

**EXPRESSING AND COMMUNICATING THOUGHT AND THE EPISTEMIC SPECIFICITY OF  
DEFINITE AND INDEFINITE NOUN PHRASES**

Hans Kamp  
University of Stuttgart

When we perform a speech act, we try to get our audience to do several things – to perform one or more cognitive acts and, in the case of directives, some other act as well. But we also express, or evince, a thought or our own. Grice argued that it is by virtue of recognizing this thought that our audience is able to perform the cognitive and non-cognitive acts we want them to perform. But whether or not one endorses this analysis of linguistic meaning, it is clear that the recipient of an utterance will, in the normal course of events, perform two distinguishable cognitive acts – (i) determine the content expressed by the uttered words and (ii) form, on the basis of (i), a belief about the speaker’s thought that gave rise to her utterance (a thought whose content may but need not be identical with the utterance content).

On this view of what happens in verbal communication there is a close connection between utterance interpretation and attitude reporting: When I interpret what you are saying to me I attribute a certain thought to you, and when I then convey my belief that you have this thought to some other person C, I will tend to use much the same words that you used when talking to me, intending C to interpret them in the same way that I interpreted them when they were used by you. For instance, when you say (1a,b) to me, I may subsequently say (2a,b) to C, intending C to interpret the indefinite NP “someone” of (2a), or the definite NP “the safety inspector” of (2b), just as I interpreted their occurrences in (1.a) or (1.b).

- (1) a. Someone has been looking for you this morning.  
b. The safety inspector is due this afternoon.
  
- (2) a. A thinks that someone has been looking for me.  
b. A thinks that the safety inspector is due this afternoon.

Just as “someone” in (1.a) can be interpreted specifically or non-specifically (Farkas,1994,2002), so “someone” in (2.a) can be interpreted either *de dicto* or *de re*. Likewise, just as “the safety inspector” can be interpreted referentially or attributively in the sense of (Donellan,1966), there is the choice between a *de dicto* and a *de re* interpretation of “the safety inspector” in (2.b).

The talk will: (i) elaborate on the parallels between the possible interpretations of noun phrases occurring within and not within the scope of attitudinal verbs; and (ii) develop an “epistemic” account of the referential/specific interpretations of definite and indefinite NPs not occurring within the scope of attitudinal predicates (e.g. those in (1)) and their relation to the *de re* interpretations for such NP occurrences within the scope of

such predicates (e.g. those in (2)). The latter account will be based on an existing proposal for the treatment of epistemically specific uses of indefinites (Bende-Farkas & Kamp, 2001, Kamp & Bende-Farkas, forthc.) and on unpublished work on utterance interpretation governed by a generalised notion of context, which among other things incorporates both the utterance context in the sense of Kaplan and the discourse context as it is used in DRT.

### **References:**

- Bende-Farkas, A. & H. Kamp, 2001, "Indefinites and Binding. From Specificity to Incorporation." Lecture Notes for the ESSLLI Summer School, Helsinki, 2001.
- Donnellan, K, 1966. Reference and Definite Descriptions. *Phil Review* 75, 281-304
- Farkas, D, 1994. "Specificity and Scope. In & G. Tsoulas. *Langues et Grammaire* 1. n.a. Paris
- Farkas, D, 2002. "Specificity Distinctions. *Journal of Semantics* 19, pp. 1-31
- Kamp, H, 2008 "Discourse Structure and the Structure of Context, unpubl. ms.
- Kamp, H & A. Bende-Farkas, 2009. "Epistemic Specificity from a Communication-theoretic Perspective, forthc.
- Kaplan, D. "Demonstratives". In: J. Almog, J. Perry & H. Weinstein (eds.) *Themes from Kaplan*, OUP, 1989.