Fake nouns: reconsidering the role of presupposition in reference

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Dorothy Ahn
Rutgers University
dorothy.ahn@rutgers.edu

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Definiteness as a class

definite descriptions, pronouns, demonstratives, and names:

categorized into a natural class by:

- **'uniquely referring use'**(Strawson 1950): singular demonstrative pronouns (*this*, *that*), proper names (*Nagoya*, *Jin*), singular personal and impersonal pronouns (*she*, *he*, *I*, *you*, *it*), and definite descriptions (*the talk*, *the linguist*)
- **(weak) familiarity** (Heim 1982; Roberts 2003)

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- **(weak) familiarity** (Heim 1982; Roberts 2003)

But their internal makeup considered to be distinct

Asserted and presupposed content

PRONOUNS

variable e

ϕ presuppositions

$[\![\text{she}_i]\!]^g$
= g(i), if g(i) is female

DEFINITES

ι taking NP $\langle et, e \rangle$

unique existence

$[\![\text{the linguist}]\!]$
= ιx. linguist(x)

PROPER NOUNS

rigid denotator e

$\in D_e$

$[\![\text{Dorothy}]\!]$
=

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Shared building blocks:

- uniqueness
- familiarity
- existence
- content

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$[\![\text{she}_i]\!]^g$
= g(i), if g(i) is female

[[the linguist]]
= ιx. linguist(x)

[[Dorothy]]
=


Shared building blocks, different mechanisms:

	$[\![\text{she}_i]\!]^g$	[[the linguist]]	[[Dorothy]]
uniqueness	g(i)	ι	rd
familiarity	g(i)	(g(i))	rd
existence	g(i)	ι	rd
content	ϕ	NP	?

This talk

PRONOUNS
variable e
ϕ presuppositions

DEFINITES
ι taking NP <et,e>
unique existence

PROPER NOUNS
rigid denotator e
$\in D_e$

$[\![\text{she}_i]\!]^g$
= g(i), if g(i) is female

[[the linguist]]
= ιx. linguist(x)

[[Dorothy]]
= 

This talk:

	[[she]]	[[the linguist]]	[[Dorothy]]
uniqueness familiarity existence	one underlying mechanism		
content	label		

This talk

PRONOUNS	DEFINITES	PROPER NOUNS
variable e	ι taking NP <et,e>	rigid denotator e
ϕ presuppositions	unique existence	(existence?)

Alternatives:

- PRONOUNS as (elided) DEF [Bi and Jenks 2019; Elbourne 2005; Heim 1990; Neale 1988]
- PRONOUNS as short DEF [von Heusinger 2002; Postal 1966; Royer 2022; Schlenker 2005]
- DEF carrying indices like PRONOUNS [Heim 1983; Schwarz 2009]
- ϕ, NP, names as use-conditional content [Gutzmann and McCready 2014]
- PRONOUNS, DEF with uniform structure [Elbourne 2008; Roberts 2003]
- NAMES as descriptions [Burge 1973; Sloat 1969, a.o.]

This talk: A variant of the uniform view

Main empirical motivation

A novel parallel observed between ϕ of pronouns and NP of descriptions

Fake features

(1) Only [Mary$_i$]$_F$ did her$_i$ homework.

a. Others$_i$ (female or not) didn't do their$_i$ homework

- ϕ inference is not part of focus alternatives
- considered as a characteristic of ϕ presupposition

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- considered as a characteristic of ϕ presupposition

Fake nominals

(2) Only one student$_i$ complained about the poster dimension provided by the conference not fitting the student$_i$'s printer.

a. Others$_i$ (student or not) didn't complain about ... their$_i$ printer

- How to account for this washed-out behavior of nouns?

Preview

Pronouns and definite descriptions alike:

- only contribute an indexed variable in the semantics
  accounts for fake features/noun property
- the content (ϕ or NP) only serve as labels for disambiguation
  labels for optimal informativity; social coordination

Implications

1. In anaphoric use, content is not interpreted
2. Uniform, minimal analysis of all anaphoric expressions referring to familiar entities
3. Difference arises from external factors

Fake nouns

Fake features of pronouns

Phi-features of pronouns observed to be systematically ignored in certain contexts (leading to terms like ‘fake features’) [Kratzer 1998; Heim 2008; Bassi 2021; Sudo 2012, a.o.]

