,i´>$ in $\text{mdb}(c)$, $\llbracket S \rrbracket^{M,w,i,c,g} = 1$