

Fake nouns: The attributive vs. referential dichotomy

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Introduction

Referring expressions

definite expressions: expressions that refer to some given entity



- pronoun *she*
- description *the woman*
- demonstrative *that linguist*
- name *Dorothy*
- epithet *the weirdo*

[Q] How are their semantics related to each other?

- mixed answer in the literature: uniform vs. distinct
- some of the fundamental ingredients of syntax and semantics rely on a dichotomy between two types of nouns: **pronouns vs. r-expressions**

pronouns vs. r-expressions

Pronouns and r-expressions are considered to be fundamentally different:

distribution-wise

Binding Theory categorically linking three primitive noun categories (anaphors, pronouns, r-expressions) to certain distributional constraints [Chomsky 1981; Reinhart 1983, a.o.]

- (1) a. Jin_i likes his_i song.
- b. *He_i likes Jin's_i song.

meaning-wise

- (2) Every girl thinks that Mary likes {her / the girl}.
- bound variable reading only available for pronouns

pronouns vs. r-expressions

The distinction is reflected in their syntactic/semantic representation:

pronouns vs. r-expressions

- pronouns as variables
- r-expressions as lexical items

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ingredient-wise

- ϕ features as presuppositions [Heim and Kratzer 1998; Sudo 2012]

(3) a. $\llbracket [+fem] \rrbracket = \lambda x : \underline{female(x)}.x$

b. $\llbracket she_1 \rrbracket^g$

= $g(1)$, if $g(1)$ is female

$g = \{ \langle 1, jin \rangle, \langle 2, jimin \rangle \dots \}$

- descriptive content (like nouns) as predicates, sets or functions of entities

(4) a. $\llbracket singer \rrbracket = \{ jin, jimin \} / \lambda x. singer(x)$

b. $\llbracket the\ singer \rrbracket = \iota x. singer(x)$

pronouns vs. r-expressions?

But many developments have challenged this strict dichotomy

- Distributional overlap

- (5) a. I met a linguist. {She / The linguist} looked happy.
b. Nit thinks {he / Nit} is smart. [Zapotec, Thai, Hmong, etc.]

→ Principle C violations

- Semantic overlap

- (6) a. Only Mary did her homework.
b. Only teacher reads teacher's paper.
[Korean, Japanese, Tagalog, Thai, etc.]

→ fake nouns

Question: What is the nature of the dichotomy?

Today's talk

There is no difference other than content.

- noun type (pronouns vs. r-expression) does not determine distribution or interpretation
- ϕ and nouns are both $\langle e, t \rangle$ predicates

It's not about ϕ vs. nouns.

It's about content-based vs. index-based reference.

Fake nouns

Fake features of pronouns

Phi-features of pronouns systematically ignored in certain contexts (leading to terms like 'fake indexicals/features') [Kratzer 1998; Heim 2008, a.o.]

- allows mismatched gender alternatives under focus operators

(7) 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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(7) Only Mary_F did her homework. [Heim 2008; Kratzer 1998, a.o.]
= No one else (**regardless of gender**) did their homework

- allows sloppy readings with mismatching ϕ in ellipsis

(8) I did my homework, but you didn't [~~do **your** homework~~]. [Bassi 2021]

Fake features

→ **Features are not present in (some part of) the derivation**

- focus alternatives copy everything but *f*-marked element
[Rooth 1985; Schwarzschild 1999]

(9) Jin_F danced again.
ALT: {Sol danced again, Min danced again,...}
presupposition of *again* projects to alternatives

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ALT: {Sol danced again, Min danced again,..}

presupposition of *again* projects to alternatives

(7) Only Mary_F did her homework.

[Heim 2008; Kratzer 1998, a.o.]

= No one else (*regardless of gender*) did their homework

ALT: {Jin did his hw, Jimin did his hw}

presupposition of *her* (female) *not* projected to alternatives

Fake features

→ **Features are not present in (some part of) the derivation**

- ellipsis is subject to an identity requirement
 - an elided XP must have a parallel structure/LF as antecedent XP
[Sag 1976, Keenan 1971, Chomsky 1965, Ross 1969, a.o.]