- allows mismatched gender alternatives under focus operators

(3) Only Mary$_{F}$ did her homework. [Heim 2008; Kratzer 1998, a.o.]
= No one else (regardless of gender) did their homework

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(3) Only Mary$_F$ did her homework. [Heim 2008; Kratzer 1998, a.o.]
= No one else (regardless of gender) did their homework

- Compare to other cases when you have a presupposition under ‘only’:

(4) Only Mary$_F$ danced again
a. Everyone else danced but didn’t dance again

(5) Only Mary$_F$ stopped smoking
a. Everyone else used to smoke

Approaches

Some approaches in the literature

1. Weak Projection: ϕ is not projected to all alternatives [Sauerland 2013]
2. Minimal pronoun: pronoun does not contain any information about ϕ-features and get them later (through syntactic transmission [Kratzer 1998, a.o.] or valuation from context [Bassi 2021])

Approaches

Some approaches in the literature

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→ 'fake'-ness as a characteristic of ϕ-features

- Sauerland 2013: pure presupposition triggers (that only add presupposition and no assertion) do not project to alternatives
- Bassi 2021: phi-features are not there to begin with, but are morphosyntactically required to be realized as features in the D

Challenge: fake nouns

Observation: bound descriptions also show the same ‘fakeness’ property

(6) (Organizing a conference) Only one student complained that the poster dimension provided by the conference didn’t fit the student’s printer.

a. Others (student or not) didn’t complain about their printer

- definite descriptions can be bound in English [Elbourne 2013; Schlenker 2005; Schwarz 2009]
- and when bound, it shows the same ‘fake’ characteristic

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- and when bound, it shows the same ‘fake’ characteristic

→ quite restricted in English

→ more productive in languages where noun-containing expressions can be bound

Tagalog

Tagalog 2nd person reference

When nouns are used with *si* (name-fier) for 2nd person reference, the same 'fakeness' is observed [Gérard Avelino, pc]

(7) Si guro lang po ang nagbasa ng papel ni guro.
si teacher only hon ang read ng paper ni teacher
'Only teacher read teacher's paper.' (others didn't read their own paper)

- While *si* is called a name-fier here, actual proper names do not seem to allow bound-reading here (Gérard Avelino pc)
- seems restricted to 2nd person honorific reference; definite-marking *ang* is not good in 3rd person

Korean

Korean 2/3 reference

Nouns can be used instead of pronouns, due to honorification and/or the lack of a 3rd person pronoun [Ahn 2019]

(8) Only professor reads professor's paper twice, others don't read their papers again.

a. kyoswunim-man kyoswunim nonmwun twu-pen ilkcyo pothong
prof-ONLY prof paper 2-cl read normal
salam-tul-un caki nonmwun tasi an ilkeyo.
person-pl-top self paper again neg read

(9) Only mom cherishes mom's clothing, others don't cherish their clothing.

a. emma-man emma os akkici talun salamtul-un caki os
mom-ONLY mom clothing cherish other people-top self clothing
an akkye
neg cherish

Data are familiar

Similar data have been observed for a while,

- but in the context of (apparent) **Principle C violations**
  (R-expressions being bound by identical R-expressions)
- Zapotec, Hmong, Vietnamese, Thai, ...

(10) John konnuad John.
John shaved John
'John shaved himself.' [Thai; Lasnik and Stowell 1991]

- bound readings allow sloppy interpretation [Chaiphet and Jenks 2021]

(11) Mii khêɛ Nít thîi khít wâa Nít chàlàat.
EXT just Nit REL think COMP Nit smart
'Only Nit thinks that she's smart.' [C&J'21:(13)]

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→ but not discussed in light of 'fakeness'

Summary of the issue

Noun-containing expressions (bare nouns, si-marked nouns, and definite descriptions) allow bound readings, and the nominal content does not project to alternatives.

Issues

1. Traditionally assumed ι-based analysis of *the* combined with focus semantics (Rooth 1992, 1985) does not give us the right reading
2. Analyses for fake features derive this property from pure presuppositional/morphosyntactic nature

Issue 1: Focus semantics and ι

free-uses

*Assumption: bare nouns in Korean and *si*-nouns in Tagalog are definite descriptions [Lee 1992; Jenks 2018; Ahn 2019, a.o.]; Roothian focus semantics [Rooth 1992, 1985]

(12) $[_{\alpha}$ Only $[_{\beta}$ professor$_{F}$ reads professor's paper]]

a. $[\![[_{\beta}\ ..]]\!]^{o} = \lambda w : \exists!x[\mathit{prof}(x)].\mathit{read}(\iota x[\mathit{prof}(x)], \text{paper-of}(\iota x[\mathit{prof}(x)])$

b. $[\![[_{\beta}\ ..]]\!]^{f} = \{\lambda w : \exists!x[\mathit{prof}(x)].\mathit{read}(z, \text{paper-of}(\iota x[\mathit{prof}(x)]) \mid \text{z is a person}\}$

c. $[\![(12)]\!]$ = No one else reads the unique professor's paper

Issue 1: Focus semantics and ι

bound uses

*Assumption: *the* carries an anaphoric index in addition to NP in its restriction (Elbourne 2013; Schwarz 2009) so that it can be bound

