

This talk considers the effects of contextual domain restriction, the phenomenon in which the denotation of a nominal is restricted to a pragmatically determined domain, on definite and demonstrative descriptions. My leading hypothesis is that distributional differences between these two kinds of noun phrases follow from constraints placed by the determiners on contextual domain restriction. Implementing domain restriction as the relativization of nominals to situations (Recanati 2004; Kratzer 2004), I argue that definite descriptions are relativized to default situations and demonstrative descriptions to non-default situations. The analysis suggests the need for a fine-grained theory of domain restriction and has implications for the semantics-pragmatics relationship.

My point of departure is a uniqueness-based theory of definiteness. It is well established that contextual domain restriction offers a potential solution to the problem posed by incomplete definite descriptions for this theory (Barwise and Perry 1983; Westerstahl 1984; Recanati 1996, 2004). The classic Russellian theory predicts that definite descriptions will be acceptable just when their descriptive content denotes a singleton set in the model, a prediction with many obvious counterexamples, such as (1). However, the definite description in (1) can be understood as referring uniquely relative to a contextually determined subset of the universe of discourse, just as the universal quantifier in (2) can be understood as quantifying over a relevant subset of the universe.

I argue that this approach is useful not only in developing a general theory of definiteness but also in understanding differences among definite noun phrases. While most research on uniqueness-based approaches to definiteness has focused on definite descriptions, I suggest that a uniqueness condition can be fruitfully applied to demonstrative descriptions as well. Now, definite and demonstrative descriptions are not always equally acceptable in the same contexts, as illustrated in (3) and (5). On the analysis developed here, these differences follow from constraints placed by definite and demonstrative determiners on what situations their complements can be relativized to.

Demonstrative descriptions refer uniquely relative to non-default situations, signaling that their interpretation requires an adjustment to the domain of discourse. The demonstratives in (3a) refer uniquely relative to subparts of the context of utterance established by speaker demonstrations. Demonstratives may also be relativized to situations containing the context of utterance as a proper subpart, in order to include elements that may have been previously unnoticed, as in (4). Anaphoric demonstrative descriptions show similar effects—they may be relativized to a situation that is a recently evoked subpart of the described situation, as in (5), or “zoom out” to include previously mentioned entities that may have been forgotten, as in (6).

Definite descriptions, on the other hand, refer uniquely relative to default situations. In extensional contexts, they must be relativized to the entire situation that is currently being described; they are insensitive to demonstrations and may not be used to refer to a proper subpart of the described situation. In intensional contexts, the situation variable associated with a definite description may also be bound by the intensional operator, as shown in (7). Two caveats are in order here: postnominal modifiers can be relativized to independent situation variables (Dayal 1998) and are not subject to these restrictions, as shown in (8), and the described situation may change during a discourse. These complications aside, definite descriptions have access to a much more limited set of situations than demonstrative descriptions do.

Previous work on free-choice items has suggested that some determiners have the ability to override the effects of domain restriction (Kadmon and Landman 1993; Dayal 1998; Kratzer and Shimoyama 2002). The analysis presented in this talk suggests that determiners influence not only *whether* domain restriction takes place, but *how* it takes place. The picture of determiner meanings that emerges is one in which the lexical semantics of determiners is tightly interwoven with pragmatics.

- (1) The table is covered with books.
- (2) Every student wrote a term paper.
- (3)
  - a. I like that painting [pointing at a painting] better than that painting [pointing at another painting].
  - b. \*I like the painting [pointing at a painting] better than the painting [pointing at another painting].
- (4) [Speaker points at an umbrella behind the door] Please hand me that umbrella.
- (5) A woman<sub>i</sub> entered from stage left. Another woman<sub>j</sub> entered from stage right. That/\*The woman<sub>j</sub> was carrying a basket of flowers. (Roberts 2002)
- (6) Remember that guy I was telling you about the other day?
- (7) The winner of the race might have been someone else.
- (8) [pointing to one of several men] The man over there looks happy.

### References

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