(10) *A taxi driver was called, but Sally didn't.
voice mismatch violates identity condition

[Stockwell 2024]

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(10) *A taxi driver was called, but Sally didn't. [Stockwell 2024]
voice mismatch violates identity condition

(8) I did my homework, but you didn't [~~do your~~ homework]. [Bassi 2021]
person feature mismatch *does not* violate identity condition

Approaches

Some approaches in the literature

1. **weak projection:** ϕ doesn't project to focus values [Sauerland 2013]
 - 'pure' presuppositions do not have to be satisfied for alternatives
2. **minimal pronoun:** ϕ isn't in the derivation; in PF interface for Spell-Out
 - features transmitted through Agree (but late) [Kratzer 1998; Messick 2023]
 - features valued from contextual information [Bassi 2021]

→ ϕ -features are fake because they are ϕ

- pure presuppositional triggers that do not have assertive content
 $\llbracket [+fem] \rrbracket = \lambda x : fem(x).x$
- things that can be syntactically transmitted/valued later in the PF

Challenge: fake nouns

Observation: nouns also show fakeness.

- (11) In this old photo, only Mary_F looks like Mary.
= No one else looks like themselves [Roeper 2006]
- (12) *The linguist* used to believe that the students in *the linguist's* class were happy, just as the philosopher did [~~believe that the students in **the philosopher's** class were happy~~]. [sloppy reading available; Safir 2014]

Almost no English data (other than Roeper 2006; Safir 2014 and Ahn 2024, 2026)

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→ more productive in languages where pronouns can be replaced by names/nouns more readily (**Korean, Japanese, ...**)

Korean

Korean 2/3 reference

Nouns* can be used instead of pronouns, potentially due to honorification and/or the lack of a 3rd person pronoun

*nouns used like names/titles

- (13) 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
교수님만 교수님 논문 두 번 읽죠, 보통 사람들은 자기 논문 다시 안 읽어요.
'Only professor reads **professor**'s paper twice, others don't read their papers again.'
- (14) emma-nun **emma**-il-ul hay-ss-ci, na-nun an hay-ss-e
mom-top mom-work-acc do-past-decl, I-top neg do-past-decl
엄마는 엄마 일을 했지, 나는 안 했어.
'Mom did **mom**'s work, but I didn't [~~do **my** work~~']'

Tagalog *si*-marked nouns allow fakeness in 2nd person reference

Japanese nouns with honorific markers

Nouns with honorific marker like *-gata* (方) allow* fake reading

*Not perfect, but sounds better than using a bare noun *sensei*. [David Oshima, pc]

- (15) Sensei-gata dake sensei-gata-no ronbun-o ni-kai
teacher-hon.pl only teacher-hon.pl-gen paper-acc two-cl
yonda(/yom-are-ta).
read-pst(/read-subj.hon-pst)
'Only the teachers read **the teachers'** own papers twice.'
(Others, teacher or not, didn't read their papers twice.)

gata-marked nouns allow(?) fakeness in Japanese.

Fake modifiers

Fakeness extends beyond nouns.

- Other predicative content like modifiers can also be fake

English example There was an event at the linguistics department and a photographer came by and asked if he could take photos. Everyone was so shy that they said no. Jane, who came late because she had been sick for the whole week, was nice enough to tell him that he could take a photo of her.

- (16) Only Jane let the photographer take a photo of her delicate self.
= Others, **delicate or not**, did not let the photographer take a photo of them.

- *delicate* is ignored in alternatives (n=20)

Japanese

Modifiers can* be fake in ellipsis in Japanese [Ryoichiro Kobayashi, pc]

*judgments vary [David Oshima, pc]

- (17) Yasuko-sensei-wa Seiko-ni-yorimo mazu sakini Chiaki-ni sikkaritosita
Yasuko-teacher-top Seiko-dat-than first early Chiaki-dat responsible
kanojo/zibun-no choosho-o mit-tu kangae-sase-ta.
she/self-gen strengths-acc 3-cl think-cause-pst
'Yasuko let Chiaki think about 3 strengths of responsible her/self earlier than
(Yasuko let) Seiko [think about 3 strengths of ~~responsible~~ her/self].'

