

Context-givenness vs. existential quantification

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This paper argues that there are strong parallelisms between indefinite noun phrases and two seemingly unrelated constructions, namely domain restriction of universals and *de re* readings of names in attitude reports, and proposes that exploring those parallelisms helps provide better analyses for these phenomena, as well as shed light on certain formal mechanisms that have been used to account for them.

Two very important properties of indefinite noun phrases, object of considerable attention especially in the nineties, are (1) indefinites' ability to take wide scope out of islands, a property some authors associate with contextual dependence (Kratzer, 1998, 2003; Schwarz, 2001), and (2) their ability to be dependent on a universal quantifier, as illustrated below.

- (1) a. John is wondering whether *a certain man* will come to the party tonight.
- b. Every one of my students is excellent at *a sub-field of linguistics*.

These and other properties of indefinites have been used by authors as reasons to propose several different mechanisms. Some argue that (at least some) wide scoping indefinites are contextually determined free choice functional variables (Kratzer 1998; Schwarz 2001), while others claim that they always carry existential force (Matthewson, 1998); some claim that co-variation is best captured by Skolemization (Kratzer, Schwarz) while others use standard existential closure under the scope of a universal quantifier (Reinhart, 1997). While these different mechanisms aren't incompatible with each other, one is naturally suspicious about whether they are all necessary. I propose that considering other phenomena that share some of these properties with indefinites can help understand what the roles of these formal tools are in grammar. Two such phenomena are domain restriction and *de re* readings of names in attitude reports.

Szabolcsi (2010) argues that it is possible and desirable to unify our accounts of domain restriction and of indefinites, based on examples like (2) (from Stanley and Szabó, 2000). This sentence has a reading where the set of apples universally quantified over is the same for each child, which happens to be nonsensical, and it has a sensible reading where the sets of apples vary with children (e.g., each child had its own basket full of apples).

- (2) Every child devoured every apple.
 - a. #Every child devoured every apple in the set *A* of apples.
 - b. Every child devoured every apple in the subset *a* of the set *A* of apples that is (somehow) assigned to that child.

Szabolcsi observes that reading a. is parallel to wide scope readings of indefinites (no co-variation, possible contextual dependence) and b. to Skolemized readings of indefinites, and she proposes that an analysis in the spirit of Kratzer (1998) can account for this.

Similarly, I argue that *de re* readings of names in attitude reports have certain characteristics in common with indefinites and domain restriction. The following is particularly striking, and to the best of my knowledge novel. Assume a scenario much like Quine's classical Ortcutt story (Ralph is acquainted with Ortcutt in two different ways, without knowing that the "two" men he saw are one and the same, and he is convinced that one of them is a spy while the other is a model citizen), but where we have a second individual, Ralph', who has beliefs that are the exact inverse of Ralph's concerning who is a spy and who is a model citizen. If Ralph and Ralph' are my only students, then sentence (3) has a true reading.

- (3) Every one of my students thinks Ortcutt is a spy.

According to Kaplan (1968), the embedded clause contains a variable ranging over descriptions of Ortcutt, but since (3) can be true in the scenario just given, it must be possible for this description of Ortcutt to depend on the choice of student, for there isn't a unique description of Ortcutt that can make the sentence

true. The availability of co-variation can potentially be accounted for with Skolemization or with existential closure of the description variable under the scope of the universal, much like the case of indefinites. I will provide arguments that will show only the latter analysis to be correct and I will present other aspects of the parallelism with indefinites.

Finally, building on the division of labor between two kinds of indefinites explored by Schwarz (2001) and Solomon (this conference), I will provide an analysis of *de re* readings of names in attitude reports and of (the relevant aspects of) domain restriction that takes into account these parallelisms and attempts to shed light on the roles and consequences of the formal mechanisms mentioned above.

References

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