

snippets

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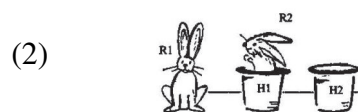
On Haddock’s puzzle and the role of presupposition in reference resolution

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A magician is working with two rabbits and two hats; one of the hats has a rabbit in it, the other is empty (2). As Haddock (1987) points out, if speaker and audience are cognizant of this situation the definite description in (1a) can be used felicitously to refer to the rabbit that is in one of the hats – even though there are two hats in the utterance situation. Interestingly, the utterance in (1b) is infelicitous as a description of the very same scene.

- (1) a. The rabbit in the hat is happy.
b. #The rabbit is in the hat.



This contrast is surprising. Comprehension requires in either case determining the referent for *the hat*, and the scene seems equally supportive in this regard – there is exactly one rabbit-hat pair with the former inside the latter. In (1a) that hat is an ingredient in identifying the intended rabbit, and in (1b) it is an ingredient of the sentence meaning, granting truth. Nevertheless, (1a) is perfectly felicitous, whereas (1b) is not. Reference resolution, then, appears to depend on linguistic form here, specifically on *the hat* being nested inside another definite DP, (e.g. Champollion and Sauerland 2011; Bumford 2017).

To see how nesting might have an impact, assume that *the*, much like a free pronoun, introduces an index i , whose value is given by the assignment a , while its NP sister contributes a constraint on the kind of entity that can serve as the value of i in the form of a presupposition (3a) (Postal 1970; Heim 1982, 2007; Elbourne 2005). We see that in the nested structure in (1a), the constraints accumulate to demand of the utterance situation that it contains a rabbit and a hat with the former inside the latter (3b). For (1b), however, the constraints project separately and do not yield a complex constraint tied together by the *in* relation (3c).

- (3) a. $\llbracket \text{the}_i \rrbracket^a = \lambda f : f \in D_{\langle e, t \rangle} \ \& \ f(a(i)) = 1 . a(i)$
b. $\llbracket \text{the}_8 \text{ rabbit in the}_7 \text{ hat} \rrbracket^a = a(7) \text{ is a hat} \ \& \ a(8) \text{ is a rabbit}$
 $\quad \quad \quad \& \ a(8) \text{ is in } a(7).$
c. $\llbracket \text{the}_8 \text{ rabbit is in the}_7 \text{ hat} \rrbracket^a = a(8) \text{ is a rabbit} \ \& \ a(7) \text{ is a hat.}$
 $\quad \quad \quad a(8) \text{ is in } a(7)$

To exploit this difference we need a principle that regulates when information expressed in an utterance, which may in principle be sufficient to identify an intended referent, can in fact be used for the purpose of reference resolution. The conjecture in (4) serves as a first approximation.

(4) *Constraint on Reference Resolution:*

Presupposed content can be used for identifying the extension of referring expressions; at-issue content cannot.

(4) predicts, among other things, that embedding (1b) in the scope of suitable presupposition triggers removes infelicity. (5) provides a glimpse of the wide range of contrasts that are expected under (4) but difficult to explain under extant accounts of Haddock's Puzzle, such as Bumford 2017 or Champollion and Sauerland 2011.

(5) a. The rabbit is in the hat again.

b. Remove the rabbit from the hat!

(Stone and Webber 1998)

(Cf. #*Put the rabbit in the hat!*)

c. The rabbit stopped being in the hat.

(Cf. #*The rabbit isn't in the hat.*)

d. John knows/regrets/realizes/ that the rabbit is in the hat.

(Cf. #*John thinks that the rabbit is in the hat.*)

To illustrate, (5a) contrasts markedly with (1b). On the present proposal, this is because *again* presupposes that there was an earlier time at which the relevant rabbit was in the relevant hat. On the assumption that accommodation is economical (preferring minimal changes to the input scene) the audience can be trusted to identify the rabbit that is currently inside a hat as the one that was previously inside the hat that is the intended referent of *the hat* in the utterance. Parallel comments apply to (5b-d).

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