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(Yasuko let) Seiko [~~think about 3 strengths of~~ **responsible** her/self].'

- whether *responsible* is matched or not may depend on QUD
[Satoshi Tomioka, pc, commenting on a related example in Noguchi 1997]

- (18) Yasuko-wa Seiko-ni yorimo sakini Chiaki-ni utukusi-i
Yasuko-top Seiko-dat than earlier Chiaki-dat beautiful-npst
kanozyo/zibun-no syasin-o tor-ase-ta.
she/self-gen picture-acc take-caus-past
'Yasuko let Chiaki take a picture of pretty her/self earlier than (Yasuko let) Seiko.'

Summary of the issue

Expressions with descriptive content (nouns with hon. marking, si-marked nouns, modified reflexives, and definite descriptions)* allow bound readings, and the descriptive content does not project to alternatives.

*I'll call them 'fake nouns'

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

strict reading

*Assumption: nouns in Korean, Japanese, Tagalog are definite descriptions [Lee 1992, Ahn 2019, a.o.; see Dayal 2011]; Roothian focus semantics [Rooth 1992, 1985]

(19) $[\alpha \text{ Only } [\beta \text{ professor}_F \text{ reads professor's paper}]]$

- a. $[[[\beta \text{ ..}]]]^o = \lambda w : \exists ! x [\text{prof}(x)]. \text{read}(\iota x [\text{prof}(x)], \text{paper-of}(\iota x [\text{prof}(x)]))$
- b. $[[[\beta \text{ ..}]]]^f = \{\lambda w : \exists ! x [\text{prof}(x)]. \text{read}(z, \text{paper-of}(\iota x [\text{prof}(x)])) \mid z \text{ is a person}\}$
- c. $[[(19)]] = \text{No one else reads the unique professor's paper}$

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

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

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

(21) $[_\alpha \text{ Only } [_\beta \text{ professor}_F \ \lambda_5 \ t_5 \text{ reads professor}_5\text{'s paper}]]$

- a. $\llbracket [_\beta \text{ ..}] \rrbracket^o = \lambda w : \exists! x [\text{prof}(x) \wedge x=5]. \text{read}(5, \text{paper-of}(\iota x [\text{prof}(x) \wedge x=5]))$
- b. $\llbracket [_\beta \text{ ..}] \rrbracket^f = \{\lambda w : \exists! x [\text{prof}(x) \wedge x=z]. \text{read}(z, \text{paper-of}(\iota x [\text{prof}(x) \wedge x=z])) \mid z \in D_e\}$
- c. $\llbracket (21) \rrbracket = \text{No one else read the paper by the unique professor that is them}$

- 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 indices.

- The presence of an index is what backgrounds/erases the content.

Combining intuitions of Weak projection and Minimal variables,
I propose the following alternative solution:

- **Separation of content and index**
 - at the truth-conditional level, only a pronoun with index
 - [similar to minimal variables account](#)
- **deriving fake nouns**
 - labels are use-conditional content
 - use-conditional contents do not project to focus alternatives
 - [similar to weak projection](#)

Deriving fakeness

Reference: [content] + [index]



[description]

Reference

Reference: [content] + [index]



[description]

Reference

Reference uses 2 ingredients:

content and index

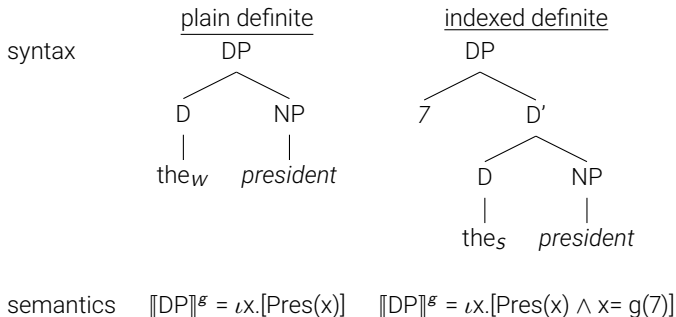
- content: linguistic description
(noun, ϕ -information, etc.)
- index: deictic, anaphoric

[Ahn 2025b] Definite space
defined by presence and overt
marking of content and index

Implementation

Content and index can be represented in syntax and semantics:

[Schwarz 2009, Elbourne 2008, Patel-Grosz and Grosz 2010, Ahn 2019, Jenks and Konate 2022]



Attributive vs Referential

In referring, we can decide to rely on content, index, or both

- when index is known (anaphoric), then content is not so necessary
- if index is not known (we don't know who), content is all we have

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→ attributive vs. referential use

[Donnellan 1966]

- **referential use:** famous misdescription use [Donnellan 1966]

(22) (looking at a man with water) The man with a martini is tall.