(13) $[\![\text{the}_S]\!] = \lambda s_r.\lambda P.\lambda y\colon \exists!x(P(x)(s_r)\ \&\ x = y).\ \iota x[P(x)(s_r)\ \&\ x = y]$ [Schwarz 2009]

Issue 1: Focus semantics and ι

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(14) [$_\alpha$ Only [$_\beta$ professor$_F$ λ_5 t_5 reads professor$_5$'s paper]

a. $[\![[_\beta$ ..$]]\!]^o = \lambda w : \exists!x[\mathit{prof}(x) \wedge x{=}5].\mathit{read}(5, \text{paper-of}(\iota x[\mathit{prof}(x) \wedge x{=}5]))$

b. $[\![[_\beta$ ..$]]\!]^f = \{\lambda w : \exists!x[\mathit{prof}(x) \wedge x{=}z].\mathit{read}(z, \text{paper-of}(\iota x[\mathit{prof}(x) \wedge x{=}z])) \mid z \in D_e\}$

c. $[\![(14)]\!]$ = No one else read the paper by the unique professor that is them

- issues:
  - unique existence presupposition of the definite projects to alternatives (similar issue observed in von Heusinger 2007)
  - each person has to be a unique professor (no 'fakeness')

Issue 2: ϕ vs. NP

ϕ is 'fake' because they are ϕ.

- **minimal pronouns.** get their features valued through syntactic transmission [Kratzer 1998] or morphosyntactic valuation [Bassi 2021]
  - nouns are not transmitted syntactically
- **weak projection.** ϕ do not project to alternatives because they are 'pure presuppositional triggers' [Sauerland 2013]
  - nouns are not pure presuppositional triggers

Intuition

It's not about phi. It's about reference to a familiar entity

- familiar reference is what backgrounds/erases the content.

Implementations:

1. Make them all minimal variables and value the content later as labels*
2. Base-generate content in LF but make them into (uninterpreted) labels upon a referential use

Proposal

Main intuition

Pronouns as minimal variables [Kratzer 1998; Safir 2014; Bassi 2021]

- Pronouns are minimal (lack features) in their semantics
    - difference: bound (K'98) vs. all (B'21) pronouns vs. A-bound anaphors (S'14)
- Morphological form is due to syntactic transmission [Kratzer 1998], information about antecedent [Bassi 2021], syntactic configuration [Safir 2014]

Main intuition

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Familiar expressions as minimal variables

1. Descriptions in familiarity uses are also minimal variables with indices
2. Content is valued in morphology from some information of the antecedent available to the speaker (and the addressee) [label]
3. The choice of a label signals the speaker's partition of discourse referents [R-partition], which fall outside of semantic interpretation

- {female, male, other}	*she*
- {honored, non-honored}	pro_{HON}
- {Jin, RJ, Dorothy}	*Jin*
- {singer, philosopher, linguist}	*the linguist*
- {positive, negative}	*the idiot*

Proposal - Part 1: Minimal indices

1. Discourse referents are tracked with an assignment function
2. LF for {he$_7$ / the linguist$_7$}: x_7, and assignment function of <7,jin> gives you jin

- Fake features, fake nouns are not an issue because the mismatching ϕ and NP information are not there to begin with. [as in Bassi 2021 for ϕ]

(15) her$_7$

a. LF: [$_{D[num:,gend:,pers:]}$ 7]

(16) the linguist$_7$

a. LF: [$_{D[num:,gend:,pers:]}$ 7]

(17) [$_\alpha$ Only [$_\beta$ professor$_F$ λ_5 t_5 reads professor$_5$'s paper]

a. $[\![[_\beta$ ..$]]\!]^o = \lambda w.read(5, \text{paper-of}(5))$
b. $[\![[_\beta$ ..$]]\!]^f = \{\lambda w.read(z, \text{paper-of}(z)) \mid z \in D_e\}$
c. $[\![(17)]\!]$ = No one else read their own paper

Proposal - Part 2: Spelling-out

How does [$_{D[num:,gend:,pers:]}$ 7] get pronounced as ‘the linguist’?

