

Functional Pronouns in a Pragmatic Semantics

Paul Dekker

ILLC/Department of Philosophy, University of Amsterdam

dekker@mail.hum.uva.nl

Workshop *Choice Functions and Natural Language Semantics*

European Summerschool in Logic, Language and Information (ESSLI XIII)

Helsinki August 2001

In my talk I will first sketch a background in which the results of systems of dynamic semantics are obtained on the basis of a classical, static meaning assignment. The basic and grounding ideas are that (i) surface indefinites are used with referential intentions and (ii) discourse is linearly ordered. The ideas are adapted from (Stalnaker 1998). In the resulting more pragmatic picture it is not so much the anaphoric potential of surface indefinites which is surprising, but the lack of anaphoric potential of indefinites in embedded positions. That is to say, the lack of anaphoric potential attributed to them in most systems of dynamic semantics.

In my talk I will argue that information structure is relevant here, and that indefinites indeed need not be associated with referential intentions when they figure in the background part of an assertion (a negated sentence, the antecedent of a conditional, the restriction of a quantifier). Motivation for this can be found in the typical roles of these constructions in discourse and dialogue, properly conceived of from some game-theoretical perspective. Their local anaphoric potential can then be analyzed, roughly, along the lines of (Gawron 1996; Aloni, Beaver and Clark 1999).

Indefinites in focal positions (consequent of a conditional, nuclear scope of a quantifier, in certain intensional contexts) are then predicted to be associated with referential intentions again, but then of a functional nature. These can be easily accounted for as well by means of a rule of division (Jacobson, 1999). Quite a few examples involving functional readings of terms have been discussed in the literature, and we will show how our pragmatic approach applies to them. Finally we turn to indefinites in so-called intermediate contexts. Here as well, referential and functional readings can be distinguished and we will argue, like (Kratzer 1998), that a more pragmatic approach is called for, and actually can be given.