- **attributive use:** description has to be foregrounded

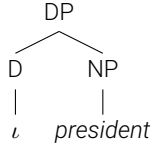
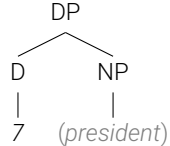
(23) In the next party, the man with a martini will give the toast.

terminological note: 'referential' here different from 'referential' as in 'referential/non-bound pronoun'

A different implementation

representing attributive vs. referential use

indexed definite just returns $g(7)$ [Gutzmann and McCready 2014, Ahn 2024]

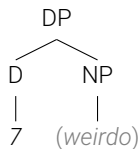
	<u>plain definite</u>	<u>indexed definite</u>
syntax	 <pre>graph TD DP1[DP] --- D1[D] DP1 --- NP1[NP] D1 --- i[ι] NP1 --- president[president]</pre>	 <pre>graph TD DP2[DP] --- D2[D] DP2 --- NP2[NP] D2 --- 7[7] NP2 --- president["(president)"]</pre>
semantics	$\llbracket \text{DP} \rrbracket^g = \iota x. [\text{Pres}(x)]$	$\llbracket \text{DP} \rrbracket^g = g(7) \text{ (if pres)}$

- for indexed definite, content is *backgrounded*
 - presupposed [Ahn 2024]
 - use-conditional [Gutzmann and McCready 2014]

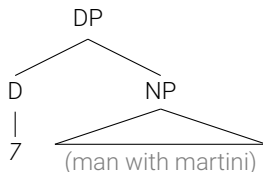
Referential *the* as a pronoun with backgrounded content

Gutzmann and McCready 2014

- referential *the* as a pronoun with backgrounded content, like epithets
multi-dimensional semantics [Potts 2005, Gutzmann 2012; McCready 2010, a.o.] for compositionality
descriptive content becomes $\langle e, u \rangle$ via * due to type-mismatch



I met the weirdo on the street
I met x_7 (and x_7 is a weirdo)



The man with a martini is tall
 x_7 is tall (and x_7 is a man with a martini)

Backgrounded content and fakeness

Advantage

Backgrounded content is ignored in ellipsis and focus.

implemented by 'truth'-conditional and 'use'-conditional dimensions

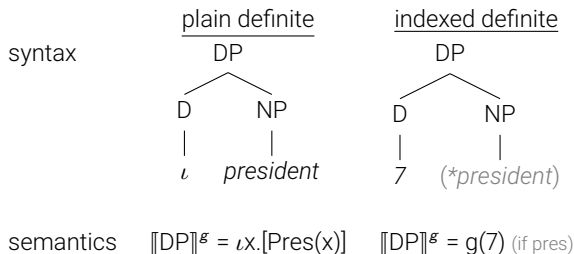
1. not subject to identity under ellipsis [Potts et al. 2009]:

- (24)
- a. I met that idiot in the movie theater.
 - b. I did ~~meet that~~ **idiot** in the movie theater too, but he's no idiot.