1. getting information about the antecedent
2. choosing an appropriate label

1. getting information about the antecedent

→ simpler in global contexts: g (<7,jin>) with information that Jin is a linguist

→ in local contexts: Bassi 2021 or Chierchia 2020

- Bassi 2021 has a way of defining a local context (LOCO) so that the information about the binder is available to the pronoun
- Chierchia 2020 assignments are transferred over through conjunction; bound uses of pronouns are identical to intersentential uses

Bassi 2021: Valuation from Context

Bassi (2021) argues that pronouns start out as bare variables (with features left blank) and receive their content from (local or global) context for morphosyntactic requirements

(18) her_{7}

a. LF: $[_{D[num:,gend:,pers:]}\ 7\ ]$
b. Information from context: the index is mapped to a female atomic individual
c. After valuation: $[_{D[num:\mathbf{sg},gend:\mathbf{fem},pers:]}\ 7\ ]$

(19) Local Context (LOCO) of α embedded in some LF as the smallest set of assignments that expand the global context (the starting assignment) with referents recorded by λ operators that c-command α

(20) $Only\ Mary_{F}\ [\ \lambda_i]\ t_i$ did her_i's homework.

a. $[_{vP}\ t_i$ did pro_i's homework]
b. starting assignment: Ø
c. Local context of vP: $\{\emptyset^{[i \rightarrow Mary]}\}$

Chierchia 2019: Event dynamics

Chierchia 2020 event dynamic semantics. Scoping binder only binds its trace, but predicate introduces a relevant thematic argument that is equated with that trace and subsequently binds the pronoun inside.

- pronouns are bound in the same way they would be in intersentential uses, just over conjunctions.

(21) Jin loves his cat.

a. [Jin$_i$ [t$_i$ v^5 TH^1 loves his$_5$ cat]]

b. Jin (λx_i. $\exists$e [[EX(e)]^5(x_i) $\wedge$ [TH(e)]^1(his$_5$ cat) $\wedge$ [love]^2(e)])

- So by the time his$_5$ is interpreted, [5$\rightarrow$Jin] is available

(22) Every boy loves his cat.

a. [every boy$_i$ [t$_i$ v^5 TH^1 loves his$_5$ cat]]

b. every boy (λx_i. $\exists$e [[EX(e)]^5(x_i) $\wedge$ [TH(e)]^1(his$_5$ cat) $\wedge$ [love]^2(e)])

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R-partition in a metalinguistic layer

- labels are speaker’s way of expressing the relevant variable with index by choosing the most appropriate (informatively optimal?) label for it
- the labels reflect a certain partition of discourse referents (R-partition)
- labels and R-partition are not part of the semantics: they are metalinguistic tags for relevant discourse referent

Putting it together

1. Context has metalinguistic labels for concepts/entities we want to talk about

- Context provides: <w, g, R-partition>
  - information about the world and discourse participants
  - assignment function
  - metalinguistic labels for concepts/entities we want to talk about
- *R-partitions*: speaker's partition of referents using labels

(23) In a context with Jin (a linguist) and RJ (an astronomer)

a. g: <7, jin>

b. R-partition: {linguist, astronomer}

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a. g: <7, jin>
b. R-partition: {linguist, astronomer}

- R-partition can be provided with indefinites or determined through QUD:

(24) a. A linguist and an astronomer entered. The astronomer danced.
b. Which one, the linguist or the astronomer, danced?

- Or it can be covert (like QUDs) and require abductive reasoning

Putting it together

2. In spelling out x_7, you're given

   - the index (7)
   - contextual information: QUD, global and local assignments ([7 → Jin])
   - relevant R-partitions which include:
     - features
     - nouns
     - epithets
     - names

fem	male	other
linguist	philosopher	
positive	negative	
Jin	RJ	

3. You can use any of the labels to express x_7. Some constraints:

   - phase-internal A-binder; then a reflexive form appears [Safir 2014]
   - outside, economy conditions preferring simpler terms [Ahn 2019; Schlenker 2005, a.o.]
     - In default cases, conventionalized features {gender, status, ...}

Putting it together

4. Choice of expression reflects speaker's R-partition of discourse referents, especially if marked

(25) The linguist is happy.

a. LF: happy(x_7)

b. R-partition:

linguist	philosopher

(26) The idiot is happy.

a. LF: happy(x_7)

b. R-partition:

positive	negative

Putting it together

5. R-partition and label are subject to the manner maxim.

   - The choice of an anaphoric expression x is cooperative in discourse if the R-partition and the label are sufficient to resolve the anaphoric expression

     (27) The linguist is happy.

     a. cooperative if R-partition of {linguist, philosopher} and the label 'linguist' are sufficient to resolve the anaphoric expression to $g(x_7)$

Putting it together

5. R-partition and label are subject to the manner maxim.

- The choice of an anaphoric expression x is cooperative in discourse if the R-partition and the label are sufficient to resolve the anaphoric expression

