

Workshop

Specificity and Scope

organized by Klaus von Heusinger und Hans Kamp

University of Stuttgart, SFB 732 Specification in Context,
A1 Incremental Specification of Focus and Givenness in a Discourse Context
& Project C2 Case and referential context

Friday, 12. Jan 2007 Room 17.98

Program

- 9.00 **Cornelia Endriss**
 Exceptional Wide Scope is a Scope Phenomenon
- 10.30- coffee break
- 10.45 **Johannes Wespel**
 Demonstratives as specificity markers
- 12.00-13.30 Lunch
- 13.30 **Edgar Onea**
 The evolution of DOM in Romanian and anchored indefinites
- 14.45-15.00 Coffee break
- 15.00 **Gerhard Jäger**
 Partial variables, presuppositions and compositionality
- 16.30 end

Exceptional Wide Scope is a Scope Phenomenon

As (1) shows, certain kinds of indefinites seem to be capable of scoping out of what is usually regarded as a scope island (cf. e.g. Ruys, 1992).

- (1) a. *If **a/some** relative of mine dies, I will inherit a fortune.* [If > ∃][∃ > If]
b. *If **every/at least one** rel. of mine dies, I will inherit a fortune.* [If > ∀/≥1]*[∀/≥1 > If]

The indefinites in (1a) seem to allow for a wide scope reading out of the *If*-clause island, which is why the respective sentences containing these indefinites are ambiguous. However, it is only a small subclass of the indefinites that allow for wide scope readings out of islands, namely singular indefinites and bare numeral ones (see Reinhart, 1997 among others). Other indefinites and all strong quantifiers obey the usual scope restrictions. Hence, (1b) only supports narrow scope readings for the involved quantificational DPs.

This inconsistent behaviour of different kinds of quantifiers in general and the apparent ignorance of island constraints of certain indefinites in particular calls for an explanation and has thus been a debated research topic for many years. An attractive way to account for the phenomena at hand would be to deny that (1a) actually allows for a genuine wide scope reading and to account for the (thus apparent) 'wide scope' reading by other means. This way, indefinites could be treated as island-sensitive and no exceptional scope behaviour would have to be assumed. Since the early eighties, many approaches along these lines have been proposed. Borrowing a term from (Kratzer, 1998), I call these the *pseudoscope* approaches. In all these pseudoscope approaches, the indefinite does not actually take (exceptional wide) scope, but stays in situ, and the impression of such a reading comes about by a different treatment of the indefinite. There are three main branches of these approaches: 1. the referentiality/specificity approaches (e.g. Fodor & Sag, 1982; Breheny, 2003), where the indefinite is treated as a referential item (cf. proper names), 2. the extreme domain restriction approaches (e.g. Schwarzschild, 2002; Umbach, 2004), where the quantificational domain of the indefinite is restricted to just the element in question, and 3. the choice or Skolem function approaches (e.g. Egli & Heusinger, 1995; Reinhart, 1997; Kratzer, 1998), where a choice function/Skolem function is responsible for the selection of the proper element from the indefinite's domain.

The aim of my talk is to show that all these pseudoscope approaches have to face severe empirical and conceptual problems such that none of them is able to properly account for the full range of the phenomenon. I will present new data and reevaluate known discussions from the literature, which together will support my claim that exceptional wide scope exists indeed. I conclude that exceptional wide scope is a genuine scope and no pseudoscope phenomenon and that only a genuine scope shifting mechanism can account for the full range of data.

To evaluate the different readings, it will also be important to distinguish between genuine and apparent *narrow scope* readings. A pseudo-narrow scope reading is a reading where the value of the involved indefinite varies with the value of some other quantifier (and therefore seems to take narrow scope), but in fact takes what I call *functional wide scope*. I will show that there are empirical means to distinguish between such functional wide scope and genuine narrow scope readings.

Gerhard Jäger: Partial variables, presuppositions and compositionality

Abstract: In this talk I am going to present a neo-Heimian analysis of the semantics of indefinites. The liberal scope taking behavior of specific indefinites is accounted for by means of long-distance existential closure. The so-called "Donald Duck problem" of the DRT account is sidestepped by taking resort to partial interpretation functions. The descriptive content of an indefinite description is analyzed as a definedness condition rather than an ordinary conjunct.

Edgar Onea: The evolution of DOM in Romanian and anchored indefinites

Like in other DOM-languages, as for instance Spanish, the diachronic evolution of direct object marking starts at the left corner of the referentiality and/or animacy scale and spreads steadily towards the right. However in Romanian this unidirectional evolution is surprisingly reversed around the 19th century: the conditions of direct object marking in Romanian are today more restrained as 200 years ago. In the first part of this study we present this unusual development based on a diachronic corpus consisting of Bible translations from different centuries and show that this phenomenon is correlated with the evolution of clitic doubling. In the second part of the paper we develop the notion of anchored specificity based on von Heusinger and Kornfilt (2004) and use a resulting specificity scale to sketch the semantic conditions of direct object marking in present day Romanian. Our claim is that different types of referential anchoring play an essential role in direct object marking in Romanian, but depending on the presence of clitic doubling and some correlated aspects of the verb-semantics and context a more refined breakdown is necessary.

Johannes Wespel: Demonstratives as specificity markers

Prince (1981) discusses English indefinite noun phrases introduced by unstressed „this“, a determiner which originally can only be used definitely. When used *indefinitely*, as in (1), “this”-noun phrases have obligatorily wide-scope readings, unlike the unmarked indefinite article “a”, which can be wide or narrow scope (2):

- (1a) Mary wants to marry *this_{indef} Swede* – he lives in Stockholm.
- (1b) *Mary wants to marry *this_{indef} Swede* – though she hasn’t met one yet.

- (2a) Mary wants to marry *a Swede* – he lives in Stockholm.
- (2b) Mary wants to marry *a Swede* – though she hasn’t met one yet.

I will make some suggestions as to what it is about “this” (as opposed to, say, “that” or “the”) that may have favoured its expansion into an indefinite-specific marker by drawing attention to semantic-pragmatic features setting “this” off from the other determiners.

The second part of the talk will then deal with German. In spoken German, there is the possibility of combining the demonstrative “so” (“so” / “like this” / “such”) with the indefinite article, yielding indefinite “so ein” (almost always contracted to “so’n”). I will

show that this complex determiner has semantic effects paralleling those of indefinite “this” in English, most notably with respect to scope:

(3a) Maria will *so'nen Schweden* heiraten – er lebt in Stockholm. (translation: see 1a)

(3b) *Maria will *so'nen Schweden* heiraten – obwohl sie noch nie einen getroffen hat. (see 1b)

This parallelism suggests that (re-)using demonstratives in order to mark indefinite noun phrases as specific might be part of a more general strategy of grammaticalization.

PRINCE, Ellen C. (1981): 'On the Interfacing of Indefinite-This NPs', A.K. Joshi, B.L. Webber, and I.A. Sag (eds.), *Elements Of Discourse Understanding*. pp. 231–250. C.U.P., Cambridge.