2. does not project to alternatives:

- (25) Only Jin_F is so peculiar that they decided to interview the weirdo.
- a. Others, weirdo or not, were not interviewed

Coming back to fake nouns

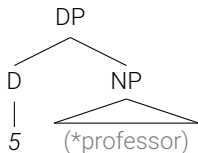


Implementation: presence of an index backgrounds the predicative content

1. Nominal content as $\langle e, t \rangle$ predicates
2. Ambiguity falls on presence and absence of index:
 - If index is present, content is backgrounded (turned into a UC label)
 - If no index, subject to: ι , quantifier *the* [Pupa 2022], $\cap$ [Krifka et al. 1995]

Deriving fake nouns

(26) $professor = x + (*prof)$



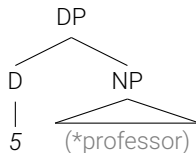
(27) $[\alpha \text{ Only } [\beta \text{ professor}_F \lambda_5 t_5 \text{ reads professor}_5\text{'s paper}]]$

- a. $[[[\beta \text{ ..}]]]^o = \lambda w. read(5, \text{paper-of}(5))$
- b. $[[[\beta \text{ ..}]]]^f = \{\lambda w. read(z, \text{paper-of}(z)) \mid z \in D_e\}$
- c. $[[(27)]] = \text{No one other than 5 read their own paper; } (*prof(5))$

Coming back to fake nouns **and features**

We can extend this proposal to ϕ

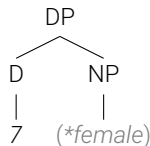
professor = $x + (*\text{prof})$



The prof is tall

x_7 is tall (and x_7 is professor)

she = $x + (*\text{female})$



She is happy

x_7 is happy (and x_7 is female)



similar effects as presupposing gender

→ ϕ as $\langle e, t \rangle$ predicate, subject to referential (with index) or attributive use

Attributive vs. referential dichotomy

Attributive vs. referential dichotomy extends beyond nouns

ϕ of a pronoun and NP of a definite description subject to same mechanism [Ahn 2024]

Both can be backgrounded (referential use):

- (28) a. Every kid is drinking her coffee. That's not true
b. Every linguist drank the coffee that I made for the linguist. That's not true

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b. Every linguist drank the coffee that I made for the linguist. That's not true

Both can be foregrounded (attributive use):

- (29) a. I don't know the LINGUIST personally, because she is an astronomer.
b. I don't know HER personally, because he is a he/him.
- (30) a. In a QP defense, the student presents and the advisor asks questions.
b. In every 1960s marriage it was understood that he should take out the garbage and she should wash the dishes. [Roberts 2023 LSA]

A nice consequence: reducing fake features to UC

Fake features subsumed under UC projection behavior.

- (31) $[\alpha \text{ Only } [\beta \text{ Mary}_F \lambda_5 t_5 \text{ did her}_5 \text{ homework}]]$
- a. $[[[\beta \text{ ..}]]]^\circ = \lambda w. \text{did}(5, \text{homework}(5))$
 - b. $[[[\beta \text{ ..}]]]^f = \{\lambda w. \text{did}(z, \text{homework}(z)) \mid z \in D_e\}$
 - c. $[[\langle 31 \rangle]] = \langle \text{No one else other than 5 did their homework, } \{*\text{female}(5)\} \rangle$

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Advantages

- No separate mechanism (syntactic transmission, pure presupposition) needed
- A uniform account for fake nouns (for *all* fakeness?)

Broad fakeness

Fakeness, then, is predicted of *all* expressions with indices.

- UC analysis of names [Gutzmann and McCready 2014]

- (32)
- a. $\llbracket \text{Jin} \rrbracket^t = x_7$
 - b. $\llbracket \text{Jin} \rrbracket^u = *jin(x)$

- modifiers of *her*/self in Japanese/English

- (33)
- a. $\llbracket \text{responsible self}_7 \rrbracket^t = x_7$
 - b. $\llbracket \text{responsible self}_7 \rrbracket^u = *responsible(x_7)$

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- (33) a. $[[\text{responsible self}_7]]^t = x_7$
b. $[[\text{responsible self}_7]]^u = *responsible(x_7)$

Uniform prediction of fakeness

- (34) a. Only Mary did her homework.
b. Only prof reads prof's paper. [Korean, Japanese, Tagalog]
c. Only Nit thinks Nit is smart. [Thai]
d. Only Jane let the photographer take a photo of her delicate self.

Summary

1. New observation: Fake nouns When a noun-containing description is bound, the noun content is ignored in focus alternatives.