(27) The linguist is happy.

a. cooperative if R-partition of {linguist, philosopher} and the label 'linguist' are sufficient to resolve the anaphoric expression to $g(x_7)$

- Speaker chooses the label based on optimal informativity
  - If you have two entities that are salient (<7,jin>,<4,dorothy>), you might say 'the singer' vs. 'the linguist' to help resolve to relevant entities
  - This applies to global contexts as well as local contexts
    - In bound uses, disambiguation is not often an issue, but it may:

(28) Every girl$_i$ told every boy$_j$ that she$_i$ likes him$_j$. [Bassi 2021]

a. LF: Every girl λ_i every boy λ_j [t$_i$ told t$_j$ that pro$_i$ likes pro$_j$].

b. LOCO below λ_j (on initial Ø): $\{\emptyset^{[i \to y, j \to z]} \mid y \text{ is a girl, } z \text{ is a boy}\}$

Arbitrary partitions

R-partition: often conventionalized (ϕ) or contextually salient content

But speaker can also introduce the relevant labels (partitions) in discourse, which would allow for more arbitrarily-set labels

- Overt introduction of partitions

(29) I saw this poet, who was from Pennsylvania, and this linguist, who was from New York, at the conference last night. **My fellow Pennsylvanian** greeted me kindly, but **the New Yorker** seemed upset about something.

a.

from PA	from NY

(30) I saw this poet, who I will call A, and this linguist, who I will call B, at the conference last night. **A** greeted me kindly, but **B** seemed upset about something.

a.

A	B

Loci in sign languages as arbitrary partitions

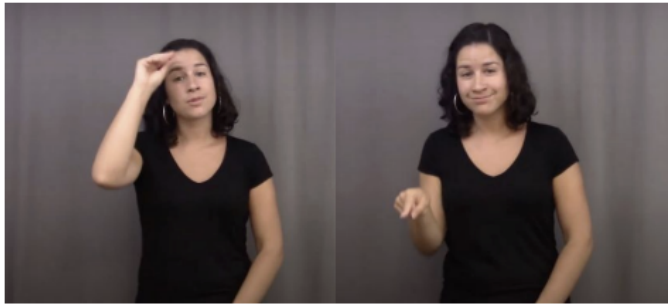
ASL loci

boy IX-LOCUS$_a$ girl IX-LOCUS$_b$ sit class IX-LOCUS$_a$ read
'There's this boy and this girl. They sit in class. That one [the boy] reads.'

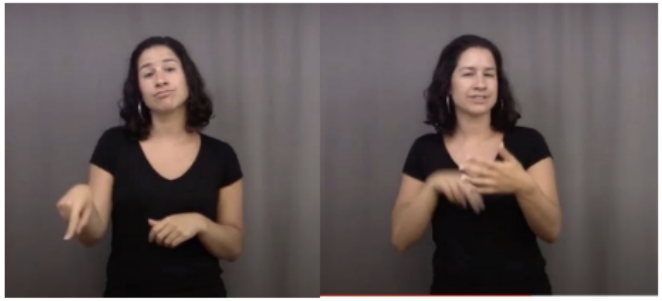
[Ahn, Kocab, Davidson, in review]:

IX$_A$ in referential expressions are spatial modifiers used like labels

Loci in sign languages as arbitrary partitions



BOY IX-a



IX-a READ

(31) a. $[\![IX_{LOC}]\!] = \lambda o.\lambda x.R(x, o)$

b. $[\![IX_A]\!] = [\![IX_{LOC}]\!](A) = [\lambda o.\ \lambda x.\ R(x,o)](a) = \lambda x.\ R(x,a)$
'associated with location a' (where ***a*** is the location represented by A)

(i)

$\lambda x.\ R(x,a)$	$\lambda x.\ R(x,b)$

→ use of arbitrary spatial modifiers as labels for discourse referents

Consequences

Consequences

1. Content of referential expression are labels. They only contribute information about R-partition, which have pragmatic consequences, but are not interpreted.

- **uniqueness as an epiphenomenon.**
  - subsumed under anaphora and manner-implicatures on labels (don't use *Jin* if there are 3 people named Jin)
  - can be canceled:

    (32) Everyone who bought a sage plant bought 8 others with {it / the sage plant}. [Heim 1982]

    (33) If a bishop meets a bishop, the guy blesses the guy.

- **deriving saliency, anti-uniqueness.**
  - use of a default/simple label {ϕ, Ø} might imply saliency
  - use of complex forms might imply contrast
    - form of contrast depends on label and focus [Jiayuan Chen, diss.]

