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Abstract

This dissertation is about pronominal and verb phrase anaphora in English.[3] The first part of the dissertation evaluates, compares, and refines some of the most prominent theories of pronominal anaphora that have been developed within the framework of Generative Grammar (Reinhart, 1983; Heim, 1998; Fox, 1999a; Büring, 2005b; Reinhart, 2006). It is pointed out that none of these theories alone accounts for all the relevant data in a satisfactory manner. The theories of Reinhart (2006) and Fox (1999a) are refined, partly drawing on work by Ruys (1994). These refinements overcome the empirical problems, while keeping the fundamental assumptions of the original theories intact.

The second part of the dissertation, however, raises some objections against these assumptions. Eventually, an alternative theory is proposed, whose main premise is that anaphora are always contextually resolved, i.e., their meaning is always contextually determined, and not sometimes syntactically encoded, as Reinhart and many others assume. A unified analysis of pronominal and verb phrase anaphora is presented. A novel account of cascaded ellipsis, of Dahl's puzzle and of Condition B effects is proposed. The theory is argued to improve on other recent proposals (cf. Hardt, 1999; Elbourne, 2005b; Schlenker, 2005) and is shown to tie in neatly with theories of information structure and discourse coherence establishment (cf. Rooth, 1992a; Schwarzschild, 1999; Kehler, 2002).

[3]This short abstract is intended for specialists in the field. The preface provides a more gentle introduction, and each individual chapter comes with a summary which provides somewhat more detail than can be given here.