2. Proposal: Nouns as labels in uses with indices

- In a referential use (involving an indexed pronoun), NP content becomes a UC label
- UC content is not subject to further TC operations → [deriving fakeness](#)
- This analysis can extend to all expressions with indices (pronouns, epithet, names)
 - modified *self*/pronoun cases ('delicate self', 'responsible her') as evidence

Coming back to the dichotomy

What we have seen so far

Traditional dichotomy of pronouns vs. r-expression in syntax/semantics

- pronouns as variables with ϕ -presuppositions
- r-expressions as lexical items with predicative noun content

Fake nouns and attributive vs. referential dichotomy

- pronouns and r-expressions can both
 - be variables with backgrounded content
 - be attributive with foregrounded content

noun category does not determine distribution or interpretation

Pronouns

We often assume the following primitive noun categories.

reflexives, pronouns, r-expressions

Pronouns

We often assume the following primitive noun categories.

reflexives, pronouns, r-expressions

- cross-linguistic picture: pronoun status less clear
- pronouns vary in the kinds of content they carry [Ahn 2019, 2025a]:
 - 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]

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

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2. Arbitrary noun classes

[Bantu languages]

- (36) ɲɛ (pron.cl1); yɔ (pron.cl9)

	Basaá pron	Tunen pron
1sg	mè	miàŋó
2sg	wè	àŋó
1pl	bēs	bʷəsú
2pl	bée	bʷənú
cl. 1	ɲɛ	wéy
cl. 2	bɔ	bʷəbú
cl. 3	wɔ	múit
cl. 4	ŋwɔ	mít
cl. 5	jɔ	nét
cl. 6	mɔ	mát
cl. 7	yɔ	yét
cl. 8	gwɔ	bét
cl. 9	yɔ	mét
cl. 10	yɔ	mít
cl. 13	cɔ	túét
cl. 14		búét
cl. 19	hyɔ	hít

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3. Primitive features

[Thai, (Kazakh, Hindi)]

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

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

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Pronouns as featural definites

What is a pronoun?

a featural definite that relies on primitive features [Ahn 2025a]

- primitive features: [Harley and Ritter 2002]
 - in phonology: physical properties [±sonorant], etc.
 - in morphology: cognitive properties person/number/gender/animacy
- class features: intermediate between primitive features vs. lexical items
- definite description: relies on the lexical item NP

Pronouns as featural definites

What is a pronoun?

a featural definite that relies on primitive features [Ahn 2025a]

- primitive features: [Harley and Ritter 2002]
 - in phonology: physical properties [±sonorant], etc.
 - in morphology: cognitive properties person/number/gender/animacy
- class features: intermediate between primitive features vs. lexical items
- definite description: relies on the lexical item NP

pronouns to r-expressions, a gradience of content

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

A different categorization

reflexives, pronouns, r-expressions



syntactically bound vs. everything else

syntactically bound:

- *D-bound* (which is constrained fully in syntax) [Safir 2014]
 - D-bound: a universally available dependent anaphor that must be A-bound
 - subject to feature matching with antecedent
 - spell-out of form sensitive to whether A-binding is phase-internal

everything else:

- pronouns, descriptions, demonstratives, names, epithets
- they all start out as $\langle e, t \rangle$ predicates
 - They can refer based on content or index
 - If an index is present, content becomes a label

Why so different?

[Q] But why are they so different?

- they carry different $\langle e, t \rangle$ content
- their content signals different kinds of reference strategy



- pronoun *she*
- description *the woman*
- demonstrative *that linguist*
- name *Dorothy*
- *epithet the weirdo*

Why so different?

[Q] But why are they so different?

→ reduced to differences in content and the pragmatics of using content

1. Informativity and attributive vs. referential tendency

- Pronouns used referentially much more than attributively
- Definites readily used attributively

2. Markedness

- Definites carry more content
- subject to pragmatic economy [Schlenker 2005]

3. Signal strength

- Pronouns may signal a referential use
 - *-nim, -gata, si* marking serve as signals of referential use
- *English: *the Pope* vs. *your highness* [Chris Barker, Anna Szabolcsi, pc]

Conclusion

Summary

- 1. Nouns can be fake.** Their descriptive content can disappear from focus alternatives just like ϕ -features.
- 2. Fakeness tracks index-based reference, not phi** When an index identifies the referent, descriptive content can become a backgrounded label.
- 3. The fundamental divide is not pronoun vs. r-expression.** It is content-based vs. index-based reference.

pronouns, descriptions, names, demonstratives, epithets differ primarily in what content they carry and how strongly they signal a reference strategy.