Consequences

2. Distinction between pronoun and definite faded. There is no fundamental semantic difference between pronouns and definites other than how conventionalized the content is.

- pronouns as a featural definites [Ahn 2025]:
  - Pronouns that rely on features [Thai, Kazakh, Hindi]
  - Pronouns that carry noun classes [Bantu]
  - Pronouns that rely on NPs [Korean, Vietnamese]

[use of open class NPs] → [noun classes] → [closed-class features]

‘Pronouns’ of other languages: featural definites

1. Relying on NPs

[Korean, Vietnamese]

(34) a. kyay (ku-ay: that-**kid**)
b. anh ay (**older.brother** DEM) (Beryl Bui, pc)

‘Pronouns’ of other languages: featural definites

1. Relying on NPs

[Korean, Vietnamese]

(34) a. kyay (ku-ay: that-**kid**)
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2. Arbitrary noun classes

[Bantu languages]

(35) ɲɛ́ (pron.cl1); yɔ́ (pron.cl9)

	Basaá pron	Tunen pron
1sg	*mɛ̀*	*mìàŋó*
2sg	*wɛ̀*	*àŋó*
1pl	*ɓěs*	*bʷàsú*
2pl	*ɓee*	*bʷànú*
cl. 1	*ɲé*	*wéy*
cl. 2	*ɓɔ́*	*bʷàbú*
cl. 3	*wɔ́*	*múit*
cl. 4	*ŋwɔ́*	*mít*
cl. 5	*jɔ́*	*nét*
cl. 6	*mɔ́*	*mát*
cl. 7	*yɔ́*	*yét*
cl. 8	*gwɔ́*	*bét*
cl. 9	*yɔ́*	*mɛ́t*
cl. 10	*yɔ́*	*mít*
cl. 13	*cɔ́*	*túɛ́t*
cl. 14		*búɛ́t*
cl. 19	*hyɔ́*	*hít*

‘Pronouns’ of other languages: featural definites

1. Relying on NPs

[Korean, Vietnamese]

(34) a. kyay (ku-ay: that-**kid**)
b. anh ay (**older.brother** DEM) (Beryl Bui, pc)

2. Arbitrary noun classes

[Bantu languages]

(35) ɲɛ́ (pron.cl1); yɔ́ (pron.cl9)

3. Primitive features

[Thai, (Kazakh, Hindi)]

- Thai: *kăo* (animate) vs. *man* (inanimate)
- Kazakh (Merlin Balihaxi, pc) and Hindi:

(36) a. *ol* (animate); NP for inanimate
b. *vo* (animate); NP for inanimate

	Basaá pron	Tunen pron
1sg	*mɛ̀*	*mìàŋó*
2sg	*wɛ̀*	*àŋó*
1pl	*ɓěs*	*bʷàsú*
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What causes the differences?

Principle C: Why do definites resist bound readings?

- inventory of anaphoric expressions / markedness
  - Safir 2014: Natural-born pronouns and names must be free wherever they would compete with a D-bound
  - Schlenker 2005: due to pragmatic economy [see also Varaschin et al. preprint]
  - Ahn 2019: Use of a more complex form (when simpler form available) results in domain widening sensitive to focus

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- focus subjectivity / QUD sensitivity

(37) Only MARY did her homework.

a. WHO$_i$ did their$_i$ homework?

(38) Only the linguist did the LINGUIST's homework.

a. WHOSE homework is such that only the linguist did it?

  - Focus effects on def/dem interpretation [Jiayuan Chen, diss., Glanzberg 2009]

What causes the differences?

In principle any of the labels can be used with bound reading; definites tend to be a) focused, and b) marked (compared to pronouns), and so it signals a QUD that resists bound-reading

prediction

1. If definite nouns are not marked, they should allow variable bound reading more readily (✓ Korean, Tagalog)
2. When definite is called for due to other reasons (disambiguation), bound reading should be possible (✓ English)

(39) [A linguist working on Binding Theory]$_i$ was so devoid of any moral sense that he$_i$ forced [a physicist working on particles]$_k$ to hire [the linguist's]$_i$ girlfriend in his$_k$ lab. [Schlenker 2005]

Attributive uses

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What about attributive/non-referential uses?

(40) In a QP defense, the student presents and the advisor asks questions.

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(40) In a QP defense, the student presents and the advisor asks questions.

Not unique to definites

(41) In every 1960s marriage it was understood that he should take out the garbage and she should wash the dishes. [Roberts 2023 LSA]

Attributive reading derived from the label?

Attributive uses

Attributive reading derived from the label?