Thank you!



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Appendix

Attributive demonstratives?

Claim: They are all $\langle e, t \rangle$

- with an index, it becomes a label
- without an index, subject to ι , quantifier, etc.

[Q] Can demonstratives be attributive?

Attributive demonstratives?

Claim: They are all $\langle e, t \rangle$

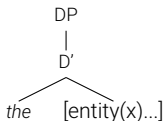
- with an index, it becomes a label
- without an index, subject to ι , quantifier, etc.

[Q] Can demonstratives be attributive?

[A] Not often! Because it's often carrying an index.

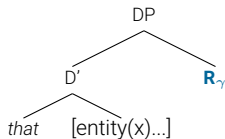
(38) $\llbracket \text{that} \rrbracket = \lambda P. \lambda R. \iota x: P(y) \wedge R(y)$

$[R: i, \rightarrow, RC, \text{gestures}]$ [Ahn 2022, 2025b]



definite

'the maximal entity
that is [restriction]



demonstrative

'the maximal entity
that is [restriction] and **also** R_γ

Attributive demonstratives?

Claim: They are all $\langle e, t \rangle$

- with an index, it becomes a label
- without an index, subject to ι , quantifier, etc.

[Q] Can demonstratives be attributive?

[A] But if the additional slot is filled (with something other than i)...

Attributive demonstratives

[Zhang and Ahn to appear]

(39) That student who scored a 100 on the exam is a genius.

(40) This car_[open-up] is the new kind of sports car, not this car_[open-side].

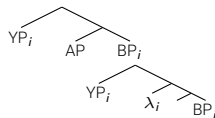


Principle C violations

Binding Theory

Binding Theory: 'restricts the distribution of nouns that have the same referent' [Büring 2005]

- binding can mean many things:
 - coindexation + c-command in syntax
 - operator/quantifier bound in semantics
- Safir 2004: *co-construal* for 'having the same referent' ('any form of identity relation between two nominals')



Co-construal depends on:

1. morphological form of the nouns reflexives, pronouns, r-expressions
2. structural relations between the nouns locality, c-command

Binding Principles

Binding Principles syntactic constraints on distribution

Principles A, B, C [Chomsky 1981]

assuming three primitive categories of nouns

A **reflexives** coconstructed with local, c-commanding antecedent

- (41) a. That it rained upset {Jin, him, *himself}
b. Min_i likes herself_i/_{*j}.

B **pronouns** cannot be coconstructed with local c-commanding antecedent

- (42) Jin_i likes him_{*i}.

C **r-expressions** cannot be coconstructed with any c-commanding antecedent

- (43) a. She_i likes Min_{*i/j}.
b. Min_i thinks that Min_{*i/j} is smart.

Principle C violations

Principle C

- (44)
- a. Jin_i sees Jin_{*i} .
 - b. Jin_i thinks that Jin_{*i} is smart.

Principle C violations

Principle C

- (44) a. Jin_i sees Jin_{*i} .
b. Jin_i thinks that Jin_{*i} is smart.

many violations across languages

r-expressions coconstrued with identical c-commanding r-expressions

- Zapotec, Hmong, Vietnamese, Thai, ...

- (45) **Nít₁** phûut wâa **Nít₁** sabaaj
Nit say comp Nit comfortable
'Nit said that she's comfortable.' [Thai; Chaiphet and Jenks 2021; Lasnik 1986]

- (46) R-yu'lààa'z ra **bxuuhahz** ra **bxuuhahz**
hab-like pl priest pl priest
'The priests like themselves.' [Zapotec; Black 1994; Lee 2003]

Principle C violations

Maybe these are just reference to different guises

(47) Nít_i said Nít_j is comfortable.

a. $g(i) = \text{Nít}_A$

b. $g(j) = \text{Nít}_B$

Principle C violations

Maybe these are just reference to different guises

(47) $Nít_i$ said $Nít_j$ is comfortable.

a. $g(i) = Nít_A$

b. $g(j) = Nít_B$

No,

- second $Nít$ allows sloppy interpretation [Chaiphet and Jenks 2021; Lee 2003]

(48) Mii khêε Nít thii khít wâa Nít chàlàat.

ext just Nit rel think comp Nit smart

'Only Nit thinks that she's smart.'