(42) ⟦the linguist⟧:

a. LF: x_7
b. R-partition: [linguist]

- label can become at-issue with metalinguistic negation

(43) I don't know the LINGUIST because she's an astronomer.

- from a label, we derive the kind of people who would generally be labeled that

(44) a. The Sheldon of that group will solve the problem.
b. The Mom of that group will solve the problem.
c. The advisor asks questions and the student answers.
d. He takes out the garbage, she does the dishes.

Attributive uses

Similar types of derivation from individual-denoting to generic:

- Zhang & Ahn 2025: deictic demonstratives referring to subkinds

  (45) That$_{\rightarrow}$ dolphin will be extinct soon.

Schoubye 2017 in analyzing names as g(i) with name presupposition

'the most plausible explanation is that a speaker who understands that 'she' can refer only to female individuals somehow infers that the relevant salient property with regard to predicative uses of 'she', that is, attributions of the form 'is a she', is the property of being female.' [p.735-736]

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→ So maybe we are getting the predicative meaning from the label
→ Or maybe I'm wrong

Proposal ver. 2

The role of reference is to background the existing content as label.

1. NP, ϕ, name are just predicates (like Bumford 2017; Coppock and Beaver 2015, etc. for descriptions and predicative views on names)
2. Ambiguity falls on referential vs. quantificational use of the predicative content:
    - When used referentially, a) index is introduced and b) content becomes a label
    - When used predicatively, they are subject to:
        - ι
        - quantifier *the* [Pupa 2022]

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     - quantifier *the* [Pupa 2022]

[Q] Mechanism to shift contents to labels?

- name-bearing property

(46) a. Mr. Science, Mr. Dog, Mr. I-like-demonstratives [Chen 2025]
b. $[\![\text{Mr}]\!] = \lambda P_\tau \lambda w \lambda x : [male(x) \wedge R_{<\tau,et>}(P)(x)]$.x bears P at w, where τ is a variable over types

- use-conditional type-shifter [Gutzmann and McCready 2014]

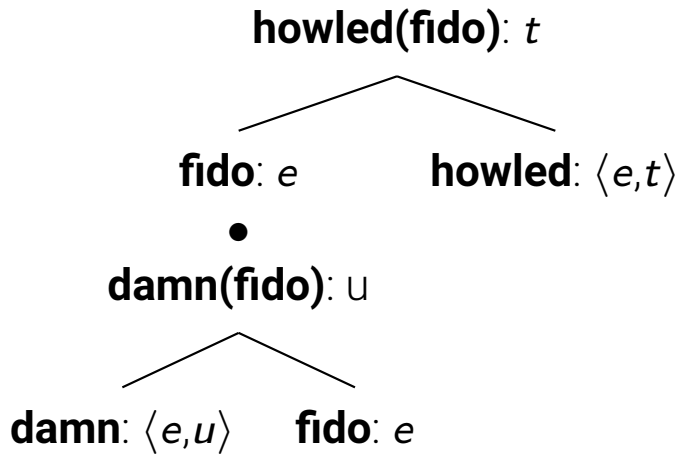
TC vs. UC domain

Use-conditional dimension (felicity conditions) [Gutzmann 2012]

- for honorifics, expressives, supplements, and other not-at-issue content

(47) This damn dog howled the whole night. [Gutzmann 2012: p4]

a. $(47)^{t}$ = {w: the dog howled in w}
b. $(47)^{u}$ = {c: cS feels negatively about the dog in c_w}
c. <howled(fido), {damn (fido)}>



TC vs. UC domain

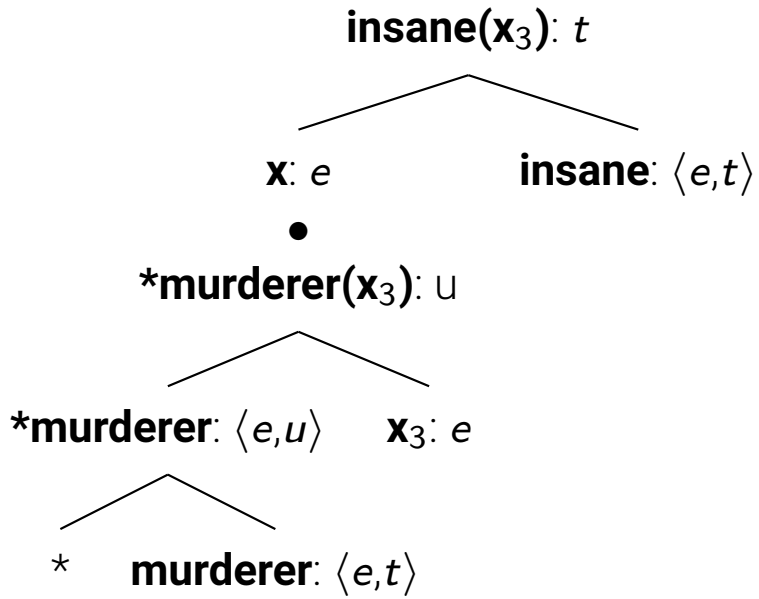
Gutzmann and McCready 2014: referential *the* turns NP from truth-conditional$_{<e,t>}$ to use-conditional$_{<e,u>}$ predicate

(48) a. $[\![\text{the}_{\text{ref}}]\!] = * = \lambda f_{et} \lambda x . f(x) :<< e, t >, < e, u >>$

b. $[_{\text{DP}} [_{\text{D'}} \text{the}_{\text{ref}} [_{\text{NP}} \text{murderer}]] 3]$

(49) a. The murderer is insane.

b. <insane(x_3),{*murderer(x_3)}>



TC vs. UC domain

NP and phi are UC content in referential uses

(50) a. $[\![\text{She is happy}]\!]^{TC}$ = happy(x)
b. $[\![\text{She is happy}]\!]^{UC}$ = female(x)

(51) a. $[\![\text{The linguist is happy}]\!]^{TC}$ = happy(x)
b. $[\![\text{The linguist is happy}]\!]^{UC}$ = *linguist(x)

..and names, too

(52) a. $[\![\text{Jin is happy}]\!]^{TC}$ = happy(x)
b. $[\![\text{Jin is happy}]\!]^{UC}$ = *jin(x)

- plus a way to derive the attributive use with regular ι

Labels vs. UC content

Are labels UC content?

- Labels cast as a subtype of UC content
- Though not all UC content seem to be labels: supplements, honorifics, etc.

But together,

- unify content of pronouns, descriptions, and names
- separate them from the index
- whether they are presuppositions, use-conditions, or metalinguistic labels, they call for some reconsiderations of the underlying mechanisms
  - ϕ vs. ι vs. $\in D_e$

Conclusion

Summary

1. New observation: Fake nouns

When noun-containing descriptions are bound, the noun content is ignored in focus alternatives.

2. Proposal: minimal variables

- In referential uses, all expressions are minimal in that they only contribute indexed variables
- Label is valued from antecedent information available in the context
- Label reflects R-partition, which has pragmatic implications

Extending to Principle C violations

Recall Principle C violations: names and nouns being bound by identical R-expressions:

(53) John konnuad John.
John shaved John
'John shaved himself.' [Thai; Lasnik and Stowell 1991]

(54) R-yu'lààa'z ra bxuuhahz ra bxuuhahz
hab-like pl priest pl priest
'The priests like themselves.' [Zapotec; Black 1994]

- Analyzed in terms of:
  1. Copy theory of reflexives
  2. Complex indices (Chaiphet and Jenks 2021)

Extending to Principle C

1. Copy theory of reflexives:
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   - analyzing reflexives as involving movement and pronunciation of copies
2. Complex indices:
   - Sudo 2012 complex indices:

     (55) she$_7$: <7,*e*,[3]>

   - Chaiphet and Jenks 2021 on Thai: apparent Principle C violations due to a subset of R-expressions (titles, names, kinship terms) being 'open-class' person features

     (56) a. Nít$_1$: <1, *e*, [*Nit*]>

     b. khruu$_4$: <4,*e*,[*teacher*]>

Extending to Principle C

1. Copy theory of reflexives:
   - analyzing reflexives as involving movement and pronunciation of copies
2. Complex indices:
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Prediction: bound expression must be identical or less than antecedent

- copy has to be at most the antecedent
- π features must agree and be identical

Non-identical copies

non-identical copies

(57) Only *the linguist* called the philosopher for the news article that identified the idiot as a culprit.

(58) wuli kyoswunim-man cip-ey kase wuli taytanhan kyoswunim
our prof-only home-DAT go our awesome prof
nonmwun ilkcyo
paper read
'Only our professor goes home and reads our awesome professor's paper.'

- Neither predicted under copy theory nor complex index story
- But labels are fine as long as the R-partition information is available

Implications

minimal semantics.

- all anaphoric expressions are minimal variables with index
- ϕ, NP, etc. as labels, no separate semantic mechanisms
  differences come from elsewhere (Principle C, saliency, (anti-)uniqueness)

content vs. reference.

- separating content vs. reference
- content can be derived from the labels, or the other way around

differences come from elsewhere.

- motivation to look at all expressions of this function (pronouns, def, dem, names, nicknames, epithets, ...)

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