(Others don't think they are smart.)

[C&J'21:(13)]

→ means only $Nít$ has the property of [y thinking y is smart]

→ suggests that $Nít$ here behaves like a semantically bound variable

Principle C violations

Solutions in the literature

Weaken Principle C.

- Obviative theories of Principle C [Reinhart 1983; Safir 2014]: if you could've used a pronoun for the same interpretation, but you used a name/description, there is an *expectation of disjoint reference*
- aligns with data showing that descriptions can be bound if you control:
 - plausibility, at-issueness [Gor and Syrett 2018]
 - markedness, discourse coherence [Schlenker 2005, Varaschin et al. 2026]

Principle C violations

Solutions in the literature

Save Principle C. pronoun $\neq$ r-expression

- The idea: they are *NOT* r-expressions in syntax!

1. they are copies of their antecedents [Lee 2003]
2. they are features on pronouns [Chaiphet and Jenks 2021]

a subset of r-exp (titles, names, kinship terms) as 'open-class' person features

(49) she₇: <7,e, 3>

[complex indices; Sudo 2012]

(50) a. Nít₁: <1, e, Nit>

b. khruu₄: <4,e, teacher>

[Q] open-class person features?

Non-identical copies; problematic for Principle C accounts

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

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

(52) 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.'

- Note that non-identical copies of r-expressions can be bound is problematic for early accounts of Principle C violations: copy theory nor complex index story

Epithets and UC

CI content occupies a separate domain from truth-conditional content

[Potts 2005, Gutzmann 2015; McCready 2010]

(53) Jin, who is amazing, is a singer.

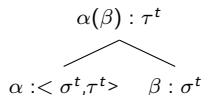
- type-theoretic distinction between truth-conditional and use-conditional content [*adopting Gutzmann and McCready 2014]

(54) truth-conditional content $\llbracket \cdot \rrbracket^t = \{w_1, w_2, \dots\}$ S true in w_x iff $w_x \in \llbracket S \rrbracket^t$
use-conditional content $\llbracket \cdot \rrbracket^u = \{c_1, c_2, \dots\}$ S felicitous in c_x iff $c_x \in \llbracket S \rrbracket^u$

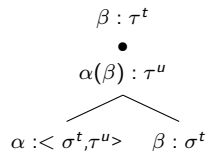
(55) a. $\llbracket (53) \rrbracket^t = \text{singer}(\text{jin})$ singer: $\langle e, t \rangle$
b. $\llbracket (53) \rrbracket^u = \text{amazing}(\text{jin})$ amazing: $\langle e, u \rangle$

TC vs. UC domain

Truth-conditional application



Use-conditional application

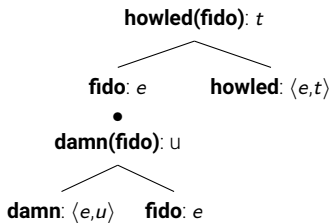


example with an expressive like *damn* (an $\langle e, u \rangle$ predicate)

(56) This damn dog howled the whole night.

[Gutzmann and McCready 2014:(16)]

a. $\llbracket (56) \rrbracket = \langle \text{howled}(\text{fido}), \{\text{damn}(\text{fido})\} \rangle$



TC vs. UC domain

TC $\langle e, t \rangle$ content can be turned into UC $\langle e, u \rangle$ content

- * operator [also Pott's (2005) comma operator]

$$(57) \quad * = \lambda f_{et} \lambda x. f(x) : \langle \langle e, t \rangle, \langle e, u \rangle \rangle \quad [\text{Gutzmann and McCready 2014}]$$

(58) Jin, a comedian, is the oldest member of BTS.

a. $\llbracket (58) \rrbracket = \langle \text{oldest-BTS}(\text{Jin}), \{*\text{comedian}(\text{Jin})\} \rangle$

